

Birmingham City University

The Fresco Decoration of the Oratorio dei Buonomini di San  
Martino: Piety and Charity in Late-Fifteenth Century Florence

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## Abstract

Despite the emergence of various studies focusing on Florentine lay sodalities, the Procurators of the Shamed Poor of Florence, otherwise known as the Buonomini di San Martino, have received little attention from social historians and much less consideration from historians of art. Consequently, there are several distinct research gaps concerning the charitable operations of this lay confraternity and the painted decorations within its oratory that beg to be addressed. The greatest research breach pertains to the fresco decoration of the San Martino chapel as, despite the existence of various pre-iconographic descriptions of the murals, comprehensive iconographic and comparative analyses of these painted works have never before been carried out. Moreover, the dating of the entire cycle and the attribution of one of its lunette paintings is questionable. Accordingly, the present study addresses these deficiencies.

Central to the current research is an original, in-depth art historical analysis of the frescoed paintings. Involving the methodologies of iconographic and comparative analyses alongside connoisseurship, the present investigation has allowed the researcher to establish the following: the art historical significance of the oratory murals; the dating of the fresco cycle; the attribution of an executor for the *Dream of Saint Martin* fresco; the identification of portraits of Lorenzo and Giuliano de' Medici within the Buonomini cycle; the disclosure of the shamed poor as non-patrician representatives of Florence. Furthermore, by placing data gained from the Buonomini's archived primary sources and the oratory's murals in juxtaposition with other contemporary Florentine literary and visual materials for the purpose of analysis, the researcher has been able to elucidate the term 'lay piety' and define a set of criteria which the shamed poor must meet in order to be termed so. This sustained use of artworks as documents, supported by other pertinent textual and visual sources has also allowed for further insight into the following spheres: religious doctrines supporting the acts of pilgrimage; the state of the Florentine pilgrim trade and the hospitality associated with this business during the *quattrocento*; the rituals surrounding the burial of poor people and early Medici patronage of the sodality. Additionally, the present research has more extensive implications: it contributes to material culture studies with regard to the lives of the less-than-wealthy and crucially gives a voice to the silent poor; it reveals that the complex messages contained within the sodality's painted cycle provide more than just a set of instructions to confraternal members. Crucially their content has repercussions beyond the microcosm of confraternal life and their advice and intimations extend onwards into the macrocosm of the civic sphere.

*For a beautiful girl in yellow shoes.*

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Figure 169 Lorenzo di Credi, *Grieving Virgin and Saint John*, between 1475 & 1500, oil on wood, Museo il Cenacolo di Fuligno, Florence.

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Figure 172 The workshop of Domenico Ghirlandaio, *Saint Martin Dividing his Cloak for the Beggar* (before restoration), 1486-1490, fresco, Oratory of the Buonomini di San Martino, Florence.

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Figure 180 The workshop of Domenico Ghirlandaio, *Taking in Pilgrims* (before restoration), 1486-1490, fresco, Oratorio dei Buonomini di San Martino, Florence.

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## List of Abbreviations and Dating

### Archives and Institutions

ABSM	Archivio dei Buonomini di San Martino, Florence
AAF	Archivio Arcivescovile Fiorentino
ASF	Archivio di Stato, Florence
ASM	Archivio del Seminario Maggiore di Cestello, Florence
BNCF	Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze

### Bookkeeping Currency<sup>1</sup>

y	Lire = 20 soldi
β	Soldo = 12 denari
d	Denaro

### Dates

All dates pertaining to manuscript sources are new style unless marked F.S. (Florentine Style) and correspond to the dating style employed when the various archives were catalogued. For dates originating from secondary sources reference should be made to the original publication.

Birth and death dates for individuals from antiquity have been provided for the sake of clarity and the reader's facility.

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<sup>1</sup> Ugo Silli, *Sulla Datazione di un Volume Pergamenaceo del XV Secolo Dell' Archivio dei Buonomini*, Florence, 2008, p.10.

Weights and Measures<sup>2</sup>

<i>Stajo</i>	Measurement for grain and flour = one bushel/24.36 litres.
<i>Libbre</i>	Measurement used for bread and meat = one pound.
<i>Braccio</i>	Measurement used for cloth = one yard.
<i>Pezza</i>	Measurement used by cloth wholesalers = c.40 <i>braccia</i> .

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<sup>2</sup> Carole C. Frick, *Dressing Renaissance Florence: Families, Fortunes and Fine Clothing*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002, pp. 225-227.

## Note on Transcriptions and Translations

The manuscript sources used throughout this study have been transcribed and translated by the author unless otherwise stated and the use of *sic* to denote scribal mistakes has been avoided. Question marks, within square brackets have been employed to denote illegible text and ellipses to indicate where original text has been omitted from the transcription. Furthermore, the spellings used in transcription comply exactly with those in the original documents. All dates are new style unless marked F.S. (Florentine Style).

## Note on Past Beneficiaries of the Buonomini di San Martino's Charity

Since its conception in 1442, the lay confraternity of the Buonomini di San Martino has provided abiding anonymity for its beneficiaries. On this occasion the identities of public figures associated with the confraternity, those from families prominent in fifteenth-century society and procurators serving during the *quattrocento* will be revealed. The majority of those helped by the sodality however, will continue to remain anonymous.

## Note on Language and Spelling

British English has been used throughout the thesis although this does not affect bibliographic references.

## Acknowledgements

As a neophyte postgraduate researcher I was warned by the historian and broadcaster, Doctor David Starkey that working towards a PhD in art history was to temporarily pursue a very lonely existence. And yes, data collection, research and writing are often tasks for the author and the author alone. Countless hours, as long in the fabric of time as Jacob Marley's chains were in the afterlife (or so it seems), have been spent in silence in archives, libraries, in my study, on planes, trains and alone at dinner during foreign research trips. Nevertheless, this thesis cannot be considered simply my *magnum opus* as, without the help of certain individuals and institutions, this study would not have been begun, let alone completed.

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Because I possessed, and still retain, a great enthusiasm for my research topic, I aspired from the very beginning to publish parts of my findings prior to completing the thesis and I was extremely fortunate to find an ally, advisor, editor and most importantly, friend, with an unparalleled knowledge of Early Modern confraternities. This individual is Professor Konrad Eisenbichler of Toronto University and it is through his gracious patronage that I have achieved so much as regards the dissemination of my work. Konrad is also responsible for introducing me to Ficino, the electronic seminar and bulletin board that encourages the circulation of information between its members worldwide.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

The Oratorio dei Buonomini di San Martino is a diminutive building, situated inconspicuously between Florence's Piazza della Signoria and the Badia (Figs. 1, 2, 3 & 4). Founded in 1442<sup>3</sup> by Antonio Pierozzi (1389-1459), Archbishop of Florence, and aided by the munificence of Cosimo 'Il Vecchio' de' Medici (1389-1464),<sup>4</sup> the lay confraternity of the Buonomini, also often referred to as the Procurators or Attorneys of the Shamed Poor of Florence,<sup>5</sup> brought relief to those who had fallen upon hard times and were considered too honourable to beg for themselves.

The oratory's fresco decoration consists of a cycle of ten painted lunettes depicting two scenes from the life of Saint Martin of Tours, the remainder illustrating charitable acts performed by the Buonomini, based on the seven corporal works of mercy (Fig. 5). The paintings' previous dating to 1479 and the attribution of this cycle are contentious issues although this art-historical thesis demonstrates that the paintings were completed during the 1480s.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, the depictions appear barely to have been mentioned in art historical circles and have, prior to the present study, never been subject to a formal art-historical analysis, despite the cursory acknowledgement of scholars since the nineteenth

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<sup>3</sup> The Buonomini *Capitoli* are dated February 1441 (Florentine style, hereafter F.S.) which is 1442 new style. See Appendix II.

<sup>4</sup> See Chapter 2:2, note number 178 for the arguments for and against Antonio Pierozzi's perceived involvement with the Buonomini.

<sup>5</sup> *Codice dei Capitoli*, c. 3-7, (1.1.1.0.1.), ABSM refers to the 'procuratori de detti poveri vergognosi'. See Appendix II, paragraph 2.

<sup>6</sup> On the dating of the fresco cycle see sections 3:3, 3:4, 5:2, 7:1 and 7:2.

century. This is not to say that the painted decorations, nine attributed to the workshop of Domenico Ghirlandaio (1449-1494) and the tenth, *The Dream of Saint Martin*, now here newly assigned to Lorenzo di Credi (around 1458-1537), are unimportant, simply that in connoisseurial terms they are not of the same quality as, say, the Sassetti Chapel murals of Santa Trinita or the Tornabuoni Chapel frescoes of Santa Maria Novella, Florence.

For the sake of clarity and ease of navigation, the present investigation has been organised using a thematic approach. The first chapter comprises statements of objectives, methodology and a review of textual sources. There follows a firm foundation for the study concentrating on Florentine confraternities and, in particular, the Buonomini di San Martino. Accordingly, this chapter explains the structure of lay confraternities, their purpose and opines on their ranking. Moreover, it also allows for an examination of the Buonomini's foundation documents, in order to pursue the presence of the confraternity's founders and survey the charity's remit and constitution. Additionally, the brotherhood's oratory is considered in terms of its wider relationship to the city of Florence and the republic's inhabitants. Accordingly, the intention of these foundation chapters are to contribute to the theoretical understanding of the sodality's foundation, charitable activities and physical siting by bolstering previously hypothetical discussions with fresh direct, verifiable data.

The third chapter, while moving the discussion forward to include the Buonomini fresco cycle, continues the mix of groundwork and analysis begun in the aforementioned

section. While the paintings are introduced with a pre-iconographic description, this section also relates the historiography of attributions, establishes the position of the fresco cycle within the genre of the Seven Works of Corporal Mercy and discusses the relationship between the executor of the majority of the oratory's painted decorations and the Buonomini di San Martino. Moreover, the importance of this chapter extends beyond the fact that the Buonomini fresco cycle has never before been placed and examined within its own genre. Its significance lies in the fact that the visual images and symbols present within this cycle do not exist in isolation. Rather, we can now understand them in terms of their relationship with other artworks existing in the same category.

The themes of the fourth chapter are piety, patronage and ritual space. Accordingly, the term 'lay piety' is clarified and the outward expressions of a shared faith, which permeated the fabric of society are scrutinised. The motif of communication is subsequently further advanced in respect of a visual primary source, the Buonomini's fresco of *Releasing the Debtor from Gaol*, which is analysed in order to aid investigation of the following: the relationship between the confraternity and its most notable fifteenth-century members; the concept of Medicean ritual space and how it was constructed. Consequently, this fresh investigation into Medici patronage of the Buonomini di San Martino is instrumental in providing new evidence of how the munificence of Lorenzo and Giuliano de' Medici was translated into a visual medium. Furthermore, this section also provides an original contribution to our understanding of the wider socio-political impact of the Pazzi Conspiracy.

The next chapter however, heralds a change of emphasis as discussion of Florence's merchant princes is left behind and the shamed poor come under scrutiny. The significance of this section being that this familiar, yet complex term is subjected to unprecedented scrutiny within the conditions and circumstances set by poverty. Accordingly, the term *poveri vergognosi* is examined in context and clarified, while an art-historical analysis of a further five of the confraterniy's frescos relating to the Works of Mercy permits a discussion of family honour and the visualisation of this ideal in relation to the shamed poor. This particular part of the investigation is uncommon in its originality as it provides a rare opportunity to hear the authentic voices of the silent poor, albeit under the supervision of the Procurators of the Shamed Poor as charitable patriarchs. This chapter closes with a short case study on the goldsmith Filippo di Baldo, which provides a new illustration of how the Buonomini catered to beneficiaries with continuing needs.

Chapter six of the thesis concentrates on the theme of spiritual journeys and, by addressing the Buonomini's *Taking in Pilgrims* and *Burying the Dead* paintings, encourages consideration of the following: the religious doctrines supporting acts of pilgrimage; the state of the Florentine pilgrim trade; the communication of the sodality's view of charity as a cardinal Christian duty and whether the sodality's depiction of the burial of a poor person was paradigmatic or realistic. Furthermore, this chapter is conducive to our abstract comprehension of spiritual journeys in the sense that it deepens our understanding of how the Buonomini communicated their view of charity, reinforces where the Seven Corporal Works of Mercy stood within the sodality's philanthropic

framework. Moreover, the section relating to obsequies furnishes us with rare, fresh and accurate data on the subject of the burial of poor people.

Finally, Chapter seven moves the investigation towards its conclusion with a comparative examination of the Buonomini's two scenes from the life of Saint Martin. This original analysis advances a likely executor for the *Dream of Saint Martin* fresco and a discussion of the dating of the cycle. Following on from this, the final section within this chapter brings together the various strands of association between the proposed executor of the confraternity's *Dream of Saint Martin* fresco and the Buonomini di San Martino. Moreover, the wider impact of this chapter allows for an understanding of the paintings' art historical position. The thesis concludes with Chapter 8.



## Section 1:1

### Objectives

The objectives of the current research were set in order to establish the following: the circumstances or considerations which prompted the establishment of the Buonomini di San Martino and the subsequent decoration of their meeting place; the identity of the shamed poor; the form, function and meaning of the extant mural cycle; the art historical position of the frescoes and a reconsideration of the paintings' questionable dating and attribution.

This research project has foundations in Renaissance art history, theology and social history. Particularly pertinent is the discipline of confraternal studies and it is because of the present study's interdisciplinary nature that the following additional issues required investigation: fifteenth-century lay piety – what it was and how it can be defined; who performed charity; what were the motivations for charitable displays and what lay institutions supported acts of philanthropy.

Accordingly the thesis is organised so that each chapter deals with a specific set of related issues with general social issues coming first, followed by an affiliated art-historical discussion. It is upheld that the confraternity was organised with the spiritual guidance of Antonio Pierozzi and aided by the munificence of Cosimo '*il Vecchio*' de' Medici. Cosimo's donations, of course, were one of the ways in which this individual

was able to publicly demonstrate his spirituality and so accordingly it is reasoned that lay piety can be generally defined as the outward expression by an unordained general public of aspects of church doctrine, religious learning and faith. In order to further understand the concept of lay piety, a variety of spiritual guides available during the *quattrocento* are consulted and the reasons for individuals attempting to obtain the metaphysical benefits that religious piety could provide are also explored. Confraternal membership as well is discussed as an aspect of piety and it is reasoned that such institutions were hierarchical in structure, both internally and externally.

As the thesis moves towards the objectives specific to the lay confraternity of the Procurators of the Shamed Poor of Florence, it is asserted that the shamed poor or *poveri vergognosi*, who are mentioned in the company's title, are defined initially by a specific set of criteria. Furthermore, it is proposed that this group of often impoverished individuals (who, it transpires, generally existed among fellow labourers and artisans rather than amid poor nobility),<sup>7</sup> can be better understood and more deeply examined, by testing whether they manifest the following: the demonstration of virtue and honour, according to gender, governed by conduct and unaffected by social status and fiscal considerations.

Relating directly to the painted decorations within the Buonomini oratory, this iconological, comparative and connoisseurial study of the Buonomini cycle reveals that

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<sup>7</sup> See sections 5:1 and 5:2.

the murals expound complex narratives, beyond those simply meant to instruct confraternal members. It is proposed that the paintings set forth a variety of social and political issues which were, at one time or another, likely considered by the inhabitants of Florence during the fifteenth century. Furthermore, as the Buonomini's fresco cycle was produced during the Laurentian 'Golden Age' and Lorenzo and Giuliano de' Medici were members of the San Martino confraternity, the extent of the brothers' involvement with this sodality is discussed. What is more, it is asserted in this thesis that the fresh identification of portraits of the pair within one of the Buonomini murals reveals the confraternity's wish to eulogise the brothers and celebrate its connections to this distinguished clan.

## Section 1: 2

### Methodology

The methodological approaches chosen for this study are those felt to be most appropriate to the research topic and are, accordingly, the best tools with which to address the aims of this thesis. The confraternity of the Buonomini and other sodalities in fifteenth-century Florence were involved in performing social and charitable works, therefore this study is necessarily inter-disciplinary, involving research into theological and socio-political issues.

Nevertheless, as the cynosure of the investigation is a cycle of painted wall decorations, then the research project falls primarily within the discipline of art history.

A method of iconographic analysis was set out by Erwin Panofsky (*Studies in Iconology*, first published in 1939). As the purpose of this study seeks to reveal the complex messages and meanings within the Buonomini frescoes, ‘as opposed to [conducting a discussion on] their form’,<sup>8</sup> this particular methodology has been selected as the primary tool and is employed throughout.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Erwin Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology: Humanistic Themes in the Art of the Renaissance*, Boulder, Westview Press, 1972, uses the word ‘form’ in more than one sense. In this instance he appears to be referring to the general appearance of the visible elements of an artwork when the piece is viewed as one entity. See footnote number 10 of the present thesis for an alternative use of ‘form’.

<sup>9</sup> E. Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology: Humanistic Themes in the Art of the Renaissance*, Boulder, Westview Press, 1972, p. 3.

The first stage of the process, entitled ‘primary or natural subject matter’, is essentially ‘an enumeration of pure forms’<sup>10</sup> or ‘motifs’ forming ‘a pre-iconographical description of the work of art’.<sup>11</sup> To put it briefly, this initial stage consists of a commentary of what is present in the painting minus any analysis or ‘reference to outside sources’.<sup>12</sup> One describes what one sees, for example, ‘representations of natural objects such as human beings, plants, houses, tools and so forth’ and where they are located within the illusionary space of the painting.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, Panofsky advises that practitioners require only ‘practical experience’ relating to contextual knowledge in order to successfully achieve a result during this first phase.<sup>14</sup> Notwithstanding that experience is not always absolute, as it often possesses various meanings and has diverse significance to the people it touches, *it* does however, also relate to issues from our shared day-to-day life experiences. Hence we are mindful, for example, that the mounted figure in the Buonomini’s *Saint Martin Dividing His Cloak for the Beggar* painting (Fig. 6) is cutting his mantle in two because in Christendom, even if we are not yet aware of the man’s identity, we are familiar with this act from its replication in the places where we practice Christian worship<sup>15</sup> and also where we conduct our everyday

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid. p. 5. Here Panofsky employs the word ‘form’ to refer to the most basic elements of an artwork which are considered independently from the whole piece. For example, shape, line, geometry and colour are, in this sense, among the formal elements Panofsky is referring to. For an alternative use of the word ‘form’ see footnote 8 of the present thesis.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Anne D’Alleva, *Methods and Theories of Art History*, London, Lawrence King Publishing, 2004, p. 20.

<sup>13</sup> E. Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology: Humanistic Themes in the Art of the Renaissance*, Boulder, Westview Press, 1972, p. 7.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. p. 15.

<sup>15</sup> Images of Saint Martin have been reproduced in the countries that now make up the United Kingdom since at least the eleventh century. For instance the ancient church of Saint Martin on the Walls, Wareham, Sussex, supposedly founded by Saint Aldhelm during the seventh century and rebuilt in the eleventh century, is home to various early-

lives.<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, our knowledge of what Panofsky describes as the ‘history of style’<sup>17</sup> does not require external arbitration, through the consultation of texts, as our ‘insight into the manner in which, under varying historical conditions, objects and events were expressed’, during this particular stage of the analysis, should be inherent.<sup>18</sup> Accordingly this pre-iconographic stage in relation to the Buonomini cycle is detailed in section 3:1 of the thesis.

The second of Panofsky’s stages deals with ‘secondary or conventional subject matter’ and requires the user to be able to correctly identify specific ‘images, stories and allegories’ produced within a painting and realise them as ‘the conscious intention of the artist’.<sup>19</sup> For example, if we return to the mounted figure depicted within the Buonomini’s *Saint Martin Dividing His Cloak for the Beggar* (Fig. 6), we can develop our ‘imprecise’<sup>20</sup> identification of the man on horseback from stage one, into a more accurate interpretation of Saint Martin of Tours. This result is achieved by the practitioner’s ‘knowledge of literary [and visual]

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medieval depictions of Saint Martin. See

[http://greatenglishchurches.co.uk/html/wareham\\_.html](http://greatenglishchurches.co.uk/html/wareham_.html), (accessed 16 March 2015).

<sup>16</sup> The lamposts in the district of Saint Martin in the Fields, London display the image of a mounted Saint Martin dividing his cloak for the beggar as the ‘paving, lighting, watering and cleansing’ within this parish, at least since 1832, were the responsibility of the Paving Committee of the Parish of Saint Martin in the Fields. See *The Statutes of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland 2 and 3, William IV, 1832*, London, His Majesty’s Printers, 1832, p. 286.

<sup>17</sup> E. Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology: Humanistic Themes in the Art of the Renaissance*, Boulder, Westview Press, 1972, p. 15.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. p. 6.

<sup>20</sup> Un-Chol Shin, ‘Panofsky, Polanyi and Intrinsic Meaning’, *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, vol. 24, no. 4, 1990, p. 19.

sources'.<sup>21</sup> Within the present thesis section 3:2, the 'Iconography of the Seven Corporal Works of Mercy', represents part of the researcher's knowledge of visual sources.

Additionally, reference to texts and book learning are crucial to this second stage of analysis as, rather than simply exposing the 'object of interpretation'<sup>22</sup> to the inexact scrutiny of the pre-iconographic stage, the researcher actually participates in an 'act of interpretation'<sup>23</sup> or as Panofsky terms it, 'an iconographic analysis in the narrower sense of the word'.<sup>24</sup>

Accordingly, for this doctoral study, an understanding of the social history of Renaissance Florence and a critical reading and evaluation of published primary and secondary literary sources are as crucial as ever. For this reason the critical review of textual sources in section 1:3 is a necessary inclusion, as are the sections regarding piety, charity and confraternity, which are discussed in Chapters 2, 4, 5 and 6.

The final stage described by Panofsky is the 'intrinsic meaning or content' phase which requires a knowledge of the history of style and historical context in order to thoroughly interpret the iconography.<sup>25</sup> This analytical step introduces Panofsky's theory of iconology and requires an 'iconographical interpretation in a deeper sense', one that explores symbolism and its cultural and historical context.<sup>26</sup> Panofsky further explains, using the

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<sup>21</sup> E. Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology: Humanistic Themes in the Art of the Renaissance*, Boulder, Westview Press, 1972, p. 15.

<sup>22</sup> U. Shin, 'Panofsky, Polanyi and Intrinsic Meaning', *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, vol. 24, no. 4, 1990, p. 19.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> E. Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology: Humanistic Themes in the Art of the Renaissance*, Boulder, Westview Press, 1972, p. 14.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid. p. 7.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid. pp. 14-15.

example of Leonardo da Vinci's *Last Supper* fresco, that while stage one of his methodology allows the researcher to describe a group of thirteen men seated at a dinner table and further investigations at stage two reveal that the gathering was in fact a depiction of the Last Supper, stage three allows us to delve even deeper.<sup>27</sup> Should we wish, for example, to 'try to understand [the painting] as a document of Leonardo's personality' we must then begin to treat 'the work of art as "something else" ...' and it is this 'something else' that has 'symbolic value'.<sup>28</sup> So for instance, in section 6:1 of the current thesis the Buonomini's *Taking in Pilgrims* (Fig. 7) fresco is scrutinised in order to discover more about pilgrimage and hospitality in early-modern Florence, partly through the exploration of the paintings' 'symbolic values'. This examination will, in turn, help to reveal the following: what motivated the Procurators of the Shamed Poor to aid pilgrims; what benefit was it to the confraternity to be performing this particular Work of Mercy and what practical issues does this charitable activity address?<sup>29</sup> Similarly, within section 6:2 of the present study, the Buonomini's *Burying the Dead* (Fig. 8) fresco is analysed iconographically in order to discover whether the painting accurately depicts one of the solemn observances surrounding the burial of a poor person.

It is at this point of the analysis that 'synthetic intuition' is brought into play, this being a mindset that Panofsky places under the banner 'equipment for interpretation'. 'Synthetic intuition' is the cognitive capacity that permits art historians to understand and utilise

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid. p. 8.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.



primary sources and interpret various ‘images, stories and allegories...which give meaning... to the formal arrangements and technical procedures’ involved in a painted work.<sup>30</sup> In other words, ‘synthetic intuition’ is the act of gathering and coalescing disparate research fibres together in order to better understand a visual document. It is in effect the marriage between the ‘symbolic values’ of a work of art and corresponding, corroborating evidence from other visual, literary and philosophical sources, valued and/or created by the particular society under scrutiny.<sup>31</sup> With regard to the current study, the two scenes of Saint Martin generally follow established hagiographical representations (see section 7:1) although the hypothesis about the other scenes is that they blur the boundaries of sacred and secular by borrowing established religious iconography for scenes of contemporary life (see sections 3:2 and 5:2 in particular). Given the religious culture of fifteenth-century Florence and prevailing attitudes towards piety and charity, which were rooted in the writings of the church fathers and subsequent canonists, primary published theological texts are consulted in order to show how attitudes were shaped and transmitted through imagery. These in turn, being an intrinsic part of the iconographic analysis, will aid the interpretation of the fresco decoration providing historical, factual information about the remit and activities of the confraternity.<sup>32</sup> The current study also benefits from data gleaned from archived materials pertaining directly to the Buonomini, which go back to the time of its inception (1442).<sup>33</sup> For this doctoral study the archives are used extensively in conjunction with primary sources located elsewhere in Florence and various published primary sources.

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid. p. 15.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> See Chapters 4, 5, and 6 in particular.

<sup>33</sup> 1441 Florentine style. For more detailed information on what is contained in these funds see section 1:3 of this thesis.

The business of attribution raises its head within this thesis in relation to *The Dream of Saint Martin* (Fig. 9)<sup>34</sup> and while Panofsky ‘fully appreciated the central importance’ of this type of expertise, *vis-a-vis* ‘the attribution and dating of works of art on the basis of comparative and formal analysis’, his priorities lay with ‘the contextual and conceptual aspects of the history of style’.<sup>35</sup> Connoisseurship has traditionally relied on the ‘close examination of original artworks’<sup>36</sup> and, as the researcher was allowed unlimited access to the Buonomini frescoes, before, during and after the most recent restoration attempt, this methodology is most suitably employed within the current study.<sup>37</sup> The sort of connoisseurship that has been used however, is not Vasarian and qualitative in nature<sup>38</sup> but emanates more from Giovanni Morelli’s ‘specificity’ and Bernard Berenson’s proclivity for identifying artists’ more ‘notable traits’.<sup>39</sup> Morelli was interested in the scientific value of connoisseurship and practised artistic comparative morphology, this being the juxtaposition of structures within the human body or within another organism.<sup>40</sup> This type of methodology, which derived

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<sup>34</sup> See Chapter 7.

<sup>35</sup> Irving Lavin, ‘Notes to Introduction’ in I. Panofsky, *Three Essays on Style*, MIT Press, Cambridge (MA), 1997, p. 201.

<sup>36</sup> David Ebitz ‘Connoisseurship as Practice’, *Artibus et Historiae*, vol. 9, no. 18, 1988, p. 207.

<sup>37</sup> Although the researcher was allowed access to both the oratory and the archives during the 2011 restoration, the current investigation has no technical objectives. However, the initial state of conservation of the paintings has been noted by the researcher and a short report by the restorer, Laura Lucioli can be found in Appendix V of the present thesis, along with figure numbers referring to images of the Buonomini frescoes prior to and post restoration.

<sup>38</sup> Hal Opperman, ‘The Thinking Eye, the Mind That Sees: The Art Historian as Connoisseur’, *Artibus et Historiae*, vol. 11, no. 21, 1990, p. 10.

<sup>39</sup> See Bernard Berenson, *Rudiments of Connoisseurship: Study and Criticism of Italian Art*, New York, Schocken Books, 1962 and Mark W. Roskill, *What is Art History*, London, Thames and Hudson, 1976, p. 22.

<sup>40</sup> D. Ebitz, ‘Connoisseurship as Practice’, *Artibus et Historiae*, vol. 9, no. 18, 1988, p. 208.

from Morelli's medical training, concentrates on anatomical subtleties such as a figure's physiognomy or how a specific body part is rendered.<sup>41</sup> Accordingly it can be seen at work within the present thesis in section 7:1. Bernard Berenson too was interested in the type of 'intimate relations' made possible by the close examination of original works of art.<sup>42</sup> By concentrating on very precise aspects of a painting, which might otherwise be considered less important or even inconsequential, he felt that the individual stamp or 'identifiable characteristic[s]' left by an artist [could] be pinpointed.<sup>43</sup> Artistic minutiae including background details all lend themselves perfectly to this type of analysis and an example of how Berenson's type of connoisseurship has been employed within this study can be found in section 7:1.

Besides aiding artistic attributions, connoisseurship can also assist its employer where Panofsky's methodology and literary texts cannot.<sup>44</sup> By way of illustration, when no direct literary sources are available for a work of art, for example a contract of works (as is the case with the Buonomini frescoes), close and critical examination of an original artwork can inform with regard to the following: the origin and preparation of artistic media; the methods specific to production; workshop practice and how the work was allocated to workshop members.<sup>45</sup> Close examination *per se* however, sits well with Panofsky as he

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Eric Fernie, *Art History and its Methods: A Critical Anthology*, London, Phaidon Press, 1995, p. 104.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid. p. 184.

<sup>45</sup> D. Ebitz, 'Connoisseurship as Practice', *Artibus et Historiae*, vol. 9, no. 18, 1988, p. 208.

considered the scrutiny of an artwork, whether the inspection take place using scientific devices or by the employment of a simple magnifying glass, an essential activity of the art historian.<sup>46</sup> Moreover, Panofsky also advises that the art historian and the ‘expert’<sup>47</sup> connoisseur are like ‘two neighbours who have the right of shooting over the same district’.<sup>48</sup> While ‘one of them owns the gun and the other all the ammunition’, each possesses what the other requires and he recommends that ‘both parties would be well advised if they realised the condition of their partnership’.<sup>49</sup> Accordingly, section 5:2 of the present thesis follows these recommendations and illustrates how the data gleaned from connoisseurship can be confirmed and strengthened by external primary sources.<sup>50</sup>

Since the primary intention of this study is to investigate the frescoes of the Buonomini di San Martino, considerations including fifteenth-century Florentine notions of piety and charity and their historical context are necessary. It is at this point where the art historical methodologies of Panofsky, Morelli and Berenson can be supplemented by methodologies categorised as new historicism. This theoretical movement boasts practitioners such as Michael Baxandall, who is particularly useful to this study on a few levels.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Erwin Panofsky, ‘The History of Art as a Humanistic Discipline’, reproduced in E. Fernie, (ed.), *Art History and Its Methods: A Critical Anthology*, London, Phaidon Press, 1995, p. 192.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid. p. 194.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid. p. 195.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Gary Schwartz, ‘Connoisseurship: The Penalty for Ahistoricism’, *Artibus et Historiae*, vol. 9, no. 18, 1988, p. 201.

<sup>51</sup> Michael Baxandall, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy: A Primer on the Social History of Pictorial Style*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1972.

Baxandall however, concentrates on contractual terms and artistic practice and therefore plugs a theoretical gap in the methodology. Secondly, as Panofsky also does not have much to say on ‘the social function of the [art] work and the audience’s expectations of it’, Baxandall once more metaphorically steps into the breach.<sup>52</sup> His concept of the ‘period eye’<sup>53</sup> considers the effects of the same artwork on a variety of viewers, who will all relate to it differently and according to what they can ‘bring to it’ from their own personal experiences.<sup>54</sup> Moreover, because of the sheer number of ‘assumptions’ that can be brought to bear when viewing a work of art, the web of information inherent in an object can be extremely complex.<sup>55</sup> This intricacy is particularly evident in the analyses conducted in sections 4:2 and 5:2 of the current thesis.

Baxandall is also useful to the present study as the way in which he recommends the use of objects as valid documents is much more palatable than Panofsky’s hierarchy of material sources.<sup>56</sup> For instance the latter, while advocating the general use of documents during art historical research,<sup>57</sup> considered the artwork as ‘primary’ material and all else as ‘secondary’.<sup>58</sup> This notion however, fails to resonate with the present study as the ranking or grading of any sources or data concerning the Buonomini frescoes has historically not served

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> M. Baxandall, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy: A Primer in the Social History of Pictorial Style*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1972. See p. 29 onwards.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid. p. 34.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid. p. 35.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid. p. 152.

<sup>57</sup> E. Panofsky, ‘The History of Art as a Humanistic Discipline’, reproduced in E. Fernie, (ed.), *Art History and Its Methods: A Critical Anthology*, London, Phaidon Press, 1995, p. 188.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid. p. 189.

this topic well. For instance, in past years the Buonomini frescoes have largely been sidelined because of issues over quality (they lack the hand of the master, being mainly workshop creations) and the voices present within the murals have been silenced, until now, simply because the paintings were considered relatively unimportant. Similarly, Panofsky's theory appears to encourage a hierarchy of sources which, in this instance, is equally unhelpful to the study. Baxandall however, despite understanding 'cultivated' people's 'preoccupation with the painter's skill',<sup>59</sup> and that 'a society's visual practices are...not all or even mostly represented in verbal records', does not draw a severe distinction between visual and literary sources.<sup>60</sup> Artworks, he states, should not be approached 'on the philistine level of the illustrated social history... nor, for that matter' through easy comparisons between how the upper and middle classes lived and artistic idealism, or as the Renaissance met the Baroque, realism.<sup>61</sup> Further, he insists that 'approached in the proper way... the pictures become documents as valid as any charter or parish roll' – making all primary sources equal.<sup>62</sup> Accordingly, for the purpose of this study, all sources, be they primary, secondary, literary or visual, are examined with equal scrutiny, thus ensuring that the data collected is as accurate and informative as is possible.

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<sup>59</sup> M. Baxandall, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy: A Primer in the Social History of Pictorial Style*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1972, p. 36.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid. p. 109.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid. p. 152.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid. p. 152 and Michael Baxandall, interviewed by Alan Langdale, 1994, Berkeley, California, p. 13. Available at [https://arthistoriography.files.wordpress.com/2011/02/media\\_139141\\_en.pdf](https://arthistoriography.files.wordpress.com/2011/02/media_139141_en.pdf), (accessed 9 October 2014).

## Section 1: 3

### Critical Review of Textual Sources

Although literature relating to the Oratorio dei Buonomini di San Martino and the lay confraternity which has been based there since 1442 is relatively limited, a brief history of their edifice and confraternal activities were first recorded in the eighteenth century by the Jesuit scholar, Giuseppe Richa (1693-1781) in *Notizie istoriche delle chiese fiorentine* (1754).<sup>63</sup> Richa's sources are often well referenced and his writings, which are divided into four volumes according to ecclesiastic *quartiere*, provide a linear history, based on chronology, for each of Florence's churches. This particular style of writing is unmistakably a product of the era in which it was produced and despite lacking the scrutiny expected of modern academic writing it is, nonetheless, an invaluable source of information for the twenty-first century researcher, providing a firm and relatively accurate platform from which to build a judicious study.

Studies concerning the medieval and Renaissance confraternities of the Italian peninsula, having emerged in the eighteenth century, subsequently appear to have ceased for around one hundred and forty two years. Correspondingly, literature concerning the Buonomini seems to have followed an almost identical path.<sup>64</sup> After an hiatus of a hundred and fifty

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<sup>63</sup> Giuseppe Richa, *Notizie istoriche delle chiese fiorentine*, 4 volumes, Rome, 1989.

<sup>64</sup> In his dissertation of 1742, entitled *De piis laicorum dissertationes* Ludovico Antonio Muratori broached the problems of corruption and reform within confraternities and in

years the Neapolitan scholar, Gennaro Maria Monti produced *Le Confraternite medievali nell'alta e media Italia*, which, although dogged by a dearth of references and some inaccuracies, proved a useful and substantial survey of confraternities in the central and northern regions of the Italian peninsula.<sup>65</sup> This was followed in 1930 by Tommaso Rosselli-Sassatelli del Turco in the forms of *La Chiesetta di San Martino dei Buonomini a Firenze*<sup>66</sup> and *La Congregazione dei Buonomini di San Martino: notizie storiche ed artistiche*.<sup>67</sup> Much like Richa, Sassatelli del Turco regales the reader with a chronological history of the little church but additionally attempts to tackle the questions surrounding the attribution of the oratory's frescoes. Sassatelli del Turco appears to have been familiar with at least some of the Buonomini's archived documents, which are now divided, somewhat unequally, between the oratory itself (which holds the majority of the records) and the Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze. For example his attribution of the confraternity's *Dream of Saint Martin* (Fig. 9) fresco is perhaps derived from the brotherhood's surviving documents.<sup>68</sup> Nevertheless, references to archival sources are

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doing so, announced the need for further research into the machinations of lay brotherhoods. Taking up the same argument in 1785 was the Florentine, Lorenzo Mehus who wrote *Dell' origine, progresso, abusi, e riforma delle confraternite laicali* which lambasted lay institutions and as Konrad Eisenbichler in 'Italian Scholarship on Pre-Modern Confraternities in Italy', *Renaissance Quarterly*, vol. 50, no. 2, 1997, pp. 567-580, here p. 568 maintains, 'contributed to the marginalization of the pre-modern confraternal movement as an area of scholarly research.'

<sup>65</sup> Gennaro M. Monti, *Le Confraternite medievali nell' alta e media Italia*, 2 vols. Venice, La Nuova Italia, 1927.

<sup>66</sup> Tommaso R. Sassatelli del Turco, 'La Chiesetta di San Martino dei Buonomini di Firenze', *Dedalo*, viii, 1928.

<sup>67</sup> Tommaso R. Sassatelli del Turco, *La Congregazione dei Buonomini di San Martino: notizie storiche ed artistiche*, Florence, Mealli e Stianti, 1930.

<sup>68</sup> Apart from a list of the original twelve procurators of the shamed poor in 1442 and a fifteenth-century list which notes Lorenzo de' Medici as a member, the Buonomini do not and never have kept an *elenca* of members from month to month or year to year. In order to ascertain who was on their rolls at any given time from their founding until now, one



implied rather than being transparent. Furthermore, despite his ancient and illustrious family connections, Sassatelli del Turco's aptitude for connoisseurship and art historical analysis must be brought into question. Despite a cursory discussion, debating the pros and cons of various potential authors for the murals, Sassatelli del Turco opts to attribute the *Dream of Saint Martin* to a man whose extant artistic oeuvre does not include any paintings of monumental scale. Therefore the author has no means to make comparisons for analytical purposes. By attributing the *Dream of Saint Martin* to the miniaturist, Francesco d'Antonio, Sassatelli del Turco has left himself open to criticism as nothing would be easier than to attribute a painting from the Buonomini oratory, which has no confirmed author, to the only artist clearly and repeatedly mentioned in the Buonomini ledgers.<sup>69</sup> Despite nagging doubts regarding scholarship and accuracy, Sassatelli del Turco's writing is however useful - useful in the sense that it indicates the path that should not be taken when tackling the questionable attribution of the Buonomini's fresco of the *Dream of Saint Martin* addressed at a later point in this thesis.<sup>70</sup>

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has to scour their archived ledgers in order to figure out names and dates of service. There is, however, a list of the confraternity's most illustrious *proposti* which is kept in the Sala dei Riunione rather than the dedicated archive. For Sassatelli del Turco to have come up with the idea that Francesco d'Antonio Miniatore was the author of the *Dream of Saint Martin* he must have been privy to some of the archived documents which mention the miniaturist and his activities as a procurator of the shamed poor.

<sup>69</sup> I say 'clearly and repeatedly mentioned' as there are other fifteenth-century artists very briefly mentioned in the Buonomini ledgers, although their names would only be revealed to the most industrious and persevering of scholars whereas Francesco d'Antonio is mentioned countless times. For help given to the Ghirlandaio family see *Libro per Procuratori di Poveri Vergognosi 1485-1497 al 18 Maggio – Ottobre 1489*, c. 3 verso and c. 15 recto, Fondo Tordi, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze.

<sup>70</sup> See chapter 7:1.

In 1952, after thirteen difficult years of research, the husband and wife team of Walter and Elisabeth Paatz finally completed the gargantuan task of compiling their six-volume work, *Die Kirchen von Florenz: Ein Kunstgeschichtliches Handbuch*,<sup>71</sup> which makes mention of the Buonomini di San Martino, their oratory and the frescoes therein. The six volumes making up this series are organised into alphabetical order and the *oratorio* of San Martino dei Buonomini is found within volume four. Despite referring to loquacious past publications such as those of Richa and Sassatelli del Turco, museum catalogues and primary sources, the Paatz handbook converts complex information into clear bullet points with regards to the building's name, history, reconstruction, interior decoration and also makes mention of the confraternity and some of its moveable artworks.<sup>72</sup>

Nevertheless, without detracting from the scholarship involved in this work or belittling the hardships involved in compiling a collection of such monumental proportions, especially given that part of the task was completed during World War II, this publication provides no new information with regard to the Buonomini. Consequently, it is a useful source of further references and provides a good, clear base of contextual information for the present study.

Despite the existence of only a modest amount of secondary source literature pertaining to the Procurators of the Shamed Poor and their San Martino headquarters, there are however, rich funds of archived primary source documents generated by the confraternity

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<sup>71</sup> Walter and Elisabeth Paatz, *Die Kirchen von Florenz: Ein Kunstgeschichtliches Handbuch*, 6 vols., Frankfurt, Vittorio Klosterman, 1952.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.* vol. 4, pp. 123-130.

in the past. The Oratory of the Buonomini di San Martino, which has only recently, within the last two decades, been opened to the public, has a dedicated archive above the confraternity's little chapel. Declared of great historical interest in 1972, this repository contains the majority of the confraternity's files and folios from the *quattrocento* to the present day.<sup>73</sup> A further, smaller fund of manuscripts concerning the activities of the confraternity during the *quattrocento* has likewise been available since 1935 at the Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze.<sup>74</sup> This fund, which contains various documents pertaining to and emanating from the Confraternity of the Buonomini di San Martino, is known as the *Fondo Tordi* and has been available to scholars apparently since the new library opened, hence the emergence of a number of essays and articles that acknowledge or focus on the activities of the Buonomini. The registers that are housed in the Florentine National Library are the oldest documents pertaining to the Buonomini's charitable activities and consist of several volumes: the first *Entrata e Uscita Febbraio 1442 – Aprile 1469* lists income and expenditure including adjustments until March 1471; *Quaderno di Partiti* [Notebook of the Parties] *Novembre 1484 – Novembre 1497* contains minutes and recommendations and the *Quaderno delle Limosine* [Notebook of Charity] *Maggio 1466 – 1470* is ostensibly a detailed list of the shamed poor helped by the confraternity.<sup>75</sup> These books provide a useful but incomplete picture of the confraternity's

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<sup>73</sup> See <http://siusa.archivi.beniculturali.it/cgi-bin/pagina.pl?Chiave=218286&TipoPag=comparc>, accessed 28 October, 2014.

<sup>74</sup> For information on the official status of the Buonomini archive see <http://siusa.archivi.beniculturali.it/cgi-bin/pagina.pl?TipoPag=comparc&Chiave=218286>, accessed 4 January 2012 and for the Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze see <http://www.bncf.firenze.sbn.it/>, accessed 28 October, 2014.

<sup>75</sup> Amleto Spicciani, 'The 'Poveri Vergognosi' in Fifteenth-Century Florence: The first 30 years' activity of the Buonomini di San Martino', in T. Riis (ed.), *Aspects of Poverty in Early Modern Europe*, Florence, Badia Fiesolana, 1981, pp. 123-129.

early activities and, beyond listing those members of the *poveri vergognosi* helped by the brotherhood, they do not furnish us with a better understanding of who the shamed poor were.<sup>76</sup> Nevertheless, should the quantitative data, that can be gleaned from such documents be employed in conjunction with information extracted from pertinent visual sources (in this case the Buonomini frescoes) the likelihood of actually defining this group increases greatly. Accordingly this task, which, in part, is made possible by the information contained in the National Library's manuscripts has been undertaken and the results appear in this thesis in due course.<sup>77</sup>

In 1972 the first slim monograph devoted to the confraternity of the Buonomini was published. Piero Bargellini's work is entitled *I Buonomini di San Martino* and, as it does not seem to have passed through the peer review process, it should be treated with increased caution.<sup>78</sup> Bargellini, although a prolific writer with a passion for publicising the art, architecture and literature of his native city of Florence, was in fact a quantity surveyor who studied painting at the Academy of Arts during the post-war years.<sup>79</sup> He subsequently became Mayor of the city in the 1960s.<sup>80</sup> It is apparent that Bargellini's primary purpose in writing the volume was to produce a high-end guide book in order to

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid. p. 121.

<sup>77</sup> See Chapter 5.

<sup>78</sup> Piero Bargellini, *I Buonomini di San Martino*, Florence, Casa di Risparmio, 1972.

<sup>79</sup> For biographical details on Piero Bargellini see Clemente Fusero, *Bargellini*, Florence, Vallecchi, 1949 and 'Piero Bargellini', in Pier L. Ballini (ed.), *Fiorentini del Novecento*, 3, Florence, 2004, pp. 41-55.

<sup>80</sup> For details pertaining to Piero Bargellini's time as Mayor of Florence see Pier F. Listri, *Tutto Bargellino. L'uomo – lo scrittore – il sindaco. Con il diario inedito dei giorni a Palazzo Vecchio*, Firenze, Nardini Editore, 1989.

disseminate Florentine culture to discerning visitors. The publication chronicles the origins of the Buonomini, its founders, and delves into the genealogy of the first recruits and patrons. Despite the author's lack of referencing, many of the assertions that he makes would appear to be the result of reading quality, peer-reviewed literature. Simultaneously however, some of what is written perhaps derives from local traditions, legends and church teaching. Bargellini also pays attention to each of the oratory's lunette paintings in turn and, despite the lack of analysis directed towards them, provides some extremely illuminating and interesting information as regards ancient Florentine marriage and burial traditions and contemporary *quattrocento* attire. He does however, make several mistakes in identifying objects that appear in the paintings and confuses some of the confraternal acts of charity based on the Seven Corporal Works of Mercy.<sup>81</sup> Notwithstanding the odd error, lack of peer review and references, Bargellini's slim volume does in fact repeat much of what Richa wrote during the eighteenth century and provides the modern researcher with a further point of reference which can be used appropriately, so long as it is supported by primary and other quality secondary sources.

In 1973 the Buonomini's foundation, activities, and their connections with the house of the Medici were mentioned by Richard Trexler in an article entitled, 'Charity and the Defense of Urban Elites in the Italian Communes', which was written as part of an edited book by Frederic Cople Jaher called *The Rich, the Well-Born and the Powerful*.<sup>82</sup> A pre-

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<sup>81</sup> See section 4:2 of this thesis.

<sup>82</sup> Richard Trexler, 'Charity in the Defense of Urban Elites in the Italian Communes', in F. C. Jaher (ed.), *The Rich, the Well Born and the Powerful: Elites and Upper Classes in History*, London, University of Illinois Press, 1973, pp. 64-109.

cursor to Trexler's *magnum opus*, *Public Life in Renaissance Florence* (1980), 'Charity and the Defense of Urban Elites' is essentially an analysis of the nature of poverty in Renaissance Florence, paying particular interest to the *poveri vergognosi*. Although this group had been mentioned by previous scholars, Trexler's essay provides the first scholarly discourse on these morally pious, yet impoverished, folk. The author comes to the conclusion that the *poveri vergognosi* were 'the same people who pawned at the Monte'.<sup>83</sup> He does not, however, qualify this statement with visual examples from the Buonomini's oratory, which show the aid given to families who no longer had any possessions to pawn. This small omission is surprising as the author is certainly aware of the Buonomini murals, mentioning the painting known as *Making an Inventory* which, for the purposes of this study and overall accuracy of title, will henceforth be known as *The Initial Visit by the Buonomini to a Vulnerable Family* (Fig. 10). Trexler though misreads this visual source and states that the family depicted in the wall painting are decently dressed, which they are not. The females' gowns are patched and the patriarch of the family has a huge hole in his hose. This oversight could be explained by the poor quality of some of the images of the oratory and the fact that, as the edifice has only recently been opened to the public, a first-hand viewing may not have been possible. Either way, Trexler's essay provides modern researchers with much to think about as regards the *poveri vergognosi*. Despite his masterful employment of archival evidence, the reader is still left without a concise working definition of the shamed poor, other than his hypothesis that they used the Christian pawnbrokers in times of need. Like Spiccianni, whose subsequent article on the *poveri vergognosi* will be discussed shortly, Trexler

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid. p. 86.

could not find the answers he required in archival material and misread the crucial visual text which is the key to understanding this unfortunate group. Accordingly, a modern study of the Buonomini and their confraternal meeting place should centre on a full analysis of the Buonomini fresco cycle, just as the present study does.

After a short hiatus of six years the beneficiaries of the Buonomini's philanthropy, the *poveri vergognosi* or shamed poor, were once again considered as a research topic but this time the research would be conducted in Italy by an Italian scholar, Giovanni Ricci. In his article, entitled 'Povertà Vergogna e Povertà Vergognosa', the Florentine Procurators of the Shamed Poor are mentioned repeatedly, although the study encompasses the notions of poverty, shame and the ashamed poor people inherent in several Italian cities.<sup>84</sup> These include Modena and Bologna. Ricci's work is admirable and well referenced although when he refers to the Buonomini and their connections with the Medici, the references wane and one would suspect that he completed this particular study without accessing the Buonomini's dedicated archive. For instance, he accuses the Medici of taking part in a 'veiled' opposition to the Buonomini when in fact archival sources strongly suggest that this illustrious family were tremendously munificent, even in times of crisis, to this particular lay confraternity.<sup>85</sup> Furthermore, he insists that the foundation of the Buonomini in 1442 was akin to the commencement of a *consorteria* - a group of clans who band together for protection and philanthropic pursuits under the

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<sup>84</sup> Giovanni Ricci, 'Povertà Vergognà e Povertà Vergognosa', in *Società e Storia*, vol. 5, 1979, pp. 305-337.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid. p. 320. For examples of Medici beneficence in times of crisis see *Entrata e Uscita 1478-1482*, (1.2.1.0.2.), Archivio dei Buonomini di San Martino (ABSM).

name of a patron saint. Moreover, Ricci states that the confraternity was perhaps formed in this manner in order to provide protection for some of Florence's more ancient families threatened by the increasing power of the Medici faction.<sup>86</sup> These research oversights can be excused, to some extent, as perhaps it was not easy to access the Buonomini's dedicated archive during the 1970s as the fund was only declared to be of great historical interest in 1972. Nevertheless, the documents regarding the brotherhood's foundation are not all kept in San Martino, rather some are held by Florence's National Library and have been since 1935.<sup>87</sup> A cursory examination of these records or, if that was not possible, even referring to Richard Trexler's earlier work on the shamed poor, would have revealed that rather than being formed as an anti-Medicean group, the Buonomini's first few years of operation would not have been possible without the repeated munificence of Cosimo 'Il Vecchio' de' Medici, one of the confraternity's main patrons.<sup>88</sup> Despite these oversights Ricci adds to the discussion on the shamed poor's identity, as he geographically expands the debate's parameters and examines their existence outside of Florence. Ricci's work therefore proves practical to present research as it contains geographically disparate examples of a social phenomenon which can be compared and contrasted with the Florentine shamed poor in order to tease out crucial and informative similarities and differences. More specifically, with reference to this particular research

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<sup>86</sup> G. Ricci, 'Povertà Vergognà e Povertà Vergognosa', in *Società e Storia*, vol. 5, 1979, p. 320.

<sup>87</sup> Olga Z. Pugliese, 'The Good Works of the Florentine 'Buonomini di San Martino': An Example of Renaissance Pragmatism', in K. Eisenbichler (ed.), *Crossing the Boundaries: Christian Piety and the Arts in Medieval and Renaissance Confraternities*, Michigan, Kalamazoo, 1991, p. 119. The author informs us in her notes that there are three sets of the Buonomini's *Capitoli* in existence. Two are held by the confraternity themselves and another is kept in the Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze.

<sup>88</sup> See section 2:2 of this thesis.



topic, Ricci's paper is immensely useful as he conveys a clear understanding that the shamed poor were neither miserable nor indigent, but defied fiscal categorisation. Consequently, his findings have made it possible for the author of this research topic to take up a hypothetical position, elevated beyond the bare bones that quantitative data and statistics often provide, to embark on a renewed, innovative search for the *poveri vergognosi*.

Within three years of the publication of Ricci's article, Amletto Spicciani produced the first truly groundbreaking monographic study of the Buonomini and their chosen beneficiaries, the *poveri vergognosi*. The academic world were alerted to this complex project, which Spicciani began in the 1970s, as the researcher published a helpful review of the Buonomini's archived documents between 1975 and 1976. This short paper ostensibly describes the documents held in both the National Library of Florence and the San Martino archive. The paper's title, 'L'archivio Fiorentino dei Buonomini di San Martino: fonti per lo studio della povertà nella seconda parte del XV secolo', also indicates that the previously untapped archival sources will be potentially a rich vein of fresh data.<sup>89</sup>

Returning to Spicciani's 1981 publication however, the term *poveri vergognosi* is problematic in itself, although Spicciani does go some way to identifying who this group

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<sup>89</sup> Amleto Spicciani, 'L'archivio Fiorentino dei Buonomini di San Martino: fonti per lo studio della povertà nella seconda parte del XV secolo', in *Bollettino Storico Pisano: Studi Storici in Memoria di Natale Caturegli*, Pisa, Pacini Editore, 1975/6, pp. 427-436.

were – namely honourable people, not used to begging, who were often temporarily poor.<sup>90</sup> He states however, that the archival resources did not provide him with enough information about these people's place in society and moreover, this restricted his research into identifying the shamed poor. Furthermore, by his own admission, he understandably, in view of the size of the archive, curtailed his study further by investigating only the first thirty years of the confraternity's activities.

Clearly there are fundamental research questions that archival sources alone cannot answer and Spicciani is well aware of this although it was perhaps outside of that author's research remit to widen the study. He does however cite excerpts from the writings of Antoninus (1389-1459), Bishop of Florence, later Saint Antoninus, in an effort to explain the economic circumstances that led to the formation of the Buonomini.<sup>91</sup> Furthermore, he admits that economic evidence provided by a theologian may be somewhat flawed and requires careful use. Spicciani's research then is useful to this study of the Buonomini for several reasons. Firstly, it is, for the time being, an unparalleled source of published archival data concerning the Buonomini's charitable activities and beneficiaries. Secondly, although his research is concerned only with the first few decades following the inception of the confraternity, Spicciani's accuracy as regards referencing and data collection provides an excellent foundation from which to begin exploring the Buonomini during the Laurentian Golden Age. Finally, given that

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<sup>90</sup> A. Spicciani, 'The 'Poveri Vergognosi' in Fifteenth-Century Florence: The first 30 years' activity of the Buonomini di San Martino', in T. Riis (ed.), *Aspects of Poverty in Early Modern Europe*, Florence, Badia Fiesolana, 1981, p. 119.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.* p. 143.

Spicciani himself reveals that the answers to exactly who the *poveri vergognosi* are lie outside the spectrum of social history alone, his admission heralds the urgent need for an interdisciplinary study of the confraternity.

Spicciani extracted a large amount of statistical data from the archived documents present in the Florentine National Library and he also attended the confraternity's dedicated archive in San Martino, where he concentrated his efforts on accumulating information from their two oldest ledgers: *Entrata e Uscita* [Income and Expenditure] 1469 – 1478<sup>92</sup> and *Debitori e Creditori* [Debits and Credits] 1469 – 1478<sup>93</sup> Spicciani however, was only interested in entries dated between 1442 and 1472 whereas the present study is the first example of modern scholarship<sup>94</sup> to consider previously unpublished data from the two aforementioned folios, the Fondo Tordi ledgers that Spicciani also consulted and the following archived account books and *Ricordanze: Entrata e Uscita 1478 – 1482*,<sup>95</sup> *Entrata e Uscita 1482 – 1489*,<sup>96</sup> *Entrata e Uscita del Proposto* [Income and Expenditure of the Proposed] 1479 – 1481,<sup>97</sup> *Entrata e Uscita del Proposto 1481 – 1489*,<sup>98</sup> *Quaderno del Camarlingo o Sia Proposto* [Notebook of Either the Camarlingo or the

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<sup>92</sup> ABSM (1.2.1.0.1.), with adjustments until 1488.

<sup>93</sup> ABSM (1.2.2.0.1.).

<sup>94</sup> Modern scholarship in this sense refers to historical researches which have taken place since 1972, the year that Michael Baxandall introduced the concept of the 'period eye' to scholarship. See M. Baxandall, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy: A Primer in the Social History of Pictorial Style*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1972.

<sup>95</sup> ABSM (1.2.1.0.2.).

<sup>96</sup> ABSM (1.2.1.0.3.).

<sup>97</sup> ABSM (1.2.4.0.1.).

<sup>98</sup> ABSM (1.2.4.0.2.).

Proposed] *dal 1474*<sup>99</sup> and the *Ricordanze di Messer Bongianni di Bongianni di Giovanni Gianfigliuzzi*.<sup>100</sup>

The 1980s was the decade which saw research into the Buonomini and confraternities in general reach its peak, in both quantitative and qualitative terms, with some of the most eminent social historians contributing to this research. The Australian, early modern historian, Dale Kent, is among their number. Although Kent has a reputation as a formidable paleographer and is a familiar face in the Archivio di Stato, the Florentine historian, Ludovica Sebregondi was reported, in *Hidden Voices*, as saying that she was unable to recall Kent ever attending the San Martino archive.<sup>101</sup> Nevertheless, in 1989 Kent maintains that she has indeed visited the archive and subsequently produced a paper entitled ‘The Buonomini di San Martino: Charity for “the glory of God, and the honour of the city, and the commemoration of myself”’, which was initially disseminated at a symposium in London during the same year.<sup>102</sup> Much positive criticism generally results from Kent’s research for the sheer amount of data extracted from archival sources. This however, is not to be confused, in this instance, with additional data which she imports from Spicciani’s research, which was discussed earlier. Conducting data from one essay to another though is common and, for that reason alone, does not justify criticism,

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<sup>99</sup> ABSM (1.2.3.0.1.).

<sup>100</sup> ABSM (4.2.1.0.1).

<sup>101</sup> Ludovica Sebregondi in J. M. Bradburne, (ed.), *Hidden Voices: Discovering the Buonomini di San Martino*, Florence, Giunti, 2011, p. 24.

<sup>102</sup> Dale Kent, ‘The Buonomini di San Martino: Charity for “the glory of God, the honour of the city and the commemoration of myself”’, in F. Ames-Lewis (ed.), *Cosimo ‘il Vecchio’ de’ Medici, 1389-1464: Essays in Commemoration of the 600<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Cosimo de’ Medici’s Birth*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1992, pp. 49-67.

especially when Spicciani's data is so accurate and plentiful. However, for the sake of clarity, Kent does not make it easy for the reader to perceive its origins. On careful scrutiny of her footnotes, the reader can eventually discern that a portion of this impressive body of data comes from Spicciani's research while what remains are carefully chosen morsels from Kent's other extensive researches.<sup>103</sup>

Unlike Spicciani, Kent does in fact mention the fresco decoration of the oratory in her paper, however, the reference is fleeting and consists of only several lines of description with no attempt to conduct a visual analysis. Given the limited parameters that she has set for her study and the fact that she is a social historian and not a historian of art, this was likely to be an informed decision rather than an omission. It is clear from the critical review of literature so far, Kent is not alone among the ranks of social historians who have chosen not to progress with an analysis of the Buonomini murals and it has been noted in some of the most recent writings from confraternal scholars that there is an urgent need to review and analyse artworks commissioned by lay brotherhoods in order to better understand their activities and what motivated their philanthropy.<sup>104</sup> This research avenue, which so far has remained entirely unfulfilled when considering the paintings commissioned by the Buonomini, is therefore ripe for investigation. Ergo the current thesis will contain the first thorough art historical analysis of the murals,

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<sup>103</sup> See A. Spicciani, 'The 'Poveri Vergognosi' in Fifteenth-Century Florence: The first 30 years' activity of the Buonomini di San Martino', in T. Riis (ed.), *Aspects of Poverty in Early Modern Europe*, Florence, Badia Fiesolana, 1981, p. 130.

<sup>104</sup> Barbara Wisch, 'Re-viewing the Image of Confraternities in Renaissance Visual Culture' in *Confraternitas*, vol.14, no. 2, 2003, pp. 13-14.

supported by other contemporary visual and literary texts, which yields useful, fresh and accurate data concerning the brotherhood and their chosen beneficiaries.

The 1980s also saw a resurrection of the sort of historically linear texts normally associated with scholars from previous centuries. Just as Richa divided his studies into ecclesiastical *quartieri*, Alberto Busignani and Raffaello Bencini likewise produced a four-volume set of books entitled *Le Chiese di Firenze*, which listed and described the churches and oratories of Florence in the Santa Spirito, Santa Maria Novella, Santa Croce and San Marco *quartieri*.<sup>105</sup> These useful books, like Richa's, allow the authors to make use of primary and secondary sources in order to narrate the history of each edifice. As would be appropriate, a small section of the Santa Croce volume has been dedicated to San Martino del Vescovo and the Buonomini. The chapter includes some information on the oratory's frescoes but the cursory quasi-analysis only reiterates Bargellini's and Sassatelli del Turco's errors regarding some of the paintings' narratives and the attribution of *The Dream of Saint Martin* mural (Fig. 9).<sup>106</sup> There are also notes on the church and the confraternity included within the chapter which are undoubtedly useful although they do appear to be overly reliant on Richa. Despite this, this section also proffers other ancient texts for the twenty-first century reader to consider. Carefully selected excerpts from Marco di Bartolomeo's *Codex Rustici* are transcribed and, although Giovanni Villani's *Nuova cronaca* is not referred to by name, the stories that the

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<sup>105</sup> Alberto Busignani and Raffaello Bencini, *Le Chiese di Firenze: Quartiere di Santa Croce*, Florence, G. C. Sansoni Editore, 1982 - one of four volumes.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 159-166.

authors have included concerning the Alighieri family, who were residents in this parish, are redolent of the tales and anecdotes contained within the latter ancient volume.<sup>107</sup>

Busignani and Bencini's publication provides interesting, quality information which is easily accessible and can be cross-checked against the original primary sources from which their material was derived. This introduction to further sources concerning the neighbourhood surrounding the Buonomini's oratory also makes it possible for the current research to address why the Procurators chose this particular district for their headquarters.

Perhaps one of the most antagonistic points to emanate from the study of Renaissance confraternities is the necessary requirement that key phrases are adequately defined. This operation has been touched upon earlier in this review with regards to the *poveri vergognosi*. Consequently, there have been a number of relatively recent essays concentrating on delineating the exact characteristics common to the Renaissance confraternity and many too considering the subtle yet fundamental distinctions between the different types of poverty during this period. Those studies most pertinent to the Buonomini were conducted by the social historians Richard Trexler and Ronald Weissman.<sup>108</sup> The former, for example, attempts essentially to define what poverty meant

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<sup>107</sup> Marco di Bartolomeo Rustici, *Codex Rustici*, 3 vols., Florence, Archivio del Seminario Maggiore and G. Villani, *Nuova Cronica*, G. Porta, (ed.), 2 vols., Parma, 1990.

<sup>108</sup> R. C. Trexler, 'Charity and the Defense of Urban Elites in the Italian Communes', in F. Cople-Jaher (ed.), *The Rich, the Well Born and the Powerful*, London, University of Illinois Press, 1973, pp. 63-109. Ronald F. E. Weissman, 'Cults and Contexts: In Search of the Renaissance Confraternity'. In K. Eisenbichler (ed.), *Crossing the Boundaries: Christian Piety and the Arts in Medieval and Renaissance Confraternities*, Michigan, Kalamazoo, 1991, pp. 201-220.

in the Italian peninsula during the *quattrocento* and his endeavours are abundantly coherent. He stresses the importance of amalgamating a sound historical context with careful inquisition in order to encourage analytical questioning. In other words, his study claims to bind inextricably the importance of a good definition and sound research to the complete *quattrocento* milieu. This, he feels, will produce a research environment primed to invite enquiry. Unsurprisingly, given the author's holistic methodology, he too mentions the fresco decorations of the Buonomini's oratory. Like those academics analogous to him though, he fails to identify and use the paintings' latent data. This in turn, to some degree, limits his scope for the formation of essential questions, which of course is contrary to Trexler's intentions.

Weissman, like Trexler, is also concerned with the general lack of historical context within confraternal studies. This is not to say that previous writings on the subject were lacking in academic rigour, only that traditionally investigations into confraternities concentrated on the theological and devotional aspects of brotherhood, rather than their secular bearings. Consequently, Weissman sets out 'six characteristics [that] distinguish the Renaissance confraternity from those that came before and after'.<sup>109</sup> This brings to bear their shared temporal features rather than their spiritual qualities. Both Trexler's and Weissman's texts are extremely useful to Buonomini scholars for several reasons. Firstly, they are packed with data and references which, although often not concerning the

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<sup>109</sup> Ronald F. E. Weissman, 'Cults and Contexts: In Search of the Renaissance Confraternity', in K. Eisenbichler (ed.), *Crossing the Boundaries: Christian Piety and the Arts in Medieval and Renaissance Confraternities*, Michigan, Kalamazoo, 1991, pp. 203-211.



Buonomini directly, are useful as exempla or for reference to further reading. Secondly, in the case of Trexler's research, which warns of the pitfalls of ignoring holistic methodologies, it ensures that those who intend to conduct new studies on the subject of the Buonomini or other confraternities, could consider themselves forewarned not to place too many limitations on their research. Likewise Weissman recommends an holistic approach, hence the choice of both 'new' and 'old' historical methodologies for the present thesis, which will provide the widest possible parameters, while simultaneously, yet naturally, controlling the latitude of the study by restricting it to a single company and its edifice.

In 1989, Olga Zorzi Pugliese resurrected part of Trexler and Spicciani's research from the 1970s and the 1980s respectively, with the basic goal of comparing primary source documentation (previously only published in part by the two aforementioned researchers) to popular contemporary Renaissance texts.<sup>110</sup> She also examined the foundation deeds of the Buonomini, which sets out the rules that the brothers abided by. She then went on to compare those rules with recommendations contained in Machiavelli's *The Prince*, Castiglione's *The Courtier* and the writings of Francesco Guicciardini. Despite her originality, and the Hegelian origins of her methodology, a fair quantity of her information appears to have been reconstituted from other previous works. This is not unusual and it can also be useful when examining a particular matter but Pugliese does

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<sup>110</sup> O. Z. Pugliese, 'The Good Works of the Florentine 'Buonomini di San Martino'. An Example of Renaissance Pragmatism', in K. Eisenbichler (ed.), *Crossing the Boundaries: Christian Piety and the Arts in Medieval and Renaissance Confraternities*, Michigan, Kalamazoo, 1982, pp. 108-120.

this, sometimes, without a critical engagement. Additionally, by restricting her study to only four primary source texts and a whole host of secondary sources, she severely restricts the amount of analytical questions that she can ask or answer. Consequently some of the statements that she makes appear sweeping and somewhat unqualified.<sup>111</sup> Pugliese, like the other researchers discussed before her, does not mention the depictions of the Buonomini. Furthermore, she does not make reference to the body of secondary evidence which suggests that people's motivation during the Renaissance was a mixture of both the sacred and the profane. Instead she states unequivocally that the anonymity of the Buonomini 'show[s] without a doubt that true humanitarianism was at work here'.<sup>112</sup> Undoubtedly there was a humanitarian strand to the Buonomini's charitable activities although more recent scholarship into other contemporaneous lay institutions suggests that social networking with a view to acquiring civic power existed simultaneously with some of the better publicised fraternal activities.<sup>113</sup> Accordingly, the further exploration of the San Martino archive for the present study allows for a more developed understanding of the extent of humanitarianism and politics in the workings of this particular confraternity.

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<sup>111</sup> U. Silli, *Sulla Datazione di un Volume Pergamenaceo del XV Secolo Dell' Archivio dei Buonomini*, Florence, 2008, p. 6, mentions the lack of precision that Pugliese uses when she terms the confraternity's Statutes as 'reformed'.

<sup>112</sup> O. Z. Pugliese, 'The Good Works of the Florentine "Buonomini di San Martino". An Example of Renaissance Pragmatism', in K. Eisenbichler (ed.), *Crossing the Boundaries: Christian Piety and the Arts in Medieval and Renaissance Confraternities*, Michigan, Kalamazoo, 1982, p. 110.

<sup>113</sup> Konrad Eisenbichler, 'The Suppression of Confraternities in Enlightenment Florence', in Nicholas Terpstra (ed.), *The Politics of Ritual Kinship Confraternities and Social Order in Early Modern Italy*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000, pp. 262-279.

In 2008 a publication entitled *Florence and Beyond: Culture, Society and Politics in Renaissance Italy: Essays in Honour of John. M Najemy* was produced.<sup>114</sup> Najemy, who contributed to this scholarly anthology, admitted to having ‘occasional reservations’ with regard to his research approaches and ‘worried that too exclusive a concern with patronage in itself may obscure the manner in which political (and other) institutions ...continued to frame social life’ in the Renaissance.<sup>115</sup> This danger can be overcome by using the correct theories and methodologies.<sup>116</sup>

In general terms the aforementioned essays, originally gathered together to acclaim Najemy’s scholarship appear to have been chosen with diversity in mind so as to illuminate the Renaissance period as a whole. Despite the Buonomini being mentioned only briefly in Kent’s particular essay, wider discussions on Renaissance charity and piety can be gleaned from many of the other papers therein. Moreover, these particular essays provide a mine of contextual information which, when organised with and checked against the primary source data included in this thesis, will contribute to the most comprehensive study of the Buonomini di San Martino since Spicciati’s in 1981.

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<sup>114</sup> David S. Peterson and Daniel E. Bornstein (eds.), *Florence and Beyond: Culture, Society and Politics in Renaissance Italy: Essays in Honour of John. M. Najemy*, Toronto, CRRS Publications, 2008.

<sup>115</sup> John M. Najemy quoted and paraphrased in D. S. Peterson and D. E. Bornstein (eds.), *Florence and Beyond: Culture, Society and Politics in Renaissance Italy: Essays in Honour of John. M. Najemy*, Toronto, CRRS Publications, 2008, p. 25.

<sup>116</sup> See section 1:2.

A similar publication to the previous set of essays discussed is *Renaissance Florence: A Social History* edited by R. J. Crum and J. T. Paoletti.<sup>117</sup> It was the editors' intention to allow the reader 'to see with new eyes', through close examination of objects and places, 'palpable and real' Renaissance Florentine space and how it functioned.<sup>118</sup> The editors describe their effort as proffering 'a richly textured sense of how art was used at all levels of society and ... how space – real, illusionistic... religious, political, personal – charted information that is revelatory'.<sup>119</sup> The Buonomini, given their important role in the history of 'Corporate Beneficence and Communal Well-Being', are mentioned in Phillip Gravitt's research although he chronicles their activities rather than analyses them. This can be accounted for as Gravitt has a finite amount of words in which he discusses a very large topic. An interesting and useful theme however, to many of the essays, including Gavitt's, is the notion of 'permeable boundaries, merging imperceptibly from public to private...[and] secular to the religious'.<sup>120</sup> Accordingly such ideas, which perhaps went undistinguished by the residents of *quattrocento* Florence, will however be engaged with from time to time during the course of this new study of the Buonomini in order to reveal, for the first time, how the form, decoration and placement of their oratory functioned within its wider social and geographical setting.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> Roger J. Crum and John T. Paoletti (eds.), *Renaissance Florence: A Social History*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2006.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid. p. 2.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid. p. 7.

<sup>121</sup> See section 2:3.

In 2008 serving Attorney of the Shamed Poor, Dr Ugo Silli, produced a booklet entitled *Sulla Datazione di un Volume Pergamenaceo del XV Secolo dell' Archivio dei Buonomini* which discusses the dating and attribution of an illuminated version of the confraternity's rules and regulations, otherwise known as the *Capitoli*. In doing so he brings into contention considerations regarding the date that the Buonomini purchased the little oratory and its associated buildings from the monks of the Badia.<sup>122</sup> The booklet, which is not widely available, is well referenced with transcriptions of the *Capitoli* and an entry from one of the Buonomini's ancient ledgers in the appendices to this thesis. It also benefits from being written from an 'insider's' perspective. The author is a current member of the company and his experiences as a procurator and *proposto* (these roles having changed little since the fifteenth century) are levelled against considerations which would have affected his *quattrocento* contemporaries. Consequently, the results are extremely convincing, especially with regard to the confraternity's accounting process and how it would have affected the date that the oratory was purchased. Silli's arguments, therefore, are helpful in discussion of the dating and attribution of the Buonomini frescoes.

Finally the most recent publication concerning the Buonomini di San Martino comes in the form of a publication entitled *Hidden Voices: Discovering the Buonomini di San Martino*, which illustrated and accompanied the wider pan-Florentine exhibition entitled,

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<sup>122</sup> U. Silli, *Sulla Datazione di un Volume Pergamenaceo del XV Secolo Dell' Archivio dei Buonomini*, 2008, Florence.

*Money and Beauty, Bankers, Botticelli and the Bonfire of the Vanities.*<sup>123</sup> Much of the book is taken up with a conversation between a group of experts: James Bradburne (the book's editor), Paolo Giustiniani (an assistant of the Buonomini), Laura Luciola (fine art restorer), Tim Parkes (author and scholar), Franco de' Peverelli Luschi and Francesco Poccianti (Buonomini) and Ludovica Sebreondi (historian). The book is fascinating as it is the first time that a publication has included the opinions and expertise of serving Procurators and so insights into how the confraternity is run are accurate and come to us first hand. The group discusses all aspects of confraternal life and although the conversation is taking place in the twenty-first century, the information that emanates is extremely useful. Despite over five centuries passing by between the confraternity's formation and this modern conversation, the brotherhood works now just as it did in the *quattrocento* – even down to the way that its procurators vote, scribe and choose their beneficiaries.

Given that the Buonomini frescoes have recently undergone a sympathetic course of restoration, the second half of the book is devoted to them. The art restorer, Laura Luciola, briefly explains the conservation and Ludovica Sebreondi writes equally succinctly on what is taking place in each lunette. Clearly Sebreondi is an extremely experienced historian and the information which she supplies about the murals is accurate and interesting although extremely sparse. Sebreondi's task here though is not to

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<sup>123</sup> James M. Bradburne (ed.), *Hidden Voices: Discovering the Buonomini di San Martino*, Florence, Giunti, 2011.

analyse the paintings but to caption them, which leaves the urgent business of providing the first in-depth art historical analysis to this particular study.

Throughout this review of textual sources the motif appears to be the reiteration that social historians, despite their interest in the Buonomini, have largely bypassed the intrinsic value of the fresco decorations of the confraternity's meeting place. Given that their priorities often differ subtly from that of other historians, this circumvention can be recognized for what it is – an informed decision. However, the lack of art historical writing concerning the Buonomini is perhaps due to a slightly different set of circumstances. Primarily, the oratory's chapel has only recently been opened to the public and despite having been briefly mentioned in art historical literature since the nineteenth century, access has been severely limited, until now. Secondly, the frescoes, when compared to other painted works by Ghirlandaio and his workshop, are arguably not of a comparable quality to those, for instance, of the Tornabuoni Chapel, Santa Maria Novella or the Sassetti Chapel, Santa Trinita, Florence. This issue of quality, married to the problems of artistic attribution and access, appears to have ensured that so far the frescoes have remained relatively uncharted.

The art historian Jean Cadogan, in her monograph on Domenico Ghirlandaio, does in fact address the frescoes directly.<sup>124</sup> She does this, firstly, to give a brief appraisal of what is

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<sup>124</sup> Jean K. Cadogan, *Domenico Ghirlandaio: Artist and Artisan*, London, Yale University Press, 2000, pp. 208-213.

transpiring in each scene and, secondly, to present an account of artistic attributions. Clearly this treatment does not constitute a thorough formal analysis. Furthermore, despite Cadogan's meticulous *modus operandi* as regards the better part of Ghirlandaio's life and works, the chapter on his workshop, in which the Buonomini frescoes appear, provides no original contribution to knowledge. Furthermore, in a work of such amplitude it is unsurprising that Cadogan elected not to undertake a detailed examination of the lunette paintings. Their attribution suggests only the tangential presence of Ghirlandaio, in conjunction with the contribution of perhaps several lesser known artists. Nevertheless, because the genre to which the Buonomini frescoes belong is a small one and paintings based on the Seven Corporal Works of Mercy were a rarity in Renaissance Italy, let alone in Renaissance Florence, the cycle is deserving of an in-depth study.<sup>125</sup> Furthermore, despite the lack of attention directed towards the paintings, the perceived connection between them and Ghirlandaio's workshop deserves the type of comprehensive interdisciplinary investigation that the current study provides as part of their art historical value lies in the fact that they were produced arguably during the Laurentian 'golden age' and linked to a master who was at the pinnacle of the Florentine artistic hierarchy after returning from working on the Sistine Chapel in Rome.

The body of textual sources that have been reviewed within this chapter demonstrates that, despite there not being a profuse number of publications, there have been enough quality writings directly concerning the Buonomini and the closely related issues of

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<sup>125</sup> Federico Botana, *The Works of Mercy in Italian Medieval Art (c.1040-1400)*, Turnhour, Brepols, 2011, pp. 1-8.



confraternity, piety and charity to ensure that this research topic is viable. Furthermore, the two rich and relatively unfathomed archives provide a reasonably complete record of the confraternity's charitable activities during the *quattrocento*. Ergo, in brief summation, the lack of literary saturation as regards the brotherhood, the existence of a barely charted, dedicated archive and the divergence and insufficiency of related studies, emphatically invites further consideration of the research questions identified herein.

## Chapter 2

### Florentine Sodalities and the Buonomini di San Martino

## Section 2:1

## Florentine Confraternities: form; function and hierarchy

The social historians who have written most extensively about the characteristics of Florentine confraternities or lay brotherhoods are Ronald Weissman and John Henderson. The basic features that they have identified are as follows: attendance was voluntary;<sup>126</sup> equality was promoted;<sup>127</sup> mutual support was offered for the living and provisions made for the dead;<sup>128</sup> membership was exclusive;<sup>129</sup> sodalities were autonomous;<sup>130</sup> they possessed a corporate environment;<sup>131</sup> lay brotherhoods were socially heterogeneous;<sup>132</sup> they possessed places of devotion and collective action;<sup>133</sup> confraternities were endowed

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<sup>126</sup> John Henderson, *Piety and Charity in Late Medieval Florence*, London, University of Chicago Press, 1994, p. 2.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*

Although Henderson is correct to say that ‘equality was promoted’ within Florentine confraternities, the resulting effort was not necessarily egalitarian. For example a listing of the original Buonomini members, their assistants and also some of those who inherited these roles within the sodality in later years, which can be found following the company’s *capitoli* within the foundation documents, reveals that original members from patrician backgrounds were simply named whereas those who came from less illustrious backgrounds were identified by their trade as well as their appellation. For instance Francesco di Benedetto di Guccio degli Strozzi and Bernardo di Mario di Marco di Forese Salviati were identified thus while Ser Alesso di Matteo di Pallo Notaio and Iacopo di Baggio Cimatore required their vocations rather than their pedigrees to describe their individuality. Lorenzo de’ Medici however, whose name appears on one of the company’s rare *elenco*, is printed entirely in upper-case characters, while his fellow procurators appellations are penned in a mixture of lower and upper case letters. See Appendix I.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>130</sup> Ronald F. E. Weissman, *Ritual Brotherhood in Renaissance Florence*, London, Academic Press, 1982, p. 206.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.* p. 207.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.* p. 209.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.* p. 210.

with a festive character;<sup>134</sup> members enjoyed a fluidity of cultural boundaries;<sup>135</sup> sodalities promoted individuality yet simultaneously encouraged brotherhood.<sup>136</sup> Furthermore, lay brotherhoods such as these took various forms,<sup>137</sup> the five main types being: *laudesi*; *disciplinati*; *fanciulli*; *sottoposti* and charitable associations.<sup>138</sup>

The *laudesi* were defined by their leading pursuit, which was the singing of lauds; these confraternities performed musical devotion to Mary the mother of Christ and found their patrons in a variety of saints. Examples include: the Compagnia delle Laudi di Santa Maria Novella and the Compagnia delle Laudi di Sant' Agnese.

The *disciplinati*, however tended to be flagellant companies whose main activity was voluntary penance, usually self-administered, in imitation of Christ's suffering. Typical instances include: the Compagnia di San Paolo; Compagnia di Santa Maria del Carmine and the Scalzo (San Giovanni Battista).

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<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

<sup>136</sup> J. Henderson, *Piety and Charity in Late Medieval Florence*, London, University of Chicago Press, 1994, p.53 and p.131.

<sup>137</sup> Other types of lay confraternity include: societies of faith; *potenze* (festive brigades) and *compagnie di armeggiatori* (equestrian groups).

<sup>138</sup> See J. Henderson, *Piety and Charity in Late Medieval Florence*, London, University of Chicago Press, 1994, pp. 34-38 for his list of the different types of confraternity which number five.

The Florentine republic was also home to lay brotherhoods meant specifically for young men and boys. These *fanciulli* companies derived from, and were attached to, mainly *disciplinati* companies (although not exclusively)<sup>139</sup> and young members could move on to attending these associated flagellant societies when they became adults.<sup>140</sup> Examples embrace: the Compagnia della Purificazione e di San Zenobi; Compagnia dell' Arcangelo Raffaello (also known as The Nativity) and the Compagnia di San Giovanni Vangelista.

Existing alongside the three aforementioned types of lay confraternities were a type of sub-guild, akin to a union, known as *sottoposti*. These sodalities concentrated on 'a single occupational grouping', unlike the guild proper, which brought together members from various occupations under the protection of a patron saint.<sup>141</sup> Typical examples are as follows: San Iacopo de' Cimatori; Santa Maria degli Angeli and San Eligio.

Most pertinent to this study however, are the lay sodalities which can be considered as charitable associations. These fraternities, which often provided very specific types of aid, were essentially 'private corporations' such as hospitals or benevolent societies which performed charitable functions, made healthcare provisions and responded to

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<sup>139</sup> For example, S. Niccolo del Ceppo was previously a Scuola di Lezione and the Scuola Puerorum Ordinandorum was an association for the instruction of religious song, grammar and ritual. See Ludovica Sebregondi, *La compagnia e l'oratorio di San Niccolo del Ceppo*, Florence, Salimbeni, 1985.

<sup>140</sup> J. Henderson, *Piety and Charity in Late Medieval Florence*, London, University of Chicago Press, 1994, p. 37.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*

diverse social needs.<sup>142</sup> Most notable are Orsanmichele, the hybrid confraternity of the Bigallo/Misericordia and the Buonomini di San Martino (otherwise known as the Procuratori de Poveri Vergognosi di San Martino).

Lay confraternities were derived from the *consorteria*, essentially a familial group who banded together, usually under the protection of a patron saint, for self-defence, prayer and often charitable giving.<sup>143</sup> Neither private nor civic institutions, lay confraternities<sup>144</sup> bridged the gap between the realms of the sacred and the secular.<sup>145</sup> For example, the administrative aspect of such sodalities mimicked Florence's civic institutions and yet they were a place to honour God and Christ's suffering, perform works of mercy and publicly display one's piety. Furthermore, members could act as penitents while retaining the ability to hold civic offices.<sup>146</sup> Confraternal membership was also a means to an end with regard to personal salvation. Roman Catholic dogma had traditionally set out salvation as an eternal crusade, which even the most pious layperson could not hope to complete.<sup>147</sup> Even so, by attending a confraternity, especially one such as the Buonomini

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<sup>142</sup> Ibid. p. 35.

<sup>143</sup> Dale V. Kent and Francis W. Kent, 'A Self Disciplining Pact Made by the Peruzzi Family of Florence (June 1433)', *Renaissance Quarterly*, vol. 34, no. 3, 1981, pp. 337 – 355. J. Henderson, *Piety and Charity in Late Medieval Florence*, London University of Chicago Press, 1994, p. 14.

<sup>144</sup> R. F. E. Weissman, *Ritual Brotherhood in Renaissance Florence*, London, Academic Press, 1982, p. 78.

<sup>145</sup> Tiffany A. Ziegler, 'A Historiographical and Artistic Survey of Confraternities from the Later Middle Ages to the Early Renaissance', M. A. Thesis, Texas Tech University, 2005, p. 7.

<sup>146</sup> J. Henderson, *Piety and Charity in Late Medieval Florence*, London, University of Chicago Press, 1994, p. 24.

<sup>147</sup> R. F. E. Weissman, *Ritual Brotherhood in Renaissance Florence*, London, Academic Press, 1982, p. 87.

di San Martino, which is perhaps the only Florentine lay brotherhood which allowed members to perform acts based on all seven acts of mercy, any regular *quattrocento* citizen of the republic had the ability to cut down the time that they would serve in Purgatory and thus reach Paradise sooner. Lay people, especially merchants, were considered particularly ‘vulnerable to eternal damnation’ as they were ‘apt to neglect...charitable obligations to [their] neighbours’.<sup>148</sup> This was because, prior to confraternal support, unlike the clergy, they lived without adequate structures which would guide their lives, previously governed by ‘fraud, perjury and avarice’, towards spiritual salvation.<sup>149</sup>

Lay confraternities served practical functions as well as spiritual needs. *Laudesi* companies, for instance, provided mainly entertainment and commemorative services and expended very little on alms.<sup>150</sup> Likewise, flagellant companies gave little money to charity and processed and attended festive occasions, however, specific devotion to Christ’s suffering made activities that concerned penitence and the afterlife their particular forte. In the case of the Compagnia de Neri, they would serve each other and the wider community by burying the dead, attending to the spiritual and practical needs

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<sup>148</sup> Phillip Gavitt, ‘Economy, Charity and Community in Florence, 1350-1450’, in T. Riis (ed.), *Aspects of Poverty in Early Modern Europe*, Florence, Badia Fiesolana, 1981, p. 105.

<sup>149</sup> Excerpt from Honorius of Autun, *Speculum Ecclesiae*, quoted in P. Gavitt, ‘Economy, Charity and Community in Florence, 1350-1450’, in T. Riis (ed.), *Aspects of Poverty in Early Modern Europe*, Florence, Badia Fiesolana, 1981, p. 105.

<sup>150</sup> J. Henderson, *Piety and Charity in Late Medieval Florence*, London, University of Chicago Press, 1994, p. 107.

of criminals prior to their executions and taking in pilgrims.<sup>151</sup> Charitable associations, such as Orsanmichele, stepped in to provide dowries, release prisoners from gaol and provide cloth, grain and alms to the ‘poor of Christ’.<sup>152</sup> The Bigallo/Misericordia too provided funerals, commemorative masses and paid hospital expenses, while donating a small amount in alms to aid the poor.<sup>153</sup> The Buonomini however, extended their help to cover all seven Works of Mercy and more besides. Much of their help was given to women in childbed,<sup>154</sup> families with sick relatives and to the wider group known as the *poveri vergognosi* or shamed poor. The confraternity did however pay to release debtors from gaol,<sup>155</sup> for pilgrims to lodge in safety and comfort, for the hungry to be fed and the thirsty to have their craving slaked.<sup>156</sup> They also distributed clothes,<sup>157</sup> provided dowries, buried the dead and aided the reform of prostitutes.<sup>158</sup>

Charity, being the ‘Christian face of patronage’, also worked to consolidate friendship and communities.<sup>159</sup> Endowments helped to retain the shape of society by keeping the

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<sup>151</sup> See Konrad Eisenbichler, ‘Lorenzo de’ Medici e la Congregazione de’ Neri nella Compagnia della Croce al Tempio’, vol. 150, *Archivio Storico Italiano*, 1992.

<sup>152</sup> J. Henderson, *Piety and Charity in Late Medieval Florence*, London, University of Chicago Press, 1994, p. 369.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.* p. 371.

<sup>154</sup> See particularly *Entrata e Uscita 1478-1482*, (1.2.1.0.2.), ABSM.

<sup>155</sup> *Entrata e Uscita 1478-1482*, c. 132 verso, (1.2.1.0.2.), ABSM.

<sup>156</sup> *Entrata e Uscita 1478-1482*, c. 131 recto, (1.2.1.0.2.), ABSM.

<sup>157</sup> *Entrata e Uscita 1478-1482*, c. 131 recto, (1.2.1.0.2.), ABSM.

<sup>158</sup> A. Spicciani, ‘The ‘Poveri Vergognosi’ in Fifteenth-Century Florence: The first 30 years’ activity of the Buonomini di San Martino’, in T. Riis (ed.), *Aspects of Poverty in Early Modern Europe*, Florence, Badia Fiesolana, 1981, p. 131.

<sup>159</sup> Dale Kent, *Friendship, Love and Trust in Renaissance Florence*, London, Harvard University Press, 2009, p. 45.



various social strata, and the individuals contained therein, in place.<sup>160</sup> It is perhaps wrong to see this act of keeping people in their rightful places as dark or sinister because it was likely a derivation of Franciscan and Dominican piety, which strives to avoid conflict and actively promotes communal accord.<sup>161</sup> For example, an artisan could attend, for argument's sake, the Buonomini di San Martino and work alongside Lorenzo and Giuliano de' Medici in the brotherhood. His status within the confraternity, which can be considered as a 'microcosm of the commune',<sup>162</sup> would reflect his standing in the city and the complex network of patronage that existed therein. Accordingly, he would be expected to perform some activities that his rich and famous *fratelli* would not be asked to do and maybe to act in their stead also.<sup>163</sup> The Buonomini rolls of membership also alludes to this 'first among equals' theory as the patrician members of the original twelve good men were simply named and their position in society was implicit from their appellation alone.<sup>164</sup> Members from the artisan classes however, are identified by both

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<sup>160</sup> Richard Texler, *Public Life in Renaissance Florence*, London, Cornell University Press, 1980, p.69. For the importance of almsgiving and the concept of 'Good Government', see Phillip Gavitt, 'Corporate Beneficence and Historical Narratives of Communal Well-Being', in R. J. Crum and J. T. Paoletti, (eds.), *Renaissance Florence a Social History*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 138.

<sup>161</sup> J. Henderson, *Piety and Charity in Late Medieval Florence*, London, University of Chicago Press, 1994, pp. 21-22.

<sup>162</sup> R. F. E. Weissman, *Ritual Brotherhood in Renaissance Florence*, London, Academic Press, 1982, p. 59.

<sup>163</sup> *Entrata e Uscita 1478-1482*, c. 8 verso, (1.2.1.0.2.), ABSM contains records of several large donations by Lorenzo de' Medici although he employs Domenico Mazinghi, another patrician, to transfer and transport the money donated from the Medici coffers.

<sup>164</sup> Although the saying 'first among equals' or in Latin *primus inter pares* was thought to have been spawned in ancient Rome with regard to the status of the *princeps sentatus* of the republic, there is no record for its first use during the classical age. The online dictionary produced by Merriam-Webster claims that its first recorded use was in 1813, although no source is cited. See <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/primus%20inter%20pares>. In this particular instance, the maxim

their names and vocations.<sup>165</sup> Furthermore, several of the confraternity's painted oratory decorations also warn of the dangers which would befall the republic if society was destabilised. One in particular is the company's *Giving Food to the Hungry and Drink to the Thirsty* (Fig. 11) painting. This depiction reminds the viewer, through symbolism, that the commune (represented in this instance by a toy lion) would be torn asunder should Christian charity (symbolised by loaves of bread) not reach those in need of it (Figs. 12 & 13).<sup>166</sup>

Just as there was a hierarchy within fifteenth-century Florentine society, a ranking system also existed between confraternities, although, I am not sure as to the full extent that this grading was referred to by contemporary citizens. Nevertheless, their external hierarchical structure was mentioned in Renaissance texts. The Florentine Compagnia de'

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has been employed to describe a group or sodality member, who although is apparently equal to his fraternal brothers, is granted unofficial esteem or recognition.

<sup>165</sup> See no. 116 and Appendix I. See also Lorenzo Polizzotto, 'The Medici and the Youth Confraternity of the Purification of the Virgin 1434-1506', in N. Terpstra, (ed.), *The Politics of Ritual Kinship Confraternities and Social Order in Early Modern Italy*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000, p. 103. J. Henderson, *Piety and Charity in Late Medieval Florence*, London, University of Chicago Press, 1994, p. 65, claims that internal structure existed. Conversely Hans Belting, cited in T. A. Ziegler, 'A Historiographical and Artistic Survey of Confraternities from the Later Middle Ages to the Early Renaissance', M. A. Thesis, Texas Tech University, 2005, p. 5, informs us that frameworks within sodalities were lacking. L. Polizzotto, 'The Medici and the Youth Confraternity of the Purification of the Virgin 1434-1506', in N. Terpstra, (ed.), *The Politics of Ritual Kinship Confraternities and Social Order in Early Modern Italy*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000, p.111 however refers to a hierarchy between companies.

<sup>166</sup> Samantha Hughes-Johnson, 'Fashioning Family Honour in Renaissance Florence: The Language of Women's Clothing and Gesture in the Frescoes in the Oratory of the Confraternity of the Buonomini di San Martino in Florence', *Confraternitas*, Vol. 23, No. 2, 2012, pp. 11-12. See also Sub-chapter 5:2 of this thesis for further examples.

Magi, for instance, who were patrons of ‘knights and kings’<sup>167</sup> and responsible for the lively, colourful pageant that took place on the feast of the Epiphany was considered, at the time, to be ‘most excellent before all others that have been performed in this age’.<sup>168</sup> Nevertheless, it is the manner in which *fratelli* addressed both those within and without the confraternity which indicates that, at least during the run-up to the pageant and throughout the celebrations, there was a hierarchy between the Magi and other companies. The former referred to themselves in written correspondence as ‘their majesties’ while addressing members of the Compagnia di San Bartolomeo, for instance, as mere ‘lords’.<sup>169</sup>

Among the Laudesi companies Orsanmichele was the wealthiest<sup>170</sup> and their shining, bejeweled tabernacle (Fig. 14), created by Andrea Orcagna (1308-1386), is testament to their prosperity.<sup>171</sup> Nevertheless, the intense patronage accorded to the youth company of the Purification of the Virgin by the Medici and the fraternity’s subsequent rise in

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<sup>167</sup> Rab Hatfield, ‘The Compagnia de’ Magi’, *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, vol. 33, 1970, p. 108.

<sup>168</sup> The decade following the Pazzi Conspiracy of 1478 would be considered an exception to the festive *zeitgeist* of the *quattrocento* as pageant type celebrations were suspended until 1488. See Nerida Newbigin, ‘Piety and Politics in the *Feste* of Lorenzo’s Florence’, in Gian Carlo Garfagnini (ed.) *Lorenzo il Magnifico e il suo mondo*, Florence, L. S. Olschki, 1994, pp. 17-41. Here, p. 39. See also R. Hatfield, ‘The Compagnia de’ Magi’, *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, vol. 33, 1970, p. 117.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid. p. 120 and p. 148. Hatfield dates this letter to c. 1466-1468 whereas Dale Kent, *Cosimo de’ Medici and the Florentine Renaissance: The Patron’s Oeuvre*, London, Yale University Press, 2000, p. 314, dates the correspondence to 1481.

<sup>170</sup> J. Henderson, *Piety and Charity in Late Medieval Florence*, London, University of Chicago Press, 1994, p. 83.

<sup>171</sup> Nancy R. Fabri and Nina Rutenberg, ‘The Tabernacle of Orsanmichele in Context’, *Art Bulletin*, vol. 63, Sept. 1981, p. 391.

popularity would suggest that there are valid reasons, beyond the size of a sodality's purse or a proclivity for feigned rhetoric (in the case of the Magi), which would suggest that lay confraternities as an entire group should be considered in terms of having a pecking order or hierarchy between them.<sup>172</sup> Furthermore, Lorenzo Polizzotto, who has spent much time studying this confraternity, has concluded that factors including, but not limited to, Cosimo de' Medici's patronage positively affected the Purification and that a gradual 'aristocratisation of members' occurred due to the less than subtle associations with the man who would become *Pater Patriae*.<sup>173</sup> This would suggest the existence of an internal confraternal hierarchy.

The Buonomini di San Martino however, because of their secret nature, the lack of a distinctive uniform and as they shun theatrical spectacle, are almost impossible to place within this perceived hierarchy between lay companies. Nonetheless, the two sections that follow, while discussing the connections between the confraternity and the men traditionally perceived as its founders and factors involving the geographical siting of the company's oratory, will also examine the following: their ranking during one of the rare processional occasions where the Procurators of the Shamed Poor have been recorded as attending;<sup>174</sup> whether the siting of their oratory lent gravitas to the company.<sup>175</sup>

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<sup>172</sup> See L. Polizzotto, 'The Medici and the Youth Confraternity of the Purification of the Virgin 1434-1506', in N. Terpstra, (ed.), *The Politics of Ritual Kinship Confraternities and Social Order in Early Modern Italy*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000, p. 111.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid.

<sup>174</sup> See section 2:2.

<sup>175</sup> See section 2:3.

## Section 2:2

## The Foundation Documents, Cosimo 'Il Vecchio' de' Medici and Antonio Pierozzi

Various biographers of Antonio Pierozzi (1389-1459) and Cosimo 'il vecchio' de' Medici (1389-1464) inform us that these two men were good friends who collaborated in order to form the Confraternity of the Procurators of the Shamed Poor of Florence, otherwise known as the Buonomini di San Martino.<sup>176</sup> These individuals were almost precise contemporaries who lived and worked in close geographical proximity and were mentioned by each other in various fifteenth-century texts.<sup>177</sup> While one understands that there is ongoing debate as to whether Cosimo and Antoninus cultivated a relationship and furthermore,<sup>178</sup> one accepts that it is likely that they did interact, these assertions are

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<sup>176</sup> Raoul Morçay, *Sant Antonin Archeveque de Florence 1389- 1459 Fondateur du Convent de Saint-Marc*, Paris, Librairie Galbalda, 1914, p. 116. Domenico Maccarani, *Vita di S. Antonino Arcivescovo di Firenze*, Florence, Anton Maria Albizzini, 1708. Guglielmo G. Bartoli, *Istoria dell' Arcivescovo S. Antonino e de' suoi piu illustri discepoli coll' apologia di f. Girolamo Savonarola*, Florence, 1782. See also Vespasiano da Bisticci, *The Vespasiano Memoirs: Lives of Illustrious Men of the XVth Century*, ed. W. G. Waters, Toronto, The University of Toronto Press, 1997 and R. Trexler, 'Charity in the Defense of Urban Elites in the Italian Communes', in F. C. Jaher (ed.), *The Rich, the Well Born and the Powerful: Elites and Upper Classes in History*, London, University of Illinois Press, 1973, p. 88 and Christopher Hibbert, *The Rise and Fall of the House of Medici*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1974, p. 74.

<sup>177</sup> Peter Howard, 'Preaching Magnificence in Renaissance Florence', *Renaissance Quarterly*, vol.61, no.2, 2008, pp. 341. See also Alison Brown, 'Cosimo de' Medici's Wit and Wisdom', in F. Ames-Lewis, (ed.), *Cosimo 'il Vecchio' de' Medici, 1389-1464: Essays in Commemoration of the 600<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Cosimo de' Medici's Birth*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1992, p. 109.

<sup>178</sup> For examples of the various schools of thought with regard to this relationship see R. Trexler, 'Charity in the Defense of Urban Elites in the Italian Communes', in F. C. Jaher (ed.), *The Rich, the Well Born and the Powerful: Elites and Upper Classes in History*, London, University of Illinois Press, 1973, p. 88 and p. 89 and D. Kent, 'The Buonomini di San Martino: Charity for "the glory of God, the honour of the city and the

tangential to the purpose of this section.<sup>179</sup> The intention of this portion of the thesis is to continue constructing a firm contextual foundation for the present study by firstly, examining the Buonomini's foundation documents for the presence of these two men and secondly, gathering together, in one place, the various, disparate strands of association between the pair and the lay Confraternity of the Procurators of the Shamed Poor so that they may be re-woven together in an orderly manner, for the sake of clarity.

The most obvious place to look for evidence that Cosimo de' Medici and Antoninus were involved in a joint enterprise to set up this charitable confraternity, would be the foundation document (*Capitoli*) of the Buonomini di San Martino (Appendix II). The document is housed within the Archivio di San Martino and dated to 1441 (Florentine style). It is the earliest known copy of the confraternity's constitution.<sup>180</sup> Cosimo is not

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commemoration of myself", in F. Ames-Lewis (ed.), *Cosimo 'il Vecchio' de' Medici, 1389-1464: Essays in Commemoration of the 600<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Cosimo de' Medici's Birth*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1992, p. 50.

<sup>179</sup> See P. Howard, 'Preaching Magnificence in Renaissance Florence', *Renaissance Quarterly*, vol.61, n0.2, 2008, p.341 and Berthold L. Ulman and Phillip A. Stadter, *The Public Library of Renaissance Florence*, Padova, Editrice Antenore, 1972, p.4 and R. Hatfield, 'Cosimo de' Medici and the Chapel of his Palace', in F. Ames-Lewis, (ed.), *Cosimo 'il Vecchio' de Medici, 1389-1464: Essays in Commemoration of the 600<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Cosimo de' Medici's Birth*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1992, p.158, for Cosimo and Antoninus's involvement in San Marco. For Antoninus as confessor to the Florentine elite see, Description of A. Pierozzi, *Confessionale and Other Texts*, Florence, 1462. Available at [http://www.textmanuscripts.com/descriptions\\_manuscripts/TM%20498%20Antoninus%20Florentinus.pdf](http://www.textmanuscripts.com/descriptions_manuscripts/TM%20498%20Antoninus%20Florentinus.pdf), (accessed 20 June 2014) and J. M Bradburne, (ed.), *Hidden Voices: Discovering the Buonomini di San Martino*, Florence, Giunti, 2011, p.37 and S. J. Cornelison, *Art and the Relic Cult of St. Antoninus in Renaissance Florence*, Farnham, Ashgate, 2012, p.14. See also Richard Trexler, 'Lorenzo de' Medici and Savonarola, Martyrs for Florence', *Renaissance Quarterly*, vol. 31, no. 3, 1978, p.295, S. J. Cornelison, *Art and the Relic Cult of St. Antoninus in Renaissance Florence*, Farnham, Ashgate, 2012, p.14, for various connections between Antoninus, Lorenzo de' Medici and the Medici women.

<sup>180</sup> *Codice dei Capitoli*, c. 3-7, (1.1.1.0.1.), ABSM.

mentioned within the confraternity's rules or *Capitoli* although his presence in the sodality is evident from the quantity and frequency of his charitable donations during the first few years of operation.<sup>181</sup> Likewise Antoninus also goes unnamed in the *Capitoli* although, Dr Ugo Silli, a current Procurator of the Shamed Poor, believes that this omission, rather than precluding Antoninus from the foundation process, actually suggests there was a reason why he was not named in the document.

The document reads as follows:

To the praise and glory of our Lord Jesus Christ and of his glorious Virgin Mother Mary and of the blessed Saint Martin our protector and advocate, and of all the celestial court. To the honour of the holy church in Rome, and of the most holy in Christ Father and Lord Pope Eugenio VIII and of the reverend in Christ Father and Lord the Archbishop of the city of Florence the utility of the shamed poor of the said city and countryside and district.<sup>182</sup>

Silli who, because of his position within the confraternity, has constant and abiding access to the Buonomini archives and having examined this document at length, questions why Pope Eugenius is mentioned by name whereas Florence's archbishop remains nameless. He is aware (as other Buonomini authors have been) that Antoninus was not archbishop when the confraternity was conceived although, because he has intimate knowledge of the sodality and its archives, he is able to enlighten us with a

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<sup>181</sup> A. Spicciani, 'The 'Poveri Vergognosi' in Fifteenth-Century Florence: The first 30 years' activity of the Buonomini di San Martino', in T. Riis (ed.), *Aspects of Poverty in Early Modern Europe*, Florence, Badia Fiesolana, 1981, p. 123.

<sup>182</sup> See *Codice dei Capitoli*, c. 3 recto (1.1.1.0.1.), ABSM and U. Silli, *Sulla Datazione di un Volume Pergamenaceo del XV Secolo Dell' Archivio dei Buonomini*, Florence, 2008, Appendix A. See also Appendix II for the passage in Italian.

convincing theory as to why Antoninus was not identified within the Buonomini's list of rules.<sup>183</sup>

'If he [Antoninus] had been archbishop', maintains Silli, 'the anonymous writer of the text (presumably one of the Buonomini or a person near to them) would [they] not be pleased to rank and proud to name him'?'<sup>184</sup> Clearly the answer to this question is in the affirmative. Silli goes on to explain that as the text contained in the *Capitoli* derives from between 1441 and 1446 (Florentine style), it was likely written during a five month hiatus between Archbishop Zabrella's death in August 1445 and Antoninus's nomination the following January, hence the anonymity.<sup>185</sup> And if one also takes into consideration that the confraternity was still a small concern, run from the house of Primerano di Jacopo, with around fifty percent of its income coming directly from the coffers of Cosimo de' Medici, then the delay in deciding, compiling or perhaps adjusting the original set of regulations is acceptable and understandable.<sup>186</sup>

There is another version of the foundation documents or *Capitoli* for the Buonomini di San Martino and, before this discussion moves on to further investigate the confraternity's principal literature, some clarification is needed with regard to both

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<sup>183</sup> U. Silli, *Sulla Datazione di un Volume Pergamenaceo del XV Secolo Dell' Archivio dei Buonomini*, Florence, 2008.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid. p. 4.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid. pp. 4-5. See also A. Spicciani, 'The 'Poveri Vergognosi' in Fifteenth-Century Florence: The first 30 years' activity of the Buonomini di San Martino', in T. Riis (ed.), *Aspects of Poverty in Early Modern Europe*, Florence, Badia Fiesolana, 1981, p. 123.



records. The aforementioned document, *Codice dei Capitoli*, (1.1.1.0.1.), which is kept at the Buonomini archive in San Martino should be considered the primordial source as firstly, it is dated 1441 (Florentine style), secondly, its compositional style strongly suggests that it was produced around this time. Thirdly, it is illuminated and contains a proper deed of foundation and dedication, an introduction to the rules, the regulations themselves and finally the names of the original twelve founding members (Appendix II).<sup>187</sup> A second document, likely a slightly later fifteenth-century reproduction and certainly an incomplete transcription of the Buonomini archive *Capitoli*, was published by Richard Trexler in 1973 and this ‘defective copy’, as Spicciani calls it, which is also kept in the San Martino archive, lacks part of the exposition which is evident in the aforementioned San Martino document and is also missing an inventory of the founding members at the end.<sup>188</sup>

The primordial copy however, is the one that interests us (Appendix II). This document is testament to the founding of what was, in 1441 (Florentine style), a new congregation,

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<sup>187</sup> Transcriptions of the dedication and part of the introduction were originally published by A. Spicciani, ‘The ‘Poveri Vergognosi’ in Fifteenth-Century Florence: The first 30 years’ activity of the Buonomini di San Martino’, in T. Riis (ed.), *Aspects of Poverty in Early Modern Europe*, Florence, Badia Fiesolana, 1981, pp. 126 and 161.

<sup>188</sup> *Codice dei Capitoli*, (1.1.1.0.2.), ABSM. See also A. Spicciani, ‘The ‘Poveri Vergognosi’ in Fifteenth-Century Florence: The first 30 years’ activity of the Buonomini di San Martino’, in T. Riis (ed.), *Aspects of Poverty in Early Modern Europe*, Florence, Badia Fiesolana, 1981, p. 162, note 9. See also U. Silli, *Sulla Datazione di un Volume Pergamenaceo del XV Secolo Dell’ Archivio dei Buonomini*, Florence, 2008, pp. 1-2. There exists also a further, incomplete version of the *Capitoli* found on the flyleaf of the *Entrata e Uscita 1442-1469*, Fondo Tordi, BNCF.

whose ‘protector and advocate’ was Saint Martin of Tour.<sup>189</sup> Furthermore, a dedication to God and the saints, originally published by Amleto Spicciani in 1981, provides information on the social climate of Florence at this time as it mentions the ‘present famine and the crowds of poor’ in both the city of Florence and the surrounding Tuscan countryside.<sup>190</sup> Additionally, the *Capitoli* introduces the title of the ‘attorneys of... the poor ashamed’ and sets out that each procurator must ‘attend with diligence and faith during their life: save just impediment’ those known as the *poveri vergognosi* or shamed poor.<sup>191</sup> Obvious in their absence are any references to the two men who are said to have founded the sodality, Antonio Pierozzi and Cosimo ‘*il Vecchio*’ de’ Medici and these silences continue as the list of confraternal rules are set out.

There is however, reference to the appointment of a spiritual guide or ‘friar priest’ who is ‘an improver or true director’ which could of course be a veiled reference to Antoninus as he was instrumental in improving several Florentine confraternities. Konrad Eisenbichler, for example, calls him the ‘father corrector’ of the flagellant companies of San Girolamo

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<sup>189</sup> *Codice dei Capitoli*, c. 3-7, (1.1.1.0.1.), ABSM refers to the ‘beato sancto martino: nostro protectore et advocato’. See Appendix II, paragraph 2.

<sup>190</sup> A. Spicciani, ‘The ‘Poveri Vergognosi’ in Fifteenth-Century Florence: The first 30 years’ activity of the Buonomini di San Martino’, in T. Riis (ed.), *Aspects of Poverty in Early Modern Europe*, Florence, Badia Fiesolana, 1981, p. 127, ‘considerando la carestia presente et la moltitudine de poveri della citta et contado di Firenze’. See also Appendix II of the present thesis for an English translation of this section.

<sup>191</sup> *Codice dei Capitoli*, c. 3-7, (1.1.1.0.1.), ABSM. See Appendix II, paragraph 3, ‘negli anni domini 1441 uno del mese di Febbraio pigliare lo essertitio d’essere procuratori de detti poveri vergognosi: et a quello attendere con diligentia et fede durante la vita loro: salvo giusto impedimento’.

and San Paolo because of the amendments that he made there.<sup>192</sup> Moreover, Antoninus often went further with his corrections as he had, on several occasions, insisted that confraternal statutes met his approval and were scrutinised by him prior to ratification.<sup>193</sup> The *Capitoli* of the youth confraternity of the Purificazione della Vergine Maria, for instance, were authorised by him in 1448<sup>194</sup> and those of San Giovanni Evangelista and San Niccolo del Ceppo were approved in 1449 and 1450 respectively.<sup>195</sup> Moreover, ‘Antoninus of the advisors’ did not earn his nickname by shying from debate and discussion.<sup>196</sup> Perhaps then, in a similar manner, his influence extended to the Buonomini’s *Capitoli* also.

Rule one then goes on to explain how the *Proposto* (the man proposed and elected to lead the other procurators for a one-month term) was to put forward the names of ‘three spiritual men... of good fame’ and then an election to choose would subsequently take place.<sup>197</sup>

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<sup>192</sup> K. Eisenbichler, *The Boys of the Archangel Raphael A Youth Confraternity in Florence, 1411-1785*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1998, p. 42. See also L. Sebgondi, *Tre Confraternite Fiorentine. Santa Maria della Pieta, detta ‘Buca’ di San Girolamo, San Filippo Benizi, San Francesco Poverino*, Florence, Salimbeni, 1991, p. 13.

<sup>193</sup> K. Eisenbichler, *The Boys of the Archangel Raphael A Youth Confraternity in Florence, 1411-1785*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1998, p. 42.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid.

<sup>195</sup> Emelio Sanesi, *La Vita di S. Antonino Arcivescovo di Firenze*, Florence, Libreria Editrice Fiorentina, 1940, p. 100.

<sup>196</sup> P. Bargellini, *I Buonomini di San Martino*, Florence, Casa di Risparmio, 1972.

<sup>197</sup> *Codice dei Capitoli*, c. 3-7, (1.1.1.0.1.), ABSM. See Appendix II, paragraph 4. Rule one mentions, ‘Prima deliberarono d’eleggere uno religio so sacerdote il quale sia loro correctore o vero direttore. accio che continuamente avessino dove ricorrere per consiglio et spiritual aiutorio’ and ‘la electione del quale correctore sia in questo modo cioe chel Proposto nomini tre huomini spirituali et di buona fama: et disaminato tralloro si metta apparito et chi a piu fave rimanga correctore’.

Nevertheless, rules two through ten allow us no further clues to either of the founding members. Rule two sets the number of attorneys at a dozen and describes the election process and the third informs the reader that the confraternity is based in San Martino and mentions its relationship to the nearby Badia.<sup>198</sup> Rule four deals with alms and how they will be distributed, while number five sets out the duties of the *Proposto* and the transfer between one *Proposto* and another.<sup>199</sup> The sixth regulation concerns the care of colleagues and states that one must visit and aid sick companions.<sup>200</sup> Furthermore, should a colleague die, then ‘a mass for the soul’ should be organised within one month.<sup>201</sup> Rule seven delineates the donation which must be made by each *Proposto*, in order to set a good example, with each donation consisting of three *stai* of wheat.<sup>202</sup> Decree number eight describes how the attorneys should live their lives as honest citizens and also prescribes preferred modes of spirituality.<sup>203</sup> Rule nine, while explaining that the number of attorneys cannot exceed twelve<sup>204</sup> and that authority within the confraternity must be shared, tantalisingly mentions that the ‘*correctore*’ or reformer, who was mentioned in the sodality’s first rule, is actually present as the *Capitoli* are being recorded and moreover, is the one performing the writing, or perhaps more realistically dictating the

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<sup>198</sup> *Codice dei Capitoli*, c. 3-7, (1.1.1.0.1.), ABSM. See Appendix II, paragraph 5.

<sup>199</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>200</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>201</sup> *Codice dei Capitoli*, c. 3-7, (1.1.1.0.1.), ABSM. See Appendix II, paragraph 9. Rule six mentions, ‘uno ufficio mortuario per l’ anima’.

<sup>202</sup> *Codice dei Capitoli*, c. 3-7, (1.1.1.0.1.), ABSM. See Appendix II, paragraph 10. Rule seven states, ‘staia tre di grano’ should be given ‘per dare buono exemplo’.

<sup>203</sup> *Codice dei Capitoli*, c. 3-7, (1.1.1.0.1.), ABSM. See Appendix II, paragraph 11.

<sup>204</sup> See P. Bargellini, *I Buonomini di San Martino*, Florence, Casa di Risparmio, 1972, unpaginated illustration section for his reproduction of the document.

rules.<sup>205</sup> The document's claim that the reformer is named below does not aid our search for Antonio Pierozzi and Cosimo de' Medici however, as the undersigned are all laymen, they number only twelve and are revealed as the original Buonomini di San Martino.<sup>206</sup> Finally, rule ten describes the confraternity's keenness to gain indulgences for members for their good deeds.<sup>207</sup>

While neither Cosimo nor Antoninus are named within the Buonomini's *Capitoli*, there are other extant literary and visual sources that provide filaments of association between these men and this lay confraternity.

Regarding Antoninus for example, during the canonisation process, part of which was held in Florence in 1516, the 'Societas S. Martini' was mentioned in connection with the former archbishop more than once. A sub-committee responsible for the Florentine hearings, which included a former prior of San Marco, sought to glean information from the city's wider population, rather than gathering testimonies from only the rich or the literate.<sup>208</sup> The fact that the delegation 'had their notary publish notices throughout Florence of further hearings, inviting anyone with knowledge of Antoninus's life, virtues or miracles, to testify' suggests that the group wished to allow time for their message to

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<sup>205</sup> *Codice dei Capitoli*, c. 3-7, (1.1.1.0.1.), ABSM. See Appendix II, paragraph 12. Rule nine informs us 'ma continuo stare fermo come a presente e scritto i quali si debbeno scrivere sa pie a questi capitoli di mano del sopradetto correctore'.

<sup>206</sup> *Codice dei Capitoli*, c. 3-7, (1.1.1.0.1.), ABSM. See Appendix II, paragraph 14.

<sup>207</sup> *Codice dei Capitoli*, c. 3-7, (1.1.1.0.1.), ABSM. See Appendix II, paragraph 13.

<sup>208</sup> Ronald C. Finucane, *Contested Canonizations: The Last Medieval Saints, 1482-1523*, Pitsboro, The Catholic University of America Press, 2011, p. 186.

permeate the various social strata which made up the municipality's population.<sup>209</sup> Moreover, the fact that six hundred testimonies to how the Buonomini had operated from the time of Antoninus's residence in Florence until this canonisation process was underway in 1516 were collected, indicates that much of what was being presented during these ceremonies was founded in reality.<sup>210</sup> Most revealing however, was the high-profile presence of the twelve Procurators of the Shamed Poor at the procession, which was part of the ceremony of transition: a ritual publicly marking Antonio Pierozzi's metamorphosis from blessed archbishop to an individual deserving of veneration and the right to an exalted position in heaven.<sup>211</sup> Sally Cornelison, in her searching study entitled *Art and the Relic Cult of Saint Antoninus in Renaissance Florence*, informs us that the twelve Buonomini accompanied the anointed and magnificently regaled corpse of Antoninus as it was carried through the streets of Florence on an elaborate bier.<sup>212</sup> Each of the attorneys would have walked, lighted wick in hand, six on either side of the bier in a sort of guard of honour, second only to the remains of the saint himself and followed directly by several princes of the church and members of the Florentine government.<sup>213</sup> Furthermore, only a few years following the death of Antoninus, Procurator of the Shamed Poor and entertainer, Feo Belcari (1410-1484) was reported by one of the

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<sup>209</sup> Ibid.

<sup>210</sup> For more details on these particular testaments see A. Spicciani, 'The 'Poveri Vergognosi' in Fifteenth-Century Florence: The first 30 years' activity of the Buonomini di San Martino', in T. Riis (ed.), *Aspects of Poverty in Early Modern Europe*, Florence, Badia Fiesolana, 1981, p. 129 & p. 168.

<sup>211</sup> S. J. Cornelison, *Art and the Relic Cult of St. Antoninus in Renaissance Florence*, Farnham, Ashgate, 2012, p. 263.

<sup>212</sup> Ibid.

<sup>213</sup> Ibid.

Dominican friars as being present at the tomb of the former Archbishop in San Marco, praying on his knees, some six decades before Pierozzi was canonised.<sup>214</sup>

In 1613, almost a century after Antoninus's canonisation process began, Michelangelo Cinganelli (1558-1635) was employed, along with other artists, to decorate the lunettes of one of the cloisters of the Convent of San Marco, Florence.<sup>215</sup> The scenes depicted within this sheltered space illustrate episodes from the life of Saint Antoninus and of particular relevance to this study is the painting entitled, *Saint Antoninus Founds the Company of Good Men at San Martino* (Fig.16). The fresco shows Antoninus seated in the loggia of a building, which overlooks the city of Florence and so clearly is not reminiscent of San Martino's actual geographic location. It is perhaps meant to remind the viewer of Pierozzi's connection to the hill town of Fiesole, with the vista also representing the Archbishop Saint's spiritual dominion.<sup>216</sup> The Archbishop Saint is surrounded by the twelve original Procurators of the Shamed Poor, who stand in various groups, and he appears to be pointing out something to the white-haired man holding a piece of parchment, positioned in front of him (should one consider the illusionary plane to be real, rather than a two dimensional space). There is no hint that Cosimo 'the elder' de' Medici is among those gathered, as he was not a member of the confraternity. It is clear

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<sup>214</sup> Ibid. p. 22.

<sup>215</sup> The Cloister of Antoninus is located adjacent to the church and is flanked on two sides by the pilgrim's hospital and the great refectory. It is distinct from the Cloister of Saint Dominic also found within the San Marco complex.

<sup>216</sup> Antoninus's first priorate was at Fiesole. See V. di Bisticci, 'Vita di Sant' Antonino Archivescovo di Firenze', in *Lettere di Sant' Antonino Archivescovo di Firenze, precedute dalla sua vita scritta da Vespesiano Fiorentino*, Barbera, Bianchi and Co., Florence, 1859, p. 8.

however, that the artist must have been provided with the names of at least eleven of the original twelve good men as he chose to include appellations both within and subordinate to the frescoed lunette.<sup>217</sup>

The centuries-long relationship between the Archbishop Saint and this charitable society would appear as strong now as it ever was. Even today's Procurators of the Shamed Poor revere Antoninus and name him as one of the founders of their confraternity. For example, Paolo Giustiniani, who joined the brotherhood as an assistant in 2006, advocates that Antoninus was attentive to the plight of the shamed poor and that is why he joined forces with Cosimo de' Medici. Likewise Giustiniani's *fratello*, Franco de Peverelli Luschi informs us that Antoninus was responding to 'a kind of poverty...which prompted [him]... to realise there was a need for a special kind of [charitable] assistance'

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<sup>217</sup> For instance, those procurators identified by titles painted onto their robes are Michele di Messer Pico Benini, Francesco di Benedetto di Guccio degli Strozzi, Luigi d'Vrabano Bruni and Antonio di Maffeo da Barberino. Those attorneys listed within an inscription found below the lunette are as follow: Ser Alesso di matteo di Pallo notaio; Nofri d'Agnolo drappiero; Primerano di Iacopo calzaiuolo; Giovanni di Baldo lanaiuolo; Pasquini d'vgolino del vernacciaio setaiuolo; Giuliano di Stagio drappiere and Iacopo di Baggio cimatore. Conspicuous by his absence is Bernardo di Mario di Messer Forese Salviati. See also the list of 'The Initial Twelve Procurators of the Shamed Poor' in Appendix II. Despite harbouring anti-Medicean sentiment around the time of the Pazzi Conspiracy of 1478 (see Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Florentine History*, vol. 2, trans. G. B. Niccolini, New York, Paine and Burgess, 1845, pp. 166-172 and p. 217), the Salviati clan remained one of Florence's wealthiest families who sustained familial, social and professional ties with the Medici and their supporters well into the sixteenth century. The family financed the building of the Salviati chapel during the 1580s, where Antoninus's saintly remains now reside. The family apparently paid more for the construction and decoration of the chapel than Filippo Strozzi had paid for his palazzo to be built almost a century previous. See Cristina Acidini Lucinat *The Medici, Michelangelo and the Art of Late-Renaissance Florence*, London, Yale University Press, 2002, p. 89. See also S. J. Cornelison, *Art and the Relic Cult of St. Antoninus in Renaissance Florence*, Farnham, Ashgate, 2012, pp. 4-6.



in fifteenth-century Florence.<sup>218</sup> He also goes on to explain that ‘the relationship between Cosimo and Antoninus was a working relationship’ rather than the friendship that both of their various biographers have suggested.<sup>219</sup> The Florentine scholar, Ludovica Sebrengondi also maintains that the Buonomini, ‘still honour Antoninus’s precepts, which were set down in writing and expanded in the statutes’.<sup>220</sup> A third member of the confraternity, Francesco Poccianti, during a recorded conversation in the Buonomini’s oratory in 2011, is quick to correct Tim Parks, professor and novelist, when he mentions that ‘I find it interesting to note that Cosimo chose precisely that kind of assistance’ that is ‘more concerned with the need to maintain those who were already higher up the social pecking order’. This procurator exclaims ‘Saint Antoninus!’, as Parks apparently erroneously claims that it was a member of the Medici and not the Archbishop Saint who decided on exactly who would benefit from the society’s charity.<sup>221</sup>

Although there is no point within this conversation where either the Italian historian or the lay brothers mentions any hard evidence connecting Antoninus to the confraternity, there is a passage that links a pious ideal maintained by the Buonomini to a concept which was written about by Antoninus. It is Francesco de Peverelli who once again enlightens with his opinions when he states, ‘we decide to give money because we feel we’re dealing with a case we need to move fast on. Sometimes that affects what we have for the future. So we place a great deal of trust in Providence’.<sup>222</sup> Antoninus too was an

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<sup>218</sup> J. M. Bradburne, (ed.), *Hidden Voices: Discovering the Buonomini di San Martino*, Florence, Giunti, 2011, p. 17.

<sup>219</sup> *Ibid.* p. 37.

<sup>220</sup> *Ibid.* p. 20.

<sup>221</sup> *Ibid.* p. 24.

<sup>222</sup> *Ibid.* p. 48.

advocate of this concept where God orders every event, both good and evil, in heaven and on earth. For instance, during his lifetime he wrote that:

Divine Providence who arranges everything well, allows a few to need temporal goods, so that with the endurance in your poverty it buys eternal life. To some others he gives an abundance not so that you waste it in dogs, sparrow hawks and mares, extravagant clothes, gambling banquets etc... but so that of the things given to you from God, you take what you need, and give the rest to the poor near hardships, so that of the things, to come from Him form an eternal shrine through the prayers of the poor. The rich glutton, does not tell the evangelical one who forgets buried in the fires of hell for to have removed other people's things, but not have given his to Lazarus and the other paupers but instead in delicate banquets and extravagant clothes.<sup>223</sup>

Still this well-disseminated pious notion, which was also a shared ideal between the Archbishop and the Buonomini di San Martino, cannot be considered a coincidental ideal with regard to the San Martino operation, nor was it simply a later move towards Antoninus's teachings following his canonisation. Take for example the way that the Buonomini have always operated and in particular, the fact that they do not capitalise and never have. This is a clear indication that, from their conception in 1442, the brotherhood

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<sup>223</sup> A. Spicciani 'The 'Poveri Vergognosi' in Fifteenth-Century Florence: The first 30 years' activity of the Buonomini di San Martino', in T. Riis (ed.), *Aspects of Poverty in Early Modern Europe*, Florence, Badia Fiesolana, 1981, p. 163.

'Permette la divina Provvidenza, la quale tutto fa bene, alcuni avere necessita del temporal bene; acciocche colla pazienza nella sua poverta acquisti vita eternal. Ad alcuni altri ne da abbondanza non acciocche gli scialacqui in cani, sparvieri e cavalla, vestiti pomposi, giuochi, conviti, ecc, ne ancora accio gli serbi in cassa, e il povero vicino stenti; ma acciocche della roba, a lui data da Dio, pigli il suo bisogni, e il resto vicino stenti; ma acciocche della roba, a lui data da eterni tabernacoli per l'orazione de poveri. Il ricco ghiottone, non dice l'Evangelico che fussi sepolto nel fuoco dell' inferno per avere tolta la roba d'altrui, ma per non avere data la sua a Lazzaro e gli altri bisognosi, ma ipesala in delicati conviti e pomposi vestimenti'.

See also D. Kent, *The Buonomini di San Martino: Charity for "the glory of God, the honour of the city and the commemoration of myself"*, in F. Ames-Lewis (ed.), *Cosimo 'il Vecchio' de' Medici, 1389-1464: Essays in Commemoration of the 600<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Cosimo de' Medici's Birth*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1992, p. 54.

has relied on Divine Providence to ensure that they are never ‘down to [their] last oil lamp’.<sup>224</sup>

A far as further documentary sources supporting Cosimo de’ Medici’s association with the Procurators of the Shamed Poor are concerned, on scrutiny of the confraternity’s records pertaining to the first few years of operation, it is almost immediately evident that this man, who would later be known as father of the nation, made generous efforts to ensure that the shamed poor were fed and watered as between 1442 and 1469 half of all donations that found their way to the Buonomini came directly from him.<sup>225</sup> For example, at Easter 1444 Cosimo was recorded as giving six barrels of wine and the next month he provided ‘24 staia of bread, 10 barrels of “vermiglio” wine... and 25 lambs, amounting to 500 libbre of meat’.<sup>226</sup> Amleto Spicciani also informs us that this type of large donation from Cosimo became quite the tradition and ‘on Christmas Eve and the day before Easter it became the custom to give out 36 staia of bread or flour, 10 barrels of wine, 300 libbre of meat... besides the usual distributions’.<sup>227</sup> In addition to Cosimo’s documented associations with the Buonomini his generosity was also broadcast throughout fifteenth-century Florence by the singer and Procurator of the Shamed Poor, Feo Belcari,<sup>228</sup> who

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<sup>224</sup> J. M. Bradburne, (ed.), *Hidden Voices: Discovering the Buonomini di San Martino*, Florence, Giunti, 2011, p. 34.

<sup>225</sup> A. Spicciani ‘The ‘Poveri Vergognosi’ in Fifteenth-Century Florence: The first 30 years’ activity of the Buonomini di San Martino’, in T. Riis (ed.), *Aspects of Poverty in Early Modern Europe*, Florence, Badia Fiesolana, 1981, p. 134.

<sup>226</sup> Ibid. p. 130.

<sup>227</sup> Ibid.

<sup>228</sup> Nerida Newbigin, *Feste D’Oltrarno: Plays in Churches in Fifteenth-Century Florence*, Florence, Leo S. Olschki Editore, 1996, pp. 27-28 traces the career of Feo Belcari and his inclusion as one of the Procurators of the Shamed Poor in 1466.

informed the city's residents that Cosimo was 'preserver of churches and holy places, and singular refuge of all those who live under the standard of poverty... for your good wine slakes our thirst'.<sup>229</sup> Additionally, Cosimo, despite never being a Procurator of the Shamed Poor himself, could have been perceived as a presence within the confraternity through the attendance of his personal assistant, Alesso Pelli, who was one of the original members of the sodality.<sup>230</sup>

Having brought together and examined a quantity of primary and secondary sources pertaining to the Buonomini di San Martino, Antonio Pierozzi and Cosimo 'the elder' de' Medici, it is apparent that while neither man is mentioned in the society's foundation document, Antoninus's association with this company is assumed through the writings of his biographers and apparent from indirect sources while Cosimo's presence can be verified with direct documentary evidence.

Despite various connections to the Buonomini, it is unclear whether Cosimo or Antoninus would have lived to have seen this lay confraternity move on from its humble

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<sup>229</sup> D. Kent, 'The Buonomini di San Martino: Charity for "the glory of God, the honour of the city and the commemoration of myself"', in F. Ames-Lewis (ed.), *Cosimo 'il Vecchio' de' Medici, 1389-1464: Essays in Commemoration of the 600<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Cosimo de' Medici's Birth*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1992, p. 60.

<sup>230</sup> See Appendix II. See also D. Kent, 'A Window on Cosimo de' Medici, *Paterfamilias* and Politician, From Within His Own Household: The Letters of His Personal Assistant, Ser Alesso Pelli', in D. S. Peterson and D. E. Bornstein, (eds.), *Florence and Beyond: Culture, Society and Politics in Renaissance Italy: Essays in Honour of John. M. Najemy*, Toronto, CRRS Publications, 2008, p.361 and Spicciani, A., 'The 'Poveri Vergognosi' in Fifteenth-Century Florence: The first 30 years' activity of the Buonomini di San Martino', in T. Riis (ed.), *Aspects of Poverty in Early Modern Europe*, Florence, Badia Fiesolana, 1981, p. 123.

origins (the home of a cobbler) and begin operating from its current base in San Martino, Florence.<sup>231</sup> The next section therefore, will explore the oratory itself, its situation and its complex relationship to the macrocosm: the city of Florence and its inhabitants.

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<sup>231</sup> U. Silli, *Sulla Datazione di un Volume Pergamenaceo del XV Secolo Dell' Archivio dei Buonomini*, Florence, 2008, p. 4.

## Section 2:3

## The Siting of the Oratorio dei Buonomini di San Martino: practical, social and political considerations

The ancient church of San Martino del Vescovo (Saint Martin of the Bishop) was certainly an established place of worship in medieval Florence as its documented existence can be traced back to the year 986.<sup>232</sup> Either founded or endowed by the Bishop of Fiesole,<sup>233</sup> the church was originally orientated differently to the existing oratory (Figs. 1 and 3) and essentially caused the once sizeable piazza in which it was built, to be bisected.<sup>234</sup> This operation formed what we now know as the Piazza San Martino<sup>235</sup> which opens out in front of the Buonomini's oratory and the Piazza del Cimitore,<sup>236</sup> located on the other side of the current building complex (Fig. 2).<sup>237</sup> At

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<sup>232</sup> G. Richa, *Notizie storiche delle chiese fiorentine*, Rome, 1989, p. 208. See also A. Busignoni and R. Bencini, *La Chiesa di Firenze: Quartiere di Santa Croce*, Florence, G. C. Sansoni Editore, 1982, p. 159.

<sup>233</sup> W. and E. Paatz, *Die Kirchen von Florenz Ein Kunstgeschichtliches: Handbuck*, volume IV, Frankfurt, Vittorio Klosterman, 1952, pp. 124.

<sup>234</sup> Walther Limburger, *Die Gebäude von Florenz, Architekten, Strassen und Plätze in Alphabetischen Verzeichnissen*, Leipzig, F. A. Brockhaus, 1910, p. 109.

<sup>235</sup> B. M. Wilson, 'Dominion of the Ear: Singing the Vernacular in Piazza San Martino' *Dickinson College Faculty, Publications*, paper 88, 2013, p. 274. Available at [http://scholar.dickinson.edu/faculty\\_publications/88](http://scholar.dickinson.edu/faculty_publications/88), (accessed 20 January 2015), cites W. Limburger, *Die Gebäude von Florenz, Architekten, Strassen und Plätze in Alphabetischen Verzeichnissen*, Leipzig, F. A. Brockhaus, 1910, appendix which mentions the 'seconda piazzuola di San Martino' being the small space where the entrance to the Buonomini's oratory is found.

<sup>236</sup> B. McDowell Wilson, 'Dominion of the Ear: Singing the Vernacular in Piazza San Martino' *Dickinson College Faculty, Publications*, paper 88, 2013, p. 274. Available at [http://scholar.dickinson.edu/faculty\\_publications/88](http://scholar.dickinson.edu/faculty_publications/88), (accessed 20 January 2015), reminds us that the Piazza del Cimitore was formerly known as the Piazza San Martino del Vescovo, or Piazza del Convento di San Martino.

<sup>237</sup> A. Busignoni and R. Bencini, *La Chiesa di Firenze: Quartiere di Santa Croce*, Florence, G. C. Sansoni Editore, 1982, p. 159. I would also like to thank Professor Blake

some point in the past however (certainly prior to 1482),<sup>238</sup> the confraternity of the Buonomini di San Martino moved their operation from the house of Primerano di Jacopo, the shoemaker and one of the initial twelve good men,<sup>239</sup> to the oratory in which they still reside to this day. The ancient church, whose likeness can be found in the *Codex Rustici* (Fig. 17), was ‘assimilated into nearby buildings’<sup>240</sup> and what remained was ‘gradually secularised’.<sup>241</sup> For instance, part of the architecture can still be seen within the new brickwork of a structure near to the Canto al Quarciona (Fig. 18). The newer complex, which was initially owned by the monks of the Badia, was divided between at least two tenants who included the Buonomini and the Compagnia dei Sarti (the Company of Tailors).<sup>242</sup> By 1479,<sup>243</sup> from the exterior at least, the Buonomini’s oratory, in particular, would have looked much as it does today.<sup>244</sup>

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Wilson for the information that he so kindly passed on to me about the San Martino area during the medieval era.

<sup>238</sup> *Entrata e Uscita 1478-1482*, c. 178 recto, (1.2.1.0.2), ABSM details an entry made on 31 December 1479 for 1037 lire, 7 soldi and 8 denari – expenditure on materials for some structural work that took place in the oratory. This work took place prior to the confraternity’s purchase of the property in 1482 (see 1.4.1.0.1., no. 2, ABSM mentioned in U. Silli, *Sulla Datazione di un Volume Pergamenaceo del XV Secolo Dell’ Archivio dei Buonomini*, Florence, 2008, pp. 11-12.

<sup>239</sup> U. Silli, *Sulla Datazione di un Volume Pergamenaceo del XV Secolo Dell’ Archivio dei Buonomini*, Florence, 2008, p. 4.

<sup>240</sup> A. Busignoni and R. Bencini, *La Chiese di Firenze: Quartiere di Santa Croce*, Florence, G. C. Sansoni Editore, 1982, p. 160 and P. Bargellini, *I Buonomini di San Martino*, Florence, Casa di Risparmio, 1972, p. 26.

<sup>241</sup> W. and E. Paatz, *Die Kirchen von Florenz: Ein Kungstgeschichtliches Handbuck*, volume IV, Frankfurt, Vittorio Klosterman, 1952, pp. 124.

<sup>242</sup> A. Busignoni and R. Bencini, *La Chiese di Firenze: Quartiere di Santa Croce*, Florence, G. C. Sansoni Editore, 1982, p. 159.

<sup>243</sup> B. Wilson. See notes 256 and 257.

<sup>244</sup> W. and E. Paatz, *Die Kirchen von Florenz: Ein Kungstgeschichtliches Handbuck*, volume IV, Frankfurt, Vittorio Klosterman, 1952, pp. 124.

Prior to the Procurators of the Shamed Poor taking up residence in San Martino, the area had been famous for the ‘production of luxury woollen cloth’.<sup>245</sup> Furthermore, one of the organised routes along which cloth merchants from out of town were escorted when visiting Florence passed directly in front of the Buonomini’s oratory, as it wound its way through the San Martino district.<sup>246</sup> In the historiography of the Buonomini much has been made of perceived connections between the confraternity’s founders, Archbishop Antonio Pierozzi and Cosimo de’ Medici, and the Arte della Lana<sup>247</sup> although, it was the deserving poor from the artisan classes in general, rather than wool workers specifically, who were actually aided by the confraternity.<sup>248</sup>

If one takes credence in theories such as the one propounded by Sharon Strocchia, that within the city of Florence there was a ‘hierarchy of spaces’, then the San Martino district would have to be considered a top-ranking neighbourhood.<sup>249</sup> Located within the

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<sup>245</sup> John F. Padgett and Paul D. McLean, ‘Economic Credit in Renaissance Florence’, *The Journal of Modern History*, vol. 83, no. 1, 2011, p. 7. See also Adrienne Atwell, ‘Ritual Wool Trading’, in Crum R. J. and Paoletti J. T., (eds.), *Renaissance Florence: A Social History*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 202.

<sup>246</sup> *Ibid.* p. 201.

<sup>247</sup> See Kent, D., ‘The Buonomini di San Martino: Charity for “the glory of God, the honour of the city and the commemoration of myself”’, in F. Ames-Lewis (ed.), *Cosimo ‘il Vecchio’ de’ Medici, 1389-1464: Essays in Commemoration of the 600<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Cosimo de’ Medici’s Birth*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1992, p. 55 and Atwell, A., ‘Ritual Wool Trading’, in Crum R. J. and Paoletti J. T., (eds.), *Renaissance Florence: A Social History*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2006, pp. 182-215.

<sup>248</sup> Spicciani, A., ‘The ‘Poveri Vergognosi’ in Fifteenth-Century Florence: The first 30 years’ activity of the Buonomini di San Martino’, in T. Riis (ed.), *Aspects of Poverty in Early Modern Europe*, Florence, Badia Fiesolana, 1981, p. 121.

<sup>249</sup> Sharon Strocchia, ‘Theatres of Everyday Life’ in R. J. Crum a. J. T. Paoletti, *Renaissance Florence: A Social History*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 61. See also Philip H. Wickstead (ed.), *Villani’s Cronicle: Being Selections of the First Nine Books of the Croniche Fiorentine of Giovanni Villani*, trans. R. E. Selfe, London,



‘powerful spatial nexus linking the Palazzo dei Priori and the cathedral’,<sup>250</sup> San Martino was, as Dante Alighieri (1265-1321) most eloquently phrased it, ‘inside the old ring of walls... soberly and modestly’<sup>251</sup> and those who resided in the old part of town held those who lived in the new parts in contempt.<sup>252</sup> Nicolas Eckstein reminds us of this old/new medieval snobbery when he explains that Dante’s *Paradiso* ‘implicitly linked the idea of a general moral decline with... new urban zones and with the character and quality of its inhabitants’.<sup>253</sup> Dante himself lived within a stone’s throw of San Martino del Vescovo and it is barely a minute away from the Buonomini’s oratory that one can find the parish church of the Portinari, where the poet’s beloved Beatrice is entombed.<sup>254</sup> Furthermore, it was during Dante’s time that San Martino was also the executive centre of Florence. Prior to 1299, before the Palazzo Vecchio was constructed, the city’s government met in the Torre della Castagna, a medieval tower overlooking Piazza San Martino which originally served to protect the nearby Badia.<sup>255</sup> John Najemy, who prompts us to

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Archibald Constable and Co. Ltd., 1906, p. 81 and the presence of the ‘*Bella* of San Martino’ who have now become *popolani*.

<sup>250</sup> Ibid.

<sup>251</sup> Dante Alighieri cited by Nicholas Eckstein, ‘Neighbourhood as Microcosm’, in R. J. Crum a. J. T. Paoletti, *Renaissance Florence: A Social History*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 226.

<sup>252</sup> For a description of the parameters of ancient Florence and an illustration of its small geographical area see Philip H. Wickstead (ed.), *Villani’s Cronicle: Being Selections of the First Nine Books of the Croniche Fiorentine of Giovanni Villani*, trans. R. E. Selfe, London, Archibald Constable and Co. Ltd., 1906, pp. 63-65.

<sup>253</sup> Dante Alighieri cited by N. Eckstein, ‘Neighbourhood as Microcosm’, in R. J. Crum a. J. T. Paoletti, *Renaissance Florence: A Social History*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 226.

<sup>254</sup> Although Dante did live in the locale his residence is not thought to be the building which is today known as Dante’s House. The church in which Beatrice is buried is Santa Margherita de’ Cerchi.

<sup>255</sup> John Najemy, ‘Florentine Politics and Urban Spaces’, in R. J. Crum a. J. T. Paoletti, *Renaissance Florence: A Social History*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2006, p.26. For the origins of the Badia see P. H. Wickstead (ed.), *Villani’s Cronicle: Being*

remember this older governmental base, also proposes that ‘at the same time the location [San Martino] was also a statement that the new office and the political order that it [the government] sought to impose were invading the world of the elite enclaves’.<sup>256</sup> A thirteenth-century inscription found on the Bargello (formerly the Palazzo del Popolo and later the headquarters of the Podestà, located on the opposite side of the Via del Proconsolo to the Badia) appears to uphold Najemy’s view of the government of republican Florence as conquerors and subjugators as it reads:

Florence is full of all imaginable wealth,  
 She defeats her enemies in war and in civil strife,  
 She enjoys the favour of fortune and has a powerful population,  
 Successfully she fortifies and conquers castles,  
 She reigns over the sea and the land and the whole of the world,  
 Under her leadership the whole of Tuscany enjoys happiness.  
 Like Rome she is always triumphant.<sup>257</sup>

After 1299, when the Florentine government moved into its new administrative building in the Piazza della Signoria, San Martino would have remained an important and busy space, much as it is today, being home to the Town Planning Department (*Assessorato all’Urbanistica*). With its labyrinth of narrow streets, San Martino is full of *canti* or street

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*Selections of the First Nine Books of the Croniche Fiorentine of Giovanni Villani*, trans. R. E. Selfe, London, Archibald Constable and Co. Ltd., 1906, pp. 69-71.

<sup>256</sup> J. Najemy, ‘Florentine Politics and Urban Spaces’, in R. J. Crum a. J. T. Paoletti, *Renaissance Florence: A Social History*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 26.

<sup>257</sup> Nicolai Rubinstein, *Studies in Italian History in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, Volume I Political Thought and the Language of Politics, Art and Politics* G. Ciappelli (ed.), Rome, Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2004, p. 20.

corners on which people living in the neighbourhood would meet and greet and ‘in cases of alarm’, those same corners would be where the soldiers of a particular district would muster.<sup>258</sup> Piazza in general due to their commodious nature, were places of many possibilities with ‘ready opportunities for casual or planned meetings’ or a venue for carrying out business.<sup>259</sup> Public squares however, can also be perceived as a ‘contested space’ as they mean ‘something different to each citizen’.<sup>260</sup> Ghirlandaio for example, in the paintings that he executed in Santa Trinita (Fig. 19), ‘recreated [the piazza in paint and plaster] as a theatrical space for a moral tale that would forever be associated with the local history of the district’.<sup>261</sup> Likewise at San Martino, one of the paintings that Ghirlandaio’s workshop effected in the oratory of the Procurators of the Shamed Poor towards the close of the fifteenth century, entitled *Releasing the Debtor from Gaol* (Fig. 20), connected Lorenzo and Giuliano de’ Medici (whose portraits are included within the scene) not only to the confraternity and in turn the district of San Martino, but also to the Stinche prison (which is the setting for the fresco) and its associated penal authority.<sup>262</sup>

Being close to Florence’s main square which was, from the *trecento* onwards, the hub of Florentine power and the centre of the Tuscan microcosm, the streets on the peripheries

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<sup>258</sup> Michael Lingohr, ‘The Palace and Villa as Spaces of Patrician Self-Definition’, in R. J. Crum a. J. T. Paoletti, *Renaissance Florence: A Social History*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 245.

<sup>259</sup> S. Strocchia, ‘Theatres of Everyday Life’ in R. J. Crum a. J. T. Paoletti, *Renaissance Florence: A Social History*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 69.

<sup>260</sup> Alison Brown, ‘Between the Palace and the Piazza’, *Renaissance Society of America Annual Conference*, Washington D.C., 22 March, 2012.

<sup>261</sup> N. Eckstein, ‘Neighbourhood as Microcosm’, in R. J. Crum a. J. T. Paoletti, *Renaissance Florence: A Social History*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 231.

<sup>262</sup> See Samantha Hughes-Johnson, ‘Early Medici Patronage and the Confraternity of the Buonomini di San Martino’, *Confraternitas*, vol. 22, no 2, 2012, pp. 3-25.

of the San Martino parish would also perhaps have been of some strategic significance. For example Milner recounts the tale of the ‘disgruntled cloth dyer Lionardo di Nichola’ who, in 1393, entered the Piazza della Signoria shouting ‘long live the guilds’.<sup>263</sup> Consequently, in order to take control of the situation, the Guelfs ‘occupied all the small streets that fed into the piazza’.<sup>264</sup> Furthermore, Giovanni Cavalcanti (1381-1451) was reported to have commented on this strategy and concluded, ‘whoever holds the piazza is master of the city’.<sup>265</sup>

During the fourteenth century San Martino would also have found itself skirted and enveloped by a new route, dubbed the *Ringstrasse* by twentieth century historian Marvin Trachtenberg, which was effectively a made up course that took walkers and riders on a tour of the city’s key monuments: the Duomo; Orsanmichele; the Palazzo Vecchio; the Bargello and the Badia.<sup>266</sup>

Despite having not been the hub of social and political power since medieval times and finding itself just on the periphery when it came to strategic and scenographic considerations, San Martino, having retained its past significance in the hearts and minds

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<sup>263</sup> Stephen J. Milner, ‘The Florentine Piazza Della Signoria as Practiced Place’, in R. J. Crum a. J. T. Paoletti, *Renaissance Florence: A Social History*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 96.

<sup>264</sup> Ibid.

<sup>265</sup> Natalie Tomas, ‘Did Women Have Space’, in in R. J. Crum a. J. T. Paoletti, *Renaissance Florence: A Social History*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 312.

<sup>266</sup> A. Atwell, ‘Ritual Wool Trading’, in Crum R. J. and Paoletti J. T., (eds.), *Renaissance Florence: A Social History*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2006, pp. 207-208.

of current residents,<sup>267</sup> must have held some significance for either the founders of the Buonomini or the twelve good men who made up their ranks. Certainly the property that the confraternity came to purchase in 1482 must have been significant to the confraternity as it stood on the foundations of the old church of San Martino del Vescovo and shared its titular saint with theirs.<sup>268</sup> Furthermore, as it had also apparently been dedicated to Saints Martin, Cosmos and Damian since the eleventh century, which would perhaps have appealed to Cosimo de' Medici had he been alive during the confraternity's move to San Martino.<sup>269</sup> At the very least, the connection resonates with memories of Florence's *Pater Patriae*. Nevertheless, if one considers simply the name, that was either chosen for or by the twelve procurators, in relation to the past political significance of San Martino, the word Buonomini conjures a mental link from the good men working for the good of the city and Christian charity in the shadow of the Torre della Castagna and the other good men of the government<sup>270</sup> working similarly in the Palazzo Vecchio: microcosm and macrocosm, not five hundred yards apart.<sup>271</sup>

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<sup>267</sup> Having spent much time in the Buonomini's oratory and living in San Martino during my researches, the historical importance of this area was constantly impressed upon me by both members of the confraternity and residents of the parish. I have also been fortunate enough to have had a private tour of the Torre della Castagna and consequently talked at some length with the curator of the little museum located there and this local pride, that was obvious in conversations that I had with local people, was also evident here.

<sup>268</sup> Eve Borsook, *The Companion Guide to Florence*, Florence, Prentice Hall, 1983, p. 86.

<sup>269</sup> D. Kent, 'The Buonomini di San Martino: Charity for "the glory of God, the honour of the city and the commemoration of myself"', in F. Ames-Lewis (ed.), *Cosimo 'il Vecchio' de' Medici, 1389-1464: Essays in Commemoration of the 600<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Cosimo de' Medici's Birth*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1992, p. 51.

<sup>270</sup> One of the pair of elected councils which made up the Florentine government was also known as the *dodici buonomini*.

<sup>271</sup> R. F. E. Weissman, *Ritual Brotherhood in Renaissance Florence*, London, Academic Press, 1982, p. 9.

Having considered factors pertaining to the exterior of the Buonomoni's oratory the discussion must now move on to the interior of their little chapel. Hence, the chapter that follows is dedicated to the painted wall decorations therein.

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## Chapter 3

### The Fresco Cycle of the Oratorio

## Section 3:1

### Pre iconographic Description of the Frescoes

The chapel of the Oratorio dei Buonomini di San Martino is a small barrel vaulted room which remains to this day a consecrated space (Fig. 3). The nature of the roof's construction defines the architectural aesthetics of the interior so consequently the spaces between the corbels and pendentives form a series of twelve lunettes. Ten of these half-moon shaped spaces are decorated in fresco while the other two are pierced by windows (Fig. 5). The two lunettes directly above the high altar show scenes from the life of Saint Martin and the remaining eight, which begin above the entrance door opposite, show charitable acts based on the Seven Works of Corporal Mercy. Clockwise around the room the remaining frescoes are as follows: *The Initial Visit by the Buonomini to a Vulnerable Family* (Fig. 10); *The Ring Ceremony* (Fig. 21); *Giving Food to the Hungry and Drink to the Thirsty* (Fig. 11); *Clothing the Naked* (Fig. 22); *Visiting a Woman in Childbed* (Fig. 23); *Releasing the Debtor from Gaol* (Fig. 20); *Taking in Pilgrims* (Fig. 7) and *Burying the Dead* (Fig. 8).

#### ***Saint Martin Dividing his Cloak for the Beggar*** (Fig. 6)<sup>272</sup>

*Prima facie*, this appears to be a traditional depiction of perhaps the most well known episode of the life of Saint Martin of Tours.<sup>273</sup> Set outside a walled city with a vast plain and distant hilltop monastery in sight, the scene shows a mounted Saint Martin in the act

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<sup>272</sup> See section 7:1 for the full analysis.

<sup>273</sup> See notes 15 & 16, pp.30-31 on why we would recognise Saint Martin.



of dividing his cloak for a naked beggar, while an assistant in armour steadies the horse by holding onto its bridle.

***The Dream of Saint Martin*** (Fig. 9)<sup>274</sup>

Set in a classically styled loggia, this particular tableau gives an account of the dream that Saint Martin claimed to have had subsequent to sharing his cloak with the beggar. Martin is shown facing the viewer, asleep on his bed. Alongside, on a raised platform, are his groom, who is also slumbering, and various pieces of armour removed by the saint before settling onto the damask-covered bed. To the left of the scene stands Christ, surrounded by a choir of angels and the entire celestial gathering are floating on a bed of clouds. Outside of the loggia, the painting's background consists of a landscape scene with an undulating plain bisected by a meandering river. On the horizon a range of mountains is visible. To the right side of the compositional space however, the pastoral calm is overshadowed by a hilltop citadel.

***The Initial Visit by the Buonomini to a Vulnerable Family*** (Fig. 10)<sup>275</sup>

This scene is the first in the cycle of eight frescoes, illustrating the acts of charity, based on the seven Works of Mercy that the Buonomini were involved in during the *quattrocento*. Prior to actually giving aid to the family, the Procurators of the Shamed Poor are shown in the client's home in the act of checking how poverty has affected them. In the centre of the scene is the matriarch of the house, telling her tale of woe to the

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<sup>274</sup> See section 7:1 for the full analysis.

<sup>275</sup> See section 5:2 for the full analysis.

seated, scribing attorney. The woman's toddler son is depicted beside this visitor. To the right of the scene is another attorney who, with the patriarch of the house and a bare-legged youth, is depicted in the act of checking inside a chest. In the background of the painting, two young women of the household are shown conversing in the doorway.

***The Ring Ceremony*** (Fig. 21)<sup>276</sup>

Showing one of the three ceremonies that constituted marriage during the Renaissance, *The Ring Ceremony* manifests how the betrothal of a couple is made possible through the confraternity of the Buonomini di San Martino providing a dowry for the bride. Central to the scene, which is set in a loggia, are the bride and groom. The latter is depicted in the act of giving a ring to the former while simultaneously a procurator drops coins into the groom's free hand, which is open and outstretched to accept them. Present also at the ceremony are the bride's parents, the groom's male friends, a notary and various members of the public. The background of the painting, as seen through the arch of the open loggia, consists of a hilly, rural landscape.

***Giving Food to the Hungry and Drink to the Thirsty*** (Fig. 11)<sup>277</sup>

This scene, which is set inside the Buonomini's own oratory, shows what typically happened within the little church on a Wednesday: - the distribution of bread and wine.<sup>278</sup>

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<sup>276</sup> See section 5:2 for the full analysis.

<sup>277</sup> See section 5:2 for the full analysis.

<sup>278</sup> A. Spicciani, 'The "Poveri Vergognosi" in Fifteenth-Century Florence: The first 30 years' activity of the Buonomini di San Martino', in T. Riis, *Aspects of Poverty in Early Modern Europe*, Florence, Badia Fiesolina, 1981, p. 125.

To the right of the scene, one of the Procurators of the Shamed Poor is shown filling flasks full of wine for a young man while his colleague pours a jug of the red liquor into a flask for a female recipient of charity. To the left of the scene, another two of the brothers and their assistant are gathered around a counter, laden with loaves of bread and are busy handing them out. The two recipients nearest the counter are bare-legged toddlers, one of whom is shown dropping the loaves that were proffered to him.

***Clothing the Naked*** (Fig. 22)<sup>279</sup>

This scene is also set inside the Buonomini's oratory and makes use of the same counter that can be seen in the *Giving Food to the Hungry and Drink to the Thirsty*. Two of the Buonomini and an assistant are shown providing fabric and garments to those in need and towards the back of the illusionary plane, partially obscured by other figures in the foreground, are a matron and a younger woman who are being handed a folded length of linen. In the foreground of the compositional space, an orderly queue has formed in front of the Buonomini's youthful assistant and the scribe. At the very front, a chubby toddler, who apparently has already been given a portion of red cloth, is holding his free hand out to accept a length of linen. Behind him stands a bare-legged young man who appears to be accepting a black tunic. Next in line is a young lady with her hands clasped in prayer and finally an aged, bearded man with a stick.

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<sup>279</sup> See section 5:2 for the full analysis.

***Visiting a Woman in Childbed*** (Fig. 23)<sup>280</sup>

Set in the bedchamber of a woman in childbed, this painting illustrates the help that the Buonomini gave to such females. Much of the organisational space is taken up by a woman, who appears to have recently given birth and is recovering in bed with her child tucked in beside her. The bed is flanked by two of the Buonomini, one of whom proffers swaddling bands. A third Procurator of the Shamed Poor is shown at the forefront of the painting. He is depicted passing a capon and a flask of wine to another female who is dressed for housework. The background of the painting shows the rear wall of the bedchamber which is decorated with a small painting of the crucifixion. Alongside this is found a small alcove housing a box of sweetmeats, a piece of fruit, a flask of honey-coloured wine and a drinking glass.

***Releasing the Debtor from Gaol*** (Fig. 20)<sup>281</sup>

This scene takes place outside a prison and shows a Procurator of the Shamed Poor paying a prison official for the release of an inmate. A third party is also privy to the scene as are various prisoners who are craning to see the transaction through barred windows. Meanwhile another attorney is attending to the prisoner himself, as he emerges through the low door to freedom.

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<sup>280</sup> See section 5:2 for the full analysis.

<sup>281</sup> See section 4:2 for the full analysis.

***Taking in Pilgrims*** (Fig. 7)<sup>282</sup>

The setting for this particular scene is the interior of a lodging house where two pilgrims, two of the Buonomini and the innkeeper have congregated. The two brothers are depicted standing with the innkeeper alongside a *credenza*, which houses seven jugs inscribed with the letter ‘s’ and a terracotta cooler complete with drinking glasses.<sup>283</sup> One of the Buonomini is dropping coins, taken from his purse, into the innkeeper’s hand and this transaction is ostensibly taking place in order to pay for the lodgings of the two bowing visitors. The background of the scene reveals the bed that the pilgrims will be sleeping in and beyond that, a mountainous landscape scene unfolds and is visible through the open window.

***Burying the Dead*** (Fig. 8)<sup>284</sup>

The final scene from the cycle of eight is set inside the walled confines of a churchyard. To the right of the scene a Procurator of the Shamed Poor pays the sexton for a burial that is taking place, while the mourner in attendance prays for the soul of the deceased. To the left of the scene we witness the burial itself. An undertaker is depicted lowering a hooded, shrouded corpse into an open grave while four members of the clergy, who have

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<sup>282</sup> See section 6:1 for the full analysis.

<sup>283</sup> L. Sebgondi, ‘The Congregation and the Fresco Cycle’, in J. M. Bradburne (ed.), *Hidden Voices: Discovering the Buonomini di San Martino*, Florence, Giunti, 2011, p. 90.

<sup>284</sup> See section 6:2 for the full analysis.

been arranged standing on the church steps, attend to the requiem. The background of the scene, visible over the church wall shows a wide river valley flanked by hills.

## Section 3: 2

## The Iconography of the Seven Corporal Works of Mercy

The seven Corporal Works of Mercy can also be referred to in literature as the acts of charity or piety and are an ‘active form of *caritas*, the love of God and one's neighbour’.<sup>285</sup> Repeat depictions of cycles belonging to this genre would appear to act as conduct reminders to those fortunate enough not to need charity while simultaneously informing the needy of the help that they could possibly expect.<sup>286</sup> This would certainly appear to be the case in medieval England where nearly all of the surviving cycles can be found in rural parish churches where various strata of society would gather to worship.<sup>287</sup> To return, *ad fontes*, to the original sources relating to the iconography of the Seven Corporal Works of Mercy, one must consider firstly Matthew 25: 31-46 and the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats, which mentions six of the acts: feeding the hungry; giving drink to the thirsty; welcoming strangers; clothing the naked; visiting the sick and visiting prisoners.<sup>288</sup> Furthermore, the Book of Tobit must also be acknowledged with regard to burying the dead.<sup>289</sup> This septet of charitable activities is directly related to one's fate at the Last Judgement. Those who ignore the examples set down in Matthew 25:31-46 will be gathered to Christ's left and subsequently relegated to ‘the eternal fire prepared for the

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<sup>285</sup> Federico Botana, *The Works of Mercy in Italian Medieval Art (c.1040 - 1400)*, Turnhour, Brepols, 2011, p. 2.

<sup>286</sup> *Ibid.* p. 1.

<sup>287</sup> *Ibid.* p. 8.

<sup>288</sup> Matthew 25: 31-46.

<sup>289</sup> Tobit 2: 1-10.

devil and his angels', while those who had acted upon Matthew's directions would be gathered together at Christ's right, under the watchful eye of the Madonna Mediatrix,<sup>290</sup> in preparation for their ascent to heaven.

From medieval times the Seven Corporal Works of Mercy have acted as a 'guide to philanthropic activity' and have come to typify confraternal piety.<sup>291</sup> These acts are regarded as manifestations of *amor Dei* and *amor proximi*, which form the foundations of lay devotion and charity,<sup>292</sup> although most confraternities would concentrate on and practice only a few of the seven works.<sup>293</sup>

The Works of Mercy genre is a relatively small category and there are no extant painted cycles exactly contemporaneous to that of the oratory of the Buonomini di San Martino, Florence, executed between 1486 and 1490. Nonetheless, another of Florence's charitable

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<sup>290</sup> Laura Fenley, *Confraternal Mercy and Federico Barocci's Madonna del Popolo: An Iconographic Study*, MA Thesis, Texas Christian University, 2007, p. 30.

<sup>291</sup> Christopher Black, 'The Development of Confraternity Studies Over the Past Thirty Years', in N. Terpstra (ed.), *The Politics of Ritual Kinship*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000, p. 22.

<sup>292</sup> William R. Levin, 'Confraternal Self-Imaging in Marian Art at the Museo del Bigallo in Florence', *Confraternitas*, vol. 10, no. 2, 1999, p. 5. See also B. Wisch quoted in L. Fenley, *Confraternal Mercy and Federico Barocci's Madonna del Popolo: An Iconographic Study*, MA Thesis, Texas Christian University, 2007, p. 14. Donald Weinstein, 'The Art of Dying Well and Popular Piety in the Preaching and Thought of Girolamo Savonarola', in M. Tetel, R. G. Witt, and R. Goffen, (eds.), *Life and Death in Fifteenth-Century Florence*, London, Duke University Press, 1989, pp. 99-100 also mentions this kind of love, rather than the avoidance of sin in relation to Augustinian piety.

<sup>293</sup> C. Black quoted in L. Fenley, *Confraternal Mercy and Federico Barocci's Madonna del Popolo: An Iconographic Study*, MA Thesis, Texas Christian University, 2007, p. 15.



societies, the Bigallo, otherwise known as the Compagnia Maggiore di Santa Maria del Bigallo, valued these acts of charity, intended to extend God's pity and benevolence to all, enough to commission a painting during the fourteenth century that included all seven works. The Bigallo was a lay sodality that provided clinical care for pilgrims and travellers<sup>294</sup> and, in conjunction with The Misericordia (from 1425), supervised around ten hospitals and institutions,<sup>295</sup> assigned parents to orphaned children<sup>296</sup> and buried the poor in times of plague.<sup>297</sup> In 1342 Bernardo Daddi (c.1280-1348) and his *bottega* brought to fruition the *Madonna della Misericordia* (Madonna of Mercy) (Fig. 24).

Depicted as a formidable, giant, spiritual entity and protectress of both the city of Florence and its inhabitants, the Bigallo's Madonna is described by Gianozzo Pucci, twenty-first century essayist in Florentine art and architecture,<sup>298</sup> as wearing a crown like that of the Empress Matilda. He also points out the tau cross on her forehead (the symbol of salvation) and claims that the Works of Mercy, depicted on seven of the eleven

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<sup>294</sup> Hanna Kiel, *Il Museo del Bigallo a Firenze*, 1977, p. 3

<sup>295</sup> P. Gavitt, 'Corporate Beneficence and Historical Narratives of Communal Well-being', in R. J. Crum and J. T. Paoletti, (eds.), *Renaissance Florence: A Social History*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 103. See also W. R. Levin, 'Confraternal Self-Imaging in Marian Art at the Museo del Bigallo in Florence', *Confraternitas*, vol. 10, no. 2, 1999, pp. 3-14.

<sup>296</sup> P. Gavitt, 'Corporate Beneficence and Historical Narratives of Communal Well-being', in R. J. Crum and J. T. Paoletti, (eds.), *Renaissance Florence: A Social History*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 147.

<sup>297</sup> R. F. E. Wiessman, *Ritual Brotherhood in Renaissance Florence*, London, Academic Press, 1982, p. 67.

<sup>298</sup> See <http://www.theflorentine.net/articles/article-view.asp?issuetocId=1589> (accessed 1 September 2015).

medallions, which edge her mantle<sup>299</sup> are the arms that she uses to protect the city of Florence.<sup>300</sup> What is more, the painted rounds, while showing various individuals engaged in the seven acts of charity, do not appear, *prima facie*, to illustrate confraternity members participating.<sup>301</sup> In fact it is not until the dawning of the sixteenth century that the *fratelli* of the new hybrid company of the Bigallo/Misericordia are illustrated performing one of the Corporal Works of Mercy - burying the dead. It is this specific activity that is referred to in Ridolfo Ghirlandaio's (1483-1561) predella panel of 1515, entitled *Tobias and Tobit Bury the Dead Before the Bigallo Loggia* (Fig. 25). Tobit was, after all, 'that confraternity's secondary patron and burial of the dead was an office pertaining to the Misericordia in particular, especially after that confraternity's re-establishment [in 1489] as a legally independent entity'.<sup>302</sup>

The Works of Mercy as set down in scripture however, could not always be matched exactly to some of the more specific or specialised acts of charity carried out by lay confraternities. Consequently, it would appear that some sodalities either commissioned artworks outside of that genre that better illustrated their charitable activities or, gently

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<sup>299</sup> There are eleven medallions on the Madonna's cloak: three contain only text; seven show the works of mercy; one shows citizens of the city of Florence along with the inscription, 'God's mercies are marvelous'. See <http://www.umilta.net/bigallo.html>, (accessed 10 October 2014) for transcriptions of all the phrases contained within the painting.

<sup>300</sup> <http://www.umilta.net/bigallo.html>

<sup>301</sup> Lay institutions, like the Buonomini di San Martino, did not always provide their members with distinctive uniforms. Thus, it is not always clear whether individuals depicted were sodality members or not. See Fig. 26 for less obvious confraternity members. For more obvious examples see Figs. 27 & 28.

<sup>302</sup> W. R. Levin, 'Confraternal Self-Imaging in Marian Art at the Museo del Bigallo in Florence', *Confraternitas*, vol. 10, no. 2, 1999, p. 7.

altered some of the original acts to best suit the pious deeds that they accomplished. For instance, a painting commissioned by the Bigallo from Niccolò di Pietro Gerini (1340-1414) and Ambrogio di Baldese (1352-1429) entitled *The Captains of the Misericordia Entrust to Mothers the Abandoned Children* (Fig.29), shows members of the confraternity performing an activity associated with the institution that is not strictly one of the Works of Mercy – the re-homing of children. Nevertheless, one could suggest that the etymology of the word *misericordia* invites the inclusion of other similar scenarios that make viewers ‘feel sorrow for others in [their] hearts’.<sup>303</sup>

While eight of the ten San Martino frescoes (Figs. 7, 8, 10, 11, 20, 21, 22 and 23) similarly depict the Procurators of the Shamed Poor carrying out various confraternal duties, their iconography is also analogous to the Bigallo’s illustrations of the Works of Mercy within their *Madonna of Mercy* painting. Both painted works meld real life with church doctrine and the visual results are ideal vignettes of confraternal life, in the case of the former cycle and spiritual life, in the case of the latter.<sup>304</sup> Furthermore, all seven acts are present in both examples although the Buonomini murals are unique in the sense that in those renderings, only the company’s procurators perform or facilitate the execution of acts of piety. This difference is understandable as the Bigallo’s illustrations, being integral to only one of numerous renderings of the Virgin commissioned by this company, concentrates first and foremost on the macrocosm: the republic; its citizens and

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<sup>303</sup> F. Botana, *The Works of Mercy in Italian Medieval Art (c.1040 - 1400)*, Turnhour, Brepols, 2011, p. 2.

<sup>304</sup> See sections 5:2 and 6:2.

their physical and spiritual wellbeing. The primary intention of the iconography of the Buonomini cycle however, was to illustrate, for the viewers (which in their case were mainly lay brothers) the microcosm: how the confraternity operated; the charitable acts that they undertook and the ultimate standard of confraternal charity within the company. The macrocosm, i.e., the Florentine republic, its government and its inhabitants, although subtly alluded to within the confraternity's painted decorations, were perhaps not the first concern to those who commissioned the fresco cycle.<sup>305</sup>

Although all of the scenes depicted in the Buonomini's fresco cycle take place in contemporary *quattrocento* settings (which was not unusual for art of this period), a number of them adhere to the Works of Corporal Mercy described in the scriptures while others gently vary the acts. For instance, the paintings entitled *Giving Food to the Hungry and Drink to the Thirsty* (Fig. 11) and *Clothing the Naked* (Fig. 22) show the procurators themselves performing just those titular tasks, a little like Filippo di Lorenzo Paladini's (1559-1608) sixteenth-century illustration of *Giving Drink to the Thirsty* (Fig. 30): a work in glazed terracotta that shows the hospital commissioner or *spedelingo*, Leonardo di Giovanni Buonafede (unknown – 1545), acting to ensure that all who need to drink are catered for.<sup>306</sup> The frequency with which the *spedelingo* of the hospital of Santa Maria del Ceppo personally ministered to the needy is not known to the researcher although the remit of the present study does allow us to discern that the Procurators of the Shamed

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<sup>305</sup> See sections 4:2, 5:2, 6:1 and 6:2.

<sup>306</sup> <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O12552/giving-drink-to-the-thirsty-plaster-cast-buglioni-santi/>, (accessed 10 October 2014).

Poor distributed bread and wine, described as ‘the most necessary commodities’ by Leon Battista Alberti,<sup>307</sup> from their oratory on a weekly basis.<sup>308</sup> Simultaneously, more specific food items were provided to the needy diurnally.<sup>309</sup> Interestingly, it must have been decided between the Procurators of the Shamed Poor and the workshop of Domenico Ghirlandaio that, despite all of the other confraternal acts of charity based on the Works of Mercy being allocated one lunette each, the fresco entitled *Giving Food to the Hungry and Drink to the Thirsty* was assigned a single space to share. This makes sense as firstly, it reflects how the confraternity operated and secondly, allows the sodality space to illustrate other equally important aspects of their charitable operations, unrelated to the Corporal Works of Mercy. Such deeds include *The Initial Visit by the Buonomini to a Vulnerable Family* (Fig. 10), a unique painted scene that relies on secular iconography and visually describes part of the confraternity’s selection procedure for prospective beneficiaries and *The Ring Ceremony* (Fig. 21), which is connected to the confraternity’s provision of dowries and closely related iconographically, to scenes depicting biblical marriages (Fig. 31) and artworks commissioned by other charitable societies who practiced similar acts of philanthropy (Fig. 32). Furthermore, *the* two aforementioned acts

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<sup>307</sup> Leon B. Alberti, *The Family in Renaissance Florence*, trans. R. N Watkins, Columbia, University of California Press, 1969.p. 189.

<sup>308</sup> A. Spicciani, ‘The ‘Poveri Vergognosi’ in Fifteenth-Century Florence: The first 30 years’ activity of the Buonomini di San Martino’, in T. Riis (ed.), *Aspects of Poverty in Early Modern Europe*, Florence, Badia Fiesolana, 1981, p. 125.

<sup>309</sup> Refer to any of the company’s *Entrata e Uscita* from the fifteenth century for verification.

involving food and drink were closely related in the *quattrocento* Florentine psyche<sup>310</sup> and before that, had been synonymous with each other since ancient times.<sup>311</sup>

Notwithstanding the aforementioned reasons for organising depictions of these two acts of charity together in one space within the Buonomini's oratory, their *Giving Food to the Hungry and Drink to the Thirsty* foreshadows a change within the iconography of the Seven Works of Corporal Mercy. For example, north of the Alps the Antwerp Poorhouse had commissioned a triptych containing representations of the Seven Corporal Works of Mercy from Bernaert Van Orley (c.1488-1641) (Fig. 33). Unlike the separate tableaus, which were not uncommon in Italy and the fifteenth-century Netherlands, Van Orley chose to interweave the iconography of the Works of Mercy and symbolic representations of the Last Judgement within the same illusionary space.

Where scriptural prescriptions for the Corporal Works of Mercy and the Buonomini's illustrations of them begin to diverge, is with the company's version of burying the dead. This painting, while following the guidelines set out in the book of Tobit, differs slightly from other confraternal representations of this act of mercy as rather than showing confraternal members being directly responsible for the various ceremonies surrounding medieval and Renaissance funerals (see Figs. 25 & 34), the Procurators of the Shamed

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<sup>310</sup> L. B. Alberti, *The Family in Renaissance Florence*, trans. R. N Watkins, Columbia, University of California Press, 1969, p. 125.

<sup>311</sup> Genesis 14:18 Melchizedek provides bread and wine after Abraham's defeat of Chedorlaomer. In the New Testament, Mark 14:24 describes bread and wine as the New Covenant during Passover.

Poor chose to present an attorney, not physically burying a colleague or involved in the requiem but, paying for these last rites to be carried out (Fig. 8).

Notwithstanding these instances where the confraternity's members are illustrated performing acts of charity to the letter and *Burying the Dead*, where a *fratello* is simply facilitating the interment, the scriptural act known as visiting the sick and represented visually during the early *quattrocento* in Italy by artists such as Olivuccio di Ciccarello (Fig. 35) has, in its depiction on the walls of the Buonomini's oratory, been very subtly altered to *Visiting a Woman in Childbed* (Fig. 23), an activity commonly performed by the brotherhood, especially during the 1470s.<sup>312</sup> Similarly, the act of visiting prisoners, visual representations of which had changed very little between the eleventh and the fifteenth centuries (Figs.36-38), was modified, in the case of the Buonomini's illustration, to accommodate the sodality's proclivity for paying for and arranging the release of prisoners from gaol, an activity that took place, on a small scale, with regularity and to a greater degree during religious festivals.<sup>313</sup> Furthermore, the confraternity also diversified from the biblical prescription of sheltering the stranger, traditionally represented in the Bigallo's *Madonna of Mercy* (Fig. 39) and encouraged the concept to metamorphose into an illustration of them paying an innkeeper for the board and lodgings of two pilgrims to Florence. This perhaps best reflected how the confraternity dealt with needy wayfarers,

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<sup>312</sup> See *Entrata e Uscita 1469-1478* (1.2.1.0.1.), ABSM and *Entrata e Uscita 1478-1482* (1.2.1.0.2.), ABSM.

<sup>313</sup> See *Entrata e Uscita 1478-1482*, c. 132 verso, (1.2.1.0.2.), ABSM and *Entrat e Uscita del Proposto 1479-1481*, c. 33, (1.2.4.0.1.).

especially if the financial aid that they gave to the alien, Simone Domenico [X] of Prato when he fell ill in Florence during the 1480s, is typical.<sup>314</sup>

Establishing the position of the Buonomini frescoes within the small genre of the Seven Corporal Works of Mercy and explaining the relationship between the visual images and symbols present in this cycle and those present in other artworks from the same category does not however, directly aid the search for the executors of this confraternity's painted cycle. Accordingly, section 3:3, which follows immediately, will begin to explore what has already been written on the subject of artistic attributions while section 3:4 and Chapter 7 will consider the extent of Domenico Ghirlandaio's involvement with the Buonomini and the complicity of his workshop and fellow artisans in this humble project.

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<sup>314</sup> *Entrata e Uscita 1482-1489*, c. 88 verso, (1.2.1.0.3.), ABSM.



## Section 3:3

## Historiography of Attributions.

Unlike many other Florentine works of art the frescoes of the Oratory of the Buonomini di San Martino were not recorded or commented upon by Giorgio Vasari (1568).<sup>315</sup> This was left to Giuseppe Richa (1754) who, although recognising that the fanlight paintings were associated with the confraternity's activities, did not attempt to describe the entire cycle nor proffer an attribution.<sup>316</sup> Richa vaguely states:

...in ten fanlights where are represented a few of them, distributing bread to the poor, others give clothes to the naked, and medicine to the ill, and flour to whoever, and distribute wine to whoever...<sup>317</sup>

In the early nineteenth century the German art historian, Karl Friedrich von Rumohr took up the task of attributing the Buonomini frescoes and his conclusion was that they had been executed by Filippo Lippi (1406-1469) during his youth.<sup>318</sup> At the dawn of this century, Crowe and Cavalcaselle added that the style of the paintings was more in

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<sup>315</sup> Giorgio Vasari, *Lives of the Artists*, vol. 1, trans. G Bull, London, Penguin, 1965 and Giorgio Vasari, *Lives of the Painters, Sculptors and Architects*, unabridged, 2 vols., trans. Gaston de Vere, Alfred a Knopf Inc, New York, 1996.

<sup>316</sup> G. Richa, *Notizie Istoriche delle Chiese Fiorentine Parte Primo del Quartiere di Santa Croce*, Florence, Pietro Gaetano Viviani, 1754.

<sup>317</sup> G. Richa *Notizie Istoriche delle Chiese Fiorentine Parte Primo del Quartiere di Santa Croce*, Florence, Pietro Gaetano Viviani, 1754, p. 227. 'In dodici lunette, ove rappresentansi alcuni di loro, dispensare pane ai Poveri, altri dare vesti agli' ignudi, e medicine agli' infermi, e chi farina, e chi vino distribuisce'.

<sup>318</sup> Carl. F. von Rumohr, *Forschungen Italienische*, Vol II, Berlin, 1827, p. 274.

keeping with Raffaellino del Garbo (unknown to 1527).<sup>319</sup> In a later edition of the same set of books the pair inclined toward Rumohr, admitting that the paintings could belong to the ‘school of Filippino’.<sup>320</sup> At the very close of the nineteenth century, Ulmann (1894), writing on Raffaellino del Garbo, disagreed with Crowe and Cavalcaselle’s attributions and instead compared the style of the Buonomini murals with that of Domenico Ghirlandaio.<sup>321</sup>

As the twentieth century dawned, Bernard Berenson (1903) suggested that the Buonomini paintings could be associated with the workshop of Domenico Ghirlandaio (1449-1494), although he specified that Davide Ghirlandaio (1452-1525) was their probable executor.<sup>322</sup> One could ‘assume that such parts of Domenico’s works as are not his own may be assigned to Davide or to Sebastiano Mainardi’ (1460-1513).<sup>323</sup> Nevertheless, by 1928 Tomasso Rosselli-Sassatelli del Turco had scoured the Buonomini archives in search of evidence linking a fifteenth-century artist to the confraternity’s frescoes and also came up with a more definitive attribution.<sup>324</sup> He attributes nine of the murals to Ghirlandaio while suggesting that the tenth painting, *The Dream of Saint Martin* (Fig. 9)

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<sup>319</sup> Joseph A. Crowe and Giovanni B. Cavalcaselle, *A New History of Painting in Italy, Umbria Florence and Siena*, (ed.) L. Douglas and T. Borenius, 6 vols., London, John Murray, 1903-1914. Of particular importance is vol. 4, p. 301.

<sup>320</sup> J. Cadogan, *Domenico Ghirlandaio: Artist and Artisan*, London, Yale University Press, 2000, p. 212.

<sup>321</sup> Hermann Ulmann, ‘Raffaellino del Garbo’, *Repertorium für Kunstwissenschaft*, XVII, 1894, pp. 107-110.

<sup>322</sup> Bernard Berenson, *The Drawings of the Florentine Painters*, vol. I., London Greenwood Press, 1970, pp. 137-141.

<sup>323</sup> *Ibid.* p. 140.

<sup>324</sup> T. R. Sassatelli del Turco, ‘La Chiesetta di San Martino dei Buonomini di Firenze’, *Dedalo*, viii, 1928.

was likely executed by Francesco d'Antonio del Cierico (1433-1484), also known as Francesco d'Antonio Miniatore.<sup>325</sup>

Between 1926 and 1927 Gèzade Francovich, in a paper entitled 'Nuovi aspetti della personalità di Bartolomeo di Giovanni',<sup>326</sup> also associated Davide Ghirlandaio with the Buonomini frescoes but, unlike the other art connoisseurs who came before him, he suggests that it is Davide who is responsible for their design.<sup>327</sup>

However, it was not until 1942 that a volume was published which constituted 'the first complete review of the literature, documents, attribution and date of decoration' pertaining to the Buonomini's little oratory and the frescoes therein.<sup>328</sup> Lorenzo Desideri Costa was responsible for this monograph and, like Sassatelli del Turco, he claims that Davide Ghirlandaio was the author of some of the murals while Francesco d'Antonio del Chierico was responsible for *The Dream of Saint Martin*, despite having no work of monumental size by this busy miniaturist, with which to make a comparison.<sup>329</sup>

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<sup>325</sup> T. R. Sassatelli del Turco, *La Congregazione dei Buonomini di San Martino: notizie storiche ed artistiche*, Florence, Mealli e Stianti, 1930. For more detailed information on how Sassatelli del Turco came up with these attributions see chapters 1:3 and 6:2 of this thesis.

<sup>326</sup> Gèzade Francovich, 'Nuovi aspetti della personalità di Bartolomeo di Giovanni', *Bollettino d'Arte*, vol. 1, 1926, pp. 65-92.

<sup>327</sup> J. Cadogan, *Domenico Ghirlandaio: Artist and Artisan*, London, Yale University Press, 2000, p. 213.

<sup>328</sup> Ibid.

<sup>329</sup> Leonia Desideri Costa, *La Chiesa di S. Martino del Vescovo, l'Oratorio dei Buonomini e gli affreschi sulle opere di misericordia in Firenze presso le case degli Alighieri*, Florence, 1942, pp. 40 -56 and p. 88 are particularly pertinent.

During the 1970s Piero Bargellini picked up the attributions where Desideri Costa left off although, rather than add any substance to the discussion surrounding the murals, he simply repeated the attributions that had come before him, specifically those of Sassatelli del Turco and Desideri Costa.<sup>330</sup> Likewise, Busignani and Bencini's four volume set of books, produced in 1982, also included information on attributions for the frescoes but only repeats the errors made by Bargellini and Sassatelli del Turco.<sup>331</sup>

In 1992 Nicoletta Pons added to the historiography of attributions when she explained that the problem with the Buonomini frescoes was that many artistic hands were present: the works also being reminiscent of the Ghirlandaiesque Master of the Epiphany of Fiesole.<sup>332</sup> Nevertheless, she provides a starting point for an investigation of the *Dream of Saint Martin* painting – to begin the search with a well-known *quattrocento* master.<sup>333</sup>

As the millennium dawned Jean Cadogan (2000) diligently included a historiography of attributions within the catalogue raisonné section of her monograph entitled *Ghirlandaio: Artist and Artisan*, and adds to the body of literature by confirming that she believes that nine of the ten paintings were executed by the workshop of Domenico Ghirlandaio and include the hands of both Davide and Domenico to varying degrees and with this the

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<sup>330</sup> P. Bargellini, *I Buonomini di San Martino*, Florence, Casa Risparmio, 1972.

<sup>331</sup> A Busignani and R. Bencini, *Le Chiese di Firenze: Quartiere di Santa Croce*, Florence, G. C. Sansoni Editore, 1982, pp. 159-166.

<sup>332</sup> Nicoletta Pons, 'Dipinti a piu mani', in *Maestri e Botteghe, Pittura alla fine del Quattrocento*, (eds.), M. Gregori, A. Paolucci and C. A Luchinat, Milan, Silvana Editoriale, 1992, pp. 257-258.

<sup>333</sup> Ibid.

present research concurs.<sup>334</sup> She also goes on to proffer an opinion regarding the *Dream of Saint Martin* painting saying that Pon's suggestion of the 'Ghirlandaiesque Master of the Fiesole Epiphany...with an associate of [Jacopo da] Sellaio, Filippo di Giuliano, is attractive'.<sup>335</sup>

The current thesis however, in Chapter seven, proffers a further alternative executor of the *Dream of Saint Martin* while the section that immediately follows the present one, explores the relationship between Domenico Ghirlandaio and the Procurators of the Shamed Poor of Florence.

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<sup>334</sup> J. Cadogan, *Domenico Ghirlandaio: Artist and Artisan*, London, Yale University Press, 2000, pp. 212-213.

<sup>335</sup> *Ibid.* p. 213.

## Section 3:4

## Domenico Ghirlandaio and the Buonomini

An overview of the relationship between the Buonomini and Domenico Ghirlandaio does not come to us easily despite the fact that nine of the cycle of ten frescoes at San Martino were executed by artists employed in his *bottega*.<sup>336</sup> In the first instance there is no formal contract of works pertaining to the decorations and it is only through connoisseurship that the paintings have been attributed to and generally accepted as being executed by the workshop of Domenico Ghirlandaio. There are many visual indicators present in the cycle which suggest the workshop's continued use of pattern books in several scenes (see particularly Figs. 23 & 7) and this advances the argument that the project could well have been carried out relatively quickly and economically. For example, Ghirlandaio completed another undertaking, this time a restoration of the *Last Supper* in the Badia di San Michele e Biagio di Passignano. This job was tantamount to the Buonomini cycle in area but had fewer figures and was charged at between 18 and 19 florins.<sup>337</sup> Jean Cadogan mentions that payment for the Buonomini undertaking could have been 'included, as a rather small part, of the 179 florins' paid for the entire program of works for this same restoration of 1478-1479.<sup>338</sup> Nevertheless, how this Vallambrosan monastery is connected to San Martino, with its Dominican roots, is unclear and what is

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<sup>336</sup> The *Dream of Saint Martin* has recently been attributed to Lorenzo di Credi. Refer to Samantha Hughes-Johnson, 'Divergent Hands: two scenes from the life of Saint Martin in the Oratorio dei Buonomini di San Martino', *Arte Cristiana*, vol c.1 nos 874 and 875, pp. 19-26 and pp. 117- 122.

<sup>337</sup> J. K. Cadogan, *Domenico Ghirlandaio: Artist and Artisan*, London, Yale University Press, 2000, p. 213.

<sup>338</sup> *Ibid.*

more perplexing is that recently there has been a logical argument made which dates the Buonomini paintings to between 1486-1490.<sup>339</sup> Scholars supporting the hypothesis that the frescoes were executed in 1479, while renovations to the oratory were taking place, perhaps do so on the basis of a document initially published by Tomasso Rosselli del Turco in *La Chiesetta di San Martino dei Buonomini a Firenze*. Located in the Archivio Buonomini di San Martino, the document accounts for expenditure on 31 December 1479 of 1037 lire, 7 soldi and 8 denari on lime, lumber, sand, bricks and gravel (*calcina, legname, rena, mattoni ghiaia*), used for some structural work carried out on the oratory prior to the confraternity's purchase of the buildings in 1482.<sup>340</sup> The Buonomini ledgers transparently record that the materials were purchased in order to make a wall, like the one that was already there and that was agreed would stay (*per fare la detta muraglia come rimanemo d accord*).<sup>341</sup> Furthermore, the ledger entry also mentions *ferramenti* or ironmongery which, as I have suggested in section 7:1, refers to two iron studded doors

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<sup>339</sup> S. Hughes-Johnson, 'Divergent Hands: two scenes from the life of Saint Martin in the Oratorio dei Buonomini di San Martino', *Arte Cristiana*, vol c. 1 nos 874 and 875, pp. 117-122.

<sup>340</sup> J. K. Cadogan, *Domenico Ghirlandaio: Artist and Artisan*, London, Yale University Press, 2000, p. 209 cites the document published by Rosselli del Turco: 'Per tanti si sono spesi tra in magistero, calcina, legname, rena, mattoni ghiaia, conci, ferramenti per insino a questo di come partitament appare a libro del camarlingo segna B a c. 5 e tirato a c. 24 e qua' denari si sono pagati per farre la detta muraglia (e acconcimi)'.

<sup>341</sup> *Entrata e Uscita 1478-1482*, c. 178 recto, (1.2.1.0.2.), ABSM. A twenty-first century procurator, Dr Ugo Silli also mentions this document in *Sulla Datazione di un Volume Pergamenaceo del XV Secolo dell' Archivio dei Buonomini*, Firenze 2008 and allows us to be privy to the entire entry:

'Spese fatte nella chasa della nostra residenza allato alla chiesa di sammartino a di 31 dicembre 1479 Y (lire) mille trentasette β (soldi) 7 d (denari) 6 per tanti si sono spesi tra in magistero calcina legname rena mattoni ghiaia conci ferramenta per insino a questo di come partitamente appare a Libro del camarlingo segnato a carta 5 e tirato a carta 24 e qua denari si sono pagati per fare la detta muraglia come rimanemo d accord per rendergli a detti poveri tra della nostra borsa e d altro che per nostro mezzo procacciassmo in cio ricordando a ciascuno la sua coscienza'.

which were likely not part of the oratory's original configuration.<sup>342</sup> It is the final part of the ledger entry however, that has fuelled the fires of support for a 1479 dating of the Buonomini's fresco cycle. The fifteenth-century instruction being,

*'rendergli a detti poveri tra della nostra borsa e d altro che per nostro mezo  
procacciassimo in cio ricordando a ciascuno la sua coscienza'*.<sup>343</sup>

Should the word *rendergli*, a compound of *rendere* and *gli* be translated as 'render', then the instruction would read, in English, 'to render it to the said poor between our purse and the other which for our half will be procured in that reminding each of his conscience'. Consequently, this would allow the reader to imagine that after the oratory was structurally altered, the frescoes, celebrating the shamed poor would then be executed or rendered.

There are however, other ways in which the verb *rendere* can be translated into English and it is the following interpretation of this crucial sentence that the researcher supports, rather than the aforementioned.<sup>344</sup> Should one translate *rendere* as 'to return' or 'to give back', the beginning of the sentence would then read, 'to return it to the said poor

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<sup>342</sup> See section 7:1 and S. Hughes-Johnson, 'Divergent Hands: two scenes from the life of Saint Martin in the Oratorio dei Buonomini di San Martino', *Arte Cristiana*, vol c. 1 nos 874 and 875, p. 119.

<sup>343</sup> *Entrata e Uscita 1478-1482*, c. 178 recto, (1.2.1.0.2.), ABSM.

<sup>344</sup> John Florio, *A World of Words or Most Copious, and Exact Dictionarie in Italian and English Collected by John Florio*, London, Arnold Hatfield for Edward Blount, 1598.



between our purse and the other', which would suggest that the Buonomini had actually used their funds along with donated monies in order to carry out the building works but crucially, part of their plan was to ensure that the cash was returned as it did not actually belong to the confraternity but was already, in the Procurators' minds at least, in the ownership of the shamed poor. A further hint that the return of the money was still in the planning stage and had not yet been brought to fruition comes with the use of the word *procacciassimo*, which is the first person, plural imperfect subjunctive of the verb *procacciare*, meaning 'to obtain' or 'to procure'.<sup>345</sup> However, in this instance it is the 'subjunctive mood' of the term rather than its translation that is most important.<sup>346</sup> Whether we decide to interpret the verb as 'to obtain' or 'to procure' makes little difference to the sentence's meaning but the 'subjunctive mood' essentially illustrates that whichever of the Procurators recorded or dictated this sentence during December 1479, they were expressing their wishes of what would occur – not real facts.<sup>347</sup> Therefore, whether one holds with the translation of *rendergli* as being 'to render it' or 'to return it', the writer's use of the subjunctive in the word *procacciasimo* suggests that whatever was suggested as taking place, was a desire that would hopefully be brought to fruition in the future. Moreover, in 1479 the confraternity were still renting their base from the monks of the Badia of Florence and a remarkable instance of charity, that the researcher suggests is recorded within the Buonomini fresco cycle (the release of ninety-eight prisoners from the Stinche), did not occur until 25 December of that year and

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<sup>345</sup> J. Florio, *A World of Words or Most Copious, and Exact Dictionarie in Italian and English Collected by John Florio*, London, Arnold Hatfield for Edward Blount, 1598.

<sup>346</sup> Laura Soave, *Webster's New World 575+ Italian Verbs*, Hoboken, Wiley, 2006, p. 31.

<sup>347</sup> *Ibid.*

consequently, would have had to have been painted subsequent to the event.<sup>348</sup>

Notwithstanding these factors previously discussed which support a later dating of the Buonomini frescoes, there are also other artistic considerations which encourage the dating of the murals to between 1486 and 1490. These determinants are examined in more detail in due course.<sup>349</sup>

Returning to the frescoes themselves, during a recent restoration programme, financed by Casa Risparmio, which included ‘cleaning the painted surface; consolidating the plasterwork; puttying cracks and gaps and painting over the puttied areas and abrasions on the frescoed surface’, Laura Lucioli, who oversaw the project, identified that each lunette would have taken between four and five days to complete.<sup>350</sup> Forty to fifty days work for several assistants would perhaps not have constituted a colossal expense for the confraternity although there are some who believe that Ghirlandaio’s workshop would not have been recompensed directly. The Italian scholar Ludovica Sebregondi states that ‘the congregation wasn’t allowed to spend money even on decorating or improving the premises’<sup>351</sup> and Paolo Giustiniani, an assistant to the Procurators of the Shamed Poor

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<sup>348</sup> For the release of prisoners from the Stinche in December 1479 see section 4:2 of the present thesis.

<sup>349</sup> For the compositional similarities between the Tornabuoni chapel murals and the Buonomini cycle and similarities between the landscape details within the Buonomini murals and Ghirlandaio’s works completed between 1476 and 1490 see section 7:1. For details of a meeting between Ghirlandaio and Credi see section 7:2.

<sup>350</sup> Laura Lucioli, Art Restorer, speaking in J. M. Bradburne, (ed.), *Hidden Voices: Discovering the Buonomini di San Martino*, Florence, Giunti, 2011, p.39, p. 58 and p. 65.

<sup>351</sup> L. Sebregondi, the Florentine art historian speaking in J. M. Bradburne, (ed.), *Hidden Voices: Discovering the Buonomini di San Martino*, Florence, Giunti, 2011, p. 48.

since 2006 also insists that ‘even [the] frescoes must have been donated’.<sup>352</sup> The money needed to purchase the oratory for the Buonomini from the monks of the Badia was certainly a donation from one of the confraternity’s members, as in 1482 one of the brothers, Domenico di Giovanni Bartoli munificently donated 218 florins towards the purchase.<sup>353</sup>

Despite the various arguments concerning payments, what we can say with some certainty is that time was likely saved during the production of the Buonomini frescoes. It had, after all been common practice for some time to reverse and reuse cartoons<sup>354</sup> and there are additional signs, over and above the usual manifestations of rapid execution connected with painting in *buon fresco*, which reveal that this project was perhaps rushed and certainly relegated to the lower ranks of the workshop (Fig. 40). If however, we query Cadogan’s theory where payment for the Buonomini frescoes is apparently consumed into the accounts of another disassociated commission, surely we should be giving credence to archival entries that at least refer to the Buonomini and coincide with the later dating of the oratory’s frescoes? For instance, within the fund of Buonomini documents held by the Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze there is a ledger

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<sup>352</sup> L. Sebreondi and P. Giustiniani, assistant to the Buonomini in J. M. Bradburne, (ed.), *Hidden Voices: Discovering the Buonomini di San Martino*, Florence, Giunti, 2011, p. 48.

<sup>353</sup> U. Silli, *Sulla Datazione di un Volume Pergamenaceo del XV Secolo Dell’ Archivio dei Buonomini*, Florence, 2008, p. 10 references the document in 1.1.4.0.1 no. 2, ABSM.

<sup>354</sup> See Michelle O’ Malley, ‘Finding Fame: painting and the making of careers in Renaissance Italy’, *Renaissance Studies*, vol. 24, no. 1, 2010, p. 9 and p. 114. See also Francis Ames-Lewis, ‘Drapery – “Pattern” Drawings in Ghirlandaio’s Workshop and Ghirlandaio’s Early Apprenticeship’, *The Art Bulletin*, vol. 63, 1981, pp. 50-51.

containing entries that are highly pertinent to this argument. The *Libro per Procuratori de Poveri Vergognosi 1485 al 18 Maggio 1487 e Ottobre 1489* contains indirect documentary evidence which connects Ghirlandaio's extended family to the confraternity during the period that and crucially, mentions the painter in the months that the researcher argues would have followed the completion of the Buonomini murals. For example, in 1487 the painter's cousin, Ambrogio was given 140 lire for the dowry of a female relative of his wife, 'at present in the house of Domenico del Ghirlandaio painter'.<sup>355</sup> A second ledger entry in January 1490 (F.S.) reveals that a further 25 lire was donated to Ambrogio (Domenico's cousin) for clothes for the family while a third, final and unspecified amount is given for a child in Tommaso Bigordi's (Domenico's father's) household who wished to enter a convent.<sup>356</sup> It is also important to note here that by 1484 Domenico's father had emancipated all of his sons. This meant that they each became Paterfamilias of their own branch of the family and were responsible for all legal and financial obligations pertaining to their particular unit.<sup>357</sup> Nevertheless, documentary evidence shows that the Ghirlandaio brothers' children and the offspring of more distant relatives could often be found in their various uncles' and cousins' homes and despite

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<sup>355</sup> J. K. Cadogan, *Domenico Ghirlandaio: Artist and Artisan*, London, Yale University Press, 2000, p. 212 mentions Rosselli-Sassatelli del Turco's publication in 1928 of various documents belonging to one of the Buonomini funds and A. Spicciani's discussion of a 1428 donation of 140 lire to dower a female from the household of Domenico Ghirlandaio's cousin. For the original manuscripts see the *Libro per Procuratori de Poveri Vergognosi 1485 – 1497 e Ottobre 1489*, c. 3 verso, BNCF.

<sup>356</sup> The *Libro per Procuratori de Poveri Vergognosi 1485- 1497 e Ottobre 1489*, c. 15 recto, BNCF details the 25 lire donation 'per vesture lo una famiglia'. For the dowering of a child in Tommaso Bigordi's household see J. K. Cadogan, *Domenico Ghirlandaio: Artist and Artisan*, London, Yale University Press, 2000, p. 212 who mentions Rosselli-Sassatelli del Turco's publication of the document in 1928.

<sup>357</sup> J. K. Cadogan, *Domenico Ghirlandaio: Artist and Artisan*, London, Yale University Press, 2000, p. 16, p. 213 and p. 348.

their lodging addresses, they were still subject to the financial benefits or constraints of their closest kin.<sup>358</sup> By 1491 Domenico had completed both the humble Buonomini project and the magnificent commission in Santa Maria Novella and can be found working at the Convent of Santa Elisabetta delle Convertite, decorating the ‘secondo piano a Francesco [or Francesca] Buonamici’.<sup>359</sup> The text is dense and difficult to decipher but whether the rooms belong to a male or a female, the patronymic conjures associations with Francesco Buonamici who was both a generous patron of the Buonomini and subsequently called to become *Proposto* of the Procurators of the Shamed Poor in 1501.<sup>360</sup>

Domenico’s connection with the Buonomini does not end with a few lines written in an ancient ledger as patronage and consanguinity by way of relatives, neighbours and friends ‘were inescapable’ in Renaissance Florence.<sup>361</sup> This Ciceronian notion of mutual benefaction was not however the only school of philosophy related to goodwill and patronage that *quattrocento* thinkers had recourse to. For instance, had the frescoes been offered as a gift to the confraternity from Ghirlandaio, the Procurators of the Shamed

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<sup>358</sup> For reproductions of personal documents and tax returns pertaining to Domenico Ghirlandaio and his family refer to J. K. Cadogan, *Domenico Ghirlandaio: Artist and Artisan*, London, Yale University Press, 2000, pp. 335- 381.

<sup>359</sup> *Libro per Procuratori de Poveri Vergognosi 1485-1497 e Ottobre 1489*, c. 3 verso, c. 15 recto, c. 18 verso, BNCF .

<sup>360</sup> For Francesco Buonamici’s generous donation of 400 lire to the Buonomini see *Entrata e Uscita del Proposto*, 1479-1481, c. 8 verso, (1.2.4.0.1.), ABSM. For the record of past *proposti* one must request the ledger from the current good men as it is still in use today and is secreted in the Sala Riunione.

<sup>361</sup> N. Eckstein, ‘Neighborhood as Microcosm’, in R. J. Crumb and J. T. Paoletti, *Renaissance Florence: A Social History*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 220. D. Kent explores the remit of ‘*parenti, vicini e amici*’ in *Friendship, Love and Trust in Renaissance Florence*, London, Harvard University Press, 2009.

Poor would not necessarily have contemplated drawing up a document concerning the program of painted decorations, nor would any transactions between them and the artist's workshop have been recorded within their ledgers. The ancient stoic, statesman and advisor to the Emperor Nero, Lucius Annaeus Seneca (4 B.C. - 65 A.D.), whose manuscript *De Beneficiis* would have been available in Florence during the *quattrocento*,<sup>362</sup> informs the reader that:

No one writes down his gifts in a ledger, or like a grasping creditor demands repayment to the day and hour. A good man never thinks of such matters, unless reminded of them by someone returning his gifts; otherwise they become like debts owing to him. It is base usury to regard a benefit as an investment... the book-keeping of benefits is simple, it is all expenditure; if any one returns it, that is clear gain; if he does not return it, it is not lost, I gave it for the sake of giving.<sup>363</sup>

Accordingly, this passage most fittingly invokes not only a form of prescribed protocol concerning unilateral grants, which could have been taken up by the Procurators of the Shamed Poor of Florence but also refers directly to the literal meaning of the word Buonomini in relation to such activities.

What is more, it is a perfectly acceptable notion to acknowledge that deals, much more lucrative than a small fresco cycle, would have been brokered and attested to verbally in

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<sup>362</sup> B. L. Ullman and P. A. Stadter, *The Public Library of Renaissance Florence*, Padova, Editrice Antenore, 1972, p. 223, informs us that the library at San Marco held a copy of Seneca's *De Beneficiis* (entry 915 of the catalogue) and p. 109 further informs the reader that no manuscripts recorded in this inventory were known to have entered the library after 1499.

<sup>363</sup> Lucius A. Seneca, *On Benefits*, trans. A Stewart, London, George Bell and Sons, 1887, pp. 4-5.

the streets, piazzas, confraternities and private residences of *quattrocento* Florence.<sup>364</sup> It is likely that this confraternal connection formed the impetus for the initial introduction of Domenico Ghirlandaio to the Buonomini di San Martino. Records from the flagellant company of San Paolo show that Domenico and his brothers Davide and Benedetto attended meetings there on a regular basis from 1472 to 1494 and it is here, that their membership could have coincided with that of another artist and Procurator of the Shamed Poor, Francesco d'Antonio del Cierico (1433-1484).<sup>365</sup>

Francesco d'Antonio del Cierico (also referred to as Francesco d'Antonio Miniatore) was certainly working in service to the *poveri vergognosi* in the 1470s and records show that he was still active during the early 1480s,<sup>366</sup> when Lorenzo de' Medici's prolific presence within the Buonomini and that of his assassinated brother, Giuliano were replaced by Pandolfo Rucellai (1436-1497) and Carlo Biliotti.<sup>367</sup> Rucellai, according to Konrad

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<sup>364</sup> N. Eckstein, 'Neighborhood as Microcosm', in R. J. Crumb and J. T. Paoletti, *Renaissance Florence: A Social History*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2006, pp. 219-239 and S. Strocchia, 'Theatres of Everyday Life' in R. J. Crum a. J. T. Paoletti, *Renaissance Florence: A Social History*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2006, pp. 55-80.

<sup>365</sup> See J. K. Cadogan, *Domenico Ghirlandaio: Artist and Artisan*, London, Yale University Press, 2000, p. 213 for the connections between Domenico and Francesco d'Antonio. See also pp. 337-340 for membership records of the Confraternity of San Paolo.

<sup>366</sup> *Entrata e Uscita March 1478 – 1482*, loose leaves, 6<sup>th</sup> May, 1482, (1.2.1.0.2.), ABSM. Francesco d'Antonio Miniatore is mentioned frequently in this ledger. There is also a further ledger which records the confraternity's debits and credits from 1469-1478 (1.2.1.0.1.), ABSM. This tome has been rebound and the pages re-set although part of the original cover has been secreted in an envelope attached to the new cover. This piece of velum has upon it a depiction of Saint Martin and the Beggar which appears to have been begun by Francesco d'Antonio, but remains unfinished.

<sup>367</sup> By 1478 Carlo Biliotti's presence within the Buonomini is discernible from the fact that he regularly takes his turn to scribe at the weekly meetings and is mentioned repeatedly in the ledgers. Pandolfo Rucellai is also mentioned in the *Entrata e Uscita*

Eisenbichler, had previously been placed in the Company of the Blacks (a fraternal society which provided comfort and support to those sentenced to death) in order to keep abreast of the machinations which inevitably took place in their ‘clandestine’ meeting place.<sup>368</sup> Carlo Biliotti too, had at least since 1478, been a ubiquitous presence at San Martino while simultaneously attending the Neri with Rucellai. Thus if Lorenzo had achieved this type of control vicariously at the Neri, there is no reason why he could not have implemented a similar system at San Martino. And interestingly the confraternity’s records show that by 1486, mentions of Lorenzo de’ Medici in the Buonomini account books had almost ceased as correspondingly, both Rucellai and Biliotti became omnipresent.<sup>369</sup> Pandolfo Rucellai was clearly a man who got things done, a character trait which *Il Magnifico* would certainly have found extremely useful politically and socially. This idiosyncrasy was actually attested to by Pandolfo’s brother Bernardo, who stated that he ‘does everything else before he attends to his and my affairs’.<sup>370</sup> Moreover

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1469 – 1478, (1.2.1.0.1.), ABSM, although it is perhaps from 1485 that his presence increases significantly. During this same year the ledgers abound with Carlo Biliotti’s name also. By 1486 mentions of Lorenzo de’ Medici are few.

<sup>368</sup> For detailed information on Lorenzo de’ Medici’s proclivity for placing supporters and key members of his circle within lay institutions see K. Eisenbichler, ‘Lorenzo de’ Medici e la Congregazione de’ Neri nella Compagnia della Croce al Tempio’, *Archivio Storico Italiano*, vol. 150, 1992, pp. 343-370 and K. Eisenbichler, ‘The Suppression of Confraternities in Enlightenment Florence’, in N. Terpstra, (ed.), *The Politics of Ritual Kinship: Confraternities and Social Order in Early Modern Italy*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000, pp. 262-279.

<sup>369</sup> *Entrata e Uscita 1478-1482*, (1.2.1.0.2.) ABSM and *Entrata e Uscita 1469-1478*, (1.2.1.0.1.), ABSM, which actually runs until 1488.

<sup>370</sup> Francis W. Kent, *Household and Lineage in Renaissance Florence: The Family Life of the Capponi, Ginori and Rucellai*, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1977, p. 71.



Pandolfo's authoratitive tone is also conveyed to us via a newly uncovered note that bears his signature.<sup>371</sup>

So, it was into this pro-Medicean milieu that Francesco d'Antonio may have introduced Domenico Ghirlandaio to those men who ostensibly controlled the confraternity during the last two decades of the *quattrocento*<sup>372</sup> and in turn to the commission which would illustrate, in visual terms, the Buonomini's close bonds with the Medici. The confraternity had, after all, included portraits of Lorenzo and Giuliano de' Medici, performing an activity associated with the Buonomini, based on one of the seven corporal Works of Mercy (Figs. 41 & 42).<sup>373</sup> Alternatively, if the bonds of brotherhood at San

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<sup>371</sup> See Appendix III for a transcription by Elena Brizio of note #Pandolfo Rucellai, Loose Leaves, *Quaderno del Camarlingo o Sia Proposto dal 1474-1481*, (1.2.3.0.1.), ABSM.

This note was uncovered during the course of the present research and was immediately brought to the attention of Dr Ugo Silli, Procurator of the Shamed Poor. The researcher and Dr Silli have recently filed this small document, along with several tiny parchment notes referring to bread deliveries and orders (referred to in section 5:2 of the present thesis) inside the *Quaderno del Camarlingo o Sia Proposto dal 1474-1481* (1.2.3.0.1.), ABSM. The note is undated, although it is *quattrocento* in style, and is simply signed 'Pandolfo'. Nevertheless, when compared to Pandolfo Rucellai's full signature, present on Loose leaves, note #6, *Quaderno del Camarlingo o Sia Proposto dal 1474-1481*, (1.2.3.0.1.), ABSM, the hand is clearly identical.

<sup>372</sup> *Entrata e Uscita 1469-1478*, (1.2.1.0.1.), ABSM (with adjustments until 1488) illustrates well Rucellai and Biliotti's various terms as *proposti*. It is interesting also to consider that each term as *proposto* lasted for a month (and still does for that matter). This is meant to ensure that the power within the confraternity does not remain with one person. See also J. M. Bradburne, (ed.), *Hidden Voices: Discovering the Buonomini di San Martino*, Florence, Giunti, 2011, p. 46 for a contemporary discussion on maintaining the balance of power within the confraternity.

<sup>373</sup> For a discussion on the involvement of Lorenzo and Giuliano de' Medici with the Buonomini di San Martino and the notion that the confraternity's oratory could be appreciated as Medicean ritual space, see section 4: 2 of this thesis and S. Hughes-Johnson, 'Early Medici Patronage and the Confraternity of the Buonomini di San Martino', *Confraternitas*, vol. 22, no 2, 2012, pp. 3-25.

Paolo had in fact not made it possible for Ghirlandaio's introduction to the decision makers at San Martino, certainly by 1486, Francesco d'Antonio and Pandolfo Rucellai did in fact become closely acquainted with Domenico's work. Both procurators, acting as arbiters of artistic taste and conversant with the associated cost of such commissions, were appointed, during the aforementioned year, to appraise the artist's *Coronation of the Virgin*, painted for the Franciscans at Narni.<sup>374</sup>

There has been mention within this section of the social nexus that lay confraternities provided but little consideration has been given to the reverent beliefs which led people to attend such institutions. Accordingly, the following section will address various aspects of lay piety, what stimulated individuals to express their faith outwardly and how they would go about fulfilling this need.

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<sup>374</sup> J. K. Cadogan, *Domenico Ghirlandaio: Artist and Artisan*, London, Yale University Press, 2000, p. 213 and p. 357.

## Chapter 4

### Piety, Patronage and Ritual Space: The Lay Confraternity of the Buonomini di San Martino During the Medicean 'Golden Age'

## Section 4:1

## Aspects of Lay Piety

If attempts are made to define the term ‘lay piety’ then a conflict occurs between notions from the past and the present. For instance the word ‘lay’ characterises the general populace and differentiates it from the clergy.<sup>375</sup> Clarification of the word ‘piety’ supposes an ostensible show of religious confidence or faith.<sup>376</sup> During the fifteenth-century however, religious faith was, as Richard Trexler put it, ‘shared behaviour’ and the clergy and laity had many practices and beliefs in common.<sup>377</sup> Making a distinction between clergy and the laity during the *quattrocento* is misleading as Christianity ran through every warp and weft fibre in the fabric of life in Renaissance Florence.<sup>378</sup> Furthermore, contemporary citizens of the republic would perhaps not have distinguished between the secular and the sacred.<sup>379</sup> Consequently, in order to explain what sort of features characterised lay piety during the fifteenth century, one must decide whether to make an artificial distinction and separate the concept from other aspects of piety as propounded by the clergy. The ‘ordained clergy’ of course were distinct from the other religious people of Florence as the former had been formally invested into the clergy

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<sup>375</sup> See K. A. Edwards, ‘Oxford Bibliographies’, <http://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780195399301/obo-9780195399301-0072.xml>, 2013, (accessed 20 May 2014).

<sup>376</sup> Ibid.

<sup>377</sup> R. Trexler, *Public Life in Renaissance Florence*, London, Cornell University Press, 1980, p. xviii.

<sup>378</sup> See R. Trexler, *Public Life in Renaissance Florence*, London, Cornell University Press, 1980, p. 33-36 for the secular clergy.

<sup>379</sup> J. Henderson, *Piety and Charity in Late Medieval Florence*, London, University of Chicago Press, 1994, p. 49.

whereas the latter had not. Nevertheless, those who make up the ‘lay’ aspect of the phrase, worked together with frocked individuals in order to express their shared faith according to prescribed church doctrine. Hence it prudent to make a distinction between the lay and the ordained while remaining mindful of their collaborations. With regard to piety however, we should not rush into constructing an artificial distinction, as the outward expression of faith was common to the whole of society, not simply those who had taken religious vows. Accordingly, the working definition that shall be used to delineate the term ‘lay piety’ in this particular instance will be as follows: the outward expression by non-ordained religious people of aspects of church doctrine, religious learning and faith.

Now that the term ‘lay piety’ has been clarified, other questions must be proposed and answered. Firstly, what motivated individuals to express their faith so obviously and secondly, how did they approach achieving this need?

The two main biblical texts most often referred to with regard to lay piety and charity are contained in two New Testament writings: one by Saint Paul; the other attributed to Saint Matthew.<sup>380</sup> The former Pauline concept of piety<sup>381</sup> mentions love and consequently, in the twenty-first century, readings from this saint’s Epistle have become popular homilies at Christian wedding ceremonies. Love however, as a theological concept, is a complex

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<sup>380</sup> 1 Corinthians 13:1-13 and Matthew 22:39.

<sup>381</sup> J. Henderson, *Piety and Charity in Late Medieval Florence*, London University of Chicago Press, 1994, p. 9.

theme which encompasses more than inter-human affection. Pauline love embodies a type of devotion that leads the performer directly towards the path to paradise. Identified as the greatest of all virtues, the love of which Saint Paul speaks is Christian charity:<sup>382</sup>

If I speak with the tongues of men, and of angels, and have not love, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal... and if I should have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not love, I am nothing. And if I should distribute all my goods to feed the poor... and have not love, it profiteth me nothing. Love is patient, is kind: love envieth not, dealeth not perversely; is not puffed up; is not ambitious... And now there remain faith, hope, and love, these three: but the greatest of these is love.<sup>383</sup>

Saint Matthew also writes of the importance of love when he explains that the second greatest commandment, second only to one's love of God, should be to 'love thy neighbour as thyself'.<sup>384</sup>

Apart from the instructions contained in biblical sources, which direct Christian folk on piety through charity and love towards one's neighbour, perhaps one of the greatest motivations to perform good deeds and behave piously day-to-day was the fear of death and the afterlife. How it played on the medieval mind is evidenced in the exposition of a book from the Middle Ages entitled *Book of the Craft of Dying*, which was composed so as to aid individuals to come to terms with their eventual demise:

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<sup>382</sup> Profound thanks to the British Provincial Minister Brother Paul of the Order of Friars Minor Capuchin for his clarification of this matter.

<sup>383</sup> 1 Corinthians 13:1-13.

<sup>384</sup> Matthew 22:39.

For as much as the passage of death, of the wretchedness of the exile of this world, for ignorance (uncunning) of dying – not only to lewd men (laymen) but also to religious and devout persons – seemeth wonderfully hard and perilous, and also right fearful and horrible; therefore in this present matter and treatise, that is of the Craft of Dying, is drawn and contained a short manner of exhortation, for teaching and comforting of them that be in point of death.<sup>385</sup>

The transitory quality of life was but a drop in the ocean of time in comparison to the eternity awaiting souls in the afterlife.<sup>386</sup> Dante's *Divine Comedy* demonstrates that Hell and Paradise were emblazoned in the medieval and Renaissance consciousness and that Purgatory became a tangible 'dialogue between the living and the dead' (Fig. 43).<sup>387</sup> Furthermore, death was often premature and unmerciful during this era<sup>388</sup> and various plagues and sicknesses all added to the 'apocalyptic climate of the age', which can be seen reflected in visual arts (Figs. 44 and 45).<sup>389</sup>

Just as there were 'ambiguous boundaries' between the sacred and the secular in fifteenth-century society, the same can perhaps be said of the obscure margins between

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<sup>385</sup> Elina Gertsman, 'Visualizing Death: Medieval Plagues and the Macabre' in F. Mormando and T. Worcester (eds.), *Piety and Plague from Byzantium to the Baroque*, Kirkville, Trueman State University Press, 2007, p. 64.

<sup>386</sup> Gordon. Belyea, 'Piety 1270-1500', [http://individual.utoronto.ca/hayes/survey2/07\\_lma\\_piety.htm](http://individual.utoronto.ca/hayes/survey2/07_lma_piety.htm), (accessed 10 May 2014).

<sup>387</sup> Joelle Rollo-Kister, 'Death and the Fraternity. A short Study on the Dead in Late Medieval Confraternities', *Confraternitas*, vol. 9, no. 1, 1998, p. 7.

<sup>388</sup> See J. Henderson, 'Historians and Plagues in Pre-Industrial Italy over the *longue durée*', *History and Philosophy of the Life Sciences*, vol. 25, 2003, pp. 481-499.

<sup>389</sup> G. Belyea, 'Piety 1270-1500'. Available at [http://individual.utoronto.ca/hayes/survey2/07\\_lma\\_piety.htm](http://individual.utoronto.ca/hayes/survey2/07_lma_piety.htm), (accessed 10 May 2014).

some Christian and pagan texts.<sup>390</sup> Social historian, Marvin Becker suggests that the moral life of Socrates (c.470-399 B.C.), the ancient Greek philosopher, was employed during the Renaissance as ‘a model for lay sanctity’<sup>391</sup> and there are certainly parallels between the way that Socrates conducted himself in ancient Athens and the manner in which Jesus Christ conducted his mortal life some three and a half centuries later. Both men were frugal, with Jesus quoted by Saint Matthew as having said, ‘foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head’.<sup>392</sup> Likewise Socrates informs us, when questioned about his frugality, ‘which of the two will adopt a soldier's life more easily, the man who cannot get along without expensive living or he whom whatever comes to hand suffices?’<sup>393</sup> Likewise both men upset the hierarchical structures within the cities that they lived and worked in and were executed as criminals<sup>394</sup> with their words coming to us, via their supporters, after their deaths. Jesus’ words and deeds of course are chronicled by the apostles while Socrates was defended by Plato and Xenophon.<sup>395</sup> Furthermore, Socrates can also be considered ‘a preacher of

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<sup>390</sup> R. F. E. Weissman, ‘Cults and Contexts: In Search of the Renaissance Confraternity’ in K. Eisenbichler (ed.), *Crossing the Boundaries: Christian Piety and the Arts in Medieval and Renaissance Confraternities*, Michigan, Kalamazoo, 1991, p. 204.

<sup>391</sup> Marvin B. Becker, ‘Aspects of Lay Piety in Early Renaissance Florence’ in C. Trinkhaus and H. A. Oberman (eds.), *The Pursuit of Holiness in Late Medieval and Renaissance Religion: Papers from the University of Michigan Conference*, Leiden, Brill, 1974, p. 197.

<sup>392</sup> Matthew 8:20.

<sup>393</sup> William. F. Bostick, ‘Jesus and Socrates’, *The Biblical World*, vol. 47, no. 4, 1916, p. 249.

<sup>394</sup> Ibid.

<sup>395</sup> C. W. Votaw, ‘The Gospels and Contemporary Biographies: Concluded’, *The American Journal of Theology*, vol. 19, no. 2, 1915, p. 220.



moral self-mastery and self-sufficiency' foreshadowing Christ 'who preached the oriental religion of redemption'.<sup>396</sup>

According to Plato (c.428-347 B.C.) who, in his *Apologies*, has the character Socrates attend an Athenian court and defend his honour, the latter philosopher is furnished with the lines:

I do know that injustice and disobedience to a better, whether God or man, is evil and dishonourable, and I will never fear or avoid a possible good rather than a certain evil.<sup>397</sup>

It is within this small part of the polemic that the author begins to suggest Socrates' inner morality which, during the Renaissance, could easily be equated to contemporary writings on charity and the love of one's neighbour.<sup>398</sup>

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<sup>396</sup> Michael Tierney, 'Socrates and his Message', *Studies: an Irish Quarterly Review*, vol.33, no. 132, 1944, p. 487.

<sup>397</sup> Plato, *The Apology*, trans. B. Jowett, New York, C. Scribner and Sons, 1871. Available from <http://www.sacred-texts.com/cla/plato/apology.htm>, (accessed 10 May 2014).

<sup>398</sup> Particularly pertinent is 'Letter to the Faithful' by Francis, of Assisi, Saint, *The Writings of Saint Francis of Assisi*, trans. Fr. P. Robinson, Philadelphia, The Dolphin Press, 1905, p. 101. Available from <http://www.sacred-texts.com/chr/wosf/index.htm>, (accessed 10 May 2014).

Socrates also warns the men of Athens to be mindful of their souls above all else and in turn, that the inner goodness and honour that emanates from this vital, spiritual essence will affect each and every aspect of life:

For I do nothing but go about persuading you all, old and young alike, not to take thought for your persons or your properties, but first and chiefly to care about the greatest improvement of the soul. I tell you that virtue is not given by money, but that from virtue comes money and every other good of man, public as well as private.<sup>399</sup>

Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), writing centuries later, similarly understands and extols the effects of virtue on society:

Again, since man by his nature is a social animal, these virtues, in so far as they are in him according to the condition of his nature, are called "social" virtues; since it is by reason of them that man behaves himself well in the conduct of human affairs.<sup>400</sup>

Religious doctrine played a great part in motivating individuals to act upon the religious principles that were transmitted from both the pulpit and the Bible, and these precepts, which centered on love and charity, were often conveyed in different ways, depending on

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<sup>399</sup> Plato, *The Apology*, trans. B. Jowett, New York, C. Scribner and Sons, 1871. Available from <http://www.sacred-texts.com/cla/plato/apology.htm>, (accessed 10 May 2014).

<sup>400</sup> 'On the Cardinal Virtues', (five articles), 'Whether the Cardinal Virtues are fittingly divided in social virtues, perfecting, perfect and exemplar virtues' by Thomas Aquinas, Saint, *Summa Theologica*, 5 vols., New York, Benziger Bros., 1947. Available from <http://www.sacred-texts.com/chr/aquinas/summa/sum198.htm>, (accessed 10 May 2014).

which religious order one favoured. For instance, Augustinian piety advances love as an encouragement to lead a Christian life rather than eschewing sin and fearing death.<sup>401</sup> Sin and evil, like good deeds and piety could, according to Saint Augustine (354-430 A.D.), be cultivated from the same fertile earth yet he stresses, using Matthew 7:18 to make his point, that if the tree is a good one then the fruit that it bears are more likely to be good than bad.<sup>402</sup> Saint Augustine also extols the virtue of charity and explains that a place in heaven can be almost assured should an individual pay ‘due repentance’ through benefaction:

I say ‘due repentance’ to signify that they must not be barren of almsgiving, on which divine Scripture lays so much stress that our Lord tells us in advance that, on the bare basis of fruitfulness in alms, he will impute merit to those on his right hand; and, on the same basis of unfruitfulness, demerit to those on his left—when he shall say to the former, ‘Come, blessed of my Father, receive the Kingdom’, but to the latter, ‘Depart into everlasting fire’.<sup>403</sup>

Franciscan piety however, ‘precisely imitates the pattern of the primitive church and the life of the Apostles in every detail’.<sup>404</sup> Evangelism, penance, humility and the vow of

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<sup>401</sup> D. Weinstein, ‘The Art of Dying Well and Popular Piety in the Preaching and Thought of Girolamo Savonarola’, in M. Tetel, R. G. Witt, and R. Goffen, (eds.), *Life and Death in Fifteenth-Century Florence*, London, Duke University Press, 1989, pp. 99-100.

<sup>402</sup> ‘The Problem of Evil’, Chapter 4 in Augustine, Saint, *Handbook on Faith, Hope and Love*. Available from <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/augustine/enchiridion.chapter4.html>, (accessed 19 June 2014).

<sup>403</sup> ‘Faith and Works’ Chapter 18 in Augustine, Saint, *Handbook on Faith, Hope and Love*. Available from <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/augustine/enchiridion.chapter18.html>, (accessed 19 June 2014).

<sup>404</sup> J. Henderson, *Piety and Charity in Late Medieval Florence*, London, University of Chicago Press, 1994, p. 21. See also William Hood, ‘Saint Dominic’s Manners of Praying: Gestures in Fra Angelico’s Cell Frescoes at San Marco’, *The Art Bulletin*, vol. 68, no. 2, 1986, p. 197, on Franciscan piety.

poverty (the latter notion being a contentious ideal according to early modern legislature and literature) are also central to the spirituality of this order.<sup>405</sup> In his early thirteenth-century *Letter to the Faithful*, Saint Francis of Assisi (c.1181-1226), founder of the Franciscan mendicant order, urges ‘all Christians, religious, clerics, and laics, men and women, to all who dwell in the whole’<sup>406</sup> to abide by the Gospel of Saint Matthew<sup>407</sup> and ‘love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart and with thy whole soul and . . . thy neighbour as thyself’.<sup>408</sup> Besides this, Saint Francis then goes on to explain the notion of charity to one’s neighbour when he tells the faithful to ‘love them as himself... let him at least do them not harm, but let him do good to them’.<sup>409</sup> The importance of Christian love, in general, is underlined once more by Saint Francis in his *Prayer to Obtain Divine Love*, which was authenticated as his own work in the mid-fifteenth century by Saint Bernardino of Siena (1380-1444).<sup>410</sup> The supplication reads as follows:

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<sup>405</sup> Nick Havely, *Dante and the Franciscans: Poverty and Papacy in the ‘Commedia’*, Cambridge, University of Cambridge Press, 2004, pp. 4-9.

<sup>406</sup> Francis, of Assisi, Saint, *The Writings of Saint Francis of Assisi*, trans. Fr. P. Robinson, Philadelphia, The Dolphin Press, 1905. Available from <http://www.sacred-texts.com/chr/wosf/index.htm> (accessed 10 May 2014).

<sup>407</sup> Matthew 22: 37-39.

<sup>408</sup> ‘Letter to the Faithful’ by Francis, of Assisi, Saint, *The Writings of Saint Francis of Assisi*, trans. Fr. P. Robinson, Philadelphia, The Dolphin Press, 1905, p.101. Available from <http://www.sacred-texts.com/chr/wosf/index.htm>, (accessed 10 May 2014).

<sup>409</sup> Ibid. p.101- 102. Available from <http://www.sacred-texts.com/chr/wosf/index.htm>, (accessed 10 May 2014).

<sup>410</sup> ‘Prayer to Obtain Divine Love’ by Francis, of Assisi, Saint, *The Writings of Saint Francis of Assisi*, trans. Fr. P. Robinson, Philadelphia, The Dolphin Press, 1905, p. 145. Available from <http://www.sacred-texts.com/chr/wosf/wosf20.htm>, (accessed 10 May 2014).

I beseech Thee, O Lord, that the fiery and sweet strength of Thy love may absorb my soul from all things that are under heaven, that I may die for love of Thy love as Thou didst deign to die for love of my love.<sup>411</sup>

Similarly Dominican spirituality was based on the teachings of Saint Dominic, which centered on scholarship, poverty, humility, corporal mortification and preaching the word of God.<sup>412</sup> This is particularly pertinent to this study since the lay confraternity of the Buonomini di San Martino was founded by the Dominican Archbishop Saint Antoninus. This mendicant order's piety is further informed by the thirteenth-century writings of Saint Thomas Aquinas. Within his *Summa Theologica* Aquinas repeats that charity 'is the foremost of the virtues' and is a kind of desire-driven love.<sup>413</sup> Furthermore, this virtue drives all human acts and resides within us courtesy of the Holy Ghost.<sup>414</sup> Saint Thomas Aquinas also explains how charity or love can become more prolific:

Charity does not actually increase through every act of charity, but each act of charity disposes to an increase of charity, in so far as one act of charity makes man more ready to act again according to charity, and this readiness increasing,

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<sup>411</sup> Ibid.

<sup>412</sup> W. Hood, 'Saint Dominic's Manners of Praying: Gestures in Fra Angelico's Cell Frescoes at S. Marco', *The Art Bulletin*, vol. 68, no. 2, 1986, p. 197.

<sup>413</sup> 'On the Subject of Charity', (twelve articles), 'Whether the will is the subject of charity', Objection 2 and the Reply to Objection 2 by T. Aquinas, Saint, *Summa Theologica*, 5 vols., New York, Benziger Bros., 1947. Available from <http://www.sacred-texts.com/chr/aquinas/summa/sum279.htm>, (accessed 10 May 2014).

<sup>414</sup> Ibid.

man breaks out into an act of more fervent love, and strives to advance in charity, and then his charity increases actually.<sup>415</sup>

What is more, this philosopher, theologian and doctor of the church affirms that this ‘increase of charity is directed to an end, which is not in this [existence], but in a future life’.<sup>416</sup>

In this life however, individuals residing in fifteenth-century Florence would have been instructed on, and would likely have understood, the concept of God existing in their neighbours. Equally, yet paradoxically, they would have also been aware that the Christian love or charity that they endowed upon those around them allowed the same ‘neighbour to be in God’ also.<sup>417</sup> Tales from the lives of saints were often used to illustrate this contradiction and one example can be found in the oratory of the Buonomini di San Martino in Florence. Above the altar in this little chapel is a pair of frescoes: one illustrating the confraternity’s patron dividing his cloak for a beggar (Fig. 6); the other, *The Dream of Saint Martin* (Fig. 9), which shows the events that apparently

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<sup>415</sup> ‘On the Subject of Charity’, (twelve articles), ‘Whether charity increases through every act of charity?’ by T. Aquinas, Saint, *Summa Theologica*, 5 vols, New York, Benziger Bros., 1947. Available from <http://www.sacred-texts.com/chr/aquinas/summa/sum279.htm>, (accessed 10 May 2014).

<sup>416</sup> Ibid.

<sup>417</sup> ‘Of the Object of Charity’, (twelve articles), ‘Whether the Love of God Extends to Charity or to Our Neighbour’ by T. Aquinas, Saint, *Summa Theologica*, 5 vols., New York, Benziger Bros., 1947. Available from <http://www.sacred-texts.com/chr/aquinas/summa/sum280.htm>, (accessed 10 May 2014).

occurred in Martin's home the following day.<sup>418</sup> When Martin gave the portion of cloth to the naked vagrant, as he returned to the safety of the city of Amiens, he did so out of Christian charity and as a response to one of the Seven Corporal Works of Mercy; clothing the naked.<sup>419</sup> It transpires that the beggar was not simply a vagabond, he was Jesus in disguise and this deception, demonstrated visually in plaster and paint in the Buonomini's meeting place, explains the concept that God can actually be within our neighbours. The second fresco, *The Dream of Saint Martin* (Fig. 9), provides further evidence that this abstraction of a spiritual entity residing within a human being is possible as the son of God himself, accompanied by a choir of angels, comes to Saint Martin as he sleeps, in order to explain what had occurred the previous day. This celestial visitation, which took place while Martin was at his most vulnerable, is also perhaps illustrative that even in sleep and unarmed, God was with Martin too, just as he had been on the previous day when he worked within this mortal and encouraged him to perform a Work of Mercy.<sup>420</sup>

Similarly, the same individuals who would have viewed the newly-painted frescoes of the Buonomini di San Martino and others like them throughout *quattrocento* Florence would have likely understood what Thomas Aquinas had to say with regard to the Works of

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<sup>418</sup> See Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend: Selections*, trans. C. Stace, Saint Ives, Clays Ltd., 1998, pp. 293-301.

<sup>419</sup> Ibid. p. 293.

<sup>420</sup> Ibid.

Mercy.<sup>421</sup> He explained that performing an act of mercy was the outward or pious expression of Christian love, known as an ‘external work’.<sup>422</sup> Conversely, the ‘inward love of charity’ is a greater power altogether, greater than the love of a neighbour and greater than the act of mercy that we perform towards him because the love of charity, situated inside a person, ‘likens us to God by uniting Him in the bond of love’.<sup>423</sup>

Within more secular, contemporary fifteenth-century texts, the love of one’s neighbour is similarly explained as being a ‘work of piety’.<sup>424</sup> For example, Leon Battista Alberti (1404-1472) endows his character Giannozzo with the speech that includes the lines:

Good men should all consider themselves friends. Even if you do not know them personally, you should always love and help good and virtuous men.<sup>425</sup>

Any discussion of piety in fifteenth-century Florence would be incomplete without making mention of the city’s diminutive, yet outspoken, Archbishop Antoninus, Prior of

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<sup>421</sup> ‘On the Subject of Mercy’, (four articles), ‘Whether the will is the subject of charity’, Objection 2 and the Reply to Objection 2 at Replies to Objections 2 and 3 in T. Aquinas, Saint, *Summa Theologica*, 5 vols., New York, Benziger Bros., 1947. Available from <http://www.sacred-texts.com/chr/aquinas/summa/sum285.htm>, (accessed 10 May 2014).

<sup>422</sup> Ibid.

<sup>423</sup> Ibid.

<sup>424</sup> L. B Alberti, *The Family in Renaissance Florence*, trans. R. N. Watkins, Columbia, University of California Press, 1969, p. 244.

<sup>425</sup> L. B Alberti, *The Family in Renaissance Florence*, trans. R. N. Watkins, Columbia, University of California Press, 1969, p. 245.



San Marco and founder of the Procurators of the Shamed Poor of Florence.<sup>426</sup> For Antoninus, the outward expression of faith was often a matter of conservatism. His taste with regard to the musical celebration of Christian faith lay on the side of Gregorian and Ambrosian chants, rather than compositions which included counterpoint, and he deplored popular ballads or bawdy verse.<sup>427</sup>

When it came to the visual celebration of faith Antoninus was equally sober, preferring the work of Fra Angelico to painters, perhaps like pre-Savonarolan Botticelli, whose depictions of pagan topics, according to Antoninus, existed ‘not for the sake of beauty but to arouse libidinous feelings’.<sup>428</sup> He further expounded that painters:

... are to be reprimanded when they paint things contrary to the faith, when they make the Trinity as one person with three heads...nor are they to be praised who paint apocryphal tales, such as midwives in the Nativity, or the Virgin’s girdle thrown down to Thomas the Apostle during her Assumption because of his doubt.<sup>429</sup>

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<sup>426</sup> For a more detailed discussion on Antoninus and the Buonomini di San Martino see Chapter 2:2.

<sup>427</sup> R. de Roover, *San Bernardino of Siena and Sant’ Antonino of Florence: The Two Great Economic Thinkers of the Middle Ages*, Boston, Harvard University Press, 1967, p. 16.

<sup>428</sup> Ibid.

<sup>429</sup> Antonino Pierozzi, ‘On the Condition of Merchants and Craftsmen’, *Summa Theologica*, Part 3, Chapter 4, Section 11 in C. E. Gilbert, (ed.), *Italian Art 1400-1500: Sources and Documents in the History of Art*, New Jersey, Prentice Hall, 1980, p. 148.

As far as the religious pageants and the associated, often visually stunning, festivities were concerned (which took place on various dates of the liturgical calendar) Antoninus was solemn, yet vociferous, as he referred to such celebrations as ‘these vain and worldly spectacles’.<sup>430</sup>

From a socio-religious point of view Antoninus was concerned with maintaining the societal structure of fifteenth-century Florence, particularly with regard to the deserving poor. This desire mainly derived from the fact that he believed that a drop in the standard of living, which stopped an individual or family from existing adequately, would affect their virtue and in turn eventually their chances of redemption in the afterlife.<sup>431</sup> He conveyed a trinity of pious deeds to fifteenth-century Florentine citizens, which would aid their journey towards salvation. This simple concept depended on three outward acts of faith: worship, charity to one’s neighbour and conducting a moral existence.<sup>432</sup>

Having established some of the more obvious reasons why fifteenth-century Florentine individuals were compelled to display piety publicly, this discussion can now move on to how they worked towards achieving this aim.

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<sup>430</sup> J. Henderson, *Piety and Charity in Late Medieval Florence*, London, University of Chicago Press, 1994, p. 93.

<sup>431</sup> R. de Roover, *San Bernardino of Siena and Sant’ Antonino of Florence: The Two Great Economic Thinkers of the Middle Ages*, Boston, Harvard University Press, 1967, p. 27.

<sup>432</sup> R. F. E. Weissman, *Ritual Brotherhood in Renaissance Florence*, London, Academic Press, 1982, p. 86.

If an individual was artistically inclined they could achieve a display of piety by perhaps painting, drawing or sculpting a religious image, writing a liturgical drama or composing a hymn, although this avenue was not open to all. Those with financial wealth could publicly reveal their piety through the concept of magnificence, which according to Saint Thomas Aquinas was classed as a virtue. He informs us that:

Human virtue is a participation of Divine power. But magnificence [*virtutis*] belongs to Divine power, according to [Psalm 68:34] "His magnificence and His power is in the clouds." Therefore magnificence is a virtue.<sup>433</sup>

Nevertheless, 'not every liberal man is magnificent as regards his actions, because he lacks the wherewithal to perform magnificent deeds'.<sup>434</sup> However, should the following recommendations be observed, then a man could ensure that a large, singular act could be classed as magnificent and thus virtuous:

It belongs to magnificence to do something great. But that which regards a man's person is little in comparison with that which regards Divine things, or even the

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<sup>433</sup> 'Of Magnificence', (four articles), 'Whether magnificence is a virtue' in T. Aquinas, Saint, *Summa Theologica*, 5 vols, New York, Benziger Bros., 1947. Available from <http://www.sacred-texts.com/chr/aquinas/summa/sum391.htm>, (accessed 10 May 2014), objection four describes magnificence as follows 'according to the Philosopher (Ethic. vi, 4) "act is right reason about things to be made." Now magnificence is about things to be made, as its very name denotes [\*Magnificence= magna facere---i.e. to make great things]. Therefore it is an act rather than a virtue'. Nevertheless, the contradiction that follows immediately, states that 'magnificence [*virtutis*] belongs to Divine power'.

<sup>434</sup> 'Of Magnificence', (four articles), 'Whether magnificence is a virtue', Reply to Objection 1 in T. Aquinas, Saint, *Summa Theologica*, 5 vols., New York, Benziger Bros., 1947. Available from <http://www.sacred-texts.com/chr/aquinas/summa/sum391.htm>, (accessed 10 May 2014).

affairs of the community at large... for instance, things that are done once, such as a wedding, or the like; or things that are of a lasting nature.<sup>435</sup>

The concept of the magnificent man was brought to us originally by Aristotle (384-322 B.C.), the ancient Greek philosopher and tutor of Alexander the Great, in his *Nicomachean Ethics*, which was written around 350 B.C. He informs us that, ‘the magnificent man is like an artist; for he can see what is fitting and spend large sums tastefully... such, therefore, are also his results’.<sup>436</sup> Furthermore, whatever is commissioned and brought to fruition, ‘should be worthy of the expense, and the expense should be worthy of the result, or should even exceed it’.<sup>437</sup> Moreover, Aristotle additionally bonds what he conceives as magnificent to what he believes to be virtuous. This permits aspects of his pre-Christian text to eventually be subsumed into fifteenth-century philosophy, through the ease with which church theologians and Renaissance authors can conceive of the ancient philosopher’s notion as a prefiguration to Christian doctrine. Examples of magnificent expenditure described by Aristotle include: expenses connected with ‘any form of religious worship’ and ‘those connected with the gods’, such as ‘votive offerings [and] buildings’.<sup>438</sup>

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<sup>435</sup> ‘Of Magnificence’, (four articles), ‘Whether magnificence is a virtue’, Reply to Objection 3 in T. Aquinas, Saint, *Summa Theologica*, 5 vols., New York, Benziger Bros., 1947. Available from <http://www.sacred-texts.com/chr/aquinas/summa/sum391.htm>, (accessed 10 May 2014).

<sup>436</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. W.D. Ross, Book IV, 2. Available from <http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/nicomachean.4.iv.html>, (accessed 20 May 2014).

<sup>437</sup> Ibid.

<sup>438</sup> Ibid.

Throughout its long history, the Roman Catholic Church was, and still remains, a willing and grateful recipient of offerings similar to those specified by Aristotle. For example, during the fifteenth century the church of Santissima Annunziata in Florence contained the life-size votive images of both Lorenzo and Giuliano de' Medici, among others.<sup>439</sup> Comparable religious tributes are also recorded, in the wake of the Pazzi Conspiracy, in the churches of Santa Maria Regina Coeli in the via San Gallo and Santa Maria degli Angeli in Assisi.<sup>440</sup> In both cases the statues were images of Lorenzo, the surviving Medici brother, and were placed, *ex voto*, in front of a miraculous crucifix and an image of the Madonna respectively.<sup>441</sup> Magnificent expenditure on buildings, mentioned by Aristotle, in the context of fifteenth-century Florence would perhaps be best associated and exemplified by the splendid, pious and charitable activities conducted by Cosimo 'the elder' de' Medici, rather than his grandson, Lorenzo de' Medici.<sup>442</sup> Despite being criticised by some of his contemporaries for his munificence, Cosimo was also lauded by others.<sup>443</sup> Antonio Pierozzi, for instance, described him as a 'magnificent man'<sup>444</sup> and his funding of the San Marco project was as much an illustration of 'personal largesse

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<sup>439</sup> Sharon Strocchia, *Burials in Renaissance Florence*, PhD Thesis, Berkeley, University of California, 1991, p. 382. See also J. K. Nelson, 'Memorial Chapels in Churches: The Privatization and Transformation of Sacred Spaces' in R. J. Crum and J. T. Paoletti, *Renaissance Florence: A Social History*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2006, pp. 364-365.

<sup>440</sup> C. Hibbert, *The Rise and Fall of the House of the Medici*, Hamondsworth, Penguin, 1974, p. 143.

<sup>441</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>442</sup> See C. Elam, 'Cosimo de' Medici and San Lorenzo', in F. Ames Lewis (ed), *Cosimo 'il Vecchio' de' Medici, 1389-1464: Essays in Commemoration of the 600th Anniversary of Cosimo de' Medici's Birth*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1992, pp. 157-181.

<sup>443</sup> P. Howard, 'Preaching Magnificence in Renaissance Italy', *Renaissance Quarterly*, vol.61, no. 2, 2008, pp. 325-369.

<sup>444</sup> P. Howard, 'Preaching Magnificence in Renaissance Italy', *Renaissance Quarterly*, vol.61, no. 2, 2008, p. 341.

inspired partly by conformity with the reforming zeal of Eugenius IV<sup>445</sup> as it was a reflection of Aristotle's pagan concept of magnificence, which encompassed 'objects of public-spirited ambition' such as buildings or equipping warships.<sup>446</sup> Cosimo, however, famously refused to fund the latter activity despite much coaxing by Pius II.<sup>447</sup> Nevertheless, according to the fifteenth-century scholar, Donato Acciaiuoli (1429-1478), the princely endowments that he awarded to various construction projects apparently 'equalled the magnificence of ancient kings and emperors'.<sup>448</sup>

A poor man however:

Cannot be magnificent, since he has not the means with which to spend large sums fittingly; and he who tries is a fool, since he spends beyond what can be expected of him and what is proper.<sup>449</sup>

Clearly it was not possible, nor acceptable, for all members of the community to act as rich patrons did. Nevertheless, more modest folk did have opportunities to band together to

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<sup>445</sup> Nicolai Rubinstein, 'Cosimo Optimus Civis', in F. Ames Lewis (ed), *Cosimo 'il Vecchio' de' Medici, 1389-1464: Essays in Commemoration of the 600th Anniversary of Cosimo de' Medici's Birth*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1992, p. 21.

<sup>446</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. W.D. Ross, Book IV, 2. Available from <http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/nicomachean.4.iv.html>, (accessed 20 May 2014).

<sup>447</sup> N. Rubinstein, 'Cosimo Optimus Civis', in F. Ames Lewis (ed), *Cosimo 'il Vecchio' de' Medici, 1389-1464: Essays in Commemoration of the 600th Anniversary of Cosimo de' Medici's Birth*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1992, p. 21.

<sup>448</sup> Alison Brown, 'The Humanist Portrait of Cosimo de' Medici, Pater Patriae', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, vol. Xxiv, no. 3-4, 1961, p. 193.

<sup>449</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. W.D. Ross, Book IV, 2. Available from <http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/nicomachean.4.iv.html>, (accessed 20 May 2014).

commission larger objects. For instance tabernacles, commissioned by cooperatives, would often be placed on street corners,<sup>450</sup> which were natural places to stop or slow down during a journey.<sup>451</sup> Additionally, should one have a few coins to spare at the end of the week, they could be popped into one of the various charity boxes, taken by confraternity members to various churches throughout the city.<sup>452</sup> Should one be passing through the San Martino district, money could be anonymously left in the Buonomini's *cassette dell' accatto*, which were emptied each day with the takings being religiously recorded in the confraternity's ledgers.<sup>453</sup>

Leon Battista Alberti, writing just one year prior to the Buonomini di San Martino's formation in 1442, 'often receives credit for reviving the ideal of magnificence in private life' during the fifteenth century as he allowed one of his characters to explain magnificent public expenditure. In his *I Libri della Famiglia* he stated that disposing of 'your wealth in honourable and splendid ways' could help an individual achieve the 'honour of [his] own name and that of [his] family'.<sup>454</sup> Moreover, as 'honour remains

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<sup>450</sup> David Rosenthal, "'Every sort of manual type, and mostly foreigners": migrants, brothers and festive kings in early modern Florence', *Urban History*, vol. 37, no. 3, 2010, p. 360.

<sup>451</sup> S. Strocchia, 'Theatres of Everyday Life' in R. J. Crum and J. T. Paoletti, *Renaissance Florence: A Social History*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 72.

<sup>452</sup> From the mid-fifteenth century such boxes were used by the Buonomini di San Martino and became a 'prominent source of income'. A. Spicciani, 'The 'Poveri Vergognosi' in Fifteenth-Century Florence: The first 30 years' activity of the Buonomini di San Martino', in T. Riis (ed.), *Aspects of Poverty in Early Modern Europe*, Florence, Badia Fiesolana, 1981, p. 128.

<sup>453</sup> *Entrata e Uscita 1478-1482*, c.8, verso, (1.2.1.0.2.), ABSM.

<sup>454</sup> L. B Alberti, *The Family in Renaissance Florence*, trans. R. N. Watkins, Columbia, University of California Press, 1969, pp. 148-149.

ever the best teacher of virtue and the most pious mother of calm and blessed peace’, then the source of such a virtue is ‘holy and sacred’.<sup>455</sup>

The concepts of honour and virtue are certainly pivotal with regard to our understanding of piety and charity in *quattrocento* Florence. Equally these moral abstractions are also elaborately bound to the charitable activities of the confraternity of the Buonomini di San Martino, because of the exemplary conduct of the people that they aided.<sup>456</sup> Nevertheless, the manner in which this lay confraternity demonstrated their piety was, and still is, veiled in secrecy, the like of which is not described by the aforementioned theologians and philosophers. Given the Buonomini’s connections with Antonio Pierozzi, former Prior of San Marco and Archbishop Saint, one would expect that the Procurators of the Shamed Poor went about their business under the influence of mainly Dominican piety. Olga Zorzi Pugliese however, in her paper entitled ‘The Good Works of the Florentine “Buonomini di San Martino”, tentatively suggests that Ambrosian spirituality, as quoted by Antoninus in his ‘*De Inhumanitate*’, informed the manner in which the Procurators of the Shamed Poor carried out duties.<sup>457</sup> Returning *ad fontes* to Saint Ambrose’s, *De Officiis Ministorum* one can see that this doctor of the church explains that benevolence

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<sup>455</sup> L. B Alberti, *The Family in Renaissance Florence*, trans. R. N. Watkins, Columbia, University of California Press, 1969, p. 149.

<sup>456</sup> For a detailed discussion of Renaissance honour and virtue see section 5:2 of the present thesis.

<sup>457</sup> O. Z. Pugliese, ‘The Good Works of the Florentine “Buonomini di San Martino”: An Example of Renaissance Pragmatism’, in K. Eisenbichler (ed.), *Crossing the Boundaries: Christian Piety and the Arts in Italian Medieval and Renaissance Confraternities*, Michigan, Kalamazoo, 1991, p. 120, refers to Antoninus’s ‘*De Inhumanitate*’, col. 330.



actually comes into its own when ‘a man hides what he does in silence, and secretly assists the needs of individuals, whom the mouth of the poor, and not his own lips, praises’.<sup>458</sup> Nevertheless, this statement is likely a paraphrase of Matthew VI: 1-4, which reads:

Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven. Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others...but when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

Clearly the passage from Matthew and the related concept put forward by Saint Ambrose perfectly suits the way in which the Buonomini carried out, and continue to implement, their acts of charity. Nevertheless, when considering the confraternity’s relationship with the Medici, a clan not entirely notable for their discretion, one might wonder whether Saint Ambrose’s abstraction would befit this association similarly. Therefore, the following section will discuss the connections between the Procurators of the Shamed Poor and the merchant prince, Lorenzo de’ Medici in the wake of the Pazzi Conspiracy and examines how both he and his fallen brother were commemorated by the confraternity

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<sup>458</sup> Ambrose, Saint, *De Officiis Ministorum*, trans. H. de Romestin, E. de Romestin and H.T.F. Duckworth, 2009., 30:147. Available at <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/34011.htm>, (accessed 18 June 2014).

## Section 4:2

## Early Medici Patronage and the Buonomini di San Martino

From 1469 to 1478, Lorenzo and Giuliano de' Medici (1449-1492 and 1453-1478 respectively) were involved in a number of Florentine confraternities, although their membership was mainly honorific.<sup>459</sup> Surviving documentation from the *laudesi* company of Sant' Agnese reveals that the two Medici brothers were freed from the confraternal 'duties, fees and responsibilities' – this was known as the 'privilege of the House of the Medici'.<sup>460</sup> In a society that depended on the patronage network to circulate favours, money, and trade opportunities between citizens, the Medici would have been expected to reciprocate the confraternity's gesture. Consequently, the merchant princes endowed confraternities with honour through association and, crucially, supported them financially. For instance, on 25 March 1473, Lorenzo and Giuliano are mentioned in the debit and credit book of the confraternity of the Buonomini di San Martino as having promised to give 5,250 lire to be distributed to various charitable causes.<sup>461</sup> Often the Medici gave goods in kind, for instance donating grain to the confraternity of Sant'

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<sup>459</sup> R. F. E. Weissman, *Ritual Brotherhood*, London, Academic Press, 1982, p.172. See also K. Eisenbichler, 'Lorenzo de' Medici e le Congregazione de Neri nella Compagnia della Croce e Tempio', *Archivio Storico Italiano* vol. 150, no. 2, 1992.

<sup>460</sup> R. F. E. Weissman, *Ritual Brotherhood*, London, Academic Press, 1982, p.171.

<sup>461</sup> A. Spicciani, 'The 'Poveri Vergognosi' in Fifteenth-Century Florence: The first 30 years' activity of the Buonomini di San Martino', in T. Riis (ed.), *Aspects of Poverty in Early Modern Europe*, Florence, Badia Fiesolana, 1981, p. 123.

Agnese every Christmas to feed the poor.<sup>462</sup> With respect to the Buonomini however, although Christmas did not go unmarked, the Medici's largesse became most apparent around Easter.<sup>463</sup> For example Lorenzo donated money to a hundred families and to the Stinche prison, along with quantities of wine, flour and meat for distribution to the poor.<sup>464</sup> Furthermore, the Buonomini's own constitution required donations in kind by

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<sup>462</sup> R. F. E. Weissman, *Ritual Brotherhood*, London, Academic Press, 1982, p. 172.

<sup>463</sup> See *Entrata et Uscita del Proposto March 1479 – 1481*, c. 34, (1.2.4.0.1.), ABSM.

<sup>464</sup> *Entrata e Uscita 1478-1482*, unpaginated (1.2.1.0.2), ABSM.

The entry concerning Lorenzo's bequest to one hundred families reads as follows:

‘Da Lorenzo de medici adi detto grossoni cento da ciento averno p [per] lui dal banco. Suo p [per] appensarli p [per] la presente pasqua da natale a cento famiglia secondo usanza come...’

While the entry regarding his bequest to the Stinche states:

‘Da Lorenzo detto adi detto grossoni. 70 da viento avemo p [per] lui dal detto banco p [per] appensarli p [per] la detta pasqua a prigione della stinche secondo usanza...’

The following entries reveal donations of 25 bushels of flour, 10 barrels of wine and 300lbs of goat meat:

‘Da lorenzo detto adi detto staia. 25 di farina avemo p [per] lui da lippo di lucrinaccia farinaiuolo p [per] dispensare a poveri i pane p [per] detta pasqua secondo usanza consegnelli a Giuliano Dome<sup>o</sup> [Domenico] formaio...’

‘Da lorenzo detto adi detto barili 10 di vino vern<sup>o</sup> [vernaccio] avemo p [per] liu da agostino [?] p [per] dispensarlo a poveri p [per] detto pasqua secondo usanza...’

‘[?] detto adi detto y trenta p [per] y10 [?] sono p [per] lamonto di libre 300 di castrone comperanno p [per] lui da pietro di giovanni di pietro beccaio per dispensaro [?] detta pasqua come di sopra a ...’

*proposti*. Rule seven states that during any one month term as *proposto*, a ‘tax’ of three staia of wheat should be paid in order to ‘give a good example’.<sup>465</sup>

It is now widely accepted that Lorenzo and Giuliano gained dominance throughout Florence by using confraternities as ‘instruments of Medici political power’.<sup>466</sup> For example, Lorenzo was not averse to using confraternal meeting places for his own private celebrations.<sup>467</sup> After donating a substantial sum to the Buonomini di San Martino, the brothers also ‘reserved the right [...] to nominate several [charitable] recipients’.<sup>468</sup> If this clause was common in agreements, such confraternities appear to have been ideal vehicles to transfer money that was officially set aside for charity back into the coffers of family, friends, and allies.<sup>469</sup>

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<sup>465</sup> *Codice dei Capitoli* (1.1.1.0.1.), Appendix II, rule 7. See also U. Silli, *Sulla Datazione di un Volume Pergamenaceo del XV Secolo dell’ Archivio dei Buonomini*, Florence, 2008, pp. 5-6.

<sup>466</sup> R. Trexler, *Public Life in Renaissance Florence*, London, Cornell University Press, 1980 p. 412.

<sup>467</sup> See R. Weissman, *Ritual Brotherhood*, London, Academic Press, 1982, p. 172 on Lorenzo’s use of the company of Sant’ Agnese for his private celebrations for the feast of the Holy Spirit.

<sup>468</sup> A. Spicciani, ‘The ‘Poveri Vergognosi’ in Fifteenth-Century Florence: The first 30 years’ activity of the Buonomini di San Martino’, in T. Riis (ed.), *Aspects of Poverty in Early Modern Europe*, Florence, Badia Fiesolana, 1981, p. 123. Spicciani reports that the folio containing the following text from 23 March 1473 has not survived:

‘in diversi tempi in pane e vino e danari contanti e alter cose... [to assist]... diverse religioni in diverse feste, e a’poveri vergognosi e incarcerate e pellegrini... [to be administered]...secondo che da lloro ci e stato ordinate, come appare al libro de’ ricordi e partiti segnato a’.

<sup>469</sup> R. Trexler, ‘Charity in the Defense of Urban Elites in the Italian Communes’, in F. C. Jaher (ed.), *The Rich, the Well Born and the Powerful: Elites and Upper Classes in History*, London, University of Illinois Press, 1973, pp. 77 and 94. For an example of beneficence directed towards distant and perhaps poorer members of the clan, see

For the first three decades after its inception, the Procurators of the Shamed Poor helped mostly wool and silk workers rather than the poor but noble relatives of Florence's great houses.<sup>470</sup> Accordingly, during the 1440s most of the alms distributed were given in kind, generally bread, wine, meat and linen. Only 747 *lire* of alms were given out in coin.<sup>471</sup> By the 1460s, Henderson claims that the total amount of alms distributed in coin had doubled and the names of those who benefitted from their charity suggest that the Medici influenced the allocation of funds.<sup>472</sup> Clans such as the Bardi, Pitti, Soderini, Spini and Torrigiani are all mentioned as recipients<sup>473</sup> as are the Peruzzi on 20<sup>th</sup> May 1478<sup>474</sup> and the Gherardini on 27<sup>th</sup> June of the same year.<sup>475</sup> Additionally, Lorenzo de' Medici joined the twelve good men as procurator.<sup>476</sup> Trexler argues that Lorenzo's decision to become involved with the Buonomini implies that 'the confraternity was disposing of sizable

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Archivio dei Buonomini di San Martino *Entrata e Uscita 1469-1478*, (1.2.1.0.1.), c. 81, ABSM where Orietta de Gregorio de' Medici is aided twice by the good men. Furthermore, *Entrata e Uscita 1478-1482*, (1.2.1.0.2), c. 131, ABSM lists a number of directives from Lorenzo de' Medici.

<sup>470</sup> A. Spicciani, 'The 'Poveri Vergognosi' in Fifteenth-Century Florence: The first 30 years' activity of the Buonomini di San Martino', in T. Riis (ed.), *Aspects of Poverty in Early Modern Europe*, Florence, Badia Fiesolana, 1981, p. 129.

<sup>471</sup> J. Henderson, *Piety and Charity in Late Medieval Florence*, London, University of Chicago Press, 1994, p. 288.

<sup>472</sup> Ibid.

<sup>473</sup> J. Henderson, *Piety and Charity in Late Medieval Florence*, London, University of Chicago Press, 1994, p. 394 and *Entrata e Uscita 1478-1482*, (1.2.1.0.2.), c. 131, ABSM.

<sup>474</sup> *Entrata e Uscita 1478-1482*, c. 131 verso, (1.2.1.0.2.), ABSM.

<sup>475</sup> *Entrata e Uscita 1478-1482*, c. 132 verso, (1.2.1.0.2.), ABSM.

<sup>476</sup> For Lorenzo listed as a member see *Codice dei Capitoli*, c.7 verso and c.8 recto, (1.1.1.0.1.), ABSM reproduced in Appendix I. For the brothers' memberships see also O. Z. Pugliese, 'The Good Works of the Florentine "Buonomini di San Martino": An Example of Renaissance Pragmatism', in K. Eisenbichler (ed.), *Crossing the Boundaries: Christian Piety and the Arts in Italian Medieval and Renaissance Confraternities*, Michigan, Kalamazoo, 1991, p. 119, and R. Trexler, 'Charity in the Defense of Urban Elites in the Italian Communes', in F. C. Jaher (ed.), *The Rich, the Well Born and the Powerful: Elites and Upper Classes in History*, London, University of Illinois Press, 1973, p. 93.

funds by this time',<sup>477</sup> although it is not until the 1470s that an unprecedented amount of alms in coin was distributed and recorded in their accounts.<sup>478</sup> Entries in the Buonomini ledgers dated to the fortnight before the Pazzi Conspiracy, 26 April 1478, reveal that Lorenzo directed funds to a number of anonymous families in the San Lorenzo district,<sup>479</sup> while the general activities of the Procurators of the Shamed Poor remained the same as always. For instance on 16<sup>th</sup> April 1478 a Madonna Manetta from San Piero Gattolino (now the Porta Romana) was provided with an overdress, while Piero Gianfigliuzzi and Carlo Biliotti facilitated aid to women in childbed.<sup>480</sup>

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<sup>477</sup> R. Trexler, 'Charity in the Defense of Urban Elites in the Italian Communes', in F. C. Jaher (ed.), *The Rich, the Well Born and the Powerful: Elites and Upper Classes in History*, London, University of Illinois Press, 1973, p. 94.

<sup>478</sup> J. Henderson, *Piety and Charity in Late Medieval Florence*, London, University of Chicago Press, 1994, p.388.

<sup>479</sup> For the direction of funds towards the families of San Lorenzo prior to the Pazzi Conspiracy see *Entrata e Uscita 1478-1482*, (1.2.1.0.2.), ABSM.

<sup>480</sup> *Entrata e Uscita 1478-1482*, c. 130 recto, (1.2.1.0.2.), ABSM.

In comparison, during the immediate aftermath of the Pazzi Conspiracy, efforts were concentrated in and around the Medici's own neighbourhood<sup>481</sup> and the San Giovanni district where Giuliano de' Medici had met his end.<sup>482</sup>

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<sup>481</sup> Three entries found in the *Entrata e Uscita 1478-1482*, c. 133 recto, (1.2.1.0.2.), ABSM, for example read:

‘Poveri detti adi 22 di luglio 1478 y tre β11 dati alla [???] inparto sta via di Sangallo p[per] 2 peze lane 2 line 2 fascie e β18 p[per] 1° cappone porto domenico mazinghi a licentia di giovanni ?’

and

‘Poveri detti adi detto [24 luglio] y una dati a franc°... [in via di Sangallo] infermo per polli et confetto porto domenico mazinghi di licentia andrea bambagiaio’.

and

‘Poveri detti adi 28 di detto y una β10 dati a franc°... τ via di Sangallo p[per] polli et giulebbo et oltre cose porto dom° mazinghi di licentia d'andrea bambagiaio’.

Other entries from *Entrata e Uscita 1478-1482*, c. 132 verso, (1.2.1.0.2.), ABSM include:

‘Poveri detti adi detto y sette β10 a giovanfranc° di lionardo... drappi infermo sta τ borgo san lorenzo et p[per] lui a michele de corso delle colombe e comp<sup>a</sup> spetiali p[per] pui seiloppi medicine et confetti e polli p[per] partito di tutti’.

and *Entrata e Uscita 1478-1482*, c. 130 verso, (1.2.1.0.2.), ABSM includes:

‘Poveri detti adi 9 detto y tre β7 fidierono a m<sup>a</sup> nanna di pippo... inparto τ via de sangallo p[per] 2 peze lane 2 line e 2 fascie β15 p[per] 1° cappone porto et cmpo francesco mazinghe’

<sup>482</sup> *Entrata e Uscita 1478-1482*, c. 130 verso, (1.2.1.0.2.), ABSM reads:

‘Poveri detti adi 7 detti y tre β7 fidierono a m<sup>a</sup> allexandra di... famtori sta τ una san giovanni inparto p[per] 2 peze lane 2 line 2 fascie e β15 p[per] 1° cappone copo franc° [?] di licenza di Simone mazinghi.’

These small acts of charity could as easily be the confraternity's small way of showing its sympathies for the loss of Giuliano and the devastation that it had caused to Lorenzo, patron and fellow procurator. They could even be coincidental. Nevertheless, considering the Medici's history of beneficence in return for support, one would also be inclined to wonder whether these instances of charitable giving were as politically motivated as altruistic. For instance in 1481, within a month of another plot to assassinate Lorenzo, the silk weavers obtained funds to build a new hospital, a display of the regime's continued commitment to civic life.<sup>483</sup> Equally Lorenzo's generosity to the King of Camaldoli in 1489 (*il Magnifico* lent the *potenze* plates and cutlery for the May Day banquet) could be construed as an attempt at 'fostering his reputation among the wool weavers of Oltrarno'.<sup>484</sup> Richard Trexler certainly reminds us that at least some of the citizens of Renaissance Florence appear to have understood at least one thread of the subtle nexus between the families like the Medici and lay confraternities as he uses the writings of Donato Giannotti (1492-1473), writer, poet and leader of the Florentine Republic of 1527 to illustrate that:

The standards, both the companies of *armeggiatori* and the *potenze*... are used by tyrants, who introduce such *feste* to entertain the plebs, so that they can keep the republic oppressed by [the plebs]... with whom they are popular.<sup>485</sup>

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<sup>483</sup> R. Trexler, *Public Life in Renaissance Florence*, London, Cornell University Press, 1980 p. 412.

<sup>484</sup> *Ibid.* p. 413.

<sup>485</sup> G. Sanesi (ed.), *Un Discorso Sconosciuto di Donato Giannotti intorno alla Milizia*, Archivio San Lorenzo, ser. 5, VIII (1891) quoted in R. Trexler, *Public Life in Renaissance Florence*, London, Cornell University Press, 1980 p. 413.



After the Pazzi Conspiracy, Lorenzo required support from both within the commune and further afield: he confided in Gian Galeazzo Sforza, Duke of Milan, that ‘he and his state were in great danger’.<sup>486</sup> Nevertheless, Lorenzo continued to patronise the Buonomini during the dark months following his brother’s death. For instance in May 1478 Lorenzo had ensured that the Buonomini’s baker, Giuliano and their grain merchant Lippo di Lucrinaccia had been paid.<sup>487</sup> During this month Lorenzo also entrusted money to a hundred poor families of his choosing, 170 other families in need chosen by Carlo Biliotti,<sup>488</sup> paid for ten barrels of wine for Easter, 300lbs of meat and various other items for consumption, which he decreed be dispensed ‘to the poor of the earth and of the region’.<sup>489</sup> He even went as far as recruiting his cousin, Lorenzo di Pierfrancesco, perhaps better known for his patronage of Sandro Botticelli, involving him also as a benefactor of

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<sup>486</sup> Dale V. Kent and Francis W. Kent, ‘Two Vignettes of Florentine Society in the Fifteenth Century’, *Rinascimento*, vol. 34, 1983, pp. 252-254.

<sup>487</sup> *Entrata e Uscita 1478-1482*, c. 131 recto, (1.2.1.0.2.), ABSM.

<sup>488</sup> *Entrata e Uscita 1478-1482*, c. 131 recto, (1.2.1.0.2.), ABSM.

The entries pertaining to Carlo Biliotti and Lorenzo read as follow:

‘Poveri di detti adi detto grossoni 170 da viento fidierono p[er] limosina a 170 famiglie di [?] poveri p[er] mano di Carlo biliotti’.

and

‘Poveri detti adi detto grossoni da viento fidierono p[er] limosina a cento famiglia di poveri oltre a 170 di sopra equali sono p[er] conto di Lorenzo de Medici’.

<sup>489</sup> *Entrata e Uscita 1478-1482*, c. 131 recto, (1.2.1.0.2.), ABSM reads:

‘Poveri detti adi detto y Quattro β9 detti a piu [?] stai p[er]... detto Lorenzo I san Martino elquale [?] dispenso a poveri della terra et di contado’.

the shamed poor.<sup>490</sup> Lorenzo di Pierfrancesco's donation consisted of a single, generous endowment of twenty-four florins worth of grain in 1478, whereas *Il Magnifico's* philanthropy consisted of nine donations from his bank (*dal suo banco*) during October, November and December of the same year.<sup>491</sup> These donations, which range from between 60 and 124 *lire* per transaction,<sup>492</sup> culminate in a promise, made by Lorenzo at the close of 1478, to donate more from 1 April 1479.<sup>493</sup>

Lorenzo's consistent patronage of the Buonomini in the wake of the Pazzi Conspiracy extended until 1485, when his presence at the Buonomini, whether through attendance or by delegation, diminished.<sup>494</sup> This consistent patronage was not always mirrored in

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<sup>490</sup> For the donation from Lorenzo di Pierfrancesco de' Medici see *Entrata e Uscita 1478-1482*, c. 19 recto, (1.2.1.0.2.), ABSM.

<sup>491</sup> *Entrata e Uscita 1478-1482*, (1.2.1.0.2.), ABSM.

<sup>492</sup> Roughly between 4 and 8 florins, depending on the fluctuating exchange rates.

<sup>493</sup> *Entrata e Uscita 1478-1482*, c. 13 verso, (1.2.1.0.2.), ABSM reads:

‘...piu limosina fatto plusa piu...primo Aprile 1479 fino ultimo...’.

<sup>494</sup> *Codice dei Capitoli*, c.7 verso, (1.1.1.0.1.), ABSM shows a list of procurators with marks beside their names denoting attendance. Lorenzo de' Medici's name bears such a distinction. See also John M. Najemy, *A History of Florence 1200-1575*, Oxford, Blackwell Publishing, 2006, p. 370 mentions Lorenzo's delegating with regard to public affairs and his honourific and actual confraternal attendance. A. Spicciani, 'The 'Poveri Vergognosi' in Fifteenth-Century Florence: The first 30 years' activity of the Buonomini di San Martino', in T. Riis (ed.), *Aspects of Poverty in Early Modern Europe*, Florence, Badia Fiesolana, 1981, p. 124, notices that within the Buonomini *Entrata e Uscita segnato A* ledger held by the Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze, that the accounting was completed, for a time, from 1 May 1466 by the *proposto*, Pandolfo Rucellai. Lorenzo and Giuliano, while the latter still lived, are acknowledged throughout the San Martino ledgers like an inseparable entity. Following his brother's murder, Lorenzo's presence remains visible until 1485. As far as Pandolfo is concerned the entries concerning his confraternal activities increase significantly during the late 1470s and his presence remains conspicuous even outside his multiple terms as *proposto*. *Entrata e Uscita 1469-1478*, c. 34 verso, (1.2.1.0.1.), (with adjustments until 1488),

regards to his connections with other confraternities. Giuliano's death was a pivotal event, triggering a reordering of Lorenzo de' Medici's web of confraternal alliances. Hatfield establishes that after Giuliano's death the Medici's enthusiastic support of the *Festa de' Magi* ceased<sup>495</sup> and Lorenzo may have gathered some consolation in the Zampillo as Giuliano, whose voice was apparently beautiful, had sung with the brothers there.<sup>496</sup> In fact, when Lorenzo himself died, his body was taken to the Zampillo, now relocated from the Vallambrosan church of Santa Trinita and on to San Marco. Other confraternities that had previously benefitted from Medicean patronage fared less well. The Compagnia di San Paolo's undertakings were halted for two years and their records show that when activities resumed Lorenzo's once regular attendance had diminished significantly.<sup>497</sup> In addition, festivities surrounding the feast of Saint John the Baptist and other pageants were halted for a decade by Lorenzo de' Medici's decree.<sup>498</sup> Plaisance too reminds us of Rinuccini's opinion on *Il Magnifico's* censure of public gala events when he writes, 'all the things that formerly enhanced the grace and reputation of the citizens, like weddings, dances, festivals and adornments of dress, these he condemned and removed by his example and with his words'.<sup>499</sup>

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ABSM for Pandolfo Rucellai as *proposto* in early 1486 and c. 38 verso for a further term in November 1486.

<sup>495</sup> R. Hatfield, 'The Compagnia de' Magi', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, vol. 33, 1970, p. 128.

<sup>496</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>497</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 127-128.

<sup>498</sup> *Ibid.* p. 119, and Charles Dempsey, 'Portraits and Masks in the Art of Lorenzo de' Medici, Botticelli, and Politian's Stanza per la Giostra', *Renaissance Quarterly*, vol. 52, no. 1, 1999, p. 7.

<sup>499</sup> M. Plaisance, *Florence in the Time of the Medici: Public Celebrations, Politics and Literature in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries*, trans. Nicole Carew-Reid (ed.), Toronto, CFFS Publications, 2008, p. 24.

In the years immediately following the Pazzi Conspiracy, Florence was ripe to receive what Hegel terms a ‘ritual revolution’.<sup>500</sup> In effect, Lorenzo spread the image of his personal sacrality by tightening his hold over the republic and sustaining connections with smaller lay brotherhoods.<sup>501</sup> The interior of the Buonomini’s meeting place illustrates how an individual can be commemorated in this manner. Of particular interest is the depiction of a debtor being released from gaol (Fig. 20).

The scene in this particular lunette is set outside a prison. If it is juxtaposed with a nineteenth-century rendering of Florence’s Stinche (Fig. 46), one can safely assume that this is, in fact, the portrayed edifice. Much of the pictorial space is taken up with the looming bulk of the jail. The viewer is thus left with no uncertainty that the prisoner, who can be seen emerging from the tiny doorway, is leaving a dark stronghold for the light, airy piazza. In his poem about his incarceration in the Stinche, the poet, Francesco Berni (1497-1535) specifies that the entrance was extremely low, another clue that this is the prison depicted in the fresco.<sup>502</sup> It is also significant that the prison doors and cells take up the sinister side of the composition and that the prisoner is emerging from darkness

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<sup>500</sup> R. Trexler, *Public Life in Renaissance Florence*, London, Cornell University Press, 1980, xvii and pp. 46-4, paraphrases Hegel: ‘Backstage, onstage and audience unite and act out reality together. In the revolutionary street, mass action is a play structuring reality’.

<sup>501</sup> Ibid.

<sup>502</sup> Guy Geltner, ‘Medieval Prisons: Between Myth and Reality, Hell and Purgatory’, *History Compass*, no. 4, New Jersey, Blackwell Publishing, 2006, p. 7: ‘O, glorious Stinche of Florence; / Celestial place, divine place, / Worthy of a hundred-thousand reverences. / To you men come with bowed heads, / And before they climb your stairs / They stoop at your door step’. Translated from Berni, *Il primo libro del l’opere burlesche di M. Francesco Berni*, fols. 52 recto -53 recto. See also F. Becchi, *Sulle Stinche di Firenze e su’ nuovi edifizii eretti in quell luogo*, Florence, Le Monnier, 1839.

into light. Given his fur-lined hat, handmade leather shoes, and dishevelled linen shirt, the released prisoner appears to have been a man of some means who has fallen from wealth (Fig. 47). The hand gestures are also very interesting and drive the artwork's narrative. As if in a state of shameful supplication, the released prisoner cups his palm towards the gentleman standing beside him. The awkward positioning of the palms suggests that the former prisoner is embarrassed to beg and not used to being the object of charity.

The Buonomini are identifiable by their red and black costumes, not unlike the ensembles worn by notaries and Florentine males holding public office.<sup>503</sup> The brotherhood had a uniform of civic red, although in the frescoes, as in life, the colour scheme is inconspicuous and sometimes visually confusing. Perhaps the more discerning contemporary fifteenth-century Florentine viewer would have recognised the subtle differences in the shade and type of cloth worn by the various figures. This in turn would have revealed the fabric's value and in turn also indicated the status of the wearer. So subtle an indicator however, leads one to suspect that Vespasiano da Bisticci was well

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<sup>503</sup> Ludovica Sebregondi, one of the six participants whose thoughts on the confraternity were recorded and recounted by J. M. Bradburne, (ed.), *Hidden Voices: Discovering the Buonomini di San Martino*, Florence, Giunti, 2011, p. 42 also mentions that the Buonomini are identifiable from their red and black costumes, although our thoughts on this have evolved independently: 'Black and red. That's an important point because they're all dressed like representatives of the highest-ranking social classes in Florence [...] If they'd gone around town wearing a white cap like members of other confraternities, everybody would have realised that they were going to help that specific family, whereas it was imperative for the Buonomini not to be identifiable as such'.

informed when he wrote that the confraternity's founder, Antoninus, wanted the Buonomini to be inconspicuous.<sup>504</sup>

To the right of the scene stand three figures bathed in natural light (Fig. 48). The first appears in full profile and the right hand side of his body is painted down the central axis of the fresco. He is attired as one of the Buonomini would be, although it has been suggested that he is in fact a creditor as he holds a promissory note in his left hand.<sup>505</sup>

With his right, he points towards the bag of money which is held by an aged, white haired man, who in turn, motions towards the emerging prisoner.<sup>506</sup> These gestures reassure the viewer that the coins exchanged are in fact, payment for the convict's release, a custom,

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<sup>504</sup> P. Bargellini, *I Buonomini di San Martino*, Florence, Casa di Risparmio, 1972, p. 12: 'Furono molti – narra il suo biografo, Vespasiano da Bisticci – che lo volevano consigliare che facesse la cappa lunga con la coda; non ne volle fare nulla; ma volle che fusse rasente terra e non piu, e di perpigliano. Avendola fatti due dita piu lunga, che non era quella de' frati, la fece mozzare'.

<sup>505</sup> L. Sebreghondi, 'The Congregation and the Fresco Cycle', in J. M. Bradburne, (ed.), *Hidden Voices: Discovering the Buonomini di San Martino*, Florence, Giunti, 2011, p. 88.

<sup>506</sup> A number of locals and some tour guides believe to this day that the white haired man shown in the *Releasing the Debtor from Gaol* mural is Piero Capponi (Fig. 46), the statesman and soldier who refused to bow to Charles VIII's exorbitant demands when the French king and his troops entered Florentine territory en route to the Kingdom of Naples. Given that Charles did not reach Florence until November 1494 and the frescoes were executed sometime between 1486 and 1490, the link to that particular event appears somewhat tenuous. Nevertheless, the Capponi were involved in business dealings with the Medici, particularly the exploitation of alum from Volterra in 1470, and their various correspondence and other associations continued until Lorenzo's death. Also Piero di Gino Capponi served the republic in various different public offices. See Richard A. Goldthwaite, *Private Wealth in Renaissance Florence: A Study of Four Families*, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1968, pp. 202, 210-211 and 223 in particular. Accordingly the tentative identification of the portrait as Piero Capponi is interesting and becomes even more so, when one takes into consideration that after Lorenzo de' Medici's death he was one of the individuals involved in the downfall of Lorenzo's son, Piero. See Francesco Guicciardini, *Dialogues on the Government of Florence*, (ed.) Alison Brown, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1994, p. Xiii.

based on one of the seven corporal works of mercy, which the Procurators of the Shamed Poor carried out regularly.<sup>507</sup>

Previous attempts to read the fresco however appear not to have taken into consideration that, although commissioned paintings were often staged on a realistic *Quattrocento* set, they were also what Patricia Lee Rubin calls ‘operative fictions, versions of desired ends – not portrayals of actual conditions’.<sup>508</sup> Within these visual hybrids of reality and fantasy, the living and the dead can come together to remind contemporary viewers of the moral, civic, and spiritual values expected of them. For example, as Rubin notes of Botticelli’s *The Wedding Feast*, (Fig. 49) painted c. 1483 for the Pucci family, the dead Giuliano de’ Medici is included with members of the living Florentine elite as a warning that violence endangers both the republic and the moral imperatives that underpin such a regimen.<sup>509</sup> If one takes Botticelli as a model, then the figure to the left of the Buonomini’s *Releasing the Debtor from Gaol* fresco (Figs. 41 & 50) could be a posthumous portrait of Giuliano de’ Medici, and the figure central to the scene may be a depiction of his brother, Lorenzo (Figs. 42 & 51). When compared to another of Botticelli’s renderings of Giuliano (Fig. 52), he and the man in the Buonomini fresco share striking physical similarities. Both are in profile (which alone is unremarkable

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<sup>507</sup> One example is found in *Entrata e Uscita 1478-1482*, c. 131 verso, (1.2.1.0.2.), ABSM. This shows that on 4<sup>th</sup> June 1478, 5 lire and 15 soldi were given to Francesco di Conte in order to extract Francesco di Profane from prison. Another is *Entrata et Uscita del Proposto March 1479 – 1481*, c. 34, (1.2.4.0.1.), ABSM.

<sup>508</sup> Patricia Rubin, *Images and Identity in Fifteenth-Century Florence*, London, Yale University Press, 2007, p. 56.

<sup>509</sup> *Ibid.* p. 262.

given that the *Quattrocento* saw the creation of countless profile portraits) and their expressions are haughty, heavy-lidded eyes lowered. Additionally, both portraits share the downward curving, rosebud mouth, the aquiline nose and the dark pageboy haircut – all features characteristic of Giuliano.<sup>510</sup> Including Giuliano or a likeness of Giuliano in the Buonomini fresco was a visual promotion of civic stability. The plot on which the Stinche was built had, after all, been confiscated from the Uberti clan as a result of their infamous support of the Ghibelline faction during the thirteenth century.<sup>511</sup> The origins of the prison's name, too, would perhaps have served to remind the *Quattrocento* viewer that grave consequences awaited those who upset the city's status quo.<sup>512</sup>

Remarkably, the Buonomini fresco expands on this political message to include the notion of clemency, an ideal from ancient Roman law. Thus Giuliano oversees the

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<sup>510</sup> L. Sebregondi, 'The Congregation and the Fresco Cycle', in J. M. Bradburne, (ed.), *Hidden Voices: Discovering the Buonomini di San Martino*, Florence, Giunti, 2011, p. 88, identifies the figure whom I propose is Giuliano de' Medici, as one of the Stinche's municipal officers. However, given the capacious nature of the figure's red tunic, the fine linen shirt, which is visible through his fashionably slit sleeves, and the expensive, handmade, fur-lined boots, this man does not appear to represent a modestly paid member of the prison staff. In 'Coping in Medieval Prisons', *Continuity and Change*, vol. 23, no. 1, 2008, Guy Geltner notes the small amount of staff present at the Stinche during the fourteenth century and remarks that they often had to take on other manual tasks within the gaol in order to survive financially. He also calculates that the wages of the warders and officials were so low that the prison odd-job man could earn more than they.

<sup>511</sup> Marvin E. Wolfgang, 'A Florentine Prison: Le Carceri delle Stinche', *Studies in the Renaissance*, vol. 7, p. 155. J. Najemy, 'Florentine Politics and Urban Spaces', in Crum R. J. and Paoletti J. T., (eds.), *Renaissance Florence: A Social History*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 22.

<sup>512</sup> M. E. Wolfgang, 'A Florentine Prison: Le Carceri delle Stinche', *Studies in the Renaissance*, vol. 7, pp. 57-58. The Stinche prison was named after the Castello delle Stinche in Chianti, once the stronghold of the Cavalcanti clan who became enemies of the Florentine state due to their support for the *Bianchi*. Interestingly, members of this family subsequently became the Stinche's first inmates in 1304.



release, and in doing so reveals his authority, which the ancients believed was only accorded to the powerful.<sup>513</sup> Likewise, Giuliano's actions also correspond to contemporary notions of piety. He dispenses one of the duties passed down from God to man in the *Pater Noster*: 'forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us'. Giuliano, of course, had been 'trespassed against' in the most violent and personal manner by Francesco de' Pazzi and Bernardo di Bandino Baroncelli. It is perhaps because he was a victim of betrayal that his likeness performs this act of clemency.<sup>514</sup> That he releases a debtor from gaol is of no small consequence, as bankruptcy preyed on the honest merchant's virtue and an individual's fiscal relationship with God himself. To cite another example, Giannozzo Manetti, the fifteenth-century politician and diplomat, referred to God as the 'master of commerce', a silent but powerful partner to the Renaissance entrepreneur.<sup>515</sup>

Real power, however, lies with the figure central to the scene, the one who has initiated the financial transaction and who literally holds the debtor's future in his hands (Fig. 51).<sup>516</sup> It is proposed here then that this figure is Lorenzo de' Medici, and that if the

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<sup>513</sup> For a discussion on authority, power and civic stability see also P. Rubin, *Images and Identity in Fifteenth-Century Florence*, London, Yale University Press, 2007, p. 267.

<sup>514</sup> The impact of the Pazzi conspiracy is evident from the writings of Poliziano and Machiavelli, although the latter wrote his version of events some decades after the event. Interestingly, through the Ricordanze di Messer Bongianni di Bongianni di Giovanni Gianfigliuzzi, c. 44 (4.2.1.0.1), ABSM, we are privy to an entry written on 26 April 1478, which not only informs us of Giuliano's death but reveals the pathos experienced by Bongianni, friend and ally of both Medici brothers.

<sup>515</sup> M. E. Wolfgang, 'Crime and Punishment in Renaissance Florence', *The Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology*, vol. 81, no. 3, 1973, p. 580.

<sup>516</sup> The figure of Lorenzo de' Medici holds a piece of rolled up parchment which could be a promissory note or release papers. Either way the future of the criminal is in *Il Magnifico's* hands.

Buonomini portrait is compared to Botticelli's likeness of *il Magnifico* in his 1475 painting *Adoration of the Magi* (Fig. 53), the same dominant features will be found to be constant: his dark overhanging brow, the heavy square jaw, the broad squashed nose and the thin serious mouth. Lorenzo's modesty and deference to the elderly, which were reported by the chronicler Giovanni Cambi, are also suggested in this painting as the elderly gentleman is placed to Lorenzo's right and the merchant prince's eyes are suitably downcast.<sup>517</sup> Moreover, if Giuliano's portrait from the same *Adoration* (Fig. 54) is also considered, it becomes apparent that we are meant not only to recognise Lorenzo and Giuliano, but also to recall them at the height of their glory. *Releasing the Debtor from Gaol* was possibly meant to record an actual deed performed by the Buonomini, since their records contain a single entry pertaining to the release of ninety-eight prisoners from the Stinche in December 1479, twenty months after the Pazzi Conspiracy and the assassination of Giuliano de' Medici.<sup>518</sup> Significantly, on 29th of that very same month, Lorenzo finally fully avenged the killing of his brother by executing Bernardo di Bandino Baroncelli.

Lorenzo's personage in the Buonomini fresco reflects not only his actual magnanimity, but also reminds the viewer of his power as a civic symbol. By accepting positions within the *Otto di Guardia* and the *Dieci di Balìa* in 1478, Lorenzo would have briefly played a

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<sup>517</sup> Alison Brown, 'Lorenzo de' Medici's new men and their mores: the changing lifestyle of Quattrocento Florence', *Renaissance Studies*, vol. 16, no. 2, 2002, p. 118 quotes Cambi as reporting, 'when he [Lorenzo] was with citizens older than himself he always put them on his right, and if they were more than two, he put the oldest in the middle'.

<sup>518</sup> *Entrata et Uscita del Proposto March 1479 – 1481*, c. 34, (1.2.4.0.1.), ABSM: 'Prigioni 98 delle Stinche – y 21.13.4 adi 25 di detto grossoni'.

significant part in the condemnation of criminals.<sup>519</sup> As one of the Eight, he had the power to rescind a citizen's liberty, but his confraternal role as one of the twelve procurators of the shamed poor allowed him to simultaneously assume the role of liberator. Following his short term among the Eight, Lorenzo appears to have remained the 'soul and mind' of Florentine government through a number of carefully crafted bills and through the appointments of Medici supporters to high office.<sup>520</sup> Given the secrecy that traditionally surrounded the Buonomini's charitable activities (and still does), one might assume *prima facie* that Lorenzo's involvement in the release of prisoners from the Stinche would have gone unnoticed. Furthermore, the liberation of the ninety-eight prisoners on Christmas Day 1479 would likely have been achieved through private negotiations between prison officials, the Buonomini, and perhaps a number of creditors.<sup>521</sup> Nonetheless, given the prison's geographical location in downtown Florence and the well-documented 'permeability of the Stinche's walls',<sup>522</sup> it would be judicious to consider whether this considerable and extensive act of charity was, in fact, a clever tool that Lorenzo employed to convey both his generosity and his authority as *de facto* ruler of Florence. The Stinche was, after all, an urban prison that operated in close proximity to local businesses, residences, and places of worship; the mass release of ninety-eight of its residents just in time to celebrate the birth of Christ is unlikely to have gone unnoticed.<sup>523</sup>

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<sup>519</sup> Melinda Hegarty, 'Laurentian Patronage in the Palazzo Vecchio: The Frescoes of the Sala dei Gigli', *The Art Bulletin*, vol. 78, 1996, p. 267.

<sup>520</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 266 – 268.

<sup>521</sup> Guy Geltner, 'Isola non Isolta. Le Stinche in the Middle Ages', *Annali di Storia di Firenze*, vol. III, 2008, pp. 15-16.

<sup>522</sup> G. Geltner, 'Isola non Isolta. Le Stinche in the Middle Ages', *Annali di Storia di Firenze*, vol. III, 2008, p. 21.

<sup>523</sup> The name of the street which flanked the Stinche to the south was and is still named the Via dei Lavatoi, which reminds us that this area was home to wash houses, likely

Subtler than the Medici *palle* (balls), news of the prisoners' release would perhaps have travelled across the city swiftly and in hushed tones via the *pancaccieri* (lay philosophers or gossips of the commune who congregated on the city's public benches).<sup>524</sup>

Despite having pointed to the importance of the mass release of prisoners in relation to the Medici brothers' personal sacrality, one should also consider the notion of the confraternity as a microcosm of Florentine society.<sup>525</sup> Accordingly, Dale Kent mentions that philanthropy was the Christian expression of patronage.<sup>526</sup> Furthermore, in a community like that of fifteenth-century Florence, reciprocity was the universal hub around which the various wheels of society turned.<sup>527</sup> The Buonomini appear to have exceeded the duties expected of similar lay confraternities and performed actions that reflected those carried out by the city's political administration. Rather than labouring the obvious parallel between the titles of the Buonomini's twelve procurators and the

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concerned with manufacturing, specifically the washing of wool or cloth. For further details on the San Pier Scheraggio wool route see A. Atwell, 'Ritual Wool Trading', in Crum R. J. and Paoletti J. T., (eds.), *Renaissance Florence: A Social History*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 204. The Via del Mercantino, now known as the Via dell'Isola della Stinche, which ran along the west side of the prison, indicates that there was once a thriving flea market in this area. See also Guy Geltner, 'Coping in Medieval Prisons', *Continuity and Change*, vol. 23, no. 1., 2008, p. 152, for the location of San Simone.

<sup>524</sup> Yvonne Elet, 'Seats of Power: The Outdoor Benches of Early Modern Florence', *The Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, vol. 61, 2002, p. 451.

<sup>525</sup> Weissman, R. F. E., 'Cults and Contexts: In Search of the Renaissance Confraternity', in K. Eisenbichler (ed.), *Crossing the Boundaries: Christian Piety and the Arts in Medieval and Renaissance Confraternities*, Michigan, Kalamazoo, 1991, p. 209.

<sup>526</sup> D. Kent, *Friendship, Love and Trust in Renaissance Florence*, London, Harvard University Press, 2009, p. 45.

<sup>527</sup> *Ibid.*

Florentine magistracy, one should let deeds speak for themselves. If we examine the events surrounding the Duomo's consecration in 1436 and compare them to the events of 1479, an interesting and informative analogy emerges. Following the construction of the cathedral's *cupola*, an event that encouraged celebratory decrees from both the Curia and the Florentine magistracy, the latter complemented the program of civic ceremonies by liberating prisoners from the Stinche.<sup>528</sup> Likewise, the Buonomini's part in the liberation of 1479 coincided with the capture and hanging of an enemy of the state, likened to Judas Iscariot, who had been at large for more than a year.<sup>529</sup>

Perhaps the final and most important question to ask with regard to Lorenzo, Giuliano, and the Buonomini is the purpose of including recognisable portraits in a room that was essentially closed to the public. Despite general acceptance that the oratory may have been intended for the sole use of the Buonomini, there is compelling evidence that suggests otherwise. In his study of the confraternity's activities, Amleto Spicciani describes how recipients of charity were recorded in the confraternity's ledgers and given a *polizza* or token that, on Wednesdays, could be redeemed for bread.<sup>530</sup> He does not make it clear as to exactly where the distribution of food took place, but perhaps evidence can be found in the visual documents on the oratory's walls. In the *Giving Food to the Hungry and Drink to the Thirsty* fresco (Fig. 11), the scene is set within the oratory's

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<sup>528</sup> Ibid. p. 40-41.

<sup>529</sup> P. L. Rubin, *Images and Identity in Fifteenth-Century Florence*, London, Yale University Press, 2007, p. 118.

<sup>530</sup> A. Spicciani, 'The "Poveri Vergognosi" in Fifteenth-Century Florence: The first 30 years' activity of the Buonomini di San Martino', in T. Riis (ed.), *Aspects of Poverty in Early Modern Europe*, Florence, Badia Fiesolana, 1981, p. 125.

vaulted space. Given Ghirlandaio's attention to accurately reproducing detail, this would indicate that at least on a Wednesday, a portion of the Florentine public, the *poveri vergognosi*, were in fact allowed to enter this otherwise private room. The remains of a trumpet window (Fig. 55), which, during the plague of 1522, was used to distribute bread without necessitating personal contact, likewise indicates that it was inside the oratory that such transactions usually took place. Accordingly, the shamed poor would have formed one of the audiences able to view the oratory's newly painted lunettes. Moreover, there is no proof to preclude the public's presence in this space during the Feast of Saint Martin. It was and still is accepted practice throughout Europe for confraternities to open their doors, however briefly, to all walks of life on certain dates of the liturgical calendar, and especially on the feast day of their patron saint.

Prior to the Pazzi Conspiracy, the Medici had already blurred the boundaries between public patronage and contemporary concepts of honour associated with their person. I refer here especially to the dual patronage of Cosimo 'the Elder' de' Medici and his brother Lorenzo,<sup>531</sup> the former's patronage of San Lorenzo<sup>532</sup> and the decoration of the

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<sup>531</sup> See J. Paoletti, 'Fraternal Piety and Family Power: The Artistic Patronage of Cosimo and Lorenzo de' Medici', in F. Ames-Lewis, (ed.), *Cosimo 'il Vecchio' de' Medici, 1389-1464: Essays in Commemoration of the 600<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Cosimo de' Medici's Birth*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1992.

<sup>532</sup> N. Rubinstein, 'Cosimo Optimus Civis', in F. Ames-Lewis (ed.), *Cosimo 'il Vecchio' de' Medici, 1389-1464: Essays in Commemoration of the 600<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Cosimo de' Medici's Birth*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1992, p. 20. See also C. Elam, 'Cosimo de' Medici and San Lorenzo', in F. Ames-Lewis, (ed.), *Cosimo 'il Vecchio' de Medici, 1389-1464: Essays in Commemoration of the 600th Anniversary of Cosimo de'Medici's Birth*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1992.

Medici chapel in the family's Via Cavour property.<sup>533</sup> Furthermore, in hindsight the events of 1478, although depriving Lorenzo of a brother, provided a different stage on which the Medici could 'merge family history with city history' almost without question or hindrance.<sup>534</sup> This was achieved in part by the forging of confraternal bonds.<sup>535</sup> As a result, a chimera made up of civic history, visual images, and folklore spilled outside the confraternity and onto the piazzetta where the people who congregated there would recognise it as a Medicean animal, made tame by admiration during times of plenty and ferocious and dangerous in times of discontent.<sup>536</sup> Many Florentines might have caught a glimpse of the oratory's painted interior as the brothers entered and exited. Needless to say, visiting traders regularly walked along the San Martino wool route and may have been aural or visual witnesses to the cult of Lorenzo and Giuliano.<sup>537</sup> Consequently, one can think of the Medici as earthly intercessors between the impoverished and the wealthy. Their confraternal brothers acted as 'participants in the new ritual forms and spaces that

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<sup>533</sup> Benozzo di Lese, Cristina Acidini Luchinat, Cristina Acidini, *The Chapel of the Magi: Benozzo Gozzoli's Frescoes in the Palazzo Medici-Riccardi Florence*, London, Thames and Hudson, 1994.

<sup>534</sup> Patricia Emison, 'The Replicated Image in Florence', in Crum R. J. and Paoletti J. T., (eds.), *Renaissance Florence: A Social History*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 434.

<sup>535</sup> P. Gavitt, 'Corporate Beneficence and Historical Narratives of Communal Well-being', in Crum R. J. and Paoletti J. T., (eds.), *Renaissance Florence: A Social History*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 149. For Lorenzo's relationship with the Compagnia della Stella see M. Plaisance, *Florence in the Time of the Medici: Public Celebrations, Politics and Literature in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries*, trans. Nicole Carew-Reid (ed.), Toronto, CFFS Publications, 2008, p. 24.

<sup>536</sup> See section 2:3.

<sup>537</sup> A. Atwell, 'Ritual Trading at the Florentine Wool-Cloth Botteghe', in Crum R. J. and Paoletti J. T., (eds.), *Renaissance Florence: A Social History*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2006, pp. 201-205.

were [subsequently] created'.<sup>538</sup> The Buonomini's oratory is thus an example of a new Medicean ritual space, a construct given meaning by the socio-political impact of the Pazzi Conspiracy. The political munificence of Lorenzo and Giuliano de' Medici was translated into a more perceptible medium, one preserved in plaster and paint and eulogised, albeit discreetly, by their confraternal brothers, the Good Men of Saint Martin.

Having examined how the Buonomini treated their most notable members within the painted murals of their oratory, it is now necessary to consider how they regarded those that received their charity. Hence the chapter that follows is dedicated to identifying the shamed poor and seeks to give a voice to those individuals obscured by poverty and silenced, until now by circumstance.

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<sup>538</sup> J. M. Najemy, 'Florentine Politics and Urban Spaces', in Crum R. J. and Paoletti J. T., (eds.), *Renaissance Florence: A Social History*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 47.



## Chapter 5

### The Shamed Poor: Behind the Veil

## Section 5:1

*The Poveri Vergognosi*

The poor are always present, in any society at any time, but their absence in documents makes it difficult to learn anything about them.<sup>539</sup>

If one holds with this statement by the twentieth-century historian, Richard Goldthwaite, that the poor are obscured by lack of surviving written authentication, then an intramural ethical abstraction (the *poveri vergognosi* or shamed poor) that operates within the boundaries set by poverty will arguably be even more problematic in its identification and evaluation. This section therefore will allow for an examination of the most pertinent sources pertaining to the shamed poor. Furthermore, rather than isolating this phrase for the purpose of remote scrutiny, other terms relating to poverty in general will also be brought to bear as this investigation will likely be best served if it is conducted in circumstances that will contribute to and encourage a fuller understanding of the meaning of the locution, ‘the shamed poor’.

The term *poveri vergognosi*, meaning shamed or shame-faced poor, was a short phrase used widely throughout Christendom, and beyond, during the medieval and Early Modern periods<sup>540</sup> to describe a particular group of unfortunate individuals within

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<sup>539</sup> R. A. Goldthwaite, *The Economy of Renaissance Florence*, Baltimore, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009, p. 570.

<sup>540</sup> The Bible, as an ancient primary source has not been ignored by the researcher although this source does not make mention of the shamed poor. For mentions of charity

society.<sup>541</sup> Written contemporary *quattrocento* sources furnish us with some information on the shamed poor, although there is rarely any accompanying description or explanation to further inform our understanding (not that there should be as the various authors of fifteenth-century documents did not create them in order to facilitate our investigations). The foundation deeds of the Casa del Ceppo (the trust that controlled the Ospedale degli Innocenti prior to the Arte della Seta), for example, mention that the hospital was not allowed to sell its immovable goods ‘so that for eternity Christ’s poor may be fed and nourished’.<sup>542</sup> They also go on to say that if anything did happen to be sold, then the proceeds should be distributed ‘among the poor of Jesus Christ... the public (*poveri più vichi*)... [and] to the secret and shame-faced poor (*poveri vergognosi*)’.<sup>543</sup> Thus, here in one document there are three orders of the poor mentioned, yet only the shamed poor are qualified with a description, namely that they are ‘secret’. In another confraternal document, which was created in the city of Turin during the sixteenth century, the poor were similarly described:

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in general see Exodus 22:22, Hebrews 13:2-3, Deuteronomy 24:14 and John 5:3. With regard to the deserving poor see Matthew 5:42 and Timothy 5:9-10.

<sup>541</sup> See Mark R. Cohen, *The Voice of the Poor in the Middle Ages: An Anthology of Documents from the Cairo Geniza*, Woodstock, Princeton University Press, 2005 and R. C. Trexler, ‘Charity in the Defense of Urban Elites in the Italian Communes’, in F. C. Jaher (ed.), *The Rich, the Well Born and the Powerful: Elites and Upper Classes in History*, London, University of Illinois Press, 1973, pp. 70-78.

<sup>542</sup> Published in P. Gavitt, *Charity and Children in Renaissance Florence: The Ospedale degli Innocenti 1410-1536*, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 1990, p. 49.

<sup>543</sup> Ibid.

The city [Turin] has no wine, salt, wheat or firewood for the maintenance of the poor and needy beggars and the shamed poor.<sup>544</sup>

Conversely the Florentine *Catasti* make no mention of the shamed poor although they do provide legal categories for the poor in general.<sup>545</sup> For example, the *miserabili* have been identified within these documents by David Herlihy and Christiane Klapisch-Zuber as including ‘the infirm, the aged, minor orphans and above all, widows...usually destitute’.<sup>546</sup> Furthermore, ‘common to miserable households everywhere was the absence of an adult male’.<sup>547</sup> The Buonomini however, given that they encouraged the ‘conjugal household’<sup>548</sup> and bestowed a large percentage of charity on women in childbed rather than orphans and the aged, are generally considered as tending to a section of the poor that did not always include the *miserabili*.<sup>549</sup> During religious festivals though, the wide range of poor people referred to within the confraternity’s ledgers does not preclude

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<sup>544</sup> Sandra Cavallo, *Charity and Power in Early Modern Italy: Benefactors and their Motives in Turin 1541-1789*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1995, p. 57.

<sup>545</sup> A. Spicciani, ‘The ‘Poveri Vergognosi’ in Fifteenth-Century Florence: The first 30 years’ activity of the Buonomini di San Martino’, in T. Riis (ed.), *Aspects of Poverty in Early Modern Europe*, Florence, Badia Fiesolana, 1981, p. 120 states that in the 1427 *catasto*, which included 10,171 returns, 2924 of those were paupers.

<sup>546</sup> David Herlihy and Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, *Tuscans and Their Families: A Study of the Florentine Catasto 1427*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1985, p. 19.

<sup>547</sup> Ibid.

<sup>548</sup> J. Henderson, *Piety and Charity in Late Medieval Florence*, London, University of Chicago Press, 1994, p. 394.

<sup>549</sup> See *Entrata e Uscita 1478-1482*, c. 134 verso, (1.2.1.0.2.), ABSM consists of thirteen entries, eight of which pertain to women in childbed. *Entrata e Uscita 1478-1482*, c. 130 verso, (1.2.1.0.2.), ABSM consists of fourteen entries, ten of which pertain to women in childbed. *Entrata e Uscita 1478-1482*, c. 131 verso (1.2.1.0.2.), ABSM has ten entries and six of them concern women in childbed.

that, at various times, this group was aided by the Buonomini.<sup>550</sup> The *miserabili* or pauper families, according to Raymond de Roover, made up 28% of the city's households between 1457 and 1458, all of which earned so little that they were exempt from even the lowest tax payment.<sup>551</sup> Nevertheless, our understanding of this point, in addition to an awareness of the juridical terms within the *catasto*, 'does not necessarily bring us closer to the reality of fifteenth century poverty' and likewise a clearer understanding of who the shamed poor were.<sup>552</sup>

Medieval and Renaissance clerics also produced documentation in which they mention and, more importantly, describe the poor. Antoninus of Florence, for instance, used '*pauper*' in his *Summa Moralis* in order to describe the 'salaried indigent' positions and trades that he assesses.<sup>553</sup> Bernardino of Siena also mentions three categories of the poor in his writings: the non conformist poor such as 'thieves and impatient paupers', those who are rich only in spirituality and those 'who gladly accept poverty' or are poor 'for

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<sup>550</sup> *Entrata e Uscita 1469-1478*, c, 131 recto, (1.2.1.0.1.), ABSM. Despite recording various purchases including large quantities of grain, meat and wine for the Easter feasts of 1478, the confraternity do not detail the individual recipients of this festive charity as they do other beneficiaries at other times of the year. I suspect this is because the food and drink was distributed among the 'poor of the earth and of the county' who are mentioned within this same set of entries.

<sup>551</sup> R. de Roover, *The Rise and Decline of the Medici Bank 1397-1494*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1963, p. 29.

<sup>552</sup> P. Gavitt, *Charity and Children in Renaissance Florence: The Ospedale degli Innocenti 1410-1536*, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 1990, p. 5.

<sup>553</sup> Antoninus quoted in P. Gavitt, *Charity and Children in Renaissance Florence: The Ospedale degli Innocenti 1410-1536*, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 1990, p. 5. The word *pauper* also turns up in a fourteenth-century will. Thomas Keuhn, *Heirs, Kin, and Creditors in Renaissance Florence*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2008, p. 96, informs us that in 1379 Piero di Bernardo of the rural parish of San Donato in Poggio, was described as a 'poor and needy' person or '*pauper et egena persona*'.

the love of God'.<sup>554</sup> Bernardino also spoke of the concept of involuntary poverty, admonishing that 'the reverse of fortune, made [individuals] fall into poverty [they] who in time had been rich or at least well looked after'.<sup>555</sup> Likewise Leon Battista Alberti, the *quattrocento* polymath, describes the way that as fortune's wheel turns, poverty can reach in and 'strike [a man] down or he suffers some accident' which forces him into penury. Accordingly, it is this type of unfortunate individual that the term *poveri vergognosi* encompasses.<sup>556</sup>

Similarly, the Florentine confraternity, the Buonomini di San Martino, in their archived sources from the fifteenth century, present the poor in variety of ways: as *poveri di dio* (poor of God), *poveri della terra* (poor of the earth), *poveri detti* (said poor)<sup>557</sup> and *poveri vergognosi* (shamed poor). As one would expect, they do not elaborate on any of these phrases, which are so problematic for the researcher yet would likely have been self-explanatory to the members of the confraternity.<sup>558</sup> Nevertheless, one would assume that

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<sup>554</sup> Bernardino of Siena quoted in A. Spicciani, *Capitale e Interesse Tra Mercatura e Poveria nei teologi e canonista dei secoli XIII-XV*, Rome, Jouvence, 1990, p. 116.

<sup>555</sup> Ibid.

<sup>556</sup> L. B. Alberti, *The Family in Renaissance Florence*, trans. R. N Watkins, Columbia, University of California Press, 1969, p. 146.

<sup>557</sup> The confraternity often begins a set of ledger entries with the term *poveri detti* (said poor). This description does not usually refer to or qualify earlier text. For instance, *Entrata e Uscita 1478-1482*, c. 130 verso, (1.2.1.0.2.), ABSM refers to *poveri detti* throughout. The exception to this rule is when the term is found midway down the page and refers back to a different phrase. For example, *Entrata e Uscita 1478-1482*, c. 131 recto, (1.2.1.0.2.), ABSM begins with *poveri di dio* and refers to the *poveri detti* for all but one of the subsequent entries.

<sup>558</sup> For the particular entries that I refer to see *Entrata e Uscita 1469-1478*, c. 134 recto and verso, (1.2.1.0.1.), ABSM and *Entrata e Uscita 1478-1482*, c. 8 verso, (1.2.1.0.2.), ABSM.

the names and professions of the individuals listed below each description of poor class would work to aid the search for clarity.

An examination of the Buonomini's *Entrata e Uscita 1478-1482*, c.131 verso shows that the page begins, 'said poor I undertake 20 May 1478...' and below the list of various acts of charity follows.<sup>559</sup> It is surprising then that the fifth entry encountered refers to a member of the Peruzzi family, whose occupation, unlike the other males also identified on this sheet, is not listed nor is an explanation of what the seventeen soldi, five denari bestowed on him was payment for. I would suggest therefore, that as the Peruzzi clan had provided the Florentine republic with no less than ten *gonfaloniers* and fifty-four priors of the city's governing body,<sup>560</sup> that this man's name alone was sufficient as a means of identification and the reasons why he needed the cash were nobody's business, except the Buonomini, who chose not to record them in any great detail.

Following on from this entry are five instances of beneficence to women in childbed, two instances of help given to ill women, one gift of clothing and five lire, 15 soldi given to Francesco di Conte in order 'to extract from prison' Francesco di Profane. If Amleto Spicciani is to be believed with regard to his perception of the elevated statuses of

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<sup>559</sup> *Entrata e Uscita 1469-1478*, c. 131verso, (1.2.1.0.1.), ABSM reads:

'Poveri detta adi 20 di Maggio 1478 y quarto β8 dati a m<sup>a</sup> madelena di pagolo di [X] inparto...?'

<sup>560</sup> <http://www.britannica.com/topic/Peruzzi-family>

individuals who were released from the Stinche through the Buonomini's charity, then one may assume that Francesco di Profane is in fact a notable person.<sup>561</sup> He is certainly worthy of not having a profession recorded alongside his name and also of the five lire, 15 soldi paid for his freedom.<sup>562</sup> Not all of those people liberated by the Buonomini were remarkable enough not to have a profession ascribed to them in the confraternity's ledgers. For instance, in June 1478 'Filippo of Madonna Dialta woodcutter' was given money to extract 'Giovanni Borsi shoemaker' from prison.<sup>563</sup> If this treatment of surnames is an unwritten rule regarding the confraternity's ledger keeping, the previously mentioned women in childbed and the two females suffering from illness from manuscript c.131 are clearly not well-known as their addresses and the professions of the heads of their families have been included within each ledger entry. Furthermore, if one was inclined to opine on their economic status, it could safely be said that these undistinguished individuals could best be described as *popolo minuto*<sup>564</sup> or equally could

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<sup>561</sup> A. Spicciani, 'L'Archivio Fiorentino dei Buonomini di San Martino: Fonti Per lo Studio della Poverta nella Seconda Parte del XV Secolo', in *Bollettino Storico Pisano: Studi Storici in Memoria di Natale Caturegli*, Pisa, Pacini Editore, 1975/6, pp. 427-436, in this instance p. 424.

<sup>562</sup> *Entrata e Uscita 1469-1478*, c. 131verso, (1.2.1.0.1.), ABSM reads:

'Poveri deti adi 4 di detto y cinque β15 dati a Francesco di conte per trarre di prigione Francesco di profane...'

<sup>563</sup> *Entrata e Uscita 1469-1478*, c.132 verso, (1.2.1.0.1.), ABSM reads:

'Poveri detti adi detto y dieci dati a Filippo di m<sup>a</sup> dialta legnauolo p[per] trarli di prigione e p[per]lui a Giovanni borsi laniauolo porto Francesco minatore p[per] partito di tutti'.

<sup>564</sup> Gene Brucker, 'Florentine Voices From the Catasto, 1427-1480', *I Tatti Studies*, no. 5, 1993, p. 16.



be considered as the wives of ‘lower guildsmen’.<sup>565</sup> That the group described is made up of the wives of men who laboured as kiln workers, cloth workers and the like, places them within a stratum of society within which ‘there were gradations based on wealth, occupation and status. Many lived from hand to mouth, moving from employer, from one rented hovel to another, and in and out of the *catasto* records’.<sup>566</sup> Others however, were not classed amongst the ‘oafs’ and ‘the rabble’<sup>567</sup> but were literate and able to keep accounts.<sup>568</sup>

Clearly there is social disparity between those considered as *poveri detti* by the Procurators of the Shamed Poor of Florence as the group of people labelled ‘said poor’ and recorded as having received help in May 1478 do not share a common economic or social stratum.

Likewise, the confraternity’s use of the term *poveri di dio* cannot be used as a tool to readily ascribe individuals to a certain economic stratum of society as the remit of this term appears to lack specificity. For example, the Buonomini’s *Entrata e Uscita 1469-1478*, c. 132 verso begins ‘the poor of God I undertake on 27 June 1478...’ and subsequently lists payments for excise duty on milled grain, payments too for goods and services to invalids from obscure families, help given to non-notable women in childbed

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<sup>565</sup> Ibid. p. 17.

<sup>566</sup> Ibid. p. 16.

<sup>567</sup> Ibid.

<sup>568</sup> Ibid. p. 17.

and monies bestowed in order to extract a man from prison.<sup>569</sup> Furthermore, four lire and six soldi changed hands between the Procurators of the Shamed Poor and Piero di Betto Gherardini, so that the recipient could pay for ‘*suo piato*’ (his litigation or effort).<sup>570</sup>

During Easter 1478 the confraternity’s records refer once again to the *poveri di dio* in addition to the *poveri* and the *poveri della terra et di contado* (the poor of the earth and of the district) on the same ledger page.<sup>571</sup> Furthermore, as the majority of entries recorded on this particular leaf refer to considerable donations of flour, bread, wine, meat and monies, which were widely distributed throughout Florence during the paschal festival, one can safely assume that in this instance, the Buonomini’s charity extended to each and every impoverished individual in the republic.

The final term pertaining to the penurious and used, albeit selectively, by the Buonomini is the expression currently under scrutiny in this section of the thesis, the *poveri vergognosi*. Furthermore, given that the confraternity’s other designation is The Procurators of the Shamed Poor of Florence and their title deeds claim that the lay brotherhood was set up, in part, for ‘the utility of the shamed poor of the said city’, one

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<sup>569</sup> *Entrata e Uscita 1469-1478*, c. 132 verso, (1.2.1.0.1.), ABSM.

<sup>570</sup> *Entrata e Uscita 1469-1478*, c. 132 verso, (1.2.1.0.1.), ABSM reads:

‘Poveri detti adi 9 di detto y quarto β6 dati a piero di berto gherardini p[per] dare a β[ser] Zanobi del pace nots[notaio] p[per] suo piato di licentia d andrea bambagiaio et Domenico mazinghi’.

<sup>571</sup> *Entrata e Uscita 1469-1478*, c. 131 recto, (1.2.1.0.1.), ABSM.

would expect their account ledgers to be peppered with mentions of them. Surprisingly however, this phrase, used so liberally within the sodality's *Capitoli*, rarely occurs in their registers, one notable exception being *Entrata e Uscita 1482-1489* which mentions the *poveri vergognosi* in relation to a grain donation.<sup>572</sup> The preamble to the confraternity's *Capitoli* does however explain that because there was a famine in the region, there was a 'large number of poor of the city and district of Florence' and of these, the 'said shamed poor' were described as: 'those who usually do not beg'; 'the inauspicious that suffer many passes' but must 'live by God from which the divine desire and the right results are advanced'.<sup>573</sup>

Accordingly, the confraternity's seemingly unspecific use of various terms to describe those who benefited from their charity, when considered alongside their own description of the *poveri vergognosi* from the sodality's *Capitoli*, would further suggest and uphold our own modern view: that the term *poveri vergognosi* transcends social structure and exists as a moral concept that operates within the boundaries of poverty.

Consequently, this term has been further defined by historians during the twentieth century as 'those who had once helped themselves but could no longer, through no fault

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<sup>572</sup> *Entrata e Uscita 1482-1489*, c. 24 verso, (1.2.1.0.3.), ABSM.

<sup>573</sup> *Codice dei Capitoli*, c. 3-4, (1.1.1.0.1.), ABSM, found in Appendix II which reads:

'Considerando la carestia presente et la moltitudine de poveri della citta et contado di Firenze: maximamente di quegli che non sono consueti a mendicare et il sinistro che patiscono molti colle loro famiglia. spirati da dio dal quale i sancti desideri et le giuste operationi procedono'.

of their own',<sup>574</sup> 'the needy who did not beg',<sup>575</sup> and respectable people 'capable of shame'.<sup>576</sup> The same scholars who provide these basic explanations of who the shamed poor are simultaneously express reservations with regard to the difficulties encountered when attempting to define this popular phrase. For instance, Richard Trexler qualifies his simple definition of the *poveri vergognosi* by stating that 'documents using the term in a practical context do not explicitly identify the *vergognosi* as belonging to any particular class'.<sup>577</sup> Likewise Christopher Black, despite identifying that the *poveri vergognosi* could include 'poor nobles', does not expand his definition beyond including 'others of respectability'.<sup>578</sup> Amleto Spicciani too, supplements his basic definition of the shamed poor with assertions such as the ashamed poor were 'contrasted in the literary sources of the time [the fifteenth century] to the public poor'<sup>579</sup> and that poverty was a 'structural phenomenon tied up...to a certain type of economy'.<sup>580</sup> A common misconception

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<sup>574</sup> A. Spicciani, 'The 'Poveri Vergognosi' in Fifteenth-Century Florence: The first 30 years' activity of the Buonomini di San Martino', in T. Riis (ed.), *Aspects of Poverty in Early Modern Europe*, Florence, Badia Fiesolana, 1981, p. 121.

<sup>575</sup> R. C. Trexler, 'Charity in the Defense of Urban Elites in the Italian Communes', in F. C. Jaher (ed.), *The Rich, the Well Born and the Powerful: Elites and Upper Classes in History*, London, University of Illinois Press, 1973, p. 75.

<sup>576</sup> C. F. Black, 'The Development of Confraternity Studies Over the Past Thirty Years', in N. Terpstra, (ed.), *The Politics of Ritual Kinship Confraternities and Social Order in Early Modern Italy*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000, p. 24.

<sup>577</sup> R. C. Trexler, 'Charity in the Defense of Urban Elites in the Italian Communes', in F. C. Jaher (ed.), *The Rich, the Well Born and the Powerful: Elites and Upper Classes in History*, London, University of Illinois Press, 1973, p. 75.

<sup>578</sup> C. F. Black, 'The Development of Confraternity Studies Over the Past Thirty Years', in N. Terpstra, (ed.), *The Politics of Ritual Kinship Confraternities and Social Order in Early Modern Italy*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000, p. 24.

<sup>579</sup> A. Spicciani, 'L'Archivio Fiorentino dei Buonomini di San Martino: Fonti Per lo Studio della Poverta nella Seconda Parte del XV Secolo', in *Bollettino Storico Pisano: Studi Storici in Memoria di Natale Caturegli*, Pisa, Pacini Editore, 1975/6, pp. 427-436, in this instance p. 428.

<sup>580</sup> *Ibid.* In this instance p. 428.

however, is that the *poveri vergognosi* were exclusive to the patrician and merchant classes and ‘such persons were impoverished noblemen and citizens, not beggars’.<sup>581</sup> Furthermore, if the previously discussed ledgers of the Buonomini di San Martino are once more brought to bear then it becomes clear that it is not members of the patrician classes who are being helped in the main. During the *quattrocento*, the majority of Buonomini aid went to families and individuals from other stratum of society.<sup>582</sup> Nevertheless, the administrative class (such as notaries, lawyers etc.)<sup>583</sup> are conspicuous by their complete absence<sup>584</sup> and those who fell from the moneyed classes<sup>585</sup> do not really feature until after 1472, when the confraternity’s bonds with the Medici become more marked and then mentions of them are few.<sup>586</sup>

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<sup>581</sup> Peter Brown, *Through the Eye of a Needle: Wealth, the Fall of Rome, and the Making of Christianity in the West, 350-550 AD*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2012, p. 467.

<sup>582</sup> See *Entrata e Uscita 1469-1478*, (1.2.1.0.1.), ABSM and *Entrata e Uscita 1478-1482*, (1.2.1.0.2.), ABSM. See also A. Spicciani, ‘The ‘Poveri Vergognosi’ in Fifteenth-Century Florence: The first 30 years’ activity of the Buonomini di San Martino’, in T. Riis (ed.), *Aspects of Poverty in Early Modern Europe*, Florence, Badia Fiesolana, 1981, pp. 121-123 and pp. 131-132.

<sup>583</sup> The administrative class as described by A. Spicciani, ‘The ‘Poveri Vergognosi’ in Fifteenth-Century Florence: The first 30 years’ activity of the Buonomini di San Martino’, in T. Riis (ed.), *Aspects of Poverty in Early Modern Europe*, Florence, Badia Fiesolana, 1981, pp. 121-123 and pp. 131-132 corresponds to the professional class described by Gene Brucker, ‘Florentine Voices From the Catasto, 1427-1480’, *I Tatti Studies in the Renaissance*, no.5, p. 21. This class was subject to internal ranking with university doctors at the top and notaries at the bottom.

<sup>584</sup> A. Spicciani, ‘The ‘Poveri Vergognosi’ in Fifteenth-Century Florence: The first 30 years’ activity of the Buonomini di San Martino’, in T. Riis (ed.), *Aspects of Poverty in Early Modern Europe*, Florence, Badia Fiesolana, 1981, pp. 138-139.

<sup>585</sup> By moneyed classes I am referring to the top ranking citizens of Florence, including wealthy merchants. G. Brucker, ‘Florentine Voices From the Catasto, 1427-1480’, *I Tatti Studies in the Renaissance*, no.5, p. 19 describes them as the ‘elite: *nobili, uomini principali, uomini grandi, uomini di buone cose, gente di qualita*’.

<sup>586</sup> A. Spicciani, ‘The ‘Poveri Vergognosi’ in Fifteenth-Century Florence: The first 30 years’ activity of the Buonomini di San Martino’, in T. Riis (ed.), *Aspects of Poverty in Early Modern Europe*, Florence, Badia Fiesolana, 1981, p. 123.

The *miserabili* too, who were often considered the architects of their own financial and moral downfall, rather than being the victims of fortune, cannot necessarily be considered as *poveri vergognosi* as they had perhaps fallen too far, in spiritual terms, to benefit from the Buonomini's charitable intervention. Among this group of destitute individuals existed the 'outcast poor', who were described by Brian Pullan in 1996 as 'the feckless, habitual sinners in need of redemption such as vagrants and common prostitutes'.<sup>587</sup> Notable exceptions to this rule are the instances where the Procurators of the Shamed Poor aided harlots to atone for their vices by encouraging them to convert to Christ once more.<sup>588</sup>

Pullan however, because of the manner in which he describes the descent from security into poverty, provides the clearest vision of this plunge into penury:

For the poor were not a social class or a uniform mass, but a pool formed partly by people descending from various social levels and retaining when they did, something of their previous social identity.<sup>589</sup>

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<sup>587</sup> Brian Pullan, 'Charity and Poor Relief in Early Modern Italy', in M. Daunton, (ed.), *Charity, Self-Interest and Welfare in the English Past*, London, UCL Press, 1996, p. 49.

<sup>588</sup> A. Spicciani, 'Aspetti finanziari dell'assistenza e struttura cetuale dei poveri vergognosi fiorentini al tempo del Savonarola (1487-1498)', in *Studi di storia economica Toscana nel medioevo e nel rinascimento: In memoria di Federigo Melis*, Pacini, Pisa, 1987, pp. 321-346.

<sup>589</sup> B. Pullan, 'Charity and Poor Relief in Early Modern Italy', in M. Daunton, (ed.), *Charity, Self-Interest and Welfare in the English Past*, London, UCL Press, 1996, p. 49.

Moreover, he goes further in separating the shamed poor from his ‘pool’ of general poor people by explaining that:

The *poveri vergognosi*... were faced not with loss of life, but rather with loss of honour or respect if their inability to live as their rank demanded became known.<sup>590</sup>

This forfeiture of moral rectitude can be attested to by contemporary early modern chroniclers. For example Giovanni Corsini, a member of a distinguished family who had fallen upon hard times, was described as ‘so immersed in a brimming expanse of misery and poverty that... he was even despised by his own relatives’.<sup>591</sup> Alberti too had a harsh view of how need transformed an individual. ‘Begging’, he wrote, ‘those bitter words, those words most hateful to a free man’s mind “I beg”’.<sup>592</sup> He further states that poverty and begging was ‘a kind of slavery’ and so metamorphosed honourable freemen into vassals lacking moral rectitude.<sup>593</sup>

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<sup>590</sup> B. Pullen, ‘Charity and Poor Relief in Early Modern Italy’, in M. Daunton, (ed.), *Charity, Self-Interest and Welfare in the English Past*, London, UCL Press, 1996, p. 49.

<sup>591</sup> G. Brucker, *Renaissance Florence*, London, University of California Press, 1969, p. 106.

<sup>592</sup> L. B. Alberti, *The Family in Renaissance Florence*, trans. R. N Watkins, Columbia, University of California Press, 1969, p. 68.

<sup>593</sup> *Ibid.* p. 148.

Ricci however, in his study of 1979, explains that ‘the ashamed poor in fact don’t necessarily make up part of any subordinate classes...they are not marginal, rather they express an extreme wish...to stay among the ranks of the [class into which they are] best integrated’.<sup>594</sup> He further allows us to further separate the shamed poor from the collective of general poor people by explaining that their ‘right to assistance derives [because] the applicant is not able to handle his own job, the needs of his...own family’ and that civilisation ‘is lost’ if these individuals are forced to act in a manner which conflicts with their social circumstances or, if they are left to ‘live indecorously’.<sup>595</sup> Moreover, the reason for this apparent conflict of actions and emotions within certain poor individuals has nothing to do with who they were or what strata of society they came from, it relied solely on the notion of honour. As Ricci states, they were ‘in need of

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<sup>594</sup> G. Ricci, ‘Povertà Vergogna e Povertà Vergognosa’, in *Società e Storica*, vol. 5, 1979, p. 307-308 states:

‘La storiografia sociale degli ultimi decenni invece ha massicciamente (e giustamente) trascurato questo tipo di ottica <<assistenziale>> della povertà vergognosa, ma ha anche riservato un’attenzione assai limitata alle figure individuali di questi poveri e al significato sociale della loro esistenza; a questo per una serie di motivi di ordine vario. La moda innanzitutto: i poveri vergognosi infatti non fanno parte necessariamente delle classi subalterne, il più delle volte anzi non ne fanno parte affatto; non sono degli emarginati, anzi esprimono un’estrema volontà, spesso coronate da successo, di restare fra i ranghi dei meglio integrati’.

<sup>595</sup> Ibid. p. 336-337 states:

‘Si ribadisce tuttavia che <<la condizione di povero vergognosi...deve risultare dalla coesistenza nel richiedente del duplice requisito della condizione civile e della decadenza da uno stato di agiatezza>>; e si precisa che la <<civiltà>> può essere persa <<per essersi dedicati in modo continuativo ed abituale a una forma di attività non compatibile con tale condizione sociale o abbandonati ad un modo di vivere indecoroso>>’.



[an] honourable life' as they were 'impoverished from a state of precedent comfort', whatever social echelon they belonged to.<sup>596</sup> Mark Cohen too is aware that honour is the quality which separates the general poor from the shamed poor as he writes that the *poveri vergognosi* 'resist turning to others for help, let alone resorting to the embarrassment of the public dole or beggary'.<sup>597</sup> Pugliese however, writing in 1991, hands us the key to the criteria on which the Buonomini di San Martino judged those who required their help. In an explanatory note within her paper she writes a one-line statement informing the reader that it was perhaps Saint Ambrose's *De Officiis* that provided the confraternity's guidelines when choosing prospective beneficiaries.<sup>598</sup> Apart from this, she does not elaborate further. Returning, *ad fontes*, to the text written by Saint Ambrose during the fourth century B.C., it is clear that the saint instructed that:

First we must always see that we help those of the household of faith (Galatians 6:10). It is a serious fault if a believer is in want, and you know it... that he is without means, that he is hungry, that he suffers distress, especially if he is ashamed of his need. It is a great fault if he is overwhelmed by the imprisonment or false accusation of his family...if he is in prison and – upright though he is - he

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<sup>596</sup> Ibid. states:

'I poveri vergognosi vi sono definite in modo non troppo diverso da quella dei testi piu antichi: <<cittadini bolognesi, cattolici, bisognosi, di vita onorata di civile condizione e che siano decaduti da uno stata di precedente agiatezza>>.

<sup>597</sup> M. R. Cohen, *The Voice of the Poor in the Middle Ages: An Anthology of Documents from the Cairo Geniza*, Woodstock, Princeton University Press, 2005, p. 33.

<sup>598</sup> O. Z. Pugliese, 'The Good Works of the Florentine "Buonomini di San Martino": An Example of Renaissance Pragmatism', in K. Eisenbichler (ed.), *Crossing the Boundaries: Christian Piety and the Arts in Italian Medieval and Renaissance Confraternities*, Michigan, Kalamazoo, 1991, p. 120.

has to suffer pain and punishment for some debt...(we ought to show [mercy] especially in an upright man).<sup>599</sup>

This being so, Ambrose is, in effect, elevating those of a certain position and spiritual disposition out of the mire of general poverty by setting the following principles: insisting that individuals must be pious; identifying the possibility or impact of emotional distress caused by poverty or incarceration; recognising whether an individual is discountenanced by privation or imprisonment and finally the vague notion (repeated twice in swift succession) that individuals should be ‘upright’.<sup>600</sup>

It is Spicciani however, who gives the greatest clue to how the Lay Confraternity of the Buonomini di San Martino hold the key to our understanding of who the shamed poor were. In his article on the brotherhood’s archived materials,<sup>601</sup> the author firstly identifies that the various funds constituted a ‘source of primary importance’ for the study of ‘Florentine poverty as a structural phenomenon, tied up that is to a certain type of economy’.<sup>602</sup> He then goes on to divide historical documents produced by the confraternity into two funds of his own creation, rather than those set out in the catalogues of the National Library of Florence and the Archive of the Good Men of Saint

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<sup>599</sup> Saint Ambrose, ‘*De Officiis*’ 30:148 in P. Schaff and H. Wace (eds.) *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 2<sup>nd</sup> series, vol. 10, Buffalo, Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1896. Available from <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/34011.htm>, (accessed 2 July, 2014).

<sup>600</sup> Ibid.

<sup>601</sup> A. Spicciani, ‘L’Archivio Fiorentino dei Buonomini di San Martino: Fonti Per lo Studio della Poverta nella Seconda Parte del XV Secolo’, in *Bollettino Storico Pisano: Studi Storici in Memoria di Natale Caturegli*, Pisa, Pacini Editore, 1975/6, pp. 427-436.

<sup>602</sup> Ibid. p. 428.

Martin. These two new funds he calls the *fonti archivistiche*, made up of literary sources from the two aforementioned repositories and the *fonti iconografiche*,<sup>603</sup> which refers to eight of the ten frescoes in the Buonomini's oratory: the ones based on the Seven Corporal Works of Mercy. Spicciani also warns the reader not to treat these paintings as 'generic depictions', but encourages us to regard them, along with the paper files, as two sources that 'illuminate each other'.<sup>604</sup>

From this examination of the most pertinent documentary sources relating to the *poveri vergognosi*, otherwise known as the shamed poor, and the scrutiny of the term within the conditions and circumstances set by poverty, it is clear that in order to be classed as shamed poor an individual must meet certain criteria: their need must be kept secret; they are not necessarily *miserabili* as the Buonomini ostensibly catch the worthy before they fall that low,<sup>605</sup> although their social status is not an issue. They do however face a loss of honour; they must be pious; they experience psychological consequences due to hardship and should be 'upright' citizens. Clearly documentary sources take us part-way to understanding how the shamed poor were judged to be just that, although they lack the depth that is required to see these individuals as fully-formed entities. Accordingly, sections 5:2, 5:3 and Chapter 6 of this thesis will be dedicated to a further search for the illusive *poveri vergognosi*. This time however, the investigation will be led by Spicciani's suggestion (which has never before been taken up) and will focus on the union between

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<sup>603</sup> Ibid. p. 429.

<sup>604</sup> Ibid. p. 436.

<sup>605</sup> See Section 5:2.

the visual documents found in the Buonomini's oratory and other various literary and visual sources.

## Section 5:2

## Fashioning Family Honour in Renaissance Florence: The Language of Clothing, Pose and Facial Expression in the Buonomini Frescoes

The image of a woman modestly dressed to attend only to the concerns in the private realm would never have been valued by a patriarch to visualise family honour.<sup>606</sup>

This short statement from Carole Collier Frick's scholarly and highly illuminating *Dressing Renaissance Florence* may well ring true when applied to Domenico Ghirlandaio's fresco decoration of the Tornabuoni chapel in the Dominican church of Santa Maria Novella, as the dominant female figures evident in several of the scenes are patrician women dressed in the finest cloth that money could buy (Figs. 56 and 57).<sup>607</sup> Nevertheless, this chapter will argue that the concept of family honour during the *Quattrocento* was not exclusive to the ruling classes, nor was the visualisation of such an ideal restricted to patrician models.

The notion of honour in Renaissance Florentine society is both difficult to delineate and often associated with 'a mercantile based patrician class'<sup>608</sup> who governed the commune,

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<sup>606</sup> C. C. Frick, *Dressing Renaissance Florence: Families Fortunes and Fine Clothing*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002, p. 209.

<sup>607</sup> Rembrandt Duits, 'Figured Riches: The Value of Gold Brocades in Fifteenth-Century Florentine Painting', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, vol. 62, 1999.

<sup>608</sup> Evelyn Welch, *Shopping in the Renaissance: Consumer Cultures in Italy 1400-1600*, London, Yale University Press, 2005, p. 69.

and was therefore necessarily male.<sup>609</sup> According to Leon Battista Alberti (1404–72) in his *I libri della famiglia* (1441), there existed two types of honour:

Ample the riches, great the possessions, and abundant the good fortune of him who knows how to content himself with inner excellence alone. Blessed the man who appears virtuous in his conduct, strong in friendships, abounding in the favour and affection of his fellow citizens. No one will have greater, firmer, or more solid honour than he who dedicates himself to the renown and lasting fame of his country, his fellow citizens, and his family. He alone deserves to have his name praised and famous and immortal among his descendants who, rightly despising every transient and perishable thing, loves virtue alone, seeks wisdom, desires only pure and righteous glory.<sup>610</sup>

The highest and most ‘solid honour’ is accorded to ‘he who dedicates himself to the renown and lasting fame of his country, his fellow citizens and his family’.<sup>611</sup> Alongside this list of qualities, some of which are governed by fate rather than the individual, the

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<sup>609</sup> A summary of ‘honourable’ criteria was set out by L. Martines, *The Social World of the Florentine Humanists 1390-1460*, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1963, pp. 18–84. For a discussion on the ‘honour elite’ see R. Trexler, ‘Charity in the Defense of Urban Elites in the Italian Communes’, in F. C. Jaher (ed.), *The Rich, the Well Born and the Powerful: Elites and Upper Classes in History*, London, University of Illinois Press, 1973. For a discussion on virtue versus fortune see R. Wittkower, ‘Time and Virtue’, *Journal of the Warburg Institute*, vol. 1, no. 4, 1938.

<sup>610</sup> L. B. Alberti, *The Family in Renaissance Florence*, trans. R. N. Walkins, Columbia, University of California Press, 1969, p. 44. For the text in Italian see below: ‘Troppo ampla ricchezza, troppo grande possanza, troppo singulare felicità reside in colui el quale sopra essere contento solo della virtù. Beatissimo colui el quale si porge ornato di costumi forte d’amicizie, copioso di favori e grazia fra’ suoi cittadini. Niuno sarà più in alta e più ferma e salda gloria, che costui el quale ora se stessi dedicato ad aumentare con fama e memoria la patria sua, e’ cittadini el la famiglia sua. Costui solo meriterà avere il nome suo apresso de’ nipoti suoi pieni di lode e famosa e immortale, el qual d’ogn’ altra cosa fragile e caduca ne giudicherà quanto si debba, da non curare e da spregiarla, solo amera la virtù solo seguirà la sapienza, solo desidererà intera e corretta gloria’. L. B. Alberti, *I libri della famiglia*, (eds.), R. Romano, A. Teneti and F. Furlan, Turin, Einaudi, 1994, p. 26.

<sup>611</sup> L. B. Alberti, *The Family in Renaissance Florence*, trans. R. N. Walkins, Columbia, University of California Press, 1969, p. 45.

author also outlines attributes associated with a second, less prestigious route to moral glory that could not only convey honour on the townsmen or *cittadini*, but also provided a realistically attainable moral target for males from the middle and artisan classes. The directive is simple and relies more on mortal bearing than on Fortune's fickle wheel<sup>612</sup> – '[appear] virtuous in conduct, strong in friendships [and abound] in the favour and affection of [your] fellow citizens' and you will be 'blessed'.<sup>613</sup>

Whether Alberti's humanist discourse, which owes much to the writings of Cicero, was intended for the instruction of the artisan classes remains a moot point, although Alan F. Nagal insists that its vernacular nature 'inscribe[s] the more particular and local relation of writer to patron ... while arguing for an openness of text or message to a diverse public'.<sup>614</sup> Alfred von Martin, on the other hand, considers fifteenth-century humanists as belonging to a 'class between classes', whose writings were often created in order to address the societal dilemmas and familial problems more specific to the upper classes.<sup>615</sup> John Najemy however, believes that Alberti was removed from his characters and their opinions and often left the reader unable to homogenise the myriad of judgements and

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<sup>612</sup> L. B. Alberti, *I libri della famiglia*, (eds.), R. Romano, A. Teneti and F. Furlan, Turin, Einaudi, 1994, p. 178 provides the discourse in Italian. L. B. Alberti, *The Family in Renaissance Florence*, trans. R. N. Walkins, Columbia, University of California Press, 1969 pp. 164–165 provides the following English translation.

<sup>613</sup> L. B. Alberti, *The Family in Renaissance Florence*, trans. R. N. Walkins, Columbia, University of California Press, 1969, pp. 164–165.

<sup>614</sup> Alan F. Nagal, 'Rhetoric Value and Action in Alberti', *Modern Language Notes*, vol. 95, 1980, p. 41.

<sup>615</sup> Von Martin quoted in A. F. Nagal, 'Rhetoric Value and Action in Alberti', *Modern Language Notes*, vol. 95, 1980, p. 41.

notions proffered into unfailing advice.<sup>616</sup> Nancy Struever, for her part, has recently established that Albertian texts were fundamentally tools of ‘self-reflection and comparison ... practical means of knowledge and judgement’.<sup>617</sup> Struever’s perception of Alberti’s works brings to mind the Latin dictum to which Nagal refers in order to illustrate that there was ‘no primacy in [literary] originality’ in many Renaissance texts – ‘nihil dictum quin prius dictum’. If this Terencian phrase is accepted in its most literal sense though, we are informed that ‘nothing is ever said that has not been said before’ and Alberti, in his writing of *I libri della famiglia* is not attempting to introduce new, fresh arguments and solutions, but discussing current societal practice and concerns using the philosophical rhetoric that was revived and readopted during the Renaissance.<sup>618</sup>

If Alberti was in fact involved in a discourse concerned with the socio-political machinations of his fifteenth-century contemporaries, then the sense that his writings flagged up areas of social concern, proposed solutions, suggested conduct and also admonished the reader, makes them remarkably similar in function and indeed in form, to the Buonomini frescoes outlined below.<sup>619</sup>

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<sup>616</sup> John M Najemy, ‘Alberti on Love: Musings on Private Transgression and Public Discipline’, in P. Arnade and M. Rocke (eds.), *Power, Gender, and Ritual in Europe and the Americas: Essays in Memory of Richard C. Trexler*, Toronto, Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2008, p. 135 and p. 149.

<sup>617</sup> A. F. Nagal, ‘Rhetoric Value and Action in Alberti’, *Modern Language Notes*, vol. 95, 1980, p. 57.

<sup>618</sup> A. F. Nagal, ‘Rhetoric Value and Action in Alberti’, *Modern Language Notes*, vol. 95, 1980, p. 57 on Nancy Struever.

<sup>619</sup> For a discussion on ‘The Period Eye’ see M. Baxandall, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy: A Primer in the Social History of Pictorial Style*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1972, pp. 29–109. See also J. M Najemy, ‘Alberti on Love: Musings on Private Transgression and Public Discipline’, in P. Arnade and M. Rocke (eds.), *Power,*



Often lacking the hand of the master and suffering from a low budget, workshop projects such as the Buonomini frescoes have at times been overlooked, yet they can provide a mine of information for the attentive researcher.<sup>620</sup> Having conducted an interdisciplinary study of the Buonomini's *Releasing the Debtor from Gaol* fresco (Fig. 20), in chapter 4:2 of this thesis (which considers the form and function of the painting in tandem with previously unpublished archival data) the surprising complexity of this particular visual text soon became apparent. The rhetoric therein is comparable to Albertian literature as it illustrates the following: a problem (the spiritual and temporal damage caused to society through debt), a proposed solution (the intervention of a charitable body), recommended conduct (through pose, gesture and dress) and, finally, a warning. The painting's setting (outside of the Stinche prison) serves as an anti-magnate<sup>621</sup> symbol and the likenesses of the dead Giuliano de' Medici, present at an event that actually took place eighteen months after his assassination, cautions those who would upset the republic's civic stability.<sup>622</sup> The gaol's name was, after all, 'politically symbolic' in the sense that the Cavalcanti's Val de Greve fortress, which was captured and demolished by the Guelfs in 1304, was known by the same name.<sup>623</sup> Furthermore, it must have been a trenchant blow

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*Gender, and Ritual in Europe and the Americas: Essays in Memory of Richard C. Trexler*, Toronto, Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2008, p. 149.

<sup>620</sup> B. Wisch, 'Re-viewing the Image of Confraternities in Renaissance Visual Culture' in *Confraternitas*, vol.14, no. 2, 2003, pp. 13-21.

<sup>621</sup> Carol Lansing, *The Florentine Magnates: Lineage and Faction in a Medieval Commune*, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1991, p. XI and p. 13. See also Dino Compagni, *The Chronicle of Dino Compagni*, trans. Else C. M. Benecke and A. G. Ferraers Howell, J. M. Dent and Co., London, 1906, pp. 28-39.

<sup>622</sup> G. Geltner, 'Isola non Isolta. Le Stinche in the Middle Ages', *Annali di Storia di Firenze*, vol. III, 2008, p. 13 on the Stinch as an anti-magnate symbol.

<sup>623</sup> *Ibid.* p.12.

for the castle's guardians when they were led from Le Stinche fortress to a penitentiary with a corresponding designation.<sup>624</sup>

Given that Alberti's written text and the Buonomini's visual texts have a common compositional form, they are ripe for comparison. Furthermore, the two institutions under discussion, family and confraternity, also beg for parallels to be drawn between them. Linked in the Renaissance psyche by concepts of love<sup>625</sup> and honour, the friendships, or more accurately kinships,<sup>626</sup> that were cultivated within lay confraternities depended on the same 'honourable affection' that underscored the 'love among members of the same family ... paternal or fraternal as the case may be'.<sup>627</sup> Accordingly, Alberti's concept of honour will be examined in conjunction with figures from the Buonomini frescoes, in order to reveal whether the visualisation of family honour in Albertian literature is similar

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<sup>624</sup> Ibid.

<sup>625</sup> The type of love referred to by Alberti was the pure love set out by Saint Paul in *Corinthians* 13. J. M Najemy, 'Alberti on Love: Musings on Private Transgression and Public Discipline', in P. Arnade and M. Rocke (eds.), *Power, Gender, and Ritual in Europe and the Americas: Essays in Memory of Richard C. Trexler*, Toronto, Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2008 refers to this type of love that Alberti calls 'amicizia'. Unlike sexual love, this higher, purer form of affection was governed 'by reason and on the basis of solid judgement, serves the needs of the poor, delights the prosperous, pleases the rich and is necessary to families, to principalities, and to republics'. Alberti, L. B., *I libri della famiglia*, (eds.), R. Romano, A. Teneti and F. Furlan, Turin, Einaudi, 1994, pp. 111–112, 119–119: 101, 106, quoted in J. M Najemy, 'Alberti on Love: Musings on Private Transgression and Public Discipline', in P. Arnade and M. Rocke (eds.), *Power, Gender, and Ritual in Europe and the Americas: Essays in Memory of Richard C. Trexler*, Toronto, Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2008, p. 143.

<sup>626</sup> Alberti makes the distinction between 'outsiders' who consist of 'strangers', 'foreigners and slaves' and a further group, 'kinsmen' in L. B. Alberti, *I libri della famiglia*, (eds.), R. Romano, A. Teneti and F. Furlan, Turin, Einaudi, 1994, p. 114 and L. B Alberti, *The Family in Renaissance Florence*, trans. R. N. Walkins, Columbia, University of California Press, 1969, p. 200.

<sup>627</sup> L. B. Alberti, *I libri della famiglia*, eds., R. Romano, A. Teneti and F. Furlan, Turin, Einaudi, 1994, p. 101.

to that shown in the oratory's visual texts. Additionally, in order to illustrate that the honourable behaviour that Alberti propounded was commonly acknowledged as acceptable during the *Quattrocento*, observations and recommendations from other pertinent contemporary literary and visual sources will also be brought to bear.

Although honour is traditionally associated with the Renaissance male, in this instance it is also the females of the period that are of interest to us, specifically those present within the Buonomini frescoes. What then does Alberti have to say about female honour and how different is it from its male counterpart? If we begin by examining what Alberti has to say about virtue, traditionally the female equivalent of male honour, it soon becomes apparent that the qualities associated with this neo-platonic concept are analogous to the moral and social standards expected from the *Quattrocento* Florentine female.

According to Alberti, virtue is just the opposite of honour, 'happy gracious and gentle, virtue will always satisfy you. It will never bring sorrow, never satiation [and] from day to day it grows more pleasant and useful'.<sup>628</sup> A woman's virtue was assessed using the following criteria that Alberti advances throughout book two of *I libri della famiglia*:

I think that beauty in a woman, likewise, must be judged not only by the charm and refinement of her face, but still more by the grace of her person and her

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<sup>628</sup> L. B Alberti, *The Family in Renaissance Florence*, trans. R. N Walkins, Columbia, University of California Press, 1969, p. 42.

aptitude for giving birth to many fine children...a woman worthy of praise must show first of all in her conduct, modesty, and purity'.<sup>629</sup>

Furthermore,

...they say that a woman should have a joyful nature, fresh and lively in her blood and her whole being...they always have a preference for youth, based on a number of arguments which I need not expound here, but particularly that a young girl has a more adaptable mind. Young girls are pure by virtue of their age and have not developed any spitefulness. They are by nature modest and free of vice. They quickly learn to accept affectionately and unresistingly the habits and wishes of their husbands.<sup>630</sup>

The two concepts of virtue that Alberti proffers are clearly soft, moderate, and compliant.

More crucially, these values are malleable through frequent use, particularly the neo-platonic abstractions of female virtue, which can be moulded by the way of a patriarch's guidance. Furthermore, the outward appearance of a woman's honour and integrity depends on her demonstrating a 'highly respectable' and virtuous appearance in public and 'modesty, serenity, tranquillity and peace' in private.<sup>631</sup> It does not however; appear to depend entirely on social class, as Alberti clearly informs us that during the search for

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<sup>629</sup> L. B. Alberti, *I libri della famiglia*, eds., R. Romano, A. Teneti and F. Furlan, Turin, Einaudi, 1994, pp. 115-116: 'Cosi stimo le bellezze in una femmina si possono guidicare non pure ne' vezzi e gentilezza del viso, ma piu nella persona formosa e atta portare e produrti in copia bellissimi figliuoli...e primi costumi in una donna lodatissimi sono modestia e nettezza'.

<sup>630</sup> Ibid. p. 116: 'Lodano i fisici filosafi...vogliono ancora sia la donna di natura ben lieta, ben fresca, ben viva di sangue e d'ogni spirito...e sempre prepongono l'eta fanciullesca per piu loro, dei quali teste non accade dire, rispetti, come a conformarsi insieme massime l'animo. Sono le fanciulle per eta pure, per uso non maliziose, per natura vergognose e senza interna alcuna malizia; con buona affezione presto imprendono, e senza contumacia seguitano i costumi e voglie del marito'.

<sup>631</sup> L. B. Alberti, *The Family in Renaissance Florence*, trans. R. N. Walkins, Columbia, University of California Press, 1969, pp. 211-213.

a future wife one should select not only the well-born maidens, but also consider those wealthy or highborn females who were raised well.

[They] should select all the well-born and well-brought-up girls and present that list to the new groom-to-be.<sup>632</sup>

Having discussed the relationship between male honour and female virtue in Alberti's *I libri della famiglia* and recognising the similarities in form between this literary text and the Buonomini's visual documents, it is now necessary to establish a working definition, for the sake of analysis – one that relates to the outward appearance of honour and virtue and transcends sexual and social boundaries. This working definition can be expressed as the demonstration of virtue and honour, according to gender, governed by conduct and unaffected by social status and fiscal considerations. Accordingly, these specifications, when applied equally to both texts will allow us to ascertain whether some of the individuals present in the Buonomini frescoes have been prized enough by the confraternity and the paintings' authors to convey a series of important narratives and admonishments to a variety of viewers.<sup>633</sup> Simultaneously, this intertextual analysis will also aid an identification of the shamed poor as the new criteria set out in our working

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<sup>632</sup> Ibid. p. 115 and L. B. Alberti, *I libri della famiglia*, eds., R. Romano, A. Teneti and F. Furlan, Turin, Einaudi, 1994, p. 115: 'Queste scelgano tutte le ben nate e bene alleviate fanciulle, e quale numero porgano al nuovo che sara marito'.

<sup>633</sup> For more information on the potential audiences for the Buonomini murals see S. Hughes-Johnson, 'Early Medici Patronage and the Confraternity of the Buonomini di San Martino', *Confraternitas*, vol. 22, no 2, 2012. J. K. Cadogan, *Domenico Ghirlandaio: Artist and Artisan*, London, Yale University Press, pp. 153–173 lists a historiography of attributions for the Buonomini murals.

definition will, for the first time, allow us to fairly determine their suitability to be known as *poveri vergognosi* by examining specific qualities common to them all.

The first fresco under discussion is *Giving Food to the Hungry and Drink to the Thirsty* (Fig. 11). Here the audience is privy to a scene that is set within the confraternity's vaulted space where a single window pierces the wall. Central to the composition is a Procurator in the act of filling a woman's flask with red wine while she struggles to hold two loaves of bread that have evidently come from the great pile behind her. To the right of this duo is another brother, standing behind a large vat brimming with deep red liquor. He is decanting wine into a flask for a male beneficiary, who appears to have already had one flask filled and is waiting for the second. To the left of the scene stands a group of three Buonomini, positioned around a counter groaning with loaves of bread. While two from the group are busy stacking the loaves, the third is shown serving two young children.<sup>634</sup>

In order to bring to the fore the moral concepts associated with the figures in the scene, attention will be paid to the apparel, poses, gestures, facial expressions of these people and to their positions within the paintings' organisational space. When compared with advice from Medieval and Renaissance conduct books and a variety of other pertinent

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<sup>634</sup> The Buonomini ledgers are full of entries regarding the purchase of grain. In November 1482 for example, it was proposed that three florins worth of grain would be purchased for bread that was to be made at the bakers in San Lorenzo. *Entrata e Uscita 1469–1478*, (1.2.1.0.1.), ABSM. There is also a dedicated grain ledger that details wheat purchases and bakery orders. See *Quaderno di Camarlingo o sia Proposto dal 1474* (1.2.3.0.1.).

primary sources, these visual signifiers will allow us to form a short, but informative profile of each of the individuals depicted.

The anonymous woman shown collecting bread and wine is clearly over seventeen years old and has likely been married, given that she is wearing a full length cloak while out in public (Fig.58).<sup>635</sup> The mantle or *fuori* completely covers her gown and is capacious enough to convey the idea that it was expensive. Its colour, which originally would have been black or at least dark, also suggests that she is now a widow.<sup>636</sup> Her left foot is just visible from beneath the cloak. She appears to be wearing leather soled hose that were often custom made and therefore an expensive piece of apparel. They lacked, however, the high fashion status of the platform clogs or *chopine*, often donned by contemporary patrician women and thus appear to be a more suitable choice of footwear for a widow or a matron.<sup>637</sup> On her head she wears a white cowl, or *cappucco*, which would perhaps allude to her honourable nature since female integrity during the fifteenth century was partly dependent on a woman's body, and often on her face as well, being covered or concealed when in public view.<sup>638</sup> Without attempting to merge the Buonomini female

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<sup>635</sup> C. C. Frick, *Dressing Renaissance Florence: Families Fortunes and Fine Clothing*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002, p. 154.

<sup>636</sup> Ibid. p. 175. A further source is S. Strocchia, *Death and Ritual in Renaissance Florence*, Baltimore, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992, p. 10. See also S. Strocchia, *Burials in Renaissance Florence 1350-1500*, PhD thesis, University of California, Berkeley, 1981, Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms International, 1984, p. 193 for the 1473 statutes governing funerals. These laws state that a widow was at liberty to wear her mourning cloak indefinitely.

<sup>637</sup> Paola Tinagli, *Women in Italian Renaissance Art: Gender Representation, Identity*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1997, p. 29–32.

<sup>638</sup> C. C. Frick, *Dressing Renaissance Florence: Families Fortunes and Fine Clothing*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002, p. 157.

into the genre of donor portraiture, this woman is not unlike a Renaissance benefactress with regard to her demeanour. Clearly she is not kneeling in prayer like the figure of Nera de' Corsi (Fig. 59), depicted in the Sassetti chapel murals, however, her subdued, customary dress affords her a similar measure of humility to the genuflecting wife of Francesco Sassetti. According to Alberti, proper reverence also relied on a woman's 'self-restraint' and on her 'air of discretion'. If we thus examine the facial expression of our anonymous woman it is clear, that in this respect, she conforms to Alberti's view.<sup>639</sup> The artist has ensured that she is neither making eye contact with the brother serving her nor with the painting's viewer. Her eyes are downcast in a modest manner and her face has an air of serenity about it (Fig. 60). She is a paradigm of modesty and is unlikely to 'go leaping about in the piazza, nor stand telling stories'.<sup>640</sup> This woman is like Francesco da Barberino's archetypal young widow who, we can imagine, eschewed cosmetics and 'washed in water and wore a veil'.<sup>641</sup> She is an example of pious beauty, her fairness encouraged only by her plain guise and devotion.

Similarly, the adult male beneficiary of the Buonomini's charity (Fig. 11) also appears to be facing his, perhaps temporary, misfortune with great grace. The man's resolute gaze, which neither meets the downcast eyes of the Procurator who is filling up a flask of wine for the beneficiary nor desperately searches for the deep red liquid as it is decanted from

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<sup>639</sup> L. B. Alberti, *The Family in Renaissance Florence*, trans. R. N. Walkins, Columbia, University of California Press, 1969, p. 229.

<sup>640</sup> Antoninus quoted in Catherine King, *Renaissance Women Patrons: Wives and Widows in Renaissance Italy 1300-1550*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1998, p. 28.

<sup>641</sup> Barberino paraphrased in C. King, *Renaissance Women Patrons: Wives and Widows in Renaissance Italy 1300-1550*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1998, p. 30.



jug to flask, assures the viewer that this individual is a stalwart. Moreover, as Alberti indicates, ‘adversities are the material of which character is built’<sup>642</sup> and as this particular beneficiary of the Buonomini’s charity has not been portrayed as a typical downcast supplicant (Fig. 61), then it would be correct to infer that his gaze and upright stance suggest that he is of ‘unshakeable spirit, constant mind’<sup>643</sup> and is able to ‘conquer fortune with patience’<sup>644</sup>, with the help of the Procurators of the Shamed Poor of Florence of course. Furthermore, the man’s clothes also suggest that he was not always reliant on this confraternity’s charity, which in turn implies that he perhaps sought ‘first to be and second to appear...of noble character’.<sup>645</sup> That the fellow is hatless should not reduce the viewer’s estimation of his civility as to sometimes go without headgear during the *quattrocento*, judging from contemporary depictions of various esteemed Florentine males, was not unusual. For example, Domenico Ghirlandaio’s *Renunciation of Worldly Goods* fresco (Fig.62), located in the Sassetti Chapel of Santa Trinita, shows half of those depicted witnessing this scene from the life of Saint Francis without headgear. Nevertheless, this lack of visible military does not necessarily mean that the Buonomini’s male beneficiary did in fact venture out without his hat. Should we return for a moment to another of Domenico Ghirlandaio’s painted murals located in the Sassetti Chapel and examine the painting entitled *Resurrection of the Boy* (Fig. 63), it is apparent that to the right of the organisational space the artist has depicted a balding man,

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<sup>642</sup> L. B. Alberti, *The Family in Renaissance Florence*, trans. R. N. Walkins, Columbia, University of California Press, 1969, p. 43 and L. B. Alberti, *I libri della famiglia*, eds., R. Romano, A. Teneti and F. Furlan, Turin, Einaudi, 1994, p. 25.

<sup>643</sup> Ibid.

<sup>644</sup> Ibid.

<sup>645</sup> Ibid.

with his back partially turned towards the audience, whose hat hangs at his back and is held there by an unseen cord. Similarly, the male beneficiary of the Buonomini's *Giving Food to the Hungry and Drink to the Thirsty* could have removed his hat and be carrying it in a like manner.

The male beneficiary's tunic also assures the viewer of his moral rectitude as it is the same pale hue as a similar garment worn by the Procurator at the centre of the composition, with the colour representing, perhaps in both cases, all things heavenly, the 'truth, consistency and fidelity'.<sup>646</sup> Furthermore, as this shade of 'cornflower blue' was apparently quite modestly priced (at one third the cost of kermes red),<sup>647</sup> it was likely that Domenico Ghirlandaio, who organised the execution of this mural, was more concerned with conveying the modesty of the charitable recipient rather than giving any impression of lost wealth. Additionally, the soled hose of our charitable recipient is made from red *perpigiano*, a stretchy woollen cloth from France, and although red hose were common vestments during the *quattrocento*, the combination of red and blue together could signify the concepts of heavenly love and heavenly truth.<sup>648</sup>

The man's cloak however, being a muddy, almost imperceptible shade of mixed earth tones, clearly relays that, despite his wish to remain upright and virtuous, he is in fact

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<sup>646</sup> Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri*, trans. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, 3 vols., Houghton Mifflin and Company, The Riverside Press, Cambridge, Boston, 1867, in this instance vol. III, p. 218.

<sup>647</sup> C. C. Frick, *Dressing Renaissance Florence: Families, Fortunes and Fine Clothing*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002, p. 102.

<sup>648</sup> D. Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri*, trans. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, 3 vols., Houghton Mifflin and Company, The Riverside Press, Cambridge, Boston, 1867, in this instance vol. III, p. 218.

wrapped in a mantle of poverty, partially hiding his honorable nature.<sup>649</sup> His cape does not possess the red/brown hues of *panno monachino*, one of the colours used in mourning clothes (Fig. 64), nor is it redolent of the expensive, dark grey material favoured by some Florentine patricians (Fig. 65). This particular garment is fashioned in naturally dyed fabric which, by its simple nature is cheap.<sup>650</sup> Furthermore, the tone of the mantle, being so difficult to quantify, is best described as the nondescript colour of poverty, akin to the shades used liberally by Massaccio in his early-fifteenth century depictions of the poor (Fig. 66).

Looking again at the entire scene we notice also that there are two children present in the *oratorio*. Neither appear ragged and the fact that they are not wearing hose is initially confusing. Firstly, the two boys look to be a little more developed than toddlers, therefore it would be proper that they were dressed like little adults,<sup>651</sup> which to some extent they are, although their outfits lack the finesse of children from patrician families (Figs. 67 & 68). Furthermore, it cannot be assumed that their hose are absent simply because they are not toilet-trained, like the infant depicted by Benozzo Gozzoli in his *School of Tageste* fresco (Fig. 69), as ostensibly they look to be of an age where this milestone should have long since been passed. Nevertheless, even if they were young enough not to be toilet trained, had they belonged to a family of some means, they would have been supplied with little leather shoes, like the unfortunate babes illustrated by Fra Angelico in his

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<sup>649</sup> L. B. Alberti, *The Family in Renaissance Florence*, trans. R. N. Walkins, Columbia, University of California Press, 1969, p. 250 and L. B. Alberti, *I libri della famiglia*, eds., R. Romano, A. Teneti and F. Furlan, Turin, Einaudi, 1994, p. 283.

<sup>650</sup> C. C. Frick, *Dressing Renaissance Florence: Families, Fortunes and Fine Clothing*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002, p. 112.

<sup>651</sup> *Ibid.* p. 166.

*Massacre of the Innocents* painting (Fig. 70), in order to keep their tender feet from harm. It must be concluded then that these children from the Buonomini frescoes are barefoot and barelegged, not because they are young and untutored but, because their family are experiencing hardship and can no longer provide adequately for them. The fact that the boys are dressed in blue and yellow however, gives the viewer a hint that all is not lost. The bright, unsullied yellow in which one of the boy's tunics has been painted could be symbolic of God's goodness and the pale blue hue of the other young fellow's garment impresses on us the importance of truth, consistency and the firmament.<sup>652</sup>

Given that one of them, the boy in blue, appears to be looking up towards the female beneficiary, it is possible that he is her son. The general scene would, in fact, make sense only if this were so, as it would be preposterous to suggest that toddlers were sent to collect wine and bread alone, especially given the way in which the Buonomini operated. Amleto Spicciani has shown in his study of the confraternity's early activities that each family needing aid was listed under the name of the head of the household and that the names and ages of dependents were written alongside. Beside this a Buonomini scribe would also indicate the number of mouths to feed and the serial number of the *polizza*, or token, that on Wednesdays the recipient could redeem for bread.<sup>653</sup> The flour, which went towards making the bread, was purchased regularly by the Procurators of the Shamed

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<sup>652</sup> D. Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri*, trans. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, 3 vols., Houghton Mifflin and Company, The Riverside Press, Cambridge, Boston, 1867, this instance vol. III, p. 218.

<sup>653</sup> A. Spicciani, 'The 'Poveri Vergognosi' in Fifteenth-Century Florence: The first 30 years' activity of the Buonomini di San Martino', in T. Riis (ed.), *Aspects of Poverty in Early Modern Europe*, Florence, Badia Fiesolana, 1981, p. 125.

Poor<sup>654</sup> and additionally each brother wishing to be considered for a term as *proposto* had to pay a tax made up of grain.<sup>655</sup> During the 1470s and 1480s flour was purchased from the grain merchant Lippo di Lucrinaccia<sup>656</sup> and was sent to be baked into bread.<sup>657</sup> The baker, whose name was Giuliano, would then transport the cooked loaves to San Martino.<sup>658</sup> The existence of several minute peices of parchment, which the researcher and Dr Ugo Silli recently filed along with the Buonomini's ledger entitled, *Quaderno del Camarlingo o Sia Proposto dal 1474* (1.2.3.0.1.), are testament to this process. The few chosen to represent the small collection in its entirety read as follow:

In the name of Jesus

Giuliano bearer of eight loaves for the invalid children

Francesco M.<sup>659</sup>

In the name of Jesus

Giuliano...8 loaves...I bring to San Martino

Francesco M on this date 25 August [1477].<sup>660</sup>

Giuliano ...bring here... 16 loaves

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<sup>654</sup> See *Quaderno del Camarlingo o Sia Proposto dal 1474* (1.2.3.0.1.), ABSM and *Entrata e Uscita del Proposto 1479 – 1481* (1.2.4.0.1.), ABSM.

<sup>655</sup> See Appendix II.

<sup>656</sup> One example of many is found in *Entrata e Uscita 1478-1482*, c. 132 recto (1.2.1.0.2.), ABSM.

<sup>657</sup> *Entrata e Uscita 1482 – 1489*, c. 24 verso, (1.2.1.0.3.), ABSM.

<sup>658</sup> Loose leaves *Quaderno del Camarlingo o Sia Proposto dal 1474* (1.2.3.0.1.), ABSM

<sup>659</sup> Loose leaves, note #2, *Quaderno del Camarlingo o Sia Proposto dal 1474* (1.2.3.0.1.), ABSM.

<sup>660</sup> Loose leaves, note #3, *Quaderno del Camarlingo o Sia Proposto dal 1474* (1.2.3.0.1.), ABSM.

Pandolfo Rucellai.<sup>661</sup>

Spicciani has also calculated that on average each person received two loaves of bread, a quantity that is corroborated by the painting as it shows the woman and child each holding two loaves.<sup>662</sup> The woman thus appears to have assumed a portion of the family duties that would normally have been allocated to the male. Her absent husband is unable to ‘stock the [family] cupboard’<sup>663</sup> for her so she has resorted to charity in order to carry out a traditionally masculine chore while remaining an ‘exemplar of virtue’, not unlike the mantled patrician females in Ghirlandaio’s *Birth of John the Baptist* (Fig. 71).<sup>664</sup>

Being mindful of the complex mesh of information often woven into Renaissance works of art, it would perhaps also be judicious to briefly consider the function of the Buonomini frescoes in relation to their form. Apart from the two scenes from the life of Saint Martin of Tours, the other images show a range of charitable acts performed by confraternity members, all based on the seven corporal works of mercy. At first glance, the frescoes not only celebrate the good works of this lay confraternity, but are also instructive on more than one level. Their most elementary vein concerns the depiction of

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<sup>661</sup> Loose leaves, note #6, *Quaderno del Camarlingo o Sia Proposto dal 1474* (1.2.3.0.1.), ABSM.

<sup>662</sup> A. Spicciani, ‘The ‘Poveri Vergognosi’ in Fifteenth-Century Florence: The first 30 years’ activity of the Buonomini di San Martino’, in T. Riis (ed.), *Aspects of Poverty in Early Modern Europe*, Florence, Badia Fiesolana, 1981, p. 137.

<sup>663</sup> L. B. Alberti, *The Family in Renaissance Florence*, trans. R. N. Walkins, Columbia, University of California Press, 1969, p. 26. For more on the father being the provider of food see p. 242.

<sup>664</sup> C. C. Frick, *Dressing Renaissance Florence: Families Fortunes and Fine Clothing*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002, p. 210 discusses mantled women.

<sup>664</sup> L. B. Alberti, *The Family in Renaissance Florence*, trans. R. N. Walkins, Columbia, University of California Press, 1969, p. 36 for a father’s duties.

some of the Buonomini's more notable activities: providing food and drink to the hungry, clothing the naked, taking in pilgrims, releasing prisoners, attending to the needs of women in childbed, conducting initial visits to families in need, burying the dead, and providing dowries. There exists however, a second level. Here, the narratives contained in the frescoes depict a complex moral code of contemporary ideals and values. With respect to the women in the frescoes, we have already begun to establish their moral apotheosis, but as yet we have ignored their admonitions. For instance, the woman depicted in *Giving Food to the Hungry and Drink to the Thirsty* is, with the Buonomini's help, able to look after her children in the manner her contemporaries would have expected of her and to raise them to be 'friends of reason and justice, and walk in the way of God'.<sup>665</sup> Yet, the woman also has her back turned towards the two boys and the microcosmic narrative that is taking place in their portion of the illusionary plane provides a stark warning of what would transpire should charity fail to reach out to the young and vulnerable. Given that time has not been kind to this particular part of the painting, the detail is a little difficult, but not impossible to discern.<sup>666</sup> Clearly both children are reaching out to a Procurator who doles out their ration of bread, but, unfortunately, the loaves that he has proffered have fallen through the children's outstretched hands and are toppling to the floor (Fig. 13). We view the bread now just as a *Quattrocento* audience would have done – suspended awkwardly in mid air for all eternity. The loaves, thus, are not only symbolic of Christian charity that has bypassed

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<sup>665</sup> Barberino quoted in C. King, *Renaissance Women Patrons: Wives and Widows in Renaissance Italy 1300-1550*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1998, p. 30.

<sup>666</sup> The Buonomini frescoes underwent a sympathetic restoration program in 2011 although some large portions of paint that have been missing for some years have not been reinstated (See Appendix V and Figs. 172-181).

the children, but they also remind us of the importance of piety and the Eucharist. It was Jesus himself who explained:

I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry and he who believes in me will never be thirsty (John 6:35).

The narrative however, does not end there – if we turn our attention to the boys' lowered hands we can distinguish that each of them appears to be holding onto the tatty remnants of a toy lion (Fig.12). The boy in yellow holds the apparently plush body with its tufted tail, while the child dressed in blue holds the head. It is as if the two have fought over a single toy and the altercation has resulted in a grotesque dichotomy. The lion could well be symbolic of the Florentine republic which, without the order that, in this instance, is provided under the auspices of Christian charity, would be torn asunder like the boys' toy lion.<sup>667</sup>

Moving on to the fresco of *Clothing the Naked* (Fig. 22), which also depicts a scene in the Buonomini's oratory, we see once again the raised carrel that, in the previous image, was piled high with bread; now, however, it has been moved to another part of the oratory where it has become a station for the distribution of cloth and garments. In this semblance of realistic space the artists have depicted a Procurator and his helper allocating lengths of linen and apparel while another brother sits and records what has been and what will be administered to the six various beneficiaries. The cloth shown in

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<sup>667</sup> For the tale of how the lion came to be the symbol of Florence see Rento della Torre, *I Medici: Vita e Vicende Familiari*, Bologna, Lucio Pugliese Editore, 1980.



the fresco painting, were it real, could well have come to the confraternity as a donation, much like the one that Lorenzo de' Medici made in 1478. Although the original purchase receipt has not been located, there is however an entry in the Buonomini ledgers that records an amount of money, received from the bank of Lorenzo de' Medici, which paid for the duty and transportation of ten bolts of cloth.<sup>668</sup>

The first recipient of alms that we will consider in this image is the young lady to the right of the composition who seems to be accompanied by an older male relative, perhaps her father (Fig. 72). Although this bearded gentleman is dressed in Florence's 'civic uniform' not unlike the Buonomini, we cannot consider him to be one of their number given that he has a protective arm around the shoulder of the female beneficiary, an unthinkable gesture if performed by a stranger.<sup>669</sup> Perhaps, then, the young lady has been

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<sup>668</sup> *Entrata e Uscita 1469-1478*, c. 8 verso, (1.2.1.0.1.), ABSM. 'Da Lorenzo detto adi detto h trenta y dua β dieci...avemo p[per] lui dal bancho suo reco domenico mazinghi sono p[per] la gabelle et porto di peze dieci di panno bisullo sicomperono p[per] lui...'

<sup>669</sup> L. Sebregondi, 'The Congregation and the Fresco Cycle', in J. M. Bradburne, (ed.), *Hidden Voices: Discovering the Buonomini di San Martino*, Florence, Giunti, 2011, p. 84 also maintains the theory that the elderly gentleman is not one of the Buonomini although she does not elucidate why. Nevertheless, in her article, 'Clothes and Teenagers: What Young Men Wore in Fifteenth-Century Florence', in K. Eisenbichler, (ed.), *The Pre-Modern Teenager, Youth and Society 1150-1650*, Essays and Studies I, Toronto, Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2002, pp. 27–51, she does mention that the old man is probably from one of the more lofty social echelons as he wears a black cloak (*lucco*) that was 'reserved for the higher social classes'. Kent, 'The Buonomini di San Martino: Charity for "the glory of God, the honour of the city and the commemoration of myself"', in F. Ames-Lewis (ed.), *Cosimo 'il Vecchio' de' Medici, 1389-1464: Essays in Commemoration of the 600<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Cosimo de' Medici's Birth*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1992, p. 56 mentions the Buonomini as sometime recipients of their own charity. Correspondingly, if the elderly gentleman is one of the brothers – he is actually embracing the concept of charity and shielding it with his cloak, which is perhaps related to the protection that *Madonna della Misericordia* accords. Also, as Sebregondi suggest in her aforementioned article, the old man likely represents one of the ages of man and one of the three social classes – the wealthy. See also Ginevra N. di

accompanied through the Florentine streets by a close member of her male kin so that she might collect a gown or a cape from the Buonomini in anticipation of winter, as various girls are recorded to have done in the summer of 1488.<sup>670</sup> Some beneficiaries of the Buonomini's charity however did not attend the oratory in order to benefit from new clothes, even if the painting is a true representation of this particular activity. For instance in February 1479, an amount of money was entrusted to a Madonna Benvenuta di Lazero in order for her to purchase firewood and have a winter overdress made.<sup>671</sup>

The previous suggestion that the scene is set in summer is substantiated not only by archival evidence but also by the clothing that the female beneficiary is wearing. She wears a dress, or *gamura*, and on top of this she is sporting a *cotta*, that is, a sleeveless overdress, often worn by women during the summer.<sup>672</sup> The fact that she is not wearing a

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Camugliano, *The Chronicles of a Florentine Family 1200-1470*, London, J. Cape, 1933, p. 142, for a short discussion on the colors associated with the three theological virtues. The colour red appears in the tricolor dress worn by Beatrice when she appeared to Dante in Purgatory and can signify either charity or love.

<sup>670</sup> The Buonomini ledgers from June 1488 record that Lisa daughter of X was given a gown costing 12β and in September of the same year, Girolamea, daughter of y was given more money towards paying for a cloak. 'Suo manto ... piu monette ... pezo dello debito'. Due to water damage the pages on this section of the ledger are not numbered. Likewise, in March 1478, the daughter of the San Bartolomeo baker was given a new gown. *Entrata e Uscita del Proposto March 1479-1481*, (1.2.4.0.1), ABSM. In April 1478 Madonna Manetta from San Piero Gattolino was also given an overdress. *Entrata e Uscita 1478-1482*, c. 130 recto, (1.2.1.0.2.), ABSM.

<sup>671</sup> *Entrata e Uscita 1478-1482*, (unpaginated) (1.2.1.0.2.), ABSM reads:

‘poveri detti adi 12 di detto β trenta fidieron a m<sup>a</sup> benuenuta di lazero sta . . .  
p[per] uno soma si legne e manifattura d una cioppa a licentia di fanc<sup>o</sup>  
miniatoe...’.

<sup>672</sup> C. C. Frick, *Dressing Renaissance Florence: Families Fortunes and Fine Clothing*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002, p. 309.

cloak in public also suggests that she has not yet reached her age of majority.<sup>673</sup>

Evidently, the young lady is well dressed as her hose and gown show no signs of wear and her sleeves are slit to reveal the fine linen *camicia* that she dons as an undergarment – a practice that became fashionably popular during the mid *Quattrocento*.<sup>674</sup> Her hair, too, is styled in a manner that attests to her middle-class status, as her forehead is customarily bare while the majority of her elaborately curled hair is arranged beneath a small *cappellina*, a type of headgear commonly worn by both girls and women during this period.<sup>675</sup> Not quite the ‘icon of female perfection’, a status that Paola Tinagli accurately accords the young Tornabuoni women in the choir frescoes of Santa Maria Novella, the Buonomini female is nonetheless a virtuous young woman.<sup>676</sup> She has managed to refrain from showing any sign of impropriety as far as her clothing and behaviour are concerned and appears to the viewer as chaste and ‘perfectly balanced’ in spirit, and not at all ‘vain and foolish’.<sup>677</sup> Furthermore, her gaze acts as evidence of her purity, which according to Alberti was ‘part of the dowry [a mother] passes on to her

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<sup>673</sup> Ibid. p. 154. See also L. Sebreghondi, ‘Clothes and Teenagers: What Young Men Wore in Fifteenth-Century Florence’, in K. Eisenbichler, (ed.), *The Pre-Modern Teenager, Youth and Society 1150-1650*, Essays and Studies I, Toronto, Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2002, pp. 27–50, for age identification through the medium of clothing.

<sup>674</sup> C. C. Frick, *Dressing Renaissance Florence: Families Fortunes and Fine Clothing*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002, p. 192.

<sup>675</sup> Ibid. p. 304. See also Joanna Woods-Marsden, ‘Portrait of the Lady 1430-1520’, in D. A. Brown, (ed.), *Virtue and Beauty Leonardo’s Ginevra de’ Benci and Renaissance Portraits of Women*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2001, p. 65 for hair styles sported by virgins and married women. See also p.67, for reference to plucked hairlines.

<sup>676</sup> P. Tinagli, *Women in Italian Renaissance Art: Gender, Representation, Identity*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1997, p. 67.

<sup>677</sup> L. B. Alberti, *The Family in Renaissance Florence*, trans. R. N. Walkins, Columbia, University of California Press, 1969, p. 213.

daughter'.<sup>678</sup> Accordingly, then, the girl's face is beautiful in its serenity and her chaste eyes are downcast in what would be considered a respectable pose.<sup>679</sup> Likewise, the blush on her cheeks adds to the outward appearance of innocence while simultaneously suggesting that such a fine specimen of virtue, fashioned in part by her parent's honour, will inevitably become a good wife.<sup>680</sup> It is her pose however, that informs the viewer exactly why she is present in the oratory. Her hands clasped together as if in prayer and her feet positioned as if she were stepping into a curtsy reveal, without words, that a need for charity brings her to the confraternity.<sup>681</sup>

The ethical caution contained in this particular painting comes from the figure central to the scene, a partially dressed young man in a yellow jacket, whose scanty garments give the impression that he is 'slight and insubstantial'.<sup>682</sup> Nevertheless, his tunic is long enough to be modest and the fact that the sleeves are slashed would attest to him being a fashionable chap. That the material is yellow would also imply that that young man, when solvent, was not paying an extortionate price for expensively dyed garments as 'Scottish yellow' and other similar hues were only around one third of the prices of

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<sup>678</sup> Ibid.

<sup>679</sup> Ibid.

<sup>680</sup> L. B. Alberti, *The Family in Renaissance Florence*, trans. R. N. Walkins, Columbia, University of California Press, 1969, p.211.

<sup>681</sup> A small ivory sculpture in the Bargello museum shows Charity (Fig. 73) in the form of a female and her pose is identical to both the female beneficiary in the Buonomini's *Giving Clothes to the Naked* mural and the woman pilgrim in the *Taking in Pilgrims* mural.

<sup>682</sup> Joseph Manca, 'Moral Stance in Italian Renaissance Art: Image, Text and Meaning', *Artibus et Historiae*, vol. 22, no. 44, p. 65.

kermes red.<sup>683</sup> Furthermore, that the youth is attending the Buonomini's oratory in search of hose and other garments perhaps reassures the viewer that he is not an individual willing to be courted by an older, homosexual as 'men typically bestowed gifts of money, clothes or other items on the adolescents they courted or sodomised'.<sup>684</sup> Consequently this visual illustration of the youth's physicality warns the viewer that should the Procurators of the Shamed Poor not work to dress him appropriately, then his moral standing would suffer in line with his finances.<sup>685</sup> As Alberti informs us, through the words of his character, Giannozzo, among a man's first considerations was to keep each member of his household dressed well:

If I neglected to do this, my flock would give me but poor loyalty, indeed my own household would hate me. I should be generally despised, those outside my family would blame me.<sup>686</sup>

Giannozzo also goes on to explain that 'your clothes should bring you respect',<sup>687</sup> while another character, Riccardo, adds that:

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<sup>683</sup> C. C. Frick, *Dressing Renaissance Florence: Families, Fortunes and Fine Clothing*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002, p. 102.

<sup>684</sup> Michael Rocke, *Forbidden Friendship: Homosexuality and Male Culture in Renaissance Florence*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1996, p. 38.

<sup>685</sup> Accordingly, the Procurators of the Shamed Poor of Florence worked towards ensuring that those they helped were dressed adequately. For example, *Entrata e Uscita 1478-1482*, c. 131 verso, (1.2.1.0.2.), ABSM records a Giovanni di Giuliano X from al Ceppo who was given a pair of stockings, 'uno paio di calze' and 'uno paio di scarpiera', while c.131 recto of the same volume records, 'poveri detti adi 15 di detto [Maggio] y una β7 dati Xnr° alfani sta a san giorgio p [per] dua camicie usare, porto franc° buonamici di licentia di Simone mazinghi'.

<sup>686</sup> L. B Alberti, *The Family in Renaissance Florence*, trans. R. N. Walkins, Columbia, University of California Press, 1969, p. 194.

<sup>687</sup> *Ibid.*

Virtue ought to be dressed in the seemly ornaments which it is hard to acquire without affluence and the abundance of things which some men call transitory and illusionary.<sup>688</sup>

Two other female beneficiaries are also present in this scene. Although they are partially obscured by the gentleman in the yellow doublet (*farsetto*)<sup>689</sup> in the mid forefront of the composition, we can still determine that the pair comprises a mature, mantled woman and a nubile young girl who are being given a length of linen cloth by one of the brothers. It is unfortunate that this particular part of the mural has deteriorated with time and much of the original colour is missing from around the head and torso of the young girl (Fig. 74). What is striking, however, despite the decay and the less than dextrous execution of the figure, are the similarities between her appearance and that of the woman considered to be Ludovica Tornabuoni in *The Birth of Mary* fresco in the Cappella Maggiore in Santa Maria Novella (Fig. 75). While I am not for a moment suggesting that the figure in the Buonomini fresco is Ludovica Tornabuoni, I would like to suggest that Ghirlandaio may well have allowed either compositional ideas from workshop pattern books or even cartoons that were designed for previous fresco cycles to be re-used and adapted to fit this particular project.<sup>690</sup> The similarity between the two women is striking – they share

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<sup>688</sup> Ibid. p. 250.

<sup>689</sup> This type of garment was the sort of thing provided to needy young men, according to their records. *Entrata e Uscita 1478-1482*, c. 129 recto (1.2.1.0.2.), ABSM show how a man from San Piero Maggiore had a *farsetto* and a shirt purchased for him by the confraternity.

<sup>690</sup> This theory derives mainly from my study of the Buonomini frescoes in relation to Ghirlandaio's Santa Maria Novella paintings. Of particular interest is his rendering of the *Birth of Saint John the Baptist* in the Tornabuoni/Tornaquinci chapel (Fig. 76). There are though other motifs that are apparent from Ghirlandaio's earlier works, for example the Santa Fina frescoes (Figs. 77 & 78). Similarities between objects and groupings within

the same hairstyle, analogous long, curved noses, thin lips, and chins that jut out in an identical manner. What they do not share, however, is the same artistic hand.<sup>691</sup>

Notwithstanding the differences in location and social status, both Ludovica Tornabuoni and our anonymous young beneficiary are meant to convey a uniform message. These women, then, not only accord to the fifteenth century notion of ‘fashionable beauty’ with their blond locks, plucked hairline to reveal high foreheads, and pale skin, but they are also paradigms of virginity.<sup>692</sup> Both are included within their respective frescoes in order to visually articulate a specific ‘component of the city’s honour’ – the virtue of its women.<sup>693</sup> Ludovica Tornabuoni’s presence in the choir frescoes of Santa Maria Novella attests to this as she is representative of Florence’s nubile yet chaste female ‘capital’ that, like any other asset, could be traded and exchanged.<sup>694</sup> Furthermore, Ghirlandaio and his contemporaries acknowledged the idea that outer beauty reflected inner morality. His earlier portrait of Ludovica’s sister-in-law, Giovanna (Fig. 79), which was probably used to aid the artist’s depiction of her in the Tornabuoni chapel, bears the inscription, ‘O that it were possible to reflect morality in a painting, for if it were then this would be the

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this cycle and the Buonomini cycle suggest the continued use of workshop pattern books. See also M. O’Malley, ‘Finding Fame: painting and the making of careers in Renaissance Italy’, *Renaissance Studies*, vol. 24, no. 1, 2010, p. 9 for commissions at moderate fees.

<sup>691</sup> Giuseppe Marchini, ‘The Frescoes in the Choir of Santa Maria Novella’, *The Burlington Magazine*, vol. 95, no. 607, 19533, p. 20.

<sup>692</sup> P. Tinagli, *Women in Italian Renaissance Art: Gender, Representation, Identity*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1997, p. 70. in D. A. Brown, (ed.), *Virtue and Beauty Leonardo’s Ginevra de’ Benci and Renaissance Portraits of Women*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2001, pp. 12–13.

<sup>693</sup> Judith Bryce, ‘Performing for Strangers: Women, Dance and Music in Quattrocento Florence’, *Renaissance Quarterly*, vol. 54, no. 4, 2001, p. 1083.

<sup>694</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 1083–84.

loveliest picture in the world'.<sup>695</sup> Accordingly, then, the young female in the Buonomini mural is an investment in the making and her worth, already evident from her apparent rectitude, will increase with assistance from the confraternity who will provide her with clothes and, in so doing, retract the veil of poverty that obscures her virtue so that she, too, can be seen as a credible example of female honour as her patrician counterpart.<sup>696</sup>

The concept of poverty hiding virtue is also present in the fresco previously known as *Making an Inventory* (Fig.10). This scene has been subject to a number of diverse interpretations including the inventorying of a legacy, cataloguing the trousseau of an impoverished maiden and recording the possessions of vulnerable wards.<sup>697</sup> Given that an entire family, consisting of father, mother, two daughters, a son, and a toddler are present within the home while two Buonomini carry out the inventory procedure, it is likely that the Procurators are in fact performing an initial visit in the home of a decent

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<sup>695</sup> See J. Manca, 'Moral Stance in Italian Renaissance Art: Image, Text and Meaning', *Artibus et Historiae*, vol. 22, no. 44, p. 53 for the inscription on Domenico Ghirlandaio's *Portrait of Giovanna Tornabuoni*. G. Marchini, 'The Frescoes in the Choir of Santa Maria Novella', *The Burlington Magazine*, vol. 95, no. 607, 1953, p. 320 on Ghirlandaio's use of existing panel paintings as a guide for portraits in the Tornabuoni chapel frescoes.

<sup>696</sup> L. B. Alberti, *The Family in Renaissance Florence*, trans. R. N. Walkins, Columbia, University of California Press, 1969, p. 250.

<sup>697</sup> See B. Wisch, 'Incorporating Images: Some Themes and Tasks for Confraternal Studies and Early Modern Visual Culture', in C. Black and P. Gravestock, (eds.), *Early Modern Confraternities in Europe and the Americas: International and Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2006, p. 248, P. Bargellini, *I Buonomini di San Martino*, Florence, Casa di Risparmio, 1972, pp. 31–32, J. K. Cadogan, *Domenico Ghirlandaio: Artist and Artisan*, London, Yale University Press, 2000, p. 212 and L. Sebreghondi, 'The Congregation and the Fresco Cycle', in J. M. Bradburne, (ed.), *Hidden Voices: Discovering the Buonomini di San Martino*, Florence, Giunti, 2011, p. 78.



family whose poverty, and therefore vulnerability, has been brought to their attention.<sup>698</sup> Accordingly the researcher has now renamed the mural *An Initial Visit by the Buonomini to a Vulnerable Family*. What perhaps has been overlooked in previous interpretations is a motif that joins the group and pronounces them a family unit - the appearance of poverty. One must also consider that young families with children were the exact demographic that made up the majority of Buonomini beneficiaries during their first thirty years of activity.<sup>699</sup> In addition to these observations, it is clear that there is an absence of decorative objects within the domestic interior, which is rather striking because even an interior as Spartan as a monk's cell or the home of a poor artisan would usually benefit from some sort of religious illustration, however small, cheap, or ephemeral.<sup>700</sup> Richard Trexler has suggested that the *poveri vergognosi* were the same people who pawned their possessions at the Monte, which is entirely credible. However, if this is the case in this image, it would appear that this family had nothing left of value to use as collateral and so it has had to appeal to the Buonomini for help.<sup>701</sup> In these situations, where family members were perhaps physically well and able, albeit they found themselves on the threshold of disaster, the confraternity would make financial

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<sup>698</sup> On the unchanging nature of the Buonomini's visiting procedures see L. Sebreghondi, 'The Congregation and the Fresco Cycle', in J. M. Bradburne, (ed.), *Hidden Voices: Discovering the Buonomini di San Martino*, Florence, Giunti, 2011, p. 78.

<sup>699</sup> A Spicciani, 'The 'Poveri Vergognosi' in Fifteenth-Century Florence: The first 30 years' activity of the Buonomini di San Martino', in T. Riis (ed.), *Aspects of Poverty in Early Modern Europe*, Florence, Badia Fiesolana, 1981, p. 156.

<sup>700</sup> Especially pertinent are the Buonomini's *Visiting a Woman in Childbed* mural (Fig. 23) and Fra Angelico's paintings in the cells of San Marco, Florence (Figs. 80 and 81).

<sup>701</sup> R. Trexler, 'Charity in the Defense of Urban Elites in the Italian Communes', in F. C. Jaher (ed.), *The Rich, the Well Born and the Powerful: Elites and Upper Classes in History*, London, University of Illinois Press, 1973, p. 85.

bequests that detailed nothing of what was purchased with the money. The records simply state that the amounts given were for ‘their needs’.<sup>702</sup>

The patriarch of the household, as he is pictured inside the domestic interior, traditionally the domain of the female,<sup>703</sup> is quite judiciously sidelined to the right-hand side of the painting’s compositional space. The fact that he is involved in helping a Procurator to look through a storage chest also testifies to a further aspect of domestic reality during the fifteenth century, the fact that it was considered advisable to hide one’s more valuable possessions. Alberti for instance allows his character, Giannozzo to explain that ‘it is imprudent to live so openly as the whole household knows everything’.<sup>704</sup> Giannozzo goes on to explain that the bedroom was the ideal place to keep treasure secreted, although so long as ‘every precious thing’ was as ‘well hidden, if possible, and locked up

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<sup>702</sup> *Entrata e Uscita 1478-1482*, unpaginated, (1.2.1.0.2.), ABSM reads:

‘Poveri detti adi detto β venti dati a figlio di benedetto dont<sup>o</sup> barbiere... san p<sup>o</sup> gattolini p [per] loro bisogni di licentia di giuliano caferucci et mia p[per] uno’.

See also *Entrata e Uscita 1478-1482*, unpaginated, (1.2.1.0.2.), ABSM, which reads:

‘Poveri detti adi 13 di detto y dua β cinque dati a nanni di... e a m<sup>a</sup> Xntonia di... e a m<sup>a</sup> piera di... τ carmaldoli β15 p[per] uno di licentia di franc<sup>o</sup> miniatore...’.

See also *Entrata e Uscita 1478-1482*, c. 131verso, (1.2.1.0.2.), ABSM, which reads:

‘Poveri detti adi 23 di detto [y 17 β 5] dati agnolo peruzi p [per] suoi bisogni p[per] partito di tutti’.

<sup>703</sup> L. B Alberti, *The Family in Renaissance Florence*, trans. R. N. Walkins, Columbia, University of California Press, 1969, p. 181.

<sup>704</sup> L. B Alberti, *The Family in Renaissance Florence*, trans. R. N. Walkins, Columbia, University of California Press, 1969, p. 209.

out of the reach of most hands and eyes', then these valuables and treasures were deemed to be 'safe from fire and other disaster'.<sup>705</sup>

That the patriarch's clothes are black would further attest to his former station and perhaps refinement,<sup>706</sup> before fortune laid him low. Certainly, the size and shade of the man's hat alone would indicate that this headgear was of some quality and therefore firstly, conveyed honour upon the individual wearing it and secondly, was an expense which was presumably incurred and dealt with when the family was solvent. Despite his generally ragged appearance and the fact that his toes are clearly visible through his worn hose, this man is informing us, through his dress (namely the white *camicia* and voluminous old, black tunic – non colours that were likewise taken up by both the Dominicans and Carmelites in order to illustrate their piety), that he has led a life of some purity and also, despite his former dignity, is now suffering humiliation.<sup>707</sup>

Despite relying on the Buonomini's charity, the women depicted in the *An Initial Visit by the Buonomini to a Vulnerable Family* fresco are uncommon, possibly unique examples because not only are they shown dressed to go about their daily domestic duties, they are simultaneously conducting themselves with a virtue and decorum that allows the viewer

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<sup>705</sup> Ibid.

<sup>706</sup> On black representing refinement see John Gage, *Color and Meaning: Art, Science, and Symbolism*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1999, p. 31.

<sup>707</sup> D. Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri*, trans. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, 3 vols., Houghton Mifflin and Company, The Riverside Press, Cambridge, Boston, 1867, in this instance vol. III, p. 219.

to appreciate their honour undeterred by their ragged appearance.<sup>708</sup> According to Leon Battista Alberti and Saint Bernardino of Siena (1380–1444), a good wife took care of the home and ‘details of housekeeping should [be committed] entirely into [her] hands’.<sup>709</sup> Furthermore, there should be ‘no household goods of which [she] had not learned both the place and the purpose’.<sup>710</sup> Accordingly, in the Buonomini fresco we are privy to this female domain. Central to the composition stands the matriarch of the household, dressed in a patched green gown, worn hose, and a veil (Fig. 82). Her appearance, despite its shabbiness, is not dissimilar to other contemporary depictions of honourable matrons, although the colour of her aged garment alludes to times past. That her dress is green signifies the theological virtue Hope and reminds the viewer that this old garment was perhaps purchased when the woman was younger.<sup>711</sup> Likewise, the colour assures us of her former youthful chastity as green had been a colour associated with virginity at least

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<sup>708</sup> Trexler also suggests that the figures included within the Buonomini frescoes were not ragged: ‘Strikingly however, the aid recipients in these paintings are solid individuals. None is ragged, none miserable’, R. Trexler, ‘Charity in the Defense of Urban Elites in the Italian Communes’, in F. C. Jaher (ed.), *The Rich, the Well Born and the Powerful: Elites and Upper Classes in History*, London, University of Illinois Press, 1973, p. 90. As the text was first published in 1973 and good quality images of the Buonomini have only recently become available this oversight could likely be due to the poor calibre of reproduced photographs. The high resolution images that I have managed to acquire have only recently been generously gifted to me by the Florentine fine art photographer, Antonio Quattrone. Additionally, I have been allowed by the confraternity to be present in their oratory for extended periods of time while conducting formal visual analyses of each painting.

<sup>709</sup> See C. C. Frick, *Dressing Renaissance Florence: Families Fortunes and Fine Clothing*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002, p. 86 for a discourse by San Bernardo of Siena and L. B Alberti, *The Family in Renaissance Florence*, trans. R. N. Walkins, Columbia, University of California Press, 1969, p. 208 for his notions on what constituted a good wife.

<sup>710</sup> Ibid.

<sup>711</sup> G. N. di Camugliano, *The Chronicles of a Florentine Family 1200-1470*, London, J. Cape, 1933, p. 142.

from the time of Dante.<sup>712</sup> This leads us to believe that her ‘integrity, purity and the character of the perfect mistress of the household’ is simply overshadowed by temporary poverty.<sup>713</sup> Moreover, her stance and pose reflect a degree of familiarity and assurance regarding the running of a household. Her feet are parted squarely, more akin to the depictions of *cittadini* who, because of the ‘grave moral weight’ that they carry, must be shown standing sure and firm.<sup>714</sup> She is also looking directly at the notary while pointing out something that may be of interest to him. Alberti stated quite clearly that ‘the woman’s character is the jewel of her family’: while the Buonomini matriarch may have lost some of her lustre, her dominant position at the centre of the composition reassures the viewer that she is the virtuous gem that crowns this perhaps temporarily jaded scene of domesticity.<sup>715</sup>

Her daughters too, who seem to be conversing quietly just outside the doorway at the back of the room, appear to be reflections of an honourable upbringing (Fig. 83). Both are dressed for chores in day gowns and headscarves and their downcast eyes and ‘honest and moderate’ expressions conform to the Renaissance ideal of female propriety,

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<sup>712</sup> D. Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy: Purgatory*, trans. Rev. H. F. Cary, 2009, <http://classiclitterature.about.com/library/bl-etexts/dante/bl-dante-purgatory-30>, p. 30, (accessed 8 August 2013):

‘A virgin in my view appear’d, beneath  
Green mantle, rob’d in hue of living flame’.

<sup>713</sup> L. B. Alberti, *The Family in Renaissance Florence*, trans. R. N. Walkins, Columbia, University of California Press, 1969, p. 250.

<sup>714</sup> J. Manca, ‘Moral Stance in Italian Renaissance Art: Image, Text and Meaning’, *Artibus et Historiae*, vol. 22, no. 44, 2001, p. 57.

<sup>715</sup> L. B. Alberti, *The Family in Renaissance Florence*, trans. R. N. Walkins, Columbia, University of California Press, 1969, p. 213.

notwithstanding their heavily patched garments.<sup>716</sup> The two female siblings are, however, depicted standing at the edge of a portal and although they may at present be free from vice, poverty could well entice them through this symbolic opening and into a world of corruption.<sup>717</sup> Archbishop Antonio Pierozzi, advised women not to stand ‘murmuring in the doorway’<sup>718</sup> because gossip and dawdling were seen to be a spiritual threat to women.<sup>719</sup> From the parents’ point of view the daughters could be considered a greater encumbrance than their male offspring; parents not only would be expected to protect the girls’ innocence and purity but they would also inevitably have to provide dowries.<sup>720</sup> Consequently, a family’s poverty had the potential to affect not just the daughters’ piety and chastity, but also their future as wives and mothers. In light of this, the Buonomini’s efforts to preserve the spiritual and physical integrity of these young women is not simply an action implemented to maintain a family’s honour, but an attempt to safeguard the *status quo* within the Florentine republic because ‘any transgression by women, brings about disorder through civil disruption and political upheaval’.<sup>721</sup>

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<sup>716</sup> E. Welch, *Art in Renaissance Italy 1350-1500*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1997, p. 281–282.

<sup>717</sup> C. King, *Renaissance Women Patrons: Wives and Widows in Renaissance Italy 1300-1550*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1998, p. 22 discusses public and private space using illustrations from the 14<sup>th</sup> century writings of Francesco da Barberino and the sixteenth-century texts of Nevizzano. Both writers agreed that public spaces could include courtyards, doorways, windows, balconies and some public rooms within the home itself.

<sup>718</sup> P. Tinagli, *Women in Italian Renaissance Art: Gender, Representation, Identity*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1997, p. 28.

<sup>719</sup> Margaret King, *Women of the Renaissance*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1991, p. 167.

<sup>720</sup> *Ibid.* p. 31. See also p. 25 for a short discussion on baby girls as the victims of abandonment and infanticide.

<sup>721</sup> C. King, *Renaissance Women Patrons: Wives and Widows in Renaissance Italy 1300-1550*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1998, p. 40–42 for tales as admonitions against the transgressions of tyrannical, lascivious men and dishonourable women. For an

If a young woman's misbehaviour could theoretically destroy a city's civic stability, equally exceptional conduct in relation to marriage could be considered 'the very basis of civic morality'.<sup>722</sup>

Positioned directly to the right of the *Initial Visit by the Buonomini to a Vulnerable Family* scene is a fresco that depicts an espousal or betrothal (Fig. 21).<sup>723</sup> Set outdoors under the cover of a small loggia, much of the pictorial space is taken up with the many figures of those attending the ceremony. To the left of the scene sits a notary writing on a sheet, perhaps the document detailing the dowry that will subsequently be sent to the groom for his perusal.<sup>724</sup> There was after all a monetary estimation required from the bride's family of the worth of her dowry and this would be checked and re-calculated by

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analysis of the Buonomini's *Releasing the Debtor from Gaol* fresco and a discussion on the visual promotion of civic stability, see S. Hughes-Johnson, 'Early Medici Patronage and the Confraternity of the Buonomini di San Martino', *Confraternitas*, vol. 22, no 2, 2012.

<sup>722</sup> Anthony F. D'Elia, 'Marriage, Sexual Pleasure, and Learned Brides in the Wedding Orations of Fifteenth-Century Italy', *Renaissance Quarterly*, vol. 55, no. 2, 2003, p. 390 and P. Tinagli, *Women in Italian Renaissance Art: Gender, Representation, Identity*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1997, p. 21. See also the story related to us originally by Messer Bernardo Machiavelli and mentioned by Anthony Molho, 'Deception and Marriage Strategy in Renaissance Florence: The Case of Women's Ages', *Renaissance Quarterly*, vol. 41, no. 2, 1998, pp. 209 – 210, which tells of the shame and scandal surrounding his servant who was seduced by a neighbour and consequently became pregnant.

<sup>723</sup> For a detailed view of an inventory made prior to an espousal and marriage see Gregorio Dati, in *Two Memoirs of Renaissance Florence: The Diaries of Buonacorso Pitti and Gregorio Dati*, Julia Martines (trans.), Long Grove, Waveland Press, 1967, p. 114. For the various ceremonies involved in marriage during the *quattrocento* see B. Witthoft, 'Marriage Rituals and Marriage Chests in Quattrocento Florence', *Artibus et Historiae*, vol. 3, no.5, 1982, pp. 43-59.

<sup>724</sup> On the serious and varied considerations surrounding marriage alliances see A. Molho, *Marriage Alliance in Late Medieval Florence*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1994, p. 13. See also J. F. Bestor, 'Marriage Transactions in Renaissance Italy and Mauss's Essay on the Gift', *Past and Present*, no.164, 1999, pp. 6-46.

the groom's kin, who are shown just beside the notary.<sup>725</sup> The espoused couple are at the centre of the composition and the bride's mother and father are standing close to their daughter's side, while the groom prepares to receive both his new wife and her dowry,<sup>726</sup> represented by the coins that the Procurator, who stands between the couple, is dropping into the groom's upturned palm (Fig. 84).<sup>727</sup>

The bride-to-be is the personification of virtue and everything that a proper fifteenth-century Florentine maiden should be.<sup>728</sup> She is pure, chaste, and in obeisance of her parents. According to Alberti, such qualities in a young woman would make her perfect marriage material because they would allow her husband to easily transform the already acquiescent maiden into a conforming wife'.<sup>729</sup> The girl bends to the will of her parents by allowing her father to give her away by holding her hand and guiding it towards the

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<sup>725</sup> E. Welch, *Art in Renaissance Italy 1350-1500*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1997, pp. 281–282.

<sup>726</sup> In this particular instance, knowing that the woman is dowered reveals nothing of her social status. Rich women were often provided with large dowries in order to 'enhance [their] social mobility' and reflect the status of that family's patriarchs. Conversely, poor women were dowered (often through the charity of strangers) in order to keep them free from moral corruption and because they were perceived as vulnerable. See P. Gavitt, *Charity and Children in Renaissance Florence: The Ospedale degli Innocenti 1410-1536*, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 1990, p. 80.

<sup>727</sup> For help towards dowries see A. Molho, 'Deception and Marriage Strategy in Renaissance Florence: The Case of Women's Ages', *Renaissance Quarterly*, vol. 41, no. 2, 1998. See also Julius Kirshner and Anthony Molho, 'The Dowry Fund and the Marriage Market in Early Quattrocento Florence', *The Journal of Modern History*, vol. 50, no. 3, 1978, pp. 403 – 438.

<sup>728</sup> Margaret King, *Women of the Renaissance*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1991, p. 40 quotes Francesco Barbero with regard to an ideal woman's comportment.

<sup>729</sup> L. B. Alberti, *The Family in Renaissance Florence*, trans. R. N. Walkins, Columbia, University of California Press, 1969, p. 115–120. See also A. Molho, 'Deception and Marriage Strategy in Renaissance Florence: The Case of Women's Ages', *Renaissance Quarterly*, vol. 41, no. 2, 1998, p. 204.



ring about to be placed on her finger.<sup>730</sup> Her mother, standing directly behind her, lays a comforting hand on the girl's left arm as if holding her in place, ready to receive the betrothal. The mother's face is not discernible, due to the deterioration of this part of the fresco, and the girl's features have been somewhat affected by the loss of paint and plaster over the years (Fig. 85). Nonetheless, the impression that emanates from the figural organisation of this small family group is that the bride is a pure and virtuous girl, unaccustomed to being outside the family fold and to what is now happening to her. The positioning of the young woman's head and neck seem to reveal the tension and uncertainty of a new experience. Her father's grief stricken face (Fig. 86) adds to the discomfort present in the scene, an indication that he will miss his virtuous daughter when she leaves his home and joins her new kin. The fact that the mother is actually holding her daughter in position reveals both a sense of reassurance and firmness, as if she would actually push the girl into position if she felt she had to. It also alerts the viewer to the fact that mother and daughter are acting in a manner that is both morally acceptable and customary.<sup>731</sup> Almost as revealing as the various clothes, poses, gestures, and facial expressions present in this fresco, is one solitary object held by the young woman – a white handkerchief that, as we may have learned from its inclusion in Shakespearean literature, can bear meanings both symbolic and literal.<sup>732</sup> In a literal

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<sup>730</sup> See Giulia Calvi, 'Maddalena Nerli and Cosimo Tornabuoni: A Couple's Narrative of Family History in Early Modern Florence', *Renaissance Quarterly*, vol. 45, no. 2, 1992, pp. 315 - 315, for some details of the various ceremonies and legal considerations involved in a Renaissance wedding, the ring ceremony being only one aspect.

<sup>731</sup> C. King, *Renaissance Women Patrons: Wives and Widows in Renaissance Italy 1300-1550*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1998, p. 23.

<sup>732</sup> John A. Hodgson, 'Desdemona's Handkerchief as an Emblem of Her Reputation', *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, vol.19, no.3, 1997, pp. 313-322. G. Dati, in

sense, the object would certainly be useful at such an emotional moment, although its fine linen and lace form would indicate that it would also have been quite a vanity.<sup>733</sup> In the years when the fresco was painted, sumptuary laws were relaxed for brides.<sup>734</sup> Perhaps it is correct that a young girl should be depicted with such a fine object because, despite the fact that her parents had to get help for a dowry from the Buonomini, they do appear to have maintained their ability to dress their daughter in a good quality gown with bright yellow sleeves fashionably slit to reveal a linen blouse or *camicia*.<sup>735</sup> The fact that the handkerchief is white reminds us of the theological virtue, Faith. The colour also alludes to the girl's virginity and to the white sheets that will be stained when the couple consummate their union.<sup>736</sup>

If we continue to imagine that the family grouped within the painting's illusionary plane are in fact real individuals who lived and breathed, it is unsurprising that the Buonomini's bride is a virtuous young lady, given the stock that she has come from. Her father, for instance, much like the patriarch in the Buonomini's *An Initial Visit by the Buonomini to*

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*Two Memoirs of Renaissance Florence: The Diaries of Buonacorso Pitti and Gregorio Dati*, Julia Martines (trans.), Long Grove, Waveland Press, 1967, p. 114.

<sup>733</sup> See Roberta O. Landini and Mary W. Bulgarella, 'Costume in Fifteenth-Century Florentine Portraits of Women', in D. A. Brown (ed.), *Virtue and Beauty Leonardo's Ginevra de' Benci and Renaissance Portraits of Women*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2001, p. 91 and Luca Landucci, *A Florentine Diary from 1450 -1516 by Luca Landucci continued by an anonymous writer 'til 1542 with notes by Iodoco del Badia*, trans., Alice de Rosen Jervis, London, J. M. Dent and Sons, 1927, p. 5.

<sup>734</sup> C. C. Frick, *Dressing Renaissance Florence: Families Fortunes and Fine Clothing*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002, p. 88.

<sup>735</sup> Ibid. p. 192.

<sup>736</sup> For an in-depth discussion on the complexities and traditions surrounding Florentine marriage and espousal ceremonies see Gene Brucker, *Giovanni and Lusanna: Love and Marriage in Renaissance Florence*, London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1986.

*a Vulnerable Family* fresco is soberly dressed in black and white with a dash of red, which suggests that he is a sober individual and a pure soul, in mourning<sup>737</sup> for the loss of such a fine, virtuous daughter. Certainly his face is contorted with grief at her leaving his house but his gaze is fixed firmly and resolutely on the groom and it is this look, rather than a gesture, that suggests the father's *moti mentali* or motions of the mind.<sup>738</sup> As an experienced father, with a child old enough to be married, this patriarch will know only too well the weighty responsibilities of running ones own home and that the duties of a young husband are many and varied. Furthermore, like most fathers, ancient and modern, he may well be wondering whether the young man is equipped to 'watch over and guard the family from all sides' and guide them 'with virtue and honour'.<sup>739</sup> Perhaps also he is considering whether his daughter's husband is diligent and honourable enough to mould the children that the couple will produce into characters of excellence<sup>740</sup> or whether this inexperienced fellow can become the kind of man that Alberti proposes as the ideal patriarch – 'not odious but dignified, not overly familiar, but kind...[with an] authority maintained by love'.<sup>741</sup> Furthermore, it would be perfectly acceptable for the bride's father to be worried as this ceremony takes place because contemporary *quattrocento* philosophy suggested that 'no relationship more entirely commands your reverence than

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<sup>737</sup> D. Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri*, trans. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, 3 vols., Houghton Mifflin and Company, The Riverside Press, Cambridge, Boston, 1867, this instance vol. III, p. 219.

<sup>738</sup> Irma A. Richter (ed.), *The Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1998, p. 179.

<sup>739</sup> L. B. Alberti, *The Family in Renaissance Florence*, trans. R. N. Walkins, Columbia, University of California Press, 1969, pp. 36-37.

<sup>740</sup> *Ibid.* p. 58.

<sup>741</sup> *Ibid.* p. 88.

the sacred tie of marriage'.<sup>742</sup> Furthermore, given that the couple are apparently so young, the father could also be worried that 'marriage perhaps seems to them to take away their present liberty and freedom'.<sup>743</sup> The union could certainly represent 'an excessive and undesirable burden' to the groom and for a guileless virgin bride, an asexual or a homosexual, 'the conjugal bed [could be perceived] as a troublesome responsibility' which leads the young to 'avoid the legitimate and honourable path to the increase of a family'.<sup>744</sup> Accordingly, it would seem that the young groom has much to consider and live up to. Nevertheless, should the father-in-law himself embody those of Alberti's ideals that have been ascribed to him, then this older man will surely see it as his patriarchal duty to ensure that 'the youth be as rich in good qualities and moral character as possible'.<sup>745</sup>

Compared to the aged father of the bride, the groom looks impossibly youthful and while he is certainly no fop, like the fashionable Sienese youth illustrated by Domenico di Bartolo in *Pope Celestinus III | Grants the Privilege of Independence to the Spedale* (Fig. 87), he is clearly well dressed and upright. While he is not royalty, his pose is almost as elegant as that of the gilded King of Persia, Ahasuerus, depicted by Marco del Buono Giamberti and Apollonio di Giovanni di Tomaso in *The Story of Esther* (Fig. 88), which implies his grace and standing. Furthermore, the groom's stance, although quite stylised, appears firm so consequently, he bears no resemblance to Pieter

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<sup>742</sup> Ibid. p. 98.

<sup>743</sup> Ibid. p.112.

<sup>744</sup> Ibid.

<sup>745</sup> Ibid. p. 58.

Bruegel's skaters (Fig. 89), whose wobbling poses were 'symbolic of a frail, morally weak mankind'.<sup>746</sup>

Seeking further evidence of the groom's outward appearance of honour, an examination of his garments in relation to contemporary Renaissance and medieval texts would appear only to perpetuate the viewer's notions of the man's honourable nature and solvency. His tunic, for instance, is just short enough to be considered fashionable while simultaneously being long enough to be modest. Saint Bernardino of Siena, who considered a short doublet to be inviting and encouraging sin, stated that, 'to have a short doublet made for [your sons] and stockings with a tiny patch in front and another in back, so that they show a lot of flesh for the sodomites' was morally reprehensible and spiritually dangerous.<sup>747</sup> That the garment is green too reminds us of hopefulness and youth and above all, immortality<sup>748</sup> especially as the prime reason for a man to marry is to perpetuate himself.<sup>749</sup>

Having considered the Buonomini groom's pose, gaze and dress in relation to various contemporary Renaissance and medieval written and visual texts, it is

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<sup>746</sup> J. Manca, 'Moral Stance in Italian Renaissance Art: Image, Text and Meaning', *Artibus et Historiae*, vol. 22, no. 44, p. 54.

<sup>747</sup> M. Roche, *Forbidden Friendships: Homosexuality and Male Culture in Renaissance Florence*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1996, p. 38.

<sup>748</sup> D. Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri*, trans. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, 3 vols., Houghton Mifflin and Company, The Riverside Press, Cambridge, Boston, 1867, p. 219.

<sup>749</sup> L. B. Alberti, *The Family in Renaissance Florence*, trans. R. N. Walkins, Columbia, University of California Press, 1969, p. 115.

apparent that this young man's honour is meant to equal his new wife's virtue. Furthermore, their love, if it were to exist outside of the painting's illusionary plain, would no doubt follow the ideals of their virtuous appearances and begin as a relationship, 'free from all lasciviousness, which joins and unites [their] hearts in honourable affection'.<sup>750</sup> Moreover in time, these feelings would preferably grow and work to raise the couple 'to glorious dignity and high estate'.<sup>751</sup>

If marriage was the bedrock upon which Renaissance Florentine society was built, the live issue of such a prestigious union conferred a transient yet 'unparalleled honour; upon childbearing women'.<sup>752</sup> Opulent scenes that convey the mothers' prestige following the birth of their children are, without exception, confined to the genres of the lives of saints and the Nativity. The Buonomini, however, appear to have adopted some of the visual traditions customarily associated with religious representations of birth and gently adapted them to convey a more secular message. Their *Visiting a Woman in Childbed* scene (Fig. 23) takes place in the chamber of a woman who presumably has not long since given birth. Much of the pictorial space is taken up by a large bed positioned on a raised platform and the only decoration in the room is provided by a small painting of the crucifixion and a niche alongside that contains a carafe of wine, a container of sweetmeats,<sup>753</sup> a glass and a piece of fruit. Reclined on the bed and covered partially with

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<sup>750</sup> L. B. Alberti, *The Family in Renaissance Florence*, trans. R. N. Walkins, Columbia, University of California Press, 1969, p. 101.

<sup>751</sup> Ibid. p. 100.

<sup>752</sup> M. King, *Women of the Renaissance*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1991, p. 14.

<sup>753</sup> Records examined show that the confraternity did not normally provide sweetmeats for women in childbed. These delicacies were usually reserved for those who were ill.

a red blanket is a veiled woman, strikingly similar in pose and physiognomy to Saint Anne, represented by Ghirlandaio in the Tornabuoni chapel frescoes. In bed beside her is her baby. Attending to the woman are two Buonomini, one on either side of the bed, while to the right of this trio is another Procurator handing a capon and a flask of wine to a female dressed for household chores.<sup>754</sup> Ludovica Sebregondi describes the standing woman as a ‘maidservant’, which is one possible reading of the figure, although this female could equally well be kin to the woman in childbed. Although she is dressed in a cap and an apron, the woman’s attire bears a striking similarity to Sandro Botticelli’s *Portrait of a Woman* (Fig. 90) who is not a domestic servant but a woman dressed in the appropriate manner for conducting household duties.<sup>755</sup>

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For examples see *Entrata e Uscita 1478–1482*, c. 130 verso (1.2.1.0.2.), ABSM which records:

‘poveri detti adi 27 di detto [Aprile] β quindici fidieron p[per] limosina...de franc<sup>o</sup>... sta palazuolo porto [?] lionardo cimatore p[per] pollo 2 confetto di licenza di proposto pandolfo alibro detto’ and ‘poveri detti adi detto[6 Maggio] y una fidieron a franc<sup>o</sup> di piero sta nel... p[per] polli e confetto p[per] dua amalati porto andrea bambagiaio di licenza di carlo biliotti’.

<sup>754</sup> L. B. Alberti, *The Family in Renaissance Florence*, trans. R. N. Walkins, Columbia, University of California Press, 1969, p. 186 informs us that ‘pheasant and capon and partridge or other delicacies...are prepared for the sick’. Various entries in the Buonomini ledgers show that chickens were often provided for the infirm. For example *Entrata e Uscita 1478–1482*, c. 132 recto and c. 133 verso (1.2.1.0.2.), ABSM and *Entrata e Uscita 1469–1478*, c.110 recto, (1.2.1.0.1.), ABSM have entries that report respectively:

‘...uno pollo buono ecco ...’ and a chicken for the ‘infirmo’ at a cost of 10 denari. Likewise in October 1483, a woman from the Borgo was given ‘pane, pollo [and] vino’ by the brothers.

<sup>755</sup> C. C. Frick, *Dressing Renaissance Florence: Families Fortunes and Fine Clothing*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002, p. 86. Equally the notion that the woman could be a *Guardedonna*, retained in order to aid the mother and child recover

Notwithstanding the identity of the female helper and the unusual presence of the procurators, the scene does, in fact, almost accurately represent the kind of aid which was provided by the Buonomini to women in childbed. For instance, unlike the sick and invalid, who were more often than not provided with pullets and chickens, women in childbed were nearly always sent a capon.<sup>756</sup> The Buonomini's records, pertaining to the 1470s, contain almost endless references to capons, worth 15 soldi, taken to various residences throughout Florence by every serving procurator, with the exceptions of Lorenzo de' Medici, Giuliano de' Medici, Pandolfo Rucellai and Piero Gianfigliuzzi. All of the other brothers, including the renowned miniaturist Francesco d'Antonio del Cierico, can be placed purchasing, fetching and carrying various goods or performing both activities.<sup>757</sup> For example in June 1478 a woman in childbed from the Canto a Monteloro was given woolen cloth, linen, swaddling bands and a capon, which were brought to her and paid for by Andrea Bambagiaio.<sup>758</sup> If Antonio Pucci's *Proprieta di*

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from the birth cannot be eliminated from this discourse. On the role of the *Guardedonna* see Louis Haas, *The Renaissance Man and His Children: Childbirth and Early Childhood in Florence 1300-1600*, New York, Saint Martin's Press, 1998, p. 43.

<sup>756</sup> See throughout *Entrata e Uscita 1478-1482* (1.2.1.0.2.), ABSM.

<sup>757</sup> *Entrata e Uscita 1478-1482*, c. 133 recto, (1.2.1.0.2.), ABSM shows Francesco d'Antonio Miniatore delivering goods to a woman in childbed:

‘Poveri detti adi 27 di detto [July 1478] y tre β18 dati a m<sup>a</sup> lisabetta dont<sup>o</sup> di... inparto sta i via san salvatore y peze lane y line y fascie e β25 p[per] 1<sup>o</sup> cappone e alter cose porto franc<sup>o</sup> miniatore di licentia di franc<sup>o</sup> rucellai’.

<sup>758</sup> *Entrata e Uscita 1478-1482*, 132 recto, (1.2.1.0.2.), ABSM records:

‘poveri detti adi detto y tre β8 dati a m<sup>a</sup> checcha di... barbiere sta al canto a monteloro iparto [inparto] 2 peze lane duo line 2 fascie e βxv p[per] uno cappone cōpo e porto andrea bambagiaio di licentia di lionardo cimatore allibro’.



*Mercato Vecchio* poem<sup>759</sup> is brought to bear at this point it is almost possible to picture the busy procurator making his way into the busy market square, marked at each corner by a church,<sup>760</sup> and wending his way past the packed stalls of greengrocers, cheese merchants and vintners,<sup>761</sup> until he reaches game stalls which, according to Pucci are:

... richly laden all the year  
With hares, wild boars and goats, fowl (wild and tame),  
Partridges, pheasants and huge capons which they rear  
Along with other birds for the gourmet's delight...<sup>762</sup>

Returning now however to the general care provided by the Buonomini to women in childbed, various fabrics and capons appear to be present in every entry pertaining to such cases and occasionally, additional items were included when the procurators believed them to be necessary to a person's wellbeing. For example during September 1478 a Madonna Maria was in childbed, although in hospital, and was given a load of wood in addition to fabric and a capon as Piero Gianfigliuzzi, who gave permission for the undertaking, and Carlo Biliotti, responsible for the delivery, must have deemed this

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<sup>759</sup> Antonio Pucci, 'Proprieta di Mercato Vecchio' in *Delizie degli eruditi toscani*, trans. N. Havely, I di San Luigi, Florence, 1770-89, Vol. VI, in Harold Acton and Edward Chaney (eds.), *Florence a Traveller's Companion*, London, Constable, 1986, pp. 112-114.

<sup>760</sup> Antonio Pucci, 'Proprieta di Mercato Vecchio' in *Delizie degli eruditi toscani*, trans. N. Havely, I di San Luigi, Florence, 1770-89, Vol. VI, in Harold Acton and Edward Chaney (eds.), *Florence a Traveller's Companion*, London, Constable, 1986, pp. 112-114.

<sup>761</sup> James Shaw and Evelyn Welch, *Making and Marketing Medicine in Renaissance Florence*, Amsterdam, Editions Rodolpi B. V., 2011, p.31.

<sup>762</sup> A. Pucci, 'Proprieta di Mercato Vecchio' in *Delizie degli eruditi toscani*, trans. N. Havely, I di San Luigi, Florence, 1770-89, Vol. VI, in Harold Acton and Edward Chaney (eds.), *Florence a Traveller's Companion*, London, Constable, 1986, pp. 112-114.

additional item essential.<sup>763</sup> Towards the end of this same month other attorneys working with cases involving women in childbed similarly judged that wood should be provided to them, along with the other more usual essential items. Cases in particular include: Madonna Xandra di Francesco from San Pietro Gattolini who was entrusted with linen, woollen cloth and firewood by Francesco Buonamici and Giuliano Caferucci;<sup>764</sup> Madonna Xandria di Giuliano from Via dell Orto, who had wollen cloth, line, swaddling bands, a capon and a load of wood delivered to her by Francesco Miniatore<sup>765</sup> and Mona Mithra di Mariotto from San Francesco who received exactly the same as the aforementioned recipient, although her endowment was made possible by Carlo Biliotti and Domenico Mazinghi.<sup>766</sup> As all of these cases occur consecutively (between the 7<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>763</sup> *Entrata e Uscita 1478-1482*, c. 134 verso, (1.2.1.0.2.), ABSM reads:

‘Poveri detti adi detto y tre β18 fidierono a m<sup>a</sup> maria di... de lamole Inparto nello Spedale di Santo nofri 2 peze lane β33 e 2 line 2 fascie β20 e β15 p[per] 1<sup>o</sup> cappone e β10 per soma di legne porto carlo biliotti e licentia di p<sup>o</sup> gianfigliazzi’.

<sup>764</sup> *Entrata e Uscita 1478-1482*, c. 134 verso, (1.2.1.0.2.), ABSM reads:

‘Poveri detti adi 12 di deto y tre β18 fidierono p[per] lim<sup>a</sup> a m<sup>a</sup> Xandr<sup>a</sup> di Francesco... tessiti di drappi Inparto da san p<sup>o</sup> gattolini p[per] 2 peze lane y 1<sup>o</sup> line soma de legne porto franc<sup>o</sup> buonamici di licentia di giuliano caferucci’.

<sup>765</sup> *Entrata e Uscita 1478-1482*, c. 134 verso, (1.2.1.0.2.), ABSM reads:

‘Poveri detti adi detto y tre β18 fidierono a m<sup>a</sup> Xandria di Giuliano... Inparto sta nella via del orto y peze lane y line y fascie e β25 p[per] uno cappone e soma de legne porto francesco miniatore...’.

<sup>766</sup> *Entrata e Uscita 1478-1482*, c. 134 verso, (1.2.1.0.2.), ABSM reads:

‘Poveri detti adi detto y tre β18 fidierono p[per] limosina a mona Mithra di mariotto... Inparto sta da San franc<sup>o</sup> p[per] y peze lane y line e y fascie e β25 per uno cappone e p[per] una soma legne porto Carlo biliotti e licentia di dom<sup>o</sup> mazinghi’.

and 12<sup>th</sup> of September 1478) and follow a further five unrelated cases, undertaken between the 1<sup>st</sup> and the 4<sup>th</sup> of September, of charity to women in childbed, who did not receive firewood along with their fabrics and capons, one may tentatively suggest that perhaps sometime between the 4<sup>th</sup> and the 7<sup>th</sup> of September 1478, the weather may have turned colder and accordingly the Procurators of the Shamed Poor responded to circumstances and tailored their help to suit.

The painted scene however, is unusual in the sense that three men are present in an environment that was exclusively the domain of women. This would lead us to suspect that the narrative the confraternity wished to convey is an ‘operative fiction’, as Rubin terms it, ‘versions of desired ends – not portrayals of actual conditions’.<sup>767</sup> In other words, it is a perpetual tableau created to show the kind of help available from the confraternity to honourable women in childbed. Like the other virtuous, married women depicted in the Buonomini murals, this woman in childbed (*donna del parto*) is appropriately veiled and averts her gaze from the two Buonomini aiding her. Her baby, snuggled by her side, appears naked, which would explain why one of the brothers is proffering swaddling bands.<sup>768</sup> The fact that the child is in bed with its mother and is not

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<sup>767</sup> P. L. Rubin, *Images and Identity in Fifteenth-Century Florence*, London, Yale University Press, 2007, p. 56.

<sup>768</sup> Various entries in the Buonomini ledgers show that it was a confraternal convention to supply women in childbed with cloth for swaddling bands. For example, see *Entrata e Uscita 1478-1482*, c. 131recto, (1.2.1.0.2.), ABSM which includes the following:

‘Poveri detti adi 16 di detto [May 1478] y tre β7 a m<sup>a</sup> margharita di giovanni... sta campo corbolini Inparto p[per] 2 peze lane 2 line e 2 fascie e βxv p[per] 1<sup>o</sup> cappone porto andrea bambagiaio de licentia di franc<sup>o</sup> melli’.

being attended to by a wet nurse suggests that the family either could not afford to employ such a woman or that the mother was, as the Venetian humanist Francesco Barbaro (1390–1454) recommends, nourishing the child in the most ‘proper ...[and] wholesome’ way.<sup>769</sup> This, Barbaro informs us, ‘lends itself to shaping the properties of body and mind to the character of the seed’ – in this case, the absent father.<sup>770</sup> It is not clear whether the absent father<sup>771</sup> has failed in his paternal duty to find and secure a wet nurse, although Alberti, despite appearing on the one hand to endorse this type of surrogacy, does in fact accommodate those who cannot find a wet nurse who meets stringent moral and hygiene requirements.<sup>772</sup> ‘You must admit also’ he says, ‘that the mother herself ... offers more suitable and much more practical nourishment to her own children’.<sup>773</sup> San Bernardino of Siena, however, would have considered the Buonomini’s woman in childbed as sin free in respect of her nursing habits.<sup>774</sup>

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<sup>769</sup> M. King, *Women of the Renaissance*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1991, p. 13.

<sup>770</sup> Ibid.

<sup>771</sup> For an example of how the Buonomini aided women in childbed with absent husbands see *Entrata e Uscita* 1478-1482, unpaginated (1.2.1.0.2.), ABSM, dated 13 February 1479, which states:

‘poveri detti adi detto [13 Febbraio] y tre β cinque dati a m<sup>a</sup> caterina fu di Giovanni... i parto sta in carmaldoli p[per] 2 peze lane β33 et p[per] 2 line e ii fascie β20 e p[per] una soma di legne β12 di licentia di franc<sup>o</sup> miniatore...’.

<sup>772</sup> See G. Calvi, ‘Maddalena Nerli and Cosimo Tornabuoni: A Couple’s Narrative of Family History in Early Modern Florence’, *Renaissance Quarterly*, vol. 45, no. 2, 1992, p. 317 on what was expected from a husband who was preparing his wife for the birth of their child.

<sup>773</sup> L. B. Alberti, *The Family in Renaissance Florence*, trans. R. N. Walkins, Columbia, University of California Press, 1969, p.151–154.

<sup>774</sup> Ibid.

It is equally conceivable that the child's father could be deceased and the Attorneys of the Shamed Poor could ostensibly be tending to a recently widowed woman in childbed, as they did in February 1479. Their ledgers state that:

Said poor I undertake said [13<sup>th</sup> February] three lire five soldi I give to Madonna Caterina of the late Giovanni weaver...in childbed staying in Carmaldoli... 2 bolts of woollen cloth... 2 linen and 2 swaddling bands... and... a load of wood...by permission of Francesco Miniatore...<sup>775</sup>

Despite the father's unexplained absence, which is not unusual when we compare the Buonomini scene to similar hagiographical representations, the woman appears to belong to a household that at one time benefitted from disposable income.<sup>776</sup> Her bed is a testament to conspicuous consumption – the enormous red coverlet draped upon it indicates an outlay of considerable expense, given the cost of red dye stuffs.<sup>777</sup> The cover also suggests that this woman, and by extension her family, is honourable. 'The better [things] are, the longer they last, and they do you more honour', states Alberti.<sup>778</sup> The

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<sup>775</sup> *Entrata e Uscita 1478-1482*, unpaginated, (1.2.1.0.2.), ABSM reads:

'Poveri detti adi detto y tre β cinque dat a m<sup>a</sup> caterina fu di giovanni tessse [??] τ parto sta τ carmaldoli p[per] 2 peze lane β33 et p[per] 2 line e ii fascie β20 e p[per] una soma di legne β12 di licentia di franc<sup>o</sup> miniatore...'.<sup>775</sup>

<sup>776</sup> L. Haas, *The Renaissance Man and His Children: Childbirth and Early Childhood in Florence 1300-1600*, New York, Saint Martin's Press, 1998, pp. 30–40 on the absence of fathers from the birthing room. See also Domenico Beccafumi's *Birth of the Virgin* (1540–43) (Fig. 91).

<sup>777</sup> For the concept of conspicuous consumption see chapter four of Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class: An Economic Study of Institutions*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007.

<sup>778</sup> L. B. Alberti, *The Family in Renaissance Florence*, trans. R. N. Walkins, Columbia, University of California Press, 1969, pp. 194–195.

crucifixion painting on the back wall, although relatively inexpensive when compared to what the bed cover must have cost, suggests that this family, although receiving help from the Buonomini, is not yet in dire straits.<sup>779</sup> The room may be sparsely decorated, but it is not empty. It is likely, then, that this family is struggling, but not desperate like the family depicted in *An Initial Visit by the Buonomini to a Vulnerable Family*. The woman in childbed could well make up part of the demographic discussed by Amleto Spicciani – a young family whose growth temporarily exceeds their income<sup>780</sup> and the depiction is certainly representative of the Buonomini's concentration on such women during the 1470s.<sup>781</sup> The painting also indicates that the woman in childbed is aware of contemporary philosophy regarding the spiritual and thaumaturgical qualities of religious imagery. The image of Christ crucified adds a revealing touch to the scene: the sacred image has clearly not been chosen in order to instruct and mould the newborn child, but

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<sup>779</sup> A. Spicciani, 'The 'Poveri Vergognosi' in Fifteenth-Century Florence: The first 30 years' activity of the Buonomini di San Martino', in T. Riis (ed.), *Aspects of Poverty in Early Modern Europe*, Florence, Badia Fiesolana, 1981, p. 132, on assistance to women in childbed.

<sup>780</sup> Ibid. p. 156 for reference to young families.

<sup>781</sup> For example, *Entrata e Uscita 1478-1482*, c. 134 verso (1.2.1.0.2.), ABSM consists of thirteen entries, eight of which pertain to women in childbed. *Entrata e Uscita 1478-1482*, c. 130 verso (1.2.1.0.2.), ABSM consists of fourteen entries, ten of which pertain to women in childbed. *Entrata e Uscita 1478-1482*, c. 131 verso, (1.2.1.0.2.), ABSM has ten entries and six of them concern women in childbed. *Entrata e Uscita 1478-1482*, c. 131 recto, (1.2.1.0.2.), ABSM shows that despite being taken up with the Easter festivities, the confraternity still managed to make provision for women in childbed. *Entrata e Uscita 1478-1482*, c. 131 recto (1.2.1.0.2.), ABSM begins with a single entry pertaining to a sick person, goes on to discuss a payment to the grain merchant, Lippo di Lucrinaccia and continues with eight entries concerning Passover. There then follow a further five entries – three of which record charity to women in childbed.

to serve as a reminder to the woman that she must accept and endure the pain of childbirth much as the Saviour accepted his own suffering.<sup>782</sup>

Having isolated and studied some of the beneficiaries depicted in the Buonomini frescoes, it is clear that this exercise has brought to light the emphasis the confraternity placed on the array of concepts and criteria that I have gathered under the banner of a working definition. Equally clear is the role that individuals from the middle and artisan classes played in communicating these notions, females in particular, as in reality women would have made up only around a fifth of those helped by the confraternity, yet women and girls are present in all but two of the eight frescoes based on the Corporal Works of Mercy and the Buonomini's own good works.<sup>783</sup> As for any other portraits, Renaissance or otherwise, viewers are privy only to what patrons and artists wish them to see.<sup>784</sup> Nevertheless, we are allowed to read the artistic texts of the Buonomini's oratory relatively unhindered and they give a voice to non-patrician men and women, specifically those classed as shamed poor, albeit under the supervision of the Buonomini as charitable patriarchs.<sup>785</sup> Furthermore, the voices we discern can be considered authentic because they comply with the ideals circumscribed by the working definition set out at the beginning of this section (the demonstration of virtue and honour, according to gender,

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<sup>782</sup> C. King, *Renaissance Women Patrons: Wives and Widows in Renaissance Italy 1300-1550*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1998, p. 24.

<sup>783</sup> J. Henderson, *Piety and Charity in Late Medieval Florence*, London University of Chicago Press, 1994, pp. 389–390.

<sup>784</sup> C. C. Frick, *Dressing Renaissance Florence: Families Fortunes and Fine Clothing*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002, p. 10.

<sup>785</sup> M. Baxandall, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy: A Primer in the Social History of Pictorial Style*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1972, p. 3 'in the fifteenth century painting was still too important to be left to the painters'.

governed by conduct and unaffected by social status and fiscal considerations) and also satisfy the standards of integrity that were addressed in contemporary literature and reproduced in the poses and expressions of individuals in Renaissance art. Like the painted figures in the *Madonna of Mercy* (Fig. 92), ‘the space [that the beneficiaries pictured in the Buonomini frescoes] occupy and the air they breathe has all the properties of an everyday world’.<sup>786</sup> Their role, however, as emissaries of virtue and respectability, expressed as it is by non-patricians depicted in both public and private settings, is unique, innovative, and highly informative.

Revelatory as the Buonomini murals are, one aspect of confraternal life that they do not convey to us is how those with long-term requirements were dealt with by the confraternity. Consequently, the next section of this thesis will investigate a case involving continuing need by examining their association with the goldsmith, Filippo (Pippo) di Baldo.

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<sup>786</sup> M. B. Becker, ‘Aspects of Lay Piety in Early Renaissance Florence’ in C. Trinkhaus and H. A. Oberman (eds.), *The Pursuit of Holiness in Late Medieval and Renaissance Religion: Papers from the University of Michigan Conference*, Leiden, Brill, 1974, p. 192.



## Section 5:3

## Catering for Continuing Need: The Case of Filippo (Pippo) di Baldo

The Buonomini were not only interested in artists, so far as the decorative scheme of their oratory was concerned, they were also benefactors of craftsmen who, at one time or another, could have been considered amongst the *poveri vergognosi*. In June 1488 the confraternity can be seen to be aiding a goldsmith named Bartolomeo di Cione whose sons were ill<sup>787</sup> and in 1482 they proffered financial help to the painter, Jacopo di Piero who had also fallen upon hard times.<sup>788</sup> An unprecedented amount of help however was given to another craftsman, who operated from the Carmine and whose documented existence was initially uncovered by Nerida Newbiggin during her research concerning the Compagnia di Santa Maria e Sant' Agnese.<sup>789</sup>

Filippo (Pippo) di Baldo was a goldsmith and before he is found in the ledgers of Sant' Agnese, 'virtually nothing' is known of him.<sup>790</sup> There is however an entry pertaining to him in the Florentine *Catasto* of 1442 which explains that he was the 25 year old dependent of his father, Baldo di Filippo, the tailor.<sup>791</sup> In 1441 he is mentioned as

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<sup>787</sup> *Entrata e Uscita 1482-1489*, June 1488 unpaginated, (1.2.1.0.3.), ABSM: 'Bartolommeo di Cione orafo bisogni...sua figlioli malaria'.

<sup>788</sup> *Entrata e Uscita 1469-1478*, c. 81 verso, (1.2.1.0.1.), ABSM.

<sup>789</sup> N. Newbiggin, *Feste D'Oltrarno: Plays in Churches in Fifteenth-Century Florence*, Florence, Leo S. Olschki Editore, 1996.

<sup>790</sup> *Ibid.* p. 117.

<sup>791</sup> *Catasto*, 654, f. 336 recto, ASF.

I owe a profound debt of gratitude to Professor Nerida Newbiggin who generously shared the unpublished *Catasto* data that she holds for Filippo di Baldo with me.

attending the Company of Sant' Agnese and can be found creating wigs and beards to be worn by those chosen to play the disciples in the confraternity's famous Ascension play.<sup>792</sup> A decade later Pippo the goldsmith has become the head of the household with his elderly mother listed as his only dependent.<sup>793</sup> By 1453 Filippo di Baldo has made progress and is 'one of the major figures responsible for technical innovation' concerning the machinery used in the confraternity's annual re-enactment of the Ascension.<sup>794</sup> Newbigin actually goes so far as to state that 'Filippo di Baldo is, I believe the person responsible for experimenting and developing the disappearing light device in the Carmine' and she further explains that 'local legend may have easily confused Filippo di Baldo with the far more famous goldsmith, Filippo di Ser Brunelleschi' as legend has accorded the latter (incorrectly) with the invention of the machinery used in the Ascension play.<sup>795</sup> Despite Filippo di Baldo's relative lack of fame when compared with the stellar personality of Brunelleschi, during 1467 he remained a respected member of Sant' Agnese and was recorded by Neri di Bicci as one of the 'three property masters responsible for the protection and care of the property' owned by the confraternity.<sup>796</sup> In 1471 we can glimpse Pippo's presence within the sodality for one final time when he is mentioned making star lights.<sup>797</sup>

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<sup>792</sup> N. Newbigin, *Feste D'Oltrarno: Plays in Churches in Fifteenth-Century Florence*, Florence, Leo S. Olschki Editore, 1996, p. 117.

<sup>793</sup> *Catasto* 692, f. 510 verso, ASF.

<sup>794</sup> N. Newbigin, *Feste D'Oltrarno: Plays in Churches in Fifteenth-Century Florence*, Florence, Leo S. Olschki Editore, 1996, p. 27 and p. 117.

<sup>795</sup> *Ibid.* p. 126.

<sup>796</sup> *Ibid.* p. 67.

<sup>797</sup> *Ibid.* p. 126.

For the next eleven years Filippo di Baldo's voice remains almost silent with the exception of a short mention during 1481 in the *Ricordanze di Messer Bongianni di Bongianni di Giovanni Gianfigliuzzi*.<sup>798</sup> Nevertheless, at the beginning of 1482 his voice returns to us but unlike its timbre at the Carmine which we could perceive as loud, proud and which resounded with his success, the intonation revealed to us from the ledgers of the Buonomini di San Martino, languishes in what are perhaps the mournful tones of temporary financial difficulty.

Looking back for a moment to the Florentine *Catasto* of 1457, in order to begin comparing the proud Pippo to the sorry Pippo, the tax return reveals a man who appears to believe that he has progressed in life to greater extent than his father. Whether what is inferred is down to the accurate recording of Pippo's words or to the literary stylings of the notary who filled in the report, one cannot say. Nevertheless, when one reads the line, 'Baldo di Filippo tailor my father he did not have anything', one can reason that the young goldsmith, unlike his forbearer, does.<sup>799</sup>

Conversely though, as the wheel of Fortune turns and Pippo finds himself at the bottom, his voice takes on the sorry tone of one seeking alms. On at least six occasions during

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<sup>798</sup> *Ricordanze di Messer Bongianni di Bongianni di Giovanni Gianfigliuzzi*, (4.2.1.0.1) ABSM, unpaginated.

<sup>799</sup> *Catasto* 794, f. 545 recto, ASF.

1482 Filippo is helped by the Buonomini<sup>800</sup> and once more in September 1483.<sup>801</sup>

Between October 1483 and 1484 he is again deemed by the confraternity to be in a vulnerable position and in need of continuing charity.<sup>802</sup>

Other unrelated entries in the Buonomini ledgers would further suggest that this type of continuing need was both readily identified by the procurators of the Shamed Poor and moreover, addressed by them. One example is in June 1478 where the Buonomini identified an individual considered an invalid who was aided at least once more in September of the same year.<sup>803</sup>

Interestingly though, the Buonomini do not only help Filippo, as the head of the family, during his hour of need, but also the goldsmith's sick child and further a male and a

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<sup>800</sup> *Entrata e Uscita 1482-1489*, c. 81 recto and verso, c. 93 verso, c. 94, verso, c. 95 verso, c. 103, verso, (1.2.1.0.3.), ABSM.

<sup>801</sup> *Entrata e Uscita 1482-1489*, c. 108, (1.2.1.0.3.), ABSM:

‘Filippo di Baldo orafo...suo figlio lo malato’.

<sup>802</sup> *Entrata e Uscita 1482-1489*, c. 111 verso, c. 116 recto and c. 119 verso, (1.2.1.0.3.), ABSM.

<sup>803</sup> *Entrata e Uscita 1478-1482*, c. 132 recto, (1.2.1.0.2.), ABSM reads:

‘Poveri detti adi detto y tre dati abgo degli alexandri p [per] suoi bisogni eva infermo porto franc<sup>o</sup> miniatore di licentia di franc<sup>o</sup> rucellai’.

*Entrata e Uscita 1478-1482*, c.134 verso, (1.2.1.0.2.), ABSM reads:

‘Poveri detti adi 3 di detto [Settembre] y tre dati a abgo degli alexandri [alexandri] malato p [per] sua bisogni di licentia franc<sup>o</sup> rucellai e franc<sup>o</sup> miniatore porto franc<sup>o</sup> b<sup>1</sup>’.

female who share the artist's patronymic are also listed as recipients of charity. At the start of 1482, a male known as Francesco da Filippo di Baldo is accorded a small amount of charity by the confraternity and in 1483, Madonna Maddelena di Baldo was given money for an overdress for her daughter.<sup>804</sup> In the absence of supporting evidence, which would perhaps serve to corroborate that these individuals who share the same surname were actually kin, one cannot say with certainty that Filippo di Baldo's nuclear family were considered vulnerable by the Procurators of San Martino. Conversely though, in the twenty five years between when Filippo is last listed in the Catasto until when he first makes an appearance in the Buonomini ledgers, it is not unreasonable to assume that his aged mother had died and that the goldsmith had perhaps married and had certainly had a child.<sup>805</sup> Furthermore, this theoretical scenario would appear all the more credible given 'the unusually late age for marriage for [Florentine] men, around thirty or thirty-one on average.'<sup>806</sup> Additionally if the fresco painting found in the Buonomini's oratory entitled, *The Initial Visit by the Buonomini to a Vulnerable Family* (Fig. 10) is brought to bear, one could almost visualise this scene as being a reflection of Filippo di Baldo's plight should the individuals sharing his surname be close kin.

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<sup>804</sup> For the entry concerning Francesco da Filippo di Baldo see *Entrata e Uscita 1482-1489*, c. 90 verso, (1.2.1.0.3.) ABSM and for the information on Madonna Maddelena di Baldo please refer to *Entrata e Uscita 1482-1489*, c. 118 recto, (1.2.1.0.3.), ABSM.

<sup>805</sup> *Entrata e Uscita 1482-1489*, c. 110 recto, (1.2.1.0.3.), ABSM mentions Filippo's sick child.

<sup>806</sup> M. Rocke, *Forbidden Friendships: Homosexuality and Male Culture in Renaissance Florence*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1996, p.14.

The painting allows us an unprecedented peak into the home of a morally upstanding, yet poor family and the messages of warning present within the work may primarily appear harsh and indicative of a worst case scenario but when one considers that most artisans, and even successful artists, often lived on credit and metaphorically walked the fine line between solvency and insolvency, we can be assured that fear of falling into moral and financial disaster was intrinsic to working and middle class life during the Renaissance. Of course there were pawn brokers where ‘the possessing class’<sup>807</sup> could trade belongings for cash with either the Jewish moneylenders or from the *quattrocento* onwards, with Christian pawnbrokers at the *Monti di Pietà*. Either way, it was not the proletariat and day labourers who were aided, but those who had something to pawn’.<sup>808</sup> For instance Ajmar-Wollheim and Dennis inform us that most artisans’ inventories listed hats, jewellery and clothing items that were in hock and that even artists would customarily pawn their possessions during times of financial hardship.<sup>809</sup> Neri di Bicci (1419-1491), for example despite his prolific artistic output lived on credit and used the pawnbroker as many as fourteen times during a four-year period.<sup>810</sup> So ostensibly then, if we postulate that Filippo di Baldo, the busy goldsmith, conducted his finances in a manner not dissimilar to the painter, Neri di Bicci, then it would appear that circumstances would not

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<sup>807</sup> R. Trexler, ‘Charity and the Defense of Urban Elites’, in F. C. Jaher, (ed.), *The Rich, the Well Born, and the Powerful*, London, University of Illinois Press, 1973, p. 84.

<sup>808</sup> Ibid.

<sup>809</sup> Marta Ajmar – Wollheim and Flora Dennis, *At Home in Renaissance Italy*, London, V & A Publications, 2006, p. 73.

<sup>810</sup> Ibid.

permit the former to avail himself of the aid that the pawnbrokers could give and he would have to rely on a charitable confraternity – the Buonomini di San Martino.<sup>811</sup>

Pippo however, was not the only recognisable individual to find himself reliant on the Buonomini's aid, whether as a temporary solution to a cash flow problem or due to more pressing, long-term needs. In 1478 for example, Piero di Betto Gherardini,<sup>812</sup> despite possessing a name associated with an ancient Tuscan clan,<sup>813</sup> appears within the confraternity's ledgers when he receives money towards litigation. Similarly, Agnolo Peruzzi, who shares his surname with one of Florence's most successful mercantile banking families,<sup>814</sup> is given a sum simply to accommodate his unspecified needs.<sup>815</sup>

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<sup>811</sup> R. Trexler, 'Charity and the Defense of Urban Elites', in F. C. Jaher, (ed.), *The Rich, the Well Born, and the Powerful*, London, University of Illinois Press, 1973, pp. 75 - 76 on the distinction between the public and ashamed poor and available avenues for financial aid.

<sup>812</sup> *Entrata e Uscita 1478-1482*, c. 132 verso, (1.2.1.0.2.) reads:

'Poveri detti adi 9 di detto [guigno] y quarto β 6 dati a piero di betto gherardini p[per] dare a β [ser] zanobi del pace nots [notaio] p[per] suo piato di licentia d andrea bambagiaio et domenico mazinghi'.

<sup>813</sup> On the noble Gherardini clan see Villani, G., *Nuova Cronica*, G. Porta, (ed.), 2 vols., Parma, 1990, p.216 and p. 310. On their Tuscan origins dating back to the tenth century see A. Fitzgibbon, 'Appendix to the Unpublished Geraldine Documents: The Gherardini of Tuscany', *The Journal of the Royal Historical and Archaeological Association of Ireland*, 4<sup>th</sup> series, vol. 4, no. 29, 1877, p. 255.

<sup>814</sup> See Villani, G., *Nuova Cronica*, G. Porta, (ed.), 2 vols., Parma, 1990, p. 1341 and p. 4128.

<sup>815</sup> *Entrata e Uscita 1478-1482*, c. 131 verso, (1.2.1.0.2.) reads:

'Poveri detti adi 23 di detto [maggio] [y 17 β5] dati agnolo peruzi p[per] suoi bisogni p[per] partito di tutti'.

If we return to the entry for Filippo in the 1457 Catasto once more, it is clear that the goldsmith is certainly gathering a fair amount of debt through acquiring goods and/or services on credit.<sup>816</sup> Consequently the deferred payments or debts that he has accrued so far and the financial needs of his one elderly dependent leave him, even after the sale of a house, in credit to the tune of only 398 soldi.<sup>817</sup> Clearly, by the 1480s, the Procurators of the Shamed Poor considered Filippo di Baldo as needing help. He was given money for bread, because his child was ill and most often, simply because of his continuing need.<sup>818</sup> The final entry in the Buonomini ledgers for Pippo occurs in July 1484 and appears as a last, pitiful call to us, as he languishes in his Via Mozza lodgings,<sup>819</sup> before time and circumstance demands that his voice once again falls silent.<sup>820</sup>

Just as the Procurators of the Shamed Poor catered to those peregrinating through their earthly lives, the Buonomini also provided practical need to individuals whose journeys were associated more with the spiritual realm. Accordingly, the chapter that follows investigates the confraternity in light of its philanthropy to wayfairers and the deceased.

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<sup>816</sup> *Catasto* 794, f. 545 recto, ASF. This entry shows that Filippo owed 38 lire and 3 soldi to Berto di Niccholo, *dipintore* and a further amount to Giovanni di Michele di Fruosono *buccaio*.

<sup>817</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>818</sup> *Entrata e Uscita 1482-1489*, c. 95 verso, (1.2.1.0.3.) ABSM details that Pippo was given money ‘*per pane*’, c. 110 recto explains that he is getting help as ‘*suo figliuolo lo malato*’ and multiple entries including c. 81 recto and verso and c. 118 recto state that the help is ‘*per più suo bisogni*’.

<sup>819</sup> *Entrata e Uscita 1482-1489*, c. 118 recto and c. 111 verso (1.2.1.0.3.) ABSM, mention that Filippo is staying in the Via mozza which is now known as the Via San Zenobi.

<sup>820</sup> The remit of this study has not permitted me to search for entries pertaining to Filippo di Baldo which could occur after 1485. By this time the goldsmith would have been 67 and elderly, that is if he was in fact still alive in 1485.



## Chapter 6

### Spiritual Journeys in This Life and the Next

## Section 6:1

## ‘He Who Would Valiant Be’: Pilgrimage and Hospitality in Early Modern Florence

During the early medieval period Florence was essentially bypassed by the two main pilgrimage routes to Rome. The first, which ran to the west of the Italian peninsula, passed through Piacenza, Pontremoli, Lucca, Siena and Viterbo; the second, which banked east before making a westerly return to meet Rome took in Parma, Modena, Bologna, Faenza, Arezzo and Orvieto.<sup>821</sup> Nevertheless, even during the twelfth century Florence was ‘impeding the efforts of pilgrims to visit nearby relics’ and luring the pious into her embrace.<sup>822</sup> During the fifteenth-century there was much to see with regard to religious relics and miracle-working objects possessing apparent thaumaturgical properties. This period, known as the ‘golden century’,<sup>823</sup> could boast the jawbone of Saint Jerome at Santa Maria del Fiore,<sup>824</sup> the Camaldolese crucifix (*La Providenza*), which broke into a sweat and was thence interred in a tabernacle,<sup>825</sup> the Lady of the Annunziata, a miraculous image of the Virgin, which was begun by a painter and apparently completed

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<sup>821</sup> Debra J. Birch, *Pilgrimage to Rome in the Middle Ages: Continuity and Change*, Woolbridge, the Boydell Press, 1998, p. 44.

<sup>822</sup> N. R. Fabbri and N. Rutenburg, ‘The Tabernacle of Orsanmichele in Context’, *The Art Bulletin*, vol. 63, no. 3, 1981, p. 385. See also R. Trexler, *Public Life in Renaissance Florence*, London, Cornell University Press, 1980, p. 6.

<sup>823</sup> R. Trexler, *Public Life in Renaissance Florence*, London, Cornell University Press, 1980, p. 7.

<sup>824</sup> L. Landucci, *A Florentine Diary from 1450 -1516 by Luca Landucci continued by an anonymous writer ‘til 1542 with notes by Iodoco del Badia*, trans. Alice de Rosen Jervis, London, J. M. Dent and Sons, 1927, p. 43.

<sup>825</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 11-12.

by a supernatural force, and Our Lady of Orsanmichele.<sup>826</sup> The Lady of Imprunetta and various other pilgrimage sites at Bibbiena, Prato, Pistoia and Loreto, were also important locations to visit.<sup>827</sup>

Pilgrimage however, should one not be a mendicant, was an expensive activity and although it benefitted the soul, it was not good for the pocket. The pious traveller was compelled to furnish him or herself with suitable travelling clothes (Figs. 93 - 95), food and often fresh water<sup>828</sup> as sometimes stretches of river could become polluted. For example, according to the writer of the twelfth-century *Liber Sancti Jacobi*, 'drinking from the River Salafo at Lorca between Puente la Reina and Estella [would prove] an almost instantly lethal act'.<sup>829</sup> Pilgrims also found themselves at the mercy of money changers, such as those mentioned on the Via Francigena by correspondents from the Middle Ages.<sup>830</sup> Furthermore, varying exchange rates also conspired against their fiscal welfare.<sup>831</sup> Working-class travellers would often have had to save for a long period of

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<sup>826</sup>Brendan Cassidy, 'Orcagna's Tabernacle in Florence: Design and Function', *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*, vol 55, no. 2, 1992, pp. 180-211. See also R. Trexler, *Public Life in Renaissance Florence*, London, Cornell University Press, 1980, p. 7.

<sup>827</sup> Ibid.

<sup>828</sup> On the consumption of water during the middle ages see John Ordonaux, trans., *Regimen Sanitatis Salernitanum*, J. B. Lippincott and co., Philadelphia, 1870, p. 113. On the safety and consumption of water during the Renaissance see Leon Battista Alberti, *On the Art of Building in Ten Books*, trans. Joseph Rykwert, Neil Leach and Robert Tavernor, The MIT Press, London, 1988, p. 100, p. 338 and p. 341.

<sup>829</sup> Vera and Helmut Hell, *The Great Pilgrimage of the Middle Ages*, London, Barrie and Rockiff, 1964, p. 22.

<sup>830</sup> William Melczer, *The Pilgrim's Guide to Santiago de Compostela*, New York, Italica Press, 1993, p. 53. See also Bernard Bachrach, *The Pilgrimages of Fulk Nerra, Count of the Angevins, 987-1040*, Michigan, Kalamazoo, 1987, p. 205.

<sup>831</sup> W. Melczer, *The Pilgrim's Guide to Santiago de Compostela*, New York, Italica Press, 1993, p. 53.

time in order to spare the few meagre coins, secreted in socks, shoes and inside pockets, that would allow them to embark on a spiritual journey.<sup>832</sup> Furthermore, accommodation for travellers was also a major expense.

In the Buonomini's *Taking in Pilgrims* fresco painting (Fig. 7) authors have attempted to illustrate how this particular lay confraternity aided pious wayfarers.<sup>833</sup> The painted scene is set within an inn which offers food, drink and accommodation, judging by the presence of a small dining table, a credenza complete with jugs and glasses and a large bed. There are two groups of figures depicted in this tableau - a total of five people - and what is transpiring is that two Procurators of the Shamed Poor from San Martino are paying an innkeeper so that the pilgrim couple present can benefit from three basic services that preserve life and limb: eating; drinking and sleeping.

Given that Florence 'competed for pilgrims as it competed for trade' and 'welcomed Rome-bound [travellers] and encouraged them to stay',<sup>834</sup> it would be easy to presume that the Buonomini pilgrims had ventured outside of Florence before being safely

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<sup>832</sup> Ibid.

<sup>833</sup> Examples of help given to pilgrims by the Buonomini are few and far between although *Entrata e Uscita 1482-1489*, c. 88 verso, (1.2.1.0.3.), ABSM, records the confraternity helping Simone Domenico... of Prato with various bills when he falls ill in Florence. The brotherhood pays 'β venti p[er] ristuotarlo dallalbergo ...e p[er] uno paio di scarpette'.

<sup>834</sup> R. Trexler, *Public Life in Renaissance Florence*, London, Cornell University Press, 1980, p. 6.

ensconced in the city,<sup>835</sup> since the civic authorities ‘never sponsored a pilgrimage or procession to a place outside the walls and required Florentine pilgrims to return by sunset and spend the evening in town’.<sup>836</sup> Further still, the Confraternity of the Buonomini di San Martino did not customarily provide aid to individuals from outside of the city’s confines either.<sup>837</sup> Nevertheless, it is impossible to tell whether the Buonomini pilgrims are coming to see Florence’s relics and shrines or plan to make their way to a hilltop monument outside of the city, perhaps similar to the one visible through the painted window to the rear of the illusionary plane. Certainly papal indulgences encouraged the faithful to stay in Florence, for example Luca Landucci, the fifteenth-century apothecary, mentions in a diary entry on 13 April, 1481, that one could diminish one’s time in purgatory by visiting six of the city’s churches on three mornings.<sup>838</sup>

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<sup>835</sup> Sandra Weddle, ‘Saints in the City and Poets at the Gates’, in D. S. Peterson and D. E. Bornstein (eds.), *Florence and Beyond: Culture, Society and Politics in Renaissance Italy: Essays in Honour of John. M. Najemy*, Toronto, CRRS Publications, 2008, pp. 179-194, however, explains that ‘there is little evidence that Renaissance Florence might have been experienced or understood by contemporaries as a collection of monuments connected by pilgrimage’, although the *Codex Rustici*, a manuscript containing the illustrations of thirty-seven Florentine churches ‘constructs the city in terms of an everyday pilgrimage experience’.

<sup>836</sup> R. Trexler, *Public Life in Renaissance Florence*, London, Cornell University Press, 1980, p. 6.

<sup>837</sup> R. Trexler, *Public Life in Renaissance Florence*, London, Cornell University Press, 1980, p. 6. However, A. Spicciani, ‘The ‘Poveri Vergognosi’ in Fifteenth-Century Florence: The first 30 years’ activity of the Buonomini di San Martino’, in T. Riis (ed.), *Aspects of Poverty in Early Modern Europe*, Florence, Badia Fiesolana, 1981, p. 131 does mention a single recorded case of aid from this confraternity outside of the city walls. For the city gates as a border between the civilised and uncivilised see S. Weddle, ‘Saints in the City and Poets at the Gates’, in D. S. Peterson and D. E. Bornstein (eds.), *Florence and Beyond: Culture, Society and Politics in Renaissance Italy: Essays in Honour of John. M. Najemy*, Toronto, CRRS Publications, 2008, p. 189.

<sup>838</sup> L. Landucci, *A Florentine Diary from 1450 -1516 by Luca Landucci continued by an anonymous writer ‘til 1542 with notes by Iodoco del Badia*, trans. Alice de Rosen Jervis, London, J. M. Dent and Sons, 1927, p.32.

Likewise Richard Trexler reports that by purchasing Roman Jubilee indulgences, ‘the city fathers enabled residents and prospective visitors to receive the same indulgence in seven Florentine churches as they would have by visiting the seven churches of Rome’.<sup>839</sup> Some residents though did not avail themselves of this papal favour as is evident from Lucca Landucci’s decision to take himself and his family to Rome for the Jubilee.<sup>840</sup> What we can be sure of however, is that the pilgrims shown within the San Martino frescoes are portrayed as seasoned travellers and have completed some of the most important pilgrimage routes. Firstly, their clothes are typical for pilgrims during this period (Figs. 96 & 97) and secondly, and most importantly, the badges that are displayed on their hats (one a cross and the other a shell) reveal that the couple previously travelled to both Jerusalem and Santiago da Compostela.<sup>841</sup>

Clearly the pilgrims depicted in the Buonomini mural are meant to be conceived as real pilgrims rather than false ones like Boccaccio’s Tedaldo degli Elisei, who cunningly disguises himself as a visitor returned from the Holy Sepulchre.<sup>842</sup> Both are dressed in garments that would prove practical for making a long journey by foot over various terrains and through changing weather. For instance, the male pilgrim is wearing hose,

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<sup>839</sup> R. Trexler, *Public Life in Renaissance Florence*, London, Cornell University Press, 1980, p. 6.

<sup>840</sup> L. Landucci, *A Florentine Diary from 1450 -1516 by Luca Landucci continued by an anonymous writer ‘til 1542 with notes by Iodoco del Badia*, trans. Alice de Rosen Jervis, London, J. M. Dent and Sons, 1927, p. 12.

<sup>841</sup> V. and H. Hell, *The Great Pilgrimage of the Middle Ages*, London, Barrie and Rockiff, 1964, p. 27.

<sup>842</sup> Giovanni Boccaccio, *The Decameron*, trans. G. H. Mc William, Middlesex, Penguin Books, 1972, p. 278.

leather boots and an overcoat, which, while being long enough to keep him dry during a downpour of rain, would also be short enough not to encumber his walking or climbing activities. Just visible around the neck portion of the overcoat is the collar of a garment that the pilgrim is wearing underneath. This item of clothing looks like a jacket known as a *pelerine* which, given the garment's brown edging, is likely lined with leather, as was traditional with this item of pilgrim-wear during the late medieval period.<sup>843</sup> The traveller has also been depicted holding a wide-brimmed felt hat, popular with travellers as it provided protection from both the rain and the heat of the sun.<sup>844</sup> The Buonomini's male wayfarer also dons a bag at his waist, likely containing documents pertaining to his identity and also perhaps letters of recommendation from his parish priest.<sup>845</sup> This particular travel accessory simultaneously supports a dating of the mural to the later medieval/Renaissance periods, as pilgrims were not usually depicted with this attribute during the early Middle Ages (Fig. 98).<sup>846</sup> Our pilgrim also possesses another two attributes traditionally associated with pious wayfarers; these being the *bordon* and the *escarcela*. The *bordon* is the long walking stick, which both he and his wife are depicted holding, and the *escarcela*, which is the rucksack-type bag that the male pilgrim has strapped to his back. The *bordon* was both a practical and symbolic item. Its strength, doubled with a pointed spike on the bottom end, made it useful to travellers as an aid to walking, for scaring stray dogs or lone wolves and for discouraging vagabonds.<sup>847</sup> Its

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<sup>843</sup> W. Melczer, *The Pilgrim's Guide to Santiago de Compostela*, New York, Italica Press, 1993, p. 57.

<sup>844</sup> Ibid.

<sup>845</sup> Ibid.

<sup>846</sup> Ibid.

<sup>847</sup> W. Melczer, *The Pilgrim's Guide to Santiago de Compostela*, New York, Italica Press, 1993, p. 58.

symbolism lay in the fact that it was wood and therefore represented the cross on which Christ ended his mortal life. In legend, the stick was also credited with having the power to chase away the Devil.<sup>848</sup> Likewise, the *escarcela* was both a practical and symbolic item. Its usefulness lay in the fact that it was a deerskin bag, which was essentially waterproof, and it was used to hold items of food. The shape of the bag however was a trapezoid so it was narrower at the mouth than at the bottom and the flatness of the design meant that it had quite a small capacity.<sup>849</sup> Symbolically the design of the bag was meant to remind the traveller of Divine Providence, a concept taken up with great gusto by the Buonomini and propounded by their founder, Antonio Pierozzi.<sup>850</sup> Essentially the pilgrims would have been encouraged by this particular doctrine to allow the Lord to provide for their needs. Accordingly, the bag is shown open at the top in order for its owner to give out food in times where there is an excess and equally receive it back when the bag is empty.<sup>851</sup> In a similar vein, the confraternity of the Good Men of Saint Martin spent all that came into their accounts on aiding the *poveri vergognosi* and relied on Divine Providence to keep refilling their empty coffers.<sup>852</sup> Pope Calixtus II (unknown -

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<sup>848</sup> Ibid.

<sup>849</sup> Ibid.

<sup>850</sup> D. Kent, 'The Buonomini di San Martino: Charity for "the glory of God, the honour of the city and the commemoration of myself"', in F. Ames-Lewis (ed.), *Cosimo 'il Vecchio' de' Medici, 1389-1464: Essays in Commemoration of the 600<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Cosimo de' Medici's Birth*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1992, p. 54. See section 2:2 of the present thesis also.

<sup>851</sup> W. Melczer, *The Pilgrim's Guide to Santiago de Compostela*, New York, Italica Press, 1993, p. 58.

<sup>852</sup> For example, *Entrata e Uscita 1482 – 1489*, c. 29 (1.2.1.0.3.), ABSM is typical and shows that at the end of the month there were no assets left at the Buonomini's disposal. The entry reads as follows:

Sum quella entrata...luglio 1485 (Sum of the income)



1124) explained why pilgrimage should be undertaken in such a pious and meager manner when he said, that the most spiritually fulfilling travels were embarked on in the ‘most narrow way’ with ‘lack of vices, mortification of the body, restitution of virtues, remission of sins [and] penitence of the penitent’ making such an expedition a ‘journey of the just’.<sup>853</sup> Likely the animal skin from which these bags were made would also work to remind the traveller of the corporal mortifications that Jesus Christ endured prior to his execution by crucifixion.<sup>854</sup>

The female pilgrim shown in the Buonomini frescoes also reveals something vis-à-vis the respectability and piety of these particular travellers. Her clothes are not only the practical garments of a seasoned traveller, being not too long and capacious enough for her to enjoy freedom of movement without becoming physically restricted, but they also convey her modesty and piety via the way that the garments will ostensibly allow her to go about a physical activity without baring flesh. Her gaze and stance however are the most revelatory aspect with regard to her piety. The fact that she makes eye contact with neither the painting’s viewer nor other subjects within the illusionary space indicates that

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y1240.13.2

Sum l’uscita...di luglio 1485 (Sum of the expenditure)

y1242.11.10

<sup>853</sup> W. Melczer, *The Pilgrim’s Guide to Santiago de Compostela*, New York, Italica Press, 1993, p. 60.

<sup>854</sup> *Ibid.* p. 58.

she is a morally upstanding individual<sup>855</sup> and her stance, almost identical in form to a tiny ivory statue of Charity (Fig. 73), currently housed in the Bargello Museum, Florence, informs us that it is the prospect of receiving an endowment that brings her to the Buonomini di San Martino and this particular inn.<sup>856</sup>

Further questions which naturally arise from this particular painted scene are: why would the Procurators of the Shamed Poor be aiding pilgrims; what benefit is it to the confraternity to be performing this particular Work of Mercy and what practical issues does this charitable activity address?

From a religious perspective the virtue of Charity towards strangers is a ‘primary Christian obligation’<sup>857</sup> and the manner in which a follower of this religion was expected to treat travellers and strangers or foreigners has been entrenched in the doctrine of this faith for millennia. The book of Genesis, from the Old Testament, tells the story of Lot taking in the two angels of Sodom<sup>858</sup> while Hebrews 13:2 reminds us not to ‘neglect to show hospitality to strangers for thereby some have entertained angels unawares’.

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<sup>855</sup> C. King, *Renaissance Women Patrons: Wives and Widows in Renaissance Italy 1300-1550*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1998, p. 22.

<sup>856</sup> Robert Freyham, ‘The Evolution of the Caritas Figure in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries’, *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, vol. 11, 1948, pp. 68-86. The allegorical figure of charity in western art is commonly depicted as a breast feeding woman although the Bargello figure of charity shown in a curtsy position with hands clasped in supplication is another symbolic alternative.

<sup>857</sup> W. Melczer, *The Pilgrim’s Guide to Santiago de Compostela*, New York, Italica Press, 1993, p. 55.

<sup>858</sup> Genesis 19:1:38

Leviticus too states that ‘you shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself’.<sup>859</sup> Matthew, of the New Testament, however, sets out six of the seven Corporal Works of Mercy including the concept of welcoming the stranger.<sup>860</sup> Clearly the Buonomini and their patrons seriously considered this act of mercy as on March 25 1473, Lorenzo and Giuliano de’ Medici donated large sums of money to the confraternity in order to assist prisoners, provide dowries, aid the shamed poor and also to provide for pilgrims.<sup>861</sup> Simultaneously, it would appear that one could take an operational part in one’s own redemption by either performing or facilitating an act of mercy such as this, depending on one’s social class and fiscal status, while similarly solving a practical and troublesome problem – that being the seedy nature of hotels and similar accommodations<sup>862</sup> in late-medieval and Renaissance Florence.<sup>863</sup>

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<sup>859</sup> Leviticus 19:34

<sup>860</sup> Matthew 25:34-46 mentions six of the seven Works of Mercy. Burying the dead is the act omitted by him and taken up by Tobit.

<sup>861</sup> A. Spicciani, ‘The ‘Poveri Vergognosi’ in Fifteenth-Century Florence: The first 30 years’ activity of the Buonomini di San Martino’, in T. Riis (ed.), *Aspects of Poverty in Early Modern Europe*, Florence, Badia Fiesolana, 1981, p. 123.

<sup>862</sup> On the seedy side of early-modern tavern culture see David Rosenthal, ‘Florence: Caught in the Tavern’, blog, August 24, 2012. Available at <http://tavernsproject.com/2012/08/24/florence-caught-in-the-tavern/> and (accessed 20 May 2015).

<sup>863</sup> There were establishments which provided housing for clerical travelers, such as the Ospizio di S. Tommaso Aquino in the San Giovanni quarter, although this was not founded until 1570. See Richard Burr Lichfield, *Florence Ducal Capital, 1520-1630*, Ann Arbor, M Publishing University of Michigan Library, 2008, para. 242, <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=acls;cc=acls;q1=taverns;q2=ACLS%20Humanities%20E-Book;op2=and;rgn=div3;rgn1=full%20text;rgn2=series;view=text;idno=heb90034.0001.001;node=heb90034.0001.001%3A11.2.6>, (accessed 20 May 2015).

Boccaccio, writing during the fourteenth century, describes a Florentine inn as having ‘sleeping quarters, which were situated almost at the very top of the building’, uncomfortable beds and a supper so meager that his character, Tedaldo degli Elisei, was unable to sleep due to hunger.<sup>864</sup> During the fifteenth century the Duke of Saxony spent time visiting Florence, although his stays were not what he and his entourage expected. The Duke’s first accommodations were at *al Leone* (the Lion Hotel), which was run by Messer Jacomo, apparently a decent innkeeper. Nevertheless, Hans von Mergenthal, who had accompanied the Duke on his travels writes that ‘you come upon a hotel keeper so assassin and certain servants, so roguish as in no other hotel in Christendom’.<sup>865</sup> During his second visit to Florence, the Duke, who still owed money at *al Leone*, decided this time to stay at the *albergo della Corona* (the Crown Hotel), which was apparently even worse.<sup>866</sup> Likewise, Christoph Kevenhiller, who lived in and around Florence in 1604, concluded that Tuscan innkeepers, particularly the Florentines ‘had learned particularly well the art to decoy strangers’. Kevenhiller did not actually name the hotels in which he resided, although he did admit that the innkeepers were ‘rascals’, kept ‘salty accounts’, prepared ‘bad food’ and served ‘watered wine’.<sup>867</sup> The Renaissance philosopher and

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<sup>864</sup> G. Boccaccio, *The Decameron*, trans. G. H. Mc William, Middlesex, Penguin Books, p.278.

<sup>865</sup> Eugenio Zaniboni, ‘Alberghi e albergatori a Firenze dal trecento all'ottocento’, *Il Marzocco*, vol. 29, no. 4, 1924, unpaginated.

<sup>866</sup> Ibid. The Crown Hotel was also mentioned in P. Gavitt, *Charity and Children in Renaissance Florence: The Ospedale Degli Innocenti 1410-1536*, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 1990, p. 115.

<sup>867</sup> E. Zaniboni, ‘Alberghi e albergatori a Firenze dal trecento all'ottocento’, *Il Marzocco*, vol. 29, no. 4, 1924, unpaginated on watered-down liquor. Conversely, for a testament to the quality of the wine see Galileo Galilei, "Contro il portar la toga," quoted in Alessandro Molinari Pradelli, *Osterie e locande di Firenze*, Rome, Newton and Compton, 1998, p.265 and reproduced in R. Burr Lichfield, *Florence Ducal Capital, 1520-1630*, Ann Arbor, M Publishing University of Michigan Library, 2008, footnote 33,

writer, Michel de Montaigne also spent time in Florence at an inn called The Angel, which he described as ‘*beaucoup pires*’ or ‘a lot of the worst’.<sup>868</sup> At a cost of seven *reali* per person, per day, he found that staying in Florence was more expensive than Paris or Venice and bad value for money saying that the beds were ‘infested with bugs’ and that the new Jerusalem was ‘not a good city for strangers’.<sup>869</sup> Not all Florentine hotels and inns were this awful however. For example Lukas Behaim, writing in 1611, mentions a boarding house ‘in shore to the Arno’ and jots down a page eulogising his landlord’s virtues.<sup>870</sup> Accordingly, the inn and its keeper shown in the Buonomini murals correspond more to Behaim’s favoured establishment rather than the dubious hostelries discussed previously. The Buonomini innkeeper looks clean and tidy in his white overall, expensive red hat and stockings and his custom made leather shoes suggest that his business is doing well.<sup>871</sup> While skirting around the subject of business, it would also be judicious to mention that in some parts of Christendom, laws and ordinances established by various monarchs allowed for innkeepers to benefit from the deaths of pilgrims should they die whilst in their care, or near to their hostelries. Legislation decreed that the innkeeper was allowed to keep the best of the deceased pilgrim’s personal items but was

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<http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=acls;cc=acls;q1=taverns;q2=ACLS%20Humanities%20E-Book;op2=and;rgn=div3;rgn1=full%20text;rgn2=series;view=text;idno=heb90034.0001.001;node=heb90034.0001.001%3A11.2.6>, (accessed 20 May 2015).

<sup>868</sup> E. Zaniboni, ‘Alberghi e albergatori a Firenze dal trecento all’ottocento’, *Il Marzocco*, vol. 29, no. 4, 1924, unpaginated.

<sup>869</sup> Ibid.

<sup>870</sup> Ibid.

<sup>871</sup> See C. C. Frick, *Dressing Renaissance Florence: Families, Fortunes and Fine Clothing*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002 for a detailed discourse on Renaissance fashion and its various costs.

under an obligation to return items of lesser or no value to the wayfarer's family.<sup>872</sup>

Nevertheless, whether this was the case in Florence remains uncertain as there is very little literature available concerning the city's inns and hotels during the Renaissance and the scope of the present study does not allow for further investigation into this very specific research sector.

The accommodation depicted in the Buonomini fresco looks pristine and commodious. Furthermore, the bed in which the pilgrim couple will sleep appears large and comfortable. It is similar in design to other beds depicted during the fifteenth-century (Fig. 99) and is covered in a huge red bedspread, which hints at the expense and quality of the cover.<sup>873</sup> Similarly the quality of the linen curtain, which can just be discerned behind the credenza to the right of the scene and which perhaps would serve to separate the sleeping, living and dining areas of the accommodation, also suggests that the hostelry is an establishment of some calibre. The contents of the credenza would also intimate that this residence was organised by a pious individual. There are seven jugs atop this piece of furniture and it is here proposed that their number refers to the Seven Corporal Works of Mercy, of which taking in pilgrims is one act. The glasses, although practically placed in a terracotta cooler as was traditional, could furthermore work as a Marian symbol as, it being a substance through which light can travel, glass has often come to represent

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<sup>872</sup> For the various royal ordinances regarding pilgrims and their possessions see W. Melczer, *The Pilgrim's Guide to Santiago de Compostela*, New York, Italica Press, 1993, p. 60.

<sup>873</sup> R. Duits, 'Art, Class and Wealth' in K. W. Woods, C. M. Richardson and A. Lymberopoulou (eds.), *Viewing Renaissance Art*, London, Yale University Press, 2007, pp. 21-59.

Mary's virginity.<sup>874</sup> That the glasses number five in total is perhaps also significant as this figure represents God's grace as seen throughout the structure of the tabernacle in the wilderness – a concept particularly pertinent to a scene which addresses pilgrims. The following instructions, heavily reliant on the number five, come from Exodus:

You shall make bars of acacia wood, five for the frames of the one side of the tabernacle, and five bars for the frames of the other side of the tabernacle, and five bars for the frames of the side of the tabernacle at the rear westward... and you shall make for the screen five pillars of acacia, and overlay them with gold. Their hooks shall be of gold, and you shall cast five bases of bronze for them... You shall make the altar of acacia wood, five cubits long and five cubits broad. The altar shall be square...<sup>875</sup>

If one also takes into consideration the tabernacle's drapes, as described in Exodus as being:

Five curtains...coupled to one another, and the other five curtains shall be coupled to one another. And you shall make loops of blue on the edge of the outermost curtain in the first set,<sup>876</sup>

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<sup>874</sup> See Penny Howell Jolly, 'Antonello da Messina's *Saint Jerome in his Study*: An Iconographic Analysis', *The Art Bulletin*, vol. 65, no. 2, 1983, pp. 238-253. See also Craig Harbison, "Iconography and Iconology," in *Early Netherlandish Paintings: Rediscovery, Reception, and Research*, Bernhard Ridderbos, Anne van Buren, and Henk van Veen, (eds.), Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Publications, 2005.

<sup>875</sup> Exodus: 26-27.

<sup>876</sup> Exodus: 26.

one can understand how the blue design on the linen curtains depicted in the Buonomini mural would also work (together with the number five) to remind the viewer how the portable sanctuary described in the Old Testament could equate and be relevant to one of the Works of Mercy being carried out in fifteenth-century Florence.

The practical, yet decorative, items on the *credenza* could also provide the key with regard to identifying which hotel is depicted in the Buonomini mural. Ludovica Sebregondi has suggested that as the majolica jugs on the sideboard are all inscribed with the letter ‘s’ and each one is ringed by circles made up of small lines, that the hostelry is an ancient Florentine establishment known as the Sun Inn.<sup>877</sup> Sebregondi however, does not explain how she has come to this conclusion as there is an absence of references on her part.<sup>878</sup>

This analysis of the Buonomini’s *Taking in Pilgrims* mural and the simultaneous investigation into pilgrimage and Florentine hostelries during the fifteenth century does not answer all of the questions that have been levelled at these particular topics. Whether the Buonomini’s pilgrims are strangers or Florentine citizens remains a mystery and similarly it is not certain which establishment our wayfarers are about to board at. More

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<sup>877</sup> L. Sebregondi, ‘The Congregation and the Fresco Cycle’, in J. M. Bradburne, (ed.), *Hidden Voices: Discovering the Buonomini di San Martino*, Florence, Giunti, 2011, p. 90.

<sup>878</sup> It must be noted that Sebregondi was under no obligation to make reference to documentary sources pertaining to the Sun Inn as the publication in which she reveals this notion does not contain any references.



importantly though, the chapter has explored the religious doctrines supporting the acts of pilgrimage, the state of the Florentine pilgrim trade and the hospitality associated with this business during the *quattrocento*. Most importantly however, the *Taking in Pilgrims* painting is revealed anew as a prime example of Ghirlandaio's proclivity for verisimilitude (especially social and geographic) with its faithful rendering and recording of the costumes and attributes of fifteenth-century pilgrims of both sexes. Furthermore, the mural communicates that the confraternity's view of charity as a cardinal Christian duty extended to the truly devout and that the Seven Corporal Works of Mercy were a central part of their philanthropic scheme.

Whether Ghirlandaio's predilection for social and geographic authenticity extends to the next mural to be examined is one consideration that will be discussed in the section that follows although, rather than focusing on attempting to identify a location for the cemetery depicted in the Buonomini's *Burying the Dead* fresco our search will be focused on obtaining a few rare fragments of evidence that will help to enrich our sparse knowledge concerning the burial of poor people.

## Section 6:2

A Fitting End to an Honourable Life: Obsequies and the *Poveri Vergognosi* in *Quattrocento* Florence

Based on the Act of Mercy set out in the book of Tobit, the Buonomini's *Burying the Dead* (Fig. 8) fresco shows how the confraternity helped with the funerals of virtuous individuals whose families could not afford the obsequies.<sup>879</sup> Tobit was acclaimed in the Old Testament for his perseverance in burying kinsmen who had been slain by the forces of the Assyrian ruler, Sennacherib (705-681 BC).<sup>880</sup> Correspondingly, many medieval and Renaissance confraternities, in what we now refer to as modern Europe, took up similar activities which marked the ultimate honour accorded to deceased *fratelli*.<sup>881</sup> Furthermore, a number of lay sodalities expanded the remit of this Act of Mercy to include the burials of those from the wider Christian family, recently deceased.<sup>882</sup>

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<sup>879</sup> On the cost of funerals and funeral debt see S. Strocchia, 'Death Rites and the Ritual Family in Renaissance Florence', in M. Tetel, R. G. Witt and R. Goffen (eds.), *Life and Death in Fifteenth-Century Florence*, Durham, Duke University Press, 1989, p. 130.

<sup>880</sup> On Sennacherib and his campaigns see William H. Shea, 'Sennacherib's Second Palestinian Campaign', *Journal of Biblical Literature*, vol. 104, no. 3, 1985, pp. 401-408; I. G. Matthews, 'Sennacherib's Invasion and Its Religious Significance', *The Biblical World*, vol. 37, no. 2, 1911, pp. 115-119. For primary sources on Sennacherib and mention of him in the Book of Tobit see J. R. Porter, 'Folklore Between the Testaments', *Folklore*, vol. 91, no. 2, 1980, pp. 133-146.

<sup>881</sup> J. Rollo-Kister, 'Death and the Fraternity: A Short Study on the Dead in Late Medieval Confraternities', *Confraternitas*, vol. 9, no. 1, pp. 3-12.

<sup>882</sup> On the return of loved ones to God see G. Brucker (ed.), *Two Memoirs of Renaissance Florence: The Diaries of Buonacorso Pitti and Gregorio Dati*, trans. J. Martines, Long Grove, Waveland Press, 1967, p. 116-117. On the Misericordia's burying of the indigent see S. Strocchia, 'Death Rites and the Ritual Family in Renaissance Florence', in M. Tetel, R. G. Witt and R. Goffen (eds.), *Life and Death in Fifteenth-Century Florence*, Durham, Duke University Press, 1989, p. 89.

The Buonomini's painted scene takes place in a rural cemetery, outside of a walled city. The forefront of the illusionary plane is taken up with two groups of figures. Just left of centre a gravedigger has been depicted in the act of lowering a hooded corpse into a tomb. To the right of the scene stand a second group made up of three men. The sexton, dressed in a yellow tunic and black hose, holds a pair of candles or tapers in his right hand while his left palm is extended towards a Procurator who is represented dropping coins into the Sexton's cupped hand. Sandwiched between these two figures is a mourner in black apparel with hands clasped in prayer. On the far left of the scene four members of the clergy, equipped with ceremonial regalia, dominate the mid-ground of the illusionary plane.

*Prima facie* the burial scene would appear iconographically similar to other contemporary scenes found within this exclusive little genre. Nevertheless, methodology used primarily in archeology warns us that we must be mindful of factual bias and distortion when considering mortuary practices in centuries past. Heinrich Harke, for example, stated that 'burials are not "mirrors of life": if anything they are a "hall of mirrors of life" (*Zerrspiegel des Lebens*) providing distorted reflections of the past. The greatest challenge for burial archeology is to identify in each case the degrees of distortion, as well as to attempt to infer the reasons for the distortion'.<sup>883</sup> Similarly the Early Modern historian, Sharon Strocchia, in her paper entitled 'Death Rites and the

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<sup>883</sup> Duncan Slayer quoting Harke in 'Halls of Mirrors' in D. Slayer and H. Williams (eds.), *Mortuary Practices and Social Identity in the Middle Ages: Essays in Burial Archaeology in Honour of Heinrich Harke*, Exeter, University of Exeter Press, 2009, p. 21.

Ritual Family in Renaissance Florence’, perceives the ceremonies surrounding a death as the ‘actual and idealised meshed together’.<sup>884</sup> The same statement can equally be leveled at Renaissance art, which was often a complex weave made up of various layers of meaning, some portrayals of reality and others often representing paradigms. Consequently, artworks created during this era demand the kind of analysis which reveals what was likely authentic and what was fantastic or biased.<sup>885</sup>

The first and perhaps most obvious issue, when exploring what is real and imaginary with regard to the Buonomini’s *Burying the Dead* fresco, is whether the cemetery in which the interment is taking place is meant to remind the viewer of an actual necropolis or, is it just a product of the artists’ or patron’s imagination? Simultaneously however, we must also be mindful and consider the archaeologist, Robert Chapman’s warning concerning funeral data. He states that if we become preoccupied with data from just one necropolis, we could draw a veil of obscurity over a corresponding ‘regional account of social life’.<sup>886</sup> As there are few surviving images pertaining directly to burials and medieval cemeteries in Florence, it is unfeasible to believe that we can discern the location from

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<sup>884</sup> S. Strocchia, ‘Death Rites and the Ritual Family in Renaissance Florence’, in M. Tetel, R. G. Witt and R. Goffen (eds.), *Life and Death in Fifteenth-Century Florence*, Durham, Duke University Press, 1989, pp. 120-122. See also Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. A. Sheridan, London, Penguin, 1977 for the origin of the mesh or Episteme.

<sup>885</sup> P.L. Rubin, *Images and Identity in Fifteenth-Century Florence*, London, Yale University Press, 2007, p. 56.

<sup>886</sup> Robert Chapman, ‘Working with the Dead’ in in D. Slayer and H. Williams (eds.), *Mortuary Practices and Social Identity in the Middle Ages: Essays in Burial Archaeology in Honour of Heinrich Harke*, Exeter, University of Exeter Press, 2009, p. 29.

comparing these types of visual examples. There are however, clues within the Buonomini mural that simultaneously indicate and confuse the rough geographical area of the anonymous cemetery. Firstly, for example, it is impossible to tell whether the burial site is located on the same side of the water as the walled city or opposite it because the view of the meandering river, which is clearly discernible in the painting's background, is obliterated in the mid-ground of the work by the artists' rendering of a high brick wall, which serves to enclose the burial site. Furthermore, it is not immediately obvious that the walled city is actually Florence although if the *Chain Map of Florence* (Fig. 100) is brought to bear, there are some striking similarities apparent between the stone buildings and terracotta topped turrets in both paintings. Further visual indicators present in the *Chain Map* and repeated in the Buonomini fresco, which suggests that the necropolis would perhaps have lain on the outskirts of Florence include sailing vessels and a barely discernible sandbank. Where the *Chain Map* and the Buonomini fresco come into direct conflict however, is when the topographies of both scenes are examined in juxtaposition from a viewing perspective. The *Chain Map* of course has reference to its creator in the right hand corner of the work and should the viewer wish to mentally extend the image's illusionary plane and include themselves within the scene, they would find themselves standing on the Bellusguardo hill, at a slightly higher altitude, just behind and to the right of the artist. Oltrarno would be below them to the right and downtown Florence would sprawl beneath them to the left. Should the viewer imagine the same scenario, but this time with the Buonomini painting, one would be present within the cemetery but, on the opposite side of the grave to the mourner, the sexton and the Procurator of the Shamed Poor. There would be plains, the remnants of a ruined building

and a range of hills to your left and a walled city to your right. Interestingly the church of Saints Vito and Modesto, first founded in the 11<sup>th</sup> century can still be found on the Bellosguardo hill and in 1792, the patronage of the sanctuary was awarded to the Good Men of Saint Martin.<sup>887</sup> This intrigue however, fails to correspond with any of the visual evidence available from the Buonomini oratory and so does not provide a definitive location. Nevertheless, the geographic area in which the twelve good men operated was generally limited to the Florence's six districts and circumscribed by the city walls.<sup>888</sup>

At least as far back as the seventeenth century the Buonomini di San Martino had routinely taken over the patronage and care of family chapels in Oltrarno.<sup>889</sup> For example in the church of Santo Spirito one can still today see the plaques which announce the confraternity's patronage over the Dei, Palla and Corsini family chapels.<sup>890</sup> Nevertheless,

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<sup>887</sup> *Campione Vecchio di Campagna*, c. 13 recto, Archivio Arcivescovile Fiorentino (AFF).

<sup>888</sup> This observation is an amalgamation of my own research and that of A. Spicciani, 'The 'Poveri Vergognosi' in Fifteenth-Century Florence: The first 30 years' activity of the Buonomini di San Martino', in T. Riis (ed.), *Aspects of Poverty in Early Modern Europe*, Florence, Badia Fiesolana, 1981, p. 144.

<sup>889</sup> These acts of patronage became apparent to the author after a visit to the church of Santo Spirito.

<sup>890</sup> DOM Questa Capella della nobile famiglia de Dei e pervenuta ne procuratori de poveri vergognosi di San Martino P. testamento di Dio: Dei Ultimo di detta famiglia morto il de XV DAPRILE MDCLXXXIII.

To God, most good, most great. This is the chapel of the noble family of Dei and it was come by, by the procurators of the shamed poor of San Martino by the will of God: Dei, the last of the said family died on 15<sup>th</sup> April 1683.

DOM ANN.DOM MDCXXXVI Questa Capella gia della nobili famiglia della Palla oggi e dell OPA de procuratori de poveri vergognosi di San Martino detti Buonomini.

the burial that can be seen taking place in the Buonomini fresco is not an intramural interment but is occurring in what looks like a church cemetery. Although not nearly as prestigious as an intramural burial, interment in a cemetery does not automatically indicate that the deceased was a pauper or a criminal.<sup>891</sup> On the contrary, burial records from the Badia show that ‘by 1440...a little over 30% [of the tombs] were non-elite and that the northwest cemetery’s residents included artisans such as the shoemaker, Piero Pacini.’<sup>892</sup> San Lorenzo too, although associated with ‘families such as the Medici, the Rondinelli, the Aldobrandini, the Martelli, the della Stufa, the Ciai and the Ginori’, also housed its fair share of deceased residents from less prestigious backgrounds.<sup>893</sup> Sharon Strocchia advises that by 1494, ‘there were a total of eighty-nine new private tombs (exclusive of chapels) situated in the lower church...of these sites, only sixty-three tombs had been claimed or occupied...forty of these sites... belonged to *popolani* of widely

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To God, most good, most great. In the year of our Lord 1636. This chapel, already of the noble Palla family, today is a work posthumously acquired by the procurators of the shamed poor of San Martino called the Buonomini.

DOM Ornata con licenza de Buonomini di San Martino. Padroni di questa capella per instrument rogato m. Antonio Corsini il di V Marzo MDCVC.

To God, most good, most great. Decorated with license from the Buonomini di San Martino masters of this chapel, by notarized instrument m. Antonio Corsini of 5<sup>th</sup> March 1695.

<sup>891</sup> S. Strocchia, *Death and Ritual in Renaissance Florence*, London, The Johns Hopkins University Press, p. 93 See also p. 96 for the ‘loose contract’ between the Stinche and the priests of San Simone.

<sup>892</sup> Anne Leader, ‘Burial Practices in Renaissance Florence’, delivered at the Renaissance Society of America Annual Meeting, Montreal, Quebec, 25<sup>th</sup> 3. 2011, p. 8.

<sup>893</sup> According to S. Strocchia, *Death and Ritual in Renaissance Florence*, London, The Johns Hopkins University Press, pp. 164 - 165.

varying professional and occupational status'.<sup>894</sup> The church of San Pancrazio likewise catered to those recently deceased who hailed from modest fiscal backgrounds, the barrel maker, Domenico di Giovanni being amongst those who purchased tombs there.<sup>895</sup>

Furthermore, given that the Buonomini's select gathering is taking place in what, for all intents and purposes, appears to be a reasonably well-kept churchyard one can perhaps rule out that what the viewer is witnessing is a pauper's burial. Clearly the land that surrounds the necropolis is green and verdant, unlike the 'refuse tip' that was the Camadoli district and home to the city's pauper's cemetery.<sup>896</sup> Furthermore, as the Buonomini's *Capitoli* describes the shamed poor as 'the inauspicious that suffer many passes' yet 'live by God' and through the effects of His Divine Providence,<sup>897</sup> it is perhaps these devoted individuals who would benefit from a burial similar to the one depicted rather than suffering the indignity of being buried 'like beasts'<sup>898</sup> in Camaldoli, alongside the outcast poor who, unlike the shamed poor, were sometimes considered the architects of their own financial and moral demise.<sup>899</sup> Furthermore, the bold rendering of a sturdy brick wall within the painting serves to encourage the notion that our deceased had led a pious existence as it reminds us of Saint Antoninus's admonitions on the

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<sup>894</sup> A. Leader, 'Burial Practices in Renaissance Florence', delivered at the Renaissance Society of America Annual Meeting, San Diego, 2013. See also S. Strocchia, *Death and Ritual in Renaissance Florence*, London, The Johns Hopkins University Press, p.165.

<sup>895</sup> S. Strocchia, *Death and Ritual in Renaissance Florence*, London, The Johns Hopkins University Press, p. 166.

<sup>896</sup> N. Eckstein, 'Neighbourhood as Microcosm', in R. J. Crum and J. T. Paoletti (eds.), *Renaissance Florence: A Social History*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 227.

<sup>897</sup> See Appendix II, paragraph four.

<sup>898</sup> R. J. Crum and J. T. Paoletti, (eds.), *Renaissance Florence: A Social History*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 227.

<sup>899</sup> See Section 5:1.



adverse affects of social dealings on the soul. In his *Work to Live Well By* Antoninus states, ‘make a good wall around your soul; so that the infernal beasts cannot destroy the good seed that God has planted’.<sup>900</sup>

Nevertheless, the concept of a communal burial area can still be entertained if one considers that sometimes the poor and members from the lower strata of Florentine society were interred in the cloisters or garden areas of various churches.<sup>901</sup>

From the *trecento* onwards the majority of burials took place in the parish to which the deceased belonged, although a minority (perhaps those with more money at their disposal) would request other churches, convents or monasteries as their final resting place.<sup>902</sup> These choices however, were not simply subject to fiscal considerations but also depended on other factors. During times of plague, for instance, it was impracticable and unadvisable to transport a corpse tainted by the disease. Moreover, during such outbreaks, when the death toll rose drastically, it was difficult enough to find the means and manpower for a decent burial, let alone one which catered to the testator’s request for

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<sup>900</sup> Saint Antoninus quoted in Theresa Flanigan, ‘Disciplining the Tongue: Archbishop Antoninus, The *Opera A Ben Vivere*, and the Regulation of Women’s Speech in Renaissance Florence’, *Open Arts Journal*, Issue 4, Winter 2014-15, p. 42.

<sup>901</sup> S. Strocchia, *Burials In Renaissance Florence 1350 – 1500*, Dissertation for Doctor of Philosophy at Berkeley University of California, University Microfilms International, Michigan, 1984, p. 362.

<sup>902</sup> George Dameron, *Florence and Its Church in the Age of Dante*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005, pp.182-184. See also A. Leader, ‘Burial Practices in Renaissance Florence’, delivered at the Renaissance Society of America Annual Meeting, Montreal, Quebec, 25-3. 2011, p. 5 and S. Strocchia, *Burials In Renaissance Florence 1350 – 1500*, Dissertation for Doctor of Philosophy at Berkeley University of California, University Microfilms International, Michigan, 1984, p. 208.

an extra parochial burial.<sup>903</sup> Other considerations include the geographical location of where the death took place and whether the deceased was spiritually entitled to interment in consecrated ground. Gregorio Dati, for example, had to bury a child that had not lived long enough to be baptised. Consequently, the interment of this tiny corpse had to take place in an unconsecrated burial ground located in what is now the Piazza del Limbo in Florence.<sup>904</sup> Also when Dati lost various other children, while living outside of Florence, they were buried near to the places where their short lives ended. Manetto for example died in Pisa in January, 1418 and was interred in San Martino there and Pippo, who died on 2<sup>nd</sup> August 1419, was laid to rest in Polonia.<sup>905</sup>

Despite only being able to hypothesise on the possible locations for the cemetery in the Buonomini mural, it is clear that the actual interment was typical for the period in which the painting was conceived. It is immediately apparent that a coffin has not been provided for the deceased. This has less to do with the fact that the Buonomini are paying for the funeral rites of one of the *poveri vergognosi* rather, it was not customary to provide a casket unless the body was to be transported any great distance.<sup>906</sup> Rather the corpse would be carried on a bier, which is a simple contraption used for transportation, similar

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<sup>903</sup> See L. Landucci, *A Florentine Diary from 1450 to 1516 by Luca Landucci continued by an Anonymous Writer 'Til 1542 with notes by Iodoco del Badia*, London, J. M. Dent and Sons, 1969, p. 24 and J. Henderson, *Piety and Charity in Late Medieval Florence*, London, University of Chicago Press, 1994, p. 299 for burials during times of plague.

<sup>904</sup> G. Dati in G. Bruker, (ed.), *Two Memoirs of Renaissance Florence: The Diaries of Buonacorso Pitti and Gregorio Dati*, Julia Martines (trans.), Long Grove, Waveland Press, 1967, p. 134.

<sup>905</sup> Ibid. p. 128.

<sup>906</sup> S. Strocchia, *Death and Ritual in Renaissance Florence*, London, The Johns Hopkins University Press, pp. 39-40.

to the one depicted within a scene by Paolo di Stefano (1397-1478) showing the confraternal burial of a flagellant brother or *fratello* (Fig. 34).<sup>907</sup> From the appearance of the Buonomini corpse, which is covered from head to toe in a white shroud, it is apparent that, when compared to the deceased rendered in both Stefano's painting and Ridolfo Ghirlandaio's *Tobias and Tobit Bury the Dead Before the Bigallo Loggia* (Fig. 25), the way that the body has been dressed is typical for a non-aristocratic deceased individual. It is also unlikely that the deceased was a guild member as the lack of a delegation from any trade associations precludes this.<sup>908</sup> Furthermore, the placement of a shrouded corpse directly into the grave, according to Ridolfo Ghirlandaio's rendering, followed fifteenth and sixteenth century conventions. The floor tomb, commonly referred to as *monumenta* or *sepultura*,<sup>909</sup> into which the body is being placed is also interesting as it appears typical of the graves that could be seen dotted around some of the outdoor spaces adjacent to the Duomo and the Bigallo, at least up until the eighteenth century.<sup>910</sup> John Paoletti in his study entitled 'Medici Funerary Monuments in the Duomo of Florence during the Fourteenth Century: A Prologue to the "Early Medici"', reveals that the area 'the present-day Via del Campanile, formerly known as the Via della Morte, functioned as a

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<sup>907</sup> For legislation concerning biers see S. Strocchia, *Burials In Renaissance Florence 1350 – 1500*, Dissertation for Doctor of Philosophy at Berkeley University of California, University Microfilms International, Michigan, 1984, p. 177.

<sup>908</sup> S. Strocchia, *Burials In Renaissance Florence 1350 – 1500*, Dissertation for Doctor of Philosophy at Berkeley University of California, University Microfilms International, Michigan, 1984, p. 199.

<sup>909</sup> For tomb terminology see A. Leader, 'Burial Practices in Renaissance Florence', delivered at the Renaissance Society of America Annual Meeting, Montreal, Quebec, 25-3. 2011, p. 10.

<sup>910</sup> G. Richa quoted in John Paoletti, 'Medici Funeral Monuments in the Duomo of Florence during the Fourteenth Century: A Prologue to the "Early Medici"', *Renaissance Quarterly*, vol. 59, no. 4, 2006, p. 1127.

community cemetery from at least the fourteenth century onwards'.<sup>911</sup> He also reminds us that Boccaccio in his *Decameron* describes Guido Cavalcanti walking among and even vaulting over the tombstones surrounding Santa Reparata and San Giovanni.<sup>912</sup>

Furthermore, he is judicious in questioning Boccaccio's artistic license as regards the height of the tombs as various renderings from fifteenth and sixteenth-century Florentine artists suggest that the graves were mainly flush to the ground or at most a few inches high.<sup>913</sup> Likewise Fra Angelico (1395-1455) in his rendering of *The Funeral of Saints Cosmas and Damian* (Fig. 101), despite depicting a floor tomb suitable for several occupants, does however, describe a low level grave which is almost identical to those depicted by Sandro Botticelli (1445-1510) in his *Punishment of the Heretics* (Fig. 102) illustration for Dante's *Inferno* and Ridolfo Ghirlandaio's *Tobias and Tobit Burying a Dead Man in Front of the Bigallo* (Fig. 25).

Sharon Strocchia, in her searching study of *Death and Ritual in Renaissance Florence* managed to uncover 'no evidence virtually for funerals of the poor classes'.<sup>914</sup>

Nevertheless, by closely examining the Buonomini's rendering of part of a *quattrocento* funeral ceremony, particularly the figures depicted therein, and collating new visual

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<sup>911</sup> J. Paoletti, 'Medici Funeral Monuments in the Duomo of Florence during the Fourteenth Century: A Prologue to the "Early Medici"', *Renaissance Quarterly*, vol. 59, no. 4, 2006, p. 1120.

<sup>912</sup> Boccaccio mentioned in J. Paoletti, 'Medici Funeral Monuments in the Duomo of Florence during the Fourteenth Century: A Prologue to the "Early Medici"', *Renaissance Quarterly*, vol. 59, no. 4, 2006, p. 1121.

<sup>913</sup> Ibid.

<sup>914</sup> S. Strocchia, *Death and Ritual in Renaissance Florence*, London, The Johns Hopkins University Press, p. 83.

evidence with intriguing morsels that historians have already gathered regarding Renaissance death rituals in general, a clearer picture of how the impecunious were treated in death may come to light. Prior to examining the individual figures within the fresco however, it would perhaps be judicious to briefly consider the rituals surrounding this final rite and the different ceremonies which made up the entire funeral proceedings.<sup>915</sup>

On the passing of an individual the first set of rituals began at the home or the place of death. *Beccamorti* or gravediggers would be employed to wash and prepare the body<sup>916</sup> or, should this service not be affordable, available or acceptable to the family of the deceased, this ‘act of purification’ would fall to a female relative.<sup>917</sup> When appropriately dressed, either in finery, confraternal vestments or a shroud, the corpse would then usually (within twenty four hours) be taken on the second leg of the ritual journey towards Paradise.<sup>918</sup> This consisted sometimes of a religious vigil in a monastic chapel<sup>919</sup>

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<sup>915</sup> S. Strocchia, ‘Death Rites and the Ritual Family in Renaissance Florence’, in M. Tetel, R. G. Witt and R. Goffen (eds.), *Life and Death in Fifteenth-Century Florence*, London, Duke University Press, 1989, p.124.

<sup>916</sup> S. Strocchia, *Death and Ritual in Renaissance Florence*, London, The Johns Hopkins University Press, p. 50.

<sup>917</sup> *Ibid.* p. 51.

<sup>918</sup> On vigils and lying in state see L. Landucci, *A Florentine Diary from 1450 to 1516 by Luca Landucci continued by an Anonymous Writer 'Til 1542 with notes by Iodoco del Badia*, London, J. M. Dent and Sons, 1969, p.15-17. On swift burials see G. Dati in G. Brucker, (ed.), *Two Memoirs of Renaissance Florence: The Diaries of Buonacorso Pitti and Gregorio Dati*, Julia Martines (trans.), Long Grove, Waveland Press, 1967, p. 115.

<sup>919</sup> L. Landucci, *A Florentine Diary from 1450 to 1516 by Luca Landucci continued by an Anonymous Writer 'Til 1542 with notes by Iodoco del Badia*, London, J. M. Dent and Sons, 1969, pp. 53-54.

and almost always of a procession to church for the requiem mass.<sup>920</sup> The religious observances would be attended by both male and female mourners although, when the body left the church for the final time to be interred in a family tomb or even a plot in the cemetery, it would be accompanied only by male mourners and clergy.<sup>921</sup>

Correspondingly, the Buonomini rendering shows only the final observances that completed this ritual journey: the absolution and burial in consecrated ground.<sup>922</sup> From the very few records that exist, and which pertain to funerals of the poor in medieval and Renaissance Florence, we might glean that what had come to pass before the burial adhered to the ‘bare necessities of honor and dignity; a decent bier, a few candles’ and a church service.<sup>923</sup> Funeral palls, for instance, were used ‘in all types of funerals... [and] should be considered essential purchases’.<sup>924</sup> Likewise wax ‘appeared at virtually all Florentine burials regardless of social rank’,<sup>925</sup> perhaps because the candles’ luminescence best reflected the promise made by Christ to his followers, which is conveyed to us via the canonical gospel of John the Apostle: ‘I am the light of the world.

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<sup>920</sup> On the funeral cortege of Giovanni Bicci de’ Medici see Conv. Sopp., c. 4. 895, 124 recto and 125 verso, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze (BNCF).

<sup>921</sup> On women’s mourning clothes see S. Strocchia, *Death and Ritual in Renaissance Florence*, London, The Johns Hopkins University Press, p.25. See also p.10 for the exclusion of women from the cortege.

<sup>922</sup> Minou Schraven, *Festive Funerals: Funeral Apparati in Early Modern Italy, Particularly in Rome*, Groningen, Groningen University Press, 1971, pp.18-19.

<sup>923</sup> S. Strocchia, *Death and Ritual in Renaissance Florence*, London, The Johns Hopkins University Press, p. 197.

<sup>924</sup> S. Strocchia, *Burials In Renaissance Florence 1350 – 1500*, Dissertation for Doctor of Philosophy at Berkeley University of California, University Microfilms International, Michigan, 1984, p. 79.

<sup>925</sup> *Ibid.* p. 80.

Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life'.<sup>926</sup>

Furthermore, candles are also highly symbolic objects: beeswax representing Christ's purity; the wick signifying his human soul; the light exemplifying Christ's divinity; the burning process symbolising sacrifice.<sup>927</sup> Clearly the bier and the pall have been omitted from the Buonomini mural but candles have been included and are being held by the sexton<sup>928</sup> while the corpse is being lowered into the grave. The tall, slim tapers (which, if they were real and existed outside the illusionary plane of the painting, would be around 18 inches long in reality and possibly between a pound and two pounds in weight) are appropriate for a modest burial and similar perhaps, in cost and austerity, to the two pounds of wax which was purchased to light the burial of 'a poor man who died in the house of Cristofano Giraldi' in 1411.<sup>929</sup> That the sexton has retained the extinguished candles is also important to our understanding of the traditions and activities which surrounded fifteenth-century funeral rites as the image reminds us that 'churches realised

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<sup>926</sup> John 8:12

<sup>927</sup> Willaim Saunders, Rev., 'The History of Votive Candles', *Arlington Catholic Herald*, 2003. Available at <http://www.catholiceducation.org/en/culture/catholic-contributions/the-history-of-votive-candles.html> (accessed 20 March, 2016).

<sup>928</sup> P. Bargellini, *I Buonomini di San Martino*, Florence, Casa di Risparmio, 1972, p. 29 believes the two items held by the sexton are objects specific to the interment *per se* as he states, 'i Buonomini... che han trasportato il cadaver mediante due pertiche' (the Buonomini... they have transported the corpse using two poles). Close examination of the fresco by the researcher during the most recent restorations however, has revealed that these long sticks are more likely candle holders topped with long tapers.

Notwithstanding that this part of the fresco has fared badly over time and, despite recent restoration, is missing paint and plaster, one can still discern that the objects held by the sexton are meant to be made up of two parts and are not a single pole. The taper holder is painted in faint brown hue while the candle atop it is rendered in a lighter, more natural colour. For a clear illustration of tapers similar to the Buonomini candles see Figure 103

<sup>929</sup> S. Strocchia, *Burials In Renaissance Florence 1350 – 1500*, Dissertation for Doctor of Philosophy at Berkeley University of California, University Microfilms International, Michigan, 1984, p. 84.

income from the sale of wax which had been partially burnt at burial services for their donors; in fact the offering and resale of candles for use at other offices was an important source of church revenue'.<sup>930</sup>

Having already discussed the appearance of the corpse, in terms of whether the Buonomini's *Burying the Dead* mural is an authentic representation of a fifteenth-century interment, it would perhaps now be judicious to briefly return our attention to the deceased and view the rendering in terms of contemporary Renaissance artistic considerations. Alberti, for example, in his treatise *On Painting* informs us that in '*istoria*... a dead man, weighs down those who carry him' and in this sense the artists working in Ghirlandaio's atelier have conformed to this particular artistic observation, which would have been published and circulated between 1435 and 1436.<sup>931</sup> Although the interment is reliant on a single person rather than bearers in the plural, the gravedigger shown in the Buonomini mural is clearly not finding it easy to lower the corpse into the open grave (Figure 104). Notwithstanding that the artist responsible for this part of the fresco has found it unnecessary to illustrate the workman's strained arm and neck muscles and make them discernible through his *farsetto*, he has however, managed to arrange the gravedigger's body in such a position as to convince the viewer that the undertaker's poker-straight legs and arched back are a natural and necessary counter to the dead weight that he is attempting to manoeuvre. Generally though the body

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<sup>930</sup> Ibid. p. 87.

<sup>931</sup> L. B. Alberti, *On Painting*, trans. C. Grayson, London, Penguin Books Ltd., 1972, p. 73.



does not ‘fall heavily’, as Alberti terms it.<sup>932</sup> For example the arms, contrary to reality, do not hang heavily at the cadaver’s sides but, in the interest of piety, remain crossed over the solar plexus. The head too does not loll at an awkward angle, rather it simply tips back slightly as the body is transferred into the grave.<sup>933</sup> Interestingly too, in repeat contemporary depictions of burials, which were often commissioned by and executed for other confraternities, there were almost always two or more individuals who transported the corpse to the cemetery and laid it in the grave. For example Ridolfo Ghirlandaio depicts both Tobias and his son Tobit carrying out a burial for the hybrid Bigallo/Misericordia confraternity (Fig. 25).<sup>934</sup> Likewise Santo di Tito (1536-1603) shows two of the Misericordia in their confraternal robes, lowering a dead brother into what appears to be an impossibly small grave (Fig. 105). Given that the interment of a body was regarded by some artists and patrons at least as a two-man activity, one must ask why the Buonomini’s gravedigger is working alone in this instance. Once again the answer probably lies in pious or spiritual considerations. Ludovica Sebreondi spoke of the confraternity’s abiding spiritual identity in June 2011, stating that ‘they still honour Antoninus’s precepts which were set down in writing and expanded in the statutes drafted in 1480’.<sup>935</sup> These included the fact that the confraternity is not allowed to capitalise assets and must dispose of all of the donations made to the confraternity and hold

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<sup>932</sup> Ibid.

<sup>933</sup> Ibid.

<sup>934</sup> W. R. Levin in ‘Confraternal Self-Imaging in Marian Art at the Museo del Bigallo in Florence’, *Confraternitas*, vol. 10, no. 2, 1999, p. 7.

<sup>935</sup> L. Sebreondi’s opinion is recorded in J. M. Bradburne, (ed.), *Hidden Voices: Discovering the Buonomini di San Martino*, Florence, Giunti, 2011, p. 20.

virtually a zero balance.<sup>936</sup> Nevertheless, the confraternity must do this ‘parsimoniously, because you never know, the next time you may have to help someone whose need is even more justifiable’.<sup>937</sup> Francesco Poccianti who has been a Procurator since 1998 and who provided the previous words of advice in 2011, goes on to inform us that ‘the whole thing’s run exactly the same way as it was back then’, and if we choose to believe his assertion then it follows that the same parsimony that the confraternity operate with today, was a serious consideration in the fifteenth century.<sup>938</sup> Consequently, by employing only one individual to bury a corpse, the confraternity could well have been indicating their fiscal prudence to the audience who, because of the brotherhood’s vow of secrecy regarding its financial operations and recipients’ identities, perhaps required some reassurance that the funds collected by the Buonomini (which were often considerable as it ‘pleased divine grace’)<sup>939</sup> were being distributed prudently.<sup>940</sup>

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<sup>936</sup> Paolo Giustiniani’s opinion recorded in J. M. Bradburne, (ed.), *Hidden Voices: Discovering the Buonomini di San Martino*, Florence, Giunti, 2011, p. 20 and p. 48. Regarding the Buonomini in particular their records show that total outgoings and incomings from March 1478 are typical for this confraternity, which did not accumulate funds. Income for this month was y. 1009.19.8.76.56.46. Outgoings amounted to y105.10.10.67.56.46. The resulting balance is a paltry y.4.8.10.

<sup>937</sup> Francesco Poccianti recorded in J. M. Bradburne, (ed.), *Hidden Voices: Discovering the Buonomini di San Martino*, Florence, Giunti, 2011, p. 48.

<sup>938</sup> J. M. Bradburne, (ed.), *Hidden Voices: Discovering the Buonomini di San Martino*, Florence, Giunti, 2011, p. 47.

<sup>939</sup> L. Landucci, *A Florentine Diary from 1450 to 1516 by Luca Landucci continued by an Anonymous Writer 'Til 1542 with notes by Iodoco del Badia*, London, J. M. Dent and Sons, 1969, p. 101 reporting Savonarola.

<sup>940</sup> On confraternal secrecy and trust within the sodality see J. M. Bradburne, (ed.), *Hidden Voices: Discovering the Buonomini di San Martino*, Florence, Giunti, 2011, p. 44. See also p.29 for recent large bequests to the Buonomini. For Savonarola and the shamed poor see L. Landucci *A Florentine Diary from 1450 to 1516 by Luca Landucci continued by an Anonymous Writer 'Til 1542 with notes by Iodoco del Badia*, London, J. M. Dent and Sons, 1969, pp. 74-75.

Returning to look specifically at the ragged figure, who is shown lowering the body into the grave, it is suggested by Ludovica Sebregondi that this is a relative of the deceased. However, given that there is a mourner present among the group to the right of the scene, it is more likely that the shabby fellow is actually a grave digger.<sup>941</sup> When compared to the building labourers that Giovanni Antonio Bazzi, otherwise known as Sodoma (1477-1549), depicted in *Saint Benedict Appears in the Dream of Two Monks* (Fig. 106), one would certainly consider that the figure in the Buonomini fresco was dressed for manual work. The little white cap with the brim turned up is virtually identical to the one worn by the bare-legged builder who is shown busily mixing cement in Sodoma's painting. Likewise, Spinello d'Aretino (c.1346-1410) in one of his *Stories of Pope Alexander III* (Fig. 107) executes the likenesses of ten builders, three of whom are donning the same cap as Sodoma's labourer and the Buonomini's gravedigger. The gravedigger in the Buonomini mural though is ostensibly younger than Sodoma's builders, as he is shown wearing tight clothes favoured by Renaissance youths. His hose, although worn at the knees, are not slack and his green *farsetto* which is worn over a linen shirt fits snugly and is attached to his tatty hose by leather cords – a practical solution to the jacket riding up during exercise.<sup>942</sup> Furthermore, this would likely suit the confraternity, as far as aspects of Dominican piety were concerned, as it would surely not be fitting for young flesh to be on show in such a tableau. Given Savonarola's contemporary fifteenth-century sermons

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<sup>941</sup> L. Sebregondi, 'The Congregation and the Fresco Cycle', in J. M. Bradburne, (ed.), *Hidden Voices: Discovering the Buonomini di San Martino*, Florence, Giunti, 2011, p. 92.

<sup>942</sup> L. Sebregondi, 'Clothes and Teenagers: What Young Men Wore in Fifteenth-Century Florence', in K. Eisenbichler, (ed.), *The Pre-Modern Teenager, Youth and Society 1150-1650*, Essays and Studies I, Toronto, Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2002, pp. 27-51.

on the subject of death, he would not have welcomed the viewer being distracted by any amount of nakedness. According to the Dominican friar, one must live life looking through ‘the eye glasses of death’ and ‘keep death constantly in mind’ in order to be blessed.<sup>943</sup> Sodoma’s men, on the other hand, are somewhat older, more rugged and wear similar garb, although the garments are more loose and flowing as would be typical of an adult male of increasing years during this period.<sup>944</sup>

Burial however was only one of the gravedigger’s duties. They were also often responsible for the preparation of the body and would sell goods related to the funeral ritual in order to supplement their income.<sup>945</sup> This was perhaps a necessary measure as *beccamorti*, were at times paid in kind rather than in cash for their services.<sup>946</sup> For example, the records of San Pier Maggiore show that a spinner’s wife, Bartolomea di Feo, who was using the church as a ‘funeral broker’, allowed the parish friar to purchase wine as payment for the gravediggers ‘so they might enjoy themselves’.<sup>947</sup>

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<sup>943</sup> D. Weinstein, ‘The Art of Dying Well and Popular Piety in the Preaching and Thought of Girolamo Savonarola’ in M. Tetel, R. G. Witt, and R. Goffen, (eds.), *Life and Death in Fifteenth-Century Florence*, London. Duke University Press, 1989, pp. 91-92.

<sup>944</sup> L. Sebregondi, ‘Clothes and Teenagers: What Young Men Wore in Fifteenth-Century Florence, in K. Eisenbichler, (ed.), *The Pre-Modern Teenager, Youth and Society 1150-1650*, Essays and Studies I, Toronto, Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2002, p. 27.

<sup>945</sup> S. Strocchia, *Death and Ritual in Renaissance Florence*, Baltimore, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992, p.50 on the preparation of the body. S. Strocchia, *Burials in Renaissance Florence 1350-1500*, PhD Thesis, University of California, Berkeley, 1981, Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms International, 1984, p. 25 and p. 245 on mentions of gravediggers and their associated business dealings in the Florentine *Catasto*.

<sup>946</sup> S. Strocchia, *Burials in Renaissance Florence 1350-1500*, PhD Thesis, University of California, Berkeley, 1981, Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms International, 1984, p. 51.

<sup>947</sup> S. Strocchia, *Death and Ritual in Renaissance Florence*, Baltimore, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992, p. 99.

Moving attention away from the interment itself, consideration will now be given to the clerics and mourners who are also attending at the churchyard. The figure at the centre of the group, positioned to the right of the painting and who was briefly mentioned earlier, is ostensibly a mourner (Fig.108). Dressed entirely in black which was the traditional colour of deep mourning during this period, the bereaved male has been depicted with his hands clasped in prayer and his face is turned towards the viewer. His gaze is directed towards the audience, who are simultaneously invited to empathise with his loss, consider their own mortality and be drawn further into the scene by this artistic device.<sup>948</sup>

Identifying the mourner's relationship to the deceased is an almost impossible task as Renaissance Florentine men could deeply mourn their sons, grandsons, mothers, fathers and daughters.<sup>949</sup> To confuse the issue further, personal servants, who traditionally attended their masters' funerals, were also customarily dressed in black.<sup>950</sup> Nevertheless, what is clearly conveyed by the figurative arrangement of the trio is that the mourner (whoever he may be) is not responsible for the cost of this funeral. The financial transaction literally bypasses him, as the Procurator of the Shamed Poor has completely circumvented the figure in black and is shown in the act of paying the sexton any outstanding expenses. For example, each of the clerics present, and positioned on the steps of the church, would have been paid anything from four to eight soldi each for their parts in the ritual<sup>951</sup> as Synodal Law 'forbade clerics to accept more than was due their

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<sup>948</sup> Ibid. p. 10 and p. 213.

<sup>949</sup> S. Strocchia, *Burials in Renaissance Florence 1350-1500*, PhD Thesis, University of California, Berkeley, 1981, Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms International, 1984, p. 65.

<sup>950</sup> Ibid.

<sup>951</sup> Ibid. p. 51.

rank'.<sup>952</sup> Likewise gravediggers could, in theory, earn small sums for the dressing of the corpse, the death announcement and for the digging of the grave<sup>953</sup> and their services too were governed by legislation. For example, the *Ordinamenta di Giustizia* of 1295 set maximum salaries for the services carried out by gravediggers (*beccamorti*, literally those who peck off the dead) and criers (*banditori*).<sup>954</sup>

As far as fifteenth-century piety and artistic conventions surrounding the depictions of assemblies of clerics at funerals are concerned, the churchmen illustrated in the Buonomini's *Burying the Dead* fresco would appear to adhere to traditional protocol. For instance, by juxtaposing the quartet of churchmen from the Buonomini fresco to the group of friars depicted on the right-hand side of Benozzo Gozzoli's (1421-1497) rendering of *The Death of Saint Francis* (Fig. 109) it is clear, through the pious expressions on the churchmen's faces and the forthright manner in which the Processional Crosses are held aloft,<sup>955</sup> that in both paintings the gathered clergy are conducting themselves with the kind of piety that conferred honour upon the proceedings and in turn upon the deceased.<sup>956</sup> Likewise in Giotto di Bondone's (c.1267-1337) earlier

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<sup>951</sup> S. Strocchia, *Death and Ritual in Renaissance Florence*, Baltimore, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992, pp. 62-63.

<sup>952</sup> S. Strocchia, *Burials in Renaissance Florence 1350-1500*, PhD Thesis, University of California, Berkeley, 1981, Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms International, 1984, p. 204.

<sup>953</sup> *Ibid.* p. 166.

<sup>954</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>955</sup> The symbolic nature of the cross extends beyond its representation of Christ's suffering, death and resurrection as it also represents God's omnipotence. See 1 Corinthians 1:18.

<sup>956</sup> S. Strocchia, *Death and Ritual in Renaissance Florence*, Baltimore, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992, pp. 5-6.

version of the same episode from the life of Saint Francis (Fig. 110), the Franciscans gathered for the requiem would appear similarly intently devout, according to their various countenances. By the same token the youthful assembly of clergy depicted by Domenico Ghirlandaio in his painting entitled *The Obsequies of Santa Fina* (Fig.78) are equally reverent and unsurprisingly have strikingly similar physiognomies to the churchmen shown in the Buonomini mural. Nevertheless, the Buonomini and the San Gimignano frescoes do differ considerably, in the sense that the clergy, represented in the San Gimignano painting, possess vivid, animated qualities which can only be realised by the most skillful artists. Conversely, the youths shown in the Buonomini fresco, while appearing to have been executed by a reasonably skillful hand, do not possess the same animation and character as those in San Gimignano.

Having examined the painting of a burial funded by the Buonomini di San Martino, in relation to written and visual Renaissance documents pertaining to the same set of rituals, it is clear that the Buonomini funeral was meant to be a frugal affair while, at the same time, providing all of the necessary ingredients for an honourable burial. The presence of the clergy (Fig. 111), dressed in the appropriate vestments and shown carrying the items essential for the requiem mass: the sacramentary (book of prayer and prefaces to all of the masses); the aspersion and aspergillum (a portable vessel for carrying holy water and the implement which allows the sprinkling of the liquid) and the Processional Cross, all dignify the proceedings and in turn the deceased. Furthermore, the additional expenditure

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on the gravedigger, vestments for the corpse and for wax candles also does ‘honour to the body’.<sup>957</sup> It is of no consequence that the deceased illustrated in the Buonomini painting has to remain anonymous as, given the confraternity’s strict rule of secrecy with regard to the identity of those that they confer help on, it would be highly unorthodox for any clues as to the person’s identity to be present at all. Nor does it matter that the little churchyard in which the burial is taking place cannot be named and pinpointed on a map of Florence as, to reiterate Robert Chapman’s warning concerning funeral data, if we become preoccupied with data from just one necropolis, we could draw a veil of obscurity over a corresponding ‘regional account of social life’ and that was certainly not the intention of this task.<sup>958</sup> Therefore, by taking Chapman’s admonishments into consideration, this art historical analysis of the Buonomini’s *Burying the Dead* fresco has allowed us to discern that the depiction is in fact an accurate portrayal of one of the rituals surrounding the burial of a poor person. Furthermore, should the viewer, for one magical moment, be physically able to enter the illusionary plane of the painting in order to take their part in mourning the anonymous deceased, they too would hear the final tolls of the church bells, which encouraged various clergy to attend the church proceedings so that the anonymous deceased could be buried with honour, ‘as if he [or she] were rich’.<sup>959</sup>

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<sup>957</sup> S. Strocchia, *Burials in Renaissance Florence 1350-1500*, PhD Thesis, University of California, Berkeley, 1981, Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms International, 1984, p. 99.

<sup>958</sup> R. Chapman, ‘Working with the Dead’ in in D. Slayer and H. Williams (eds.), *Mortuary Practices and Social Identity in the Middle Ages: Essays in Burial Archaeology in Honour of Heinrich Harke*, Exeter, University of Exeter Press, 2009, p. 29.

<sup>959</sup> S. Strocchia, *Burials in Renaissance Florence 1350-1500*, PhD Thesis, University of California, Berkeley, 1981, Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms International, 1984, p. 100.



The scrutiny that has been leveled against the Buonomini's depiction of this final act of compassion marks the end of these unprecedented analyses of the eight of the ten murals that decorate the confraternity's little oratory. Attention will now turn to the two paintings that depict the sodality's patron, Saint Martin of Tours, whose acts of charity and humanity were a paradigm for the Procurators of the Shamed Poor of Florence.

## Chapter 7

### The Saint Martin Frescoes

## Section 7: 1

## Divergent Hands: Two scenes from the life of Saint Martin in the Oratorio dei Buonomini di San Martino

No one ever saw him enraged, or excited, or lamenting, or laughing; he was always one and the same: displaying a kind of heavenly happiness in his countenance, he seemed to have passed the ordinary limits of human nature. Never was there any word on his lips but Christ, and never was there a feeling in his heart except piety, peace, and tender mercy.<sup>960</sup>

This description of Saint Martin of Tours piety and countenance comes to us via his contemporaneous biographer, Sulpitius Severus, the saint being the subject of the two rendered images, found juxtaposed above the altar in the little chapel of the Oratorio dei Buonomini di San Martino. While the painting entitled *Saint Martin Dividing his Cloak for the Beggar* (Fig. 6) is found in the lunette to the left, *The Dream of Saint Martin* (Fig. 7) can be seen on the right.

*Prima facie* the depiction of *Saint Martin Dividing his Cloak for the Beggar* appears to conform to traditional hagiographical representations of Martin's most renowned and reproduced act of mercy. According to Severus, Martin happened upon a half-naked beggar outside the gates of Amiens. It was a bitter winter's day and as others ignored the

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<sup>960</sup> Sulpicius Severus, *Sulpicius Severus on the Life of Saint Martin: A Select Library of Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, 2<sup>nd</sup> series, vol. II, trans. A. Roberts, New York, 1894, p. 42.

beggar's entreaties and passed him by, Martin, who had previously donated his excess clothes to similar unfortunates, took pity on him and divided his one remaining cloak in half with his sword, giving a portion to the beggar and keeping the rest for himself.<sup>961</sup> Accordingly the Buonomini mural shows a mounted Saint Martin central to the composition with his groom to the viewer's left and the beggar to the right. The trio takes up much of the pictorial space at the forefront of the painting while the walled city of Amiens and a winding landscape scene, leading ultimately to a hilltop monastery, dominate the background.

Likewise the *Dream of Saint Martin* scene initially appears to follow established representational conventions as it shows the events which took place the following night, when Christ and a choir of angels appear to Martin in a dream, informing him that the beggar, whom he clothed, was in fact the Saviour. Within the mural Martin is represented in repose on a bed, raised from the floor by a shallow dais, while a groom sits sleeping at the saint's feet. Also present within the classically decorated loggia are Christ, still clothed in the portion of cloth given to him by Martin, and a choir of seven angels who, like their Lord, float just above the tiled loggia floor upon a carpet of clouds. The scene is completed by a landscape background which can be seen through the loggia's three open arches.

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<sup>961</sup> Ibid. p. 3.

Pausing for a moment to consider the two Buonomini murals in relation to earlier visual representations of these same scenes from the life of Saint Martin, it soon becomes apparent that the Buonomini frescoes are in fact more innovative and perhaps unique than they appear at first sight. More often than not, Saint Martin is portrayed only in the company of the beggar, although sometimes an artist has included onlookers to witness the event or a group of unfortunates appealing for alms (Figs. 112-115). Correspondingly, repeat depictions of Saint Martin's dream are replete with angels, Christ and the sleeping saint (Fig. 116).<sup>962</sup> None however, include Martin's man servant and for this reason alone the Buonomini murals are singular.<sup>963</sup>

Although the the servant depicted in *The Dream of Saint Martin* is not an exact likeness of the groom (painted by a member of Ghirlandaio's workshop) in *Saint Martin Dividing his Cloak for the Beggar*, it is clear that despite the lack of stylistic integrity some effort has been made to maintain a visual unity (Figs. 117 and 118). Regardless of explicit efforts to replicate the servant from one mural to the next, the hair and lips of the figure in *Saint Martin Dividing his Cloak for the Beggar* appear simultaneously delicate yet full, whereas an examination of those same features in relation to the groom in *The Dream of Saint Martin* reveals a thin-lipped, shorter haired and generally coarser likeness.

Nevertheless, a visual unity, similar to the type of continuity required in television

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<sup>962</sup> *The Dream of Saint Martin*, Simone Martini, 14<sup>th</sup> Century, Cappella di San Martino, Lower Church, Assisi is markedly pertinent.

<sup>963</sup> Despite investigating every image of Saint Martin at the Warburg Institute's photographic library and hundreds of images of the saint available online the researcher has yet to discover one which includes his servant.

programs and films, has been achieved by ensuring that the groom retains the same clothes and armour in both paintings. Additionally, both servants sport a jaunty white feather in their caps although the plumage adorning the groom's cap in *Saint Martin Dividing his Cloak for the Beggar* is more elongated and delicate than the drooping tuft represented in *The Dream of Saint Martin* mural. Furthermore, this effort, to effect a visual association from one mural to the next, guarantees that we recognise the servant's presence as the narrative moves from scene to scene. The impetus for incorporating the groom without prior artistic precedent perhaps lies in the literature of Sulpitius Severus and Jacobus de Voragine, as both biographers write that while Martin was still only fifteen years old and in military service within the Roman army, he had a single servant who was supposed to attend him.<sup>964</sup> Martin though, despite being a pagan, was already endowed with saint-like parsimony and humility, which is attested to by reports of him sharing his meals with the attendant and moreover cleaning the servant's dirty boots.<sup>965</sup> There is perhaps no need to labour the similarities between Martin's actions and those of Christ during and after the Last Supper. The message, which derives from John: 13, is not simply meant to illustrate saintly virtues. It also informs the painting's primary audience, the Buonomini, that just as the 'Lord and master' could kneel to wash the feet of his disciples and act as the servant, so too, metaphorically, could the brothers of this lay

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<sup>964</sup> S. Severus, *Sulpicius Severus on the Life of Saint Martin: A Select Library of Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, 2<sup>nd</sup> series, vol. II, trans. A. Roberts, New York, 1894, p. 2. See also J. de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, trans. C. Stace, London, Penguin, 1998, p. 293.

<sup>965</sup> S. Severus, *Sulpicius Severus on the Life of Saint Martin: A Select Library of Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, 2<sup>nd</sup> series, vol. II, trans. A. Roberts, New York, 1894, p. 3.

confraternity.<sup>966</sup> On the one hand the brothers were expected to be patrons and administrators of charity but conversely, their role would also require them to become servants to the *poveri vergognosi* by providing notarial and welfare services to them when required. Not only did the Buonomini beg outside the city's churches, including Santa Maria del Fiore and Santa Maria Maggiore, in order to preserve the honour of the shamed poor, but also, from July 1470, as we have seen, they visited women in childbed, fetched and carried goods and even purchased property for beneficiaries.<sup>967</sup> The oratory's painted murals would also appear to support the notion that the brothers were expected to be, in part, servants to the poor as the fresco entitled *Visiting a Woman in Childbed* (Fig. 23) clearly illustrates two brothers making such a visit. Furthermore, the mural recently termed by the researcher as *An Initial Visit by the Buonomini to a Vulnerable Family* (Fig. 10), shows a member of the confraternity scribing during an assessment of potential vulnerable wards.

Given that the scenes from the life of Saint Martin are allocated to only two lunettes from a possible ten, Ghirlandaio and his co-workers perhaps faced a similar dilemma to the one that had confronted them in San Gimignano between 1477 and 1478 when the workshop was commissioned to paint scenes from the life of Santa Fina in the diminutive chapel of the Collegiata (Fig. 119). Just as the architectural design of the San Martino

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<sup>966</sup> John 13: 13-17.

<sup>967</sup> See *Entrata e Uscita 1469-1478*, c. 113-117, (1.2.1.0.1.) and *Entrata e Uscita 1478-1482*, c. 132 recto, (1.2.1.0.2.), ABSM. For the collection of alms see *Libro per Procuratori de Poveri Vergognosi 1485 al Maggio 1497 e Ottobre 1489*, c. 15 verso, Fondo Tordi, BNCF. For the purchasing of property on behalf of a client see *Entrata e Uscita, 1478 – 1482*, loose leaf, (1.2.1.0.2.), ABSM.

oratory encouraged the placement of the painted decorations, so too the constructed scheme in San Gimignano dictated the spaces to be painted. Giuliano da Maiano's design allowed only for the decoration of the lateral walls of the little chapel and this was further confined to the two niches found there (Figs. 77 and 78).<sup>968</sup> In order to comply with contemporary traditions of hagiographical representation, visual affirmation of an immaculate, pious existence and the supernatural ability to work miracles would have ideally been referenced, as would key events during the saint's life and ultimately a visual reportage of his or her death.<sup>969</sup> Limits on space however, require innovative visual solutions so, rather than depicting multifarious episodes within a single scene, Ghirlandaio makes reference to several events using carefully considered visual motifs which works on two levels. Firstly, it allows the composition to remain uncomplicated and this lends clarity to the tale being told. Secondly, it further rewards the observant viewer, familiar with that particular saint's life, to added details.<sup>970</sup> In the Oratorio dei Buonomini for example, Martin's life as a monk and the monastery he established at Marmoutier may be referred to by the hilltop abbey visible in the background of *Saint*

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<sup>968</sup> Linda A. Koch, 'The Portrayal of Female Sainthood in Renaissance San Gimignano: Ghirlandaio's Frescoes of Santa Fina's Legend', *Artibus et Historiae*, vol. 19, no. 38, 1988, p. 147.

<sup>969</sup> For a typical example of scenes from Saint Martin's *vita* see Simone Martini's (1284-1344) early fourteenth-century fresco cycle in the Cappella di San Martino, Lower Church, San Francesco, Assisi (Figs. 120 and 121). Also pertinent is Giotto di Bondone's decoration of the Bardi Chapel, Santa Croce (Figs. 122 and 123) and Andrea Pisano's (1290-1348) twenty bronze reliefs of scenes from the life of Saint John the Baptist, which decorate the south doors of the Florence Baptistery (Figs. 124-129).

<sup>970</sup> L. K. Koch 'The Portrayal of Female Sainthood in Renaissance San Gimignano: Ghirlandaio's Frescoes of Santa Fina's Legend', *Artibus et Historiae*, vol. 19, no. 38, 1988, p. 149 on the informed Renaissance individual and M. O' Malley, 'Finding Fame: painting and the making of careers in Renaissance Italy', *Renaissance Studies*, vol. 24, no. 1, 2010, p. 22 on the suggestion that Sixtus employed Ghirlandaio for the 'directness of message' contained in his paintings.



*Martin Dividing his Cloak for the Beggar* (Fig. 6). His hermitage may likewise be alluded to by isolated landscapes beyond the loggia in *The Dream of Saint Martin* (Fig. 9). Martin's refusal to bear arms is implied by his armour, abandoned by the bed in which the sleeping saint lies (Fig. 130).

Unlike the Santa Fina frescoes, in the *Dream of Saint Martin* there is a distinct lack of domestic objects which symbolize the Eucharist and the Virgin. Their omission can be best understood by taking into consideration the theological concepts of piety and charity associated with the Buonomini and Martin, their figurehead.<sup>971</sup> As far as property ownership was concerned, both the confraternity and the saint shunned material possessions. The confraternity adopted and modified the Dominican pledge of poverty to best suit the lay institution, for example they did not hold on to donated property but disposed of it quickly, in order to ensure a rapid and regular turnover of charitable funds which would be ploughed back into the community.<sup>972</sup> Monthly tallies from its ledgers showing almost equal debits and credits demonstrate that this rule was strictly adhered to.<sup>973</sup> Saint Martin was also said to have shunned material possessions throughout his life. Sulpicius Severus records that even prior to dividing his cloak for the beggar, Martin 'had

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<sup>971</sup> P. L. Rubin, *Images and Identity in Fifteenth-Century Florence*, London, Yale University Press, 2007, p. 124.

<sup>972</sup> On the first rule of the Buonomini constitution which states, 'Non si tenghino Beni stabili, ne Entrate ferme perpetue'. See O. Z. Pugliese, 'The Good Works of the Florentine "Buonomini di San Martino": An Example of Renaissance Pragmatism', in K. Eisenbichler (ed.), *Crossing the Boundaries: Christian Piety and the Arts in Italian Medieval and Renaissance Confraternities*, Michigan, Kalamazoo, 1991, p. 111.

<sup>973</sup> For example the monthly tally for July 1485 is as follows: 'sum quella entrata y1240.13.2' and the 'sum l'ucita y1242.11.10', which was typical. See *Entrata e Uscita 1469-1478*, c. 29, (1.2.1.0.1.), ABSM.

nothing except his arms and his simple military dress...for he had already parted with the rest of his garments' in the name of charity.<sup>974</sup> Even as Bishop of Tours Martin's dress could not be considered extravagant as he was described as having the same 'homeliness in his garments' that he had possessed as a monk.<sup>975</sup> Given the aforementioned considerations, the omission of household objects, would have likely been perfectly acceptable to both the artists and the patrons, resulting in a visual composition in which the spiritual integrity of both Martin and Antoninus clearly reinforces the fraternal values expected of the Buonomini.<sup>976</sup> Despite the lack of symbolic domestic objects, nonetheless there are other visual indicators which would suggest that Marian references are not entirely absent from the *Dream of Saint Martin* mural. For example, the palm leaves which decorate the frieze atop the loggia arches (Fig. 131) could be symbolic of Mary as the *Mater Dolorosa* and refer also to Christ's entry into Jerusalem where, according to the gospels, the celebrants who lined the route into the city, laid down their cloaks in his path – a fitting reference given the associations between Christ, Saint Martin and the divided mantle.<sup>977</sup>

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<sup>974</sup> S. Severus, *Sulpicius Severus on the Life of Saint Martin: A Select Library of Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, 2<sup>nd</sup> series, vol. II, trans. A. Roberts, New York, 1894, p. 3.

<sup>975</sup> Ibid.

<sup>976</sup> L.A. Koch, 'The Portrayal of Female Sainthood in Renaissance San Gimignano: Ghirlandaio's Frescoes of Santa Fina's Legend', *Artibus et Historiae*, vol. 19, no. 38, 1998, p. 147.

<sup>977</sup> P. L. Rubin, *Images and Identity in Fifteenth-Century Florence*, London, Yale University Press, 2007, pp. 188-9.

Clearly there exists an emblematic and visual continuity between the two scenes from the life of Saint Martin despite the different artistic nuances left behind by the painters of these murals. As we have discussed previously, a mere glimpse of the two paintings together reveals that they diverge stylistically. *Saint Martin Dividing his Cloak for the Beggar* bears the signature style of Ghirlandaio's workshop whereas *The Dream of Saint Martin*, as will be demonstrated, owes more to Verrocchio's *bottega*. With regard to the former, there are distinct similarities between the Netherlandish inspired landscape scene which can be discerned through the window in Ghirlandaio's *The Annunciation of Santa Fina's Death by Gregory the Great* (Fig. 77) and the panorama visible in *Saint Martin Dividing his Cloak for the Beggar* (Fig. 6). Likewise, the famous towers of San Gimignano, included in *The Obsequies of Santa Fina* (Fig. 78), are not dissimilar to those visible within what is supposed to be the walled city of Amiens in the Buonomini mural, (Fig. 6). Neither is the winding road, leading to a hilltop church in the background of the *Portrait of Francesco Sassetti and his Son Theodoro II* (Fig. 132) dissimilar to the one on which Martin had presumably travelled before encountering the beggar at the city gates. Furthermore, the white steed on which Saint Martin is mounted is typical of Ghirlandaio's cobby equestrian models (Fig. 133) and the almost vertical pleats present in the draped material of the saint's mantle is further testament to Domenico's influence (Figs. 134 and 135).

Close examination of the brushstrokes applied by one of the artists responsible for *Saint Martin Dividing his Cloak for the Beggar*, especially those which make up the groom's chainmail, reveal that they were rapidly and loosely executed using small dots of grey

paint with minute highlights of white (Fig. 117). That the medium was *buon fresco* goes some way to explaining the need for a speedy application of paint to plaster. The lack of dexterity however, which is not as apparent in the *Dream of Saint Martin* fresco (Fig. 118), is repeated in other scenes executed by Ghirlandaio's assistants. This suggests that the job was either rushed or, at the very least, delegated to the lower ranks of the workshop hierarchy.<sup>978</sup>

The *Dream of Saint Martin* mural appears to have been executed in an altogether more dexterous manner, although the composition of the scene still owes much to Ghirlandaio and his associates. For example, the particular references to Giotto, Massaccio and Filippino Lippi, common in Ghirlandaio's compositions, are indicated here by the inclusion of the sleeping groom, whose pose bears more than a passing resemblance to the napping guard in Filippino Lippi's *The Liberation of Saint Peter* (Fig. 136), found in the Brancacci chapel in Santa Maria del Carmine.<sup>979</sup> Furthermore, the choir of angels that listen intently to Christ as he explains that the beggar clothed the previous day was in fact Him, owes much to a similar grouping in Botticelli's *The Temptation of Christ and the Purification of the Leper*, located in the Sistine Chapel in Rome (Fig. 137). Particularly interesting here is the startling similarity between the submissive angel to Christ's right in

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<sup>978</sup> A prime example taken from the Buonomini's fresco cycle is the *Taking in Pilgrims* mural where masterly portraits are painted atop flaccidly draped bodies, supported by legs composed in an almost infantile manner (Fig. 48). For further examples of low levels of skill within generally masterly works see G. Marchini, 'The Frescoes of the Choir of Santa Maria Novella', *The Burlington Magazine*, vol. 95, no. 607, 1953, p. 324.

<sup>979</sup> J. K. Cadogan, 'Observations on Ghirlandaio's Method of Composition', *Master Drawings*, vol. 22, no. 2, 1984, p. 169.

the aforementioned work by Botticelli and the angel dextral to the Lord in *The Dream of Saint Martin* (Fig. 138).<sup>980</sup> Both are clearly positioned in the same desirable spot, (the right hand of course is the hand with which God will deal out mercy during the Last Judgement) and apart from the colour of their robes and the raptor-like wings of Botticelli's angel, they could be almost interchangeable.<sup>981</sup> The angels' appearances seem to owe much to Verrocchio's (1435-1488) influence as the almost sculptural qualities of their faces are a curious hybrid of cherub and adolescent (Figs. 139 and 140). The particular rendering of drapery is also an idiosyncrasy from the workshop of Verrocchio which was taken up heartily by Botticelli in particular (Figs. 141 and 142). It is significant that Botticelli was at one time considered the author of the Buonomini's *Dream of Saint Martin*, although this attribution carries little weight.<sup>982</sup>

It is perhaps wise not to stray too far from Verrocchio's *bottega* in this quest to ascertain the artist responsible for this work, since evidence of his influence can be found elsewhere within the murals. An examination of the pictorial space in which the slumbering Martin is found reveals that the saint has fallen asleep without removing all of his armour. As he lies there, turned to face the viewer to ensure that we recognise him

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<sup>980</sup> W. Hood, 'Saint Dominic's Manner of Praying: Gestures in Fra Angelico's Cell Frescoes at San Marco', *The Art Bulletin*, vol. 68, no. 2, 1986, p. 201 notes that 'Michael Baxendall has established that the Virgin Mary in both the North Corridor and Cell 3 *Annunciation* [in the Dominican monastery of San Marco] is shown in an attitude denoting submission' (Fig. 143). Likewise, the angels depicted in Sandro Botticelli's *The Temptation of Christ and the Purification of the Leper* (Fig. 144) and *The Dream of Saint Martin* (Fig. 145) by the workshop of Domenico Ghirlandaio share this same pose.

<sup>981</sup> Psalm 110 refers to the right hand of God and the Last Judgement.

<sup>982</sup> J. K. Cadogan, *Domenico Ghirlandaio: Artist and Artisan*, London, Yale University Press, 2000, p. 209.

from *Saint Martin Dividing his Cloak for the Beggar*, we see that he still wears his arming cap, chainmail and breastplate, although his spurs, vambrace and a basinet are arranged by the bedside. Also present is a stylised helmet (Fig. 146), almost fantastical in nature, which bears a striking resemblance to analogous headgear sculpted and drawn by Verrocchio and Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519) respectively. The *Ideal Portrait of Alexander the Great* (Fig.147) is a sculpted relief in marble, attributed to Verrocchio, which shows the young king in profile and atop his head is a classically inspired chimera of a helmet: the basinet portion has been honed to resemble a giant conch shell and it has impressive dragon's wings attached on the part which rests just behind the wearer's ears.<sup>983</sup> Produced in the 1480s and likely a prototype for, or copy of, the bronze reliefs which Giorgio Vasari records were commissioned by Lorenzo de' Medici and later sent as a gift to Matthias Corvinus of Hungary, the marble rendering bears an extremely strong resemblance to the helmet in the Buonomini mural.<sup>984</sup> This would suggest that, much like Leonardo's silverpoint drawing of an *Antique Warrior in Profile* (Fig. 148), it was a painted homage to Verrocchio's expertise - an exercise in contemporary artistic training but, moreover, deference to a master from his student.<sup>985</sup> The helmet is also

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<sup>983</sup> For attributions of the sculptures to Verrocchio see Leo Planiscig, *Andrea del Verrocchio*, Vienna, 1941, pp. 26 – 28 and John W. Pope-Hennessy, *Italian Renaissance Sculpture*, London, Curwen Press, p. 38. For a contrasting opinion on authorship see Susan V. Lenkey, *An Unknown Leonardo Self-Portrait*, Stanford, California, 1963. For a further and more recent discussion on this subject see also David A. Brown, *Leonardo da Vinci: Origins of a Genius*, London, Yale University Press, 1998, pp. 68 – 73.

<sup>984</sup> G. Vasari, *Lives of the Artists*, vol. 1, trans. G Bull, London, Penguin, 1965, p. 234.

<sup>985</sup> For Leonardo as Verrocchio's pupil see Jill Dunkerton, 'Leonardo da Vinci: Pupil, Painter, Master', *National Gallery Technical Bulletin*, vol. 32, London, Yale University Press, 2011. For Leonardo as a co-worker of Verrocchio see Wilhelm R. Valentiner, 'Leonardo as Verrocchio's Coworker', *The Art Bulletin*, vol. 12, no. 1, 1930, pp. 42-89, Gigetta D. Regoli, *Verrocchio, Lorenzo di Credi, Francesco Simone di Ferrucci*, Milan, 5

strikingly similar to the likeness of headgear, fashioned in silver, in a relief commissioned from Verrocchio's atelier during the period that Leonardo da Vinci would have been present and working there. Entitled *The Beheading of John the Baptist* (Fig. 149), the panel is one of eight making up the Silver Altar of Florence's ancient Baptistery.<sup>986</sup> Likewise, the headgear worn by Scipio Africanus and Decius in Ghirlandaio's depictions of *uomini famosa* in the Sala dei Gigli (Fig. 150) is also markedly pertinent. Interestingly it was Lorenzo de' Medici who, in 1479 was elected to serve in the Opera di Palazzo, taking over the renovations of the Palazzo Vecchio from among others, his freshly executed nemesis, Jacopo di Pazzi.<sup>987</sup> This perceived visual connection between the two edifices perhaps adds a further layer of meaning to the Buonomini frescoes as it can be linked directly to the Medici brothers' personal achievements and sacrifices. The text which accompanies Scipio in the Sala dei Gigli reads 'I am Scipio; I conquered Hannibal and subdued the Carthaginians' and that which accompanies Decius pronounces, 'I am Decius, an example to my son and a martyr for Rome'.<sup>988</sup>

Verrocchio was associated both with the house of Medici and the Buonomini, through various commissions and especially associated with Giuliano and Lorenzo de' Medici

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Continents Editions, 1966 and D.A. Brown, *Leonardo da Vinci: Origins of a Genius*, London, Yale University Press, 1998.

<sup>986</sup> Andrew Butterfield, *The Sculptures of Andrea del Verrocchio*, London, Yale University Press, 1997, pp. 105 – 122.

<sup>987</sup> M. Hegarty, 'Laurentian Patronage in the Palazzo Vecchio: The Frescoes off the Sala dei Gigli', *The Art Bulletin*, vol. 78, no. 2, 1996, pp. 266 – 267.

<sup>988</sup> M. Hegarty, 'Laurentian Patronage in the Palazzo Vecchio: The Frescoes off the Sala dei Gigli', *The Art Bulletin*, vol. 78, no. 2, 1996, p. 275.

through his creation of their jousting or *giostra* helmets and banners.<sup>989</sup> It is unsurprising then that this mesh of artistic association is referred to in the Buonomini murals. The Christ, who appears to Martin in the Buonomini fresco is remarkably similar to the Saviour, carved in relief by Verrocchio for the Medici at their villa in Careggi (Fig. 151). These previously overlooked visual references would perhaps make little sense if examined in isolation but given that both Lorenzo and Giuliano's portraits are central to the Buonomini's *Releasing the Debtor from Gaol* mural (Fig. 20) these symbols can be understood as the artist intended them to be.<sup>990</sup> Lorenzo and Giuliano were both avid patrons of the Buonomini and perhaps surpassed what was expected of them by the brotherhood as they did not take up certain confraternal privileges that were often conveyed on eminent citizens.<sup>991</sup> There is no record of the brothers ever fetching and carrying goods, as most of the other Buonomini did,<sup>992</sup> however, their munificent donations of money, grain, wine and meat show that the brothers did not dispense with all of the traditional confraternal obligations. Lorenzo, particularly during the years immediately following the Pazzi Conspiracy, when his attendance at other lay

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<sup>989</sup> The Buonomini had patronised Verrocchio's workshop on various occasions as they acquired not only a bust of their founder, Antoninus (Fig. 152), but also a pair of terracotta angel candlesticks (Fig. 153). See P. Bargellini, *I Buonomini di San Martino*, Florence, Casa di Risparmio, 1972, pp. 7-8.

<sup>990</sup> Ernst Gombrich, *Symbolic Images: Studies in the Art of the Renaissance*, London, Phaidon Press, 1972, p. 4.

<sup>991</sup> For Medici confraternal involvement see R.F.E. Weissman, *Ritual Brotherhood in Renaissance Florence*, London, Academic Press, 1982, pp. 171 -172. For confraternal privileges bestowed on eminent citizens see *Archivi delle Compagnie Soppresse* (archive 1, vol. 4), *Libro di Pariti della Compagnia di Sant' Agnese*, 1483 – 1509, 14v.

<sup>992</sup> There is no record of Pandolfo Rucellai running errands although his presence within the confraternity is prolific, due to the amount of direction he is recorded as providing.



confraternities waned, continued to attend San Martino.<sup>993</sup> Likewise his largesse towards the shamed poor abided, despite his diminishing generosity towards other confraternities and increasing fiscal demands directed at institutions such as the Monte di Pietà.<sup>994</sup>

Accordingly, the inclusion of the brother's portraits and symbolic reference to them in *The Dream of Saint Martin* reveals the bonds that this family forged with the Buonomini, while simultaneously indicating the artistic nexus with Verrocchio.<sup>995</sup> Ultimately however, it is the portraits, rather than symbolic references, that illustrate how the munificence of Lorenzo and his assassinated brother, Giuliano was translated into a visual authority which was recorded and celebrated by the Buonomini.<sup>996</sup>

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<sup>993</sup> On the decline of Medici confraternal patronage see R. Hatfield, 'The Compagnia de' Magi', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 1970, pp. 119 - 125 and C. Dempsey, 'Portraits and Mass in the Art of Lorenzo de' Medici, Botticelli and Politian's Stanze per la Giostra', *Renaissance Quarterly*, vol. 52, no. 1, 1999, p. 7. On Lorenzo de' Medici's continued patronage of the Buonomini in the wake of the Pazzi Conspiracy see chapter 5 of the thesis.

<sup>994</sup> For Lorenzo and Giuliano de' Medici's use of confraternities as 'instruments of Medici political power', see R. Trexler, *Public Life in Renaissance Florence*, London, Cornell University Press, 1980, p. 142. On the Monte de Pietà see Amanda Lillie, 'Lorenzo de' Medici's Rural Investments and Territorial Expansion', *Rinascimento*, vol. 32, 1993, p. 62.

<sup>995</sup> For the portraits see section 4:2 of this thesis and S. Hughes-Johnson, 'Early Medici Patronage and the Confraternity of the Buonomini di San Martino', *Confraternitas*, vol. 22, no 2, 2012, pp. 3-25.

<sup>996</sup> For Verrocchio as Lorenzo de' Medici's 'court artist' see W. R. Valentiner, 'Leonardo as Verrocchio's Coworker', *The Art Bulletin*, vol. 12, no. 1, 1930, p. 63. For a discussion on the portraits of Lorenzo and Giuliano de' Medici in the Buonomini mural, *Releasing the Debtor from Gaol*, and their confraternal activities see section 4:2. For reference to the abiding munificence of Lorenzo de' Medici to the Buonomini di San Martino during the years following the Pazzi Conspiracy see *Entrata e Uscita 1478-1482*, (1.2.1.0.2.), ABSM. For the donation from Lorenzo di Pierfrancesco see *Entrata e Uscita 1478-1482*, c. 19 recto (1.2.1.0.2.), ABSM.

Being mindful that the Buonomini frescoes were likely completed between 1486 and 1490,<sup>997</sup> it is with Lorenzo di Credi (c.1458-1537) then, that we arrive at the probable executor to Ghirlandaio's design for *The Dream of Saint Martin*. Dagenhart once remarked on the artist's 'technically careful, almost painful minute method of hatching' which is mirrored in the painstaking rendering of the groom's chainmail (Fig. 118). The little painted dots of grey, highlighted with white, are abundantly more uniform and deliberate than those found on the same figure in *Saint Martin Dividing his Cloak for the Beggar* (Fig. 117). In addition, the manner in which the figure's hair has been rendered is quite unlike the tresses executed in the other Buonomini murals. It is almost Leonardesque with its wisps of convoluted curls, which reflect Lorenzo di Credi's 'habit making use' of elements from Leonardo da Vinci's compositions.<sup>998</sup> Furthermore, apart from the bunched drapery worn by the angel to the right of Christ which, in all probability, was a motif judiciously borrowed from Verrocchio and taken up enthusiastically by Sandro Botticelli, the vestments worn by the remainder of those gathered should be considered further visual traces of Lorenzo di Credi's hand, especially considering the elongated, limp pleating customarily associated with his drapery.<sup>999</sup> Given the 'pure' lines which delineate the figures and the contrast of colours, especially evident with regard to the angel's costumes, which resonate in hues of peach, blue and green, it is understandable that the painting was once incorrectly attributed to Francesco

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<sup>997</sup> For the various strands that suggest a dating of 1486-1490, rather than the previously accepted dating of 1479, see sections 3:3, 4:2, 7:1 and 7:2.

<sup>998</sup> Bernard Degenhart, 'Drawings by Lorenzo di Credi', *The Burlington Magazine*, vol. 57, no. 328, 1930, p. 15.

<sup>999</sup> Roger Fry, 'A Tondo by Lorenzo di Credi', *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*, vol. 4, no. 10, 1909, p. 187.

d'Antonio, the miniaturist, as such careful and colourful rendering was traditionally associated with such diminutive illustrations (Fig. 154). Nevertheless, as Pons suggested,<sup>1000</sup> we should look to the attributes of a known master who is similarly artistically disposed and Lorenzo di Credi displayed analogous aesthetic idiosyncrasies.<sup>1001</sup>

The anatomy of the figures too is an important factor in constructing a reliable attribution for the Buonomini mural and if we examine some of Lorenzo di Credi's figure drawings, it is clear that the 'stylised ankles' especially remarkable in a drawing in the Louvre, Paris (Fig. 155) are almost identical to those of Christ in the *Dream of Saint Martin* mural. The Lord's toes too share the same flaccidity as those found in the artist's *Sketch of Feet* (Fig. 156), currently to be found in the Gabinetto Nazionale delle Stampe in Rome.<sup>1002</sup> Also anatomically and stylistically striking in its similarity to the Buonomini's Christ, is Lorenzo di Credi's *Nude Young Man, Full Face, Holding a Staff* (Fig. 157). Not only does the youth, thought to be a rendering of Saint John the Baptist, share the same muscular neck, defined clavicle, pronounced pectoral muscles and 'stylised ankles' as the Christ in the *Dream of Saint Martin*, he has likewise been apportioned an analogous stance. Moreover, Lorenzo di Credi formed the arms of his figures, especially those in *contrapposto*, in an extremely distinct manner, most likely inherited from his former

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<sup>1000</sup> N. Pons, 'Dipinti a piu mani', in *Maestri e Botteghe, Pittura alla fine del Quattrocento*, (eds.), M. Gregori, A. Paolucci and C. A Luchinat, Milan, Silvana Editoriale, 1992, pp. 257-258.

<sup>1001</sup> B. Degenhart, 'A Madonna by Lorenzo di Credi', *The Burlington Magazine*, vol. 58, no. 334, 1931, p. 45 and R. Fry A Tondo by Lorenzo di Credi, *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*, vol. 4, no. 10, 1909, p. 187.

<sup>1002</sup> B. Degenhart, 'Drawings by Lorenzo di Credi', *The Burlington Magazine*, vol. 57, no. 328, 1930, p. 12. See also D.A. Brown, *Leonardo da Vinci: Origins of a Genius*, London, Yale University Press, 1998, p. 154 and note 30, p. 211.

master Verrocchio. Comprising of a pronounced shoulder muscle, followed by a slim, muscular bicep and a lithesome yet strong forearm, the anatomy of Christ's arm in the Buonomini mural is almost identical to the upper limb structure of several other painted and sketched figures executed by Lorenzo di Credi (Figs.158 and 159).

Perhaps a further, more seductive visual indicator, which suggests Lorenzo di Credi as the painter of the Buonomini's *Dream of Saint Martin* fresco, can be found in the painting's background. Following the fashionable Netherlandish tradition the landscape scene, visible through the loggia's three arches, shows a lush river valley complete with hilltop fortress, isolated watchtower and, as the eye moves deeper into the painting's illusionary space, a range of pale-blue mountains. Careful examination of the buildings reveals a peculiarity which is often associated with medieval castle architecture north of the Alps – the gothic pinnacle (Fig. 160). The pinnacles, which break up the imbrications of the roof have been achieved by the artist's use of well placed flicks of paint and is a motif which appears not to have been taken up by Verrocchio's more notable students, with the exception of Lorenzo di Credi. In his painting *The Virgin and Child* (Fig. 161), which currently resides in the National Gallery, London and which was thought to have been completed in Florence during the last two decades of the *quattrocento*, Lorenzo di Credi has rendered similar pinnacles (Fig. 162).

Having examined the two works in terms of style and analysed the paintings' content using the 'controlling principles of interpretation' set out by Panofsky, there still remains

an unresolved question.<sup>1003</sup> Why were only nine of the Buonomini murals executed by the workshop of Domenico Ghirlandaio, leaving the tenth to be completed by Lorenzo di Credi? Given that we know of no documentary evidence linking the paintings to either of the two artists, one only has recourse to informed conjecture. There are scholars who support the hypothesis that the murals were executed in 1479, while the renovations of the oratory were in progress, although little consideration appears to have been given to the language used within the surviving document pertaining to this project.<sup>1004</sup> The Buonomini records clearly state that the materials were purchased in order to build a wall but the language implies that it was not necessarily decorated.<sup>1005</sup> The expenses also mention *ferramenti* (ironmongery) and if we look carefully at the entire wall on which the two frescoes depicting scenes from the life of Saint Martin are found, it becomes apparent that this is possibly the wall mentioned in the records (Fig. 163). The great iron studded doors and the stone frames each seem to be missing a reveal, which suggests that they were not part of the original configuration. Although there is no written description of the oratory's interior from the *quattrocento* it has however been recorded by the workshop of Ghirlandaio in the *Clothing the Naked* mural (Fig. 22). Here the artist has included the likeness of one of the oratory doors, which differs from the iron studded doors located directly below the Saint Martin murals as unlike them, it is plain wood flanked by two grey stone reveals. This would suggest that the doors with single stone reveals, which today lead to the Buonomini archive and the Sala Riunioni, were

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<sup>1003</sup> E. Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology: Humanistic Themes in the Art of the Renaissance*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1972, pp. 3-31.

<sup>1004</sup> See section 3:4.

<sup>1005</sup> *Ibid.*

additions, modified to fit into a constructed space where the position of the existing lateral walls did not allow for the attachment of a stone reveal on each. Ghirlandaio's proclivity for the inclusion of recognisable buildings and authentic aspects from *quattrocento* interior decorations in his painted compositions is documentary in its accuracy.<sup>1006</sup> His incorporation therefore, of interior aspects of the Buonomini's oratory within two of the frescoes conveys that it was the lateral walls, windows and the grey stone corbels, which decorate each impost, that were in situ prior to the paintings' commencement. Furthermore, if we physically stand underneath the frescoes and look upwards taking in the line of the wall, it is clear that an extra layer of plaster has been applied to accommodate each painting (Fig. 164). We can adduce therefore, that whether the paintings were executed a day or a decade after the plaster from the 1479 renovations dried, they were, nonetheless created later.

There are however, other strong visual indicators,<sup>1007</sup> and indirect documentary links<sup>1008</sup> suggesting that the dating was later, which inevitably moves the time period when the cycle was created from hypothetical to theoretical. It was perhaps then, after Ghirlandaio's return from Rome, during the 'Laurentian Golden Age', that the

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<sup>1006</sup> Ghirlandaio includes the facade of Santa Trinita, the Palazzo Spini and the Ponte Vecchio in the *Resurrection of the Boy* fresco in the Sassetti Chapel, Santa Trinita (Fig. 19) and the Stinche prison in *Releasing the Debtor from Gaol*, Oratorio dei Buonomini di San Martino (Fig. 20).

<sup>1007</sup> For compositional similarities between the Tornabuoni chapel frescoes and the Buonomini cycle see section 5:2. For similarities between the landscapes of the Buonomini paintings and Ghirlandaio's works between 1476 and 1490 see section 7:1. For the release of prisoners from the Stinche 25 December 1479 see section 4:2.

<sup>1008</sup> See Chapter 3:4 for details of indirect documentary links between Ghirlandaio and the Buonomini. For a documentary link between Ghirlandaio and Credi see section 7:2.

Buonomini murals were conceived - a period where Ghirlandaio's workshop must have been at its busiest. Domenico's organisational virtuosity and hubris are evident, if we are to believe Giorgio Vasari's report of what he was supposed to have said to his brother Davide. 'Leave me to the work while you provide; for now that I have begun to understand the ways of this art it is a grief to me that I am not given the whole circumference of the walls of Florence to cover with frescoes'.<sup>1009</sup> There is a hint of irony also as we are aware, in retrospect, just as Vasari would have been, of the number of large, technical commissions awarded to Domenico and his *bottega* on his return from completing his work in the Sistine Chapel. Even so, despite the workload and personal fame that Domenico acquired following his visit to Rome, there is evidence to show that this master would limit his own artistic contributions to commissions and in doing so, could arrange low fees for relatively humble projects.<sup>1010</sup>

The Buonomini's cycle of frescoes would most probably have been one of these humble projects. The general quality of painting is clearly not comparable to those frescoes executed by Ghirlandaio and his assistants in the Tornabuoni and Sassetti chapels although, there are hints of the master in some of the Buonomini portraits (Fig. 165). The

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<sup>1009</sup>G. Marchini, 'The Frescoes in the Choir of Santa Maria Novella', *The Burlington Magazine*, vol. 95, no. 607, 1953, p. 320. '*Lascia lavorare a me e tu provvedi, che ora che io ho cominciato a conoscere il modo di questa arte, mi duole che non mi sia allogato a dipignere a storie il circuito di tutte le mura della città di Fiorenza*'.

<sup>1010</sup>M. O' Malley, 'Finding Fame: painting and the making of careers in Renaissance Italy', *Renaissance Studies*, vol. 24, no. 1, 2010, p. 9 and p. 114. For the workshop of Ghirlandaio and the artistic relationship between Domenico and Davide see J. K. Cadogan, *Domenico Ghirlandaio: Artist and Artisan*, London, Yale University Press, 2000, p.153 and p. 170.

cost of the murals and the time taken to execute them could also have been diminished further by incorporating drawings from workshop pattern books into the compositional drawings. It has been suggested that the compositional drawings for the prestigious *Birth of the Virgin* fresco (Fig. 166) were made up in a similar manner and it had been common practice for some time to reverse and reuse cartoons.<sup>1011</sup> Considering these factors, and the fact that there are signs over and above the usual manifestations of rapid execution connected with painting in *buon fresco*, we might surmise that Ghirlandaio and his workshop took on the Buonomini frescoes in tandem with those of the Tornabuoni chapel and found themselves unable to complete the former, the task of which then fell to Lorenzo di Credi, the newly appointed master of Verrocchio's *bottega*,<sup>1012</sup> who would have found himself available to aid the busy Domenico Ghirlandaio at the Oratorio dei Buonomini di San Martino in Florence.<sup>1013</sup>

Much of the difficulty associated with examining any form of evidence surviving from *quattrocento* Florence concerns the task of isolating some of the diverse and often convoluted messages contained within an artifact, in order to make sense of it. By

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<sup>1011</sup> P. L. Rubin, *Images and Identity in Fifteenth-Century Florence*, London, Yale University Press, 2007, p. 238 and on Ghirlandaio's compositional shortcuts see J. K. Cadogan, *Domenico Ghirlandaio: Artist and Artisan*, London, Yale University Press, 2000, p. 164.

<sup>1012</sup> On the mutual acquaintance between the workshops of Domenico Ghirlandaio, Verrocchio and the Ferrucci see L. Pisani, 'The Exchange of Models in Florentine Workshops of the Quattrocento: A sheet from the Verrocchio Sketchbook', *The Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, vol. 67, 2004, pp. 269-274.

<sup>1013</sup> Dario A. Covi, 'New Documents Concerning Andrea del Verrocchio', *The Art Bulletin*, vol. 48, no. 1, 1966, pp. 97-103.

<sup>1013</sup> P. L. Rubin, *Images and Identity in Fifteenth-Century Florence*, London, Yale University Press, 2007, p. 124.



concentrating this chapter on only two of the Buonomini murals, those depicting scenes from the life of Saint Martin of Tours, we have allowed ourselves the scope to explore not only the multiple messages contained within such visual texts, but also the ‘synchronic possibilities’ of the images.<sup>1014</sup> Thus investigations into the historical context of the incidents depicted, which included a review of primary source texts and comparisons between the Buonomini murals and other artworks of a similar iconographic type, have proven revelatory. Despite generally conforming to traditional hagiographical representations and contemporary *quattrocento* artistic conventions, the murals, in respect of their inclusion of Martin’s groom, without prior artistic precedent are, in fact, more innovative than was previously thought. Furthermore, it has also been possible to establish how the acts shown or alluded to in the frescoes, reflected the pious notions associated with the Buonomini di San Martino and their founder, Antoninus. When considering the later chronological point at which the incidents depicted were executed in paint and plaster, using the tools of iconographic analysis, comparative analysis, connoisseurship and close visual inspection of the edifice itself, it has been possible to opine on the murals’ dating, attribution and their relationship to other murals within the cycle, which depict the Buonomini carrying out charitable activities derived from the Works of Mercy. Consequently, a forceful and seductive argument has emerged which not only illuminates the paintings’ art historical position but also, for the first time, advances Lorenzo di Credi as a likely executor of the *Dream of Saint Martin* mural, perhaps the only surviving work in *buon fresco* by this artist.

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<sup>1014</sup> Ibid.

Markedly there are many visual indicators that support Lorenzo di Credi as the plausible creator of the *Dream of Saint Martin* fresco but as yet, this study has not detailed the professional or social connections between the Procurators of the Shamed and the aforementioned artist. Accordingly, the following section of this thesis is dedicated to scrutinizing the nexus between man and lay organisation, despite the dearth of direct documentary evidence pertaining to the painting *per se*.

## Section 7:2

## Lorenzo di Credi and the Buonomini

Described in the twentieth century as ‘an insipid artist, in whom we can trace no development at all from his twenty-fifth year to the end of his life’, Lorenzo di Credi was in reality a decent artist whose skills were eclipsed by his co-workers, Leonardo da Vinci and Sandro Botticelli.<sup>1015</sup> His position within Verrocchio’s atelier is illustrated well by his annual earnings in 1480 which were recorded as being 12 guilders.<sup>1016</sup> In comparison, two years earlier, Leonardo da Vinci was paid 25 guilders and Verrocchio 60, as an initial payment towards an altarpiece that they were working on.<sup>1017</sup> Nevertheless, for reasons personal, professional, or a mixture of both, Verrocchio chose the pedestrian Credi as heir to his lucrative business empire and in 1488, when the master died whilst working in Venice, Lorenzo took on the mantle of responsibility.<sup>1018</sup>

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<sup>1015</sup> W. R. Valentiner, ‘Leonardo as Verrocchio’s Coworker’, *The Art Bulletin*, vol. 12, no. 1, 1930, p. 49. On Credi’s lack of development as an artist see M. Davies in his publication for the National Gallery, London, entitled *The Earlier Italian Schools*, London, Yale University Press, p. 303. For allowing me to access their dossier on Lorenzo di Credi’s *Virgin and Child* painting on 16.11.2011, I extend profound thanks to the National Gallery, London.

<sup>1016</sup> For documentary evidence of Credi’s position within the artistic hierarchy of Verrocchio’s workshop see W. R. Valentiner, ‘Leonardo as Verrocchio’s Coworker’, *The Art Bulletin*, vol. 12, no. 1, 1930, p. 49.

<sup>1017</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1018</sup> For the ‘*Testamento di Andrea Verrocchio*’, Venezia 25 Giugno, 1488, see Giovanni Gaye, *Documenti di Storia Italia III*, Carteggio Inedito D’Artisti Dei Secoli XIV XV XVI, p. 367.

A reasonable amount of Credi's artistic output has survived into the present day although *The Dream of Saint Martin* has only recently been attributed to him by myself.<sup>1019</sup> The argument that the aforementioned painting is the only extant work in *buon fresco* by Credi has been brought to our attention through data acquired by comparative stylistic and iconographic analyses and connoisseurship, as there exists no contract of works.<sup>1020</sup> Accordingly, in the absence of documentary sources that refer directly to the painting, it is a struggle to hear the voices that will reassure us of Credi's connection to the Buonomini. The artist himself pronounces his presence loudly and relatively clearly through the artistic signatures that he has left behind on the oratory's walls (Figs. 9, 161 and 162) but how he came to be painting there must remain a hypothesis.

Having mentioned previously that the Buonomini frescoes were likely produced between 1486 and 1490, while the most experienced or skilful artists in Ghirlandaio's workshop were at work at Santa Maria Novella, we can speculate that Ghirlandaio likely found his business oversubscribed.<sup>1021</sup>

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<sup>1019</sup> S. Hughes-Johnson, 'Divergent Hands: two scenes from the life of Saint Martin in the Oratorio dei Buonomini di San Martino', *Arte Cristiana*, vol c1 nos. 874 and 875, pp. 19-26 and pp. 117- 122.

<sup>1020</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1021</sup> 'Domenico Ghirlandaio, Florentine Painter' in G. Vasari, *Le Vite de Piu Eccellenti Architetti, Pittori et Scultori Italiani, da Cimabue Insino a Tempi Nostri I*, Florence, 1550, revised in 1568 states, 'lacia lavorare a me e tu provedi, che or anche io ho cominciato a conossere il modo di questa arte, mi duole che non mi sia allogato a dipignere a storie il circuito di tutte le mura della citta di Fiorenzo'. Look to G. Marchini, 'The Frescoes in the Choir of Santa Maria Novella', *The Burlington Magazine*, vol. 95, no. 607, 1953, p. 320 for the same section of text in English translation.

Conversely, during the late 1480s Lorenzo di Credi, although perhaps reasonably occupied with small commissions, did not appear to be able to gain or retain the more lucrative, large projects that had historically come the way of Verrocchio's workshop.<sup>1022</sup> For instance on the 3<sup>rd</sup> October 1488, Credi signed a contract to complete the Pistoia monument, a commission originally secured by his dead master, yet by 1514 it was still unfinished.<sup>1023</sup> Similarly Credi was not invited back to Venice to complete the equestrian statue begun by Verrocchio and by January 1489 the Venetians had allowed the exiled Alessandro Leopardi to return in order to complete it.<sup>1024</sup> He did however manage to take on a series of small commissions for the Convent of San Gaggio and during the last part of the *quattrocento* he produced four paintings for them: *Jesus and the Samaritan*; *Annunciation*; *Grieving Virgin and Saint John* and *Noli me Tangere* (Figs. 167-170).<sup>1025</sup> Additionally during the last decade of the fifteenth century or thereabouts, also completed a *Portrait of a Young Man* (Fig. 171) for an anonymous patron. Almost simultaneous to these commissions was Credi's involvement in a series of litigations connected to his master's bequests. By 1489 Credi and Verrocchio's brother, Tommaso were both being

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<sup>1022</sup> Günter Passavant, (trans. Katherine Watson), *Verrocchio: Sculptures, Paintings and Drawings*, London, Phaidon Press, 1969, p. 9 mentions the unsuccessful negotiations regarding the completion of the Forteguerra cenotaph. D. Covi, 'Four New Documents Concerning Andrea del Verrocchio', *The Art Bulletin*, vol. 48, no.1, 1966, pp. 97-103 mentions Credi's failure to secure the completion of the equestrian statue in Venice and the Pistoia monument. For further discussion on this subject see also L. Planiscig, *Andrea del Verrocchio*, Vienna, 1941, pp. 40-43.

<sup>1023</sup> D. Covi, 'Four New Documents Concerning Andrea del Verrocchio', *The Art Bulletin*, vol. 48, no.1, 1966, p. 98.

<sup>1024</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1025</sup> These paintings are on permanent display at the Fuligno Museum, Via Faenza, Florence and were listed in the inventory of the city's Convento di San Gaggio in 1890.

sued by Francesco di Giovanni and Biagio di Bartolommeo.<sup>1026</sup> Additionally, Giovanni di Domenico, nephew-in-law to Verrocchio, began a separate suit in order to secure a dowry which had supposedly been bequeathed to his wife but which had not been received by the couple.<sup>1027</sup> The legal proceedings reached their peak as regards complexity in 1490 when Tommaso began proceedings against Credi and Domenico Gregorio declared bankruptcy, which meant that ‘the title-holder to his property, Jacopo di Lucca Totti, continued the suit against Credi and Tommaso’.<sup>1028</sup> It is likely then that Lorenzo di Credi, unwanted in Venice and Pistoia and caught up in litigation, found himself available to aid the busy Domenico Ghirlandaio in Florence.<sup>1029</sup> The two men would have known each other both quasi socially and professionally after all. In the first instance Ghirlandaio would have encountered Credi when he purchased some wine from him sometime between Verrocchio’s death in 1488 and when the document, which listed assets of Verrocchio’s that had been sold, was produced in November 1490.<sup>1030</sup> Such sales, often

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<sup>1026</sup> D. Covi, ‘Four New Documents Concerning Andrea del Verrocchio’, *The Art Bulletin*, vol. 48, no.1, 1966, p. 97.

<sup>1027</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1028</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1029</sup> G. dalli Regoli, *Verrocchio, Lorenzo di Credi, Francesco di Simone Ferrucci*, Milan, Five Continents, 2003, p. 16 produces a timeline for Credi and conspicuously between 1488 and 1490, she does not associate the artist with any known commissions, or any projects at all for that matter. This is not to say that Regoli’s publication was lacking in academic rigour, quite the contrary, as Martin Davies states in *The Earlier Italian Schools*, London, Yale University Press, p. 303, ‘there is enough fact to form a good idea of Lorenzo di Credi’s style, but his chronology is not very sure’.

<sup>1030</sup> D. Covi, ‘Four New Documents Concerning Andrea del Verrocchio’, *The Art Bulletin*, vol. 48, no.1, 1966, p. 99 and p. 103. In a document which is related to the litigation between Lorenzo di Credi and Tommaso del Verrocchio, it is stated that:

‘...item che dipoi che decto Andrea fu ito a Venegia, decto Lorenzo vend [?] a Domenicho del Ghirlandaio dipintore barili sei di vino. Non credit. Item ebbe ancora per decto Andrea da Giovanni per Mona Brigida Lire 14 soldi XI piccioli.

organised in order to liquidate bequeathed assets into cash, were not uncommon and various local artists and other buyers would have expressed an interest in or purchased materials and items from the workshop of a recently deceased master. It was inevitable then that artists would have happened upon each other at these events. Some years later in 1498 Cosimo Rosselli organised a similar event when he found himself executor to Benedetto da Maiano's will. Rosselli oversaw the drawing up of an inventory of 'real and personal property' belonging to Maiano and the sale of completed sculpture and 'marbles outside the woodworking shop, not worked up'.<sup>1031</sup> He also recorded that Lorenzo di Credi had given him '1 large florin' for a small wooden crucifix which had once belonged to Benedetto da Maiano.<sup>1032</sup>

Returning briefly to our discussion of the relationship between Lorenzo di Credi and the Ghirlandaio clan, further strands of connection exist: the first unites them via a third party, Francesco di Simone Ferrucci, with whom both Verrocchio's *atelier* and Ghirlandaio's

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Item che decto Lorenzo dopo la morte di decto Andrea, vend [?] a Michele d'Antonio fabro certi feramenti, che lui n'ebe Lire XL. Non credit...'

See also Maud Cruttwell, *Verrocchio*, London, Duckworth and Company, 1904, pp. 234-56. The first part of this document, which relates to Domenico Ghirlandaio is translated as follows, '...item that was later that the said late Andrea prepared in Venice, the said Lorenzo sold to Domenico Ghirlandaio painter six barrels of wine. Not credit...' More recently G. Passavant, trans. Katherine Watson, *Verrocchio: Sculptures, Paintings and Drawings*, London, Phaidon Press, 1969, pp. 214-31 for published documents regarding the various legislations.

<sup>1031</sup> Creighton E. Gilbert, (ed.), *Italian Art 1400-1500: Sources and Documents in the History of Art*, New Jersey, Prentice Hall, 1980, pp. 44-45.

<sup>1032</sup> *Ibid.* p. 47.

*bottega* shared sculpted models and sold various decorative items to each other;<sup>1033</sup> the second, is present by way of the relationships between the painters, Antonio del Ceraiuolo (Antonio d’Arcangelo) and Giovanni d’Antonio Francesco dello Scheggia (lo Scheggia) and their various bonds to the two workshops. Despite being Credi’s pupil, Antonio was recorded as attending both the aforementioned master’s workshop and the Ghirlandaio *bottega*.<sup>1034</sup> Furthermore, both Antonio and Giovanni had worked simultaneously at the convent of La Crocetta (albeit during the first two decades of the sixteenth century), where Credi’s niece, Benedetta lived as a nun.<sup>1035</sup> This web of association expands further as there is documentary evidence that places lo Scheggia in Pisa during 1495 with Davide and Benedetto Ghirlandaio.<sup>1036</sup> According to Meghan Callahan, this suggests that by 1495 there was a ‘fluid interchange between members of the workshops of Lorenzo di Credi and the Ghirlandaio family’.<sup>1037</sup> Although this documentary evidence is perhaps a little late chronologically, to support the present theory (that the Buonomini frescoes were in fact completed between 1486 and 1490 in tandem with the choir chapel frescoes of Santa Maria Novella) it does however illustrate both the intricate bonds of association between members of Florence’s artistic community and also the apparent facility with which these craftsmen could move from *bottega* to *bottega*.

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<sup>1033</sup> L. Pisani, ‘The Exchange of Models in Florentine Workshops of the Quattrocento: A sheet from the Verrocchio Sketchbook’, *The Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, vol. 67, 2004, pp. 269-274.

<sup>1034</sup> Meghan Callahan, ‘Antonio del Ceraiuolo at la Crocetta and a note on Lorenzo di Credi’s niece’, *The Burlington Magazine*, vol. 152, no. 1282, 2010, pp. 7-11.

<sup>1035</sup> *Ibid.* p. 8.

<sup>1036</sup> *Ibid.* p. 10.

<sup>1037</sup> *Ibid.*



In 1498, with the *quattrocento* coming to a close, Credi's name finds mention in correspondence between the merchant, Francesco Bongianni and Pandolfo Rucellai, the latter already an associate of Girolamo Savonarola<sup>1038</sup> and so taken with aspects of Dominican piety that he will soon take monastic vows and be known as Fra' Santi Rucellai.<sup>1039</sup> The letter reveals that Bongianni, as a patron of the artist, had popped into Credi's Florentine workshop to be told a tale of 'two brace of ...[Dominican] friars' who had also attended the space some time before and recounted details of a miracle performed by Savonarola.<sup>1040</sup> Clearly this correspondence and the encounter that it records cannot be used as evidence to support Credi's previous connection to the Buonomini but what is transparent is it provides, as F.W. Kent describes:

...a rare reference to what must have been a constant flow of citizens and, as it were, city life and experience, in and out of artists' *botteghe*. It supplies a concrete if still ultimately tantalising example of that process of complex interaction between individuals - citizens, patrons and artists - in a small community, the contemplation of which reveals the preconditions of artistic production and even creativity in the period better than recourse to grand abstractions about the relationship between 'society' and 'creator'.<sup>1041</sup>

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<sup>1038</sup> For correspondence between Rucellai and Savonarola in 1487 see Edoardo Fumagalli, 'I Trattati di Fra Santi Rucellai', *Aevum*, vol. 51, no. ¾, 1977, p. 295.

<sup>1039</sup> See Renzo Ristori, *Un Mercante Savonaroliano: Pandolfo Rucellai*, and for a brief but informative biography of Pandolfo Rucellai see also E. Fumagalli, 'I Trattati di Fra Santi Rucellai', *Aevum*, vol. 51, no. 3/4, 1977, pp. 289-332. See p. 299 in particular for Pandolfo's entrance into the monastery of San Marco in 1495 and also his change of name.

<sup>1040</sup> F. W. Kent, 'Lorenzo di Credi, his patron Iacopo Bongianni and Savonarola', *The Burlington Magazine*, vol.125, no. 966, 1983, p. 540.

<sup>1041</sup> Francis W. Kent, 'Lorenzo di Credi, his patron Iacopo Bongianni and Savonarola', *The Burlington Magazine*, vol.125, no. 966, 1983, p. 540.

Although the process behind Lorenzo di Credi coming to paint the *Dream of Saint Martin* comes to us in dissociated fragments (like a badly tuned radio signal that we cannot discern fully) what we can be certain of is that the confraternity that he came to work for made quite an impression on him. As he approached the end of his life Credi, like his master before him, made his last will and testament and written therein were instructions to leave a generous bequest to the Buonomini di San Martino. ‘His universal heirs... [were] to be the Society and Procurators of Holy Martin of Florence, which is called the Confraternity of the Shamed Poor’ and the three executors were instructed to ‘attend to the sale of Lorenzo’s furniture and goods’ which would mostly ‘relate to the art of the painter’ and exchange everything for cash’<sup>1042</sup> This programme of asset liquidation would certainly have appealed to the way that the Buonomini operated and for that matter still does. Paolo Giustiniani, a current assistant to the Buonomini explained recently that ‘everything that the Congregation receives is handed out at once...it doesn’t capitalise, accumulate or make money out of donations’.<sup>1043</sup> Similarly, their account books from the

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<sup>1042</sup>G. Gaye, Carteggio Inedito D'Artisti Dei Secoli XIV XV XVI, *Documenti di Storia Italiana III*, p. 372 reads:

‘In omnibus autem aliis suis bonis et rebus, iuribus et actionibus, et nomine debitorum, quae restabunt in hereditate dicti Laurentii tempore mortis sue quae omnia maxime erunt mobilia, suos heredes universales fecit, instituit et esse voluit societatem et homines gubernatores Sancti Martini da Florentia, quae appellatur la Compagnia de' Poveri Vergognosi, cum infrascriptis oneribus et obligationibus, videlicet: quod predicti gubernatores et provisores dicte societatis, quanto ocius pieri poterit, post mortem dicti Laurentii procurent, ut vendantur et sive vendant omnes masseritias et mobilia dicti Laurentii, et reducant omnia, salvis infrescriptis legatis, in pecunia numerata. Et quas venditiones, de his maxime quae pertinent ad artem pictoris, exortatur ipse testator prefatos gubernatores sociatatis’.

Profound thanks to David Shaw for overseeing my Latin translation.

<sup>1043</sup> J. M. Bradburne (ed.), *Hidden Voices: Discovering the Buonomini di San Martino*, Florence, Giunti, 2011, p. 20 and p. 48.

fifteenth-century are testament to the fact that even then, just decades after their inception the confraternity did not capitalise.<sup>1044</sup>

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<sup>1044</sup> Total outgoings and incomings from March 1478 are typical for this confraternity, which did not accumulate funds. Income for this month was y. 1009.19.8.76.56.46. Outgoings amounted to y105.10.10.67.56.46. The resulting balance is a paltry y.4.8.10.

## Chapter 8 Conclusion

The Procurators of the Shamed Poor of Florence are a lay brotherhood otherwise known as the Buonomini di San Martino. Still operating today, the confraternity was founded in 1442. The sodality was certainly aided initially by the munificence of Cosimo '*il Vecchio*' de' Medici and organised with the spiritual guidance of Antonio Pierozzi, Archbishop of Florence, in mind. Performing acts of charity based on the Seven Corporal Works of Mercy, the confraternity does not capitalise and relies on the pious notion of Divine Providence to perpetually refill its empty coffers.

Lay confraternities, like the Buonomini di San Martino provided one of the accepted avenues where laymen and women could publicly practice their piety according to their preferred mode of spirituality and this study has clearly set out the confraternity's basic features and various forms. Lay piety is a slippery term and, for the purposes of this study, the author has circumscribed that lay piety is the outward expression by an unordained general public of aspects of church doctrine, religious learning and faith.

Just as a person's choice of confraternity was a personal issue, so was one's preference of spirituality. Within the Catholic Church, while following the word of God, one could also select from a variety of spiritual guides: Dominican; Franciscan; Augustinian and so forth, whose dogma was set out in a variety of religious texts, ranging from biblical

sources to medieval theological writings. Displays of lay spirituality and the associated metaphysical benefits of reducing one's time in purgatory were achieved by the production of art, literature, magnificent expenditure on architecture, through the performance of charitable acts and most commonly through confraternal membership. Furthermore, the motivation for such public displays, beyond the wish to progress more quickly to Paradise, ranged from concerns about purgatory, fear of death due to the apocalyptic nature of the age, innate piety and on to the need for personal advancement.

Confraternities were subject to internal and external hierarchies. Internally, despite an essential need to be socially heterogeneous, these companies possessed a social order based on existing Florentine infrastructure. Externally, there existed a further hierarchical structure which subtly ranked sodalities against each other according to membership, the festivals with which it was associated and also according to its fiscal health. The Procurators of the Shamed Poor however, also possessed both geographical and titular advantages over other Florentine confraternities. The siting of their oratory is significant as San Martino was formerly Florence's political centre and is the neighbourhood in which Dante Alighieri lived and worked. Furthermore, the *dodici Buonomini* (twelve good men) was a title not only conferred on the twelve Procurators of the Shamed Poor, it was also synonymous with the first elected council of Florence.

Most of the lay confraternities that existed during the *quattrocento* performed a few Works of Mercy from the seven, these acts being set out in various books of the Bible.

Nevertheless, membership to the Buonomini di San Martino allowed one to ostensibly perform charitable deeds based on the entire set. Companies could also be selective with regard to the individuals that they bestowed their charity upon. The Buonomini were not singular in that they aided the *poveri vergognosi*, although their fresco cycle and various contemporary literary sources would suggest that the criteria on which the classification as shamed poor depended was more of a moral concept than a categorisation *per se*. The present study is unique in that it splits this obstacle (the illusive concept known as the *poveri vergognosi*) bilaterally, in order to further aid understanding of this confusing abstraction. Accordingly, one side of the defining line becomes a set of criteria, which must be met by prospective members of the shamed poor. These standards being: their need must be kept secret; they are not necessarily *miserabili*, although their social status is not an issue; they face a loss of honour; they must be pious; they experience psychological consequences due to hardship and should be ‘upright’ individuals. On the other side of the dividing line lies a more sophisticated and intricately derived set of ordinances that potential members of the shamed poor must adhere to, in order to be considered as *poveri vergognosi*. These are expressed within this thesis as the demonstration of virtue and honour, according to gender, governed by conduct and unaffected by social status and fiscal considerations. Furthermore, once one was ranked as shamed poor, the Buonomini would then discreetly decide on a suitable restorative care plan. Some cases required only a single instance of benefaction whereas others required continued charitable intervention.

Notwithstanding that the lay confraternity of the Buonomini di San Martino was founded in 1442, the painted decorations of its oratory were not executed until the 1480s and were realised by the workshop of Domenico Ghirlandaio, in tandem with the Tornabuoni chapel frescoes of Santa Maria Novella. The dating of the frescoes is suggested by the following: compositional similarities between the Buonomini cycle and the Tornabuoni/Tornaquinci murals; the artistic relationships between the confraternity's painted decorations and motifs present in both the later works of Domenico Ghirlandaio and the Sistine Chapel frescoes executed by Sandro Botticelli during the 1480s; indirect documentary evidence dated between 1487 and 1490; documentary evidence from the close of 1479. Furthermore, this later dating of the Buonomini murals is bolstered by the researcher's singular review of the confraternity's foundation documents, the language of which suggests that the Procurators used funds assigned to the shamed poor (in the addition to monies provided from another, anonymous source) in order to carry out only building works, not fresco painting, in their oratory in 1479. They did however, as the same document states, plan to return the capital to the penurious.

Although pre-iconographic descriptions of the Buonomini murals have existed for centuries, the full iconographic and comparative analyses that the author has carried out as part of this study is the first of its kind. The iconological, comparative and connoisseurial studies of the Buonomini cycle, carried out during this investigation, have revealed that the messages contained within these murals provide much more than instruction to *fratelli*. Actual deeds are recorded in the media of plaster and paint. For instance, the donation of money to the confraternity by Lorenzo de' Medici in 1479

which allowed ninety- eight prisoners to be released from the Stinche prison is celebrated along with the documentation of an initial visit by confraternity members to a family in need. Fallen confraternity members are eulogised, as is evident from the inclusion of a portrait of the dead Giuliano de' Medici within one of the lunette paintings. Furthermore, moral tales and warnings are visually communicated and these have repercussions beyond the microcosm of confraternal life, extending to the macrocosm of the civic sphere.

The Procurators of the Shamed Poor, like other Florentine confraternities, could boast members of the most notable and ancient of the city's families amongst their ranks however, the Medici are singled out by the sodality for special treatment. The presence of Lorenzo and Giuliano de' Medici's portraits on the oratory walls not only commemorates these merchant princes but, subtly subverts this small room into a new ritual space where the cult of Medici could be witnessed alongside illustrations of the Buonomini's good deeds. The Medici has a long and illustrious connection to the confraternity, that began at the sodality's inception in 1442 and continued throughout the family's ducal reign. Throughout the fifteenth century however, Medici involvement came in intense pulses. Initially Cosimo '*il Vecchio*' de' Medici provided the majority of goods and income which came into the confraternity although it was his factotum, Alesso Pelli who was registered as one of the twelve and not he. Prior to the Pazzi Conspiracy Lorenzo and his brother, Giuliano took Cosimo's place as patron. Both men served as procurators although they did not perform deliveries or visits, as most of the other attorneys did. In the immediate aftermath of the Pazzi Conspiracy, although not attending the



confraternity, Lorenzo retained his connections to them by continuing with donations to the Buonomini and installed two of his trusted associates, Carlo Biliotti and Pandolfo Rucellai as Procurators of the Shamed Poor. The decline in Medicean involvement within the sodality, which began in the early 1480s, coincided with the meteoric rise in this family's fortunes during the period following the Pazzi conspiracy. Likewise, Lorenzo's lack of involvement at San Martino during his last few years alive also mirrored contemporary habits of confraternal attendance.

The information gained from analyses of the paintings in conjunction with other documentary sources does not end there however. Iconographic, comparative and connoisseurial analyses, used simultaneously and directed at the two scenes from the life of Saint Martin of Tours, revealed that Lorenzo de' Credi was the artist responsible for the painting entitled *The Dream of Saint Martin*. By further applying the powerful tools of art historical analysis to the figures depicted in the Buonomini frescoes and cross checking the extracted data with written intelligence from conduct books and other contemporary Renaissance literary and visual sources, the formerly mute individuals classed as shamed poor are, for the first time, allowed a voice. Moreover, these traditionally silent individuals reveal themselves as unique. As non-patrician representatives of Florence, they are as virtuous and respectable, in their own way, as their high-born counterparts, also immortalised by Domenico Ghirlandaio and his assistants but this time, in the choir chapel frescoes of Santa Maria Novella.

Despite its uniqueness, the Buonomini cycle was a modest program of decoration and there are no known records illustrating the cost of the painted works or indicating the commissioner. The scenes were organised by Domenico Ghirlandaio and the job would only have taken just over a month to complete as there was much reliance on pattern books and cartoons and sketches from other larger commissions were reused and made to fit the smaller job. Furthermore, the quality of the paintings, in connoisseurial terms, are inferior to those that Domenico was working on simultaneously at Santa Maria Novella. This suggests that despite the odd masterly touch, the Buonomini paintings were executed by a group of painters from the lower ranks of Ghirlandaio's workshop who were, on occasion, aided by the master's brother Davide.

Perhaps due to the fact that the Buonomini cycle was born of a master's concept yet was executed by many workshop hands, the paintings have previously received little attention and have not been investigated thoroughly. The current study however, is an attempt to rectify these shortcomings. The sustained use of the artworks as documents, backed up by other pertinent primary and secondary sources has, throughout the entire thesis, allowed for further insight into the following spheres: religious doctrines supporting acts of pilgrimage; the state of the Florentine pilgrim trade and the hospitality associated with this business during the *quattrocento*. Likewise, the study also brings the Buonomini's *Burying the Dead* mural to the fore and demonstrates that the painted scene is an accurate portrayal of one of the rituals surrounding the burial of a poor person who, because of the piety and decency he possessed in life, was buried with honour. In addition to these

discussions Ghirlandaio's proclivity for the faithful rendition of people, places and objects are upheld.

Charity however, was the Buonomini's primary Christian duty. Nevertheless, not all of those aided by the confraternity were allotted a place on the oratory's walls or within the company's ledgers. Even so, the confraternity's philanthropy embraced a number of artists and artisans – some famous, some obscure, some poor and some rich.

Nevertheless, what is surprising, given the meticulous nature of the confraternity's account books, are the lack of references in these records to the sodality's decorative scheme. It would appear that in this instance, rather than base their elaborate patronal web solely on the Ciceronian notion of mutual benefaction (as was customary in Florence) the Buonomini unusually employed the ancient stoic, Seneca's conception of reciprocity, which requires no book keeping for mutual transaction, in their confraternal sponsorships of Domenico Ghirlandaio and Lorenzo di Credi.

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## Appendices



## Appendix I

Partial Transcription of Membership Details from the *Codice dei Capitoli*.

Elenco (list) of Members Including Lorenzo de' Medici, c. 7 verso and c. 8 recto, (1.1.1.0.1.) ABSM.

- + Piero da rificione Lenzi
- + Niccolo di bernardo di Simone del nevo
- + Lionardo di benedetto Strozi
- + Baptista di pandolfo pandolfini
- + Alexandro di lionardo manelly
- + Francescho di Bartolomeo Nelli
- + LORENZO DI PIERO DE MEDICI
- [Four further entries are illegible]
- + Giovanni del M<sup>o</sup> Piero de M<sup>o</sup> Domenico
- + Franc<sup>o</sup> di bartolomeo Melli
- + Augustino di domenichi decto ilciegia
- \* Pagolo di marchione bellandini Linaiuolo
- + Ser Ludovico di Giovani da radda
- + Giovani d'Agnolo della ione
- + Piero di Roberto Gianfigliazi
- + Giuliano di marcheo caferucci
- + Bernardino di Jacopo di M<sup>tinio</sup> tintore
- \* Antoniofrancescho di Bartolomeo
- \* Bernardo di Zanobi di Nobili

- Piero di francesco di goccio
- + Iacopo di nicolo d Agnolo rigarnece
- + Giovani di Matteo nelli
- \* Lionardo di Pagalo cimatore
- + Cipriano dorlandino umattiere

Members from 1442-1501, c. 9-15, (1.1.1.1.0.1) ABSM (please note however that although some *proposti* are indicated, there are others that are not singled out as such).

- Nofri di Filippo Calzaiuoli
- Bartolomm. Dell A. Giuochi
- Feo di Feo Belcari
- Francesco di Bettino Setaiuolo (rinunzio)
- Pandolfo di Gio. Rucellai (frate di S.Marco)
- Morello di Pagolo Morelli
- Mariano di Primerano di Iacopo Calzaiuolo (anno 1501 ach.s.mar)
- S. Pagolo d'Amerigo di Bartolo Grasso
- Mariotto di Domenico di Giovanni (textitore di fette)
- Damiano d'Antonio di Biagio (rimendatore)
- Francesco d'Ant. di Francesco (miniature)
- Simone d'Iacopo Mazzinghi
- Andrea di Piero Bambagiaio
- Francesco di Filippo di Vanni Rucellai
- Carlo di Filippo Rinuccini
- Carlo d'Alighieri Biliotti
- Francesco di Gio. Buonamici
- Domenico di Bernardo Mazzinghi
- Francesco di Filippo Rinuccini
- Domenicio di Giovanni Bartolo
- Piero di Francesco di Goccio Ferranti
- Piero di ser Lorenzo Pagoli
- Bernardo d'Inghleses di Schiatta Ridolfi
- Niccolo di Primerano d'Iacopo Calzaiuolo (proposto 1490)
- Gioacchino di Biagio Guasconi
- Iacopo di Giovanni Salviati
- Lionello di Giovanni Boni (proposto 1501)

## Appendix II

Transcription of the Buonomini's *Capitoli* from the *Codice dei Capitoli*,  
c. 3-7, (1.1.1.0.1.) ABSM (translated in part).

Ad laude et gloria del nostro signore iesu christo: et della sua gloriosa madre vergine maria et del beato sancto martino. nostro protectore et advocato: et di tuta la celestiale corte. Ad honore del la sancta chiesa di Roma: et del sanctissimo in christo padre et Signore papa Eugenio IIII et del reverndo in christo padre et signore mes l'arciveschovo della città di Firenze. Ad utilità de poveri vergognosi della città et contado et distretto. Et ad salute dell anime degli infrascripti principiatori dell infrascripta opera de Misericordia, et de chi ce porgerà aiuto: alla quale l' onnipotente idio presti gratia et aumento conperseveranza.

**To the praise and glory of our Lord Jesus Christ and of his glorious Virgin Mother Mary and of the blessed Saint Martin our protector and advocate, and of all the celestial court. To the honour of the holy church in Rome, and of the most holy in Christ Father and Lord Pope Eugenio IIII and of the reverend in Christ Father and Lord the Archbishop of the city of Florence the utility of the shamed poor of the city and countryside and district. And to the health of the souls written below principals of the works of mercy written below and those who will hand us help: to which the all powerful God lends grace and augments with perseverance.**

Considerando la carestia presente et la moltitudine de poveri della città et contado di Firenze: maximamente di quegli che non sono consueti a mendicare et il sinistro che patiscono molti colle loro famiglia. spirati da dio dal quale i sancti desiderii et le giuste operationi procedono. Gli infrascripti Dodici cittadini diliberorono colla benedictione del sanctissimo padre et Signore papa Eugenio quarto negli anni domini 1441 1<sup>o</sup> del mese di Febbraio pigliare lo essertitio d'essere procuratori de detti poveri vergognosi: et a quello attendere con diligentia et fede durante la vita loro: salvo giusto impedimento. Et cerchare tutti isieme [insieme] et divisamente secondo parrà alle loro discretioni ogni

aiutorio et limosina da ciaschuno signore spirituale et temporale et da ogni cittadino et altre persone per distribuire di Tempo in tempo ai detti poveri vergognosi. Per li modi vie et forma che dissotto saranno annotate.

**Considering the present famine and the large number of poor of the city and district of Florence: ultimately of those who usually do not beg and the inauspicious that suffer many passes with their family, to live by God from which the divine desire and the right results are advanced. The undersigned twelve citizens deliberated with the good speaking of the holiest father and Lord Pope Eugenio 4<sup>th</sup> in the year of 1441 1<sup>st</sup> of the month of February to seize the firebrand to be attorneys of the said shamed poor: and to that attend with diligence and faith during their life: save just impediment. And to look for all together and discreetly according to their discretion every help and charity known of every lord spiritual and temporal and of every citizen and other person for to distribute time to time to the said shamed poor. For them by way of manners and form which will be noted down beneath.**

Prima deliberarono d' eleggere uno religioso sacerdote il quale sia loro correctore o vero direttore. acciò che continuamente avessino dove ricorrere per consiglio et spirituale aiutorio. Il quale religioso abbi auctorità d' eleggere uno altro sacerdote in istato secolare di matura età et di buona vita il quale sia come suo vicario. che continuamente s'abbi a ritrovare coi detti procuratori in ogni partito s'avesse a fare se con comodità aversi può acciochè in ogni loro opera sia il consiglio spirituale et la fede del detto sacerdote: sendo non di meno approvato per la maggiore parte de detti procuratori. La electione del quale correctore sia in questo modo cioe chel proposto nomini tre huomini spirituali et di buona fama: et disaminato tralloro si metta apparito et chi a più fave rimanga correctore. Et manchando detto correctore e suo vicario per morte o per altra cagione o predetti procuratori si mutassono si provegha come dissopra si dice:

Anchora che l' numero de detti procuratori non sia nè possa essere piu che dodici et manchandone per morte o altro giusto impedimento alchuno o per alchuno difetto si comettesse che dio lo diliberi del quale si stia al giudicio de sacerdoti che per li tempi fussono in detto eserticio [esercito] deputati et della maggiore parte s'abbia esaminare [examinare] per secreto partito a fave de detto dodici procuratori il quale giudicio s'abbia esaminare per secreto partito a fave bianche et nere. Et in tal caso s'abbia a nominare in luogo di quello manchasse uno per ciaschuno de detti procuratoribet quegli mettere appartito et quello che avesse più fave nere abiendo il numero de due terzi s'inteda essere in luogo di quello manchasse et se si fussono concorrenti si gitti la sorte: et chi tovvha la

sorta s'intenda essere electo et non possa essercitare detto ufficio se prima non si confesssa [confessa] per essere più abile alla divina grazia. et fidele a questa opera principiata:

Item che nella chiesa di sancto martino di Firenze sia al presente la loro residenza la quale concede loro abate della badia a di firenze a beneplacito di lui et dei suoi successori che possino andare. senza averne afare alchuna recognition alla detta Badia et quivi fare condure diuramente pane et ogni altra cosa s'avesse a distribuire. Intendendo non di meno per detto uso non acquistare alchuna giuriditione in sudetto luogo ma a ogni volontà et richiesta dill'abate o suo successore lascialla libera et spedita come al presente la.

Anchora chel modo del dispensare le limosine si debba dare di concordia della maggior parte de detti procuratori insieme col sacerdotte [sacerdote] se non chomodità aver si può divise in mese secondo richiederanno i bisogni et tempi e a quegli poveri che per la maggior parte sie deliberato:

Ancora chel detto sacerdote cioè vicario tenga una borsa in che siano inborsa ti i detti dodici procuratori et ogni mese traga uno proposto il quale tenga conto di tutto quello li perverà nelle maini in danari et roba. et cosi di tutto quello distribuirà per entrata et uscita et de partiti si farà a suo tempo. Et finite il mese suo infra octo di sia tenuto rendere ragione ale suo successore con dargli ogni resto di danari et roba gli avanzassi in mano: Il quale Proposto si debba trarre octo di innanzi che l'altro esca: et possa detto proposto ragunare il resto de compagni quando et come alla sua conscientia parra bisogni et ciaschuno de detti compagni sia tenuto per amore di dio a ubidire aiutare et puramente consigliare secondo si richiede a detto essercitio:

Anchora che infermando achuno [alchuno] de detti procuratori debba il proposto che sarà in quel tempo farlo vicitare [visitare] da compagni quando et come allui parrà. et se avesse bisogno sovenirlo. Et manchando di vita sieno tenuti e compagni in fra uno mese fargli dire uno ufficio mortuorio per l'anima sua nella quale si spendi fiorini due:

Item che ciaschuno de detti dodici procuratori debbeno ogni anno dare delloro proprio per distribuire a poveri et per dare buono exemplo di loro al proximo staia tre di grano o quel più volessi dare: et detto grano sia la prima parita che l' proposto metta a entrata

distribuendo le dette tre staia o quell più avessi per ciaschuna settimana durante el tempo suo acciò che continuamente ogni settimana si facci qualche limosina et se caso fusse che per alchuno sinistro alchuno de detti procuratori non potessi darlo chiedendo lo per amore di dio se egli lasciato:

Anchora che i detti procuratori debanno vivere finestamente: Fuggire ogni contrarietà di bene vivere: non giucare nè stare a vedere: non usare a taverne nè alluochi disonesti: non fare contratti inleciti usare alle chise: andare alle messe alle prediche a divini uffici come è debito a veri christiani et sieno tenuti ciaschuno de detti una volta il mese o per lo meno di due confessarsi: et comunicarsi oltre all' obrigo della chiesa tre volte l'anno: cioè per la nativité di christo per le pentecoste: et per l'assumptione di nostra donna. Et debba ciaschuno de dodici dire ogni di l'orazione di sancto martino coll'antifona et col versetto acciò che dio median te le intercessioni di sancto Martino proveghi a poveri et loro conservi in pace. Et dire ogni de sette pater nostri coll' ave maria: ricordandosi dell' ore di christo pati passione: in caso che altro ufficio o divotione non dicesse. Et se alchuno de detti procuratori non si portasse honestamente come di sopra si dice. Et essendo amonito et non si emendi sendo dichiarato per la magior parte de detti procuratori et di consiglio de detti due sacerdoti s'intenda essere privato et cancellato di detto numero. Et se scadesse che alchuno de detti procuratori non volesse o non potesse essercitare detto ufficcio sendo dichiarato nel modo detto per detti procuratori insieme co sacerdoti rimanghi fuori del numero: et in suo logo se lega uno altro come pel capitolo se dispone.

Item che i spopradetti dodici procuratori col detto sacerdote per le due parti di loro habino acutorità et balia di giugnere et diminuire quello che paresse loro a questi capitoli secondo le occurrentie de temporali et etiam de elegere ministri per aiutorio del loro essercitio multiplicando le facende como protrebbe acchadere et premiare quelli tali elegessono per loro aiutorio come per le due parti di loro si disponesse: et torre case et luogi a pigione per conservare le cose et roba avesseno a guardare: tutto a spese de beni per venissono in loro governo per detto essercitio. Intendendosi non di meno che per detta autorità e balia non si possa accrescere o diminuire il numero de detti dodici procuratori. Ma continuo stare fermo come a presente è scritto. i quali si debbeno scrivere da piè a questi capitoli di mano del sopradetto correctore.

Item s'adomandi al sancto padre per rimedio de peccati de sopradetti procuratori per essere più sollecciti nel bene operare in questo misericordioso essercitio quella indulgentia annuale che parrà alla sua beatitudine et a quelgli che persevereranno fino alla morte similimente li parrà secondo la consueta largità della santa chiesa. Et a quegli che porgeranno aiutorio a questa opera pia quella indulgentia: che parrà alla sua sanctità. Le

quali indulgentie si debbeno fare notare in su certo libro diputato. Et se alchuno de detti procuratori: o di quegli che saranno manchasse in fare o osservare i detti capitoli o alcuna parte d'essi o obmettesse alcuna delle cose avessi a fare: che per questo non intenda esser tenuto o obligato a peccato mortale.

[The Initial Twelve Procurators of the Shamed Poor]

Michele di M. Pico Benini  
Franc. Di Bened. Di Guccio degli Strozzi  
Luigi d'Vrabano Bruni  
Bernardo di Mario di M. Forese Salviati  
S. Alesso di Matteo di Pallo Notaio  
Nofri d'Agnolo Drappiero  
Primerano di 'Iacopo Calzaiuolo  
Giovanni di Baldo Lanaioulo  
Pasquino d'vgolino del Vernaccaio Setaiuolo  
Antonio di Maffeo da Barberino  
Giuliano di Stagio Drappiere  
Iacopo di Baggio Cimatore

## Appendix III

Transcription of Note #Pandolfo Rucellai, *Quaderno del Camarlingo o Sia Proposto dal 1474-1481*, (1.2.3.0.1.), ABSM.<sup>1045</sup>

El miniatore mi disse ier sera che voleva della polliza et però ve rimando per insino in 120 che dandone all'innanti de l'altra passarete la somma delle staia 150 pure voglio più tosto perdere nel più che nel meno

Chonfortovi a tenergli le mani adosso però disse l'altra sera che non volie dare a una che sta fuor di porta staia 3 et se non inhominciano a fare a questo modo roviniamo questa opera et se voi venite passarete de liggieri sarete chagione che degli altri faranno il simile.

Chomprendo che se s'andassi a X si farà chonchlusione di quel fatto e non andando voi e poveri verranno a perdere questo sussidio et però vi chonforto a sapere a perigholi alle tentagioni diaboliche

Pandolfo

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<sup>1045</sup> Profound thanks to Elena Brizio for the transcription of this document.



## Appendix IV

Poor Families Entered in the Quaderno on 1 May 1466.<sup>1046</sup>

Occupation of Head of Family	Number of Such Families	Total Number of Times Each Family was Assisted
Setaiolo fu (was a silk weaver)	1	42
Tintore (dyer)	1	83
Purgatore (cloth washer)	1	89
Tiratore di drappi (cloth ironer)	1	212
Tessitore di drappi (weaver)	10	765
Filatoiaio (silk spinner)	2	264
Riveditore di panni (remover of cloth impurities)	4	335
Scardassiere (wool carder)	2	132
Pettinatore di Lanna (separated the short wool from the long)	1	3
Lavora di Lanna (wool washer)	2	163
Lavora di Tinta (dye washer)	1	5
Sta di linaiolo (I work in linen)	2	93
Sta al Purgo (I work in cleaning)	1	5
Conciatore	1	123

<sup>1046</sup> The table was originally compiled and published in Italian by A. Spicciani, 'The 'Poveri Vergognosi' in Fifteenth-Century Florence: The first 30 years' activity of the Buonomini di San Martino', in T. Riis (ed.), *Aspects of Poverty in Early Modern Europe*, Florence, Badia Fiesolana, 1981, pp. 138-9.

(a tanner or washer of clothes)		
Calzolaio (cobbler/shoemaker)	3	169
Cibattiere (slipper or thong maker)	3	200 <sup>1047</sup>
Pianellaio fu ( was a slipper vendor)	`1	124
Pellicciaio (furrier)	1	8
Calzaiolo (hose maker or vendor)	1	212
Sta al Sarto (works in tailoring)	1	5
Stette a rigattiere (junk dealer)	1	8
Sta con i Cinque del Contado (I was with the Five of the County)	1	27
Guardia in S. Martino (The guard in San Martino)	1	33
Dell'Opera (of the works)	1	5+165 <sup>1048</sup>
Scrittore (writer)	1	159
Miniatore (miniaturist)	1	5
Otonaio (brazier)	1	171
Torniaio (lathe operator/ turner)	1	79
Coltellinaio (cutler)	1	91
Legnaiolo (wood cutter)	1	55
Fornaio (was a baker)	3	62
Pollaiolo (poulterer)	1	84

<sup>1047</sup> A ciabattiere was assisted four times and then was suspended. Later he was assisted a further four times

<sup>1048</sup> This family was assisted for two separate periods and was inscribed twice.

Sensale (commercial agent)	1	5+201 <sup>1049</sup>
Barbiere (barber)	1	90
Scalpeltatore (stone cutter or fettler)	1	4
Manovale (unskilled labourer)	2	65
Lavora gli orti (he works in the gardens)	1	5
Portatore (bearer/porter)	1	139
Senza indicazione di professione (without indication of profession)	15	771
Vedove (widow)	18	967

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<sup>1049</sup> This family was assisted for two separate periods and was inscribed twice.

## Appendix V

### The Frescoes and their Most Recent Restoration

Laura Lucioli gave the following informative reports concerning the modern restoration of the murals in 2011:

#### Initial State of Conservation<sup>1050</sup>

‘The fresco cycle did not appear to be in a critical state of conservation because it had been carefully restored in the 1970s, but both the plaster and stonework had been damaged by the movement and settlement that had occurred since then in the building itself. In particular, old cracks restored through puttying in the past had widened again and the putty had consequently fallen out. Random deposits of dust were clearly visible, and in several areas the painted surface had become opaque and dark, with a yellowish-brown patina caused by the aging of old fixatives used during the previous restoration process. In addition, those areas where the painted surface was damaged or missing due to deterioration caused by infiltration or by the microclimate inside the oratory had been restored with an undercoat which had become too grainy and worn as its chemical components aged. The plasterwork on the walls and ceiling had also taken on a yellowish tinge cause by dust and candle smoke and by a general deterioration of the old whitewash.

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<sup>1050</sup> For images of the Buonomini frescoes prior to their most recent restoration see figures 170-179.

## Restoration

The restoration project consisted in cleaning the painted surface; consolidating the plasterwork; puttying cracks and gaps and painting over the puttied areas and abrasions on the frescoed surface. The aim of these operations was to recover the original colour scheme by completely removing all dust and alien substances present on the frescoed, plastered and stone surfaces. The plasterwork that had come loose from the wall was stabilized, and the painted surface was anchored to the plaster wherever it had come away from it or appeared to be flaking. Gaps and abrasions in the colour on the frescoed surface were then puttied and completed in paint'.<sup>1051</sup>

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<sup>1051</sup> L. Lucioli in J. M. Bradburne (ed.), *Hidden Voices: Discovering the Buonomini di San Martino*, Florence, Giunti, 2011, pp. 62-65.

Volume II

Illustrations



Figure 1 Oratorio dei Buonomini di San Martino (exterior), 2011, San Martino, Florence.



Figure 2 Piazza del Cimatore, 2011, Florence.





Figure 3 Oratorio dei Buonomini di San Martino (interior), 2011, San Martino, Florence.

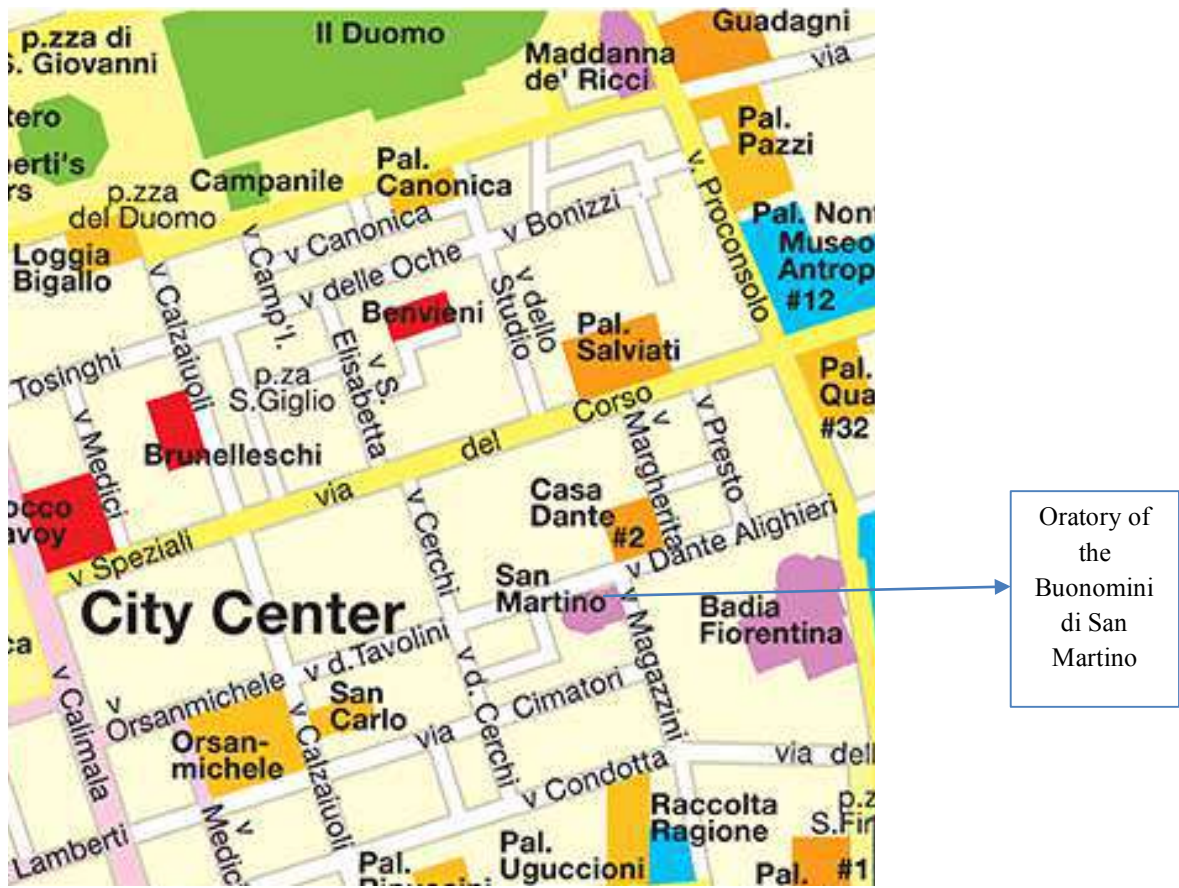


Figure 4 Map of Florence Showing the Location of the Oratory of the Buonomini di San Martino.

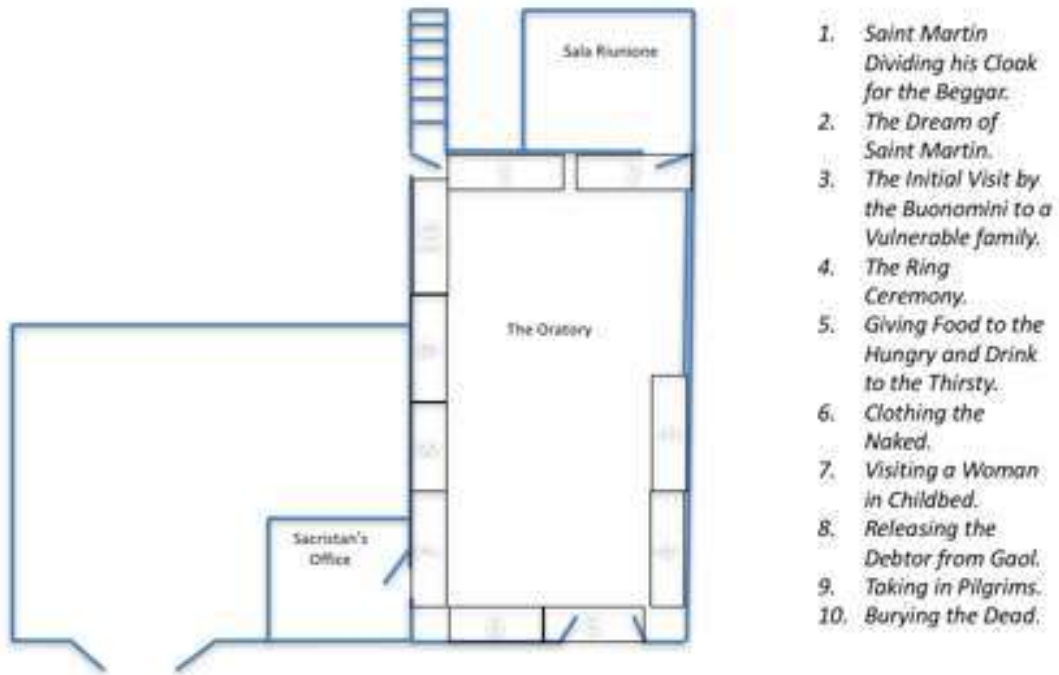


Figure 5 Ground Plan of the Oratory of the Buonomini di San Martino Showing the Position of the Frescoes.



Figure 6 The workshop of Domenico Ghirlandaio, *Saint Martin Dividing his Cloak for the Beggar*, 1486-1490, fresco, Oratorio dei Buonomini di San Martino, Florence.





Figure 7 The workshop of Domenico Ghirlandaio, *Taking in Pilgrims*, 1486-1490, fresco, Oratorio dei Buonomini di San Martino, Florence.



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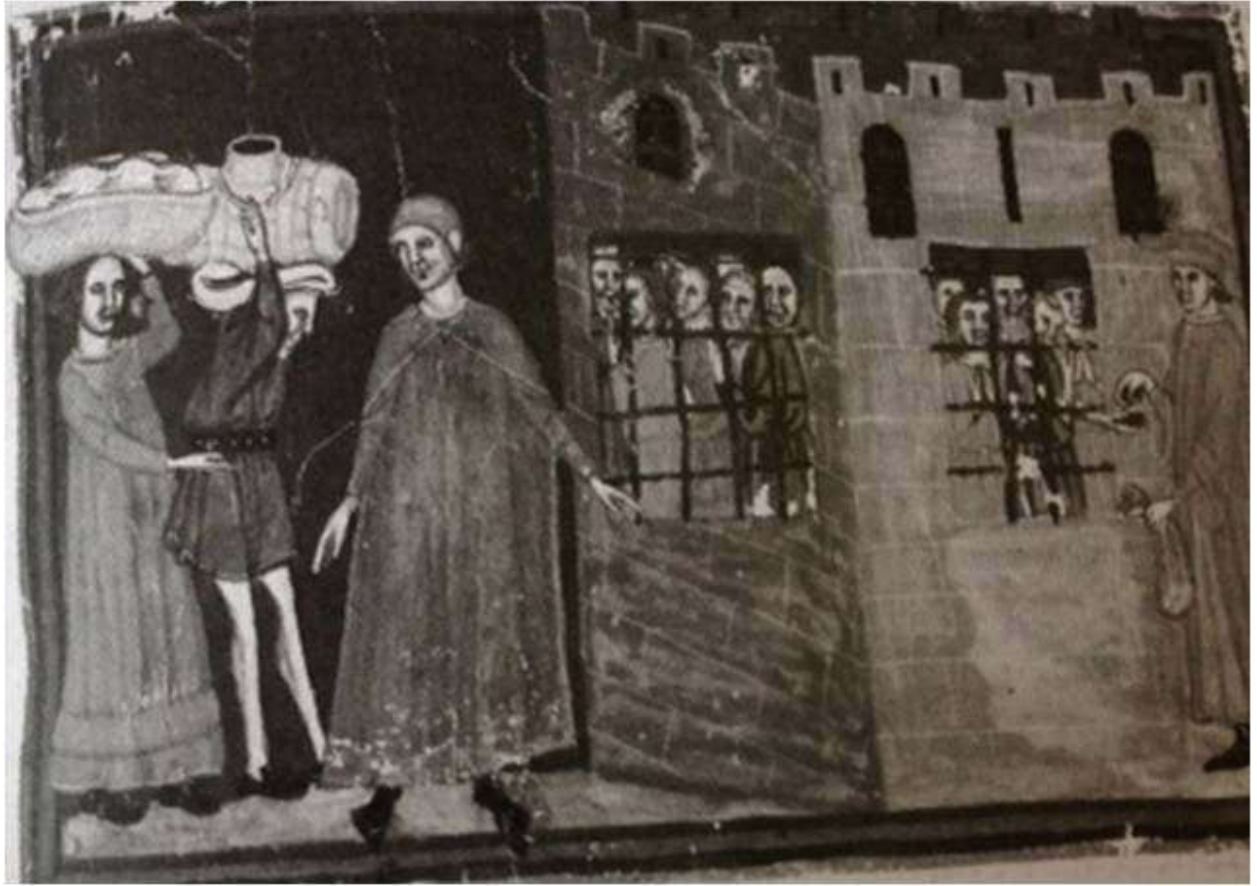


Figure 37 Anonymous, *Visiting Prisoners*, 1340, paint on parchment, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, Florence.



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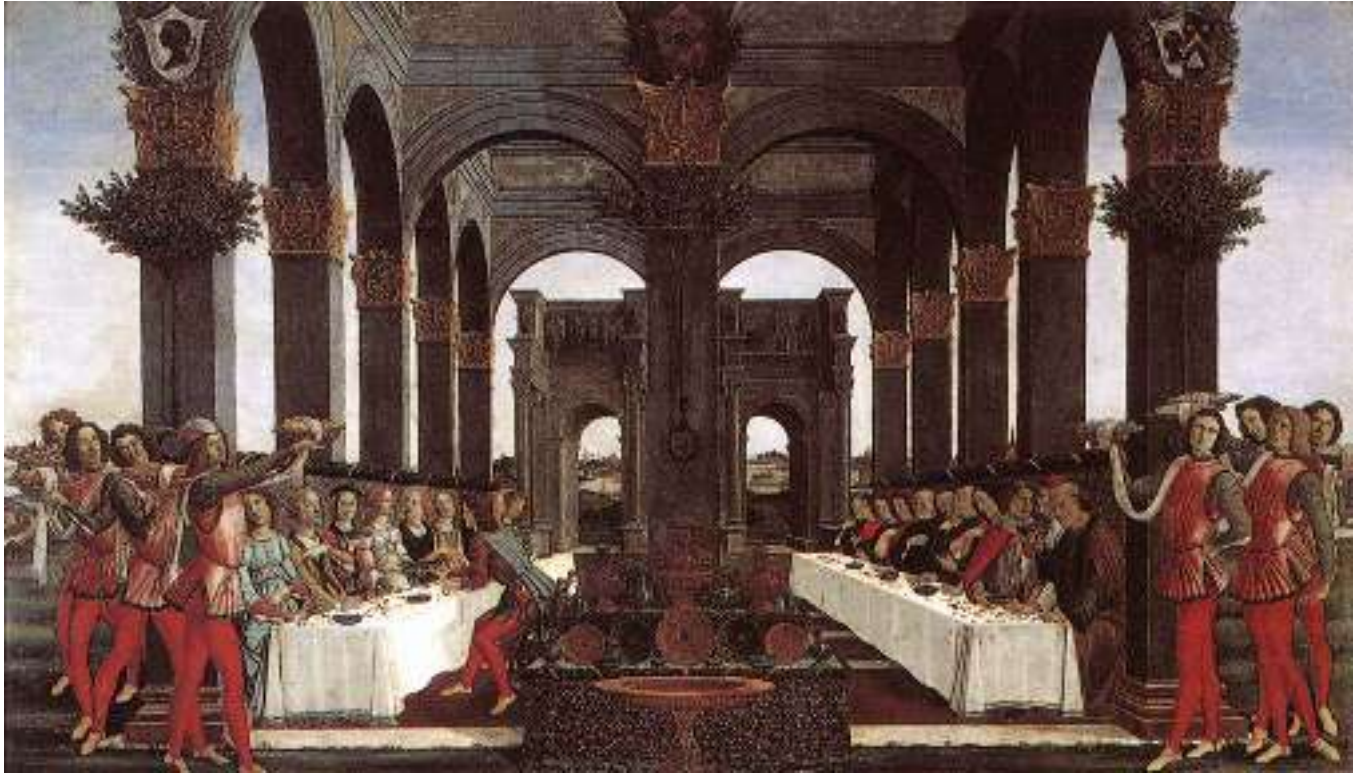


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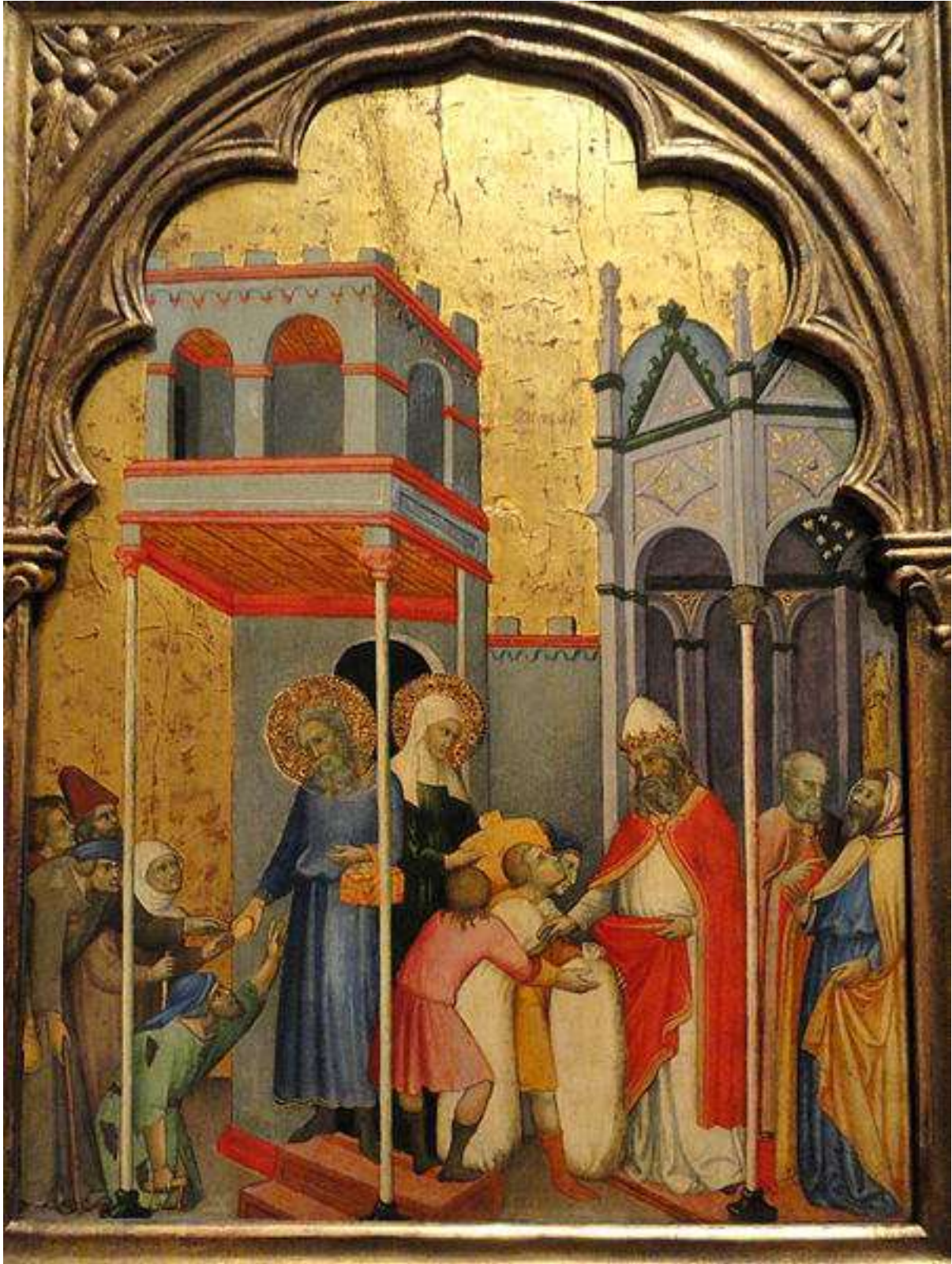


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Source: gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque de France

Figure 95 Anonymous, *Tedaldo Returns to Florence Disguised as a Pilgrim*, 1432, tempera and ink on paper, *Decameron*, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris, l'Arsenal, ms 5070, fol. 120r.





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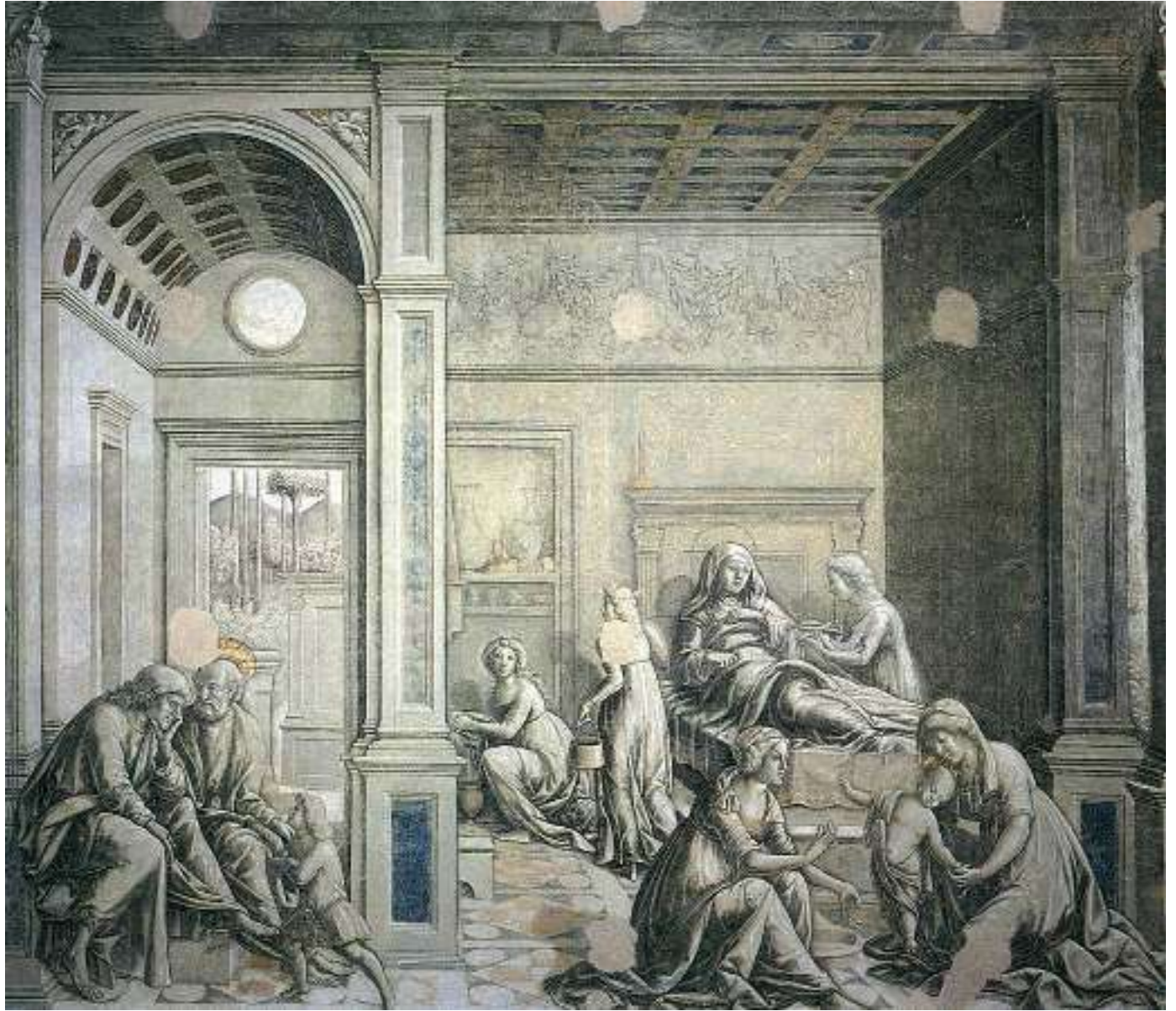


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Figure 101 Fra Angelico, *The Funeral of Saints Cosmas and Damian*, 1438-40, tempera on wood, Museo di San Marco, Florence.

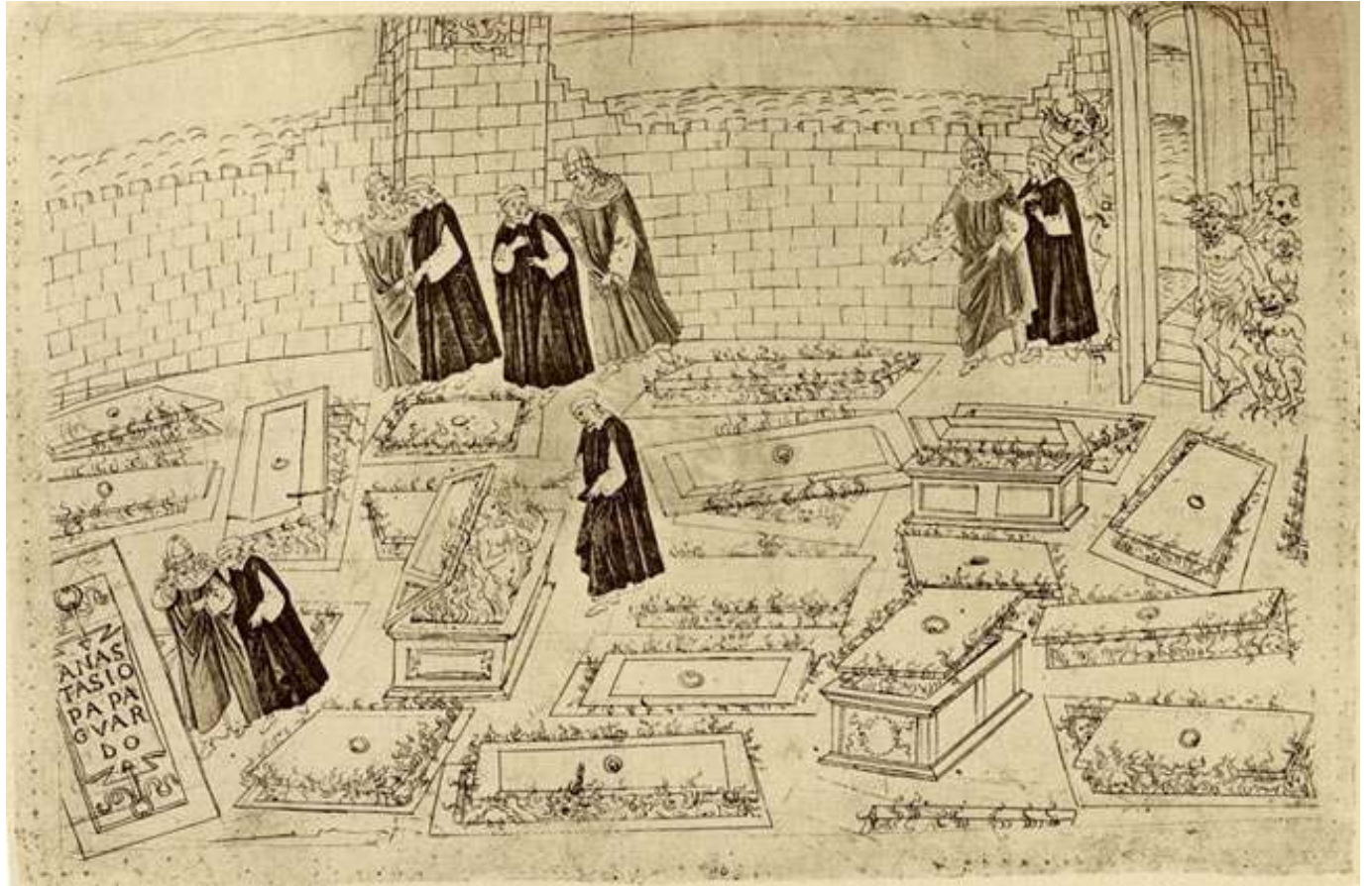


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Figures 121 Simone Martini, *Scenes from the Life of Saint Martin*, 1320-25, fresco, Lower Church, San Francesco, Assisi.



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Figures 139 Andrea del Verrocchio, *Head of an Angel*, 15<sup>th</sup> century, black chalk gone over in sepia on paper, Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence.



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Figure 143 Fra Angelico, *Annunciation* (Cell 3), 1440-42, fresco, Museo di San Marco, Florence.



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Figure 145 Lorenzo di Credi, detail of an angel from *The Dream of Saint Martin*, 1486-1490, fresco, Oratorio dei Buonomini di San Martino, Florence.



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Figure 148 Leonardo da Vinci, *Antique Warrior in Profile*, c.1472, silverpoint on prepared paper, The British Museum, London.



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Figure 155 Lorenzo di Credi, *Saint John the Baptist*, 15<sup>th</sup> century, silverpoint, sepia wash and white highlights on prepared paper, Louvre, Paris.



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Figure 159 Lorenzo di Credi, *Torso of a Half-Nude Man*, 15th century, silverpoint and white highlights on prepared paper, Louvre, Paris.



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Figure 161 Lorenzo di Credi, *Virgin and Child*, c.1480-85, oil on wood, The National Gallery, London.



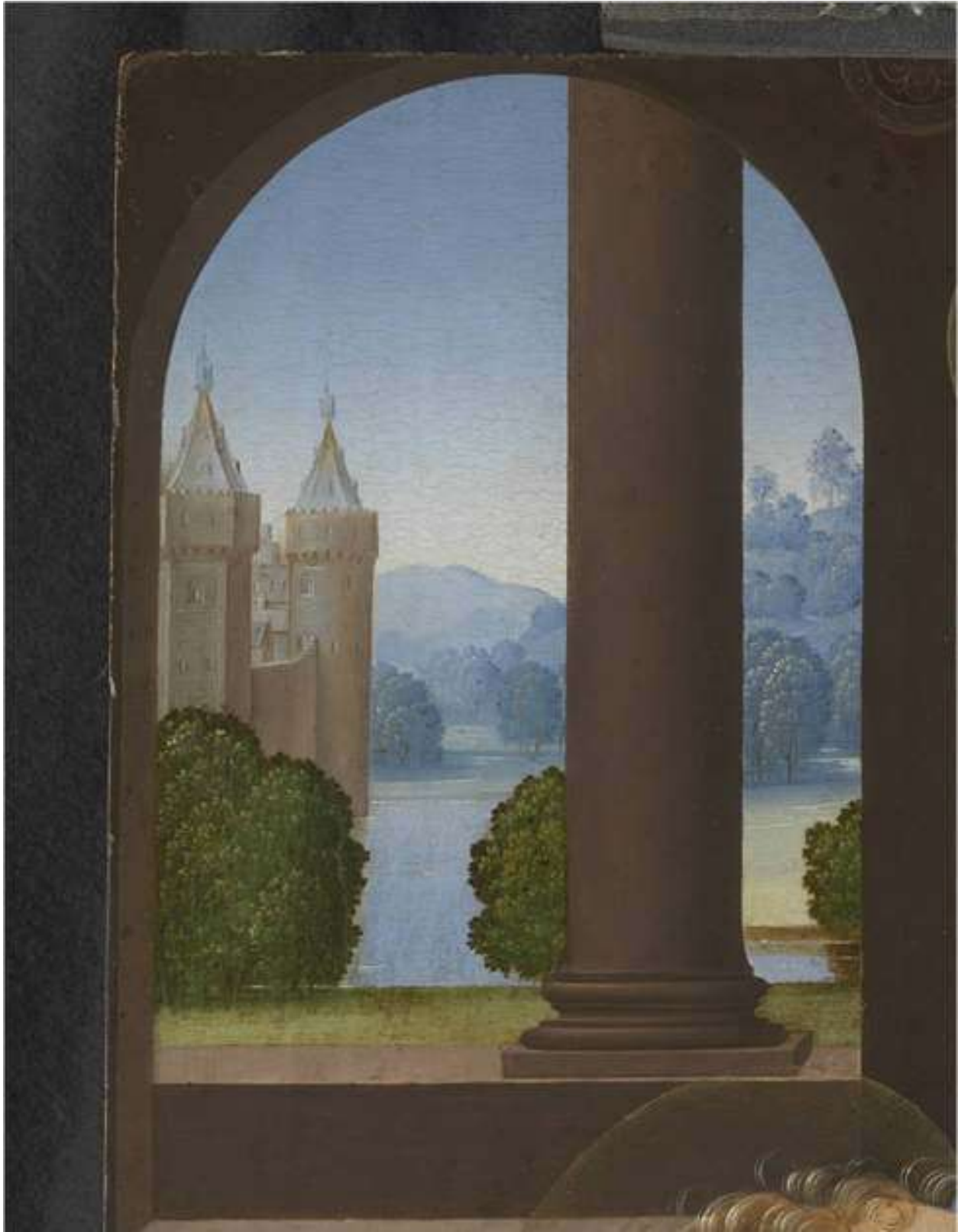


Figure 162 Lorenzo di Credi, detail from *Virgin and Child*, c.1480-85, oil on wood, The National Gallery, London.



Figure 163 Altar wall of the Oratorio dei Buonomini di San Martino, Florence.



Figure 164 The workshop of Domenico Ghirlandaio, *Giving Food to the Hungry and Drink to the Thirsty* (showing detail of the plasterwork), 1486-1490, fresco, Oratorio dei Buonomini di San Martino, Florence.



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Figure 166 Domenico Ghirlandaio, *Birth of the Virgin*, 1486-1490, fresco, Santa Maria Novella, Florence.



Figure 167 Lorenzo di Credi, *Jesus and the Samaritan*, between 1475 & 1500, oil on wood, Museo il Cenacolo di Fuligno, Florence.



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Figure 171 Attributed to Lorenzo di Credi, *Portrait of a Young Man*, c.1490, oil on wood, Museo il Cenacolo di Fuligno, Florence.



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Figure 174 The workshop of Domenico Ghirlandaio, *The Initial Visit by the Buonomini to a Vulnerable family* (before restoration), 1486-1490, fresco, Oratorio dei Buonomini di San Martino, Florence.



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Figure 176 The workshop of Domenico Ghirlandaio, *Giving Food to the Hungry and Drink to the Thirsty* (before restoration), 1486-1490, fresco, Oratorio dei Buonomini di San Martino, Florence.



Figure 177 The workshop of Domenico Ghirlandaio, *Clothing the Naked* (before restoration), 1486-1490, fresco, Oratorio dei Buonomini di San Martino, Florence.





Figure 178 The workshop of Domenico Ghirlandaio, *Visiting a Woman in Childbed* (before restoration), 1486-1490, fresco, Oratorio dei Buonomini di San Martino, Florence.



Figure 179 The workshop of Domenico Ghirlandaio, *Releasing the Debtor from Gaol* (before restoration), 1486-1490, fresco, Oratorio dei Buonomini di San Martino, Florence.



Figure 180 The workshop of Domenico Ghirlandaio, *Taking in Pilgrims* (before restoration), 1486-1490, fresco, Oratorio dei Buonomini di San Martino, Florence.



Figure 181 The workshop of Domenico Ghirlandaio, *Burying the Dead* (before restoration), 1486-1490, fresco, Oratorio dei Buonomini di San Martino, Florence.