

# Epitaphs in Giorgio Vasari's *Lives*\*

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When Michelangelo died in Rome in 1564, his body was transported back to his native Florence for an honourable state funeral. The event was an extravagant multi-step affair because of the deep sentiments many Florentines genuinely felt for the master and also because of what Michelangelo—regularly identified as ‘il divino’—had come to symbolize to the artistic and cultural superiority of the Florentine state which only the year before had launched the Accademia del Disegno with Michelangelo at the spiritual helm. The funeral involved a procession and a rapid formal burial in Michelangelo's own parish of S. Croce followed by a lengthy public mourning over an elaborately decorated catafalque set up in the Medici parish of San Lorenzo.<sup>1</sup> Both the sepulchre and the catafalque received the attention of *letterati* in the form of verses in the Latin and Italian. About the S. Croce sepulchre, Vasari wrote,

When the people had calmed down, it was ordered to place him in a sepulchre in the church next to the Cavalcanti altar, by the door that leads into the cloister of the chapter-house. While this was happening, the news had spread through the city, and such a multitude of young people came to see him that that it was difficult to close the sepulchre. And if it had been day, instead of night, they would have been forced to leave it open many hours in order to satisfy everyone. The following morning, while the painters and sculptors were beginning arrange for his honouring, great minds, of which there have always been many in Florence began to attach above the aforementioned sepulchre verses both Latin and in Italian, and thus it continued for some time; but those compositions that were printed at that time were only a small part with respect to the many which were written.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> On Michelangelo's funeral, see Rudolf and Margot Wittkower, *The Divine Michelangelo*, London: Phaidon Publishers, 1964.

<sup>2</sup> ‘Passata poi la furia del popolo, si diede ordine di metterlo in un deposito in chiesa a canto all'altare de' Cavalcanti per me' la porta che va nel chiostro del Capitolo. In quel mezzo, sparsasi la voce per la città, vi concorse tanta moltitudine di giovani per vederlo, che fu gran fatica il potere chiudere il deposito. E se era di giorno, come fu di notte, sarebbe stato forza lasciarlo stare aperto molte ore per sodisfare all'universale. La mattina seguente, mentre si cominciava dai pittori e scultori a dare ordine all'onoranza, cominciava belli ingegni, di che è sempre Fiorenza abundantissima, ad appiccare sopra detto deposito versi latini e volgari, e così per buona pezza fu continuato, in tanto che quelli componimenti che allora furono stampati furono piccola parte a rispetto de' molti che furono fatti’ from Giorgio Vasari, *Le vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori e architettori nelle redazioni del 1550 e 1568*, edited by Rosanna Bettarini and with commentary by Paola Barocchi, 9 vols to date. Firenze, Sansoni, 1966-, vol. 6, 128. Unless otherwise noted, English translations are the author's.

And later about the catafalque at S. Lorenzo,

And since it was not possible that the whole city should see the whole aforementioned thing in one day, as the Duke wished, it was all left standing many weeks, for the satisfaction of his people and of the foreigners who came from nearby places to see it.

We shall not present the great multitude of epitaphs and verses in both Latin and Tuscan, written by many worthy men in honour of Michelagnolo; both because' they would want an entire work for themselves, and because they have been written down and sent to publication by other writers.<sup>3</sup>

Both of these passages refer to vast numbers of epitaphs and other commemorative poetry. In the case of S. Croce, Vasari adds the striking detail that the verses—presumably written on slips of paper—were physically attached to the funeral bier. That this was true also of the S. Lorenzo catafalque is made clear by an earlier text describing the obsequies, *Esequie del divino Michelagnolo Buonarroto*, published in 1564 and ostensibly written by its publisher Jacopo Giunti though probably based on either Giorgio Vasari's or Vincenzo Borghini's notes.<sup>4</sup> Whether or not Vasari had a hand in its content, this booklet later served as Vasari's immediate source for his section on Michelangelo's funeral in his *Vite* of 1568.<sup>5</sup> The relevant passage of reads:

Apart from the poems previously affixed to Michelangelo's bier, many were also laid upon the catafalque at this time and are still being laid there every day, but as it would take too much time now to collect them all, and perhaps delay these notes, content yourself at present with the following.<sup>6</sup>

The obsequies booklet also published a selection of the verses from each location, though not all of them which would have been 'lengthy and tedious' and worse, might have slowed down the printing of the booklet.<sup>7</sup> It is hard to know how many verses there were

<sup>3</sup> 'E perché non fu possibile che tutta la città in un sol giorno vedesse il detto apparato, come volle il signor Duca, fu lasciato stare molte settimane in piedi a sodisfazione de' suoi popoli e de' forestieri, che da' luoghi convicini lo venero a vedere./ Non porremo in questo luogo una moltitudine grande di epitaffi e di versi latini e toscani fatti da molti valenti uomini in onore di Michelangelo, si perché un'opera da se stessi vorrebbero, e perché altrove da altri scrittori sono stati scritti e mandati fuori.' in Vasari, *Le vite*, ed. Bettarini/Barocchi, vol. 6, 140-1.

<sup>4</sup> See Wittkower, *The Divine Michelangelo*, 34-35, and earlier bibliography he cites in the appendix, 140.

<sup>5</sup> For a recent discussion of the booklet in relation to Vasari's *Vite*, see Lisa Pon, 'Michelangelo's Lives: Sixteenth-Century Books by Vasari, Condivi, and Others,' *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, 27, 1996, 1015-37.

<sup>6</sup> 'oltre ai componimenti, che sono stati appiccati al deposito di Michelangelo ne sono stati assai messi intorno al Catafalco e se ne mettono ogni giorno, ma perché il raccorgli tutti farebbe hora troppo lungo cosa, e forse ritardarebbono questi avisi, contentatevi per hora di questi...' English and Italian text from Wittkower, *The Divine Michelangelo*, 126-7.

<sup>7</sup> Regarding the S. Croce tomb, the obsequies pamphlet notes the following: 'la mattina sequente si cominciò per certi belli ingegni appicare in sulla sepoltura versi latini & volgari, & per molti giorni poi si seguitò, & si seguita ancora dequali ne ho fatti scrivere a pie qualcuno, che il porli tutti saria cosa troppa lunga, & forse tediosa.' Wittkower, *The Divine Michelangelo*, 76-77. Antonio Corsaro in 'Michelangelo e i letterati' (in *Officine del nuovo: sodalizi fra letterati, artisti ed editori nella cultura italiana fra Riforma e Controriforma: atti del Simposio internazionale, Utrecht 8-10 novembre 2007*, edited by Harald Hendrix and Paolo Procaccioli, Manziana: Vecchiarelli, 2008, 383-425) links the flood of verses in honor of Michelangelo with the recognized importance

in all, though some evidence is offered by the written lament of a casual observer (published in full in the appendix of Rudolf Wittkower's volume on Michelangelo's obsequies) who was upset that he did not get a chance to copy down the some twenty poems he saw there before they were taken away, presumably to be prepared for publication.<sup>8</sup> The site of the bier and tomb in S. Croce with its longer availability and to which epitaphs continued to be attached even as the catafalque was erected is likely to have been covered with even more epitaphs.

While the scale of Michelangelo's funeral was obviously unusual for an artist—though very much in line with Renaissance cultural practice for elite intellectuals and political leaders—the ritual of placing epitaphs on tombs would appear to have been reasonably diffused during the Renaissance, even in less exalted circles. Judging from the number of poems surviving in Raphael's honor, for example, it is likely that he too once possessed a tomb covered with attached paper epitaphs.<sup>9</sup> It is well known that the composition of celebrative elegies and epigrams based on ancient models formed part of the various public rituals associated with burial.<sup>10</sup> Like funeral orations, epitaphs were sometimes gathered together and published, as was the case with Michelangelo in a limited way in the volume on the obsequies and more extensively in two dedicated publications.<sup>11</sup> The social ritual practice of attaching paper epitaphs to tombs documented

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of Michelangelo as a literary and intellectual figures. Corsaro's lengthy appendix (pp. 407-425) consists of the first lines of poems addressed to Michelangelo or about Michelangelo drawn from earlier published collections and many manuscript sources.

<sup>8</sup> Wittkower, *The Divine Michelangelo*, 25. This information derives from an anonymous and undated letter in the Biblioteca Nazionale, Florence (MS. Magliabechiano, XXXVIII, 115, fol. 125r-126v) which Wittkower transcribed, 144-47 ('Eravi appicato circha venti versi latini in sun un cantone, e da l'altro v'era un sonetto di madonna Laura moglie dell'Ammannato, che né dell'un dell'altro ho possuto haver copia, chè quando doppio desinare io vi tornai con quel'animo di copiarli, trovai che gl'erano stati levati, che molto l'hebbi per male....' Wittkower, *The Divine Michelangelo*, 147).

<sup>9</sup> The large number of surviving epitaphs for Raphael, a few of which are printed in Vasari's biography, are discussed and printed in John Shearman, *Raphael in Early Modern Sources*, 2 vols., New Haven, Yale University Press, 2003, vol. 1, 639-62, and 664-5. It is David Rijser's opinion that they must have been attached to the tomb: David Rijser, 'The Practical Function of the High Renaissance Epigram: The Case of Raphael's Grave', in *The Neo-Latin Epigram: a learned and witty genre*, edited by Susanna de Beer, K.A.E. Emenkel and David Rijser, Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2009, 103-34.

<sup>10</sup> See John McManammon's *Funeral Oratory and the Cultural Ideals of Italian Humanism*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989, esp. 28-30 and Sharon Strocchia, *Death and ritual in Renaissance Florence*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992, esp. 6-19, 30-39 on all of the symbols, flags and other temporary objects that adorned tombs. More generally on Renaissance epitaphs, see Ian D. McFarlane, 'The Renaissance Epitaph', *The Modern Language Review*, 81: 4, 1986, 15-35 and Joshua Scodel, *The English Poetic Epitaph. Commemoration and Conflict from Jonson to Wordsworth*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991, though neither of these authors discuss ritual use or biography. On funeral catafalques, see Olga Berendsen, 'The Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century Catafalques', Ph.D Dissertation, New York University, 1961 who posites that the practice of setting up catafalques came from Spain to Italy via the funeral of Charles V ('Introduction', 1-28).

<sup>11</sup> The obsequies volume published eight poems from S. Croce and four from S. Lorenzo, including a very long one by Laura Battiferri. Several commemorative poems were also published with the funeral oration by Giovan Maria Tarsia. More substantial still are the two volumes of verse in honour of Michelangelo published the year after artist's death by Domenico Legati and Paolo del Rosso/Gherardo Saracini (the latter has not been located in recent years). See note 7, Corsaro, 'Michelangelo e i Letterati', 407-25.

by Vasari in these passages that led to those publications, however, has not received sufficient scholarly attention.<sup>12</sup>

In the *Vite*, Vasari's description of the attaching of paper epitaphs to tombs appears in a number of artists' lives, and it is implied in many others. One might even consider it typical of his biographical project. The ritual appears to have been very important to the writer, and by the second edition seemingly more important than the content of epitaphs themselves, many of which he eliminated in 1568. In Michelangelo's case, Vasari refrained from printing any epitaphs, writing only about the ritual and this is true of several other cases in the second edition. Without appropriate recognition of the importance of this ritual for Vasari's biographical project, it is impossible for the modern reader to fully comprehend Vasari's comments on the ritual or even his own relationship to the epitaphs he does print in the *Vite*.

Considering the above, the intentions of this study are 1) to offer evidence for epitaph attaching rituals and related social rituals in earlier periods 2) to evaluate Vasari's attitudes towards the epitaphs in the two editions of his *Vite* in light of the social ritual that produced some of them, 3) to demonstrate how an understanding of this practice might in some cases help identify the precise relationship between the epitaph and the tomb which has often been a source of confusion in the scholarship on individual artists, and 4) to suggest how epitaphs and epitaph rituals might contribute to a more nuanced understanding of Vasari's biographical project. While this essay does not propose to analyze the content or form of the epitaphs in any detailed way which has been initiated elsewhere,<sup>13</sup> these subjects will be discussed to the extent that they bear on the above arguments. It is hoped that this study will not only enrich our understanding of Vasari's *Vite* but will also contribute to broader discourses about the role of epitaphs in Renaissance biography and culture.

Epitaphs and references to epitaphs form a small but important part of the *Vite* beyond the case of Michelangelo's extraordinary biography. In the first edition of his *Vite* published in 1550, a majority of the biographies conclude with epitaphs, epigrams or commemorative verses. More precisely, of the 133 lives in that first edition, 108 possess

<sup>12</sup> Only two recent studies have addressed the ritual though neither use the ample evidence supplied by Vasari. Kathleen Wren Christian, *Empire without End. Antiquities Collections in Renaissance Rome, c. 1350-1527*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2010, 'Antiquity, Secular Memory, and the Art of Self-Commemoration', 142-49, discusses the practice of attaching epitaphs as related to the reenactment of the ancient funeral feast of *parentalia* with reference to Pomponio Leto's Roman solidarity and Florence's Platonic academy, citing Hugh Lindsay, 'Eating with the Dead: The Roman Funerary Banquet' in *Meals in a Social Context: Aspects of the Communal Meal in the Hellenistic and Roman World*, edited by Inge Nielsen and Hanne Sigismund Nielsen, Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 1998, 67-80 which the author has been unable to consult. While there is no certain evidence in the ancient literature she cites for the attaching of epitaphs to tombs, there are many examples of commemoration through banquets and by writing or reciting epitaphs. David Rijser ('The Practical Function of the High Renaissance Epigram', 103-34, esp. 108-13) views the attaching of epitaphs to Raphael's grave (which he very reasonably hypothesized) as a variation of the attaching of epigrams to ancient statues, this latter in his view being a revival of ancient cultic traditions expressed in the *Priapea* collection of erotic poems, again in the context of the Roman solidarities.

<sup>13</sup> See in particular the studies by Rosanna Bettarini, 'Vasari scrittore: come la Torrentiniana diventò Giuntina', in *Il Vasari, storiografo e artista. Atti del congresso internazionale nel iv centenario della morte. Arezzo - Firenze 2-8 settembre 1974*, Florence: Istituto Nazionale sul Rinascimento, 1974, 485-500 and Francesca Pellegrino, 'Topoi e storiografia nei epitaffi vasariani', in *Percorsi vasariani tra le arti e le lettere atti del Convegno di Studi, Arezzo, 7 - 8 maggio 2003*, edited by Maddalena Spagnolo and Paolo Torriti, Montepulciano: Le Balze, 2004, 109-130.

one or more epitaphs. The epitaphs describe the artists' strengths and weaknesses, their competition with nature and with named ancient artists. Some prose examples also include references to family, colleagues and the age of the deceased or date of death. A large percentage are in Latin prose or humanistic elegiac verse but some are in Italian, Italian poetic epitaphs being largely reserved for artists belonging to or associated with the Tuscan tradition.<sup>14</sup> In some cases Vasari presented the epitaphs as tomb inscriptions (e.g. Giotto, Raphael), a few of which are attributed to specific authors and only a portion of which are traceable today.<sup>15</sup> More often the epitaphs are of a purely literary character, never having been intended as inscriptions, though some of these are printed in a 'lapidary style' as in one of the three for Leonardo and one of the two for Rosso Fiorentino.<sup>16</sup> The Latin poetic epitaphs, for example, are generally in elegiac couplets which were rare for inscriptions well into the sixteenth century but very common as literary tributes.<sup>17</sup> A subset of these non-inscribed epitaphs were physically associated with the tomb through being appended to it or placed above it (e.g. Barna da Siena, Lazzaro Vasari, Desiderio da Settignano, Bartolomeo della Gatta). Some literary epitaphs are treated as the survivals from large epitaph writing campaigns at the time of the artist's death (e.g. Barna da Siena, Simone Martini, Taddeo Gaddi, Paolo Uccello, Lorenzo Ghiberti, Jacopo della Quercia, Domenico Beccafumi). Others were simply earned by the

<sup>14</sup> Of the thirty-four Italian epitaphs, in all but six are for Tuscan artists, and of those remaining six, two (Morto da Feltré and Chimenti Camicia) were adopted by Florence, and two (Polidoro da Caravaggio, Francesco Francia) adapted Florentine style. Thirty-three of the thirty-four artists receiving Italian epitaphs lived in the late fifteenth or sixteenth centuries, as opposed to only one in the fourteenth (Andrea Tafi, fl. 1300). These statistics suggest that Vasari, consciously or unconsciously, felt that Italian or Tuscan epitaphs were appropriate for artists working in the Tuscan artistic idiom at a time when they might conceivably have been commemorated in the Tuscan language. In 1550, these Italian poetic verses might have been Vasari's small contribution in support of the Tuscan language to the linguistic debates taking place in the newly-founded Florentine Academy, many of whose members were friends or acquaintances of his (See the books by Armand De Gaetano, *Giambattista Gelli and the Florentine Academy. The Rebellion Against Latin*. Florence: Olschki, 1976 and Carlo Dionisotti *Gli umanisti e il volgare fra quattro e cinquecento*. Florence: Le Monnier, 1968). By 1568, as Anthony Blunt noted long ago, Vasari's patriotism was less evident (Anthony Blunt, *Artistic Theory in Italy, 1450-1660*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962, 99). This change in attitude is attested to even on the 1568 title page in which no longer notes that the book is written in the Tuscan language.

<sup>15</sup> In 1550, Vasari only attributed a few tomb inscriptions—two Latin poetic epitaphs by Angelo Poliziano for Giotto and Fra Filippo Lippi, one Latin prose epitaph by Pier Vettori for Andrea del Sarto, one combination prose and poetic epitaph by Pietro Bembo for Raphael, and one Latin literary epitaph by Baldassare Castiglione for Raphael.

<sup>16</sup> On 'Lapidary Style', see Iiro Kajanto, 'On Lapidary Style in Epigraphy and Literature', *Humanistica Loveniensia*, 43, 1994, 138-71. Curiously, the lapidary inscription on Perin del Vaga's tomb in the Pantheon (1547), cited by Kajanto as an early example of an inscription that fulfills all of the characteristics of lapidary style (defined by Kajanto as the symmetric arrangement of lines of unequal length in which each line represents a full idea with no enjambment) is not printed in symmetrical fashion in Vasari's volume but rather as a paragraph, except for the first line, D. O. M.

<sup>17</sup> The Latin poetic epitaphs are most often elegiac couplets of four or six lines. Since elegiac verse was far less common for inscribed epitaphs in the ancient and medieval periods—hexameter was preferred—it appears that Vasari's epitaphs were more often modelled after literary rather than inscribed epitaphs. See Iiro Kajanto, 'Latin verse inscriptions in Rome', *Latomus*, 52, 1993, 42-57. On commemorative elegiac poetry, see Concetta Bianca, 'I poeti del secondo quattrocento Romano' in *Poesia umanistica latina in distici elegiaci: Atti del convegno internazionale. Assisi, 15-17 maggio 1998*, edited by Giuseppe Catanzaro and Francesco Santucci, Assisi: Accademia Properziana del Subasio, Centro Studi Poesi in Distici Elegiaci, 1999, 183-98.

artist because the merits of his work at the time of his death or at a later time (e.g. Bartolomeo di S. Marco, Masaccio).

In what must have been a large number of cases for which Vasari was unable to collect a previously formulated epitaph from a tomb inscription or other source (and it would be fascinating to know the range of those other sources!), he commissioned the epitaphs. Vasari's letters from the late 1540s demonstrate that he solicited epitaphs from the critic, Pietro Aretino, and from the historian, Giovanbattista Adriani. Aretino did not furnish them, claiming that he was too busy publishing his own letters, but most likely, Adriani did.<sup>18</sup> Paolo Giovio who by Vasari's own testimony witnessed the birth of the project<sup>19</sup> and served as Vasari's advisor is another likely source of Latin verses while Vasari himself was an amateur poet in the Italian language.<sup>20</sup> Vasari's close association with the poets of the Florentine Academy moreover would have made it easy for him to procure a few verses from its members. Finally a manuscript in the Vasari archives in Arezzo contains ten artists' epitaphs in Latin verse written in a distinctively humanist style.<sup>21</sup> Four of these (for Lazzaro Vasari, Donatello, Masaccio, Correggio) are recorded in

<sup>18</sup> Aretino's letter to Vasari was published in the fifth book of his letters and is cited in Charles Davis' entry on a manuscript of epitaphs in the Vasari archive, *Giorgio Vasari. Principi, letterati e artisti nelle carte di Giorgio Vasari, Arezzo 26 Settembre – 29 Novembre*, Florence: EDAM, 1982, 220. Adriani's participation is referred to in a letter of Vasari's to Vincenzo Borghini, of Feb. 1550 (Karl Frey *Di litterarisches Nachlass Giorgio Vasaris*, 3 vols., Munich: Mueller, 1923-40, vol. 1, 257, no. CXXV) in which he says 'Avertite, che se bene il Marcellino darà i suoi pitaffi, che è fecie, che gnien' ho richiesti, che megli dia, avendo smarriti quegli che ha già dati', as cited in the abovementioned entry by Davis.

<sup>19</sup> A discussion of the origins of Vasari's project is recounted in his autobiography (Vasari, *Le vite*, ed. Barocchi/Bettarini, vol. 6, 369-408. Vasari reported a conversation at Palazzo Farnese between Paolo Giovio, Francesco Maria Molza, Romolo Quirino Amaseo, Claudio Tolomei, and Annabile Caro. Although Giovio was planning to write biographies of artists—and in fact had written three on Michelangelo, Leonardo and Raphael, Vasari convinced him that he needed the help of an artist. Giovio then decided that it would be better if Vasari wrote the biographies himself. The genesis of the book as a whole is discussed by Charles Davis in his entry, 'L'origine delle 'Vite'', in *Giorgio Vasari. Principi, letterati e artisti*, 213-15, Patricia Rubin, *Giorgio Vasari. Art and History*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995, 162-65, Elena Pagano, 'L'eredità di Paolo Giovio nella storiografia artistica vasariana', in *Atti della Accademia Pontaniana*, 38: 1989, 211-17, and Philip Sohm, 'Ordering History with Style: Giorgio Vasari on the Art of History', in *Antiquity and Its Interpreters*, ed. Alina Payne, Ann Kuttner, and Rebekah Smick, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, 40-54. Giovio's idea of history and biography is outlined in a letter of his to Girolamo Scannapeco in which he defends his panegyric style (I, 174ff). On Giovio, see also *Paolo Giovio: il Rinascimento e la memoria. Atti del convegno Como, 3-5 giugno 1983*. Como: Societa Villa Gallia, 1985. Claudio Tolomei thought one should create a myth around a person so that he stood as an example (*Delle lettere...di libri sette* Venice: 1581 or 1549), 92v-93 as discussed by Zygmunt Wasbinski, 'L'idee de l'histoire dans le première et la seconde édition des *Vies de Vasari*', in *Il Vasari, storiografo e artista. Atti del congresso internazionale nel IV centenario della morte. Arezzo – Firenze 2-8 settembre 1974*, 1-25. Florence: Grafistampa, 1974, esp. 5-6, and the appendix which includes a passage from Claudio Tolomei and another from Francesco Patrizzi on subject of biography, 44f. Wasbinski situates Vasari's two efforts in the middle of a changing view of history, in which it is divided from literature, citing many historical treatises. Borghini and Adriani were advocates of this division. Borghini separated 'l'ufficio del Poeta da quel dello Istorico' (Wasbinski, 'L'idee', 8). For a more complete view of Borghini's role in the first edition, see Silvia Ginsburg, 'Filologia e storia dell'arte. Il ruolo di Vincenzo Borghini nella genesi della *Torrentiniana*', in *Testi, immagini e filologia nel XVI secolo: atti delle giornate di studio, Pisa Scuola Normale Superiore, 30 settembre – 1ottobre 2004*, eds. Eliana Carrara and Silvia Ginzburg, Pisa: Edizioni della Normale, 2007, 147-205.

<sup>20</sup> Much of Giorgio Vasari's poetic production (including poems to and about artists) was published by Ugo Scoti-Bertinelli, *Giorgio Vasari scrittore*. Pisa: Nistri, 1905, 263-303.

<sup>21</sup> See Iiro Kajanto, *Classical and Christian. Studies in the Latin Epitaphs of Medieval and Renaissance Rome*, Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedekatemia, 1980, on humanistic forms in epitaphs. On the form of the Latin

Vasari's biographies, the two latter of which would be attributed by Vasari to Fabio Segni in the 1568 edition.<sup>22</sup>

Vasari's need to include epitaphs in 1550 partly stemmed from the structural purpose they served. The epitaphs provided satisfying conclusions to the individual biographies with a natural emphasis on death, commemoration and the tomb. Like the rhetorical introductions which prepare the reader for the moralistic themes he was expected to extract from the life, the epitaphs indicate closure of the biographic episode. Vasari usually also discussed the death of the artist, his tomb and the sense of loss and mourning felt by the artist's family and compatriots. Since epitaphs were an established form for honouring the dead, they sometimes served as a point of departure for a commentary on the extent to which an artist was appreciated by his contemporaries. Giovanni Bellini and Lorenzo Ghiberti, for example, received many sonnets and epigrams, while Baldovinetti and Masaccio were not honoured at all at the time of their deaths—Vasari emphatically stated that no epitaphs were placed above Masaccio's tomb at that time—though many were produced by later fans and Vasari reported four of these.<sup>23</sup>

It is not impossible that Vasari included epitaphs in his first edition in order to help validate his biographical decisions. While some artists, especially those of the Tuscan tradition whose names had already found their way into the texts of Filippo Villani, Lorenzo Ghiberti, and 'Il libro di Antonio Billi' were obvious choices, many other selections were not foregone conclusions. By publishing his book, Giorgio Vasari knew he was creating a canon, just as Diogenes Laertes had done for the great philosophers of antiquity, St. Jerome had earlier done for important Christians, and Paolo Giovio had done for Renaissance writers and statesmen. Indeed Diogenes' and Giovio's incorporation of epitaphs in their biographies may also have partly been to justify their own canons. Both authors served as Vasari's models either directly or indirectly, a topic which will be taken up later in this essay.

In 1568, Giorgio Vasari expunged many of the epitaphs he had so carefully collected and commissioned for the earlier edition. Of the 108 lives that included epitaphs in 1550, only thirty-seven of those same lives still included epitaphs in 1568, and sometimes only one of the two or more published in 1550 edition. Of the many lives newly added in 1568, only three received new commemorative verses—the tomb inscriptions for Baccio Bandinelli and Cristofano Gherardi and the poem in honor of Pierino da Vinci. As has been noted in the scholarly literature, Vasari's limiting the

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humanist epitaph in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, see also the articles by Nadia Petrucci, 'Pomponio Leto e la rinascita dell'epitaffio antico', *Eutopia*, 3, 1994, 19-45 and Gian Luca Gregori and Silvia Orlandi, 'Riminiscenze classiche negli epitaffi del Cinquecento. Le famiglie Delfini e Bocca Paduli', *Eutopia*, 3, 1994, 45-66. Volume 3 of *Eutopia* published the 'Atti del convegno internazionale *vox lapidum* dalla scoperta delle iscrizioni antiche all'invenzione di un nuovo stile scrittorio' held in Acquasparta and Urbino, 11-13 September, 1993.

<sup>22</sup> See Charles Davis' entry on the epitaph manuscript in *Giorgio Vasari. Principi, letterati e artisti nelle carte di Giorgio Vasari*, 219-20. Eight of these ten had previously been published by Alessandro del Vita, Del Vita, Alessandro, *Lo zibaldone di Giorgio Vasari*, Rome: Reale Istituto di Archeologia e di Storia dell'Arte, 1939, 317-19. Del Vita attributes the epitaphs to Cosimo Bartoli but Davis contests this attribution on the basis that the hand and the cultural outlook appear different.

<sup>23</sup> 'Fu sepolto nella medesima chiesa del Carmine l'anno MCCCXLIII. E se bene allora non gli fu posto sepolcro alcuno, per essere stato poco stimato vivo non gli è però mancato dopo la morte chi lo abbia onorato di questi epitaffi:...', from the 1550 edition, Vasari, *Le vite*, ed. Bettarini/Barocchi, vol. 3, 133.

epitaphs in 1568 responds to his larger purpose of emphasizing the works over the biography. In a few cases the content of the lost epitaphs was integrated into the closing discourse of the biography but most of the epitaphs could not be so accommodated.<sup>24</sup> Some epitaphs of the earlier edition that emphasized the personal defects of the artists were summarily discarded, resulting in biographies that end on less damaging notes.

Vasari's new edition also systematically changed the conclusions to deemphasize mourning and sadness and this affected both the prose sections and the epitaphs. Epitaphs which recorded events like gloomy painters gathering around Correggio's tomb were removed, leaving in Correggio's case only a more spirited poem, now attributed to Fabio Segni.<sup>25</sup> Along similar lines, retained epitaphs were sometimes moved away from the very end of the biography so that they no longer served to cap the text (e.g. Taddeo Gaddi, Andrea Tafi, Margaritone, Pietro Cavallini, Simone Martini), this function having been taken over in 1568 by the insertion of a new phrase 'fine della vita di...'.<sup>26</sup> Many new biographies—even that of Vasari's friend, Francesco Salviati—moreover, contain no references to the tomb at all. The psychological effect of all of these modifications is a diminishing association between the end of the biography and the death/tomb of the artist and a greater emphasis on the literary project of writing the biography.

In one case —that of Masaccio—the reverse occurred: the epitaphs were actually moved from near the end in 1550 to the very end in 1568. The effect is dramatic.<sup>27</sup>

But with all of the works by Masaccio that always had such a high reputation, there is the opinion or firm belief of many, that he would have produced even greater fruit in art if death, which snatched him away at twenty-six, had not cut his life off so early. But whether due to envy or due to the fact that good things usually do not last long, he died in the flower of his youth; and he went so quickly

<sup>24</sup> The content of the epitaph was often retained in the text since it was conceptually related to the discourse Vasari used to introduce the epitaph. When he eliminated the epitaph, the discourse remained. Bettarini, 'Vasari scrittore', 494-96, esp. n21, discusses this for the lives of Morto da Feltro, Piero di Cosimo, and Leonardo, whose epitaphs were eliminated (in Leonardo's case the one that provided the content later absorbed into the text was eliminated but one other was retained).

<sup>25</sup> The poem eliminated from the 1568 edition reads: DISTINCTOS HOMINI QUANTUM NATURA CAPILLOS/ EFFICIT, ANTONJ DEXTRA LEVIS DOCUIT./EFFIGIES ILLI VARIAS TERRAEQUE MARISQUE/NOBILE AD ORNANDAS INGENIUM FUERAT./COREGIUM PATRIA, ERIDANUS MIRATUR ET ALPES:/MAESTAQUE PICTORUM TURBA DOLET TUMULO.[The gentle hand of Antonio taught how much nature made distinct hairs of man. He had the noble ability to adorn/varied images of earth and sea. The fatherland, the Po, and the Alps wondered at Correggio. A gloomy troop of painters weeps at his tomb.], while the poem retained reads: HUIUS CUM REGERET MORTALES SPIRITUS ARTUS/PICTORIS, CHARITES SUPPLICUERE IOVI:/NON ALIA PINGI DEXTRA, PATER ALME, ROGAMUS:/HUNC PRAETER, NULLI PINGERE NOS LICEAT./ANNUIT HIS VOTIS SUMMI REGNATOR OLYMPI,/ET IUVENEM SUBITO SYDERA AD ALTA TULIT,/UT POSSET MELIUS CHARITUM SIMULACRA REFERRE/PRAESENS, ET NUDAS CERNERET INDE DEUS [As the spirit supports the limbs of this painter when alive, the graces entreat Jove: Oh beneficent father, we ask that no other hand paint us except him, don't let anyone else paint us. The great ruler of Olympus acquiesced to this wish. And he brought the young man to the high stars right away, so that in their presence he could better make an image of the graces and ever since, as a God, he could see them naked] both from Vasari, *Le vite*, ed. Bettarini/Barocchi, vol. 4, 55.

<sup>26</sup> According to the edition of Vasari's *Vite* edited and annotated by Bettarini and Barocchi, vol. II, 391, the fact that this phrase is missing from a few of the lives is merely a typographical error.

<sup>27</sup> A similar effect is achieved in the life of Cristofano Gherardi who also died before his time and whose inscribed epitaph and tomb was provided by Cosimo I de' Medici, ed. Barocchi/Bettarini, vol. 5, 304.

that there were those who suspected poison rather than another cause. Hearing of his death, it is said that Filippo Brunelleschi said, 'We have had a great loss in Masaccio's death' and he suffered very much, having worked very hard to show him many elements of perspective and architecture.

He was buried in the same church of the Carmine in 1443. And if at that time no memorials were placed on his tomb because he was little esteemed in life, he did not lack those who honored him later on with these epitaphs:

By Annibale Caro

I PAINTED AND MY PAINTING WAS EQUAL TO TRUTH:  
I GAVE MY FIGURES ATTITUDE, SOUL, MOVEMENT,  
I GAVE THEM FEELING. MICHELANGELO TAUGHT  
ALL OF THE OTHERS, AND FROM ME ALONE HE EARNED

By Fabio Segni

WHY, O ENVIOUS LACHESIS, DO YOU CUT THE THREAD OF THE  
FIRST FLOWER OF YOUTH  
WITH YOUR FUNERARY THUMB?  
BY KILLING THAT ONE, YOU KILLED INNUMERABLE APPELLES':  
THAT ONE DYING, ALL CHARM OF PAINTING DIED.  
THAT SUN EXTINGUISHED, ALL THE STARS ARE EXTINGUISHED.  
ALAS! THAT ONE PERISHING IS LIKE ALL HONOR THAT PERISHES.<sup>28</sup>

In the 1568 edition, Vasari compels the reader to focus on Masaccio's unfortunate death at age twenty-six, Brunelleschi's sense of loss, and his general lack of esteem by his contemporaries who placed no epitaphs on his tomb. These negative feelings are contrasted with the great esteem accorded to him in Vasari's time when epitaphs were produced. In 1568 Vasari reduced the number of printed epitaphs from four to two, but those two reported in 1568 are attributed to specific authors, Annibale Caro and Fabio

<sup>28</sup> Ma con tutto che le cose di Masaccio siano state sempre in cotanta riputazione, egli è nondimeno opinione, anzi pur credenza ferma di molti, che egli arebbe fato ancora molto maggior frutto nell'arte, se la morte che di 26 anni ce lo rapì, non ce lo avesse tolto così per tempo. Ma, o fusse l'invidia o fusse pure che le cose buone comunemente non durano molto, e' si morì nel bel del fiorire; et andossene sì di subito, che e' non mancò chi dubitasse in lui di veleno assai più che d'altro accidente. Dicesi che sentendo la morte sua, Filippo di ser Brunellesco disse: 'Noi abbiamo fatto in Masaccio una grandissima perdita', e dolse infinitamente, essendosi affaticato gran pezzo in mostrargli molti termini di prospettiva e d'architettura./ Fu sotterato nella medesima chiesa del Carmine, l'anno 1443, e, sebbene allora non gli fu posto sopra il sepolcro memoria alcuna, per essere stato poco stimato vivo, non gli è però mancato doppo la morte chi lo abbia onorato di questi epitaffi:  
/D'Annibal Caro/ PINSI, E LA MIA PITTURA AL VER FU PARI;/ L'ATTEGGIAI, L'AVVIVAI, LE DIEDI IL MOTO,/ LE DIEDI AFFETT. INSENGNI IL BONARROTO/ A TUTTI GLI ALTRI, E DA ME SOLO IMPARI/ Di Fabio Segni/ INVIDA CUR, LACHESIS, PRIMO SUB FLORE JUVENTAE/ POLLICE DISCINDIS STAMINA FUNEREO?/ HOC UNO OCCISO, INNUMEROS OCCIDIS APPELLES:/ PICTURAE OMNIS OBIIT, HOC OBEUNTE, LEPOS./ HOC SOLE EXTINGUO, EXTINGUNTUR SYDERA CUNCTA./ HEU! DECUS OMNE PERIT, HOC PEREUNTE, SIMUL' from Vasari, *Le vite*, Bettarini/Barocchi, vol. 3, 132-33.

Segni, intimating the great service to earlier artists that Cinquecento reassessments of their work could have.<sup>29</sup>

Those epitaphs that are retained in 1568 are better integrated into the biographies, either because they offer documentary evidence (in the case of tomb inscriptions) or because the circumstances of their production enhance the individual lives. The three new epitaphs added in 1568 bear witness to this tendency: two are tomb inscriptions, one of which describes Cosimo I's great esteem for Giorgio Vasari's assistant in the Palazzo Vecchio decorations, Cristofano Gherardi, a point Vasari is eager to emphasize, and the third, a sonnet attributed to Pietro Bembo for Pierino da Vinci draws attention to that promising young artist's premature death in his early 20s, a major theme of the biography. The great stature of Pietro Bembo as poet, funeral orator and author of Raphael's epitaph was certainly also a factor in its printing.<sup>30</sup>

As scholars have previously noted, occupying the place of the expunged epitaphs in the new version of the *Vite*, are references to students and to visual media including Vasari's drawings collection ('libro de' disegni') and portraits made by contemporaries or near contemporaries (which also served as models for the framed woodcut portrait busts at the beginning of each 1568 biography).<sup>31</sup> The citation of portraits at the end of the artists' lives invites an association between the death, burial and tomb of the artist and the portrait, which becomes a form of visual epitaph. Effigies of the deceased were common enough on tombs but very uncommon on artists' tombs since they were reserved for only certain classes of people such as high ranking ecclesiastics and members of the nobility, though exceptions were made.<sup>32</sup> By coupling the artist's portrait with his burial, Vasari implied a more elevated status for artists by association with the much grander effigy-rich tombs accorded the more honourable classes. A nice example of this transposition occurs in the life of Niccolò Aretino who dies just after he has completed a papal tomb with the Pope's effigy. Following the description of that tomb and Niccolò's death is the reference to his own portrait.<sup>33</sup>

In spite of the vast differences in the quantity, collocation and descriptive contexts of the epitaphs in the two editions of the *Vite*, Vasari is remarkably consistent in bearing witness to epitaph-writing campaigns and in preserving descriptions of attaching paper

<sup>29</sup> Cristoforo Gherardo's life, only included in the second edition, also ends with his epitaph for much the same reason, though this epitaph and tomb conversely show how much he was appreciated by both Giorgio Vasari and Cosimo I de' Medici (Gherardi was his assistant at the Palazzo Vecchio), Barocchi/Bettarini, *Le vite*, 5, 304.

<sup>30</sup> Vasari attributed Raphael's epitaph to Bembo but modern scholarship is vexed on this question. See David Rijser, 'The Practical Function of Epigrams: Raphael's Grave', 103-36, esp. 125-31, and Shearman, *Raphael in Early Modern Sources*, vol.1, 639-62, for bibliography.

<sup>31</sup> Much of the contents of Vasari's 'Libro de' disegni' has been reconstructed by Licia Collobi Ragghianti and Carlo L. Ragghianti, *Il libro dei disegni di Giorgio Vasari*, vols. I, II, Firenze: Vallecchi, 1974.

<sup>32</sup> On tomb etiquette, see Andrew Butterfield, 'Social Structure and the Typology of Funerary Monuments in Renaissance Florence', *Res: Anthropology and Aesthetics*, 26, 1994, 47-67 and 'The Funerary Monument of Cosimo de' Medici Pater Patriae', in *The Early Medici and their Artists*, edited by Francis Ames-Lewis, London: Birkbeck, 153-68.

<sup>33</sup> 'Fece dunque Niccolò il detto sepolcro, e vi ritrasse quel papa di naturale: ben è vero che, per la incommodità de' marmi et cotte, e similmente la statua del Papa sopra la cassa, la quale è posta dietro al coro della detta chiesa./ La quale opera finita, si ammalò Niccolò gravamente e poco appresso si morì d'anni 67, e fu nella medesima chiesa sotterrato l'anno 1417. Et il suo ritratto fu fatto da Galasso ferrarese suo amicissimo, il quale dipingeva a que' tempi in Bologna...' Vasari, *Le vite*, ed. Bettarini/Barocchi, vol. 3, 34.

epitaphs.<sup>34</sup> Although eliminating many epitaphs in 1568, Vasari preserved all earlier references recording the act of attaching of epitaphs to the tomb, even when he refrained from printing any examples. A case in point is Barna da Siena's biography which contains his most detailed Trecento reference to the practice. According to Vasari, the citizens of San Gimignano gave Barna an honourable funeral in their parish church and that because of his great reputation, for many months they placed epitaphs in Latin and Italian around his tomb. The passage, identical in both editions reads:

And in the parish church, the people of San Gimignano, having much honoured him in the funeral rites, gave his body an honoured tomb, holding for them that same reputation when he was dead, that he held when he was alive, and not ceasing for many months to attach epitaphs in Latin and vernacular around his tomb, as the men of that town were dedicated to good letters. In this way they gave the just prize to the honest labour of Barna by celebrating in ink the man who had honoured them with his paintings.<sup>35</sup>

In 1550 this description was followed by a printed epitaph. In 1568, Vasari retained the description of the citizens' placing epitaphs on the tomb—a record of the actions of the living—while the single example of an epitaph in his honour was eliminated. Clearly the ritual activity of remembering the deceased in this literary fashion was of continued importance to the author in a way that the individual commemorations were not.

Unlike Michelangelo's bier and catafalque, in the case of Barna, Vasari described an event in which he did not participate, as Barna died two centuries before Vasari wrote his biography. The time gap opens up the possibility that the author is extrapolating based on his own first-hand experiences of what went on in the sixteenth century. However, even if Vasari or his sources were indeed getting carried away in this case, he was nevertheless recording a contemporary practice that dated back to at least the fourteenth century, if not earlier. In other words, it is very possible that what Vasari wrote was true.

A famous literary precedent is found in Boccaccio's *Trattatello in laude di Dante*, itself an important model for Vasari's biographies as a whole.<sup>36</sup> Boccaccio recounted how after Dante's body was entered in Ravenna, many poets all over the region of Romagna spontaneously wrote verses 'placed as epitaphs on the future tomb, with merited praise for all posterity he who reclined inside it.' The poets also collected them together and sent

<sup>34</sup> In only two cases (Paolo Uccello and Jacopo della Quercia) does Vasari delete his reference to Latin and Italian epitaphs from his 1568 edition. In the case of Jacopo della Quercia, Vasari removed the whole section about his being buried in the cathedral, instead focussing on Jacopo's role as *operaio* and other information he received directly from Domenico Beccafumi. In Paolo Uccello's case the removal of the comments allowed Vasari to skip more lithly over Uccello's sepulchre.

<sup>35</sup> 'E nella Pieve predetta i Sangimignanesi, onorandolo molto nell'essequie, diedero al corpo suo onorata sepoltura, tenendolo in quella stessa reputazione morto, che vivo tenuto l'avevano, e non cessando per molti mesi d'appicare intorno al sepolcro suo epitaffi latini e volgari, per essere naturalmente gli uomini di quel paese dediti alle buone lettere. Così dunque all'oneste fatiche del Berna resero premio conveniente, celebrando con i loro inchiostri chi gli aveva onorati con le sue pitture.' in Vasari, *Le vite*, ed. Barocchi/Bettarini, vol. 2, 255-56.

<sup>36</sup> See Catherine M. Soussloff, 'Lives of poets and painters in the Renaissance', *Word and Image* 6:2, 1990, 154-62 and Johannes Bartuschat, 'Dalla vita del poeta alla vita dell'artista. Tendenze del genere biografico nel Quattrocento', *Letteratura e Arte*, 1, 2003, 49-57.

them to the ruler, Guido Novello da Polenta, each hoping that his would be chosen as an inscription. Unfortunately Guido lost power and died so nothing happened, but a short time later, Boccaccio saw the collection which he likened to a tomb—not a corporeal one, but one which perpetuated his memory in an incorporeal way.<sup>37</sup> Boccaccio then chose one epitaph by Giovanni del Virgilio to be inscribed on the tomb, but in the end a different one by Bernardo Canaccio Scannabecchi was used. By the time the tomb was reconstructed and given a second epitaph in 1483 by Bernardo Bembo (Pietro Bembo's father) the Trecento rhyming Latin hexameters written in the first person by Scannabecchi had been misattributed to Dante himself.<sup>38</sup>

Boccaccio's narrative—which is also related more synthetically by Filippo Villani in his own biography of Dante in his *Le vite degli uomini illustri fiorentini* (another model and source for Vasari's *Lives*)<sup>39</sup> provides a striking parallel to Vasari's description of Barna's and other artists' tombs. Noteworthy are the spontaneous quality of the citizens' poetic outpouring that occurred over a period of time, the ritual of the verses' sepulchral placement and the sense in which those paper epitaphs served as paper memorials to the deceased—first placed on the tomb itself and then collected together in a manuscript. Although such paper epitaph rituals and competitions are naturally difficult to investigate

<sup>37</sup> There are several versions of Boccaccio's *Trattatello in laude di Dante*. In the first and longest version, Boccaccio describes the poems in honour of Dante after he discusses the tomb and funeral oration at Dante's home by Guido Novello. The text reads, 'E tornato alla casa nella quale Dante era prima abitato, secondo il ravignano costume, esso medesimo, si a commendazione all'alta scienza e delle virtù del defunto, e si a consolazione de' suoi amici, li quali egli avea in amarissima vita lasciati, fece uno ornato e lungo sermone; disposto, se lo stato e la vita fossero durati di sì egregia sepoltura ornarlo, che se mai alcuno altro suo merito non l'avesse memorevole renduto a' futuri quella l'avrebbe fatto./ Questo laudevole proponimento infra breve spazio di tempo fu manifesto ad alquanti li quali in quel tempo erano in poesi solennissimi in Romagna; per che ciascuno si per mostrare la sua sofficienza, sì per rendere testimonianza della portata benivolenza da loro al morto poeta, sì per cattare la grazia e l'amore del signore, il quale ciò sapevano disiderare, ciascuno per se fece versi, li quali, posti per epitafio alla futura sepultura, con debite lode fecessero la posterità certa chi dentro da essa giacesse; e al magnifico signore gli mandarono. Il quale con gran peccato della Fortuna, non dopo molto tempo, toltogli lo stato; si morì a Bologna; per la qual cosa e il fare il sepolcro e il porvi li mandati versi si rimase. Li quali versi stati a me mostrati poi più tempo appresso, e veggendo loro [non] avere avuto luogo per lo caso già dimostrato, pensando le presenti cose per me scritte, come che sepoltura non sieno corporeale, ma sieno, si come quella sarebbe stata, perpetue conservatrici della colui memoria...'. The passage is taken from the edition of Vittore Branca, *Tutte le opere di Giovanni Boccaccio*, 12 vols., Milan: Mondadori, 1967, vol. 3, 458-9, after which Boccaccio describes and cites the single epitaph by Giovanni del Virgilio that he chose to be engraved on the tomb. According to Branca's n392, 876, four fourteenth century epitaphs are known today. In addition to the one by Giovanni di Virgilio, there is one attributed to Menghino Mezzani, another attributed to Petrarch and a third by Bernardo de Canatro who is otherwise unknown.

<sup>38</sup> See Agosto Campana, 'Epitaffi' in *Enciclopedia dantesca. Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, fondata da Giovanni Treccani*, 6 vols., Rome: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 1970-76, vol. 2, 710-13 and vol. 5, 51-53 and Guido Martelletti, 'Giovanni del Virgilio', in *Enciclopedia dantesca*, vol. 3, 193-94. Dante died 14 September 1321. The first epitaph was engraved on the front of his sarcophagus in 1357. Paolo Giovio's *elogium* of Dante includes the original inscription in rhyming hexameters by Scannabecchi, and Bembo's newer one.

<sup>39</sup> Villani, Filippo, *Liber de origine civitatis Florentiae et eiusdem famosis civibus*, edited by Giuliano Tanturli. Padua: Antinore, 1997, 355: 'Decreverat vir nobilis vere Guido Novellus ex operoso marmore sumptu amplissimo erigere monumentum, quo egregii poete cineres conderentur. Set amici propositum infelix fraudavit eventus, fortunis Guidonis indeterius commutatis. Que tamem illo interim potuit viri nobilis diligentia adimplevit. Curavit siquidem ut per multos cuiusque arbitrio ponendi versus in sepulcro in poete laudem dictarentur; multisque multorum receptis, hos qui fuere magistri Iohannis Del Virgilio iusset in frontispicio solennis arcule insigniri: *Theologus Dantes...*'

since the material evidence is long gone, in Dante's important case, a single manuscript version was produced and this allowed the poems to survive longer than they would have ordinarily. Even the ritual itself received attention in Boccaccio's text because he saw that manuscript. Reading between the lines suggests that such ritual practices lie at the very foundation of this commemorative genre in the late medieval period. Epitaph-writing campaigns to shower tombs might possibly also lie at the origin of manuscript collections of epigrams and epitaphs in honor of deceased individuals, placing epitaph rituals in even closer proximity to funeral oratory whose Renaissance popularity it shared.

In a study focusing on funeral oratory, Paul Oskar Kristeller noted that the practice of assembling epigrams and other panegyric writings in honor of rulers first occurred in manuscript form in the mid-fifteenth century for the rulers Nicolas III d'Este (d. 1441) and Cosimo de' Medici *pater patriae* (d.1464).<sup>40</sup> By the second half of the fifteenth century such collections became more and more common for non-political figures, including for the humanists, Giannozzo Manetti (d. 1459) and Domizio Calderini (d.1478),<sup>41</sup> and for the musician, Antonio Squarcialupi (d. 1480) whose inscribed memorial epitaph was written by Lorenzo the Magnificent and installed in the Florentine cathedral along with another for Giotto with an epitaph by Poliziano that received Vasari's attention. By the sixteenth century such collections were published and apart from dedicated publications, there exist many Neo-Latin elegies addressed to the 'tumulus' usually thought to be metaphoric *topos* but which probably point to an origin in these ritual practices.<sup>42</sup> However, Boccaccio's passage and Vasari's references indicate that the ritualized appending of ephemeral paper epitaphs on tomb monuments preceding some of those manuscripts was much older with roots as much in the literary/artistic sector as in the realm of political panegyric. It is altogether possible that the manuscripts surviving today are the material residue of this ritual practice as was the one in Dante's honour (or the publications in Michelangelo's honour), though it is impossible to know for certain.

The epitaph attaching ritual may even be detectable as early as 1227 in a text by Buoncompagno da Signa (c. 1170-1250), cited by Armando Petrucci in his *Le scritture ultime*. Buoncompagno describes how there were 'epitaphia' and 'carmine' spoken and perhaps appended to a bishop's tomb (or bed of state) he saw in Rome. The passage reads:

There were epitaphs and poems were recited with which is recorded in memory the greatness and merits of the defunct and always ending with a mention of the contempt for this world...<sup>43</sup>

<sup>40</sup> Paul Oscar Kristeller, Francesco Bandini and his Consolatory Dialogue upon the Death of Simone Gondi', in *Studies in Renaissance Thought and Letters*, Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1956, 411-35, esp. 419-20, n27. Strocchia, *Death and Ritual*, 109-11, cites the great numbers of epitaphs and epigrams written upon the death of Coluccio Salutati.

<sup>41</sup> Manetti's epitaphs are collected at the end of Vat. Palat. Let. 1594 (Bianca, 'I poeti del secondo quattrocento Romano', 1999, 183-98 who also lists many others) and Calderini's are discussed by Roberto Weiss, 'In memoriam Domitii Calderini', *Italia medioevale e umanistica*, 3, 1960, 309-21.

<sup>42</sup> See Giovanni Parenti, 'L'invenzione di un genere, il 'Tumulus' Pontaniano', *Interpres*, 7, 1987, 125-58. Giovanni Pontano's Tempietto in Naples is covered with inscribed epitaphs of ancient and modern origin—a materialization of his tumulus poems.

<sup>43</sup> From Buoncompagno da Signa, *Candelabrum eloquentiae*, 1227 as cited in Armando Petrucci, *Le scritture ultime. Ideologia della morte e strategie dello scrivere nella cultura occidentale*. Turin: Einaudi, 1995, 76: '....fiunt

The presence of epitaphs at the tomb does not guarantee that they were attached or hung from it as they could have been read aloud, though the author clearly distinguishes the poems which were recited from the epitaphs which were simply present. If the practice developed from the *ex voto* notes placed over the tombs and relics of saints, then they must have been appended or placed over the tomb.<sup>44</sup>

The ritual of attaching paper epitaphs might also have developed from the recitation of oral verses, a possibility at least since the early 13<sup>th</sup> century when Buoncompagno was writing and very popular in fifteenth century humanist circles.<sup>45</sup> The word, 'epitaphia' translates as 'reading over the tomb' in Greek and if combined with 'logos' can mean funeral oration. These meanings carried over into Latin. If the paper ritual developed from oral rituals (combined with the ancient tradition of writing literary epitaphs for publication), it would represent a much more democratic form of honouring the dead since those not officially invited to offer oral praise at a funeral ceremony could still attach their memorials during the funeral or at a later time. The mid-fifteenth century humanist, Leon Battista Alberti in his book on architecture (VIII.4) described the recitation of epitaphs. First stating that verbosity is more thoroughly objectionable in epitaphs than in other genres, noting that Plato decreed that no more than four verses might be written on a tomb,<sup>46</sup> Alberti relaxed a bit, stating: 'But if (the inscription) is somewhat longer, let it be so elegant and learned that it moves the spirit to piety, compassion, and grace, and so appealing that one is not sorry he read it and happily commits it to memory and repeats it.'<sup>47</sup>

One of the examples Alberti offers is the last couple of lines of the epitaph of Ennius which state that no one should give him a funeral, because he shall live on by

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etiam epitaphia, dictantur carmina quibus posteris ad memoriam reductuntur magnitudines et merita defunctorum et semper in fine fit mentio de contemptu mundi...'

<sup>44</sup> Such a situation of *ex voto* notes hanging above the tomb of St. Agnes is pictured by Lorenzo Lotto in the left predella panel of his St. Lucy altarpiece (1532), commissioned by the priors of the Confraternity of St. Lucy, Jesi (for the convent of S. Floriano), now housed in the Pinacoteca civica, Jesi. The scene depicts the many notes appended to the ceiling around the tomb of St. Agnes who was instrumental in healing St. Lucy's mother, Eutichia. I thank Creighton Gilbert, sadly now deceased, for this reference. According to Horace (*Ars Poetica*, 75-77) the genre of the epigram originates in votive offerings.

<sup>45</sup> Christian, *Empire without End*, esp. 143-44 discusses the recitation of poetry in connection with ceremonies and banquets in honor of the deceased humanists, Platina and Marcantonio Altieri. This kind of poetic commemoration has ancient precedents (Statius, *Silvae* 2.3.76-98, Catullus 101). The poems recited in church preceding Platina's *parentalia* banquet of 1482, celebrated on the first anniversary of his death, were viewed by the diarist, Jacopo Gherardi as being in conflict with Christian doctrine because of their content (passage quoted in Christian, *Empire without End*, 240, note 82), not because of the overall recitation ritual which was combined with a funeral oration given by Pomponio Leto. The association between epitaph, tomb and song also surfaces in a volume of youthful poetry published by Pietro Aretino in 1512 and reproduced in Patricia Brown, *Venice and Antiquity*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996, 291: 'Trophii: sepulchri: eptiaphi: e carmi...'

<sup>46</sup> This comment perhaps accounts for so many four-line Latin poetic epitaphs in Vasari's biography and for Poliziano's remark that Giotto's name was worth a long poem — of eight lines! 'hoc nomen longi carminis instar erit' ([my] name will be worth a long poem)!

<sup>47</sup> 'Aut si tandem paulo prolixior est, omnino sit elegans doctum, habeatque in se, quod animos moveat ad pietatem ad misericordiam ad gratiam, quodve legisse non poeniteat et mandasse memoriae et pronuntiassse iuvet.' Giovan Battista Alberti, *L'architettura*, edited and translated by Giovanni Orlandi with introduction and notes by Paolo Portoghesi, 2 vols., Milan: Il polifilo, 1966, vol. 2, 695. Giraldis noted the same platonic passage in his *De vario sepeleendi ritu libellus*. See note 55.

flitting from the mouths of learned men, a sentiment which was then recalled by Poliziano in his dedication letter to Lorenzo de' Medici of the first printed copy of the book in 1486.<sup>48</sup> Although this epitaph referred to Ennius' own poetry and not to literary epitaphs written about him, Alberti's commentary offers an image of a culture in which the dead are remembered by having their epitaphs recited by the living like pithy poetic funeral orations, as well as physically inscribed on or attached to the tomb. Vasari knew Alberti's book on architecture, and even designed a frontispiece for his friend Cosimo Bartoli's Italian translation published in 1565.<sup>49</sup> He also may have been familiar with Ennius' epitaph from other sources since it appears to have been widely known in cultivated circles.<sup>50</sup> He was also probably familiar with humanist recreations of the ancient rites of *parentalia* in which anniversaries for the deceased were celebrated by communal meals and poetry recitations, the best known example being that of 1482 for Bartolomeo Platina.<sup>51</sup> Perhaps at the origin of all of these humanist conceits was the well-known example of Artemisia who established an *agon* or competition of reciting praises for her husband, Mausolus, at the site of his tomb, one of the Seven Wonders of the World.<sup>52</sup>

Such humanist attitudes linking commemoration, the circulation of epitaphs and the related ritual of attaching paper memorials to stone mausolea is reminiscent of a famous passage in Ariosto's *Orlando furioso* (35.10-23) about time and immortality. In his allegory, Ariosto describes poet-swans who rescue names from the ruins of time and the river of forgetfulness by writing poems about them. The swans take these rescued names to the Temple of Immortality, where a nymph attaches them to a column dedicated to the goddess.<sup>53</sup> Giorgio Vasari even drew his own version of this passage in the mid-1540s, just as he was writing the first edition of the *Le vite*—and he appears to have been the only sixteenth-century artist to have done so, suggesting that this drawing is a visual attestation of his singular interest in describing epitaph attaching rituals [Fig. 1].<sup>54</sup>

<sup>48</sup> The passage reads, 'Because it deserves to flit on the mouths of learned men' [Nam et ipse dignus est, qui volitet docta per ora virum], as cited in Alberti, *L'architettura*, vol. 1, 5. On Alberti's idea of commemoration, see Eugenio Garin, 'Leon Battista Alberti e il mondo dei morti', *Giornale critico della filosofia italiana*, 4, 1973, 178-89, and Jonathan Reiss, 'The Civic View of Sculpture in Alberti's *De re edificatori*', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 32, 1979, 1-17.

<sup>49</sup> *L'architettura di Leon Battista Alberti tradotta in lingua fiorentina*, Venice: Francesco Franceschi, 1565.

<sup>50</sup> This passage by Ennius is recalled on the back of Piero della Francesca's portrait of Battista Sforza, Duchess of Urbino, accompanying an image of her on a triumphal chariot accompanied by Chastity and other virtues: 'Adorned by the praise of her husband's great deeds, she who held to chastity in good times flies on the mouths of men' [Que modum rebus tenuit secundis coniugis magni decorata rerum laude gestarum volitat per ora cuncta virorum]. The inclusion of this reference to Ennius indicated that the painting was executed after the death of the Duchess in July 1472 and certainly refers to the collection of poems, orations and letters put together by Federico Veterano for her husband, Federico da Montefeltro (cod. Urbinas latinus 1193). See Creighton Gilbert, *Change in Piero della Francesca*, Locust Valley, NY: J.J. Augustin, 1968.

<sup>51</sup> Christian, *Empire without End*, 2010, 142-49.

<sup>52</sup> The episode is recounted in Aulus Gellius, *Attic Nights* 10.18. The tomb as one of the Seven Wonders is also discussed by Vitruvius, *The Ten Books of Architecture*, 8.2.11, Strabo, *Geography*, 14.2.16, and Pliny, *Natural History*, 36.4 (who also includes the tomb's dimensions), as well as a brief mention in Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, 8.16. One of the *Coryciana* poets compared Goritz' column favourably to the Seven Wonders of the World. On the *Coryciana*, see note 56.

<sup>53</sup> Lodovico Ariosto, *Orlando furioso*, introduction, commentary and notes by Marcello Turchi, 2 vols. Milan: Garzanti, 1974, vol. 2, 957-60.

<sup>54</sup> On this drawing and its relationship to Ariosto, see Julian Kliemann's entry entitled, 'Progetto di decorazione' in *Giorgio Vasari. Principi, letterati e artisti*, 118. Kliemann considers this to be a drawing for the decoration of a loggia which heavily shows the influence of Vasari's Venetian experiences, and thus probably



Fig. 1 Giorgio Vasari. *Detail of a drawing based on Ariosto's Orlando Furioso canto 35, 1540s, pen, black chalk and wash on paper (29.5 x 48) Florence, Gabinetto dei disegni e stampe, Galleria degli Uffizi.*

Vasari condensed Ariosto's narrative to three figures: Time takes the names away in a bag, Poetry writes in a book, and the Nymph affixes the worthy names to a column. In Ariosto's case, they are merely names and not epitaphs, but they are names linked to commemorative poetic texts, a point which Vasari emphasized by placing the figure of the Poetry writing nearby. Whether either Ariosto or Vasari knew that columns were typical grave markers (sometimes engraved with names) in archaic Greece remains an open question, though the fact that Zeus' son Sarpedon received just such a tomb in Homer's *Iliad* (16.788), suggests that this phenomenon ought to have been known in Renaissance literary circles.<sup>55</sup>

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dates to soon after his return from Venice in the 1540s. He suggests that it was for the loggia of Don Pedro da Toledo, viceroy of Naples because this commission is referred to in a ricordo of 14 April 1545.

<sup>55</sup> Herodotus also mentions tombs in the form of columns with epitaphs inscribed on them (Herodotus, *Herodotus in Four Volumes*, tr. A. D. Godley, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971, vol. 3, book VII, ch. 228, 544-45). Lilio Gregio Giraldi who was working in Ferrara published a book entitled, *De sepulchris et vario sepeliendi ritu* first printed in Basel, 1539 in which he discusses the typologies of ancient tombs including column tombs and drawing on Herodotus and others. The author consulted this book in a later edition, Lilio

Both Ariosto and Vasari may also have been specifically recalling an extraordinary pier in the church of S. Agostino in Rome that was home to more than four hundred Latin poems appended to wooden boards attached to its sides. In front of the pier was an altar dedicated to St. Anne with an image of her, the Madonna and Christ child sculpted by Sansovino. The altar and image had been commissioned by the humanist Johan Goritz of Luxemburg and the poems addressed Sansovino, St. Anne, and Goritz. They were presented to Goritz every year since the altar's dedication on St. Anne's day (26 July), 1512 and eventually published in a collection entitled, *Coryciana* in 1524.<sup>56</sup> While not exactly the same phenomenon as attaching epitaphs to tombs, this annual ritual probably developed from epitaph attaching rituals since Goritz' empty tomb was lying beneath the altar waiting to receive him. Since some of the poems are ekphrastic or prosopopeic, they are also associated with the related phenomenon of attaching poems, praises or invectives to works of art, the most famous examples being the political invectives attached to the statue of Pasquino every St. Mark's day (25 April) in Rome<sup>57</sup> and the celebratory verses

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Gregorio Giraldi. *Opera Omnia*, 2 vols., ed. Johann Faes, Paul Colomesi, Johann Jensius, Paris: Jacob Hack, 1696, vol. 1, 722-76.

<sup>56</sup> Johan Goritz of Luxemburg not only held a religious service on the feast of Saint Anne, but also gave a great literary dinner in his garden on the slopes of the Capitol where poems were attached to trees, wells, walls and garden statuary. In her doctoral dissertation ('The Saint Anne Altar in Sant' Agostino, Rome', PhD Dissertation, New York University, 1984), Virginia Bonito has studied the context of the poems in relation to the altar and tomb and also in conjunction with Goritz' literary dinners. She cites various contemporary accounts of the annual practice including the introduction of the published volume by Blosio Palladio (iv-v), several of the poems themselves (by Palladio and Silvio Laurelio), Egidius of Viterbo, *Historia XX Saeculorum* (Ang. Lat. 502 fol. 197v) who describes the event as a 'certamen' or contest, and Fra Mariano da Firenze, 'Tractatus de origine, nobilitate et excellentia Tusciae' of 1517, Firenze Archivio dei Frati Minori, ms. 334. Laurelio's comments are particularly interesting since he compares Goritz's column favorably to the seven wonders of the world, one of which all concerned would have known was the tomb of Mausolus (ut miracula detonata septem/ isti cedere iam queant columne....' The verbs used for attaching the poems are: *figere* (Palladio) and *apendere* (Mariano da Firenze). See Bonito, 'The Saint Anne Altar', esp. 21-25, 162-192. Bonito also includes a discussion of the poems themselves and transcribes and translates about a quarter of them. She relates the phenomenon to ancient panegyrics and medieval ex-votos but finds no exact parallel. On the culture of the poems in the *Coryciana*, see also Giovanni Perini, 'Carmi inediti su Raffaello e sull'arte della prima metà del Cinquecento a Roma e Ferrara e il mondo dei Coryciana', *Römisches Jahrbuch der Bibliotheca Hertziana*, 32, 1997/8, 368-407, esp. 374-88. The *Coryciana* volume edited by Blosio Palladio in 1524 exists in a modern critical edition by Jozef Ijsewijn, *Coryciana*, Rome: Herder, 1997. See also the more recent work by David Rijser, *Raphael's Poetics: Ekphrasis, Interaction and Typology in Art and Poetry of High Renaissance Rome*, Amsterdam: Barleaus Pers, 2006, esp. 155-234, and 'The sculptor as philologist: interaction between scholarship and the arts in the Goritz Chapel and the 'Coryciana', Rome 1512 - 1527', in *Officine del nuovo: sodalizi fra letterati, artisti ed editori nella cultura italiana fra Riforma e Controriforma: atti del simposio internazionale, Utrecht 8 - 10 novembre 2007*, edited by Harald Hendrix e Paolo Procaccioli, Manziana: Vecchiarelli, 2008, 257-265.

<sup>57</sup> Anne Reynolds ('The Classical Continuum in Roman Humanism: the Festival of Pasquino, the Robigalia, and Satire', *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance*, 49, 1987, 289-309) views the Pasquino ritual as the assimilation of the pagan ritual of Robigalia (an agricultural festival she associates with satire) with contemporary religious practice. On Pasquino more generally, see Fernando and Renato Silenzi Silenzi, *Pasquino: quattro secoli di satira Romana*. Florence: Vallecchi, 1968, Ann Reynolds, 'Cardinal Oliviero Carafa and the Early Cinquecento Tradition of the Feast of Pasquino', *Humanistica Lovaniensia*, 34, 1985, 178-208, Leonard Barkan, *Unearthing the Past*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999, 209-69, Angelo Romano, 'La satira di Pasquino: formazione di un genere letterario', in *Ex marmore: Pasquini, Pasquinisti, Pasquinate nell'Europa moderna. Atti del colloquio internazionale (Lecce-Otranto, Nov. 17-19, 2005)*, edited by Chrysa Damianaki, Paolo Procaccioli and Angelo Romano, Manziana: Vecchiarelli, 2006, 11-34 and most recently, Cathleen Wren Christian, *Empire without End*, 2010, 185-89.

attached to Cellini's Perseus upon its unveiling.<sup>58</sup> This tradition is at least as old as 1501 when the first epigrams were attached to the Pasquino statue in Rome but was also practiced outside of the Eternal City.<sup>59</sup> Whether the practice of attaching epigrams to statues developed as a result of epitaph attaching rituals or independently in the context of poetry about ancient statues that imitated examples in *Greek Anthology* or indeed is continuous with ancient practice is not clear.<sup>60</sup> The poem-attaching ritual associated with the Pasquino statue (which was usually clothed for the occasion) resembles a parody of the depositing of votive offerings, suggesting to this author that it was influenced by the ritual attaching of poetic epitaphs. David Rijser's contention that the source of the Pasquino poetry-attaching ritual is the erotic and parodic *Priapea*, a collection of epigrams purporting to be votive offerings to a cult statue of Priapus in a rustic shrine further

<sup>58</sup> Benvenuto Cellini, *La vita*, ed. Lorenzo Bellotto, Parma: Guanda, 1996, 707-8. Cellini described how even in an unfinished state his work was appreciated so much that many verses in Latin and even Greek were attached each day to it because it happened to be school vacation for the Studio of Pisa so all the learned students engaged in a competition with each other using his statue as the subject, but that what gave him the most satisfaction is that his fellow artists also joined in the praise: 'Et non restavano i popoli continuamente di appicare alle spalle della porta, che teneva un poco di parato, inmettere che io le davo la sua fine. Io dico che 'l giorno medesimo che la si tenne paracchi ore scoperta, e' vi fu appiccati più di venti sonetti, tutti in lode smisuratissime della mia opera; dappoi che io la ricopersi ogni dì mi v'era appiccati quantità di sonetti, et di versi latini et versi greci; perché gli era vacanza allo Studio di Pisa, tutti quei eccellenti dotti e gli scolari facevano a ggara. Ma quello che mi dava maggior contento con isperanza di maggior mia salute inverso 'l mio Duca, si era che quegli dell'arte, cioè scultori et pittori, ancora loro facevano a ggara a chi meglio diceva. Et infra gli altri quale io stimavo più, si era il valente pittore Iacopo da Puntormo, et più di lui il suo eccellente Bronzino, pittore, che non gli bastò 'l farvene appicare parecchi, che egli me ne mandò per il suo Sandrino (Alessandro Allori) insino a casa mia, il quale è rarissimo, che questo fu causa di consolarmi alquanto. Et così io la ricopersi, et mi sollicitavo di finirla.' The poems are published in Francesco Tassi's 1829 edition of Cellini's autobiography, *Vita di Benvenuto Cellini: Orefice e scultore fiorentino / scritta da lui medesimo; restituita alla lezione originale sul manoscritto Poirot ora Laurenziano ed arricchita d'illustrazioni e documenti inediti dal dottor Francesco Tassi*, 3 vols. Florence: Guglielmo Piatti, 1829, vol. 3, 455-93, from a manuscript in the Riccardiana (no. 2353). Tassi calls them 'Poesie toscane e latine sopra le opere in bronzo e in marmo di Messer Benvenuto Cellini', without direct reference to the Perseus. The Perseus was unveiled in 1554. On Cellini's Medusa, see Michael Cole, *Cellini and the Principles of Sculpture*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, 43-78, which cites earlier bibliography. Such poetic competitions are also more generally related to the practice to publishing poetry about works of art such as the verses in Latin and Italian written about Raphael's S. Cecilia or Giambattista Strozzi's verse about Michelangelo's Night in the New Sacristy which received a poetic response from the artist himself as if from the lips of his statue. Vasari, *Le vite*, ed. Bettarini/Barocchi, vol. 6, 58-59.

<sup>59</sup> Fra Sabba di Castiglione wrote to his patron, Isabella d'Este from Rhodes (between 1505 and 1508) noting that he was sorry for the dilapidated statues he saw so that he wrote a poem and attached it to the throat of one of them ('apiccailo al collo a una') cited in Christian, *Empire without End*, 2010, 195. Rijser, 'The Practical Function of Epigrams', 103-36, esp. 110-14, hypothesizes that epigrams were first written about works of art and then around the beginning of the Cinquecento were attached to them following the ancient precedent of the *Priapea*, a collection of poems initially ascribed to Virgil and imitated in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. The Priapic poems may indeed refer to a practice of attaching poems to the walls of a shrine, though they may just as easily refer to the scribbling of the verses on the walls. Rijser links this to the long tradition of love graffiti. He views the attaching of epigrams to works of art as an important precedent to the writing of epitaphs in honor of Raphael after his death, in part because of the extraordinary neo-antique statue adorning Raphael's tomb (on this latter, see Tilmann Buddensieg, 'Raphael's Tomb' in *Sixteenth-century Italian Art*, edited by Michael W. Cole, Oxford: Blackwell, 2006, 10-24.

<sup>60</sup> On ancient popular satire in the form of pithy literary statements, see Giovanni Cupaiuolo, *Tra poesia e politica: le pasquinate nell'antica Roma*, Napoli: Loffredo, 1993, who discusses ancient graffiti and pamphlets of a satirical or critical nature, though he consents that the diffusion of this literature was primarily oral, the most established form being the 'carmina triumphalia' sung by returning victorious soldiers (on this latter, 11-13).

supports the idea that it is a parody of a serious practice, especially as Francesco Robortello connects the *Priapea* to Marforio, another contemporary 'talking statue' who was in dialogue with Pasquino.<sup>61</sup>

Vasari's immediate literary model for concluding the *Vite* of his first edition with epitaphs also derives from a Roman humanistic milieu: Paolo Giovio's volume of biographies of illustrious scholars and poets first published in 1546.<sup>62</sup> Like Vasari, Giovio used the epitaphs and references to tombs to punctuate the biographic episodes of his text. Unlike Vasari, his epitaphs were never printed in 'lapidary' fashion, even when they consisted in tomb inscriptions, and he always sought to attribute epitaphs to specific poets including, in some cases, the subject of the biography. Unattributed poems were labeled 'uncertain.'<sup>63</sup> Giovio's inspiration to conclude his biographies with epitaphs—as well as Vasari's, directly or indirectly—must have been the third century Greek writer, Diogenes Laertes whose biographies of philosophers each close with an epitaph, sometimes attributed to the author himself.<sup>64</sup>

Diogenes only distinguished between epitaphs inscribed on the grave stele and those of a literary character while Giovio also offered the third possibility—not present in Diogenes and perhaps not of ancient origin—of epitaphs attached to tombs. Because Giovio did not elaborate on the ritual process, presumably because it was common enough in his day, his references to it have been little noticed in modern scholarship.<sup>65</sup> In order to indicate the activity of attaching paper epitaphs to tombs, Giovio used the verb 'affigere' as opposed to the 'sculpting' or inscribing of verses as on Boccaccio's tomb and purely literary compositions physically unconnected to the tomb.<sup>66</sup> For example, when

<sup>61</sup> The passage of Robortello is quoted in Reynolds, 'The Classical Continuum', 300 in order to connect satire with rustic attaching of poetry to statues: 'scimus custodem hortorum Priapum tam magnam segetem veteribus poetis Latinis dedisse iocorum, qui Priapeio continentur carmine. Sic enim est prorsus existimandum, ut Romae his temporibus videmus ad Marforii statuam multa affigi a multis obscena, ac maledica carmina; ita in hortis Mecoenatis olim factum a poetis diversis.' It comes from Robortello's commentary on Horace, *Paraphrasis in librum Horatii, qui vulgo De arte poetica ad Pisones inscribitur*, Firenze: Torrentino, 1548, p. 28. On Rijser's hypothesis, see note 59.

<sup>62</sup> Giovio, Paolo. *Elogia veris clarorum imaginibus apposita quae in Musaeo Ioviano Comi spectantur* Venice., M. Tramezzino, 1546. See also note 19.

<sup>63</sup> Vasari did not go to the same trouble to attribute his epitaphs in either edition, though more are attributed in 1568. Giovio concluded his short *elogi* of both men of letters (1546) and men of war (1551) with epitaphs. The first edition illustrated with portraits is that printed in Basel in 1577 and this is the edition the author has used (Paolo Giovio, *Elogia virorum literis illustrium, quotquot vel nostra vel avorum memoria vixere*, Basel: Peter Perna, 1577). The epitaphs in these collections are conceived of as long inscriptions for his portrait collection. Giovio's longer biographies in his *Illustrium virorum vitae* first published in Florence by Torrentino in 1549 also include some epitaphs. For an excellent recent Italian translation of the *elogi*, see the edition by Franco Minonzio, translated by Andrea Guasparri and Franco Minonzio, *Elogi degli uomini illustri*, Turin: Einaudi, 2006. On Giovio's portrait collection which he called a museum, see the introductory essay and ample bibliography by Franco Minonzio in Giovio, *Elogi*, 2006, xix-cxxv, Franco Minonzio, Franco. 'Il Museo di Giovio e la galleria degli uomini illustri', in *Testi, immagini e filologia nel XVI secolo*, eds. Eliana Carrara and Silvia Ginzburg, 77-146, Sonia Maffei, 'Spiranti fattezze dei volti: Paolo Giovio e la descrizione degli uomini illustri dal museo agli Elogia', in *Ecfrasi: modelli ed esempi fra Medioevo e Rinascimento*, ed. Gianni Venturi and Monica Farnetti, Rome: Bulzoni, 2004, 227-68. Roma, 2004, and Linda Susan Klinger, 'The portrait collection of Paolo Giovio', PhD diss. Princeton University, 1991.

<sup>64</sup> Other important models for Giovio include Plutarch and Sallust. See Rubin, *Giorgio Vasari*, esp. 155-63.

<sup>65</sup> Except in Christian, *Empire without End*, 142, in reference to Pomponio Leto, see note 12.

<sup>66</sup> In Boccaccio's case, Giovio used the phrase, 'verses sculpted into the stone' ('insculptis his carminibus'), Giovio, *Elogia*, 1577, 13. In Donato Acciaoli's case he uses the word, 'inscripto', Giovio, *Elogia*, 1577, 29. These

discussing the tomb of the great Florentine humanist and poet, Angelo Poliziano, Giovio wrote that Poliziano's student, Paolo Crinito, 'affixed' a verse on his teacher's tomb.<sup>67</sup> He reported that poem as well as two others. The tomb monument in the church of San Marco, Florence, displays only the shortest epitaph of uncertain authorship in Giovio.<sup>68</sup> Since tomb inscriptions are generally inscribed on tombs rather than attached to them (though it is possible to affix a stone or metal plaque), in this case Giovio is surely referring to the ritual practice of placing a paper epitaph on the tomb of the deceased as a way of honoring him. This reading is encouraged by the sixteenth century Italian translation of Giovio's text, 'some Latin verses not dissimilar in meaning to these were placed above the tomb by his student Crinito.'<sup>69</sup> In several of Vasari's biographies, the same wording of placing the epitaph above the tomb is used (e.g. Simone Martini, Bartolomeo della Gatta, Masaccio, Mantegna), though Vasari also applied the more

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distinctions between inscribed or sculpted words on the tomb monument, purely literary compositions and epitaphs 'affixed' to the tomb are made by Giovio in both books of *elogi* and in the *vite*.

<sup>67</sup> 'Tumulo autem hoc Carmen Crinitus discipulus affixit', Giovio, *Elogia*, 1577, 74. The epitaph for Poliziano cited by Paolo Giovio was not published in Pietro Crinito's own volume of poetry, although other epitaphs for Marullus and Pico della Mirandola were included. Another similar example is found at the close of the life of Platina who receives an inscribed epitaph but also several affixed ones: 'this epitaph was commissioned from his student Demetrius to be inscribed on the tomb which is can be seen on the left at the level of the third column, and tearful friends affixed these other similar poems' ['sepulchro autem, quod a laeva ad tertiam columnam conspicitur, hoc epitaphium ab alumno Demetrio inscribi iussit, quum & haecquoque carmina amici lugentes affixissent:'] Giovio, *Elogia*, 1577, 35. In some cases such as that of Pomponio Leto, the reported epitaphs 'adorned' the tomb 'ornaretur' (Giovio, *Elogia*, 1577, 79) so it is difficult to know what Giovio meant, though the implication is that they were attached slips of paper. This is Christian's almost certainly correct assumption, *Empire without End*, 2010, 142. Christian connects the ritual reciting and attaching of epitaphs to the revival of *parentalia* and ritual meals. References to Platina's *parentalia* which took place on the first anniversary of his death, do not indicated the attaching of epitaphs, only the reading of poetry, banqueting and the ultimate collection of the poems in a volume, though the attaching of poetry on this occasion is very likely given the fact that poems were, in fact, attached to his tomb as Giovio indicated. The poems were published in the 1568 edition of his own *Historia de vitis Pontificum Romanorum*. Cologne: Maternum Cholinum, in a section entitled, 'Diversorum academicorum Panegyrici in Parentalia B Platinae', vol. 2, 89-98.

<sup>68</sup> The short epitaph is included in Giuseppe Richa, *Notizie istoriche delle chiese fiorentine divise ne' suoi quartieri*, 10 vols., Florence: Pietro Gaetano Viviani, 1754-62 (reprinted Rome: Multigrafica, 1972), vol. 7.3, 141: 'Poliziano the angel lies in this tomb/ A new thing: he had one head and three tongues' [POLITIANUS IN HOC TUMULO IACET ANGELUS UNUM/QUI CAPUT ET LINGUAS RES NOVA TRES HABUIT]. Crinito's epitaph as reported by Paolo Giovio reads: 'Wait here pilgrim, hold your step here a little/ You see the famous poet from the powerful spirit,/ Ready sharp mind, aspiring to difficulty/ And accustomed to reach the highest/ I am he, Angelo Poliziano/ Flora nourished me with her generous breast/ And I died when the menacing French troops/ Struck down the kings of Naples/ Go in peace, and that please, remembering our merits' [HIC, HIC, VIATOR, PAULULUM GRADUM SISTE./ VATEM POTENTIS SPIRITUS VIDES CLARUM:/ QUI MENTE PROMPTUS ACRI, ET ARDUUM SPIRANS,/ AC SUMMA QUAEQUE, ET ALTA CONSEQUI SUETUS./ IS ILLE EGO ANGELUS POLITANUS SUM/ FOVIT BENIGNO ME SINU FLORA, ET ILLIC/ IN FATA CESSI, PARTHENOPEOS REGES/ CUM GALLICA ARMA IRRUERENT MINABUNDA/ TU VALE, ET HOC SIS MERITI MEMOR NOSTRI].

<sup>69</sup> 'Furono posti dal Crinito suo discepolo alcuni versi latini sopra la sepoltura sua di senso poco dissimili al qui sottoscritto madrigale'. Paolo Giovio, *Le iscrizioni poste sotto le vere immagini de gli huomini famosi in lettere*, tr. Hippolito Orio, Firenze: Lorenzo Torrentino, 1552, 76. Conversely, when the fourteenth century historian, Filippo Villani, *Liber de origine*, in his biography of Guido Guerra, 422, noted that Guido, 'Decessit septuagenarius et in oppido Montis Varchi, quod ipse constuxerat, iuxta fores maiores ecclesie sepultus est ho versu monumento superinscripto, *Guido Guerra comes sit tibi, Virgo, comes*' which must refer to an inscription, the roughly contemporary Italian translation also used the verb 'to place' (porre) 'ponendo al suo sepulcro questo verso'.

precise verb, 'appicare', 'to attach' which leaves no room for doubt. Vasari's own ancestor, Lazzaro Vasari, for example, received a single epitaph (reported in both editions and included in the aforementioned manuscript of ten epitaphs probably all commissioned by Vasari) which in time was 'appicato'.<sup>70</sup>

This admittedly meager accumulation of evidence for epitaph attaching rituals within the broader context of the ceremonial use of epitaphs nevertheless offers the modern scholar more options when considering the relationship between the Renaissance epitaph and the tomb. Renaissance writers such as Vasari and Giovio produced their biographies for a humanistic culture that was accustomed to epitaphic inscriptions, commemorative poems and the ritual practice of attaching paper epitaphs to tombs. Sometimes the authors were precise in their descriptions, but more often than not their references to epitaphs were less clear unless the reader could supply the ritual context with few clues at his disposal. Without a sense of that ritual context, an epitaph which is 'placed over' or 'placed on' the tomb might be mistaken for an inscription—or worse as an instance of the biographer's fabricating an inscription, thereby diminishing his credibility.

In Vasari's case, the epitaph-attaching ritual also has possible implications for epitaphs with no clearly stated relationship to the tomb. For example in the 1568 edition, Pietro Cavallini was buried 'honorably in St. Pauls outside the Walls with this epitaph, *As much glory as Pietro the painter gave to the city of Rome...*'<sup>71</sup> While it is certainly possible that Vasari intended an inscription as has mostly been assumed in the scholarship on the artist,<sup>72</sup> it is more likely that Cavallini received this honor in the form of a paper note laid upon his tomb as poetic inscriptions were not the norm for even famous artists of the period. Even Giotto received no inscription at the time of his death. Apart from the much later memorial installed under the auspices of Lorenzo de' Medici in 1490, his only tomb marker was a white marble slab which may easily postdate his burial. Of the artists given biographies in Vasari's lives, the earliest to have received a traceable inscription was Brunelleschi who died in 1446.<sup>73</sup> A similar argument in favor of paper epitaphs may be

<sup>70</sup> Vasari, *Le vite*, ed. Bettarini/Barocchi, vol. 3, 298: 'Mori Lazzaro vecchio nel 1452, e Giorgio suo figliuolo, essendo di sessantotto anni, nel 1484; e furono sepolti ambedue nella pieve di Arezzo, appiè della capella loro di San Giorgio; dove in lode di Lazzaro furono, col tempo, appiccati questi versi:...'

<sup>71</sup> 'Fu sepolto in San Paulo fuor di Roma onorevolmente e con questo epitaffio: Quantum Romanae Petrus decus addidit urbi...' Vasari, *Le vite*, ed. Bettarini/Barocchi, vol. 2, 189.

<sup>72</sup> As for example in Adolfo Venturi, *Storia dell'arte italiana*, vol. 5, Milan: Hoepli, 1907, 167 followed by Irene Margaret Field, 'Pietro Cavallini and his School. A study in Style and Iconography of the Frescoes in Rome and Naples', PhD Dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1958, 8, who both use the epitaph as certain proof that the artist was buried at St. Pauls Outside the Walls. According to Paul Hetherington, *Pietro Cavallini, A Study in the Art of Late Medieval Rome*, London: Sagittarius Press, 1979, 6: 'Vasari is the first authority to quote the epitaph on Cavallini's tomb in S. Paolo, and burial in one of the major basilicas of Rome as an honour that—at least for a painter—must have been unique'. A great fire destroyed Cavallini's major works in the church as well as his tomb and epitaph, if it ever was inscribed there.

<sup>73</sup> According to Vasari, Giotto 'fu sotterato in Santa Maria del Fiore della banda sinistra entrando in chiesa, dove è un matton di marmo bianco per memoria di tanto uomo' (Vasari, *Le vite*, ed. Bettarini/Barocchi, vol. 2, 117). Giotto was not buried in the current cathedral of S. Maria del Fiore but rather in the earlier cathedral of S. Reparata which had become a crypt after S. Maria del Fiore was built over it. S. Reparata was not completely torn down until 1375, almost four decades after Giotto's death in 1337. Since even elaborate tomb markers were not reinstalled in the new church, it is likely that Giotto's white marble slab is not Giotto's original tomb marker (if he even had a tomb marker). Of all of the Trecento and early Quattrocento artists cited by Vasari, there is not a single one for whom an identifiable tomb inscription has been traced except for Buschetto, architect of the cathedral of Pisa whose tomb and epitaph on the façade of the Pisa are noted by

made about for the S. Spirito tomb of Giotto's pupil, Stefano Fiorentino,<sup>74</sup> for Giuliano da Sangallo,<sup>75</sup> and for Baldassare Peruzzi.<sup>76</sup> In the latter case, Vasari's words in 1550 are actually more precise ('e fu posto questo epitaffio') than those written in 1568 ('con questo epitaffio'), but presumably Vasari intended the same action. It is interesting that in the eighteenth century, the great commentator on Vasari, Giovanni Gaetano Bottari stated that Peruzzi's epitaph was no longer in the Pantheon, demonstrating his conviction that Vasari intended an inscription and probably also demonstrating that the cultural ritual of appending paper epitaphs by then no longer existed.<sup>77</sup>

Most of the artists discussed in Vasari's lives did not receive tombs with sculpted portraits or elaborate inscriptions. Vasari's decision in 1550 to conclude his biographies with epitaphs, references to mourning, descriptions of massive epitaph-writing campaigns, and/or epitaphs appended to the tombs provides an honourable closure to

Vasari in the preface to the first part of his *Vite*. Some burial sites noted such as that of Taddeo Gaddi in S. Croce have been confirmed by documents (Biblioteca Nazionale, Fondo Nazionale II.X.67, 104, n. 25 and ASF Manoscritti, 619: 'Sepoluario di S. Croce di varie mani', 11r, 11bis v and 12r, n. 25, but without mention of any monument or inscription. The necrology is discussed by Andrew Ladis, 'Taddeo Gaddi: Style and Chronology', PhD Dissertation, University of Virginia, 1978, 18. It is possible that the Trecento sculptor and architect, Giovanni Pisano received a tomb with inscription which before 1731 was placed near the door of the canonica of Siena cathedral but later moved several times. The inscription was very simple [Hi(c) e(st) s(epulcrum) magis(tri) ioh(ann)i q(uon)d(a)m magistri Nico(l)e et ei(us) eredum]. On this see Silvia Colucci, *Sepolcri a Siena tra Medioevo e Rinascimento: analisi storica, iconografica e artistica*, Firenze: Sismel Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2003, 194-95, it is reproduced in fig. 7. On Brunelleschi's extraordinary tomb memorial which provided the model for Giotto's in the cathedral see Doris Carl, 'Il ritratto commemorativo di Giotto di Benedetto da Maiano nel Duomo di Firenze', in *Santa Maria del Fiore. The cathedral and its sculpture. Acts of the International Symposium for the VII Centenary of the Cathedral of Florence. Florence, Villa I Tatti, 5-6 June 1997*, ed. Margaret Haines, Fiesole: Cadmo, 2001, 129-48, Elisabeth Oy-Marra, *Florentiner Ehrengabmäler der Frührenaissance*, Berlin: Mann, 1994, 99-115 and Gesa Schütz-Rautenberg, *Künstlergrabmäler des 15. und 16. Jahrhunderts in Italien: ein Beitrag zur Sozialgeschichte der Künstler*, Cologne: Böhlau, 1978, 1-53. Strocchia, *Death and Ritual*, 193-4 notes that in the later Quattrocento members of the artisan class were just beginning to include markers on their tombs. These were not coats of arms or epitaphs but rather tools of the trade. She associates this with the increased use of surnames in this period by these same classes.

<sup>74</sup> Vasari, *Le vite*, ed. Bettarini/Barocchi, vol. 2, 140: 'egli morì, per quanto si dice, l'anno che cominciò il giubileo del 1350, d'età d'anni 49, e fu riposo in S. Spirito nella sepoltura (de' suoi maggiori—added 1568) con questo epitafio...'

<sup>75</sup> Vasari, *Le vite*, ed. Bettarini/Barocchi, vol. 4, 152: 'Onde obbligo si debbe avere alle fatiche sue, avendo fortificato il dominio fiorentino et ornata la città, e per tanti paesi dove lavorarono dato nome a Fiorenza et agli ingegni toscani, che per onorata memoria hanno fatto loro questi versi. In Masaccio's biography, Vasari changes the wording from change from epitaph (1550) to memoria (1568) but the same thing is meant (Vasari, *Le vite*, ed. Bettarini/Barocchi, 133.

<sup>76</sup> In the 1568 edition, the text reads: 'e nella Ritonda appresso a Raffaello di Urbino, dove fu da tutti i pittori, scultori ed architettori di Roma onorevolmente pianto ed accompagnato, datogli onorata sepoltura con questo epitaffio', the ending having been slightly modified from the 1550 edition which was a bit clearer, 'E gli fu posto questo epitaffio.' (Vasari, *Le vite*, ed. Bettarini/Barocchi, 4, 326.)

<sup>77</sup> See Vasari, Giorgio, *Vite de' più eccellenti pittori scultori e architetti scritte da Giorgio Vasari pittore e architetto aretino corrette da molti errori e illustrate con note*, 3 vols. Rome: Pagliarini, vol. 2, 204: 'L'epitaffio di questo valentuomo non si trova più nella Rotonda, tolda via Dio sa come, e quando, nella guisa, che se ne disperdono ogni dì per un'orrende barbarie, reputata sacrilega fin da Gentili, ma che tuttavia si seguirà a praticare. Se si fosse potuto riscontrare col marmo, forse si sarebbe trovato da far qualche correzione, che sembra bisognarci.' On Bottari's edition more generally see Thomas Fangenberg, 'The Limits of a Genre: Giovanni Gaetano Bottari's edition of Vasari's *Lives* (1759-60)' in *Le Vite del Vasari. Genesi, topoi, ricezione. Die Vite Vasaris. Entstehung, Topoi, Rezeption*, edited by Katja Burzer, Charles Davis, Sabine Feser, and Alessandro Nova. Venice: Marsilio, 2010, 293-300.

each biography. Even in the many cases in which the epitaphs must have been commissioned by Vasari himself, their inclusion, however un-organically connected to the biography, still ended the biographies on a note of literary dignity, reminding readers of epitaph-attaching rituals. Vasari's citation of epitaphs allowed his contemporaries to imagine physical markers on the tomb sites of his artists which otherwise in the majority of cases would have remained unmarked graves. It is probably not irrelevant at this juncture to recall that in the late Middle Ages, the Florentines led the list in sheer numbers of specifically demarcated grave sites and that Giorgio Vasari's native Arezzo was most remarkable in its demand for tombstones with inscriptions.<sup>78</sup> Vasari's plentiful citations of epitaphs combined with his more precise references to epitaph-attaching rituals—then most closely associated with humanistic circles and political leaders—demonstrate to his readers that the artists he chose to discuss were worthy of the same kind of commemoration.

By 1568, Vasari's attitude to the individual epitaphs had changed somewhat. Having now included many more references to students, drawings and portraits and having also become less rigid in his biographical structure, he no longer felt compelled to close his biographies with epitaphs. The 30% or so of the epitaphs that he retained along with the three new ones were better integrated into the text. The epitaphs of 1568 all aspire to biographical contexts beyond vague commemoration—they could be tomb inscriptions, verses written by specific individuals (some of unattributed poems in 1550 are attributed in 1568), products of epitaph writing campaigns, or paper memorials attached to tombs. It is for this reason that every instance of attaching epitaphs to tombs is retained in 1568: this ritual action is a meaningful gesture that provides a specific context for the creation and social function of the poem. At this latter date, Vasari is less interested in physically marking each artist's tomb with an epitaph than he is in differentiating the type and degree of commemoration his artist's received. In some cases, references to such rituals also underscore the collective commemoration of artists at different times in history, a theme which increases in stature in 1568.

Vasari's *Vite* and the related booklet describing Michelangelo's obsequies are some of the most important sources attesting to this epitaph-attaching ritual in the Renaissance. Even though an author like Paolo Giovio acknowledged that some epitaphs were attached to tombs rather than inscribed on them, nowhere does he actually describe the ritual so that his references to it have proven cryptic to modern readers. Giovio wrote from the point of view of a seasoned humanist who viewed such funerary events and postings as a normal part of humanist and political culture. Giorgio Vasari, on the other hand, an artist writing about artists did not so easily glide over such ceremonies. He clearly felt a great sense of pride that artists of his own and earlier periods could be honoured in exactly the same literary way that Dante had been, and therefore cited many more details so that the reader would make those connections easily. One of Vasari's missions in writing the book was to raise the status of the artist by insisting on the intellectual nature of the three arts of design. Articulating how artists received widespread public commemoration in the form of epitaphs attached to their tombs along the lines of what was normally done for poets and political figures was a natural extension. Through Vasari's enthusiasm for his

<sup>78</sup> These are the conclusions of Samuel K. Cohn, Jr., *The Cult of Remembrance and the Black Death: Six Renaissance Cities in Central Italy*, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992, esp. 137 (on Florence) and 232 (on Arezzo).

artists and his project, the modern reader receives a worm's eye view on this ritual aspect of Renaissance culture which was usually taken for granted.

Renaissance epitaphs may have been written with a distant posterity in mind but they were also very much connected to living social ritual. Although often attached to tombs, their presence in Renaissance biography was not solely to signal the closure of a life in a suitably honourable way but rather also to document the living rituals associated with the death of an important personage. The epitaphs are testaments to the relationship between the living and the dead over time and are therefore a dynamic genre. The inclusion of an epitaph, especially one that is specifically 'placed over' or attached to a tomb was meant to call up images of the actions and movements of the living which in the case of Vasari's biographies supports one of his major underlying themes—made more prominent in 1568—of a dynamic living history of art.

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