

Response to Ricardo de Mambro Santos, review of *Re-Reading Leonardo*

Claire Farago

It is a great privilege to be reviewed in this journal. I am very honored and humbled by Ricardo de Mambro Santos's review. My deepest thanks to Richard Woodfield for commissioning the review and for the opportunity to continue the conversation.

Since the publication of our book, interest in the historical reception of Leonardo da Vinci's treatise on painting, the chief text by which Leonardo was known for nearly three centuries after his lifetime, has been increasing. This includes work on the critical edition of the *editio princeps* (Paris: Langlois, 1651; French and Italian editions), a project that I direct. We anticipate a September 2012 submission of the final manuscript for publication (by E. J. Brill). The new edition will include the first modern English translation of the 1651 text, which was an extensively abridged version of the manuscript compiled around 1570 by Francesco Melzi (Codex Urbinas Vaticanus 1270). The new edition will also include a critical apparatus, extensive concordances comparing significant pre-publication manuscripts, readers notes, and introductory chapters that establish the text philologically, culturally, artistically, and intellectually.

The unknown context in which Melzi's manuscript was abridged shortly after it was compiled (in fact before it was entirely finished) is what brings me to write this note. Since the publication of *Re-Reading Leonardo*, I have considerably re-thought the matter. Although there can be no doubt that, by 1585, the abridged version of the text circulated among a loosely connected group of artists and men of letters centered in Florence, at the end of the day there is no indication that anyone had access to the Codex Urbinas. The early manuscripts reveal the work of collectors and literary humanists comparing their versions of the same abridged text. In other words, the abridgment may have – must have - taken place elsewhere. The original of the abridged manuscript has disappeared without a trace. Furthermore, no one has any idea who the editor was. Despite these methodological challenges, we will present substantial textual and other documentary evidence that the original abridgment project was undertaken in Milan when Carlo Borromeo was Archbishop (in office, 1560-84). What is perhaps most significant about our discovery is that the Christian bias of the editorial campaign can be documented by both internal and external means.

I would be interested in hearing from anyone doing research in this area for the sake of exchanging ideas and information. Claire Farago, farago@colorado.edu