Giovanni Battista Adriani and the drafting of the second edition of the *Vite*: the unpublished manuscript of the *Lettera a Messer Giorgio Vasari* in the Archivio Borromeo (Stresa, Italy)

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The writing of the second edition of the *Vite*, published in Florence by Giunti in 1568, was a crucial time for discussions and fruitful exchanges of ideas between Vasari and his closest friends and collaborators. Vasari was well aware of that, and patently recognized his debt in the case of Giovanni Battista Adriani. The short treatise on the artists of antiquity (this is the content of the *Lettera a Messer Giorgio Vasari*, which is dated September 8, 1567) was, in fact, clearly printed with the name of its editor, and was inserted in haste by Giunti at the beginning of the second volume of the *Terza parte* of Vasari’s biographies, together with Vasari’s letter addressed Agli artefici del disegno (To the craftsmen in design), and not where it has been intended, which is immediately after the *Teoriche* (Introduction to the three arts of drawings): Architecture, Painting and Sculpture), at the beginning of the first of the three volumes of the *Vite*.³

I will quote the sixteenth-century texts according to the following criteria: *u* is distinct from *v*, *j* is transcribed with *i*; accents, apostrophes and punctuation marks are used according to the custom of today, as is the division of words and the use of capital letters; all abbreviations have been withdrawn without giving any account, only when an abbreviated reading is not certain, the total will appear in parentheses. All my amendments or additions will be placed between square brackets. All translations are mine, unless otherwise stated. I’m very grateful to Dr. Alessandro Pisoni, keeper of the Archivio Borromeo in Isola Bella (Stresa, Italy) for his helpful suggestions. Many thanks also to Bob Learmonth for reviewing my original text and to Richard Woodfield for his valuable advice and assistance.


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Adriani’s work⁴ was conceived to fill the space, temporal and historio-critical, left empty by Vasari in the edition of Vite published in 1550 (Florence, Torrentino), which starts from the Middle Ages and ends with the artists who were his contemporaries.⁵ Because he treats the arts of antiquity, Adriani’s main source is, of course, Pliny, as Vasari confirms in the letter Agli artefici del disegno (To the craftsmen in design), just mentioned above: ‘And to the end that this work may prove to be in every way complete, and that there may be no need to seek anything outside its pages, I have added a great part of the works of the most celebrated craftsmen of antiquity, both Greek and of other nations, whose memory has been preserved down to our own day by Pliny and other writers, without whose pens they would have been buried, like many others, in eternal oblivion’.⁶

The Lettera a Messer Giorgio Vasari, previously known only through the printed text in the Vite,⁷ consists of forty pages full of erudite references (Herodotus, Varro and Pomponius Atticus are mentioned among others), where citations are rare, but the whole essay is rich in information taken from various sources and not only from Pliny.

The Florentine scholar, Adriani, also cleverly reformulated information taken from Pliny’s Naturalis historia. Whereas the Roman historian distributes the discussion of the fine arts across books XXXIV-XXXVI, dealing, respectively, with metals, clays and stones, and then dedicated to metal carving, painting and sculpture in marble, Adriani organizes his treatise in a very different way, detaching himself from any homage to the ancient model (whilst he was also well aware of Greek sources, from Strabo to Plutarch, from Pausanias to Lucian, and of many

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⁵ For a recent overview of the 1550 edition see Eliana Carrara, ‘Giorgio Vasari’, In: Vasari, gli Uffizi e il Duca, 384 (entry ‘XV.14’).

⁶ See Giorgio Vasari, Lives of the painters, sculptors and architects, Translation by Gaston du C. de Vere. With an introduction and notes by David Ekserdjian, 2 vols, New York: Knopf, 1996, II, p. 188. ‘E perché questa opera venga del tutto perfetta né s’abbia a cercare fuora cosa alcuna, ch’ho aggiunto gran parte delle opere de’ più celebri artefici antichi, così greci come d’altr’azioni, la memoria de’ quali da Plinio e da altri scrittori è stata fino a’ tempi nostri conservata, che senza la penna loro sarebbono, come molte altre, sepolti in sempiterna oblivione’; Vasari-Bettarini/Barocchi, I, 176 (the spacing of the characters is mine).

⁷ Le Vite de’ più eccellenti, III, fols a1 recto-e4 verso.
Latin writers, in particular Cicero (*Orationes in Verrem*, *De inventione*), Vitruvius and Valerius Maximus.⁸

In fact, he opens his analysis of the origins of art by considering the oldest, that is painting, underlining the high esteem it enjoyed in ancient Greece, as it was only to be practiced by free men (p. 189). This should be carefully noted at a moment when the amateur practice of art was becoming increasingly popular, especially painting, as is evidenced in a treatise written, not coincidentally, by Alessandro Allori, another of the young men in Vasari’s vast workshop.⁹

After the catalogue of Greek painters (pp. 189-202), including the mention of several women (p. 202), the Romans are also remembered (pp. 202-204). After that, the Florentine scholar considers ‘plastic’ (pp. 204-206), that is the art of modelling with clay, and then examines sculptures in bronze and other metals. Considerable space is dedicated to big names in the art of casting, from Polycleitos to Lysippus, not forgetting of course Phidias and Praxiteles (pp. 206-216). These sculptors’ names reappear shortly after, when Adriani addresses the birth and development of stone sculpture (pp. 216-224), giving his attention to large colossal statues and establishing a comparison between the Greek and Roman worlds, and between the figurative types of the two great ancient cultures (pp. 224-226). The conclusions (p. 227) follow a very brief overview of the goldsmith’s art, the very minute and refined art of modelling tableware (pp. 226-227), which is connected to miniature works of sculpture in marble (p. 223), which, in turn, introduces conversely the above mentioned monumental stone sculpture.

The sophisticated interplay of parts refers also to the structure of the *Teoriche*. If Vasari begins his writing starting from architecture, sculpture and then finally approaches painting, and as a painter it is this art that has the last word,¹⁰ Adriani seems to harmonize everything and closes the circle of the narrative with a path which, like Pliny, his source, not only excludes architecture, considered most commonplace and utilitarian, but relies entirely on great monumental marble sculpture, both sacred and profane; the basic model, incidentally, for contemporary celebrations of the Medici princes.¹¹

It is, therefore, a text that has many points of interest and should deserve a closer examination than it has received so far, in order to address the discussion, necessarily thoughtful and far-reaching, about the numerous sources consulted by

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the historian of the Medici and their consolidation into a dense synthesis, documenting knowledge of the fine arts of Antiquity in the second half of the sixteenth century in Florence.

A newly discovered manuscript, almost complete, facilitates a more thorough exegesis of the *Lettera* (Fig. 1). In the course of a wider survey of Vasari’s manuscripts, I was able to retrieve a copy of the work that I think was written by Adriani’s own hand, with significant autograph corrections and interventions.

![Manuscript Image](image-url)

Figure 1 Giovanni Battista Adriani, *The manuscript of Lettera a messer Giorgio Vasari*, Isola Bella, Archivio Borromeo, ms. AD, LM, *Adriani, G. B.*, f. 1r (photo by Archivio Borromeo, with permission).


I am convinced by comparing the handwriting in letters signed by the learned Florentine man, both when young—like a letter to Piero Vettori of 17 January 1543, and when old — the text is dated September 14, 1574 and this time is addressed to Vincenzio Borghini - (Figs. 2-3).

Figure 2 Giovanni Battista, Letter to Piero Vettori, London, British Library, ms. Additional 10268, f. 62r (photo by BL, with permission).


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Figure 3 Giovanni Battista Adriani, *Letter to Vincenzo Borghini*, Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, ms. Magliabechiano XXV 551, f. 160r (photo by BNCF, with permission).
Eliana Carrara  Giovanni Battista Adriani and the drafting of the second edition of the *Vite*

No less persuasive is then the comparison with the draft of the sonnet *La ben faconda, e più verace storia* accompanied by the signature in full of its author ‘Giovanbatista Adriani Marcellino’ (Fig. 4). Just as good is the comparison with the final version contained in the manuscript Palatino 1154 (Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale) of the *Oratio iohannis Baptistae Adriani habita Florentiae in sacris funeribus Caroli Quinti*, printed by Lorenzo Torrentino in 1558 (and again in 1562) (Fig. 5).

![Figure 4 G. B. Adriani, *La ben faconda, e più verace storia*, sonnet to Benedetto Varchi, Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, ms. Banco Rari 63, f. 17r (photo by BNCF, with permission).](image)


17 BNCF, ms. Palatino 1154, ff. 4r-9v; the manuscript contains, in addition to the rough draft of the work (ff. 1r-3v), other *Orazioni e Lezioni Accademiche* of the Florentine historian: see Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione, *Indici e Cataloghi. IV. I Manoscritti Palatini della Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze. Vol. III, Fasc. 4*, Anna Saitta Revignas, ed, Roma: Istituto Poligrafico dello Stato, 1955, 298-300. The funeral oration, held by Adriani on December 9, 1558, should have been originally pronounced by Benedetto Varchi: see Maria Fubini Leuzzi, ‘L’oratoria funeraria nel Cinquecento. Le composizioni di Benedetto Varchi nei loro aspetti culturali e politici’, *Rivista Storica Italiana*, CXVIII, 2006, 384 (and, with the title Le orazioni funebri di Benedetto Varchi nella loro cornice storica, politica e letteraria, also in *Benedetto Varchi* (1503-1565). Atti del Convegno (Firenze 2003), Vanni Bramanti, ed, Roma: Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 2007, 219-20).
Figure 5 Giovanni Battista Adriani, *Oratio Iohannis Baptistae Adrianii habita Florentiae in sacris funeribus Caroli Quinti, incipit*, Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, ms. Palatino 1154, f. 4r (photo by BNCF, with permission).

And a further confirmation comes from the autograph signature by Adriani on May 23th 1566, in his role as ‘censor’ of the Accademia Fiorentina, to ratify the
readmission of Agnolo Bronzino into that illustrious literary institution for poetic merit (Fig. 6).18
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The manuscript is now divided into two fragments consisting of respectively 18 and 20 folios, bringing the top, right, a later numbering in pen and continuous from 1 to 40, with one gap between f. 18v (white as its *recto*) and f. 21r.\(^19\)

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\(^19\) The manuscript is kept in the Archivio Borromeo, Isola Bella, Stresa (Italy), with the shelfmark AD, LM, *Adriani, G. B.*, f. 17v (photo by Archivio Borromeo, with permission).

The text, which has the same form as the printed letter,\(^20\) without discontinuity or large changes comes to f. 17v (Fig. 7), when it stops abruptly after a

\(^20\) Adriani, ABI B, f. 1r: ‘Io ho dubitato alcuna volta meco medesimo messer Giorgio carissimo se quello di che voi et il molto reverendo don Vincenzio Borghini mi havete più volte ricerco si deveva mettere in opera o no, cioè il raccorre et brevemente raccontare coloro ch e nella pittura et nella scultura, et in arti simili antichi tempi furono celebrati, de’ quali il numero è grandissimo, et a che tempo essi feciono fiorire l’arti loro, et delle opere di quelli le più onorate e le più famose, cosa che in sé ha del piacevole assai, ma che più si converrebbe a coloro che in cotali arti fussero [as replacement of ‘fussero’] esercitati o come pratici ne potessero più propriamente parlare [‘più ... parlare’ in interline instead of ‘dare miglior giudizio di me’ crossed out’]. See Vasari-Bettarini/Barocchi, I, p. 179.
few lines, with the narrative that has as its subject the looting of art works made by the Romans in the conquered territories, leaving blank the rest of the folio.21

At f. 21r the draft begins with a list of the works of a Greek painter,22 whose name is not testified because of the gap above-described, and the text follows continuously up to f. 23r, when a couple of lines clearly crossed out are a sign of a decided intervention by the author, also attested to by a very visible reference mark in the left margin (Fig. 8).23 The narrative, in fact, picks up where it left off at f. 17v, with a partial rewriting, in order to reach, except for forms of greeting and farewell seen in Giunti’s edition, the end of the printed text.24

21 Adriani, ABIB, f. 17v: ‘[...] figure di bronzo e di marmo, delle quali a Roma ne fu portato dal mondo, et in Roma si gran numero, che si credeva che vi fossero più statue che huomini; dell’arte delle quali e de’ maestri più nobili d’esse è tempo homai, come habbiamo fatto delle pitture e de’ pittori, che alcune cose ne diciamo, quello che intanto troviamo scritto da altro, che volendo ogni cosa raccontare sarebbe cosa troppo lunga, e più di noia che di diletto’. See Vasari-Bettarini/Barocchi, I, 204 (lines 22-7). On this folio there are two later notations and by an other hand than Adriani; on the same line, where Adriani’s text ends, is noted: ‘Vedi fogli seguenti alla chiamata [a conspicuous reference mark follows]’; in the left margin, a nineteenth-century hand (which I have not been able to identify until now) writes: ‘Seguita lo stampato: “quanto però pare che al nostro proponimento si convenga. E perocché egli pare che il ritrarre etc. etc.”’.


23 Adriani, ABIB, f. 23r: ‘E come questo advenne nelle cose dipinte, così e molto più nelle [follows crossed out: ‘figure di bro’] statue di bronzo e di marmo, delle quali a Roma ne fu portato d’altronde, et ve ne fu [‘ve ne fu’ in interline instead of ‘quivi’ crossed out] fatto si gran numero, che si teneva per certo [‘per certo’ written in interline] che vi fusse più statue che huomini; delle arte delle quali e de’ maestri più nobili d’esse è tempo homai, come habbiamo fatto de’ pittori e delle pitture, così anco alcune cose ne diciamo [the above mentioned crossed out lines follow], e quanto pare che si convenga al nostro proponimento’. See Vasari-Bettarini/Barocchi, 204 (lines 21-7). See also above footnote 21.

24 Adriani, ABIB, f. 40r-v: ‘Havevano le greche statue et le romane differenza infra di loro assai chiara, che le greche per lo più erano secondo l’usanza delle palestre igniude, dove i giovani alla lotta et ad [‘ad’ written in interline] altri giuochi si esercitavano igniudi, che in quelli ponevano il sommo honore. Le romane si facevano coperte o d’armadura [corrected in interline above ‘arme’] o di toga, habito [‘propriam’ crossed out follows] specialmente romano, il quale honore, come noi dicemo poco fa [f. 40v] dava primieramente il comune; poi, cominciando l’ambitione a crescere, fu dato anco da privati e da comuni forestieri a questo e quel cittadino, o per benefizio ricevuto da lui o per haverlo amico, e massimamente lo facevano i minori amici ai più potenti, di maniera che in breve spazio le piazze, i templi [‘i templi’ replaced in interline above ‘le chiese’ crossed out] e le loggie ne furono tutte ripiene’. See Vasari-Bettarini/Barocchi, I, 225-226 (lines 1-10). Adriani’s source is Pliny, Naturalis historia, Book XXXIV, Chapters 17-18.
That the folios of the Archivio Borromeo constitute the first draft of Adriani’s *Lettera* is confirmed by the state of the incomplete sketch of some parts, where precise references to years of activity of one or more artists are lacking or of the accomplishment of a work, generically remembered with the mention of the ancient Olympics then in progress, on the basis of the Plinian text.25

25 Adriani, ABIB, f. 33r: ‘Dicesi [located on the left margin, with a reference mark, to replace ‘e si dice’ crossed out in the body of the text] che i primi maestri di questa arte di cui ci sia memoria
Figure 9 Giovanni Battista Adriani, *The manuscript of Lettera a messer Giorgio Vasari, Isola Bella, Archivio Borromeo, ms. AD, LM, Adriani, G. B., f. 5v* (photo by Archivio Borromeo, with permission).

A clear demonstration is present at f. 5v (Fig. 9), where the name is quoted of ‘Polignotus of Thasus, the first to paint women with clothes of bright and beautiful colours, and adorn their heads with various ornaments and of the new fashions, and this was around the years ...’. Thanks to him, painting rose in importance. He first

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furono Dipeno e Scilo, che nacquero nell’isola di Creti al tempo che i Persi regnavano, che secondo il corso degli anni de’ Greci viene a essere intorno a l’olimpiade cinquantesima inanzi alla fondazione di Roma anni [...]’. See Vasari-Bettarini/Barocchi, I, 216-217 (lines 39-40 and 1-3), where the date is now completed: ‘intorno alla olimpiade cinquantesima, cioè dopo alla fondazione di Roma anni 137’. The corresponding passage is to be found in the book XXXVI, chapter 9 of Pliny’s *Naturalis historia*. And see also f. 36v, that is to be compared with Vasari-Bettarini/Barocchi, I, 221 (lines 16-17) and with Chapter 30 of Book XXXVI of Pliny’s *Naturalis historia*. 

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made his figures open their mouth, and show teeth, and made the faces look more alive and more gentle than the old coarseness.\textsuperscript{26}

The passage in question was integrated and corrected as follows in the Giunti edition: ‘Polignotus of Thasus, the first one who painted women with clothes of bright and beautiful colours, and adorned their heads with various ornaments and of the new fashions, and this was around 330 years after Rome was built. Thanks to him, painting rose in importance. He first made his figures open their mouth, and show teeth, and made the faces look more alive and more gentle than the old coarseness’.\textsuperscript{27}

Along with this passage from the \textit{Lettera}, which echoes Pliny exactly,\textsuperscript{28} one can mention another point in the same folio of the manuscript, where Adriani recalls the ‘excellence of the art [i.e. painting], to which the Athenian Apollodorus brought much clarity... [on the left margin ‘Olimp. 93’], who first began to create beautiful figures in this art and obtained very great glory’.\textsuperscript{29} Also in this case, the time reference, inserted in the manuscript’s margin according to the Olympic chronology, is transformed in the 1568 edition in a dating \textit{ab Urbe condita:} ‘around the year 345 after Rome was built’.\textsuperscript{30}

An example of a broader integration made by the Florentine historian into his draft is demonstrated by the narration of Myron’s celebrated activity ‘for that beautiful heifer that he made of bronze, which was much praised in famous verses. He also painted a dog of great beauty and a man who threw the discus into the air, and a satyr who appeared to be surprised by the bagpipe’s sound [...].\textsuperscript{31} A long
annotation appears on the left margin, taken from Cicero’s *Verrines* (2.4.93), which was not accepted in the Giunti edition: ‘At Agrigento in Sicily there was an Apollo, that had written on its thigh with letters inlaid in silver the name of its maker, a statue that was stolen by Verres’ (Fig. 10).³²

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Figure 10 Giovanni Battista Adriani, *The manuscript of Lettera a messer Giorgio Vasari, Isola Bella, Archivio Borromeo, ms. AD, LM, Adriani, G. B., f. 26v* (photo by Archivio Borromeo, with permission).

³² Adriani, ABIB, f. 26v: ‘In Cicilia a Gergento era anco uno Apolline che haveva scritto in una coscia a lettere d’argento comesso il nome dello artefice, la qual figura fu rubata da Verre’.
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At f. 39r, still on the left margin, a note is present that was then inserted in the text of the edition that appeared in 1568 relating to the dispersal of ancient statues in the Byzantine period: ‘[…] in the time of the emperor Zeno in a very large fire, which destroyed the finest and the best part of Constantinople, many [i.e. statues] were ruined, among which was that beautiful Aphrodite of Cnidus by Praxiteles, of which we made mention above, and that wonderful Jupiter by Phidias, which was at Olympia, and many other noble statues in marble and bronze’ (Fig. 11 at end of text).34

At f. 39v (Fig. 12 at end of text) we find a broad range of corrections related to the passage where the presence is mentioned, already in Republican Rome, of statues in honour of outstanding personalities: ‘Also Hermodorus had a statue in his…’

33 Adriani, ABIB, f. 39r: ‘[…] al tempo di Zenone imperatore per un grandissimo incendio, che [...] disfece la più bella e la miglior parte di Costantinopoli, molte ne […] inserito in interline] furono guaste, fra le quali fu [a letter crossed out follows] quella bella Venere Gnidia di Prassitele, di cui di sopra facemo menzione, e quel Giove miracoloso di Fidia che era ad Olimpia [e quel Giove miracoloso di Fidia che era ad Olimpia inserted in margin], e molte altre nobili di marmo e di bronzo; see Delle Vite, f. e3r: ‘[…] al tempo di Zenone imperatore per un grandissimo incendio, il quale disfece la più bella e la miglior parte di Costantinopoli, molte [that is statues] ne furono guaste, infra le quali fu quella bella Venere da Gnidio di Prassitele, di cui di sopra facemo menzione, e quel meraviglioso Giove Olimpico fatto per mano di Fidia, e molte altre nobili di marmo e di bronzo; see Vasari-Bettarini/Barocchi, I, 224 (lines 18-23). The Phidian sculpture probably was lost in the fire that, in 475, destroyed the Lauseion in Constantinople, where it had been brought along with other classical works: see Robin Cormack, *Icons*, London: The British Museum Press, 2007, 27. For the collection of antiquities set up in his palace by Lausus, a rich eunuch and ‘praepositus sacri cubiculi’ (in charge of the sacred bedroom) see: Cyril Mango, Michael Vickers and Eric D. Francis, ‘The palace of Lausus at Costantinople and its collection of ancient statues, *Journal of the History of Collections*, IV/1, 1992, 93-95.

34 According to information provided by Frey (see *Le vite de’ più eccellenti pittori, scultori e architettori scritte da M. Giorgio Vasari*, Karl Frey, ed. München: Müller, 1911, 312 footnote 262), the source is to be found in Georgius Cedrenus’ *Σύνοψις ιστορίων*, printed in Basel in 1566 in a bilingual version (Greek and Latin), with rich indexes and chronological tables: Georgii Cedreni *Annales*, sive *Historiae ab exordio mundi ad Isacium Comnenum* [...], Basileae, per Ioan. Oporinum et Episcopios fratres, 1566, 265 lines 12-13, and 288-289 (lines 57-60 and 3-9). About the author, who lived in Constantinople in the late eleventh and early twelfth century, see Riccardo Maisano, ‘Note su Giorgio Cedreno e la tradizione storiografica bizantina’, *Rivista di Studi Bizantini e Slavi*, III, 1983, 227-248; for the Basel edition see Agostino Pertusi, *Bisanzio e i Turchi nella cultura del Rinascimento e del Barocco. Tre saggi*, Carlo Maria Mazzucchi, ed, Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 2004, 55-56.

35 Adriani, ABIB, f. 39v: ‘Hebbevela [‘la’ inserted in interline] ancora [‘ra’ inserted in interline. ‘La statua’ crossed out follows] quello Hermodorio savio da Efeso, il quale, a quei X cittadini romani che compilavano le romane [‘romane’ inserted in interline to replace ‘leggì’ crossed out], le greche leggì interpretavava. E quello Oratio Coclite, il qual solo sopra il ponte haveva l’impeto de’ Toscani sedevanisi, e massimamente a coloro i quali, essendo ambasciatori, erano stati da’ nimici uccisi, come alcuni che da [‘Fidenati’ crossed out follows]. Adriani’s correction seems to originate from having compared the narration of Pliny’s, *Naturalis historia*, XXXIV, 23-24, which is the entire passage’s source, with Livy’s *History of Rome*, IV, 17, where Lars Tolumnius, King of the Veientes, is quoted] il re e.re [‘d’ crossed out follows] Veinti, a Fideni [‘Il re … Fidene’ inserted in the left margin, with reference mark in the text], furono uccisi, et altri da Teusa, regina di Schiavonia, e quello Ottavio che, rinchiudendo il re Antioco in breve cerchio fattoli intorno nella polvere con una verga, e che domandava spazio, costrinse a risolversi avanti che quindi uscisse, il quale, essendo poi dagli inimici ucciso, merìò per questo conto d’havere in ringhiera una statua.’
honour, the wise man of Ephesus, who translated the Greek laws to the ten Roman citizens who were writing the Roman ones. And also the Horatius Cocles, who alone on the bridge [i.e. Pons Sublicius] had resisted the attack of the Etruscans. There were also many other ancient statues erected by the people or by the Senate to their citizens, and especially to those who, being ambassadors, were killed by enemies, like some who were killed by the king of Veientes, in Fidenae, and others by Teusa, Queen of Slavonia, and the Octavius who, having locked King Antiochus in a tight circle made around him in the dust with a stick, while he was asking for space, forced him to make his choice before he could come out, who, being then killed by the enemy, deserved for this reason to have a statue on the Rostra’.37

As evidenced by a note of a nineteenth-century hand,38 the second part of the passage (from ‘come alcuni’ to ‘una statua’) is not present in the Giunti edition, which thus gives no account of the names mentioned by Adriani among ‘ambasciatori […] da’ nimici uccisi’.39

Every exegesis of the Letter should in the future, I think, start from this manuscript, which testifies to corrections and variations made by Adriani himself, and certifies to the collaboration with Vasari.

Documenting the drafting of the Lettera, with changes, variations and additions made by Adriani to his own text, as well as the editorial curation which took place in the Giunti workshop,40 is also a useful way to approach, with proper respect, the large corpus of the Vite. It is important to examine, without prejudice and preconception, Vasari’s extraordinary work, and his personal involvement as a writer41 to create one of the masterpieces of Italian Renaissance literature.

36 Already Ermolaus Barbaro (1454-1493), based on Polibio (2, 4, 7; 2, 6, 4 ff.; 2, 8, 4 ff.; 2, 9, 1; 2, 11, 4 ff.; 2, 12, 3) had doubts (‘non Teusam’ about the name transmitted by the manuscripts of Naturalis historia, corrected in ‘Teuta’ in modern editions: see Hermolai Barbari castigationes Plinianae et in Pomponium Melam, Giovanni Pozzi, ed, 4 vols, Patavii: in aedibus Antenoreis, 1973-1979, III, 1090; Pline l'Ancien, Histoire naturelle. Livre XXXIV, Henry Le Bonniec and Hubert Gallet de Santerre, eds, Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1953, 116.


38 On the left margin, pointed out by a ‘manicula’ (a reference mark in the shape of a little hand): ‘Tutto questo luogo fra le due linee verticali manca nello stampato’.

39 See Delle Vite, f. e3v; Vasari-Bettarini/Barocchi, I, 225 (lines 13-19).


There is, in conclusion, a more and more urgent need for a study devoted to Vasari’s language, after the research undertaken by Nencioni, and not continued by the most recent historiography, although certainly there are — and indeed new ones emerge — autograph documents of the painter of the Medici court.
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Giovanni Battista Adriani and the drafting of the second edition of the *Vite*

Figure 11 Giovanni Battista Adriani, *The manuscript of Lettera a messer Giorgio Vasari*, Isola Bella, Archivio Borromeo, ms. AD, LM, *Adriani, G. B.*, f. 39r (photo by Archivio Borromeo, with permission).
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Figure 12 Giovanni Battista Adriani, *The manuscript of Lettera a messer Giorgio Vasari, Isola Bella, Archivio Borromeo, ms. AD, LM, Adriani, G. B., f. 39v* (photo by Archivio Borromeo, with permission).
Eliana Carrara  Giovanni Battista Adriani and the drafting of the second edition of the *Vite*

In 1984 **Eliana Carrara** was admitted to the Faculty of Arts and Philosophy of the Scuola Normale Superiore in Pisa, where she obtained a PhD in the History of Art Criticism (Supervisor Paola Barocchi). In 1998 she received a scholarship from the National Research Council (sector “Science and Technology of Cultural Heritage”) to study abroad at the Warburg Institute in London. From 1 February 2005 she is a researcher in the History of Art Criticism. She is now working on Vasari’s texts and his cultural *milieu* in the Medici court: Eliana Carrara, ‘Pliny and the Art of the Ancients and the Moderns. Reading the *Naturalis Historia* (Books XXXIV-XXXVI) in Florence in the Sixteenth Century (the Anonimo Magliabechiano to Vasari’s Lives)’, in: *De l’auteur à la référence. Les repères textuels à la Renaissance*, Isabelle Diu and Raphaële Mouren, eds, in print).

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