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AN INSTANCE OF FEMININE PATRONAGE IN THE MEDICI COURT OF SIXTEENTH-CENTURY FLORENCE

The Chapel of Eleonora da
Toledo in the Palazzo Vecchio

While the artistic patronage of Cosimo I de' Medici, duke of Florence, has been examined extensively, especially as it relates to his political program of Medici supremacy, the influence of his wife Eleonora da Toledo (Fig. 1) on Florentine art of the period has not received recognition.¹ Bronzino's frescoes for her chapel in the Palazzo Vecchio offer an opportunity to investigate the growing importance of Eleonora's impact on court art and life, and to contrast, once her role in the chapel is identified, the very different attitudes of the duke and the duchess to the uses of art. An examination of the iconography of the fresco cycle as it developed from its inception in about 1540, the year after her marriage to the duke, to its completion

1. For Cosimo's development of Medicean iconography, see especially K. W. Forster, "Metaphors of Rule: Political Ideology and History in the Portraits of Cosimo de' Medici," *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz*, xv, 1971, 66–104; P. W. Richardson, *Studies in the Personal Imagery of Cosimo I de' Medici, Duke of Florence*, Ph.D. diss., Princeton University, 1973; New York, 1975; and Janet Cox-Rearick, *Dynasty and Destiny in Medici Art: Pontormo, Leo X, and the Teen Cosimos*, Princeton, 1984. No study has examined the extent of Eleonora's participation in the arts, though her involvement with the development of the Palazzo Pitti, her encouragement of Baccio Bandinelli, and her relationship with poets such as Laura Battiferri, as well, of course, as her role in the chapel, indicate activity from the 1550s to her death. The present essay is intended as an introduction to this unexplored aspect of the sixteenth-century Medici court.

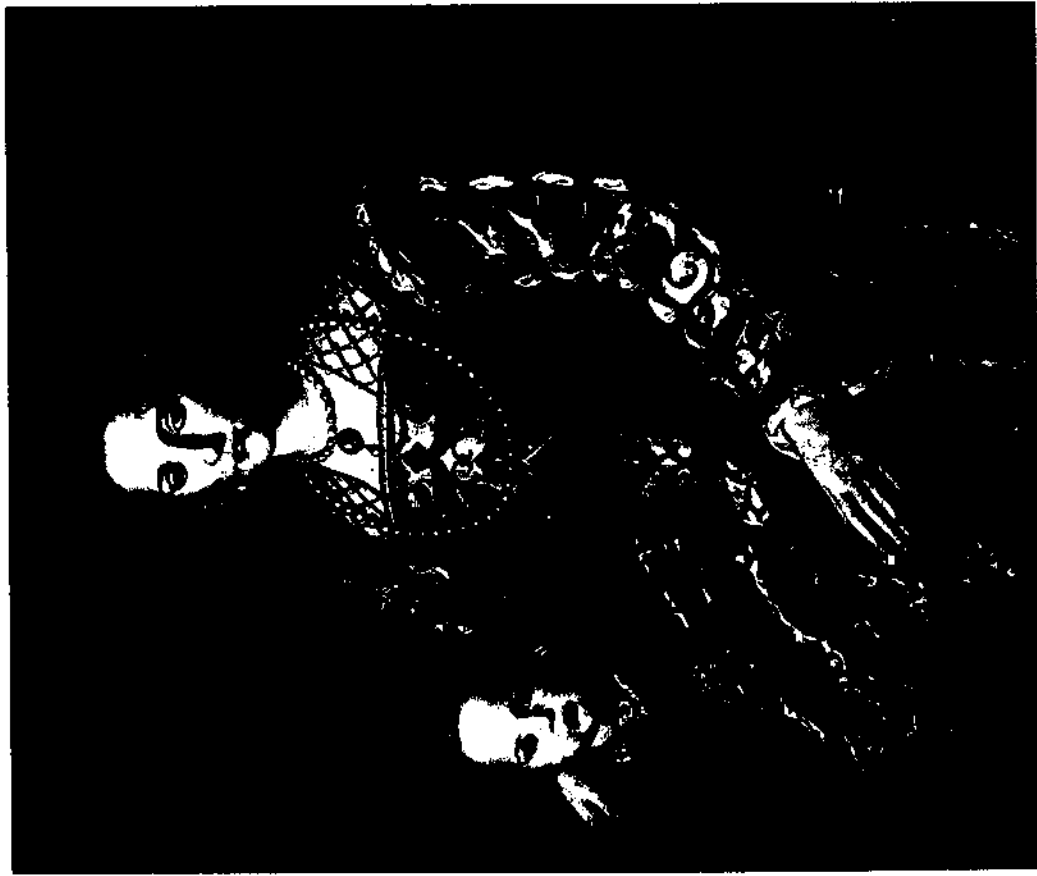


Fig. 1 Bronzino, *Portrait of Eleonora da Toledo and son Garcia*. Uffizi, Florence (photo: Studio Fotografico Quattrone, Florence)

around 1564 reveals changes indicative of Eleonora's increasing control in the court and of her personal concept of the function of religious painting. Eleonora da Toledo entered the Florentine scene as insurance to the Medici fortunes, her imperial connections and childbearing age being her

most attractive assets. She was the seventeen-year-old daughter of Pedro da Toledo, the wealthy viceroy of Naples and supporter of Charles V. By establishing an association with the Toledo family, Cosimo placed himself directly in the imperial circle, which was an important factor in maintaining the prestige of the Tuscan state.² When Eleonora entered Florence in June 1539, one of the first sights to welcome the new bride was a triumphal arch topped by an allegorical representation of "Fecundity," a female figure accompanied by five infants, an allusion to one of the duties expected of the new duchess.³ This she was to fulfill very well, bearing the duke eleven children, two of whom became granddukes of Florence. The emblem of her medal, an imminently fecund peahen, survives to illustrate the association.⁴ Three years her husband's junior, she was also an ideal age, in accordance with contemporary treatises on marriage, to have her yet unformed notions molded by her older husband, though as she settled into the ducal court, Eleonora's strict and pious Spanish background may have subtly resisted, or at least provided an alternative to, Medici tradition.

In 1540, soon after the marriage, the couple moved to the Palazzo Vecchio, symbolically claiming as their ducal residence the administrative and political center of Florence. The duchess took apartments on the second floor, and Cosimo, those on the first. The chapel, a small, squarish room, was located between Eleonora's private bedroom and the terrace that overlooked the Sala dei Cinquecento.⁵ Despite the personal function of the chapel, however, it seems to have been the duke who instigated its decoration. Vasari's words make clear that, while the chapel was Eleonora's,

2. Cosimo had initially hoped for marriage with Margherita of Parma, Alessandro's widow and Charles V's illegitimate daughter.

3. P. F. Giambullari, *Apparato et feste nelle nozze dello illustrissimo Signor Duca di Firenze, e della Duchessa sua Consorte* . . . , Florence, 1539, 7. Bronzino participated also in the decorations for both Eleonora's entrance and the nuptial banquet (G. Vasari, ed. G. Milanesi, *Le vite de più eccellenti pittori, scultori ed architetti*, Florence, [1906], 1973, vii, 596). For the wedding celebration, see also A. C. Minor and B. Mitchell, *A Renaissance Entertainment: Festivities for the Marriage of Cosimo I, Duke of Florence, in 1539*, Columbia, Mo., 1968.

4. Eleonora's impresa was designed by Paolo Giovio, with the motto "Cum pudore laeta foecunditas" and the image of a peahen protecting six young under its wings (Janet Cox-Rearick, "Bronzino's Crossing of the Red Sea and Moses Appointing Joshua: Prolegomena to the Chapel of Eleonora di Toledo," *Art Bulletin* LXIX [1987]: 60 and n. 77). For the medal by Domenico Poggini, see G. F. Hill and G. Pollard, *Renaissance Medals from the Samuel H. Kress Collection at the National Gallery of Art*, London, 1967, no. 342.

5. For a plan, see E. Allegri and A. Cecchi, *Palazzo Vecchio e i Medici: Guida Storica*, Florence, 1980, xxiv-xxv.

the decision to select Bronzino was Cosimo's.⁶ Frequent payments to Bronzino in 1542 and 1543 concerning work in the palace for the duke substantiate that the major part of the project was carried out in the first half of the decade (immediately following the wedding), that is, sometime soon after the move of 1540 to the completion of the altarpiece in 1545.⁷

The narrative frescoes of the earliest part of the program depict the miracles of Moses that saved the Israelites during their exodus from Egypt to the Holy Land, and are among the first instances of Cosimo's personal and political investment in biblical imagery.⁸ Bronzino's *Brazen Serpent* (Fig. 2), for example, presents a traditional theological parallel between Moses' bronze serpent and the cross of the crucifixion,⁹ while it proclaims how the duke, like Moses, is elected by God to save his people. The

6. Probably, as Vasari implies, it was Bronzino's work with Pontormo at the Medici villas of Careggi and Castello, as well as his contributions for the wedding decorations, that earned him the duke's attention and the commission for the chapel: "... il duca, conosciuta la virtù di quest'uomo, gli fece metter mano a fare nel suo ducal palazzo una cappella non molto grande per la detta signora duchessa, donna nel vero, fra quante furono mai, valorosa, e per infiniti meriti degna d'eterna lode" (Vasari-Milanesi, vii, 596).

7. For the chronology of the fresco decoration, see Janet Cox-Rearick, *Bronzino's Chapel of Eleonora in the Palazzo Vecchio*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1993, chap. 2, 54ff. Earlier scholars had placed Bronzino's frescoes after the 1545 altarpiece, in the years 1550-64 (A. McComb, *Agnolo Bronzino: His Life and Works*, Cambridge, Mass., 1928, 33), until Craig Hugh Smyth's reassessment set back the major part of the chapel to early in Cosimo's rule (Smyth, "Bronzino Studies" [Ph.D. diss., Princeton, 1955], 216-17; and idem, *Bronzino As Draughtsman: An Introduction* [Locust Valley, N.Y., 1971], 53-54 n. 23). Both Smyth and Cox-Rearick place the Frankfort drawing for the vault as early as 1540. Vasari's discussion of the chapel immediately following the wedding preparations substantiates this chronology, as do the payments made to Bronzino for work in the Palazzo Vecchio dating from April 1542 to July 1543. The inscriptions discovered in the restoration of 1949 and interpreted by Edward Sanchez in 1957 date the *Crossing of the Red Sea* and the *Brazen Serpent* to 1541-42, while the two Old Testament scenes flanking the door to the terrace are given by Cox-Rearick (1993, 62) to late 1542-43 and dated by Smyth to 1546. The substitute for the altarpiece of 1545 was begun in 1553. A letter from Bronzino to Cosimo of April 1564 (first published by G. Gage, *Carteggio inedito d'artisti dei secoli XIV, XV, XVI*, Florence, 1839, iii, 134), in which the artist promises to finish the decorations, indicates that there was still some work to be done in the chapel, which probably consisted of the eucharistic putti of the left wall and three of the allegorical symbols in the pendentives. That year the *Annunciation* panels received new frames and the chapel was at least mostly complete—four years after Eleonora's removal to the Palazzo Pitti and two years after her death.

8. Art under Cosimo began increasingly to turn to Old Testament subject matter in the service of the duke's secular aspirations. For examples, see particularly Richelson, chap. 4, "Religious Imagery."

9. John 3:14: "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up." And John 3:18: "He who believes in Him is not condemned, he who does not believe is condemned already."



Fig. 2 Bronzino, *The Brazen Serpent*, fresco, interior of entrance wall, Chapel of Eleonora da Toledo, Palazzo Vecchio, Florence (photo: Studio Fotografico Quattrone, Florence)

fresco relates typologically to the sacrificial theme of the altarpiece of the *Lamentation* on the opposite wall (Fig. 3); at the same time, the snake-entwined rod that protects the Israelites represents not only Christ on the Cross, but the caduceus, which, with its associations with the medical profession, serves as a visual pun on the Medici name and Cosimo's healing control.¹⁰ Political salvation will come to those Florentines who are faithful to Medici authority, and so to God's will. The implicit comparison this fresco draws between the Israelites, Christians, and Florentines occurs in the other Mosaic frescoes in the chapel (*The Crossing of the Red Sea*, *Moses and the Miraculous Spring*, and *The Fall of Manna* [Figs. 4

10. An earlier example of this propagandistic play is found in the official compliments dedicated to Leo X, which entitle him "Medici, healer of the people" (John Shearman, *Raphael's Cartoons in the Collection of Her Majesty the Queen*, London, 1972, 15). A medal was coined soon after Cosimo's election with the motto "Publicae salutis" (Pietro Bargellini, *I Medici*, Florence, 1980, 236).



Fig. 3 Bronzino, *Lamentation*, original altarpiece for the Chapel of Eleonora da Toledo, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Besançon (photo: Musée des Beaux-Arts et d'Archéologie, Besançon; Ch. Choffier).



Fig. 4 Bronzino, *Crossing of the Red Sea*, fresco, right wall from entrance, Chapel of Eleonora da Toledo, Palazzo Vecchio, Florence (photo: Studio Fotografico Quattrone, Florence)

and 5]), and announce a pattern of imagery that Cosimo will employ throughout his rule to depict himself as a divinely legitimate and successful authority.¹¹ Under Eleonora, the emphasis is to shift from Medici propaganda to a more specifically devotional Christian meaning.

The altarpiece of the *Lamentation* (Fig. 3) and its two flanking panels were completed in 1545 but were only briefly, if at all, the devotional focus of Eleonora's chapel.¹² At its completion, Cosimo dispatched the *Lamentation* to Nicholas Perrenot de Granvelle, a chief counselor of the

11. M. Meiss, in *The Great Age of Fresco: Discoveries, Recoveries, and Survivals*, New York, 1970, 132, was the first to suggest the Medicean purpose behind the selection of Mosaic themes in his comments on Bronzino's *Moses and the Miraculous Spring*. Cox-Rearick, 1993, part 4, presents a detailed analysis of the intended parallels between Cosimo and Moses underlying Bronzino's frescoes.

12. The completion of the altarpiece can be securely dated to the summer of 1545: a letter from Lorenzo Pagni, the ducal secretary in Florence, dated August 12, 1545, discusses the frame

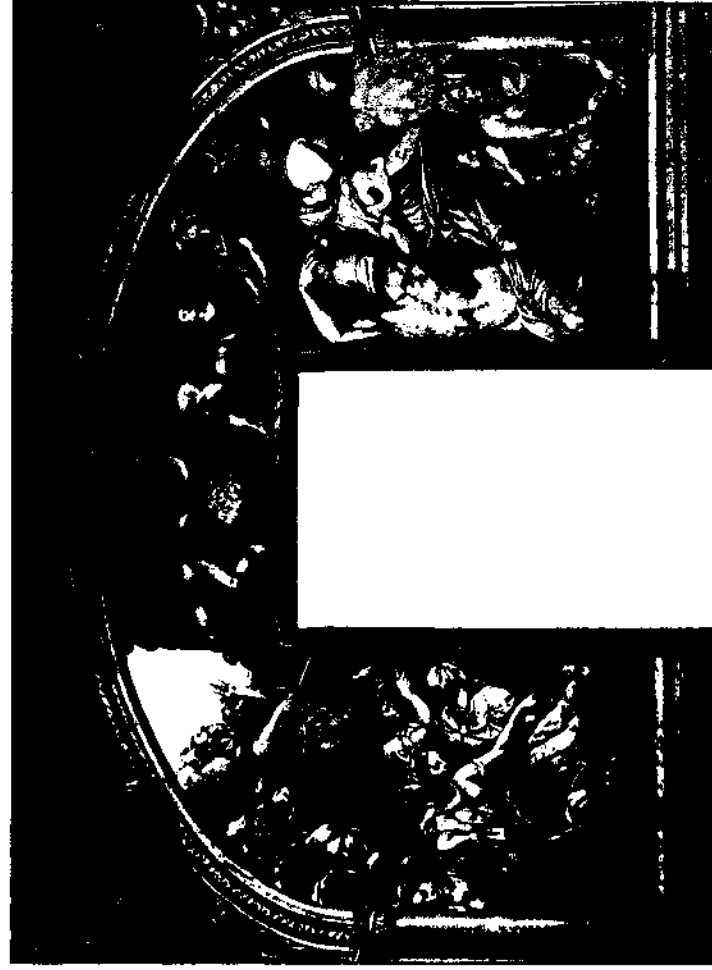


Fig. 5 Bronzino, *The Miraculous Spring and Gathering of Manna: Putti with Symbols of the Eucharist*, left wall from entrance, Chapel of Eleonora da Toledo, Palazzo Vecchio, Florence (photo: Studio Fotografico Quattrone, Florence)

emperor, to be placed in his private chapel in Besançon, and so Bronzino's first altarpiece became an instrument of Medici diplomacy.¹³ The second version of the painting, a close copy of the first (Fig. 6), was not done until 1553, and thus Cosimo's gift to Granvelle left Eleonora's chapel without an altarpiece for eight years.¹⁴

for the painting, and indicates that the altarpiece is at that moment in Eleonora's chapel; for documentation concerning the Besançon *Lamentation*, see Cox-Rearick, 1993, 74–76 and doc. 9.

13. Ibid., also A. Castan, "Le musée de Besançon et la *Déposition de Croix* du Bronzino," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* xxxiii (1881): 462–63, and O. H. Giglioli, "La Pietà del Bronzino della Cappella del quartiere di Eleonora da Toledo in Palazzo Vecchio," *Rivista d'arte* vi (1909): 263. The correspondence pertaining to the completion of the first altarpiece testifies to Cosimo's eagerness that it be finished, framed, and shipped off to the imperial minister. Granvelle had been helpful when, in 1543, Cosimo had finally granted control of the fortresses at Florence and Livorno, as well as the release of the city from the Spanish troops. The painting is now in the Besançon Museum.

14. Although the letter of 1545 from Bronzino to Riccio indicates that the substitute was already being considered, and a copy would do (see note 16), a payment for two ounces of blue

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The subject of Bronzino's altarpiece—a "Deposition," or more accurately, "Lamentation"—is a kind of Pietà with witnesses. These are not actual participants, present at the Savior's death and burial, but people contemplating the sacrificial body of Christ. From the midst of the grouping, and directly behind the Virgin and Christ, a female figure is curiously emphasized, both by her placement and by her gesture. Cox-Rearick claims, on the basis of a drawing in the Uffizi for the figure's head, that it is a portrait of Eleonora herself.¹⁷ Yet this figure seems no more physiognomically particularized than the other attendants. Instead, she is a generic type—one of the Marys, but especially a feminine devotee who could summon the sympathies of a female viewer. In a sense, she is a mirror image of the elegant worshiper who would look upon the body of Christ from the other side of the picture plane; yet she is not a "portrait" in the conventional meaning of the word.

While Bronzino's second version of the altarpiece (Fig. 6) seems generally to have followed Cosimo's request of 1545 that the copy be identical and "not more beautiful," subtle deviations in this later version of 1553 attest to the change in Bronzino's work during these years. Most striking is the darker color, notably more subdued than the jewel-like hues of the original, and gloomier, too, than Bronzino's major altarpieces of the previous year, the *Resurrection* and *Christ in Limbo*.¹⁸ The drawing in the later piece is harsher and less fluid, the Virgin older, and the figures lament Christ's death more openly. The formal changes and heightened tragic content ally the piece more closely with Counter-Reformation ideas. Bronzino produced a copy that would demand little new invention or time from his work for the duke, while the duchess, given a faith more in keeping with the sobriety of the Counter-Reformation, perhaps found it "more beautiful."

Dissemi che così voleva et era contento, ma mi pare che S.E. si contenti che prima si fornisca il ritratto; et di più dice Sua E. che si faccia in questo mezzo far il legname per dipingerli su detta tarola, et aggiugnere sua prefata E.: "Io la vogli[o] in quel modo proprio come sta quella, et non la vogli[o] più bella": quasi dicesse: "Non m'entrare in altra inventione, perchè quella mi piace" (Cox-Rearick, 1993, 79–80 and doc. 13; 1989, 40).

17. Cox-Rearick, "Les Dessins de Bronzino pour la Chapelle d'Eleonora au Palazzo Vecchio," *Revue de l'Art*, 1971, 14, 20; 1989, 73; and 1993, 200–209 and 261–65, the author goes so far as to identify Bronzino as Nicodemus, Bandinelli as Joseph of Arimathea, the Virgin as Maria Salviati, and Eleonora as Maria Cleophas.

18. Also observed by Cox-Rearick, 1993, 188, who conjectures that the shift in tonality might be attributed to Eleonora's advancing tuberculosis, and to a general Counter-Reformation trend in Florence. The coloristic differences between the more public altarpieces and the second *Lamentation* would seem due to the influence of the private patron, Eleonora, rather than merely to aesthetic considerations of the artist.

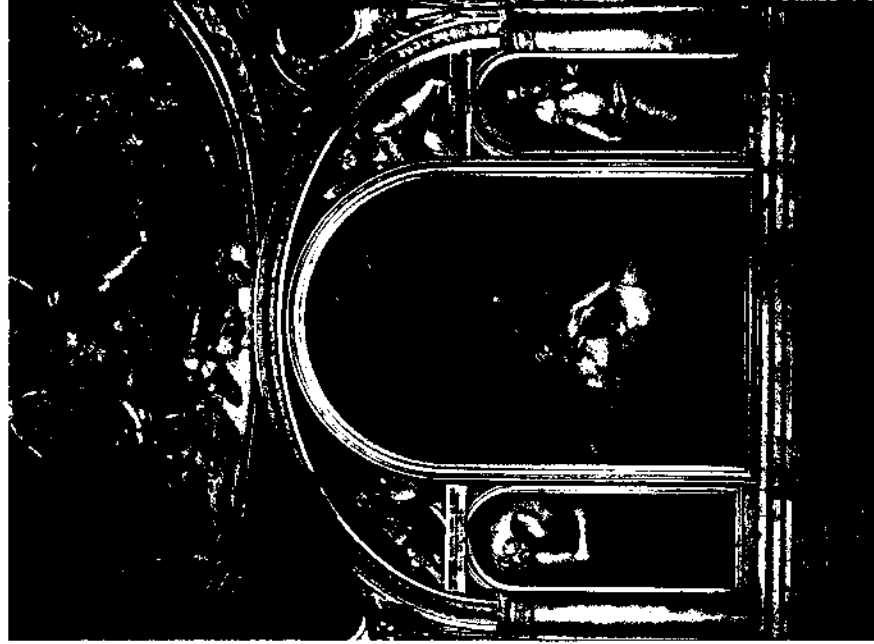


Fig. 6 Bronzino, altar wall of the Chapel of Eleonora da Toledo, *Lamentation, Annunciation*, frescoes of spandrels, vault, pendentives. Palazzo Vecchio, Florence (photo: Studio Fotografico Quattrone, Florence)

Although the essential design of the altarpiece remained unchanged, the new set of side panels substituted even a new subject. The contrasting imagery—from the depiction of John the Baptist (Fig. 7) and Saint Cosmas to that of the Angel and Virgin Annunciate (Figs. 8 and 9)—speaks clearly of dissimilar attitudes toward the purposes of art in the chapel, and here we have specific contemporary testimony from Vasari for Eleonora's influence.



Fig. 7 Bronzino, *Saint John the Baptist*, original side panel for altarpiece of the Chapel of Eleonora da Toledo. Getty Museum, Malibu, California

Of the first pair of narrow altarpiece panels (completed, with the *Lamentation*, in 1545), the *John the Baptist* is now in the J. P. Getty Museum (Fig. 7)¹⁹ and the *Saint Cosmas* is lost. Later in the Palazzo Vecchio,

19. For the panel now in the Getty Museum, see F. Zeri, "Agnolo Bronzino: Il S. Giovanni Battista della Cappella di Palazzo Vecchio," *Paragone* III, no. 27 (1952): 55.



Fig. 8 Bronzino, *Angel of the Annunciation*, present side panel for the altarpiece of the Chapel of Eleonora da Toledo. Palazzo Vecchio, Florence (photo: Studio Fotografico Quattrone, Florence)

in Cosimo's private chapel, Vasari painted Saint Cosmas as a portrait of Cosimo il Vecchio and Saint Damian as Cosimo I.²⁰ Could Bronzino's lost panel have likewise been a portrait of the duke himself? If it were

20. These panels, still in the chapel (which is called the Chapel of Leo X, though actually it was the duke's), were part of a decorative project completed by Vasari in 1561; see Vasari-Milanesi, VII, 699; E. Allegri and A. Cecchi, 162–65; and Cox-Rearick, 1993, 266–67, and Fig. 16. I am reluctant



Fig. 9 Bronzino, *Virgin Annunciate*, present side panel for the altarpiece of the Chapel of Eleonora da Toledo. Palazzo Vecchio, Florence (photo: Studio Fotografico Quattrone, Florence)

the case that Cosimo's own features appeared in the chapel, and this must of course be hypothetical, then his specific presence would have been an indication of power overriding the vaguer reference to Eleonora in the female witness of the altarpiece. Whether or not a portrait, the inclusion of

to see as many portraits in the chapel as Cox-Rearick suggests, but the linkage of Cosimos, duke and saint, would follow naturally from Medici tradition and Renaissance practice.

Saint Cosmas was, like the duke's identification with Moses in the chapel frescoes, self-referential. The presence of panels of the Baptist, patron saint of the city, and Cosimo's name-saint constitute another political intrusion into Eleonora's private sphere. But at some point between the removal of the first altarpiece in 1545 and the 1553 inventory, Eleonora intervened, relegating these first two panels to the duke's quarters and replacing them with the more pious images of the Virgin Annunciate and the Archangel Gabriel.²¹ Vasari specifically ascribes the substitution of the side panels to

21. The 1553 inventory of Cosimo's *guardaroba* includes the first two side panels, indicating that they were removed from the chapel sometime before that date; Conti, 139–40. Earlier writers have usually placed the Annunciation panels chronologically alongside the 1553 *Lamentation*, while some, like Smyth, 1971, 54 n. 23, date them to the early 1560s (see Cox-Rearick, 1993, 366 n. 49, for literature). Most recently, Cox-Rearick argues that "Cosimo asked Bronzino to complete the second set of flanking panels" when the chapel was "refurbished" in 1563 (1993, 86). Although her case is persuasive, Vasari's statement (see below) should be given careful consideration, especially since his loyalties are not to Eleonora but to her husband. I would at least suggest that an earlier dating is still quite possible, as is the duchess's role in determining the subjects of the new panels.

Cox-Rearick bases her chronology of the panels on the discovery of two new documents. An order of June 19, 1563, for "adornamenti e una tavola per uno altare nella Cappella in Camera Verde" (87 and doc. 22), clearly indicates that some plan is afoot for Eleonora's chapel; but the Annunciation side paintings would have required the preparation of two panels, not "una tavola" (singular). The purpose of this panel is impossible to know—a replacement altar? one of the side panels?—but the reference certainly does not offer firm proof that the pair was executed in 1564. The second piece of evidence is a letter from Bronzino to Cosimo of April 15, 1564, in which the artist assures his duke that he will be completing work: "E in tanto non manco di seguire la Tavola de Cavalieri [the *Nativity* for the church in Pisa], e dar fine a quel tanto che manca nella Cappella di Palazzo, le quali cose credo che V.E.I. troverà al suo ritorno fornite" (88 and doc. 24). "Le quali cose" refers to both the altarpiece of the *Nativity* and some unspecified work in the chapel, which could have been even minor touch-ups; no side panels are mentioned.

Since Lensi's citation of the documents for the commission of the Annunciation frames and their gilding of July 15 and September 16, 1564 (A. Lensi, *Palazzo Vecchio*, Milan and Rome, 1929, 134; Cox-Rearick, 1993, doc. 25), which clearly specified "una Nunitata" and "uno Angelo" for the "Cappella della Camera Verde," there has been an increasing tendency to place the paintings in a moment immediately preceding that date. Yet the commission of the frames only provides a *terminus ante quem*, not a date for the panels themselves—especially since frames of the proper dimension would already have been available at least four years earlier. An inventory of July 1560, described the *Saint John the Baptist* and *Saint Cosmas*, still in the *guardaroba* and without frames (Bronzino, *compagni*, dentro in uno S.to Cosimo et nell'altro S.to Giovanbatista, di man del Baptista was later cut down), could not the first frames have been moved to serve the Annunciation, and then later replaced by the new frames of 1564 as part of a general restoration of the chapel? Bronzino's payment of February 17, 1565, refers only to the "rassetare" of the chapel, most likely meaning repairs and minor cleanups, especially in light of the small sum he is given (doc. 27). If Cox-Rearick is correct that Salviati's altar tapestry of 1545–46 was used to substitute for the panel sent to Granvelle, and her case is extremely convincing, then we see a definite distaste for blank

Eleonora; in his life of Bronzino, he relates how the artist made two new paintings to accompany the new altarpiece:²² "When the first altarpiece was removed, the *Baptist* and *St. Cosmas* were put in the Duke's *guardaroba*; since the Duchess, changing her mind, had these other two made."

It is clear that new needs had to be answered, and the shift in emphasis may be explained in part with a look at the spiritual histories of the patron and patroness of the chapel. As for any indications of Cosimo I's religious attitudes in the years of the program's initiation, the duke's participation in the religious life of Florence was chiefly limited to the types of organizations that would be expected to maintain his image as a munificent and acceptably pious ruler, while asserting the continuity of Medici tradition.²³ Throughout his rule, his attitude toward new developments in Catholic thought was conditioned always by political necessity. The reorganization of the altars of Sta. Maria Novella and Sta. Croce, for instance, carried out under the duke's instigation in the 1560s, was, if in part determined by the changing religious climate in Florence, just as evidently a ducal gesture to make the individual families that owned the chapels conform to Medici will.²⁴ As in his wife's chapel, religious art for Cosimo continued to function as an assertion of Medici authority.

spaces in the chapel, especially at the devotional focus. It is difficult to believe that Eleonora would so detest the panels with saints as to prefer empty walls, or to believe that Vasari, an artist intimate with artistic matters in the Palazzo, would single out the duchess's decision for her chapel without good cause. Hence it is still arguable that the panels, or at the very least, their design, were done before Eleonora's death, and that the program may indeed be attributed to the duchess herself.

22. Vasari-Milanese, vii, 597: "Ma in cambio di questi, quando ne fu levata la prima tavola, erano un San Giovanni Battista ed un San Cosimo, che furono messi in guardaroba quando la signora duchessa, mutato pensiero, fece fare questi altri due."

23. Cosimo attended Mass at SS. Annunziata and the Duomo and was *procurator* of the confraternity of S. Martino, whose members, mostly high Florentine nobility, engaged in anonymous almsgiving (B. Baldini, *Vita di Cosimo de' Medici, Primo Gran Duca di Toscana*, Florence, 1578, 58; P. Paschini, *Tre ricerche sulla storia della chiesa nel cinquecento*, Rome, 1945, 5). The *buonomini* of S. Martino al Vescovo dated their origins back to the mid-fifteenth century. In the 1540s, church reform under Cosimo was largely designed to keep the ecclesiastical powers in check; for his decrees against a possible resurgence of anti-Medici feeling at S. Marco and the strengthening of his bureaucratic hold on church reform, see E. Cochrane, *Florence in the Forgotten Centuries, 1527–1800*, Chicago, 1973, 50–51 and 61. Because of his antipathy toward the Farnese, the duke exhibited a pattern of disdain for papal authority. His response to the Index of Paul IV was reserved (A. Panella, "L'Indice de Paolo IV a Firenze," *Rivista storica degli archivi toscani* 1 [1929]: 11–29). With the election of Pius IV as a "Medici" pope, Cosimo began to take a more friendly approach toward the Holy See. For the duke's later political-religious activities, see L. Carceri, *Cosimo primo granduca*, Verona, 1926, i, 22–24; H. Jedin, *History of the Council of Trent*, London, 1957, i, 90.

24. Marcia Hall, *Renovation and Counter-Reformation: Vasari and Duke Cosimo in Sta. Maria Novella and Sta. Croce, 1565–1577*, Oxford, 1979.

Eleonora, in the years after the completion of the Moses cycle and the first altarpiece, began to develop an interest in the arts. With the dispatch of the first altarpiece to Granvelle, Cosimo's political manipulation of his wife's private chapel reached a climax. In 1545, the duchess was now twenty-three years old—a mature woman by Renaissance standards, and mother already of Medici heirs. She had surely gained in her six years in Florence a clear understanding of the importance held in that city by art in the claim for power and prestige. Eleonora herself begins to play the game of artistic patroness.

In 1549, Eleonora arranged the purchase and remodeling of the Palazzo Pitti, which became the ducal residence in 1560.²⁵ Her involvement in this and in other artistic projects in Florence of the late 1540s and until her death at forty in 1562 provides evidence for her growing influence on decisions concerning commissions throughout Florence. Both Cellini and Vasari tell of the duchess's persistent efforts toward Bandinelli's promotion. Says Vasari: "... in truth, if it had not been for that lady ... Baccio would have lost completely the favor of the Duke."²⁶

25. Eleonora purchased the palace for 9,000 florins, making payments in 1549–53; F. Morandi, "Palazzo Pitti, la sua costruzione e i successivi ingrandimenti," *Commentari* xvi (1965): 39.

26. Vasari-Milanese, vi, 188; "E nel vero, se non fusse stata quella signora che lo tenne in piè, e lo amava per la virtù sua, Baccio sarebbe cascato affatto, ed avrebbe persa interamente la grazia del duca. Servivasi ancora la duchessa assai di Baccio nel giardino de' Pitti, dove ella aveva fatto fare una grotta ... dentrovi una fontana ... Per queste cose la duchessa di continuo aiutava e favoriva Baccio appresso al duca; il quale aveva dato licenza finalmente a Baccio che cominciasse il modello grande del Nettuno." In his *Memoriale* (ed. P. Barocchi, *Scritti d'arte del cinquecento*, Milan and Naples, 1973, n. 1408), Bandinelli praises Eleonora: "... la signora Duchessa che amo e reverisco con tutto il cuore; e veramente che da lei e dal suo padre eccellentissimo e tutta la casa Tolledo sono stato sempre favorito." After Cellini's return from France in 1545, Eleonora supported his rival Bandinelli, but Cosimo did not—especially with the Duomo choir project and the Neptune. Late in Bandinelli's career, he made cartoons of four Old Testament subjects to be painted by Andrea del Mignola and given to Eleonora to decorate rooms in the Palazzo Pitti; see J. H. Beck, "Precisions Concerning Bandinelli 'pittore,'" *Antichità viva*, v (1973): 7–11. See also Cox-Rearick, 1989, 46 and 77, no. 20. According to Vasari (189), Eleonora also acquired for Bandinelli the Pazzi family chapel in Ss. Annunziata for his own tomb. The artistic rivalry between Cellini and Bandinelli as it relates to the conflicting sponsorship of Cosimo and Eleonora, respectively, merits further study. A summary of the acrimonious feeling between the two sculptors is given by John Pope-Hennessy, *Italian High Renaissance and Baroque Sculpture* (1963), 1985, 44–46. Ample contemporary testimony is given in Vasari's life, Cellini's autobiography, and Bandinelli himself in the *Memoriale*. Cellini's stories of his unsuccessful efforts to win the duchess's support also trace the growing importance of her influence, as her initial interests, limited to the acquisition of jewels and small objects, matured into an increasing involvement in the Neptune commissions.

By Cristoforo Bronzino's account, Eleonora had a passion for philosophy and literature (G. Pieraccini, *La stirpe de' Medici di Cafaggiolo*, Florence, 1925, n. 64–65), and in 1547 several Florentine writers and poets assembled an academy under her encouragement. The nature of this

Eleonora's distinctive personality and spiritual tendencies, combined with her increased influence on art of the court, account for the later iconographical changes in her chapel. Her upbringing in the Spanish court of Naples prepared her for a life in Florence in which seclusion, prayers, and the demanding domestic occupation of rearing a large family alternated with the less retiring activities of travel, sport, and gambling.²⁷ In Florence, her devoutness became notorious, and as the female head of the ducal house, religion was her natural domain. Giovanni da Nola's tomb for her parents, begun probably before Pedro da Toledo died in 1553 and installed in the church of S. Giacomo in Naples in the 1560s, bears witness to the priorities of Eleonora's native society. While the reliefs on the base tell of the viceroy's worldly accomplishments, the effigies of Pedro and his wife in prayer dominate the tomb and stress the image of the ruler's piety above all else.²⁸ During the years in which this tomb was begun, Eleonora asserts these inherited values in her chapel.

The viceroy's interest in the Jesuits, which his daughter was to imitate, began in 1539, when he summoned Father Bobadilla to Naples. Pedro, occasionally in Florence during the late 1540s and early 1550s, was the first to be approached by the Jesuits on the delicate matter of instituting a Jesuit college in the Medici city.²⁹

"academy" and the extent and significance of the duchess's participation is not clear. The duchess's friend, the poetess Laura Battiferrti (painted by Bronzino, and the wife of Ammannati), published her first book of poems in 1560 with a dedication to Eleonora.

27. The anti-Spanish sentiments of Italian chroniclers, past and present, often color views of the duchess's character. For a general discussion of Italian attitudes toward the Spanish, see B. Croce, *La Spagna nella vita italiana durante la rinascenza*, Bari, 1917, 210–12. Pieraccini's ruthless characterization of Eleonora reflects the anti-Hispanic feeling of many contemporary letters, diaries, and histories (n. 60). A letter of 1541 from Riccio to Cosimo, away in Pisa, describes the duchess's nearly monastic existence in the palace, where she spent many hours in prayer and was attended by religious worthies (ibid., 59). Her rare public appearances were splendid. In 1548 she was carried forth in a green satin sedan chair designed to her own specifications, which struck the Florentines as a sort of exotic tabernacle (H. Rahner, *St. Ignatius Loyola: Letters to Women*, trans. K. Pond and H. Weetman, London, 1958, 16). The intense privacy of her spiritual life and the extravagance of her public display met with disapproval; as one observer writes, "It was a marvelous thing to behold such a proud woman. She was never seen to visit churches and other holy places, as her high station demanded—even if it were for the sake of a good example" (ibid., 94). In March 1544, she visited the saintly nun of Prato, Caterina de' Ricci, and was apparently impressed (P. G. de' Agresti, *Sta. Caterina de' Ricci*, Florence, 1964, i, 70).

28. Pope-Hennessy, 354 and 455–56, pl. 52, fig. 64.

29. Rahner, 94. Pedro da Toledo attempted to extend the arm of the Inquisition to Naples, and populated his household with priests and monks who were often informants against heretics as well as spiritual advisers. B. Nicolini, "La biblioteca di Don Pietro da Toledo," in *Ideali e passioni nell'Italia religiosa del cinquecento*, Bologna, 1962, 131 and 138–39.

Eleonora followed her father's Jesuit sympathies and corresponded with no less than Ignatius Loyola. Her letters to the founder of the Society of Jesus concerned such topics as requests for Jesuit representatives in Florence, spiritual questions, and particularly the founding of a Jesuit college in Florence to be supported by ducal funds.³⁰ Ignatius, believing Eleonora could be of assistance in the establishment of a Society foothold in Tuscany, sent his illustrious assistant, Diego Lainez, to the Florentine court in July 1547.³¹ Lainez was a Spanish priest who had been close to Ignatius from the earliest days of the Jesuits and who was to become the second general of the Society of Jesus.

The Jesuits' primary objective in their relations with Florence always remained the secure establishment of the college. But Eleonora viewed the situation quite differently. In her opinion, the members of the Society in Florence were to answer first to her own private spiritual needs and those of her daughters. In 1555, the duchess defied not only Ignatius but even the pope in an attempt to detain Lainez from his mission to the Imperial Diet at Augsburg.³²

Cosimo's good opinion was not so easily won. When the duke himself was informed of the Jesuits' projected college, he responded warily. Cosimo remarked: "These novelties always prove dangerous," for they "alienate wives from their husbands."³³ Finally, early in 1552, the Jesuits could announce that the college was to be a reality, though it soon became evident that the institution was to be a modest one. Ignatius wrote boldly to Eleonora that the newly founded college was hardly worthy of such powerful princes—an obvious hint that her generosity was less than adequate. Cosimo simply replied that the Jesuits already had enough money.³⁴

The Jesuits' continued presence near Eleonora during the later 1540s and early half of the 1550s—years in which Bronzino was still employed on the

30. Rahner, 106. Eleonora willed the college 200 scudi, a bequest that made her a part-foundress. For a fairly detailed account of Ignatius's correspondence with Eleonora, see the last chapter in Rahner, part 1.

31. In 1546, Loyola sent a young secretary, the only recently ordained Juan de Polanco, to test the court's receptivity. Polanco, in his eagerness, apparently failed to respect Eleonora's love for finery, and insisted, in the name of religious piety, on a more modest style of living at the ducal court. The suggestion was not received warmly by the duchess. In the spring of 1547, Ignatius wrote from Rome reprimanding Polanco on his lack of tact: "... now, with your efforts to reform the duke and duchess all at once, you see to what a pass matters have come." Polanco was withdrawn from Florence (Rahner, 114). In 1547, Ignatius sent the more discreet Lainez (*ibid.*, 95).

32. *Ibid.*, 100–103.

33. *Ibid.*, 35.

34. *Ibid.*, 96.

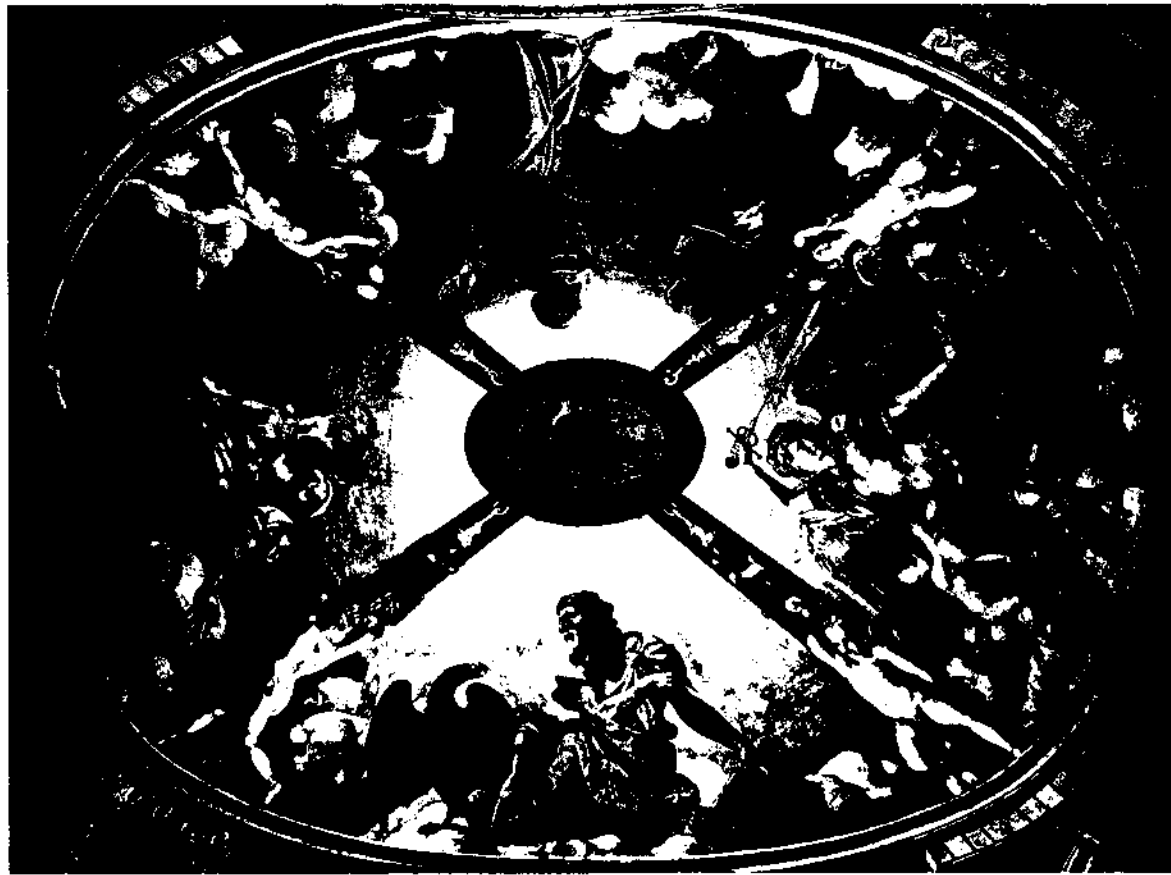


Fig. 10 Bronzino, *Four Saints and Trinity*, vault fresco of the Chapel of Eleonora da Toledo. Palazzo Vecchio, Florence (photo: Studio Fotografico Quattrone, Florence)

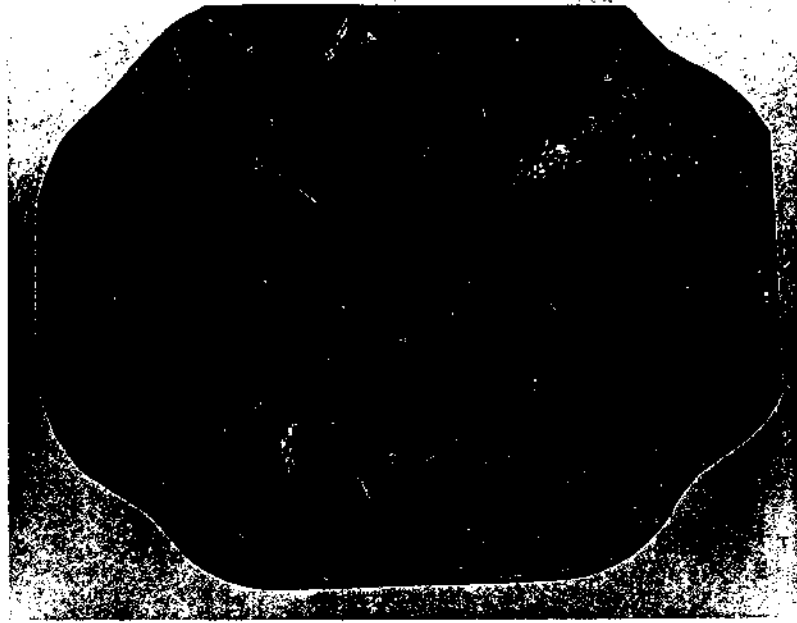


Fig. 11 Bronzino, *Four Saints and Medici/da Toledo Coat-of-Arms*, drawing for the vault fresco of the Chapel of Eleonora da Toledo. Städtischen Kunstinstitut, Frankfurt

chapel—had its impact in molding the religious content of the decorations into its final form.

At the most commanding point of the chapel, the center of the vault (Fig. 10), a change takes place that is symptomatic of the new devotional feeling in the chapel. The *modello* for the ceiling, now in Frankfurt (Fig. 11), depicts the Medici/Toledo arms uniting the sections of the vault at the center between the four saints, and examination of the fresco has shown that originally the joining of the two family emblems indeed once surmounted the chapel. But at some point in the later phase of the decoration, the coat-of-arms was replaced with the image of the tricephalic Trinity, surrounded

by a floral wreath, which still appears at the center of the vault. What might have inspired this change in imagery, emblematic of a shift from Cosimo's overarching dynastic ambitions to reverence for the mystic unity of God in three persons?³⁵

The Trinity was important as a common object of devotion in Ignatius's writings, both in his account of personal trinitarian experience and in the

35. The arms still visible beneath the Trinity are more complex than those of the Frankfurt drawing: Cox-Rearick surmises that this intermediary image probably resembled the arms with eagle and crown in the center of the vault of the duchess's nearby Camera Verde, which was painted by Rhdolfo Ghirlandajo in 1542 (1971, 13 n. 33). Smyth placed the *Trinity* in the mid-1540s or early 1550s (1971, 54 n. 23), while Cox-Rearick first dated it to the early 1560s (1971, 12–13). Allegri and Cecci (28) postulate that the change occurred around February 1564 (Florentine dating) because of the payment "per spese fatte el Bronzino pittore nel rassettare la cappella ch'è nella Camera Verde, in diverse spese." Cox-Rearick, who publishes this document and corrects the date—1565—has recently dated the execution of the *Trinity* to that year, when the chapel was being "tidied up" for the marriage of Francesco in December (1993, 88; doc. 27). Her argument is attractive, particularly as the 1565 restoration might have been a moment in which the coat-of-arms of the mother of the groom may have been deemed no longer appropriate. Documents, however, do not help us much with this troublesome but crucial image, since it could be neatly and inexpensively rendered by an assistant in a negligible amount of time. As with Bronzino's letter of 1564, the 1565 payment is suggestive but not specific enough to indicate exactly which part of the decoration was involved; because of the near state of completion of the chapel from the mid-1550s, it may still be conjectured that the imagery had been planned, if not executed, before Eleonora's death. Two factors argue for a return to an earlier dating. First, the painting, so emblematic as to be difficult to judge on a stylistic basis, is not dissimilar in function and symbolic level to the sudarium over Salviati's tapestry of the *Lamentation* (1545–46), which may have been the focal point of the devotion from the removal of the original *Lamentation* panel in 1545 to 1553, as Cox-Rearick has herself convincingly suggested. Although the iconography is different, the reduction of a potent Christian concept to an iconic human countenance that exists on a spatially anomalous plane, and yet dominates the main figurative composition, has a precedent in the tapestry, where the face of Christ is flanked instead by the combined arms of the Medici/Toledo houses—a possible intermediary stage in Eleonora's fluctuating program. Second, the condemnation of such eccentric religious imagery took place already at the last session of the Council of Trent in December 1563 (P. Barocchi, *Trattati d'arte del cinquecento*, Bari, 1961, II, 521 n. 2), and in 1564 Giovanni Andrea Gilio, in his *Degli errori de' Pittori circa l'istorie*, is already specific concerning the heterodoxy of the tricephalic representation of the Trinity: in Gilio's dialogue, Vincenzo corrects Troilo, saying, "Piumi pare eretico dipingere la Trinità con tre teste in un sol busto, come in molti luoghi se vede . . . perché, so ben l'essenza è sola, le persone sono distinte, e questo, oltre che io stimo eretico, lo fo anco mostruoso" (ibid., II, 36). The depiction of the Trinity as three unified faces was already condemned in the fifteenth century by Antoninus, the bishop of Florence (C. Gilbert, "The Archbishop on the Painters of Florence," *Art Bulletin* xli [1959]: 76), and might thus be seen as specifically non-Florentine. The inclusion of this iconography in the chapel therefore must belong to a particular moment before the attentive restrictions of the Counter-Reformation, and it helps date the change, also to a period before the mid-1560s. The special emphasis on the Trinity promised by the Jesuits, Eleonora's spiritual advisers, seems to beg a connection or at least counterexplanation. Even if the image is posthumous, it is also possible that the transformation of the outmoded heraldic image could have incorporated an icon dear to Eleonora's beliefs, and recognizable as such to her son, embarking on his own dynastic adventure together with his new wife.

Spiritual Exercises.³⁶ The first contemplation of the instructions for the second week of exercises on the Incarnation calls upon the participant to recall "how the three Divine Persons should become man to save the human race."³⁷ The new emblem thus relates more closely to the redemptive theme of the *Lamentation*, as well as subtly adjusting the meaning of the Moses cycle below. No longer seen accompanied by the family arms and Florentine and personal saint of Cosimo, but in a more overtly christological context, the salvational aspects of the Old Testament scenes also become more religiously resonant.

The Trinity that looks, in Ignatius's words, "down upon the whole expanse and circuit" of the world is the focus of contemplation in the chapter of the *Spiritual Exercises* devoted to the Incarnation.³⁸ The First Prelude, invoking the worshiper's meditation on the three Divine Persons, continues: "So when the fullness of time had come, they sent the Angel Gabriel to Our Lady." The First Point of the same chapter reiterates this connection, for the participant must "see," in Ignatius's words: "First, those on the face of the earth, in such great diversity of dress and in manner of acting. . . . Secondly, I will see and consider the three Divine Persons seated on a royal dais or throne. . . . Thirdly, I will see our Lady and the angel saluting her. I will reflect upon this to draw profit from what I see."³⁹ The replacement of the patron saints with the *Annunciation* (Figs. 6, 8, and 9) forms a program consistent with this passage of Ignatius's thought. The images of the Trinity and the Incarnation would naturally be linked in the mind of anyone familiar with Ignatius's devotional prescriptions, not to mention a worshiper who corresponded with Loyola himself and who spoke, perhaps daily, with the second general of the Society.

The last decorative feature to form a part of the modified program consists of the *sopraporta* of putti who draw aside a curtain to reveal a draped globe surmounted by a wafer and chalice (Fig. 5). The reference to the bread and wine of communion, and thus to the redemptive subject of the chapel expressed especially in the altarpiece, is more obviously stated,

36. In the "autobiography" of Ignatius, written by Father Luis Gonçalves da Câmara in Rome during the last years of the saint's life, "five points" on messages of special calling are listed. The first relates Loyola's constant devotion to the Trinity, which finally culminated in the form of a vision. "As a result the impression of experiencing great devotion while praying to the Most Holy Trinity has remained with him throughout his life"; see J. O'Callaghan, trans., and J. C. Olin, ed., *The Autobiography of St. Ignatius Loyola*, New York, 1974, 37–38.

37. L. J. Puhl, ed., *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, Chicago, 1968, 49.

38. *Ibid.*, 49.

39. *Ibid.*, 49–50.

while reemphasizing the Christian as opposed to Medicean implications of the *Miraculous Spring* and *Gathering of Manna* on the walls to either side. This last small passage of fresco completes the Incarnation theme and becomes a reminder of the universal importance of Christ's flesh and blood and its place in the Catholic ritual. The Counter-Reformation import of this later fresco is unmistakable, for the cloth is pulled from the globe to expose southern Europe, leaving the Protestant north cloaked in darkness. The global dominance of the eucharistic emblem reflects, too, the zeal for universal faith that was to distinguish the Jesuits in the history of Catholicism. While Smyth and Cox-Rearick had originally included this fresco segment in the changes made in the 1560s, it has more recently been suggested that it is part of a later intervention,⁴⁰ however, the iconographical consistency of this image with the other changes under Bronzino, as well as the closeness of one of the putti to a similar figure in Bronzino's work of c. 1555, allows for the possibility that the painting was planned much earlier.⁴¹ As a late addition to the fresco cycle, this painting completes the evolution of the program toward an increasingly Christian message, for here the objects of the Mass surmount the world.

Confined by her Spanish upbringing, the restrictions of Renaissance society, and even by the prominence of her position as Duchess of Florence, Eleonora found in religion one of the few acceptable feminine outlets of personal expression. It was reported to Ignatius Loyola in Rome that she had impulsively exclaimed: "I would give 20,000 ducats to become a Jesuit

40. Smyth, 1971, 54 n. 23, dated the *sopraporta* to 1564, noting the inconsistency of style. Allegri and Cecchi (24 and 28, with an incorrect date of 1581) first placed the painting to the later date, attributing it to Allori, and Cox-Rearick (1993, 90, 367 n. 54, and doc. 29) supports this conclusion (correcting the date of the document to 1582). The *Putti with Chalice and Host* are much less sensitively drawn and colored than the rest of the frescoes, and were certainly done at a later period, indeed perhaps by Allori. Just how much later this portion was done is problematic. Cox-Rearick, following the evidence of Allegri and Cecchi's document, believes that the *sopraporta* was executed after a door was cut into the wall to provide access to the newly decorated terrace. The payment refers only to the purchase of new brass doorknobs, which does not in itself necessarily indicate the date or extent of the modification. Cox-Rearick also contends that the flanking scenes of *The Miraculous Spring* and *The Fall of Manna* (completed in May 1543; 62) were "drastically modified" (130–32) in 1582, and that the door replaced approximately ten giornate of fresco (67, 130–32). The two compositions, however, seem to me perfectly adapted to the present surface, door included, and the preparatory drawings (in the Biblioteca Ambrosiana, Milan, *ibid.*, fig. 90, and in the Uffizi, fig. 84) also substantiate the probability that the Moses frescoes of the north wall as well today essentially reflect Bronzino's original design.

41. The figure to the right exhibits a pose resembling that of the Eros of Bronzino's *Venus, Cupid, and a Satyr* in the Galleria Colonna, Rome, which is dated to about 1555.

myself, if I were a man!"⁴² As a woman, and as duchess, she asserted her limited power by transforming her chapel from Medicean panegyric to an image of Counter-Reformatory piety.

The study presented above was formulated before the appearance of Janet Cox-Rearick's authoritative 1993 volume on the chapel. Some points have been updated in light of her discoveries, especially documentary, and some arguments presented in the footnotes that question or at least suggest further consideration of her conclusions, particularly concerning the chronology of changes made in the chapel. In a few cases, her publication of the archival background has made my interpretations, formed without knowledge of the new material, problematic; the eucharistic *sopraporta*, for example, may well fall after Eleonora's direct sponsorship. I still believe, following Vasari, that the duchess ordered and was responsible for the content of the *Annunciation* panels, and that the *Trinity* in the vault should not be dismissed from Eleonora's activity. Cox-Rearick has drawn attention to two additional works of art, which enrich but also complicate the history of the chapel: the tapestry *design* of the *Lamentation*, by Salviati, and a fascinating drawing in a private collection in Amherst, attributed to Bandinelli and presented by Cox-Rearick as an early idea possibly related in some way to the duchess's altarpiece. Her discovery of the connection between these works and the chapel should stimulate new controversy on the duchess's role in the culture of the Medici court, since both constitute evidence for an even earlier participation in the chapel program than my essay has suggested. (It is difficult to believe that an artist could portray the duchess, as in the c. 1540 drawing, with disheveled hair and in a pose of open spiritual ecstasy, so at variance with the extreme composure of her official image in Bronzino's portraits, without her own consent.) In confronting afresh the problem of Eleonora's contribution to the program of her own chapel, I feel that future studies may even reveal her influence to have been earlier and more vigorous than previous scholars, myself included, have assumed. Indeed, Bruce Edelstein, in his review of Cox-Rearick's book, has challenged the author for her tendency to override Eleonora's influence with Cosimo's, and argues strenuously for a reinvestigation of the duchess as patron.⁴³

42. Rahner, 106. This outcry was Eleonora's statement of admiration for the religious zeal of Cristóbal Truxillo, a court favorite who, under the duchess's encouragement, became an eager member of the Society of Jesus.

43. Bruce Edelstein, "Janet Cox-Rearick, *Bronzino's Chapel of Eleonora in the Palazzo Vecchio*," *California Studies in the History of Art*, xxix, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1993, as reviewed in

Eleonora's chapel cannot be understood without further consideration of her own religious beliefs and contacts; this essay is intended to initiate further discussion of this aspect of Florentine cultural history. The particularly isolated situation of the chapel, deep within Eleonora's private sanctum, and the fact that in 1549 even the ever-serviceable Riccio had to write her at Poggio a Caiano for the chapel keys⁴⁴ suggest the chapel was not a court showpiece where Cosimo could broadcast his dynastic and political ambitions but was exclusively Eleonora's personal domain. The documentation of liturgical objects and decorations, including a rather elaborate pax, stored in the *guardaroba* for Eleonora's use in the chapel, also speaks for her interest in decorating and outfitting the chapel for private worship.⁴⁵ Eleonora also begins to emerge even by Cox-Rearick's account as a political presence surprisingly early in her marriage. In 1541 and 1543, she is entrusted as acting regent in Cosimo's absence.⁴⁶ Finally, and most important, the paintings themselves warrant reexamination for evidence of the duchess's own interests. Bronzino's Moses cycle has a decidedly "feminine" aspect, for the unusual number of female figures and the earnestness with which these female characters participate in the sacred drama. Not only is the exclamatory figure in the *Lamentation* a mirror for the duchess's piety, but many of the female figures take a prominent part in the Moses narratives. Cox-Rearick's analysis of the *Moses Appointing Joshua* identifies the pregnant woman on the right as a type for Eleonora, within a painting that celebrates the birth of Francesco and the continuation of Medici rule.⁴⁷ Surely such an event was as important for the mother as for the father. Many of Bronzino's women in the chapel narratives are mothers, whose spiritual caretaking is illustrated, for instance, in the two women in *The Miraculous Spring*; in concert with a figural diagonal that parallels the angle of Moses' rod, one mother holds a bowl of the miraculous water to an infant who greedily drinks, while the second balances a roaring, still-thirsty baby on her shoulder and leans to dip her bowl from the spring. The men may clumsily thrust their faces to the water with no thought other than

Art Bulletin, lxxvi, 171-74; especially 173-75. For example, Edelstein draws attention to Vasari's statement in the 1550 edition of the *Lives* that the chapel was created "per la illustrissima signora duchessa" despite the biographer's usual courtly tendency to flatter his patron, Cosimo, and that acknowledgment of Eleonora's artistic activity recedes in the second edition, published after her death (173 and n. 12).

44. Cox-Rearick, 1993, 80.

45. *Ibid.*, 72 and 81.

46. *Ibid.*, 34-35.

47. *Ibid.*, 310-19.

their own satisfaction and salvation, in contrast with the women's more complex responsibilities.

Whose chapel was it? Cosimo's deliberate self-assertion of Medici power by means of Old Testament imagery surely formed aspects of the program, but the complexity of the iconography and visual elegance of the paintings may in time reveal the growing influence of his wife. Cox-Rearick discusses which academicians of the court may have advised Bronzino—Giambullari and Gelli being the most likely candidates—but the question remains, To whom did they respond? If Bandinelli, at first patronized by Cosimo, grew to depend particularly on Eleonora's sponsorship, the advisers for the chapel program could have likewise been increasingly subject to the will of the duchess. In conclusion, an appraisal of Eleonora as patron still remains to be written.

Sheila ffolliott

THE IDEAL QUEENLY PATRON OF THE RENAISSANCE

Catherine de' Medici Defining
Herself or Defined by Others?

Like the late twentieth century, the Renaissance produced a number of "how-to" books, many of which, like Machiavelli's *Prince* or Castiglione's *Courtier*, articulated or advocated ideal behaviors. In 1586, Nicolas Houel, the Parisian apothecary who, in 1562, had presented then queen-regent Catherine de' Medici with an illustrated "how-to" manuscript modeled on the ancient queen Artemisia, dedicated another book to the queen mother.¹ This time it was a published work: *History of the Devotion, Piety, and Charity of the Illustrious Queens of France, together with the Churches, Monasteries, Hospitals, and Colleges that they have founded and built in diverse parts of the kingdom: By means of which foundations God has given them fruitful and happy issue* (that is, children, specifically male).² Although art patronage had a place in Houel's earlier idealization of queenly life, his later book represents, significantly, the first attempt to chronicle over time the patronage activity of a group of women as a class—in this case

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1. See S. ffolliott, "Catherine de' Medici as Artemisia: Figuring the Powerful Widow," in *Rewriting the Renaissance: The Discoveries of Sexual Difference in Early Modern Europe*, ed. M. Ferguson, M. Quilligan, and N. Vickers, Chicago, 1986, 227-41.

2. *Les Mémoires et Recherches de la dévotion, piété, et charité des illustres Roynes de France*, . . . Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, rare book room; the translations are mine.