The Unseeing Masks: The Meaning of the Two Masks in Michelangelo Buonarroti's Venus and Cupid of 1532-1534

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The Unseeing Masks: The Meaning of the Two Masks in Michelangelo Buonarroti's *Venus and Cupid* of 1532-1534

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Abstract

It is hard to ignore the satyr-like mask that ogles Venus and her son in Jacopo da Pontormo's *Venus and Cupid* (1532-34) (Fig. 1), a painting based on a lost cartoon by Michelangelo (Fig. 2). Partly obscured by this mask, a more impassive mask faces the opposing direction, as if deliberately to evade the erotic interaction between the incestuous couple. Michelangelo was the first to introduce the motif of masks accompanying the goddess of love and her son, a motif that was soon replicated and elaborated upon by a number of sixteenth century artists. The masks themselves have received little attention in scholarly literature; they have typically been dismissed as symbols of love's deceit. An explanation of how Michelangelo's use of two masks accompanying Venus and Cupid was meant to be interpreted by the painting's contemporary Florentine audience will argue for a more complex reading, and will question whether the masks were simply symbols of a single idea.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my fellow classmates: Antonina Crabtree, Courtney Christ, Elizabeth Asenas, Maria Vittoria Di Sabatino and Nathaniel Sloan. Thank you for making this an unforgettable year.

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1. Introduction

Using a now lost cartoon by Michelangelo, in 1532-34 Pontormo executed a large-scale oil painting entitled *Venus and Cupid* (Fig. 1). The painting will be treated as a surrogate for Michelangelo's lost cartoon, and will be analysed in the present context as Michelangelo's original design and conception. The painting is composed of a reclining nude Venus crowned with a modest headband set against a billowing piece of blue drapery which is, in turn, set against a barren landscape. She toys with Cupid's arrow jutting out from his quiver. Cupid himself inelegantly straddles Venus' body, as he strives to kiss her on the lips.

It is difficult to disagree with Jonathan Katz Nelson's statement that Pontormo's painting possesses "an unsettling iconographic density," especially notable in the host of objects to the left of the painting, to which Venus subtly points with her right index finger.[1] These include a vase with red roses, Cupid's bow and spare arrows, a reclined corpse housed in an open altar-like structure surmounted by a draped cloak,[2] and two lifelike masks with, paradoxically, empty lifeless eye sockets (Fig. 3). One mask faces Venus with a lascivious smile (Fig. 4). The second mask, that faces the opposing direction, features smooth skin, and a markedly vacant expression (Fig. 4). As Nelson argues, these objects undoubtedly relate to the theme of love, yet the "precise allegorical message" is expressed in a "cryptic language," indeed.[3] This thesis will attempt to

[1] Nelson, Jonathan Katz, "The Florentine *Venus and Cupid*: a Heroic Female Nude and the Power of Love," in *Venus and Love: Michelangelo and the new ideal of beauty*, Exhibition Catalogue, ed. Franca Falletti, Jonathan Katz Nelson, Galleria Dell'Accademia (Firenze: Giunti, 2002), 29.
[2] The pallid grey of the reclined body's skin hue suggests it is a corpse.
[3] Nelson, 29.

decipher the reasons behind the presence of the masks, as well as their individual and collective meanings, renditions, placements and sightlines.

As an allegorical motif, the mask has held innumerable meanings over the centuries. Moshe Barasch and Eckhard Leuschner have both published studies which provide detailed overviews of the changing significations of the mask.[4] As Leuschner indicates, the earliest conception of the mask is found in Classical Antiquity when it was used as an attribute of the muse *Thalia* who governed comedy and poetry; a notion which continued during the Renaissance.[5] The use of masks in ancient Greek and Roman theatre also led to the development of specific mask typologies, each with different appearances and expressions that were readable as character "types."[6] Barasch has also explored how masks functioned outside of Ancient theatrical performances: they were used in festivals of Dionysos (Bacchus) as a symbol of the God;[7] and they were depicted in funerary art, where they possessed symbolic and religious importance.[8] Barasch then explores the drastic change that occurred in the Middle Ages when masks became symbols of vice, evil and deceit, a notion partly influenced by the hostility of the

[4] Barasch, Moshe, "Masks in Renaissance Art," in *Scripta Hierosolymitana. Volume XIX: Studies In The Drama*, ed. Arieh Sachs, (The Hebrew University, Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1967); Barasch, Moshe, "The Mask in European Art. Meanings and Functions," in *Art the Ape of Nature: Studies in Honor of H. W. Janson*, ed. Moshe Barasch, Lucy Freeman Sandler, and Patricia Egan, (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1981), 263; Leuschner, Eckhard. *Persona, Larva, Maske: Ikonologische Studien zum 16.* (Kunstgeschichte: Frankfurt am Main, 1997); Leuschner, Eckhard. "Women and Masks: The Economics of Painting and Meaning in the 'Mezza Figura' Allegories by Lippi, Dandini and Martinelli." *Firenze Milleseicentoquaranta*, (2010): 311-323.

[5] Leuschner, "Women and Masks," 314.

[6] Barasch, "Masks in Renaissance Art," 78.

[7] Ibid, 79. In the Renaissance, this ancient tradition was certainly known, as a handful of artists including Giovanni Antonio Dosio and Giovanni Maria Falconetto made drawings and sketches of a Roman copy of the Greek neo-Attic relief or painting of c.100 BC entitled *Bacchus visiting the poet Icarius ('Triclinium').* [See Bober, Phyllis Pray, Ruth Rubinstein, and Susan Woodford, *Renaissance Artists & Antique Sculpture: A Handbook of Sources*, Second Edition, Revised and Updated ed. (London: Harvey Miller, 2010), pages 134-136] In their renderings, based on the antique prototype, satyr-like masks lay concealed under the bed of Icarius, thus alluding to the arrival of Bacchus and his entourage of drunken satyrs and Silenus. The masks are rendered most clearly and detailed by Falconetto. These Renaissance drawings undoubtedly merit more study, as they indicate that ancient conceptions of masks were revived during the Renaissance.

[8] Ibid.

church towards masks as objects of deception.[9] The concept lingered in the sixteenth century spectacles in which masks of young men often appeared in performances concerning love and trickery, but the notion of love's deceit and deception was typically presented in a light-hearted manner.[10] Cesare Ripa's late sixteenth century *Iconologia*[11] contains more than twenty different entries in which the mask is used in an allegorical manner.[12] He portrays how masks were employed as personifications of Fraud, Deceit and Death as well as more positive notions, such as Imitation and Painting.[13] The plethora of meanings attributed to the mask as a motif renders it difficult to assign it a singular raison d'être in Pontormo's *Venus and Cupid*. Embarking upon this task necessitates an analysis of the context surrounding the production of the painting.

The *Venus and Cupid* was commissioned by the Florentine merchant banker Bartolomeo Bettini to be designed by Michelangelo, and painted by Pontormo. It was intended to hang as decoration for a chamber in Bettini's Florentine town house.[14] Bettini was an erudite intellectual, intimately connected with many humanists who engaged extensively in poetic discourse.[15] He befriended Benedetto Varchi, one of the leading academicians at the Medici Court; he also maintained contact with Michelangelo, Pontormo, and Bronzino, all three of whom "contributed letters to Varchi's [famous] debate on the paragone" between the arts,[16] as well as the poetic notion of "love as an inspirational force."[17] In line with this poetic ambiance, Bettini intended for the *Venus and Cupid* to be placed alongside and accompanied by portraits of Tuscan poets "who

[9] Barasch, "Masks in Renaissance Art," 80.
[10] Nelson, 49-50.
[11] The first edition of Ripa's *Iconologia* was published in 1593.
[12] Leuschner, "Women and Masks," 312.
[13] Ripa, Cesare, and Edward Andrew Maser, *Baroque and Rococo Pictorial Imagery: The 1758-60 Hertel Edition of Ripa's 'Iconologia,'* (New York: Dover Publications, 1971), 67-197.
[14] Aste, Richard, "Bartolomeo Bettini and his Florentine 'chamber' Decoration," in *Venus and Love: Michelangelo and the new ideal of beauty*, 3.
[15] Ibid, 14.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Nelson, 42.

sang of love," including Francesco Petrarca, Dante Alighieri and Giovanni Boccaccio; these were commissioned to be painted by Bronzino.[18] In light of this fact, it seems likely that Pontormo's painting was meant to complement and perhaps even visually encapsulate some of these writers' poetic ideas; a topic this thesis will address in due course.

Literature Review

Although extant art historical scholarship has failed to adequately examine the motif of the two masks as they appear alongside Venus and Cupid, several scholars have attempted to explore the significance of painted and sculpted masks that appear in different contexts in the Renaissance. Barasch has examined the representations of painted masks in Renaissance European art by looking to the mask's history, uses and meanings in both antiquity and the Middle Ages, the two trends which inspired Renaissance representations of masks.[19] Barasch identifies what he believes to be the three main iconographic significances of the artistic mask in the Renaissance; the mask "as a symbol of deceit,"[20] "the mask as a symbol of antiquity" in mythological and historical scenes,[21] and the mask "as a physiognomic symbol."[22] As Barasch himself points out, his study is by no means exhaustive, but rather provides a brief overview of some of the mask's "iconographic and expressive context[s]" in the Renaissance.[23] Nevertheless, he does provide some elucidating points of information. Firstly, he highlights that the use of the mask in the Renaissance often exhibited an amalgamation of its meanings in antiquity and the

[18] Nelson, 29.
[19] Barasch, "Masks in Renaissance art," 81.
[20] Ibid, 82-83.
[21] Ibid, 83- 85.
[22] Ibid, 85-87.
[23] Ibid, 76.

Middle Ages, thus resulting in a novel use of the motif.[24] Moreover, he highlights the fluid signification that the mask adopted in the Renaissance and how it became a medium of expression for a large variety of meanings,[25] and that rather than observing them only as objects symbolising deceit, one should also consider their ability to reveal and expose a series of ideas.[26]

More recently, Leuschner has provided similar general overviews of the meaning of masks over the years. In his book entitled *Persona, Larva, Maske*,[27] Leuschner's guiding question is how artists have deliberately portrayed masks in paintings, sculpture and graphics in order to express particular concepts or ideas that would have been understood by contemporary viewers. Like Barasch, he analyses the reinterpretation of the mask as an ancient motif by Renaissance artists, and examines the variety of meanings assigned to the mask which vary depending on context.

As regards the Michelangelo-Pontormo *Venus and Cupid*, only a handful of art historians (Charles De Tolnay,[28] John T. Paoletti,[29] Nelson,[30] Leuschner[31]) ruminate (and briefly at that) on the meaning of the masks. The majority of art historians have tended to analyse other aspects of the painting, and have (unintentionally or perhaps knowingly) overlooked the masks. For example, Richard Aste executes a social contextual study on Pontormo's painting, analysing its commission as well as the circle of individuals that were involved in its creation.[32] He does not address the masks. Aste also adopts a socio-political reading; he argues that Bettini

[24] Barasch, "The Mask in European Art," 263.
[25] Barasch, "Masks in Renaissance art," 83.
[26] Barasch, "The Mask in European Art," 255.
[27] Leuschner, *Persona, Larva, Maske*.
[28] De Tolnay, Charles, *Michelangelo*. Vol. III, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1948), 108.
[29] Paoletti, John T., "Michelangelo's Masks," *The Art Bulletin* 74, no. 3 (1992): 438.
[30] Nelson, 49-56.
[31] Leuschner, *Persona, Larva, Maske*, 175-180.
[32] Aste, Richard, "A Merchant-Banker's Ascent by Design: Bartolomeo Bettini's Cycle of Paintings by Michelangelo, Pontormo, and Bronzino for His Florentine Camera," (PhD diss., City University of New York, 2015), 1-245.

commissioned paintings from Michelangelo, Pontormo and Bronzino (the leading painters of Florence) for his *camera* as a way to socially advance his standing in the unstable climate of new Medici rule after the collapse of the Republic.[33]

Bronzino's painted masks, which are wholly inspired by those of his predecessor Michelangelo, are the only other masks painted by a Florentine Cinquecento artist which have been briefly explored in extant literature. In the case of Bronzino's *Allegory of Love* of 1540-1550 (Fig. 5), the masks in the bottom right hand corner have traditionally been interpreted as representing deceit and the misleading nature of love. Robert Gaston argues that the painting is about the deceit and dangers of love; although he does not address the iconography of the masks directly, his reading of the painting includes them.[34] Charles Hope on the other hand has argued that they symbolise Vices related to Amore, such as *Luxuria*.[35] A different strand of interpretation has read the masks in light of the distressed figure to the left of Cupid howling and tearing at his hair; due to his emaciated appearance, J. F. Conway has argued he is meant to represent a victim of syphilis.[36] Carol Plazzotta and Larry Keith have conducted a study on the *pentimenti* of the painting in order to trace Bronzino's process of execution in an attempt to learn more of the painting.[37] They discovered that the masks were originally placed on the opposing side of the painting, near the doves, before being transferred to the right, leading them to believe that the masks should be read in light of the syphilis victim.[38] Aste highlights that, in the

[33] Aste, "A Merchant-Banker's Ascent by Design," 4.
[34] Gaston, Robert W., "Love's Sweet Poison: A New Reading of Bronzino's London 'Allegory'," *I Tatti Studies in the Italian Renaissance* 4 (1991): 274.
[35] Hope, Charles, "Bronzino's Allegory in the National Gallery," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 45 (1982): 243.
[36] Conway, J. F., "Syphilis and Bronzino's London Allegory," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 49 (1986): 250.
[37] Plazzotta, Carol, and Larry Keith, "Bronzino's 'Allegory': New Evidence of the Artist's Revisions," *The Burlington Magazine* 141, no. 1151 (1999): 89-99.
[38] Ibid, 96.

Renaissance, Venus was relegated in visual culture as "the cause of syphilis."[39] Moreover, the disease's unappealing symptoms, including skin discolouration, lesions and loss of hair, led to the use of wigs and masks.[40] As Margaret Healy has pointed out, "masks had a special place from the mid-sixteenth century in the disguising of the facial disfigurement caused by Syphilis and its treatments."[41]

However, the venereal disease readings fail to take into account the extravagantly lifelike rendering of the masks: rather than representing actual masks that were meant to be worn, these masks served to convey abstract meanings relating to the nature of looking. In fact, it is safe to say that the motif of the two masks accompanying Venus and Cupid in Pontormo's painting has not been adequately studied. In particular, the satyr-like features of the mask to the viewer's right have been overlooked as an important, deliberate rendition. Moreover, the distinct placement and calculated sightlines of the two masks certainly require further investigation. This study will aim to remedy these gaps and so too to provide further insights into a distinct and unique representation, as it is the very first instance in which two painted masks are depicted alongside the goddess of love and her son in western art. As Barasch rightly points out, although Michelangelo's masks in Pontormo's *Venus and Cupid* are indebted to the notion of antique theatrical masks, they have also morphed into a sophisticated and novel motif particular to the Renaissance, a motif that was undoubtedly understood and discussed by the painting's audience.[42]

[39] Aste, "A Merchant's Ascent by Design," 160. As Aste explains, syphilis came to Italy in 1494 by way of King Charles VIII of France and his invading armies.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Healy, Margaret, "Bronzino's London 'Allegory' and the Art of Syphilis," *Oxford Art Journal* 20, no. 1 (1997): 9.
[42] Barasch, "The Mask in European Art," 263.

Methodology

This thesis will adopt an inter-disciplinary approach consisting of contextual, iconographical and literary methodology. Since Michelangelo can be considered the inventor of the motif, his painting, executed by Pontormo, will provide the focus of this study. The thesis will begin by analysing the primary literary sources concerning masks that likely influenced Michelangelo. Subsequently, it will strive to analyse possible sources for each of the mask's opposing physiognomies and explore their respective significations. It will be argued that the depiction of two masks was meant to offer multiple contributions to contemporary Florentine poetic discourses on the theme of love, as well as to playfully tantalise and taunt the viewer by echoing and mocking their leering gaze and their inevitable surrender to Venus's erotic love. This thesis will also argue that the masks embodied a morbid meaning which, although not necessarily moralising, did spark conversations on the supposed inevitable consequences of love: lust and death. Furthermore it will be argued that when depicted alongside Venus and Cupid, these painted masks are not meant to be understood as literal masks, but as symbols of larger interrelated concepts; their strikingly lifelike and human appearances suggest that they are meant to be understood as embodying the gaze of the painting's viewers.

2. CHAPTER 1: The Mask or *Larva* in Michelangelo's Florence: Literary Sources

In order to show how Michelangelo's motif of two masks accompanying Venus and Cupid would have been understood by the painting's contemporary audience, this thesis will first assess the primary literary sources that suggest how masks were used, depicted and perceived in Renaissance Florence by Michelangelo and his contemporaries. Since neither Michelangelo nor his immediate successors ever provided any direct written mention of the motif, it is necessary to turn to the writings that possibly influenced Michelangelo and the painting's composition.[43] In doing so, this thesis will adopt the methodology of Gaston who, in his analysis of Bronzino's later painting, the *Allegory of Love* of 1540-1550 (Fig. 5), examines the painting's allegorical figures in light of contemporary poetry. He argues that more than simply being influenced by literary poetic sources, Bronzino's painting is, "in its representational ontology," more of a poem about the deceit and dangers of erotic love and its consequences in which Bronzino tries to surpass, in pictorial form, the expressive capacities of poetry.[44] This chapter will strive to demonstrate that Michelangelo's decision to depict two masks alongside Venus and Cupid was similarly born from his literary ambiance which invoked the notion of masks and masking to encapsulate love and the ephemeral nature of desire.

[43] Renaissance poetry is a vast field that lies beyond the confines of this paper. What I aim to do is merely elucidate some key examples that are most relevant to the imagery of masks and masking, and that can be identified as likely poetic sources for the masks in Pontormo's painting.
[44] Gaston, 249-88.

Masks of Vice and Virtue

In *Venus and Love: Michelangelo and the New Ideal of Beauty* (2002), Nelson attempts to decipher the abstruse iconography of Pontormo's painting.[45] He argues that the painting encapsulates the "elementary concept" of the Renaissance theory of love developed by Marsilio Ficino in the late Quattrocento, and advanced in the sixteenth century by Benedetto Varchi and many others.[46] In this conception, love has two natures, one earthly and "driven by the senses;" the other celestial and divine.[47] Nelson juxtaposes Venus' "noble bearing" with Cupid's "agitated twisting;" he claims that the "monumental, statuesque Venus" can be seen to embody Virtue, while the "sly, cunning" Cupid can be interpreted as embodying Vice[48] (Fig. 1).

This poetic theme is a constant in Michelangelo's own poetry. For example, in one sonnet he writes that "[un amor] tira al cielo, e l'altro in terra tira" ("One love draws toward heaven, the other draws down to earth").[49] Clearly Michelangelo was strongly aware of this poetic conceit of earthly and heavenly love. Nelson suggests that the notion of Virtue and Vice conveyed in the figures of Venus and Cupid can be transposed to the motif of the two masks which should similarly be read as allegories of Virtue and Vice.[50] This seems convincing when considering how Sebastiano del Piombo depicts masks in his *Portrait of Aretino* of c.1525 (Fig. 6) and how Giorgio Vasari employs them in his *Portrait of Lorenzo de' Medici* of 1533-1534 (Fig. 7), for the masks are meant to express a similar idea. In Sebastiano del Piombo's painting, two masks to the left of Aretino are meant to symbolise Virtue and Vice respectively, with Aretino's right hand

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[45] Nelson, 27-57.
[46] Ibid, 47.
[47] Ibid.
[48] Ibid.
[49] Buonarroti, Michelangelo, *The Poetry of Michelangelo: An Annotated Translation*, ed. and trans. James M. Saslow, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 440. Translation in text by Saslow. Unless otherwise stated, as in this case here, all translations have been made by the author.
[50] Nelson, 49. Henry Thode shares a similar view: "the two masks, symbols of the two potentialities of love – to sink to the animal level, or to rise to the ideal." (Henry Thode as quoted in De Tolnay, *Michelangelo*, Vol. III, 195)

placed strategically over the plainer mask of Virtue. However, as Matthias Winner points out, the inscription, "In Utrumque Paratus" (prepared for both), declares Aretino to be prepared and able to embody either.[51] Due to the close relationship between Michelangelo and del Piombo, it is very likely that he was familiar with del Piombo's earlier painting. In Vasari's portrait of Lorenzo, the sitter of Lorenzo is framed by masks of varying appearance. A smooth expressionless mask in the top right corner is strategically placed adjacent to Lorenzo's own head thus designating him as virtuous. It hangs from the nozzle of a silver pitcher which projects out of its left eye. The inscription on the nozzle reads "Premium Virtutis" (Virtue's reward). Vice on the other hand, is symbolised by the distressed satyr-like face depicted in the lower register, resting face-up on a pedestal. Here, we even have a direct explanation from the artist himself. In 1553, Vasari wrote a letter in which he outlines how the "maschera bruttissima" ("ugly mask") is meant to embody "il Vitio" ("vice"), whereas the "purissimo vaso" ("pure vase"), to which the beautiful mask is attached, is meant to represent Virtue.[52] These two paintings might suggest that Michelangelo's masks embodied a similar signification. In his *Venus and Cupid*, the 'ugly' satyr-like mask of Vice leers in the direction of Venus and could indicate that she is the cause of Vice and Lust. Alternatively, or perhaps simultaneously, the representation of Vice could be hinting that the viewer who observes Venus is captured by her spell and will inevitably fall prey to Vice. Michelangelo is consequently portraying a novel conception of the inevitable triumph of Vice over Virtue - and hence the triumph of sin and lust – especially since the mask of Virtue is depicted as half-obscured by the mask of Vice.

[51] Winner, Matthias, "Michelangelo's Il Sogno as an Example of an Artist's Visual Reflection in His Drawings," *Studies in the History of Art*, Washington 33 (1992): 233.
[52] Vasari, Giorgio, *Opere di Giorgio Vasari.* Volume 6. (Harvard University: S. Audin and Company, 1823), 322. "Sopra questo ho fatto una maschera bruttissima, figurata per il Vitio, la quale stando a giacere in su la fronte sarà conculcata da un purissimo vaso pien di rose et di viole, con queste parole *Virtus omnium vas*.".

However, Nelson's argument crumbles slightly when observing Michelangelo's 1533 print entitled *Il Sogno (The Dream)* (Fig. 8); a print executed contemporaneously with his *Venus and Cupid* which urges reconsideration of Nelson's argument. This print is composed of a figure slumped over a box filled with masks that very much resemble those accompanying Venus. Traditionally, these masks have been interpreted as allegories of sleep, and as attributes to *sogno (dream).*[53] The Florentine poet Angelo Poliziano for example, describes dreams as being concealed in "lor larve" ("their masks").[54] Nevertheless, as Winner points out, the protagonist of the print is awake; he gazes to the left, turning his body so as to hear the trumpet of the winged flying figure above him. Winner also analyses Michelangelo's work in light of an earlier Renaissance print executed by Bernardo Parentino entitled *An Allegory of Hercules at the Crossroads* (c.1490) (Fig. 9) – thought to have been based in turn upon the remains of an ancient stucco relief[55] – in which an old woman dangles a mask from a piece of cord in front of a distressed Hercules as a symbol of Vice.[56] As Winner outlines, this imagery descends from the medieval conception of portraying Vices at the feet of Virtues.[57] Winner argues that all the masks housed in the box in Michelangelo's *Il Sogno*, no matter their fashioned physiognomy, represent Vice; as he claims, the fact that the masks are located "in the lowest possible place,

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[53] Winner, 229.

[54] Poliziano, Angelo as quoted in De' Medici, Lorenzo, *Poesie Del Magnifico Lorenzo De' Medici, E Di Altri Suoi Amici E Contemporanei: Divise in Due Parti. 1449-1492,* (The Univeristy of California: L. Nardini and A. Dulau, 1801), 384. "Ciascun de' Sogni dentro a le lor larve." As this thesis will come to explore, the word 'larva' was used as a synonym for mask.

[55] Marcantonio Michiel claims that the ancient lost relief that inspired Parentino's print was housed in the antique Paduan collection of the Venetian humanist Niccolo' Leonico Tomeo . In contrast, Tietze-Conrat argues that the stucco relief the print was thought to be inspired by was a "Renaissance forgery," as no trace of the original stucco remains. Tietze-Conrat's argument is more convincing since, as Emanuele Cassamassina and Ruth Rubinstein argue, there is "no conclusive evidence" that Tomeo's lost relief was the one copied by Parentino. (Casamassima, Emanuele, and Ruth Rubinstein, ed., *Antiquarian Drawings from Dosio's Roman Workshop: Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale Di Firenze*, N.a. 1159: Catalogue, 1.st ed., (Florence: Giunta Regionale Toscana, 1993), 96) It is more likely that Parentino forged the inscription: "De stucho soto terra entro una volta del palace de Antoniano a Roma" in order to create a sense of antique authenticity.

[56] Winner, 230.

[57] Cox-Rearick, Janet, *Bronzino's Chapel of Eleonora in the Palazzo Vecchio*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 272.

underneath the globe and the youth, defines them as evil."[58] Winner suggests that the masks' diverging appearances (some have beards, others appear younger) (Fig. 10) give "visual form to Saint Jerome's observation that there is 'a counterfeit mask for every sin to which we are inclined.'"[59] The print's inscription thus signals its reliance on the ancient Roman sepulchral conception of the mask as "larva," a word that signified both mask, and the soul of "a dead person who has led a sinful life."[60] As Thomas Peterson points out, the word "larva" derives from "larua" which denotes a "mask or skeleton-like ghost, but also a skin or hide."[61] A quote from Varchi confirms that these multiple implications of the term *larva* were known in the Renaissance. In his *Lezione Seconda* (which discusses a sonnet by Giovanni della Casa), Varchi states that "Larve in lingua Latina significano (oltre quello, che noi diciamo maschere) l'anime dannate de' rei, che noi volgarmente chiamiamo spiriti" ("In Latin Larve signify (as well as what we call masks) the damned souls of the wicked, that we vulgarly call spirits").[62] Varchi thus affirms that the mask, the *larva*, as a symbol of the *dead damned soul*, as advanced by Winner, was indeed prevalent in the Cinquecento, and surely an idea Michelangelo knew well.

This reference to *larva* will open up new considerations. It challenges Nelson's argument as both Michelangelo's masks, regardless of their diverging appearances, can be designated as symbols of vice. Winner justifiably argues that Michelangelo was undoubtedly aware of Parentino's print; Parentino was a contemporary of Andrea Mantegna, an artist that

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[58] Winner, 230.

[59] Ibid, 233. The fact that the Lorenzo's vast collection included a painting of *St Jerome in his Study* by Jan van Eyck makes it very likely that Michelangelo would have been exposed to St Jerome's writings. (Ventrone, Paola, and Palazzo Medici Riccardi, ed., *Le Temps Revient 'l Tempo Su Rinuova: Feste E Spettacoli Nella Firenze Di Lorenzo Il Magnifico*, (Milano: Silvana Ed, 1992), 29)

[60] Ibid, 232.

[61] Petrarca, Francesco, *Petrarch's "Fragmenta": the narrative and theological unity of "Rerum vulgarium fragmenta,"* ed. Thomas Erling Peterson, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016), 82.

[62] Varchi, Benedetto, *Lezzioni di m. Benedetto Varchi accademico fiorentino, lette da lui publicamente nell'Accademia fiorentina*, (Filippo Giunti: University of Turin, 1590), 306.

Michelangelo frequently looked to.[63] Moreover, as we shall see in more detail later, Parentino's print was widely diffused and copied in the Renaissance and likely attracted Michelangelo's attention.[64] This argument becomes all the more convincing when one compares Michelangelo's foreshortened corpse-like figure housed in an altar underneath the masks (Fig. 3) to the two reclined bodies depicted under the mask in Parentino's print (Fig. 9); an intriguing similarity that this study will also explore further. Finally, while Nelson does provide a satisfactory interpretation of the two masks, the literary passages to which he refers to are not specifically about masks or masking. This thesis will aim to remedy this by consulting literary sources which directly address masks, thus providing a finer insight into the meaning of the mask, or *larva*, in Michelangelo's time.

The Mask or *Larva* as a Poetic Rhetorical Device

Michelangelo's composition, painted by Pontormo, was intended to be accompanied by painted portraits of Boccaccio, Petrarca and Dante, among others.[65] Roberto Leporatti has argued that it is therefore tempting to read Pontormo's *Venus and Cupid* in light of these poets' writings.[66] In Boccaccio's *Decameron*, masks are relegated to the trickster who adopts false personas in order to deceive his victim. As Giuseppe Mazzotta points out, Boccaccio writes that laughter "is produced by a mask behind which the tricksters try to appropriate the world … and enjoy it."[67] In his *Decameron*, Boccaccio describes one of his deceiving characters, Buffalmacco, as being "in guise che pareva pure uno orso; se non che la maschera aveva viso di diavolo ed era

[63] Winner, 230-233.
[64] Furlan, Caterina and Ludovico Rebaudo, "'Hercules Tristis Insaniae Poenitentia,' Su un Disegno all'Antica di Bernardino da Parenzo," *Annali della Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa. Classe di Lettere e Filosofia*, Serie IV, Vol. 7, No. 2 (2002): 323.
[65] Nelson, 29.
[66] Ibid.
[67] Mazzotta, Giuseppe, *The World at Play in Boccaccio's Decameron*, (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1986), 54.

cornuta" ("in a guise that resembled even a bear; except that the mask had the face of a devil and was horned").[68] In light of his writings, it seems reasonable to interpret masks as symbols of deception and trickery.

On the other hand, the mask embodies a slightly different role in the poetry of Dante and his successor Petrarca which aligns more closely with the ancient conception of the mask outlined by Winner. In his poetry, Dante refers to his love Beatrice, who provides the impetus for his long journey through hell, as "una larva immaginaria" ("an imaginary *larva*") in order to encapsulate the elusive nature of his desire.[69] In his writing, Beatrice herself never appears as a constant physical presence, but rather as a conjured shadow of love. This hints that Dante likely provided the first instance of this poetic rhetorical device in which the mask, or *larva*, represents the ephemeral nature of love and desire. As Alessandro D'Ancona states, by using masking as a rhetorical device, the reader is meant to appreciate Beatrice as a "cosa celeste … destinata solo a fuggevole apparizione sulla terra" ("a celestial thing … destined only for a fleeting appearance on earth.") [70] The notion of masking, love and desire is thus inextricably married with the notion of elusiveness and transience. Petrarca, following in the footsteps of his idol, adopts a similar technique. He uses the mask and the notion of masking as a rhetorical device when talking about his love Laura. As Unn Falkeid states, the "shiftiness of Laura", as embodied in the "many variants of her name, such as 'l'aura', 'auro', 'lauro', and 'laurea'," [71] portrays that Petrarca "encapsulates his lover as always covered under false names of which each is a mask for [his]

[68] Boccaccio, Giovanni, *Decameron di Giovanni Boccaccio*, ed. Vittore Branca, (Torino: Giulio Einaudi, 1956), 696. In Boccaccio's Decameron, Buffalmacco is a practical joker who plays tricks on his friends and acquaintances. In the above quote, he deceives a physician named Master Simone by convincing him to side with the devil.

[69] Alighieri, Dante. *Vita Nuova Di Dante Allighieri: A Corretta Lezione Ridotta Mediante Il Riscontro Di Codici Inediti E Con Illustrazioni E Note Di Diversi, Per Cura Di Alessandro Torri*, ed. Alessandro Torri, 16th ed, Volume 1 in *Delle Prose E Poesi Liriche Di Dante Allighieri*, (Livorno: P. Vannini, 1843),72.

[70] Alighieri, Dante, *La Vita Nuova Di Dante Alighieri*, ed. Alessandro D'Ancona, 2nd ed, (Pisa: Gilileo, 1884), 142.

[71] This was undoubtedly influenced by his idol Dante who similarly referred to his love Beatrice with different names, such as 'Bea' and 'Bice.' (Dante, Alighieri, and Pompeo Venturi, *La Divina Commedia*, (Parigi, 1841), see pages 15, 513, 715, for a few examples.)

restless instability of desire."[72] In his *Rime Sparse*, Petrarca writes that Laura appears to Petrarca in a deceiving guise: "tra via m'apparve / quel traditore in si mentite larve / che più saggio di me inganato avrebbe" ("on the way / I saw that traitor in such false disguises / That even men wiser than I would have been deceived").[73] The mask is thus used as a device to express the "elusive and unattainable" nature of love and longing. As Mazzotta argues, Petrarca uses the term *larva* as synonymous with the mask, thus inventing the idea of an *amorous phantasm*, or *ghostly love*, embodied by Laura whose very name recalls the word *larva*.[74]

Masking in the Golden Age of Florence

In the late fifteenth century, the meaning of the mask and the notion of masking were revived and re-invented by Lorenzo il Magnifico. The mask adopted a similar signification to Dante's and Petrarca's conception of the *amorous phantasm*, thus encapsulating the ephemerality of loving desire. In the writings of Lorenzo and his contemporaries, the word *larva* similarly signified both "mask" and "phantasm", referring to "the frightening apparitions of ghosts and the nightmare."[75] This predicates the flexible meaning assigned to the mask in the Cinquecento, since its meaning incorporates connotations of death and shadows.

Charles Dempsey explores the notion of masking in the poetry, art and festive spectacles of Cinquecento Florence.[76] He shows that Lorenzo "reshaped the traditional Florentine civic celebrations … with the invention of new forms of poetic presentation and musical

[72] Falkeid, Unn, "Style, the Muscle of the Soul. Theories on Reading and Writing in Petrarch's Texts," *Quaderni d'Italianistica*, vol. 29, issue 1 (2008): 26.
[73] Petrarca, Francesco, and Ugo Dotti, *Canzoniere*, 1.st ed., (Milano: Feltrinelli, 1992), 89.
[74] Mazzotta, 52.
[75] *The New Criterion*, Volume 1, Issues 7-10, (New York: Foundation for Cultural Review, 1982), 75.
[76] Dempsey, Charles, "Portraits and Masks in the Art of Lorenzo De' Medici, Botticelli, and Politian's Stanze Per La Giostra," *Renaissance Quarterly* 52, no. 1 (1999): 1-42.

performance."[77] By examining the format of Lorenzo's new public masquerades and the *mascherate, canti* and *canzone* that played a prominent role in the *trionfi*, Dempsey examines the prominent and very real phenomenon of masking present in the time of Lorenzo and visible in the paintings of Sandro Botticelli which are inhabited with depictions of "ephemeral costumes" and white dresses (as a means of disguise).[78] For example, the writings of Luigi Pulci (a diplomat in the Medici court), demonstrate that masks were associated with love. In *Da poi che' Lauro*, Pulci writes that in appearing in the guise of masks, his patron Lorenzo was attempting (yet failing) to deceive, much like a real lover would: "con sue certe larve / credea ad me similar non esser desso. / Ha puro amante!" ("with certain of his masks / he believed he could deceive me of his appearance. / Ah, a pure lover!")[79] Moreover, as Dempsey points out, in Pulci's *La giostra di Lorenzo de' Medici* of 1474, Pulci writes of Lorenzo appearing to his lover Lucrezia in the guise of "dissimulating masks:"[80] "molte volte al suo bel sole apparve … con mentite larve" ("many times he appeared to his beautiful sun … with deceptive masks").[81] A similar poetic conceit is present in the poetry of Lorenzo himself. His lover Lucrezia is described as being *masked* either as Diana, or as the Sun. For example, in the *Canzone* entitled *La Costante Speranza*, he writes: "Ed a me si celasse il mio bel sole!" ("And my beautiful sun was hidden from me!")[82] Similarly, in the *Stanze* of the poem *Le Selve d'Amore*, he writes: "…spiriti d'amore // Vengon per onorar il mio bel sole" ("…spirits of love // Come to honour my beautiful sun").[83] The poetic notion of love was thus encapsulated by the phenomenon of "fictional masks," as Demspey refers to

[77] Dempsey, "Portraits and Masks," 1.
[78] Ibid, 14.
[79] Luca Pulci as quoted in Dempsey, "Portraits and Masks," 7.
[80] Ibid, 8.
[81] Ibid.
[82] De' Medici, 110.
[83] Ibid, 37.

them.[84] What needs to be stressed is not the deceiving nature of these masks, but rather the fact that they are invoked specifically and solely in the context of love, and that they conjure connotations of ephemerality as well as of death, in the context of love.

In the Cinquecento, the notion of masking continued to be an alive and thriving concept. Correspondence from the c.1540s confirms their actual usage in Florentine festivals and carnivals. For example, in a letter dated to the 19th of March 1542 addressed to Cosimo I de' Medici, the sender (unknown in this case) mentions the presence of masked men ("mascarati") at a recent Carnival.[85] This verifies that masks and masking were not only a poetic rhetorical device, but also physically used and worn in Michelangelo's time.

Michelangelo's rendition of the masks in the New Sacristy of the Medici funerary chapel show that he was aware and influenced by this poetic conceit advanced by his close friend and patron Lorenzo. As well as being a poet himself, Michelangelo had been, after all, very close to Lorenzo; he lived with him in his house where he learnt to become a sculptor.[86] During 1526-31, Michelangelo executed the allegorical sculpture of *Night* which adorns Giuliano de Medici's effigy in the funerary chapel (Fig. 11). The female allegorical figure is depicted with a satyr-like mask perched in the space of her left elbow (Fig. 12). This mask has commonly been interpreted as one of Night's attributes, such as her owl.[87] Paoletti has argued that the physiognomy of the mask bears an undeniable resemblance to Michelangelo's own physiognomy and should be read as a self-portrait of the artist.[88] It is true that the mask exhibits particular facial features that correspond to portraits of Michelangelo - such as that executed by Daniele da Volterra in c.1544

[84] Dempsey, Charles, *Inventing the Renaissance Putto*, (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 212.
[85] "The Medici Archive Project," Volume 617, Folio: 163, Doc ID: 22800, last modified November 1, 2019, http://bia.medici.org/DocSources/Home.do .
[86] Dempsey, *Inventing the Renaissance Putto*, 220.
[87] Paoletti, 241.
[88] Ibid, 426.

(Fig. 13) – in particular the forked beard, and the disfigured nose. Michelangelo had his nose broken by Torrigani, resulting in a flat front with a "lateral swelling at the bridge," and this feature, which Michelangelo was sensitive about, appears perpetually in his portraits.[89] The only aspect of the sculpted mask which diverges from his appearance are the two noticeable front teeth which Paoletti convincingly interprets in light of Asciano Condivi's account of Michelangelo's first marble sculpture, namely a copy of an antique head of a faun that was housed in Lorenzo's collection.[90] Condivi recounts how Lorenzo did not approve of Michelangelo portraying the old faun with a mouth full of perfect teeth, and in response Michelangelo "removed an upper tooth."[91] Paoletti argues that this only serves to emphasise the fact that the mask should be read as a self-portrait.

Because this is a somewhat romantic reading, this thesis will rely on the work of Dempsey who delivers a more convincing argument, one grounded in historical and social contextual analysis. He reads the mask in light of Lorenzo's prominent involvement and influence in contemporary Florentine Carnivalesque festivals, as well as in view of his untimely death and the sudden disappearance of the entire Medici family line.[92] Thus Dempsey argues that Michelangelo's mask denotes the "turbulent nightmares, or ghostly cares crowding in and filling Night's troubled sleep."[93] It follows that rather than reading the mask as a self-portrait, it should be read as a personal tribute to Lorenzo, his actions and his poetry. The exaggerated front teeth should be seen as an added humorous and playful reference to the earliest work Michelangelo executed for his patron in the form of an artistic signature, thus accentuating the personal nature

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[89] Paoletti, 431.
[90] Ibid, 432.
[91] Condivi, Asciano, as quoted in Condivi, Asciano, George Bull, Peter Porter, and Michelangelo Buonarroti, *Michelangelo, Life, Letters, and Poetry*, (Oxford Oxfordshire: Oxford University Press, 1987), 12.
[92] Dempsey, *Inventing the Renaissance Putto*, 219.
[93] Ibid, 221.

of the tribute, and celebrating the close relationship between them. The homage is elaborated in the numerous grotesque masks executed by Silvio Cosini[94] that adorn the cornices of the chapel, and which stand as "phantasms of [the Medici family's] unsatiated desire"[95] (Fig. 14). De Tolnay further supports this interpretation. He states that the decorative elements of the Sacristy's architecture are derived from antique burial altars and funerary sarcophagi, and that the masks that make up the decorative frieze, their mouths wide open either in laughter or in despair, symbolize "the derision of the fear of death"[96] (Fig. 14). In other words, Michelangelo ordered the depiction of these masks as emblems of death and immortality.[97]

Considering Michelangelo's close relationship with Lorenzo, and the fact that both figures were undoubtedly aware of the writings of Petrarca and Dante (the poets who influenced the Cinquecento revival of the poetic notion of masks and masking),[98] it is feasible to argue that, in line with the Cinquecento fashion, the two masks in Michelangelo's *Venus and Cupid* are meant to act as a subtle comment on love and the ephemeral and transitory nature of desire. They are, like the roses depicted in the vase to the left of the painting, an attribute of Venus. Here, they are not meant to act as a tribute to Lorenzo. However, they do align with the way the mask was invoked and used in the Cinquecento, as analysed above. This reading is not denying the possibility of the masks acting as attributes of Virtue and Vice, or as symbols of deceit; it is

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[94] Vasari, Giorgio and Maurizio Marini, *Le Vite Dei Più Eccellenti Pittori, Scultori E Architetti*, ed. Integrale, 3. ed., (Roma: Grandi Tascabili Economici Newton, 1997), 661. "… Silvio … ha passato … alla grottesca, come si puo' vedere nella sagrestia di Michelagnolo Buonarroti in alcuni capitelli di marmot intagliati sopra i pilastri delle sepolture con alcune maschere tanto bene straforate che non e' possibile veder meglio."

[95] Dempsey, *Inventing the Renaissance Putto*, 223.

[96] De Tolnay, *Michelangelo*, Vol. III, 65.

[97] Ibid.

[98] Lorenzo was in possession of Dante's and Petrarch's writings: "Among the books was a manuscript of Petrarch's work, first the Triumphs, illustrated and illuminated … and the Songs, Sonnets, and the Vita of Dante, covered in crimson satin, with many insets.'" Moreover, he was tutored by Cristoforo Landino, namely a Latinist and Dante scholar who published the first edition of Dante's *Divine Comedy* in Florence in the new medium of print. (Ventrone, 29) Moreover, Chastel confirms that after meeting Landini at the Medici Palace, Michelangelo studied Petrarch, Dante and Boccaccio, and formed a particularly intimate connection with the writings of Dante. (Chastel, André, *Arte e umanesimo a Firenze al tempo di Lorenzo il Magnifico: studi sul Rinascimento e sull'umanesimo platonico*, (Torino: Guido Einaudi, 1979), 132)

simply arguing that their more general connotation of the *amorous un-graspable phantasm* should not be ignored. In light of this reading, Michelangelo's motif of two masks alongside Venus and Cupid can be interpreted as a pictorial expression of poetic ideas concerning love as advanced in Lorenzo's Florence.

In sum, in analysing the literary climate in which the conception of the mask as an allegory for desire was born, it is possible to propose a new reason for Michelangelo depicting two masks in the company of Venus and her son, and a new way of interpreting the motif. The insertion of the masks alongside Venus and Cupid can be assigned to the literary climate which conjured the mask in the context of love, in order to encapsulate its supposed elusive and ephemeral nature; it explains Michelangelo's choice. However, the interpretation has yet to consider the two masks' opposing appearances. The chapters which follow will be dedicated to analysing likely sources for each of the two masks as separate entities, in order to come to an understanding of their likely diverging significance.

3. CHAPTER 2: The Leering Lustful Satyr Mask

Of Michelangelo's two masks in Pontormo's *Venus and Cupid*, the mask to the viewer's right ogles the amorous couple, its thick fleshy lips stretched into a disturbing grin (Fig. 5). The prominent nose, intensely furrowed brow with penetrating eyes framed by prominent crow's feet, and white wispy facial hair enhance its disturbing expression of insatiable desire. The mask's downward converging eyebrows accentuate the intensity of its eye sockets which burn into the goddess of love, despite the fact that, as a mask, it is actually unseeing (Fig. 1). The moustache echoes the contour of its expressive lips, and the beard stresses the protrusion of the lower jaw.[99] The features of this mask are undeniably those typical of a lustful, bestial satyr.

Although scholars have labelled this mask as a satyr-mask in passing, its significance has not been adequately explored.[100] De Tolnay goes furthest by suggesting that the satyr-mask represents the "lower desires" of love; however, he does not explore the significance of the mask's rendering.[101] Here, it will be argued that Michelangelo, by his satyr-like rendition of the mask and its deliberate placement and sightline in this particular painting, was intent to evoke connotations of lust associated with the mythological figure. In light of the painting's context of viewing and intended audience, this was meant to contribute to the viewer's interpretation of the painting, and to provide a direct comment on their very own act of looking.

[99] The mask's eyebrows, moustache and beard all appear to be of real hair.
[100] Aste, "A Merchant's Ascent by Design," 150; Paoletti, 439; Nelson, 50.
[101] De Tolnay, *Michelangelo,* Vol. III, 194.

The Lustful Satyr

From antiquity to the Renaissance, the satyr has possessed varying associations. In *The Noble Savage*, Lynn Frier Kaufmann traces the evolution of satyr imagery by addressing literature and sixteenth century prints and paintings.[102] She explores how, in antiquity, satyrs embodied creatures of lust and excessive sexual energy that would lust after and rape woodland nymphs.[103] They were typically depicted as sharing the physical characteristics of horses and goats, two animals known for their "sexual potency."[104] In short, ancient satyrs were defined by their impulsive bestial nature and their devotion to wine as loyal attendants to Dionysos.[105]

In the Renaissance, diverging traditions further expanded the connotations associated with the satyr. On the one hand, the satyr came to be conceived as a symbol of vice. In his *Trattato di Architettura* of the 1460s, for example, Antonio Filarete describes his painted representation of vice, namely "una figura inuda in forina di satiro" ("a naked figure in the form of a satyr").[106] Alternatively, the Renaissance satyr could also represent an innocent wild figure helplessly subjugated to sin; this tradition was initiated and propagated by the German artist Albrecht Dürer.[107] According to Kaufmann, Dürer grants the self-indulgent creature a new role as a noble "paterfamilias," a motif which became prevalent in Germany and in the north of Italy through the diffusion of his prints.[108] Dürer presents satyrs either as part of a family, or in the

[102] Kaufmann, Lynn Frier, *The Noble Savage*, (Ann Arbor, Mich.: UMI Research Press, 1984). This publication grew out of Kaufmann's PHD Dissertation.
[103] Ibid, 2-14.
[104] Ibid, 2.
[105] Ibid, 15.
[106] Ibid, 68. See also Filarete, Antonio Averlino, *Trattato di Architettura*, ed. Anna Maria Finoli and Liliana Grassi, vol. 2, ed. (Milan: Ed. Il Polifilio, 1972), 553-34).
[107] Ibid.
[108] Ibid, 35. As Kaufmann explores, granting the satyr such a noble and heroic persona was born out of the desire of fifteenth century German humanists to conjure a being who signaled an honorable "wild man."

company of Hercules[109] (Fig. 15). As Kaufmann states, he renders satyrs as "innocent bystanders in a primitive world," as opposed to figures of sin and vice.[110] This was picked up by Italian artists such as the engraver Marcantonio Raimondi who similarly depicts the satyr in the presence of other family members, thus humanising the mythological figure (Fig. 16). In contrast, other Italian artists tended to follow the ancient satyr type, giving emphasis to the association of lust and unbridled sexual longing, likely due to their access to a profusion of antique remains.[111] This resulted in the development of a visual tradition which depicted the satyr approaching and spying on a beautiful sleeping woman, as a means of accentuating their sexual potency.[112] In the Renaissance, this idea was first used in a woodcut illustration to the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* where a standing satyr pulls back a piece of drapery to reveal the reclining and partially nude figure of a sleeping fountain nymph (Fig. 17). The subject was later adopted by artists such as Botticelli and Mantegna, who were the first to depict satyrs in the presence of Venus.[113] This can be seen, for example, in the complex iconography of Mantegna's painting of *Minerva Expelling the Vices*[114] (Fig. 18).

Another tradition advanced in the Renaissance was that of the satyr as an ironic form of self-representation. This was adopted by Michelangelo's contemporary Pietro Aretino who used it as a personal metaphor of self-embodiment to quite literally encapsulate his role as a satirist.[115] On the reverse of one medal of around 1536, Aretino is depicted in the guise of a satyr visually composed entirely of erect phalli, thus drawing a playful parallel between the creature's sexual

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[109] Kaufmann, xxii.
[110] Ibid, 43.
[111] Ibid, ix.
[112] Ibid, 84.
[113] Ibid.
[114] Verheyen, Egon, *The Paintings in the Studiolo of Isabella D'este at Mantua*, (New York: New York University Press, 1971), 34.
[115] Waddington, Raymond, *Aretino's Satyr: Sexuality, Satire, and Self-Projection in Sixteenth-Century Literature and Art*, 2nd ed., (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014), 94.

excess, and Aretino's verbal excess as a satirist[116] (Fig. 19). Although the medal post-dates Michelangelo's *Venus and Cupid,* it represents another variant of the diverse significations the satyr could possess in the Renaissance.[117] The above examples indicate that the Renaissance satyr embodied more than just sin and vice.

Michelangelo was undoubtedly aware of these diverging traditions. Condivi recounts that Michelangelo's very first sculpture was modelled on an ancient sculpture of a head of a faun (satyr) housed in Lorenzo's sculpture garden at San Marco.[118] In addition, Michelangelo would have been exposed to more recent depictions of the figure, including those of his contemporaries. In earlier works of art by Michelangelo, the satyr appears more grounded in the antique tradition. In his *Bacchus* of 1496-97, an inebriated small satyr accompanies the figure of Bacchus (Fig. 20). He stands in an exaggerated unstable contrapposto position, balancing his full weight on his left goat leg, while bending his right knee. He smiles playfully as he turns to embrace and smell the bunch of grapes held by Bacchus, thus signalling his role as a devoted, and most likely inebriated, attendant to the God of wine.

In contrast, Michelangelo's satyr-mask in Pontormo's painting exhibits a fierce expression of lust that is entirely focused on the erotic embrace between Venus and Cupid (Fig. 4). Paoletti argues that, like the mask adorning his *Night* sculpture, the satyr-mask in Pontormo's painting should be read as Michelangelo inserting his presence into the work of art in the form of a self-portrait. As Paoletti claims: "the bearded mask shifts the act of viewing into the painting, thus removing Michelangelo's active looking at the sexually available Venus to the safe distance of the anonymous mask."[119] While Paoletti arguably goes too far in reading the mask as a self-

[116] Waddington, 110-111.
[117] Ibid, 122.
[118] Condivi, Asciano, as quoted in Condivi, Bull, Porter, and Buonarroti, 11.
[119] Paoletti, 438.

portrait, I would like to build on his remark concerning the 'act of viewing.'[120] To do so, it will first be necessary to analyse Michelangelo's satyr-mask in more depth.

Michelangelo's rendition of the satyr-mask exhibits a Renaissance conception of the satyr which accentuates its lust and sexual thirst as a way to visually encapsulate the viewer's own likely response to the painting's primary subject being observed by them and the satyr. The Renaissance conception of the satyr as exhibiting an unbridled sexuality and carnal longing that was visually embodied through the satyr's gaze and sightlines was advanced by the artist Mantegna, who Michelangelo certainly looked to. In contrast to Dürer and Aretino, Mantegna foregrounded the element of lust associated with satyrs, as advanced in antiquity. Mantegna and his circle portrayed the satyr as leering and spying on sleeping women in order to more strongly evoke their "sin of sexual excess," as well as provide a visual comment on the nature of looking and observing.[121] As Kaufmann rightly points out, Mantegna's amusing conceptions introduce "a motif which was to become canonical for the satyr in Italy," namely the satyr who is "privileged to serve the viewer as well as himself" in his lustful observance of a reclined beauty.[122]

In one work in particular, the satyr can be seen to humorously echo the viewer's own act of observing. In *Sleeping Couple with Cupid and Two Satyrs* of c.1497 (Fig. 21), from the School of Mantegna, two satyrs occupy the two upper hand corners of the print, and both intensely watch the sleeping couple. The foreshortening of the reclined man's body strategically accentuates his groin. The satyr on the left clutches a pillow to his chest as he stares intently at the sleeping male below him. The more active satyr to the right, arguably a less domesticated satyr, pulls back the bed covering to expose the naked body of the sleeping woman, and appears

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[120] Paoletti, 438.
[121] Kaufmann, 67-77.
[122] Ibid, 69. As Kaufman accentuates, this motif was a novel conception of the Renaissance (it is based on no ancient literary source).

to be fanning her with a banner as he ogles her form. His mouth is open and stretched into a smile of delight. The satyrs' positioning on either side of the couple places them on a separate plane from the two principal sleeping subjects, thus drawing them closer to the viewer's space. As a result, they provide a stand-in for the audience who is similarly able to ogle the sleeping couple, through the guise of the two satyrs.

As Kaufmann explains, in order to convey their lust and sexual huger, Mantegna and his school also modified the physiognomy of the satyr to accentuate his lasciviousness. Instead of presenting them with human faces, he rendered them with wide flattened noses and protruding mouths typically found on goats.[123] In *Sleeping Couple with Cupid and Two Satyrs* (Fig. 21), both the satyrs feature broad and flat animalistic noses. In the engraving *Virtus Combusta, An Allegory of Virtue* (upper half) of ca.1495-1500 from the School of Mantegna (Fig. 22) the goat-like features of the satyr to the far left are exaggerated even further. The satyr features a broad flat nose and a distinctly protruding lower jaw. Kaufman argues that in denying him more human features, Mantegna was accentuating his vice and animal nature, but more importantly, his lust.[124] Considering the accessibility of such prints, we can surmise that Mantegna's satyrs formed the inspiration for Michelangelo's own conception of the figure. This is confirmed by the fact that Michelangelo similarly renders his satyr-mask in Pontormo's *Venus and Cupid* with goat-like features including a flat nose and protruding jaw (Fig. 4).

[123] Kaufmann, 68.
[124] Ibid.

The Paradoxical Unseeing, Leering Mask

In light of this observation, one can firmly argue that Michelangelo's satyr-mask is meant to similarly provide a comment on the nature of observing. In his painting, the audience – the voyeur - is able to recognise their own act of looking as echoed in the painting, and is able to foresee themselves inevitably falling prey to the erotic and less noble form of love. Therefore, while Lynette M.F. Bosch makes an interesting suggestion that the two masks, one beautiful, young and female, and the other an "ugly old man" hint at love's "all-pervasive power, which can affect the young and the old, the beautiful and the ugly;"[125] one could conversely argue that the masks make a more direct comment on the specific audience of the painting, and the typical 'victim' of Venus's love. As Paoletti argues, "for (male) viewers, [the satyr mask] calls attention to the voyeuristic process in which they are engaged, especially since the mask has a decidedly leering aspect to it."[126] Nelson furthers this argument, observing that the life-like mask (with its fleshiness and its hair) "seems to leer at Venus, mocking our own contemplation of the Goddess of Beauty and Love."[127] In Pontormo's *Venus and Cupid*, the mask's exaggeratedly protruding lower lip serves to highlight his disturbing smirk. That the mask echoes the viewer's own act of looking is rendered clearer by considering the fact that, as a mask, it is unseeing. Paradoxically, its gaze is *blind*, since its eye sockets are mere holes, and as a literal object, it does not possess the ability to look. As a result, Michelangelo induces the viewer to metaphorically wear the mask and observe the painted Venus; the viewer is meant to inhabit the unseeing mask, thus rendering the unseeing motif a tool (and scapegoat) for his own observation of the reclining goddess.

[125] Bosch, Lynette M. F., "Bronzino's London 'allegory': Love Versus Time," *Notes in the History of Art* 9, no. 2 (1990): 30-35.
[126] Paoletti, 438.
[127] Nelson, 50.

Michelangelo, while not being moralising, is certainly cleverly taunting the viewer through this specific mask.

The same visual game can be observed in later adaptions of Pontormo's painting by Michelangelo's followers. Bronzino, in his painting *Venus, Cupid and Satyr* (1553-1555) (Fig. 23), develops and renders the ogling satyr in a figurative sense, by replacing the leering mask with a real satyr who echoes and amplifies the action of Michelangelo's mask. Bronzino was undoubtedly one of the artists most familiar with the iconography of Pontormo's painting, as he was commissioned to execute the paintings of Tuscan poets that were to frame it. He is indisputably elaborating on Michelangelo's unique conception of a mask as a leering yet paradoxically unseeing satyr. He vulgarises Michelangelo's more subtle rendition, as Bronzino associates us, the viewer, more aggressively with the lascivious satyr that sees as we do. The viewer is able to inhabit the satyr, yet at the same time they are able to distinguish themselves from the lecherous creature, as they recognise what the lascivious satyr cannot see: Venus as a painted embodiment of ideal beauty.[128]

The Nature of Viewing

That the leering satyr-mask is meant to remind the viewer of their own looking becomes all the more clear when examining the painting's context of viewing. As mentioned, the painting was commissioned to hang in Bettini's private chamber or *camera* in his Florentine palazzo. Aste shows that in light of the large size of Pontormo's *Venus and Cupid* (that would have been the central panel of the room), one can surmise that the *camera* must have been of considerable

[128] Nelson, 30.

dimensions.[129] The painting was thus conceived, in line with other decorative programs of the sixteenth century, to "dazzle the viewer,"[130] to be the focus of conversation, and to "impress an intellectual [well-learned] elite."[131] As Aste confirms, Florentine *cameras* served as backdrops to business meetings, and as "arenas for political discussions," as well as social interactions and discussions.[132] While the primary function of the *camera* was to act as a bedroom or living space, the secondary, and arguably more significant function was to allow for an "erudite display of luxury goods" to be admired and discussed by the viewer.[133] Aste goes so far as to argue that Bettini was reliant on having a large audience simply because it would allow for his social ascent through the Florentine ranks of society.[134] What is important in the present context is not the ulterior motif that inspired the commission, but the fact that this painting would have undoubtedly had a regular privileged audience who would have admired, and discussed at length the painting's execution, and more importantly, the ideas sparked by its subject. Yet, Aste fails to adequately acknowledge how the painted masks can be read in light of the desired audience and reception of the painting.

In the painting itself, the figure of Venus would have provided the focus of discussion, sparking dialogues on the nature of love, desire and lust. The rendition of Venus's majestic body was surely for the benefit of the male viewer who would have been enraptured by her milky skin and the way she is posed to display herself and her body (Fig. 1). This is confirmed by Varchi himself. In his *Due Lezzioni*, two lectures that he delivered to the Accademia in March of 1547 in which he discusses the *paragone* between the arts, among other topics, he refers to this very

[129] Aste, "A Merchant's Ascent by Design," 16.
[130] Ibid.
[131] Ibid, 21.
[132] Ibid, 16. See page 17 for further information regarding the nature and multiple functions of the Florentine *camera*.
[133] Ibid, 13.
[134] Ibid, 14.

painting explicitly.[135] He claims that, much in line with ancient marble sculptures, Michelangelo's Venus possesses the ability to make its (male) audience fall in love with her. As he asserts:

> Non dice egli che gl'huomini medesimi si sono innamorati delle statue di marmo, come avvenne alla Venere di Prassitele, Benché questo stesso avviene ancora hoggi tutto il giorno nella Venere, che disegnò Michelangelo a M. Bartolomeo Bettini, colorita di mano di M. Iacopo Puntormo.[136]
>
> (Is it not said that the men themselves fell in love with the marble statues, as happened to the Venus of Praxiteles? This happens all the time today with the Venus that Michelangelo designed for M. Bartolomeo Bettini, and coloured by the hand of Iacopo Puntormo.)

Despite the rhetorical nature of this statement and the fact that it is primarily about the *paragone* between the abilities of painting and sculpture, it does provides an implicit insight into the painting's audience and reception, and hints towards the probable effect of the painted Venus. The Venus, presumably also beautifully painted by Michelangelo, captures the observing audience, entrapping them in a fantasy of love and lust; a phenomenon that the satyr-mask tauntingly renders explicit.

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[135] Aste, "A Merchant's Ascent by Design," 3.

[136] Varchi, Benedetto, *Due lezzioni di M. Benedetto Varchi: nella prima delle quali si dichiara un sonetto di M. Michelagnolo Buonarroti : nella seconda si disputa quale sia piu nobile arte la scultura, o la pittura, con una lettera d'esso Michelagnolo & piu altri eccellentiss. pittori et scultori sopra la quistione sopradetta,* (In Fiorenza: Torrentino, 1549), 104.

Michelangelo uses the satyr-mask to satirise the audience's own likely response to the *painted* goddess of love. After all, in the sixteenth century, the incorrect etymology that derived *satire* from *satyr* was very much accepted.[137] The two became interrelated and almost inseparable, and in visual terms their association turned into "a visual pun."[138] In Pontormo's painting, the satyr-mask subtly converses with the viewer, echoing, mirroring and taunting his immediate surrender to love and lust. Michelangelo is suggesting that those eligible to observe the painting, the very cream of contemporary society, might allow their lust to prevail, just like the satyr-mask, if they do not see the beauty of Michelangelo's painted Venus, whose rendering embodies the contemporary poetic conception of ideal beauty.[139] It is clear that the audience were meant to consider the mask not as a literal object, but as a symbol they were able to hide behind in their admiration of Venus. They are asked to come into play and are made vulnerable to their own inner perversion. The mask thus draws the audience into the painting, and the viewers are able to recognise that they themselves play an integral role in its meaning; they are the ones condemned by love, tricked by love, and ultimately doomed to suffer the inevitable effects of love. Michelangelo is thus knowingly exploiting the multifaceted connotations evoked by the mythological satyr, resulting in a complicated, fluid and abstruse motif that the painting's intellectual and privileged audience would have delighted in discussing for its very ambiguity.

[137] Waddington, 94-96.
[138] Ibid, 95.
[139] For more on the Cinquecento canon of ideal female beauty, see Nelson, 30-48.

4. CHAPTER 3: The Mask of Death

Partially obscured by the satyr mask, a second mask with a smooth and expressionless countenance faces the opposing direction, away from Venus and Cupid (Fig. 4). Scholars appear undecided on the nature of this mask, which will henceforth be referred to as 'the neutral mask.' Aste, for example, labels this mask as that of an "idealised female youth,"[140] whereas Frederick Mortimer Clapp identifies it as masculine.[141] These diverging opinions make it clear that the neutral mask and its meaning warrant more study. In this chapter, evidence from similar depictions of masks, poetic imagery from Michelangelo's own writing as well as actual death practices will illuminate the meaning of this neglected feature. An obscure painting attributed to Ridolfo del Ghirlandaio featuring a similarly neutral mask is helpful toward interpreting Michelangelo's own rendition (Fig. 24). Moreover, the prevalence of death in the love poetry of Michelangelo and his contemporaries, as well as the Renaissance practice of making death masks, demonstrate that Michelangelo's neutral mask is meant to connote the second of love's inevitable consequences, death.

[140] Aste, "A Merchant's Ascent by Design," 150.
[141] Clapp, Frederick Mortimer, *Jacopo Carucci da Pontormo, his life and work*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1916), 142.

Later Evidence of the Neutral Mask

In the sixteenth century, a new tradition of still life painting surfaced, particularly in the north, which depicted masks explicitly in the context of mortality and death. Although much later than Michelangelo's *Venus and Cupid*, these provide an invaluable glimpse forward at the literalization of a connection between the mask and death. Such paintings have been huddled under the category of *Vanitas*, namely the theme of the fragility of man, and of his world and his desires in light of the certainty and inevitability of death.[142] The Flemish artist, Pieter Boel, for example, painted a 1622 *Vanitas con Putto* which features a plain mask that discretely covers a skull (Fig. 25). To the right, a strategically placed mirror reflects what the mask conceals, the skull, a universal symbol of death, thus revealing the mask's true nature (Fig. 26). As Alberto Veca states, in the mirror, the "true face" of the mask is revealed, and by extension, "the true aspect of the mask itself."[143] A similar motif can be seen in Antonio Pereda's *Sogno del Cavaliere (Dream of a Knight)* of c.1670 where an impassive mask appears alongside a skull, a gun and other diverse objects arranged casually on a table (Fig. 27). Moreover in the title-page engraving of *The Masquerades* by the Netherlandish artist Jacques de Gheyn in 1595-1596, a skeleton, partly hidden by a fictive cartouche, holds two plain masks over the faces of two praying figures. A third plain mask is visible at the bottom of the cartouche (Fig. 28). Curiously, all the masks used in this context adopt the same neutral countenance and smooth unblemished skin that is visible in Michelangelo's neutral mask.

These paintings indicate that at some point the motif of the mask had developed into an undisputable symbol of death. Though here in a context more obviously concerning 'vanitas,' the

[142] Veca, Alberto, and Galleria Lorenzelli, *Vanitas: Il Simbolismo Del Tempo*, (Bergamo: Galleria Lorenzelli, 1981), 10.
[143] Ibid, 209.

transience of life and of material things, another later source, the *Iconologia* of the Italian iconographer Ripa, similarly labels the mask as an attribute and symbol of death; as he states, the figure of death is represented as a "Skeleton, [covered] with a rich Mantle, [embroidered] with Gold: its face [covered] with a fine Mask."[144] Although the seventeenth century Northern paintings as well as Ripa's *Iconologia* are all from a much later period, they raise the question as to when and how this tradition began. When was the mask first used as a symbol of mortality and death? It is likely that it was born from the same obscure iconography that appears in Ridolfo's painting, from ideas expressed in contemporary poetry (including Michelangelo's) and from the tradition of making death masks, a practice that underwent a revival in the latter half of the fifteenth century. As will become clear in what follows, Michelangelo was one of the first to use a painted mask as a visual symbol of death in his *Venus and Cupid* executed by Pontormo. The paintings discussed above are thus descendants of an idea that was initiated in the Renaissance and which was then made increasingly more visually explicit.

Death in Renaissance Florentine Poetry

Firstly, it is important to return to the ideas expressed in the poetry of Lorenzo and his Florentine contemporaries as explored in Chapter 1. More specifically, it is worth further emphasising the connotation of death associated with masks and masking in their poetry. As seen previously, the word *larva* in the Renaissance signified both a literal mask, as well as a shadow or ghost. The word was invoked in the context of love to encapsulate the fleeting nature of

[144] Ripa, Cesare, *Iconologia: or, Moral Emblems*, (London: Benj. Motte, 1709), 53.

desire, and its consequences.[145] The link between masking and death was thus a phenomenon prevalent in poetic literature.

Michelangelo's poetry constantly refers to death, and in the majority of cases, death in the context of love. For example, in sonnet XV, in which he writes of his love, he states: "se dentro del tuo cor morte e pietate / porti in un tempo, e che 'l mio basso ingegno / non sappia, ardendo, trane altro che morte" ("if you hold both death and mercy in your heart / at the same time, and my lowly wits, though burning, / cannot draw from it anything but death.")[146] Moreover, in sonnet LVIII, which is about love and death, he writes: "Ognor che l'idol mio si rappresenta / agli occhi del mie cor debile e forte, / fra l'uno e l'altro obbietto entra la morte" ("Every time that my idol appears again / in the eyes of my heart, which is faint yet strong, / Death comes between one object and the other.")[147]

In fact, the theme of death is not only a constant in his written verse, but, as Laura Camille Agoston convincingly explores, a thematic focus in his art; as she claims, in his self-representation, "death is recalled as the condition of the self."[148] As Agoston points out, both of his self-representations in the Sistine Chapel depict him in the context of death. As others have indicated, in the *Last Judgment*, the artist depicts himself as "an empty sack of flesh" clasped by St Bartholomew (Fig. 29).[149]

Agoston also discovers that in the less celebrated part of Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel, in the fresco *Judith with the Head of Holofernes*, Michelangelo inserts a self-portrait of himself

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[145] See Chapter 1, pages 13-21. That love and death are interlinked in Renaissance poetry is a known and undoubtedly vast area of this study that lies outside the confines of this thesis. I merely want to explore it briefly so as to elucidate the presence of the neutral mask.
[146] Buonarroti, *The Poetry of Michelangelo,* 302. Translation in text by Saslow.
[147] Ibid, 411. Translation in text by Saslow.
[148] Agoston, Laura Camille, "Sonnet, Sculpture, Death: The Mediums of Michelangelo's Self-Imaging," *Art History -Oxford-* 20, no. 4 (1997): 535.
[149] Ibid, 546. In this case, he depicts himself as an actual *larva*, which, as explored in Chapter 1, can also signify skin or hide (see page 13).

as the severed head of Holofernes (Fig. 30).[150] As Agoston points out, in his self-representation as the severed head, he has manipulated his features with signs of old age and physical decay, thus accentuating his preoccupation with personal death.[151]

That death occupied a central concern in Michelangelo's poetry and art is confirmed by a letter of 1555 that he wrote to Vasari. In it he writes, "…non nasce in me pensiero che non vi sia dentro sculpita la morte …" ("…no thought is born within me in which death is not sculpted within..").[152] It becomes clear that death was a theme that constantly plagued the poets and artists of the time, and Michelangelo in particular.

The obsession and fascination with death in Florence is confirmed when considering that the Basilica of Santissima Annunziata, the most important Florentine Church after the Duomo, allegedly housed a collection of organs, body parts and entire bodies in wax that were made as votive offerings.[153] As objects, they permanently preserved, in physical form, dead and deceased bodies. Corey Tazzara, Paula Findlen and Jacob Soll state that most of these wax replicas of body parts belonged to descendants of the Medici family.[154] Among the collection was a life-size wax replica of Lorenzo himself, dressed in a patrician cloak (*lucco*).[155] Moreover, a morbid obsession with death was shared by other Renaissance artists, such as Michelangelo's contemporary Cosini, who, as we have seen, made grotesques for the Medici Chapel. As Stephen J. Campbell points out, Cosini reportedly once removed the corpse of a hanged man from his

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[150] Agoston, 546..
[151] Ibid, 548.
[152] Buonarroti, Michelangelo, *Le lettere di Michelangelo Buonarroti*, ed. Gaetano Milanesi, (Firenze: Le Monnier, 1875), 558.
[153] Funke, Jana, and Jen Grove, *Sculpture, sexuality and history: encounters in literature, culture and the arts from the eighteenth century to the present*, (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 88.
[154] Tazzara, Corey, Paula Findlen, and Jacob Soll, eds., *Florence After the Medici: Tuscan Enlightenment, 1737-1790*, (New York, NY: Routledge, 2019), 4-38.
[155] Ibid.

grave, dissected it, flayed it and made a leather tunic out of the corpse's skin.[156] Moreover, as Laura Macy has explored, in Cinquecento Italian Madrigals, an orgasm was metaphorically considered to be equivalent to death.[157]

The Mask on Ridolfo del Ghirlandaio's Portrait Cover

One particular visual precedent provides an insight into the formation behind Michelangelo's very distinctive rendering. In c.1510 Ridolfo del Ghirlandaio executed a monochrome panel featuring a plain frontal facing mask depicted in the centre of two dragon-like grotesques (Fig. 24). The panel carries the motto *Sua Cuique Persona*[158] that appears inscribed in a painted fictive plaque in the middle of the panel.[159] The mask bears an uncanny resemblance to that of Michelangelo's neutral mask. Both exhibit smooth skin, and are lacking expression and adornment.

The circumstances and meaning of Ridolfo's panel with a painted mask are so far unknown. A document from the 19th century[160] discovered by Alessandro Conti, explicitly states that at one point the panel was seen covering a painting by Ridolfo entitled *La Monaca* (Fig. 31). This is a similarly elusive portrait (of the same measurements) whose meaning still remains unclear.[161] The likelihood that Ridolfo's painting was a sliding cover that would have been

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[156] Campbell, Stephen J.,"'Fare Una Cosa Morta Parer Viva': Michelangelo, Rosso, and the (un)divinity of Art," *The Art Bulletin* 84, no. 4 (2002): 602.
[157] See the Italian Madrigals *Tirsi morir volea* and *Il bianco e dolce cigno* discussed in: Macy, Laura, "Speaking of Sex: Metaphor and Performance in the Italian Madrigal," *The Journal of Musicology* 14, no. 1 (1996): 1-34.
[158] The motto translates to "to each his own mask." Fossi, Gloria and Firenze Musei, ed., *Gli Uffizi. La Guida Officiale*, (Taylor and Francis, 2010), 117.
[159] Although there have been many disagreements concerning the authorship of this painting (see Natali, Antonio, "La Coperta Della Monaca," *Piscina Di Betsaida: Movimenti Nell'arte Fiorentina Del Cinquecento*, (1995): 116-137), the issue of attribution will be here set aside, since the primary focus in this present context is the likely meaning of the painted mask and the context of the panel on which it features so prominently.
[160] The document was found in the Archivio Centrale dello Stato di Roma.
[161] Natali, 126. The sitter's identity is unknown.

removed to reveal the portrait beneath is confirmed by a second document[162] which states that *La Monaca* was covered by a "tirella."[163] Moreover, Hannah Baader states that the "small metal ring" at the top of Ridolfo's panel confirms that it was conceived to act as a sliding cover for another painting.[164] This leads one to consider the concealing and revealing capacity of Ridolfo's image of the mask.

Some have argued that the sitter of *La Monaca* is a nun, hence its late title.[165] In addition, scholars have disputed whether the painting's landscape is an exact representation of the painted scene or whether it is fashioned to suggest a "moralistic undertone."[166] Antonio Natali argues that this landscape was purposefully fashioned to create a suitable "paysage moralisé" with a "symbolic value" that would reflect the virtue and morality of the sitter.[167] As Natali notes, to one side of the sitter appears the portico of the Franciscan hospital of San Paolo, and on the other, in the distance, the church of the monastery of San Jacopo di Ripoli, thus strategically highlighting the nun's piety.[168] Novella Macola combats the theory that she is a nun by arguing, more convincingly, that the revealing and rather sensual neckline of the sitter's dress and the rings that adorn her fingers hint at her more probable status as a benefactor.[169]

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[162] The second document is housed in the Archivio della Soprintendenza Fiorentina.
[163] Natali, 131. "...la tirella fu acquistata come quella che copriva il ritratto della Monaca."
[164] Baader, Hannah, "Anonym: 'Sua Cuique Persona'. Mask, Rolle, Porträt (ca.1520)," in Preimesberger, Rudolf, Hannah Baader, and Nicola Suthor, ed., *Porträt*, (Berlin: Geschichte der klassischen Bildgattungen in Quellentexten und Kommentaren, 1999), 239.
[165] See Natali, 125-135. It is important to point out that this title is anachronistic as it was granted to the painting long after its conception, likely in the 19th century.
[166] Ibid, 125.
[167] Ibid, 135.
[168] Ibid, 134.
[169] Macola, Novella, *Sguardi E Scritture: Figure Con Libro Nella Ritrattistica Italiana Della Prima Metà Del Cinquecento*, (Venezia: Istituto Veneto Di Scienze, 2007), 134.

However, could it be that the portrait is posthumous?[170] Dressed in black, with a sombre expression, the deceased lay woman holds a prayer book inscribed with IHS, the monogram of Christ, that could be a display of her piety, and sign of a hope of a safe afterlife. In this way, the mask might be a suitable outward cover that, when removed, would reveal a painting that eternalised the woman's presence as a living individual. In contrast, the lifeless unseeing mask on the cover was arguably used to convey the fact that the woman is no longer living (Fig. 24). Hans Belting points out that the mask on Ridolfo's panel has the same measurements as the woman's face in *La Monaca*, thus reinforcing the idea that the mask must be meant to connote her deceased state.[171]

Moreover, in antique Roman funerary altars, similar frontal masks likely act as symbols of death. For example, in a mid-sixteenth century drawing after the c.50 AD Funerary Altar of Amemptus by an unknown artist, an inscription is surmounted by a frontal and expressionless mask with what appear to be billowing ribbons attached to either side of its head[172] (Fig. 32). Curiously, the mask on Ridolfo's panel also has ribbons attached to either side of the mask, thus reinforcing a possible connection between the two.

The meaning of the panel's motto also arguably supports a reading that the sitter is deceased. In the ancient writings of Seneca,[173] the very phrase *Sua Cuique Persona,* encourages one to be that which one is: "l'invito e' ad essere coerentemente, fino in fondo, ciò che si è" ("the invitation is to be, coherently, until the end, who one is").[174] The same idea, to remain true

[170] This argument has been tentatively proposed by Hans Belting, Thomas S. Hansen, and Abby J. Hansen. (Belting, Hans, Thomas S. Hansen, and Abby J. Hansen, ed., *Face and Mask: A Double History*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017), 94). "Perhaps the portrait represents a memento of a dead woman."
[171] Belting, S. Hansen, J. Hansen, 94.
[172] Casamassima and Rubinstein, 43, 191.
[173] The motto appears in Seneca's *De beneficiis,* II, 17.
[174] Macola, 134.

to oneself, is expressed by the very same phrase by Quintilian.[175] Jon R. Snyder argues that the motto asserts a very clear message; namely that each of us has "a mask (or persona) that can be worn whenever needed, in order to hide or disguise some truth about us."[176] In contrast, Adriano Prosperi proposes that the Latin phrase indicates the mediation of the philologist Poliziano, who had associations with the same circles as Domenico Ghirlandaio (Ridolfo's father).[177] This leads one to question the meaning of the motto in light of Poliziano's writings, and hints that it may have had something to do with accepting one's fate in light of the inevitability of death. After all, Poliziano, a close friend of Lorenzo and Michelangelo, was one of the many Renaissance humanists who explored the theme of death in verse. Juliana Hill, for example, has explored how death was a persistent fixation for Poliziano, so much so that his insistent "meditation upon it [formed] … a leit-motif to his whole thought."[178] In addition, Eugenio Donato argues that the link between love and death formed the core of Poliziano's *Stanze*.[179] For example, at one stage, he states: "Disgiunto ha morte il più leale amore, / Che mai giungesse al mondo la natura, / E spento il fuoco nel più dolce ardore."[180] ("Death has broken the most loyal love, / So that its nature never came into the world, / And the fire is extinguished in the most sweet ardor"). In his poetry more generally, love and death appear inextricably linked. This can be observed for example, in his Rime III:

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[175] Macola, 134.
[176] Snyder, Jon R., *Dissimulation and the Culture of Secrecy in Early Modern Europe*, (CA: University of California Press, 2009), 6.
[177] Prosperi, Adriano, *Dare L'anima: Storia Di Un Infanticidio*, (Torino: Guido Einaudi, 2015), 287. "...la fonte dotta rinvia alla mediazione di un filologo esperto e precisamente di quel Poliziano che ebbe notariamente rapporti con la bottega di [Domenico] ghirlandaio." Although Poliziano was no longer alive in Ridolfo's time, the fact that he had been involved with the workshop of Ridolfo's father makes it extremely likely that Ridolfo would have been aware of his writings.
[178] Hill, Juliana as quoted in Donato, Eugenio, "Death and History in Poliziano's Stanze," *MLN* 80, no. 1 (1965): 28.
[179] Donato, 34.
[180] Poliziano, Angelo, *Le Stanze d'Angelo Poliziano: e la tragedia dell'Orfeo*, (Firenze: All'insegna di Pallade, 1821), 20.

Venite insieme, amanti, a pianger forte

Sopra il mio corpo morto e steso in terra;

E vedrete la mia crudel sorte,

E quanto è tristo il fin della mia guerra.

Per troppo amore i'son condotto a morte:

Tristo è colui che Amor crudele afferra:

Questa è del mio servir sola mercede,

Che mortal cosa amai con tanta fede.[181]

Come together, lovers, to cry loudly

Above my dead body lying on the ground;

And you will see my cruel fate,

And how sad is the end of my war.

For too much love I am led to death:

Sad is the one who true love catches:

This is the only consideration for my service,

As a mortal thing I loved with so much faith.

Could not the mask thus be embodying the woman's true form, that of death, while it covers a fictional living version of her form alive?

[181] Poliziano, Angelo, Vincenzo Nannucci, and Luigi Ciampolini, *Rime*, (Napoli: Raffaele De Stefano E Socii, 1837), 157.

Maurice Brock makes some interesting observations which advance this argument; he juxtaposes the "firm, lifeless, immutable [and frontal]" mask with the living, animated woman with telling eyes that it covers, and who is seated in three-quarter profile, a position which suggests movement.[182] Additionally, Macola herself strengthens this reading, as well as the relationship between the depicitons, by drawing attention to the index finger of the woman's right hand which points to something outside the confines of her portrait panel, possibly the mask on the panel cover that has just been removed by the viewer[183] (Fig. 31). She suggests that the sitter could be labelling the mask as a symbol of the fleeting, transient nature of life.[184]

Alternatively, it could be that the sitter is a recent widow who is depicted as mourning her lost husband. Not least because it was common for widows to become benefactors once their husbands died; this could account for the strategic depiction of certain recognisable buildings in the background that might allude to the widow's contributions as benefactress.[185] Moreover, her piety can be interpreted as her prayers for her husband's afterlife, as well as her own. In light of this reading, the mask on the cover still refers to death and its inevitability. The widow's finger that points outside the confines of her portrait could be interpreted as her signal to the mask (that has just been removed) as a representation of her deceased husband.

In either case, whether the sitter is a widow depicted as mourning her dead husband, or she herself is deceased, Ridolfo's panel, and hence his mask, undoubtedly has something to do with death and the transience of life. This is confirmed by the decorative elements that frame the

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[182] Brock, Maurice, as quoted in Macola, 135.
[183] Macola, 134.
[184] Ibid, 134-135.
[185] Carolyn Valone explores the phenomenon of widows becoming wealthy benefactresses due to the large inheritance they are suddenly responsible for; *La Monaca* could be an early presage of this phenomenon. (Valone, Carolyn, "Piety and Patronage: Women and the Early Jesuits," in *Creative Women in Medieval and Early Modern Italy: A Religious and Artistic Renaissance*, ed. Matter E. Ann and Coakley John, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994), 159; and Valone, Carolyn, "Women on the Quirinal Hill: Patronage in Rome, 1560-1630," *The Art Bulletin* 76, no. 1 (1994): 131, 138.)

mask, as they are recognised emblems of death. As De Tolnay states, "fantastic dolphins [and] sea dragons," both of which are visible on Ridolfo's panel, are meant to remind the viewer of "the long journey to Hades"[186] (Fig. 24). Among other decorative motifs, oil lamps, such as the one depicted above Ridolfo's mask, represent immortality.[187] Although used in a different context, the visual resemblance between Michelangelo's and Ridolfo's masks makes the earlier image (and others like it that may be lost) a very possible contender as a visual source of inspiration. This is made more likely by the fact that, as Vasari informs us, in 1488 at the age of thirteen, Michelangelo was sent to be apprenticed as a painter in the Ghirlandaio workshop under Domenico, Ridolfo's father.[188] It is undeniable that Ridolfo's paintings and drawings, as well as those of his family, were circulating in his workshop and hence made visible to those working there. Moreover, Michelangelo and Ridolfo were close contemporaries; de Tolnay states that in the 1480s, Ridolfo also appears among the list of apprentices at the Ghirlandaio workshop, thus making it very likely that Ridolfo and Michelangelo were working alongside each other, or that Michelangelo would have at least seen some of his work.[189] Furthermore, as David Franklin states, towards the mid-1510s, the time of the panel's creation, Ridolfo was "the most sought after and materially successful painter in Florence;" this makes it more likely that Michelangelo would have looked to his work.[190] While we are unable to trace a sure link between Ridolfo's panel and Michelangelo's *Venus and Cupid*, Ridolfo's panel does serve to show that the link between the mask and death was a phenomenon being explored in the 1510s.

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[186] De Tolnay, *Michelangelo,* Vol. III, 65.
[187] Ibid.
[188] Vasari and Marini, 1203. "1488. Ricordo questo di' primo d'aprile, come io Lodovico di Lionardo di Buonarota acconcio Michelagnolo mio figliuolo con Domenico e Davit di Tommaso di Currado per anni tre prossimi…"
[189] De Tolnay, *Michelangelo,* Vol. I, 14.
[190] Franklin, David, "An Overlooked Ridolfo Ghirlandaio in Florence," *Mitteilungen Des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz* 45, no. 3 (2001): 490.

The Renaissance Revival of Death Masks

Both Ridolfo and Michelangelo were debatably developing a visual motif of death whose conception was born, not only from their poetic ambiance, but also from the real and physical practice of making commemorative death masks. Since antiquity, the mask as a memorial object has been conjured up in the context of death. Death masks, namely masks that were cast from a mold "taken directly from the human face," were a phenomenon that began in antiquity.[191] Pliny the Elder recounts that death masks were made and displayed in the *domus*: "In the halls of our ancestors … portraits were the objects displayed to be looked at, not statues … but wax models of faces."[192] The tradition of death masks enjoyed a revival in the Renaissance Golden Age of Lorenzo, thus advancing the inseparable link between the mask and death, the mask and mortality.[193] In fact, in the second half of the fifteenth century, the popularity of death masks soared in Florence in particular, to the extent that they became a desirable feature to exhibit in one's private home.[194]

Lorenzo was among those in the Renaissance who had a death mask made upon his death[195] (Fig. 33). In addition, Dante, whose writings, as discussed, were devoured by Michelangelo, and whose ideas clearly informed the content of the Michelangelo-Pontormo

[191] Schuyler, Jane, "Death Masks in Quattrocento Florence," *Notes in the History of Art* 5, no. 4 (1986): 1.
[192] Pliny, The Elder, *Natural History*, Volume IX, trans. H. Rackham, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1938), 35.2.6-7, 265. Whether the practice of parading death masks did or did not really occur in antiquity does not matter in this case, as Renaissance humanists and artists, such as Lorenzo, would have regarded these ancient texts as authoritative accounts when visually informing themselves about the past. For more on the practice of ancient Roman wax masks, see Flower, Harriet I., "Spectacle and Political Culture in the Roman Republic," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Roman Republic*, ed. Harriet I. Flower, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 334-337; and Flower, Harriet I., *Ancestor Masks and Aristocratic Power in Roman Culture*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996).
[193] Schuyler, 1.
[194] Ibid. According to Schuyler, they were exhibited in homes and in churches with hardly any re-working.
[195] Ibid. Others included Filippo Brunelleschi, and the prior of San Marco, Saint Antonino.

painting, himself had a death mask made. Indeed, the tradition of death masks was very much alive in Michelangelo's Florence and thus arguably influenced Michelangelo's painted mask.

In fact, both Michelangelo's mask and Ridolfo's precursor exhibit common Renaissance features of death masks. Filippo Brunelleschi's death mask was made a few hours after his death in 1446.[196] The skin on his death mask appears smooth and wax like (Fig. 34). Moreover, its expression is relatively passive. As Jane Schuyler points out, the process of making a death mask smoothed out any visible impurities, as the heaviness of wet plaster on the skin had the flattering effect of erasing wrinkles.[197] In his death mask Brunelleschi's eyes are closed, as if he is sleeping, and as Schuyler again points out, his mouth reveals two signs of death: "a flattened upper lip and flaccidity at the sides of the mouth because of the lack of nerve stimulus."[198] Michelangelo's neutral mask in Pontormo's painting similarly exhibits smooth unblemished skin and an inactive expression (Fig. 4).

Moreover, and more importantly, both masks exhibit no facial hair and thus also conform to the practice of death masks. In his *Il Libro dell'Arte* of c.1400, Cennino Cennini offers advice to artists concerning the making of death masks. The deceased subjects should be clean-shaven and then anointed with oil so as to prevent the cast getting stuck to any facial hair.[199] In the case of Michelangelo's mask, one can observe the faint shadow of what may be stubble, likely in order to label the mask as distinctly male, as the prime victim of Venus' love would be. However, one cannot deny that Michelangelo's neutral mask also looks distinctly alive; the five o-clock shadow and the taut lips impart a sense of life to the mask. This creates a mesmerising

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[196] Schuyler, 2.
[197] Ibid, 3.
[198] Ibid, 2.
[199] Cennini, Cennino, *Il Libro Dell'arte: O, Trattato Della Pittura*, (Firenze: F. LeMonnier, 1859), 136. "…benche' la barba o capellatura male si puo' fare, ma fa' che sia rasa la barba."

paradox in which the mask encapsulates a thriving youth, as well as that very youth's inevitable death as a result of Venus's love.

The Consequence of Love

The connotation of death becomes all the more clear when examining the Michelangelo-Pontormo mask in light of its surrounding objects. Directly below the two masks, one can observe the foreshortened body of a male corpse reclining in a small altar-like covering (Fig. 3). This particular depiction bears an undeniable resemblance to the two reclining bodies that appear in Parentino's *The Allegory of Hercules* (Fig. 9). The print features a distressed Hercules turning away from an old seated woman to his left who dangles a mask before him, and towards a cloaked seated woman to his right. In the lower register of the painting, a younger woman kneels before an amphora (or urn). It is curious that in Parentino's print, the two bodies[200] are depicted directly below the dangling mask, thus re-enforcing a connection between the mask and death, as well as a connection between Parentino's print and Pontormo's painting.

Furlan and Rebaudo have shown how Parentino's print was quickly disseminated shortly after its making, leading to the execution of several variants which Michelangelo was likely aware of.[201] For example, one variant, which appears as a bas-de-page decoration of a Venetian frontispiece of *Herodoti*,[202] features a single dead body at the feet of Hercules, as opposed to two, and the mask dangled by the elderly woman appears more in line, visually, with Michelangelo's rendering (Fig. 35). Moreover, the authors indicate that by the second half of the sixteenth century, the design had travelled extensively (in the form of replicas) and had made

[200] Caterina Furlan and Ludovico Rebaudo label them as two dead children. Furlan and Rebaudo, 323.
[201] Ibid, 322.
[202] Ibid,343.

itself to Rome, as evidenced by a variant of it by an unknown artist which appears in a notebook of antiquity ("il codice berlinese") belonging to Giovanni Antonio Dosio made between 1559 and 1565[203] (Fig. 36). Although these works postdate Pontormo's painting by a significant number of years, it is entirely possible that Michelangelo saw the print at an earlier date. Dosio states that he himself found a copy of the print in the book of the engraver and print publisher Antonio Salamanca in Rome who was known to have been working in Florence in the mid-sixteenth century.[204]

Scholars, such as Vincenzo Farinella, have argued that Parentino, who, like Mantegna, was fascinated by antiquity, depicts no narrative, but is merely experimenting with his knowledge of antiquity and ancient archaeology, and attempting to create an 'authentic' recreation and playful medley of *all'antica* motifs.[205] Yet, the print must have had a meaning that we have yet to decipher. Furlan and Rebaudo, for example, suggest that it portrays Hercules in distress after accidentally killing his two sons and his wife Megara as a result of being induced to madness by Hera; a morbid story about death.[206] For the purpose of this study, one could argue that regardless of the print's narrative or lack of narrative, Michelangelo extracted the visual motif of the mask suspended over two dead bodies and inserted it into a new context. In Pontormo's painting, the neutral mask takes on a related but new message; namely the undeniable link between love, masking and death.

This message is reinforced by other visual motifs in Pontormo's painting. Michelangelo's two masks are surmounted by a vase of flowers (Fig. 3). These flowers undoubtedly symbolise ephemeral beauty, a phenomenon that was further advanced in the sixteenth century through still

[203] Furlan and Rebaudo, 326.
[204] Casamassima and Rubinstein, 96.
[205] Furlan and Rebaudo, 324, 333.
[206] Ibid, 335.

life paintings.[207] De Tolnay mentions in passing that the altar in the painting is covered in "a mourning veil," suggesting the non-living status of the reclined body housed in the altar, and once again evokes the death or "miserable end" as DeTolnay states, of those youths who succumb to Venus' love.[208]

It is clear that Michelangelo's rendition of the neutral mask can be attributed to his creative fusion of ideas advanced in contemporary poetry together with the real physical practice of making death masks. The result is a painted mask that conveys death and the transience of life that results from Venus' love. In Pontormos's painting, the *larva* is depicted both as a mask, and as an embodiment of death and ephemerality. Michelangelo was thus communicating a rather sombre message concerning love, and its inevitable consequences. The painting, however, is not meant to be moralistic. Instead, it playfully gives visual form to poetic ideas concerning the nature of love that were circulating in sixteenth century Florence. What renders the neutral mask disconcerting to the viewer is its empty eye sockets which denote its status as a literal object meant to be worn (Fig. 4). In this case, as with the satyr mask, the lack of seeing eyes implies that the viewer is meant to metaphorically wear the mask, and see through its eye holes. This in turn denotes the viewer as the next victim of Venus's love, and therefore one step closer to death.

[207] Veca, 13. In painted still life, flowers became "l'illustrazione piu' efficace della fragilita' e della brevita', ma anche della desiderabilita' della bellezza." (The roses represent the "transitory nature of [love's] joys.") DeTolnay, *Michelangelo*, Vol. III, 108.
[208] DeTolnay, *Michelangelo*, Vol. III, 194.

5. Conclusion

Michelangelo's masks are a wonderfully dense motif possessing many implications for the delight of Bettini's humanist friends. This audience would have revelled in the masks' elusive and polysemic meanings. As Nelson claims, "Varchi specifically addressed the use of enigmatic figures to obscure the 'mysteries of love.'"[209] Although this quote postdates Michelangelo's *Venus and Cupid*, it does reflect the general poetic ambience which the whole circle subscribed to. The masks must be celebrated for their ambiguity, as the erudite audience would have delighted in the challenge of iconographic intricacies.

In his *Venus and Cupid*, Michelangelo used the motif of two masks to play an engaging visual game with the viewer. The painting's surrounding portraits of Tuscan poets hint that the masks were to be read in light of the Tuscan poetic traditions which conjured the *larva*, or mask, to encapsulate the fleeting and ephemeral nature of love and desire; a poetic conceit that began with the writings of Dante and Petrarch, and which was fiercely revived by Lorenzo de' Medici. The satyr-mask partly dilutes the shame of looking, by allowing the viewer to anonymously embody the leering satyr. Yet at the same time, it teases the viewer by echoing and raising questions about their own act of looking, and by hinting towards the inevitable lust to which they are to succumb in longing after the painted Venus. Conversely, the neutral mask warns the viewer that, although they may be at their prime, they will soon possess a similarly impassive countenance when they experience love's second consequence: death. Michelangelo's masks are

[209] Nelson, 29.

not a moralising motif; however, they do spark, in a morbid yet humorous manner, discussion on the inevitable consequences of love: lust and death. Michelangelo has thus succeeded in creating a taunting and challenging representation of the inevitable consequences of love to be discussed and marvelled at by the audience. The painting is not meant to be didactic, but instead a playful and artistic encapsulation of poetic conceits.

Michelangelo's novel motif, which betrays an amalgamation of antique and medieval ideas, depicted in a new way that ties their meaning to Venus and Cupid, has presented masks in a new light, and has expanded their expressive capabilities as painted symbols. His masks, and in particular the satyr-mask, are depicted as seeing objects as well as unseeing objects. This tantalising paradox makes it clear that his masks are meant to be adopted and metaphorically worn by the painting's audience. They thus express a sophisticated comment on the nature of viewing that neatly meshed with the Renaissance social experience of viewing *camera* paintings in an intimate manner.

What may appear, at first glance, to be a simple motif, has instead proven to expose innumerable Florentine thoughts concerning love and its intoxicating and dangerous nature. The purpose of this study has not been to negate any extant theories on the significance of the mask; it has merely sought to expand the likely associations of this complex motif which became a fertile language among the circle of painters and poets responsible for its creation. It has become clear that these two masks cannot be ignored when discussing the Michelangelo-Pontormo *Venus and Cupid*; to do so would be to undermine the complexity of Florentine Cinquecento thought. The motif of these two masks accompanying Venus and Cupid, invented by Michelangelo, was adapted, modified, and expanded by his successors, thus becoming ever more fruitful over the years.

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Illustrations

Figure 1: Jacopo da Pontormo (after Michelangelo cartoon), *Venus and Cupid*, 1532-34.
Oil on panel, 128 x 197 cm, Uffizi Galleries, Florence.
Image Source:
https://library-artstor org.jcu.idm.oclc.org/#/asset/SCALA_ARCHIVES_1039614818

Figure 2: *Venere e Amore*, Sixteenth century drawing after Michelangelo original lost cartoon, c.1532.
Carbon, 131 x 184 cm, National Museum and Galleries of Capodimonte, Naples.
Image Source:
http://www.accademia.org/explore-museum/halls/hall-prisoners/

Figure 3: Detail of Jacopo da Pontormo (after Michelangelo cartoon),
Venus and Cupid, 1532-34.
Image Source:
https://library-artstor org.jcu.idm.oclc.org/#/asset/SCALA_ARCHIVES_1039614818

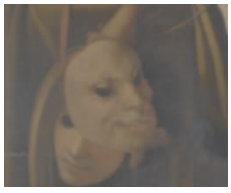

Figure 4: Detail of Jacopo da Pontormo (after Michelangelo cartoon),
Venus and Cupid, 1532-34.
Image Source:
https://library-artstor org.jcu.idm.oclc.org/#/asset/SCALA_ARCHIVES_1039614818

Figure 5: Agnolo Bronzino, *The Allegory of Love*, 1540-1550.
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Image Source:
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Image Source:
https://library-artstor-org.jcu.idm.oclc.org/#/asset/AZERIIG_10312628952

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Image Source:
https://library-artstor-org.jcu.idm.oclc.org/#/asset/ARTSTOR_103_41822000646537

Figure 8: Michelangelo Buonarroti, *Il Sogno (The Dream),* 1533.
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Image Source:
https://courtauld.ac.uk/gallery/what-on/exhibitions-displays/archive/michelangelos-dream

Figure 9: Bernardo Parentino, An Allegory of Hercules at the Crossroads, c.1490.
Pen and brown ink on vellum, Christ Church, Oxford.
Image Source:
Winner, Matthias. "Michelangelo's Il Sogno as an Example of an Artist's Visual Reflection in His Drawings." Studies in the History of Art, Published by the National Gallery of Art, Washington 33 (1992): 231.

Figure 10: Detail of Michelangelo Buonarroti,
Il Sogno (The Dream), 1533.
Image Source:
https://courtauld.ac.uk/gallery/what-on/exhibitions-displays/archive/michelangelos-dream

Figure 11: Michelangelo Buonarroti, *Notte,* 1526-1531.
Detail of Tomb of Giuliano de' Medici, New Sacristy (Medici Chapel), San Lorenzo, Florence.
Image Source:
https://library-artstor-org.jcu.idm.oclc.org/#/asset/SCALA_ARCHIVES_1039929285

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Image Source:
https://library-artstor-org.jcu.idm.oclc.org/#/asset/SCALA_ARCHIVES_1039929285

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New Sacristy (Medici Chapel), San Lorenzo, Florence.
Image Source:
De Tolnay, Charles. *Michelangelo*. Volume III, The Medici Chapel.
Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1948

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Engraving on paper, 32 x 22 cm, Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Massachusetts.
Image Source:
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Image Source:
https://www.wga.hu/html_m/m/master/xunk_it/xunk_it7/10medal1.html

Figure 20: Michelangelo Buonarroti, *Bacchus*, 1496-1498.
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Image Source:
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Figure 31: School of Andrea Mantegna, *Sleeping Couple with Cupid and Two Satyrs*, c.1497.
Drawing, The British Museum, Department of Prints and Drawings, London.
Image Source:
Kaufmann, Lynn Frier. *The Noble Savage*. Studies in Renaissance Art History, No. 2. Ann Arbor, Mich.: UMI Research Press, 1984

Figure 22: School of Mantegna, *Virtus Combusta, An Allegory of Virtue* (upper half), ca.1495-1500.
Engraving on laid paper by Giovanni Antonioda Brescia, 27 x 41 cm, National Gallery of Art, London.
Image Source:
https://research.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details/collection_image_gallery.aspx?assetId=28229001&objectId=1343972&partId=1

Figure 23: Agnolo Bronzino, *Venus, Cupid and Satyr*, 1553-1555.
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Image Source:
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Figure 24: Ridolfo del Ghirlandaio, *Sua Cuique Persona*, c.1510.
Oil on panel, 73 x 50 cm, Uffizi Galleries, Florence.
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Oil on canvas, 111 x 150 cm. Paris.
Image Source:
Veca, Alberto, and Galleria Lorenzelli. Vanitas: *Il Simbolismo Del Tempo.* Bergamo: Galleria Lorenzelli, 1981.

Figure 4: Detail of Pieter Boel, *Vanitas con Putto*, 1622.
Image Source:
Veca, Alberto, and Galleria Lorenzelli. Vanitas: *Il Simbolismo Del Tempo.* Bergamo: Galleria Lorenzelli, 1981.

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Image Source:
Veca, Alberto, and Galleria Lorenzelli. Vanitas: *Il Simbolismo Del Tempo.* Bergamo: Galleria Lorenzelli, 1981.

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Engraving, Herzog Anton Ulrich-Museum, Braunschweig.
Image Source:
Leuschner, Eckhard. *Persona, Larva, Maske: Ikonologische Studien zum 16. Bis 18.* Jahrhundert, Europaische Hochschulschriften, Reihe 28, Kunstgeschichte, Frankfurt am Main, 1997.

Figure 29: Detail of Michelangelo Buonarroti, *The Last Judgment,* 1534-1541.
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Image Source:
https://library-artstor-org.jcu.idm.oclc.org/#/asset/AWSS35953_35953_31697430

Figure 30: Michelangelo Buonarroti, *Judith and Holofernes,* 1508-1512.
Fresco, Sistine Chapel, Vatican City.
Image Source:
https://library-artstor-org.jcu.idm.oclc.org/#/asset/LESSING_ART_1039902657

Figure 31: Ridolfo del Ghirlandaio, *La Monaca,* 1505-1515.
Oil on panel, 65 x 48 cm, Uffizi Galleries, Florence.
Image Source:
https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Donna_velata

Figure 32: *Funerary Altar of Amemptus* (front). 1559-1565.
Brown ink over black chalk pentimenti and guide lines, 18 x 14 cm,
Louvre, Paris.
Image Source:
Casamassima, Emanuele, and Ruth Rubinstein. *Antiquarian Drawings from Dosio's Roman Workshop: Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale Di Firenze, N.a. 1159: Catalogue.* First Edition. Inventari E Cataloghi Toscani, 45. Florence: Giunta Regionale Toscana, 1993.

Figure 33: Cast of the *Death Mask of Lorenzo de' Medici*, 1492.
Gypsum-based stucco mounted on poplar panel, 22 x 16 x 8 cm (mask), 58 x 44 x 5 cm (panel), Museo degli Argenti, Florence.
Image Source:
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Lorenzo_death_mask.jpg

Figure 34: *Brunelleschi's Death Mask*, 1446.
Museo dell'Opera del Duomo, Florence.
Image Source:
Schuyler, Jane. "Death Masks in Quattrocento Florence." *Notes in the History of Art* 5, no. 4 (1986): 1-6.

Figure 35: Detail of *Satiro che scuoia un capretto; Erodoto incoronato da Apollo*, Allegorical Scene, 1494. In *Herodoti... [Historiarum] incipit Laurentii Vallensi conversio de Graeco in Latino*,
Venetian engraver of the 15th century, Xylograph. Venetiis, per Gregorium de Gregoriis.
Image Source:
Furlan, Caterina, and Ludovico Rebaudo. "'Hercules Tristis Insaniae Poenitentia' : Su Un Disengo All'antica Di Bernardino Da Parenzo." *Annali Della Scuola Normale Superiore Di Pisa, Classe Di Lettere E Filosofia / Pubbl. a Cura Dei Professori Della Scuola Normale E Dell'università Di Pisa* 4. Ser. 7, (2005): 321-341.

Figure 36: *Enigmatic Stucco Relief* (copy of the invenzione drawn by Bernardo Parentino), 1559-1565.
Brown ink and wash over black chalk pentimenti, white chalk highlights, 26 x 20 cm.
Image Source:
Casamassima, Emanuele, and Ruth Rubinstein. *Antiquarian Drawings from Dosio's Roman Workshop: Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale Di Firenze, N.a. 1159: Catalogue.* First Edition. Inventari E Cataloghi Toscani, 45. Florence: Giunta Regionale Toscana, 1993.