

## The *Figura Sforzata*: modelling, power and the Mannerist body

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Sculpture begins, Benvenuto Cellini explains, when an artist works contortions into a piece of wax or clay:

A good man takes the clay or wax, and begins to impose upon it one of his 'graced' figures. I say 'graced' because, beginning with the frontal views, and before they are resolved, [the sculptor] raises, lowers, pulls forwards and backwards, bends and straightens the said figures' limbs many times.<sup>1</sup>

Cellini's comment is striking in several respects. For one thing, it treats the act of modelling, the careful manipulation of a small piece of soft material, as an heroic act. Modelling, the most delicate of the sculptor's operations, is nevertheless work for a *virtuoso*, for a *valentuomo*. From a purely technical point of view, moreover, the work Cellini describes the artist performing completely elides the actual forming of a figure. The man takes his piece of wax, and without yet doing anything, seems to find a creature with arms and legs already in hand. The details given in a contemporary text by Vasari – that the limbs can be made from wax sticks that the modeller rolls out in between his palms, that clay or wax can be built over a wire armature that gives the figure's skeleton both support and flexibility<sup>2</sup> – are all points, in Cellini, passed over without mention. For Cellini, the whole exercise of modelling is one of *bending*.

In view of Cellini's only surviving *bozzetto*, the wax sketch for his *Perseus and Medusa* now displayed in the Museo Nazionale in Florence (plate 18), the description of modelling he provides may come as little surprise. With Perseus posed – stepping, head bowed, right arm flexed, left arm raised – and with the truncated body of Medusa turned into a fantastical shape beneath him, the composition seems designed to move figural members with the greatest conceivable invention. Looking from this work to other examples of Florentine sculptural design in the second half of the sixteenth century, moreover, Cellini's account seems to target much more than his own personal interests. Works like Giambologna's *Florence and Pisa* (plate 19), Leone Leoni's *Charles v and Furor*, or Vincenzo Danti's *Honour and Deceit* (plate 20) belong, alongside Cellini's *Perseus and Medusa*, to a genre of imagery in which meaning resides in the folding of bodies. The victor, in these works and in many like them, is a figure who stands, largely vertical but intricately and gracefully flexed. The victim, meanwhile, is discomposed, all joints pushed to their limits.



18 Cellini, wax model for *Perseus and Medusa*, Museo Nazionale, Florence. Photo: Kunsthistorisches Institut, Florence.



19 Giambologna, *Florence and Pisa*. Museo Nazionale, Florence.  
Photo: Art Resource.

Heinrich Schickhardt, the court architect of the Duke of Württemberg, described Giambologna's *Florence and Pisa* as: 'a woman, much greater than life-size, upon a man who, marvelously bent together [*zusammengebogen*], kneels or stands, both figures naked, [and] made most artfully'.<sup>3</sup> In the older literature, figural contortion of the kind that interested this writer was treated as a hallmark of Giambologna's 'Mannerism'. More recent studies have suggested some ways in which the same sorts of composition might be associated with poetics and rhetoric instead, serving visual analogues for such literary figures as anaphora, chiasma and antithesis.<sup>4</sup> Given descriptions like those of Schickhardt and Cellini, however, yet another possibility for approaching these arises as well. As the surviving clay and wax models for Giambologna's *Florence and Pisa* (plate 21)



20 Vincenzo Danti, clay model for *Honour and Deceit*. Museo Nazionale, Florence. Photo: Kunsthistorisches Institut, Florence.

attest, the eight-foot marble monumentalized a design that was, quite literally, *zusammengebogen*. Posed, the figures were *contrapposti* in the participial sense of the term; the marble records the actions performed by a hand upon a body.

It is felicitous that Schickhardt's remark should have been made with reference to a work by Giambologna. Giambologna drew little, composing almost exclusively with models.<sup>5</sup> It is, tellingly, as a modeller that Giambologna's biographer, Baldinucci, has him present himself for the first and only time to Michelangelo:

[Giambologna then] came to Rome, where, in the two years he was there, he modeled [*modellò*] as beautifully as you could imagine. In his old age,



21 Giambologna, clay model for *Florence and Pisa*. Victoria and Albert Museum. Photo: V&A Picture Library.

he used to recount to his friends how, having one day made a model of his own invention, which he had finished, as we commonly say, with his breath, he went to show it to the great Michelangelo. Michelangelo took the model in hand, and immediately ruined it, but as seemed best to him, giving it a new attitude and resolving it, with marvelous bravura, into the total opposite of what the young man had made, saying, ‘Now, first go learn how to sketch [*bozzare*], and then how to finish.’<sup>6</sup>

A number of ideas in the passage closely echo those in Cellini: Michelangelo modelled, Baldinucci implies, by rearranging the limbs of an already extant figure (*attitudinandolo di nuovo*). This gesture, fittingly for the *valentuomo*, was one that involved *meravigliosa bravura*, virtuously ruining Giambologna’s figure, even while renovating it. One of the things Baldinucci must have heard from contemporaries, or inferred from extant works, is that Giambologna, in his earliest days, not only studied Michelangelo’s sculpture, but did so in the medium of wax. Michelangelo’s reaction to these exercises might be read in various ways: as an honest attempt at instruction; as a gesture of frustration at the youngster’s misunderstanding of his work; as an act of emulation, performing a *contrapposto* on Giambologna’s invention. What it shows about Giambologna, though, is that the newcomer wanted to learn, above all, how Michelangelo used flexible



22 Federico Zuccaro, *Portrait of Giambologna*. National Gallery, Edinburgh. Photo: National Galleries of Scotland.

materials to resolve designs. Throughout the early pages of Baldinucci's *Life*, the writer presents Giambologna as a modeller, and other evidence suggests that this was not just a post-facto invention.<sup>7</sup> It is with what is presumably a copy after Michelangelo's model for his *Samson* – the subject Giambologna used for his own earliest monumental marble work – that Giambologna appears in the portrait drawn of him by Federico Zuccaro (plate 22).<sup>8</sup> No less importantly, it is with one of the earliest recorded collectors of wax *bozzetti*, Bernardo Vecchiotti, that Giambologna lived during his early years in Florence.<sup>9</sup> Raffaello Borghini records that one room of Vecchiotti's villa was filled with 'modelli by Giambologna, and statues by other masters'.<sup>10</sup> And it is to Vecchiotti, and perhaps thus indirectly to Giambologna, that we also owe the survival of Benvenuto Cellini's wax study for his *Perseus*.

The present essay begins with a descriptive proposition; its first premise is that the art of sculpture practised in Italy in the wake of Michelangelo, and notably the art of Cellini and Giambologna, is an art of modelling. From this point of departure, it will ask what we gain by describing the works of these sculptors not just as *contrapposte*, or *serpentine*, but more specifically as *zusammengebogen*. Why might the process of bending shapes itself have held interest for the artists? Why was this sculptural act in particular so significant to them? What were the conditions in which such a strategic use of modelling could take on meaning?

Focused as they were on how Michelangelo's figural style might be recaptured in wax, sculptors must have been intrigued by the rumours reported by Armenini:

Who is there who does not yet recognize that, having before oneself a figure or two in full relief, one can, merely by turning them so that they face in different directions, draw from them many figures for one's painting, and all differing from one another? It is in this way that the *Judgement* of Michelangelo should be considered, its artist having used the means I am relating. Some, in fact, say that he made certain figures of wax with his own hand, and that he twisted [*torceva*] their members as he wished, first softening their joints in warm water, so that, re-softened, they would come out well.<sup>11</sup>

Armenini's account attributes to Michelangelo much the same process we have seen described elsewhere: the modeller in wax does not figure, mash, roll, or stretch his form; softening its joints, he bends it. Though nothing else has come down to us that might corroborate Armenini's comments, it nevertheless shows that contemporaries *imagined* works like the *Last Judgement* to be the result of wax modelling. The fresco becomes a vast *summa* of the different ways in which wax bodies could be turned.<sup>12</sup>

It was, in fact, the bent bodies in the *Last Judgement* that provoked some of the frescoes' most ardent and attentive criticism. The sharpest of this appears in the writing of a man who found the painting disturbing, Giovanni Andrea Gilio da Fabriano. As Gilio's attack on Michelangelo's *Last Judgement* has been analysed by a number of recent scholars, there is no need to rehearse here the full range of his complaints, their theological basis, or their impact on later painters

and writers.<sup>13</sup> What is relevant, however, is to draw attention to what Gilio thought Michelangelo's bent forms demonstrated. Gilio conveys his understanding of these forms by relating them to a central term in his critical vocabulary, the verb *sforzare* and its cognates *sforzato* and *sforzo*.

The role that *sforzi* were to play in Gilio's discussion is foreshadowed already in the dedication with which he prefaces his dialogue:

I am amazed that this beautiful and excellent art has neither book nor rule that could give painters the way and the order in which they ought to make every manner of figure. Because of this, most of these painters go dissolutely along, committing infinite errors in their stories [*historie*], as one can see clearly throughout Italy, and still more in Rome. It seemed to me that for this reason, modern painters today, when they have to make some work, have as their first intent to twist [*torcere*] the head, the arms, or the legs of their figures. Thus one says that [the figures] are *sforzate*, and these *sforzi* are sometimes such that it would be better for them not to be there, for [the painters] think little about doing the subject of their story, if they consider it at all.<sup>14</sup>

Gilio declares that *sforzate* figures distil what is excessive in the licence of painters. As the dedication presents the problem, the danger of *sforzi* is that they distract artists from the issues that they should properly be considering. *Sforzi* absorb painters to the point that the artists forget their pictures have subjects.

Gilio's ideas about *sforzi* engage one of his fundamental distinctions, that between poetry and history.<sup>15</sup> When, in the introduction, Gilio presents *sforzi* as a manifestation of licence, he makes it plain that he draws his concept of licence from a reading of Horace's *Ars Poetica*.<sup>16</sup> Already in the dedication, he suggests that 'nearly all follow the saying of Horace, that to the painter, as to the poet, everything is licit.'<sup>17</sup> A central question in the dialogue proper is how much licence the doctrine of *ut pictura poesis* allows. The problem of *sforzi* comes up in this context a few pages along:

When one is purely a poet, I think that it is legitimate for him to paint all that his caprice tells him to, with those gestures, with those *sforzi*, that are fitting to the figure that he makes. Of this we have the example of the Chigi Loggia, where Raphael painted the Feast of the Gods with those actions and *sforzi* that caprice brought to his mind.<sup>18</sup>

Gilio brings up Raphael's loggia to contrast it with Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel; the former exemplifies poetical, the latter historical painting. For Gilio, this distinction excuses Raphael from the charges Michelangelo will face throughout the dialogue. The problems of decorous action that guide the censure of the Sistine Chapel evaporate when the painter's subject is poetic. For Gilio, a story involving pagan characters is not, properly speaking, a story (or history) at all, and it therefore carries no requirements for the poses of its characters. The implications of this are far reaching. It entails, for example, that the difference between sacred and secular painting extends even to style. In so far as *sforzi* are a product of the artist's



caprice, both the postures the artist gives to figures, and the way those figures are used to compose his scene, are matters for free invention – a principle that by no means holds for history painting. The distinction also indicates something about what *sforzi* are to the poetic painter. Although Gilio seems to use the terms *gesti*, *atti*, and *sforzi* as synonyms, the thrust of his claim is that *sforzi* are governed by the interests of variety and decoration. Being *capricci*, they are ‘*senza regola, e senza legge alcuna*’, serving only the ‘*ornamento de la pittura*’.<sup>19</sup>

All of this changes when one is a history painter, for the postures in history paintings, unlike those in poetries, must, according to Gilio, be accountable as *actions*. Consider his objection to Michelangelo’s depiction of angels (plate 23):

[Messer Francesco said:] For this reason, I do not praise the *sforzi* that the Angels make in Michelangelo’s *Judgement* – I’m talking about those who hold the cross, the column, and the other holy mysteries, who represent jesters or jugglers rather than Angels. Angels hold the entire globe of the Earth without any effort [*senza fatica*], not to speak of a cross, or a column or something similar.

Messer Silvio responded: that was done only to show the splendour and the force of art.<sup>20</sup>

In this passage, it becomes evident that *sforzi* might not be just caprices. They can also imply some sense of work; they can suggest the application of force (*forza*).



23 Michelangelo, detail of *The Last Judgement*. Sistine Chapel, Vatican. Photo: Art Resource.

The problem with Michelangelo's angels is that they exert themselves (*si sforzano*); their bearing suggests that the objects they carry are a burden. For Gilio, this means that the *sforzi* involve a theological error: angels can never exert themselves, because they have limitless strength. Gilio's real worry, however, is not that Michelangelo misrepresented the angels' nature, but that he was indifferent to it. The possibility that 'Silvio' offers and that Gilio fears is that Michelangelo never actually intended to indicate anything about angels; the *sforzi* are there not to show the angel's force, but rather to index what Gilio calls the *forza de l'arte*.

To a certain extent, Gilio's comments here follow Alberti's criticism of conspicuously artificial invention.<sup>21</sup> Alberti was suspicious of the identification of painting with poetry, and Gilio shares the suspicion, even as he ultimately seeks to distinguish the sister arts on somewhat different terms. As *sforzate* figures are dangerous only where the truth of a story is at issue, Gilio allows that such figures are acceptable, even desirable, in *poesie*. Only in *storie*, where the viewer instinctively looks to the narrative of the scene to find the rationale for the postures and actions of the characters, do *sforzi* become a real concern. As *sforzi* obstruct this mode of reading, disjoining action and event, there are very few kinds of narrative that, according to Gilio, *sforzi* would suit. They may not appear, for example, in works where the relevant figure is to be noble or glorious: hence, in paintings of the Last Judgement, figures of Christ should be 'resplendent, shining, glorious, held in majesty with great magnificence by thousands of Angels, not with those tangles, nor with *sforzi*, moresques, or bagatelles, which you admire just because Michelangelo did them'.<sup>22</sup> If the figure is twisted, it fails to represent the protagonist in a fittingly triumphant form. At the same time, *sforzi* are no less suspicious in cases where the point is to show debasement. Thus, when Gilio describes how Christ should be shown in scenes from the Passion, he proposes that Christ be 'afflicted, bloody, covered with spit, abused, wounded, deformed, livid and ugly' – but not *sforzato*. As the aim of such an image is to show Christ reduced to the point that 'he doesn't have a man's form', a *sforzo*, which inherently aims to 'express well all of the muscles and all of the members of that well-composed body', would be indecorous.<sup>23</sup> The single instance Gilio offers, in fact, of a history painting with an appropriately employed *sforzo*, is Raphael's *Transfiguration* (plate 24), in which a possessed boy is shown 'in a *sforzato* attitude, with swollen throat and twisted hands, as those afflicted by similar evils are apt to be'.<sup>24</sup> The example is not accidental. Contemporary writers on demonic magic could themselves specify that the insane are like people *da Demonij sforzati* – the possessed 'become twisted with strange forces' [*con strane forze si storceuono*].<sup>25</sup> In the context of Gilio's argument, moreover, the reference to Raphael is telling, for it exposes the kind of infiltration that Gilio generally imagines the *figura sforzata* to involve. A *sforzo*, Gilio understands, can imply an invasive *forza*. Just as the twisting of the possessed boy shows that something has got *into* him, so does the posture of an angel, or of Christ, prompt Gilio to ask whether something has got into that scene from outside, something that overrides the principle of historical or factual probability. This invasive force, Gilio allows, might be nothing other than art itself. 'To show the *forza de l'arte* has always been the intent of artificers.'

The kinds of criticism Gilio levelled against Michelangelo appear to have been representative, though not normative, for his time. Some contemporaries seem to have brought his objections to bear not only on ‘historical,’ but also on ‘poetic’ works; others seem to have dismissed them as misguided. Consider, for example, Baldinucci’s report of the unveiling of Giambologna’s *Hercules and the Centaur* (plate 25). At the event, he tells us, the statue was mocked for showing Hercules in in



24 Raphael,  
detail of *The  
Transfiguration*.  
Pinacoteca, Vatican.  
Photo: Art Resource.



25 Giambologna,  
*Hercules and the  
Centaur*. Loggia de'  
Lanzi. Photo: Wolf  
Löhr.

such a way that he seems about to miss the Centaur with his club. To such satires Baldinucci offers the following response:

This was certainly one of the most masterful works that the chisel of Giovanni Bologna ever formed. And I would respond to whoever writes, with the sentence of I know not what fencing master, that if that Hercules unloads the blow, it would not be within range to strike the centaur, that if one considers well, one would discern clearly that Hercules is not in the act of beating the centaur, but rather of drawing up his arm to put it in range to strike. And if then such a response as this is not satisfactory, I would go

on to say that perhaps Giovanni Bologna himself foresaw this [criticism], but nevertheless, the attitude in his model having turned out so marvellously well, for that reason he then made the marble statue, that is, to assure himself that the statue would never to its shame have to discharge an empty blow, and thus would never have to give occasion for others to make fun of him.<sup>26</sup>

Baldinucci suggests that Giambologna knew perfectly well that the work might be criticized for the inconsistency between its pose and its story, yet carried out the marble anyway, *just because* his model was so marvellous. Marble statues do not exist in order to act things out; they exist to show the quality of the design on which they are based. Artists do not create poses as a means to telling stories; poses are an end in themselves. Bent bodies, whatever their context, read first as demonstrations of artistry; narrative is subsidiary, if not irrelevant.

Baldinucci's manner of looking at Giambologna is consonant with Armenini's manner of looking at Michelangelo: both look through the finished products to the imagined models behind them. And though Gilio's discussion of *sforzi* is not explicit about this, the historical vocabulary it provides can also be placed into a similarly oriented tradition of criticism. Pietro Aretino, for example, admired the figure that, *bent* to the ground, showed a 'sforzata facilitade'.<sup>27</sup> Paolo Pino recommended that *inventione*, which comprised 'devising poems and histories on one's own', also required that, in every work, the artist 'include at least one figure that is all *sforziata, misteriosa e difficile*'.<sup>28</sup> Still more intriguing is a passage from Benedetto Varchi's 'Della Natura', a lecture the poet-critic read in Florence during Lent 1547. Varchi's comments focus on Petrarch's lines 'Ubbidire a Natura in tutto è 'l meglio/ Che a contender con lei 'l tempo ne sforza' ('to obey Nature in all is best, for time takes away the power to oppose her'), about which he has the following to say:

Here we ought incidentally to note, with regard to our language, that the word *sforza* was used by [Petrarch], I don't know whether improperly, but certainly in a novel manner, since he composed it from the verb *forzare* and from the letter *s*, which is often placed at the front of a word to give it a contrary meaning, as we have noted elsewhere. Accordingly, *sforza* in this instance means nothing other than 'deprives of forces [*forze*] and robs of possibility', and, as we would say 'enervates'. It is used sometimes by doctors to describe the form of the body – not for the substantial form, which is the soul – but for the figure, as Galen notes in his 34th Aphorism, e.g., for one who has a long neck or short legs and other similar things.<sup>29</sup>

Varchi's lines, like Pino's, associate *sforzare*, the robbing of forces, with particular cases of the human form, or figure. With their supposition that a *sforzo* pertains only to the body, not to the soul that shapes it, moreover, Varchi's comments, like Gilio's, raise the more general question of how the depicted body provides a medium for applied and withdrawn forces. The claim that the notion of a *sforzo* arose as the antithesis, or complement, to the action of *forzare*, forcing or compelling, anticipates the contrapposto of *forza* and *sforzo* that Gilio finds in

Michelangelo. Likewise comparable to Gilio is Varchi's association of the concept with Petrarchanism, and hence *pars pro toto* with poetics generally. Varchi goes as far as to wonder whether the concept of the *sforzo* was *invented* by Petrarch. The claim lends weight to Gilio's fear that *sforzi* ultimately reveal poetic licence, the painter's emulation of the poet's use of force. For Varchi, it further allows the term *sforzare* to be associated both with his favorite topic, the Florentine vernacular, and with the identity of Italian artistic modernity as such, a prospect not unrelated to Gilio's own concerns with the nature of Renaissance art and Michelangelo's influence upon it.

All of this encourages another look at Michelangelo himself, the artist who fascinated all the writers we have been considering, the artist who, by mid-century, seems to have started so many people thinking about the poetics of bent forms. The most famous of Michelangelo's actual poems, in his own day as in ours, was the sonnet beginning 'Non ha l'ottimo Artista alcun concetto/ch'un marmo solo in sè non circoscrive', probably composed around 1537 (towards the end of his work on the *Last Judgement*). The poem's conceit turns on a comparison between the sculptor's marble, in which the artist's *concetto* can be unveiled, and the poet's beloved, from whom the true artist can withdraw pleasure, joy and happiness. While modern writers have proposed various glosses for the sonnet, Varchi's own 1547 commentary (published in 1549) suggests that, to contemporaries, the poem attributed to the sculptor the power to realize *any* imaginable form in a given block.<sup>30</sup> To say that 'the excellent artist has no *concetto* that a single marble does not enclose with its excess' is to say that the starting contours of a block present the excellent artist with no limitations. Varchi identifies Michelangelo's term *concetto* with what he calls a *modello*, and he writes that 'art is nothing other than the form, that is, the *modello*, of the artificial thing . . . which form or *modello* is the factive beginning of the artificial form in matter.'<sup>31</sup> As David Summers has observed, Varchi's equation of *concetto* and *modello* evokes the wax figures used by both sculptors and painters to fix the idea for their final works (plate 26). Varchi's claim is thus similar to Cellini's, that good sculptors 'take up earth or wax to express their *concetto*'.<sup>32</sup> Both the poem and its reception, consequently, are helpful for the present discussion. They indicate the ease with which Michelangelo's poetic self-image already implicated the making of sculpture, be it in wax or in stone. They demonstrate his interest in the relationship between the theme of sculptural creation and that of love. And they suggest how all these topics might be coordinated through a notion of the material's dependence on the artist, its conversion to passivity before an artist who imposes an idea on it.

Varchi's take offers a line of reading for a number of other early Michelangelo poems which, although less explicitly about art, and lacking contemporary exposition, raise consonant themes. Consider, for example, the following fragment:

Chi è quel che per forza a te mi mena,  
oilmè, oilmè, oilmè,  
legato e stretto, e son libero e sciolto?  
Se tu incateni altrui senza catena,  
e senza mane o braccia m'hai raccolto,  
chi mi difenderà dal tuo bel volto?<sup>33</sup>



26 Michaelangelo, wax model for 'Young Slave'. Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Photo: V & A Picture Library.

The imagery here is typical of the Petrarchan descriptions of twisted selves, tied out of shape because laced to a beloved, that can be found throughout Michelangelo's early sonnets. Here, as elsewhere, Michelangelo associates the moving of the body with captivation and servitude.<sup>34</sup> *Sforzi* read, in Michelangelo as in Varchi, in relation to a missing *forza*. At the same time, however, the verses allow that Michelangelo, far more than Varchi, appreciated the paradoxes created by such a schema. Absent in Michelangelo is any sort of rigorous opposition between strength and weakness; the sculptor's *sforzate* figures, on the contrary, are charged with psychic and physical potential, activated in their self-loss. Michelangelo, no less than Varchi, was fascinated with deformity, but his bodies, unlike those Varchi describes, aim to show how power, movement and freedom might become manifest precisely in their surrender.

It is tempting to compare the ideas Michelangelo pursues in his poems to those he works out in his art, where bands, ribbons and fillets ubiquitously tie up figures (plate 27). The laments of the verse quoted above, for example, might well be put into the mouths of Michelangelo's apparently suffering prisoners. If Michelangelo's lines are added to the words he and others attributed to his creations, however, they do not read only as embodiments of a Petrarchan subjective voice. They also figure an *address*, to a mover. Consider another madrigal, which appears on the same folio as the verse just cited:

Come può esser ch'io non sia più  
mio?  
O Dio, o Dio, o Dio,  
chi m'ha tolto a me stesso,  
c'a me fusse più presso



27 Michelangelo, '*Bearded Slave*'. Accademia, Florence. Photo: Art Resource.



o più di me potessi che poss'io?  
 O Dio, o Dio, o Dio,  
 come mi passa el core  
 chi non par che mi tocchi?  
 ...<sup>35</sup>

The second and sixth lines ostensibly work as an apostrophe to God. Yet the lines might just as well carry double entendres – ‘O Dio, od io, o Dio,’ for example – a possibility encouraged not only by the first person pronouns used before both lines for rhyme, but also by the focus of the poem itself, the self-division of the speaker. Articulating a subject that moves between being its own and belonging to another, the poem imagines the experience of being taken over, possessed. The product of a writer whose other arts treated the subjects of God’s creation, and who, for this art, was himself called divine, such a poem might well treat, even simultaneously, the binds of poet and beloved, artist and God, sculpture and sculptor.

Many of Michelangelo’s works explore the possibility of showing a force that exists only outside, or beyond, the figures that convey it. Like the implication of the giant *David*’s furrowed brow, that there is, nearby, a yet greater Goliath, these *sforzate* bodies attempt to prove what *else* is around. It is just this aspect of Michelangelo’s figures that would later raise Gilio’s own worries, for *sforzi* that allude to a not-quite-knowable outside mover always allow the possibility that that mover is not God, but rather an all-too-human force of artifice. Thus, another partial sonnet, adapting one from Petrarch, ends:

Quinci oltre mi legò, quivi mi sciolse;  
 per me qui piansi, e con doglia infinita  
 da questo sasso vidi far partita  
 colui c’a me mi tolse e non mi volse<sup>36</sup>

The sonnet dates to the years in which Michelangelo was working on his ‘slave’ and ‘victory’ figures. With Michelangelo as the author, and with the agent identified as a male ‘colui’, the poem’s *sasso* might well be read as one of the stones Michelangelo spent his days contemplating. The action of this poem, on this gloss, would be consistent with that of Michelangelo’s earlier writings – the speaker is tied, taken from himself. If the poem’s voice is donated to the sculptures, the sculptor’s own agency comes to occupy the position of the beloved. By representing force through the contortions that prove its actions, the power of artistic *ingegno* appears where self-causation is absent. The lines might be read as a sort of complement to another of his verses, from roughly the same period:

Io crederrei, se tu fussi di sasso,  
 amarti con tal fede, ch’i’ potrei  
 farti meco venir più che di passo;  
 se fussi morto, parlar ti farei  
 ...<sup>37</sup>

Here the writer openly describes himself as a *sasso's* lover and life-giver, the spirit that makes it talk, live and speak.

While no sixteenth-century writer meditated as deeply as Michelangelo on the complex agency that sculpture involved, the ideas in these poems might nevertheless be viewed against the period's tendency to read sculpture in metonymic terms. Cellini satirized Bartolommeo Ammannati by comparing the sculptor to his figure of Hercules, and the sculptor's product to the *sforzato* Antaeus.<sup>38</sup> Pierino da Vinci's *Samson and a Philistine* – a response, significantly, to the famous Michelangelo model later put in Giambologna's hands – seems to give the victim the face of Michelangelo.<sup>39</sup> While no contemporary evidence has surfaced to indicate how this conceit was originally intended or interpreted, the work does suggest that the emulation of the great master could be linked in particular to the bending of antagonistic forms. Is Pierino here suggesting that he has conquered Michelangelo's figure, or is he, alternatively, nodding to Michelangelo's self-identification with the state of enslavement? Explicit identifications of the sculptor and his protagonist appear in contemporaries' responses to Giambologna's *Rape of a Sabine* (plate 28). As Bernardo Davanzati wrote to its artist:

Quest'opra, eterna Idea, e simulacro  
 e gloria della bella arte divina  
 da far' tutti stancar' gl'ottimi Artisti  
 è Giambologna mio, la tua Sabina.  
 Tu se' il Talassio; il lungo studio, e macro  
 è il vecchio padre à cui tu la rapisti.<sup>40</sup>

Who are the 'ottimi artisti' to whom Davanzati refers? Perhaps the phrase designates the camp to which Giambologna proves himself to belong: he, like all great artists, tires himself with study. Given Varchi's publication, on the other hand, the allusion could well be to Michelangelo. In this case, the spent old man, folding up at youth's feet, would represent the condition of the artists of the past; the 'study' would be that which exhausted others, but which has, with Giambologna, yielded a renewed sculptural achievement. Either way, the poem accommodates an epistemological allegory to a triumphal sculptural format. The artist with the idea is opposed to – imposed upon – the old man without one. Idea and art are mapped onto an image of force. Youthful strength is equated with intellectual fertility, while crumpled defeat is marked with the vacated forces, artistic and otherwise, of old age.

Giambologna seems to have been particularly interested in Michelangelo's 'slaves': on the list of the 'many figures by Giambologna in wax, clay, and bronze' that Vecchiotti owned, the first category was 'prisoners.'<sup>41</sup> And a range of artists, looking at the model Michelangelo provided for thinking about the relation between artist and artwork, discovered the variety of ends to which the dialectic of the *sforzo* could be turned. A particularly interesting case is that of Cellini. We know, to begin, that Cellini appreciated something he understood as Michelangelo's *forza*; we even find him using this quality as a criterion to explain his preferences in Michelangelo vintage. In admiring what he calls the *gesti* of Michelangelo's *Battle of Cascina*, Cellini writes: 'Although the divine Michelangelo made Pope Julius's great chapel after that, he never again made anything half as good [as the *Battle of Cascina*]: his



28 Giambologna, *The Rape of a Sabine*, Piazza della Signoria, Florence.  
Photo: Wolf Löhr.

*virtù* never again attained the *forza* of those first studies.<sup>42</sup> *Virtù* and *forza*, moreover, are evident preoccupations throughout Cellini's *oeuvre*, and as his remarks on modelling already suggest, these preoccupations coincided with a thoroughly self-aware bending of figures. The variety of self-alienation that seems vital to Michelangelo's forms is mostly absent in Cellini, but an attention to the images of making through which Michelangelo expressed his concerns nevertheless forms the basis of Cellini's art as well.

Among Cellini's most revealing statements about the *figura sforzata* is his discourse 'On the Principles and the Way to Teach the Art of Drawing,' a short piece written in the mid-1560s, in the context of debates over the curriculum to be instituted for the newly founded Accademia del Disegno. The primary ambition of Cellini's essay is to reduce the human body to a learnable structure, a project that leads Cellini to treat the human skeleton as the basis of a mnemonic scheme:

Because the entire importance of such capacities as these consists in making a nude man and woman well, you must realize that, to do them well and reduce them safely to memory, you need to come to the foundation of nude bodies. This foundation is their bones, such that, when you have committed a skeleton to memory, you can never make a figure, be it nude or clothed, with errors – and that is a great thing to say. I will not go so far as to say that you will be certain of making your figures with better or worse grace by this means, but only that it will allow you to make them without errors, and of this I can assure you.<sup>43</sup>

In 'reducing' the body to a *fondamento* of bones, Cellini attempts to fuse the learning of drawing with traditional rhetorical exercises. The positions of the bones serve as the *loci* that Frances Yates and others have demonstrated to be the crucial organizational terms in the classical understanding of the development of artificial memory.<sup>44</sup> Turned into *loci*, the bones come to exist in an order, one governed not only by their sequence of connections in the skeleton, but also by the ideal progress of the student. Beginning with the tibia, so simple a form as to be masterable by even the weak student in two attempts, the course ends with the head, 'man's most beautiful part', in which the bones, owing to their complexity, must be studied from many points of view.<sup>45</sup> Cellini aims to show his own knowledge of that order through the very exercise of writing, from memory, his treatise.<sup>46</sup>

This explains Cellini's preference, at various moments, for promoting the study of bones over the study of muscles. And it eventually leads Cellini to make some rather surprising remarks about the body's display of force: 'When an arm shows some *forza*, a bone such as this makes the most diverse and beautiful actions, and he who understands this will make it show very beautifully on the back, because the bone shows itself far above the muscles, and has the name *os scapularis*.'<sup>47</sup> According to Cellini, the interest of the flexed arm is not, as one might expect, the demonstration of a large bicep; rather it is the effect that that arm generates on the figure's back, where, in response to the arm's movement, bones are pressed to the covering surface of skin. Having a figure tense its body is pleasing not because of the potential strength the figure is shown to have; it is

pleasing because, tensed, a figure's skeleton is turned in appealing ways. Remarkably, Cellini goes on to assert that Michelangelo's own art evidences this:

And to show you an example of this and to adduce a very great author, [I would have you] look at the works of master Michelangelo Buonarroti, for his high manner is so different from the others and from that which was seen in the past, and is so pleasing, for no other reason than for his having upheld this order of the bones. And to see that this is so, look at all of his works, sculptures as well as paintings for the most beautiful muscles posed well in their places have not done him so much honour as his showing of the bones.<sup>48</sup>

When Cellini makes his own slim, ribby, twisting, fleshless creatures (plate 29), he may well be following what he takes to be Michelangelo's example.

This provides the first sense in which Cellini's figures, like Michelangelo's, might usefully be described as *sforzate*. In contrast to his nemesis Baccio Bandinelli, whom Cellini condemned repeatedly for his favour of corporeal mass and for his ludicrously exaggerated rendering of muscles, Cellini understood the virtue of his art to involve its whittling away of strength. Perhaps it is on account of his denigration of muscles that Cellini's figures largely avoid the impression of movement. They pose, and in posing, their bones rest (*posano*) in beautiful positions.

Cellini's figures may also help explain what their maker means with his reference to Michelangelo's *forza*, for the successful memorization of bodies, and the display of memory in poses that highlight the body's skeletal armature, amount, for Cellini, to a sort of artistic conquest. Recommending that beginning students draw a tibia before drawing an eye, Cellini explains that

Putting such a principle before an adolescent of a tender age, it is most certain that it will seem to him that he is to portray a little stick. And because the most important thing in all of the most noble arts – wanting to defeat and dominate them – consists in nothing other than taking spirit over them [volendole vincere e dominare, non in altro consiste che nel pigliare animo sopra di loro], there will not be found even the most faint-hearted lad who, beginning to draw such a bone-stick, will not manage to do it, if not on the first, at least on the second go. Such cannot be said when one sets oneself to drawing an eye.<sup>49</sup>

The attraction of Cellini's course of study is that it allows the artist to overcome the figure, to dominate it, with memory as his weapon. A figure is conquered when it is paralysed into an artful order.

As Cellini's actual sculpture shows, his interest in the *figura sforzata* extends beyond the study of anatomy. Consider, for instance, his designs for the Porte Dorée of King Francis I's chateau at Fontainebleau. Nancy Vickers has drawn attention to Cellini's boast about his cruel treatment of the woman who modelled for one part of this work, the *Nymph* (plate 30) that was to serve as the overdoor: 'I made her remain in great discomfort hour after hour, and



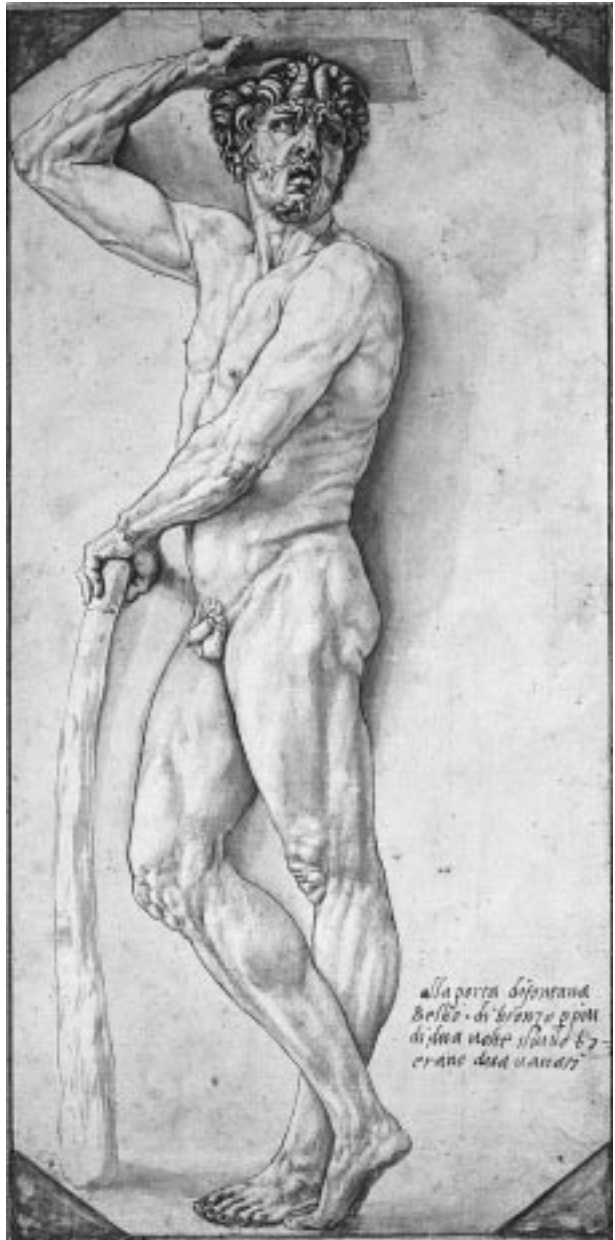
29 Cellini, *Narcissus*, Museo Nazionale, Florence. Photo: Kunsthistorisches Institut.



30 Cellini, *Nymph of Fontainebleau*, Paris: Louvre. Photo: © RMN/Art Resource.

remaining in this discomfort caused her great pain, and to the same degree brought me delight, for she had the most beautiful form and brought me the greatest honour.<sup>50</sup> Cellini imagines there to be a kind of reciprocity between his model's loss of agency in being forced to hold an awkward pose and his own empowerment in mastering the pose in his art.<sup>51</sup> The *Nymph* and its model, however, were not the only figures in the ensemble to be turned. Cellini's works for the entrance – which complemented frescoes by Primaticcio showing Hercules's enslavement to Omphale<sup>52</sup> – included two satyrs, serving as supports, one of which leaned on a club, Hercules's own attribute (plate 31). Carrying the stories above, the satyrs would have evoked the well-known explanation Vitruvius gave for the earliest caryatids: the original support figures were effigies of slaves, their status indicated by their condemnation to bear the weight of the building.<sup>53</sup> That Cellini's satyrs are, moreover, bent in a manner that recalls the Michelangelo slaves he would have known from Florence suggests how conceptually layered the *sforzo's* display of mastery could be. The Fontainebleau ensemble reminds the viewer that retirement to the wood requires a renunciation of the life of action; at the Porte Dorée, one surrenders one's force. Presided over by the Victories that originally surmounted Cellini's doorway, *all* the figures in the portal – Hercules, the satyrs, the king and the nymph herself – seem conquered.

Reading Cellini's thoughts both on the study of anatomy and on the use of the live model, it is worth asking how these conform with his more basic exercises of design. We know, for example, that although Cellini's first move in designing the *Perseus and Medusa* was to establish its form in wax (plates 18 and 32), he subsequently studied the individual figures by having studio hands adopt the model's poses – by having his subordinates, that is, take on the attitudes he had



31 Cellini, *Satyr*. Washington: National Gallery of Art, Woodner Collection. Photo: © 2001 Board of Trustees, National Gallery of Art, Washington.

earlier turned.<sup>54</sup> The *Perseus*, too, is an image of victory, and here, too, the victim is decidedly bent – Cellini himself, in fact, refers to ‘that *femmina scontorta* who is under the feet of Perseus’<sup>55</sup> Contortion, here as with the *Nymph* and satyrs, is associated with a state of domination. And with Medusa in particular, that domination serves a vivid demonstration of self-loss. In a poem on the statue, Cellini draws particular attention to the animation that Medusa’s body, subjected to Perseus’s sword, surrenders:



Qualche saggio di me Perseo pur mostra  
 in alto ha 'l testio e 'l crudel ferro tinto,  
 sotto ha 'l cadavro e non di spirito privo.<sup>56</sup>

Cellini's vocabulary here is consistent with that of the other poets who wrote about his statue, and it unmistakably recalls the terms Vasari used when writing in the same years about the statue to which the Perseus was to be a pendant, Donatello's *Judith and Holofernes*.<sup>58</sup> In both instances, the works' conceit depends on a contrapposto between containment and evacuation, the spirit and its taking. The conceit is close to the notion we have seen Cellini articulate in his discourse on drawing, when the student, faced with enemy bones, is enjoined to 'pigliar animo sopra di loro'. Yet it is also noteworthy that Cellini does not allow his Medusa to be deprived of spirits, for as such, the figure brings out the full paradox of the *figura sforzata*. In the exposure of Medusa's animus, Cellini puts himself in the role of the deus artifex, the sculptor empowered not only to make, but also to move, his creation. Yet inasmuch as Medusa's spirits, to stand in opposition to Perseus's, must be *lost*, her *forza*, her *sforzo*, must also be empty. Both in her life and in her death, Medusa offers the conditions of Perseus's, and Cellini's, own virtue.

Other remarks by Cellini equally demonstrate his awareness of the dialectics of *forza*. He writes, for instance, that when the evil Bandinelli saw the great *Perseus*, he was 'sforzato dalla forza della virtù dell'arte', and compelled to recognize the worth of Cellini's work.<sup>58</sup> The comment offers a template for understanding Cellini's victories over his antagonist throughout the *Vita*. Cellini's enemy, confronted with the self-contained power of Cellini's *sprezzatura*, loses the composure that Cellini himself never fails to maintain.<sup>59</sup> All this, finally, points up the fundamental difference between the aesthetic sensibilities of Cellini and those of Michelangelo. Whereas *sforzi* occupied Michelangelo for their implication of self-loss in the face of an invisible force, they attracted Cellini for their potential to *attribute* force to a master who, as a good courtier, had to mask it.<sup>60</sup>

Baldinucci regarded Giambologna's art as, distinctively, an art of bending figures. This essay set out both to validate that view, and to demonstrate that the aesthetic of the bent figure to which Giambologna responded – the aesthetic, that is, of the exemplary modellers who preceded him – brought together, in the thought of his contemporaries, ideas of artistry and force. A technical basis of design, the process of bending figures in wax encouraged a particular kind of form, the *figura sforzata*. The interest in a set of artistic problems, conversely, encouraged related kinds of formal and technical experimentation. We have seen the poetics of artistry that Giambologna's *Rape of a Sabine* provoked. To tie this, too, to the essay's opening question, it need only be recalled that the monumental work Giambologna ultimately made for the Loggia de' Lanzi, like so many other colossal Giambologna pieces, is based on a small figure that the artist had been working for years.<sup>61</sup>

It is not surprising that Giambologna, courtier to the Medici, heir both to Michelangelo and to a generation's responses to Michelangelo's work, witness to discussions prompted by both Varchi and Gilio, took it upon himself to lay bare



32 Cellini, *Perseus and Medusa*.  
Piazza della Signoria, Florence.  
Photo: Wolf Löhr.



33 Giambologna, *Samson and a Philistine*, Victoria and Albert Museum, London: Photo: V & A Picture Library.

the architecture of contortion. And perhaps, with this in mind, it is best to end with a return to Giambologna's beginning, the *Samson and a Philistine* (plate 33) that was his first large marble. Giambologna's work departs from, as much as it responds to, the works of Michelangelo and Cellini. For all their interest in how figures get turned, both Cellini and Michelangelo, for different reasons, resisted showing brute creatural strength. While both might think and write about bent forms, their art depended on a certain indirectness: in Cellini's *Perseus*, the hero seems indifferent to his victim; in Michelangelo's sculptures, the operator might be absent altogether. This lends a particular drama to Giambologna's own choices. For when he made his *Samson*, crumpling at his waist a Philistine who, mouth open, renders up his last breath, Giambologna unmasked the force behind the *sforzo*. With a colossal, *zusammengebogene* group, Giambologna showed of sculpture what Gilio knew of painting: that when a figure is bent, someone is doing the bending. If the Philistine has been mastered, it is because a *virtuoso* has bent him into shape.

To begin with Samson was undoubtedly a considered choice, for it alluded to the model by Michelangelo that all knew. It was, however, to be but the first of many sculptures by Giambologna that engaged with what his predecessors had left him, making his figures represent both the origin of force, and the vehicle of it. Giambologna's sculpture is a sculpture of the hand, an art of the *mano*, and for this reason it may be, quite literally, supremely 'mannerist'. To the degree that it is that, however, it is also a supremely realist art. Showing the hand that drove his contemporaries' fantasies and fears about the power of artistry, Giambologna exposed the *forza* that Michelangelo and Cellini could merely imply.

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### Notes

I wish to thank Mary Pardo and Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann for reading earlier versions of this piece, and for offering valuable critical suggestions.

- 1 Giuseppe Guido Ferrero (ed.), *Opere di Benvenuto Cellini*, Turin, 1980, p. 810: 'piglia un valentuomo terra o cera, e comincia a imporre una sua graziata figura; dico graziata perché, cominciando alle vedute dinanzi, prima che ei si risolva, molte volte alza, abbassa, tira innanzi e indietro, svolge e dirizza tutti e' membri della sua dettafigura.' A different, though compatible, reading of the passage is offered by Johannes Myssok, *Bildhauerische Konzeption und plastisches Modell in der Renaissance*, Münster, 1999, pp. 60–1 and 67.
- 2 Giorgio Vasari, *Le Vite de' più eccellenti architetti, pittori, et scultori italiani, da Cimabue insino a' tempi nostri* (1550), ed. Luciani Bellosi and Lorenzo Torrentino, Turin, 1986, pp. 45–7.
- 3 Cited in Elisabeth Dhanens, *Jean Boulogne, Giovanni Bologna Fiammingo, Douai 1529–*  
*Florence 1608*, Brussels, 1956, p. 148: 'ein Weib vil mehr dan lebensgros uff einem man, der wunderbarlich zusammengebogen kniehet oder steht, bede nakhend, von Jan de Balone ganz künstlich gemacht.'
- 4 See David Summers, 'Maniera and Movement: the Figura Serpentinata', *Art Quarterly*, vol. 35, 1972, pp. 269–301; the same author's brilliant 'Contrapposto: Style and Meaning in Renaissance Art', *Art Bulletin*, vol. 59, 1977, pp. 336–61; and Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann, 'The Eloquent Artist: Towards an Understanding of the Stylistics of Painting at the Court of Rudolf II', *Leids Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek*, vol. 1, 1982, pp. 119–48, all with further references.
- 5 Here and in what follows, I am indebted to Charles Avery's discussion of sixteenth-century *bozzetti* in 'La Cera Sempre Aspetta', *Apollo*,

- vol. 119, 1984, pp. 166–76, and in *Giambologna: The Complete Sculpture*, New York, 1987, pp. 63–70. See also Irving Lavin, 'Bozzetti and Modelli: Notes on Sculptural Procedure from the Early Renaissance through Bernini', in *Stil und Überlieferung in der Kunst des Abendlandes*, Berlin, 1967, vol. 3, pp. 93–103; Jennifer Montagu, 'Disegni, Bozzetti, Legnetti, and Modelli in Roman Seicento Sculpture', in *Entwurf und Ausführung in der europäischen Barockplastik*, exhib. cat., Munich, 1985, pp. 9–15; and Myssok, op. cit. (note 1), esp. pp. 28–32, with further bibliography.
- 6 Filippo Baldinucci, *Notizie dei professori del disegno da Cimabue in qua*, Florence, 1974–75, vol. 2, p. 556: 'se ne venne a Roma, dove in due anni ch'e' vi dimorò, modellò quanto di bello gli potè mai venir sotto l'occhio, e soleva poi in vecchiaia raccontare a' suoi famigliare, che avendo un giorno fatto un modello di propria invenzione, il quale aveva finito, come noi usiamo di dire, coll'alto, l'andò a mostrare al gran Michelagnolo; il quale presolo in mano, tutto gli lo guastò, secondo però quello che parve a lui, attitudinandolo di nuovo, e risolvendolo con meravigliosa bravura tutto al contrario di quello che il giovanetto aveva fatto, e si gli disse: or va prima ad imparare a bozzare e poi a finire.'
- 7 See, for example, the account of Giambologna's first years in Florence, in Baldinucci, op. cit. (note 6), vol. 2, p. 557: 'Fermatosi per tanto il giovane in casa di quel gentiluomo, e datosi di gran proposito agli studi dell'antiche statue, e di quelle del Buonarruoti, fecesi fra quei della professione ben presto conoscere per molto valoroso: questo però non potè seguire senza invidia degli artefici, i quali non potendo negare il giusto tributo di lode che dovevasi all'abilità del fanciullo, dicevano quella non eccedere il segno d'un bel modellare di terra e di cera, ma quando che fosse che e' si facesse la prova nell'intagliare il marmo, sarebbesi egli trovato tutt'altro essere da quello che faceano parere i suoi modelli'. (The lad, having stopped for a while in the house of that gentleman [Vecchietti], and having given himself, with great visions, to the study of ancient statues and the statues of Buonarroti, quickly made himself known among others of the profession as a man of great skill. This, however, could not happen without the envy of the other artificers, who, not being able to deny the just tributes of praise that Giambologna's ability was owed, said that this ability would not go beyond the indications given by his beautiful modelling in clay and in wax, and that, when the time came for Giambologna to make his attempt at cutting marble, he would be exposed as something entirely different from what his models made him seem.)
- 8 On both the drawing and Michelangelo's model, see Eike D. Schmidt, 'Die Überlieferung von Michelangelos verlorene Samson-Modell', *Mitteilung des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz*, vol. 40, 1996, pp. 78–147, with considerable further bibliography.
- 9 See esp. the description of Vecchietti's collection in Raffaello Borghini, *Il Riposo*, Florence, 1584, pp. 13–15.
- 10 *ibid.*, p. 13.
- 11 Giovan Battista Armenini, *De' veri precetti della pittura*, ed. Marina Gorreri, Turin, 1988, p. 118: 'Ma chi è che ancora non sapia che di una o di due figure di tondo rilievo, solamente col voltarle, nel modo che sono per diverse vie, non se ne cavino molte in pittura e tutte tra sé diverse? Poiché ciò pure si vede, da chi punto considera nel Giudizio dipinto da Michelangelo, lui essersi servito nel termine ch'io dico. Né ci sono mancati c'hanno detto quivi, ch'egli n'aveva alcune fatte di cera di man sua e che li torceva le membra a modo suo, immollandole prima le giunture nell'acqua calda, acciò quelle a rimorbidir si venisse . . .'
- 12 This may be the point of an astonishing work made after the *Last Judgement*, a relief in 'cera stuccata' by Jacopo Vivo. The work does not survive, but its appearance is recorded in a late sixteenth-century description. See Romeo de Maio, *Michelangelo e la Controriforma*, Rome, 1981, p. 43.
- 13 See, most recently, Bernardine Barnes, *Michelangelo's Last Judgment: the Renaissance Response*, Berkeley, 1998, with further bibliography.
- 14 Giovanni Andrea Gilio da Fabriano, *De gli errori, e de gli abusi de' Pittori circa l'histoire: con molte annotationi fatte sopra il Giudizio di Michelagnolo, & altre figure . . .*, Camerina, 1564, p. 69v: 'E piu maraigliato mi sono, che questa bella, & eccellente arte non habbia ne libro, ne regola, che dia à pittori il modo e l'ordine di quanto in ogni maniera di figure à fare habbino: perche dunque à la scapestrata la maggior parte se ne vanno, ne l'histoire infiniti errori commettono; come chiaramente in tutta Italia, e piu in Roma veder si puo. Onde mi pare c'hoggi i moderni pittori: quando à fare hanno qualche opera, il primo loro intento è di torcere à le loro figure il capo, le braccia, ò le gambe. acciò si dica che sono sforzate, e quei sforzi à le volte sono tali, che meglio sarebbe che non fussero, & al soggetto de l'histoire che far pensano poco, ò nulla attendono.'
- 15 This portion of my reading of Gilio depends on the important discussion by Charles Dempsey in 'Mythic Inventions in Counter-Reformation Painting', in *Rome in the Renaissance: The City and the Myth*, ed. P.A. Ramsey, Binghamton, 1982, pp. 55–75.
- 16 On Horatian licence and Renaissance painting, see David Summers, *Michelangelo and the Language of Art*, Princeton, 1981, pp. 103–43; and Ulrich Pfisterer, 'Künstlerische potestas

- audendi und licentia* im Quattrocento. Benozzo Gozzoli, Andrea Mantegna, Bertoldo di Giovanni', *Römisches Jahrbuch der Bibliotheca Hertziana*, vol. 31, 1996, pp. 107–48 (with further references).
- 17 Gilio, op. cit. (note 14), p. 69v: 'quasi tutti confidano nel detto d'Horatio che al pittore, & al poeta ogni cosa lecita sia.'
- 18 *ibid.*, p. 75r: 'Quando è puro poeta, penso che lecito gli sia dipingere tutto quello, che il capriccio gli detta; con quei gesti, con quei sforzi sieno però convenevoli a la figura, che egli fa: del che habbiamo l'esempio ne le loggie del Chisi dove Raffaello dipinse la cena de gli Dij con quegli atti e sforzi che il capriccio gli mise in capo.'
- 19 *ibid.*, p. 76r.
- 20 *ibid.*, pp. 89v–90r: '[disse M. Francesco] Per questo io non lodo gli sforzi che fanno gli Angeli nel giuditio di Michelangelo, dico di quelli che sostengono la croce, la colonna, e gli altri sacri misteri; i quali piu tosto rappresentano mattacini, ò giocolieri, che Angeli: conciosia che l'Angelo sosterebbe senza fatica tutto 'l globo de la terra: non che una Croce, ò una colonna, ò simili. Disse M. Silvio quello fu fatto solo per mostrar il decoro, e la forza de l'arte.'
- 21 See Alberti, *On Painting and on Sculpture*, ed. and trans. Cecil Grayson, London, 1972, pp. 84–85, and Summers, *Michelangelo*, op. cit. (note 16), pp. 90–2.
- 22 Gilio, op. cit. (note 14), p. 95v: 'risplendenti, lucide, gloriose, in maestà sostenute con gran magnificenza da migliaia d'Angeli, non con quei groppi ne sforzi, ne moresche, ne bagattelle, che voi gli miriate che Michelagnolo gli ha fatti.'
- 23 Christ should be 'afflitto, sanguinoso, pieno di sputi, depelato, piagato, difformato, liuido e brutto' such that 'non hauesse forma d'huomo'. Artists seek rather to 'bene isprimere tutti i muscoli, e tutte le membra di quel ben composto corpo'. See Gilio, op. cit. (note 22), p. 86v, as well as his similar argument regarding the depiction of tortured saints, pp. 113r-v.
- 24 *ibid.*, p. 81v: 'con atto sforzato, con la gola gonfia, con le mani storte: come sogliono fare i vessati da simil male.'
- 25 Gio. Battista della Porta, *Della fisonomia dell'huomo*, Padua, 1613, p. 13v: 'Molti impazziscono, come tutti quei che sono stimati, che da Demonij sieno sforzati, il che non auiene se non per la distemperanza naturale.' Francesco de' Vieri writes that *spiritati* can be seen 'facendo atti, e mouimenti di tutto il corpo marauigliosi', and he refers to possessed monks who 'gagliardamente, e con strane forze si storceanono'. See Vieri, *Discorso intorno a' dimoni, volgarmente chiamati spiriti*, Florence, 1576, pp. 59, 62. On possession, magic and wax models, see Aby Warburg's addenda to his 'Art of Portraiture and the Florentine Bourgeoisie', in Warburg, *The Renewal of Pagan Antiquity*, ed. Kurt W. Forster, trans. David Britt, Los Angeles, 1999, pp. 436–7.
- 26 Baldinucci, op. cit. (note 6), vol. 2, pp. 573–4: 'Questa per certo fu una delle più matrevoli opere, che formasse mai lo scarpello di Gio. Bologna; ed io risponderai a chi scrisse, per sentenza di non so qual maestro di scherma, che se quell'Ercole scaricasse il colpo, non sarebbe a tiro di colpire il centauro, che, se bene si considera, conoscerassi chiaramente che l'Ercole non istà in atto di percuotere il centauro, ma di ritirare il braccio per metterlo a tiro del colpo; se poi tale mia risposta non piacesse, seguiterei a dire, che forse Gio. Bologna di ciò s'avvidde ancor esso, ma tornando a maraviglia bene quell'attitudine nel suo modello, per questo fece poi la statua di marmo, cioè per assicurarsi, che ella non avesse mai con sua vergogna a scaricar quel colpo a vòto, e così non avesse a dar materia che altri s'avesse a far beffe di lui.'
- 27 Pietro Aretino, *Lettere sull'arte*, ed. Ettore Camesasca, Milan, 1957, vol. 1, p. 175; cited in Fredrika H. Jacobs, 'Aretino and Michelangelo, Dolce and Titian: *Femmina, Masculo, Grazia*', *Art Bulletin*, vol. 82, p. 61, n. 91.
- 28 See Paolo Pino, *Dialogo di pittura*, in the forthcoming translation with commentary by Mary Pardo. I am grateful to Professor Pardo for alerting me to Pino's discussion, and for sharing her manuscript with me.
- 29 Benedetto Varchi, *Opere*, ed. G.B. Busini, Trieste, 1859, vol. 2, p. 653: 'Dove noteremo incidentalmente quanto alla lingua, che quella voce *sforza* fu usata da lui, non so se impropriamente, ma bene nuovamente, avendola composta dal verbo *forzare* e dalla lettera *s*, la quale molte volte posta dinanzi a' verbi dà loro la significazione contraria, come avemo notato altrove; onde *sforza* in questo luogo non vuol significare altro, che priva di forze e toglie la possibilità, e, come noi diremmo, sgagliarda. Pigliasi ancora alcuna volta pur da' medici per la forma del corpo, non per la forma sostanziale, che è l'anima, ma per la figura, come nota Galeno nel trentaquattresimo Aforismo; esempigrazia d'uno che avesse il collo lungo o le gambe corte ed altre cose somiglianti.' Petrarch's lines appear in his sonnet 'Dicemi spesso il mio fidato specchio'; see Robert M. Durling (ed. and trans.), *Petrarch's Lyric Poems*, Cambridge, Mass., 1976, pp. 570–1.
- 30 Varchi, op. cit. (note 29), vol. 2, p. 616: 'E così in fin qui ha detto, che d'un marmo solo si possono cavare tutte le figure, e nel più perfetto modo, che se le possa immaginare qualunque maestro' (And so, to this point [i.e., in the first two lines of the sonnet], [Michelangelo] has claimed that from a single marble can be carved all the figures that a master can imagine, and in the most perfect manner). See the discussion in Summers, *Michelangelo*, op. cit. (note 16), pp. 203–33.

- 31 *ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 615: 'Perciocchè oltra quello che i Greci chiamano *idea*, ed i Latini ora *forma*, ora *specie* ed ora *exemplar*, e talvolta *exemplum*, e noi imitando ora i Greci ed ora i Latini chiamiamo quando *idea*, quando *esemplare*, e quando *esempio*, e più volgarmente modello, ciò è quella immagine che si forma ciascuno nella fantasia, ogni volta che vuole fare checchessia.' See also *ibid.*, p. 617, 'l'arte non è altro che la forma, ciò è il modello della cosa artificiale, la quale è nell'anima, ciò è nella fantasia dell'artista, la qual forma, o vero modello è principio fattivo della forma artificiale della materia.'
- 32 See Ferrero, *op. cit.* (note 1), p. 825; also Summers, *Michelangelo*, *op. cit.* (note 16), p. 212. On the different terms used to designate wax models, see Myssok, *op. cit.* (note 1), pp. 15–19.
- 33 'Who is this who by force leads me to you, alas, alas, alas, bound and fettered, though I am free and unfettered? If you enchain others without a chain, and if, without using arm or hand, you have gathered me in, who will defend me from your beautiful face?' Christopher Ryan (ed. and trans., translation modified), *Michelangelo: The Poems*, London, 1996, pp. 6–7.
- 34 I am reminded here of the idea, available in numerous contemporary sources, that the lover binds the beloved with the spirits he or she emits from the eyes. See esp. Ioan Couliano, *Eros and Magic in the Renaissance*, trans. Margaret Cook, Chicago, 1987, esp. pp. 28–32, 87–106.
- 35 'How can it be that I am no longer mine? Oh God, oh God, oh God, who has taken me from myself, that he might be closer to me or have more power over me than I myself? Oh God, oh God, oh God, how can someone penetrate my heart without seeming even to touch me?' Ryan, 1996 *op. cit.* (note 3), pp. 6–7 (translation modified: Ryan assumes that that the addressee is female, although this is not implied by the Italian syntax).
- 36 'Over there he bound me, and there he set me free; here I wept for myself, and from this stone, with infinite suffering, I saw him create a division, he who took me from myself and did not want me.' *ibid.*, pp. 28–9 (translation modified; Ryan dates the poem to 1524–34). Cf., for example, Petrarch's 'Sennuccio, l'vo' che sapi in qual maniera,' in Durling, *op. cit.* (note 2), pp. 220–1.
- 37 'I would believe that if you were made of stone I should love you with such faithfulness that I should make you come to me more than in passing; if you were dead, I would make you speak...' *ibid.*, pp. 40–1 (Ryan dates the poem to 1531–32).
- 38 See Ferrero, *op. cit.* (note 1), pp. 895, 944–5 and 972–3.
- 39 See Ernst Steinmann, *Die Porträt-darstellungen des Michelangelo*, Leipzig, 1913, pp. 79–80.
- 40 'This work, the eternal Idea, simulacrum and glory of the beautiful divine art, such that it wears out all great artists – this, my Giambologna, is your Sabine. You are Talassius, and the old father is the long and exhausted study from whom you abducted her.' Biblioteca Nazionale, Florence, Fondo Magliabechiano, VII, 874, p. 202r. The poem is unpublished, but is related to one published already in Giambologna's day by Michelagnolo Sermartelli, and reprinted in Paola Barocchi (ed.), *Scritti del Arte del Cinquecento*, Milan and Naples, 1973, vol. 2, p. 1221.
- 41 Borghini, *op. cit.* (note 9), p. 13: 'di Giambologna molte figure di cera, di terra, e di bronzo in diuerse attitudini rappresentanti varie persone come prigionii, donne, Dee, fiumi, & huomini famosi.'
- 42 Ferrero *op. cit.* (note 1), p. 82: 'Se bene il divino Michelagnolo fece la gran cappella di papa Iulio da poi, non arrivò mai a questo segno alla metà; la sua virtù non aggiunse mai da poi alla forza di quei primi studii.'
- 43 *ibid.*, p. 829: 'perché tutta la importanza di queste tali virtù consiste nel fare bene un uomo e una donna ignudi, a questo bisogna pensare che, volendogli poter far bene e ridursegli sicuramente a memoria, è necessario di venire al fondamento di tali ignudi, il qual fondamento si è le loro ossa: in modo che, quando tu arai recatoti a memoria una ossatura, tu non potrai mai fare figura, o vuoi ignuda o vuoi vestita, con errori; e questo si è un gran dire. Io non dico già che tu sii sicuro per questo di fare le tue figure con meglio o peggio grazia; ma solo ti basti il farle senza errori, ché di questo io te ne assicuro.'
- 44 Frances Yates, *The Art of Memory*, Chicago, 1966, pp. 2–3 and *passim*. For Renaissance examples of the body used as the basis for a visual pnegmonics, see Claire Richter Sherman (ed.), *Writing on Hands: Memory and Knowledge in Early Modern Europe*, exhib. cat., Seattle, 2000, esp. cat. no. 38.
- 45 Ferrero, *op. cit.* (note 1), pp. 828, 834.
- 46 That Cellini was writing from memory is shown by the manuscript's evidence of what Cellini forgot. Throughout the text, Cellini has left blank spaces when he could not recall the names of particular bones.
- 47 Ferrero, *op. cit.* (note 1), p. 833: 'quando un braccio fa qualche forza, questo tale osso fa diverse e bellissime azioni, il che (chi lo intende bene) fa molto bel vedere in sulla schiena, perché si mostra molto sopra i muscoli di detta stiena; e ha nome *os scapularis*.'
- 48 *ibid.*, p. 835: 'E per mostrartene un esemplo e allegarti un autor grandissimo, vedi le opere di maestro Michelagnolo Buonarroti; ché la sua alta maniera è tanto diversa dagli altri e da quella che per l'addietro si vedeva, ed è tanto piaciuta, non per altro che per avere tenuto questo ordine delle ossa: e che sia il vero, guarda tutte le opere sue

- tanto di scultura quanto di pittura, che non tanto i bellissimi muscoli ben posti ai luoghi loro gli abbian fatto onore quanto il mostrare le ossa.’
- 49 Ibid, p. 829: ‘... mettendo innanzi questo tal principio a un tuo giovanetto di tenera età, è certissimo che a quello gli parrà ritrarre un bastoncello. E perché in tutte le nobilissime arti la maggiore importanza che è in esse, volendole vincere e dominare, non in altro consiste che nel pigliare animo sopra di loro, e’ non sarà così pusillo animo di fanciullo che, cominciando a ritrarre un tal bastoncello d’osso, che non si prometta di farlo, se non alla prima, alle due benissimo; che così non interverrebbe quando lo mettesi a ritrarre un occhio.’
- 50 ibid, p. 440.
- 51 See Nancy J. Vickers, ‘The Mistress in the Masterpiece’, in *The Poetics of Gender*, ed. Nancy K. Miller, New York, 1986, pp. 19-41, as well as the illuminating discussion in Elizabeth Cropper, ‘Michelangelo Cerquozzi’s Self-portrait: the Real Studio and the Suffering Model’, in *Ars naturam adiuvans: Festschrift für Matthias Winner*, Mainz, 1996, pp. 401–412.
- 52 On the frescoes, see Frances Huemer, ‘A Dionysiac Connection in an Early Rubens’, *Art Bulletin*, vol. 61, 1979, pp. 562–74, and especially Dorothee Herrig, *Fontainebleau: Geschichte und Ikonologie der Schloßanlage Franz J.*, Munich, 1992, pp. 163–7, with further references.
- 53 See Vitruvius, *De Arch.* 1.1.6 on caryatids as prisoners.
- 54 See the letter from 12 June 1570 in Ferdinando Tassi, *Prose e poesie di Benvenuto Cellini con documenti la maggior parte inediti*, Florence, 1829, p. 183.
- 55 Ferrero, op. cit. (note 1), p. 495: ‘quella femmina scontorta che è sotto i piedi del Perseo.’ A suggestive comparison is the 1553 letter Fernando Gonzaga, which describes the *attitudine* of Leoni’s Furor as ‘molto contorta et horribile’; see Eugène Plon, *Les matres italiens au service de la maison d’Autriche. Leone Leoni, sculpteur de Charles-Quint, et Pompeo Leoni, sculpteur de Philippe II*, Paris, 1887, p. 369; and Ferrero, op. cit. (note 1), p. 495.
- 56 ‘Perseus shows some evidence of me: he holds aloft the head and the cruel sword, tainted with blood; beneath he has the cadaver, yet not bereft of spirit.’ Ferrero, op. cit. (note 1), p. 859.
- 57 See, for example, Carlo Milanese (ed.), *I Trattati dell’Oreficeria e della Scultura di Benvenuto Cellini*, Florence, 1857, p. 411: ‘Perseo miro, e sotto a lui caduto / Il spirito e ‘l corpo prezioso e caro / di Medusa’ (I gaze upon Perseus, and upon what is fallen beneath him, the spirit and body, precious and dear, of Medusa).
- 58 Vasari, op. cit. (note 2), p. 317: ‘[L]a semplicità del di fuori nello abito et nello aspetto di Giuditt, manifestamente scuopre nel di dentro, l’animo grande di quella Donna, et lo aiuto di Dio: si come nella aria di esso Oloferne, il vino et il sonno, et la morte nelle sue membra, che per avere perduti gli spiriti si dimostrano fredde et cascanti ...’ On the passage, see esp. Charles Dempsey, ‘Donatello’s *Spiritelli*’, in *Ars naturam adiuvans: Festschrift für Matthias Winner*, ed. Victoria V. Flemming & Sebastian Schütze, Mainz, 1996, pp. 50–61.
- 59 Tassi, pp. 208–209: ‘Il Bandinello, che era il maggiore nimico ch’io avessi al mondo, perché mosso dalle sua arrabbiate invidie già cominciate in Roma, e qui cresciute per l’un cento; con tutto questo, sforzato dalla forza della virtù dell’arte, egli stimò la fatica del mio Perseo seddicimila scudi, che con tutta la pessima sua natura, e con tutti gli odii grandissimi che avevamo insieme, la virtù accecò tutte le malignità; di modo che fe’ cotale stima ...’
- 60 See, for example, Cellini’s description of his famous confrontation with Bandinelli before Duke Cosimo over the merits of the antique: ‘Il Duca mi stette a udire con molto piacere, e in mentre che io dicevo queste cose il Bandinello si scontorceva e faceva i più brutti visi del suo viso, che era bruttissimo, che immaginar si possa al mondo’; Ferrero, op. cit. (note 1), pp. 506–507.
- 61 Castiglione puts the point succinctly: ‘e per lo contrario il sforzare e, come si dice, tirar per i capegli dà somma disgrazia e fa estimar poco ogni cosa, per grande ch’ella si sia. Però si po dir quella esser vera arte che non pare esser arte; né più in altro si ha da poner studio, che nel nasconderla: perché se è scoperta, leva in tutto il credito e fa l’omo poco estimato’; see Baldesar Castiglione, *Il Libro del Cortegiano*, ed. Bruno Maier, Turin, 1969, p. 124. Cf. *The Book of the Courtier*, trans. Thomas Hoby [1561], New York, 1967, p. 59 ‘And contrarywise to use force, and (as they say) to hale by the hear, so ever it be, is to be litle esteemed. Therefore that may be said to be a very art that appeereth not to be art, neyther ought a man to put more diligence in any thing then in covering it: for in case it be open, it loseth credit cleane, and maketh a man litle set by.’
- 62 On the relationship between Giambologna’s marble *Sabine* and his earlier treatments of the subject, see esp. the entries by Charles Avery, Manfred Leithe-Jasper, and Anthony Radcliffe in *Giambologna: Ein Wendepunkt der europäischen Plastik*, exhib. cat., Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, 1978, pp. 139–46 (with references to earlier discussions of the problem).