AMONG THE PROPHETS: MICHELANGELO'S DAVID

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Submitted to the

Faculty of The Arts and Sciences
of American University
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of

Masters of Art

In

Art History

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Date

April 23, 2015

2015
American University
Washington, D.C. 20016
In the room the women come and go
Talking of Michelangelo.
—T.S. Eliot.
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ABSTRACT

This thesis argues that Michelangelo employed the grammar of the Cathedral and Prophet program in the making of his David with particular reference to Lorenzo Ghiberti’s Gates of Paradise, Donatello’s Jeremiah, Nanni di Banco’s Isaiah, and Assumption of the Virgin above the Porta della Mandorla. Emphasizing Christological prophecy as the lynchpin of the overall sculptural program, it likewise applies humanist and Christian exegesis in order to reposition the David into its intended religious context. Raised on top of the Duomo, the David would have embodied the ancestral bloodline—emanating from the Tree of Jesse, carried through the womb of the Virgin Mary, and culminating in the incarnation of Christ. The incarnation—prophesied by Jeremiah, Isaiah, and the Minor Prophets—fulfills the thematic program—both in form and in hermeneutics—of the sculptural ensemble gracing the cathedral and baptistery architectural complex. The tree-stump is considered crucial to the istoria of Michelangelo’s David, akin to the importance of Goliath’s head in previous depictions of David; here it symbolizes the genealogy of Christ as derivative of the Davidic bloodline. Moreover, the employment of masculinity studies and the philosophies of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari lends new insight into the interconnectedness between the David, the viewer, and site.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This project would not have been possible without the advice of Dr. Kim Butler and Joanne Allen. From the moment I had walked into Dr. Butler’s office and announced that I had found a gap in the scholarship of Michelangelo’s *David*, her support and belief in this project was unwavering; I will be forever grateful.
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INTRODUCTION

As it appears today to most viewers in the Galleria dell’Accademia, Michelangelo’s *David* would seem—to the non-specialist at least—to exist as an isolated incidence of singular artistic genius. This thesis, however, insists on context. It considers Michelangelo’s *David* in light of, and typological, Christological, and ultimately Mariological significations the sculpture would have embodied had it been placed atop the Campanile’s buttress, where it would have functioned as a continuation of the series of the twelve Old Testament Prophets and other works bearing formal and theological reference points. Remarkably, no scholar has ever discussed *David* within the thematic and biblical context of the sculptural program gracing the façade of Santa Maria del Fiore, let alone nearby points of reference in the existing Piazzza del Duomo sculptural program. In contrast, this thesis produces a site-specific study of *David’s* prophetic and Christological identities as an expression of the cathedral’s Marian theme that had developed over centuries. In considering the intended placement of the David on a buttress or niche, I contend that this Opera dell’Duomo commission appealed to historical memory, evident in its lofty placement among the Tribuna prophets. The project coherence, as Charles Seymour observes, lay in part in its embodiment of a sense of consecrated idealism and civic dignity—functioning to lead the mind and soul upward from the city-state of man to the Holy City of God.

The commission for the colossal David linked Michelangelo with the oldest continuing sculptural program in Florence at his time. This meant he could establish his professional identity by engaging with the important tradition represented by the Duomo Prophets. I follow Seymour in contesting that the marble Michelangelo had inherited was, as Vasari claimed, merely botched by ‘Simone da Fiesole,’ or ‘Agostino di Duccio. Instead, the *David* seems to have been conceived, in its design at least, in relation to the greatest Florentine sculptor of the
Quattrocento—Donatello, who had failed to create a David sculpture for the same buttress. Thus, the young Michelangelo was given the challenge of completing what Donatello had imagined but had been unable to execute. He was thus to measure himself in a competition with the Florentine past.¹

Two critical contexts informed my study of Michelangelo’s David. The first is the influence of the powerful Arte della Lana, which supported the effort to make the Cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore one of the largest churches in Christendom by its completion in 1467. Rising majestically above the city in the center of the final circuit of walls, the Duomo stands for Florentine unity and piety. The dedication of Santa Maria del Fiore in particular—Saint Mary of the Flowers—signified Florence itself as Florentia, the city of flowers. As a mighty symbol of the New Jerusalem and the New Rome, the cathedral unified Florence across space and time and evoked the communal hope for temporal prosperity and spiritual renewal. The second major context informing this thesis is the motivation to create large-scale public monuments, specifically religious sculpture such as the would-be David on the buttress, Nanni di Banco’s Isaiah and Assumption on the Porta della Mandorla, Lorenzo Ghiberti’s Gates of Paradise, and Donatello’s Jeremiah. The novel modes of artistic and architectural practice at the core of my thesis are no longer considered the result of autonomous stylistic developments, or as political symbols. Rather, such works can be understood according to Michael Baxandall’s model. In his 1972 volume Painting and Experience in Fifteenth Century Italy, he asserts:

A fifteenth-century painting is the deposit of a social relationship. On one side there was a painter who made the picture, or at least supervised its making. On the other side there was somebody else who asked him to make it, provided funds for him to make it and, after he had made it, reckoned on using it in some way or other. Both parties worked within institutions and conventions—commercial, religious, perceptual, in the

¹ Seymour, Michelangelo’s David, p. 45.
widest sense social—that were different from ours and influenced the forms of what they together made.2

Thus, to a fifteenth-century Italian, the production of sacred art—for example, prophets, the Virgin Mary, and ancestors of Christ—was an unquestionably communal endeavor. Underlying my argument is the point that the *David* was not just a discrete commission that reveals its meaning simply by close scrutiny of its form and documentary history. Rather, I see it as part of a network of artistic works for the Duomo complex. Ordered for the Cathedral and subsequently placed at the main portal to Florence’s seat of government, the statue would have culminated a substantial number of sculptural commissions for the Cathedral, the baptistery, and the Campanile. It is insufficient, therefore, to limit discussion to the iconic form of the *David* itself, regardless of its importance.

The questions surrounding the *David’s* placement, according to Rona Goffen, implies that it must have become obvious to Michelangelo that the intended site on top of the north buttress would be difficult, if not impossible, for its placement. If Michelangelo (and eventually his patrons) did not consider the *David* practicable as a buttress figure, did he have another site in mind as he worked? Saul Levine has argued that he did, that Michelangelo conceived of the Giant for the entrance of the Palazzo della Signoria, and that both the statue and its site were intended as political statements.3 According to N. Randolph Parks, however, the sources indicate that the palace was selected only after protracted deliberations. Goffen agrees with Parks, noting that his textual analysis seems to be correct, but cautions words only tell half the story.4

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3 Goffen, Renaissance Rivals, p. 123.
4 See Parks, “Placement of Michelangelo’s *David,*” Another explanation: perhaps the necessity to abandon the original idea of placing he figure on a buttress had become clear by early 1504, either for visual or engineering reasons, but no decision had been reached before the January meeting; Seymour, *Michelangelo’s David,* p. 57. Cited in Goffen, Renaissance Rivals, p. 123.
evidence—the David itself—narrates another part of the maker’s intentions. Indeed, it is highly improbable that Michelangelo designed his Giant without considering its placement. Goffen claims that the best evidence we have that Michelangelo conceived the statue to be installed in the Palazzo della Signoria is the fact that—although conceived to be seen only from frontal view—the statue was completed in the round, including the sling that establishes the Giant’s identity as David, a detail that would be invisible were the figure on a buttress.

As already noted, he had been obligated by the terms of the contract to complete the statue by August 1503. In the majority of accounts of the commission, it seems to have become conventional to state that the David was effectively finished in the early months of 1504. Proof of this can be found in the very brief Deliberazione of the Operai of the Cathedral dated 16 June 1503. This makes provision for a public viewing of the statue one week later, on 23rd of June, the eve of one of Florence’s most important feast days, that of the Birth of Saint John the Baptist, the city’s most important patron saint. On that day the door of the structure that had been built around the David was to be opened. Therefore, since Michelangelo had, presumably, no

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5 Some scholars have asserted that the back was completed after the decision to place the sculpture had been made. Goffen does not agree with this sequence of events. The sling can have been an afterthought, nor the placement of the raised arm to hold it. The statue’s planar frontality also suggests that Michelangelo conceived it to be seen against a wall and not equally visible from several or all points of view on a buttress. Baccio Bandinelli criticized the David for succeeding only from the frontal view, according to Benvenuto Cellini, who repeated the charge with the intention of discrediting the critic; ‘but in fact it is true,’ as Virginia Bush has noted. See Virginia L. Bush, “Bandinelli’s Hercules and Cacus and Florentine Traditions,” in Studies in Italian Art and Architecture 15th through 18th Centuries, ed. Henry A. Millon (Cambridge and Rome, 1980), p. 183. Cited in Goffen, Renaissance Rivals, p. 123.

6 Hirst, “Michelangelo in Florence,” p. 487 cf. n. 4; This conclusion is based on the description of the statue as ‘quasi finita’ in the preamble to the practica of January 1504 (for which see Milanesi, Le Lettere di Michelangelo Buonarroti pubblicate coi ricordi ed i contratti artistici, Florence, [1875], p. 620.

7 Florence, Archivio dell’Opera del Duomo, Seconda Seria II, 9, Deliberazione 1496-1507, fol. 59v. The text of this Deliberazione is to be found neither in G. Poggi, Il Duomo di Firenze, ed. M. Haines, Florence [1988] (original edition Berling [1909]) nor in the documents relating to the David published in Frey, “Studien zu Michelagniolo Buonarroti und zur Kunst seiner Zeit,” Jahrbuch der Königlich preussischen Kunstammlungen, XXX [1909], Beiheft, p. 107 no.10. The text reads “Dicta die [i.e. 16th June] Item deliberaverunt per tres fabas nigras deliberaverunt etc. qualiter die 23 videlicet vigilia S.
foreknowledge of the decision to move his sculpture upon completion, he sculpted the David for the top of the buttress. Thus, the David is specifically referential in its form and iconography; I will explore this core issue in the following chapters.

The first chapter will canvass the existing scholarship on Michelangelo’s David and related works. Of all debates on the sculpture, the question of its placement is undoubtedly paramount. While Saul Levine and N. Randolph Parks productively consider interpretive problems regarding the deliberation records, they neglect consideration of the most fundamental location—its intended site on the north buttress of the Duomo. I will also analyze the copious methodological frameworks used to assess Michelangelo’s David—ranging from formal and iconographic to ‘feminist’ and post-structural interpretations. In so doing, I will adumbrate overarching themes and methodologies with my observation that the David’s formal qualities derive from Michelangelo’s decision to have it engage with the Piazza del Duomo sculptural program.

Chapter two specifically deals with ritornelli—a Guattarian word meaning “a reminiscence”—exploring visual and exegetical parallels that can be mapped between Michelangelo’s David and Donatello’s Jeremiah on the Campanile. The choice of Donatello’s Jeremiah is not casual; Charles de Tolnay affirms the formal consistencies between both sculptures but does not explore exegetical parallels—here understood to be: the Book of Jeremiah prognosticating the coming of the incarnate messiah in the figure of the David, the forefather of Christ.⁸

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⁸ Joannis Baptiste aperiatur hostium gigantis et tota dicta die apertum sit adeo quod possit videri gigas marmoreus ab omnibus volentibus videre etc. mandantes.”

The third chapter furthers a framework of physical liminality beyond the idea of the spiritual threshold between Old and New Testaments explored in the previous chapter. This very idea of the “inbetweenness” of David’s body, which is somewhere between that of a late adolescent and a fully-grown man, reflects engagement with socio-cultural ideas of masculinity, which I also consider in light of its particular artistic precedents. In particular, I consider reference points such as Andrea Castagno’s Shield of David (c. 1450-55), Nicola Pisano’s Fortitude (1260), and Donatello’s Saint George (c. 1416). Michelangelo’s David is the perfect incarnation of the living idealized Renaissance man, the symbol of virtue, fortitude, and moral strength.  

Although the contention that the political symbolism expressed in the form of David has been naturalized over time, we shall see the work also reflects Florentine humanist concern with the ideal roles and “divine” potential of the Christian man.

The final chapter unifies the typological interconnections between David and Christ, the former foreshadowing the Messiah—the New Testament usurping the Old—into a meta-narrative of Marian iconography as a part of the David’s pedestal itself—Santa Maria del Fiore. Examples on the northern side of the Cathedral, the intended site of the David included the Porta della Mandorla Assumption by Nanni di Banco and his Isaiah, along with the culmination of the arc of the David’s gaze—Ghiberti’s Gates of Paradise. Although, as many scholars have pointed out, the David embodied civic identity, there are equally important religious implications relating to the choice of the David as the first of a series of twelve ancestors. Following Irving Lavin, I posit that the phenomenon of Mariological devotional imagery and ideology was related to Florentine response to the explosion of Marian devotion throughout Europe in the late Middle Ages. Certain formulations of Ildephonsus of Toledo, cited by Mary Bergstein in another

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context, express the theme “radice flos ascendit Christus”: the identification of the rod of Isaiah (11:1) with both Christ as the flower that will arise from the stem of Jesse and as a branch that shall grow out of his roots; and “Virgo inter filias, ac sit lilii inter spinas,” where the Virgin becomes the friend—or lover—identified in the Song of Songs (2: 2), believed to be written by King Solomon himself, as the lily among the thorns.10 “Again,” sayest the Lord unto Isaiah, “There shall be a root of Jesse, and he that shall reign over the Gentiles; in him shall the Gentiles trust.” Isaiah is here called ‘the root of Jesse,’ that is, a branch from the family of David as is the very life and strength of the family; compare (Isaiah, 11:1). As we shall see, these exegetical relationships are crucial to situating the iconography of Michelangelo’s David in historical context. Each chapter is framed methodologically with the post-structuralist philosophies of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, with which the interconnectedness between the David, visual recurrences, and viewer response within the context of late fourteenth and early fifteenth-century Florence is deconstructed.

CHAPTER 1
HISTORIOGRAPHY

The beginnings of the modern obsession with Michelangelo’s David can be traced to the late 1860s, when Florence hoped that it would become the permanent capital of a united republic of Italy; the statue’s genesis as a symbol for republican Florentines at the beginning of the sixteenth century made it an appropriate symbol for the emerging new country. The 400th anniversary of Michelangelo’s birth in 1875 brought further attention to the statue, although another 35 years would elapse before Luigi Arrighetti’s copy would replace the statue before the Palazzo della Signoria (Figure 27). After World War II and the defeat of fascism and Nazism in Europe, a new generation of art historians trained in the crucible of the war years saw Renaissance Florence, with its constitution and putative republican government, as a paradigm for American and European opposition to totalitarian regimes. The recent evolution of gender studies, especially queer studies, has also opened new avenues for exploration of the meaning of the statue, some of which had been implicit in earlier writings by English critics of the nineteenth century, though this aspect had never been discussed.  

Originally commissioned as one of a series of prophets for the sproni (buttresses) of the Duomo of Santa Maria del Fiore in Florence, Michelangelo’s David is in fact the culmination of a hundred-year-long saga beginning in the marble quarries in Carrara and ending in the Piazza della Signoria. I will begin with an overview of of the English-language scholarship on the David, with a particular focus on the question of its site-specificity. Although almost all sources acknowledge David’s initial intended site, they quickly turn to its subsequent location following

the 1504 deliberations. Thus, scholarly focus centered on the *David* as a political and civic emblem of Florence, but, I posit here, that is only half the story. Its original religious context and meaning must be integrated into scholarly narratives on the statue, and not just as a mere allegorical foil for a political argument. In addition, scholars have focused on formal and iconographical readings, including materialistic discussions of the *David* and its temporality. Another strain of scholarship has employed feminist and queer interpretations, often grounded in sound socio-historical evidence. Recently, post-structuralist analysis has established yet another interpretive framework.

Saul Levine argued that Michelangelo conceived of the “Giant” for the entrance of the Palazzo della Signoria, and that both the statue and its site were meant as political statements. As interpreted by N. Randolph Parks, however, documents indicate that the palace was selected only after protracted deliberations.\(^{12}\) The Deliberations clarify the fact that the desire to find an appropriate location for the statue implied a belief that the statue did have a meaning, and that a suitable location needed to be one that matched this meaning. Early in the meeting, for instance, Francesco Monciatto said:

> I believe that everything that is made is made for a specific purpose, and I believe that because [the statue] was made to be placed on the external pilasters or buttresses around the church [i.e. the Duomo]. The reason for not wanting to put it there I do not know, for there it seemed to me it would serve well as an ornament for the church and the Consuls [of the Wool Guild]—and the place has been changed.\(^{13}\)

Scholar Randolph Parks comments:

> It is likely that the exceptional quality of the statue was the major reason...[for the location change] We find several members of the *practica* [the commission]...contemplating a location worthy of the


statue, a place where it would be honored and esteemed. I see no reason to doubt, therefore, that after the quality of the David became overwhelmingly apparent, the Signoria elected to bring it down to street level and give it grander exposure…

Saul Levine adds that the meeting aimed to determine a “fitting location that is consistent with the symbolic nature of the image.” Indeed, the deliberations of the thirty-two speakers generate insight into the symbolic function, appearance, and the importance of the site. Originally, there were nine different locations proposed, but the two most-supported locations were in front of the Palazzo Vecchio and the Loggia dei Lanzi. Debate centered not just on location, but its symbolic value. At the Palazzo Vecchio, Saul Levine posits that the David engages with symbolic Goliath to the South, where Medici supporters were currently based. He stood with strength and power, defensive, relating to the political crisis threatening republican liberty at that time, as an obvious anti-Medicean symbol. Placement in the Loggia, on the other hand, would have neutralized its the powerful political associations, and turned it into a non-partisan civic symbol. Interestingly, those arguing for the Loggia were very careful with their words since it was all being recorded, and therefore argued mainly about the problems of sheltering the sculpture, even though there had not been any problems recorded previously.

There is plausible evidence that it was already determined that the statue would be placed somewhere in the area of the Piazza della Signoria, possibly even in front of the Palazzo Vecchio. Levine argues that the meeting had to be called due to the David’s obvious an anti-

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15 S. Levine. "The Location of Michelangelo's David: The Meeting of January 25, 1504."; p. 34.
Medicean symbolism to ensure it was not only the Signoria that wanted it there.\textsuperscript{19} The politics of the image were so meaningful that this meeting was required, which reinforces modern interpretations regarding the power and iconography of this statue.\textsuperscript{20} Levine observes that the statue has two primary views: the front of the figure and the view from the left.\textsuperscript{21} The front view emphasizes the heroic, Herculean stance embodying strength and a powerful defensive capacity. But as the sharply turned profile of the head directs our attention toward the left side of the figure, we discern aspects that are active, aggressive, and even menacing.\textsuperscript{22} These features culminate in the head with its terribilità and intensely staring eyes directed to the implicit presence of a dangerous and threatening Goliath\textsuperscript{23}

\textsuperscript{19} Levine, Saul. \textit{Tal Cosa: Michelangelo's David Its Form, Site and Political Symbolism}. Ann Arbor, Mich.: University Microfilms, 1972; p. 142.

\textsuperscript{20} The minutes reveal that nine different locations were proposed:

1.) Over one of the buttresses on the north side of the cathedral
2.) In front of its west façade;
3.) Where the \textit{Marzocco} stood (the lion of Florence) by Donatello;
4.) In the courtyard of the Palazzo Vecchio;
5.) Where Donatello’s \textit{Judith} stood;
6.) In the bay of the Loggia dei Lanzi nearest the Palazzo Vecchio;
7.) In the central bay of the Loggia;
8.) In the new Grand Council Hall of the Palazzo Vecchio;
9.) In the Piazza di San Giovanni.


\textsuperscript{21} S. Levine. "The Location of Michelangelo's \textit{David}: The Meeting of January 25, 1504."; p. 33.

\textsuperscript{22} S. Levine. "The Location of Michelangelo's \textit{David}: The Meeting of January 25, 1504." p. 33.

\textsuperscript{23} The crisis resulting from the Borgian-Medicean campaign against Florence in 1501 paralleled the situation faced by the city a hundred years before. At that time, the Visconti of Milan had mounted a military campaign southward toward the city that although abated by the death of Giangaleazzo in 1402 persisted as a threat into the early years of the 15\textsuperscript{th} century. A program of civic imagery, initiated with the Baptistery competition panels of 1401, was soon developed in works whose form and location appeared to direct a symbolism of resistance northward toward Milan. Donatello’s marble \textit{David} of 1408; Originally intended for a buttress on the north tribune of the Duomo, in this location would have confronted the Milanese Goliath. Its companion piece of the same year, Nanni di Banco’s \textit{Isaiah}, as well as Donatello’s \textit{Saint George} (Or San Michele, 1416) and the \textit{Abraham and Isaac} group (the Campanile, 1421), all aimed their expressive physiognomies in a northward direction. This earlier symbolic tradition of physically orienting imagery toward a geographic source of danger was, at the beginning of the sixteenth century, apparently continued in Michelangelo’s \textit{David}. 
The *David*, therefore, also possessed connotations that were independent of site.\textsuperscript{24} Its energetic and physiognomic vitality placed it in a series of heroic Florentine sculptures elsewhere in the city. As Frederick Hartt and others have pointed out, these works embodied a dynamic symbolism related to the military and political crises threatening republican liberty in the early decades of the Quattrocento.\textsuperscript{25} For Levine, regardless of its location, the *David* could be interpreted as a talismanic symbol, protecting the entire Florentine community from tyranny and invasion. Nonetheless, the *David* embodied political meaning, and if the proposal to place it in front of the Cathedral had been accepted, its political impact, as Levine maintains, would have been considerably reduced.\textsuperscript{26} If placed in its intended setting on top of the north buttress, the *David*’s large scale would have allowed the sculpture to visually commingle with the many figures on the west façade and to be submerged in the historical and biblical iconographic traditions of the sculptural program of the Duomo—a point crucial for the new reading this thesis offers.\textsuperscript{27}

Levine drew upon previous scholarly work; Frederick Hartt and others had pointed out these objects’ embodiment of a dynamic symbolism related to the military and political crises

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\textsuperscript{24} S. Levine. "The Location of Michelangelo's *David*: The Meeting of January 25, 1504." p. 34.
\textsuperscript{26} Rosselli, Botticelli, and Giuliano da Sangallo suggested the possibility of this location for the *David*. Botticelli also envisioned a Judith on the other corner of the façade. See S. Levine. "The Location of Michelangelo’s *David*: The Meeting of January 25, 1504." p. 35.
\textsuperscript{27} S. Levine. "The Location of Michelangelo's *David*: The Meeting of January 25, 1504." p. 35. John Pope-Hennessy (*Italian Gothic Sculpture*, New York, 1955, p. 185, 219) gives a partial summary of the sculpture on the west façade of the cathedral. Its general appearance, including its sculpture, is shown in a drawing, executed in Florence in the second half of the sixteenth century, which is in the Museo dell’Opera del Duomo, Florence (Pope-Hennessy fig. 56, opp. 181). A detail is shown in Figure 3. Besides the material on the west façade, the sculptural program of the Catedral included the projects for the north side (the tribune buttresses and the Porta della Mandorla), the Campanile and the decorations for the two south portals (Porta del Campanile and the Porta dei Canonici).
threatening republican liberty in the early decades of the quattrocento. For Levine, no matter where the *David* was placed, it would have functioned as a civic symbol protecting the entire Florentine community, including partisans of contending factions. Yet the *David* at the same time embodied fraught politics, and if the proposal to place it in front of the Cathedral had been accepted, its political impact, Levine maintains, would have been considerably reduced.

Another piece of evidence regarding contemporary belief in the sculpture’s fraught political symbolism casts Giuliano da Sangallo as a ‘crypto-Medici sympathizer.’ Sangallo first elaborated upon the proposal made previously by Cosimo Rosselli that the *David* be placed in its own niche (“in the manner of a little chapel in the rear wall of the Loggia.”) This proposal is significant because, in effect, it extends his first thought that it be placed in the vicinity of the Duomo. In such a niche, the biblical, Christian aspects of the *David* iconography would be emphasized, and the contemporary, controversial political aspects of the work would be virtually eliminated. Here the figure would become an image with a single, frontal view, its left side almost completely concealed by the framing of the niche. Within such a recess, it would be almost” buried” in a position significantly distant from normal public view and submerged within the deepest shadows of the Loggia. If Giuliano da Sangallo’s final plan had been accepted, the *David*—standing within a tabernacle—would have been rendered so innocuous that

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29 Rosselli, Botticelli, and Giuliano da Sangallo suggested the possibility of this location for the *David*. Botticelli also envisioned a Judith on the other corner of the façade. See S. Levine. "The Location of Michelangelo's *David*: The Meeting of January 25, 1504." p. 35.
even its general civic symbolic associations would have been attenuated and therefore protected from vandalism (and the elements), according to Levine.\textsuperscript{31}

However, James Beck finds in the preamble to the minutes a hint that security against attack was a concern of Michelangelo himself:

…The officials of the Duomo, seeing that the statue…is almost finished, and being desirous of placing it in a suitable and commodious place, one that is secure and solid, as Michelangelo, the master of the aforesaid giant, has requested, and [sic] the directors of the Wool Guild, desirous of putting into effect these wishes, decided to call a meeting…\textsuperscript{32}

“Clearly,” adds Beck, “as he was concluding his assignment, Michelangelo sought assurances that the placement would prevent vandalism…” Beck’s argument depends upon his translating *locum solidum et resolidatum* as ‘secure and solid.’\textsuperscript{33} He thus appears to be aligning ‘suitable’ with ‘secure’ as terms of social space and ‘commodious’ with ‘solid’ as terms of material space. While not an entirely secure reading, it seems to fit well with the tenor and direction of the deliberations. Levine’s extended argument for understanding opposition to the statue as politically motivated finds an echo in Beck’s comments on Giovanni’s speech:

Giovanni…introduced a curious suspicion. If located out in the open, some nasty person might do the statue harm. That is, for some unexplained reason, the David might become the target of vandalism (...and such a possibility supports the suspicion that there was a political aura surrounding the David that could have made it offensive to some).\textsuperscript{34}

Political motives might account for Giovanni’s inferred hostility, and so, Levine argues, might concern for decorum; and in each case it is understandable that, in a politically fraught meeting, no one would wish to name the root problem.


\textsuperscript{33} cf. ‘sound and solid,’ Klein and Zerner; ‘firm and solid,’ Levine; ‘solid and structurally trustworthy,’ Seymour.

\textsuperscript{34} Beck, James H. Three Worlds of Michelangelo. New York: W.W. Norton, 1999; p. 130.
Ultimately, the statue was installed in the Piazza, at the entrance to the Palazzo Vecchio. It would appear, on the face of it, that the ‘coverers and enclosers’ lost to those who would see the statue in its entirety out in the open. It should be noted the fears regarding security were justified, since the statue was indeed attacked, on the first night of its being moved out of the Opera del Duomo, on 14 May 1504. The diary of Luca Landucci records that during that night “some stones were thrown at the colossus to harm it. Watch had to be kept at night…. ”

Levine, following Charles de Tolnay among others, claims supporters of the Medici family ‘quite possibly’ organized the stoning. “Perhaps,” says Margaret Walters, “but more probably by people shocked by its insistent nudity”; “probably out of a sense of moral outrage on the part of decent citizens,” agrees Monica Bohm-Duchen. Even more to the point is an all-too-often overlooked item about which Frederick Hartt has reminded us:

In a triumphant example of Second Republic prudery, not only the genitals but what Vasari called the ‘divine flanks’ of the David could not be exposed to innocent Florentine eyes until they had been provided with a girdle. A brass wire sustaining twenty-eight copper leaves was paid for on October 31\(^{38}\) according to a document published by De Nicola in 1917 and subsequently ignored. According to a passage from Pietro Aretino’s famous denunciation of the indecencies of the Last Judgment, which everyone quotes but no one reads, this girdle was still in place as late as 1545.

Thus, Hartt accounts for the gap between the statue’s journey from the Duomo workshop to the Piazza della Signoria on 14-18 May and the final ‘uncovering’ of the statue on 8 July, as

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described in Landucci’s diary.\(^\text{39}\) A girdle had to be provided so that the giant’s offending genitals could be decently covered.\(^\text{40}\) Thus, issues of political symbolism and public decorum were both at play.

To turn now to more humanist interpretations of the *David*—Jacob Burckhardt famously cited individualism and realism as core characteristics of the Renaissance; this correlated, in his view, to greater artistic license and personal freedom. At the beginning of his key section “The Development of the Individual,” in his *Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, Burckhardt writes:

In the Middle Ages both sides of human consciousness—that which was turned within as that which turned without—lay dreaming or half awake beneath a common veil. The veil was woven of faith, illusion, and childish prepossession, through which the world and history were clad in strange hues. Man was conscious of himself only as a member of a race, people, party, family, or corporation—only through some general category. In Italy this veil first melted into air; an objective treatment and consideration of the State and of all the things of this world became possible. The subjective at the same time asserted itself with


\(^{40}\) A painter, Raffaello di Giovanni, is paid for gilding a metal garland added to Michelangelo’s *David*, and for a Madonna for the audience-Chamber of the Nove in Palazzo Vecchio.

‘A Bastiano d[i] Domenico Cennini orafo lire 20, soldi 5, per la grillanda intorno al Gigante. (1.20, s. 5)’

‘A Raffaello di Giovanni dipintore lire 5, soldi 14, sono per mettere d’oro detta grillanda. c. 22 (1.5, s. 14)’

‘A Francesco di Bernardo Battiloro per 161 pezo d’oro per dorare detta grillanda. c. 22 (1.5, s. 13).’

Cited in Shearman, “1508/2 Late May to mid-July 1508,” In *Raphael in Early Modern Sources (1483-1602)*, p. 118. Florence, ASF, Signori e Collegi, *Deliberationi fatte in forza d’ordinaria autorità* 110, fol. 204v. Text and reference from Caglioti. The cross-references, carta 22, carta 51, are to a lost account book for January-December 1508, *Giornale Primo*, which may be partially reconstructed by collation (following Caglioti) so as to date c. 22 late May-early June, and c. 51 before 18 July. The grillanda supplied and gilded here is shown my Caglioti to be a replacement for one made in 1504 to hide the genitals of *David*, which was already known as the *Gigante* when it stood as a mutilated block, before its allocation to Michelangelo, in the Opera del Duomo. In addition, a Letter from Pietro Aretino to Michelangelo dated to November, 1545 notes: “[…] so that you may raise his name [to fame] by making [a cover of] fiery flame over the shameful parts of the damned and rays of sun around those of the blessed, or imitate the modesty of the Florentines which hides under a few golden leaves those [genitals] of his beautiful colossus, which moreover is placed in the public piazza and not in a consecrated place […]. See, Paoletti, John T. *Michelangelo's David: Florentine History and Civic Identity*. Cambridge University Press, 2015; p. 311.
corresponding emphasis; man became a spiritual individual, and recognized himself as such.\textsuperscript{41}

The proposal that key works of the period are those that can be interpreted as icons of human freedom is spurious. Michelangelo’s audacious colossus has not been universally read in this way. It was for Burckhardt a bastion of bourgeois values, and Heinrich Wölfflin deemed it a thoroughly “ugly hobbledooy.” Only Frederick Hartt recuperated the \textit{David} in the later twentieth century as an emblem of republican virtue in “its total and triumphant nudity,” which he thought to be utterly reconcilable with “Michelangelo’s views on the divinity of the human body.”\textsuperscript{42}

Indeed a work, which neither the sixteenth-century sources nor the art historical literature privileged, rose to the prominence only in light of Hans Baron’s influential thesis that the Florentine Renaissance was triggered by the city’s fortuitous escape from impending Milanese oppression in 1401. At that point, every Florentine \textit{David} then became an emblem of civic pride, and Michelangelo’s the most important and influential (\textit{Figure 1}).\textsuperscript{43} Nonetheless, questions of attribution and dating remained the primary focus of scholarship.

However, a recent publication on Renaissance sculpture demonstrates that many other modes of inquiry are possible. For instance, Sarah Blake McHam made some important points regarding sculpture’s frequent failure to inspire innovative scholarly approaches.\textsuperscript{44} First and foremost, many art historians have tended to assume implicitly that the medium of painting is and always has been the primary vehicle for artistic expression. In Renaissance culture, however,

the primacy of painting was not all a given.\textsuperscript{45} McHam also suggests that declining interest in the Greco-Roman tradition, which played such a central role in the development of Renaissance sculpture, might have further contributed to a drift of sculpture studies into slightly stagnant intellectual backwaters.\textsuperscript{46} In addition, as McHam rightly points out, the reliance on two-dimensional photographs (generally in black-and-white) to study three-dimensional works of art can also restrict interpretative strategies.\textsuperscript{47}

Turning to the \textit{David}, McHam notes the 1504 decision to replace the \textit{Judith} in the \textit{Ringhiera} with the \textit{David} meant that another Old Testament hero who had delivered the Jews stood before the seat of government symbolically ready to protect Florence, the New Jerusalem.\textsuperscript{48} The colossal size of the statue, the first on such scale since Roman times, imitated the awe-inspiring dimensions of ancient colossi. The vivid accounts of colossi by Greek and Roman authors were known by the fifteenth century and repeated in contemporary treatises by Ghiberti and Alberti. Their description of how colossi were often sited in the \textit{fora} of ancient cities seems to have been imitated with the installation of the \textit{David} in the piazza.\textsuperscript{49} Indeed, the \textit{David} is the first Renaissance sculpture to be set on an undecorated low socle in the manner of ancient statuary.\textsuperscript{50} I, on the other hand, contend that the base does not compete with the sculpture for our attention by its ornamentation and height and hence does not define the sculpture as a decorative

\textsuperscript{45} See n. 50.
\textsuperscript{46} H.W. Janson, “The Revival of Antiquity in Early Renaissance Sculpture,” in \textit{Looking at Italian Renaissance Sculpture}, ed. Sarah Blake McHam (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 40-59. Freestanding sculpture had not been produced since the end of the Roman Empire because these works were considered “idols,” and therefore inconsistent with the religious beliefs prevalent during the Middle Ages.
\textsuperscript{47} Johnson, Geraldine A. "Review: Looking at Italian Renaissance Sculpture by Sarah Blake McHam." \textit{The Burlington Magazine} 141, no. 1151, p. 117.
\textsuperscript{48} McHam, “Public Sculpture in Renaissance Florence, p. 164.
\textsuperscript{49} McHam, “Public Sculpture in Renaissance Florence, p. 164.
\textsuperscript{50} Bautista, Preston W. \textit{Manifesting Masculinities in Central Italian Renaissance Art: Artistic Theory and Representations of the Male Body}. Ann Arbor, Mich.: University Microfilms International, 2008; p. 94 n. 27.
object. Instead, it positions the colossal figure much closer to us than does the base of the *Judith.* This radical change means that the proximity of the sculpture combines with its scale to emphasize the physical presence of the sculpture to such a degree that its convincing superhuman scale amazes the viewer. The theme of the victorious David immediately connects the colossalus to the three earlier versions of the subject inside the palazzo and activates their Republican resonance; unlike the earlier depictions, *David* has not already killed Goliath. The choice to depict the *David* as intensely concentrating, in what the author interprets as wary anticipation of battle, is calculated to communicate his tension and involve the viewer in his upcoming confrontation—comparable to the dynamic of Donatello’s *Saint George.* Some scholars have argued Michelangelo’s statue was installed to make its twisting head face Rome to stress protection of the Republic against the Medici partisans grouped there. But because the encounter with Goliath is not explicitly depicted, McHam asserts nevertheless the viewer can define the statue in personal terms and thus become even more engaged by *David’s* emotions and inspired by his heroic model. Lastly, McHam argues Michelangelo’s innovative interpretation can be understood as his imaginative response to the challenge of public sculpture in the ancient world, which its historians characterized as recording individuals who deserved immortality by their distinction and whose statues were commissioned so that citizens would “have always before their eyes so that they might not only remember but imitate the worthy actions they had done.”

51 McHam, “Public Sculpture in Renaissance Florence,” p. 165. Weil-Garris, “Pedestals,” 381-93, carefully reconstructs the *ringhiera* and analyzes perceptively the effect it and the base of the statue made on the viewer’s appreciation of the statue.
52 McHam, “Public Sculpture in Renaissance Florence,” p. 165.
In contrast to McHam’s reading, Charles Seymour repeated and elaborated the series of contradictions in Vasari’s report about the placement and meaning of Michelangelo’s *David*.\(^{54}\) With Vasari’s questionable credibility, Seymour argued the only way to plausibly interpret the *David* is to view it in the context of the Quattrocento plans to decorate the tribuna of Florence cathedral with giant figures. Drawing upon documents, contemporary historical events, contemporary literature, and philosophy, Seymour situates the multiple meanings of the *David* as prophet, as a symbol of freedom for the Florentine citizens, as Adam, as Hercules, as colossus, and as self-portrait. Furthermore, he notes Opera del Duomo archival documents make it clear that the commission of the *David* had nothing to do with civic head Soderini but was entirely beneath the purview of the Operai, which affects the context for a political reading of the sculpture.\(^{55}\) Seymour also argued an important corrective in noting the colossal scale for the prophets was introduced much earlier—in 1410, with the commission for Donatello’s terracotta *Joshua* for the North Tribuna. From all available evidence, the huge figure, several times life size, stood in its place on the Tribuna until well into the seventeenth century.\(^{56}\) As a figure symbolizing civic *virtù* and freedom, the *Joshua* was an important precedent for Michelangelo’s commission; it also incorporated the key words from the opening of the Book of Joshua, a point that will become important here as well. Seymour even notes the humanist flavor in the colossal *Joshua* goes far to explain the proposal in 1415 to add a Hercules to the Duomo prophet series.\(^{57}\) There is evidence of a continuing close symbolic association between the subjects of *David* and *Hercules* (as well as with *Joshua* in public art in Florence up to roughly 1450).\(^{58}\)

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\(^{56}\) Seymour, Michelangelo’s *David*, p. 28 n. 9. See B. Shaw, in *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Instituts in Florenz*, 1959, pp. 178 ff.

\(^{57}\) Seymour, *Michelangelo’s David*, p. 29.

\(^{58}\) Seymour, Michelangelo’s *David*, p. 31.
The historical path to the marble colossus finished by Michelangelo must also take into account the David in marble commissioned from Donatello in 1412 (Figure 25).\(^{59}\) Michelangelo’s David was arguably informed by the shadow of the Donatello projects. Donatello had provided the continuing energy for the program of colossi for the Duomo Tribuna up to 1455.\(^{60}\) Michelangelo, in Seymour’s estimation, must have felt a difficult tension between the achievements of the great corporate past and the ideals of his own precarious and more individualistic present.\(^{61}\)

Seymour enunciates three principal interpretive headings for Michelangelo’s David. The first is the high value that all Renaissance Florentines placed upon their city’s traditional independence and beauty; in this respect, Michelangelo was no exception. Second, each Florentine had within his city a constant source of visual reference to communal liberty; such visual references were most evident in architectural monuments—but beginning by 1400 they were increasingly present in painting and even more so in sculpture.\(^{62}\) Third, during the Quattrocento the tradition of individual liberty inherited from the High Middle Ages was bolstered by Renaissance humanistic thought and by poetry revived from ancient Greece and Rome; the second half of the Quattrocento, into which Michelangelo was born and in which he received his first impressions as a boy and youth, saw a tremendous spurt in humanistic learning and influence in all aspects of the arts—the art of sculpture was at the time thought of as a direct parallel to the process of developing the highest good in human nature in general, and in human nature in Florence in particular.

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\(^{59}\) Seymour, Michelangelo’s David, p. 31 n. 14. The so-called David II, to which Lányi had called attention. It is a commission which fits perfectly into the Duomo Prophet-sequence as we can reconstruct it today. However, the interpretation of the documents and the identification of the piece today present problems. For a summary discussion of the problems see op. cit., Appendix I.

\(^{60}\) Seymour, Michelangelo’s David, p. 40.

\(^{61}\) Seymour, Michelangelo’s David, p. 41.

\(^{62}\) Seymour, Michelangelo’s David, p. 9.
affairs within the city-state. It is clear from many sources that the artist was devoted to his native city and its civic humanist traditions—represented by such massive and timeless architectural monuments as the Duomo, with its Campanile designed by Giotto, the Palazzo della Signoria, with its adjacent Loggia, and Or San Michele, a veritable storehouse of Quattrocento sculpture symbolizing the dignity and power of the major trade-guilds.

As noted above, the colossal David was first set up on the speakers’ platform, or ringhiera, near the entrance of the Palazzo Vecchio in Florence. Michelangelo is known to have made drawing studies for his David of 1501-4, which can be found on a sheet now preserved at the Louvre. The principal study on the recto of the sheet is for the pendant right arm of the marble David—the outlines still being felt out, the final form of the huge, outsize hand yet unresolved. The very early study for the David is accompanied on the same sheet by a smaller experimental sketch for another David in bronze, commissioned in 1502 for the French military commander in Italy under Charles VIII, Pierre de Rohan, Maréchal de Gié, soon to become the Duc de Nemours. On the verso of the sheet, another fragment of several lines of verse refers to a cool green shade and a running stream. This arcadian imagery is accompanied by a drawing of a digging man—apparently a memory of a motif of Adam in the story of Genesis carved by the Quattrocento sculptor, Jacopo della Quercia, for the façade of San Petronio in Bologna. One of the fragments consists of the first words of a famous sonnet by Petrarch:

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63 Seymour, Michelangelo’s David, pp. 8-9.
64 Seymour, Michelangelo’s David, p. 9. See Appendix II-A, p. 137.
67 Seymour, ‘And I with my Bow,’ p. 4.
69 Seymour, Michelangelo’s David, p. 4.
“Rotta l’alta Colonna…”—in literal English translates to ‘Broken the tall column and the verdant laurel tree hewed down.’

The Petrarchan fragment on the laurel tree quoted on the Louvre sheet is balanced by an even more intriguing fragment, a scholium, possibly the first sketch for the opening of a poem:

\[
\text{Davice cholla fromba} \\
\text{e io chollarcho} \\
\text{Michelagniolo.}
\]

Literally translated: “David with his sling and I with my bow, Michelangelo.”

Frequently scholars point out that there is intended a play on the word ‘bow’—the meaning at the literal level is of a bow considered as a weapon, but the secondary meaning surely is not, as was once thought, a reference to a figurative bow of genius drawn against Michelangelo’s rival Leonardo; much less, as was advanced in counter-argument, to Cupid’s bow; nor even, despite a more recent and more closely argued theory, to the curved portion of a harp frame. It is noteworthy that an instrument not unlike a crossbow in the shape is held by one of Nanni di Banco’s workers in stone shown on the relief under his Quattro Santi Coronati for Or San

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70 Francesco Petrarca, Sonnet ccxxviii. In Joseph Auslander’s translation (New York: David McKay co., 1932, the first line runs: ‘The Lofty Column and the Laurel fall.’ The last lines contain the poignant expression of loss: ‘Ah life, that seems to rich in ecstasies, Yet can in one swift morning dissipate, What we have gained with years and man sighs.’ Cited in Seymour, Michelangelo’s David, p. 5.

71 Cited in Seymour, Michelangelo’s David, p. 7.

72 Vasari mentions, as an apparent exception to the bow-handle design of the running drill, a brace and bit design invented by Alberti for cutting porphyry: see L. S. Machlehole and G. B. Brown, Vasari on Technique, New York, 1960 (first published in 1907), pp. 30-31. For softer marble the old-fashioned bow-drill would have presumably sufficed; drills weighing up to twenty pounds could be used, thus providing for a relatively powerful and efficient boring tool. Alternate readings of arco are: a weapon directed against Leonardo da Vinci in a figurative Sense (Papini, in Il Vasari, III, 1930, p. 1), as Cupid’s bow (Pecchial, ibid., p.221), the curved portion of a harp-frame (R. J. Clements, Poetry of Michelangelo, pp. 154-160). Michelangelo il Giovane, of rather dubious fame as editor of his great-uncle’s poetry, had apparently thought the reference was to a harp. Iconographically, the type of David with the harp (psalmist) is medieval and northern as opposed to the Florentine Quattrocento freedom symbolism in the shepherd slayer of Goliath (for the medieval David see H. Steger, David Rex et Propheta, Erlangen, 1961).
Michele in Florence (c. 1415)—almost as much as the chisel and mallet, the bow may be thought of as a symbol of the marble-sculptor’s craft in Florence (Figure 30).\footnote{Seymour, \textit{Michelangelo’s David}, p. 8.}

To return to political civic readings—since Frederick Hartt’s influential arguments, it has been common to understand images of the young David as personifications of Florence's dedication to political freedom or republican liberty; and it has been assumed that the \textit{David} was an official or quasi-official emblem of the city.\footnote{F. Hartt, "Art and Freedom in Quattrocento Florence", in L. Sandler (ed.), \textit{Essays in Memory of Karl Lehman}, Locust Valley, N.Y., 1964, pp.114-131. See, for example, C. Seymour, \textit{Michelangelo’s David}, Pittsburgh, 1967, esp. p. 45; F. Ames-Louis, "Art History or Stilkritik? Donatello's Bronze \textit{David} Reconsidered", Art History, 2, 1979, pp. 139-155; P. Leach, \textit{Images of Political Triumph: Donatello's Iconography of Heroes}, Ph. D. Dissertation, Princeton University, 1984; J. Poeschke, Die Skulpturer Renaissance in Italien, Bd. I, Donatello und seine Zeit, Munich, 1990, pp. 87-88; P. Leach, "Donatello's Marble \textit{David}: Leonardo Bruni's Contribution", Source, 12, 1993, pp. 8-11.}

Hartt based this interpretation primarily on his reading of the first sculpture in the series, Donatello’s marble \textit{David} (Figure 25). Following Baron’s lead, Hartt argued that Florence's struggles with Milan and Naples at the beginning of the century had profoundly transformed the civic culture of the city, making it the capital of republicanism in Italy. Hence, David, as giant-killer, would have been understood as a tyrannicide and a personification of \textit{libertas}. Therefore, he reasons, that this gave Michelangelo the idea to treat the \textit{David}, not as a biblical hero, but as the defender and the just administrator of his people.

In a closely related argument, which develops a humanist reading, Charles de Tolnay argues that Michelangelo represented his \textit{David} not as a biblical hero, but as the defender and the just administrator of his people.\footnote{Tolnay, Charles de. "Michelangelo's Political Opinions," In \textit{Michelangelo: Selected Scholarship in English}. Hamden, CT: Garland, 1995. 81-122.} Michelangelo was commissioned to execute the \textit{David} on August 16, 1501, twelve days after the adaptation of a new constitution.\footnote{Tolnay, Charles de. "Michelangelo's Political Opinions," In \textit{Michelangelo: Selected Scholarship in English}. Hamden, CT: Garland, 1995, pp. 81-122.} He carved the giant
from a single block of marble originally intended to crown one of the buttresses of the Florentine Cathedral; the block had been roughhewn forty years prior by Agostino di Duccio. Florence already owned several Davids. Donatello and Verrocchio, a number of little bronze statuettes, and a fresco by Michelangelo’s master, Domenico Ghirlandaio, in Santa Trinità served as precedents. All of them show the biblical boy, sword in hand, one foot on Goliath’s head, wearing either a timid expression, with head slightly bowed, or else the proud smile of victory. In contrast, Michelangelo’s David is an adolescent, naked and bereft of the traditional attributes of the sword or Goliath’s severed head—retaining only the sling, and even that hidden behind his back. Instead of following the conventions of the Davids of the fifteenth century, Michelangelo’s David, according to Tolnay, is more proximate to the tradition of Hercules. Unlike his predecessors, Michelangelo does not represent a precise moment in the life of David; Michelangelo, it would seem, emphasized instead the permanent features of the David’s moral character. Under the thick shock of hair like tongues of flame and the stormy furrows of a brow frowning in indignation, we encounter the fire of a glance full of pride and disdain. The eyelids are contracted, the nostrils pinched with rage, the lips swollen with anger. He is the embodiment of fortezza (force) and ira (anger). Tolnay surmises that the Florentine humanists of the early Renaissance considered fortezza to be the greatest of the civic virtues. From the second quarter of the fifteenth century on, and in contrast to the stoic tradition of Cicero, which placed philosophy and diplomacy above arms, they had exalted the active struggle in defense of the homeland. This doctrine of fortezza, praised as a civic virtue, was associated by Renaissance writers with the doctrine of ira, the passion of anger, which had been condemned as a vice in the

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middle ages, until it too was raised by them to the rank of a civic virtue. According to Coluccio Salutati, anger is a vice only if it affects the judgment; when it arouses the courage of the citizen in the struggle for liberty, it becomes a virtue. It is anger, which heightens the moral force of the brave man; and Leonardo Bruni tells us that fortitude and pietas, the two virtues of strength and love of country, are engendered only by ira. Palmieri explains that anger can sustain *fortezza*, since it causes man to choose danger for virtue’s sake. At the end of the century, Landino finds in Platonism a justification of anger in terms of virtue. Michelangelo’s David is an embodiment of the two chief civic virtues of the Renaissance.\(^{79}\) The commune of Florence in the Middle Ages armed its free citizens; this custom was abolished by the Medici, who disarmed the people. In humanist writings of the beginning of the fifteenth century, such as those of Leonardo Bruni, the idea of a fighting militia reappeared along with the ideal of the citizen warrior defending liberty. This was one of the main points in the reform of the city’s constitution. Machiavelli’s ideas were anticipated by about five years in Michelangelo’s *David*, the embodiment of the ideal of the *cittadino guerriero*.\(^{80}\)

Humanist analysis continues with Kenneth Clark, who posits that the influence of antique art on Michelangelo’s style derives from works of two different kinds. One the hand were the gems and cameos, which nourished his sense of physical beauty, informing in particular the representation of smooth and symmetrical limbs. On the other, were the battered fragments, the fallen giants, half buried in the Campo Vaccino.\(^{81}\) In these figures, the eye could comprehend the large lines of movement and then come to rest at those places sufficiently intact to provide it


with a nucleus of form. His contemplation of half-obliterated antiquities sanctioned a practice he had followed in his earliest drawings: the concentration on certain passages of modeling, which were by themselves so expressive that the rest of the figure needed no more than an indication. At such points, closely knit sequences of the body where the muscle landscape of the torso, or the knot of muscles round the shoulder and on the knee, form points of tension and relaxation that are both firm and soft, and that which follow a logical pattern. Since the Greeks had turned the body into a kind of independent harmony, it was possible by almost imperceptible changes of emphasis to alter its whole effect. Michelangelo with a few elements, the muscles of the torso and thighs, above all the junction of the thorax and abdomen, can evoke an immense range of emotional effect.

Since a sculptor’s medium is naturally stationary, he can show only the potential of action and therefore must concentrate his attention on expressive formal qualities. Philipp P. Fehl’s argument concerns the representation of character by the hands of the sculptor. In Donatello’s works we find beauty made manifest through ugliness of features, and physical beauty is spiritualized and transformed beyond itself by the intensity of experiences of the soul which, in the service of God and magnanimity, advanced to the very thresholds of death. Michelangelo chose to represent the moment before the climax of the battle, when David hurls his shot at Goliath, but in such a fashion that the David retains his watchfulness in equilibrium of tensions. The pose of the left leg has been criticized as awkward, however, Fehl interprets it in the readiness to of the David to jump into action. We then comprehend that the David intends to

83 Clark, The Nude, p. 248.
84 Clark, The Nude, p. 249.
cast his shot on the run. He has to calculate the movements of his enemy as well as his own and to release the stone at the exact moment, because he does not get another chance, as Michelangelo would make it seem.  

Indeed, physiognomy carried the implications of this relationship between body and soul to an extreme presuming that the nature of the soul is evident not only in the actions of the body, but in its character, configuration, and resemblances. Summers, in his discussion entitled “David’s Scowl,” considers the notion that during the Renaissance, and for many centuries, the human body is the agent (or tool) and the outward expression (or palace) of the intelligible soul, makes the invisible visible by showing the states of the soul in the actions of the body. The factors felt to be significant in physiognomical definition were “movements, gestures of the body, color, characteristic facial expression, the growth of hair, the smoothness of the skin, the voice, condition of the flesh, the parts of the body, and the build of the body as a whole.” The author of Physiognomonica turned to the analogy with animals, by far the most frequently cited being the lion, which was ‘King of beasts,’ is used repeatedly to exemplify the manly qualities of courage and daring, and in fact is said ‘to exhibit the male type (Forma maria) in its perfect form.” Signs of courage (signa fortis) are—coarse hair; an upright carriage of the body; size and strength of bones, sides and extremities; the belly broad and flat; shoulder blades broad and set well apart, neither too closely nor too loosely knit; a sturdy neck, not very fleshy; a chest well covered with flesh and broad; flat hips, the thickness of the calf low down on the leg; gleaming eyes, neither wide and staring nor yet mere slits, and not glistening; the whole body of a brilliant hue; a forehead straight and lean, not large, and neither quite smooth nor yet a mass of

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88 Fehl, Philipp P. "On the Representation of Character in Renaissance Sculpture”: p. 305.
90 Summers, David. "David's Scowl": p. 312.
91 Summers, David. "David's Scowl": p. 312.
These descriptions, as Summers argues, not only agree with Michelangelo’s *David* but also correspond to some of its most outstanding characteristics: the broad shoulders, back, and chest; the relatively flat hips; the strong neck, large hands and feet. *David* does not have the great beard one would expect in maturity but the hair of his head “starts low down with a vigorous growth;” and “hair on the nape of the neck indicates liberality, as in lions.”93 *David* with attributes of the ‘lion of Judah’ and the lion as also an ancient symbol for the city of Florence supports the civic readings that have long been seen in Michelangelo’s colossus.94 A major characteristic shared by the lion and the courageous man is a cloudy brow. “A square and well proportioned forehead,” the pseudo-Aristotelian author wrote, “is a sign of a proud soul, as in the lion. A cloudy brow signified self-will as in the lion and the bull.”95 Michelangelo’s disciple, Vincenzo Danti, based his *Tratto delle Perfette Proporizioni* on just such a distinction between what he called ‘quantitative’ proportion and ‘qualitative proportion. In Danti’s second, higher sense, proportion was a kind of decorum.96 These two kinds of proportion could obviously contradict one another, and Danti meant that in such a case ‘qualitative’ proportion was primary; it was more important to make visible the living soul that made the body what it was than to

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92 Summers, David. "David's Scowl": p. 313.
93 Summers, David. "David's Scowl": p. 313.
94 David was also the prefiguration of the Messiah, referred to in Revelations 5:5 as the lion of Judah. On the *Marzocco*, see H.W. Janson, *The Sculpture of Donatello*, 2: 42-43.
95 “Quicunque autem obnebulosam, audaces vel iracundi, referuntur ad taurum et leonem” (811b) (313).
show the numerical relations of the parts of the material body. Summers concludes that the David’s thus has a double meaning: audacia is in the soul of the great warrior-king and psalmist—and it is also in the soul of Michelangelo. His colossus takes its place among the great audaciae, at once signaling the perfection of the arts overcoming of all difficulties, predecessors and rivals, “all statues modern and ancient, Greek or Latin as they may be.” In his realization of the David, Michelangelo emerges the victor from his contest with antiquity and surpasses the artists of his own tradition. The scowl thus makes as visible as the soul of the David the soul of the sculptor Michelangelo.

Other iconological readings tied to key formal points include Edward J. Olszewski’s argument that Donatello’s Marble David was an important point of reference in alluding to future time. However, H. W. Janson argued that the David was the marble figure commissioned in 1408 for a buttress of the north transept of the Cathedral of Florence as one of a series of prophets, and as a companion piece to Nanni di Banco’s contemporary ‘Isaiah.’ It is unclear if it was ever installed, but it was soon returned to the Opera del Duomo and replaced by Donatello’s colossal terracotta Joshua (1410). Manfred Wundram has questioned Janson’s

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97 Summers, David. "David’s Scowl"; p. 314.
102 E. Olszewski, “Prophecy and Prolepsis”: p. 67, p. 77 (n. 10). For more on the colossal Joshua now lost, see C. Seymour, Jr., Michelangelo’s David, A Search for Identity, Pittsburgh, 1967, pp. 29-32;
reading of the documents to argue that the Bargello marble is the *David* referred to in a contract of 1412 and was never intended for the cathedral (Figure 25). Wundram offered other arguments against Janson’s ascription of *David* with the buttress of the Cathedral. Janson’s discussion of the history of the bargello *‘David’* was influence in part by the speculations of Jenő Lányi, particularly Janson’s ruminations on the presumed re-carving of the figure. Both scholars assumed that the *‘David’* once held a scroll to match Nanni’s *Isaiah*, and both conjectured that Donatello removed it when the figure was installed in the Palazzo Vecchio. The need to postulate the absence of a scroll through re-carving would have been unnecessary had they been aware of the Duomo *‘David’* with its scroll. Pope-Hennessy found the scroll appropriate for the figure as one of a set of twelve prophets, and he called attention to the figure’s lips parted as if in song or warning. The Duomo marble also matches the base of the *Isaiah* in shape, both of which conform to the pentagonal tribune site. The scriptural account in the Book of Samuel, in its use of the future tense, established David’s response to Goliath as the prophecy, and marked the beginning of a promise that would be made redundant in the psalms, and explicit with the evangelists as in Gabriel’s prediction to Mary, “He will be great, and will be called the son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give him the throne of his father David” (Luke, 1:32).


103 E. Olszewski, “Prophecy and Prolepsis”: p. 67, p. 77.

104 E. Olszewski, “Prophecy and Prolepsis”: p. 67, p. 77 (n. 16). Wundram pointed out that the documents for the project of 1408, which Janson called a ‘*David,*’ referred only to a figure or a prophet, where as the partial payment of fifty florins made to Donatello in 1412 refers specifically to a ‘Saint John the Evangelist and a ‘*David;*’ 1968.

105 E. Olszewski, “Prophecy and Prolepsis”: p. 69.

106 E. Olszewski, “Prophecy and Prolepsis” pp. 76, 77 (n. 23), 79 (n. 58). See also, Romans, 1:3; “His Son, who was descended from *David* according to the flesh.” *David*’s triumph over Goliath has been read as “a proleptic parallel of Christ’s triumph” over the devil based on a metaphorical equation of Saint Augustine. Christ’s defeat of the devil represented the triumph of eternity over time. Schneider underscores Janson’s observation of Donatello’s change of *David* from prophet to military hero in 1416 in the transfer of the sling to his right hand with a “resulting emphasis on triumph,” L. Schneider,
As this scholarship *in toto* suggest, certain early modern discourses—humanism, philosophy, and rationalism, to name a few—seem to contain in crystalline form those notions of mastery of the will to power that Jacob Burckhardt took be be characteristically Renaissance, as noted above. Today the rhetoric of free will, individualism, and mastery continues to thrive within may discourses, yet Renaissance discourse seems to be problematized. Although Burckhardt’s glorifications of will and individualism held sway within Renaissance studies for over a century, the ideas of Old Mastery central to that tradition have gradually fallen out of fashion over the past several decades.\(^{107}\) This shift in period concept is due in large part, though not exclusively, to the more recent advent of post-structuralist theory. It is precisely in the encounter between post-structuralism and traditional Renaissance studies that the notion of the individual, or subject emerges. “Subject,” however, is no more a synonym for “individual” than “Early Modern” is for “Renaissance.” Whereas Structuralist thinkers tended to see the individual as a unified, centered, autonomous, and free being—a creature, in short, not unrelated to the “universal man” or old master of Burckhardtian fame—Poststructuralists see the subject as the antithesis of that individual. The poststructuralist subject, far from being autonomous, fully conscious, and freely willing, is a product or function of some broader, determining category—for example, language, social class, and ideology—or the hidden forces of the unconscious. The poststructuralist subject is, in short, a determined subject.

This very tension due to the opposition between old master and new subject is apparent in a recent volume by Irving Lavin.\textsuperscript{108} As its title might suggest, Irving Lavin’s volume is not an expression of ‘new art history,’ but is instead an excellent example of art historical research. In short, Lavin interprets Michelangelo’s \textit{David} as symbolic of the creative struggle of the artist. In this chapter, Lavin defines and explores the two complementary aspects of the David by offering observations and suggestions concerning the Louvre sheet. However, Lavin acknowledges that there is nothing new in the suggestion that David had personal meaning. Vasari records that Michelangelo returned from Rome to Florence expressly in order to compete for the commission. As noted above, the “David with the sling and I with the bow. Michelangelo / Broken the tall column and the green” has been read in important ways in relation to the \textit{David}.\textsuperscript{109} Lavin argues the basic sense of the upper inscription seems to indicate that Michelangelo identifies himself with the biblical giant killer, equating the instruments with which they succeeded in dispatching their respective, common adversary. The second inscription has a parallel, binary construction. The phrase is a quotation, omitting the last word, from the opening line of a famous sonnet of Petrarch “\textit{Rotta è l’altra Colonna e l verde lauro},” in which the poet laments the almost simultaneous deaths in the spring of 1348 of his friend Giovanni Colonna and his beloved Laura. Many explanations of Michelangelo’s ‘arco’ had been given through the centuries until an ingenious interpretation, first suggested by Marcel Brion in 1940 and then elaborated by Charles Seymour, seemed to resolve the problem. The arco must be the bowed drill, called a \textit{trapano}, used by sculptors since antiquity to facilitate the work of carving marble. In that case, the ‘alta colonna’ of the second inscription could be taken as referring to a great pillar (or column) of marble originally intended a \textit{Gigante} to be mounted on a buttress of Florence Cathedral, which


\textsuperscript{109} Lavin, Past-Present, p. 110.
had defeated earlier sculptors for at least a century.\textsuperscript{110} The theme of the broken column, as Lavin observes relates closely to the related themes of Hercules and Samson slaying the lion.\textsuperscript{111} Boccaccio, for example, speaks of \textit{arco dell’intelletto} in reference to the mental effort required for a work deserving of eternal fame. At the opposite end of the conceptual scale, the term was also applied to various parts of the body, and in particular the phrase \textit{con l’arco della schiena}.\textsuperscript{112} The traditional Hebrew \textit{midrashim}, or commentaries on the Old Testament, and in the mystical Zohar, offered a rich body of legendary and interpretative material concerning the story of David and Goliath, some of which seems particularly relevant. In one text, for example, Moses is said to have prayed for his seed, and especially for David, as follows: “Hear, Lord, his voice, and Thous shalt be an help against his adversaries”, ‘bringi him’ then back ‘to his people’ in peace; and when alone he shall set out into battle against Goliath, ‘let his hands be sufficient for him, and thou shalt be an help against his adversaries.”\textsuperscript{113} The Lord is specifically invoked to render David’s hands ‘sufficient,’ and these deeds, in turn, are related to the Hebrews’ divinely inspired use of their favorite weapon, the bow. Similarly, the Zohar speaks of the ‘evil’ eye that David cast upon his opponent, who rooted him to the ground, unable to move, an apt description of the effect of the glance of Michelangelo’s \textit{David}.\textsuperscript{114} Michelangelo might well have been aware of these ancient texts, which were avidly studied by the learned men of his generation, including Marsilio Ficino, Giovanni Pico della Mirandola and especially Egidio da Viterbo, who has been credited with an important role in the conceptual design of the Sistine ceiling.\textsuperscript{115} The inscriptions on the Louvre drawing are also, after all, a tissue of references— to the biblical hero as the

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{110} Lavin, Past-Present, p. 111.
  \item \textsuperscript{111} Lavin, Past-Present, p. 112.
  \item \textsuperscript{112} Lavin, Past-Present, p. 113.
  \item \textsuperscript{113} Lavin, Past-Present, p. 116. See KJV Ps. 78:72 : “So he fed them according to the integrity of his heart; and guided them by the skilfulness of his hands.”
  \item \textsuperscript{114} Lavin, Past-Present, p. 116.
  \item \textsuperscript{115} Lavin, Past-Present, p. 116.
\end{itemize}
prototype of the artist, and to the verse of Petrarch as a metaphor for a political statement.\textsuperscript{116} Methodologically, the inscriptions are paralleled visually in the statue itself, which refers to the earlier Florentine depictions of the Old Testament David, who incorporates the pagan paragon of fortitude and virtue, Hercules, and who is also assimilated to the Early Christian warrior saints.\textsuperscript{117} The parallel Michelangelo draws in the first text of the Louvre sheet between \textit{David} and himself inevitably does more than simply equate two remarkable victories over physically superior adversaries.\textsuperscript{118} David had long since become an emblem of Florentine republicanism, and it is clear that Michelangelo imputed to his own giant a sort of apotropaic efficacy with respect to Florence’s contemporary enemies, equivalent to and infused with the same divine power as the Biblical hero with respect to the Philistine enemies of Israel.\textsuperscript{119} The first inscription itself therefore suggests that Michelangelo’s personal power served a larger, communal purpose, through the image of \textit{David}.\textsuperscript{120} The nature of this public mission, is manifested in the text written below the artist’s signature, for the associations evoked by the Petrarchian verse extending the meaning of the defeat of the challenging giant far beyond the superiority of purely intellectual and technical prowess.\textsuperscript{121} Apart from its physical character, \textit{David}’s extraordinary size, physique and complete nudity is above all distinguished by its unprecedented isolation of the moment before the epic battle with the Philistine.\textsuperscript{122} Normally, and quite rightly, this abrogation of the traditional rule of showing David triumphant over the decapitated giant, is taken as serving to heighten the dramatic intensity of the event.\textsuperscript{123} Given the inscription on the drawing, however,

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  \item \textsuperscript{116} Lavin, Past-Present, p. 128.
  \item \textsuperscript{117} Lavin, Past-Present, p. 128.
  \item \textsuperscript{118} Lavin, Past-Present, p. 132.
  \item \textsuperscript{119} Lavin, Past-Present, p. 132.
  \item \textsuperscript{120} Lavin, Past-Present, p. 132.
  \item \textsuperscript{121} Lavin, Past-Present, p. 133.
  \item \textsuperscript{122} Lavin, Past-Present, p. 136.
  \item \textsuperscript{123} Lavin, Past-Present, p. 136.
\end{itemize}
the shift of emphasis from victory to vigilance must also be understood in light of the potential future menace inherent in the Medicean theme of verdant laurel and *le temps revient*.

Michelangelo’s narrative innovation thus imbues the figure with a vital, contemporary meaning analogous to the physical power and psychological immediacy of support, has become the modern image of the spiritual force with which moral right is endowed. In this sense, especially, the *David* shows its debt to that great tradition of warrior saints, propugnators of the faith, which includes the *Saint George* of Donatello, and Michelangelo’s own earlier portrayal of *Saint Proculus*. Instead of Goliath’s head between or beneath David’s feet, Michelangelo placed behind his leg the stump of a tree, a conventional method of adding support commonly used by ancient sculptors. In the case of Michelangelo’s *David*, however, the device may also serve as an attribute of *David*, equivalent to Goliath’s head, though different in form as well as meaning, which I shall consider in more depth below.

Leonard Barkan’s analysis of the *David* sets a methodological precedent for my argument by opening the dialogue to the consideration of other possible literary, mythological, and theological identities. As the project developed, the iconographic program became focused on the Prophets of the Hebrew Bible, including Joshua as well as David. Referring to *Studies for David, Corpus 19r*, Barkan notes that the *pentimenti* in the hand along with other rough-hewn passages in the design—may even perhaps reflect an anxious sense that this destabilized extremity might need to be anchored; however, in addition to structural reasons, there is, ostensibly, an uncanny resemblance to the flagging right arm of *Jeremiah* (*Figure 28 and 34*).

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124 Lavin, Past-Present, p. 136.
125 Lavin, Past-Present, p. 137.
126 Lavin, Past-Present, p. 137.
Irving Lavin has pursued a sequence of associations that begins with the sculpting tool and proceeds to the *seste ad arco*, or compass, an instrument that allows artists to adjust the scale of two-dimension works to sculpture.¹²⁹ Hereafter, Lavin goes on to illustrate representations of David Slaying Goliath that closely resemble the images of a sculptor, in the act of wrestling with his creation.¹³⁰ Lavin’s equivocates *David’s* iconography—not only in typological terms, but in suggesting that the underlying reference in *arco* was to David’s harp, Michelangelo was recognizing some of the basic terms of the comparison, between his biography and the characteristics of the biblical hero.¹³¹ Still, Barkan assesses that Lavin’s reading fails to take into account that *arco* must refer in part to some sort of weapon; or else, there is no parallel to *fromba*.¹³² Even if the *arco* is not a musical instrument, it is certainly plausible that Michelangelo might be making some sort of contrast between brute force and his own *ingegno*.¹³³ If the proposition that *fromba* and *arco* aligns with *fortezza* and *ingenio*, then Michelangelo would seem to conquer the marble block with his virtuosity, rather than with a sling and a stone.¹³⁴ Although Barkan’s terms show indebtedness to the labyrinthine logic of post-structuralism, we do not need to posit a radically anachronistic Michelangelo in order to see him as hungry for the rhetorical properties of language.¹³⁵ The tropic exercise of *fromba* and *arco*, with all its ambiguity and polyvalence of signification, with its semiotic slippage between metaphor and

¹³⁰ The image is taken from Fanti, *Triompho di Fortuna* (Venice 1527), where it is card 38; see Lavin, “David’s Sling,” 41-43.
¹³³ See Girardi, 473; and Residori, 468.
¹³⁵ Barkan, *Michelangelo: A Life on Paper*, p. 120.
simile, and by vacillating between contrast and comparison—is fundamental to language.136

Language affords him the opportunity to radicalize and multiply these canons of resemblance.

The most fundamental binary on the Louvre sheet is the neighboring presence of two different pieces of sculpture. Similarly, they too, align themselves in much the same way as fromba and arco. The radical iconographic choice—to depict a moment of stasis, or perhaps, self-reflection, in the biblical account, rather than the customary scene of triumph where the hero poses atop his oversized trophy head—represents in itself a decision against brute force and in favor of other, more inward aspects of the legend.137 Barkan skirts David’s religious or typological significations, opting instead to related the story of David and Goliath to the hundred-year-old saga between sculptors and the giant marble block.138 David, the shepherd boy, promptly sheds the borrowed armor, explaining to Saul that he is too young and too inexperienced to be comfortable with the accessories of the professional warrior. This motivation, which stems from the young man’s praiseworthy level of self-knowledge, is replaced by a theological motivation when David, defying Goliath in the heat of battle, offers a different reason for appearing unclad: “Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied.”139 When Michelangelo sketches preliminary forms in response to his two recent commissions, and writes, “David with his slingshot, and I with my bow,” he is not merely comparing himself to the biblical hero; he is inserting himself in a sequence of heavily moralized—and as I argue, typological analogues.140

136 Barkan, Michelangelo: A Life on paper, p. 120.
137 Barkan, Michelangelo: A Life on Paper, p. 121.
Sifting through the sorites of discourse on Michelangelo’s *David* proves to be an exercise in the archeology of academic thought itself. The history of Michelangelo’s *David* begins from an image of the basic plastic form—a giant cut-out rock of Carrera marble and an enigmatic inscription on parchment—whether that be the grasp of ideal forms, the orderly reception of sense impressions, or the social construction of the world through visuality. The concepts of Vasarian teleology itself build, and build upon, that image—the ideal image of the *David*: “To be sure, anyone who sees this statue need not be concerned with seeing any other piece of sculpture done in our times or in any other period by any other artist.”\(^{141}\) At first glance, thematic points of reference—the date, circumstances of commission, and the famous poem—all seem to repeat themselves adding nothing to the study of Michelangelo’s *David*. For Deleuze, repetition is produced via difference, not mimesis. For Michelangelo’s *David*, meaning is created through similarities and differences noted by spectators engaging in a non-linear pattern of circumspection. Repetition is a process of foregrounding that resists turning into an inert system of replication. In fact, the whole Platonist idea of repeating in order to produce copies is completely undermined by Deleuze. For Deleuze maintains this approach is deeply flawed because it subsumes the creative nature of difference under an immobile system of resemblance or narrative, for that matter. Deleuze refuses to seek an originary point out of which repetition can cyclically reproduce itself. He insists that the process does not depend upon a subject or object that repeats, rather, it is self-sustainable. Whilst repetition is potentially infinite—consisting of new beginnings—it is crucial that we do not mistake this process of historiography be a linear sequence: the end of one cycle marking the beginning of the next.

CHAPTER 2
AMONG THE PROPHETS

Remarkably, scholars have never investigated Michelangelo’s *David* within the thematic
and biblical context of the sculptural Program of Santa Maria del Fiore (i.e. the Florentine
Cathedral)—the site for which the celebrated colossal marble sculpture was commissioned
(*figure 1*). They have focused instead on the post-completion placement of the *David*, as
exemplified in the work of Saul Levine, N. Randolph Parks, and others. And, although

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142 For the meeting of 2 July, see Seymour, *Michelangelo’s David*, pp. 136-7; G. Poggi, *Il Duomo
di Firenze*, Berlin, 1909 no. 446 in De Tolnay, *Youth*, p. 151. In awarding the contract, the Operai were
joined by the Consuls of the Arte della Lana, who traditionally provided funding for cathedral projects.

143 Charles Seymour dates the program’s genesis to c. 1408 See, C. Seymour, *Michelangelo’s
David: A Search for Identity*, p. 45. Indeed, a document dated January 24, 1408 states: “Item. It was
decided that Donato di Betto Bardi [Donatello] was competent…to make or execute for the said church
one of the figures of the twelve prophets, to which the prophet *David*, under the terms and conditions, and
for the same salary, as those concluded with Giovanni d’Antonio di Banco, the master in charge of a
figure that he has agreed to make as a certain other prophet, which is to be placed upon the buttress of one
of the tribunes at present built or completed (*Delib.*. LIV, folio 15v).” See Seymour, “*Michelangelo’s
David: A Search for Identity,*” p. 109. Furthermore, Seymour suggested that it is probable that the true
recipient of the contract was Donatello himself, and that Agostino was to work as his assistant and
amanuensis, since Donatello was too old to be able to do the physical work himself. The next contract
was drawn up with Antonio Rossellino is dated 6 May 1476: “The O
perai, considering that several years
ago the sculptor Agostino was commissioned to make a marble giant, which is at present in the cellars, do
commission [Antonio Rossellino], stonemason and sculptor, to finish the giant and to have it placed on
one of the buttresses of the church” (*Delib.*. 1472-1476, folio 48). Quoted in Seymour,
*Michelangelo’s David*, p. 135. Although Saul Levine finds the minutes of the meeting of January 25,
1504 the most revealing in terms of *David’s* iconography, he admittedly
states that it also possessed
connotations that January 25, 1504,” pp. 31-32 (n.3), 34. First published with brief annotations by
Giovanni, The *Minutes*, a later transcription was published by Milanesi with some corrections of Gaye’s
Search for Identity*, Pittsburgh, 1967, pp. 141-155. Saul Levine employs a new transcription that was
prepared by Enzo Settesoldi, Archivist of the Duomo. Nonetheless, we should not make the presumption
that *David* is a purely political statue— first and foremost, he is intended as a bastion of typological
eminence. Standing at nearly seventeen feet tall, *David* would have made the viewer aware of the claim
Florentine exceptionalism by the means of exegetical and formal parallels with the iconographical history
of the sculptural program at the Duomo. See, S. Levine. “The Location of Michelangelo’s *David*: The
Michelangelo’s appropriation of Donatello’s visual vocabulary has long been acknowledged, insufficient analyses of formal and thematic points of reference continue to propagate a Vasarian model that views Michelangelo as a ‘divine genius’ who created the David ex nihilo. In contrast, I will argue, in this chapter, that Michelangelo employed the grammar of the Cathedral and Prophet Program in the making of his David — with particular reference to the façade, buttresses, and Campanile of the Cathedral, especially in regard to Ghiberti’s Gates of Paradise, the east-facing baptistery doors (Figure 2) and Donatello’s Jeremiah, located on the second tier of the west-facing side of the Campanile (Figure 3). With an emphasis on Christological prophecy as the lynchpin of the overall sculptural program, I will likewise apply humanist and Christian exegesis to reposition the David into its intended religious context. Discursively speaking,

pp. 185, 219) gives a partial summary of the sculpture on the west façade of the cathedral. Its general appearance, including its sculpture, is shown in a drawing, executed in Florence in the second half of the sixteenth century, which is in the Museo dell’Opera del Duomo, Florence (Pope-Hennessy, opp. 181). Besides the material on the west façade, the sculptural program of the Cathedral included the projects for the north side (the tribune buttresses and the Porta della Mandorla), the Campanile and the decorations for the two south portals (Porta del Campanile and the Porta dei Canonici).

Indeed, a document dated January 24, 1408 states: “Item. It was decided that Donato di Betto Bardi [Donatello] was competent…to make or execute for the said church one of the figures of the twelve prophets, to wit the prophet David, under the terms and conditions, and for the same salary, as those concluded with Giovanni d’Antonio di Banco, the master in charge of a figure that he has agreed to make as a certain other prophet, which is to be placed upon the buttress of one of the tribunes at present built or completed” (Delib., LIV, folio 15v). Furthermore, to summarize very familiar facts: in the contract of 16 August 1501, Michelangelo was allowed two years to complete the marble David; in that for the bronze David of 12 August 1502 he was allowed six months; and in that for the Apostles, dated 24 April, 1503 he was bound to deliver one statue every year over the following twelve years. See Hirst, “Michelangelo in Florence,” p. 487 n. 1. See G. Milanesi, Le lettere dei Buonarroti coiricoridei contratti Michelangelo pubblicate artistic, Florence [1875], pp. 620-23,624, and 625-26 respectively, or the three contracts. For a complete transcription of that for the bronze David, see F. Caglioti, “David bronzeo di Michelangelo (e Benedettoda Rovezzano): il problemadei pagamenti,” in Ad Alessandro Conti del Seminar di Storia della critica (1946-1994), Quaderni d'arte VI, Pisa [1996], pp.110-11. Added to these projects was the obligation he had brought with him from Rome in the spring of 1501, to deliver fifteen statues destined for the Piccolomini altar in Siena Cathedral within the following three years. In the agreement signed by Michelangelo in Florence on 19 June 1501, he undertook to accept no other work prior to the completion of Cardinal Francesco Piccolomini’s assignment. See also, Hirst, “Michelangelo in Florence,” p. 487 cf. n. 2. Unsurprisingly, contractual obligations and the reality of their observance begin to diverge in these early years of the sixteenth century yet as Hirst argues did not happen all at once. Hirst introduces a small piece of evidence which goes far to vindicate the artist’s record in the case of the David. As already noted, he had been obliged by the terms of the contract to complete the statue by August 1503. In the
Michelangelo’s *David* is a wayfarer of sorts—having been interpreted through many different methodological frameworks, which placed him in various milieus depending upon time and space.

To contextualize my argument I will briefly review the monuments and their respective sculptural programs (*Figure 4 and 5*). By the 1290s, Santa Reparata, the precursor to Santa Maria del Fiore, was dwarfed not only by the surrounding urban expansion and by the new large and space mendicant churches of Santa Croce and Santa Maria Novella. And, it was decided to build a new, much larger cathedral, which was erected as a shell around the older church (later demolished). The new cathedral was to be rededicated to the Virgin Mary. Arnolfo di Cambio’s façade, only partially completed, was destroyed in 1587; some elements of its design, however, are indicated in a drawing made immediately prior to its destruction (*Figure 35*). Whether this drawing reflects the façade of Arnolfo’s time, or whether major changes were made during the fourteenth century has been a matter of debate; it certainly shows the fifteenth-century majority of accounts of the commission, it seems to have become traditional to state that the David was effectively finished in the early months of 1504. Hirst, “Michelangelo in Florence,” p. 487 cf. n. 4; This conclusion is based on the description of the statue as *quasi finita* in the preamble to the *practica of January 1504* (for which see Milanesi, *Le Lettere di Michelangelo Buonarroti pubblicate coi ricordi ed i contratti artistici*, Florence, [1875], p. 620. Proof of this can be found in the very brief Deliberazione of the Operai of the Cathedral dated 16 June 1503. This makes provision for a public viewing of the statue one week later, on 23rd of June, on the eve of one of Florence’s most important feast days, that of the Birth of Saint John the Baptist, the city’s most important patron saint. On the day mentioned the door of the structure, which had been built around the *David*, was to be opened. The text reads “Dicta die [i.e. 16 June] Item deliberaverunt per tres fabas nigras deliberaverunt etc. qualiter die 23 videlicet vigilia S. Joannis Baptiste aperiatur hostium gigantis et tota dicta die apertum sit adeo quod possit videri gigas marmoreus ab omnibus volentibus videre etc. mandantes.” Quoted in Florence, Archivio dell’Opera del Duomo, Seconda Seria II, 9, Deliberazione 1496-1507, fol. 59v. The text of this Deliberazione is to be found neither in G. Poggi, *Il Duomo di Firenze*, ed. M. Haines, Florence [1988] (original edition Berlin [1909]) nor in the documents relating to the *David* published in Frey, “Studien zu Michelagniolo Buonarroti und zur Kunst seiner Zeit,” *Jahrbuch der Königlich preussischen Kunstemmlungen*, XXX [1909], Beiheft, p. 107 no.10.

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niches added to accommodate the seated Apostle figures by Donatello and others of the early fifteenth century. Although a convincing reconstruction of details of the original façade has remained elusive, it is probably that the design was much purer and simpler than that seen in the drawing with its late Gothic accretion of sculptures difficult to imagine as forming a coherent iconographic or aesthetic whole. Indeed, the prominence given to sculpture on the façade represented a decisive break with Florentine tradition, which preferred flat geometric marble intarsia of restrained polychromy, as seen on the facades of the Baptistry and San Miniato al Monte. The sculptural program, concentrated on the three façade portals, was clearly a response both to the façade then under construction in Siena, designed by Giovanni Pisano, and to developments north of the Alps. At any rate, let us begin with the west-facing façade of the Cathedral and the David on the northern buttress of the Duomo apse completed in 1504, but never installed. There, David’s gaze would have arced toward the direction of the eastern portal of the baptistery known as the “Gates of Paradise,” created by Lorenzo Ghiberti between c. 1425 and 1452 (Figures 5 and 8). Adjacent to the baptistery, to the south of the Duomo façade is the Campanile adorned with the Prophet Program including the Unidentified Prophet, Habacuc, Jeremiah, and the Bearded Prophet, all of which were added between c. 1416 and 1435 (Figure 6). Echoing each other in form, Jeremiah and David resonate by way of ricocheting glances, from the visual connections made by viewers steeped in humanist and Christian writings, and by way of formal ritornelli—that is to say visual and exegetical parallels, as well as through exegetical and theological associations.

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In 2010, a citywide exhibition entitled *David la Forza della Bellezza* evoked the 1504 debate organized by Gonfaloniere Piero Soderini, which resulted in the transfer of the *David* from its planned sacred context on the northern buttress of the Florentine Cathedral to the more emphatically civic context of the Piazza della Signoria (*Figure 29*). Copies of the original life-size statue made of fiberglass and marble dust were placed in the diverse venues proposed in the 1504 debate, making visible what Leonardo, Sandro Botticelli, and Giuliano da Sangallo—artists who participated in the panel debating the location change for the sculpture—only could have imagined. One exhibition image in particular shows a copy of the *David* on top of the Duomo buttress, his head no longer turning towards Rome (as in the sculpture’s Piazza della Signoria site), but instead now gazing toward the Baptistery. Indeed, the *David’s* gaze would have initiated an arc encircling the entire Piazza del Duomo ensemble including the Duomo, Baptistry, and Campanile, thus tying together the visual and Christological *ritornelli* and thereby encouraging viewers to make associations with Ghiberti’s *Gates of Paradise* and Donatello’s *Prophet* Program, specifically his *Jeremiah* (*Figure 3*). Following the *David’s* gaze, one would be directed toward the *Gates of Paradise* and then proceed to the Campanile where the *Jeremiah* is installed. This visual arc would have encouraged viewers to make these formal connections while transitioning from space to space in the milieu of the Piazza del Duomo. Indeed, after the *David’s* location change, theological context was lost that would have posited David as the Son of Jesse, as an ancestor of Christ, and his physical strength as embodying an

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expression of his moral virtue.\textsuperscript{151} In Matthew 1:17, Christ is first called the son of David, because under that title he was commonly spoken of, and expected to be the messiah, among the Jews. Through David’s lineage, Christ is not only a son of Abraham, but also that son whom was destined to be the father of many nations, inclusive of Quattrocento Florence.\textsuperscript{152}

As foretold by the prophet Jeremiah and fulfilled in the book of Revelations: “One of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed.”\textsuperscript{153} And on the top of the church, an empty buttress remains unfulfilled. For the Cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore—named for the holy flower rooted in Davidic line and having dimensions drawn according to the scriptural account of Solomon’s temple—it is the placement of the triumphant David on the buttress, that would have completed the symbolic matrix of the sculptural Program.\textsuperscript{154} I argue that the theme of the Gates of Paradise is consistent with the Piazza del Duomo Prophet Program simultaneously being installed on the both

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\textsuperscript{151} The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. \textsuperscript{2} Abraham begat Isaac; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat Judas and his brethren; \textsuperscript{3} And Judas begat Phares and Zara of Thamar; and Phares begat Esrom; and Esrom begat Aram; \textsuperscript{4} And Aram begat Aminadab; and Aminadab begat Naasson; and Naasson begat Salmon; \textsuperscript{5} And Salmon begat Booz of Rachab; and Booz begat Obed of Ruth; and Obed begat Jesse; \textsuperscript{6} And Jesse begat David the king; and David the king begat Solomon of her that had been the wife of Urias; \textsuperscript{7} And Solomon begat Roboam; and Roboam begat Abia; and Abia begat Asa; \textsuperscript{8} And Asa begat Josaphat; and Josaphat begat Joram; and Joram begat Ozias; \textsuperscript{9} And Ozias begat Joatham; and Joatham begat Achaz; and Achaz begat Ezekias; \textsuperscript{10} And Ezekias begat Manasses; and Manasses begat Amon; and Amon begat Josias; \textsuperscript{11} And Josias begat Jechonias and his brethren, about the time they were carried away to Babylon: \textsuperscript{12} And after they were brought to Babylon, Jechonias begat Salathiel; and Salathiel begat Zorobabel; \textsuperscript{13} And Zorobabel begat Abiud; and Abiud begat Eliakim; and Eliakim begat Azor; \textsuperscript{14} And Azor begat Sadoc; and Sadoc begat Achim; and Achim begat Eliud; \textsuperscript{15} And Eliud begat Eleazar; and Eleazar begat Matthan; and Matthan begat Jacob; \textsuperscript{16} And Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ \textsuperscript{17} So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David until the carrying away into Babylon are fourteen generations; and from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ are fourteen generations” (Matthew 1:17).

\textsuperscript{152} See also, Mt. 15:22; 20:31; 21:15.

\textsuperscript{153} Rev. 5:5.

Campanile and Cathedral façade and later embodied in the incarnation of Michelangelo’s *David* (*Figure 9*).

In order to conceptualize the temporal and spatial scheme, it is logical to begin according to the directional arc created by the *David’s* gaze. Indeed, Michelangelo too, looked back nearly a hundred years earlier in regards to Ghiberti’s Baptistery doors, or the so-called *Gates of Paradise*. Indeed, this colloquial name for the Baptistery doors derives, according to Vasari, from an enthusiastic endorsement by Michelangelo: “They are so beautiful, that they might be well the *Gates of Paradise*.155 Ten panels in gilded bronze, five for each wing of the door, illustrate notable episodes from the Old Testament, with prophets (*Figure 9*)—continuous narratives that are perfectly coherent with those of two existing doors.

Michelangelo’s documented admiration for the doors, and sensitive response to the site of his commission, would account for the formal *ritornelli* seen particularly in a few of the niche prophets and heads. These figures certainly would have resonated with viewers paying close attention to the Baptistery and Cathedral Program and prompted contemplation of a unified theological and formal scheme (*Figure 9*).

Several examples of visual *ritornelli* can be seen in niches next to the main panels. First is the niche figure of *Samson* to the right of panel IV (*The Story of Abraham*) (*Figure. 9*). A handsome youthful male nude, symbolizing *fortezza*, much like Michelangelo’s *David*, stands in *contrapposto*. Samson is to David, in typologically, what Hercules is to David, mythologically.156 On the other side of the complex, and in comparison to *Samson*, Michelangelo did not wish to

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156 Samson bears many similar traits to the Greek Herakles (and the Roman Hercules). Herakles and Samson both battled a Lion bare handed (Lion of Nemea feat), Herakles and Samson both had a preferred primitive blunt weapon (a club for the former, an ass’ jaw for the latter), they were both betrayed by a woman which led them to their ultimate fate (Herakles by Dejanira, while Samson by Delilah). Both heroes, champion of their respective people, die by their own hand: Herakles ends his life on a pyre while Samson makes the Philistine temple collapse upon himself and his enemies.
represent a singular historical moment in the life of his David; more likely, the sculptor aimed to incarnate him with the essence of civic virtù—attributes of fortitude and courage. Another impressive element of the work is the contrapposto; the tension of the right is poised against the relaxation of the left. The David’s right hand—the dexter, of course, embodying forterzsa—not unlike Ghiberti’s Samson—is perpendicular to the rock on which he stands. Samson’s right arm hangs loosely yet tightly grips the donkey’s jawbone, while his left arm is raised upwards holding onto the column he will eventually break into pieces. His wild locks of hair and steely gaze ties this figure back to David on the buttress (Figure 10). Regarding the heads, one in particular seems to capture the psychological complexity present in Michelangelo’s David. Located on the lower left of the Panel I (The Creation, Fall, and Expulsion) is the visage of a youthful male whose brow muscles strain as if determined to win an infinite staring contest (Figure 11). Michelangelo was clearly interested in captured his psychological intensity, which seemed to elevate him beyond the realm of mere prophetic synecdoche.

Circumambulating the Cathedral, one would encounter numerous sculptural ritornelli at select sites. As the Campanile would come into view, one would notice the Jeremiah and the other prophets on the west-facing side of the bell tower (Figure 6). On top of the north-facing buttress, one would have entered into the shadow of the David. The hierarchical position in both intended settings reduces the human presence to a mere speck in the shadow of these statues so grand they require architecture for pedestals. It is one thing to witness the David and the Jeremiah in a museum setting removed from their original context. However, during their tenure on top of the Duomo and Campanile respectively, viewing the David and Jeremiah would have

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elicited an appreciation of awe-inspiring power and glory and an awareness of their interconnectedness.

As one strolls to the west side of the Campanile, there, on the second tier of Giotto’s tower is a group of four prophets with formal *ritornelli* reminiscent of Michelangelo’s creation (*Figure 6*). As one gazes upwards towards the four *prophets*, the *Jeremiah* stands out of one of the finest examples of Donatello’s ability to replicate nature (*Figure 3*). One cannot conceive of *David’s* intense character without the life-like foundations preceded by Donatello. According to Frederick Hartt, the *Jeremiah* is the most successful of the prophet series; his billowing masses of drapery are under perfect control, by the hand of the sculptor.\(^{158}\) The prophet clings to them as if the forces of nature, as Hartt would have it, ‘blow with the fierce anger of God’s command.’ As time passed, he became to be called *Il Popolano*, for his resemblance to an earthbound man. Standing resolute and fierce, his limbs, hands, and even his drapery quiver with life. *Jeremiah’s* bodily features are deeply incised: his sunken eye sockets, drilled blazing flames of hair, pursed lips, the forceful turn of the head and most aptly, the flagging, venous right arm recalls formal attributes of the *David* (*Figure 37*). So it follows, that Donatello’s vehement carvings, of the *Jeremiah’s* furrowed brow, wild hair, bulging lips, and even his carotid artery must have been visible to viewers on the ground, since a portrait likeness, as legend has it, was legible as the prophet leans precariously with his toes prodding the edge of the plinth.\(^{159}\) Indeed, viewers may have recognized the expression of civic pride and prophetic hope through shared stylistic and hermeneutic *ritornelli* equivocating between the *David* and the *Jeremiah*.


\(^{159}\) (Before 1530) Billi, pp. 48f: “[Donatello did]…two figures on the Campanile, one the side towards the square: one is the likeness, drawn from nature, of Giovanni di Barduccio Cherichini, the other (*Jeremiah*) represents the young Francesco Soderini; [they are standing] side by side, towards the Canonica.” See Janson, *Donatello*, p. 35.
In addition to formal ritornelli, exegetical typologies abound between the two ancestors of Christ. What emerges in Jeremiah is a human fully capable of anxiety and aggression.\footnote{See Castelfranco, 1963, pp. 23-33. Cited in Bergstein, \textit{Nanni di Banco}, p. 36.} Jeremiah experienced the passion in his own body, for the priests had derided him, and the elders had taken him captive; he had been beaten, cast into prison, and upon his miraculous liberation, according to Christian doctrine, he foreshadows the Resurrection.\footnote{For parallels between Jeremiah and Christ, cf. St. Jerome, \textit{Tranlatio homiliarum origenis in Jeremiam}, Migne, XXV, col. 666; St. Isidore, \textit{Allegoriae quadem Scripturae Sacrae}, Migne, col. 114; Hrabanus Marus, \textit{De Universo}, Migne, CXI, col. 67; Rupertus of Deutz, \textit{De Trinitate}, Migne, CLXVII, col. 1365; id., \textit{De divinis officiis}, Migne, CLXX, cols. 122 and 126. Cited in Hartt, “Lignum Vitae,” p. 194 n. 110.} In fact, Origen wrote on Christ’s humiliation as a fulfillment of prophecy:

Yet they bruise the holy head of the church with blows, on account of which they themselves suffer the blows of Satan, not to prevent them from being puffed up and thus perfect their virtue but so that they might be delivered to the avenging enemy to be repaid for their sinful act in beating Jesus. And not content merely to spit on his face and bruise him with blows, they bruised him also with their open hands and made sport of him, saying, ‘Prophesy to us, who has struck you?’ For this reason they have received an eternal blow and have been deprived of all prophecy, struck and chastised and even then they would not submit to discipline, the very thing that Jeremiah prophesied of them: ‘You have lashed them, and they grieved not, and they would not submit to discipline.’\footnote{Jer. 5:3. See Origen, Commentary on Matthew 111-113, in Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten Jahrhunderte. Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1897. Cited in Edwards, \textit{We Believe in the Crucified and Risen Lord}, p. 93.}

Origen refers to Luke 22:64, in which the mockers struck Christ on the face, and continued to do so until he named the person that smote him, thereby intending an affront to his prophetical office, and the knowledge of ‘secret things’ which he was said to withhold. Although it is not certain whether Christ acquiesced or not, he bore every physical passion. Stalwart and impassioned, Jeremiah stands his ground, refusing to be overtaken by the whirling winds—the wind-swept drapery lashes his body—testing the prophet to his very physical and spiritual limits. Origen writes of the slippage between Christ and Jeremiah:
And those who declared that Jeremiah was Jesus, rather than that Jeremiah was a type of Christ, perhaps said of Jeremiah but were not realized in the prophet but had begun to be realized in Jesus. God appointed him ‘for the nations and kingdoms, to uproot and dig up and destroy and pull down and transplant,’ having made him to be a prophet to the nations to whom he had proclaimed the word.  

Holding forth his scroll containing the words of God, The Jeremiah stands, looking upward from his great rolling eyes, pursing his heavy lips until the lower one partly curls over, as if responding to a supernal voice (figure 38). As previously mentioned, The Jeremiah’s stance, ocular gaze, the hanging right arm, and above all, prophetic exegesis infuses to make this heroic figure a prototype of Michelangelo’s David. Michelangelo’s innovation of his David was accomplished by denuding Jeremiah of his heavy drapery—thereby fully expressing the divinely human body that anticipated Christ.  

It is true that tree stumps are conventions of structural support and enables the David to stand erect (figure 39). Yet, it is also possible that such a stable element, with biblical implications, detaches the statue from conventional narrative and, even, historical time.


164 On 8 September 1504, the day David was unveiled to the city of Florence the biblical hero wore a gilded wreath on his head, while the tree stump and sling were highlighted in gold. See Goffen, Renaissance Rivals, p. 40 n. 209; Karl Frey, “Studien zu Michelagniolo,” p. 132 nos. 189, 190, 192, the Opera payment records dated 30 June 1504 for gilding the Giant’s wreath or garland, sling, and tree stump. See also, G. Bull, Michelangelo: A Biography, p. 452 n. 297; “When first placed on the piazza, the statue was adorned with gilt accessories: a ‘ghirlanda’ or ‘cigna’ a belt of copper leaves.” Although he was adorned with a belt or a fig leaf to cover up his ‘shame’ in his new location on the piazza, there is so far no contention that the artist had indubitably intended to gilt the tree stump, sling, and garland on his own volition. On an interesting note, Seymour, David, transcribes a document dates to 9 October, 1415: “The goldsmith Filippo di Ser Brunellesco and the sculptor Donato di Niccolò di Betto Bardi request 10 gold florins as partial payment for a little figure of stone, clad in lead gilt, which has been made at the request of the Operai as a demonstration and test for large figures which are to be made for placing on the buttresses of S. Maria del Fiore” (Stanz, QQ, folio 103). See also, A. Amendola, and A. Paolucci, David, p. 10. Perhaps Michelangelo intended to continue this tradition of gilding initiated by his Renaissance and classical forefathers’ predilection for gilding large colossi. See also, K. Weil-Garris “On Pedestals: Michelangelo’s David, Bandinelli’s Hercules and Caucus and the Sculpture of the Piazza della Signoria,” p. 392 contends that “the fact that David once wore a gilt wreath reminds us that such additions were conceivable.”
Therefore, we are forced to rethink the literal interpretation of an actual biblical account of the battle and to instead conceive of the *David* as a timeless symbol becoming a paradigm of classical anatomical perfection. The *David* is indeed an ideal—a mirror of the church—he is simultaneously the body of Christ and the bodies of worshippers of the church who will be protected by the *David*.

In contrast to fifteenth-century representations of *David* that abide by the Old Testament’s description of him as a young boy, Michelangelo’s rendition is a fully developed virile man. With sword, helmet, and usually clad in armor; the head of Goliath is laid like a trophy of victory at his feet and he is always shown at the completion of his heroic deed—that is not the case in Michelangelo’s *David* (Donatello’s *David* for instance) (*Figure 28*).¹⁶⁵ Indeed, *David*’s iconography supports both humanist and Christian values. In the *Oration on the Dignity of Man*, Giovanni Pico della Mirandola’s asserts that God created human beings with an indeterminate nature either capable of aspiring to an angelic identity or degenerating into bestiality.¹⁶⁶ For Pico, “man is the intermediary between creatures, close to the gods, master of all the lower creatures, with the sharpness of his senses, the acuity of his reason, and the brilliance of his intelligence the interpreter of nature, the nodal point between eternity and time, and… the intimate bond or marriage song of the world…” and as Michelangelo would seem to

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¹⁶⁵ For example in the versions of Donatello, Bellano, Bertoldo, Antonio Pollaiuolo and Andrea del Verrocchio; see C. Tolnay, *Youth*, p. 153.

¹⁶⁶ Pico imagines that God told Adam about his ‘indeterminate nature:’ “If you see a philosopher judging things through his reason, admire and follow him: he is from heaven, not the earth. If, however, you see a philosopher, judging and distinguishing all things according to the rule of reason, him shall you should in veneration, for he is a creature of heaven and not of earth; if, finally, a pure contemplator, unmindful of the body, wholly withdrawn into the inner chambers of the mind, here indeed is neither a creature of earth nor a heavenly creature, but some higher divinity, clothed with human flesh.” Mirandola, Giovanni, and A. Robert Caponigri. *Oration on the Dignity of Man*. Washington, D.C.: Regnery Pub., 1998; pp. 10-11.
evoke in the *David* seems to warrant Pico saying, “for thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour.”167

Although there has been some debate as to whether *David* is represented before or after his encounter with Goliath, I contend that the *David* is not in movement but rather in advance of movement. Michelangelo expresses a non-narrative scene in the story of the biblical hero, not merely capturing the psychology of that instant. In light of the *David’s* original intended placement on top of the buttress, his pivoting head intensely gazing towards the baptistery would have suggested signification of *David’s* prophetic liminality. He is neither in the past nor in the future, but rather engaged in the present moment. He stands for an unfulfilled prophecy; he is between the juncture of having been a shepherd, yet he is not yet crowned as king;168 David is an ancestor of Christ but that Messiah has yet to come. Christ’s descent from Abraham through David enables the nations to enter the covenant through Christ’s resurrection.169 According to Theodoret of Cyr, a fifth-century theologian, there are two distinct natures in the incarnate Christ:

For likewise when we hear Peter saying again that God swore to David that Christ would be raised up from the fruit of his loins170, we do not say that God the Word took his origin from the seed of David; rather we say that his flesh is of one kind with David, which God the Word assumed.

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168 Gregory of Nyssa affirms: “Eunomius…offers the following exegesis: “Peter is speaking of the one who was in the beginning and is God, and it is this one whom he declares to have become Christ and Lord.’ Thus, whatever he once was, it is this one who became Christ and Lord according to Eunomius. In the same way the history says of David that, being the son of Jesse and set over the flocks he was anointed as king—not that the anointing made him a man but that it transformed him, being according to his nature whatever he was, from a private person to a king.” See, Against Eunomius 3.4 in *Gregorii Nysseni Opera Sermones*, Ed. By Ernestus Geberhardt. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1967. Cited in E. J. Edwards, *We Believe in the Crucified and Risen Lord*, p. 113.

169 Rom. 1:3, “Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh” and Gal. 1:16-19.

170 Acts 2:30, “Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne.”
Just so one who hears that Christ suffered in the flesh ought to acknowledge the suffering of the flesh while confessing the impassibility of the Godhead.\textsuperscript{171}

Indeed, Christ’s descent from David’s bloodline infuses the two figures with Incarnationist duality. David is the bridge, if not the tree, from which the latter day messiah was interpreted to have sprung.

To draw a parallel to biblical typology, Michelangelo’s colossus teologically surpassed those of the ancient Greco-Roman predecessors. By extension, the Florentines themselves have exalted over the greatest civilizations of times past—in these times Florence was anointed the title of the ‘New Rome’ and the ‘New Jerusalem.’\textsuperscript{172} Thus, as it is written in the book of Matthew:

\begin{quote}
\end{quote}

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All the peoples and nations, according to Girolamo Savonarola, would conform to the one true religion of Florence and the world would be united into one flock under a single shepherd—as foretold in the Book of Jeremiah—David, and ultimately Christ—would be that savior. In another vein, As Eusebius demonstrates: “[…] The prophets plainly address Christ by name, at the same time witnessing presciently to the future combination of the Jewish people against him, as well as the calling of the Gentiles. At one time Jeremiah says, “The spirit before our face, Christ the Lord has been taken up in their corruptions of whom we have said that we shall live in his shadow among the nations.” Then David says in these words without disguise, “Why have the nations raged and the people imagined vanities?…It is therefore not only those who have been honored with the high priesthood, anointed with manufactured oil for symbolic reasons, who have been adorned with the name of Christ by the Hebrews; but kings also, who were themselves anointed by the prophets at God’s behest and made as it were iconic Christs, since they themselves also bore in themselves the types of the regal and supreme authority of the one true Christ, the divine word ruling all […]” See, “The Title Pertains to All Three Offices and Both Covenants,” in E. J. Edwards, \textit{We Believe in the Crucified and Risen Lord}, p. 27. See also, H. de Lubac, J. Daniélou et al., eds. \textit{Sources Chrétiennes}. Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1941-. 31:13-15. See, P. Villari, trans. by Linda White Mazini Villari. \textit{Life and Times of Girolamo Savonarola}. London: T.F. Unwin, 1896, p. 196: “The dreams of those days: it was there that statesmen desired to crush the enemy of Europe and re-establish the Latin Empire; it was there that the clergy wished to convert the infidels and replace Jerusalem under the Christian rule; many men shared Savonarola's belief that the times announced by his prophecies were at hand, and that at last there would be but one fold and one shepherd.” The scriptural account in the Gospel of Luke, in its use of the future tense, established David’s response to Goliath as the prophecy, and marked the beginning of a promise that would be made redundant in the psalms, and explicit with the evangelists as in Gabriel’s prediction to Mary: “He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David,” Lk. 1: 32.
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When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets (Mt. 16:13-14).  

The others, who had spoken of Christ as Jeremiah, is a choice subject both because he was the weeping prophet, and Christ was often in tears; or because God had “set him over the kingdoms and nations,” (Jeremiah, 1:10), which they thought agreed with their notion of the Messiah. Or when they speak of Christ as ‘one of the prophets,’ this might indicate the honorable notion the disciples entertained of the prophets; and yet, as Jeremiah weeps, they were “the children of them that persecuted and slew them” (Matthew, 23:29). Rather than allow Jesus of Nazareth, one of their own countrymen, to be such an extraordinary person as his works bespoke him to be, perhaps they would say: ‘It was not he, but one of the old prophets.’ Thus, the slippage between David, Jeremiah, and the other prophets provides a motive for the theological and formal ritornelli between Michelangelo’s David and Donatello’s Jeremiah (Figure 40).

These important points of connection notwithstanding—nearly three times the height of Donatello’s Jeremiah, the David was intended to impress the viewers from below, as well as dwarf the accomplishments of his rival Donatello. Every part of his body is made up of an abstract form, a line on a carved surface. His long legs lead the eye to the V-form of the torso;
thus, the overall composition is a counterpoised X-shape of sorts. Compositionally, this functions to draw the eye upwards into the most critical aspect of David’s attributes—that is, his facial expression (Figure 36). Clearly incised and chiseled out, Michelangelo certainly did not hold back when it came to the use of the drill on the facial features—his hair, nostrils, and eyes. The pupils are deeply incised with a suggestion of a glimmer of light hitting the surface of his eyelid that is visible from down below. The direction of his gaze is made possible by the drill holes of the pupils, but also in the flaming locks of hair do we see remnants of the drill marks. The viewers’ gaze fluctuates between the hand and the eyes—the other point of fascinating, inescapable attraction. Michelangelo also exploits the essential properties of light in the David’s position on the Duomo. Those linear polished surfaces would have been carefully calculated as to catch the light at different points during the day in order to create an added effect of chiaroscuro to the youthful hero.\textsuperscript{177} He is sometimes darker or lighter depending on the hour—a beacon of light during the day and presumably a glowing aura at night. The Carrara marble used on the David allows for the penetration of light to an approximate depth of one inch resulting in a waxy or translucent appearance—perfect for the replication of the human fabric.\textsuperscript{178} As an important ingredient in the David’s transformation from marble to a statement of Incarnationist theology, or the “human nature of Christ,” he was seen as the ‘prophet’ sent by God who truly was the embodiment of corporeal human flesh.\textsuperscript{179}

\textsuperscript{177} Through careful observation of the David in the Galleria dell’Accademia during different times of the day, I would not imagine the David’s shifting conditions in light to be non-existent on top of the Duomo buttress in full-spectrum lighting especially with the architecture of the Cathedral casting varying shadows at each hour. In fact, the effect of chiaroscuro might even be heightened.

\textsuperscript{178} J. C. Rich, \textit{The Materials and Methods of Sculpture}, p. 228.

\textsuperscript{179} J. C. Rich, \textit{The Materials and Methods of Sculpture}, p. 228.
And yet, while gazing upon this magnificent colossus, had it stood above the people high on top of the north buttress, one would be forgiven if they were to confuse the David for a God.  

This conflation with a ‘God’ can be contextualized with the the prominent Neoplatonic belief that the symbolic meaning of the ideal male nude figure is *nuditas virtualis*, or “the state of innocence.” Since this nude male body is ideal and completely void of sin, it follows the Christian Neoplatonic doctrine that posits idealized nude beauty as being the mirror image or reflection of God himself—a body both beautiful and righteous. Through this perfected depiction of an idealized *nuditas virtualis*, the mind might transcend to a higher level of thinking, in which the light of the divine is attained and the immaterial soul may leave the material body. Michelangelo embraced the symbolic meaning of nudity as *nuditas virtualis* and believed the ‘nude figure to be far nobler than anything that might clothe it.’ This belief is evident in his David, who is idealized and youthful, unashamed of his complete nudity.

Physically, the David is in a moment of plastic stasis—for he is a perpetual evocation of prophetic liminality foreshadowing the lineage of Christ. The branch—the gilded tree trunk—that holds the David upright is paralleled in scripture—indeed, as it is written in the prophecies of Jeremiah: “Behold, the days are coming,” sayeth the lord unto Jeremiah, “when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch; And He will reign as king and act wisely, and do justice and righteousness in the land.”

Christ is here prophesized as a branch sprung from David (Zechariah, 3:8), at a time when it seemed to be a root in barren ground, buried, and not likely to

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180 Plotinus affirms several Platonic tropes in his own work, *Enneads*. One important theme is "the tendency to identify the beautiful, the good, and the true as one and the same," see R.B. Harris, *The Significance of Neoplatonism*, p. 3. See, J. Snow-Smith, "Michelangelo's Christian Neoplatonic Aesthetic of Beauty in his Early Oeuvre: the Nuditas Virtualis Image," in *Concepts of Beauty in Renaissance Art*, p. 147.


182 Jer. 23:5.
resurrect. As a branch emanating from David’s bloodline, Christ is the root and direct descendent of him (Revelation, 22:16): “This very branch shall be raised as high as the throne of his father David, and there, Christ shall prevail; he shall set up a kingdom in the world that shall be victorious over all opposition and he shall rule righteously. In these times, the whole world will triumph during the reign of Christ’s kingdom. For, as by the sin of the first Adam the totality of creation was made subject to pride, so by the grace of the second Adam it shall, some way or another, to be delivered out from the bondage of corruption and into the glorious deliverance of the offspring of God” (Romans, 8:20, 21).

Let us remember that past interpretations have not addressed the fact that he originally began as part of the Prophet Program for the north buttress of the Florentine Cathedral. Contending that viewing David in situ, in light of shared formal ritornelli with Donatello and Ghiberti’s Jeremiah and the Gates of Paradise respectively, lends more insight into Michelangelo’s interpretive choices. Viewing the David raised on top of the Duomo would have evoked the ancestral bloodline—emanating from the Tree of Jesse, just as the David shoots forth from the tree stump Michelangelo provides him with—and ultimately, culminating in the incarnation of Christ.

Thus, the concept of philosophical immanence in which being is not only expressive, but instead mandates that the incorporeal side of its sense must not issue from some second world transcending this one, just as Incarnationalist theology requires the need for the existence of a God manifest in flesh. ¹⁸³ For Deleuze, this indicates that sense and meaning must arise from within this world, even if they remain irreducible to the world’s corporeality; they must delineate and organize this corporeal world, even though they do not change the latter’s materiality. By

extension, the male body is revealed as a highly unstable process.\textsuperscript{184} While viewers gaze at the David, he is inevitably penetrated. As such, the penetrated male body appears not as the radical other of traditional western masculinity, but rather as what David Savran calls its “Pathologized double;” as that which lies in wait behind the subject like a shadow cast by a giant.\textsuperscript{185}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{185} Savran, David. Taking it Like a Man: White Masculinity, Masochism, and Contemporary American Culture. Princeton University Press, 1998; p. 27.
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CHAPTER 3
PLACING MANHOOD ON A PEDESTAL.

From the moment of its conception, Michelangelo’s *David* ushered in a transformation—not only formally and iconographically as the first colossal male nude, but moreover as symptomatic of a moment within Florentine society in which puerility had diminished and manhood had begun (*Figure 1*). When in 1501, Michelangelo was commissioned to furnish a large-scale public monument; he offered not a sanctified ephebe, but a giant of a man, virile and muscular, resolute, and heroic. Michelangelo’s *David* arguably symbolized the Republic’s unified will, its mature pride, and potency. No longer a delicate boy denuded and ruled by his elders, as Christopher Fulton observed, the colossus is an idol of masculinity and fierce liberation.186 His body flexes with controlled measure and exhibits the self-assured power of a mature individual governed by reason.

Although Jacob Burkhardt found fault with the “preoccupation with the model” seen in this statue and with the “mistake” of trying to represent the figure of an adolescent in colossal proportions, he further remarks that “only grown persons can be conveniently enlarged…when seen through a diminishing glass, the *David* gains uncommonly in beauty and life; to be sure with exception of the head which seems to have been designed for quite a different mood.”187 I would argue instead that this is not a vice but a virtue. Within this schism, the Giant is endowed not only with a prophetic liminality, as discussed in my previous chapter. Moreover Michelangelo bestowed upon *David* a frame of physical liminality—for he is neither a boy nor a fully-grown man. This very preoccupation with “inbetweenness” waxes its way through *David’s*

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form, and as noted above, is indicative in part of his socio-cultural and artistic antecedents.

Utilizing visual precedents such as Andrea Castagno’s *Shield of David*, c. 1450-55, Nicola Pisano’s *Hercules/Fortitude/Daniel*, 1260, and Donatello’s *Saint George*, c. 1416—this chapter demonstrates the socio-cultural, iconographic, and philosophical etiologies behind Michelangelo’s choice in depicting the *David* as a post-pubescent individual burgeoning into a man (*Figures 15, 16, 17*). I will further discuss the intended location on top of the buttress of the Duomo as placement of manhood, so to speak, on a pedestal. As such, Michelangelo’s *David* seems to be the perfect incarnation of the living idealized Renaissance man, the symbol of virtue, fortitude, and moral strength. 188 In line with the contention that the political symbolism expressed in the *David* has been naturalized over time, it is also agreed that the work reflects Florentine humanist supra-political ideas regarding ideal roles and potential of Christian man in a Neoplatonic vein 189

Michelangelo’s *David* is the incarnation of masculine strength, both physical and spiritual. His face expresses the heroic disdain of the exemplary being over against his everyday surroundings. It is a strong bony face; the broad cheeks are strenuously framed by the strongly projecting chin and above by the low forehead, overvaulted by a heavy mass of hair, the locks of which are like ‘tongues of flames.’ Tolnay observes that the strong, protruding nose, with its distended nostrils, as well as the wrinkled brow, its muscles drawing together over the eyes, the swollen lips in the corners of which contempt and anger seem to tremble, the uplifted eyelids and deep, large eyes give an expression of defiant audacity, recalling the heroic scorn of the

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189 Levine, *Tal Cosa* p. 205. Although, from what we know of Michelangelo’s ideas, so sensitively expressed in his poetry, there is every likelihood that the sculptor would have been naturally attracted to the concepts of Neo-Platonism, this was virtually assured by his contact with the prominent Florentine humanists, including Pico della Mirandola and Ficino, while he lived in the household of the Medici from 1492-94. See, Levine, *Tal Cosa*, p. 206. Gilbert, Creighton. *Complete Poems and Selected Letters*. New York: Random House, 1963; pp. xxx, xxxi.
Proclus, albeit in a purer, rarified form (Figure 18). The body of the David was something entirely new for Michelangelo himself. His early concern for measured forces within the body is here replaced by a near-exact rendition of human anatomy; the richness of forms in bones, muscles, veins, and supple parts in the chest and belly are unprecedented in his work. The finest surface gradations are crafted; there is an omnipresent disquietude as though the body were a veritable reservoir of energies. If every organ of the human body in nature suggests its function by its form, even without movement, Michelangelo exploits this principle to the maximum. By making intensively visible the essential structure of organs at rest, he is able to suggest potential action. Thus, for example, the right arm, which hangs completely passive, is endowed with bulging veins and clenched muscles, suggesting the power of that arm and its kinetic potentiality.

This slender, muscular body reveals no respite of energy but rather vigilance, and dynamism of potential power. Outwardly, he seems to be somewhat self-possessed and placid; inwardly he is taut and ready for action. Anger and heroic scorn are written in his noble face. He is the embodiment for forza (force) and ira (anger). The Florentine humanists of the early Renaissance considered forza to be the greatest of the civic virtues. From the second quarter of the fifteenth century on, and in contrast to the stoic tradition of Cicero, which placed philosophy and diplomacy above arms, the patria had exalted the active struggle in defense of the homeland. This doctrine of forza, praised as a civic virtue, was associated by Renaissance writers with the doctrine of ira, the passion of anger, which had been condemned as a vice in the Medieval period, until it too was elevated to the rank of a civic virtue. According to Coluccio

190 Tolnay, Youth, p. 95.
191 Tolnay, Youth, p. 95.
192 Tolnay, Youth, p. 96.
194 Tolnay, Art and Thought, p. 8.
Salutati, anger is a vice only if it affects the judgment; when it arouses the courage of the citizen in the struggle for liberty, it becomes a virtue. Anger heightens the moral force of the brave man. Leonardo Bruni tells us that fortitude and pietas, the two virtues of strength and love of country, are engendered only by ira, while Matteo Palmieri explains that anger can sustain forza, since it causes man to choose danger for virtue’s sake. At the end of the century, Cristoforo Landino too, finds in Platonism a justification of anger in terms of virtue. Therefore, Michelangelo’s David is an embodiment of the two chief civic virtues of the Renaissance. Michelangelo identified the David with the Hercules type in order to better express forza. Just as one was the symbol of strength for classical antiquity, so the other was the ‘manu fortis’ of the Middle Ages. It is not surprising that Michelangelo merged the two in a moment destined to exalt the civic virtues; and all the more because, from the end of the thirteenth century, Hercules had been honored as the patron and protector of Florence. Thus in this chapter, we shall also consider the slippage between David and Hercules, with attendant qualities of masculine strength and virtue theorized in the writings of Pico della Mirandola and Machiavelli, with the introduction of some additional related sculptural precedents.

In closely studying the form of the David, it becomes evident that much of its impact derives from the manner in which the various details of his bodily extremities are configured in relation to its torso, contributing to the effect of its dynamically powerful stance. If magia naturalis—physical metamorphosis—is the paradigmatic human activity, we can concur that humanity is not a fixed entity but is instead a mediator, the inhabitor of a liminal space between the animal and the angelic—in Pico’s Hermetic tradition—between the elemental and the astral.

195 Tolnay, Art and Thought, p. 8 n. 14. See, Palmieri, Vita civile, ed. 1830, p. 81
196 Tolnay, Art and Thought, p. 8.
197 Tolnay, Art and Thought, p. 9.
198 Levine Tal Cosa, p. 206. Vasari makes a pointed reference to those relationships. See Barocchi, I, p. 22: “…né piedi né mani né test ache a ogni suo membro di bonatà.”
earth and heaven. Indeed, moral analogies recur in Pico della Mirandola’s description of man on
the sacred ladder lifted towards grace and redemption in his *Oration on the Dignity of Man (De
Hominis Dignitate)*:

If this is what we must practice in [man’s] aspiration to the angelic way
of life, I ask ‘who will touch the ladder of the Lord either with soiled foot
or unclean hands?’…But what are these feet? What these hands? Surely
the foot of the soul is the most profane part by which the soul rests on
matter as on the soil of the earth…why should we not call the hands of
the soul its irascible power which struggles on its behalf…these hands,
these feet, that is all the sentient part whereon resides the attraction of the
body which, as they say, by wrenching the neck holds the soul in
place…

If the right and left arms of the *David* subtly mirror the forms of the legs, they are also composed
in a deliberate formal relationship with each other, particularly in the transverse parallelism of
both hands. Here, Michelangelo has adapted the classical sculptural motif of arranging the arms
in contrasting upward and downward positions. This tradition was associated with the
theological implication of the symbolism of “dexter” and “sinister” handedness, as well as
iconographically linked with the immaterial and the material.

Indeed, scholars have debated at length the sizeable right hand of the *David*. Charles
Seymour rejects the notion that Michelangelo had made an error in scale and thus notes:

“frequently the size of the hand is explained as an attempt to suggest the gangling over-grown
characteristics of adolescence in the young *David*.” Although one can concur with Seymour’s
explanation, taking into account the original intent for the *David* to be on a buttress and the
resulting need optical corrections, it is also possible to entertain the idea of the ‘*manu fortis,*’ in

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201 Levine, Tal Cosa, p. 208. Seymour, *Homo Magnus et Albus*, p. 48. He furthers his argument by
observing that “the hand, with the thumb so prominent, is more likely a reference...to Pliny’s description
of the Colossus of Rhodes...In his *Historia Naturalia*, Pliny the Elder suggests the huge scale of the
Rhodian colossus by saying that ‘few men can embrace the thumb in the span of both arms.’
which a proper understanding of the relatively large scale of this hand, is dependent upon its visual duality with the large upraised left hand.\footnote{Levine, \textit{Tal Cosa}, p. 208. Seymour is involved in a common visual lapse in considering only the scale of the right hand of the David: “The colossal mode of Antiquity probably also had a connection with the huge right hand which hangs a the thigh.” Actually the size and scale of both hands of the David are identical, as noted by Saul Levine, with the strength and support of Christ, see Seymour, pp. 45, n. 38.} Indeed, as the sculpture is examined from different perspectives, this measured relationship of the hands becomes a powerful motif displaying intriguing variations in formal effect. To focus on the primary view—seen frontally, the left arm and hand point directly towards the head of the \textit{David} to accentuate the moral strength of fortitude and the capacity of intellect to withstand offense; in the lower area, the strong right hand reasserts the physical capacity for the resolution of conflict.\footnote{Levine, \textit{Tal Cosa}, pp. 208-209.}

In the total configuration, what is conveyed—as Saul Levine observes—is the effect of an ascending and descending circularity in which the moral energies of a powerful contemplation alternate with those of the potentials for physical action.\footnote{Levine, \textit{Tal Cosa}, p. 208.} Here are ‘plastic expressions,’ which illustrate in some measure Pico’s description of the moral and physical dynamism involved in man’s choices for salvation or damnation:

\begin{quote}
Neither a fixed abode nor a form that is thine alone nor any function peculiar to thyself have we given thee… to the end that according to the longing and according to the judgement thou mayest have and possess what form and what functions those thyself shalt desire. Thou, concentrated by no limits in accordance with thine own free will…shall ordain for thyself the limits of thy nature…thou shalt have the power to degenerate into the lower forms of life, which is brutish. Thou shalt have the power, out of thy soul’s judgment to be reborn into the higher forms which are divine.\footnote{Levine, \textit{Tal Cosa}, pp. 209-210. See Cassirer, pp. 224-225.}
\end{quote}

In Pico’s view, man is impassively observing his own destiny. He is directly involved in its formation, for it is he himself who is responsible for the ultimate victory or defeat.\footnote{Pico writes: “We have set thee at the world’s center that thou from there may more easily observe whatever is in the world. We have made thee neither of heaven or of earth, neither mortal nor...} The
Neoplatonic idea of the sculptor who shapes the image as a mirroring of God’s divine shaping of man and all other forms, directly coincides here with the view of man himself as a sculptor who fashions the nature of his own being.\(^{207}\) The powerful treatment of the immense hands of the *David*, may in fact echo this Neoplatonic conceit which stresses the two aspects of man’s capacity: the one of the mind, the other of the body. In his metaphorical description of man’s ability to literally mold himself and to morally rise or descend within the limited registers defined by the very mode of being human, Pico reiterates the prevailing humanist view of man at the center in relation to both the divine ‘chain of being,’ and the choices he encounters. It is a center from whence “we may be rapt to the heights of [divine] love and descend.”\(^{208}\) In his evolution, man uses his “discourses and reasoning” to “penetrate all things from center to center.”\(^{209}\)

The idea of structural and functional unity of all living things is inextricably tied to Aristotelian thought, which configures a hierarchical conception that taxonomizes life forms into an order of ever-growing perfection. Thus, in the *History of Animals*, Aristotle writes: “Such animals are always prior by a small difference to the others and show already that they have more life and movement.”\(^{210}\) Man is thus the terminal stage of this ladder of beings, and therefore immortal, so that with freedom of choice and with honor, as thou mayest fashion thyself in whatever shape thou shalt prefer.”


\(^{207}\) Levine, *Tal Cosa*, p. 210. That Michelangelo possessed this view of his own role as a sculptor is conveyed in the following sonnet here given in Gilbert’s sensitive translation (Gilbert, p. 28): “If my rough hammer in hard stone can form a human semblance, one end then another, set moving by the agent who is holder, watcher and guide, its course is not its own. But that divine One, staying in Heaven at home, gives others beauty, more to itself, self-mover; if hammers can’t be made without a hammer, from that one living all the other come. And since a blow will have the greatest force as at the forge it’s lifted up the highest, this above mind to heaven has run and flown. Wherefore with me, unfinished, all is lost. Unless the divine workshop will assist in making it; on earth it was alone.”


also the condition of its intelligibility: he is prior to the other animals, as actuality precedes potentiality. One finds in other animals human capacities in an embryonic state:

The Traces of these differentiated characteristics may be found in all animals, so to speak, but they are especially visible where character is the more developed, and most of all in man. The fact is, the nature of man is the most rounded off and complete, and consequently in man the qualities or capacities referred to above are found in their perfection.\textsuperscript{211}

Aristotle was also intrigued by the fact that not all the parts of children’s bodies grow perpetually and at the same rate. Thus, he says several times that children are like dwarves, with the upper part of the body more developed than the lower part.\textsuperscript{212} In his \textit{On the Parts of Animals} he writes: “all the other animals are dwarves by comparison with man.”\textsuperscript{213} We find here once more the Aristotelian notion of man as the completed element in the animal series. Aristotle continues, “Noblest of all are those whose blood is hot, and at the same time thin and clear. For such are suited alike for the development of courage and intelligence. Accordingly, the upper parts are superior in these respects to the lower, the male superior to female, and the right side to the left.”\textsuperscript{214}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item[\textsuperscript{211}] Aristotle, \textit{History of Animals}, (9.1.680b4; cf. 8.1.588a19,33); cited in Pellegrin, Aristotle’s Classification,” p. 92.
\item[\textsuperscript{212}] Pellegrin, Aristotle’s Classification, p. 109 n. 47. See Parts of Animals 4.10.686b11; IA 11.710b13; Parva Naturalia 453b6. Comparisons between children and animals are frequent in Aristotle. Children, he says, have a “language” comparable to that of the viviparous quadrupeds (History of Animals 4.9.536b5); they have, like animals traces of their future characteristics as adults (History of Animals 8.1.588a19); they cannot, as animal cannot, serve as norms: a passage in the Eudemian \textit{Ethics} (7.2.1236a2) says that the “pleasant,” which serves as a point of reference, is that of adults and not that of children and animals (cf. 2.1.1219b5; Nichomachean \textit{Ethics} 1.10.1100a2, 3.3.1111a21, 6.13.1144b8). Aristotle also notes the imperfection of children by comparing them to women: they have feminine forms, for the female is a sterile male (Generation of Animals 1.20.728a17), and like women, they are never bald (Generation of Animals 5.3.784a24).
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
For some, the *David* is still more striking because of his somewhat incongruent appearance.\(^{215}\) As Heinrich Wölfflin observes, Michelangelo’s ideal of beauty is embodied by a gigantic male youth in the process of metamorphoses, neither man nor boy, “a stripling at the age when the body stretches itself and the huge hands and feet seem to have no relation to the size of the limbs.”\(^{216}\) The figure is a faithful reproduction of the course of natural phenomenon—puberty—which, on this scale, is sincerely breathtaking and the “feeling of elasticity in the whole is a perpetual source of wonder.”\(^{217}\)

Indeed, building upon Wölfflin’s observations, one might read the *David* as stretched in at least two directions. The sideways twist of his head is so sharp, and the gaze so concentrated, that it almost feels as if he has left the rest of his body—physically and psychically—behind for us to dwell on disregarded. His body has just begun to follow his eyes; the left foot has started to twist around, while the right leg maintains its equilibrium. It would seem that Michelangelo is the first artist to routinely locate the viewer in one of his figures’ blind spots—thus, we are uncertain if we are merely watching the action unfold or possibly even performing in the narrative, perhaps even donning the role of Goliath at times. It has been said that he head must have been added “at a moment when [Michelangelo] was under a totally different kind of inspiration,’ and that its ‘passionate intensity…almost conflicts with the weighting substance of the body.”\(^{218}\)

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\(^{215}\) Traditionally, the image of David had been the portrait of a handsome young victor and it was thus that Donatello portrayed him as a stalwart, yet delicate, boy; so, too Verrocchio’s boy, reflects a different facet of taste, as slender, angular, fine-drawn lad. See, Wölfflin, *Classic Art*, p. 46.

\(^{216}\) H. Wölfflin, *Classic Art: An Introduction to the Italian Renaissance*, p. 47.

\(^{217}\) Wölfflin, *Classic Art*, p. 47.

\(^{218}\) J. Hall, *Michelangelo and the Reinvention of the Human Body*, p. 53 n. 56. Burckhardt, p. 633; S. Freedberg, vol. 1, p. 41; Wölfflin, p. 62, says something similar about sixteenth-century art in general, but in Hall’s view, this phenomenon is almost exclusively confined to Michelangelo: “The fifteenth century thought it necessary to animate every part equally; the sixteenth found it more effective to accentuate a few isolated points only.”
Meanwhile, in *Nichomachean Ethics* III: VI, Aristotle turns from his general account of virtue and its preconditions to consider the specific character of virtues and their related vices in more detail.\(^{219}\) Among the first virtues he discusses, of central importance to this paper, is courage. Aristotle claims that courage, ‘manliness,’ or ‘manly spirit,’ is a mean with respect to fear and confidence. In the same chapter, he delimits the sphere of courage specifically by reference to the kind of fear it concerns. He notes that the things that we fear are, unequivocally, evils.\(^{220}\) For Aristotle, the courageous man, is concerned with death for it is the most fearful thing of all—a limit. When someone is dead, he cannot judge morality from evil:\(^{221}\)

These are deaths in battle, because they take place in the greatest and noblest danger; and this fits with the way honors are bestowed in cities and courts of monarch. So it is the person who is fearless with respect to a noble death, or the risks of immediate death, that should really be described as courageous; and risks in battle are of all like this.\(^{222}\)

The *David* seems to embody the Aristotelian belief “the exercise of fortitude is virtue.” Thus the relationship between fortitude and virtue is in effect reciprocal. Cicero recounts the etymology of “the term virtue is from the word that signified man; a man’s chief quality is fortitude.”\(^{223}\)

Indeed, the *David* bears a relationship to Trecento and Quattrocento representations of the Christian virtue of fortitude and strength as a herculean, totally nude, male figure.\(^{224}\)

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\(^{219}\) For the preconditions of virtue see Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics*, (II to III: 5).

\(^{220}\) Aristotle writes: “Fear may be defined as a pain or disturbance caused by envisaging some destructive or painful evil in the future. For there are some evils, e.g., injustice or stupidity, the prospect of which does not frighten us: only such as amount to great pains or losses do.” Cited in Pearson, “Courage and Temperance,” p. 110. (*Rhetoric*: II:5.138a 21-24).


\(^{223}\) Quoted in Levine, *Tal Cosa*, p. 213. See, Eisler, p. 82.

\(^{224}\) Levine, *Tal Cosa*, p. 213. See, for example, the figure of Strength, by Nicola Pisano, on the pulpit of the Baptistry, Pisa. Colin Eisler has explored the classical sources of the concept of virtue especially as they relate to the notion of the “athlete of virtue” in both classical and Christian ideas. See, Levine, *Tal Cosa*, p. 213. See, Colin Eisler, “The Athlete of Virtue, The iconography of Asceticism,” *De Artibus opuscula XL, Essays in Honor of Erwin Panofsky*, ed. Millard Meiss, V. I, New York, 1961, pp. 82 and passim. In Eisler’s exploration of the use of the term, he writes: “The concept of the athlete of virtue is less metaphorical than might initially appear to be the case,
This ancient Greek association between the moral implications of athletic virtue and ideal militant attributes corresponds with ideas current in early sixteenth-century Florence.  

Expressing a renewed civic humanism generated by the depth of crisis at the time, Niccolò Machiavelli engaged with the classical Roman view of the ideal warrior. His interest was, of course, stimulated by the search for precedents and practices applicable to the defense and political strategy of the Florentine Republic. About the time that Michelangelo’s *David* was conceived and executed, Machiavelli had already developed an interest in the possible reconstitution of the communal civic militia. It is also likely that the authorities, including the Gonfaloniere Soderini, were considering this option; in consequence, there was now an interest in these problems of the physical fitness of the Florentine youth. Machiavelli builds his view of a physically fit and disciplined militia from his extensive studies of roman military practices.  

Before he begins, in his *Art of War*, an analysis and description of the proper organization of a citizen’s army, he refers to the Roman view of the ideal soldier as such:

> Some, such as Pyrrhus, would have their soldiers tall and large of stature; others, like Julius Caesar, prefer such as are active and vigorous; of which they form a conjecture from the symmetry of their limbs and the vivacity of their aspect. Some that have treated on this subject, accordingly recommend that they have quick and lively eyes, muscular necks, wide chests, brawny arms, long fingers, small bellies, round sides, spare legs, and little feet which are for the most part signs of strength and agility, two qualities that are principally necessary in a soldier. But above all, we ought to have a strict regard to their morals and behavior.

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226 Levine, *Tal Cosa*, p. 214. Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Art of War*, trans. Peter Whitehorne, Albany, 1815, passim. Although this was written a number of years after the Florentine crisis of 1501, it is common knowledge that Machiavelli’s’ interest in a reconstituted citizens’ Militia began even before the Borgian crisis and continued from this time on (See, Bayley, pp. 246-259).  
As to the age of such superior warriors, there should be “none above [the age of] seventeen, because there would be enough man… of riper age, in such an army.” These passages function nearly as an ekphrastic illustration of the David, though the issue of sculptural figure’s apparent age is a complicated one. Surely, Michelangelo’s David could not merely just seventeen years old, for his muscles are too developed. Yet, at the same time he appears youthful, lacking any facial or body hair that would situate him as an adult in his twenties. Inevitably, Michelangelo imbued the David with age ambiguity as if to allow both boys and men the possibility to identify and to emulate the heroism inherent in the David’s form.

In the fifteenth century, the biblical story of David was digested to suit the politics, philosophical, and social mores of those years. In this vein, Machiavellian masculinity was addressed in the context of the author’s The Prince (c. 1512), as well as Giovanni Pico della Mirandola’s Oration on the Dignity of Man (1486). Pico’s articulation of mankind’s relevance in the grand scheme of Renaissance ontology buttressed Machiavelli’s ideas and accorded with Neoplatonic philosophies that saw in the male physique the exalted principles of antiquity:

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231 Christopher Fulton provides the following anecdote in his article “The Boy Stripped Bare of His Elders,” which lends support to my own conclusions about the age and image-identification of viewer upon seeing Michelangelo’s David: “The inspiring effect of boys looking at boys is reenacted in many modern-day environments. As a young student, each morning as I entered the front door of my day school in Cleveland, Ohio, I came face to face with the image of my bronzed twin: a near reflection of my self. Clad in a toga, the youth holds articles that are emblematic of manual training and academic instruction. But especially noteworthy is the spareness of the dress. The skirt is drawn high on the leg and most of the chest is bared. This is not simply an image of an industrious, corn-fed, mid-western youth, it is a boy who has been laid nearly nude for the eyes of his fellows. The adolescent spectator is directed to admire the virtues exemplified by the figure while projecting his own self-image onto the model. I believe that Donatello’s David and other contemporaneous images of stripped adolescents commanded a similar response. Just as they were designed as inspirational figures calling young men to seek identification with biblical exempla, so they also admonished adult viewers to rear their children in the image of boy-heroes and thrilled them with a portrayal of perfected Florentine youth who would fulfill the city's millenarian dreams.” See, Fulton, “The Boy Stripped Bare by His Elders,” p. 37.
fortitude, strength, moral rectitude, and courage.\textsuperscript{232} These closely correlate to the Machiavellian hero. This context supports the premise that Michelangelo’s David about masculinity that epitomized Florentine humanist Christian and civic values.

The Gigante’s adult physicality reflected Aristotle’s contention that masculine perfection was synonymous with excellence—a visual portrayal of good government and its rewards.\textsuperscript{233} Michelangelo’s depiction of a nude David may also have been inspired by Machiavelli’s notion regarding the importance of military autonomy. Machiavelli called attention to David’s example when the shepherd boy set out to battle with Goliath.\textsuperscript{234} Thus, David’s nudity alludes to the same biblical passage to which Machiavelli referred in The Prince (1513, 1532)—he wrote that, stripped of Saul’s arms and equipped only with his sling, David’s bare body and his stance of vigilance proclaimed unambiguously the Florentine government’s preparedness against attack from its enemies.\textsuperscript{235}

Michelangelo would also likely have been familiar with Marsilio Ficino’s 1492 translation of Plotinus, who in his Enneads, wrote:

Withdraw into yourself and look. If you do not see beauty within you, do as does the sculptor of a statue that is to be beautiful; he cuts away here, he smooths it there, he makes this line lighter, this one purer, until he disengages beautiful lineaments in the marble. Do you this too…\textsuperscript{236}

\textsuperscript{233} A. Butterfield, “New Evidence for the Iconography of David in Quattrocento Florence,” p. 130.
\textsuperscript{234} “I yet want to commit to memory one scene from the Old Testament for this purpose. When David offered himself to Saul to go fight with the Philistine Challenger Goliath, Saul, to give him spirit, armed with his arms: which David, as soon as he had put them on, refused, saying that with them he could not make use of himself well, and therefore that he wanted to meet the enemy with his sling and his knife.” Machiavelli, The Prince, trans. Daniel Donno, pp. 51-52. For Machiavelli’s opinion on mercenary and auxiliary armies, see Niccolò Machiavelli, The Prince (1532), trans. Daniel Donno (New York: Bantam Classical, 1984), pp. 50-53.
\textsuperscript{235} Bautista, Manifesting Masculinities, p. 97.
\textsuperscript{236} Quoted in Gill, Il Gigante, p. 232. Plotinus, Enneads, 1.vi.
The Neoplatonic aphorism, in which art must serve a moral purpose, would also have appealed to the serious young man who was a committed Christian; and who, as an artist, believed that the image of a statue was to be found within the block, just as the beauty of the soul is to be found within the physical being, if only it can be freed.

Since Frederick Hartt's influential essay, “Art and Freedom in Quattrocento Florence,” it has been common to understand images of the young David as personifications of Florence's dedication to political freedom or republican liberty; and it has been assumed that the David was an official or quasi-official emblem of the city. Hence, David, as giant-killer, would have been understood as exemplary of the defeat of tyrannicide and as a personification of libertas, an embodiment dependent on his placement in front of the Piazza del Signoria. But placed on top of the Duomo buttress, as noted in Chapter Two, the David have taken on a whole other set of meanings as well as sharing some of the same implications connected to its subsequent placement in the Piazza del Signoria.

The iconographic innovation of the David's physical maturity is as remarkable as the colossal size of the statue. On one level, it may be that David's belief that he can kill Goliath—

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238 When it was part of the Quattrocento prophet program the David, along with twelve other monumental statues, was intended for placement “high around the east end of the Duomo.” See, Seymour, Michelangelo’s David, p. 27. Cited in Bautista, Manifesting Masculinities, p. 91. These statues were meant to be colossal in scale not only to maximize their visual impact; their monumental size also evoked a long tradition in central Italian art whereby size was equated with virtue and power. Bautista, Manifesting Masculinities, p. 91. See Seymour, Michelangelo’s David, p. 28; James Hall, Michelangelo
albeit with God’s assistance—has made him aggrandized in stature. That is to say, positive, righteous thinking has given him superhuman powers for size is a state of mind and soul. In addition, Augustine believed that David ushered in a new, more mature era in human history, one that culminated in Christ as the ‘Son of David,’ he writes: “David marks the beginning of an epoch, and with him there is what may be called the start of the manhood of God’s people, since we may regard the period from Abraham to David as the adolescence of this race.” Augustine situated David’s physical liminality within in the typology of Christian theology. Not only does the boy transcend into manhood, but so too does the biblical epoch mature from the book of Genesis to Kings—we can extrapolate that in the first book of Samuel, David, although physically still a boy houses the spirit of a virtuous and courageous, fully-grown man. We shall return to this critical issue of the social role and transformation of pre-pubescent males to fully-grown men in quattrocento Florence.

The David is partially inspired by antique and modern representations of Hercules, a symbol of virtue and fortitude. Embodied in the Florentine Republic, he was usually depicted in the nude. There certainly are strong formal similarities, and Michelangelo was soon commissioned to make a statue of Hercules as a pendant to his statue of David, but this was never completed. Yet, Hercules was a popular subject—not for his psychological complexity, but for his Twelve Labors. Recognized in antiquity by the Neoplatonic philosopher Plotinus (AD

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*and the Reinvention of the Human Body*, p. 40. It is for this reason, for example, that images of God or Christ in medieval art are usually depicted larger in comparison to other figures within the same composition. Thus, the 1464 contract for a statue of David required from Agostino di Duccio a “figure of marble to be quarried at Carrara, nine braccia in height, at the scale of a giant.” Bautista, *Manifesting Masculinities*, p. 91. See Document 441 of Giovanni Poggi’s edition of the minutes of the Opera del Duomo, Florence. Published in *Il Duomo di Firenze* (Berlin: Bruno Cassirer, 1909), quoted in Seymour, *Michelangelo’s David*, pp. 126-129.

241 Hall, Michelangelo and the Reinvention, p. 57.
204-270) in a treatise translated into Latin in 1492 by Marsilio Ficino: “Hercules was a hero of practical virtue. By his noble service, he was worthy to be a God. On the other hand, his merit was action and not the contemplation which would place him unreservedly in the higher realm.”

Although Hercules’ earthly toil merited Hercules’s elevation to the level of a God, due to his inability to attain a ‘higher realm’ of cognition and moral judgment, he differs from Michelangelo’s depiction of the David as predominantly cerebral in nature; David is represented as a man who puts reason before action.

Patricia Simons aimed to expand the scope of masculinity in relation to the homoerotic potential in the corpus of Renaissance art. The narratives engaged in gendered, sexual politics, and the backdrop of a masculinized patria (fatherland) is predominant to Hercules’ prominence in Florence. Hercules’ civic implication as an exemplar of conquest and masculine virtue was further highlighted, but in the stratum of Christian interpretation, when he appeared as a standing hero or enacting three of his conquests, carved on the jamb of the Porta della Mandorla of the Florentine Cathedral in the 1390s (Figure 19). As Erwin Panofsky and Leopold Ettlinger have argued, these religious citations of Hercules present his labors as exempla virtutis, or as ‘mythological antetypes in a Christian context’ of moral allegory.

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242 Hall, Michelangelo and the Reinvention, p. 58 n. 75. See Plotinus I. 1, p. 13.
246 Simons, “Hercules,” p. 638 n. 40. Panofsky, Renaissance and Renascences, p. 150 n. 4; Ettlinger, ‘Hercules Florentinus’, pp. 126-127. Such is presumably also the case with the two reliefs carved by Antonio Federighi for the Pozzetto del Sabato Santa in Siena’s Cathedral a little before 1460, depicting Hercules conquering the Nemean Lion and battling with Nessus. Visualizing a republican assertion as Florence formulated an expansionist program of righteous might against supposed tyranny during the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, appropriated later in the Quattrocento populate the Medici Palace of that city when the dynasty cleverly adopted civic traditions to support their own claim to power. Choosing the same three exploits featured on the Porta della Madorla—Hercules battling with
A comparison of Nicola Pisano’s *Hercules/Fortitude/Daniel* (1260) with its descendant, Michelangelo’s *David*, elucidates the similarities between Nicola’s and Michelangelo’s approach to physicality and masculinity (*Figure 16*). The *Fortitude*’s “intense physiognomy, heightened by a disquieting glimpse of a smile and a revelation of life’s truths” is suggestive of the *Giant*’s *terribilità*. Indeed, the *David* and the *Fortitude* share an iconographic device: in both statues, the “turn of the head, the thick, strained neck, furrowed brow, and leonine hair” convey a defiance allayed by vulnerability. As Erwin Panofsky recognized in passing, the pulpit in the Pisan Baptistery cast ‘Hercules in the feminine role of Fortitude.’ Nicola’s choice to depict a decidedly masculine *Fortitude*, instead of adhering to the tradition of representing this virtue as female, indicates an understanding of the male figure’s expressive capacity and of its superiority as affirmed in religious and classical texts. As a manly icon, the *Fortitude* appropriately embodies two essential qualities of the heroic male ideal: strength and courage.

The association here of David with the Hercules type is not surprising when we find that the latter had already played a role in the history of the statue. In fact, Agostino di Duccio had executed a gigantic terracotta Hercules for another buttress of the cathedral before Michelangelo began the *David*. Thus, there existed even in the Gothic project an association of the two heroes. This connection is not merely superficial. Indeed, during the entire Middle Ages and the early

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Renaissance, Hercules and David were considered reciprocal and as symbolic personifications of fortitude.\textsuperscript{250} In the medieval period, David was called ‘manu fortis’ and Hercules, ‘manu potens’ or ‘Hercules fortis’. When he wished to show \textit{Fortitude} on the pulpit of the Baptistry of Pisa, Nicola Pisano copied the antique Hercules type of the Sarcophagus of the Museo delle Terme. In the Quattrocento, one finds David and Hercules side by side, as the Jewish and pagan types of fortitude. Thus, it was only a step for Michelangelo to combine the two figures as a symbol of moral rectitude.\textsuperscript{251} As Antje Middeldorf Kosegarten contends, Hercules and David are combined in Nicola’s \textit{Fortitude}.\textsuperscript{252} Although the fully nude hero is without a club, the presence of a lion perched upon the figure’s shoulder evokes Herculean mythology.\textsuperscript{253} Nicola, according to Kosegarten, imagined his \textit{Fortitude} as a pastoral David in the guise of Hercules to demonstrate his awareness of antique models.\textsuperscript{254} It is noteworthy that in Florentine political ideology, David and Hercules are commonly conflated heroic exempla.\textsuperscript{255}

The producers and audiences of this variable Herculean model were primarily male.\textsuperscript{256} Just as in Michelangelo’s \textit{David}, Hercules had to work at his masculinity.\textsuperscript{257} As a complex character, sometimes steeped in ambiguous gender and sexual roles, he dawned multiple

\textsuperscript{250} C. Tolnay, \textit{The Youth of Michelangelo}, p. 94-95.
\textsuperscript{251} Tolnay, \textit{Youth}, p. 95.
\textsuperscript{253} Bautista, \textit{Manifesting Masculinities}, p. 46. Kosegarten, “‘Davide Come Ercole’”, p. 879.
\textsuperscript{256} Simons, “Hercules,” p. 634 n. 7.
ascriptions. While vilification of his enemies guaranteed resolution in favor of male power, patriarchal authority, masculine reason, and human virtue, the visual imagery frequently showed him as though forever caught in the act of struggling for that terminus. The figure of Hercules reminds viewers that virility is a self-conscious performance rather than a universal, natural condition, and that male gender need not always be conflated with heteronormative sexuality. The mythological model of Herculean labors suggests that under patriarchy masculinity must be constructed as always in crisis, forever under threat, in order for manliness to come to the fore.

The concept of strength as a virtue completely determines the attitude of Michelangelo’s David and explains his tense expression. The whole weight of the figure falls on the right leg and the body sways slightly toward this side. The straight leg, flagging right arm, and palpating carotid artery of the neck, emphasizes the strict verticality of the right side. The head is turned brusquely toward his left side. Thus, there exists a contrapposto between the bilateral sides of the statue: its right side is closed in outline; the left is open and the outline broken by the raised arm. This contrast of boundaries corresponds to a moral distinction. Whereas the right side is characterized by strength and certainty, the left side leaves itself exposed. Certain ancient myths looked upon the right side of the human body as masculine and active, and the left as feminine and passive in Aristotelian logic, as previously stated. The middle ages gave a theological interpretation to this distinction, namely that the strong right side is under divine protection, while the weak left is exposed to the powers of evil.

Classicism itself could be read as a kind of psychic and historical masquerade for Renaissance society. Classical values were highly charged in terms of an inheritance, not only nationalistic but also familial. The Patria was peopled by citizens who were sons reclaiming the

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heritage of the fathers. In 1403, Salutati proclaimed that the Florentines “are of Roman race […] sons, flesh of their flesh, bones of their bones.” As though the city were a feminized body to be kept virginal and intact by its male soldiers he declared that:

All the Florentines have in their minds the firm resolve to defend [the patria’s liberty] like life itself, even more than life, with their wealth and with their swords, so as to leave to their sons this supreme legacy left to us by our fathers; so as to leave it, with the help of God, entire undefiled.

In the milieu of fifteenth-century Florence, depictions of adolescent males were self-consciously employed in the training and socialization of youth. By paying heed to the social foundations for these images, one discovers that the artistic treatment of youth, instead of proclaiming liberation from social strictures, served as an instrument in the enforcement and reproduction of patriarchal authority. One may begin by considering the social status of adult men in quattrocento Florence. To prepare themselves to assume the responsibilities of heading a family unit, males from this social environment customarily postponed their marriage and sired children only after they had achieved a measure of status in the community. In an effort to

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262 C. Fulton, “The Boy Stripped Bare by His Elders: Art and Adolescence in Renaissance Florence.” p. 31.


264 Fulton, “Boy Stripped Bare,” p. 31 n. 3. Data taken from the Florentine tax returns of 1427 record a surprisingly large age difference between men and their spouses. While the average age of marriage for young women was 17, for men it was close to 30, so that the aver disparity between spouses married in that year was 13.6 years. Children were sired by fully mature fathers. The average baby born in 1427 had a father nearly 30 years of age; David Herlihy, “The Generation in Medieval History,” Viator 5 (1974): pp. 347-364. For the family, see also Chrítiane Kapish-Zuber, Women, Family, and Ritual in Renaissance Italy, trans. Lydia Cochrane (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), esp. the chap., “Childhood in Tuscany at the Beginning of the Fifteenth century,” pp. 94-116. Boys were easily intimidated by fathers who adhered to the moral principles of gravity and self-control. Florentine youth
abate the threats represented by disorderly youth, the adult community instituted social mechanisms for controlling the independent wills of their sons. Adolescent confraternities and informal secular brigades channeled the energies of young men into the city’s ritual life; ecclesiastical schools and private humanist tutors inculcated Christian values and a deep respect for elders. But one must also recognize that by giving visual form to the social concept of idealized youth, necessitated the creation of artistic images exemplifying the perfect adolescent who would make a worthy heir, a trustworthy citizen, and an adult who could lead the city into a future of material and spiritual prosperity. Thus, works of art depicting young men honored Florence as a whole, its moral codes, and its aspirations. The city’s youth represented the hope for the future, and because so much was invested in their training, their conduct and demeanor reflected the city’s moral condition.

In contrast to the commune of Florence during the middle ages, which armed its free citizens, the Medici disarmed the people. In humanist writings of the beginning of the fifteenth century, such as those of Leonardo Bruni, the idea of a fighting militia reappeared along with the ideal of the citizen warrior defending liberty. Donatello’s Saint George, sculpted for the

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265 Fulton, “Boy Stripped Bare,” p. 32.
266 Fulton, “Boy Stripped Bare,” p. 33. One characteristic type of image that completely effaces the difficult issues concerning youth presents a solitary figure stripped of his clothing and undertaking some form of self-sacrifice. Isolated from all corrupting influences—especially those of his unregenerate peers—the portrayed subject dutifully accepts a prescribed fate while exhibiting the most meritorious conduct. Thus shorn of youthful excesses, Domenico Veneziano’s Saint John the Baptist in the Desert makes no claims to status or property, and in his utter nakedness, he has nothing to conceal. Stripped bare by his elders who commissioned the painting, the youth is shown undefended and fully subject to paternal control.
267 Tolnay, Art and Thought, p. 9 n. 15. Donatello’s Saint George is an early incarnation of this citizen warrior, which explains its inner similarity to Michelangelo’s David. This is also the idea that Machiavelli expressed when said in his Principe (Book XII): “It is necessary to arm oneself with one’s own arms and with one’s own men [that is, no more mercenaries]). Piero Soderini, on the advice of Machiavelli (who was at the time secretary of the chancellery), created the city militia. This was one of
Armorer’s Guild, is an outstanding example of heroic masculinity (Figure 17).\textsuperscript{268} Even during the Renaissance, Donatello’s statue was recognized for its martial significance. Francesco Bocchi, for example, in his Eccelenza del San Giorgio di Donatello (1571, 1584), wrote that the statue “expresses the magnanimity and force by which [the figure] is elevated.”\textsuperscript{269} Charles de Tolnay expands on Bocchi’s comment, observing that Donatello’s Saint George was the first representation of the type of cittadino guerriero described in the writings of Leonardo Bruni.\textsuperscript{270} Donatello imbued his Saint George with a psychological vigilance that prefigured the terribilità of Michelangelo’s David. As a personification of this iconography of heroism shared by the Saint George with the early Fortitude and the gigante, Donatello’s statue served to symbolically defend the Florentine Republic from the threat of attack by the Visconti.\textsuperscript{271}
To return to the work of Simons—she combines an examination of Leonardo Bruni’s language about Florentine citizenship, with a consideration of Donatello’s sculpture of a military, sainted hero produced for Bruni’s civic environment. Over time, art historians have naturalized patriarchy and masculinity when discussing the first few decades of the fifteenth century in Florence. For Hartt, the work was “a Renaissance statue in the completeness of its individuality, the forthrightness of its stance, the magnificence of its forms.” A delicate balance between positive and negative forces is what makes the Saint George such a subtle and appealing work, for it performs the very production of adult masculinity in process. Donatello visualized a coming of age, the birth of a particular kind of ‘Renaissance man’ growing into his manhood. Masculine masquerade is a mediated strategy for performing gender identity, and what is rendered visible in the Saint George is that negotiation at work, creating the illusion that it can prevail. The Saint George centers on a complex series of oppositions held in careful balance. We see becoming not being, transition, not stasis. The Saint’s body language subtly suggests a psychomachia between fear and courage. Depending on the direction from which the viewer first encountered the sculpture, the statue’s suggestion of a psychic moment of transformation differs in its narrative import, but the fundamental sense of an emerging consciousness about confrontation and masculine heroics is to the fore. Tense anticipation of what may come with the passing of time is emphasized by the ensemble’s combination of different moments: the three-dimensional Saint prepares, while in the stiacciato relief below is placed a narrative of his

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A ‘holy fighter’ defeating the dragon and other enemies by ‘arming himself with the sign of the cross,’ Saint George triumphed over evil through his employment of virtue, as did an unarmored David defeating Goliath or a Christianized Hercules conquering bestial Antaeus.\footnote{Simons, “Separating Men,” p. 158. See, Jacobus de Voragine, \textit{The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints}, trans. by William Granger Ryan, 2 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993) I, pp. 238-239.} \textit{Saint George}’s body is restrained and in a delicate balance of Bruni-sanctioned equivocation, while his mind works at the application of reason and prudence, establishing discipline before he moves outward to act out that power in the material world. As Bruni indicates, such control and action were constructed as purely masculine. In the Western tradition, the very notion of objective, neutral, transcendent reason, for Bruni is the central requirement for virtue, involving
‘an exclusion of the feminine.’

So too, however, has masculinity been produced through omission, the valorization of purely virile skills exhibited in the Saint George. The carved figure excludes ‘feminine’ attributes in both his external appearance and an internal life of reasoning and self-control; He takes on the role of a universal hero and an active citizen.

As Simons observes, a particular kind of masculinity is embodied in the very handling of the marble, with the clarity of the silhouette, the precision of the carving especially delineating the armor, the assertive intrusion into a viewer’s space with a once protruding lance as well as the breaking of the fourth wall beyond the shallow niche, the penetrating gaze on a grand and distant object, the impression of tight control over the chisel akin to the Saint’s delicate tremor around a pivot, the overall air of regularity and order, all suggest the decisive, definitive, and dynamic form tailored to a particular notion of manhood.

Donatello’s Saint George ensemble constructs a Florentine and masculine identity through introspection and contrast much more than through any awareness of a particularized external threat from Milan or Naples. Yet, the Saint George still vacillates, forever caught in the lingering thoughts of a temptation to flee. The figure’s beautified youthfulness has traces of feminine smoothness and delicate bones, for he is a beardless youth shedding femininity rather than an already fully adult man. Liminal, he is caught on the verge of maturity, growing the sheath of masculine masquerade, hovering close to reconciliation between effeminizing materiality, and masculinizing spirit. As Simons contends, male viewers were instructed in the denial of effeminacy and yet attracted to an ideal of male beauty.

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281 Genevieve Lloyd points out that ‘femininity itself has been constituted through such processes of exclusion.’ See, Simons, “Separating Men,” p. 160.
Shedding the last vestiges of femininity, entering a rite of passage into manhood, but still young adulthood, the *Saint George* enables a multifaceted, ambivalent range of responses from its audience. Many would have been struck by the homoerotically attractive figure. Some identified with his virile composure, some with his trepidation as he dons the mantle of *gravitas*. Eroticism energizes the engagement of male object and male viewer, for “there is always a constant oscillation between that image as a source of identification, and as an other, a source of contemplation.” This model of psychosexual spectatorship is arguably relevant for Michelangelo’s *David*, a point to which we shall return in closing this chapter.

Dunlop explored masculine bodily performance in a different vein. She considered the cultural and conceptual problem common to the proliferation of images of young male civic heroes from the mid-fifteenth century as the staging of the bodies of men, particularly young men, whether for civic, erotic, or artistic ends. She argues that three contests and stagings of male youth coalesced here: David defeating Goliath, in the first instance; but also the displays of young Florentines in which such parade shields were used; and finally the struggle of Castagno and his generation to create a modern—‘masculine’—painting rivaling the mythic figures of ancient art. It is the premise of what follows that the male figure was the pre-eminent subject of Quattrocento Florentine art, from Masaccio’s *Trinity* to Michelangelo’s *David*. Alberti’s 1436 treatise *Della Pittura* clarifies as a first principle that male image, and men for that matter, were

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286 Simons, “Separating Men,” p. 173. Donatello’s staging of the figure’s gaze establishes a charged set of interactions between the statue and its spectators. Saint George’s gaze, over the heads of puny viewers on mundane street level and focused on some distant threat, sets up a mechanism of seeming denial of being and object to be looked at because the saint so insistently enacts looking himself.

“fra tutte le cose notissimo”—“best known but also most notable, and the measure of all things.”

Dunlop analysis of Castagno’s *David* allows us to re-examine the role of the male body in the development of Florentine Renaissance art even as it forces us to be explicit about our theoretical linking of use value and aesthetics, art history, and social history. She views as important the fact that David keeps swinging, despite Goliath’s battered head in the foreground, which she sees as symptomatic of a larger socio-cultural rebellion of children against their elders beginning in the middle half of the fifteenth century.

The belief in the hot-blooded biliousness of male youths was widespread; the propensity for violence was central to pre-modern definitions of young male physiology and had been since the medical codifications of Hippocrates and Galen. Men were by nature the definition of hotter and dryer than women, a state that made them physiologically more fixed, stable, strong, and rational. As Aristotle’s *Rhetorica*, a text fifteenth-century patrician youths would have studied, explained, the heat of male youth created strong passions, and little ability to restrain the need to satisfy them. Aristotle considers the various types of human character, in relation to the emotions and moral qualities:

> Young men have strong passions, and tend to gratify them indiscriminately. Of the bodily desires, it is the sexual by which they are most swayed and in which they show absence of self-control. They are changeable and fickle in their desires, which are violent while they last, but quickly over: their impulses are keen but not deep-rooted, and are

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like sick people's attacks of hunger and thirst. They are hot-tempered, and quick-tempered, and apt to give way to their anger; bad temper often gets the better of them, for owing to their love of honour they cannot bear being slighted, and are indignant if they imagine themselves unfairly treated. While they love honour, they love victory still more; for youth is eager for superiority over others, and victory is one form of this [...] Their hot tempers and hopeful dispositions make them more courageous than older men are; the hot temper prevents fear, and the hopeful disposition creates confidence; we cannot feel fear so long as we are feeling angry, and any expectation of good makes us confident.  

Young men were brave, given to sudden indignations, and unrestrained—the male body, not yet having reached its equilibrium and being dominated by heat, left young men volatile, hypersexualized, and in need of external control, consumed by fluctuating desires that they could not restrain. Although young men craved sex and physical pleasure, they were also, however, courageous. According to Aristotle, the youth infinitely preferred to do great feats above mundane chores. This is why young men made great warriors, lovers, heroes, or simply killers—it was literally in their blood.  

Savonarola had been fascinated by the duality of character. Ascanio Condivi later said that Michelangelo had great affection for Savonarola “whose voice still lives in his memory,” and he studied his published writings closely. He may have heard a sermon on Psalm 73 given in Florence Cathedral at Advent 1493, in which Savonarola argued that David was the archetypal Christian, because Christians are divided into two types—the perfect, who are “strong of hand and beautiful in appearance” because they strive energetically and have a clear conscience; and the imperfect who, although they have faith, “still feel the fires of the flesh and of lust, and of other vices.”

292 Dunlop, “Parading David,” p. 690.  
294 Hall, Michelangelo and the Reinvention, p. 56 n. 70. Brookhaus, p. 103. Brookhaus prints the entire sermon, but only applies ‘strong of hand and beautiful of appearance’ to David. For unconvincing attempts to moralize the right and left sides of David see Wilde (1932). Though the Spirit of prophecy by
It should be noted, however, that the new order of the post-Savonarolan period was marked by the relative unimportance of youth. Not only did the friar’s citywide organization of boys disappear, and with it their moral policing, but boys lost their central role in communal rituals. It seems also that at this time the ideal image of youth that had slowly developed during the Quattrocento and employed as a symbol of the city and its moral fiber shifted.295

Michelangelo’s David depicts a moment when he is sizing up his enemy and preparing to throw his sling. Yet, he is much older than in any previous representation, a young man with an athletic physique that is offered to us unashamedly. While it is true that the narrowness of the marble block compelled Michelangelo to make a flatter and more relief-like image, nevertheless, he exploited this to his advantage by making the torso as full frontal as possible.296 His first act on getting hold on the marble block had been to denude David. He cut off a knot of marble left by Agostino di Duccio on the chest: it was probably a knot from David’s cloak. This naked man’s body, with its huge hands, seems to dilate vertically and laterally before our eyes, maximizing the amount of naked flesh that is available for inspection.297 The full and unabashed depiction of David’s nipples, navels, and genitals are unmatched. Saint Augustine singled out the male nipples, in particular, as being created for aesthetic reasons alone since they perform no sacred songs descended chiefly on David, who is therefore styled “the sweet psalmist of Israel,” yet God put some of that Spirit upon those about him. This is a psalm of great use; it gives us an account of the conflict, which the psalmist had with a strong temptation to envy the prosperity of wicked people. He begins his account with a sacred principle, which he held fast, and by the help of which he kept his ground and carried his point, Ps. 73:1. He then tells us, firstly, How he got into the temptation, Ps. 73:2-14. Secondly, How he got out of the temptation and gained a victory over it, Ps. 73:15-20. And Thirdly, How he got by the temptation and was the better for it, Ps. 73:21-23. If, in singing this psalm, we fortify ourselves against the life temptation, we do not use it in vain. The experiences of others should be our instructions.

296 Hall, Michelangelo and the Reinvention of the Human Body, p. 52.
297 Hall, Michelangelo and the Reinvention, p. 53.
practical function. David’s nipples are erect, and stand to electrically charged attention—acted upon by the atmosphere or perhaps suggesting his post-pubescent metamorphosis. They contrast with the meticulously drilled depths of the navel—tugging at the skin surrounding the orifice.

Even the two-pronged tree stump that supports his standing leg is can be read as erotically charged. It is like a hand—consisting of thumb and forefinger—gripping his lower leg, for its position is echoed by David’s own thumb and finger resting against the thigh of the standing leg.

Michelangelo’s forthright display of manhood, for some may be embarrassing, perhaps because we do not have the Goliath’s severed head to distract our attention, or to minimize David’s scale. The explicitness of Michelangelo’s statue was too provocative for the commissioners and it was soon decided that the statue’s genitals were to be covered with a garland of twenty-eight copper

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Augustine writes: “There are some things, too, which have such a place in the body, that they obviously serve no useful purpose, but are solely for beauty, as e.g. the teats on a man’s breast, or the beard on his face; for that this is for ornament, and not for protection, is proved by the bare faces of women, who ought rather, as the weaker sex, to enjoy such a defense. If, therefore, of all those members which are exposed to our view, there is certainly not one in which beauty is sacrificed to utility, while there are some which serve no purpose but only beauty, I think it can readily be concluded that in the creation of the human body comeliness was more regarded than necessity. In truth, necessity is a transitory thing; and the time is coming when we shall enjoy one another’s beauty without any lust,—a condition which will specially redound to the praise of the Creator, who, as it is said in the psalm, has “put on praise and comeliness.”

299 Hall, Michelangelo and the Reinvention, p. 53. In the biblical Song of Solomon, Ps. 7:2; “Thy navel is like a round goblet, which wanteth not liquor: thy belly is like an heap of wheat set about with lilies.” In his Exposition on the Psalms Augustine writes: “And when He was on the Cross, ”I thirst,” He said, although they gave not to Him that for which He was thirsting. For themselves He was thirsting: but they gave vinegar, not new wine, wherewith are filled up the new bottles, but old wine, but old to its loss. For old vinegar also is said of the old men, of whom hath been said, ”For to them is no changing;” namely, that the Jebusites should be overthrown, and Jerusalem be builded.” When the soul wants not that fear then the navel wants not liquor. The belly is like a heap of wheat in the store-chamber, which perhaps was sometimes, to make show, adorned with flowers. The wheat is useful, the lilies are beautiful; there is every thing in the church which may be to the members of that body either for use or for ornament. All the body is nourished from the belly; it denotes the spiritual prosperity of a believer and the healthful constitution of the soul all in good plight.
leaves. Permitting the artist some license, spectators well versed in the Old Testament parable might see the nudity as a form of visual hyperbole, aimed at providing a latent reference to the youth’s casting off of Saul’s armor before he took to battle. Others still, might interpret David’s lack of clothing as symbolizing his humility, or his later prophetic abilities. Or, one might take a step further and recognize the nudity as a sign of David’s heroic virtue; his beautiful body becomes an incarnate expression of courage.

Considering an array of theoretical, socio-cultural, and formalist approaches to the manner in which the body was constructed during the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries allows us to situate the David within humanist and other sociocultural contexts. A number of artistic precedents led to a full blossoming of corporeal masculinity in the liminal body of Michelangelo’s David in which the boy has finally grown up to become a full-fledged man. Or, to complicate matters, one might argue he is still in the process of growing up. His distended proportions, lack of key identifying attributes, and penetrating gaze suggest that the model for

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300 Hall, Michelangelo and the Reinvention, p. 53. A painter, Raffaello di Giovanni, is paid for gilding a metal garland added to Michelangelo’s David, and for a Madonna for the audience-Chamber of the Nove in Palazzo Vecchio.

‘A Bastiano d[i] Domenico Cennini orafo lire 20, soldi 5, per la grillanda intorno al Gigante. (1.20, s. 5)’

‘A Raffaello di Giovanni dipintore lire 5, soldi 14, sono per mettere d’oro detta grillanda. c. 22 (1.5, s. 14)’

‘A Francesco di Bernardo Battiloro per 161 pezo d’oro per dorare detta grillanda. c. 22 (1.5, s. 13).’

Cited in Shearman, “1508/2 Late May to mid-July 1508,” In Raphael in Early Modern Sources (1483-1602), p. 118. Florence, ASF, Signori e Collegi, Deliberationi fatte in forza d’ordinaria autorità 110, fol. 204v. Text and reference from Caglioti. The cross-references, carta 22, carta 51, are to a lost account book for January-December 1508, Giornale Primo, which may be partially reconstructed by collation (following Caglioti) so as to date c. 22 late May-early June, and c. 51 before 18 July. The grillanda supplied and gilded here is shown by Caglioti to be a replacement for one made in 1504 to hide the genitals of David, which was already known as the Gigante when it stood as a mutilated block, before its allocation to Michelangelo, in the Opera del Duomo.

301 Randolph, Engaging Symbols, p. 159 n. 45. Sam. 17: 38-39. Olszewski, “Prophecy and Prolepsis,” p. 72, sees the nudity of the bronze David as a “prefiguration of his [David’s] dancing nude before the Ark of the covenant on its return to the Israelites (2 Sam. 6:14-20).

302 Randolph, Engaging Symbols, p. 159 n. 46.

303 Randolph, Engaging Symbols, p. 159 n. 47.
boyhood has shifted from one centered on rebellion to a more psychological expression of interiority, yet this can still be read as controlled angst.\textsuperscript{304} Michelangelo’s \textit{David} exalts the characteristics of fortitude, strength, moral rectitude, and courage. If he had been placed atop the buttress for all to see, his size and height accentuates the significance of this cultural shift in politics—and made visual through the \textit{David’s} liminal body—a boy transcending puberty and becoming a man.

I shall conclude with reflections on some theoretical implications of the sculpture’s corporeal liminality for gendered spectatorship, particularly male. Norman Bryson noted that although in the case of the sculpture, one could speak of its mathematical purity, its construction according to a canon of perfect proportions, its classicism: here he only mentions the diminished size of its genitals.\textsuperscript{305} It is the Greek tendency in this period to limit life-sized or enlarged genitals to comic and bacchic scenes, to the realm of the satyrical; the Polykleitos regards underplaying and diminution of the genitals as essential for its higher purposes.\textsuperscript{306} The convention is so familiar that it is still possible to overlook its aspect of the bizarre; for idealization here entails that the discrepancy between the viewer’s sense of his own sex and the ideal, as well as the accompanying anxiety, be resolved by so diminishing the genitalia that no anxiety concerning discrepancy will arise. The gap between actuality and the imago is dealt with by reversing it so that the idealized genitalia do not compete with the real thing; or, more precisely, they are made to compete—gap and disparity are presented—but the spectator “wins.” In this case, the anxious gap between the male spectator and the image of masculinity can be precisely measured as a ratio: as the sculpture’s genitals are diminished relative to actual genitals, so the sense of the

\textsuperscript{304} It is also possible that optical corrections, designed for the Duomo buttress, could partially account for the distended proportions of the \textit{David}.


male’s genital self-possession and sexual power stands in relation to the masculine imago. What is feared and cannot be assumed by the male subject is the sexuality of the imago, a fear that in the case of the sculpture is defused by the strategy of diminution and sublimation.307

Let us now turn to a terse and telling formulation of this ‘play’ between the immaterial and the material as described in “Foldings, or the Inside of Thought (Subjectivation)” — the last chapter of Deleuze’s *Foucault* that examines Foucault’s three-volume study of the history of sexuality.308 Michel Foucault, says Deleuze, took sexuality to be a mirror of subjectivity and subjectivation broadening the scope by subsuming sexuality in a matrix of subjectivity. In this vein, every human being participates in an ongoing process of living in the world, by gaining consciousness and agency through a constant give-and-take of perception, affect and cognition. Subjectivity becomes an ongoing negotiation of things perceived, both consciously and unconsciously, within and outside the body.309 Taking into account the experience of the male viewer gazing upon the *David*, Richard Leppert in his essay “The Male Nude: Identity and Denial,” adduces that he is forced to acknowledge and confronted by his own discomfort in the presence of David’s nudity. In short, Leppert continues, “many men do not know what to do with their eyes.”310 This supports the point that Michelangelo’s power is engendered by his ability to compel the desiring viewer to behold, yet; perhaps in the moment of the late twentieth-century we are ‘forced’ to violate a taboo.311 In this moment, depending where and who they are, men are culturally forbidden to take pleasure in looking at the body of their own sex, though they are

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308 Deleuze, Gilles. "Foldings, or the Inside of Thought (Subjectivation)," in *Foucault* (1988): 94-123.
culturally required, in post-modern times, to make their own specific bodies pleasurable sights to themselves and others of both sexes. The affecting power of the male nude in art therefore lies in part in its ability to produce tension in the male viewer who, when gazing, is forced to acknowledge the power exerted upon him by the ideal body of another male. Yet to exert this power, as Leppert notes, given the hegemony of the heterosexist model in the late twentieth century: “the idealized body must become an object of desire, a transformation that culturally feminizes both the figure represented and for the male viewer, given the culturally established rules of gendered looking.”

Just as Lacan’s child gazes into the mirror for the first time, so too viewing the David across the centuries captured the predicament of misrecognition. Thus, the self is not the naturally bounded organism (a thing within the world), but a site of desires, relations, drives, fantasies and projections that cannot possess the coherence of a body.

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313 There is a radical disjunction between the subject, who is nothing more than an effect of its relation to an other whom it cannot read, and the self, ego or individual that we imagine ourselves to be. It is the body as bounded organism, centred on a looking face whose gaze can be returned by the mirror, that not only represses the chaotically dispersed and relational manner of our existence; it also operates as a figure of reading. We read other bodies as though they harbored a sense or interior meaning that might be disclosed through communication, and we read texts as though they operated like bodies—as well-formed organisms possessing a systemic logic the sense of which might become apparent. What that delightful recognition of one’s bodily integrity covers over is the condition of subjection: that we speak and are, not through being one’s own self, but as always situated within a system of symbolic relations of which we are only ever effects. These effects are never given as such, but always relayed through relations of enigma, misrecognition, anticipation, projection, and unattainable desire. See, Guillaume, Laura. Deleuze and the Body. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011; p. 10-11. See, Butler, Judith. The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1997; Butler, Judith. Undoing Gender. New York: Routledge, 2004; Laplanche, Jean. Essays on Otherness. London: Routledge, 1999; Mitchell, Juliet. Psychoanalysis and Feminism. New York: Vintage Books, 1975; Wright, Elizabeth. Psychoanalytic Criticism: Theory in Practice. London: Methuen, 1984. See also, Guillaume, Laura. Deleuze and the Body. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011; p. 9. See, Felman, Shoshana. Jacques Lacan and the Adventure of Insight: Psychoanalysis in Contemporary Culture. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987.
In *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, Foucault contended that the ‘self’, the ‘I’, is always defined by the ways it is doubled by another, not a single or commanding ‘other’ or *Doppelgänger*, but simply any of a number of possible forces.\(^{314}\) ‘It is I who live my life as the double of the other,’ and when I find the other in myself the discovery ‘resembles exactly the invagination of a tissue in embryology, or the act of doubling in sewing: twist, fold, stop, and so on.’\(^{315}\) For Foucault, history was the ‘doubling of an emergence.’\(^{316}\) By that, he meant that what was past or in an archive was also passed, mirrored or folded into a diagram. History was shown to be what sums up the past but that can be marshalled for the shaping of configurations that will determine how people live and act in the present and future. Whether forgotten or remembered, history is one of the formative doubles or others vital to the process of subjectivation. In *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze and Guattari maintain the importance of the virtual body part.\(^{317}\) The body has been increasingly ‘privatized’, no longer living its forces collectively or intensively. Instead of the phallus being a collective talisman, capable of generating the powerful spectacle where the body has become folded in on itself—for example, in which the beholder’s interpretation of the David’s faciality is embodied within the sculpture’s own ‘flesh’.\(^{318}\) On the contrary, the organs are now private: the eyes that look out on a world as so much calculable matter to be mastered by the hand that will labor to transform the world into exchangeable commodities. This privatization of the organs means that desire can only be experienced as secret and personal, lost in its passage.

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\(^{316}\) Deleuze, Gilles. *Foucault*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988; p. 98.
through collective speech, and never capable of reaching that full masterful voice of the phallic master.\textsuperscript{319}

Specifically, the concept of the ‘fold’ allows Deleuze to think creatively about the production of subjectivity, and ultimately about the possibilities for, and production of, non-human forms of subjectivity.\textsuperscript{320} In fact, on one level the fold is a critique of the standard account of subjectivity, which presumes a simple interiority and exteriority (appearance and essence, or surface and depth). For the fold announces that the inside is nothing more than a fold of the outside. Similarly, the David’s body, in all its brazen exposure, announces the ideals of bravery, courage, and fortitude—emanating from the interior psyche and manifested in the exterior form of a man. These culturally constructed notions of Christian civic masculinity are presented for viewing and psychic integration on the part of the male beholder in particular.


CHAPTER 4

MULTIFOLIATE ROSE: MARIOLOGICAL SIGNIFICATIONS.

Let us now turn to Victor Turner’s conception of liminality, a recurrent theme in the previous chapters—here deriving from a Bergsonian observation in which the philosopher,

[... ] Saw in the words and writings of prophets and great artists, the creation of an ‘open morality,’ which was itself an expression of the élan vital, or evolutionary ‘life-force.’ Prophets and artists tend to be liminal and marginal people, ‘edgemen,’ who strive with a passionate sincerity to rid themselves of the clichés associated with status incumbency and role-playing and enter into vital relations with other men in fact or imagination. In their productions we may catch glimpses of that unused evolutionary potential in mankind which has not yet been externalized or fixed in structure.”321

Apparent here is the important close association that Turner detects between liminality and aesthetic practice, which is related to Félix Guattari ethico-aesthetic paradigm discussed above. Aesthetic sensibility avant la lettre provides existential matrices that, by means of new liminal practices, open up the beholders’ field of vision to the possibility of new emanations of communitas, that is, the appeal to the very spirit of civic communality. Public sculpture thereby ensures the proximity of the creation of values and the production of subjectivity interceding between nothingness and complexity, between being as difference, and subjectivity as a processual and transient actualization—albeit not through controlled structured viewing, but instead through the beholders’ nomadic engagement with public sculpture.

It is clear that art took on an increasing importance in Guattari’s conception of political action, not in the romantic sense of a transcendent or mythical figures capable of imprinting their destiny on the passive substance of a people, but instead as a kind of psychic dislocation, enabling the passage from bounded existential territories to the social worlds of interconnected

flows, and serving as a kind of disorienting translation between the necessary embodiment of voice and the infinite proliferation of abstract ideas. Aesthetic experience is recognized in its intrinsic or even ineffable qualities and is welcomed as a moment of irreducible singularization; yet, it is also understood to produce discursive, philosophical, and societal effects in its passage through the adjacent domains of existence. The result is that art is neither instrumentalized nor explained away as a symptom, nor is it set apart from politics and society as a domain of pure creation or revelation. For Guattari, cartography itself is an ethical-aesthetic act that provokes an event of existence. Rather than focusing on moral criteria, early guidebooks furnish the ideal sequence in which actual monuments and their sculpture should be experienced. These narrative descriptions have, I contend, unique values for our subject. First, they recognize the existence, subjectivity, and the specifically visual character of the spectators’ experience. Second, descriptions of statues arranged in a “wonderfully disposed order” on architecture indicate broadly shared cultural expectations that visual relationships between sculpture and architecture create mutually reinforcing patterns of meaning. According to Marvin Trachtenberg, these very modalities find their counterparts in the piazza. Just as it is primarily architecture that serves to generate pictorial space, so in the piazza it is the building, its plan, and height, that determines the spatial dimensions of the plaza. The Cathedral demands the need for, and thereby creates the space. Thus becoming an analogue to both mediums and giving identity to the urban space in an

322 To be sure, in Deleuze and Guattari’s final co-written work, What Is Philosophy?, the specific locus of art is identified as the plane of composition, producing the constellation of a sensible universe. But rather than isolating this artistic function, Guattari’s Schizoanalytic Cartographies reveals the dynamic relations of territories, flows, rhizomatic ideas, and perceptual/affective intensities, inviting us, the beholder, to the composition of a processual map whose vocation is to become a sharable territory. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, Qu’est-ce que la philosophy? (Paris: Minuit, 1991), chapter 7. English translation by Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell, What Is Philosophy? (New York: Columbia U. P., 1994), chapter 7.

unequivocal manner as the Piazza del Duomo. Moreover, the cathedral plays a multifoliate role, so to speak, in that it serves in both iconic plasticity, and furthermore functions within the piazza itself as an icon. One might go as far as to say that Santa Maria del Fiore and comparable cathedrals, established what were in effect the classical union of time, place, and theme.\textsuperscript{324}

Beyond these essential duties, the cathedral contributed to the sheer visual gravitas and vivacity of Florence’s topography and identity, anointed, as it were, as the New Rome and the New Jerusalem during the end of the Quattrocento and at the beginning of the Cinquecento.

In the case of sculpture for a religious monument such as Santa Maria del Fiore, philosophical meaning expands to become theological exegesis and thus participates in the mystery of existence of the biblical God who interacts with history. The statues of prophets and kings, of apostles and evangelists that in Santa Maria del Fiore express faith in a concrete ‘history of salvation,’ themselves constituting historical actions and presences, redraw cartographies of real space and the subjective perception of time. The utopian aspirations that permeate the later works all have their generative matrix in these ideas, which merge into the broader currents of complexity theory and what Guattari called ‘ecosophy’. At the horizon of his vision was an exit from determinism and domination by way of a “new alliance” between humanity and technology, each reshaping the other through coevolutionary mechanisms. The relation of biosphere and noosphere returns in this text, like a geosophy of humanity seeking a new compass.\textsuperscript{325}


\textsuperscript{325} Indeed, Guattari’s machines act similarly to religious public sculpture: “Machines are not totalities closed in upon themselves. They maintain determined relations with a spatio-temporal exteriority, as well as with universes of signs and fields of virtuality…. A machine rises to the surface of the present like the completion of a past lineage, and it is the point of restarting, or of rupture, from which an evolving lineage will unfold in the future. The emergence of these genealogies and fields of alterity is
Indeed, Bishop Sicard of Cremona presents a very different type of characterization of sculpture in Book I of his *Mitrale*, a liturgical manual for bishops written in about 1200. Book one, entitled *De ecclesiae aedificatione, ornatu et utensilibus* and divided in thirteen chapters, gives a detailed listing of the parts of architecture of churches and their necessary liturgical furnishings, of their designation, their consecration, and reconciliation. The plan of the cathedral repeated the square that formed the crossing to generate a nave six units in length, a transept two units wide while the dome was to be three units high. This matched the dimensions of Solomon’s Temple, a critically important point of reference for Santa Maria del Fiore: (book of 1 Kings 6:2) 

“And the house, which King Solomon built to the Lord, was threescore cubits in length and twenty cubits in breadth, and thirty cubits in height” (i.e. 60 x 20 x 30).” So important were the ratios that the Flemish composer Guillaume Dufay would incorporate them into the motet he wrote for the new dedication of the Cathedral on 25 March 1436.

In the case of Santa Maria del Fiore, this philosophical-theological sense should be characterized in specifically Christological and Incarnational terms. In this final chapter I will explore the proleptic and prophetic bases for which a Mariological interpretation can be read in light of the Florentine cathedral itself as it is, of course, dedicated to the Holy Virgin of the flower. In conjunction with the Opera’s intended placement of Michelangelo’s *David*, on the north buttress, analysis of scriptural, Christological, Mariological, and mystical accounts supports *David’s* particular placement and inclusion within the schema of transversal modes of representation. Although, as many scholars have pointed out, the *David* was a beacon of

complex. It is continually worked over by all the creative forces of the sciences, the arts and social innovations, which become entangled and constitute a mecanosphere surrounding our biosphere – not as the constraining yoke of an exterior armor, but as an abstract, machinic efflorescence, exploring the future of humanity *[le devenir humain]*.” See, Félix Guattari, “Pour une refondation des pratiques sociales,” in *Le Monde diplomatique* (Octobre 1992); English translation by Sophie Thomas, “Remaking Social Practices,” in Gary Genosko, ed., *The Guattari Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996).
Florentine civic identity, there are at the same time religious implications connected to the choice of prominent tree-stump iconography (discussed in Chapter Two).

Certain formulations of Ildephonsus of Toledo, cited by Mary Bergstein in another context in her study of Marian politics of quattrocento Florence, express the theme “radice flos ascendit Christus,” where he identifies the rod of Isaiah (11:1), with both Christ as the flower that will arise from the stem of Jesse and as a branch that shall grow out of his roots; and “Virgo inter filias, ac sit lilii inter spinas,” where the Virgin becomes the friend—or lover—identified in the Song of Songs (2:2), believed to be written by King Solomon himself, as the lily among the thorns.326 “Again,’ sayest the Lord unto Isaiah, “There shall be a root of Jesse, and he that shall reign over the Gentiles; in him shall the Gentiles trust.” Isaiah is here called the root of Jesse, that is, such a branch from the family of David as is the very life and strength of the family: compare (Isa. 11:1). Christ was David’s Lord, and yet withal he was the Son of David (Matt. 22:45), for he was the ’root and offspring of David,’ (Rev. 22:16).327 Christ, as God, was David’s root; Christ, as man, was David’s offspring—“And he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles to grasp the significance of these developments for the planning and design of the Duomo.


327 A flower will arise according to Ambrose, he writes: “Scripture also expresses the Son’s incarnation beautifully “from a bud you have gone up” for like a plant of the earth he was to be conceived in the womb of a virgin. And like a fragrant flower sent forth from the maternal bosom in the splendor of the dawn, he was to go up for the redemption of the whole world, as Isaiah says: “There will come forth a rod out of the root of Jesse, and a flower will blossom from his root.” The root is the family of the Jews, the rod is Mary, and the flower is her Christ, who vanquished the foul odor of worldly filth, poured forth the fragrance of eternal life.” See, Gen. 49:9, whereas Jerome’s translation reads *a praeda fili mi ascendisti*, Ambrose’s text evidently has ex *germine mihi ascendisti*. See also, Ambrose, On the Patriarchs 4.19-20 in Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum. Vienna, 1866. McKinion, Steven A. Isaiah 1-39. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2004; p. 95.
It is crucial to understand the import of the new dedication to the cult of the Virgin itself and to the intended placement of the David on top of the cathedral’s buttress as participating in this genealogical jouissance with the prophet program, specifically Donatello’s Jeremiah, Nanni di Banco’s Isaiah of 1408, commissioned for the north tribune of the cathedral and his Porta della Mandorla of c. 1414-21, also located on the north wall of the cathedral’s exterior, Ghiberti’s Gates of Paradise, and moreover, Santa Maria del Fiore itself; its environs will be examined as a systemic entity. Furthermore, interpretative techniques, mainly iconological analyses of Michelangelo’s later work in the Stanza d’Eliodoro and Sistine ceiling respectively, will be applied to the David in order to stress iconological continuity with Marian themes.

Furthermore, I will propose a similar model as in the case of Michaël Amy’s essay entitled “Imagining Michelangelo’s St. Matthew in its Setting,” by proposing a hypothetical collocation for Michelangelo’s David. Amy’s important analysis of the non finito Saint Matthew in its intended setting sets a methodological and conceptual precedent for this chapter’s argument. Through his analysis of the tormented Evangelist and Apostle, who in suffering raises his gaze towards an endpoint that serves an iconological purpose—and as I proposed in the case of Michelangelo’s David, his gaze is directed towards the vicinity of the Gates of Paradise (Figure 2). So too does Amy bring us back to the basic meaning of sculpture representing man in Santa Maria del Fiore: to the ‘sculptural’ sense of the life of faith, enunciated by the prophet Isaiah, when he described the people of Israel as a community “extracted from the quarry” and “hewn from the rock” which is Abraham; and specified in the New Testament where, in the first Letter of Saint Peter, we read that the believers are “living stones” united with the “cornerstone” Christ and that the Church itself is constructed of such stones (1 Peter, 2:4-7). “Hearken to me,”

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commands Isaiah, “ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the Lord: look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged (Isaiah, 51:1).” Here, the Israelites are directed to look back to their origin, and to the smallness of their beginning, for God says: “Look unto the rock whence you were hewn.” That which is born of the flesh is flesh. How hard was that rock out of which we were hewn, unapt to receive impressions, and how miserable “the hole of that pit out of which we were digged.”

The ancient liturgical hymn still used in feasts of the dedication of churches, Urbs Ierusalem beata, introduces a further image pertinent to this theme implicit in Amy’s text. Evoking the figure of the edifice/community constructed of ‘living stones’ around Christ:

“tusionibus, pressuris expoliti lapides suis coaptantur locis per manum artificis; disposuntur permansuri sacris aedificiis”: that is, the stones chosen for the sacred façade can be laid, each in its place, only after they have accepted and endured the strong blows and modeling force of the hand of the Artificer. And the meaning of sculpture in Santa Maria del Fiore consists also in this way, that is, to portray in stone the existential process by which, even in suffering, man allows himself to be hewn, refined, molded, so that—from that primeval and crude material—the features of his preternatural being emerges.

Physically and symbolically, both Man and the Cathedral engendered the civic ideology prominent in early fourteenth-century Florence. As Marvin Trachtenberg has argued, Santa Maria del Fiore “must be predicated on the premise that the key to [its] design resides in [its] iconography; that is, we must seek to understand [it] in semiotic terms… as [a] complex three-dimensional [signifier] that participated in the larger semantic field centered on Florentine civic mythology.”

Considered from this perspective, Santa Maria del Fiore may be seen as

incorporating “layers of deeply meaningful multiple images in its design.” In what Trachtenberg identifies as the Florentine layer, the nave includes elements derived from the three most prominent and ‘modern’ Florentine churches, namely Santa Maria Novella, Santa Croce, and Orsanmichele. Furthermore, the octagonal baptistery of San Giovanni found amplification in the grand dome as well as in the external forms of the three tribunes. As such, Santa Maria del Fiore was the repository of a complex web of referentiality: “the Duomo appears as a flamboyant, explosive, polymorphous celebration of the city as represented in its major preexisting ecclesiastical monuments.”

Although not a common feature of Tuscan architecture, when the northwest tribune of the cathedral was completed in c. 1407-08, the Operai began the process of planning the decoration for the sproni—or buttresses—with freestanding, life-sized statues of prophets. The commission for the first of the twelve prophets, a marble Isaiah—sculpted by Nanni di Banco—was to establish a working precedent for the other eleven prophets as well as set the tone for the typological, Christological, and ultimately Mariological iconology of the program (Figure 21). Less than a month after Nanni di Banco and his workshop received the commission for the Isaiah, a second figure, a David profete was assigned to Donatello, who was ordered—as stated in the 20 February 1407-08 Deliberazione—that the David was the be carved in the same manner

333 For information on attribution of the Isaiah, see Bergstein, The Sculpture of Nanni di Banco, pp. 99-105.
and under the same conditions as Nanni di Banco’s *Isaiah* (*Figure 47*). Although no specific document survives regarding the installation of the statues, about two weeks after Donatello finished the marble *David*, the Operai decided that a statue of a prophet that had been placed above the tribune be taken down; it is therefore inferred that one of the two buttress figures, most likely Nanni’s *Isaiah*, had been put in place and then removed for reasons unstated. Sometime during the following year, a campaign for a colossal figure, also intended for a buttress above the northwest tribune, went into effect. In fact, Donatello himself mentioned the project for this colossal figure called *Giesuè (Joshua)*. Beginning with Giovanni Poggi in 1909 and Jeno Lányi in 1936, art historians have concluded that given the *Joshua* differed from the *Isaiah* and the *David* primarily in terms of material and size, the original marble prophet had proved inadequate in scale and was therefore replaced with at least one ‘giant’ made of modest, malleable material. After considerable experimentation, a whitewashed ‘homo magnus’ was completed by Donatello. As is chronicled by diaries, cathedral records and prints, Donatello’s *Homo Magnus* remained in place on a buttress facing the Via dei Servi through the middle of the eighteenth century. References to Donatello’s buttress figure can be found in writings of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, as well as in prints such as those by Israël Silvestre in the mid-seventeenth century and by Giuseppe Zocchi in the mid-eighteenth century (*Figure 23*). Without a trace, this *Homo Magnus* suddenly and inexplicably vanished. However, while tenured on the buttress, the *Homo Magnus* must have had an prodigious presence in its particular setting. While in the intervening centuries, the original ‘twin’ marble figures by Nanni di Banco and Donatello,

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respectively, were stored at the Opera del Duomo until July 1416, when the Provvisore officially relinquished the statue to the Priors of the Signoria to be installed in the Palazzo della Signoria, at which point it appears that Donatello and his workshop made minor alterations to prepare the statue for its new appointment.\textsuperscript{338} Donatello’s David of 1409, documented as occupying the Palazzo della Signoria throughout the sixteenth century apparently entered the Uffizi sometime in the eighteenth century and is commonly identified as the marble David at the Bargello (Figure 25). In contrast, Nanni di Banco’s Isaiah remained at large until 1935, when Lányi persuasively demonstrated it to be the so-called Daniele/Gianozzo Manetti in the nave of the cathedral to the right of the entrance, a figure taken indoors from the cathedral’s demolished façade in 1587 (Figure 33).\textsuperscript{339} Prior to Lányi’s research, this statue known as Isaiah today, standing in one of Ammannati’s wooden niches along with the other Apostles in the nave inevitably harbored a legendary attribution to Donatello and furthermore, it was known as being the prophet Daniele which early sources mentioned as standing on the cathedral façade.\textsuperscript{340} The present statue identified as Nanni di Banco’s Isaiah, seems to resemble the figure in Bernardo Poccetti’s drawing, which stands on the second tier to the right of the central door between two columns of a projected pilaster, very likely the statue ascribed to Donatello by the Anonimo Gaddiano “in della facciata fra due colonne è la figura di Daniello” and described by Albertini as “uno che si piegha.”\textsuperscript{341}

Ulrich Middeldorf immediately endorsed Jeno Lányi’s definitive identification of the nave statue as Nanni di Banco’s lost Isaiah, traceable to the Duomo complex from pre-1445 to

\textsuperscript{338} Bergstein, \textit{The Sculpture of Nanni di Banco}, p. 100.
\textsuperscript{340} Bergstein, \textit{The Sculpture of Nanni di Banco}, p. 101. See Billi, Vasari and Borghini.
\textsuperscript{341} Bergstein, \textit{The Sculpture of Nanni di Banco}, p. 101.
the present. Lányi discovered that both the specified heights of both Donatello’s marble David of 1409 and Nanni di Banco’s Isaiah correspond to the approximate height of 3½ braccia, as well as having the plan of its base corresponding with that of the buttress, and furthermore, the indentations made for clamps and screws in the base all point to the fact that at one time it had been secured from below to give it effect of hovering over viewers. Formally, the Isaiah exemplifies a correspondence between the two figures as manifested in their contrapposto where engaged and detached members mirror those of the other. Notwithstanding, only the heads and gentle torsion of the shoulders move harmoniously in the same direction—this presumably motivated by their planned orientation toward the body of the cathedral. What ‘the body’ means is, of course, corporeal—flesh and blood—both Mary as Ecclesia and Christ as Savior dialectically annunciate the doctrine of incarnationist theology, lest the beholder forgets the genealogy of Jesus Christ emanated out of the root of Jesse.

Just as the rock supports the David in as much as it is a synecdoche for ecclesia, so too is the root supporting the statue itself. As previously mentioned, although ‘tree stumps,’ denoted as such, are classical motifs allowing for the structural support of a freestanding nude sculpture, in the case of Michelangelo’s David, however, the root takes on a scriptural reading and is critical to the statue’s iconography, perhaps going as far to perplex art historians for generations as to the precise moment of the David’s temporality. In contrast, Kathleen Weil Garris Brandt provides a model for which to examine the David and the significance of the tree stump in its intended location. In summary, the detachment from the original in situ, of Michelangelo’s Pietà for the Capella del Re de Francia’s location further detaches itself from its important historical context as a commission based on both political and individual interests of the time and as a

343 Bergstein, The Sculpture of Nanni di Banco, p. 102.
work that was meant to inspire devotion and an intimate religious experience by envisioning the experience of a pilgrim who would ambulate around the sculpture counter-clockwise and would then encounter a symbolic tree stump (Figure 42).\textsuperscript{344} Clearly, Michelangelo was no stranger to arboreal symbolism.

Turning to the Sistine Chapel frescoes, in particular The Flood scene, Michelangelo rendered two trees, a living tree on the right—partially obliterated in the eighteenth century and now mostly invisible—and a dead tree on the left. These two trees, it has been rightfully observed, refer to the green and the withered trees of Luke 23:31: “For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?” For these two trees refer more generally to the Cathedral’s decorative trimmings and use of green marble as if Santa Maria del Fiore is in itself a colossal Tree of Life, thus implying a larger Christological and Mariological meaning. However, at the left of the flood, on high ground, Michelangelo depicted men, women, and children who have temporarily sought refuge. Within an enclosure of mothers, we behold a childless couple, their backs turned to us, gazing up at the dead tree into which a male figure has climbed, vainly seeking to escape his irrefutable fate. This haunting scene, in Paul Barolsky’s reading, eludes to the moment before the very passage in Luke preceeding the green and dry trees.\textsuperscript{345} Like Dante before him and the classical poets Virgin and Ovid, Michelangelo associates the trunk and limbs of the human body with the form of a tree as depicted in the Sistine chapel and in the tree stump supporting the David. The tree stump itself is evocative of Inferno XIII, which illustrates the circle of suicides. In Dante, the sinners have been metamorphosed into trees, one of which cries out in pain when the poet snaps off a branch. That speaking soul belongs to

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{344} Brandt, Kathleen Weil Garris. “Michelangelo’s Pietà for the Cappella Del Re Di Francia.” In Michelangelo, Selected Scholarship in English. Hamden, CT: Garland, 1995; p. 225.
\end{itemize}
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Pier della Vigna, who was the minister, private secretary and counselor of Frederick II until he fell into disfavor and was put in prison and blinded. Dante describes the way Pier speaks as such:

\[\text{Come d'un stizzo verde ch'arso sia da l'un de' capi, che da l'altro geme e cigola per vento che va via, sì de la scheggia rota usciva insieme parole e sangue.}\]

As it has been said, this passage echoes the Polydorus scene of the \textit{Aeneid}, where Virgil links the limbs or \textit{membra} of tree and human body, and when Dante speaks of the \textit{tronco} or trunk that spoke to him, it has further been noted, he also echoed a related passage in \textit{Metamorphoses}. In the New Testament, Luke only compares the green and dry tree to a humanity that is blessed or damned in a general manner, whereas Dante, following Virgin and Ovid, associates humanity with trees by specifically comparing their respective limbs and trunks. Michelangelo underscores this the of mechanosphoric interrelativity between man and botanical form in the male figure climbing and wrapping around the dead tree above so that the man’s extended arms seem to merge with a prominent branch to the extent to which the branch seems to become an extension of the man’s own limb. By having the figure actually clutch the dead branch with the hand of his own outreached limb, Michelangelo establishes an identity between limb and limb that approaches their utter identity in Dante and the classical poets. In Michelangelo’s \textit{David}, the stump grows out of the rock—or \textit{ecclesia}—only to sprout the body of the giant.

Returning to Jeremiah 23:5: “Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth.” Here is a promise which effectually secures the honour of the covenant made with David notwithstanding; for by it the house will be raised out of its ruins to a greater

\footnote{\textit{Inf. XIII}, 40-44. [As from a green brand that is burning at one end, and drips from the other, hissing with the escaping air, so from that broken twig came out words and blood together…]}
lustre than ever, and shine brighter far than it did in Solomon himself. Christ is here spoken of as a “branch from David, the man the branch” (Zechariah, 3:8), his appearance mean, his beginnings small, like those of a bud or sprout, and his rise seemingly out of the earth, but growing to be green, to be great, to be loaded with fruits. A branch from David’s family, when it seemed to be a “root in a dry ground,” buried, and not likely to revive, similarly, Christ is the “root and offspring of David,” (Revelation, 22:16). In him doth the “horn of David bud,” (Psalm, 132:17-18). He is a branch of God’s raising up; he sanctified him, and sent him into the world, gave him his commission and qualifications. He is “a righteous branch,” for he is righteous himself, and through him many, even all that are his, are made righteous.

As Irving Lavin observes, the Virgin, through her compassionate participation in the Passion and her power as joint intercessor, also participated as co-redemptress with Christ in the process of salvation. Hence, the punning metaphor expressed by Christ when he appointed Peter as his successor, “Tu es Petrus et super hanc petram aedificabo ecclesiam meam,” was also applied to her. This metaphor is evident in Michelangelo’s Pietà where the Virgin’s rocky throne is the stone on which the church was built—that is, the very stone that can be identified as Christ and of which is visually interchangeable with the sedimentary rock on which the David stands.

347 “There was only one remedy in the secret of the divine plan that could help the fallen living in the general ruin of the entire human race,” according to a Sermon given by Leo the Great; he continues: This remedy was that one of the sons of Adam should be born free and innocent of original transgression, to prevail for the rest by his example and by his merits. This was not permitted by natural generation. There could be no clean offspring from our fault stock by this seed. The Scripture says, “Who can make a clean thing conceived of an unclean seed? Isn’t it you alone? David’s Lord was made David’s Son, and from the fruit of the promised branch sprang. He is one without fault, the twofold nature coming together into one person. By this one and the same conception and birth sprung our Lord Jesus Christ, in whom was present both true Godhead for the performance of mighty works and true manhood for the endurance of sufferings. See Job 14:4. See also, Leo the Great, Sermon, 28.3. P. Schaff et al., eds. Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, 2 series (14 vols. Each). Buffalo, N.Y.: Christian Literature, 1887-1894; Reprint, Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1952-1956. Reprint, Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1994, 212:142. Cited in Wenthe, Dean O. Jeremiah, Lamentations. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2009; p. 167.

In the *Pietà*, however, the rocky seat is not a carved, geometric building block, as in the *Madonna of the Stairs*, the *Pitti Madonna* and the *Medici Madonna*, where it suggests the Virgin’s foreknowledge as *Sedes Sapientiae*, the cornerstone or *pietra angolare* of the Ecclesia proper to Christ’s architectural metaphor – the term ingeniously invoked in a sermon of 1493 by Savonarola for the junction between the Old Law and the New: “The cornerstone was Christ Jesus who joined two walls together, that of our Church and that of the Hebrews (*Figure 44, 45, and 46*).” In the St. Peter’s *Pietà*, instead, the earthly seat of the Virgin suggests the rocky summit of Golgotha, where the Virgin together with her son replace the crucifix itself. There, emerging from this portion of barren landscape the barren stump of a tree, its roots tightly entwined in the stone. The hewn-off remnant is a clear allusion to God’s promise of retribution and salvation through the prophet Ezekiel: “And all the trees of the field shall know that I the Lord have brought down the high tree, have exalted the low tree, have dried up the green tree,

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*Footnotes:

349 We are indebted for this connection to Weil-Garris Posner (1970, p. 131, n. 64), who refers to Bernardino de Bustis (Offi cium Conceptionis Virginis Mariae, Milan, 1492): the Madonna is founded eternally ‘super petram’, and ‘per petram autem in S. scriptura intelligitur Christus’. A remarkable text by an earlier Franciscan, Servasanctus de Faenza, applies the petrine metaphor to the Virgin for her perdurance in the faith through the Passion, and her wisdom: “Unde ipsa est illa petra, super quam domus fundata, & fi rmata, quam etsi fl umina, ventique percutiant; tamen inter fl umina illa immobile perseverat. Mons Sion non commovebitur in aeternum. Unde ei potuit dicere Christus illud Matthæi: super hanc petram ædifi cabo Ecclesiam meam: quia in passione Dominica tota defi ciente Ecclesia primitivorum in fi de, sola Domina nostra firma in fi de permanit, ut petra. Fuit ergo similis adamanti, cujas tanta est fortitude, ut sanguine solo rumputur hircino. Quia Maria, Regia Virgo numquam nisi Christi sanguine recenter effuso, potuit esse turbata, quia nullo fuit alio tempore perturbata. Si enim juxta Philosophorum sententiam non cadit perturbatio in sapientem virum; quanto magis Domina omnium sapientissima numquam perturbationem mentis est passa?” (Bonaventure 1668, vol. III, 364 col. 2A). Servasanctus sermons on the Virgin were long attributed to St Bonaventure, and part of this passage was cited as such by Marracci 1710, p. 511. For the restoration to Servasanctus see Oliger 1924, pp. 166–170. See Lavin, “Divine Grace,” p. 299.

350 On the Seat of Wisdom in the Medici Chapel, see Lavin 2001, pp. 57–61. Savonarola 1930, p. 86, cited by Calì 1967, p. 166 n. 105: “La pietra angolare era Cristo Gesù, che congiunse due muri insieme, cioè la Chiesa nostra con quella degli Ebrei.” The cornerstone metaphor was Christ’s, who also used it in reference to the turn from the old to the new: Matthew 21.42 ‘Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord’s doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes?’ (dicit illis Jesus numquam legisitis in scripturis lapidem quem reprobaverunt aedifi cantes hic factus est in caput anguli a Domino factum est istud et est mirabile in oculis nostris.) Also Acts 4.11. See Lavin, “Divine Grace,” p. 303.
and have made the dry tree to flourish: I the Lord have spoken and have done it.” Christ echoed the passage after his condemnation by Pilate at the instigation of the Jews: “For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?”

The metaphor of the green and dry tree would later play a key role in the ideology of the Sistine ceiling, where similar amputated tree stumps appear in the scenes of Adam and Eve, the protagonists of original sin. The metaphor became a direct warning to the unfaithful when John the Baptist preached baptism:

“And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: every tree therefore which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.”

Part of this meaning maybe discerned literally in a salient yet scarcely noted detail that actually joins Christ’s body to the tree, that is, his left foot protruding toward the space of the spectator, the heel resting in the crotch of the severed branch. Technically, the branch supports the suspended leg, but in this context it invokes a famous passage in Genesis, in which God shelters the descendants of Eve from the serpent-devil whose head will be crushed and will insinuate under heel. In the King James Version: “And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.” While in the Douay Version: “I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and thy seed and her seed: she shall crush thy head, and thou shalt lie in wait for her heel.” Either way, the passage is crucial because it foretold the

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promise of redemption at the hand, or rather the foot, of a savior. But it is also ambiguous, particularly with regard to gender, and the Genesis passage became a major disputation between Catholics, who insisted on the feminine in reference to Mary and the Church, and the Protestants who insisted that Christ alone was the victor over Satan.\textsuperscript{357}

Touching the heel of the David’s right foot is the root itself—the “root of David”—the genealogy of Christ—the tree of Jesse, and so forth. This leads us to reason that Michelangelo’s \textit{David} is denying a sense of narrative time and thus embodies a conceptual space of exegetical phantasm. Standing in stark opposition to Sir John Pope-Hennessey’s reading of the eagle caressing the leg of Donatello’s David, stating that “it would have read as what it was, a means a strengthening a vulnerable point in the structure of the statue,” the fact that a root, stump, or even branch of a tree is rooted to the foot of the \textit{David} cannot preclude an exegetical reading.\textsuperscript{358} Nanni di Banco’s \textit{Isaiah} on the buttress of the cathedral would have, perhaps, spoken the words of Augustine referencing the signification of the root strengthening the \textit{David}’s leg, according to the prophecy of Isaiah 11:1.\textsuperscript{359}

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\textsuperscript{357} Lavin, “Divine Grace,” p. 307.  \\
\textsuperscript{359} David was the king of Israel and the son of Jesse at a certain time in the Old Testament, when the New Testament was still hidden there in the Old, like a fruit in its root. For if you seek the fruit in its root, you will not find it. But neither would you find the fruit in the branch, unless it had first come from the root. At that time, then, the first people had come from the seed of Abraham carnally. The second people, those belong to the New Testament, also belong to the seed of Abraham, but spiritually. Those first people who were still carnal, therefore, among whom very few prophets understood both what was to be desired from God and when to announce it publicly, foretold this future time and the advent of our Lord Jesus Christ. Insofar as Christ himself was born according to the flesh, he was hidden in the root, in the seed of the patriarch, and was to be revealed as a certain time, like fruit appearing on the branch, as it is written ‘A rod will blossom from the root of Jesse.’ The same is true of the New Testament, which was hidden in Christ throughout those earlier times and was known only to the prophets and to a very small group of godly persons, not as the manifestation of present realities but as a revelation of future events. For what does it mean, brothers, if I can remind you of one specific event, that Abraham sending his faithful servant to betroth a wife to his only son, makes him swear to him that Abraham, his only son, makes him swear to him and in the oath says to him, ‘Put your hand under my thigh and swear?’ What was in the thigh of Abraham upon which the man put his hand and promised to him: ‘in your seed, all the
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In terms of formal commonalities, Donatello’s Bargello David and Nanni di Banco’s Isaiah clearly belong together as a pair not merely in light of the symmetrical reflection and distribution of drapery at the shoulder, waist and legs, but each portrays a biblical prophet as an adolescent, thereby suggesting that one statue served as the thematic exemplar for the other. The traditions apparent in the Isaiah may be identified by proceeding, as it were, from the periphery to the center, deriving its roots from the ‘international Gothic’ style, the tradition of Pisan sculpture, the study of Roman antiquities, and above all, the local collective impulse to create a Hercules/Fortitude/Daniel hero. Monumental in scale and in size, the Isaiah stood free from the constraints of architecture en plein air, so to speak, watching over the street life of the via dei Servi, reflecting, in grande certain localities and ritornelli of the coexistent gothic style. Rather than look to Northern manuscripts and French ivories for the morphology of the overstated contrapposto, akathetic drapery, and cadential ribbons of scroll, one must turn their attention to local artistic inspiration such as works of the contemporary stonecarver Niccolò Lamberti and the goldsmith Lorenzo Ghiberti. Nanni had worked alongside Lamberti on the archivolt and jamb reveals of the Porta della Mandorla (Figure 19). Nanni di Banco’s statue monumentalizes a figural style—and in particular a superstructure of drapery. A phylogenic and morphological antetype to the Isaiah is present in the Hercules figure of the lower left reveal of the Porta della Mandorla, of which Bergstein attributes to Nanni di Banco (Figure 19). Both the Hercules and the Isaiah share a common ancestor in Nicola Pisano’s Hercules/Fortitude/Daniel in the Pisan Baptistery.


360 Bergstein, The Sculpture of Nanni di Banco, p. 103.
Although the *Isaiah* was removed from the buttress only a short time after its initial placement, nevertheless it demonstrated the critical fortunes of the figure, emphasizing the sculpture’s heroic demeanor, having been associated with the personalities Daniel, David, Joshua, Fortitude, and Hercules. This insistence on the identification of the Isaiah not only as a prophet, but in addition as a biblical hero. Donatello’s pendant tribune figure was a heroic young *David* made “*cum modis et condictibus factis cum Johanne.*”\(^{361}\) Agostino di Duccio was assigned a marble *David* for the cathedral tribune in 1464, and from the same block of stone, the *David* of Michelangelo was originally intended to continue the same program of tribune figures inaugurated by Nanni’s *Isaiah.*\(^{362}\) Furthermore, the pagan hero associated with Isaiah was Hercules. After all, in 1415—in the immediate wake of the *Isaiah*’s installation on the buttress—Donatello and Brunelleschi made a gilded stone model of a figure “*per ruova e mostra delle figure grandi che s’anno a fare in su gli sproni,*” which in 1449 came to be known as “*primio Erchole di macignio choperto di pionbo.*”\(^{363}\) Thus, both *David* and *Hercules*—as we shall see, from the lower left reveal of the *Porta della Mandorla*, bare a close bond to Nanni di Banco’s initiation of the prophet series: *Isaiah*.

A bearded figure, wearing a tunic elaborately tied off at the level of his hip, holds a scroll at his left side and gestures upwards, his gaze directed towards the heavens and his right, establishes him as a prophet. Although this *Campanile Prophet* of c. 1410-23 is now attributed to Giuliano di Giovanni da Poggibonsi, Hans Kauffmann identified this work as the ‘lost buttress figure ‘Isaiah’ made in 1408 by Nanni di Banco. However, during the Donatello congress of 1966, Manfred Wundram had proposed, on the other hand, that this figure is actually Donatello’s

\(^{361}\) Bergstein, *The Sculpture of Nanni di Banco*, p. 105, see doc. 64.


buttress figure the *David.* At any rate, whether or not art historians will actually discover the identity of this figure is tantamount to the unquestionable formal impact it must have had on Michelangelo’s conception during the creation of his *David.* However, we must caution ourselves in the knowledge that Wundram set out to reappraise the reciprocal influences of Donatello and Nanni di Banco, and in many cases, revising standard attributions, and chronologies of the works of art. H.W. Janson conversely argued that the Isaiah has no attributes of a *David*; he further remarked that whereas the Bargello *David* is the compositional mirror image of the *Isaiah,* no such relationship exists between the *Isaiah* and the Campanile Prophet *(Figure 47).* More recently, Sir John Pope-Hennessy argued that the Campanile Prophet and the inside the cathedral correspond to the commissions of c. 1407-08, as proposed by Wundram and Herzner, yet, unlike both scholars, Pope-Hennessy conversely recognized the figure inside the Duomo as Nanni di Banco’s *Isaiah,* thus concluding that the Campanile Prophet was the only surviving figure to satisfy iconographic and archaeological requirements for a King *David* buttress figure by Donatello. Pope-Hennessy sees the Campanile Prophet, not as a shepherd, warrior, or king, but as the David the Psalmist in the midst of rapture, for his slightly agape lips are parted as if in song. Apropos Wundram’s hypothesis, Brunetti briefly entertained the imaginative notion that the Operai may have actually ordered figures to crown all four buttresses of the northwest tribune of the Duomo; she would then include, on the basis of certain formal ‘diagonality’ and the archaeological feature of pentagonal bases, the Campanile Prophet and the earliest young saint of Nanni di Banco’s *Quattro Santi* group at Orsanmichele among four buttress figures actually produced, together with the *Isaiah* and the *David.* Bergstein motions to erase all ‘false’ attributions of this figure to Nanni di Banco, summarily precluded by the glib,

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flippant posture affected by this figure, the arrangement of the hair and beard in sigmoid clumps, and the long, downturned shape of the eyes.

Eyes fixed on the north-facing wall of the Cathedral in front of the Via de’ Servi, just below where the *David* was to be placed, the *Porta della Mandorla* by Nanni di Banco (c. 1421-24)—‘almond door’—owes its namesake to the depiction of the *Assumption of the Virgin* framed within a Mandorla, graces the tympanum (*Figure 20*). 365 The word of the Lord came unto Jeremiah, saying, “what seest thou?,” and the prophet replied, “I see a rod of an almond tree (Jer. 1:11).” As tempting as it may be to equate the almond tree in Jeremiah’s vision with that of *Porta della Mandorla’s* iconography, we must afford the chance to understand the Hebrew etymology. In Hebrew, the word ‘nut-tree,’ as it was translated into the vulgate according to Jerome, means sacred, whereas the Hebrew word for ‘a watch’ or ‘watchful’ or ‘to watch’ is *soced*; thus, the prophets plays on the theme of vigilance. 366 The heavenly Virgin is seated majestically, encased within an aureola, supported by angels, and surrounded by spiritelli. Mary Bergstein’s monograph on the artist examines the ways in which traditional Mariological texts and sculptural types are presented in visionary terms in Nanni di Banco’s *Assumption*.

Functioning as a preexisting stage for which the Opera was assigned to commission artists to fill

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365 The word “mandorla,” meaning a vesica piscis aureola shape frequently surrounding the Virgin and Christ can trace its etymology, not surprisingly, to Italian in which it literally means ‘almond.’ If we go even further we can trace the word’s roots back to Vulgar Latin *amandula*, from Latin *amygdala*, and finally to the Greek origin transliterated to *amugdála*.

366 Graves, Michael. Commentary on Jeremiah. Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 2011; p. 5. A similar example can be found in the book of Daniel, Jerome continues, following Theodotion’s version, where from the schinos and prinos trees, that is, from the ‘mastic tree’ and the ‘oak’ tree—the latter of which is present in the tympanum of the *Porta della Mandorla* For it was Aquila and Symmachus, supposedly, who gave ‘watching rod’ as a translation—yet on the other hand, they translated the phrase into the vulgate as ‘almond-tree-rod.’ As such, Jerome explicates the text: “With this rod, God is watching and examining the sins of the people, so that he may strike and apprehend those at fault. Similarly, the apostle writes to sinners: ‘What do you wish? Shall I come to you with a rod, or with love in a spirit of gentleness?’ This is also the same rod or staff of which David speaks: ‘Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.’ And it is beautiful how it says ‘they comfort me,’ since the Lord strikes only so that he may afterwards heal […] Some people understand the ‘watching’ (or ‘nut tree’) rod to be the Lord, about whom Isaiah speaks: ‘There shall come forth a rod from the stump of Jesse.’ (Is. 11:1).
with sculptural reliefs and statues, the *Assumption* is a work that is meticulously integrated into the fabric of the ready-made sculptural program of the Cathedral, and in many ways, can be seen as an organic growth of the planned sculptural meta-narrative.\(^{367}\) Simultaneously, the *Assumption* is remarkable for its incorporation of Albertian pictoriality *ante litteram*, and, as we shall see, was admired by artists for its compositional sophistication well into the sixteenth-century, no less intersecting with the moment of the creation of Michelangelo’s *David*. The *Assumption* relief itself is planted firmly in the local culture of Florence, and even the sculptural tradition of Santa Maria del Fiore itself, with immaculate roots in medieval Mariological texts. The doctrine of the corporeal Assumption of Mary to heaven—although officially becoming a dogma in 1950—was already widely diffused by the time Jacopo da Voragine wrote the *Golden Legend*.\(^{368}\) The conception of the corporeal Assumption of Mary culminated together with the growth of the cult of the Virgin and the synthesized worldview of Franciscan naturalism.\(^{369}\) Furthermore, the iconography of the *Madonna della Cintola*—*Madonna of the Belt with Saint Thomas*—was a uniquely Tuscan tradition, which was linked with devotion to the *sacra cintola* at Prato.\(^{370}\) The unadulterated joy enunciated in the interpretation of Nanni di Banco’s *Assumption* emerges out of a long tradition beginning with the earliest Church fathers. Indeed, Saint Jerome avowed that the Virgin was elevated “above the choirs of angels,” for the chorus of joyous angels musical angels enveloping the Virgin is the most ubiquitous visual element in images of the Assumption:


“Maria is assumed into heaven; angels rejoice in chorus praising the Lord alleluja.” The iconographic program of the Porta della Mandorla is well documented since, after Nanni di Banco’s death, the Operai’s capomaestro commissioned Donatello to complete the ensemble with heads of prophets imbedded below the two lower corners of the external frieze. These relief busts represent characters from the Old Testament, perhaps those cited among the medieval literature on the Assumption of the Virgin, but generalized in cathedral documents as prophets. As an apocryphal story, the Assumption of the Virgin was ratified in the early Middle Ages by phrases taken from Prophets including Moses, Solomon, David, Isaiah, Enoch, Elijah, and Daniel. Among all biblical texts, the Song of Solomon played a central role in Christian thought on the Assumption. Focusing on the phrase, “Who is this who ascends?,” cluing the viewer in to the identity of the crowned patriarchal figure under the left corner of the frontispiece, may in fact represent King Solomon, the son of King David. However, if as H.W. Janson suggests, the head on the right is a woman, then she may be identified as Esther or the Queen of Sheba, Solomon’s queen regnant. One finds in the literature of the Assumption, especially in the sermons of Franciscans such as Saint Bonaventure and of Matteo d’Acquasparta—the latter being of particular importance to Florentine thought. Esther was, of course, invoked as a prefiguration of Mary Queen of Heaven, while the Queen of Sheba was figured in the Middle

372 See Bergstein, The Sculpture of Nanni di Banco, p. 60, see Doc. 166. For the prophets, see Ildelfonso, Bishop of Toledo, Sermon VI on the Assumption: “Haec ist illa virgo gloriosa, cuius ineffabile longe ante et figuris legalibus et prophetarum oraculis praenunibitur” (Migne 1844-66, p. 96: col. 264).
373 A Marian association with the Song of Solomon was strongly rooted in the art of the Mediterranean world, as seen in the Coronation of the Virgin mosaic at Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome by Jacopo Torritiin c. 1292-95, which bears the following inscriptions: “veni electa mea et ponam in te thronum meam,” “Maria Virgo assumpta est ad etherum thalamum in quo Rex Regum stellate sedet solio,” and “Exaltata est sancta dei genitrix super choros angelorum ad cælestia regna.”
374 C.f. Janson 1957, p. 43.
Ages as an antecedent for the Church, or Ecclesia as the seat of wisdom, *sedes sapientiae*.\(^{375}\)

Furthermore, the Song of Songs—written by King Solomon, son of King David—was frequently interpreted as prefiguring the union of Christ and the Church. Seen from the perspective of Christian theology, the Queen of Sheba was to be the perfect companion of Solomon and a vessel of wisdom—mystically comparable to Maria, the Bride of Christ.\(^{376}\) In all its linguistic polyvalences, a metal lily was placed in the Virgin’s left hand and inevitably conjured theological connections to the writings of Saint Ambrose, who resided in Florence briefly during the fourth century.\(^{377}\) Similarly, Ildefonso of Toledo cited the Canticle in his sermons on the Assumption of the Virgin (7:2): “Your belly is a heap of wheat, surrounded with lilies,” and, referred the risen Virgin as “blessed among daughters like a lily among thorns.”\(^{378}\)

Devotional writings of the thirteenth century, lauded Maria Regina as “angelic lily” and “celestial flower.”\(^{379}\) Tendrils of amaranth vine—having been a symbol of immortality since pagan antiquity, carried over into Christian art as an alluding to the Resurrection of Christ and Victory over death—caress two of the musical angels. Indeed, Donatello’s victorious *Bronze David* of 1408-09 is crowned with amaranth wreathes (*Figure 26*).\(^{380}\) As a flower that never wilts, amaranth also became the symbol of the body of the Virgin Mary in late medieval hymnology.\(^{381}\) In Nanni di Banco’s *Assumption*, interwoven crowns of amaranth elaborate the central themes of the

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\(^{376}\) See Krautheimer 1956, pp. 117-80; Wright (1994, pp. 95-441) has proposed that Dufay’s motet “Nuper Rosarum Flores,” composed for the consecration of the Duomo in 1436, was structurally based on the proportions of the Temple of Solomon. See Bergstein, *The Sculpture of Nanni di Banco*, p. 60.

\(^{377}\) Ambrose, in Migne, 1844-66: cols. 240, 246, 412.

\(^{378}\) Conrad of Saxony 1904, pp. 169-170.

\(^{379}\) “Gli angeli cantavano che cantico che dice, ‘come el giglio è sopra la spina, così l’amicha mia è sopra tutte le donne” (Gatti 1992, pp. 235-238).

\(^{380}\) Eisler 1961, p. 86.

\(^{381}\) Marracchi 1694, p. 34.
immortality and incorruptibility of the body of the Virgin, and of the eternity of her reign in Paradise.

Bordering the exterior composition, ribbons of polychrome intarsia depict a chain of hanging candelabra seen in perspective from below. Alternating in form, these candelabra demonstrate a meticulous understanding of Renaissance principles of linear perspective executed in stonemasonry. These elements certainly are not inordinate to the scene, and are in fact invaluable to the Mariological iconography of the sculptural ensemble. Sacred literature used the metaphor of light to allude to the ascending Virgin, characterized as “Maria illuminatrix.”

Homilies and sermons on the Assumption were performed assiduously and consequentially reinterpreted the phrase from the Song of Solomon, as well as signifying to other scriptures, such King David’s Psalms. In invoking the Psalmist David, an unidentified writer wrote: “As the moon and our lamp she was illuminated by the Lord and was herself illuminatrix of the world, according to this prophecy, ‘How you illuminate my lamp, Oh Lord!’ Behold, Maria was the light of wisdom.”

In point of fact, Saint Anthony of Padua’s observed that the Gospels report only six occasions upon which the Virgin Mary spoke, comparing her words to the six branches of a candelabra, as well as to the six leaves of a lily, and the six steps that lead to the throne of Solomon. Mary Bergstein observes that these tripartite themes ostensibly present, within the tympanum, where Solomon, the lily, and the chandeliers are wreathed into a unique Marian

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384 “Ipsa namque luna et lucerne nostra illuminata fuit a Domino et illuminatrix fuit mundo, iuxta illus propheticum, ‘Quaniam tu illumines lucernam meam Domine!’ Ecce, si Maria fuit lumina sapientiae.” See Bergstein, The Sculpture of Nanni di Banco, p. 79 n. 30.  
385 Rohr 1948, 76; regarding the Assumption, Adam of Saint Victor wrote: “Tu thronus es Salomonis, cui nullus par in thronis, Arte vel material; Ebur candens casitatis, Presignans mysteria” (in Fleury 1878, 1:270).
program. For the angels cantillate, their horns resound, as it would seem, to viewers acquainted with theological tractates and thus would be reminded of chapter 132:17 in the book of Psalms—
“There will I make the horn of David to bud: I have ordained a lamp for mine anointed.” The Psalmist speaks dialectically of the ‘horn of David,’ alluding to the Christological ‘horn’ of Christ as the savior of mankind. The ‘true light,’ in exegetical terms therefore, can be found in the lamp of David marrying the King to the Queen of Heaven, the Holy Virgin.\footnote{Writing in the years between A.D. 325 and 330, Eusebius of Caesarea, writes in his \textit{Commentary on Psalms} 18.29, 30: “[…] The lamp is prepared for Christ, having arisen from the seed of David, for who other could it be than the offspring who has come forth from the succession of David according to the flesh; in what way does Christ who came into the womb of David become the ray of his own excellence and the light shining bright for all people? Why in the aforesaid words does David speak prophetically: “Because you will light my lamp, Lord?” He says, “You yourself, Lord, who are the true light, having been united with the lamp coming forth from me in a certain mysterious way, are going to light that very lamp. Even the shadows with which I was once covered you will scatter entirely so that their memory does not enter my mind.”;}\footnote{Bergstein, \textit{The Sculpture of Nanni di Banco}, p. 63.} That lamp is likely to burn brightly which God ordains. A lamp is a successor, for, when a lamp is almost out, another may be lighted by it; it is a succession, for by this means David shall not want a man to stand before God. Christ is the lamp and the light of the world.

Nanni di Banco’s Assumption is a specifically Florentine characterization of the Virgin Mary. The ascending Virgin originally held a metallic lily and offered a silk and gold-threaded sash to Saint Thomas.\footnote{Bergstein, \textit{The Sculpture of Nanni di Banco}, p. 63.} Despite their disappearance over the course of centuries, these ‘accouterments’ substantiated the original composition. The lily hearkens to the gilded lilies that the Florentines carried in hand during civic processions, functioned as a synecdoche of the city itself, as well as standing for the incorruptibility of the Virgin in corporeal form and spirit.\footnote{Bergstein 1991, p. 675-687.} The sash was a simulacrum of the \textit{sacra cintola} conserved at Prato, which promised numinous power.
associated with the original relic.\textsuperscript{389} Since the Florence had annexed Prato in 1351, the \textit{saкра cintola} itself had become a \textit{de facto} possession of the Florentine Republic.\textsuperscript{390}

In April of 1412, the Priors of the Florentine Signoria had publically reconfirmed the dedication of the cathedral to Santa Maria del Fiore—the Holy Virgin of the flower—and recommended that a statue of the Virgin Mary holding a lily in her hands was to be installed at the summit of the west façade of the Duomo.\textsuperscript{391} Bergstein makes the logical assumption that Nanni di Banco’s \textit{Porta della Mandorla} relief of 1414 stands in place of the unrealized wishes of the commissioners. To be sure, in the poetry and visual art of the ‘dolce stil novo,’ Florence had had been personified into the form of a woman bearing Marian intimations of the lily and its associated symbolism. In effect, the \textit{Porta della Mandorla} is a representation of a prosodical and excursive emanation of “Santa Maria del Fiore.” The display of the lily and the \textit{cintola} dramatizes and embellishes the civic overtones of this work in its predominantly public setting—her majesty, Santa Maria del Fiore is crowned in all its glory, prevailing and triumphant.

All the people directly involved in the production of the \textit{Porta della Mandorla Assumption}—the \textit{capomaestro}, the commissioning wool guildsmen, the clergy, and of course, Nanni di Banco and his workshop—were indubitably cognizant of the preexisting Marian sculptural program thematically engulfing the entirety of the church exterior. Let us not forget that Nanni had begun his own artistic career at the cathedral with the prophet \textit{Isaiah}, destined for one of the buttresses on the same side as the \textit{Porta della Mandorla}, the site of Donatello’s marble \textit{David} at one time, and the planned site for Michelangelo’s \textit{David}. The existing sculptural program was, to say the least, commanding if not extensive in its thorough account of the life of the Virgin. Above the portals of the west façade, Arnolfo di Cambio had installed the Nativity of Christ, the Virgin in

\textsuperscript{389} Lessanutti 1996, pp. 200, 208.
\textsuperscript{390} Cassidy 1988, pp. 174-180.
\textsuperscript{391} Bergstein 1991, pp. 675-687
Majesty, and the *Dormitio Virginis*. Statues of Gabriel and Mary of the Annunciation were situated in lateral niches above the southwest door, otherwise known as the *Porta del Campanile*. Niccolò Lamberti’s *Madonna della Rosa*, inspired by one of Dante’s typifications of the Virgin Mary, the poet writes (*Par. XXIII: 73*): “Here is the rose in which the divine Word / was made flesh: here are the lilies / whose fragrance led humankind to the righteous way.” Nanni’s *Assumption* is a psychologically living and breathing entity, structured with a dynamic network of figural types, poses, and ricocheting glances. In the case of the tangible reception of the Virgin’s cintola by Saint Thomas, human cognizance of a divine mystery—Mary’s bodily translation to heaven—is at the core of the theological program and the church at large.

As previously mentioned, accessories such as the metallic lily, not to exacting sashes provided for Assumption day in order to simulate the relic of the sacra cintola, conserved in the cathedral of Prato, were added to the sculptural scheme. So, it seems fitting that there are bears and oak groves, common features of the surrounding Florentine countryside. Here in the *Assumption*, the landscape passage morphs from marble into rocks, bark, and fur—elaborating to the scientific description of nature, and as such, appealing to the somatic appeal of the work.

In the fifteenth-century, the interpretation of art frequently sprung out from the actualized possibilities of naturalistic descriptions to more cosmic and philosophical issues. Nanni’s choice of setting this scene in the wilderness in the Assumption underscores Mary as the consummation of her role as the second Eve. The Solomonic phrase: “Who is this who ascends from the desert?,” provided the basis for the traditional medieval image of contrast between the exile of

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393 Cited in Bergstein, *The Sculpture of Nanni di Banco*, p. 64.
Eve to the wilderness for her fatal transgression and the Virgin’s ultimate physical transcendence from that early desert to celestial paradise.\textsuperscript{396} Throughout his career, Nanni di Banco adapted pictorial material from Andrea Pisano’s repertoire on the Campanile. Nanni’s bear in the gable zone corresponds to the desert of human sorrow as configured in a bear eating fruit from a tree in the panel by Andrea Pisano, where Adam and Eve are expelled from earthly paradise into the valley of tears from which Mary would finally rise as humanity’s new representative (\textit{Figure 20}).\textsuperscript{397} Images of wilderness also refer to the state of original sin, or the human condition outside Baptism. Bergstein observes that deeply ingrained in all of these images is Dante’s conception of the dark wood in which ferocious beasts roam according to animal instinct.\textsuperscript{398} She acutely observes that the wilderness of bears is the inverse-landscape or, in other words, the opposite of the \textit{hortus conclusus} — the enclosed garden that stood for the incorruptibility of the Virgin Mary.\textsuperscript{399}

\textsuperscript{396} Among many examples: Augustine, in Migne 1844-66, 40: col. 1144; Saint Peter Damian, in \textit{ibid.} 183: col. 425; Martin of Lièges, in \textit{ibid.} 209: cols. 22-23; Conrad of Saxony 1904, p. 164; Matteo d’Acquasparta 1962, pp. 281-283; Voragine 1924, 3:982.

\textsuperscript{397} See Janson 1963, pp. 98-107.

\textsuperscript{398} Par 1:1. \textit{The Divine Comedy} was recited in public places, e.g., in 1412 at Orsanmichele (Zervas 1996, I:186).

\textsuperscript{399} Christian cosmology views bears in a negative light—bearing the sins of gluttony, anger, and lust—presumably a continuation of their identity as \textit{incubi} and \textit{succubi}, which had originated in pagan folklore; see, Bertini 1985, p. 1045. Medieval medical thought associated bears with hypersexuality, bestiality, and even demonic intervention in the human conception of monsters; See, Jacquet and Thomasett 1988, pp. 162-168. Throughout the Middle Ages, bears were characterized as exemplifying the sins of lust for physical gratification, or \textit{luxuria}; see, Bergstein, \textit{The Sculpture of Nanni di Banco}, p. 69. The sinister symbolism of the bear accentuates the doctrinal issue at stake here in the Assumption, moreover, the incorruptibility of the Virgin’s earthly body as well as her celestial spirit. In terms of visual symmetry, the bear’s physical appetite is counterpoised by the more rational, spiritual desires of Saint Thomas, who lifts his gaze and hands to the ascendant Virgin exclaiming: “Dammi un segno” (give me a sign); see, “Leggenda della Cintola,” in Gatti 1992, p. 237. For alternative iconographic readings see cf. \textit{ibid.}, pp. 58-68; Emison 1992, pp. 381-387; in cat. 1-12. From the standpoint of the person coming from the Servite Church, the Virgin may appear to gather pilgrims and citizens into the precinct of the cathedral, itself newly rededicated (1412) to the Virgin Mary as Santa Maria del Fiore; see, Bergstein 1991, pp. 673-675. The unfinished cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore stood at the epicenter of Florentine public life—an enormous work in progress that as such as a paradigm of the city’s collective imagination as well as a regular meeting place of artisans, humanists, and theologians; see, See Martines 1994, pp..
The segment of stone constituting the lower left reveal of the *Porta della Mandorla*—comprising two scroll-bearing angels and a figure of ‘Fortitude’ personified by *Hercules*—is dated to around 1395 and is tentatively assigned to Nanni di Banco (*Figure 19*). Nevertheless, the *Hercules* is indubitably a precursor to the Isaiah, while simultaneously anticipating the corporeal and supernal type of Nanni’s later statues. *Mutatis mutandis*, the *Hercules* seems to predict Nanni’s *Isaiah* of 1408 in the position of the limbs and emphases of gravity. The turn of the head away from the direction of the body and the highly plastic modeling of the youthful visage, with fleshy protrusions of eyelids and lips and even the errant gaze, marks a return to the *Isaiah*. Additional *ritornelli* are manifested in the position of neck and shoulders, the full-bodied chest, forced recession of the waist under the rib cage, and swaying contrapposto with an engaged leg. In both the *Hercules* and the *Isaiah*, a certain tension in the position of the arms results from the uplifting motion of the shoulders. The *Hercules* foreshadows the *Isaiah*, too, in that it appears to have risen from a study of Nicola Pisano’s *Hercules/Fortitude/Daniel*, as Bergstein refers to it but discussed as *Hercules/Fortitude/Daniel* figure located in Pisa, in the previous chapter. In each figure, the quadratic face with heavy lips seems to be derived from Nicola Pisano’s vocabulary, itself morphologically related to later Roman and Early Christian models. However, Nanni di Banco departs from the patriarchal gothic type as typified in the *Hercules*. In this vein, Nanni’s *Hercules* is disinterested in its closest iconographic predecessors, namely the *Labors of Hercules* vignettes from the lower half of the inner jamb of the *Porta della Mandorla*, carved by Piero di Giovanni Tedesco, and Andrea Pisano’s *Hercules and Cacus* of c. 1335 for the Campanile (*Figure 48*). The *Porta della Mandorla’s Hercules* follows Andrea

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213-241. The production of meaning based on form, in monumental pictorial projects such as Nanni di Banco’s *Assumption*, as well as in statuary and architecture like the prophet series, had an immeasurable impact on the formulation of the theory and practice of Renaissance art.

Pisano’s *Hercules* in several details. Although the right arms of the present figure is broken, we can still see that the arm, shoulders, and torso are conceived in a manner similar to Andrea’s relief; the passage of the figure’s left forearm draped with a lion skin in Andrea’s relief is a motif traceable to the *Hippolytus* in Pisa and Nicola Pisano’s *Hercules/Fortitude/Daniel* (*Figure 16*). Despite the damage to the supporting leg in Andrea’s *Hercules*, it is obvious that Nanni’s *Hercules* stands in a similarly conceived contrapposto. It is significant that Nanni would subsequently refer to the Campanile panels in the later works. The present *Hercules* is more convincing than that of Andrea Pisano, though, because not only are the free and engaged legs more persuasively differentiated, but the feet are naturalistically foreshortened. These technical refinements have been observed from Giovanni d’Ambrogio’s *Apollo* of 1393 at the top section of the same reveal (*Figure 19*).

Having another level of significance, as well, the symbol also refers to the ultimate flower that sprang from the root and tree of Jesse, and Christ himself, Cristina Acidini Luchinat observes that the juxtaposition of Marian and Christological scenes in the windows and nave reiterates the rarely noted but perfectly obvious and critically important fact that the appellation Fiore—which obviously relates to the city’s name and its Gallic flower, the lily, one of the oldest and most venerated symbols of Mary’s virginity. Luchinat proceeds to cite another of Saint Bernard’s famous sermons, that on Advent, where appropriately, he explains the virgin birth of Christ as the genealogical fulfillment of the Old Testament generations, and describes Mary’s son as “*Flos est filius Virginis,*” the flower is the son of the Virgin.401 Luchinat makes this observation in discussing the basic theme she finds in the program of the stained glass windows of the Duomo, the continuity of the Old Testament through Christ. Lavin

asserts, however, that this peculiarly Florentine relevance of Bernard’s metaphor applies to the building as a whole, and helps to explain many of its distinctive features, including the typological conflation of the centrally planned types, the church of the Nativity in Bethlehem and the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem, with the cruciform basilica plan. Indeed, it is tempting to think of the cathedral of Florence itself as a metaphor for the Incarnation. The Duomo thus encapsulates the process of salvation in architectural form: the resplendent exterior devoted to the virgin and dressed to celebrate the marriage of Christ and his Church, the sober interior holding Christ in his sacramental form. Santa Maria del Fiore may be though of a colossal, living reliquary—the container, the virginal bride, and mother of God; the substantive, the savior of mankind—generated from Florentine devotion and civic conscience. 402

We shall now move into an analysis of related theological meaning in the Sistine ceiling. Reviewing and expanding upon ideas established by Frederick Hartt, I will establish that the David was perceived by humanists and theologians at the time as being the ancestor of Christ and the root of that lineage—with specific reference to arboreal imagery. Charles de Tolnay proposed that the scenes on the Sistine ceiling be understood as visions of the prophets. 403 In addition, Henry Thode had shown that all four spandrels represented deliverances of the chosen people as antetypes of salvation through Christ. 404 Here, as in the Stanza d’Eliodoro, we should be alert for some arboreal symbols. Pier Paolo Vigerio interprets Michelangelo’s rendition of David’s Victory over Goliath in this topical sense, as if to say: “If God hid him, shall he not be able to liberate him? He liberated your fathers from the Egyptian army…he beheaded Goliath the

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giant, most practiced in arms, by means of the unarmed David (expert in naught save pastoral things) in single combat.”

In the *Opera Nuova Contemplativa*, the Victory of David over Goliath is twice connected with Christ’s victory over Satan, as prophesied by Zechariah. It was the Tree of Jesse, and the ancestors of Christ are represented in the spandrels below, starting from the seed of Abraham, of which the Three Holy Children sang.

Most likely planned from the beginning, according to Hartt, and possibly even designated the central feature of the whole design—the semi-geometrical form of a Tree of Jesse fills the long planar surface of the vault. In fact, Michelangelo’s sketch for the first version, if expanded in proportion to the length of the Ceiling, is fully compatible with this view. The Prophets and Sibyls also, to whom Michelangelo assigned the most prominent places, appear on a traditional representations of the Tree of Jesse as attendants of the Ancestors, foretelling the glory of their

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407 Hartt, “Lignum Vitae,” p. 193. Furthermore, as previously stated, Jeremiah exclaims: “Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth (23:5-6). In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, the Lord our righteousness;” see, Jer. 23: 5-6. See Hartt, “Lignum Vitae,” p. 194. Transliterated from Hebrew, “Ish habbenayim” is an adjective with many meanings. Literally, it translates to ‘the man in between’—that is, between the camps of the Israelites and the Philistines; it also bears typological significance in its suggestion of Old to New Testament liminality—David as bearing the seed that will become the Virgin and through which that vessel is begotten the Lord Jesus Christ. In the Septuagint translation, the words ‘anerdyatos,’ meaning ‘a hero,’ appear, while the King James Version translates the passage “And there went out a champion out of the camp of the Philistines, named goliath, of Gath;” see, Haitovsky, “Sources,” p. 5. However, in the Vulgate, we find “et egressus vir spurius de castris Philisthinarum nomine Goliath de Geth,” and, again, in 1 Samuel 17:23, “Appparuit vir ille spurius ascendens Goliath nomine Philisheus de Geth ex castris Philisthinarum;” see, Haitovsky, “Sources,” p. 5 n. 20. *Biblica Sacra*, 2 vols. (Stuttgart: 1964), 1, pp. 391-392. This derogatory reading of Goliath’s name agrees with Rabbi Isaac Luria’s (the Aziel’s) interpretation in the Mishna Nasim Parashat Sotah, dedicated partially to the story of David and Goliath which, in effect, the vulgate calls Goliath a ‘spurious man’ or a ‘bastard’—that is, a man whose parents and lineage is unknown—the exact conceptual opposite of the Tree of Jesse; see, Haitovsky, “Sources,” p. 5 n. 21. See Babylonian Talmud, Sotah, 42.

408 Wind, “Sante Pagnini,” p. 224 n. 35. This may be illustrated by even so remote an object as the Tree of Jesse on the ceiling of Saint Michael’s in Hildeheim. As for the series of interconnected medallions with which Michelangelo framed the central panels, they would not be unsuitable for a genealogical tree, according to Wind.
progeny and exhibiting the gifts of the Holy Spirit.\footnote{Wind, “Sante Pagnini,” p. 224 n. 37. Cf. A. Watson, \textit{The Early Iconography of the Tree of Jesse}, 1934, p. 148; also pp. 9ff, 54ff, 68, 169f. See also the Introduction by W. L. Schreiber to \textit{Oracula Sibyllina}, ed. P. Heitz, 1903.} For his characterization of the Forebearers of Christ, Michelangelo had ample material from which to draw, for the subject had become a customary theme of sermons on Feasts of the Virgin, and the most celebrated of these were accessible in print.\footnote{Wind, “Sante Pagnini,” p. 225 n. 39. Some of the most instructive of these sermons, including a Pseudo-Alcuin, are collected in the Renaissance \textit{Homeliarius} under the Feast of the Nativity of the Virgin (\textit{Homeliarius Doctorum in Evangelia…per Anni Cursum, Basileae}, 1506; earlier editions, 1482, 1493, 1494, 1498). The theme had become a fashionable that it was made the subject of a forgery by Annius of Viterbo, who included in his spurious \textit{Antiquilates} (first published in 1498) a chapter on the Genealogy of Christ. Being a Dominican, he was attacked by Samuel Cassinensis, an irascible character and professional pamphleteer, who also wrote a diatribe against Savonarola, to which Gianfrancesco Pico della Mirandola replied in his \textit{Defensio Hieronymi Savonarolae Adversus Samuelem Cassinensem} (reprinted in 1615). Characteristically, Samuel was aroused against Annius of Viterbo, not by the latter’s imposture, of which he had no suspicion, but by Annius’ irreverent treatment of Nicolaus de Lyre whom he had ridiculed as Nicolaus Delirans. Samuel’s polemical reply was printed in 1502 under the title \textit{De Genealogia Salvatoris} and it is not without interest as the statement, by a very subaltern mind, of a problem which he recognized to be popular. It is curious that the most comprehensive treatise on the mystical interpretation of the Genealogy, written by a Spanish Franciscan, was published in the XVIII Century: \textit{De temporali, human et mystica E. N. Jesu Christi generatione observation genealogica, panegirica, mystica, dogmatica et moralis super primum caput S. Matthei…authore fr. Isidoro a S. Michaele…Neapoli, 1704.} The book which is today extremely rare (the only copy known to Wind is in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, D. 3156), was reviewed in the “Acta Eruditorum” with some astonishment at the survival of this \textit{ingeniosa pietas}.} Saint Antoninus of Florence, the founder of the theological school of San Marco, had written such a sermon on the Genealogy of Christ, which was incorporated in his \textit{Summa}. Savonarola, too, in his sermon on Ruth, gave a mystical interpretation of the genealogy of Boaz which coincides with the first section of the Genealogy of Christ.\footnote{Wind, “Sante Pagnini,” pp. 225-226 n. 40. Savonarola’s preoccupation with riddles of this kind is apparent in his little dialogue \textit{Della Ferita Prophetica}, The Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit appear to him in the guise of seven Orientals, whose exotic Hebrew names (Uria, Eliphaz, Rechima, Ichima, Thoralmes, Abbacue, Saphthan) are each translatable into a spiritual power, and form together the acrostic \textit{Veritas}. They introduce themselves to Savonarola by saying: “Noi Siamo orientali venuti di peregrine e longingue regiani: la stirpe nostra e antiquissima: ilche testificano il nostril nomi per rispecta alla antiquita di epsa prima lingua.” Acrostic verbalisms are of course in the best prophetic tradition, as may be seen in the Sibyllinic Oracles. The markedly cerebral character of the device, notwithstanding its use in jocose compositions, forms part of the pathology of obsessional literature.} According to Saint Antonine of Florence, all the names in the Genealogy of Christ express virtues because none but...
the virtuous could be ancestors of the Savior.\textsuperscript{412} The Genealogy was a recurrent subject for sermons on the vices and virtues, and thus was well known in the period.

Emile Mâle discovered, in studying the religious art of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, that representations of the genealogy of Christ are regular concomitants to the new cult of the Immaculate Conception.\textsuperscript{413} The Office of the Feast was illustrated in Renaissance missals by a picture of the genealogy according to Saint Matthew.\textsuperscript{414} However, since the Genealogy of Christ is so closely connected with the dedication of the chapel, it was probably not introduced into the program as an afterthought.\textsuperscript{415} Ancestry and typology were therefore intrinsically connected to a Marian theological program.

In illustrating the ‘miraculous salvations of the chosen people,’ the four frescos in the corners of the Sistine ceiling conform to the prophetic plan.\textsuperscript{416} The histories of David and Judith, Moses and Esther resume the contrast between Prophet and Sibyl and adumbrate salvation through Mary and Christ. Prophetic analogues are transparent in the cases of Judith and David; for as Christ is called the ‘son of David’ (Matthew, 1:1); Butler Wingfield has introduced evidence suggesting that both Judith and David represented Marian typologies\textsuperscript{417}

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\textsuperscript{413} Wind, “Sante Pagnini,” p. 221. See Mâle, L’Art Religieux de la Fin du Moyen Age, 1925, p. 217.
\textsuperscript{414} Wind, “Sante Pagnini,” pp. 221-222 n. 29. The Genealogy according to Saint Matthew I was the Gospel text of the feast (cf. Robert Lippe, Missale Romanum Mediolani 1474: A collation with Other Editions Printed Before 1570, 1899-1907, II, pp. 166f.) The same text was read on the feasts of the Nativity and the Presentation of the Virgin (ibid., I, p. 337; II, p. 251), The relation between the Genealogy according to Saint Matthew and the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception is expounded to the fullest in : Hieronymous de Guevara, Commentaria in Matthaenum, Tomi Primi Pars Secunda: De Augustissimo Immaculatae Marianae Conceptionis Mysterio, 1640, a large quarto volume comprising 662 pages of commentary on Matthew I only.
\textsuperscript{415} Wind, “Sante Pagnini,” p. 224.
\textsuperscript{417} Cited in Butler, Kim E. "The Immaculate Body in the Sistine Ceiling." Art History 32, no. 2, 250-89; p. 269. See n. 90, Della Rovere, L’Orazione, 89 (f.4/268v).
\end{flushright}
As is well known, Judith is sanctioned as a figure for Mary by a concordance of Luke 1:42 and Judith 13:23 as well as expounded in the homilies of the Fathers and Doctors of the Church, and repeated in devotional tracts and images. Thus, the association of Judith with Mary, and of David with Christ (and potentially Mary herself) resulted in Judith and David, becoming one of the most popular biblical correlates. In Ghiberti’s *Gates of Paradise* on the baptistery of Florence for instance, the figure of Judith holding the head of Holofernes appears next to the relief of *David slaying Goliath*; and as religious models of political liberation, the two symbols became equivalent and interchangeable; thus, it is highly suggestive that Michelangelo’s own *David* was assigned a place once occupied by Donatello’s *Judith*.418

Lorenzo Ghiberti’s successful fulfillment of the first doors, installed in 1424, led to his commission without a competition for the final set of doors with Old Testament scenes for the north entrance (c. 1424-52). The first panel, unsurprisingly, is the *Creation of Adam and Eve, Temptation and Fall, and Expulsion from Paradise*.419 Since the creation prefigured the Incarnation of Christ, Adam’s heroic muscularity, long-flowing hair, and short beard alluded to Christ, the second Adam, at the age of his sacrifice. Just above Christ, Ghiberti represented Adam and Eve’s fall from grace to emphasize the necessity for a redeemer. The serpent’s temptation of Eve, furthermore, was often understood as an antitype of Gabriel’s annunciation to the Virgin, the second Eve, and the Vessel of the Incarnation. The framing palm and deciduous trees also evoke Christ’s palmatious entry into Jerusalem to begin his Passion and the regenerative promise of his sacrifice. In the panel’s center, God’s creative hand draws from

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Adam’s side the figure of Eve, carried aloft by a chorus of angels. The narrative merited pride of place, for it prefigured the foundation of the Church embodied by the Virgin and, also typologically, the symbolic interdependence of Christ’s and the Virgin’s bodies presented in an Old Testament genealogy. Therefore, when Michelangelo stood before the Baptistery of Florence, he was confronted by the portal to Paradise, a work of magnificent mastery that abounds with typological, Christological, and Mariological motifs, on which he reflected deeply for his own project.

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421 Marvin Trachtenberg’s article “Architecture and Music Reunited: A new Reading of Dufay’s ‘Nuper Rosarum Flores’ and the Cathedral of Florence,” buttresses my reading of the pre-history of the David as part of a larger prophet program with the meaning of the cathedral itself in terms of its architectural form. Trachtenberg’s study proposes a transient nexus of architecture, sacred music, and theology in early modern Florence. Nuper Rosarum Flores has been known to musicologists and historians of Florence as an isorhythmic motet commissioned from Guillaume Dufay for the dedication of the new Cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore on March 25, 1436. Musicologist Charles Warren found a strong connection between its music structure and the dimensions and proportions of the new Cathedral. Warren’s reading has been sharply undermined, in particular by Craig Wright, who showed that while Warren’s analysis of the music structure was essentially correct, his reading of the architecture was so deeply flawed as to be invalid; see, Trachtenberg, “Architecture and Music,” p. 741. In Wright’s view, Dufay’s score was informed not by the design of Santa Maria del Fiore but instead by a numerological and symbolic nexus sited in biblical and exegetical descriptions of Solomon’s Temple and in Marian lore; see, Trachtenberg, “Architecture and Music,” p. 742. The referentiality of the music was not to the real architecture of the Cathedral, but to the imaginary Solomonic architecture, that was the universal model for all church construction. In contrast, Trachtenberg proposes furthers Wright and Warren’s arguments respectively, by arguing that what we may be dealing with here is not two independent binary relationships—music to building, and music to biblical/exegetical text—but a triadic nexus in which all three factors are densely interrelated: the Cathedral directly related, in its homology, to Wrights textual model, as well as retroactively to the motet, which itself refers to both text and (real and biblical) image; see, Trachtenberg, “Architecture and Music,” p. 742. Rather than seeing building and/or text as “casual” models for the music in the manner of Wright and Warren, Trachtenberg suggests instead that a more complex, bidirectional circulation of referentiality may be at work, producing a complex cultural entity that we might call “word/image/music;” Trachtenberg, “Architecture and Music,” pp. 742-743. Trachtenberg proceeds by first briefly reviewing Warren’s and Wright’s arguments and then offers his own analysis. Just as Solomon prefigured Christ, so too was his Temple the precursor and symbol of the universal church, to which every sanctuary drew spiritual authority from it. Similarly, Mary and her womb were the maternal temples, the templum maternale in which Christ was nurtured: May is the Temple of Christ, May is Solomon’s Temple, which conversely signifies Mary, who is the seat of Wisdom, and so on; see, Trachtenberg, “Architecture and Music,” p. 745. For Trachtenberg the
CONCLUSION

Michelangelo’s *David* grows, as it were, out of the tree stump that grounds him within his familial roots as the forefather of Vessel of Christ—the Virgin Mary—and Christ himself as he is an incarnate Tree of Jesse. Just as in previous depictions of the David, such as Donatello’s and Verrocchio’s versions where Goliath’s head plays both a structural and iconographic role in identifying the part of the story after David slays the giant. Michelangelo’s *David*, however, is liminal in its formal use of the tree trunk—both as a classical reference and necessary support—but moreover, the trunk can be read as the root of Jesse as foretold by the prophecies of Jeremiah and Isaiah. The root answers the question as to why it is so difficult for art historians to identify the exact moment in the Book of Samuel—did David kill Goliath or is it yet to have happened? Unquestionably, Michelangelo imparts a tripartition of past, present, and future time.

As time passed, art historians have not only forgotten the importance of the original setting of the David but also his intended function as a living Tree of Jesse. From the Latin Vulgate Bible used in the Middle Ages: *et egredietur virga de radice Iesse et flos de radice eius ascendet*. For, the word *flores* is Latin for flower; *Virga* is a “green twig” or “rod” as well as a convenient near-pun with *Virgo* or Virgin, which undoubtedly influenced the development of the image. Thus, Jesus is the *Virga Jesse* or “stem of Jesse, traditionally represented with flowering tree imagery.” Let us remember that in the post-medieval period, the Tree of Jesse—one of many meanings of Michelangelo’s *David* presented here—stood for the actual royal descent of Jesus, especially by royalty, nobility, and the clergy. These very communities were
patricians of the arts, inclusive of the Arte della Lana, who had planted the seed of the David statue nearly a hundred years aforesaid in 1408 with the intention of him intermingling with mother ecclesia—approaching Heaven, on the sproni of Santa Maria del Fiore.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


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