THE CHOREOGRAPHIC IMAGINATION IN RENAISSANCE ART

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ABSTRACT
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This dissertation studies the complex relationship between Italian Renaissance art and dance. Interdisciplinary scholarship has hitherto focused on Renaissance dance treatises, which often exhibit parallels with contemporary writings on painting and sculpture. My research goes beyond the textual parallels to focus instead on the mechanisms of figuration in the visual arts, and on the corporeal sensibility of the Renaissance image. I examine the ways in which figural patterns, interactions, and gestures can be understood in terms of choreography. At issue is the nature of figural composition and of the figure itself, the characteristics of the dancing body and the role of that body within the corporeal imagination of the artist. The fundamental thesis is that the Renaissance artist can be considered a choreographer in his own right.

Chapter One (From Solo to Chorus) provides a framework for thinking about the artist as choreographer by discussing at length Leon Battista Alberti’s *On Painting* (1435/36). First, I show that Alberti’s definition of figural composition is essentially choreographic, in that it concerns the formal organization of bodies that move with expressive purpose. Secondly, I analyze Alberti’s emphasis upon the Calumny of Apelles and the Three Graces, themes from Antiquity that express an aesthetic held in tension between the poles of fury and grace. These poles ultimately take us one step beyond the alignment of composition and choreography: Alberti also breaches the strict limits imposed on the body by court dance practice. In doing so, he paves the way for artists who expand the world of dance *pictorially*.

These two aspects of Alberti’s book—the choreographic nature of figural composition and the role of dance in the figural imagination—establish the range of issues discussed in the next four chapters, which treat paintings, sculptures, prints, and drawings made between circa
1430 and 1520. Organized to progress from duo to chorus, they treat both explicit and implicit depictions of dance as well as bodies ranging from the graceful to the frenzied.

Chapter Two (Duo) explores Annunciations by Donatello and Botticelli as dancing duos that pivot on the opposition between entry and reception, flourish and calm, male and female. The dance is just about to begin—impending duet signals imminent union. Focusing on Botticelli’s depiction of the Three Graces in the *Primavera*, Chapter Three (Trio) considers representations of actual dancing, moments when artists such as Botticelli, Mantegna, and Leonardo da Vinci become choreographers in the most explicit sense of the term. Chapter Four (Chorus I) looks at Antonio Pollaiuolo’s *Dancing Nudes*, a fresco that demonstrates the ability of the artistic imagination to choreograph dances far beyond the limits of reality.

Chapter Five (Chorus II) extends the dissertation’s reach into the sixteenth century with a discussion of Raphael’s design for the *Massacre of the Innocents* engraved by Marcantonio Raimondi. Its graceful figures and their careful composition lead to an inevitable engagement with dance; the violence of the subject is transcended by a choreographic aesthetic. Raphael’s art confirms this dissertation’s argument for the artist as choreographer, a thesis that has the potential to broaden understanding of what lies at the very core of Renaissance art itself: the composition of human bodies in motion.
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Without some brilliant and excellent man in whose footsteps we may follow in our diction, we shall not be able to be impressive in the thoughts we state or elegant in the refinement and brilliance of our language.

Antonio da Rho (1450)

With sheer elegance and clarity of thought my advisor, David Rosand, choreographed this dissertation from beginning to end. If it were not for the imagination and insight with which Professor Rosand approached my education, I may never have learned how to marry my background in dance to my passion for Renaissance art. He never instructed me to leave my personal history outside of academia; rather, he taught me how to harness my individuality, how to cultivate my own voice. I realize now that I am more than just an art historian: I am a dancer who studies art history.

So too did David Freedberg nurture my interest in the relationship between art and dance. It is Professor Freedberg who introduced me to Aby Warburg, and taught me, through Warburg's legacy as well as his own work on the dancing body, that young art historians need to be brave—that we need to make bold statements about our field if we are to ensure its future.

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For Lucas
Not until art history can show...that it sees the work of art in a few more dimensions than it has done so far will our activity again attract the interest of scholars and of the general public.

—Aby Warburg, in a letter to Mesnil (18 August 1929)

The encounter between two disciplines doesn’t take place when one begins to reflect on the other, but when one discipline realizes that it has to resolve, for itself and by its own means, a problem similar to one confronted by the other.

—Gilles Deleuze, “The Brain is the Screen” (1986)

Well sure, we all sense the presence of dance in Renaissance pictures, but no one really knows what to say about it. Not even within studies of Donatello’s works do we find a satisfactory explanation of the phenomenon.

In 1760, Jean-Georges Noverre, dancer, critic, and momentary ballet master of the Paris Opera, published Lettres sur la danse et sur les ballets.¹ Woven throughout the Lettres are both literal and metaphorical references to Renaissance art—a curious thread that dance historians have always noted, but to which art historians have paid little heed. This is surprising given the frequency and occasional specificity of the references. In the first letter we immediately encounter Raphael and Michelangelo, followed by a general comparison of a ballet to a painting.

Poetry, Painting, and dancing are, or should be, Monsieur, a faithful copy of beautiful nature. It is owing to their accuracy of representation that the works of men like Corneille and Racine, Raphael and Michelangelo, have been handed down to posterity, after having obtained (what is rare enough) the commendation of their own age. Why can we not add to the names of these great men those of the maîtres de ballet who made themselves so celebrated in their day! But they are scarcely known; is it the fault of their art, or of themselves?

A ballet is a picture, or rather a series of pictures connection one with the other by the plot which provides the theme of the ballet; the stage is, as it were, the canvas on which the composer expresses his ideas; the choice of the music, scenery and costumes are his colours; the composer is the painter.²

¹ Jean Georges Noverre, Letters on Dancing and Ballets, trans. Cyril W. Beaumont (Brooklyn: Dance Horizons, Inc., 1966). Noverre’s letters were written and published with the aim to reform. Their cumulative effect is clear: sumptuous costumes, whose masks occlude expressive faces, should be eliminated; ceremonial formulas aimed at pleasing the king should give way to narratives; and these plots, moreover, should be driven by the embodiment of human emotions that affect all observers. A culture still hungry for the characteristics of Baroque spectacle did not find these revisions easy to accept, and Noverre’s hot-headed personality barely helped the situation—in fact, it made him many enemies. At the same time, however, he was hailed “le genie” by Diderot and “Prométhée de la danse” by Voltaire. These voices of the Enlightenment championed Noverre for inventing what he called the ballet d’action, a form a narrative ballet that ultimately replaced the seventeenth-century ballet de cour. See Selma Jeanne Cohen, ed. Dance as a Theatre Art, Second ed. (Hightstown, NJ: Princeton Book Company, 1992), Judith Chazin-Bennahum, "Jean-Georges Noverre: Dance and Reform," in The Cambridge Companion to Ballet, ed. Marion Kant (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 87, Lillian Moore, Artists of the Dance (New York: Horizon Books, 1968), 44, and Charles Edwin Noverre, The Life and Works of the Chevalier Noverre (London: Jarrold and Sons, 1882), 23.

² Noverre, Letters on Dancing and Ballets, 1. “La Poésie, la Peinture & la Danse ne sont, Monsieur, ou ne doivent être qu’une copie fidèle de la belle nature. C’est par la vérité de l’imitation que les ouvrages des Racines & des Raphaëls ont passé à la postérité, après avoir obtenu (ce qui est affez rare) les suffrages même de leur siècle. Que ne pouvons-nous joindre aux noms de ces grands hommes, ceux des Maîtres de Ballets qui se sont rendus célèbres ans leurs temps! Mais à peine les connôit-on; est-ce la faude de l’art?
Noverre’s pictorialization of eighteenth-century ballet extended as well to negative assessments of performances. Those that fell short of his expectations were said to “not afford a single picture worthy of a painter’s attention.” Henceforth, Noverre garnered quite a reputation for himself as the choreographer who summons the power of painting. His belief that in a good ballet “everything must paint,” earned him the nickname “the painter of pantomime,” as well as direct comparison with Raphael.

In the October 1766 issue of the Mercure de France Noverre’s contribution to the dance world is laid bare.

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3 Noverre, *Letters on Dancing and Ballets*, 17.

Dance is the art that most closely approximates painting. Both speak to the eyes, and they form in the same way tableaux where the passions and sentiments of the characters are rendered with the help of gesture, attitudes, positions, and groupings...and it is by making dancing as close to painting as possible that M. Noverre has created a new art...5

Such anonymous reviews characterize Noverre as something of an anomaly in the eighteenth-century dance world, but he was not at all alone. According to the dance historian Susan Leigh Foster, “The verb ‘to paint’ was utilized in virtually every eighteenth-century text on dance to describe the choreographic process of selection and refinement that transformed Nature into art.”6 Examples abound to support this claim: In his 1725 treatise on the dance, Le Maître à Danser, Pierre Rameau claimed that performers danced like pictures, whose arms act as frames for the artful body within.7 Likewise, Pierre-Charles Roy likened dancers to “living paintings.”8

Outside of France, the English theater supported a pictorial sensibility grounded in the Italian Renaissance. Charles Gildon wrote in 1710 that, “a complete Actor ought not to be a Stranger to Painting and Sculpture, imitating their graces so masterly, as not to fall short of a Raphael Urbin or a Michael Angelo....”9 And in 1784, in his Dramatic Miscellanies, Thomas

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5 Susan Leigh Foster, Choreography and Narrative (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996), 120 and 309, original French provided in note 77: “...la danse de pantomime est l’art qui s’approche le plus de la peinture. Elles parlent l’une & l’autre yeux, & elles forment pareillement des tableaux où les passions & les sentiments des personnages sont rendus par le secours des gestes, des attitudes, des positions et des groupes...& c’est en rapprochant le plus qu’il est possible la dans de la peinture, que M. Noverre est parvenu à un art nouveau...”

6 Ibid., 13-14.


8 From the 1714 “Ode de la Danse.” See Jacques Bonnett, Histoire de la danse sacrée et profane (Paris 1724), 140.

9 Charles Gildon, Life of Mr Thomas Betterton (London, 1710 ), 139.
Davies recalls King Lear “throwing away his crutch, kneeling on one knee, clasping his hands together, and lifting his eyes towards heaven in a manner worthy of the pencil of Raphael.”

Looking beyond the eighteenth-century, we encounter Carlo Blasis, whose *Code of Terpsichore* admonishes dancers to learn from sculpture and painting. Blasis translated theory into practice with the *attitude*—a ballet position directly inspired by Giambologna’s *Mercury*.

In 1845, Danish choreographer August de Bournonville debuted *Raphael*, a romantic ballet in six acts. Bournonville himself played the role of Raphael, while other notable men danced the parts of Marcantonio Raimondi, Giulio Romano, Francesco Penni, Giovanni da Udine, and others.

The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries prompt us to think about an implicit bond between pictorial composition and dance choreography. These periods compare the arts at the level of practice itself, and behind each comparison is a sense of intimacy, the feeling that an interdisciplinary connection exists beyond mere subject matter. On numerous occasions, these bold declarations of artistic affinity are taken from the general to the specific via allusions to the Renaissance. By the eighteenth century, much had happened in dance, and any number of dance masters could have been called upon for inspiration, from Domenico da Piacenza in the fifteenth century.

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10 Davies, *Dramatic Miscellanies: Consisting of Critical Observations on Several Plays of Shakespeare*, vol. 2 (Dublin, 1784), 181.

11 “Dancers should learn from those chaste pieces of sculpture and painting, the real mode of displaying themselves with taste and gracefulness. They are a fount of beauty, whereto all who aspire to distinction must resort for purity and correctness of design...Those precious monuments of ancient skill have been repeatedly pronounced the best models for the painter and the sculptor: in my own opinion they are of equal service to the dancer.” See Carlo Blasis, *The Code of Terpsichore*, trans. R. Barton (New York: Dance Horizons, 1976 [1828]), 75.

12 See ibid., 74: “That particular position technically termed attitude is the most elegant, but at the same time the most difficult which dancing comprises. It is, in my opinion, a kind of imitation of the attitude so much admired in the Mercury of J. Bologne.”

century to Fabritio Caroso and Thoinot Arbeau in the sixteenth. Instead, choreographers and critics like Noverre invoke Raphael and Michelangelo, inviting us to give more sensitive thought to Renaissance figural composition—the muse of choreography.

**Painter : Choreographer**

Is Renaissance figural composition a choreographic practice? When the Italian Renaissance artist set about composing a group of figures, did he become, in essence, a choreographer? This dissertation recovers the comfort and enthusiasm with which the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries compared painting and choreography. Art historians already draw upon the vocabulary of dance to describe Italian Renaissance pictures, from Michael Baxandall’s interest in the duo performed by Botticelli’s *Pallas and the Centaur*, to Leo Steinberg’s description of Michelangelo’s *Doni Tondo* as “pure Martha Graham.”\(^{14}\) Even the Renaissance itself cribbed the vocabulary of dance in the service of art.\(^{15}\) And yet, this descriptive tendency is rarely questioned by art or dance historians. Our desire to turn to the language of dance when describing Renaissance art is evidence of a larger visual phenomenon that receives focused attention in this dissertation: in many Renaissance works of art, the viewer meets an artist who has choreographed a dance.\(^{16}\)


To speak of art in terms of choreography requires further explanation. As a word culled from the modern vocabulary of dance, it signals the interdisciplinary nature of this project. But rather than use it to allude to the influence of court dance and festival culture—to factors external to pictorial art—it is applied here directly to artists and artworks. In other words, this dissertation encourages the idea that the Renaissance artist can himself be considered a choreographer, for the making of a work of figural art in this period is essentially the making of a dance. Like a choreographer, the Renaissance artist strived for the aesthetic organization of bodies that move with expressive precision. Thus, the central concern is with the mechanisms of

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*Rhetoric of the Image* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), 8. Barthes asks, “What is the connection between the picture and the language inevitably used in order to read it—i.e. in order (implicitly) to write it? Is not this connection the picture itself?” Holly responds by exploring how paintings “have legislated what we can say about them; how they have seductively ‘set us up’ as spectator-historians to say certain things in certain rhetorically persistent ways.”

17 According to the *Dictionnaire de la danse*, ed. Philippe Le Moal (Paris: Larousse, 1999), the word chorégraphie was coined by Raoul-Augur Feuillet to designate his system of dance notation. In 1700, Feuillet published *Chorégraphie, ou l’Art de decrire La Dance par caracteres, figures et signes demonstratifs,* and subsequently published in English as, *Orchesography, or the art of dancing, by characters and demonstrative figures,* trans. John Weaver (London: H. Meere, for the author, 1706). Thus, there were two aspects to the term in early eighteenth century: the notating of steps and dances and the devising of them. According to the dance historian Lynn Garafola, “in the nineteenth century the adjective chorégraphique often referred to dance in general. In the years immediately after WWI the terms “choreography” and “choregraphist” began to be used with reference to the Diaghilev company, as though critics and audiences had experienced the idea of choreography through the works that made up the repertory” (E-mail message to the author, September 26, 2011). By the 1930s, the term had stabilized. Lincoln Kirstein, for example, lists it in his *Ballet Alphabet: A Primer for Laymen* (New York, 1939), and subsequently published as Lincoln Kirstein, *Three Pamphlets Collected: Blast at ballet, Ballet Alphabet,* and *What ballet is all about* (Brooklyn: Dance Horizons, 1967), 19: "Choreography, or as it is written today, choreography, meant in the time of its invention as a dance term, the notation or steonographic record of dance steps….it has come to signify the degree by a dance composer of dance patterns which comprise ballets.”

Although it is important to underline the fact that the word is historically tenuous, choreographies were created and documented. Moreover, the very fact that fifteenth-century Italian dance masters used instead the term compositione only confirms of the relatedness of dance and pictorial art. Antonio Cornazano: “Gli ballitti sono una composizione di diverse misure che po’ contegnire in se tutti gli nove movimenti corporei naturali.” Domenico da Piacenza: “E nota che lo cambiamento se adopra se non in le composizione dele bassedanze secondo vederai sequentemente in una la quale e nominata Corona.” See *Fifteenth-Century Dance and Music: Twelve Transcribed Italian Treatises and Collections in the Tradition of Domenico Da Piacenza* 331-334, and 88-89, respectively.
art, with figural patterns, interactions, gestures—in fact, an image’s entire corporeal sensibility—and the ways in which these aspects can be understood in terms of choreography.

Dance history is a relatively young field, and the mingling of dance history with art history even younger. Within Renaissance studies, the recent fruit of their intersection is something different than what is proposed here. What is generally found is an interdisciplinary relationship constructed on the basis of the fifteenth-century dance treatises. Around 1450, the dance master Domenico da Piacenza wrote De arte saltandi et choreas ducendi. This is the first surviving treatise in Western history to defend the aesthetic and intellectual virtues of dance, as well as to record its steps and choreographies for posterity. The impact of Domenico’s treatise is attested to by the speedy arrival of two more treatises, one by Antonio Cornazano (c. 1455), the other by Guglielmo Ebreo (1463). Together, the weight of their contributions can be felt throughout the Renaissance and into the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when dance criticism still rested on the descriptive language they first pioneered.

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18 Twelve surviving fifteenth-century manuscripts convey information about Renaissance dance practice, but only four are absolutely fundamental for their length, originality, and attempt to deal with the theory of dance: Domenico da Piacenza, De arte saltandi et choreas ducendi, Paris, Biblio-thèque Nationale, fonds ital. 972; Antonio Cornazano, Libro dell'arte del danzare, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Capponiano 203; Guglielmo Ebreo, De pratica seu arte tripudii, Paris, Biblio-thèque Nationale, fonds ital. 973. [There are seven surviving manuscripts of Guglielmo’s treatise, one of which is authored by Giovanni Ambrosio, the name Guglielmo assumed after his conversion to Christianity between 1463 and 1465. See Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Antinori 13; Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, Magliabechiano XIX. 88; Modena, Biblioteca Estense, ital. 82. a. J. 94; New York Public Library, Dance Collection, MGZMB-Res. 72-254; Siena, Biblioteca Comunale, L. V. 29; and Giovanni Ambrosio, De pratica seu arte tripudii, Paris, Biblio-thèque Nationale, fonds ital. 476.] For an overview of all of the surviving treatises, see Fifteen-Century Dance and Music: Twelve Transcribed Italian Treatises and Collections in the Tradition of Domenico Da Piacenza. Translated by A. William Smith. Vol. 1. New York: Pendragon Press, 1995, and the introduction in Guglielmo Ebreo, De Practica sue arte tripudii (On the Practice or Art of Dancing), trans. Barbara Sparti (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), with further bibliography.

19 For issues of dating, see note 23 below.
Herein lies the greatest contribution of the fifteenth-century treatises on dance: the sheer effort made to bring an ephemeral art under rhetorical control. To articulate the movements of the body is a formidable challenge; it demands a refined vocabulary and a cultivated body consciousness. Nevertheless, the fifteenth-century dance masters attempted to describe and codify their art. The result, however rudimentary, was the first systematization of dance, a groundbreaking separation of the art into its fundamental elements: misura, memoria, partire del terreno, aire, maniera, movimento. The ongoing debate over the exact meaning of these concepts is complicated by the fact that the treatises are not illustrated. Indeed, to deal with the history of early dance practice is to deal with language, not images.

It is this language that the art historian inevitably confronts. We must decide whether to use it, or to acknowledge but ultimately set it aside. This decision is difficult given the fact that in fifteenth-century Italy, a theory of art grows up alongside a theory of dance: with Leon Battista Alberti’s emphasis on the expressive capacity of the moving body in Della pittura (1435/36) also came Domenico da Piacenza’s codification of the dancing body in De arte... who desires such an art form / Must apply six principles faultlessly; / Demonstrating in theory and practice / As I here describe, teach, and sing. / Misura is first, then memoria [and] / Partire del terreno, with beautiful aire / Sweet maniera, and movimento. / These give glory to dancing / And sweet grace to whom the impassioned star / With its rays favors most.” See Fifteen-Century Dance and Music: Twelve Transcribed Italian Treatises and Collections in the Tradition of Domenico Da Piacenza, 122.

saltandi et choreas ducendi (ca. 1440s). The temptation has been to assume that simultaneity necessitates intertextual study, that reading one illuminates the other, and that the commonalities, once identified, constitute the evidence for a solid interdisciplinary relationship.

This was the approach taken by Michael Baxandall, the first art historian to present the dance treatises as fertile ground for art history. He was keen to observe that the newly formed language of dance was sometimes used to describe artistic style. Citing a 1442 sonnet by Angelo Galli in praise of Pisanello, he identified three words that have a direct relationship to dance: misura, aere, and maniera. For Baxandall, this linguistic connection provides insight into how a Renaissance person’s experience of dance informed his perception of represented movement. In other words, fifteenth-century people, like the poet Angelo Galli, cribbed the language of dance when describing art.

Art and dance historians have since augmented Baxandall’s points by teasing out further rhetorical intersections. The work done by Sharon Fermor, in particular, has contributed to a

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25 Ibid., 77: “Arte, mesura, aere et desegno / Manera, prospectiva et naturale / Gli ha dato el celo per mirabil dono.” When Baxandall briefly turns his attention away from the matching vocabularies of dance and painting and towards the images themselves, his contention is that dance served as a kind of crutch for the artist, something he turned to when the visual tradition offered no easy solution to his challenge: “When he had a new classical subject, with no established tradition for the arrangement and no assurance that the story was very widely or intimately known, he could let the figures dance their relationship out, as Botticelli lets them in his Pallas and the Centaur.” (Ibid., 80-81).

more thoughtful consideration of the complex ways in which Renaissance descriptions of
movement are indebted to the language of dance. Her publications show, for example, that
writers on art such as Lodovico Dolce and Giorgio Vasari borrowed words like leggiadria and
gagliardezza from the existing dance vocabulary. Valuable insights such as these help us restore
to the language of criticism some of its original descriptive precision. 27 But once we have read
Domenico da Piacenza alongside Leon Battista Alberti, once we are able to identify what Vasari
meant when he referred to un posar leggiadrissima, what then? Is there an interdisciplinary
discourse beyond language?

My approach differs from that of previous studies in that it ultimately has little to do with
the dance treatises themselves. Without questioning their importance, I bring images to the
center of the discussion. In focusing on the pictorial rather than linguistic implications and
dimensions of dance, this dissertation looks back to the model provided by Aby Warburg, who
seems to have written without full knowledge of the fifteenth-century dance masters and their
treatises. Indeed, systematic analyses of these manuscripts only got going in the late 1920s, with
the work of Otto Kinkeldy and Curt Sachs. 28 In turn, Warburg’s thoughts were not predicated
upon the critical vocabulary of dance; rather, his ideas rested on his response to the pictorial

27 See Sharon Fermor, "On the Description of Movement in Vasari's Lives," in Kunst, Musik, Schauspiel:
15-21, idem, "Studies in the Depiction of the Moving Figure in Renaissance Art, Art Theory, and
Criticism," (PhD Dissertation. Warburg Institute, 1990), idem, "Poetry in Motion: Beauty in Movement in
the Renaissance Conception of Leggiadria," in Concepts of Beauty in Renaissance Art, ed. Francis Ames-
Lewis and Mary Rogers (Aldershot, Hants, England; Brookfield, VT: Ashgate, 1998), 124-133, and idem,
"Movement and Gender in Sixteenth-Century Italian Painting," in Body Imaged, ed. by Kathleen Adler

28 Otto Kinkeldy, A Jewish Dancing Master of the Renaissance: Guglielmo Ebreo (New York, 1929), and
Curt Sachs, Eine weltgeschichte des tanzes (Berlin: D. Reimer, 1933).
For Warburg as well as for this dissertation, the issues at hand are the nature of figural composition and of the figure itself, the characteristics of the dancing body and the role of that body within the corporeal imagination of the artist. What emerges is a history of dance in art, an exploration of the artist’s ability to choreograph figures in motion.

**Overview**

Chapter One provides a framework for thinking about the artist as choreographer by discussing at length Alberti’s *Della pittura* (1435/36). First, I show that Alberti’s definition of figural composition is essentially choreographic, in that it concerns the formal organization of bodies that move with expressive purpose. Secondly, I analyze Alberti’s emphasis upon the Calumny of Apelles and the Three Graces, themes from Antiquity that express an aesthetic held in tension between the poles of fury and grace. These poles ultimately take us one step beyond the alignment of composition and choreography: Alberti also breaches the strict limits imposed

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on the body by court dance practice. In doing so, he paves the way for artists who expand the world of dance pictorially.

These two aspects of *Della pittura*—the choreographic nature of figural composition and the role of dance in the figural imagination—establish the range of ideas presented in the next four chapters, which treat paintings, sculptures, prints, and drawings made between circa 1430 and 1520. Organized to progress from duo to chorus, they treat both implicit and explicit depictions of dance as well as bodies ranging from the graceful to the frenzied.

Chapter Two explores Donatello’s Cavalcanti *Annunciation* (ca. 1428-33) and Botticelli’s Cestello *Annunciation* (1489) as dancing duos that pivot on the opposition between entry and reception, flourish and calm, male and female. The longer we ponder the corporeal relationship of Gabriel and the Virgin in relationship to couples dancing, the more we may begin to see these Annunciations as exhibiting a very particular moment: the dance is just about to begin—impending duet signals imminent union.

Focusing on Botticelli’s depiction of the Three Graces in the *Primavera* (ca.1489-90), Chapter Three considers representations of actual dancing, moments when artists become choreographers in the most explicit sense of the term. The images treated are different in subject matter and medium, yet strongly linked by problems related to the depiction of dance on a two-dimensional surface: the maintenance of bodily equilibrium, the suggestion of pace, the creation of purposeful draperies, the repetition of form, the disposition of feet, and the embodiment of music. An exploration of these challenges affords insight into how much Renaissance artists knew about the mechanics of dance.

Chapter Four looks at Antonio Pollaiuolo’s *Dancing Nudes* (ca.1470s), a fresco that demonstrates the ability of the artistic imagination to choreograph dances far beyond the limits of
reality. In antithesis to the aims of Quattrocento dance, Pollaiuolo’s nudes exhibit a total explosion of the self. Indeed, that which is suppressed in court dance is celebrated in this fresco: broken wrists, flexed ankles, bent knees, and exposed backs. Pollaiuolo’s nudes tell their own history of dance, and one that explores the full range of bodily capability, from the elegance of the Three Graces to the fury of the maenads.

Chapter Five extends the dissertation’s reach into the sixteenth century with a discussion of Raphael’s design for Marcantonio Raimondi’s engraved Massacre of the Innocents (ca. 1511-12). While this print is not a literal depiction of dance, its graceful figures and their careful composition lead to an inevitable engagement with dance and the overwhelming presence of a choreographic mind at work. Raphael is the quintessential painter-choreographer—a Renaissance Balanchine, as it were—and thus reaffirms the dissertation’s argument for the artist as equal to the choreographer, a conviction with the potential to broaden understanding of what lies at the very core of the Renaissance art itself: the composition of human bodies in motion.
From Solo to Chorus

Affective Figure
Graceful Solo
Harmonic Chorus
The Three Graces
Beyond Grace
The *istoria* will move the soul of the beholder when each man painted there clearly shows the movement of his own soul....we weep with the weeping, laugh with the laughing, and grieve with the grieving. These movements of the soul are made known by movements of the body.

—Alberti, *Della pittura* (1435/36)

The virtue of dance comes from the fact that it is an action which makes spiritual movements visible...certain graceful movements are there engendered which, being confined as if against their nature, strive as hard as they can to escape and make themselves manifest in the form of active movements.

—Guglielmo Ebreo, *De practica de sue arte tripudii* (1463)
Set the body in motion. Make its moving parts speak. Turn its actions eloquent. The kinetic body defines Renaissance art. Filling the perspectival space that is the precondition of pictorial process, the moving body completes the image and connects it to the responsive viewer, who recognizes significance in its physicality. Meaning in art was meaning in motion.

A direct connection is thus forged with dance, the performing art that produces meaning entirely through human movement. In other words, when the kinetic body emerges as a significant force in Renaissance art, so too does the artist draw close to the choreographer, maybe even surpassing him. This is the interdisciplinary story that is usually told for eighteenth- and nineteenth-century France, where the visual and performing arts are yoked with great enthusiasm by a number of dance critics and artists, from Jean-Georges Noverre to Edgar Degas.¹ While this awareness of artistic affinity is articulate and well documented in French culture around the dawn of modernity, it actually has much deeper roots. Art and dance come into close formal alignment beginning in fifteenth-century Italy, the period and place that celebrated the human figure as the instrument of expression in a harmonious composition.

The *locus classicus* for this celebration is Leon Battista Alberti’s *Della pittura* (1435/36).² Alberti articulates the primacy of the human figure in motion, and thus voices the

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² The only secure date we have for Alberti’s treatise is 1435. A legible note on the last page of codex *Marcianus* XL 7 (the copy of Cicero’s *Brutus* owned by Alberti) reads: “on Friday, the 26th of August, 1435, in Florence, Leon Battista completed the De Pictura.” Because the note is written in Latin, scholars have assumed the priority of this version of the treatise. Notable amongst the proponents of this theory is Cecil Grayson. See Leon Battista Alberti, *De Pictura*, ed. Biblioteca degli scrittori d’Italia degli Editori Laterza, trans. Cecil Grayson (Roma: G. Laterza, 1975). In 2006, a new translation was published by Rocco Sinisgalli, who argues instead for the priority of Alberti’s Italian edition. See Rocco Sinisgalli, *Il nuovo De pictura di Leon Battista Alberti* (Rome: Edizioni Kappa, 2006). An argument for the priority of
very means through which the artists considered in subsequent chapters make and evoke dances. As he himself makes clear, *Della pittura* is a response to Florentine artists who feel their way into a composition through the eloquent body. They explore its movements, mirror individual actions in adjacent figures, and fuse successive, pictorial phrases into a single, intelligible whole, marked by variety and yet bound by harmony—the very *discordia concors* we still identify with a successful piece of choreography. Indeed, to enter the studio—to engage with image-making itself—is to see directly into the relationship between Renaissance art and dance, for Alberti’s definition of figural composition is essentially choreographic, it is the formal organization of bodies that move with expressive purpose.

Implicit in much art historical writing is the notion that the affinity between the pictorial and the performing arts rests at the level of composition itself. Creighton Gilbert, in a particularly suggestive passage, analyzed Simone Martini’s 1333 *Annunciation* in choreographic terms (Figure 1.1).

The figures are made of these elaborately twisting lines and become objects of elegant artifice, raised above the heavy physical constraints to a refinement less spiritual than a patterned, highly bred formula of graceful behavior systems. Calligraphy becomes choreography...Like some dances, this pattern is also a story, and that is its strength. It shares

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the Italian edition has also been made by Maria Picchio Simonelli, "On Alberti's Treatises of Art and Their Chronological Relationship," *Yearbook of Italian Studies* (1971), 75-102.

I have chosen to focus on the Italian version of Alberti’s book, not because he may have written it first but because this is the version he addresses explicitly to artists. Throughout this chapter, the in-text quotations come from Leon Battista Alberti, *On Painting*, trans. John Spencer (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1966). For the original Italian, refer the corresponding paragraph in Grayson, which is footnoted following the page number in Spencer. In subsequent chapters, only Spencer is cited.

3 In the Prologue, Alberti laments the fact that Nature “no longer produced either geniuses or giants….” But upon his return to Florence in 1428, he finds the city infused with new talent, and singles out Filippo Brunelleschi, Donatello, Ghiberti, Luca della Robbia, and Masaccio. “I have come to understand that in many men, but especially in you, Filippo, and in our close friend Donato the sculptor and in others like Nencio, Luca and Masaccio, there is a genius for [accomplishing] every praiseworthy thing.” Alberti, *On Painting*, 39.
with Florentine painting a focus on a limited group of people interrelating at an acute point of drama.\footnote{Creighton Gilbert, "Simone Martini's Annunciation," ARTnews LXXIX, no. 5 (1980): 131.}

So too has Michael Baxandall attempted to explain a figural composition in terms of dance. The painting in question is another duo: Botticelli’s \textit{Pallas and the Centaur} (Figure 1.2). Baxandall takes the picture “in the spirit of a \textit{ballo in due},” and concludes that the figures “dance their relationship out.”\footnote{Michael Baxandall, \textit{Painting and Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy} (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 80-81. For particularly good commentary on Baxandall’s insights into Botticelli’s dance-like manner, see Pierluigi de Vecchi, "Movement, Action and Expression in the Work of Sandro Botticelli," in \textit{Botticelli. From Lorenzo the Magnificent to Savonarola} (Milan: Skira Editore, 2003), 51-53.}

There is much more to these turns of phrase than the gratuitous borrowing of “choreography” and “dance” for descriptive purposes. The language used by Gilbert and Baxandall suggests that the means inherent in composing a narrative painting are also the means associated with choreographing a dramatic dance.\footnote{The more popular analogy through which Albertian composition has been understood is, of course, rhetoric. The analogy between pictorial composition and classical rhetoric was treated extensively by Michael Baxandall in \textit{Giotto and the Orators}. Further considerations of Alberti’s dependence upon rhetorical structure can be found in Eric Cameron, "The Depictional Semiotic of Alberti's on Painting," \textit{Art Journal} 35, no. 1 (Autumn, 1975), 25-28, Jack M. Greenstein, "On Alberti's 'Sign': Vision and Composition in Quattrocento Painting," \textit{The Art Bulletin} 79, no. 4 (Dec. 1997), 669-98, and Thomas Puttfarken, \textit{The Discovery of Pictorial Composition} (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000).}

Indeed, with the kinetic body as their shared vehicle of expression, artists and choreographers faced the same, fundamental challenge: the communication of meaning through human actions and interactions.

This is where the relationship between art and dance is to be found: in a study of the figure and of figural composition, the very aspects Alberti identifies and then encourages in subsequent generations of artists. In focusing on somatic modes of expression and choric unity,
he draws art so close to dance that Renaissance artists appear to us as choreographers *avant le lettre*.\(^7\)

What about the particular details of Alberti’s program? He calls for windblown drapery and hair—clothes and tresses which themselves mime the movements of a dancer; and he champions the Calumny of Apelles and the Three Graces as ideal *istorie*—suggested themes from Antiquity that bear out an aesthetic founded upon the poles of fury and grace. Such polarities, hinted at by Alberti throughout his treatise on painting, ultimately take our interdisciplinary story one step beyond the alignment of composition and choreography. Alberti also breaches the strict limits imposed on the body by court dance practice, and in doing so paves the way for artists who expand the world of dance *pictorially*.

**Affective Figure**

In 1435, Alberti wrote the very first treatise on painting, committing to paper what he observed to be the superiority of pictorial compositions founded upon the expressive capacity of the human figure in motion. Alberti’s *Della pittura* does not begin, however, with the body, or at least not directly. In the Prologue, Alberti outlines the structure of his little book.

You will see three books; the first, all mathematics, concerning the roots in nature which are the source of this delightful and most noble art. The second book puts the art in the hand of the artist, distinguishing its parts and demonstrating all. The third introduces the artist to the means and the end, the ability and the desire of acquiring perfect skill and knowledge in painting (Prologue).\(^8\)

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\(^7\) For a brief history of the word, see my Preface, note 2.

\(^8\) Alberti, *On Painting*, 40. On the treatise’s structure, see Mark Jarzombek, "The Structural Problematic of Leon Battista Alberti’s *De Pictura*," *Renaissance Studies* 4, no. 3 (1990): 273-86, which reviews the relevant older literature.
To begin with mathematics was to root painting in the measurable and thus raise it to the status of science—a persuasive device employed to the same end by the dance masters in their treatises.⁹ Mathematics, and more specifically, geometry, is not for Alberti a goal in itself, however; it is harnessed to establish the rational, and therefore intellectual, dimension of painting. This use of mathematics in the service of art is made clear right at the very opening of Book I, in which Alberti beseeches the reader “to consider [him] not as a mathematician, but as a painter writing of these things” (¶ 1).¹⁰ As a painter donning the robes of a mathematician, Alberti is concerned mainly with the explanation of one-point perspective—a new mathematical way of creating pictorial space.

The transition from Book I to Book II is often understood as a move from numbers to figures, yet the division is not so clear-cut. Alberti’s initial determination to ground painting in optics and geometry is equally matched by his desire to base it in the tangible and the corporeal: “Mathematicians measure with their minds alone the forms of things separated from all matter. Since we wish the object to be seen, we will use a more sensate wisdom (un più grassa minerva)” (¶ 1).¹¹ A complex discussion of proportional triangles is then interrupted by a more accessible, human simile: “a small man is proportional to a larger one, because the same proportions between the palm and the foot, the foot and the other parts of the body were in Evander as in Hercules...” (¶ 14).¹² And towards the end of the section human proportions are

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¹⁰ Alberti, On Painting, 43.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid., 53.
introduced as essential to perspective. One *braccio*, or one-third the height of a man, is given as the module. As John Spencer points out, Alberti’s emphasis is on measurements derived *from man*, rather than from abstract numbers.\(^{13}\)

Geometry provides for a commensurable figural composition, but the source of that commensurability is the human body itself. This dual reliance upon both the quantitative and the qualitative is concomitant with the purpose underlying the very invention of one-point perspective: the placement of figures, and more importantly, figures whose existence in the field of vision will appear to be continuous with that of the beholder. “Thus the beholder and the painted things he sees will appear to be on the same plane.”\(^{14}\) And so, although Book I purports to be *tutto matematico*, deviations must be made, because perspective is tied to the human body. In Alberti’s own words: “man is the mode and measure of all things.”\(^ {15}\)

The system of perspective established by Alberti in Book I realizes its end in Book II: to create a space for the figures in an *istoria*, the “greatest work of the painter” (¶ 33).\(^ {16}\) If Book I was meant to equip the painter with the rules of linear perspective, then Book II was intended to instruct him in composing figures—the basis not only of mathematical proportion, but of a moving *istoria* as well. Alberti is the first to critically appreciate figural composition. Cennino Cennini includes composition as one of the painter’s tasks, but neither engages it as practice, nor distinguishes it as superior to the more material aspects of painting: the mixing of colors, the

\(^{13}\) Ibid., 109, n.42.

\(^{14}\) Ibid., 56.

\(^{15}\) Ibid., 55. This belief is based in Vitruvius. For a discussion of Alberti’s study of Vitruvius, see page 36ff. of this chapter.

\(^{16}\) Ibid., 70.
tinting of papers, the tempering of glues, and defining the properties of pigments. Alberti brings figural composition to the center of artistic practice, declaring that, “the fame of the painter and of his art is found in the composition of bodies” (¶ 39).

I say composition is that rule in painting by which the parts fit together in the painted work. The greatest work of the painter is the istoria. Bodies are part of the istoria, members are parts of the bodies, planes are parts of the members (¶ 33).

Soon after, Alberti sees fit to reiterate, almost verbatim, the definition and importance of a figural composition.

It would be well to repeat what composition is. Composition is that rule of painting by which the parts of the things seen fit together in the painting. The greatest work of the painting is not a colossus, but an istoria. Istoria gives greater renown to the intellect than any colossus. Bodies are part of the istoria, members are parts of the bodies, planes part of the members (¶ 34).

Similar to Book I, in which Alberti begins his discussion of perspective with points, lines, and planes, Book II lays a significant amount of emphasis on the breakdown of a structure into its constituent parts. In the later passages, we begin with circumscription, or drawing, and then follow the steps of composing planes into members, members into figures, and figures into compositions. This reductive approach to composition opens the door to the studio, and one quite unlike Cennini’s. In the place of an artist concerned with mechanical processes, we find an

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17 At the outset of his book, Cennino Cennini pretends to distinguish scienza from mere craft, however he does little to pursue the distinction. Composition is, for example, couched within a discussion of snapping charcoal lines in preparation for a fresco. “Then when the plaster is dry, take the charcoal, and draw and compose according to the scene or figures which you have to do; and take all of your measurements carefully, snapping lines first, getting the centers of the spaces...But the charcoal wants to be tied to a little cane or stick, so that it comes some distance from the figures; for it is a great help to you in composing.” Cennino d'Andrea Cennini, *The Craftsman's Handbook*, trans. Daniel V. Thompson (New York: Dover Publications, 1960), ch. 67 and 75.


19 Ibid., 70.

20 Ibid., 72.
artist who works with the body—someone who begins with a solo and ends up with a chorus. Compositional practice is thus defined from the inside out, as a dialectic of part to whole. It is only by applying discipline from the bottom up that the artist will ensure that, “every part [will be] well thought out in our mind from the beginning, so that in the work we will know how each thing ought to be done and where located” (¶ 61).

To show the extent to which agreement between compositional elements is absolutely imperative, Alberti unfurls a series of examples that enact a progression from planes, to members, to bodies. This progression has received much scholarly attention, most notably from Michael Baxandall, who proved its basis in rhetoric. But the composition of a periodic sentence happened at a writing desk, and was only one part in a five-step process of invention, arrangement, style, memory, and delivery. Delivery—a crucial aspect of rhetorical skill that Baxandall omits—shifts the discipline from the desk to the stage, and thus also from writing to

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21 Ibid., 96. On the implications this statement carries for the practice of making full scale cartoons, see David Rosand, Drawing Acts (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 29-32.

22 The extent to which pictorial and prose construction parallel one another is Michael Baxandall’s great legacy to art history. See Michael Baxandall, Giotto and the Orators (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), 131, where the following is claimed. “...the notion of compositio is a very precise metaphor transferring to painting a model of organization derived from rhetoric itself. Compositio was a technical concept every schoolboy in a humanist school had been taught to apply to language. It did not mean what we mean by literary composition, but rather the putting together of a single evolved sentence or period, this being done within the framework of a four-level hierarchy of elements: words go to make up phrases, phrases to make clauses, clauses to make sentences.” Dance is mentioned once in Giotto and the Orators, and Baxandall’s philological approach to Alberti’s theory of art has influenced dance history’s approach to its treatises. Barbara Sparti, Sharon Fermor, and Jennifer Nevile have extended his argument to the dance treatises, arguing that the dance masters “take over terms from rhetoric in their effort to build a specialized vocabulary in which to describe the art of dance.” Jennifer Nevile, The Eloquent Body: Dance and Humanist Culture in Fifteenth-Century Italy (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2004), 81. See as well Sharon Fermor, "Studies in the Depiction of the Moving Figure in Renaissance Art, Art Theory, and Criticism" (PhD Dissertation, Warburg Institute, 1990), and Barbara Sparti, "Humanism and the Arts: Parallels between Alberti’s on Painting and Guglielmo Ebreo’s On...Dancing," in Art and Music in the Early Modern Period, ed. Katherine A. McIver (Burlington: Ashgate, 2003), 173-92.
performing. Cicero and Quintilian, the classical writers pillaged most often by Alberti, enact this shift when buttressing rhetoric with pathos. Cicero writes:

But all these emotions must be accompanied by gesture—not this stagy gesture reproducing words but one conveying the general situation and idea not by mimicry but by hints, with this vigorous manly throwing out of the chest, borrowed not from the stage and the theatrical profession but from the parade ground or even from wrestling; but the movements of the hand must be less rapid, following the words and not eliciting them with the fingers; the arm thrown out rather forward, like an elocutionary missile; a stamp of the foot in the beginning and ending emphatic passages.23

A Ciceronian orator’s success depends upon his ability to appeal to the audience’s emotions. Sentence structure alone could not achieve this end. Stirring listeners required theatrical techniques—tone of voice, gesture, facial expression, and bodily carriage. In other words, while rhetoric followed strict, syntactical rules those rules provided only a structure, and one that was open to, and indeed demanding of, performative inflection. In the moment of speaking, the orator passes from grammar to the theater, and from rhetoric to acting.

By participating in a rhetorical tradition inherited from Cicero and Quintilian, so too did Alberti participate in a theatrical tradition. If he rooted his definition of composition in rhetoric, then he also rooted it in theater, and, by extension, dance, to which Quintilian refers in his discussion of rhetorical gesture.

I will not blame even those who give a certain amount of time to the teacher of gymnastics. . .we give the same name to those who form gesture and motion so that the arms may be extended in the proper manner, the management of the hands free from all trace of rusticity and inelegance, the attitude becoming, the movements of the feet appropriate to the motions of the head and eyes in keeping with the poise of the body.... No one will deny that such details form a part of the art of delivery, nor divorce delivery from oratory; and there can be no justification for disdaining to learn what has got to be done, especially as chironomy, which, as the name shows, is the law of gesture....We are told that the Spartans even regarded a certain form of dance as useful element in military training....while Cicero, in the third book of his de Oratore quotes the words of Crassus, in which he lays down the principle that the orator ‘should learn to move his body in a

bold and manly fashion derived not from actors on the stage, but from martial and even from gymnastic exercises."24

The gulf between the movements of a dancer and the activities of the rhetorician was not as great as the modern division of the fields might have us assume. Writers, artists, and dancers shared a concern for corporeal eloquence. It is not enough to work a composition from the ground up. Artists, like orators and dancers, find kinetic correlatives for human emotions. Alberti clinches this inextricable link when he declares the efficacy of the human body in motion: “The movements of the soul are made known by the movements of the body” (¶ 41).25 Not long thereafter the dance masters also put pen to paper to affirm the fundamentality of the affetti for their art. “Dance,” Guglielmo Ebreo writes, “is an action which makes spiritual movements visible.”26 Painting and dancing are affective arts. Underlying both is a psychological assumption, a reliance upon empathy—upon the viewer’s reaction to meaningful human movement.

The full, emotional participation of the viewer is the thesis at the center of John Shearman’s Only Connect, in which he posits that, beginning with Alberti and the discovery of linear perspective, works of art became “transitive.”27 This property, in which the emotions depicted in the picture are replicated within the viewer’s mind, depends for Alberti upon the figure in motion. Human movement provides the connection; it is the means through which “we

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weep with the weeping, laugh with the laughing, and grieve with the grieving” (¶ 41). In establishing this emotional dialectic between viewer and work of art, Alberti suggests a kind of kinesthetic or phenomenological experience of painting, a body-conscious mode of looking, and one that extends to dance, an art also predicated upon the affective potential of human movement. In the words of the fifteenth-century dance master Guglielmo Ebreo,

The virtue of dance comes from the fact that it is an action which makes spiritual movements visible...certain graceful movements are there engendered which, being

28 Alberti, On Painting, 77. Alberti’s source is Horace’s Ars poetica, lines 101-103.

29 In his essays on painting, phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty wrote, “Things have an internal equivalent in me; they arouse in me a carnal formula of their presence.” Thinking about Cézanne’s paintings in particular, he continued, “There is a human body when, between the seeing and the seen, between touching and the touched, between one eye and the other, between hand and hand, a blending of some sort takes place—when the spark is lit between sensing and sensible, lighting the fire that will not stop burning....Once this strange system of exchanges is given, we find before us all the problems of painting....Quality, light, color, depth, which are there before us, are there only because they awaken an echo in our body and because the body welcomes them.” See Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "Eye and Mind," in Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Basic Writings, ed. Thomas Baldwin (London and New York: Routledge, 2004 ), 295-96.

confined as if against their nature, strive as hard as they can to escape and make themselves manifest in the form of active movements.\textsuperscript{30}

An \textit{istoria}, whatever its actual subject, depends on the human body’s ability to share the dancer’s task: to kinetically project emotional significance in myriad ways.\textsuperscript{31} Hence Alberti’s eagerness in Book I to require a sightline between beholder and object, so as to link the viewing eye with the affective figure.\textsuperscript{32} That the viewer’s emotional participation in a painting was of paramount importance to Alberti is confirmed further by his desire for an interlocutor, a choric figure hailing not from rhetoric but from the stage.

\begin{quote}
In an \textit{istoria} I like to see someone who admonishes and points out to us what is happening there; or beckons with his hand to see; or menaces with an angry face and with flashing eyes, so that no one should come near; or shows some danger or marvellous thing there; or invites us to weep or to laugh together with them (¶ 42).\textsuperscript{33}
\end{quote}

Without such corporeal continuity on either side of the picture plane, the dramatic content of the painting would be lessened. The inventive force of an \textit{istoria} must be matched by movements that rouse the observer’s soul.

\textsuperscript{30} \textit{Fifteenth-Century Dance and Music}, 126.


\textsuperscript{32} On the connection between vision and composition, see Greenstein, "On Alberti's 'Sign': Vision and Composition in Quattrocento Painting." On linear perspective as a tool for engaging the viewer, see Shearman, \textit{Only Connect... Art and the Spectator in the Italian Renaissance}, 60-62, 66, 98.

\textsuperscript{33} Alberti, \textit{On Painting}, 78.
Graceful Solo

“The fame of the painter and of his art,” Alberti writes in Book II, “is found in the following—the composition of bodies” (¶ 39). As Alberti lays out the rules of composing planes into members, members into figures, and figures into compositions we are, in a sense, allowed access to the world of the studio, to how an artist who begins with a graceful solo can end up with a harmonic chorus—una coreografica pittoresca. It is the attention given to figural construction and invention—from the first stages of drawing a single human figure to the rendering of an affective istoria—that nurtures the production of works whose potential to evoke dance lies not in their fidelity to contemporary dance practice itself, but rather in their concern for the human architecture of a composition.

The human body stands at the heart of pictorial design: “Bodies are part of the istoria, members are parts of the bodies, planes are parts of the members” (¶ 35). Here in Book II Alberti uses the word istoria for the very first time, yet he does not provide a straightforward definition of the term. Rather, he comments upon its form: an istoria is made up of bodies. This is highly significant, for prior to the fifteenth century a work of art was classified as an istoria solely on the basis of its subject matter. Alberti, by contrast, places form above content.

34 See note 18 above.

35 In the sixteenth century, Vincenzo Borghini makes a similar analogy between painting and music, from which I adapt the phrase “coreografica pittoresca”: “There is in painting a part that corresponds to it [music] in a certain way and shares with it a most important and inseparable feature: this is harmony, a composition, a fit and appropriate disposition of the parts with each other, so that they do not impair each other but make the whole appear well disposed and composed, not confused and disordered. And out of all these things together there is born a harmony and, so to speak, pictorial music [musica pittoresca]...” See Paola Barocchi, Scritti d'arte del Cinqueneto, 3 vols., La letteratura italiana (1971-77), 611-13.

36 Alberti, On Painting, 70.

37 For the medieval concept of historia, see Greenstein, Mantegna and Painting as Historical Narrative, ch. 1 (“The Significance of Historia...”). On art history’s interpretation of the word historia as “history painting,” see Grafton, "Historia and Istory. Alberti’s Terminology in Context," who traces the translation
focuses the artist’s attention not upon the invention of a subject (that will come later), but on the creation of human figures. Alberti thus implies something revolutionary indeed: an istoria is nothing less than a figural composition, a work of art that bodies forth its meaning. Herein lies the merit of works like Giotto’s Navicella. Neither the religious nature of Giotto’s subject nor his virtuoso ability to paint a ship at sea piques Alberti’s interest; rather, he is struck by the artist’s figuration of the story: “Eleven disciples all moved by fear at seeing one of their companions passing over the water” (¶ 42).

The invention of such a multi-figured istoria as Giotto’s begins with the single figure, and the significance Alberti lays upon perfecting the relationship between its planes and its members cannot be overstated. To be sure, the correspondence of part to whole is a leitmotif of Della pittura: as points, lines, and planes beget perspective, so here planes and members beget bodies. To only acknowledge such parallels between Book I and Book II, however, hardly does justice to the profound implications of Alberti’s almost taxonomic breakdown. Over the course of Book II, his treatment of the body as a system of surfaces and members gives rise to demands for anatomical study and to statements about the mechanics as well as the limitations of human movement. Focusing on this progression, we will see that the creation of an affective istoria back to Hubert Janistchek’s 1870 German edition of Della pittura (das Geschichtsbild). Grafton also notes that John Spencer was one of the first art historians to expand our understanding of an Albertian istoria. Leaving the word untranslated, Spencer concentrates on the formal dimensions Alberti assigns to an istoria. Spencer’s thoughts are summed up in the introduction to his translation of Della pittura as well as in his article, "Ut Rhetorica Pictura: A Study in Quattrocento Theory of Painting," Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes 20, no. 1/2 (1957), 26-44. Following Spencer, Greenstein also claims that “an historia, for Alberti, rests not on the subject matter itself, but rather on the manner in which the subject is pictorialized. Artistic form, in other words, is the distinguishing quality of pictorial historia.” Similarly, Grafton writes that “Alberti certainly did not coin the word, but the manner in which it dominates On Painting endows it with entirely new dimensions and implications. An istoria is not simply a narrative history painting. It is, more precisely, the communication of a story through entirely figural means.”

38 To put it more explicitly, “Whatever the painted persons so among themselves or with the beholder, all is pointed toward ornamenting or teaching the istoria.” Alberti, On Painting, 78.
depends upon a deep analysis of human form. In other words, while Book II of Della pittura may be characterized by its pioneering discussion of composition and expressive movement, Alberti underpins such overriding concerns with ideas about the process of figural construction itself. His investment in the rational principles of anatomy, proportion, and motion ultimately provide the foundation for a more profound figural act: the embodiment of grace.

We begin with the planes. Alberti takes his discourse back to basics, to the turning of an outline around a figure, establishing its primary volumes. A figure is born when the first contour line is set down on the page. From this he turns to the next step in his hierarchy of corporeal construction: the composition of members. “If in a painting the head should be very large and the breast small, the hand ample and the foot swollen, and the body puffed up, this composition would certainly be ugly to see” (¶ 36). This first observation is rather plain, but it prompts Alberti to draw an important conclusion: “we ought to have a certain rule for the size of the members.” What Alberti desires here is nothing less than a canon of human proportions, yet his desire does not give immediate rise to a discussion of the measurements themselves. Instead, he makes the first of two statements concerning anatomical study, instructing artists to “isolate” the bones, which then serve as an armature for muscle and flesh. This process must be followed, he adds, “so that it is not difficult to understand where each muscle is beneath” (¶ 36). It is quite sudden how the topic of interest shifts away from mensuration and towards the articulation

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39 Alberti has very little to say about this first level in the hierarchy of corporeal construction. Baxandall surmises that the treatment is short because the *compositio superficierum* “has been forced on [Alberti] by his model.” See Baxandall, *Giotto and the Orators*, 132.


41 Ibid., 73.

42 Ibid.
of muscle. With equal rapidity, Alberti returns to his initial discussion of proportions, and announces that the system should be based on the human head. This conscious abandonment of the classical, Vitruvian foot could only have been sparked by Alberti’s own careful study of the human body. In the very next line, theory does indeed become practice, as this new unit of measure is justified by a personal observation: “It seems a more worthy thing to me for the other members to have reference to the head, because I have noticed as common in all men that the foot is as long from the chin to the crown of the head” (¶ 36). And so, as much as Alberti’s individual pronouncements on the topics of proportion and anatomy are themselves groundbreaking, the very organization of his ideas has profound implications for image-making. It is anything but haphazard or accidental that anatomy is sandwiched between proportions. Anatomical study—corporeal sensitivity—is the hinge; rational, numeric control over the body depends upon the careful consideration of organic human form.

Once anatomy and proportion have been worked out, “then provide that every member can fulfill its function in what it is doing” (¶ 36). Alberti thus insinuates, through the opening line of the very next passage, that form precedes function. To know the body is to enable its movement. Leonardo da Vinci, perhaps Alberti’s most sensitive reader, acknowledged this connection. “The painter who has knowledge of the sinews[muscles and tendons], will know well, when a limb moves, / how many and which sinews are the reason for it…” When he

43 Ibid.
44 Ibid. The emphasis is my own.
took the evolution of a single figure as his subject, Alberti established a resounding affinity between the shape of a body and its movements; anatomy and kinesiology are inextricably bound.\textsuperscript{46}

Runners, fencers, and hoplites in a contest—characters defined by overt action—now enter the discussion. These individual, action figures are then contrasted with a striking opposite: the ancient Meleager, whose death is defined as a loss of movement. What started out in Book II as a dialectic of part to whole, is here expanded to include a polemic between action and inaction, battles and funerals, life and death. Alberti is careful not to let emotions enter the equation just yet. At this point, he focuses entirely on the actions themselves; his concern is with the gestures, postures, and positions that endow a single figure with the movements appropriate to its station. A runner throws his hands and feet; a tired hoplite bends to the ground; the men who carry Meleager buckle under the weight of his flaccid body. Everything has been building up to this point: the single figure in motion is the artist’s compositional unit of measure.

As Alberti codified this evolution, drawings were being made that study the single figure and the movements available to it. A sheet attributed to Domenico Veneziano can be considered in terms of the single figure in motion (Figure 1.3).\textsuperscript{47} Rather than prepare for a specific composition, Domenico explores a man in varying degrees of action. A figure slumps in a chair, poises himself to strike a blow, and pares his fingernails. In preparation for his bronze relief of

\textsuperscript{46} Baxandall’s rhetorical paradigm proves inefficient for deducing such things about Alberti’s program for painting. Thomas Puttfarken noted that Baxandall’s analogy is difficult to sustain once we reach the composition of members. In Puttfarken’s own words, “It is the concern with the human body, and the importance attached to it, even in Alberti himself, that renders the implied analogy between pictorial and rhetorical composition incomplete and limits its critical usefulness.” Puttfarken, \textit{The Discovery of Pictorial Composition}, 55-59.

the *Flagellation*, Lorenzo Ghiberti repeatedly sketched a man in a variety of violent poses (Figure 1.4). Like Alberti’s interest in the twin poles of life and death, these early figural essays concentrate on a gamut of human movements, from the lethargic to the vigorous.

North of Florence, Pisanello repeated a nude women four times across the bottom of a small sheet filled with different motifs (Figure 1.5). Each figure constitutes Pisanello’s thinking about the female body in poses both functional and casual, from binding her hair to gesturing rightwards, as if to introduce the artist’s next riff. These are four different solo performances, a woman in the midst of four different actions.

Alberti does not expatiate on particular movements before returning to the science of movement itself. Advancing to near the end of Book II we learn that he is concerned not only with the *what*, but also with the *how* of human movement. A single figure can change its place in seven ways: up, down, right, left, forward, back, and around. These seven ways of moving act as vectors that can transform the pictorial field into a swirling mass of figures in motion. Such directional possibilities, however, do not prompt Alberti to list actions—jumping, running, turning, and the like. He ponders the following instead:

Consider how a man, in all his positions, uses his whole body to sustain his head, the heaviest of all members; and when the figure is standing on one foot, the foot is always on a perpendicular with the head, almost like the base of a column, and in one who stands upright the face is turned in the same direction as the feet. Movements of the head I see to be such that there is almost always some part of the body beneath to sustain it...or again, almost like the arm of a balance, it extends one member corresponding in weight to the head; and we see that whoever holds a weight extended on one arm, his foot being fixed almost like the tongue of a balance, the rest of the body is counterposed to counterbalance the weight (¶ 42).


This is a rather ingenious explanation of the principle of counterposition. In David Summers’ words, “there seems to be no close precedent for Alberti’s tectonic, mechanical conception which defined [movement] as the continual mutual compensation of weights arranged symmetrically around a central vertical axis.”

In the midst of thinking about the seven ways in which a body can progress through space, Alberti comes to consider the physical requirements of these movements: the center of gravity, he intuits, must be aligned with the supporting leg. Commenting on what we may assume was already a part of studio knowledge, and turning practice into precept, Alberti articulates the mechanics of human movement itself.

Alberti’s recognition of the center of gravity must be read in conjunction with the statements he makes about the limitations of human movement.

I have noticed that in raising the head no one turns his face higher than he would in looking at the zenith; horizontally no one can turn his face past a point where the chin touches the shoulder; the waist is never twisted so much that the point of the shoulder is perpendicular above the navel...I see in nature that the hands are almost never raised above the head, nor the elbow over the shoulder, nor the foot above the knee, nor between one foot and the other is there more space than that of one foot (¶ 43).


52 Janson attributes Alberti’s observation to a particular sculpture: Donatello’s *Saint Mark* (1413), which emphasizes the role placed by the weight-bearing leg. See H.W. Janson, "The Image of Man in Renaissance Art: From Donatello to Michelangelo," in *The Renaissance Image of Man*, ed. B. O’Kelly (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1961), 91-97. That Alberti had discovered something central to figuration itself is confirmed by the fact that he gives the center of gravity a prominent place in another treatise, *On Sculpture*. Alberti ostensibly wrote this book in order to present a canon of human proportions. Along with the presentation of this system comes also a detailed investigation of what Alberti calls the “median perpendicular.” This median is nothing less than the center of gravity, and Alberti understands the body to be organized around it. Using a complex machine called the *finitorium*, a sculptor could determine the distance between any member of the body and its center of gravity. On the *finitorium* see Jane Andrews Aiken, "Leon Battista Alberti's System of Human Proportions," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 43 (1980): 75. Spencer attributes Alberti’s knowledge to his earlier work in physics, which was part of the curriculum in philosophy. See his introduction to Alberti, *On Painting*, 23.

53 Ibid., 79-80.
It would be errant to see this injunction solely in response to certain virtuoso displays of extreme bodily torsion.\textsuperscript{54} For it is also integral to Alberti’s exploration of the mechanics of human movement—of what a body can be made to do when intangible forces like the center of gravity are brought into the sphere of the studio. A statement about physical limits is, in other words, the natural product of a mind totally consumed by the acquisition of kinetic knowledge. As Book II unfolds, a moving figure comes into being. A careful reading of the manner in which Alberti documents the evolution of this figure reveals that rational knowledge is crucial to its formation. Planes and members provide a framework for discussing anatomical control, the kind of control needed to render movement convincingly.

As a corollary to this, graceful modulation assumes an increasingly important role in figuration. At every point in the process just traced, there is an equal emphasis upon rational construction and graceful inflection. Indeed, Alberti is keenly aware throughout Book II of the need to attend to both the physical reality and the expressive potentiality of the body. A composition, an impassioned istoria, grows out of this dialectical process of control and inflection at the level of the single figure.\textsuperscript{55}

This dialectical exchange also belongs to dance. Dancers exert a tremendous amount of control over their bodies, but then tweak the rules that they have internalized. In essence, this is the definition of a great performer: someone who executes, almost mechanically, the ins and outs

\textsuperscript{54} David Summers, for example, interprets this passage as Alberti’s rejection of certain canonical works from Antiquity, especially the Discobolos. See David Summers, "Contrapposto: Style and Meaning in Renaissance Art," \textit{Art Bulletin} 59 (1977): 339 ff.

\textsuperscript{55} Alberti does indeed make antithetical demands: natural imitation coupled with idealistic adherence to an a priori norm of beauty. In Kenneth Clark’s words, there is “a conflict between a scientific and a stylistic approach, a dilemma...which underlies the whole of On Painting.” Kenneth Clark, \textit{Leon Battista Alberti on Painting}, Proceedings of the British Academy, Annual Italian Lecture (London: British Academy, 1944), 15.
of a piece of choreography, while bringing individual flair to that basic armature of steps. In other words, dance is at once studied and also freely rendered. This has been the assumption since Lucian’s ancient dialogue, De saltatione. While Lucian writes that a dancer’s body should “conform to the canon of Polykleitos,” he also praises the performer who, with “suppleness of limb,” makes it appear that “the might of Heracles and the daintiness of Aphrodite were to be manifested in the same person.”

So too was the Renaissance invested in dancers that style a standard performance. They divided their steps into two categories, natural and accidental, and assigned words like aire, fantasmata, and ondeggiare to the various ways in which a dancer might improvise upon the given steps. Guglielmo Ebreo himself declares that

Dancing with these three things [memoria, misure, and partire del terreno] and lacking aire and maniera, the dancing will appear to be crude and without beautiful gestures and grace, which if lacking, shows this art to be neither pleasurable nor delightful. These other things are necessary, otherwise it would be without any perfection.

56 τὸ δὲ σῶµα κατὰ τὸν Πολυκλείτου κανόνα ἡδὲ ἐπιδείξειν μοι δοκῶ µήτε γάρ ύψηλὸς ἢγα ἔστω καὶ πέρα τοῦ µετρίου ἐπιµήκης µήτε ταπεινὸς καὶ νανόδης τὴν φύσιν, ἀλλ’ ἐξεµέτρου ἀκριβῶς, οὕτε πολῦσαρκος, ἀπίθανον γάρ, οὕτε λεπτός ἢς ὑπερβολήν: σκελετῶδες τοῦτο καὶ νεκρικόν.” (line 75)

57 Accidentals are also a part of music: According to Edward Lowinsky, “chromatic tones could be obtained by notating accidentals, so called because they were treated as accidental rather than essential to the tone system, or by musica ficta, ‘feigned music.’ The system of musica ficta was a set of rules that allowed the singer to sing an accidental where none was written, according to two principles, that of necessity and that of beauty.” Edward Lowinsky, “The Musical Avant-garde of the Renaissance,” in Art, Science and History in the Renaissance, ed. Charles Singleton (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1968), 113-162, 114.

58 Che dançando se con queste tre cose & / Mancando ce L’aire & la Mainera / Parirebbe el dançare essere una cosa / Cruda & senza nisuno bello giusto & / Gracia le quale mancando non Mostra- / rebbe
Alberti shares—and indeed fully anticipates—this feeling. He is concerned with heightening movement just as much as, if not more than, he is committed to movement itself.

In Book II Alberti writes that artists “will put as much study and work into remembering what they take from nature as they do in discovering it” (¶ 42).\(^{59}\) Shortly thereafter, he refers to his method for depicting human movement as propelled first by fantasy and then by nature. “Let me say something about these movements,” he writes. “Part of this I fabricate out of my mind, part I have learned from nature” (¶ 42).\(^{60}\) Alberti’s appeal in Book III to opposing stories from Antiquity—one about Narcissus’ reflection, the other about Zeuxis’ Maidens of Croton—further illustrates this dichotomy. On the one hand, Alberti credits Narcissus as the founder of painting, thereby placing mimesis at the center of artistic practice. On the other hand, he recommends a Zeuxian model, thus implying the very opposite: nature’s inadequacy.\(^{61}\) In turn, Alberti warns that the painter Democritus failed to achieve the highest honors because he was more concerned with truth in representation than with beauty (¶ 56). Direct imitation of nature is only one component of the artistic process; the body is observed, but then ultimately perfected through artificial means.\(^{62}\)

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\(^{59}\) Alberti, *On Painting*, 73.

\(^{60}\) Ibid., 78.

\(^{61}\) For the references to Narcissus at Zeuxis’ Maidens of Croton, see ibid., 64 and 93, respectively. On the concept of nature in Quattrocento art theory, see especially, Jan Bialostocki, “Renaissance Concept of Nature and Antiquity.” For a very interesting analysis of Alberti’s inclusion of Narcissus in Book II, see Hubert Damisch, "Parlo Come Pittore," in *Leon Battista Alberti*, ed. Joseph Rykwert and Anne Engel (Milan: Olivetti, 1994), 555-74.

\(^{62}\) Even the ancients, Alberti claims, corrected flaws found in nature. “Plutarch says that when the ancient painters depicted the kings, if there were some flaw in them which they did not wish to leave unnoticed, they ‘corrected’ it as much as they could while still keeping a likeness.” Alberti, *On Painting*, 76-77.
modulation, Alberti effectively theorizes figuration in dance-like terms. Indeed, planes and members do not give rise to any generic figure in motion; what Alberti has in mind is quite precisely a graceful solo.

Returning to our discussion of the planes of the body, we see that grace is a criterion of figuration from the outset. “That grace in bodies which we call beauty is born from composition of planes” (¶ 35). Expecting to read further about the deconstruction of form into conjoined surfaces, we learn instead about the affective potential of the transitions made between them. Alberti imagines a young woman’s face, whose soft contours receive light and shade in way that is itself a graceful sight to behold.

The next phase in Alberti’s hierarchy of corporeal construction is the composition of members, and it is here that he introduces the sheer scope of movements available to the human body, from the exertion of combat to the listlessness of death. We saw that Alberti relishes in such variety; he hopes for an artist who will make “every part in motion.” This overzealous attitude should not, however, be mistaken for objectivity. For in the very last sentence of Alberti’s disquisition on corporeal members he announces his preference for a very specific kind of movement: “in motion he [the artist] will keep loveliness and grace. The most graceful movements and the most lively are those which move upwards in the air” (¶ 37).

Grace is a notoriously difficult concept to define. Rooted at once in behavior and religion, it immediately complicates any reading of Alberti’s text. Despite the sparseness of his words, however, Alberti is actually quite precise as to what he means. To defy gravity is to be

63 Ibid., 72.

64 Ibid., 74. As we shall see, the dance masters make a similar claim, writing that “un atto de aiereoso presenza et rilevato movimento colla propria persona....” Guglielmo Ebreo, De practica sue arte tripudii, trans. Barbara Sparti (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 96-97.
graceful. Grace is not an emotion, such as melancholy or anger, which, he says elsewhere, can be conveyed by wrinkled foreheads and swollen eyes; it is a matter of ethereal presence, more than it is an issue of functional gesture. It exists in planar transitions, rising motions, and airy poses—it is even described, at one point, as a “sweetness of quiet.”

It is easy to misconstrue the open-ended nature of Alberti’s preference for upward mobility as his inability to communicate exactly how grace manifests itself corporeally. The loose explanation given is, however, quite deliberate. Alberti’s point is that virtually any movement can be graceful. As in dance, grace is not specific to any one step, or even to one piece of choreography. Rather, it is a charming quality of finish, a subtle nuance, which ornaments movements and suffuses entire performances. Alberti’s fencers, philosophers, and hoplites are all potentially graceful, granted the artist who portrays them choreographs a certain amount of artifice into their actions. It is this subtle separation between the real and the ideal that separates the mundane from the dance-like. As Paul Valéry observed about dance,

Dance is an action that derives from ordinary, useful action, but breaks away from it, and finally opposes it… [so that] …all action which does not tend toward utility and which on the other hand can be trained, perfected, developed, may be subsumed under this simplified notion of the dance…

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65 Alberti, On Painting, 80. In Patricia Emison’s words, Grace “lies in that which is fugitive, such as the fleeting presence of half-light and slight movements of gesture and glance.” See Patricia Emison, "Grazia," Renaissance Studies 5, no. 4 (1991): 437. While Emison deals almost exclusively with the nature of grace in the sixteenth century, I believe hers is the best study to date to deal with the complex meanings associated with the concept and its application to art in the Renaissance.


67 He continues, “For the dancer is in another world; no longer the world that takes color from our gaze, but one that she weaves with her steps and builds with her gestures. And in that world acts have no outward aim; there is no object to grasp, to attain, to repulse or run away from, no object which puts a precise end to an action and gives movements first an outward direction and co-ordination, then a clear and definite conclusion….But this detachment from the environment, this absence of aim, this negation of
This is essentially what will happen at the turn of the sixteenth century. In the hands of artists—Raphael being the epitome—battles become balletic, bows become reverences, and gestures become highly expressive yet ultimately purposeless.68

If these moments when dance is experienced through the actions of a single figure seem coincidental given Alberti’s overarching desire for grace and beauty, there is another point in Book II when the solo he imagines is more directly inspired by a dancer. Deeply concerned with human movement, Alberti does not settle for the seven ways of indicating change of place: up, down, right, left, forward, back, and around. These are vectors that transform the pictorial field into a swirling mass of figures in motion. But that activation is further intensified when inanimate things join in the moving.

I am delighted to see some movement in hair, locks of hair, branches, fronds and robes. The seven movements are especially pleasing in hair where part of it turns and spirals as if wishing to knot itself, waves in the air like flames, twines around itself like a serpent, while part rises here, part there. In the same way branches twist themselves now up, now down, now away, now near, the parts contorting themselves like ropes. Folds act in the same way, emerging like the branches from the trunk of a tree. In this way they adhere to the seven movements so that no part of the cloth is bare of movement (¶ 45).69

explicable movement, these full turns (which no circumstance of ordinary life demands of our body), even this impersonal smile--all these features are radically opposed to those that characterize our action in the practical world and our relations with it.” Paul Valéry, "Philosophy of the Dance," in What Is Dance?, ed. Roger Copeland and Marshall Cohen (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 61-63. Almost forty years earlier, Rudolph Arnheim wrote, “...in order to be art, the body must become form and be accepted as such. If the spectator views the dancer as belonging to practical reality, he sees something monstrously unnatural, comparable to what we should feel if we met a Picasso figure walking in the public street....The dance may acknowledge the ‘practical’ nature of its instrument, the human body, by offering pantomime....Or it may tend toward pure, nonrepresentational movement.” Rudolph Arnheim, "Concerning the Dance " in Towards a Psychology of Art (London: Faber and Faber [originally published in Dance Magazine], 1966 [1946]), 262.

68 In this sense, Alberti fully anticipates art theory of the late sixteenth century. On Raphael and gracefulness in art, see Emison, "Grazia," 427-60. David Rosand has also noted that a “measured balance between natural and ideal” is key to understanding Raphael’s art. Rosand, Drawing Acts, 122.

69 Alberti, On Painting, 81.
Allowing his imagination free rein, Alberti constructs a fantastic comparison between hair, tree branches, and robes that allows both animate and inanimate objects to share the same qualities of dynamic movement.\(^\text{70}\) In giving to drapery the same seven movement he gives to the body, Alberti shows that the act of draping a figure was much more than just the final step in constructing the human form. Draperies transcend their function as mere ornamentation to become participants in movement itself.\(^\text{71}\)

Pisanello’s drawings of noble men and women illustrate what must have been something like Renaissance clothing (Figure 1.6).\(^\text{72}\) A woman, perhaps a member of the Este court, drowns in thick, luxurious fabrics. Her petit frame is enveloped in a magnificent fur cape, which trails like massive, unopened wings. This is a woman of rank, a person whose status is defined by the length and weight of her high-quality garments. Alberti, always in full recognition of decorum, nevertheless wishes something altogether different for drapery. It should whip through air and move through space, miming—and hence ameliorating—the graceful actions of the body it

\(^\text{70}\) Aby Warburg sensed in this passage a tension between “anthropomorphic imagination and analogical reflection.” See Aby Warburg, "Sandro Botticelli’s Birth of Venus and Spring [1893].” in The Renewal of Pagan Antiquity: Contributions to the cultural history of the European Renaissance, trans. David Britt (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute for the History of Art and the Humanities, 1999). In more recent years, the most sensitive interpretation of this passage appears in Georges Didi-Huberman, "The Imaginary Breeze: Remarks on the Air of the Quattrocento," The Journal of Visual Culture 2, no. 3 (2003): 275-89, where it is written that, “It is fascinating to observe the extent to which Alberti enters into the fractal intimacy of these ‘surfaces in motion’, to which he assigns a common morphology. Multiple folds emanate from a single fold like leaves grow from the twig, the twigs from the branch and the branches from the trunk; but, in addition, each local fold reproduces the global structure, each detail of the movement contains the totality of possible movements” (281).

\(^\text{71}\) See again Didi-Huberman, "The Imaginary Breeze," 281: “Alberti here defines nothing less than the field of animation proper to painting. The principle flaw of painting—namely, that it is an inanimate surface that merely bears a semblance to animate things—becomes prodigious once all of the movements in a painting function on the same level of effectiveness. Whether they are mechanical or organic, subsidiary or essential, local disturbances or disturbances globally propagated throughout the picture, they all conspire to animate the image...Alberti insists, then, that this power of animation should incorporate the field of ‘accessories in motion’: hair, manes, branches, foliage, or draperies.”

\(^\text{72}\) See Degenhart, Pisanello und Bono da Ferrara, cat. 728.
ostensibly covers. Alberti thus redefines the relationship between a figure and its drapery in a wholly new and symbiotic way. Drapery seizes upon form and defines movement.\(^{73}\)

It was Aby Warburg who famously recognized that the mobilization of drapery and hair was an ancient device for heightening the perception of movement. His discovery of the fundamental role played by these “accessory forms in motion” (bewegtes Beiwerk) was made in response to the question that continually directed his research: What was it about antiquity that interested the Renaissance artist? In attending to this question, Warburg found that Renaissance artists were fascinated by ancient formulas for heightening human movement. Dynamic drapery and hair, they learned, help to create a strong, sensory impression of motion.

Instrumental in Warburg’s contribution to art history was Alberti’s passage on flying draperies and hair. By drawing upon this antique formula for the intensification of movement Alberti was, Warburg implies, also claiming dance as a significant model for art. For an “imaginary breeze” does not flow through all antique figures; where the wind gusts, the dancer lives. Beyond involving artists in the reclamation of Antiquity, Alberti is thus responsible for a more specific integration: the formal properties of dance entering into the artist’s studio.\(^{74}\) It is just such an assimilation that gives birth to La Ninfa fiorentina—the fluttering female figure Warburg sees mysteriously dancing her way in and out of so many Florentine pictures.

\(^{73}\) On this symbiotic relationship, see ibid.: 275-89, and especially 281, where it is written that “only the painter can defy gravity and intensify the natural configurations of movement.” Alberti is not the only fifteenth-century writer on art to discuss the role of wind. Atmospheric effects also concern Lorenzo Ghiberti, who writes about ancient art from the perspective of air sculpted into draperies, of air painted by Apelles, or in the form of a variety of weather conditions, such as thunder and hail. See Lorenzo Ghiberti, I commentarii (Firenze: Giunti, 1998 [c.1447]), I, 6, 9; I, 8, 10; I, 8, 15: 56, 72, 75). For insightful commentary on these passages, see Didi-Huberman, “The Imaginary Breeze,” 278.

\(^{74}\) Didi-Huberman points out that “commentators are silent when it comes to the supposed ‘direct source’ of Alberti’s injunction to make hair and drapery float in the wind.” He reminds the reader that H. Janitschek’s edition of On Painting, which Warburg used, fails to annotate paragraphs 44 and 45 of Alberti’s text. Grayson’s 1975 edition makes the same omission. See ibid.: 286, note 8.
From Warburg’s perspective, Alberti learned from dancers just as much as he took from rhetoricians. This is one of the great insights brought to Alberti’s text, and yet it does not figure prominently in the scholarship on *Della pittura*. That the dancers lying furtively behind Alberti’s text were not objects of Warburg’s wild imagination but extant figures available for study is attested to by Pisanello’s drawings of classical antiquities. Beyond a treasury of ancient motifs, these drawings constitute a veritable compendium of kinetic knowledge. Rarely did Pisanello copy the entire sarcophagus; instead, he was attracted to figures in motion, and dancers in particular (Figure 1.7). Contained within his *taccuino di viaggio* are drawings of battles, hunts, triumphs, satyrs, and maenads (Figure 1.8). When taken together, these subjects share a common denominator: complex movements and draperies that accentuate those movements. Maenads, especially, are known for the difficulty—perhaps even impossibility—of their motions. Under the influence of Dionysus, they execute dances that must have captured the eyes of artists devoted to the challenge of representing human movement on a two-dimensional surface. A slightly awkward drawing of a maenad shows Pisanello studying what Alberti imagined: the potential for drapery to accentuate human movement (Figure 1.9).\textsuperscript{75} Drapery traces the contour of an outstretched leg, the curve of the back, and the point of a toe—the defining aspects of this figure’s pose. In plucking these vivacious women from their original context, Pisanello uses dance to study human movement.

Alberti may have also studied movement from this very same sarcophagus. In Book II, he takes histrionic movements to task.

You will find that in expressing too violent movements and in making the breast and small of the back visible at the same time in the same figure—a think which is neither possible nor becoming—some think to be praised because they hear that figures appear

\textsuperscript{75} For the three aforementioned drawings, see Degenhart, *Pisanello und Bono da Ferrara*, cats. 731, 746, and 750, respectively.
most lively which most throw about all of their members. For this reason their figures appear hackers and actors without any dignity in the painting (¶ 44).76

Where might Alberti have seen such a serpentine figure? The maenad Pisanello plucked from the sarcophagus displays her chest and the small of her back simultaneously—the complex torsion Alberti specifically mentions, but ultimately disfavors. Indeed, the characteristics Alberti names—violence, torsion, and chaotic limbs—describe maenads. Apparently, Alberti has based one proscription on his response to a dancer.

Warburg believed that dancers formed the background of Della pittura, but their presence therein has since been overshadowed by literary sources. Alberti was indeed a humanist, but he was also someone who learned from visual things just as much texts.77 He dedicates the Italian translation of his treatise to practicing artists, is adamant that his readers consider him a painter, and litters Della pittura with references to artworks, the majority of which are antique.78 In Book II, an airy nymph—and perhaps even a maenad—is the guiding light behind Alberti’s animation of the single figure. Her presence is shrouded in description, but at the end of the century, in drawings and paintings by artists like Leonardo, Botticelli and Ghirlandaio, it

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76 Alberti, On Painting, 80.

77 Alberti is writing at a very early date, and so it is difficult to surmise which images of dancers were available to him. Warburg focused on a relief showing Achilles on Scyros, one of the eight panels set into the staircase of S. Maria in Aracoeli, and a Roman statue of Pomona, now in the Uffizi. While a fifteenth-century drawing after the Achilles panel attests to the fifteenth century’s awareness of the relief, Phyllis Pray Bober’s Census clarifies that the earliest reference we have to the Pomona is in Bocchi’s description of the Uffizi (1591). Of more immediate availability to Alberti, according to the Census, would have been a relief panel depicting the Death of Pentheus located in the Camposanto at Pisa since the end of the thirteenth century. This prized relief, the source for many important works by the Pisani, Donatello, and Pollaiuolo, depicts a maenad with flying drapery. Of interest also is a sarcophagus depicting the Judgment of Paris, which was located in S. Maria a Monterone in Rome since at least the end of the fifteenth century. See Aby Warburg, "Sandro Botticelli's Birth of Venus and Spring," 106, 127, and Phyllis Pray Bober and Ruth Rubenstein, Renaissance Artists and Antique Sculpture (London: Harvey Miller and Oxford University Press, 1986), 150-51.

78 In fact, Alberti only mentions one post-classical work: Giotto’s Navicella.
becomes quite clear that this graceful dancer is one solo at the heart of an Albertian composition.\footnote{Alberti only makes direct mention of a nymph once. “When you paint Diana leading her troop, the robes of one nymph should be green, of another white, of another rose, of another yellow, each a different color, so that light colors are always near other different dark colors.” Alberti, \textit{On Painting}, 84-85.}

\textbf{Harmonic Chorus}

The single figure is not an end in itself. An istoria, Alberti reminds us, “gives greater renown to the intellect than any colossus” (¶ 35).\footnote{Ibid., 72. On colossi, see Leonard Barkan, \textit{Unearthing the Past} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 113 ff.} In the shift from treating planes and members to treating the composition as a whole is a parallel move from solo to chorus, thus implying that the success of a multi-figure composition lies in one’s dedication to first studying a single body.\footnote{A somewhat different interpretation of the single figure is given by Puttfarken in \textit{The Discovery of Pictorial Composition}, 53ff, who argues that the Renaissance did not have the conceptual tools to discuss composition beyond the single figure. The art historian’s interest in multi-figure compositions is, in Puttfarken’s opinion, a modern notion. The general thrust of Puttfarken’s argument was echoed by Hope, "'Compositon' from Cennini and Alberti to Vasari," an essay published in the very same year.} Throughout Book II, Alberti oscillates between part and whole, moving back and forth between the creation and inflection of a single figure and that figure’s integration within a larger group. He is after totality, a feeling of togetherness.\footnote{To use Michael Baxandall’s words, “Alberti was providing a concept of total interdependence of forms that was quite new, rather unclassical and, in the long run, much the most influential of the ideas in De pictura.” \textit{Giotto and the Orators}, 130.}

How is such visual harmony attained? Alberti’s explanation is given indirectly, in the course of examples that concentrate on the theme of variety. Consider, for instance, the mythological twins Castor and Pollux. The brothers are alluded to at the end of a long paragraph about decorum, which appears within a larger section devoted to the discussion of corporeal
members. It is inappropriate, Alberti begins, for beautiful young women like Helen and Iphigenia to have old and gnarled hands. Likewise, it would be ridiculous for an old man, such as Nestor, to be depicted with smooth, youthful skin. Alberti continues to present similar examples in the form of polar opposites—old versus young, rosy versus dirty, women in men’s clothes versus men in women’s clothes—until we arrive at Castor and Pollux. The allusion is curious, because unlike the previously mentioned antitheses, twins are, by definition, identical, and therefore pose a unique challenge: the portrayal of individuality between two figures that are physically indistinguishable. Alberti finds the ancients to have been particularly good at solving this problem: “The Antique painters took care in painting Castor and Pollux to make them appear brothers, but in the one a pugnacious nature appeared and in the other agility” (¶ 38). The twins illustrate the principle of variety within uniformity—the artist’s ability to cut separate shapes that fuse into a single, harmonic whole.

Just as Alberti began this disquisition on variety with an example—Castor and Pollux—so too does he finish it with one.

A painting in which there are many bodies in many dissimilar poses is always especially pleasing. There some stand erect, planted on one foot, and show all the face with the hand high and the fingers joyous. In others the face is turned, the arms folded and the feet joined. And thus to each one is given his own action and flection of members; some are seated, others on one knee, others lying. If it is allowed here, there ought to be some nude and others part nude and part clothed in the painting; but always make use of shame and modesty (¶ 40).

These exemplary poses are not so dissimilar at all. They seem dualistic, but like Alberti’s complementary colors—rose and green, white and yellow—these poses harmonize because they are antithetical. Dissimilarity yields harmony. Included also are poses that, when linked together, unfurl themselves like a scroll: seated, one knee, lying down.

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84 Ibid., 76.
Alberti’s second iteration of composition as nothing less than the harmonization of bodies is wedged between the aforementioned passages. Again, the order in which Book II unfolds carries significance: by flanking the definition of composition with examples of variety, Alberti places rhetorical emphasis on the notion that a harmonic composition is also a contrapuntal one, a controlled aggregation of disparate, yet complementary elements.

It is just this sense of control over the pictorial field that serves to distinguish Alberti from other humanists who wrote about painting. The copious, almost encyclopedic details offered by Pisanello, whose florid paintings aroused ekphrastic descriptions, irritate Alberti.

I certainly condemn those painters who, because they wish to seem copious or because they wish to leave nothing empty, on that account pursue no composition. But indeed they scatter everything around in a confused and dissolutioned way, on which account the historia seems not to enact but rather to disorder its matter... (¶ 40).  

Copiousness and variety are not equal. For Alberti, variety controls copiousness: “I should wish this copia to be ornata with a degree of varietas.” Thanks to the philological rigor of Michael Baxandall, we know that the subtext here is classical rhetoric, and specifically, the periodic sentence. The strict rules governing the construction of a period supplied Alberti with a venerated model, the syntax of which he transferred to painting. Amongst the many syntactical attributes of classical prose, the Renaissance was particularly attracted to its antithetical character. For Baxandall, Leonardo Bruni exemplifies this predilection. Like so many humanists, he was devoted to the idea that “gay and witty interrelationships of words, set

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85 Ibid., 75-76.
86 On the distinction Alberti makes between these two rhetorical values, see Baxandall, Giotto and the Orators, 136 ff.
87 Baxandall summarizes “—the notion of compositio is a very precise metaphor transferring to painting a model of organization derived from rhetoric itself” (ibid., 131).
together like a vermicular pavement or mosaic, have the utmost charm.”

Alberti himself made the principle of antithesis both a syntactical and pictorial habit when writing *De pictura*, the Latin edition of his treatise. He juxtaposes words like *intemperanter/indiligenter* and *admodum/paulum*, while simultaneously advocating for a kind of compositional contrapposto.

I desire all these movements to be in a painting: there are some bodies placed towards us, others away from us, and in one body some parts are shown to the observer, some are drawn back, some are high and some low (¶ 43).

Essentially, Alberti claims for painting a principle that had, since Antiquity governed rhetoric and that will come, in the Renaissance, to control music: *harmonia est discordia concors*.

*Della pittura* does not provide a fully formed discourse on pictorial harmony. It contains the initial thoughts on a concept that Alberti returns to again and again throughout his career.

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88 Baxandall points out (ibid., 24, note 39; 30-31) that Alberti himself adopts this syntactical habit in both the Latin and Italian versions of *Della pittura*. The desire for oppositional relationships extends beyond language in the classical period to embrace other aspects of culture. For the complex history surrounding the ancients’ ability to see harmony in discord, “to see the triumph of symphony over the discordant voices,” cf. Leo Spitzer, *Classical and Christian Ideas of World Harmony* (Baltimore: A.G. Hatcher, 1963).

89 Baxandall also observes how Alberti’s Latin text is itself modeled on the periodic sentence; in other words, as he gives to painting the rule of juxtaposition, so too does his writing perform this essentially syntactical principle by opposing such adverbs as *intemperanter* and *indiligenter* when describing the antithesis formed when black and white are juxtaposed. See Giotto and the Orators, 29-30. The most important classical source in this respect is Cicero, who, in *De oratore*, argues for the great organizing force of antitheses. The relevant passages from Cicero are cited and discussed by Summers, "Contrapposto: Style and Meaning in Renaissance Art," 336-60. For a detailed treatment of classical contrapposto as a compositional device, see ibid.: 342-55., where Summers argues that “Alberti himself recognized the composition of figures, groups of figures, and colors by the juxtaposition of opposites, that is, by *contrapposto*, and clearly considered this construction to be a prime means to the attainment of *varietà*.” According to Summers, art theory advocated a model of contraposition, because antithesis was the major stylistic form in Western rhetoric and poetry—the two liberal arts to which painting aspired.


91 This is the central concern of Franchino Gaffurio’s *Practica musicae* (1496) and *De harmonia* (1500), the frontispieces for which carry the phrase *harmonia est discordia concors*. On *varietas* as critical to the contrapuntal character of Renaissance music, see Alexis Luko, "Tinctoris on Varietas," in *Studies in Medieval and Early Modern Music*, ed. Ian Fenlon, *Early Music History* (New York and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 99-136.
The notion of a harmonic composition, and more importantly, the affective power of harmony itself, surfaces in *Della famiglia* (1432-34), *Profugiorum ab aerumna* (1441), and above all, in *De re aedificatoria* (1452). Here, in the final treatise of his career, Alberti deems architecture the “most musical art,” and defines beauty in terms of composition, adopting the word *concinnitas* to express a value he had only experimented with in *Della pittura*: our innate attraction to harmonic fit—the strong grip of commensurability. That the greatest commentary upon *Della pittura* is to be found in a treatise on architecture is hardly surprising, since for Alberti, as for Vitruvius before him, architecture was theorized in corporeal terms.

The composition of a building takes center stage in *De re aedificatoria*. In Branko Mitrovic’s reading of the treatise, “The prominent position assigned to the formulation of the concept of *lineamenta* in the opening sections of *De re aedificatoria* announced that Alberti’s aesthetic theory was likely to be one which relates human aesthetic judgments to the shapes and formal properties of objects.” *Lineamenta*, or design, precedes construction just as in *Della pittura* form precedes function. Alberti’s approach to architecture might even be described as pictorial, in as much as his ideal building seems to grow directly out of the formal priorities set forth in *Della pittura*, which is dedicated to an architect and written at a time when Alberti was

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93 According to Alina Payne, “the most significant overlap and potential for discourse migration between architecture and the figural arts was...their shared paradigm, the human body.” See Alina Payne, *The Architectural Treatise in the Italian Renaissance* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 66.

94 In Payne’s words, “It should not be surprising that the author of of *De Pictura*, who places composition at the center of the art of painting, should also be most sensitive to its role in architecture.” In her analysis, Alberti gives composition a presence it never had in Vitruvius. See ibid., 80.

avidly reading Vitruvius’s *De architectura*. Furthermore, the proportional systems he presented in *Della pittura* and *De statua* were not exclusive to the human figure. Guided by the classical image of the Vitruvian Man, Alberti transferred human proportions to architecture, where they transcend their basic rationality and achieve an effect akin to musical harmony. In turn, the balance maintained in *Della pittura* between rational control and graceful inflection is struck also in *De re aedificatoria*, wherein Alberti states how he is keenly aware of the difficulties encountered in executing a work in such a manner that it marries practical convenience with dignity and grace, so that ... these parts are imbued with a refined variety, in accordance with the demands of proportion and concinnitas.

Although *De architetura* is the most obvious precedent for *De re aedificatoria*, Vitruvius does not use the term concinnitas, preferring instead disposizione and symmetria, which call attention to the numerical basis of a sound design. Concinnitas, however, appears exactly fifteen times in

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98 Leon Battista Alberti, *On the Art of Building in Ten Books*, trans. Joseph Rykwert, Neil Leach, and Robert Tavernor (Cambridge, Mass and London: The MIT Press, 1994), 2.1.35 [“...quanto sia difficile condurre un lavoro in modo che la convenienza pratica delle parti possa conciliarsi col decoro e l’eleganza: che cioè l’opera sia lodata, oltre che per altri rispetti, anche perché le sue parti sono armoniosamente variate secondo una concezione unitaria delle proporzioni.” See Leon Battista Alberti, *L’architettura*, trans. Giovanni Orlandi (Milan: Editioni il Polifilo, 1989), 54]. It is on this point of intersection that Koenigsberger aligns the architect and the painter. “The work of Alberti himself testifies to the common fact that the dividing line between architect and painter could be a faint one. Thus, the architect who envisaged the imitation of nature on the basis of harmony and proportion, and the painter who began to talk of imitation of nature both in mathematical terms, and in terms of naturalistic design, were often the same person.” Koenigsberger, *Renaissance Man and Creative Thinking*, 180.
Cicero’s *De oratore*, and it is from this text that Alberti must have drawn inspiration.\(^9^9\) For Cicero, it signals the harmonic relationship between part and whole in a sentence, which is like “a body of its own as it were, and neither headless nor feet-less, with a middle and with members adapted to each other and to the whole.”\(^10^0\) It is this inextricable relationship, moreover, that ultimately affects the orator’s audience. This must have piqued Alberti’s interest, for he was acutely aware of his culture’s innate attraction to harmonic fit. In Book II of *Della famiglia*, he writes

> Man was created for the pleasure of God, to recognize the primary and original source of things amid all the variety...He was made to praise God together with universal nature, seeing in every living thing such great and perfectly matched harmonies of variegated voice and verse and music combined in concord and loveliness.\(^10^1\)

In *Della tranquillità dell’ animo* (also known as *Profugiorum ab aerumna*), an anecdote is told that provides a fictional context for this theory. Before the Duomo of Florence, the character Agnolo Pandolfini remarks:

> I often think it delights me so because I see in it a graceful charm joined with a full and robust solidity, so that on the one hand, each of its parts appears to be placed so as to please the eye, and on the other, I know that everything has been made so as to endure....And what I appreciate most, there is a wonderful sweetness to these voices heard at the mass and other rites...[they] quiet every disturbance of the soul and move me to a certain indefinable, what I call *lentezza d’animo*.\(^10^2\)

\(^9^9\) See Mitrovic, *Serene Greed of the Eye*, 112, note 308. While Mitrovic focuses on Cicero, he reminds us that *concinnitas* goes all the way back to Aristotle’s *Nichomachean Ethics*. See ibid., 118.


\(^10^1\) Koenigsberger traces this belief back to the *Micrologus*, a treatise on music written by Guido da Arezzo in c. 1026. “Hence it is that we loathe and abhor discords and are delighted when we hear harmonical concords, because we know there is in ourselves the like concord.” Cited and discussed in Koenigsberger, *Renaissance Man and Creative Thinking*, 182 ff.

And in Book IX of *De re aedificatoria*, Alberti envisions a viewer like Pandolfini, someone who is attracted to the harmonic structure underlying the design of a building.

When you make judgments on beauty, you do not follow mere fancy, but the workings of a reasoning faculty that is inborn in the mind. It is clearly so, since no one can look at anything shameful, deformed, or disgusting without immediate displeasure and aversion. What arouses and provokes such a sensation in the mind we shall not inquire in detail, but shall limit our consideration to whatever evidence presents itself that is relevant to our argument. For within the form and the figure of a building there resides some natural excellence and perfection that excites the mind and is immediately recognized by it. I myself believe that form, dignity, grace and other such qualities depend on it, and as soon as anything is removed or altered, these qualities are themselves weakened and perish.  

Entrenched in *De re aedificatoria* is the firm belief that “the eyes are by their nature greedy for beauty and concinnitas....” Indeed, the commensurability of ratios which underlies both figural and architectural composition was endowed with affective power.

No wonder then that Alberti wished for architects to take their ratios “from the musicians to whom this kind of number is extremely well known,” or that the passages concerning man’s inherent attraction to harmonic compositions occur not within the books on design or

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104 Statements such as this led Rudolf Wittkower to posit Alberti’s awareness of a certain “inborn sense,” which he then places in the context of Neoplatonism. “[Alberti] maintains, in other words, that the perception of harmony through the senses is possible by virtue of this affinity of our souls [to the cosmic harmony of the world]. This implies that if a church has been built in accordance with essential mathematical harmonies, we react instinctively; an inner sense tells us, without rational analysis, that we perceive an image of the vital force behind all matter—of God himself.” Wittkower, *Architectural Principles in the Age of Humanism*, 25.
construction but within the book Alberti dedicates to the topic of ornament.\(^{105}\) For Vitruvius, ornament refers simply to the entablature of a building. Alberti’s conception is, again, much closer to rhetorical theory, and in this case, Quintilian’s: “the ornate is something that goes beyond what is merely lucid and acceptable.” By discussing *concinnitas* under the rubric of ornament, Alberti highlights its unmeasurable quality. Despite its basis in geometry, *concinnitas* refers to a visual experience beyond the quantitative aspects of built form. A paradox thus stands at the center of *De re aedificatoria*, and the practice and experience of architecture more generally: geometry, a rational science, supports a subjective experience.

This brings us back to painting, the medium through which Alberti first introduces the term *concinnitas*.\(^{106}\) Having considered *De re aedificatoria*, we might venture to say that as early as the 1430s, Alberti already believed that a painting’s viewer is moved by the harmonic nature of its composition just as much as, if not more than, the specific subject of the *istoria*.\(^{107}\) In 1414, long before Alberti ever set pen to paper, the humanist Giovanni da Ravenna voiced this very experience.

> When a painting is exhibited, the knowledgeable beholder expresses approval not so much of the purity and exquisite quality of the colours as about the arrangement and the proportion of its parts, and it is the ignorant man who is attracted simply by the colour.\(^ {108}\)

\(^{105}\) Cited and discussed in ibid., 110 ff. Wittkower tracks down an instance in which a musician is regarded as a critic of architecture. In 1490, the musical theorist Franchino Gaffurio is called to Mantua to discuss Milan Cathedral. See ibid., 137.


\(^{107}\) Refer back to note 30.

For Alberti, as for Giovanni da Ravenna before him, composition itself receives the most attention and praise. Size, copiousness, and variety, for instance, occupy a greater portion of the treatise than subject matter does. Furthermore, the very separation of *Della pittura* into three books, which treat the principles of composition first and the subjects for paintings last, attests to the primacy of the figural structure itself.

The notion that a harmonic figural composition is itself aesthetically potent—that it arouses an ineffable emotional response independent of the theme it renders—recalls the art of dancing. A dance presents a circuitous system, an apparently seamless group of individuals moving through space as a unit. Understanding and appreciating a piece of choreography hinges on the ability to gather meaning from this kinetic system. In other words, it is not the specific meaning garnered from this corporeal system that affects us; rather, it is the underlying, unified structure that captivates.

This has been the case at least since Greek Antiquity, when philosophers commented extensively upon the affective power of a harmonic choreographic structure.

As for the earth our nurse which winds about the pole extended through the universe, he fashioned it to be the guardian and craftsman of night and day, and the first and eldest of the gods born with the heavens. To describe the choral dances of these same gods, their juxtapositions and their retrogradations and their progressions, or to say which of these gods meet in conjunction and which in opposition, and how at times they hide each other from us, disappearing and appearing again, sending terrors and warnings about future events to those who cannot calculate their motions—to tell as this without visual models would be labour spent in vain.109

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109 Plato, *Timaeus* 40a-d, trans. Donald J. Zeyl (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2000), 27. (πτηνὸν καὶ ἀεροπόρον, τρίτη δὲ ἐνυδρόν εἶδος, πεζὸν δὲ καὶ χερσαῖον τέταρτον. τοῦ μὲν οὖν θείου τὴν πλείστην ἱδέαν ἐκ πυρὸς ἀπηργάζετο, ὅπως ὅτι λαμπρότατον ἱδέαν τε κάλλιστον εἶν, τὸ δὲ παντὶ προσεικάζων εὐκυκλόν ἐποίει, τίθησιν τε εἰς τὴν τοῦ κρατίστου φρόνησιν ἐκείνῳ συνεπόμενον, νείμας περὶ πάντα κύκλῳ τὸν οὐρανόν, κόσμον ἄληθινόν αὐτῷ πεποικιλμένον εἶναι καθ’ ὅλον. κινήσεις δὲ δύο προσῆψεν ἐκάστω, τὴν μὲν ἐν ταῦτῳ κατὰ ταῦτα, περὶ τῶν αὐτῶν ἀεὶ....) Plato’s account of the cosmic dance belongs to a entire tradition in which dance is used as a metaphor for the harmony of invisible phenomena. Sophocles writes of Dionysus leading a dance of “fire-breathing stars” (*Antigone*, 1146); the Pleiades, Hyades, and other stars dance across Achilles’ shield in *Electra* (Euripides, 467-68); for Pliny, even small islands at Nymphaeum can be called “Dancers,” because their movement is synchronized with
So reads a small portion from Plato’s *Timaeus*, in which choral dancing emerges as a vision of the harmonic unity of the cosmos. Offering a theory of dance’s primordial origin, Lucian expatiated on Plato’s ideas in *De saltatione*:

> Dance came into being contemporaneously with the primal origin of the universe, making her appearance with Love—the love that is age-old. In fact, the concord of the heavenly spheres, the interlacing of the errant planets with the fixed stars, their rhythmic agreement and timed harmony, are proofs that Dance was primordial.¹¹⁰

Guided by the perfect consonances of music, earthly dancing is an echo of the concordance of the planets and stars. So too does Plotinus, the founder of Neoplatonism, see dance as the physical manifestation of phenomena beyond human comprehension. In the *Enneads*, he defines choral dancing as an art in which dancers with specific roles keep harmony with the other members of the dance. For Plotinus, a chorus is like a flock—a single, “sympathetic organism” in which whatever affects a part, ultimately disrupts the whole.¹¹¹


The capacity for dance to articulate the mysterious harmony of the heavens remains a leitmotif of early Christian writings, the difference being that the pagan dance of planets and stars is transformed into a dance of angels in heaven. The important place of angelic dancing in the religious imagination is solidified by a variety of authors, ranging from Dionysus the Pseudo-Areopagite to Thomas’ Aquinas and Dante. No one, Dante asserts, should be amazed that the rhythms and patterns of choral dancing reveal “tanto secreto ver.”

In the fifteenth century, Marsilio Ficino translated into Latin the works of Plato, Plotinus, and Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite. In the following passage, the relationship of part to whole—the leitmotif of Alberti’s earlier writings on painting and architecture—is given Christian resonance.

Moreover, every divisible object is in a sense one whole composed from many parts. If the parts do not possess something that was one and the same and common to them all, they would never form that whole.

God is defined by His unity, whereas the world is characterized by multiplicity. During the rare moments when human beings experience variety become uniformity, they are, according to Ficino’s unitarian philosophy, given momentary access to the divine. According to Guglielmo

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Ebreo, dance qualifies as one of these rare moments, for it is inextricably linked to the efficacious “measured and perfect consonances” of music.\textsuperscript{114}

In light of this cultural background, we might now reconsider the fact that art historians tend to draw naturally upon the vocabulary of dance when confronted with harmonic figural compositions. Key examples are the historiographic moments with which this chapter began: the responses of Creighton Gilbert and Michael Baxandall to Simone Martini’s \textit{Annunciation} and Botticelli’s \textit{Pallas and the Centaur} (Figures 1.1 and 1.2). These subjects are not immediately relatable to dance, and yet art historians do not hesitate to accord them the status of choreography when describing the phenomenal pull of their figural unity.\textsuperscript{115} For they activate what Alberti knew to be our inborn attraction to harmonic fit.

\textbf{The Three Graces}

It is in light of the importance Alberti assigns to harmonic compositions that we should understand his choice of the Three Graces as an ideal subject for the painter. Forever locked in a

\textsuperscript{114} See Guglielmo Ebreo, \textit{De Practica sue arte tripudii}, 89. On the subject of Neoplatonic undertones in the treatises on dance, see Berghaus, "Neoplatonic and Pythagorean Notions of World Harmony and Unity and Their Influence on Renaissance Dance Theory," 43-70, and Nevile, \textit{The Eloquent Body}, ch. 4.

\textsuperscript{115} For Creighton Gilbert’s description of Simone Martini’s \textit{Annunciation} as choreographic, see note 2 above. Another noteworthy mention of Annunciations as well as other two-figure compositions in terms of dance choreography occurs in Fermor, "Studies in the Depiction of the Moving Figure in Renaissance Art, Art Theory, and Criticism", 160. On Botticelli in particular, see Vecchi, "Movement, Action and Expression in the Work of Sandro Botticelli," 53, where it is written that “the experience of dance nevertheless seems to have had a considerable bearing on...Botticelli’s art, commencing with his singular feeling—almost that of a choreographer—for the expressive interaction of the movements of figures, in pairs or groups.” The most compelling uses of choreography with respect to Raphael’s design for Marcantonio Raimondi’s \textit{Massacre of the Innocents} appear in Patricia Emison, "Raphael's Multiples," in \textit{The Cambridge Companion to Raphael}, ed. Marcia B. Hall (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 196, Roger Jones and Nicholas Penny, \textit{Raphael} (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1983), 93, and Rosand, \textit{Drawing Acts}, 130. Further examples are cited in Chapter 5 of this dissertation.
measured dance, the Three Graces are a visual emblem of unity—of harmony mapped onto a group of bodies—and thus constitute a veritable mise-en-scène for compositional practice itself.

The Three Graces shift our focus to the third, and final book of Della pittura, where Alberti is concerned primarily with two things: determining what gives “good will and fame to the painter,” and building further upon the rules established for composing an istoria. This time, however, his discussion of an istoria focuses not on the fundamental principles underlying its composition—the technical “how” of painting—but on the invention of the subject itself.

Invention is a recurrent theme of Alberti’s literary output, but it is here in Book III of Della pittura that he is most explicit about its importance: “A beautiful invention has such force, as will be seen, that even without painting it is pleasing in itself alone” (¶ 53). For this reason, Alberti suggests that painters associate with men of letters, whose literary inventions will aid the artist in the conception of an imaginative istoria. Perhaps worried that his fellow artists will be offended by the implication that written inventions precede painted ones, Alberti reminds them that even the renowned Phidias, “more famous than other painters, confessed that he had learned from Homer, the poet, how to paint Jove with much divine majesty” (¶ 54).

Thus absolved, Alberti offers two exemplary literary models, the Calumny of Apelles and the Three Graces:

Invention is praised when one reads the description of Calumny which Lucian recounts was painted by Apelles. I do not think it alien to our subject. I will narrate it here in order to point out to painters where they ought to be most aware and careful in their inventions.

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116 Imagination is discussed by Alberti in several of his texts. In the opening of De re aedificatoria, for example, he writes that while “In the beginning, there were a few basic building types, all derived from Nature,” eventually, “the various kinds of buildings have become almost infinite.” And in Canis, an often overlooked, tongue-in-cheek account of his dog, Alberti mentions the writer’s ability to create rhetorical images. He writes, “Besides all this, others invented fabulous things that could not be absolutely believed....” Cited and discussed in Jarzombek, On Leon Baptista Alberti, 89.

117 Alberti, On Painting, 91.
In this painting there was a man with very large ears. Near him, on either side, stood two women, one called Ignorance, the other Suspicion. Farther, on the other side, came Calumny, a woman who appeared most beautiful but seemed too crafty in the face. In her right hand she held a lighted torch, with the other hand she dragged by the hair a young man who held up his arms to heaven. There was also a man, pale, ugly, filthy and with an iniquitous aspect, who could be compared to one who has become thin and feverish with long fatigues on the fields of battle; he was the guide of Calumny and was called Hatred. And there were two other women, serving women of Calumny who arranged her ornaments and robes. They were called Envy and Fraud. Behind these was Penitence, a woman dressed in funeral robes, who stood as if completely dejected. Behind her followed a young girl, shameful and modest, called Truth. If this story pleased as it was being told, think how much pleasure and delight there must have been in seeing it painted by the hands of Apelles (¶ 53).  

I should like to see those three sisters whom Hesiod gave the names Aglaia, Euphrosyne and Thalia, who were painted laughing and taking each other by the hand, with their clothes girdled and very clean. This symbolizes liberality, since one of the sisters gives, the other receives, the third returns the benefit; these degrees ought to be in all perfect liberality. How much praise similar inventions give to the artist should be clear (¶ 54).  

Alberti unfolds his suggestions in just such a consecutive manner, and the absence of a break for commentary between them invites comparison on the part of the reader. Both istorie are fundamentally figural, but unlike the Calumny, for which Alberti provides a pairing of author and artist, the Three Graces is presented in purely literary terms—that is to say, Alberti credits Hesiod, without citing any one artist’s representation of the poet’s invention. Moreover, whereas the Calumny is a multi-figured, complex, and tormented tale about the tribulations of the victim of injustice, the Three Graces is a simple and peaceful allegory of friendship and liberality. Aside from the aesthetic implications of contrasting emotional tones, which we shall treat later, is the embedded contrast made here between a story and an allegory. This is significant, because

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Della pittura continually stresses the construction of an istoria. Thus, the central place accorded to the creation of a narrative framework for painting breaks down when Alberti suggests the Three Graces—a non-narrative dance.

If not material for a narrative, then what does the Three Graces offer? From the vast array of ancient stories and paintings available to Alberti, why turn to Hesiod (actually Seneca) for a dance? The Graces’ tranquil round, evocative of a never-ending cycle of giving and receiving, certainly resonates with the ethical dimension of Della pittura. Book III opens by declaring that painters should be honorable men, professionals concerned with good will more than with riches.

Everyone knows how much more the goodness of a man is worth than all his industry or art in acquiring the benevolence of the citizens...It often happens that the rich, moved more by amiability than by love of the arts, reward first one who is modest and good, leaving behind another painter perhaps better in art but not so good in his habits. Therefore the painter ought to acquire many good habits—principally humanity and affability (¶ 52).

Although couched in a language of friendship and good will, Alberti’s choice to feature the Graces in his proleptic treatise demands a further explanation, and one that is rooted in visual, rather than ethical challenges. For in the wake of Della pittura, artists were increasingly attracted to the compositional formula manifested by the Graces. That the choreography of the trio came to mean something to Renaissance artists is confirmed by the numerous compositions

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120 Could Alberti have seen an ancient depiction of the Three Graces? Cardinal Prospera Colonna owned the sculpture of the Three Graces prior to their transfer to the Piccolomini Library in Siena. Alberti, who traveled to Rome in 1432 and permanently in 1443, may very well have seen this famous marble group. See chapter 3, note 3. On Alberti and Cardinal Colonna, see Grafton, Leon Battista Alberti: Master Builder of the Italian Renaissance, 239 ff, with further bibliography.


122 Alberti, On Painting, 89-90.
that are organized according to its principle of bilateral symmetry. Nowhere is this tendency more concentrated than in the work of Antonio Pollaiuolo, whose approach to composition is predicated almost entirely upon the rotation of a single figure in space (Figures 1.10, 1.11).

Like the brothers Castor and Pollux, Hesiod’s three sisters are bound to one another; each performs a distinct action, yet the group ultimately fuses into one mellifluous unit. The dance of the Three Graces is the pure embodiment of concinnitas, and thus encapsulates, in simple triplet form, the principle of harmony espoused throughout Della pittura. In other words, by invoking the Graces, Alberti does much more than suggest a future subject for painting; under the aegis of a dance, he defines the very nature of figural composition itself.

Beyond Grace

Given Alberti’s emphasis upon harmony, grace, and decorum, it is tempting to read the Three Graces as the very culmination of his treatise. But it cannot be taken for granted that the trio is preceded by, and paired with, the Calumny of Apelles. Faced on the one hand with the

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123 In his fundamental essay on the motif, Edgar Wind observed that the Three Graces’ “persistent attraction for great artists would seem to call for an explanation.” See Wind, "Seneca's Graces," 34. On bilateral symmetry, see David Summers, "Figure Come Fratelli: A Transformation of Symmetry in Renaissance Painting," in Sixteenth-Century Italian Art, ed. Michael W. Cole (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2006), 485-510. It is surprising that the Three Graces do not factor into Summers’s article, even though this trio provided the Renaissance with the most conspicuous model of bi-lateral symmetry, and one that could be endlessly inflected. See, for example, Andrea del Castagno’s Vision of St Jerome, Ercole de’ Roberti’s Wife of Hasdrubal and her Children, Durer’s Orpheus, and Signorelli’s Brera Flagellation. Castagno’s painting was brought to my attention in this context by Leo Steinberg, who argued in his Norton Lectures (1995-96) that the Vision of St Jerome is based on the Three Graces.

124 In thinking about the dance of the Three Graces as an emblem for artistic practice in the Renaissance, it becomes useful to remember that ancient poets call out to the trio for creative inspiration, and that epics, such as the Iliad, marry Aglaia to Hephaestus, the patron god of craftsmen. This antique correlation between the Three Graces and artistic practice gains special resonance towards the end of sixteenth century, when the trio figures prominently within paintings and prints devoted to subjects like the Triumph of Painting, Pygmalion, and the Artists’ Atelier. On the Three Graces as an allegory for art itself, see Veronika Mertens, Die Drei Grazien: Studien Zu Einem Bildmotiv in Der Kunst Der Neuzeit (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1994).
Graces—a token of quiet restraint—and on the other hand, with the Calumny—a story charged with turbulent emotion—can it be said that Alberti lays the foundation for an art that will come to pivot around an antithesis between grace and fury?125

The presumably deliberate juxtaposition of the Calumny and the Graces is not unique to Book III; in fact, Della pittura is shot through with polarities. In Book I, Alberti recognizes the effectiveness of comparison, declaring that “all things are known by comparison, for comparison contains within itself a power which immediately demonstrates in objects which is more, less or equal” (¶ 18).126 The visual force assigned to the comparative mode goes beyond mere differences in scale, the collocation of light and dark shades, or the pairing of different, yet complementary colors to encompass emotions and their kinetic correlatives.127

In Book II, within the context of his defense for painting as an art that moves the experienced and inexperienced alike, Alberti writes

Nature herself seems to delight in painting, for in the cut faces of marble she often paints centaurs and faces of bearded and curly headed kings. It is said, moreover, that in a gem from Pyrrhus all nine Muses, each with her symbol, are to be found clearly painted by Nature (¶ 28).128

Centaurs and Muses—raucous creatures and harmonious dancers—are the very antithesis of one another. This dichotomy trickles down throughout Book II. For instance, we read about the painter Demon’s sweaty hoplites, who, exhausted and out of breath, throw down their weapons.

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125 In Paul Holberton’s words, “Even Alberti’s choice of Seneca’s Three Graces might have been motivated by an idea of harmony and friendship, rather than strictly by one of liberality, since it seems to make a deliberate antonym to the quarrels of the Calumny of Apelles, the other subject Alberti recommended to painters.” See Holberton, "Of Antique and Other Figures: Metaphor in Early Renaissance Art," Word and Image 1 (1985): 50.

126 Alberti, On Painting, 55.


Among them is the hero Ulysses, feigning insanity. These action figures are immediately followed by a striking opposite: the dead Meleager, whose every member “appears completely dead—everything hangs, hands, fingers, and head; everything falls heavy” (¶ 37). Alberti thus invites his reader to imagine the stark difference between the body language of Demon’s aggressive contesters, and what is, presumably, the famous sarcophagus depicting the death of Meleager. In the space of one paragraph, Alberti runs the gamut from overt action to death.

“The istoria,” Alberti writes, “will move the soul of the beholder” (¶ 41). The means by which the istoria affects its viewers is human movement: “the movements of the soul are made known by the movements of the body” (¶ 41). What are the kinetic correlatives for subjects as serious as battles and deaths? Surely those “pleasant and graceful movements” to which Books II and III repeatedly return do not serve. Indeed, such subjects imply an affective range far greater than sweetness. In elaborating on his famous pronouncement of corporeal eloquence, it is Alberti himself who recognizes the broad arc of emotions with which the painter has to work.

Care and thought weigh so heavily that a sad person stands with his forces and feelings as if dulled, holding himself feebly and tiredly on his pallid and poorly sustained members. In the melancholy, the forehead is wrinkled, the head drooping, all members fall as if tired and neglected. In the angry, because anger incites the soul, the eyes are swollen with ire and the face and all the members are burned with colour, fury adds so much boldness there. In gay and happy men the movements are free and with certain pleasing inflections...Thus all the movements of the body should be closely observed by the painter (¶ 41-2).

This series of examples moves from sadness to happiness and, correspondingly, from weak to furious motion. And so, while it is certainly true that Alberti stresses that painters seek grace and

129 Ibid., 73.

130 Ibid., 78.

131 Ibid., 77. The emphasis is my own.
beauty in all things, and hopes that they temper their representations with moderation, it is also
correct to say that he contradicts these criteria by repeatedly grounding his treatment of painting
in themes of gut-wrenching emotion: fighting, death, sacrifice, and fear.\textsuperscript{132} There is, in other
words, a critical disjunction in \textit{Della pittura} between Alberti’s principles and the examples he
uses to illustrate them. When gathered together, these examples, and the principles they
exemplify, illustrate Alberti’s truly expansive vision for the art of painting. Fifty years later,
artists like Botticelli and Pollaiuolo will make manifest the thematic and emotional range latent
in \textit{Della pittura}. These two artists form a pictorial environment that embraces the full range of
bodily capability—from graceful solos and dancing maenads to harmonic choruses and violent
tragedies (Figures 1.12, 1.13).\textsuperscript{133}

This scope, captured first by Alberti in his significant pairing of the Calumny with the
Three Graces, is more expansive than that found in the treatises on dance. To be sure, Alberti
and the dance master share the belief that the movements of the body reflect the motions of the
mind; indeed, for both practitioners, the human body in motion is the affective unit of a coherent
composition.\textsuperscript{134} But the social sphere in which Renaissance dance operated restricted the body to

\textsuperscript{132} In addition to Demon’s hoplites and the death of Meleager, Alberti also presents Timanthes’
Immolation of Iphigenia, for which the ancient painter represented extreme states of grief. The story of
Iphigenia’s sacrifice is followed by praise for Giotto’s \textit{Navicella}, the only contemporary work mentioned
by Alberti. Like Iphigenia, the Navicella is a serious story, for which Giotto rendered fear, rather than
sadness, on the disciples’ faces. (Ibid., 78) In John Spencer’s words, “Of the myriad antique incidents
which he certainly must have known and could have chosen Alberti left aside all the lachrymose and
erotic. He was interested only in truly virile emotions. (Ibid., 24-25)

\textsuperscript{133} Aby Warburg recognized the period’s interest in “expressing the whole cycle of human emotional life,
from melancholy stillness to vehement agitation.” See Warburg, “Sandro Botticelli’s \textit{Birth of Venus} and
\textit{Spring}, ”157. The most recent publication to take up this kinetic scope is Bertrand Prévost, \textit{La Peinture en
Prévost’s chapters treat antithetical subjects, such as grace and war, civility and comedy.

\textsuperscript{134} In his treatise on dance, Guglielmo Ebreo writes, “This virtue of dance is simply an outward
manifestation of the movements of the soul...” (“La qual virtute del danzare non e altro che una actione
demonstrativa di fuori di movimenti spirituali...”) Ebreo, \textit{De practica sue arte tripudii}, 88-89.
a very limited range of movements. In announcing that “all the movements of the body should be closely observed by the painter” (¶ 42), Alberti fashions a choreographer for the art world, and one who races far ahead of the court dance master.¹³⁵

¹³⁵ If the dance masters did read Alberti, as Barbara Sparti suggests, then they lost sight of his undercurrents. It was up to the artists to register Alberti’s alternatives, to link the elegance of the Three Graces with the fury of the maenads. See Sparti, "Humanism and the Arts: Parallels between Alberti's on Painting and Guglielmo Ebreo's On...Dancing," 173-92.
2

**Duo**

Call and Response
Whosoever danceth not, knoweth not the way of life.
—Jesus Christ, Gnostic Hymn

I am angelic love who circles that high gladness that breathes out from the womb that was the dwelling place of our Desire; / So shall I circle, Lady of Heaven, until, you follow your son, and make still more divine the supreme sphere, because you enter it. Thus the circling melody sealed itself, and all the other lights sounded the name of Mary.
—Archangel Gabriel, in Dante, Paradiso, Canto 23

Venite in danza, or gente amorosa,
non tenete ascosa
la dolce fiammetta,
che si ben s’assetta
in alma gentile....
—Leon Battista Alberti, Venite in danza
Call and Response

The Annunciation to the Virgin takes the form of a short but intense conversation. In Luke 1:28, the sacred colloquy runs as follows:

And the angel came unto [Mary], and said, Hail, though that art highly favored, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women. And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be. And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: thou hast found favor with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus…Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee…And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her.

This notoriously brief episode—just thirteen lines—is comprised of bold statements and humble questions, of confrontations and submissions. No matter how large the mountain of exegetical literature on the Annunciation grew, nor how expansive the repertoire of symbolic props surrounding the protagonists became, the subject remained at its most fundamental level a conversation defined by asymmetry and union—a paradigm of discoria concors. The challenge presented to artists was to figure a harmonious dialogue, to enact individuality and unification simultaneously. Indeed, the tightly knit execution of variety within uniformity is the formal means through which the Annunciation expresses its meaning, from early Christian mosaics to twentieth-century American art (Figure 2.1).

In Simone Martini’s 1333 Annunciation, Gabriel’s body, the olive branch he holds, and the vase of flowers act in tandem to form one mellifluous unit that gravitates towards the Virgin, whose body hollows out a concavity to receive her visitor’s energy (Figure 2.2).1 The gentle curve of the angel echoes the bent stem of the olive branch, the top-heavy shoots of flowers, and

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1 The painting was commissioned for the altar of St. Ansanus in Siena Cathedral, and now hangs in the Uffizi. I discuss the work as purely Simone’s invention, but Lippo Memmi, his brother-in-law, is generally regarded as having participated in the altarpiece’s construction. On the painting’s history, see Andrew Martindale, Simone Martini (Oxford: Phaidon, 1988), 41-43 and cat. no. 12. Seligman (Gronigen: Bouma's Boekhuis, 1984).
the pointed arches. The Virgin’s body strikes a complementary pose. She approximates the angel’s gesture and matches the concave outline of her body to the convex curve of the objects she seems to pull within her orbit. This *Annunciation* is indeed replete with forms that cut familiar shapes. Gabriel and the Virgin are bound through bodily reciprocity, which culminates in opposing drapery corners—small pools of cloth on the verge of coalescence.\(^2\) No wonder the very center of the composition is marked by a perfect pair of lilies (Figure 2.3).

One hundred years later, Donatello develops further this expressive structure, in which the coupling of action and reaction is palpably synchronized. Such internal logic captured the attention of Giorgio Vasari, who launches his account of Donatello’s career with the Cavalcanti *Annunciation* (Figure 2.4).\(^3\)

In his youth [Donatello] made many things, which were not highly regarded because they were so many. But the thing which earned him a name and brought him recognition was an Annunciation in blue-grey stone which was placed in the church of Santa Croce in Florence at the altar in the chapel of the Cavalcanti family, for which he made a decoration in the grotesque style. . . .Donatello demonstrated above all his great ingenuity and artistry in the figure of the Virgin, who, frightened by the sudden appearance of the angel, timidly but gently moves Her body in a very chaste bow, turning towards the angel greeting Her with the most beautiful grace, so that Her face reflects the humility and gratitude one owes to the giver of an unexpected gift, and even more so when the gift is so great....\(^4\)

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\(^3\) The sculpture is located in Santa Croce against the south wall of the church in the sixth bay. On the debate over whether or not this is in fact the sculpture’s original location, see H. Janson, *The Sculpture of Donatello*, 2 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), 104-105. There is also an ongoing debate over the date of the sculpture. See ibid., 107, and Gerald S. Davies, "A Sidelight on Donatello's Annunciation," *The Burlington Magazine* 13, no. 64 (Jul., 1908): 222-27. A more recent study of the sculpture was published by Ulrich Pfisterer, *Donatello und die Entdeckung der Stile 1430-1445* (Munich: Hirmer Verlag, 2002), 232-267.

Shifting between description and interpretation, Vasari stops to marvel at the Virgin’s ambivalent pose, her simultaneous turning away and doubling back. Her lower extremities swing right and hug up against the pilaster that defines the tabernacle’s pictorial limit, while her upper body counters that feeling of escape by tilting inwards, bringing her back into the compositional fold. Such ambiguity is repeated in the shape of the lectern. Its gentle curve begins at the break in her timorous knee and ends at the bend in her reverent elbow. The sweep of its arc comments on the story of a woman startled but humbled by the unexpected arrival of an angel in her bedchamber. So too does this decorative embellishment seem to embrace Gabriel, who leans forward, magnetized by its pull. Gabriel and the Virgin are drawn to the farthest edges of the frame at the waist, yet their heads, shoulders, and feet yearn to be near. Archangel and Virgin exert a reciprocal force, “like complementary arcs irresistibly attracted to each other.”

Such magnetic tension is heightened further by the folds of drapery that fall in an even tempo from Gabriel’s right leg, so that his emergence from behind the pilaster assumes a musicality measured out in cloth (Figure 2.5). The fabric, divided into tight triplets, pulsates in even waves towards the Virgin. In the background, vegetal forms are contained within concentric squares. Shaped like volutes that spiral towards each other, these delicately gilded vines come ever so close to touching, and the circular pattern they trace within double-rectangles acts as a decorative analogue for Gabriel and Mary’s interaction in the larger space of the quadrate tabernacle itself.

The moment is indeed fraught with tension; contact is everywhere imminent. Below the central scene, the Cavalcanti family shields incline inwards, and in the lunette two lounging putti

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gravitate towards each other (Figure 2.6). Four more putti balance precariously on the edges of the cornice, joined together by festoons and gripped hands (Figure 2.7). With hands on hips that sway in unison, these juvenile movers are more than architectural ornament, and more than playful all’antica quotations; they are figures yoked by dance. As if to make his point even clearer by way of contrast, Donatello tops the flanking pilasters with Janus-faced capitals—pairs of opposing heads that stand as the ultimate antithesis to the varying degrees of physical interaction that permeate the rest of the ensemble (Figure 2.8). There may be no other fifteenth-century Annunciation in which the principal couple and subsidiary figures are so interactive, where a sense of kinetic community is so very present. If only for its scale, let alone the dramatic nature of the figural interactions, a contemporary viewer may have experienced the Cavalcanti Annunciation as a permanent manifestation of the fluid transition often made between the biblical and the theatrical in sacre rappresentazioni. Gabriel, still partially obscured by pilasters that act as wings for a quasi-stage space, has come to rest before the Virgin.

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6 The general tendency has been to treat everything outside of Gabriel and the Virgin as architectural ornaments whose style provides evidence for Donatello’s knowledge of Antiquity. For a detailed treatment of Donatello’s debt to Antiquity in the Annunciation, see Maria Grazia Pernis, "Greek Sources for Donatello's Annunciation in Santa Croce," Source V, no. 3 (Spring 1986): 17-20, and Michael Greenhalgh, Donatello and His Sources (London: Duckworth, 1982), 84-95. For an interesting treatment of the putto’s passionate dance, see Charles Dempsey, Inventing the Renaissance Putto (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2001), 49.


9 Joachim Poeschke made note of Donatello’s use of the pilasters to animate the scene. “It appears that the angel is moving out from behind the one on the left, the Virgin taking refuge behind the one on the right.” Joachim Poeschke, Donatello and His World, trans. Russell Stockman (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1993), 394.
Donatello’s sculpture constitutes an important step towards a profoundly figural treatment of the Annunciation. In the Gospel account only a few lines explain the subject’s mystery. It is to words that the Virgin submits, as it is through the Word that she becomes impregnated. The pens of subsequent exegetes filled out elements of the story that were left unexplained, and so the circumstances surrounding the angel’s message grew. The dialogue gained a specific time and place, and the place eventually gained a variety of accessories: a door, a bed, a desk, a book, a spindle, a candle, a vase of lilies, a manicured garden. And yet, the words themselves remained absolutely crucial. Artists like Simone Martini understandably gave visual prominence to the very first words uttered: *Ave Maria gratia plena dominus tecum.* To inscribe these words into the gold ground, or to contain them within a speech scroll was to set the dialogue in motion—to initiate the Incarnation itself. This inscription, the Holy Spirit’s descent from a mandorla of cherubim, the olive branch, the vase of lilies, the draped throne—

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11 In the words of Thomas Aquinas, “Just as the human word takes on a voice to make itself known to men’s senses, the Word of God has also taken on flesh to appear visibly to men. The human voice is formed by man’s breath; and the flesh of the Word of God had to be formed by the spirit of the Word.” Thomas Aquinas, *Compendium theologiae* (Milan: Editoria Elettronica Editel, 1992), 219. Translated and discussed by Georges Didi-Huberman, *Fra Angelico. Dissemblance and Figuration*, trans. Jane Marie Todd (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 108.

even the gold ground itself—place Simone’s altarpiece firmly within the exegetical tradition, where peripheral symbols mediate the experience and understanding of the event.

Concurrent with Alberti’s writing of Della pittura, Donatello restricts his Annunciation to the body alone, demonstrating that a text can be pictured without words, that a network of reciprocal gestures, poses, and glances can establish significance. Donatello is insistent upon the essential corporeality of the event to the extent of eliminating any geometric delineation of space. There is a total absence of orthogonals in this sculpture; recession into space is planar, and mimics the process of revealing a relief by carving away successive layers of stone. The Cavalcanti Annunciation is spatially bare; it is an istoria denied its requisite prospettiva. The narrow space between them is bridged not by holy write or by descending dove but by tender vigilance. Indeed, no one who sees the Cavalcanti Annunciation misses Gabriel’s gaze of affection (Figure 2.9).

Donatello’s Annunciation is a prominent monument in the church of Santa Croce, and it is not difficult to imagine that Botticelli studied its striking composition when, in 1489, Benedetto di Ser Francesco Gaurdi del Cane commissioned from him an Annunciation for his family’s chapel in the neighboring church of Cestello (Figure 2.10). The dialectical structure we have been tracing is particularly eloquent in Botticelli’s Cestello Annunciation, an altarpiece that pivots on the opposition between entry and reception, flourish and calm, male and female. The palm of the Virgin’s hand is cupped to receive Gabriel’s gesture, yet her lower body recoils; her downcast eyes meet his, yet her raiments melt on the ground in opposing directions. This is an Annunciation unaided by inscribed words, diving dove, receptive ear, or gilded rays of divine intervention. As in Donatello’s sculpture, the sacred exchange—the words that signal the

13 This church is now known as Santa Maria Maddalena dei Pazzi. On the history of the church, see Alison Luchs, Cestello, a Cistercian Church of the Florentine Renaissance, Outstanding Dissertations in the Fine Arts (New York: Garland, 1975).
Incarnation itself—is established by a network of answering gestures and complementary movements alone. This is choreography: to tell a story with the body, to adapt movement to meaning.\textsuperscript{14}

Gabriel has come to rest before the Virgin, his draperies still blowing back from whence he came. The haste with which he has entered her chamber is exaggerated by the strength of his gaze and the urgency of his gesture, which the Virgin does not mirror but echo. Botticelli is not alone in using mirrored gestures to tell the story of the Annunciation. Jacopo della Quercia, Pesellino, Filippo Lippi, and Lorenzo di Credi, for instance, also match arm and hand positions (Figures 2.11-2.14). In each instance, the intimacy established by gestural unity seems to signify the very act of Incarnation.

In Botticelli’s \textit{Annunciation}, the level of intimacy created by the choreographic unity of call and response is furthered by Gabriel’s proximity to Mary. The checkerboard floor does more than map out three-dimensional space in this picture, and the thick \textit{pietra serena} door frame plays a role greater than that of a barrier between interior and exterior, between bedroom and enclosed garden. Botticelli measures movement against these rectilinear forms. Each orthogonal band of cream on the ground, each vertical incision into the stone frame, represents a

\textsuperscript{14} Dance often enters the art historical discourse precisely when dealing with the Annunciation. In Chapter 1 we saw how Creighton Gilbert dealt with Simone Martini’s Uffizi \textit{Annunciation} in terms of dance. Michael Greenhalgh calls the Cavalcanti \textit{Annunciation} “a piece of theatre;” Yrjo Hirn delights in a Gabriel who “dance[s] towards Mary with the grace of a ballet dancer,” as does Anna Jameson, who characterizes the archangel as a “dancer in a ballet.” See Gilbert, "Simone Martini's \textit{Annunciation}," 131, Greenhalgh, \textit{Donatello and His Sources}, 84, Hirn, \textit{The Sacred Shrine}, 290, and Anna Brownell Jameson, \textit{Legends of the Madonna} (Detroit: Gale Research Company, 1972), 179. On the topic of Botticelli’s \textit{Annunciation} more specifically, we encounter Jacques Mesnil, who in 1938 wrote, “A la composition d’un équilibre simple, aux masses exactement contre-balancées, de la fresque de San Martino, s’est substituée ici une composition dont la ligne dominante est une oblique formée par l’avant-bras droit de l’Ange et le bras droit de la Vierge qui vont a la recontre l’un de l’autre; cette ligne, par laquelle semble passer l’afflux divin, et la pose contournée du corps de la Vierge, présagent déjà l’art baroque et les moyens d’expression de son pathétique théâtral.” See Mesnil, \textit{Botticelli} (Paris: A. Michel, 1938), 114-115. More recently, Alessandro Cecchi called the Virgin’s pose “una riverenza.” See Cecchi, \textit{Botticelli} (Milan: Motta, 2005), 254.
threshold to be crossed. Gabriel’s gesture trespasses the inner limit of the door frame, while a piece of his diaphanous drapery crosses the central orthogonal, which perfectly bifurcates the picture in alignment with the predella image of the risen Christ (Figure 2.15). The landscape beyond reiterates the dramatic encounter taking place in the foreground, its river’s course measured against the strong vertical of an imposing tree (Figure 2.16). The meandering shape of the river, full of sharp twists and turns, offers a visual commentary on the Virgin, whose serpentine form is alternately attracted to and repelled by Gabriel’s approach.

Botticelli, an artist that Bernard Berenson believed to be “haunted by the idea of communicating the unembodied values of touch and movement,” has essentially realized the Incarnation by stimulating the viewer’s awareness of an impending sense of touch. In recent years, David Freedberg has encouraged art history to give more attention to “felt spectatorial involvement,” or the viewer’s physical response to represented movement. For Freedberg, to experience Botticelli’s Annunciation


16 Lucien Rudrauf offers an eloquent description of Botticelli’s insistence upon action and reaction in the Annunciation: “At the opposite limit, the concordance of two transitory moments can scarcely be shown with greater rhythmic frenzy than that which runs through Botticelli’s strange composition, catching one’s eye in the Uffizi. This frenzy makes one keep looking back and forth from the pole of action to that of reaction, as if in response to an alternating current. The electric shock communicated by these tense gestures and zigzagging draperies is such that the dynamic problem forces itself inevitably on the mind.” See Rudrauf, “The Annunciation: Study of a Plastic Theme and its Variations in Painting and Sculpture,” trans. T.M., The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism, Vol. 7, No. 4 (Jun., 1949), 337.

17 Bernard Berenson, The Florentine Painters of the Renaissance (London: Putnam Books), 73. For a more recent discussion of the sense of touch in early modern art, see Elizabeth D. Harvey, ed, Sensible Flesh. On Touch in Early Modern Culture (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003). Harvey argues (ibid., 1) that touch is the most erotic and seductive of the five senses. Touch, she goes on to explain, also plays a central role in religious representations, from Noli me tangere to Doubting Thomas.
is to feel a strong sense of corporeal involvement with the movements of its figures. It is as if one feels one’s own muscles are activated in the way both the angel’s and the Virgin’s are, and above all, a kind of incipient sway of one’s own torso as the Virgin recoils from the forward rush of the angel.\footnote{David Freedberg, "Movement and Morality," (The National Gallery, London, 17 November 2007), 4. My thanks to Professor Freedberg for kindly allowing me to read this paper.}

Taking this observation one step further, we feel the Archangel and Virgin magnetize each other; like two people entering into a \textit{pas de deux}, they are animated by one spirit, but never touch. The Cestello \textit{Annunciation} exhibits a very particular moment indeed: we feel that a dance is just about to begin—that an impending duet is signaling an imminent union.

How did Botticelli become a choreographer? How does he elicit this response from us? We can begin to approach these questions through dance history itself. The dialectical structure underlying Botticelli’s \textit{Annunciation}, its choreography of call and response, couples the active, yet reverential approach of the angel with the reticent, yet ultimately willing response of the Virgin. So too does the opposition of enthusiasm and coquetry—advance and retreat—underpin the nearly ninety duos choreographed in the fifteenth century, the multitude of which are essentially “vast metaphor[s] for conversation.”\footnote{See Mark Franko, \textit{The Dancing Body in Renaissance Choreography} (Birmingham: Summa Publications, 1986)., especially Ch. V, section B, "The Strategy of Conversation."}

The topic of these choreographed conversations was, moreover, quite specific. More often than not, the relationship between a man and women was at the heart of a dance. From \textit{Pietosa}, a dance for two, to \textit{Cupido}, a dance for four, Renaissance dances signaled, plotted out, and reinforced the norms of heterosexual interaction. \textit{Belreguardo novo}, a popular trio for two men and a woman, contrasts the double step (\textit{doppio}) in two different measures. The men dance the faster, \textit{saltarello doppio}, while the
woman performs the slower bassadanza doppio.\textsuperscript{20} This is just one example of many in which the male dancer, adept at virtuoso jumps and turns, approaches a female partner, whose steps are purposefully demure and full of coquettish retreats.\textsuperscript{21}

Furthermore, Gabriel’s pose in Botticelli’s painting compares to that of the male dancer, who solicited his female partner in the form of a riverenza, or bow (Figure 2.17).\textsuperscript{22} To request a dance was to initiate more than just a sequence of steps: the riverenza was the kinetic conceit for

\textsuperscript{20} For many more examples, see Nevile, \textit{The Eloquent Body}, 30 ff and 52 ff. See also Jennifer Nevile, "Disorder in Order: Improvisation in Italian Choreographed Dances of the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries," in \textit{Improvisation in the Arts of the Middle Ages and Renaissance}, ed. Timothy McGee (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2003), 151.

\textsuperscript{21} Eileen Southern has posited that Renaissance women “must have shared an awareness of their culture’s insistence on the thin line dividing virtuous performance from its opposite (Salome), chaste display ... from blatant exhibitionism, and order from disorder.” Eileen Southern, "A Prima Ballerina of the Fifteenth Century," in \textit{Music and Context. Essays for John M. Ward}, ed. Anne Dhu Shapiro (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985), 1102. On the proscriptions given to women by the fifteenth-century dance masters, see Fermor, "Studies in the Depiction of the Moving Figure in Renaissance Art, Art Theory, and Criticism", 49-50.

\textsuperscript{22} Gabriel is often discussed as mere reactive agent, his entrance simply a pretense for exploring the Virgin’s psychological state. It is precisely the nature and number of her reactions that has fed scholarly discourse on the subject. On the basis of a Quattrocento sermon by Fra Roberto Caracciolo da Lecce, which outlines five possible responses of the Virgin Annunciata, Michael Baxandall concluded that the preacher’s discourse is a key to understanding how Renaissance artists approached subject. Baxandall, \textit{Painting and Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy}, 48-55. Contemporary ideology brings certain focus to the pictorialization of the Virgin; however, artists had to deal equally with both angel and Virgin, both interrogator and respondent. Yet we remain content to not ask too much of Gabriel, exploring a solo where there is a duo—a single figure that responds to a messenger, rather than a pair who respond to each other. Aby Warburg intuited there was more to the Renaissance artist’s depiction of Gabriel than mere messenger. In emulation of Warburg, André Jolles wrote the following in a letter designed to cure the art historian’s writer’s block: “In many of the works of art I had always liked, I discovered something of my Nymph...Sometimes I saw her in a seraph flying towards God in adoration and then again in Gabriel announcing the good tidings.” By tracing the metamorphosis of Warburg’s \textit{ninf\`a fiorentina}, Jolles enters into a topic central to Warburg’s concerns: the omnipresence of a classical dancer in a variety of Renaissance pictures. He shadows Warburg through the churches and museums of Florence, lovingly mapping out in pictures a dancing nymph’s presence in some of the city’s most memorable characters and subjects, none of which are directly related to dance. Amidst the cast of figures he mentions, appears Gabriel, dancing his way onto the scene. For the correspondence between Jolles and Warburg, see E.H. Gombrich, \textit{Aby Warburg. An Intellectual Biography} (London: The Warburg Institute, 1970), 108.
the beginning of the courtship ritual, so that the prelude to a dance was also the prelude to a romance.\footnote{In Jennifer Nevile’s analysis, each fifteenth-century dance can be divided into seven categories: “opening sequence,” “formal greeting,” “inspection,” “social progress,” “confrontation,” and “submission.” The riverenza can occur in both the “formal greeting” and “confrontation” portions of the dance. See Nevile, *The Eloquent Body*, 54-55. In the 16th and 17th centuries, the placement of the riverenza at the beginning of the dance only becomes more explicit. In his *Orchesographie* of 1589, Thoinot Arbeau writes, “When you have entered the place where the company is assembled for the dance you will choose some comely damsel who takes your fancy, and, removing your hat or bonnet with your left hand, proffer her your right to lead her out to dance. She, being sensible and well brought up, will offer you her left hand and arise to accompany you.” He adds later that “The reverence, the first gesture and movement, occupies four tabor rhythms accompanied by four bars of the tune on the flute.” See Thoinot Arbeau, *Orchesography*, trans. Mary Stewart Evans (New York: Dover Publications, 1967), 52 and 54. On the history of the riverenza, and its appearance in texts other than dance treatises, particularly courtesy books, see Franko, *The Dancing Body in Renaissance Choreography*, ch. III.}

Images that record actual Renaissance dance practice are extremely rare, but there are surviving cassoni that feature dancers and, more importantly, male dancers performing a riverenza before a potential female partner. Of these extant panels, the two depicting the *Marriage of Alceo and Lucretia* are exceptional for their attempt to show two distinct moments in the dance: the summoning bow, followed by a duo in full swing (Figures 2.18, 2.19).

To the dance historical context we can join the exegetical tradition, which embroiders the Annunciation with elements of worldly love, from descriptions of Gabriel’s human form to hymns that celebrate the Virgin’s beauty in language borrowed from Song of Songs. Angels were presumed to be genderless; Thomas Aquinas, for instance, said they belong to an incorporeal order. Nevertheless, Gabriel is often referred to as a man. Saint Ambrose compares the his entrance to that of a man who has breached the thalamic chamber:

\begin{quotation}
It is the proper way of Virgins to tremble and shake as soon as a man enters the room, and to be terrified whenever a man addresses them. Women may learn from Mary how to apply the proper rules of womanhood. She was alone in her closed chamber, that no man might see her.\footnote{Ambrosius, *Expositio in Lucam*, translated by Hirn, *The Sacred Shrine*, 284.}
\end{quotation}
Saint Jerome provides a similar explanation for the Virgin’s reaction to seeing the angel:

> When the angel Gabriel entered to Mary in the form of a man and greeted her, she became so disquieted and terrified that she could not answer him, for never before had she been addressed by a man. Later she recognised the messenger and answered him. And she who had trembled before the man, speaks with an angel unmoved by fear.25

If Gabriel was likened to a chivalric suitor, then Mary, by extension, became the ideal lover, the very personification of chastity and humility. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the Song of Songs, an Old Testament nuptial song in which the bride and bridegroom express their ardent passion for each other. Although the Song is referenced only once in the New Testament (John 3:28-39), it became foundational for early Christian authors who wished to express, in poetic terms, Christ’s love for the church.26 In the twelfth century, the Song of Songs gained in popularity and took on a new dimension: the abstract notion of the church, Ecclesia, was identified with the Virgin Mary, whose relationship to Christ is described in increasingly secular terms. St. Bernard of Clairvaux, for example, invokes the Song to describe Christ’s love of the Virgin: “Thou has wounded my heart, My Sister, My Bride (Song 4, 9),” and, “Thy breasts are better than wine.”27

If Mary was regarded as the bride, then the Annunciation necessarily became a scene of courtship, the moment when an angel woos on behalf of the bridegroom. In his commentary on the Incarnation, St. Bernard invokes the metaphor of the kiss: “It is the Word assuming Manhood Who is the Mouth that gives the kiss; it is the Manhood taken that receives it.”

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pleads, “Let Him kiss me with the kiss of His Mouth.”

Indeed, by drawing upon the poetry of love, theologians cast their encounter in an increasingly chivalric light.

Marilyn Aronberg Lavin has demonstrated how visual imagery changed in response to the growing literature of love surrounding Christ and the Virgin. She concentrates on Cimabue, an artist who was especially adept at “converting religious concepts into visual form.” In Cimabue’s Life of the Virgin cycle at Assisi, for example, the interlocked bodies of Christ and the Virgin make manifest the sexually charged language of the Song. More telling even are manuscript illuminations of the Song itself, which, beginning in the twelfth century, transform Christ and the Virgin into an amorous couple.

Himself faced with the penultimate story of divine love, Botticelli figured an image that resonates with this world of courtly love, with dances that map out the relationship between a modest woman and her chivalric suitor. In effect, he figured the mystery of the Annunciation


28 Saint Bernard, On the Song of Songs, 24, 28.

29 See Hirn, Sacred Shrine, 291-293, and Paul Küchenthal, Die Mutter Gottes in der altdeutschen Schönen Litteratur bis zum Ende des XIII. Jahrhunderts (Braunschweig: Oeding, 1898), 44. According to Yrjo Hirn, “The situation itself, the meeting between the young virgin and the heavenly youth, was such that a deviation from the severe theological interpretation could with difficulty be avoided. The legend’s manner of describing the Annunciation was connected by inevitable and often, probably, unconscious associations with the poetry of earthly life….If the whole of her sex is thus idealised in Mary’s person, the male sex is glorified in Gabriel, the ‘strength of God,’ who, mighty and aflame but with the carful ‘Fear not’ of a chivalrous protector, enters the chamber of the youthful Virgin.” See Hirn, The Sacred Shrine, 290, 90-93. The Virgin as “female paragon and the ideal of the feminine personified” is also explored in Marina Warner, Alone of All Her Sex: The Myth and Cult of the Virgin Mary (New York: Vintage Books, 1983), xxiv.

30 Lavin, The Liturgy of Love, 33. Her fundamental thesis is that “Cimabue’s intensified verisimilitude, with its burgeoning plasticity and moving gestures, shows the carnal love depicted as proof of these spiritual miracles.” (33)

31 Ibid., 17ff.

32 Susan Rohr von Scaff argues that in many Annunciation pictures “we witness in Gabriel and Mary the suitor proposing to his beautiful and alluring lady in an attitude of courtship.” See "The Virgin
as a kind of ballo in due, the moment when Gabriel, the messenger of divine love, arrives to woo Mary, a woman so perfect she “never knew the disordered movements of the passions.”

For Sharon Fermor, the fifteenth-century ballo provides more than a point of comparison with painting. It provided “examples of ways in which small numbers of figures could communicate patterns of relationships through their placing within coherent groups.” In Fermor’s analysis, dance is presented as a crutch for the artist, something he turned to when the visual tradition offered no easy solution to his problem.

The question of the relationship between the visual and performing arts is not so one-dimensional. Artists certainly experienced dancing but they did not necessarily document it. Nor did they depend on ephemera for inspiration, least of all when picturing the Annunciation, a subject for which the visual tradition is extremely rich. Thinking about this long tradition, we might surmise that influence also runs in the opposite direction, that the court dance master turned to the Annunciation, a religious duo that provided a venerable model upon which to base choreography for the ideal man and woman.

Perhaps this is why so many allegories of love,
from manuscript illuminations to mirror cases, are structured like Annunciations (Figures 2.20-2.23). Influence surely ran in both directions, however, because artists and choreographers faced similar challenges, which results in the natural resemblance of their respective works. The intimate—indeed indivisible—bond between the human body and the significance of the Annunciation creates a natural intersection between the subject and dance.

Such physical correspondence becomes particularly acute in the wake of Della pittura, when, as Samuel Edgerton points out, “artists favored a more humane treatment of the subject: the angel and Mary were brought closer together, and emphasis placed less on the mystery and more on the intimacy of their conversation.”

In terms of subject matter, Alberti clearly prioritizes the secular over the sacred, but his larger precepts respond to and have ramifications for all genres of art making, especially altarpieces. The Annunciation has, for instance, been the lens through which many scholars have studied the development of perspective. At the same time, the subject realizes—we might even say it demands—corporeal eloquence.

modes long used in painting. See Kristin Phillips-Court, The Perfect Genre: Drama and Painting in Renaissance Italy (London: Ashgate, 2011), Ch. 1 ("Delighting the Spirit: Belcari's Rappresentazione quando la Nostra Donna Vergine Maria fu annunziata dall'Angelo Gabriello). On Annunciation plays in Florence, see note 17 above.


Considering Annunciations made in the 1430s, Donatello’s being exemplary, one could surmise that Alberti’s *istoria*, while wedded to the revival of pagan subject matter, is more immediately engaged with advances made in religious art. The advance, in this case, is one from verbal to bodily dialogue—from *eloquenza* to *eloquenza corporale*. For when the sacred words inscribed into the gold ground begin to fall away, and the Annunciation subsequently becomes a dialogue predicated entirely on human movement, the artist inevitably aligns with the choreographer, maker of mute dramas.
Trio

The Mechanics of Dance
The Center of Gravity
Gravity and Speed
Complicit Draperies
Patterned Surfaces
The Disposition of Feet
Striking Chords
At those times when we ordinarily watch the Dance with no special object in mind, the only way to lead our imagination on is to stand patiently, calmly watching each of the dancer’s steps, each strange pose—toeing, tapping, lunge, or rebound—and then ask ourselves: “What can the meaning of it be?” Or, better still, find inspiration suddenly and interpret it.
—Stéphane Mallarmé, *Ballets* (1886-97)

Each art, therefore, having its own peculiar and untranslatable sensuous charm, has its own special mode of reaching the imagination, its own special responsibilities to its material. One of the functions of aesthetic criticism is to define these limitations; to estimate the degree to which a given work of art fulfills its responsibilities to that special material.
—Walter Pater, *The School of Giorgione* (1877)
The Mechanics of Dance

The fifteenth century also offers representations of actual dancing, moments when artists become choreographers in the most explicit sense of the term. This chapter proceeds to look at such moments in the careers of Botticelli, Mantegna, and Leonardo. The images treated are different in subject matter and medium, yet strongly linked by problems related to the depiction of dance on a two-dimensional surface: the maintenance of bodily equilibrium, the suggestion of pace, the creation of purposeful draperies, the repetition of form, the disposition of feet, and the embodiment of music. An exploration of these challenges affords insight into how much Renaissance artists knew about the mechanics of dance.¹ A few artists have been hailed great musicians, while none has been praised for their skill in dancing, and yet the degree of sensitivity they show towards the performing art is profound—it is that of a choreographer.²

Botticelli’s Primavera, and more specifically, the Three Graces depicted therein is the point of departure and the central image in this chapter (Figure 3.1). Botticelli is the first Renaissance artist to make the Three Graces actually dance; his trio is a flight of the choreographic imagination. This is hardly to claim that the motif was absent from art made before 1490. By mid-century, Francesco Cossa had placed an image of the Three Graces within his fresco of the month of April (Figure 3.2), and shortly thereafter Niccolo Fiorentino struck two

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¹ In an important article concerning the separate responsibilities art and dance have to their respective material, Tilman Seebass wrote, “A picture representing dance is also a work of art in its own right. It must be appreciated as a vision of the artist and studied with the methods developed by art historians.” Tilman Seebass, "Iconography and Dance Research," *Yearbook for Traditional Music* 23 (1991): 33.

² It comes as a surprise to find an art historian declare, “How much more difficult it would have been for an artist to capture with perfect precision the more subtle and controlled movements demanded by the dance....It is unlikely, I suggest, that he could have reproduced either the bodily movements of the dance, or the details of steps and footwork....” See Sharon Fermor, "On the Question of Pictorial Evidence for 15th Century Dance Technique," *Dance Research* 5, no. 2 (1987): 30. On artist-musicians, see Emanuel Winternitz, *Leonardo da Vinci as a Musician* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), and Walter Pater, "The School of Giorgione," in *Fortnightly Review* (London: Chapman and Hall: 1877), 83-98.
medals, the reverses of which carry images of the trio (Figure 3.3). Cossa’s and Niccolo’s Graces are nude, tightly interlocked, and arranged symmetrically in the typical formation; in other words, both artists are entirely faithful to the cool, static Roman formula (Figure 3.4).\(^3\) Botticelli abandons this standard, clothes the Graces in transparent garments, and sets them into motion.\(^4\)

The inspiration for Botticelli’s invention is *Della pittura*, wherein Alberti offers the Three Graces as an ideal istoria.

> I should like to see those three sisters whom Hesiod gave the names Aglaia, Euphrosyne and Thalia, who were painted laughing and taking each other by the hand, with their clothes girdled and very clean (¶ 54).\(^5\)

Alberti credits Hesiod, but his inspiration is really Seneca, who describes the Graces as dancing and as diaphanously clad.\(^6\)

> Why do the sisters hand in hand dance in a ring which returns upon itself? For the reason that a benefit passing in its course from hand to hand returns nevertheless to the giver....They are maidens because benefits are pure and undefiled and holy in the eyes of

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3 A typical example, and the one that exerted the most influence upon Renaissance artists, is the sculptural group located in the Piccolomini Library of Siena Cathedral. Before arriving in Siena at the beginning of the 16th century, this group of the Three Graces belonged to Cardinal Prospero Colonna, who, according to an inscription recorded by Fra Giocondo, displayed them in his Roman palazzo. For reasons still unknown to scholars, the group was sold in the 1460s to Cardinal Francesco Piccolomini. Around 1500, probably on the occasion of the Cardinal’s death, the Graces traveled north, to Siena, where in 1502 they were installed at the very center of the Piccolomini Library, where the group remains. For a more detailed account of this history, see Mauro Cristofani, *Siena: Le origini* (Firenze: Leo S. Olschki, 1979), and Barbara Tavolari, "Liberaliter agere. Le tre grazie: un marmo antico nella libreria piccolomini," in *Le sculture del Duomo di Siena*, ed. Mario Lorenzoni (Cinisello Balsamo, Milan: Silvana, 2009), 166-70. See as well the entry in Bober and Rubenstein, *Renaissance Artists and Antique Sculpture*, cat. no. 60.

4 Heinrich Wölfflin recognized that Botticelli’s Three Graces are entirely different from their prototypes. “The Venus on her shell bears little enough resemblance to her antique sister and Botticelli’s group of the Graces is entirely different in appearance from the antique group....” See Heinrich Wölfflin, *Classic Art*, trans. Peter and Linda Murray, (New York: Phaidon Press, 1994), 247.

5 Alberti, *On Painting*, 91. See also my Chapter One, note 115.

all; and it is fitting that there should be nothing to bind or restrict them, and so the maidens wear flowing robes, and these, too, are transparent because benefits desire to be seen.\(^7\)

Alberti must have been attracted to Seneca’s invocation of certain ancient, studio *topoi*: the presentation of multiple views of a figure and the creation of garments so sheer that they reveal bodily form.\(^8\) It is taken for granted that in addition to providing the opportunity for certain a *dimonstrazione dell’ arte*, Alberti, via Seneca, appeals to a specific pictorial act: the creation of a dance. Botticelli is the first artist to take up that challenge.

Such invention on the part of Botticelli keeps with the more subtle nuances of Seneca’s text: namely, his awareness of and appreciation for artistic license, poetic and pictorial alike.

Some would have it appear that there is one for bestowing a benefit, another for receiving it, and a third for returning it; others hold that there are three classes of benefits, those who earn benefits, those who return them, and those who receive and return them at the same time. But of the two explanations do you accept as true whichever you like; yet what profit is there in such knowledge?....but surely no one will believe also that the names which Hesiod assigned the Graces has any bearing on the subject....Each one twists the significance of these names to suit himself, and tries to make them fit some theory although Hesiod simply bestowed upon the maidens the name that suited his fancy. And so Homer changed the name of one of them....I could find another poet in whose writing they are girdled and appear in robes of thick texture or of Phryxian wool.

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\(^8\) In the *Natural History* (36.20), Pliny the Elder celebrates Praxiteles’ Cnidian *Venus*, which, because it was placed in an open shrine, was “equally admirable from every angle” (aedicula eius tota aperitur, ut conspici possit undique effigies dae, favente ipsa, ut creditur, facta. Ferunt amore captum quendam, cum delituisset noctu, simulacro cohaesisse, eiusque cupiditatis esse indicem maculam). Also mentioned by Pliny (*Natural History*, 35.58) is Polygnotos, the first painter to drape women in gossamer dresses (Alii quoque post hos clari fuere ante LXXXX olympiadem, sicut Polygnotos Thasius, qui primus mulieres tralucida veste pinxit….). Although not related to any one artist or artwork, Lucian mentions in the *Amores* “clothes of a tissue as fine as a spider’s web [which] pass for clothes so as to excuse the appearance of complete nakedness” (See *Amores*, XLI, trans. MD Macleod, Cambridge, Mass., 1967, pp. 212-13). On the Three Graces as an example of such formal challenges, see Rosand, "Ekphrasis and the Renaissance of Painting: Observations on Alberti's Third Book.", and Leo Steinberg, "The Algerian Women and Picasso at Large," in *Other Criteria: Confrontations with Twentieth-Century Art* (London: The University of Chicago Press, 2007), 177.
The reason Mercury stands with them is, not that the argument or eloquence command benefits, but simply that the painter chose to picture them so.9

Seneca is frustrated by what has apparently become a debate over the exact significance of the Three Graces: he finds no purpose in deciding between clever riffs on an old theme. As the final line makes clear, Seneca’s fascination lies with license itself, and specifically with pictorial license. Art historians tend to assume, understandably, that the Three Graces is one of the most standardized motifs in the history of art, for the surviving antiquities are indeed strikingly similar in appearance.10 Seneca reminds us, however, that the subject was once the site of great artistic invention. That artists may have appreciated the potency of Botticelli’s own choreographic invention is confirmed by the fact that from sixteenth century onwards, no two representations of the group are exactly alike.11

On account of their dancing, Botticelli’s Three Graces are unique among fifteenth-century representations of the group. They also stand out within the Primavera itself, which, like most of Botticelli’s paintings, operates in a rather planar way. Proceeding from right to left we

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9 Seneca, *Moral Essays*, I.iii.2. Elsewhere in the same text (II.vii.9) Seneca actually deplores “silken raiments—if that can be called raiment, which provides no protection for the body, or indeed modesty, so that, when a woman wears it, she can scarcely, with a clear conscience, swear that she is not naked.” On this strange contradiction, as well as other similar denouncements made by ancient voices, see Leo Steinberg, *The Sexuality of Christ in Renaissance Art and in Modern Oblivion* [1983] (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 154-57 (“Gossamer at the hips”).


11 Notable choreographic inventions that succeed Botticelli’s include: Dürer’s engraving of the *Three Graces* (1497); Raphael’s *Feast of the Gods*, which features, in the upper right corner, the Three Graces (1517-18); Correggio’s *Three Graces*, depicted in monochrome in a lunette of the Camera di San Paolo in Parma Cathedral (1518-19); Pontormo’s mysterious, attenuated drawing of the trio (c.1535); and Lucas Cranach the Elder’s *Three Graces* (1535). These, and many others, are reproduced in Mertens, *Die Drei Grazien: Studien Zu Einem Bildmotiv in Der Kunst Der Neuzeit*, 1994.
are kept close to the surface by a series of actions that unfold like a scroll. Zephyr initiates our descent into the painting. Outstretched arms and a loving glance carry us towards the nymph Chloris, the object of his glowing affection. She tries to flee his inevitable grasp, but turns back momentarily to face her love struck god. The counter-motion she makes rotates her body to face the picture plane, and the flesh that so attracts Zephyr is made immediately available to the viewer. The die has been cast: Chloris transforms into Flora, whose delicate steps complete those of her predecessor. “I was once Chloris who am now called Flora” (*Chloris eram quae Flora vocor*). Next comes Venus, set back in a flattened, double-choral arch of sky and greenery. Palm pressed against the picture plane, she acknowledges the viewer and directs attention towards her dancing attendants, the Three Graces. To have chosen the Roman, frieze-like convention for depicting the Graces would have been to maintain the painting’s general adherence to the surface, giving us a composition much more akin to a sarcophagus relief. Botticelli, however, consciously chose to interrupt the picture’s relief aesthetic by inflecting a circle into space. He sets the Three Graces in motion, making them perform the circular dance Seneca so lovingly described: “The beauty of the whole is destroyed if the course is anywhere broken, and it has most beauty if it is continuous and maintains an uninterrupted succession.”

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13 For an interesting study of the recurrence of round dances in Botticelli’s paintings and drawings, see Prévost, *La peinture en actes. Gestes et manières dans l'Italie de la Renaissance*, 199-204.

14 Seneca, *Moral Essays*, Book I, ch. 2, line 4. (Sed utrumlibet ex istis iudica verum; quid ista nos scientia iuvat? Quid ille consortis manibus in se redeuntium chorus? Ob hoc, quia ordo beneficii per manus transeuntis nihil minus ad dantem revertitur et totius speciem perdit, si usquam interruptus est, pulcherrimus, si cohaeret et vices servat. In eo est aliqua tamen maioris dignatio, sicut pro- merentium.)

On Botticelli’s abandonment of the Roman formula for depicting the Graces, see Kenneth Clark, *The Nude: A Study in Ideal Form* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1956), 9-10: “He has recognized that the Graces were part of a frieze of dancers, and has given them back their movement, animated by the rhythm of drapery.” It has been pointed out to me by Geoff Lehman that traditional, one-point perspective is absent from Botticelli’s painting. In Lehman’s analysis, Botticelli creates space through figural volumes alone. The dance itself contributes to this corporeal sense of space. On the corporeal construction of
How does Botticelli make the Graces rotate before us? How does he link their bodies together in a flowing continuity? Such questions take us to directly to the workings of the dance itself. In a painting seemingly devoted to the realm of Venus, the trio’s presence is easily explained, and so they are often glossed over in favor of the more mysterious characters that populate the outer limits of the composition.\(^\text{15}\) The combined presence of these mythological characters is complicated, and scholars have worked to determine their iconographic fit within a painting whose overriding subject is itself vexing.\(^\text{16}\) The dance Botticelli so deliberately rendered is lost in a melee of texts and interpretations, when, really, to use Philippe Alain Michaud’s words, “the mythographic subject was merely a pretext for the Renaissance artist to explore the movements of which a figure is capable.”\(^\text{17}\)

The whole painting can indeed be appreciated as an exercise in the depiction of human movement. Scanned again from right to left, the immediate effect is one of acceleration and deceleration. Entering with Zephyr on high, we plunge into the pictorial space, rise back up with Venus, circumambulate the Graces, and climb their sinuous arms to Mercury, whose caduceus

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\(^\text{16}\) According to James Elkins in "On Monstrously Ambiguous Paintings," \textit{History and Theory} 32, no. 3 (1993): 227-47, the \textit{Primavera} is one of those paintings “whose literature has grown too large to be fruitfully discussed within the normal bounds of disciplinary art history.” For a detailed summary of its voluminous literature, see Dempsey, \textit{The Portrayal of Love}, Chapter One.

\(^\text{17}\) Michaud believes that examining Botticelli’s paintings from a conceptual standpoint obscures “their purely visual tenor, once again covering the Florentine artist with a veil of exegesis....” His argument is mainly leveled against Wind’s treatment of the painting, which he finds to consistently “subordinate visual expression to verbal expression.” See Philippe-Alain Michaud, \textit{Aby Warburg and the Image in Motion} (New York: Zone Books, 2004), 75, 77, and 80.
transports us back into the sky from whence Zephyr first came. The Graces rise and fall like calm waves, and so too does the painting alternate between fast and slow movements, between hot pursuits and calm rounds. The *Primavera* has its own cadence, its own ebb and flow. And its current is concentrated within the dance itself, a dance whose measure governs the kinetic atmosphere of the entire pictorial field. In other words, the *Primavera* is governed by the tempo of a dance; philological rigor is indeed matched by choreographic ingenuity.

Humanist advisors were hardly equipped to instruct a painter on the activation of figures. Aby Warburg demonstrated that the poetry written by Angelo Poliziano, the likely intellect behind the *Primavera*’s iconographic program, inspired Botticelli to include certain lyrical motifs, such as serpentine drapery and hair. But the shapes and positions they take and the manner in which they ornament and accentuate the body, to say nothing of the placement of feet and the suggestion of musical tempo, are choreographic decisions made by Botticelli himself. The making of a convincing roundelay was the job of the artist alone. Botticelli, and many

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19 Edgar Wind pays significant attention to the fact that the triple rhythm embodied by the Three Graces is repeated throughout the painting, and it is delightful to consider that the entire picture might have begun with the decision to depict the trio, for all of the figures seem to depend upon them. See Edgar Wind, *Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1958), 117. More recent scholarship, especially the work done by Charles Dempsey, has furthered our understanding of the Three Graces as the painting’s connective tissue. Dempsey calls attention to the fact that they are attendants of Venus; that their windblown draperies require the presence of Zephyr, who then occasions, by way of mythology, Chloris and Flora; and that Mercury is also tied to the Three Graces, as well as to the wind. See note 7 above, as well as Dempsey, "Mercurius Ver: The Sources of Botticelli's Primavera,” idem, "Botticelli's Three Graces.”, and idem, *The Portrayal of Love*, 33 ff.


21 Paul Holberton made a similar statement in regards to antique figures in the Renaissance. “Hitherto iconography has been obsessed by the idea of the textual source—find that, and you have the picture ...
other artists—Mantegna and Leonardo included—are highly skilled at making figures dance. Their insights are the subjects of this chapter.

**The Center of Gravity**

A dancer’s body is governed by its center of gravity. All movements—from a simple *plié* to a daring *fouetté*—must be executed with respect to this intangible core, which is sensed by many dancers to lie deep within the abdomen. The center of gravity must be obeyed, because movement disrupts balance, de-centers the body, and thus threatens to overturn the potential grace of a correctly performed step. Observe little girls in the dance studio: teachers instruct their students to imagine that a pole passes directly through the center of their bodies; another commonly invoked studio game is one in which children pretend that a piece of yarn is attached at the center of the head. As imaginary strings growing out of small buns are pulled heavenward by the tiny dancers’ hands, bodies lengthen, postures become more erect, and every subsequent movement made is measured against its distance from the central axis of the body. These childish exercises are of constant necessity in the dance studio, because they call attention to the

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Suppose, however, that Renaissance pictures could be like poems. It would follow that an artist need not follow another’s text, but could compose his own. It could also follow that he need not compose his poem as text, but as a picture....” See Holberton, "Of Antique and Other Figures: Metaphor in Early Renaissance Art," 58.

22 The dance historian Barbara Sparti acknowledges the difficulty of representing dance: “Indeed, a large dancing group poses technical/pictorial problems for the painter, which partially explains its rarity in the history of Western art.” As far as I can tell, Sparti is the only dance historian to recognize artists who invent dances. She discovered that both Ambrogio Lorenzetti’s dance in the *Allegory of Good Government* and Giotto’s dancers below the figure of *Justice* in the Arena Chapel are “unique creations.” See Barbara Sparti, "Inspired Movement Versus Static Uniformity: A Comparison of Trecento and Quattrocento Dance Images," *Music in Art* XXXIII, no. 1-2 (2008): 40.
center of gravity. Indeed, the center of gravity is so fundamental to dance that it is now known in studio-lingo as simply “the center.”

Although this brief exposition on the relationship between a body and its center of gravity is based on modern studies of dance, its essence was already recognized in the Renaissance, and, significantly, within treatises on art. We recall that Alberti asked artists to observe the following:

Consider how a man, in all his positions, uses his whole body to sustain his head, the heaviest of all members; and when the figure is standing on one foot, the foot is always on a perpendicular with the head, almost like the base of a column, and in one who stands upright the face is turned in the same direction as the feet. Movements of the head I see to be such that there is almost always some part of the body beneath to sustain it ... or again, almost like the arm of a balance, it extends one member corresponding in weight to the head; and we see that whoever holds a weight extended on one arm, his foot being fixed almost like the tongue of a balance, the rest of the body is counterposed to counterbalance the weight (¶ 42).

Alberti articulates the principle of counterposition in rather ingenious terms. The center of gravity, he intuits, must be aligned with the supporting leg. This is a critical moment in Della pittura when Alberti shows that he was concerned with more than just eloquent movement; he was interested in the mechanics of human movement itself.

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25 According to David Summers, “there seems to be no close precedent for Alberti’s tectonic, mechanical conception which defined [movement] as the continual mutual compensation of weights arranged symmetrically around a central vertical axis.” See Summers, Michelangelo and the Language of Art, 408. John Spencer, however, attributes the observation to Alberti’s earlier work in physics. See Spencer’s introduction to Alberti, On Painting, 23. Alberti’s humanistic education may also have brought him into contact with Galen, who wrote extensively about the role of bodily symmetry in human movement. On the influence of Galen’s De usu partium, see Samuel Jr. Edgerton, "Alberti's Colour Theory: A Medieval Bottle without Renaissance Wine," Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes 32 (1969): 124-25. H.W. Janson attributed Alberti’s observation not to a text but to a particular sculpture: Donatello’s Saint Mark (1413), which clearly emphasizes the role played by the weight-bearing leg. See Janson, The Sculpture of Donatello, 89.
Alberti’s insight into the role played by the center of gravity is even more apparent in On Sculpture, a short (possibly) unfinished treatise written sometime between the 1430s and 1460s. The presentation of a canon of human proportions is the book’s ostensible purpose. Along with Alberti’s discussion of proportions comes an investigation of what he calls the “median perpendicular.” This median is nothing less than the center of gravity, and Alberti understands the body to be organized around it. Using a complex machine called the finitorium, a sculptor could determine the distance between any member of the body and its center of gravity, a process founded upon the notion that all moving parts of the body are ultimately governed by the center of gravity. Artists themselves confirm that Alberti picked up on something central to figuration itself. Albrecht Dürer, for example, writes in his own treatise that “it had been recommended since Alberti’s Della pittura to construct figures along a center of gravity extending from the chin to the instep.”

Alberti’s recommendation of the Three Graces as an ideal subject for painting does not appear within this context, but we could very well imagine that surviving examples provided him with a model from which he could study the principle of dynamic equilibrium. The trio’s gentle sway does not escape the eye. This is a defining feature of the motif, and the degree to which the group swings distinguishes the several Roman variants. The Three Graces in Siena (Figure 3.4), for instance, undulate little in comparison to the relief in the Louvre, perhaps the most sensuous of all the extant versions (Figure 3.5). In this example, the hips of the two flanking Graces swell so much that the figures appear to pull away from the center. The sculptor ingeniously counters

26 On the dating of De statua, see Aiken, "Leon Battista Alberti's System of Human Proportions," 68-96.

27 On the finitorium see ibid.: 75.

28 For this and other such examples, see Summers, Michelangelo and the Language of Art, 493.
their seeming separation from the group at the shoulders, which gently hug back up against the central Grace. To trace the contour that begins at their feet (now missing) is to outline a dramatic S-curve, whose rising and falling contours lend a sense of movement to an otherwise flat composition. Quintilian may well have had the Three Graces in mind when writing the following:

The body when held bolt upright has but little grace, for the face looks straight forward, the arms hang by the side, the feet are joined and the whole figure is stiff from top to toe. But that curve, I might almost call it motion, with which we are so familiar, gives an impression of action and animation....A similar impression of grace and charm is produced by rhetorical figures ... they involve a certain departure from the straight line and have the merit of variation from ordinary usage.29

Quintilian writes of the brilliance of contrapposto. By de-centering the body—by shifting its center of gravity—artists endowed figures with kinetic potential. The word potential is key here, for contrapposto does not involve any change of place. Popping the foot, swinging the hip, or raising the arm does not bear upon a body’s progress through space. These stationary aspects of contrapposto are akin to what the dance masters call fioriti (“ornaments”), movements that grace a pose.30 The concept finds a parallel in Alberti’s theory of architectural ornament, “an added

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29 Quintilian, Institutiones oratoriae, Book II, ch. 13, 9-11. For an extended discussion of this passage as it relates to rhetorical and pictorial contrapposto, see Summers, "Contrapposto: Style and Meaning in Renaissance Art," 336-60.

30 The rote execution of dance movements would have been considered unskilled, and perhaps even boring to watch. A highly skilled dancer, by contrast, would embellish the dance without altering its essential patterns. Fortunately, the dance treatises give us some idea of the possibilities for stylizing balli. See Franko, The Dancing Body in Renaissance Choreography, 10 and Chapter IV, Part C, where we learn that the ornaments of dance inflected the basic choreographic skeleton. On “fioreggiare” (flowerings), see Barbara Sparti, "Improvisation and Embellishment in Popular and Art Dances in Fifteenth- & Sixteenth-Century Italy," in Improvisation in the Arts of the Middle Ages and Renaissance, ed. Timothy McGee (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2003), 117-44, Nevile, "Disorder in Order: Improvisation in Italian Choreographed Dances of the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries," 145-69, and Barbara Sparti, "Style and Performance in the Social Dances of the Italian Renaissance: Ornamentation, Improvisation, Variation and Virtuosity," in Proceedings of the Ninth Annual Conference of the Society of Dance History Scholars (Riverside: Society of Dance History Scholars, 1986), 31-51. On ornament and improvisation in the sixteenth century, see Yvonne G. Kendall, "Ornamentation and Improvisation in Sixteenth-Century
embellishment of beauty and thus has the character of something attached or additional,” or landino’s notion of ornato, which contributed to the charm and finish of a painting.

Botticelli harnesses the kinetic potential of the contrapposto stance—its ability to be both pose and driving force. The Three Graces move not by leaps and bounds, but through subtle shifts-in weight (Figure 3.6). In the central Grace, hips and torso precede legs; indeed we perceive the body’s very core as propelling her leftwards.

The central Grace, her weight placed firmly on one foot, steps resolutely to the left, and presses her left hand gently but firmly against the slightly yielding hand of her neighbor. She in turn, even as she receives this benefit, this act of grace, shifts her feet and passes it on to the third partner of the dance.31

Charles Dempsey thus describes how Botticelli used shifts in weight to signify the giving, receiving, or returning of gifts.32 To see how Botticelli carefully manipulates the contrapposto pose—how he locates the energy of the dance at the core of body—is to understand something

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31 Dempsey, The Portrayal of Love, 34-35. Dempsey’s formal analysis stems from Wind’s: “In so far as dialectic can be danced, it has been accomplished in this group. ‘Opposition,’ ‘concord,’ and ‘concord in opposition,’ all three are expressed in the postures and steps and in the articulate style of joining the hands. Placed palm against palm to suggest an encounter but quietly interlocked in the absence of conflict, they rise up high to form a significant knot when they illustrate the Beauty of Passion.” Wind, Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance, 118-19.

32 For the complex history of how the Three Graces came to personify liberality, see Webbe, "The Three Graces in Renaissance Art: Origins and Transformations of a Theme". She makes the important point that while Seneca was read with great enthusiasm during the Renaissance, liberality was just one facet of a complex network of meanings Italian culture gave to the motif. Two fifteenth-century portrait medals cast by Niccolò Fiorentino illustrate the trio’s iconographic range. Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1463-1494), a Neo-platonic philosopher, and Giovanna degli Albizzi (1468-1488), a noblewoman who married into the powerful Tornabuoni family, were two very different Florentines, yet the reverse of their portrait medals each bear an image of Three Graces. The visual form of the Three Graces lent itself to such facile shifting. Three graceful women in constant contact with one another was a kind of blank canvas—an image that could be harnessed for a variety of meanings. In Wind’s words, “The easy symmetry of the group, relieved by the sideward turn of the middle figure, should have saved it, one might think, from moral vagaries. But its very transparency made the design a suitable target.” See Wind, Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance, 27-28.
even more fundamental about dance than gesture. The network of glances is joined by a network of gravitational centers. The leftward glance of the central Grace matches the swell of her hip, the rounded contour of which speaks to the empty space by the Grace who responds in kind. We are given the impression that the dancers sense each other’s presence through more than glance; a skilled dancer need not have her companion in sight, for adjacent energies can be felt. Botticelli is thinking like a dancer—like an individual who feels things through the body.33

Gravity and Speed

In his notes for a treatise on painting, Leonardo da Vinci takes Alberti’s observations about the center of gravity one step further.

Motion is created by the destruction of balance, that is, of equality of weight, for nothing can move by itself which does not leave its state of balance, and that thing moves most rapidly which is farthest from its balance. When a man or other creature moves either rapidly or slowly, that side which is above the leg that sustains the body will always be lower than the opposite side. The center of gravity of a man in motion will be over the center of the leg which rests on the ground. That animal which moves most slowly will have the center of gravity of its supporting legs nearest the perpendicular line of the center of gravity of its whole body. Conversely, that animal which moves most rapidly will have the center of its supports farthest from its center of gravity.34

33 That Botticelli asks his audience to understand and appreciate certain subtle, yet fundamental things about dancing is not surprising given the fact that Lorenzo de’ Medici—cousin to the likely patron, Pierfrancesco de’ Medici—was himself a choreographer. (There is still disagreement as to who exactly commissioned the Primavera. On the scanty evidence, and the various hypotheses it has given rise to see Dempsey, The Portrayal of Love, 21ff.) Two dances have been attributed to Lorenzo: Venus and Lauro. It has even been proposed that the dance performed by Botticelli’s Graces is none other than Lorenzo’s Venus, which is a bassa danza built around the double-step (passo doppio), on which see Emily Roulette Jayne, "A Choreography by Lorenzo in Botticelli’s Primavera," in Lorenzo de' Medici: New Perspectives, ed. Bernard Toscani (Brooklyn College and the Graduate Center of the City University of New York: P. Lang, 1993), which I discuss later in this chapter. On the dance Lauro, and its relationship to Botticelli’s Primavera, see Andrea Francalanci, "Le tre grazie della Primavera del Botticelli: La danza fra allegoria e rea
ta storica," Medioevo e Rinascimento 6, no. 3 (1992), 23-37.

34 “Del moto creato dalla destruttione del bilicho, cioe qualita imperoche nesuna cosa per se si move che non escha del suo bilicho e’ quella fa piu velloce che piu si rimove dal predetto suo bilicho....” See Leonardo da Vinci, Treatise on Painting [Codex Urbinas Latinus 1270], ¶ 346ff [hereafter abbreviated as McM with paragraph number].
In addition to recognizing that a relationship exists between the center of gravity and movement, Leonardo explores gravity’s specific relationship to acceleration. This exploration finds graphic expression in three drawings at Windsor Castle.

In Windsor 12596 (Figure 3.7), Leonardo draws the posterior view of a male nude. The drawing forces consideration of the human body’s obeisance to its central axis, which is still visible as a finely incised metalpoint line that bifurcates this stalwart figure. Like three points of a stable triangle, the figure’s head and firmly planted feet are organized around this guiding axis. The impression given is a body of great stability, and therefore also of immobility. Just as Leonardo surmised in his writings, when balance is maintained, movement is thwarted. This figure’s wide stance stakes claim over the ground. He is not going anywhere.35

Windsor 12581, The Pointing Lady, is kinetic potential soon-to-be realized (Figure 3.8). Gesturing yonder, she directs us to a faraway place.36 Her ethereal body has not yet departed,

Leonardo’s ideas concerning the role played by the center of gravity in human and animal movement develop out of Aristotle’s On the Motion of Animals, which treats mammalian movement as a condition of axial disequilibrium. Aristotle observes the bi-lateral symmetry of the body, and deduces that movements must originate from the middle of the trunk. While he never assigns a specific name to this corporeal center, scholars assume it to be the center of gravity. See Martha Craven Nussbaum, Aristotle’s De motu animalium: Text with Translation, Commentary, and Interpretive Essays (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), 370. For Galen’s treatment of the same subject, see note 25. On Leonardo’s acquaintance with the law of balances as explored by Aristotle, Euclid, Archimedes, and Jordanus, see Martin Kemp, Leonardo da Vinci. The Marvellous Works of Nature and Man (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 120ff. Most recently, Michael Cole has provided further insights into the artist’s exploration of bodily equilibrium by studying late sixteenth and early seventeenth-century Florentine redactions of Leonardo’s treatise. See Michael Cole, "On the Movement of Figures in Some Early Apographs of the Abridged Trattato," in Re-Reading Leonardo, ed. Claire Farago (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009), 107-25.


36 Our sense that she points to something in the distance is confirmed by Leonardo himself, who writes, “Friendly gestures pointing to things that are near either in time or space should be made with the hand not too far removed from the person, but if the things are far away, the hand of the pointer should also be
but the imaginary wind that sends her draperies and hair flying render her presence fleeting; at any moment, she may dance into the mysterious distance. The temporal impression given to us by Leonardo befits the drawing’s supposed purpose, as *The Pointing Lady* may be one of the very few surviving records of Leonardo’s theatrical activity.\(^\text{37}\) As she seems to dissolve before our very eyes, so too does she seem to embody the theater itself—a place where spectacle, like music, dies as soon as it begins.\(^\text{38}\)

Carlo Pedretti is sensitive to this figure’s enigmatic pose, but also doubtful about our ability to assign it any specific meaning.

It is impossible to reach a satisfactory explanation of the enigmatic series of the deluges and masqueraders on the basis of the drawings alone. Unless documents are found that can be related to them, any attempt to explain them by means of iconography is destined to remain a theory.\(^\text{39}\)

Such a challenge seems to miss the point. Discoveries made in the archives rarely elucidate Leonardo’s drawings, because while some are connected to specific works, most are really investigative—the graphic means through which Leonardo came to understand the complexities of nature and man. By surrounding the *Pointing Lady* with the various things (mainly theatrical) for which the drawing could have been preparatory, we obscure what it meant for Leonardo to


\[^{38}\] “Music is to be termed the sister of painting, for it is subject to the sense of hearing, a sense second to the eye. It composes harmony with the conjunction of proportioned parts sounded at the same time. It is obliged to be born and to die in one or a number of harmonic rhythms...” McM ¶ 39.

probe a figure on the verge of moving.\textsuperscript{40} It may be for this reason that Pedretti finds it impossible to reach a definitive iconographic interpretation of the \emph{Pointing Lady}, or of the drawings related to it, such as the so-called \emph{Masquereders}.\textsuperscript{41} For the drawing’s purpose lies not only in costume, scenery, or even in the portrayal of a specific character, such as Dante’s Matelda.\textsuperscript{42} Leonardo’s \emph{Pointing Lady} is also a drawing about how movement happens: it rouses us to understand how body parts realign when the center of gravity is compromised.

Early as the second century CE, writers were aware of the tendency for audiences to be more attracted to theatrical accoutrements than to the actors and dancers themselves. Frustrated by Demetrius the Cynic’s belief that a dancer is a mere adjunct to the flute, Lucian, author of the only surviving, classical dialogue on dance writes

\begin{quote}
People were duped by the accessories of the business—the silk vestments, the beautiful mask, the flute and its quavers, and the sweet voices of the singers, by all of which the dancer’s business, itself amounting to nothing at all, was embellished. Thereupon the dancer...performed without flute or songs,...enjoining silence upon the chorus itself, quite unsupported, he danced the amours of Aphrodite and Ares, Helius tattling, Hephaestus laying his plot ... in such wise that Demetrius was delighted beyond measure with what was taking place and paid the highest possible tribute to the dancer....‘I hear the story that you are acting, man, I do not just see it; you seem to me to be talking with your very hands!'\textsuperscript{43}
\end{quote}


\textsuperscript{41} The most outstanding example is Windsor 12575, \textit{Youth in a Masquerade Costume}. See Meller, "Leonardo Da Vinci's Drawings to the Divine Comedy," fig. 24.

\textsuperscript{42} This is the argument made by Meller in ibid.: 143-44. The possibility that Leonardo’s drawing may relate to a series of studies for illustrations of Dante is discussed further by Arasse, \textit{Leonardo Da Vinci: The Rhythm of the World}, 220-55, and Martin Kemp, "Leonardo Da Vinci: Science and the Poetic Impulse," \textit{Royal Society of Arts Journal} CXXXIII, no. 5343 (1984), 196-214. For Meller’s theory in the context of dance, see Femorn, "The Moving Figure in Leonardo's Art," 77.

\textsuperscript{43} ο δή και Δημήτριον τὸν Κυνικὸν παθέθεν λέγουσιν. ἐπεὶ γὰρ καὶ αὐτὸς ὁμοῦ σοι κατηγόρει τῆς ὀρχηστικῆς, λέγον τοῦ αὐλοῦ καὶ τῶν συρίγγων καὶ τῶν κτύπων πάρεργον τι τὸν ὀρχήστην εἶναι, μηδὲν
Lucian insists upon the eloquence of the dancing body, its ability to communicate meaning with or without theatrical accoutrements. If Leonardo’s *Pointing Lady* is indeed a creature of the theater, then she, as Lucian would assure us, speaks independently of factors external to the body itself.

A slight diagonal describes the sway of her legs, and two feet placed in close proximity provide little support for a body that leans to the right. The long, gentle curve of a drapery fold guides our eye from her knee to her abdomen, where suddenly, a change of direction occurs. *The Pointing Lady* no longer leans forward, but counters the movement of her lower body, so that her shoulder and head remain in line with her hip. She simultaneously suggests motion and stability—the twin poles that anchor Leonardo’s investigation of human movement, as well as his understanding of dance.

Motions are of three general kinds; that is, motion in space, simple contained motion, and the third, motion compounded of contained motion and motion in space….Compound motions are infinite, and among them are: dancing, fencing, playing, sowing, plowing, and rowing…."44

44 “…moti infiniti sono li moti composti perche in quelli e balare, scermire, giuocolare….” McM ¶ 355.
In so categorizing movement, Leonardo finds a paradoxical situation implicit in dance: the opposition between movement and stillness.

This duality was an essential quality of dance since antiquity. Plutarch describes how dancers’ movements led into static poses, “when they arrange their bodies into an Apollo, Pan, or Bacchant, as in a picture.” Libanius notes the precision with which dancers could come to a complete stop with the music. “They are carried along as if on wings but then finish in a motionless pose as if glued to the spot and along with the pose the image appears.” In both Plutarch and Libanius there is a common association of the dancer’s pose with an “image.” At one point, Libanius even compares a dancer to a statue. Ruth Webb’s detailed analysis of such passages has revealed that an important quality of ancient dance was the “constant aesthetic contrast between the flow of movement (phora, kinēsis) and the fixed poses (stasis, schesis, schēma) that punctuated it, all underlined, one supposes, by dramatic changes in the tempo of the accompanying music.” This aesthetic is repeated in the Renaissance, in, for example,

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48 Webb, *Demons and Dancers*, 70.
Domenico da Piacenza’s treatise on dance. He assigns the relationship between movement and stasis the term *fantasmata*, and describes it thus:

Note that fantasmata is a physical quickness which is controlled by the understanding of the misura first mentioned above. This necessitates that at each tempo one appears to have seen Medusa’s head, as the poet says, and be of stone in one instant, then, in another instant, take to flight like a falcon driven by hunger.49

The falcon’s flight is a metaphor for the dancer’s constant negotiation of movement and pose—what we might be called an aesthetic of suspension. *The Pointing Lady* captures this fleeting essence of the dance.50

A figure in rapid motion compromises its center of gravity. Indeed, the swiftly moving body, Leonardo observes, “leans forward towards the point he runs to.”51 This is the effect rendered in a third drawing from Windsor 12708, a tiny clipping from Codex Atlanticus 298

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49 “Oltra dico a ti chi del mestiero vole imparare bisogna danzare per fantasmata e nota che fantasmata e una presteza corporalle la quale e mossa cum lo intelecto dela mexura dicta imprima disopra facendo requia acadauno tempo che pari haver veduto lo capo di meduxa como dice el poeta cioe che facto el motto sii tutto di piedra in quello instante et in instante mitti ale como falcone che per paica mosso sia….” See *Fifteenth-Century Dance and Music*, 12, lines 59-65.

50 Fantasmata is used by Domenico da Piacenza and Antontio Cornazano, but not by Guglielmo Ebreo. On fantasmata, see Mark Franko, "The Notion of 'Fantasmata' in Fifteenth-Century Italian Dance Treatises," *Dance Research Annual* 16 (1987), Jennifer Nevile, "Disorder in Order: Improvisation in Italian Choreographed Dances of the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries," in *Improvisation in the Arts of the Middle Ages and Renaissance*, ed. Timothy McGee (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2003), 145-69, and Sparti, "Improvisation and Embellishment in Popular and Art Dances in Fifteenth- & Sixteenth-Century Italy," 117-44. On Domenico’s conscious invocation of the Italian fantasma, meaning ghost, as well as the Latin phantasma, meaning dream, see Nevile, *The Eloquent Body*, 86. It is interesting to note that fantasmata is still relevant to dance. In her recent book on George Balanchine, Nancy Goldner writes the following about the piece *Theme and Variations*: “I think it’s the pause, that second of stasis, and then the release that takes your breath away.” Nancy Goldner, *Balanchine Variations* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2008), 48.

51 In Fermor’s analysis, the *Pointing Lady* exemplifies la donna honesta, who, in the dancing manuals, makes almost indiscernible steps with the legs kept very close together. She concludes that “Leonardo’s moving figure is not a simple copy of a natural pose...rather, it is life, or nature, filtered through the prism of convention—a complex combination of observation with literary, social and moral ideals.” See Fermor, "The Moving Figure in Leonardo's Art," 77.

recto-c (Figure 3.9). A man is in rapid pursuit of a woman, and we feel the urgency with which she attempts to escape him. He is almost upon her; his fingertips reach the edge of her dress. While the female figure stays barely ahead of his grasp, Leonardo indicates that the man runs at a more rapid pace, for his limbs are furthest from the center of his body. Neither of his feet is placed directly beneath the central axis of the body, and his back leg is raised completely off the ground.

Outside of Florence, there is another painter attentive to the role played by the center of gravity in the depiction of speed, Andrea Mantegna. At the extreme right of the Parnassus a young Muse rushes into the scene with great speed, as if she burst out of the wings just a second too late (Figure 3.10). Of the few preparatory drawings that exist for the Parnassus, one is devoted to this quickstepping dancer (Figure 3.11). The drawing is highly finished, yet noticeably different from the final, painted figure. In the drawing, Mantegna renders a dancer who distributes her weight evenly between split legs. Poised on the balls of both feet, the figure in this drawing is suspended between two movements. In the finished painting, only one Muse is granted such a pose: the figure exactly right of center. Like a hinge, her left leg suggests forward movement towards the dancer dressed in hunter green, while the backwards sway of her body and sideward glance produce a counter-motion, a momentary pause in the direction whence she came. Whether Mercury and Pegasus have caught her attention, or she is distracted by the sudden arrival of the tardy Muse, is hard to determine. What can be said is that Mantegna knew, choreographically, the moment in the dance when such a balanced stance was most appropriate.

52 It his been surmised that this figure represents Terpsichore herself. See Maud Cruttwell, Andrea Mantegna (London: George Bell and Sons, 1901), 95. It has also been argued that the Muse assisting the final latecomer is Terpsichore, as Guarino da Verona once instructed Lionello d’Este that Terpsichore should be represented with the ‘gesture of one commanding the dance.’ See Ronald Lightbown, Mantegna (Oxford: Phaidon and Christie’s, 1986), 198, note 67.
In a dance rife with progressive and regressive movements, he needed a kind of compositional center of gravity, a stationary pivot point around which the entire group revolves. That Mantegna meant to draw attention to this specific moment in the dance is confirmed by the fact that this is the only ungirdled Muse. She and the dancer that follows are also distinguished by their shot-silk dresses, which combine the solid colors of their respective groups: green and red on the left; pink and grey on the right.

And so, the preparatory drawing with which our discussion of Mantegna began, could not ultimately be used for the rapid arrival of the ninth, and final Muse. To have done so would have been to pause the movement at the extremes. Instead, Mantegna sparks the chorus’ outer limits. On the far right we encounter the tardy Muse, who joins the dance with exuberance. On the far left is a dancer that enacts the very opposite: she pulls away from the group momentarily, cocking her hip in unison with Apollo’s chords. Indeed, the Parnassus slows down towards the center and speeds up at the periphery.

This defining feature of Mantegna’s choreographic habit—a calm center and an excited periphery—represents a new, pictorial way of thinking about choral dancing. The originality of Mantegna’s choreographic style is thrown into sharp relief when compared to the group of nine, female dancers frescoed by Ambrogio Lorenzetti in the Good Government (1338) (Figure 3.12). Like the city their dance symbolizes, these nine ladies follow the measured and even tempo delivered by the accompanying tambourine player. Around twenty-five years later, but in Florence, Andrea Bonaiuti depicted a very similar chorus of eight dancers in his Triumph of the

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Church (1365-68) (Figure 3.12). Although split into two, well-defined groups of three and four (the eighth dancer, at the far left, departs from the group) these dancers share both tempo and step. Such symmetry in the form of regular intervals and uniform steps did not interest Mantegna. His dance of the Muses expands and contracts; it ebbs and flows like breath. Botticelli’s Three Graces, Leonardo’s drawings, and Mantegna’s Muses focus attention upon the center of gravity, both as a way to depict movement and as a choreographic principle. Significantly, these figures all wear flowing garments. Indeed, to render a figure in motion—and particularly one that dances—the artist cannot but implicate draperies as well.

Complicit Draperies

There was a time when Greek artists depicted the Three Graces clothed. When, why, and by whom they were disrobed was already a matter of debate in Antiquity. In the Description of Greece, Pausanias writes,

> Who it was who first represented the Graces naked, whether in sculpture or in painting, I could not discover. During the earlier period, certainly, sculptors and painters alike represented them draped. At Smyrna, for instance, in the sanctuary of the Nemeses, above the images have been dedicated Graces of gold, the work of Bupalus; and in the Music Hall in the same city there is a portrait of a Grace, painted by Apelles. At Pergamus likewise, in the chamber of Attalus, are other images of Graces made by Bupalus; and near what is called the Pythium there is a portrait of Graces, painted by

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55 Interestingly, this is not an issue in the treatises on dance. In fact, movement (movimento) is the very last element dealt with in the treatises. Certainly, steps as different as the sempio, a walking step, and the volta, a jumping turn, would have required dancers to shift their weight. But this is a principle that is learned in the course of practice itself, and therefore not the stuff of treatises that are designed to impress a humanist audience.
Pythagoras the Parian. Socrates too, son of Sophroniscus, made images of Graces for the Athenians, which are before the entrance to the Acropolis. All these are alike draped; but later artists, I do not know the reason, have changed the way of portraying them. Certainly to-day sculptors and painters represent Graces naked.  

The tradition of representing the Graces clad in garments has ended, but Pausanias is unable to trace the genesis of their nudity. Seneca is roughly contemporary with Pausanias, but his description of the Three Graces disregards completely the current penchant for displaying the trio nude. Seneca’s Graces are clad in “ungirdled garments,” and thus harken back to an archaic mode of presentation.

Did Alberti follow Seneca’s model because he shared his taste for the archaic? To put it another way, why did Seneca’s text trump the available Roman sculptures? For Edgar Wind, the popularity of Stoicism in the Renaissance allowed for a competition to arise between Seneca and the surviving antiquities. With specific regard to the Primavera, Charles Dempsey has argued that Botticelli’s representation of the Three Graces (Figure 3.6), which follows closely Alberti’s description of them in Della pittura, are consciously archaic; like the other mythological figures shown in the painting, their specific guises are meant to transport the viewer to a remote and rustic world.

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57 For a modern interpretation of this new type, as well as a detailed account of its subsequent history in art, see Deonna, "Le groupe des trois grâces nues et sa descendance," 274-332.

58 Wind writes, “It appears that Seneca retained so strong a hold over the imagination that a friction resulted between the literary and pictorial imagination....that the Graces are not represented naked, but wearing loose, transparent garments, shows how much the painter was inspired by literature.” It is for this reason, Wind deduces, that fifteenth and sixteenth-century representations of the Three Graces fall into two distinct categories: those that follow Seneca’s text, such as Botticelli’s Primavera, and those that follow the nude model offered by the extant antiquities, such as Raphael’s Three Graces. Wind, "Seneca's Graces," 32.

59 Dempsey writes, “The idea of images created by antiquiores pictores, the more ancient painters, is a significant one in the conception of the Primavera...Mercury, the Three Graces, and Venus are all shown
Alberti’s—and by extension, Botticelli’s—reliance upon Seneca’s Graces may, however, have more to do with draperies and less to do with Stoicism or archaism. Recall that Alberti writes the following in Book II of Della pittura,

I am delighted to see some movement in hair, locks of hair, branches, fronds, and robes...Folds act in the same way, emerging like the branches from the trunk of a tree. In this they adhere to the seven movements so that no part of the cloth is bare of movement. As I have noted, movements should be moderated and sweet. They should appear graceful to the observer rather than a marvel of study. However, where we should like to find movement in the draperies, cloth is by nature heavy and falls to the earth. For this reason it would be well to place in the picture the face of the wind Zephyrus or Austrus who blows from the clouds making the draperies move in the wind. Thus you will see with what grace the bodies, where they are struck by the wind, show the nude under the draperies in suitable parts. In the other parts the draperies blown by the wind fly gracefully through the air.  

Allowing his imagination free rein, Alberti constructs a fantastic comparison between hair, tree branches, and robes that allows both animate and inanimate things to share the same qualities of dynamic movement. In endowing drapery with dynamic movement, Alberti shows the act of clothing a figure to be much more than just the final step in constructing human form. Draperies transcend their function as mere ornamentation to become the very locus of motion itself. And so proceeds a game of matching: a still body occasions heavy, sedate draperies, while an active body necessitates dynamic, speedy draperies. The result of such correspondences is fully animated figures, whose movements are projected onto extremities, drapery, and hair. Here in the Primavera in their immeasurably ancient manifestations as the archaic deities of nature’s fertility, the renascent gods of the first spring that shone on the face of the earth...” Dempsey goes on to conclude that, “The materia of Botticelli’s invention for the Primavera is the materia of the Scriptores rerum rusticae...the same qualities are evident, for example, in the selection of Horace and Seneca as foundations for the representation of the Graces, for the maker of that selection perceived that the clothed and dancing Graces they describe in the company of Mercury are uniquely characterized as the archaic and primitive goddesses of the earth’s liberality, specifically derived from an ancient tradition that goes back to Hesiod.” Dempsey, The Portrayal of Love, 37, 44, and 49.

Alberti, On Painting, 81.

My reading of Alberti’s treatment of draperies was influenced by Georges Didi-Huberman, who writes that “Alberti defines nothing less than the field of animation proper to painting. The principle flaw of
lies the power of Botticelli’s diaphanous shifts. Trapped within each gossamer piece are the characteristics of the dance. The points at which they cling and release chart spatial vectors, elongate limbs, and trace dynamic, linear paths that imitate—and thus ameliorate—the poses struck by the dancers themselves. Botticelli’s draperies are part and parcel of human movement; they are lifeless articles that take shape around organic forms.

One Grace rises with both feet on demi-pointe. In compliance with her rising body, the translucent robes defy gravity. Long, upward sweeping lines are punctuated by areas of cloth that float away from the body—as in the portion directly above her genitalia—as well as by folds that lift and arch—like the one atop her left thigh. Aby Warburg recognized that this figure’s draperies have a kinetic life of their own.

Although the folds over the right thigh can only have been produced by tying the garment with a cord, there is no girdle to be seen: for the sake of the motif, he omits to account visibly for the lie of the drapery.

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painting—namely, that it is an inanimate surface that merely bears a semblance to animate things becomes prodigious once all of the movements in a painting function on the same level of effectiveness. Whether they are mechanical or organic, subsidiary or essential, local disturbances or disturbances globally propagated throughout the picture, they all conspire to animate the image...” Didi-Huberman, "The Imaginary Breeze: Remarks on the Air of the Quattrocento," 281. For the full range of Didi-Huberman’s thoughts on the topic of drapery, see idem, Ninfa moderna: Essai sur le drapé tombé.

Again, Didi-Huberman: “Body, surfaces and air all hang together, like the Three Graces in Botticelli’s Primavera: each element in that dialectical dance exists by virtue of its being borne, transported and transformed by the others.” See Didi-Huberman, "The Imaginary Breeze: Remarks on the Air of the Quattrocento," 276. Kenneth Clark anticipates this observation: “So naked beauty reappears in the Renaissance as it first emerged in Greece, protected and enhanced by draperie mouillée.” Clark, The Nude: A Study in Ideal Form, 98.

Warburg observed a similar amount of kinetic freedom in the garments Botticelli created for the Three Graces depicted in a fresco from Villa Lemmi (now detached, Louvre, Paris). “The three Graces, walking in file, have the same loose, ideal costume as those in the Spring, except that over this shift-like garment the second and third (from the left) wear a cloak whose upper edge billows out from the hindmost Graces’ right shoulder and forms a swag across the lower part of her torso, without any evident means of support.” Warburg, "Sandro Botticelli’s Birth of Venus and Spring," 115.
Warburg interpreted this treatment of drapery to be so fundamental to the depiction of movement on a two-dimensional surface, that he claimed it to be an “indispensable attribute” of painted form. Indeed, this Grace is swathed with drapery folds that are minutely reactive to the figure’s ascent; they move like currents that flow upstream.

The central Grace, seen from behind, wears perhaps the most sensual of the gowns. Her upper body is almost bare, as the buttons meant to fasten the dress over her left shoulder have come undone, and the sleeve over her right arm has split apart at the seams. Much of the drama of this figure lies in its transparent clothing—clothing that threatens to reveal, and perhaps even abandon the body it presumes to conceal. A similar effect is rendered by Mantegna, who clothes a single Muse in suspenseful drapery (Figure 3.10). Exactly left of center is dancer clad in hunter green. A sharp twist to the right has caused her overskirt to spin out like a top, revealing an underskirt held together by a single button. It is clear that this dancer sinks her weight into her left hip, because the delicate button, surrounded by many radiating folds, is under stress. One more movement and the clasp may burst. A fleshy thigh, like the one belonging to the Muse in red, is on the verge of revelation.

That such expectancy pervades Botticelli and Mantegna’s figures is entirely appropriate to their choreographic roles. For the central Grace, Botticelli has worked hard to make her drapery collaborate with the intended ambiguity of her choreographic position. A long fold from rib cage to upper knee cap is tangent to the next Grace’s rounded belly, while several folds of drapery fly back in the opposite direction to coalesce with her sister’s at the right. Nowhere does her dress make contact with the ground; it flutters and floats, mingling here and there with her flanking companions. Mantegna’s Muse, like Botticelli’s Grace, turns her back to the audience,

Ibid. In a note from September 29, 1890 he adds, “Spectator and clothing. With clothing in motion, every part of the contour is seen as the trace of a person moving forward whom one is following step-by-step.” Cited and discussed in Michaud, Aby Warburg and the Image in Motion, 83-84.
and dances out a *figura serpetinata* that complicates the leftward thrust of the dance. Will she double back, as the muse in red has done? Or will she continue forward, as the undulating hem of her draperies do? Such choreographic tension is concentrated around a little gold fastener that threatens to release its grasp.

In Botticelli’s dancing Three Graces, the lines of force traced by the drapery are defined by the dance itself. In creating a kind of doubling, whereby both animate and inanimate objects contribute to a sense of movement, Botticelli realizes the synergistic relationship Alberti imagined to exist between a moving body and sheer drapery. The chemises Botticelli designed for the Three Graces are just such variegated and dynamic maps. Replete with choreographed folds, these draperies dance.65

We can see once more the inseparability of movement and drapery by looking at a Leonardo’s *Three Dancing Maidens* (Figure 3.13).66 Three dancers dart across the page. The two lateral figures are seen from behind and strike nearly identical lunging *serpetinate* poses, while the central figure is caught upright and in profile as she jumps.67 This formation reverses that of Three Graces. In other words, Leonardo reinvigorates juxtaposition within the same field, the formula for which the classical trio is famous. Still obedient to the typical formation, these dancers spring through space with newfound energy; indeed, the page is alive with horizontal,

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65 On Warburg’s contribution to the role of drapery in depicting movement, see Chapter One, page 29.


67 It has been proposed that these three dancers may represent the three theological virtues—Faith, Hope, and Charity—but their compositional relationship to the Three Graces has never been suggested. See Meller, "Leonardo Da Vinci's Drawings to the Divine Comedy," 143.
vertical, and helical motions, as well as combinations thereof. The dancer at stage right, for example, lunges left to meet her partner. Her deeply bent right knee is the power source that will propel her laterally across the page. That lateral propulsion is counteracted, however, by the exaggerated twist of her torso, which turns her upper body and face away from the direction in which she travels. In a note contained in Ms.G., the latest of the notebooks, Leonardo expresses interest in the infinite movements available in nature: “...which movement is sometimes fast and sometimes slow, and sometimes it turns right and sometimes left, now up and now down....” Leonardo has indeed created a dancer that performs simultaneous, yet ultimately contradictory movements. She is the dancing equivalent of his spiraling whirlpools, twisting flight paths, coiled hairs, elliptical flowers, and serpentine horses. To borrow Paul Valéry’s description of a

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68 In an essay devoted to Picasso, Leo Steinberg makes a brief digression into the theme of the Three Graces: “If Renaissance masters thought the device too predictable, they knew how to disguise it, the game being to maintain hidden identities in variation.” See Steinberg, "The Algerian Women and Picasso at Large," 178.


70 To cite just one of Leonardo’s many notes on water: “Observe the motion of the surface of water, which resembles that of hair, which has two motions, one of which depends on the weight of the hair, the other on the direction of the curls; thus the water forms turning eddies, one of which follows the impetus of the main course, while the other follows that of incidence and reflection” (Nota il moto del lieullo dell’acqua, il quale fa a vso de’ capelli, che ânno due moti, de’ quali l’uno attede al peso del uello, l’altro al liniamento delle volte; così l’acqua à le sue volte revertingino se, delle quali vna parte attende al inpeto del corso principale l’altro attede al moto incidete e reflesso). Richter ¶ 389.

In Gombrich’s analysis, “The point Leonardo here wishes to make is actually rather simple. He wants to remind us only of two factors, the spiraling movement of the vortex and the forward pull of the river.” If faced with the Three Dancing Maidens, I imagine that Gombrich would have read it in much the same manner that he reads the studies of water and air: as “a diagram visualizing Leonardo’s theoretical propositions...” Ibid., 46, 48. On the unity of Leonardo’s thought, see Kemp, Leonardo Da Vinci. The Marvellous Works of Nature and Man, esp. ch. V (“The Prime Mover”), Rosand, Drawing Acts, 97-111 (“Drawing and Knowing”), and Gombrich, "Leonardo Da Vinci's Method of Analysis and Permutation: The Form of Movement in Water and Air," 39-56.
dancer, “And the whole lovely fiber of her smooth, muscular body, from the nape of her neck to the heel of her foot, progressively expresses and twists itself; all is aquiver."\textsuperscript{71}

Drapery is crucial to our perception of the complex movements executed by Leonardo’s \textit{Three Dancing Maidens}. A thick band of twisted fabric encircles the torso of the dancer at stage right. This sash is noticeably absent from her partner’s dress, because this figure performs a vertical motion. That vertical motion is exaggerated, moreover, by the arc of drapery that traces the path of her left foot. Through drawing, Leonardo studied the correspondence of human movement and drapery. While he is not unique in recognizing their mutual dependence, he was the first to complement his drapery studies with accompanying text, written explanations of the symbiotic process he sought to penetrate graphically.

The draperies with which figures are clothed are of three sorts; that is, thin, thick, and medium. The thin ones are lightest and liveliest in motion. Therefore when a figure is running consider the motion of this figure, because it bends now to the right, now to the left, and in putting weight on the right foot the drapery of that part rises from the foot, its undulation reflecting the percussion.\textsuperscript{72}


\textsuperscript{72} “Li panni di che son uestite le figure sono di tre sorti cioe sotili, grossi, e mezzani. Li Sotili sono piu agili et atti a movimenti, adonque quando la figura corre considera li moti d’essa figura perchè ella si spiegha nor a’destra hor a’sinistra e nel postare la gamba destra il panno da quella parte s’alza dapie reflettendo la percussione della sua onda....” McM ¶ 567.
Leonardo’s draperies are conceived of in tandem with human movement. More specifically, a causal relationship is thus established: human movement determines the movement of cloth. It is this causal relationship that separates Leonardo from Alberti, who, although highly imaginative, requires an external cause for the movement of drapery. Enter Zephyr—wind personified. Leonardo, by contrast, sends draperies flying in Zephyr’s absence. The body itself is made to account for the characteristics of moving drapery. In the passage excerpted above, a musical metaphor is introduced instead to explain how drapery reacts to a foot that hits the ground: “When it rests on the right foot, the drapery on that side rises from the foot, reflecting by its undulation the impact (la percussione) of the foot on the ground.” Like a percussive instrument that transmits vibrating shock waves, the impact of the foot sends the surrounding draperies flying. In a related note, Leonardo discusses the effect of air upon the body, but his discussion quickly turns to consider the opposite: the body’s effect upon the surrounding air: “the wave of the air that is produced by means of a body which moves through this air will be considerably swifter than the body that moves it.” While air is an invisible force with which the moving body must reckon, the human body is also a mass that exerts its own force upon invisible phenomena.

73 It must be hardly coincidental that just as Leonardo classifies three kinds of human movement, so too does he list three kinds of drapery. Refer back to section 2, “Gravity and Speed.”

74 Warburg recognized the tension Alberti creates between imagination (anthropomorphische Phantasie) and reflection (vergleichende Reflexion). “The rule of Alberti’s shows both imagination and reflection in equal proportions. On the one hand, he is glad to see hair and garments in marked movement, and he gives reign to his fancy, attributing organic life to inanimate accessory forms ... On the other hand, however, Alberti expressly insists that he set his accessory forms in motion only where the wind really might have caused such motion....” Aby Warburg, “Sandro Botticelli’s Birth of Venus and Spring [1893],” 96.

75 See note 72 above.

Midway between Alberti and Leonardo, we find the dance master Guglielmo Ebreo engaging with a similar principle, albeit in less scientific and more practical terms. In the brief sections of his treatise that are devoted to the issue of clothing, he advises dancers to use short cloaks, because “the cloak gathers wind as you perform a salto or a volta.” What Leonardo and the dance masters intuit is a relationship that is quite familiar to all modern theatergoers: the stage is never windy. Fluttering draperies are the result of dancing bodies that stir the surrounding air.

Alberti initiated, and Leonardo furthered, this discussion of the ways in which drapery complies with and reacts to human movement. Proleptic as Della pittura is, however, Alberti omits—as does Leonardo—the ways in which drapery can work to establish figural relationships. Botticelli and Mantegna provide a few cases in point for the manner in which drapery participates in the larger choreographic structure.

Chloris’s featherweight drapery touches down in a significant location (Figure 3.1). Midway between herself and Flora, the woman she will become, an evanescent corner settles over the grass. It fans out in the exact location of her next step—the one that is congruous, we imagine, with her imminent metamorphosis. Botticelli helps us to further imagine it so, because Flora’s drapery touches the ground in close proximity and in exactly the same fan shape, tingeing—almost synaptically—the tips of Chloris’s translucent gown with its calm gold tone. Drapery is deployed in a similar way in the earlier Return of Judith to Bethulia, a painting that Aby Warburg felt to contain the spirit of dance (Figure 3.14). Two flaps of blue fabric trail

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77 “Che la mantellina piglia vento che como tu dai un salto o una volta…” See Fifteenth-Century Dance and Music, 151, lines 1170-85.

78 In a letter designed to cure Warburg of his constant writer’s block, André Jolles wrote the following, “In many of the works of art I had always liked, I discovered something of my Nymph… Sometimes she was Salome dancing with her death-dealing charm in front of the licentious tetrarch; sometimes she was
behind Judith’s right foot in an even tempo, tracing her previous steps. She is the precursor to Flora, whose even pace is measured by two precise fans of flowered cloth that follow close behind her right foot.

The Three Graces’ draperies also make contact with the ground at three crucial junctures in the choreography: between Venus and the Grace closest to her; between that Grace and the central one, and between the Grace at the left and Mercury. To establish a compositional link between Venus and her neighboring Grace, Botticelli uses drapery just as much as, if not more than, gesture and glance. Indeed, a strong diagonal connects the tip of her fallen drapery and the point of Venus’ toe. This Grace, positioned closest to Venus, wears a diaphanous shift that spreads on the ground in two directions: towards Venus behind her, and towards the central Grace. Traditionally, there is an important compositional relationship between these two Graces. In many antique examples, the interval between these two figures is smaller than that between the central Grace and the Grace that flanks her right side (Figure 3.15). Botticelli maintains their close proximity not simply through spacing, or mirrored feet, but also via draperies that mingle around the figures’ shins like merging clouds. To carry the viewer’s eye away from the Graces and towards Mercury, Botticelli employs drapery yet again. These three pieces of drapery, which fall in soft folds over the grass, have a magnetic quality—their directional pulls establish relationships amongst the dancers, as well as across the composition.

Judith carrying proudly and triumphantly with a gay step the head of the murdered commander; and then again she appeared to hide in the boy-like grace of little Tobias....” For the set of correspondence from which this excerpt comes, see Gombrich, *Aby Warburg. An Intellectual Biography*, 108.

79 As far as I can tell, the only subsequent Italian artist to pick this up is Correggio, who winds the long flowing hair of the central Grace around the righthand sister.

80 What we might call “narrative drapery,” to borrow a phrase from Leo Steinberg (*The Sexuality of Christ*, 261) can be seen at work in Botticelli’s sacred works as well. In the late *Pieta* (c. 1495), for example, the great swag of cloth draped over the Virgin’s knees falls to the ground where it hugs up
And then there is that fabulous puffed sleeve, whose profile is silhouetted against the painting’s dark backdrop of trees. This blonde Grace is the only woman to which Botticelli gives such a cumuliform sleeve. And yet, in addition to distinguishing her, it also serves to bind her to the trio. Its undulating shape is mirrored by the central Grace’s snaking ponytail, and then again by the profile of the skirt worn by the leftmost Grace. In a long, diagonal sweep—from sleeve to bustle—drapery and hair cut similar shapes that sew the Graces together.

We have already seen how Mantegna uses the cut and color of draperies to highlight certain dancers. He also uses the dancers’ dresses to accentuate movement, chart comings and goings, and most importantly, highlight figural relationships that are crucial to grasping the choreography. Unlike the circle dances performed by the angels in Botticelli’s Mystic Nativity (Figure 3.16) and Coronation of the Virgin (Figure 3.17), this is not an evenly spaced chain of dancers. These nine women are divided into three distinct groups: four on the right, three left of center, and two at the far left. The directional relationship amongst and across the groups is established by the draperies as much as it is fixed by the nature of the steps. Throughout the dance a peach sash imitates the Muses meandering line. Where the sash is absent, woven arms do the work. The space between the Muse in green and the Muse in red marks an important choreographic juncture, the moment when the dance loops back upon itself. Draperies, whose similarly shaped corners are attracted to each other like pools of water about to coalesce, heighten our sense that these Muses may ultimately collide. The Muses in green and red are

against the Magdalene’s red cloak. In almost perfect imitation of each other, the folds defining each fallen bolt emblematize the close relationship amongst the grief-stricken women.

81 The dresses Mantegna designed for the Muses have been used as evidence for contemporary theater costumes. See Stella Mary Newton, Renaissance Theatre Costume (New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1975), 130.
not alone, however. The Muse in royal blue joins them from behind to form a distinct trio, and so too does her drapery corner mingle with theirs.

Perhaps this is why Lincoln Kirstein celebrated Renaissance artists, rather than dance masters, when envisioning the ideal costumes for George Balanchine’s company. The great Italian painters, he declared, “working a century before academic ballet was established, had conceived beautiful dresses that described dancers in ideal motion, rather than merely displaying them, like pieces of scenery, for ephemeral entries.”

Patterned Surfaces

The *sempio* was the basic building block of Renaissance choreography. It consists of a single step forward that is enlivened by a gentle rise onto *demi-pointe*. When performed in a sequence, it would essentially have appeared like stylized walking. Out of this elementary step, which found its way into every fifteenth-century dance, grew a whole repertoire of related movements: *doppio*, *ripresa*, *continentia*, *reverentia*, *mezavolta*, *volta tonda*, *movimento*, and *salto*. The *doppio* offers the most obvious example, as it is a literal extension of the *sempio*: an initial step forward, a second step upon which the dancer rises to demi-pointe, and a closing step that sinks the foot back to the ground. While the dance masters do not explain how new steps came into being, an analysis of the different types, which all share a common root in the *sempio*,

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83 Each dance master gives a slightly different list of the basic “natural” movements. Consult Fermor, "Studies in the Depiction of the Moving Figure in Renaissance Art, Art Theory, and Criticism", 51-54. A useful table can also be found in Nevile, "Disorder in Order: Improvisation in Italian Choreographed Dances of the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries," 147.
reveals an acutely interrelated network of movements. Part of the appeal of a fifteenth-century dance must have depended somewhat on the viewer’s awareness of this network.

Charm also existed in turning basic steps into leitmotifs of the choreography. The *sempio* and *doppio* provide useful examples here, because they often served as repetitive anchors in Renaissance choreography; namely, they usually recur, either alone or in combination, at the beginning, middle, and end of a dance. Steps could also be repeated with slight modifications. Sometimes these changes were subtle, such as an extra beat, while at other times additional jumps and turns altered the original step more boldly. Such is the case with the *ripresa*, the most frequently varied step. To imagine fifteenth-century choreography is to see dances embroidered with both repetition and variation. An audience’s awareness of a pattern, and the moments when it is inflected, must have been an important ingredient in the experience and enjoyment of court dance.

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84 With regard to the familial relationship of steps in Renaissance dance, rhetorical theory provides a useful simile. Cf. the fifteenth-century humanist Gasparino Barzizza: “All good literary imitation comes from adding, subtracting, altering, transferring, or renewing. Adding is, for example, if I have found some short piece in Latin in Cicero or some other learned orator and I add some words to it, so that the piece is seen to take on a form that is new and different from before.” The kind of additive act Barzizza describes for rhetoric is suggestive of what we have inferred about the relationship amongst different dance steps. Barzizza is cited in Baxandall, *Giotto and the Orators*, 34. For more on the relationship between rhetoric and dance, see ibid., 11-13, Fermor, "Studies in the Depiction of the Moving Figure in Renaissance Art, Art Theory, and Criticism", and most recently, Nevile, *The Eloquent Body*. Dance historians still debate over the proper execution of each basic step. For the various interpretations, see Fermor, "Studies in the Depiction of the Moving Figure in Renaissance Art, Art Theory, and Criticism,” 51-54.

85 A few notable examples are Guglielmo Ebreo’s *Reale, Alesandresca*, and *Lioncello*. The choreography for each dance can be found in *Fifteenth-Century Dance Treatises and Music*, 152-53, 69-70.

86 Examples include *meza ripresa* and the addition of *passetti*, or small steps. See Nevile, " Disorder in Order: Improvisation in Italian Choreographed Dances of the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries," 151-52.

87 Elite men and women were trained in the art of dancing from childhood. Their intimate awareness of the basic arsenal of steps available to their resident dance master must have contributed to their experience of his choreography. On the place of dance within the courts, see Nevile, *The Eloquent Body*, ch. 2 ("Dance and Society"), and Barbara Sparti, "The Function and Status of Dance in the 15th Century Italian Courts," *Dance Research* 14, no. 1 (1996), 42-61.
Is there any evidence that artists patterned pictorial surfaces with repetition and variation?

S.J. Freedberg spotted this principle at work in Leonardo’s *Adoration of the Magi*, where the Virgin’s pose acts as the point of origin for all the surrounding figures.

The pattern of her shaping and her posture—an incipient *contrapposto*—unfolds farther, with change of stress but not of essence....Less insistently, he extends this mode of shape and pose to the surrounding male forms.  

More recently, David Summers noted that Raphael’s early paintings use symmetry to achieve clarity, while his later works soften and inflect this formula. In the Santa Maria della Pace *Sybils*, for example, “not one figure in a rigorously symmetrical composition conforms exactly to its counterpart, but rather answers it in size, posture ... and relative harmony of parts.” The result, Summers declares, is that “a remarkable balance is achieved between freedom and the salience and apparent pervasiveness of normative visual elements.”

What about earlier paintings, and particularly ones that depict dancers? Did artists let certain poses reverberate throughout the composition, just as choreographers threaded the *sempio* and *doppio* throughout their dances? In the *Primavera*, all seven pairs of feet are variations on Venus’ simple contrapposto pose (Figure 3.1). The goddess stands at the very center of the painting; she is the apex of a broad, foreshortened triangle. Just as she marks the geometric center of the painting, so too does she represent its figural mean—a kind of postural halfway point between Chloris’ wobbly escape and Mercury’s firm, flat-footed stance. Within the Three Graces themselves, similarity of pose takes on special meaning. Botticelli pictures their ancient


89 Summers, "*Figure come Fratelli,*" 495.

90 Ibid., 497.
relationship through more than propinquity; he lets variations in pose bind the quartet. Indeed, the only aspect that distinguishes Venus from the Grace to her right is costume and an upraised arm. A quintessential contrapposto, like the dance master’s sempio, is the point of origin from which all other movements in the Primavera arise.

According to Paul Barolsky, “these compositional conjunctions can be multiplied seemingly ad infinitum.” Chloris’ left arm, bent at a forty-five degree angle, is mirrored (and reversed) by Flora, Venus, the Graces, and Mercury. In a kind of rhyming sequence of A-B-A, Zephyr’s extended left arm is mirrored by Chloris’ right and Cupid’s left. Familial gestures meet yet again in Venus, her neighboring Grace, and Mercury, who all, in varying degrees, raise a right arm while lowering the left. By working with variations upon one pose and one step, the painting becomes embroidered with a pattern. Repetition thus serves a larger, choreographic function, and one that might even be considered apart from the larger iconographic program.

Criticism is often leveled at Botticelli for this very reason. His bodies have been described as flat, two-dimensional patterns that ornament the surface. In the face of incipient naturalism, Botticelli is thus regarded as somewhat retardataire, an heir to the ornamental lines of

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91 Barolsky, "Botticelli's "Primavera" And the Poetic Imagination of Italian Renaissance Art," 10.

92 Venus and Mercury’s postural relationship is also clinched chromatically, as pointed out in ibid.: 9. “Although only slightly isolated from the figures to which they are otherwise conjoined, Mercury and Venus, the two planetary presences, are chromatically linked. For Mercury’s red draperies with their golden flames of love are linked to the identical color of Venus’ dress and the similar golden flames that border both her neckline and bosom.”

93 On pattern see Bertrand Prévost, who connects rhythmic repetition in Botticelli’s work to a particularly Florentine ambient, in which Lorenzo de’ Medici invents a motto that celebrates repetition: “le temps revient.” Prévost engages also with Poliziano’s famous Rime CXXII. He interprets the refrain of couplets (ben venga) as a musical rhythm that is incarnated in Botticelli’s movements: “Que se passe-t-il sinon que le mouvement gagne en intensité chorégraphique? Car ce que dessine la ballade de Politien, c’est bien le va-et-vient d’une ronde: l’action mimique y infiltre la composition même des mots et des phrases comme pour mieux inviter à rentrer dans le danse, à s’infiltrer dans la ronde.” See Prévost, La peinture en actes. gestes et manières dans l’Italie de la Renaissance, 198-99.
Sienese as well as Florentine painters that worked in the International Gothic style. Such stylistic assessments, however, ignore the relevance of dance, an art that depends upon line and even more so on pattern. Artifice is in the service of an overarching choreographic design—duplication is in the service of dance.

The Disposition of Feet

If nothing else, dance brought the relationship of figure and ground to the forefront of every artist’s mind. Alberti declared that the most graceful figures are those that “move upwards into the air.” The kind of rising motion Alberti imagines is assisted by flying draperies and hair, but to take a figure into the air, work must also be done at ground level, where a negotiation is made between a dancer’s feet and the stage. The degree of contact made with the ground is, in other words, an aspect of figuration that artists shared with dance masters.

When Emily Roulette Jayne considered the *Primavera*, she perceived in it Botticelli’s calculated approach to the placement of feet. In doing so, she became the first art historian to

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94 Botticelli’s art has been labeled a “Second Gothic.” In Dempsey’s words, “Many writers have indeed commented on the late Gothic character of the *Primavera*, finding this expressed in the elastic linearity of Botticelli’s contours and in his vibrant colorism, both of them irresistibly reminiscent of the most refined paintings of the International Style; often too, Botticelli’s depiction of the grove brightly patterned with flowers has been likened to late medieval tapestries.” Dempsey, *The Portrayal of Love*, 72. Taking a similar judgment to task in the work of Simone Martini, Creighton Gilberti suggests that we distinguish between paintings that are “flat decorative” and “three-dimensionally decorative.” Simone—and I would argue by extension Botticelli—creates a “line system, which is not two-dimensional, but winds around the bodies forward and back as a net on their surfaces ... a Simone work is three-dimensionally decorative. As a result, it retains a human connection while being elevated to an entrancingly artificial world, thereby making the viewer respond.” See Gilbert, “Simone Martini’s *Annunciation*,” 131.


96 In addition to requiring that dancers execute steps with rising and falling motions, the dance masters also discuss the principle of *partire di terreno* or *mesura da terreno*, which was the ability to judge correctly the size of the given performance space. Itinerant troops had to perform in spaces of varying sizes, and their success depended upon their ability to adjust the length of their steps to the given stage.
ask a question that is too often ignored: “What accounts for Botticelli’s own interest in feet and in the depiction of feet in sequential motion?” The Three Graces’ feet, she argues, are so painstakingly choreographed that a contemporary step, and perhaps even an entire dance, can be recovered from their positions. In her analysis, each figure can be understood as performing one part in the doppio, a three-part step. The dance master Antonio Cornazano provides instructions:


To perform a doppio, you must campeggiare (sway) on the left foot which remains on the ground and somewhat turn the torso to that side, ondeggiare (rise) during the second short step and elevate suavely above that one, and with the same grace, lower on the third step that completes the doppio.99

For Jayne, each step in this tripartite sequence, as well as the undulating contour its profile traces, is visualized by Botticelli’s Three Graces. Considering Botticelli a socially minded artist who was responsive to the world of ephemera, Jayne then turns to the fifteenth-century dances themselves. She points out that the majority of the doppio-based trios recorded in the treatises are co-ed: namely, either they are for a woman and two men or for a man and two women. Only a handful of dances are non-gender specific, and within this small group, only a

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97 Emily Roulette Jayne, "Tuscan Dancing Figures in the Quattrocento" (PhD Dissertation, Yale University, 1990), 150.

98 Ibid., 160: “Not only does each of them take a step which is part of a dance step, but they stand in an arrangement which is a dance arrangement of the period and is a particular dance arrangement.”

99 “to per fare uno doppio dovete / campeggiare sopra el sinistro che / rimane in terra volgendo alquan- / to la persona a quella parte & / ondeggiare nel sicondo passo curto / levandovi soavamente sopra quello / e con tal sua vita abassarvi al terço / che compisse el doppio.” Fifteenth-Century Dance and Music, 85, lines 120-127. This argument, which Jayne made her 1990 dissertation, was subsequently published as "A Choreography by Lorenzo in Botticelli's Primavera."

100 “The first Grace, the Grace with her back to us, steps out on her left foot ... the Grace her left rises up on both feet as she steps forward with her right foot....The third Grace, the one of the right of the central Grace, completes the double by joining the left to the right foot in slightly semi-circular form.” Jayne, "Tuscan Dancing Figures in the Quattrocento", 162-63.
few indicate that the dancers should hold hands. Even less frequent are dances that were performed solely by women. Significantly, one of these rare female dances is a trio, “dandosi mano,” choreographed by none other than Lorenzo de’ Medici himself. This dance, called Venere, is one of two dances attributed to Lorenzo in a copy of Guglielmo Ebreo’s treatise. In Jayne’s eyes, the prevalence of the doppio, coupled with the choreography’s insistence upon an arrangement similar to that of the Three Graces is evidence for the notion that Botticelli pictorialized Lorenzo’s “Venus in a painting about Venus.” Her detailed analysis of the disposition of their feet reveals the artist’s great sensitivity to the relationship between dancer

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101 See ibid., 169, where the dances Lionzello novo, La ingrata, Fenus, Spero, Pelygryna, Alis, Carterva, and Belfiore are cited as examples in the page’s corresponding footnotes. In taking this gender-based survey of fifteenth-century dances, Jayne makes one important omission: a section from Guglielmo Ebreo’s treatise on dance. Immediately before listing contemporary dances, Guglielmo includes a section titled, “Here are Placed Three Figures Dancing” (Qui Andaranno Tre Figure Che Dançarranno). What follows is not the description of any one dance, but rather a final defense of the art as something that gives “Conforta il cor e fa ‘l piu signorile / & porge con dolceça allegra Vista.” Fifteenth-Century Dance and Music, 152, lines 1216-34. It is extremely curious, at least to me, that Guglielmo couches this apology in a dance for three figures, although it is impossible to prove that the Three Graces influenced his choice.

102 This copy, now in the Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze (Maggiabecchiana-Strozziarno XIX 88), was probably sent in 1477 to Lorenzo, from whom Guglielmo was trying to gain employment. See Timothy McGee, "Dancing Masters and the Medici Court in the 15th Century," Studi Musicali 17 (1988): 201-24. On Lorenzo de’ Medici as choreographer, see Paolo Orvieto, "Carnevale e feste Fiorentine del tempo di Lorenzo de’ Medici," in Lorenzo Il Magnifico e il suo tempo, ed. Gian Carlo Garfagnini (Firenze: Leo S. Olschki Editore, 1992), and Jayne, "A Choreography by Lorenzo in Botticelli’s Primavera."

103 For the prose description of Lorenzo’s dance, as well as an analysis of its relationship to Botticelli’s Three Graces, see Jayne, "Tuscan Dancing Figures in the Quattrocento", 170-73. In contrast to Dempsey (Portrayal of Love, 35), who ultimately defines the dance of the Three Graces as pure gesture, Jayne places greater emphasis upon the steps with which the dancer’s arms are coordinated. Indeed, centuries had passed since dance was defined solely by chironomia. In the Renaissance, it was dependent almost entirely upon a circumscript set of steps. On the absence of gesture in the fifteenth-century dance treatises, see Franko, The Dancing Body in Renaissance Choreography, 10ff. On chironomia, or the ancient art of gesture, see Gilbert Austin, Chironomia; or, a Treatise on Rhetorical Delivery (London: W. Bulmer and Co., 1806).
and stage. He endowed them with individual steps, and thus with a distinct piece of choreography. Whether this choreography mimics Lorenzo de’ Medici’s Venus is really beside the point. What does matter is that steps have been crafted for each dancer. The monotonous footwork present in so many choirs of dancing angels—from Fra Angelico’s Last Judgment to Botticelli’s own Mystic Nativity—is here transcended.

We have seen the potential for scholars to interpret Botticelli’s Three Graces through the lens of contemporary dance practice. The same cannot be done for Mantegna’s Muses. In the case of this pictorial dance, the footwork belongs solely to the artist himself.105 There is (as yet) neither a document nor an earlier work of art that provides a precise model for the snaking line Mantegna’s Muses stamp out in the Parnassus.106 To be sure, the nine women abound on

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104 Jayne, "Tuscan Dancing Figures in the Quattrocento", 164. By coming to such a conclusion, Jayne aligns herself with Michael Baxandall, who presented essentially the same argument for Botticelli’s Pallas and the Centaur. “When he had a new classical subject, with no established tradition for the arrangement and no assurance that the story was very widely or intimately known, he could let the figures dance out their relationship, as Botticelli lets them in his Pallas and the Centaur,” Baxandall, Painting and Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy, 81. Barbara Sparti takes issue with Jayne’s approach, and by extension, Baxandall’s. She notes the “tendency amongst some art historians to identify specific dances in paintings—a saltarello, tarantella, sardana—where often the image in question is about ‘dance’ in general...” Sparti, "Inspired Movement Versus Static Uniformity: A Comparison of Trecento and Quattrocento Dance Images," 50, note 18. For more on the danger of making one-to-one correlations between actual and represented dance, see Fermor, "On the Question of Pictorial Evidence for 15th Century Dance Technique," 18-32.

105 Jayne, "Tuscan Dancing Figures in the Quattrocento", 176. It is interesting to note that Mantegna is absent from Jayne’s dissertation. His conspicuous absence from a study that is devoted to making correlations between represented and actual dancing is, for me, further testament to the fact that Mantegna exercised his own choreographic imagination. Isabella d’Este, Mantegna’s patron, was famous for giving her artists creative license. For instance, in 1501 she asked Leonardo da Vinci for a picture whose invenzione was of his choosing. On the unique circumstances surrounding each of the studiolo paintings, see Lightbown, Mantegna, chapter XI (“Isabella and her Studiolo”), and Stephen J. Campbell, The Cabinet of Eros (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), especially Part II ("The Paintings").

106 Even Pausanias, an important ancient source for images of Mount Helicon, makes no mention of the Muses’ dance. See Pausanias, Description of Greece, IX, xxviii-xxxi. And whereas numerous trios can be found to compare with Botticelli’s Three Graces, research has not revealed any fifteenth-century dances for nine people. For a survey of the relevant choreography, see Fifteenth-Century Dance and Music, 277ff.
ancient sarcophagi, pop up in illustrated manuscripts, and even appear in fifteenth-century Italian paintings that Mantegna surely knew. But none of these many precedents shows the Muses in the midst of a dance as complex and vigorous as Mantegna’s.

A sarcophagus in the Museo Nazionale di Roma supplies the typical, antique mode of depiction (Figure 3.18). The women do not dance; rather, they are separated into niches, and defined by attributes. Terpsichore, the Muse of dance, holds the lyre. It is through her association with an instrument—and particularly an Apollonian one—that the viewer is able to make an identification. Dancing itself plays no part here. The Muses continue to be represented as a static group of maidens carrying specific attributes well into the fifteenth century, when Italian artists like Agostino di Duccio, Giovanni Santi, and the anonymous maker

107 For the history of the Muses in literature and in art, consult Elisabeth Schröter, *Die Ikonographie des themas Parnass vor Raffael* (Hildesheim and New York: Georg Olms Verlag, 1977).

108 The other figures in the painting are, according to Phyllis Williams Lehmann, “based on models selected with great care....” In contrast, the Muses “who dance and sing to the music of Apollo’s lyre present a more difficult problem...For although the choir of Muses sing to Apollo’s lyre—and even dance—throughout ancient literature, seemingly, no antique monument shows them, like the ecstatic followers of Dionysus, engaged in this activity.” Lehmann goes on to reiterate her point in a more declarative manner: “The very fact that no extant antique representation of the Muses show them as a group of dancing maidens has hindered previous attempts to discover an antique model for Mantegna’s Muses.” See Phyllis Williams Lehmann and Karl Lehmann, *Samothradian Reflections* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), 91-92, 98, 99.

109 *The Census of Antique Works of Art and Architecture Known in the Renaissance* (www.census.de, ID=154331, 29 January 2012) places this sarcophagus in S. Paolo fuori le Muri between 1457 and 1501, making it possible that Mantegna, who was working in Rome from 1488-90, saw this object or at least one like it. A *Taccuino di viaggio* kept in the Uffizi contains a sheet upon which a figure from this exact sarcophagus is recorded, confirming that it was indeed known to fifteenth-century artists. For a survey of the antique works from which Mantegna drew inspiration throughout his career, see Ilse Blum, *Andrea Mantegna und die Antike* (Strassburg and Leipzig: Heitz, 1936). For a specific discussion of Mantegna in Rome, see Lightbown, *Mantegna*, chapter IX ("Mantegna in Rome").

110 See Max Wegner, *Die Musensarkophage* (Berlin: Mann, 1966), wherein a bevy of similar reliefs are illustrated.
of the so-called Tarocchi cards portray them as single figures, none of which dance (Figures 3.19-3.21).\textsuperscript{111}

Around 1450, a Muse appeared that provides an exception to the rule: Cosmè Tura’s Terpsichore (Figure 3.22).\textsuperscript{112} Nestled into the corner of a wide throne draped in velveteen fabrics, Tura’s muse gazes down upon three nude children who move under her influence. Whereas other fifteenth-century artists chose to illustrate Terpsichore’s connection with dance via an instrument, Tura puts her in direct connection with her art. Like a puppet master pulling their strings, Terpsichore’s slender limbs are the lifelines of this dance.

Cosmè Tura’s conception of the muse Terpsichore may have been inspired by a fourth-century Samothracian Frieze of Dancing Maidens, which the antiquarian Cyriacus d’Ancona copied into his sketchbook in October 1444 (Figure 3.23).\textsuperscript{113} The Samothracian Maidens, which


\textsuperscript{112} Terpsichore is one Muse in a series made for Leonello d’Este’s Villa Belfiore. Cosmè Tura, the artist of Terpsichore and Calliope, was joined by Michele Pannonio (Thalia), Angelo da Siena (Erato and Urania), and other unidentified Ferrarese artists. See Campbell, \textit{Cosmè Tura of Ferrara}, ch. II ("Non Vanis Aut Lascivis: Painting, Poetry, and the Studio of Belfiore").

\textsuperscript{113} This sketchbook is lost, but at least two copies of it exist from the fifteenth century: one in the Bodleian Library, Oxford (Ms. Lat. Misc. d. 85), the other in the Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Florence (Ms. Asb. 1174, A. Fol. 123v). On Cyriacus in Samothrace, as well as the Oxford and Florence copies of his original drawing, see Lehmann and Lehmann, \textit{Samothracian Reflections}, ch. 1 ("Cyriacus of Ancona's Visit to Samothrace"), and 100ff.
are labeled by Cyriacus as Muses, even though they are actually nymphs, form a dynamic chain: some look forward, while others turn to gaze in the opposite direction. These characteristics—plus the flowing sash that links the chain—find their way into Tura’s painting, where the cavorting nudes are strung together by a strip of fabric that is quickened by their gyrations. Moreover, his arrangement of this childish triad, which is curiously similar to the iconic formula offered by the Three Graces, signals something new for the Muses: a central hinge figure is flanked by two dancers that direct attention back towards the center. For all of Tura’s ingenuity, Terpsichore herself does not do the dancing. Only with Mantegna, does such a choreographic event come to pass.

*Terpsichore* was part of a decorative cycle for Lionello d’Este’s *studiolo* in Villa Belfiore. When given the commission to paint *studiolo* pictures for Lionello’s great-niece, Isabella d’Este, Mantegna surely looked to his predecessor’s example. The positions of the children dancing at the feet of *Terpsichore* are repeated in the *Parnassus*, where the same push-pull dynamic governs the Muses spanning the front row of Mantegna’s chorus (Figure 3.10). The parallels end here. Mantegna’s Muses are free of their usual attributes, and are united in a

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114 There was a tradition for confusing the Muses with nymphs. In his Seventh Eclogue, Virgil invokes the Muses as “Nymphae, noster amor,” and Servius explains that Varro called the Muses nymphs because the movement of water makes music. That Mantegna’s *Parnassus* does indeed represent the nine Muses, and not nymphs, is confirmed by the poem Battista Fiera wrote in praise of the painting (c. 1502). See Lightbown, *Mantegna*, 200, and Roger Jones, "'What Venus Did with Mars': Battista Fiera and Mantegna's 'Parnassus'," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 44 (1981): 193-98.

115 Discussions of the Belfiore Muses often revolved around the topic of sensuality. The fifteenth century, Stephen Campbell explains, was irritated by their *voluptas*. He cites contemporary poetry that calls for a chastening of the subject. See Campbell, *The Cabinet of Eros*, 126ff. This mode of interpretation, while useful for placing Guarino’s painting in its broader social and historical context, also draws attention away from its choreographic elements.

116 For the Muses as a part of the Este decorative tradition, see ibid., 126, 29.
The history of representing the Muses as individuals and of relegating Terpsichore’s
dance to auxiliary figures has ended.

Nine dancers with eighteen nimble feet scurry across the pictorial field. Every
quickstepping foot is visible, save for two. Left of center, in the second row, a muse wearing
royal blue is partially obscured by her sister in red. And at the far right, the muse dressed in
peach reveals only her left foot. The other one, we assume, is hidden behind her tardy
companion. In these instances, Mantegna has solved a difficult problem through a kind of
Siamese-twinning. What better way to emphasize to the viewer a duo’s dependence upon
simultaneity: joined at the shoulders and waistlines, these dancers share arms, legs, and feet.

The remaining, sixteen visible feet are also fonts of choreographic information. How
many ways can an artist divide the number nine? By following the meandering line traced by the
Muses’ feet, we will see that Mantegna’s chorus breaks down into duos, trios, a quartet, and a
quintet, as well as into combinations thereof.\footnote{There was a tradition for leaving the Muses anonymous. Boccaccio did not attribute any distinct areas of specialization to the Muses. See Giovanni Boccaccio, \textit{Genealogie deorum gentilium libri [C.1360]}, ed. Vincenzo Romano, vol. 10-11, Opere (Bari: G. Laterza, 1951), 11.2. His source was Fulgentius, who said they represent different stages in a single process of learning. On Fulgentius interpretation of the Muses, see Spitzer, \textit{Classical and Christian Ideas of World Harmony}, 38-39.}

A quartet occupies the right half of the dance. The four dancers are organized in pairs.
The tardy Muse is assisted by a partner, who guides her into the dance. Ahead of this pair are
two Muses also meant to be seen in tandem, as they are caught in different moments of the very
same step. The separation of this foursome into two duos is emphasized again by the orange
sash that loops into an almost perfect circle in the empty space between them. While it
emphasizes an important spatial division, it simultaneously draws our eyes to what happens on

\footnote{The entire composition betrays the effort Mantegna put into making feet eloquent. The love displayed by Venus and Mars is manifested in their overlapping feet, and Apollo’s music is not made without labor, as he splays the toes on his left foot in accordance with the string he plucks.}
the ground: namely, three feet belonging to three different dancers are on the verge of collision. One dancer, the third from the right, has a foot in two worlds: her right foot reaches back to meet the first pair, while her left, rooted firmly in the ground, hides beneath the heel of the dancer she follows. It is as if Mantegna knew that dancers are constantly aware of adjacent steps; the step they leave behind is just as important as the step they grow into. Through the mingling of feet, Mantegna has embroidered a basic quartet with duos and trios.

From Venus and Mars, to Mercury and Pegasus, pairs proliferate in Mantegna’s panel. It should come as no surprise then that the remainder of the Muses’ dance is also ripe with duos. Directly beneath Mars and Venus, two Muses split the painting’s center. Earlier, it was shown how their unique, shot-silk raiments serve a dual purpose: color differentiates them from the chorus, but also associates them with their respective groups. So too does footwork play a role in helping the viewer to see these dancers as a unit. The ungirdled Muse leads with her left foot, while the Muse that turns her back is about to step with her right. They appear to perform consecutive moments of the same step.¹¹⁹

A significant change occurs at this point in the choreography: the Muse in red, along with her twin in blue, reverses the direction of the dance. When viewed along with the Muse whose back is turned, a circular trio appears embedded in the midst of a line-dance. Mantegna softens this abrupt, directional change at ground level, where we find that although the Muse in red moves in opposition to the Muse on her right, their steps, like their arms, form a mirror image.

A pair of identical steps is also to be found at the extreme left of the dance, where the Muse facing Apollo is mirrored by her neighbor in royal blue. Although their bodies are oriented differently in space, their feet nevertheless strike same basic pose.

¹¹⁹ On sequential movement, see Jayne, "Tuscan Dancing Figures in the Quattrocento", 150.
The precise moment in which this directional change occurs is not arbitrary. It happens on axis with the figure of Anteros, the son of Mars and Venus. In the Renaissance as in Antiquity, Anteros symbolized reciprocal love. Together with his brother Cupid, he stood for the notion that, in Vincenzo Cartari’s words, “Love increases in one who at the same time loves and is loved with a love equal to his own.” The concept of reciprocity is thus reified twice by Mantegna: first of all in the guise of Anteros himself, and secondly in a dance that doubles back upon itself. Indeed, Mantegna invented a piece of choreography that fits with the larger composition.

It has long been recognized that the Parnassus stands as a mythological tour de force, a “re-imagination and re-invention” of a lost artistic canon. “To paint like the ancients,” Stephen Campbell explains, “one had to make something completely new.” In the case of Mantegna, novelty lies not only in a unique conglomeration of mythological characters, but also in the original dance the Muses perform. Such a choreographic invention must have meant something to the fifteenth-century, for the sole engraving related to the painting takes Mantegna’s dance as its only subject (Figure 3.24).

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121 The terms “re-imagination” and “re-invention” are borrowed from Campbell, *The Cabinet of Eros*, 118.

122 According to Campbell (ibid., 118), “The famous meandering line of dancing Muses in *Mars and Venus* is an exemplification of pictorial scientia, the principle of a variety yet continuity of movement, of fluidity and order, the reconciliation of multiple moving bodies with the demands of stable pictorial structure. It is probably for this reason that this passage alone—neither the entire invention nor the other mythology Mantegna painted for Isabella, nor any of the other words in the studiolo—circulated in the form of an engraving....” Isabella was herself a skilled dancer, and must have taken personal delight in Mantegna’s Muses. Dance master Domenico da Piacenza was employed at the Este court in Ferrara from around 1439.
Striking Chords

Music makes the body dance:

This [music] descends with delight through our hearing to the brain and the warm senses, where certain sweet sympathetic *movimenti* are generated. As if trapped against their nature, they try to exit as much as possible and are manifested by action. This action from the sweetness and melody is drawn to the exterior when the body is dancing. It demonstrates itself to almost be one with the voice and harmony, whether from the accompanied and sweet song or from the heard and orderly arranged sound.\(^{123}\)

With these words, the dance master Guglielmo Ebreo established the musical underpinnings of his art. For him, music is more than mere accompaniment: it is the very catalyst for movement. Dancing happens because the body is penetrated by sweet sounds—melodious sounds that go straight to the heart.\(^{124}\)

Near the end of Book I of Guglielmo’s treatise, his discussion of music takes a practical turn in a series of what he calls “experientials.” These are exercises designed for the perfection of certain essential skills in dancing. Significantly, the challenge in each is a musical one: to onwards. Whether Isabella knew him or not (she was born in 1474) is still up for debate. It is certain, however, that she received dance instruction, because in 1481 she is recorded as Guglielmo Ebreo’s dance partner. And in 1485, Isabella herself wrote about how delighted she was with dance master Lorenzo Lavagnola. On Isabella and dance, see Barbara Sparti, "Isabella and the Dancing Este Brides," in *Women's Work: Making Dance in Europe before 1800*, ed. Lynn Matluck Brooks (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2007), 19-48.


\(^{124}\) Guglielmo Ebreo writes (ibid., 122, lines 05-10), “The rich harmony and sweet melody / That when heard, goes to the heart. / Passion is born of this great sweetness / From which dancing arises, which so greatly pleases.” (“Dal ermonia suave el dolce canto / Che per l’audito passa drento al core / Di gran dolceça nasce un vivo ardore / Da cui el dançar puo vien che piace tanto.”) By arguing that dance proceeds naturally from music, Guglielmo effectively tries to raise the status of his art. See Nevile, *The Eloquent Body*, 79-80.
gauge the tempo so as to make the mind “sharp and attentive to sound.” He suggests dancing with and against a dance’s given tempo; asks the musician to try and draw the dancer into a different meter midway through the choreography; and recommends that dancers practice counting beats. Guglielmo emphasizes the significance of this last experiential through a curious comparison. He likens a dancer who internalizes the four dance measures—bassadanza, piva, quadernaria, saltarello—to a physician who knows “at which level the pulse beats” in healthy and sick individuals. Misura, Guglielmo finally declares, is “the basis of the entire aforesaid art of dancing.”

The majority of Book II of Guglielmo’s treatise is devoted to a dialogue between the dance master and an anonymous critic, but there are few general chapters on rules for dancing, one of which is titled “Experiment of How to Recognize a Good Dancer.” This experiment dashes our modern expectations, since it has nothing to do with physique or virtuosity. Instead, it focuses entirely upon musicality.

One needs to dance according to
that timbre sounded by the instruments,
and each
plays with its own timbre.
The pifari
will sound one timbre; the organ, one
timbre; the harp, another timbre; the drum,
another timbre; and when all play the
same ballo, know that
it is necessary for the dancer to dance
with that quality, misura,

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126 Ibid., 136, lines 631-32. Bassadanza is the slowest measure, and piva is the fastest. See Fermor, "Studies in the Depiction of the Moving Figure in Renaissance Art, Art Theory, and Criticism", 54-58.

127 Fifteenth-Century Dance and Music, 136, lines 619-20. For Guglielmo’s chapter on misura, see ibid., 129-30, lines 360-87. For a critical discussion of misura, see Fermor, "Studies in the Depiction of the Moving Figure in Renaissance Art, Art Theory, and Criticism," 42-42.
and tempo sounded by the said musicians. One dances to each one by itself. If the dancer dances always with the same quality although *misurato* and a *tempo*, but not relating to the timbre of the said musicians, the dancing will be imperfect and signifies a lack of comprehension.\(^\text{128}\)

This excursus on a dancer’s engagement with instruments of differing timbres appears immediately before Guglielmo’s long list of contemporary choreographies, and thus goes to show that the interdependence of dance and music was a topic of great currency.\(^\text{129}\)

Renaissance artists were aware of this inextricable link between dance and music. A tambourine player stands amidst the dancers in Ambrogio Lorenzetti’s *Allegory of Good Government* (Figure 3.12). Dancers double as musicians in Andrea Riccio’s *Bacchic Procession* (Figure 3.25). Donatello’s *Music-Making Angels* strike their instruments while dancing, as do the music-making putti included amidst the rambunctious dancers on the *Cantoria* for Florence.

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\(^\text{128}\) Fifteenth-Century Dance and Music, 151-52, lines 1195-1215: “Elle di bisogno che dança / Sun quell aira che sonaranno li stromenti / Benche elli soneno un ballo ongnuno / Sonara con l’aira sua quantunca che / Sonassero un ballo midesimo li pifare / Sonaranno In un aira l’organo In un aira / L’arpa in un altra Aira El tamburino / In un altra Aira E tucti sonaranno / Un ballo midesimo Sappiate che cului / Che danca gli e bisogna de ballare / Con quell’aira & con quella misura & con quel temp che sonaranno / Li dicti sonatori cioe Dançando lo / Ongnun da per se E se’l dançatore / Dançasse sempre con un aira & ben / Che dançasse A misurato & a tempo & non essendo comforma all’aira de- / Li dicti sonatori el suo dançare serio / Imperfecto & e signale de non intendere.” On dance’s close collaboration with the art of music, see Jennifer Nevile, "The Relationship between Dance and Music in Fifteenth-Century Italian Dance Practice," in *Dance, Spectacle, and the Body Politic, 1250-1750*, ed. Jennifer Nevile (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2008), 155-65.

\(^\text{129}\) While it is unlikely that the fifteenth-century dance masters were aware of Lucian’s ancient dialogue on dancing, they share with him an emphasis on musicality. Lucian defines a good dancer as someone who is “above all successful in doing the right thing at the right time...” (καίτοι τῆς μὲν ψυχῆς προεῖπον τὰ πλεύστα μνημονικὸν τῇ γάρ εἶναι ἐκ καὶ ἑυφύς καὶ συνετὸν καὶ ὅξων ἐπινοῆσαι καὶ καιροῦ μάλιστα ἐστοχάσθαι φημὶ δεῖν αὐτὸν) On the other hand, he is disappointed by dancers who “make senseless movements that have nothing to do with the harpstring, as the saying goes; for the foot says one thing and the music another.” (τὰς θυέστου συμφοράς, τὸ ὄμοιο παρηγγέλοντος, καὶ ἄλλος τὴν Σεμέλην ὑποκρινόμενος βιαλλομένην τὸ κεραυνὸ τὴν Γλαύκην αὐτῇ εἶκαςε μεταγενεστέραν οὖσαν.) Lucian, The Dance, 277 (line 74) and 281 (line 80).
and the *Pulpit* in Prato (Figures 3.26-3.28). And in two prints by Mantegna, *Bacchanal with a Wine Vat* and *Bacchanal with Silenus*, the figures that dance are also the figures making music (Figures 3.29, 3.30).

Most eloquent of all, though, is Mantegna’s *Parnassus*, which asks its viewer to understand as much about the relationship between dance and music as it does about classical myth.¹³⁰ We saw how Mantegna’s footwork revealed duos, trios, quartets, and quintets operating within his chorus of nine dancers. Are there any solos? To pose such a question seems strange in light of the fact that the Muses are bastions of harmonic force. One self-involved figure could disrupt the innate concord of this ancient ennead. And yet, Mantegna isolates a dancer.

At far left, a Muse dressed in deep hunter green peels herself away from the group momentarily (Figure 3.31). While her lower feet point towards a Muse who mirrors her pose, her true partner at this instant is Apollo himself.¹³¹ The sinuous curve that contours her left side echoes the bulbous shape of the god’s lyre, and as she cocks her hip in unison with the chord he plucks, so too does he incline his instrument towards her.¹³² Mantegna declares in one pictorial

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¹³⁰ On music as a primary theme in the painting, see Lehmann and Lehmann, *Samothracian Reflections*, 59-178.

¹³¹ The *studiolo* inventory that was taken after Isabella’s death in 1542 describes the musician as “Orpheus playing with nine nymphs dancing.” On the difficult question of whether Mantegna’s *Parnassus* depicts Apollo or Orpheus, see Lightbown, *Mantegna*, 197-98. On the role of music in Isabella’s studiolo, see Tim Shephard, “Constructing Isabella d’Este’s musical decorum in the visual sphere,” *Renaissance Studies* 25, no. 5 (Nov., 2011): 684-706.

¹³² Michael Cole has noted a similar relationship between the body and music in Perugino’s *Apollo and Marsyas*, in which the artist “used the two figures’ forms to embody the difference in their music.” Sticking with the same theme, but looking ahead to the later sixteenth century, Cole cites as an example Giambologna, who “did essentially the same thing with his own Apollo, following the lyre’s shape with the figure’s contour....” See Cole, "Harmonic Force in Cinquecento Painting," 83. Raphael’s Saint Cecilia, a painting also singled out by Cole (p. 84-5), is explored with respect to both music and dance in Sharon Fermor, "Movement and Gender in Sixteenth-Century Italian Painting," in *Body Imaged*, ed. Kathleen Adler and Marcia Pointon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 129-45.
passage what the dance masters strain to convey over an entire treatise: dancer and musician are one.

The close bond between the harmonious sounds produced by the lyre and the choric movements of the dancers themselves is emphasized by Marsilio Ficino, who writes in a letter to Antonio Canigiani that

The first music takes place in reason, the second in fantasy, and the third in words; thence follows song and after that the movement of the fingers in sound. Lastly the whole movement of the body in gymnastics or dancing. Thus we may see that the music of the soul is led by steps to all the limbs of the body. It is this music that orators, poets, painters, sculptors and architects seek to imitate in their work.\(^\text{133}\)

Elsewhere, Ficino points out that, “The chorus of the Muses does not dance becomingly, but limps and falters, whenever the lord Apollo is far away.”\(^\text{134}\)

Looking to a voice from our time, Paul Valéry contemplated a dancer’s relationship to her music.

She yields, she borrows, and gives back the cadence so exactly that if I shut my eyes, I see her exactly with my hearing. I follow her, I find her again, I can never lose her; and if I stop my ears and look at her, so wholly is she rhythm and music that it is impossible for me not to hear the cithers.\(^\text{135}\)

Five centuries earlier, Mantegna bonded Muse with musician, body with beat. His hunter green Muse bends in compliance with the Apollonian instrument that guides her.

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\(^{134}\) Marsilio Ficino, *The Letters of Marsilio Ficino*, trans. Members of the Language Department of the School of Economic Science, London, 6 vols. (London: Shepheard-Walwyn, 1975-99), vol. 4, 4, 23. Ficino’s point is rendered clearer before another painting in Isabella’s *studiolo*: Lorenzo Lotto’s *Apollo Asleep with the Muses at Play*, in which the Muses throw off their clothes and scurry about while the god neglects to play his influential lyre.

4

Chorus I

The Apollonian Veil
Dance Undone
Apollo and Dionysus, Chorodidaskaloi
Per semplice diletto
Idiosyncratic Choreography
...the wanton and unimaginative underclasses, which often adulterate [dance] with their corrupt souls and lascivious minds from [being a] liberal and virtuous art to to an adulterated and vile science. Many times, for dishonest lust under the appearance of honesty, they execute dancing as a means to be able to arrive at the realization of some of their whims. As much as I am able, I fully condemn those people, and do not entrust this present work in their hands!...Then, dance with virtue.

—Guglielmo Ebreo, De practica sue arte tripudii (1463)

Among you lasses and young lovers
Long live Bacchus and Desire!
Now let us pipe and dance and sing,
Our hearts consumed with sweetest fire!
Away with suffering and sorrow!
Let what is fated have its way.
Let all who want to, now be gay:
About tomorrow no one’s sure.

—Lorenzo de’ Medici, Triumph of Bacchus (1489-90)
The Apollonian Veil

Clashing symbols drown out Apollo’s lyre in La Gallina, a villa in the hills above Florence. This suburban house preserves—just barely—Antonio Pollaiuolo’s Dancing Nudes (Figure 4.1).¹ Even in its ruined form, one thing about this mural leaps to the eye: that Pollaiuolo depicted what could never be danced. Neither the streets of the city nor the vestiges of antique art admit these exact movements, so that we must credit Pollaiuolo with inventing his own pictorial choreography, and one whose Dionysian fantasy responds to the context of the suburban villa itself.²

Concerning the related engraving of the Sausage Seller, Patricia Emison has written that the print transports us to “a pictorial world that allows rudeness (Figure 4.2). As a place Italian

¹ I was granted access to Villa Gallina in April 2010. I am deeply indebted to Professor David Freedberg for putting me in contact with Litta Maria Medri, who arranged my visit. The current owners of La Gallina, the Secci family, were kind enough to let me spend half an hour with their Pollaiuolo, which is indeed quite ruined. No one knows when or why the painting was covered, but it has been suggested that the brothers Jacopo and Giovanni di Orsino Lanfredini (who owned the villa in the late 15th century) became followers of Savonarola (piagnoni), and that their lascivious fresco caused embarrassment. The brothers are indeed listed amongst those that signed the petition for Savonarola’s release. See L. Polizzotto, The Elect Nation. The Savonarolan Movement in Florence (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 453. A different theory is put forth by Mildred Mansfield and Eve Borsook, who think the painting might have been obscured in 1529, when the villa became a military outpost. See Mildred Mansfield, A Family of Decent Folk, 1200-1741: A Study in the Centuries Growth of the Lanfredini (Florence L.S. Olschki, 1922), and Eve Borsook, The Mural Painters of Tuscany, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1960). For the history of conservation efforts made to preserve the painting since its discovery, see Guido Botticelli and Silvia Botticelli, "Il Restauro Delle Pitture Di Antonio Del Pollaiolo a Villa La Gallina," Critica d'Arte 18 (June 2003): 49-59. This restoration confirms what Alison Wright had observed, that it was painted almost entirely a secco and should therefore be called a mural, not a fresco. Her scholarship on the painting is the most comprehensive to date. See Alison Wright, The Pollaiuolo Brothers: Arts of Florence and Rome (London and New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), ch. 3 ("The Development of Secular Subjects"). The research presented in this monograph was published first as Wright, "Dancing Nudes at the Lanfredini Villa at Arcetri," in With and without the Medici: Art and Patronage in Tuscany, 1434-1494, ed. Alison Wright and E. Marchand (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998), 47-77. My thanks also to Professor Wright, who kindly corresponded with me when I was seeking access to the villa.

² Wright argues that Pollaiuolo’s dance is idiosyncratic; it is, in her opinion, “entirely unarchaeological.” Wright, The Pollaiuolo Brothers, 110. This chapter builds upon Wright’s extensive research, and takes her conclusions one step further by giving Pollaiuolo choreographic autonomy.
Renaissance art seldom takes us, it deserves special attention.”

Pollaiuolo’s *Dancing Nudes* take us to an even more remote world, for while the *Sausage Seller* arguably represents the *moresca*, a grotesque dance that was performed in Renaissance Italy, there is no equivalent for Pollaiuolo’s choreography. Indeed, the *Dancing Nudes* is not mimetic but exploratory, not documentary but imaginary. In Villa Gallina, a fifteenth-century viewer encountered a dance the likes of which he could only experience in paint.

The Lanfredini family, wealthy cloth merchants with close ties to the Medici, acquired Villa Gallina in 1427 (Figure 4.3). The *Dancing Nudes*, located on the long south wall of the *sala grande terrena*, was likely commissioned from Pollaiuolo by the brothers Jacopo and Giovanni di Orsino Lanfredini sometime in the late 1460s or early 1470s. No documents related

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4 Prévost declares the Renaissance artist’s capacity for invention—their ability to move beyond the status quo: “Donner du style aux corps: les artistes en ont fait leur affaire. Décoder les gestes et les postures, pousser les corps au bout de leurs limités motrices, inventer de nouveaux événements corporels; les images nous intéressent en leur capacité à mettre au point de nouvelles possibilités corporelles et gestuelles” (ibid., 81). Focusing on the ability for artists to invent new postures and gestures, Prévost then asks, “Comment l’invention artistique intervient-elle dans l’ordre des pratiques gestuelles?”

5 For a comprehensive history of the Lanfredini, see Mansfield, *A Family of Decent Folk*. Mansfield reveals that they had business and property in both Northern Italy and Florence. They were, for example, Florentine ambassadors to Ferrara (1471), and secured Este support for the Medici during the Pazzi conspiracy. In the 1460s, Giovanni Lanfredini lived in Venice, and was a diplomatic intermediary between Florence and the Venetian government. His success saw him appointed the ambassador to Naples and Rome as well. For more concerning the brother’s diplomatic missions, see Wright, *The Pollaiuolo Brothers*, 103. On Giovanni Lanfredini’s close relationship with Lorenzo de’ Medici, for whom he was ambassador to Rome, see their correspondence in Jon Thiem, ed. Lorenzo De’ Medici: *Selected Poems and Prose* (University Park: Pennsylvania State Press, 1991), 173-77. For their ownership of Villa Gallina in particular, see Wright, "Dancing Nudes at the Lanfredini Villa at Arcetri," and, more recently, idem *The Pollaiuolo Brothers*, 102 ff.

6 The brothers inherited the villa in 1452, and *catasto* records confirm that they inhabited it in the second half of the fifteenth century. See Mansfield, *A Family of Decent Folk*, 76-77, and Wright, *The Pollaiuolo Brothers*, 447, note 64, where Catasto 67 ("Quartiere di Santa Spirito, Gonfalone Drago, 1427") is cited.
to the commission have come to light, but the surviving Lanfredini correspondence suggests that
the family favored Pollaiuolo. Letters to the artist as well as economic interventions made on his
behalf refer to him as a dear friend (*carissimo compare*).\(^7\)

For the *sala grande terrena*, the villa’s most public room, Pollaiuolo dispersed a group of
ecstatic dancers across a narrow ledge (Figure 4.4).\(^8\) From left to right we follow the sharp
thrusts and counter-thrusts of their bodies as they alternately leap over the arches and pause
above the piers. Heads are tossed back, eyes are diverted or half-closed, and all is precarious, as
single bodies themselves swell outwards, dilating away from their centers of gravity. Almost
completely unaware of the viewer, these brazen nudes are lost in the dance itself, totally
consumed by their spectacular gyrations. Pollaiuolo’s nudes seem to dance for dance’s sake.

The dance they celebrate is Dionysian. Dionysian for its solipsism, for the sheer
extremism of its movements, and for its involvement of the whole body—from the flexion of
toes to the finishes of hands. All of this can be observed in the dancer at the far left, whose
powerful leap sets this frieze in motion (Figure 4.5). He is disconnected from that overt action—
captivated by a gesture more than by the adjacent dancer he threatens with a sharp elbow. What
can be said about a hand that elicits a smile? In contrast to Botticelli’s Three Graces, it does not
extend the arm’s reach, nor cap it with elegance (Figure 4.6). Rather, this dancer’s hand seems

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\(^8\) The fresco measures 4.5 meters high by 3.76 meters wide. Architectural interventions, especially those made by Stefano Bardini, who owned the villa in the early nineteenth century, have made it very difficult to draw the building’s original ground plan. On Bardini’s ownership and architectural interventions see A Bruschi, *Torre al Gallo e Villa la Gallina* (Florence, 1992), and F. Scalia, "Stefano Bardini Antiquario e Collezionista," in *Il Museo Bardini Firenze*, ed. F. Scalia and C. de Benedictis (Milan: 1984), 61-62. Alison Wright believes, and I agree, that the *sala grande terrena* has retained its basic layout. See Wright, *The Pollaiuolo Brothers*, 103. When I visited in 2010, La Gallina was undergoing yet another renovation. The Secci family is currently in the process of subdividing the building into luxury apartments. Due to heavy construction, I was unable to enter the villa through Bardini’s nineteenth-century facade.
shaped around an invisible ball of energy. Locked into a flexed position, it mimes the contour of the opposing foot. A long arabesque is traced from hand to hand, and a synaptic jump is made from hand to foot. The relationship between extremities that cut similar angular shapes is apparent all along the way. These angular positions then pulsate throughout the rest of the figures, like riffs on an original Dionysian theme.

But the god of wine himself is nowhere figured. The nudes contort themselves under his influence, as if intoxicated by the grapes and poppies strewn throughout the heavy festoon that hangs above. “The spirit of the god Dionysus,” wrote Marsilio Ficino in emulation of Plotinus, was believed by ancient theologians and Platonists to be the ecstasy and abandon of disencumbered minds, when... partly at the instigation of the god, they transgress the natural limits of intelligence and are miraculously transformed into the beloved god himself: where inebriated by a certain new draft of nectar and by an immeasurable joy, they rage, as it were, in a bacchic frenzy.

Pollaiuolo’s nudes perform movements that contribute not to a narrative but to a state of being. They are, to use an ancient Greek term, enthousiasmos—in the state of having the god within.

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9 For an interesting commentary on Pollaiuolo’s hands see Prévost, La peinture en actes. Gestes et manières dans l’Italie de la Renaissance. He argues that “Dans le fond, l'activité débordante chez Pollaiolo renvoie toujours à un certain usage de la main....” He goes on to illustrate a number of figures by Pollaiuolo, in which physical tension is concentrated in the hands. Among the figures he illustrates is the Villa Gallina dancer I discuss above (see his ill. 66). Prévost observes that the figure’s raised and crooked pinky finger (“le petit doigt qui ‘rebique’”) is a recurring feature in the artist’s work (“Le motif ne manque pas de frapper par sa répétition constante au sein de l’oeuvre de Pollaiolo...”), but that art history has only been interested in the motif as far is it can be used for making attributions (“c’est toujours pour le rabattre sur des formes d’identité”). Prévost hopes that scholars will come to see the hand as the most expressive part of the body (“la partie plus expressive du corps humain.”) Ibid., 161-81, but especially 61, 63, and 64.

10 Cited and discussed in Wind, Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance, 62. Ancient texts suggest that the god’s presence could be implicit. About a statue of an Indian, Callistratus wrote, “Drunkenness was overcoming him, and yet the colour of the marble did not portray his drunkenness... but this condition was indicated by the attitude; for he stood reeling and jovial, not able to plant his feet steadily, but tremulous and tending to sag to the ground.” Callistratus, Descriptions, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press and W. Heinemann, 1931).
one. As such, the mural occupies an important place in fifteenth-century Italian painting: along with Agostino di Duccio’s dancers in the Chapel of the Muses, it is one of the few existing large-scale representations of dance to take frenzied adults as its subject.

Neither the treatises on dance nor modern interpretations of the art prepare us for such frenzied dancers, making the fresco a unique case through which to explore a critical disjunction between social conventions and pictorial ideas. In terms of the reality of Quattrocento dance practice, the sheer ungainliness of the villa dancers’ movements—not to mention their unabashed nudity—would have turned the Lanfredini’s world upside-down, for they were part of a culture that judged human nature in terms of body language. At two-thirds life size, these dancers’ indecorous motions and lascivious interactions must have struck their contemporary viewers as the very embodiment of disorder and sin. And so, while the mural was painted in the fifteenth century, is not exactly of the fifteenth century. It is indeed one of those special cases in the

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13 This approach has been neglected by earlier scholarship despite the Quattrocento’s status as a particularly rich moment in the history of dance. Art historians have preferred to compare the mural to antique precedents. See Laurie Fusco, "Antonio Pollaiuolo’s Use of the Antique," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 42 (1979): 257-63. Jayne, whose entire dissertation centers on the fifteenth-century dance treatises, also fails to call attention to Pollaiuolo’s perversion of contemporary dance practice. Jayne, "Tuscan Dancing Figures in the Quattrocento", ch. V.

14 When Alessandra Strozzi examined prospective wives for her son, she wrote of one lady that “judging by her walk, she is not a dullard, and should therefore not be ruled out.” See C. Guasti, ed. *Alessandra Macinghi negli Strozzi. Lettere di una gentildonna fiorentina del secolo XV ai figliuoli esuli*, Florence, 1877, 458.
history of art when the corporeal status quo is sharply undercut, when control is countered by abandonment. The Lanfredini’s Apollonian veil was lifted to reveal a Dionysian alternative.\footnote{“Apollonian consciousness, which, like a veil, hid this Dionysian world from his vision,” as Friedrich Nietzsche wrote in \textit{The Birth of Tragedy}, trans. Clifton P. Fadiman (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1995), 7. Of interest also is Georges Canguilhem’s theory about normaIcy and pathology, which Prévost adduces to explain the disjunction between the bodies invented by artists like Pollaiuolo and the bodily norm in the fifteenth century. “...non comme une absence de normes, mais comme une création de nouvelles normes de vie, certes plus astreignantes, moins vivable biologiquement et socialement, mais qui son tout autant régulées.”See Prévost, \textit{La peinture en actes}, 83.}

Can the fresco’s exuberant lack of decorum be reconciled with the social reality of its prominent Florentine patrons? Should we feel compelled, as other scholars have, to provide a vernacular gloss?\footnote{Wright argues that Pollaiuolo’s dance is a curious hybrid, a kind of \textit{moresca all’antica}. Wright, "Dancing Nudes at the Lanfredini Villa at Arcetri," 47-77, and idem, \textit{The Pollaiuolo Brothers}, 102-13. The \textit{moresca} also serves as the point of comparison in Prévost’s study. “Nous savons désormais que les hommes dansant frénétiquement sur les murs de la Villa Gallina, à Arcetri, ne sont pas de suivants de Dionysos comme on l’a longtemps cru. La célèbre fresque de Pollaiuolo représente plutôt des danseurs en train d’exécuter une moresca.” Prévost, \textit{La peinture en actes}, 141.} Or can we consider the notion that the pictorial imagination operated independently of social life—that artists choreographed original, Dionysian dances regardless of their absence in reality? Pollaiuolo’s \textit{Dancing Nudes} suggest that in the context of a suburban villa, Quattrocento thinking about dance could reach beyond the Apollonian grace advocated by the treatises to embrace the uninhibited movement of the Dionysian dancer. Seen in this light, Pollaiuolo’s mural reveals, as Alberti once insinuated, that Renaissance artists appreciated the fundamental idea that the grace of Apollo coexists with, and in contrast to, the fury of Dionysus—an opposition based in antique dance and revivified in the fifteenth century.

This is especially true for Tuscan artists of the late fifteenth century. It may be that Florence did not have a resident dance master, but instead resorted to the contractual hiring of experts from neighboring courts for special occasions. Florentine culture thus naturally invites
stepping away from the dance treatises, for it had none of its own. What Florence did have was a wealth of literature that pivots on the contrast between city and country, between urban businessman and rustic farmer, between Apollo and Dionysus. This polarity was, moreover, championed by none other than Lorenzo de’ Medici, a man who regarded himself as both poet and choreographer.

Dance Undone

Renaissance culture disciplined the body to speak a measured and graceful cadence. One means to that end was dance, which was a form of physical conditioning as much as it was a source of entertainment. It factored into life as a kind of insurance—protection against movements that could label one uncouth, uneducated, and even unfit to wed. This deep seated association between physicality and morality goes all the way back to Plato’s Laws, in which a person who cannot dance is deemed a person of no culture: apaideutos achoreutos. And that attitude is repeated in the fifteenth century, in, for example, Guglielmo Ebreo’s treatise on dance,

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17 On the possibility that the dance master Guglielmo Ebreo (later known as Giovanni Ambrosio) tried to obtain employment from Lorenzo de’ Medici, see McGee, "Dancing Masters and the Medici Court in the 15th Century." On the notion of a choreographic style particular to Florentine artists, see André Chastel, Art et humanisme a Florence au temps du Laurent le Magnifique (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1959), 310. “Le style chorégraphique a pris a Florence une ampleur qui mérite réflexion.”


19 In his 1589 treatise on dance, Thoinot Arbeau recounts that “Seeing one of his daughters suitors, Hippoclide of Athens, dancing awkwardly, he said immediately: Clisthene has undanced his marriage.” Arbeau, Orchesography, 76-77.

where it is written that, “the character of everyone is made known by the dance.”

Guglielmo recommends dancing “only to those of honest and chaste hearts.” It is, he feels, “a mortal enemy to the wanton and unimaginative underclasses … who execute dancing as a means to be able to arrive at the realization of some of their whims.” As the frontispiece to his treatise reveals, dance was indeed a crucial means of courtly self-fashioning, a way of inscribing social hierarchy on and through the body (Figure 4.7).

This placement of dance within a culture of self-control and bodily regulation tethered the dance master to a very limited range of movements. We might even go so far as to label Renaissance dance inconspicuous, since most of the steps recorded in the treatises are grouped under the heading “natural movements.” Before describing any steps or dances, Domenico da Piacenza warns the reader of his treatise, “all things spoil or go bad if they go astray, that is, to

21 Guglielmo continues, “But when it is practiced by noble, virtuous, and honest men, I say that this science and art is good, virtuous, and worthy of commendation and praise. And moreover, not only does it turn virtuous and upright men into noble and refined persons, but it also makes those men who are ill-mannered and boorish and born into a low station into a sufficiently noble person. The character of everyone is made known by the dance.” (Ma quando è exercitata da huomini ge\[ne\]tili, virtuosi & honesti, dico essa scienza & arte essere buona et virtuosa et di commendatione & laude digna. Et più che non solamente gli huomini virtuosi & honesti fa tornare gentili & pellegrini: ma anchora quegli sonno male acostumati & di vil conditione nati, fa divenir gentili & d’assai: La qual da apertamente a cognoscere la qualità di tutti.) This passage only occurs in one manuscript of the treatise: Guglielmo Ebreo, "Guilie\[l\]lmi Hebraei Pisauriensis De Practica Seu Arte Tripudii Vulgare Opusculum," (Paris: Bibliothèque National, [Ms Fonds It. 973] 1463), 19r-19v. Translated and discussed in Jennifer Nevile, "Dance and Society in Quattrocento Italy," in Dance, Spectacle, and the Body Politick, 1250-1750, ed. Jennifer Nevile (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), 87-88, and Prévost, La peinture en actes, 39.


23 On the inconspicuous nature of Renaissance dance, see Fermor, "On the Question of Pictorial Evidence for 15th Century Dance Technique," 25, and Prévost, La Peinture en actes, 40. This is the case even as late as Thoinot Arbeau’s Orchesographie (1589), where the instructions for positioning feet match those found in courtesy books.
extremes. Being moderate saves one.”

This was a serious censure, as it is repeated four times in the space of Domenico’s first eighty lines. In turn, the impalpable gap the body crosses when it begins to dance was intentionally diminished during the Renaissance.

Fueled by steps that resembled stylized walking, dances were choreographed to be as close to life as possible; they were meant to act as a kind of mirror, a kinetic surface onto which virtues were reflected physically (Figure 4.8).

In the few accounts of dancing that exist outside of the treatises themselves, the ease with which Italian culture slipped from dance criticism to judgment of character is readily apparent. From a wide array of voices, we hear that excellent dancing is concomitant with good breeding and impeccable etiquette, while bad dancing is a sign of low class and deplorable manners.

And so the dance master’s role was to teach the aristocracy how to dance in a way that protects as well as extols their virtues. Such is the purpose named in a letter written from Filippus Bussus to Lorenzo de’ Medici. Bussus, a little-known dance master, offers to come to Florence to teach the Medici family “some noble, beautiful and dignified balli and basse danze, fit for people of your elevated status rather than just anybody.”

While dancing measured individual quality, it

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25 I am paraphrasing Alfred Gell: “There is a gap, a threshold however impalpable, that is crossed when the body begins to dance, rather than simply move.” The Art of Anthropology: Essays and Diagrams (New Brunswick, NJ: Athlone Press, 1999), 190-92.

26 For a convincing argument for the overlap of dance and civility, see Franko, The Dancing Body in Renaissance Choreography, 33, and Emmanuel Rodocanachi, "La Danse en Italie du xve au xviie siecle," La Revue des Etudes Historiques 7 (Nov.-Dec. 1905): 569.

27 Cited in McGee, "Dancing Masters and the Medici Court in the 15th Century," 221, doc. IV. ("alcuni signorelli, belli et dignissimi balli et basse danze, liquali sono proprie cosse degnie da signori come siti voy, et non da ogni persona.").
also served as a barometer for the caliber of the city itself. Antonio Filarete’s 1475 *Libro Ceremoniale* records Galeazzo Maria Sforza’s 1459 visit to Florence. The Florentine dancers that received him are, in Filarete’s account, symbolic of the Republic’s civilized nature. “And those from outside the city were particularly impressed by the quantity of noble women, the orderliness of the young men, the manner of dancing and celebrating with great propriety and civilized enjoyment.”

Polite dancing was more than entertainment; it denoted a well-mannered population and an orderly government.

In antithesis to the aims of Quattrocento dance, Pollaiuolo’s nudes exhibit a total explosion of the self. Completely nude, save for one fantastic headpiece that echoes the movements of its wearer, they activate the body in ways that the period suppressed: broken wrists, flexed ankles, bent knees, exposed backs, all woven together with a verve that stands in direct opposition to the fluidity of contemporary choreography. The treatises overflow with descriptions of a trained dancer’s ability to steer the body from one move to the next, “like a double-oared gondola crossing the waves of a calm sea.”

Pollaiuolo inverts this model by structuring his dance around flexed feet and bent knees, thrusts and counter-thrusts, as well as rhythmic alternations between bursts and poses that situate the dancers in opposition to one another.

This polarized structure becomes even more charged in the co-ed trio at the far right (Figure 4.9). These are not chivalric men who court virtuous women, as in the dances depicted

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in manuscript illuminations and on cassoni. Rather, these are bawdy males who compete for a disrobed woman’s attention. The lusty mode in which they address her nude figure aligns not with chivalric court dances but with rustic poetry. Like Lorenzo de’ Medici’s Bacco e Ariadne, in which “nymphs fall gladly for the ruses / That the satyrs execute,” Pollaiuolo’s nudes corrupt the model of social dancing and the courtship ritual in general.30

If Pollaiuolo’s Dancing Nudes belongs to the history of dance, if it contributes to our understanding of fifteenth-century attitudes towards the body in motion, it does so in opposition to court dance as contemporary treatises defined it. Indeed, Pollaiuolo’s nudes tell a different history of dance—one of destabilization and solipsism. Rather than lead us synaptically through a chorus of five figures, Pollaiuolo gives us abrupt transitions between five solos.31 Elbows and knees threaten heads and hips. Indeed, the entire dance seems to resist the kind of choral coalescence we expect from Renaissance composition, pictorial and choreographic alike. With the exception of the dancer at the far right, whose contortion returns him to the fold, we might imagine this dance going on forever, without any perceivable end.32 And yet, the trio to which that leap returns him is torn asunder, as if the Three Graces burst apart at the seams.

30 Thiem, ed. Lorenzo De’ Medici: Selected Poems and Prose, 163. I discuss this poem further on page 31ff. The lusty mode in which the dancers address the female nude has led more than one scholar to relate Pollaiuolo’s invention to the moresca, a dance that, in Bertrand Prévost’s words, “donc à penser une sorte de maniérisme amoureux où la gestuelle érotique gagne en consistence esthétique.” Prévost, La peinture en actes, 143.

31 We are reminded Joan Acocella’s description of Vadislav Nijinsky’s Rite of Spring “Their movements [were] hatched in isolation and they were like spontaneous fires that [broke] out in haystacks.”

32 The fresco may have once continued on the other side of the fireplace, and perhaps even around the entire room, although the most recent restoration did not uncover any traces of pigment. Botticelli and Botticelli, “Il Restauro delle pitture di Antonio del Pollaiolo a Villa La Gallina.”
Not far away, in Villa Lemmi, Botticelli depicted *Venus and the Three Graces* approaching a member of the Tornabuoni family (Figure 4.10). These figures glide across the space as one unit. Accurate recreations of exactly what the dance masters choreographed will be forever out of reach, but Botticelli seems to figure an allied rhetoric, for his women breathe the same air, drift over the calm waves of the same sea. They are the close cousins of the Three Graces who execute an elegant round in the *Primavera*, a lyrical dance choreographed entirely around the notion of togetherness, of harmony—from the intertwining of hands to steps that follow the subtle beats of the contemporary *bassadanza*, the queen of slow measures.

To place Pollaiuolo alongside Botticelli is to illustrate a kinetic range far greater than that found in codified dance. Together, these Quattrocento artists form a distinctly pictorial environment, and one that embraces the full range of bodily capability—from the elegance of the Three Graces to the fury of the maenads. Even the Pollaiuolo brothers themselves can be

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33 When she discovered Pollaiuolo’s fresco, Mary Logan Berenson immediately noted the contrast it strikes with Botticelli’s Villa Lemmi frescoes. “La rude vigueur, la vitalité débridée de nos personages, contrastent énergiquement avec la grace des figures des fresques de la Villa Lemmi, qui semblent aimablement soulevées et comme gonflée par le vent, tandis que nos joyeux compères se jettent a corps perdu dans les excés de l’orgie sans frein et que leurs muscles élastiques leur permettent de bondir l’égerement en l’air: ils ont deja en eux la force latente qui anime des figures telles que l’Hercule, dans le groupe en bronze de Pollaiuolo conservé au Bargello.” See Mary Logan Berenson, "Découverte D'une Fresque De Pollaiuolo," *Chronique des arts* 36, no. 343-344 (1897): 343-44.

34 On a diagram of the *misure* from the version of Domenico’s treatise in the Bibliothèque National, Paris (f. Ital. 972, c. 4v, lines 201-225), is written, “Io sono bassadanza, regina delle mesure e merito di portare corona et in l’operare de mi poche genti hano ragione e chi in dançare lo in sonare ben di me s’adopra força che dali cieli sia data l’opra.” Fifteenth-Century Dance and Music, fig. 5 and p. 19, lines 201-205.

35 Prévost’s *La Peinture en actes* is organized around these two artists. In response to the question, “Des gestes?” He declares, “D’emblée voilà devant une bifurcation.” In turn, the book pivots around dialectical topics, such as grace and combat, love and war, restraint and ornament. For his treatment of Pollaiuolo specifically, see Bertrand Prévost, "Le pathos ornemental de Pollaiolo," *Critica d’Arte* 18 (June 2003), 60-71. On love and war as two fundamental, yet contrasting modes of existence for every Renaissance person, Prévost directs the reader to G. Careri, *Gestes d’amour et de guerre: le tasse aux origines de l’image-affet* (Paris: EHESS, 2005).
found to oscillate between these two poles. The counterpart to the *Dancing Nudes* is the *Coronation of the Virgin* (1483), in which two arcs of musical angels provide chaste dancing and musical accompaniment for the enthroned Virgin and Christ (Figure 4.11). This approach to dance—the coexistence of both nymph and maenad—finds its precedent not in the Renaissance but in Greco-Roman antiquity, when Apollo and Dionysus constituted twin prongs of a bifurcated dance world.\(^{36}\)

**Apollo and Dionysus, *Chorodidaskaloi***

Apollo and Dionysus form a duality that pervades classical thought.\(^{37}\) The ubiquitous conflict between these two opposing powers can be given certain focus through the lens of dance, for these twin gods were, amongst other things, *chorodidaskaloi*: masters of the dance, leaders of choruses. Plato writes,

> As we said, the gods were given to us as partners in the dance (*synchoreutai*) and have granted us the pleasurable perception of rhythm and harmony. Thanks to this perception they animate us and lead us in the dance as they join us one to another in songs and dances; and because of the charm inherent in the activity they invented the word ‘chorus.’\(^{38}\)

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36 It may be possible to trace this bifurcation into the medieval period, when the early church fathers divided dancing into two rigidly opposed categories: David’s holy dance of praise and worship (2 Samuel 6:14) versus Salome’s evil and erotic movements (Matthew 14:6-8). See Alessandro Arcangeli, *Davide o Salome?* (Treviso and Rome: Edizioni Fondazione Benetton Studi Ricerche/Viella, 2000), and idem, "Dance under Trial: The Moral Debate 1200-1600," *Dance Research* 12, no. 2 (1994): 127-55.

37 Nietzsche was the first to demonstrate that a quintessential feature of classical Greek thought is the opposition of Apollo and Dionysus. For Nietzsche, this opposition was ultimately a way of describing a totality. “And lo! Apollo could not live without Dionysus! The ‘titanic’ and the ‘barbaric’ were in the last analysis as necessary as the Apollonian.” See Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, esp. 12.

38 Plato, Laws, Book II, 653e-654a. (κινεῖσθαι δὲ ἀεὶ ζητεῖν καὶ φθέγγεσθαι, τὰ μὲν ἄλλα ἔχειν καὶ σκιρτῶντα, οἷον ὀρχούμενα μεθ’ ἡδονῆς καὶ προσπαίζοντα, τὰ δὲ φθεγγόμενα πᾶσας φωνάς. τὰ μὲν οὖν ἄλλα ζῷα ύπὶ ἔχειν αἴσθησιν τῶν ἐν ταῖς κινήσεις τάξεων οὐδὲ ἀταξίαν, οἷς δὴ ρυθμὸς ὀνόμα καὶ ἀρμονία: ἴκνυν δὲ οὔς.) Plato’s source is the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*, which is discussed in this context in Steven H. Lonsdale, *Dance and Ritual Play in Greek Religion* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), ch. 2 ("Origins and Divine Prototypes").
Dance was viewed as Apollo’s greatest gift to mankind. Just as the divine creator coaxed order from chaos by choreographing the heavenly spheres, so too does earthly dancing impart order to the body politic.\(^{39}\) Apollo is associated with the lyre. The Pythagoreans identified its strings with harmonic intervals and the seven planets, and so aligned Apollo’s music with the cosmic harmony of the spheres. As choreus, or Apollo Musagestes—leader of the Muses—harmony is imparted to the dancers themselves, who move in choruses so intrinsically graceful that they are worthy of the heavenly spheres themselves. But Apollo is not alone; his partner in dance is Dionysus, who offers a competing model. His dancers are guided by the pipes, a rustic instrument that breaks down the harmony of Apollo’s restrained choruses. Whereas Apollo’s lyre conduces order, Dionysus’ aulos summons disorder. Rough, angular movements, such as tucked jumps, are the kinetic correlates for its sounds.\(^ {40}\) The opposing musical, and hence choreographic styles of Apollo and Dionysus are ultimately inseparable and actually crucial to the stability of the universe.\(^ {41}\) Wild dances were present, after all, at Zeus’ birth. Desperate to save her son from Cronos’ cannibalism, Rhea summoned the Corybantes, who protected the baby by wailing and leaping to the beat of the drum and aulos.\(^ {42}\) And so, try as they might to

\(^{39}\) See ibid., ch. 2 (“Origins and Divine Prototypes”), esp. page 45.

\(^{40}\) See ibid., ch. 3 (“Dance as a Disruptive Force”).

\(^{41}\) According to James Miller, “Apollo restrained but could not, and indeed would not, repress Dionysus, for the health of the cosmos depended on their continual interaction. With the liberating impetus of the Revel-King, the dance of Apollonian order would have degenerated into a sterile round of passionless conformity ... Conversely, without the providential restraint of the god of harmony, the dance of Dionysian passion would have torn the living world apart....” Miller, Measures of Wisdom, 454. Nietzsche once likened their co-dependence to procreation’s reliance upon “the duality of the sexes, involving perpetual conflicts with only periodically intervening reconciliations.” He also recognized in ancient literature that man’s entire existence was believed to be predicated upon “a hidden substratum of suffering and knowledge, which as again revealed to him by the Dionysian.” See Nietzsche, The Birth of Tragedy, 1, 12.

suppress him, ancient writers invariably admit Dionysus into their choreographic schemas. They celebrate the sweet steps of the Muses as well as the leap of the Corybantes.

Such is the case with Plato. In Book II of the *Laws*, dance originates with the birth of a child, whose lack of motor control resembles a kind of Dionysian frenzy.

...no creature is ever born in possession of that reason, or that amount of reason, which properly belongs to it when it is fully developed; consequently, every creature, during the period when it is still lacking in its proper intelligence, continues all in a frenzy, crying out wildly, and, as soon as it can get on its feet, leaping wildly. Let us remember how we said that in this we have the origin of music and gymnastic.

It is only with a rigorous education, Plato then argues, that these wild movements can be tamed and molded into Apollonian grace.

What it says is that, almost without exception, every young creature is incapable of keeping either its body or its tongue quiet, and is always striving to move and to cry, leaping and skipping and delighting in dances and games, and uttering, also, noises of every description. Now, whereas all other creatures are devoid of any perception of the various kinds of order and disorder in movement ... to us men the very gods, who were given, as we said, to be our fellows in the dance, have granted the pleasurable perception of rhythm and harmony....Shall we accept this account to begin with, and postulate that education owes its origin to Apollo and the Muses?

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43 Plato, *Laws*, Book II, 672c. (οἶδα, ὅτι πᾶν ζῶον, ὅσον αὐτῷ προσήκει νοῦν ἔχειν τελεωθέντι, τούτον καὶ τοσοῦτον οὐδὲν ἔχον ποτὲ φύεται: ἐν τούτῳ δὴ τῷ χρόνῳ ἐν ὧν μήπω κέκτηται τὴν οἰκείαν φρόνησιν, πᾶν μαίνεται τε καὶ βοῶν ἀτάκτως, καὶ ὅταν ἀκταινώσῃ ἑαυτὸ τάχιστα, ἀτάκτως ἀὖ πηδᾷ. ἀνα ἐνδὲ ὅτι πουσικῆς τε καὶ γυμναστικῆς ἔφαεν ἀργάς ταύτας εἶναι.)

44 Ibid., Book II, 653e-654a. (κινεῖσθαι δὲ αἰεὶ καὶ καὶ φθέγγεσθαι, τὰ μὲν ἄλλα ἐμνα καὶ σκηρτῶνα, οἷον ὀρχούμενα μεθ’ ἱδνῆς καὶ προσπαίοντα, τὰ δὲ φθεγγόμενα πάσας φονάς, τὰ μὲν οὖν ἄλλα ἐμα ὅς ὅ τε ἐρήμου ὄνομα καὶ ἀρμονία: ἡμὲν δὲ οὐς: ἐπομεν τοὺς θεν ςυγχρεντας δεδοσθαι, τοὔτους εἶναι καὶ τοὺς δεδωκότας τὴν ἐνρυθομεν τε καὶ ἕναρμονοιν αἰσθησιν μεθ’ ἱδνῆς, ἣ δὲ κινεῖ τε ἡμὰς καὶ χορηγεῖν ἡμῶν τούτους, φῶς τε καὶ ὀρχήσειν ἀλλήλας συνεῖροντας, χοροῦ τε ὄνομακέναι παρά τὸ τῆς χαρὰς ἕρματον ὄνομα. πρῶτον δὴ τοῦτο ἀποδεξώμεθα; θόμεν παιδείας εἶναι πρὸτῃν διὰ Μουσῶν τε καὶ Ἀπόλλωνος, ἢ πός.) Elsewhere in Book II, he claims that “the art of choral dance as a whole [choreia] is identical with education as a whole [paideia].” Cited and discussed in Miller, *Measures of Wisdom*, 52. For other passages pertaining to the connection between dance and education, see Plato, *Laws*, Book VII. The most important study of singing and choral dancing as a part of Athenian education is Werner Jaeger, *Paideia: The Ideals of Greek Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1939, 1945). See also Lonsdale, *Dance and Ritual Play in Greek Religion*, ch. 1 ("Dance and Play in Plato's Laws").
It might seem that Plato means to banish Dionysus from society, but this is not the case. He permits the god to enter the lives of adults, who, under the influence of wine, return to a childish state in which the body is pliable and open to irrational movements.\(^{45}\)

We stated also that the gods, in pity for us, have granted to us as fellow-choristers and choir-leaders Apollo and the Muses,—besides whom we mentioned, if we recollect, a third, Dionysus ... The choir of Apollo and that of the Muses have been described, and the third and remaining choir must necessarily be described, which is that of Dionysus.\(^{46}\)

Apollonian and Dionysian dances coexisted in Plato’s ideal society. For a better sense of what these Dionysian dances consisted, we must turn to one of Lucian’s lesser-known dialogues, *De saltatione*. Essentially an encomium, Lucian’s purpose is to defend dance before the cynic Crato. In doing so, he praises all manners of dancing, from the Apollonian to the Dionysian.

And certainly the Bacchic dance that is especially cultivated in Ionia and in Pontus, although it is a satyr-show, nevertheless has so enthralled the people of those countries that when the appointed time comes round they each and all forget everything else and sit the whole day looking at titans, corybantes, satyrs, and rustics. Indeed, these parts of dance are performed by the men of the best birth and first rank in every one of their cities, not only without shame but with greater pride in the thing than in family trees and public services and ancestral distinctions.\(^{47}\)

In addition to sketching out the origins of various dances, Lucian details the criteria necessary for judging contemporary dancers.

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\(^{45}\) While considering further the young’s predisposition for Dionysian motion, Plato even goes so far as to suggest that the state “pass a law that ... no children under the age of eighteen may touch wine at all....” Not until a man is forty may he drink wine and “join in the convivial gatherings and invoke Dionysus....” Plato, *Laws*, 133. Lonsdale points out that one of the many Greek words for dancing, *paizō*, is a derivative of the word *pais*, meaning child. Lonsdale, *Dance and Ritual Play in Greek Religion*, 1.

\(^{46}\) Plato, *Laws*, Book II, 655a. (δειλῆς ἐν τοῖς αὐτοῖς τε καὶ ἵσοις ἃρ’ ὄμοια τά τε σχήματα καί τά φθέγματα συμβαίνει γίγνεσθαι.)

\(^{47}\) ἡ μὲν γε Βακχικὴ ὁρχησίς ἐν Ἰωνίᾳ μάλιστα καὶ ἐν Πόντῳ σπουδαζομένη, καίτοι σατυρικὴ οὖσα, οὕτω κεχείρωται τοὺς ἀνθρώπους τοὺς ἕκε ὡστε κατὰ τὸν τεταγμένον ἐκαστὸν καιρὸν, ἀπάντων ἐπιλαθόμενοι τῶν ἄλλων, κάθηται δι’ ἡμέρας τιτάνας καὶ κορύβαντας καὶ σατύρους καὶ βουκόλους ὀρέσσες. καὶ ὀρχοῦντας γε ταῦτα οἱ εὐγενεστάτων καὶ πρωτείοντες ἐν ἐκάστῃ τῶν πόλεων, οὐχ ὅπως αἰδούμενοι ἄλλα καὶ μέγα φρονοῦντες ἐπὶ τῷ πράγματι μᾶλλον ἣπερ ἐπὶ εὐγενείαις καὶ λειτουργίαις καὶ ἀξιώμασι προγονικοῖς (line 79). Lucian, *The Dance*, 281.
In general, the dancer undertakes to present and enact characters and emotions, introducing now a lover and now an angry person, one man afflicted with madness, another with grief, and all this within fixed bounds. Indeed, the most surprising part of it is that within the selfsame day at one moment we are shown Athamas in frenzy, at another Ino in terror; presently the same person is Atreus, and after a little, Thyestes; then Aegisthus, or Aerope; yet they are all but a single man....there is either flute or lyre or vocal music or tragedy’s mummery or comedy’s buffoonery. The dancer, however, has everything at once, and that equipment of his, we may see, is varied and comprehensive—the flute, the pipes, the tapping of feet, the clash of cymbals, the melodious voice of the actor, the concord of the singers.  

In celebrating dancers who can easily transform themselves into multiple characters—even within the space of one day’s performances—Lucian reveals his culture’s appreciation for the Apollonian and the Dionysian. He champions the fluidity between flute and lyre, comedy and tragedy, frenzy and harmony.

We are open to this scope. As heirs to Loie Fuller, Isadora Duncan, and Martha Graham our modern sensibility towards dance welcomes and even demands such physical range. In the

48 τὸ δὲ ὅλον ἡθ καὶ πάθη δείξειν καὶ ὑποκρινεῖσθαι ἡ ὀρχησίς ἐπαγγέλλεται, νῦν μὲν ἔρωντα, νῦν δὲ ὀργιζόµενον τινα εἰσάγουσα, καὶ ἄλλον μεμηνότα καὶ ἄλλον λελυπηµένον, καὶ ἀπαντα ταῦτα μεµετηµένος, τὸ γούν παραδοξώτατον, τῆς αὐτῆς ἡμέρας ἄρτι µέν Ἀθάµας µεµηνός, ἄρτι δὲ Ἰνω φοβουµένη δείκνυται, καὶ ἄλλοτε Ἀτρεὺς ὁ αὐτός, καὶ µετὰ µικρὸν Θυέστης, εἶτα Λίγισθος ἡ Αερόπη: καὶ πάντα ταῦτα εἷς ἀνθρώπος ἐστιν, (line 67) Ibid., 271.

49 The Greek dancers Pylades and Xenophon of Smyrna were praised for their portrayal of Dionysus. In the Greek Anthology, Antipater of Thessalonica praises Pylades (Epigram #290): “Pylades put on the divinity of the frenzied god himself, when from Thebes he led the Bacchants to the Italian stage, a delight and a terror to men, so full by his dancing did he fill all the city with the untempered fury of the demon. Thebes knows but the god who was born of the fire; the heavenly one is this whom we see brought into the world by these hands that can utter everything.” An anonymous poet praises Xenophon of Smyrna (Epigram #289): “We thought we were looking on Bacchus himself when the old man lustily led the Maenads in their furious dance....” See The Greek Anthology, trans. W.R. Paton, 5 vols., The Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1956-60), 16.289 and 290. Cited and discussed in Lillian B. Lawler, "The Dance in Jest," The Classical Journal 59, no. 1 (Oct, 1963): 5-6. While all of the ancient commentators on the technical and physical demands of dance are too numerous to mention, noteworthy examples from the time of Lucian include Libanius, Galen, and Plotinus, who each praise dramatic twists, turns, leaps, and backwards bends. See Webb, Demons and Dancers, 66-67.
Renaissance, however, radical alternatives to the Apollonian body were suppressed, for they were thought to reveal the baser side of human nature.\textsuperscript{50} In Guglielmo Ebreo’s opinion,

...the wanton and unimaginative underclasses, which often adulterate [dance] with their corrupt souls and lascivious minds from [being a] liberal and virtuous art to an adulterated and vile science. Many times, for dishonest lust under the appearance of honesty, they execute dancing as a means to be able to arrive at the realization of some of their whims. As much as I am able, I fully condemn those people, and do not entrust this present work in their hands!...Then, dance with virtue.\textsuperscript{51}

This is not to suggest that Renaissance dancers did not perform virtuoso moves, because they certainly did. In January 1490, at the wedding of Ercole d’Este to Angela Sforza, a young Tuscan woman “pirouetted with a ballerino in the most diverse ways, with jumps and lithesome twistings of her body....”\textsuperscript{52} But in the hierarchy of steps presented by dance masters like Guglielmo Ebreo, whose harsh words we read above, salti (jumps) and volte (turns) as well their accompanying musical measures are consistently placed last. They had to be used with great caution, for they carried a rural connotation and thus threatened the performer’s social standing.

\textsuperscript{50} Relevant here is Mary Douglas’ theory of two bodies: “The body as social construction controls the way in which the body is perceived as a physical construction, while on the other hand ... a particular social viewpoint is made manifest in the physical perception of the body.” Mary Douglas, \textit{Natural Symbols: Explorations in Cosmology}, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 1996), ch. 5 (The Two Bodies%).

\textsuperscript{51} \textit{Fifteenth-Century Dance and Music}, 128, lines 301-330: “Et conforme Ma aliena in tucto & / Mortale inimical di viciosi & Me- / chenaici plebei li quail Le piu volte Con / Animo corrupto & con la scelerata / Mente La fanno di arte liberale & / Virtuosa sciencia adultera & servile / & molte volte ancora alle lur inhone- / ste concupisciencie Socto specie di ho- / nestade la inducono meçana per potere / Cautamente al efecto d’alcuna sua / voluntate dançando Per venire Ai quali / quanto piu posso totalmente la niego / Loro ne punto mi curo che alle Soe / Mane la presente opra….poi / Con Virtu Dançando.”

\textsuperscript{52} Cited in Sparti, "Style and Performance in the Social Dances of the Italian Renaissance: Ornamentation, Improvisation, Variation and Virtuosity," 38 and 48, note 44. Of the dance masters, Antonio Cornazano is perhaps the harshest censor. He suggests that women limit themselves to assisting a man with fast turns and jumps, which may have to do with the fact that his is the only treatise dedicated to a woman, Ippolita Sforza, his star pupil. See \textit{Fifteenth-Century Dance and Music}, 87. On Ippolita’s dancing, see Southern, "A Prima Ballerina of the Fifteenth Century," 183-97.
Take the *piva*, for instance. It was the fastest of the four dancing measures, and its provenance—as the word *piva*, or bagpipe, implies—is rustic. Due to its origins with country folk, the dance masters look upon the *piva* condescendingly.

The *piva*, the first rung of this ladder, is lesser than the others to the extent that one can see here. It is a country-villa dance. Its song, derived from the shepherd’s hornpipe, is the origin of all the others. From this pipe, it passed to the pipes made from reeds.\(^{53}\)

Although heretofore this *piva* for our predecessors was the main style of dancing, today for the intellects refined in more florid things, it is despised, and held in disrepute by courtiers and by good dancers.\(^{54}\)

Therefore, let the masters of trivia and the foot stompers be silent, because only this manner (i.e. the *bassadanza*) is noble. Let the *bassadanza* be removed from such fare, which alters it into vile motions and makes it lose its natural propriety.\(^{55}\)

These passages from Antonio Cornazano’s treatise on dance place the *piva* in a pastoral context; it is the province of the satyr Pan and his reed pipes, rather than the god Apollo and his elegant lyre. The speed and jubilance with which one must dance to the rustic *piva* is less dignified, and thus ill-suited for gentlemen. Cornazano’s opinion of the *piva* is particularly harsh, because he was a humanist and a poet, as well as a dance master. In his collection of *Proverbii et Facetie*, for example, the *piva* embroiders a tale of wanton seduction.\(^{56}\)

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\(^{53}\) *Fifteenth-Century Dance and Music*, 92, lines 424-430: “La piva primo grado di questa scala / e tanto minore dell’ altri quanto / si puo per oculata fede qui vedere / vallo e da villa origine di tutti / gli altri e ‘l suon suo controvato ne- / l’ avena per gli pastori.. Dall’avena a- / le canne pallustri.”

\(^{54}\) Ibid., 87, lines 213-215: “Questa quantunche presso gli precessori nostri fosse principale sono a dançare suso hoggidi per gl’ ingiegni assuttigliati in piu fiorite cose e abiecta e vilipesa da persone magnifice e dan bon dançatori.”

\(^{55}\) Ibid., 88, lines 271-277: “Tacciano adonche gli mastri di baghatelle et frappatori di pedi che sol questa maniera e signorile et extracta la bassadança di questa una si cambia in vili movimenti & perde la proprieta sua naturale.”

\(^{56}\) “This same man went to invite her to dance; and having taken several turns with her around the room to the accompaniment of the saltarello, he indicated to the musician that he should play him a piva which would better serve his purpose of placing the said relic in her hand; and the music thus having changed, they began to get down to it more quickly, there being a great deal of movement in the dance. And after he had squeezed her hands a little, and she had responded by squeezing his, in that quickening of the
We are beginning to see that the fifteenth-century treatises on dance are polarized: at one extreme, the slow tempo of the bassadanza was associated with the court and thus also with moral virtue; on the other end of the spectrum, the fast tempo of the piva was equated with the country and thus also with moral corruption. It was necessary for the dance masters to segregate urban from rural dancing, because their treatises were forged on the ideals of the court. By the fifteenth-century, the Apollonian and Dionysian duality no longer exerted a positive influence on dance, because the practice was controlled by the strict physical parameters of the civic elite.  

But Villa Gallina exists outside the city of Florence. It turns its back on the urban center to look out over what once was a vineyard that sloped towards the small town of Arcetri (Figure 4.12). In strict, geographic terms, Villa Gallina is not rural but suburban. Like Cosimo de’

measure, which whirls the dancers round, he put the great beast in her hand in turn; nor did she avoid taking it, but held it tightly as long as she could do so secretly, and she did this more than once.”

Translated and cited in Fermor, "Studies in the Depiction of the Moving Figure in Renaissance Art, Art Theory, and Criticism", 56. The original Italian can be found in Antonio Cornazano, Proverbi di Antonio Cornazano in facetie (Bologna: Romagnoli, 1865), 97-98.

57 In the sixteenth century, Castiglione goes so far as to restrict dancing entirely to the confines of the court. His fear is that outside the palace walls, noblemen will give in to the more grotesque forms of dance, such as jumping and tumbling. “...I think he ought to put aside all others, such as vaulting on the ground, rope walking, and the like, which smack of the juggler’s trade and little befit a gentleman.” See Baldesar Castiglione, The Book of the Courtier, ed. Daniel Javitch, trans. Charles S. Singleton (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 2002), 29. Jumping is disliked throughout the sixteenth century. In 1580, Michel de Montaigne writes, “Just as in our dances, these men of low condition, because they cannot reproduce the carriage and decorum of our nobility, try to excel by means of dangerous jumps and other strange and juggleresque movements.” And in 1585, Tommaso Garzoni says in La piazza universale that jumping “is performed and watched by ignoble people.” Not until Tuccaro’s Trois dialogues de l’exercice de saute et voltiger en l’air (1599) is jumping and other less noble forms of dancing admitted to the court and codified for posterity.

58 Villa Gallina stands to the back of the larger Torre del Gallo, also owned by the Lanfredini family. The Torre faces the city side of the hill, while the Villa faces away from Florence and towards Arcetri and a plain of vineyards. James Ackerman believes that “In reflecting on the ways in which villas respond to the landscape, one must remember to look not only at them, but out from them. The choice of prospect is almost as subject to the myth and the rule of taste as is the choice of design....” Sites such as the Villa Gallina’s, in which the building is made to relate to both the city and the countryside, “most fully illustrates the urban roots of the villa myth.” James S. Ackerman, "The Villa as Paradigm," Perspecta 22, Paradigms of Architecture (1986): 24.
Medici’s paradigmatic villa in Fiesole, La Gallina’s position actually serves to highlight its relationship to Florence proper: it is both tied to and divorced from the city center. Of the Fiesole villa’s strategic location, Marsilio Ficino wrote:

We saw beneath us all Florence—fields, houses and, in the middle, over the Arno, mist, and on the other side, steep mountains. We imagined a house placed on the slopes of the hill in such a manner as to ... allow it to receive breezes when the weather is warm.

At Villa Gallina, Pollaiuolo was also faced with both city and country vistas. He consciously chose to call attention to the rural aspect of the villa’s site—to its status as locus amoenus—for his dancing nudes surmount a series of barrel vaults through which a landscape is pictured (Figure 4.13).

In De re aedificatoria, Alberti acknowledges a crucial difference between urban and suburban properties: “[the ornament] to a town house ought to be far more sober in character,

59 On the site of the Medici villa at Fiesole, Ackerman writes, “It had no connection with agriculture, and was not an adaptation of an existing structure; the site was chosen for the panoramic view, and a massive substructure had to be built to support the building and the garden on the steep hillside....Clearly, the patron chose the site because it commanded all of Florence and a great stretch of the Arno valley....” See Ackerman, The Villa, The A.W. Mellon Lectures in the Fine Arts (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), 73-77. Calling attention to Christiane Klapisch-Zuber’s population map of 1427, Amanda Lillie demonstrates that there was a “marked preference for sites not only near Florence but within the most densely populated parishes surrounding the city. Of thirty-two residential villas, only six were situated in parishes whose population was under 100 in 1427.” Lillie connects this statistic to agriculture, and notes that Alberti himself recommends that houses be “not far from the piazza” so as to easily buy and sell goods at market. See Amanda Lillie, Florentine Villas in the Fifteenth Century (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 45.

60 Cited in Ackerman, The Villa, 77.

61 A lot debate has surrounded this curious barrel-vaulted structure. In her recent monograph, Wright identifies the structure as giardini pensili—a feature, she reminds us, of ancient Roman villas, as well as of the paradigmatic Medici villa at Fiesole. See Wright, The Pollaiuolo Brothers, 105. Prior to Wright’s study, the mysterious edifizi were usually identified as baths. See especially E. Battisti, L'antirinascimento (Milan,1962), 301, idem, Cicli pittorici: storie profane (Milan1981), 98-99, and Jayne, "Tuscan Dancing Figures in the Quattrocento", 223. Further bibliography on the design of gardens for villas can be found in Wright, The Pollaiuolo Brothers, 448, notes 79-82. On the history of the phrase locus amoenus, or pleasant place, see Ernst Robert Curtius, European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York: Pantheon Books, 1953), 195 ff.
whereas in a villa the allures of license and delight are allowed.”62 He goes on to add that, “Let everything smile at the visitor and greet him as he arrives. And once he has entered, let him be unsure whether it would be more pleasurable to stay where he is or to venture further, enticed by its gaiety and splendor.”63 Outside of the city, visual enticement is what Alberti wants, and enticed the Lanfredini undoubtedly were by Villa Gallina’s *sala grande terrena*. For here, Pollaiuolo breached the limits imposed by the city, and in doing so expanded the world of dance pictorially.

*Per semplice diletto*

When around 1400 Cennino Cennini wrote that painting “calls for imagination and skill of hand in order to discover things not seen...presenting to plain sight what does not actually exist,” it is doubtful that he ever imagined his statement would have ramifications for an artist’s

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62 Alberti, *On the Art of Building in Ten Books*, 294. Villa architecture, as well as ideology, always defines itself in opposition to the city. In response to Alberti’s theory, Ackerman asserts that “the villa cannot be understood apart from the city: it exists not to fulfill autonomous functions but as the antithesis to urban values and accommodations...” Ackerman, "The Villa as Paradigm," 11.

63 Alberti, *On the Art of Building in Ten Books*, 296. Although she never cites Alberti’s thoughts on villa decoration, Wright does interpret Pollaiuolo’s dancers within the context of villa culture. “The fact that the Pollaiuolo painting was devised for a villa site almost certainly encouraged the jovial subject and its classicizing gloss: landscape, bacchantes, satyrs, and *sileni* at their revels were discussed as suitable subjects for country-house decoration in Pliny the Elder’s *Natural History*.” Wright, *The Pollaiuolo Brothers*, 113. However, it must be noted that Wright is incorrect in stating that Pliny provides the precedent here. The passage she refers to in Book 35 of the *Natural History* concerns the painter Nicomachus, who painted “a fine picture of Bacchants with Satyrs not for a country house but for “the Temple of Peace in Rome.” Wright also cites a passage that does refer to villas. However, Pliny is not describing paintings for villas, but rather paintings of villas. He recalls the painter Tadius, who painted “walls with pictures of country houses and porticoes and landscapes and groves....” Pliny, *Natural History, Books 33-35*, trans. H. Rackham, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2003), 35.109-12 and 15-17. Nevertheless, her apt placement of Pollaiuolo’s mural within the context of villa culture, deserves further attention.
engagement with dance. But in Florence, this is just what happened. In the freer context of Villa Gallina, art tells its own history of dance.

Since Antiquity, privileged city dwellers have idealized the countryside. The untouched landscape is free of the political, financial, and social stresses of the urban center—it is home to the idyllic shepherd who peacefully tends to his flock and tills his land. This is, in essence, the tension that underlies Horace’s Satires. Pitting the city against the country, he deplores Rome and celebrates Tivoli. There, in his Sabine villa, he lives in comfort, and dreads the call to return to the capital. The split between urban and rural life—between negotium and otium—was not only a Horatian topos. A century later, Pliny the Younger cries out, “O sweet and honorable otium, lovelier than any negotium!” Indeed, this is the antithesis that perennially animates all bucolic poetry, from Theocritus and Virgil to Petrarch and Poliziano. These poets, classical and post-classical alike, created characters who are resolutely aware of their distance from the city.

Virgil, whose Eclogues and Georgics idealize country life to such a degree that they have become synonymous with—and indeed paradigmatic of—Arcadian literature, transmitted the

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64 Cennini, The Craftsman’s Handbook, I. For deeper analysis of this passage, see Summers, Michelangelo and the Language of Art, 190-91.

65 Country life was not, of course, anywhere near idyllic. Only the wealthiest class could see the agricultural life in such a way. Slaves, Ackerman reminds us, were a necessary component in the expropriation of rural land to support a myth of pleasure and relaxation. See Ackerman, "The Villa as Paradigm," 12.


67 Horace’s oscillation between rus and urbs is discussed in Ackerman, The Villa, 35. For a more general overview, see Stephanie Harrison, ed. The Cambridge Companion to Horace (New York and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), ch. 17 ("Town and Country").

pastoral tradition begun by Theocritus to the Roman world. Book II of the *Georgics* opens by summoning Bacchus himself.

Thus far the tillage of the fields and the stars of heaven: now thee, Bacchus, will I sing, and with thee the forest saplings, and the offspring of the slow-growing olive tree. Hither, O Lenaean sire! Here all is full of thy bounties; for thee blossoms the field teeming with the harvest of the vine, and the vintage foams in the brimming vats. Come hither, O Lenaean sire, strip off they buskins and with me plunge thy naked legs in the new must.

Although not always directly critical of the city center, Virgil’s repeated invocation of Bacchus coupled with the stories he spins of musical contests, wild creatures, and rustic characters transport the reader to imaginary, pastoral locales where urban values are explicitly absent.

Villa culture was part and parcel of pastoral ideology. Indeed, it was by building villas that the ancients fulfilled a “fantasy impervious to reality.” It is no coincidence that these

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69 For an interpretation of Theocritus’ poetry within the context of the pastoral tradition leading up to the fifteenth-century in Italy, see Louis E. Lord, *A Translation of Orpheus of Angelo Politian and the Aminta of Torquato Tasso* (London: Oxford University Press and Humphrey Milford, 1931), Part I (“The Greek Pastoral”). Straddling Virgil’s major contribution to the bucolic tradition, are Martial’s *Epigrams* (86-103CE) and Juvenal’s *Satires* (late 1st-early 2nd c. CE). Aggravated by city life, both Roman writers glorify the countryside. Martial rants about how the city disturbs his sleep (*Epig.*, XII.57), and Juvenal declares that in the country, “no one wears a toga until he’s dead.” (*Sat.*, III.160) A useful compendium of such pastoral literature is K.D. White, *Country Life in Classical Times* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977).


72 On the various types of Roman villas, see Ackerman, *The Villa*, ch. 2 (“The Ancient Roman Villa”), especially 42 ff. For further bibliography, see ibid., 287, notes 13 and 14. Ackerman, the author of the quote cited above, also writes, “The villa is a paradigm, not only of architecture, but of ideology; it is a myth or fantasy through which ... persons whose position of privilege is rooted in urban commerce have been able to expropriate rural land ... for the realization of the myth.” Idem, "The Villa as Paradigm," 11 and 12.
ancient poets’ bucolic visions are often associated with specific country houses: Horace dreams of his Sabine villa in Tivoli; Martial recalls a long autumn at his villa at Nomentum; and Pliny the Younger memorializes his seaside and mountain retreats in a series of letters.\textsuperscript{73} Paintings only strengthened the fantasy such villas were designed to support. Frescoes, from landscapes at Boscoreale to Bacchic mysteries at Pompeii, gave visual form to an ideology founded upon delights either missing or forbidden inside city walls.\textsuperscript{74}

Petrarch served as the conduit through which Italian culture imbibed the principles of ancient bucolic poetry.\textsuperscript{75} From his secluded cottage in the Vaucluse, he wrote the \textit{Vita Solitaria} (1346), an essay that glorifies the country at the expense of the city. By idealizing rustic life, Petrarch became, in effect, the Virgil of the post-classical world.\textsuperscript{76} And just as ancient bucolic literature was accompanied by a widespread desire for country homes, so too was the pastoral revival ignited by Petrarch followed by an explosion of villa architecture.\textsuperscript{77} In the wake of the

\textsuperscript{73} On Roman villa culture, see Ackerman, \textit{The Villa}, ch. 2 ("The Ancient Roman Villa"). On Pliny’s famous villas, see Pierre de la Ruffinière du Prey, \textit{The Villas of Pliny from Antiquity to Posterity} (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

\textsuperscript{74} With regard to frescoes in Pompeian villas, tapestries in medieval castles, and the social gatherings depicted on the walls of Palladian architecture, Ackerman claims that “painting also bolsters the ideology.” Ackerman, "The Villa as Paradigm," 12.

\textsuperscript{75} The pastoral tradition is not prevalent in literature written after the fall of the Roman Empire, but it certainly did not die. Ernst Robert Curtius demonstrates that “Arcadia was forever being rediscovered.” Curtius, \textit{European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages}, 187. In drawing a line between pre and post-Empire literature, I am following a generalization made by Ackerman: “The favorable assessment of country life and the associated distaste for urban values and conditions disappears from written records in the West with the fall of the Roman Empire and emerges again only in the fourteenth century.” Ackerman, \textit{The Villa}, 63. In Bartlett’s analysis, medieval literature privileges a different pastoral tradition: the garden of love. See Angelo Bartlett Giamatti, \textit{The Earthly Paradise and the Renaissance Epic} (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), ch. I.iv (“Medieval Gardens”).


\textsuperscript{77} Ackerman states essentially the same principle, but in reverse: “Major revivals of the villa from that of the fifteenth century to Le Corbusier have been explicitly justified by reference to the Roman writers of
**Vita Solitaria**, the landscape of Italy, and especially of Tuscany, became dotted with suburban houses.

There was no ordinary or great citizen who had not built or was not in the process of building in the country a grand and rich estate with an expensive layout and handsome buildings, and much better than in town. And in this all were guilty and because of the unreasonable cost they were thought to be mad. And it was such a magnificent show that most foreigners not familiar with Florence, coming from outside, believed that these rich buildings and beautiful palaces in a three-mile band outside the city made a city in the style of [ancient] Rome.  

In this passage from Giovanni Villani’s *Nuova Cronica*, the sheer number of new villas that cropped up around Florence amounts to a kind of craze for country living. Unfortunately, none of these early villas survive. What we do have is a wealth of fourteenth-century bucolic literature. Most famous, of course, is Giovanni Boccaccio’s *Decameron*, a collection of ten stories that revolve around a group of ten wealthy Florentines who have taken refuge from the plague in a sumptuous suburban villa.  

For Petrarch, the countryside was a place of quiet contemplation—an isolated, somewhat monastic retreat that supported activities of the mind.  

In Boccaccio, that silence is broken. The world of the *Decameron* is filled with trickery, comedy, and licentious pleasure. Indeed, when they fled the city for a villa, Boccaccio’s characters also left urban rules and regulations behind.

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The freer context of the rural landscape also provides the backdrop for Boccaccio’s *Ninfale Fiesolano*, the love story of Mensola, a nymph of Diana, and Affrico, a shepherd.\(^{81}\) The *Ninfale* ends with the founding myth of Fiesole, the very location in which the Medici would build a villa in the early fifteenth century. Inspired by this villa, and the language Boccaccio used to praise its idyllic location, Angelo Poliziano populated the fifteenth-century imagination with Pan and his retinue. His *Rusticus*—a kind of updated version of Virgil’s *Georgics*—was in fact written within the walls of the Medici villa itself.\(^{82}\) Poliziano was not alone in drawing inspiration from the Medici villa at Fiesole. So too did Marsilio Ficino document his love for its hilltop location.\(^{83}\) Even Lorenzo de’ Medici himself tried his hand at pastoral poems. In his *De summo bono*, the character Lauro wanders the valley of Monte Giove, where he encounters the shepherd Alfeo, with whom he debates about whether rural or urban life is superior.

Lured on, escorted by the sweetest thoughts

\(^{81}\) A fuller account of fourteenth-century pastoral literature would include Ser Giovanni and Franco Sacchetti, who both express the contrast between urban and rural life. Sacchetti deserves special mention, as he also wrote *Canzoni a ballo*, or songs set to dances. See John Addington Symonds, *The Renaissance in Italy: Italian Literature, in Two Parts* (New York and London: Charles Scribner's Sons and Smith, Elder, & Co, 1909), Part I, 129-34.

\(^{82}\) While the late fifteenth-century’s emulation of the *Georgics* certainly continues a long tradition of Virgilian poetry, it was also fueled, at least in part, by Cristoforo Landino’s 1487 publication of and commentary upon Virgil’s text, which Poliziano owned. On Landino’s participation in the bucolic tradition, see Annabel Patterson, *Pastoral and Ideology, Virgil to Valéry* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1987), ch. 2 (“Versions of Renaissance Humanism”), and Jan M. Ziolkowski and Michael C.J. Putnam, eds., *The Virgilian Tradition: The First Fifteen Hundred Years* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), Part IV, ch. V. On Poliziano’s ownership and annotation of Virgil’s text, which amounts to a palimpsest of allusions to ancient poetry, see Patterson, *Pastoral and Ideology, Virgil to Valéry*, 82 ff. Amanda Lillie has taken great care in analyzing the Medici’s devotion to their villa at Fiesole. See Amanda Lillie, "Fiesole: Locus Amoenus or Penitential Landscape," *I Tatti Studies* 11 (2007): 11-55, and esp. 25.

\(^{83}\) In a letter to Filippo Valori he describes a walk he took with Pico della Mirandola, another frequenter of the Medici property: “O fortunate man, whose lot it is to live in a sacred temple when he withdraws from public affairs: a temple, I say, for it has been placed near this sacred grove and twenty temples of the gods surround it. And so the place is holy above all others and especially suited to oracles.” Marsilio Ficino, *Opera Omnia*, 2 vols. (Basel 1576 [facsimile repr. Turin, 1962]), vol. I, liber IX, 893-94. Discussed in Lillie, "Fiesole: Locus Amoenus or Penitential Landscape," 25.
I fled the bitter storms of my civic life
to lead my soul back to a calmer port;
and so my heart was carried from that life
to this one—free, serene, untroubled—which
retains the little good the world still knows.
To free my feeble nature from the load
that wearies it and stops its flight, I left
the pretty circle of my native walls.

....
I gazed out on the land—and then I heard
a bagpipe sounding with such loveliness
the piper’s flock of sheep joined in the dance.

....
With dulcet pipe I’ve set my verse to music,
without the help of an other god
than Pan, whose favor has sustained this song—
that Pan whom every shepherd venerates,
whose name is feted through Arcadia,
whose rule is over all that’s born and dies. 84

Lorenzo transports us to the realm of Pan, the “dance-loving” (philochoros), tutelary deity of
shepherds and flocks. His homeland is Arcadia, where he tends to pastures, chases nymphs, and
makes rustic music. 85 The panpipes resound in Lorenzo’s Simposio, a poem that overflows with
references to Dionysus himself.

That time of year when all the leaves change hue
and lay aside their green, and all the trees
turn pale and, later, lose their foliage too;
then, when the peasant with his rustic ways,
awaiting some reward for all his labors,
looks forward to the fruit of toilsome days,
....
when one beholds in ever town and street
and every byway Bacchus, with whose spirit
I hope this work of mine will be replete;
then, as so often happens, I had passed,
outside my city, several days of leisure,
and I was coming back to town at last.
....


85 See Lonsdale, Dance and Ritual Play in Greek Religion, 263.
In wine is my delight, so let us go:
it gives me joy, it gives me cheer, it is
the single greatest good I’ll ever know;
but when that need for which I live is dead,
and I can feel no more the pangs of thirst,
then take a stick and knock me on the head.\textsuperscript{86}

The culmination of Lorenzo de’ Medici’s pastoral activities is \textit{Bacco e Arianna}, a carnival song

that places decorum aside.

Those who love these pretty nymphs
Are little satyrs, free of cares,
Who in the grottoes and the glades
Have laid for them a hundred snares.
By Bacchus warmed and now aroused
They skip and dance the time away.

Among you lasses and young lovers
Long live Bacchus and Desire!
Now let us pipe and dance and sing,
Our hearts consumed with sweetest fire!
Away with suffering and sorrow!
Let what is fated have its way.
Let all who want to, now be gay:
About tomorrow no one’s sure.\textsuperscript{87}

\textsuperscript{86}Thiem, ed. \textit{Lorenzo de’ Medici: Selected Poems and Prose}, 43-52. For the original Italian, see the
critical edition offered by Mario Martelli, \textit{Simposio} (Firenze: Olschki Editore, 1966). Intoxication is a
leitmotif of Lorenzo’s writings. In addition to the works excerpted above, he authored \textit{I Beoni}, a plebeian
poem that describes various stages of intoxication.

\textsuperscript{87}Thiem, ed. \textit{Lorenzo de’ Medici: Selected Poems and Prose}, 162-64.

Questi lieti satiretti,
delle ninfe innamorati,
per caverne e per boschetti
han lor posto cento agguati;
or, da Bacco riscaldati,
ballon, salton tuttavia.
Chi vuol esser lieto, sia:
di doman non c'è certezza.

Donne e giovinetti amanti,
viva Bacco e viva Amore!
Ciascun suoni, balli e canti!
Arda di dolcezza il core!
Non fatica, non dolore!
These characters represent the antithesis of the tamed polis. Dwelling in the hillsides surrounding Florentine villas *all’antica*, Bacchus, satyrs, and nymphs epitomize the absence of moral restraint that characterized urban life. In the fifteenth century, the rhetoric surrounding *villegiatura* was indeed in full force.\(^{88}\)

The Lanfredini family purchased Villa Gallina shortly before Cosimo de’ Medici began building his exemplary villa at Fiesole. By the time the brothers Jacopo and Giovanni took up residence in La Gallina and commissioned Pollaiuolo to decorate the *sala grande*, Cosimo’s grandson, Lorenzo de’ Medici, had already expanded his country estates to include Ambrìa, Castello, and Careggi. Shortly, he would add to the list Poggio a Caiano.\(^{89}\) With each acquisition, the pastoral literature associated with the Medici properties grew in kind, such as when Lorenzo wrote *Ambra*, a poem directly inspired by his villa of the same name.

Unlike the Medici, the Lanfredini brothers did not leave behind poetry inspired by Villa Gallina. We have neither records of symposia that took place there nor eyewitness accounts of Pollaiuolo’s mural. Despite this dearth of documentary material, the Lanfredini’s privileged place within the socio-political sphere suggests that we might understand their experience of La

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\(^{88}\) For a more extensive treatment of Florentine poetry at the time of Lorenzo de’ Medici, see Dempsey, *The Portrayal of Love*, esp. ch. 2-5. For a more general overview of Lorenzo as poet, as well as further bibliography, see Paolo Orvieto, *Tutte le opere di Lorenzo de’ Medici*, 2 vols. (Roma: Salerno editrice, 1992).

\(^{89}\) Lorenzo inherited Castello and Careggi. He purchased Ambra in 1474 from the Rucellai family, and commissioned Giuliano da Sangallo around 1485 to design Poggio a Caiano. For a concise history of the Medici villas, see Ackerman, *The Villa*, ch. 2 ("The Early Villas of the Medici"), especially 78 ff, and de la Ruffinière du Prey, *The Villas of Pliny from Antiquity to Posterity*, ch. 2 ("The Medici and Pliny").
Gallina in a manner comparable to that of the Medici themselves. We might, for example, imaginatively characterize the Lanfredini brothers as Ficino described their friend and business partner, Lorenzo de’ Medici.

Lorenzo de’ Medici, that follower of Apollo, often raves like a Bacchant through the hills of Ambra and of the valley of Agnano, drunk with the nectar of Dionysus. Then, inspired from on high, he pours onto mankind from his open mouth celestial songs whose profound meanings no one is permitted to penetrate, except those spirits swept up by a certain similar frenzy. But Lorenzo, our patron, enraptures a few of those listening more attentively and fruitfully, evidently pouring out his song on them before the others, in the abundance of his frenzy.

Ficino’s account shows his awareness of the dichotomy between Apollo and Dionysus, and the fact that this dichotomy is invoked when the city is pitted against the country—when the palazzo is replaced by the villa. The *Dancing Nudes* fulfills the rustic fantasy Villa Gallina was built to evoke. Pollaiuolo’s intoxicated dance is, in other words, Villa Gallina’s pictorial complement—visual support for a lifestyle founded upon poetic notions of license. Like a post-classical Villa of the Mysteries, it favors Dionysus over Apollo, frenzy over restraint, percussion over strings, and wine over water.

This opposition, so long a part of pastoral literature, was also sanctioned by architectural theory. In Books Six through Ten of *De re aedificatoria*, Alberti tackles the difficult topic of ornament by making modal distinctions; he notes that specific kinds of buildings require certain genres of decoration.

...the subjects of both poetry and painting are various, some expressing the memorable actions of great men, others representing the manners of private persons, others describing the life of rustics: The former, as the most majestic, should be applied to publics works and the buildings of princes; and the latter, as the more cheerful, should be set apart for pleasure-houses and gardens. Our Minds are delighted in a particular manner.

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90 According to Wright, Pollaiuolo’s painting most certainly “aligned Jacopo and Giovanni Lanfredini with the cultural élite.” Wright, *The Pollaiuolo Brothers*, 113.

91 Cited in Ackerman, *The Villa*. Unfortunately, Ackerman does not cite his source.
with the pictures of pleasant landscapes, of havens, of fishing, hunting, swimming, country sports, of flowery fields and thick groves.  Villa Gallina provided the architectural context in which Pollaiuolo could violate the decorum of the dance world. Surrounded by pastoral ideology and supported by architectural theory, he created a dance inspired not by the grace of Apollo but by the fury of Dionysus. To use Alberti’s own words, Pollaiuolo’s painting was designed “per semplice diletto.”

The counter-culture created by bucolic poetry and supported by villa culture found expression in other media as well; namely, drawings, medals, and above all, prints. It is significant that these three media are, like the villa itself, associated with artistic license. The images of dancing discussed in Chapter Three were by and large made for courtly environments, such as studioli and palazzi. Pollaiuolo’s Dancing Nudes and related prints, such as the Sausage Seller (Figure 4.2), the anonymous Round Dance All’ Antica, and Mantegna’s bacchanalias (Figure 4.14), exist on the marginalia of the dance world. As vehicles suited to the

92 Alberti, On the Art of Building in Ten Books, trans. Joseph Rykwert (Cambridge, Mass and London: The MIT Press, 1994): “a certain license is often possible.” (293) “How charming was the practice of those more fanciful architects of stationing huge statues of slaves at the door jambs of a dining room, so that they support the lintel with their heads; and of making columns, especially for garden porticoes, that resembled tree trunks, their knots removed and their branches tied into bundles, and the shaft scrolled and plaited with palms and carved with leaves, birds, and channels....In doing this, the artist must, as far as he is able, guard each part in its noble form by skilfully maintaining the lines and angles ... yet seeming to entertain the viewer with a charming trick--or, better still, to please him by the wit of his invention.” (293 94).

93 “Diverse sono le case di campagna abitate dagli uomini liberi e quelle abitate dai contadini. Queste vengono costruite essenzialmente per motivi d’interesse, quelle piuttosto per semplice diletto.” See Leon Battista Alberti, L’ architettura (De re aedificatoria), trans. Giovanni Orlandi; introduction and notes by Paolo Portoghesi (Milano: Edizioni il Polifilo, 1966), Book V, ch. 15. Inventories reveal other villas that supported similar breaches of decorum. Amanda Lillie documents a preponderance of secular imagery in the villa at Santuccio, for example. See Lillie, Florentine Villas in the Fifteenth Century, 144. For further examples, see Ingvar Bergström, Revival of Antique Illusionistic Wall-Painting in Renaissance Art (Göteborg: ACTA Universitatis Gothoburgensis, 1957).

dissemination of eclectic inventions, prints became the natural forum for pushing the boundaries of what was acceptable in dance.\textsuperscript{95} By virtue of its geographic location—its dislocation from the city center—villas also became the province of artistic fantasia.

The dance masters were certainly not ignorant of villa culture or of pastoral ideology more generally. They worked in the upper echelons of society, and as we have seen, they recognized rustic genres, such as the \textit{piva}. Such recognition, however, usually gave way to criticism. The \textit{piva} “is despised, and held in disrepute by courtiers and by good dancers.”\textsuperscript{96} While the dance masters were banishing such rustic movements from their practice, artists were creating an alternate world, and one inclusive of the more grotesque aspects of corporeality.

In Chapter One, it was shown how \textit{Della pittura} creates a fundamental tension through the juxtaposition of the Three Graces and the Calumny of Apelles. At the end of the century, Leonardo da Vinci develops this tension further in his extensive notes for a treatise on painting.

There are some emotions without bodily gestures and some with bodily gestures. Emotions without bodily action allow the arms to fall, and so the hands, and every other part which shows action. But emotions that have corresponding bodily actions cause the body and its parts to move in accordance with the motion of the mind, and of this many things will be said. There is a third motion which partakes of both attributes, and fourth which is neither one nor the other, and these last are those of the senseless or rather those who have lost their senses, and this is to be put in the chapter on madness and on buffoons and their morris-dances.\textsuperscript{97}

\textsuperscript{95} See Patricia Emison, "Prolegomenon to the Study of Prints," \textit{Word and Image} 11, no. 1 (Jan. - Mar. 1995): 1-16. Emison argues that “By giving up the essentially public and therefore civic or religious character of art, prints were less obliged to obey strict ideas of decorum.” (p. 2) Indeed, “The history of Renaissance whimsy is in no small part documented in prints.” (p. 6) For a more general introduction to Renaissance prints, see David Landau and Peter Parshall, \textit{The Renaissance Print 1470-1550} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994).

\textsuperscript{96} “Questa quantunche presso gli precesori nostri fosse principale sono a dançare suso hoggidi per gl’ ingiegni assuttigliati in piu fiorite cose e abiecta e vilipesa da persone magnifice e dan bon dançatori.” \textit{Fifteenth-Century Dance and Music}, 87.

\textsuperscript{97} “Sono alcuni moti mentali sans’ el moto del corpo, et alcuni col moto del corpo. Li moti mentali senza’ l moto del corpo lasciano cadere le braccia, mani et ogni altra parte, che mostri uitta; ma li moti mentali al moto del corpo tengono il corpo con le sue membra commoto appropriato al moto della mente; et di
Leonardo is more explicit than Alberti, hinting to us that he has even planned on devoting an entire chapter to wild dances. Dance historical studies of the relationship between art and dance theory have implied that the dance masters were aware of art theory.\(^98\) If this is indeed the case, the dance masters lost sight of Alberti and Leonardo’s undercurrents, failed to register their alternatives. That was left to artists.

From this perspective, the place of dance in Renaissance art appears better illuminated by ancient writings, such as Lucian’s *De saltatione*, than by any of the fifteenth-century treatises. Even if the Quattrocento was unaware of Lucian’s dialogue, the period was certainly privy to antiquities that visualized Lucian’s basic tenets.\(^99\) The Three Graces in Siena, Dionysian processions on sarcophagi in the Camposanto at Pisa, and a host of gems illustrating the archetypal contest between Apollo and Marsyas—which were voraciously collected and copied—schooled the Quattrocento in a dance world far more expansive than what is represented by the dance literature of the period.\(^100\)

\[^98\] Most famous in this regard is Sparti, "Humanism and the Arts: Parallels between Alberti's on Painting and Guglielmo Ebreo's On...Dancing."

\[^99\] *De saltatione* was translated from Greek to Latin by Ioannis Laskaris, and printed together with other works by Lucian in Florence ca. 1496 by Lorenzo d’Alopa. It is now kept in Die Bayerische Staatsbibliothek (*Somnium sive vita Luciani*, GW M18976).

Idiosyncratic Choreography

The greatest challenge when dealing with the *Dancing Nudes* has been the identification of source material. Whose dance is this? Which objects or texts did the artist study? Such questions of pictorial responsibility are characteristic of scholarship on Pollaiuolo in general.\(^{101}\) In the case of the *Dancing Nudes*, the consensus is that the dance represented is a composite. Building upon a group of antique vases and sculptures amassed by Fern Rusk Shapley and Laurie Fusco, Alison Wright presented an array of objects that illuminate the temporal eclecticism of Pollaiuolo’s dance: ancient cameos and sarcophagi, as well as contemporary *moresca* prints and drawings, none of which exactly match Pollaiuolo’s mural. In Wright’s own words, “the pictorial language of the body developed in Pollaiuolo’s panel is not a pure one, Greek or otherwise.”\(^{102}\) Faithful to neither Antiquity nor the Renaissance, Pollaiuolo’s dance is, in the final summation, his own.

In their explorations of Pollaiuolo’s figural vocabulary, Wright and her predecessors effectively provide the material for a kind of Warburgian *Mnemosyne*. Between 1923 and his death in 1929, Aby Warburg sought to assemble an “art history without a text,” an atlas of

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\(^{101}\) Literature devoted to the enigmatic *Battle of the Nudes* is exemplary of this tendency. Brief reviews of the literature surrounding this print can be found in Wright, *The Pollaiuolo Brothers*, 176 ff, and Patricia Emison, "The Word Made Naked in Pollaiuolo's *Battle of the Nudes*," *Art History* 13, no. 3 (Sept. 1990): 261-75, esp. 61 and note 1. Wright and Emison’s bibliographies should be updated with a lecture that was delivered by Edward J. Olszewski in 2008 at Bowling Green State University’s conference *Beholding Violence*. The paper, which argued that Pollaiuolo’s print represents Jason’s search for the Golden Fleece, was subsequently published as Edward J. Olszewski, "Bring on the Clones: Pollaiuolo's *Battle of Ten Nude Men*," *Artibus et Historiae* 60/30 (2009): 9-38. To my knowledge, this article is the most recent publication on the print.

\(^{102}\) See Fern Rusk Shapley, "A Student of Ancient Ceramics, Antonio Pollajuolo," *The Art Bulletin* 2, no. 2 (Dec., 1919): 78-86, Chastel, "L'etruscan Revival Du Xve Siecle ": 165-80, Fusco, "Antonio Pollaiuolo's Use of the Antique," 62, and Wright, "Dancing Nudes at the Lanfredini Villa at Arcetri," 66. The significant loss at the center of the mural further complicates the situation. To imaginatively complete the partially obscured dancer on our left, Wright proposes a drawing by Verrocchio in *The Pollaiuolo Brothers*, 105-06.
images designed to illustrate the complex pictorial atmosphere in and out of which works of art operate and arise. In the case of the Renaissance, particular montages illustrate how ancient motifs were deposited and ultimately transformed by early modern culture. Rather than illustrate direct borrowings from Antiquity, Warburg made juxtapositions in order to reveal “associative relationships.” This is true of plate 37, where the Dancing Nudes (Figure 4.15) appears as part of a constellation of pictures that tell a history of form, of what unites seemingly disparate visual motifs, from dances to battles—a conjunction to which we will return. In a similar spirit, Wright points to a body of influential objects that provided a departure for an original depiction of dance.

Thinking in terms of Warburg’s Mnemosyne, what remains to be said is that Pollaiuolo’s idiosyncratic choreography ultimately depends upon something more profound than the mere borrowing of individual motifs from an eclectic range of objects. The works of art usually selected to accompany the Dancing Nudes display key principles of Dionysian dancing: oppositional force, synaptic space, solipsism, and overt physicality. Pollaiuolo recast these elements into his own choreographic idiom, and one that permeates his entire oeuvre, from the enigmatic Battle of the Nudes to the Martyrdom of St Sebastian (Figures 4.16, 4.17). His dance

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103 Quoted in Michaud, Aby Warburg and the Image in Motion, 240 and 62 ff. For further bibliography on the Mnemosyne project, see ibid., 379, note 20.

104 One of the earliest notes referencing the atlas has to do with the relationship between Antiquity and the Renaissance: “The entry of antiquity into the pathos-style of early Florentine Renaissance painting.” Cited in Gombrich, Aby Warburg. An Intellectual Biography, 285. Of course, Warburg did not restrict himself to images that pre-date the Renaissance. Indeed, his Mnemosyne is famous for reaching to the future for comparative material. For example, Judith holding the head of Holofernes is juxtaposed with a female wielding a golf club. See Michaud, Aby Warburg and the Image in Motion, 262 and fig. 97.

should be understood not just within the context of ancient models, but within what Warburg himself described as Pollaiuolo’s own “Baroque muscular rhetoric.”

Of the antique works connected with the *Dancing Nudes, The Triumph of Bacchus*, a well-known sarcophagus in the Camposanto at Pisa, deserves special mention (Figure 4.18). As the literature consistently points out, the figures at either extreme of Pollaiuolo’s mural bear a striking resemblance to the leaping satyrs depicted on the sarcophagus (Figures 4.19). This is just one example of many in which Pollaiuolo plucked individual bodies from larger narrative structures. Did he also respond to the choreography itself? Wright claims that Pollaiuolo shows a “desire to emulate the representation of the rhythmic dance all’ antica,” but what are the specifics of that emulation? The sarcophagus follows a rather simple schema: a central, relatively static figure (Bacchus) is compressed on either side by ecstatic satyrs and maenads. Unlike other triumphal processions, the dancers do not pull up a chariot’s rear; rather, they push and pull dynamically around the god himself. A consistent tension against the horizontality of the pictorial field characterizes this ancient relief, as well as Pollaiuolo’s interpretation of it. *The Dancing Nudes* embody a raucous ebb and flow; like the cymbals played by the putti below, the dancers clash.

Pollaiuolo was certainly not the first artist to study Dionysian sarcophagi, but his interpretation represents a new level of choreographic awareness on the part of Renaissance artist. Consider, for example, Pisanello’s drawing after two maenads from a third-century oval


107 Much of the literature on this mural, as well as on Pollaiuolo’s study of Antiquity in general, highlights his tendency to quote from a variety of objects. See especially Shapley, "A Student of Ancient Ceramics, Antonio Pollaiuolo.", Fusco, "Antonio Pollaiuolo's Use of the Antique.", and Wright, "Dancing Nudes at the Lanfredini Villa at Arcetri," 47-77. For a brief review of the scholarship that has focused on the *Triumph of Bacchus* sarcophagus, see idem, *The Pollaiuolo Brothers*, 109 and notes 93-95.
sarcophagus (Figure 4.20). On the sarcophagus, the maenads are placed back to back, self-involved. With heads tossed back, these followers of Dionysus are lost in ecstasy and thus disengaged from the audience. A marble plaque in the Uffizi emphasizes the essential solipsism of maenadic dancing (Figure 4.21). Whereas Pollaiuolo retains such total absorption in the moment, it is lost by Pisanello, who reverses the duo.

Despite their ecstatic movements, the satyrs and bacchantes that populate the *Triumph of Bacchus* sarcophagus exhibit long, fluid contour lines. Horace tells us that Bacchus is an ambiguous god; his influence is like a “gentle torment” (*lene tormentum*) or a “sweet peril” (*dulce periculum*). The sculptor who carved this sarcophagus embodied these paradoxical phrases, as did many other sculptors who set to work on Bacchic themes.\(^\text{108}\) Also in the Camposanto is a marble krater carved with Dionysian revelers, whose bodies are long and lithe, even as they cavort (Figure 4.22). Noteworthy as well is the *Satyr Holding up Grapes*, a freestanding Roman sculpture in the Uffizi (Figure 4.23).\(^\text{109}\) Grapes and a panther define the limits of his vertical reach, but this figure rises on tiptoe with Apollonian grace. Looking to the fifteenth-century itself, *The Triumph of Bacchus and Ariadne*, an anonymous print sometimes attributed to Botticelli, displays a fluidity of form that is conspicuously absent from *The Dancing Nudes* (Figure 4.24). The flexed feet, angular leg positions, and quasi-symmetrical composition that characterize their dance are nowhere in sight.

As plate 37 of Warburg’s *Mnemosyne* suggested, these aspects are peculiar to Pollaiuolo. Amongst the visual models proposed for *The Dancing Nudes*, the most interesting does indeed

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\(^{109}\) The statue was in the Maffei Collection in Rome by 1500. The date of its entrance into the Uffizi is unknown. See Bober and Rubenstein, *Renaissance Artists and Antique Sculpture*, cat. 73.
come from within the artist’s own oeuvre: the small bronze statue of *Hercules and Antaeus* (1470s). In the statue, Antaeus struggles for his life, while in the painting, an almost identical figure dances (Figure 4.25). Pollaiuolo often reused figures by flipping drawings, but he knew that some movements, while similar, could not simply be transferred from one figure to the next; they must be articulated differently. Antaeus and the dancer in the villa each funnels his energy through the body in a particular way, one towards defense, the other towards dance. A nude in distress has become a nude that dances: a nude protecting its body becomes one celebrating it.

There is also a visual connection to be made with other violent subjects depicted by Pollaiuolo, namely the *Battle of the Ten Nudes* and the *Martyrdom of St Sebastian*. In each, aggressive figures are controlled by a palpably symmetrical design, by a kind of choreography of recto and verso (to which I will return in the next chapter). Such choreographic control can be found in preparatory drawings as well, such as the Louvre’s *Nude Man Seen from Three Angles*—a kind of masculinization of the model offered by the Three Graces (Figure 4.26). The inscription on the upper left-hand corner of this drawing, which emphasizes Pollaiuolo’s achievement in both painting and sculpture, has led several scholars to speculate on the artist’s use of three-dimensional models, and hence Pollaiuolo’s participation in the ongoing *paragone* debate between painting and sculpture. The stream of copies made directly after it suggest

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111 Matisse performed a similar transformation in the midst of studying Pollaiuolo’s bronze statue of Hercules and Antaeus. The drawings he made after it evolve into a “Tarantella.”

112 On this drawing as an exercise in *disegno*, see Wright, *The Pollaiuolo Brothers*, 159 ff.

113 “This the work of Antonio di Jacopo del Pollaiuolo, most excellent and famous Florentine painter and most outstanding sculptor. Whenever he depicted the image of man, see how marvelously he rendered the limbs.” For the original Latin inscription see, ibid., 151. See Bernhart Degenhart, "Unbekannte Zeichnungen Francescos Di Giorgio," *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 8, no. 3/4 (1939): 117-50, and Ulrich Middledorf, "Su alcuni bronzetti all'antica del Quattrocento" (paper presented at the Atti del v convegno internazionale di studi sul Rinascimento Florence, 1956, 1958).
something different, however: that the drawing’s legacy is one of good design, of structuring compositions in terms of antithesis, or contrapposto. In Pollaiuolo’s own *Prisoner Led Before a Ruler*, for example, the principles explored in the Louvre drawing are repeated at the far right, where three male nudes are arranged in frontal, dorsal, and profile poses (Figure 4.27). The effect rendered is less one of three-dimensionality and more one of unity, of a figural group bound by shared contours.

The bacchic theme of the Villa Gallina mural would seem to afford Pollaiuolo the very opposite approach: the opportunity to be improvisational, to use maenadic dancing as the impetus for a composition that lacks controlling factors, such as symmetry or axiality. But the *Dancing Nudes* only appears impromptu; a contrapuntal structure underpins its figures and its choreography (Figure 4.4). The leaping figure at the far left, for example, is his own mirror image. Like the pair at the center of the *Battle of the Nudes*, his crooked right arm is flipped to produce the downturned left arm. So too does the right arm provide the pattern for the bent left leg. Arms and legs bent at near right angles then proliferate throughout the remaining figures. In other words, when composing the *Dancing Nudes*, Pollaiuolo did not copy/flip entire figures, but rather repeated the contours of individual members, so that the gestural and postural language of the frieze of dancers is, in fact, quite uniform. Such a characteristic places the *Dancing Nudes* squarely within Pollaiuolo’s oeuvre; it is his own choreographic idiom.

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114 In Alison Wright’s words, “This legacy of copying is not just part of a subsequent fortuna storica but was clearly invited by the peculiarly programmatic quality of the drawing—it seems to have been produced as a didactic anatomical exercise aiming not just to solve specific representational problems but to demonstrate their solution. To borrow a contemporary term used in Francesco Squarcione’s workshop in Padua, the Louvre drawing can be taken as an ‘example sheet’ from which good design practice could be learned.” Wright, *The Pollaiuolo Brothers*, 159-60.

5

**Chorus II**

Recto and Verso

Choreographed Combat

Coda: The Choreographer’s Muse
...in dancing, a single step, a single movement of the body that is graceful and not forced, reveals at once the skill of the dancer...Often too in painting, a single line which is not labored, a single brush stroke made with ease and in such a manner that the hand seems of itself to complete the line desired by the painter, without being directed by care or skill of any kind, clearly reveals the excellence of the craftsmanship....

—Baldesar Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier*, 1528

The capacity to see parts collectively and simultaneously, the power of grasping the variety of things in the field of vision as a single unit, which links up with a type of composition in which every part of the whole is felt to have its necessary and inevitable place within that whole.

—Heinrich Wölfflin, *The Sense of Form in Art*, 1931

Choreographic movement, used to produce visual sensations, is quite different from the practical movement of everyday life used to execute a task, to walk, to lift an object, to sit down. Choreographic movement is an end in itself, and its only purpose is to create the impression of intensity and beauty.”

—George Balanchine, *Notes on Choreography*, 1945
Recto and Verso

Battle scenes are not listed amongst Alberti’s ideal istorie. Bodies pushed to their physical limit go against the grain of Della pittura, frustrating the graceful aesthetic it puts forth. However, as a theme that demands overt interaction and even physical contact, combat inevitably became in the fifteenth century the very occasion for demonstrating skills central to Alberti’s program.¹

Consider again Pollaiuolo’s Battle of the Nudes (1470s) (Figure 5.1). Numbering ten, the maximum amount of figures Alberti deems appropriate for a legible composition, the Battle of the Nudes depicts hyper-muscular men in direct confrontation. The chain that lies at the very center of the composition suggests that Pollaiuolo intended for us to contemplate modes of figural encounter. This chain, which has been interpreted as everything from a gladiatorial weapon to the imprisoned soul, is, more simply stated, a tool of linkage and therefore quite appropriate to a composition that breaks down into a system of interrelated duos and trios.²

Indeed, brutality is clearly choreographed in the Battle of the Nudes, in which the workshop practice of rotating figures and flipping drawings—a kind of choreography of recto and verso—produces a disciplined structure central to this “pas de deux of personal encounter.”³


² According to Laurie Fusco and Colin Eisler, the nudes are gladiators. A summary of their arguments can be found in A.M. Hind, Early Italian Engraving, 7 vols., vol. 1 (London: M. Knoedler, 1938-48), 189-90, and Laurie Fusco, "Battle of the Nudes," in Early Italian Engravings from the National Gallery of Art, ed. Jay A. Levenson et al (Washington: National Gallery of Art, 1973), 66-80. For Patricia Emison, the chain, “which in its limpness appears not to be a weapon,” is Pollaiuolo’s way of visualizing the neoplatonic belief in the fettered soul. See Emison, "The Word Made Naked in Pollaiuolo's Battle of the Nudes," 265. The most up to date summary of these competing interpretations of the chain, and others, can be found in Wright, The Pollaiuolo Brothers, 180 and the corresponding footnotes.

the *Battle of the Nudes*, artists acquired for their studios a model of violence, but one that is ultimately harmonized.⁴

Numerous attempts have been made to relate this enigmatic print to a classical text, but the most satisfying mode of appreciation still remains a formal one.⁵ Renaissance artists support this approach. Leonardo used battles as exempla for principles of composition, and in the context of the paragone debate, he proclaimed the supremacy of a painted battle over a written one.⁶ In *The Life of Pollaiuolo*, Vasari fails to engage at all with the precise subject of the *Battle of the Nudes*. That it depicts a struggle is enough to whet his appetite, and his interest subsequently lies with the artist’s control over human form.⁷

Pollaiuolo’s deployment of frontal, dorsal, and foreshortened aspects of the body is studied in drawings (Figure 5.2), and then further exaggerated in the *Martyrdom of Saint Sebastian* (1473-75) (Figure 5.3).⁸ This monumental altarpiece is patterned by basic figural

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⁵ For a concise overview of the stylistic and iconographic approaches taken to Pollaiuolo’s engraving, see Manca, "Moral Stance in Italian Renaissance Art: Image, Text, and Meaning," 28 and note 1.

⁶ “In this case, the painter will surpass you because your pen will be worn out before you describe fully what the painter with his medium can represent at once.” (In questo caso il pittore ti supera, perche la tua penna fia consumata, inanzi che tu descriua a’ piena quel, che immediate il pittore ti rapresenta con la sua scientia.) See Leonardo da Vinci, *Treatise on Painting [Codex Urbinas Latinus 1270]*, trans. A. Philip McMahon (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1956), ¶ 36. The paragone debate frames Patricia Emison’s interpretation of Pollaiuolo’s *Battle of the Nudes*, which she claims is “an image that competes with texts....” Emison, "The Word Made Naked in Pollaiuolo's *Battle of the Nudes*," 263.


⁸ A precedent for Pollaiuolo’s studied approach to violent themes is Paolo Uccello’s *Battle of San Romano*, which hung in Palazzo Medici until 1492. See Randolph Starn and Loren Partridge, "Representing War in the Renaissance: The Shield of Paolo Uccello," *Representations* 5 (Spring, 1984):
units, from the mirrored pairs in the foreground to the matching horses and riders buried deep in the landscape. In contemporary pictures, Saint Sebastian stands in contrapposto (Figure 5.4), but Pollaiuolo denies him this asymmetrical pose, opting instead to splay the martyr’s body equally around the post to which it is tied. In apparent contradiction to the subject itself, which would seem to demand the kind of heated chaos represented by the fictive relief on the triumphal arch in the background, Pollaiuolo brought the figural composition under control. As in the Battle of the Nudes, the strict adherence to recto and verso brings a certain harmony to the composition.

There are other instances in the later Quattrocento when we can speak more explicitly about dance in the context of violence. Witness Donatello’s Judith (1455-60), where the pathos of battle has been extracted from the protagonist and relegated to a dancing commentary on the triangular base (Figure 5.5). Or Pollaiuolo’s Antaeus (1470s), whose overt connection to the flailing dancer from Villa Gallina suggested, as in Chapter 4, the shared physical requirements of ecstasy and torment (Figure 5.6). In Verrocchio’s Beheading of the Baptist (1477-80), the figure on the viewer’s extreme left assumes a pose that is strikingly similar to the balletic response of the Virgin Annunciate (Figure 5.7), as if to imitate Salome’s sensuous dance. And among the many drawings he produced to illustrate Dante’s Inferno, Botticelli’s Sodomites and Usurers features nudes that contort themselves like grotesque moresca dancers (Figure 5.8).

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9 Commenting upon the symmetrical composition of a much later Flagellation by Sebastiano del Piombo, David Summers writes, “Once the identity of the figures is recognized, a continuity is also evident which gives the group a grace of movement less evident in the movement of the shapes in two dimensions. Three-dimensional sequence has become a kind of dance.” See Summers, "Figure Come Fratelli," 498. Pollaiuolo’s symmetrical approach to the subject of Saint Sebastian was immensely popular. For an account of the images that are indebted to its composition, see Wright, The Pollaiuolo Brothers, ch. 7 and List of Works, no. 54.
On the topic of the *moresca*, Luca Signorelli’s small *Flagellation of Christ* is worth noting in detail (Figure 5.9). Ever since Vasari placed him on the threshold of the third generation, art history has been comfortable assuming that Signorelli’s paintings garner meaning through attentiveness to the figures themselves. The *Flagellation* further determines this kind of reading, for it is, above all, a subject about the body. Each corporeal element requires the viewers’ closest attention, from the peculiar Turkish loin clothes to the grotesque pose of the tormenter binding Christ’s hands. This figure relates to a dancer in Pollaiuolo’s *Dancing Nudes* as well as to figures in drawings and prints of the *moresca*.10 The *moresca* activated a group of drunken males around a woman, and for this reason existed on the fringes of society.11 Its spectacular gyrations of the body, like those “too violent movements” condemned by Alberti, would have struck a Renaissance audience as the embodiment of disorder and sin—an inversion of the decorum and harmony of a court dance. Signorelli may have meant to tap into the moral and ethical qualities of the *moresca*, for both dancer and tormenter were crude individuals worthy of contempt and ridicule.12

10 A figure resembling a morris dancer can also be found in Baccio Baldini’s engraving of the *Flagellation* (c. 1463-64), as well as in an anonymous Flagellation once located in Atri Cathedral. See ibid., fig. 346. Pollaiuolo’s influence upon Signorelli, especially in regard to rotating and flipping figures, is discussed in idem, “Dimensional Tension in the Work of Antonio Pollaiuolo,” 65-79.


12 This hypothesis is attested to further by *moresca*-like figures from *The Damned Being Plunged into Hell*, one of Signorelli’s frescoes in the Chapel of San Brizio, Duomo, Orvieto (1499-1502). Groups of figures in the *Resurrection of the Flesh* are, by contrast, patterned on the Three Graces. The drawings Botticelli made to illustrate Dante’s *Inferno* also contain distinctly *moresca*-like figures, pointing to the notion that he, like Signorelli, transferred the movements of a contemptible dance to figures bound for
But are Signorelli’s figures just as rude as these performers? His semi-nude bodies are plasticized, their movements more fluid than wild.13 Save for the man binding Christ’s hands, the smooth sway of the figures walks a fine line between grace and brutality. These are not the trembling, craggy, nervous lines of Pollaiuolo, or even the awkward acrobatics of *moresca* dancers, but rather bodies composed of unbroken contours and swelling curves. Most striking in this respect is the elegant s-shaped figure that mirrors Christ’s pose. What we have been calling the choreography of recto and verso, that standard, workshop mechanic of flipping drawings to produce a forcibly symmetrical and legible composition is used here to bind center and periphery. Indeed, for Signorelli, as for many artists working in the latter half of the fifteenth century, violence became the venue to display skills more choreographic than mimetic.14

Where in all of this are we to seek meaning? In the case of Pollaiuolo’s *Battle of the Nudes*, we could turn to the ancient Greeks, who identified the best warrior with the best dancer.15 A highly choreographed weapon dance, or pyrrhic as it was called, existed as the hell. On the parallel between martyrdom and gymnastic contests, see Colin Eisler, ”The Athlete of Virtue: The Iconography of Asceticism,” in *De Artibus Opuscula XI: Essays in Honor of Erwin Panofsky*, ed. Millard Meiss (New York: New York University Press, 1961), 82-97.

13 “It would be impossible to overrate the excellence and beauty of drawing in the splendid swing of the bodies, the flexibility of the limbs, [and] the sinewy elasticity of the leg muscles.” Maud Cruttwell, *Luca Signorelli* (London: Duckworth and Company, 1911), 33.

14 All six extant paintings are catalogued in Tom Henry and Laurence Kanter, *Luca Signorelli* (New York: Rizzoli, 2002), cats 2, 84, 87, 94, 104, and fig. 11, which is of uncertain attribution.

15 In Plato’s words, “It represents modes of eluding all kinds of blows and shots by swervings and duckings and side-leaps upward or crouching; and it also the opposite kinds of motion, which lead to active postures of offense, when it strives to represent the movements involved in shooting bows or darts, and blows of every description.” (ὁρχήσιν λέγοι τὴν πολεμικὴν δὴ τούτων, ἄλλην οὖσαν τῆς εἰρηνικῆς, πυρρίχην ἄν τις ὁρθῶς προσαγορεύοι, τὰς τε εὐλαβείας πασῶν πληγῶν καὶ βολῶν ἐκνεύσεις καὶ ὑπείξεις πάση καὶ ἐκπεφυγήσεις ἐν ὑψει καὶ συν ταπεινώσει μιμομένην, καὶ τὰς ταυτὰς ἐναντίας, τὰς ἐπὶ τὰ δραστικὰ φερομένα καὶ σχῆμα, ἐν ταῖς τοῦτοι βολαῖς καὶ ἁκοντίων καὶ πασῶν πληγῶν μιμήματα ἐπιχειροῦσας μιμεῖσθαι: τό τε ὁρθὸν ἐν τοῦτοις καὶ τὸ εὐτόνον, τῶν ἀγαθῶν σωμάτων). See Plato, *Laws*, trans. by R.G. Bury, Book VII, line 815a. Plato’s description of the pyrrhic is the most detailed account of a dance to survive from Antiquity. In fact, we have more evidence for the pyrrhic than for any other
physical embodiment of this very real analogy. Normally performed in the nude, the pyrrhic focused on movements that were essential in battle, such as leaping and crouching—actions also present in Pollaiuolo’s engraving. In the case of Signorelli’s *Flagellation*, we might consider the likelihood that this little painting was originally one side of a standard carried by a flagellant.
confraternity, and that the theatrical quality of the image responds to the processional route it once traveled.¹⁷

Must we rely on these contextual factors to arrive at meaning? Or can we talk about Pollaiuolo and Signorelli’s images of violence outside of such external influences? For these images seem to be born not only out of ancient traditions and popular culture, but also out of a distinctively pictorial aesthetic, a standard of taste not totally equatable with the horrific characteristics of realistic violence. The controlled composition of Pollaiuolo’s *Battle of the Nudes*, and the swinging lines of Signorelli’s *Flagellation* stand at the forefront of this trend, which comes to full fruition at the beginning of the sixteenth century with Marcantonio Raimondi’s engraving of Raphael’s *Massacre of the Innocents* (Figure 5.10).¹⁸ Balanchine’s chorus has replaced Pollaiuolo’s pyrrhic. Drama is formalized and emotions are curbed in the interest of harmony. Indeed, the artist who chose to place his self-portrait amongst the cosmographers in the *School of Athens*, is also the artist who placed a battle relief under a statue

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¹⁷ Signorelli’s *Flagellation* arrived at the Brera in 1811 along with another panel of equal size, the *Madonna del Latte*. Considering the size and width of each panel, curators posit that they once formed a double-sided processional banner. See Luisa Arrigoni and Valentina Maderna, *Pinacoteca di Brera: Dipinti* (Milan: Electa, 2010), cat. 31.

¹⁸ There are two versions of this engraving. They are known as the *Massacre “with fir tree”* and the *Massacre “without fir tree,”* which itself exists in two versions: one with an inscription and one without. There is still much debate over the authorship and chronology of the two plates. For a review of the various opinions surrounding this complex issue, see Lisa Pon, *Raphael, Dürer, and Marcantonio Raimondi. Copying and the Italian Renaissance Print* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2004), 120-21 and note 71. Pon herself believes that both versions were made by Marcantonio, but that the *Massacre “with fir tree”* is the earlier version, dating from 1511-12. Although Pon makes new and important points, I have chosen to follow Rosand, who finds the Massacre “without the fir” to be the superior version. The relative irregularity of the burin work in the version “with the fir” suggests the hand of another, possibly Agostino Veneziano, as Patricia Emison has surmised. See, respectively, Rosand, *Drawing Acts*, 364, note 20, and Patricia Emison, "Marcantonio's Massacre of the Innocents," *Print Quarterly* I (1984): 157-67. To this I would like to add a small observation I made when viewing both prints in the British Museum. In the *Massacre “without the fir,”* the female figure anchoring the center of the composition looks to our left, whereas in the version “with the fir” she looks to our right. This small yet significant detail is, for me, further evidence that the version “without the fir” is by Marcantonio’s hand, because it continues the circularity of the composition.
of Apollo and ultimately choreographed one of the most horrific events in Christian history (Figure 5.11).

Not once in his short career did Raphael depict an actual dance. Yet, when describing his figural language—from the earliest Umbrian works to the monumental Roman fresco cycles—the temptation to describe it in terms of dance has always existed. Beginning with Castiglione, Raphael’s close friend and perhaps most sensitive critic, art and dance are elided.

...in dancing, a single step, a single movement of the body that is graceful and not forced, reveals at once the skill of the dancer...Often too in painting, a single line which is not labored, a single brush stroke made with ease and in such a manner that the hand seems of itself to complete the line desired by the painter, without being directed by care or skill of any kind, clearly reveals the excellence of the craftsmanship...\(^{19}\)

With subtlety, Castiglione announces the unity of the arts, the common denominator of which is sprezzatura, the term he coins to encompass the grazia and facilità that should attend good dancing as well as good painting.\(^{20}\) The ease with which Castiglione shuttles between art and dance also characterizes Vasari’s Lives, in which human movement is often described using words shared by the sixteenth-century vocabulary of dance. The most important term in this respect is leggiadria, which appears only in passing in the fifteenth-century treatises on dance.\(^{21}\)

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\(^{19}\) Castiglione, The Book of the Courtier, 35. To my knowledge, the only dance historian to cite this passage is Nevile, The Eloquent Body, 1. For a careful discussion of Castiglione’s attention to the unforced line of the painter, who, in this case, is most definitely Raphael, see David Rosand, "Una linea sola non stentata. Castiglione, Raphael, and the Aesthetics of Grace," in Reading Medieval Culture. Essays in Honor of Robert W. Hanning, ed. Robert M. Stein and Sandra Pierson Prior (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), 454-79.


\(^{21}\) See Fifteenth-Century Dance and Music: Twelve Transcribed Italian Treatises and Collections in the
But by the mid-sixteenth century, leggiadria had become a critical commonplace in treatises on subjects ranging from dance and behavior to the beauty of women and grace in painting. In the cases of painting and dancing, leggiadria refers specifically to movement that is characterized by fluidity and ease.\textsuperscript{22} Like sprezzatura, it connotes a certain non so che—that ineffable grazia of the ideal body in motion. Vasari employs it most prominently in the lives of Raphael and Parmigianino, the artist he claims to be Raphael redivivus. So too does it factor into Lodovico Dolce’s admiration for Raphael’s facilità—his “maniera leggiadra e gentile.”\textsuperscript{23} The point of showing the matching vocabularies of art and dance is not that Raphael painted in conscious


\textsuperscript{22} On the similarity of leggiadria and sprezzatura, see Fermor, "Studies in the Depiction of the Moving Figure in Renaissance Art, Art Theory, and Criticism", 217. For its usage in treatises on behavior and beauty, see Elizabeth Cropper, "On Beautiful Women, Parmigianino, Pertrachismo, and the Vernacular Style," \textit{The Art Bulletin} 58, no. 3 (Sep., 1976): 374-94.

emulation of dance but that sensitive critics were apparently struck by his tendency to bring figures into dance-like states.24

The modern art historian’s subjective experience of Raphael’s paintings continues the tradition begun in the Cinquecento. In 1829, M. Quaramere de Quincy described Raphael’s figures as composed “fatto alla danza;” for Hermann Friedrich Grimm, the Death of Ananias, “has a theatrical effect, like the last scene of a tragedy upon the stage”; Heinrich Wölfflin reads Raphael’s figural groups in terms of fugal effects, polyphony, and choruses; similarly, Oskar Fischel praises Raphael’s “sense of whole,” his “power of orchestration and contrapuntal quality for the melody of the single voice”; Edward McCurdy is more pointed in his comparisons, identifying the “inherently artificial” pose of Joseph in The Marriage of the Virgin as that of a dancing master; Ettore Camesasca found the Sacrifice at Lystra to “border on archaeology and choreography”; Jean Pierre Cuzin experiences the protagonists in the Marriage of the Virgin as performing a courtly dance (de danse courtoise); Francis Ames-Lewis likens the ground in the Massacre of the Innocents to a “floor-patterned stage”; and Roger Jones and Nicholas Penny go one step further by applying the phrase “studied choreography” to the print.25

24 The phrase “to bring figures into a dance-like state” is borrowed from Cole, ”Harmonic Force in Cinquecento Painting,” 89. Cole discusses Raphael’s Saint Cecilia in this context, and complements it with painted figures that evoked the opposite response from critics. Such ‘graceless’ figures include the nudes in Michelangelo’s Last Judgment, which Andrea Gilio da Fabriano famously compared to jugglers, acrobats, and morris dancers. See ibid., 86 ff.


At times, dance was even used as a negative form of commentary on Raphael’s works. “The moment a painter invites you to look at his work by exposing it in a public space, for the exhibition in his
In conducting a survey of the literature on Raphael, the words dance and choreography appear most often in conjunction with the *Massacre of the Innocents*. In each instance, the word’s appearance has nothing to do with the influence of court dance or festival culture and everything to do with composition, with Raphael’s organization of bodies that move with the kind of effortless grace Castiglione assigns to painting and dancing alike. Developed out of a Florentine tradition for subverting violence, the *Massacre of the Innocents* is violence harmonized: controlled, corralled, choreographed. The language used to describe the *Massacre* is not romantic but significant. Choreography rolls off the art historical tongue because Raphael figured his image so.

**Choreographed Combat**

In Rome, and deeply involved with the frescoes for the Stanza della Segnatura, Raphael forged a partnership with the engraver Marcantonio Raimondi, who brought along a tradition of engraving that extends back to Pollaiuolo and Mantegna. This was a tradition of technical and graphic innovation, of the association of the print medium with artistic fantasia. But whereas

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Pollaiuolo and Mantegna were, for the most part, their own engravers, Marcantonio served the pen of Raphael.

Why did Raphael, unlike Leonardo, Michelangelo, and Fra Bartolommeo, show such enthusiasm for printmaking during his years in Rome? The answer seems to lie with the Stanze themselves. These were the Pope’s private apartments, and few would ever have seen Raphael’s frescoes. Marcantonio’s burin became a publicity tool, the graphic mouthpiece, as it were, for Raphael’s linear style as well as for his figural inventions. In the Massacre of the Innocents, the special role played by Raphael is proclaimed by Marcantonio, who openly credits the painter’s invention in an inscription on the back wall (“RAPHA/VRBI/INVEN”). Printmaking had thus become a partnership, a joining of technical skill and pictorial inventiveness.

According to Vasari, the first fruit of this graphic partnership is the Lucretia (Figure 5.12). This print provides an important precedent for the Massacre, as it too advances the idea

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28 This is essentially how the topic is framed in Pon, Raphael, Dürer, and Marcantonio Raimondi, 102.

29 “Broadcast” is the term John Shearman employs to describe the partnership of Raphael and Marcantonio. See John Shearman, Mannerism (New York: Penguin Books, 1990), 48. For the “publicity argument,” as Lisa Pon, Raphael, Dürer, and Marcantonio Raimondi, 102-03, phrases it, see Francis Ames-Lewis, Draftsman Raphael (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 3-8, and Rosand, Drawing Acts, 124. Pon poses an alternative theory. She argues that Raphael’s collaboration with Marcantonio had less to do with publicity and more to do with the practice of drawing. Roger Jones and Nicholas Penny also offer a slightly different reading of the partnership. Based on a passage from Vasari, cited in the note below, Marcantonio, not Raphael, initiated the relationship. See Roger Jones and Nicholas Penny, Raphael (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1983), 82.

30 Rosand observes that this “may be one of the earliest printed examples of the formula invenit, or inventor, a term that represents full acknowledgement of the legitimacy of separating invenzione from disegno....” David Rosand, “Raphael, Marcantonio, and the Icon of Pathos,” Source III, no. 2 (1984): 36. For standard catalogue entries on the two versions of the print, see Innis H. Shoemaker, The Engravings of Marcantonio Raimondi (Lawrence, KA: 1981), nos. 21 and 26.

31 On the great technical advances made in the course of this partnership, see Pon, Raphael, Dürer, and Marcantonio Raimondi, 106 ff.

32 “But to turn to Marcantonio, who, having arrived in Rome, engraved in copper a most beautiful sheet of Raphael’s. This print was a Roman Lucretia killing herself, made with such diligence and beautiful style
of graceful death. Having just completed the second of two prints after Michelangelo’s *Battle of Cascina*, Marcantonio was no stranger to the depiction of violence. But Raphael’s *Lucretia* required something new of the engraver: the adaptation of his burin’s *taille* to “a chastened flow of line.” So transformed, Marcantonio created a female figure whose outstretched arms are matched by long, uninterrupted lines that hug her gentle contours. That the *Lucretia* relates in posture and gesture to a Muse from Raphael’s *Parnassus* is further testament to this tragic figure’s inherent grace (Figure 5.13).

Leonardo, who paid particularly close attention to the articulation of limbs, attested to the concinnity between line and grace.

The limbs should be adapted to the body with grace and with reference to the effect that you wish the figure to produce. And if you wish to produce a figure that shall itself look light and graceful you must make the limbs elegant and extended, and without too much display of the muscles....[and] none of the limbs should be in a straight line with the adjoining parts.

that it was brought to Raphael right away by some friends of his. Raphael was inclined to have some designs of his put out in print....” See Milanesi, *Le opere di Giorgio Vasari*, vol. V, 411. The *Lucretia* is very similar to another print, *Dido*, and there is still a debate as to which one came first. See Pon, *Raphael, Dürer, and Marcantonio Raimondi*, 95-98, and Patricia Emison, "The Singularity of Raphael's *Lucretia*," *Art History* XIV (Sept., 1991): 373-97. In the Metropolitan Museum of Art, there is a drawing that has been identified as a modello for the print (1997.153), about which see Julien Stock, “A Drawing by Raphael of ‘Lucretia,’” *Burlington Magazine* 126 (1984): 423-24. Some, however, remained unconvinced. Following Rosand, *Drawing Acts*, 364, note 25, I have chosen not to discuss it.


34 On the inextricable link between Raphael’s graphic style and Marcantonio’s, see Rosand, *Drawing Acts*, 125-26. On the manner in which the print was engraved, see Pon, *Raphael, Dürer, and Marcantonio Raimondi*, 95 ff.

35 The shifting of the audience outside the frame of the picture was observed first by Rosand, "Raphael, Marcantonio, and the Icon of Pathos," 41.

To this passage we might join a drawing from Leonardo da Vinci’s corpus of anatomical studies. Although it purports to investigate the myology of the shoulder, the artist’s pen created a form more poetic than scientific (Figure 5.14). Occupying a space that runs diagonally from the top-right to the mid-left, is an arm held slightly away from the body. Physiologically, the shoulder muscles lift the arm, as the notes and smaller drawings scattered across the page imply, but visually, Leonardo assigns agency to the wrist, as if he had studied the mechanics of a dancer who relies on this delicate joint to guide her arm through space. Couched within the context of Leonardo’s anatomical studies, this graceful arm is indeed a strange hybrid—a port de bras well beyond the limits of mechanical movement. This hybridity, the gestural ease of a muscular body that might otherwise be harsh and forceful, also characterizes Raphael’s Lucretia. Athletic yet graceful, she stands alone, poised in the face of death.

The suicide of Lucretia is rare in painting prior to the sixteenth century, and the depiction of her in solo form even rarer. Botticelli, for example, inserted Lucretia three times into a crowded narrative panel (Figure 5.15). The singularity of Raphael’s Lucretia, to borrow a phrase from Patricia Emison, affords the figure comparison with other solo protagonists, such as Saint

37 On Leonardo’s poetic inflections of scientific endeavors, see Martin Kemp, "Leonardo Da Vinci: Science and the Poetic Impulse," Royal Society of Arts Journal CXXXIII, no. 5343 (1984): 197. Drawings such as the one I discuss here bear out, in Clark’s mind, a marriage of intelletto and fantasia. On Leonardo’s conception of grazia, see Emison, "Grazia," especially 437-38.

38 Here, the evocation of dance is quite different from older studies of dancers depicted on antique sarcophagi. Looking back to the maenads drawn by Pisanello, for example, we find an artist’s commitment to studying and recording classical subject matter. To juxtapose Pisanello and Leonardo is to confront the difference between documentation and exploration—between an artist who copies a dancer from Antiquity and an artist whose detailed interest in graceful form bore a body that strike us as dance-like. Anatomical drawings that resemble dance deserve a study unto themselves. In addition to Leonardo’s corpus, one could fruitfully study through the lens of dance the fascinating body positions used to illustrate the 1538 edition of Vesalius’ Tabulae anatomicae.
Catherine (Figure 5.16), who shares Lucretia’s slow, serpentine twist against the picture plane.  

But we might look back even further, to Raphael’s Umbrian years, when he made a very small painting of Saint Michael (Figure 5.17). Here, the archangel pirouettes at the center of an ominous landscape, his delicate skirt still blowing in the wind. As in the Lucretia, the value here is not the violent event at hand—the defeat of an evil dragon—but rather the performative pose the figure strikes in a moment of great pathos.  

This first foray into printmaking happened in the context of Raphael’s work in the Stanza della Segnatura, and there too we can find the graceful inflection of a violent theme. On the left-hand side of the School of Athens is a small, fictive relief of nude men in combat (Figure 5.18). In the preparatory drawing, as in Pollaiuolo’s print, the composition is bound by flipping and rotating poses (Figure 5.19). The figure at the center of the drawing is poised to strike a blow against a man who crouches beneath him. Although considerably weaker and overcome with fear, the figure on the ground is, in fact, another iteration of his opponent. So too does the central figure provide the model for the nude man hiding his face in apparent agony: each lunges rightward, one heroically, the other fearfully. Raphael’s image of combat signals a departure from Pollaiuolo’s in that it carries a newfound sense of effortlessness; the hard labor of Pollaiuolo’s nudes is masked by unforced lines and rounded contours. Raphael must have  

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40 In considering the studied artifice of Lucretia’s pose, Rosand came to categorize her as a kind of secular Andachtsbild—an “icon of pathos.” See Rosand, "Raphael, Marcantonio, and the Icon of Pathos," 34-52, especially 38.  

41 See Paul Joannides, The Drawings of Raphael (Oxford: Phaidon Press, 1983), no. 233r. Raphael’s use of symmetry has been discussed in Summers, "Figure Come Fratelli," 495-97.
recognized the distinctive *sprezzatura* of his little battle scene, for he chose to place it below a sensuous statue of the divine Apollo, who, lyre in hand, gazes towards *Parnassus*.

The *Massacre of the Innocents* arises out of this atmosphere, a period in which Raphael was involved in making drawings for prints as well as for frescoes in the Stanza della Segnatura. In fact, we can trace his initial thoughts about the *Massacre* to a drawing for a fresco on the vault of this very room: the *Judgment of the Solomon* (Figure 5.20). With great figural economy, Raphael boiled the impending violence down to the simple juxtaposition of a lunging male nude and a seated woman. Although highly affective, Raphael abandoned this composition, opting instead for a male figure that turns its back to the viewer. But the lunging nude did not go to waste; Raphael plucked him from this drawing and placed him in an early figural study for the *Massacre*, where his wide stance becomes the leitmotif for the entire composition.

In what is most likely the second of the surviving preparatory drawings for Raphael’s *Massacre*, the generative power of the initial, lunging male nude is compounded at ground level, where feet create a synaptic network (Figure 5.21). In the subsequent compositional study (hereafter referred to as the British Museum drawing), this thread of lunging figures hugs the

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42 See Joannides, *Drawings of Raphael*, no. 252r, and Gere and Turner, *Drawings by Raphael*, no. 102. This drawing is comprised of two separate pieces of paper. The second iteration of the lunging soldier in the upper righthand corner was drawn on a different slip of paper that Raphael then affixed to the larger sheet. See Pon, *Raphael, Dürer, and Marcantonio Raimondi*, 122. Pon also points out that Raphael was not the first artist to adapt a study for the *Judgment of Solomon* to the *Massacre of the Innocents*; Luca Signorelli did the same. See ibid., 195, note 88.

43 There is no disagreement over the idea that the sheet of figure studies in the Albertina is the earliest surviving drawing for the *Massacre*. The order in which the compositional studies that follow this drawing were made is, however, a matter of great debate. In the pages that follow, I am working with the series as it is laid out by Pon (ibid., 122-36), whose detailed visual and computer analyses of the drawings are persuasive.

44 Joannides, *Drawings of Raphael*, no. 253v.
picture plane, carrying the viewer laterally across the foreground action (Figure 5.22). \(^45\) And as the action changes direction and curves away from the plane, the lunging pose is maintained in the serpentine manipulation of the group. Raphael continues to play with this first figural idea, pivoting the pose at various degrees for male and female figures alike. As in music, where a repetitive note or melodic structure punctuates the score, or as in dance, where recurrent steps pattern the choreography, Raphael’s insistence upon the lunging pose acts to thematize and thus regulate his composition. What results is a figural study of choreographic control: remarkably similar figures that dance around a central axis.

By recognizing the importance of the single figure motif in Raphael’s conception of the Massacre, an important distinction can be made between versions that are choreographic and ones that are more generally theatrical. The event is recounted in the Gospel of Matthew (2:16-18). Herod, King of Judea, has just learned of the birth of Jesus Christ. Duped by the Magi, who failed to report Christ’s identity, Herod wreaks havoc on Bethlehem by ordering the execution of all male children under the age of two. The slaughtered Innocents are the first Christian martyrs. Despite their crucial role in Christianity, the gospel story is spartan in its details.

Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently enquired of the wise men. \(^46\)

The particularities of violence were left to be elaborated upon by artists, who oftentimes filled out the narrative to produce a violent spectacle. \(^47\) Ghirlandaio’s Massacre, a fresco in the

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\(^{45}\) Ibid., no. 287, and Gere and Turner, *Drawings by Raphael*, no. 122.

\(^{46}\) Matthew 2:16-18.

\(^{47}\) Dramaturgists also improvised upon the spare details of the gospel story. For a concise analysis of Massacre plays and their parallels in the visual arts from the eleventh century onwards, see Laura
Tornabuoni chapel of Santa Maria Novella, Florence, is paradigmatic in this regard (Figure 5.23). The melee of violence occurs on a stage space defined by a massive triumphal arch that spans the space between two buildings. Figures hang from the windows and emerge from the buildings onto a narrow passageway to observe the event. In a similar spirit, Bernardino Jacopi Butinone and Matteo Giovanni surrounded their depictions of the Massacre with buildings whose balconies are full of spectators (Figure 5.24). The privileged place accorded Herod in these examples gives further emphasis to the spectatorial nature of fifteenth-century representations; these Massacres are theaters of violence.

Among the compositions made in direct response to the dissemination of Raphael’s Massacre of the Innocents is an unusual, polychrome version in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (Figure 5.25). The Lombard sculptor Giovanni Angelo del Maino adapted Raphael’s composition to a kind of diorama, one that is comparable to tableau-vivants by Guido Mazzoni. Perhaps dissatisfied with the absence of traditional witnesses in Marcantonio’s print, del Maino filled the upper register of his sculpture with Herod and his guards, thus endowing Raphael’s composition with the spectacular qualities of earlier imagery. In the wake Raphael’s invention, we find also Marco da Ravenna’s engraving of Baccio Bandinelli’s Massacre of the Innocents, in which architecture delineates a deep stage space (Figure 5.26). Peripheral figures, so mannered

In the fifteenth century, the Massacre of the Innocents was a popular liturgical play, but one that often took on a comic tone. In Jacobus’s analysis, the Massacre shifted from a demonstration of God’s plan for human salvation, to a source of popular entertainment, replete with all the elements of pageantry.

In the Mead Museum of Art is a cassone painting (inv.1961.86) inspired by Raphael’s Massacre that also chooses to add Herod.
in their poses, line the building’s fantastical ledge.\textsuperscript{50} In \textit{The Martyrdom of Saint Lawrence}, Bandinelli performs a similar theatricalization of a composition that, at its core, belongs to Raphael. In this case, the image to which Bandinelli responds is the \textit{Death of Ananias} (Figure 5.27). To Raphael’s composition, he again added an architectural superstructure filled with spectators that strike an overwhelming variety of complex poses.

The affective power of Raphael’s \textit{Massacre} is not mediated through internal audience members.\textsuperscript{51} As in the \textit{Lucretia}, the viewer is the print’s sole spectator. The shrieking mother at the very center of the composition calls attention to our active participation in the image, as she steps forward in order to invite us inward.\textsuperscript{52} Moreover, Raphael’s \textit{Massacre} is far less insistent on variety; indeed, it seems to assert just the opposite: the repetition and inflection of one figural motif. That is to say, it is less about the individual figures and more about the binding of those figures, the subordination of part to whole.\textsuperscript{53}

\textsuperscript{50} These figures provoked Vasari remark that the print is “filled with many nudes, masculine and feminine, with children living and dead, the women and soldiers in various poses.” Vasari, \textit{Le Vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori e architetti} [1568], V, 416. For an insightful discussion of the prints made in direct competition with Raphael’s, see Rosand, "Raphael, Marcantonio, and the Icon of Pathos," 46-47, with further bibliography.

\textsuperscript{51} This is not to suggest that Raphael refrained entirely from internal spectators, or from theatricality more generally. In the Stanza dell’ Incendio, for example, the \textit{Expulsion of Heliodorus} features figures that cling to the framing columns, straining to view the action going on below. \textit{The Fire in the Borgo}, for which this room in the Vatican is named, is also populated with choric groups. On this painting and Raphael’s indebtedness to Aristotelian tragedy in particular, see Kurt Badt, "Raphael's 'Incendio Del Borgo'," \textit{Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes} 22, no. 1/2 (Jan.-Jun., 1959): 35-59.

\textsuperscript{52} On the careful balance Raphael strikes between narrative movement and iconic stillness, see Rosand, "Raphael, Marcantonio, and the Icon of Pathos," 48.

\textsuperscript{53} In this way, the true afterlife of Raphael’s invention lies not in the aforementioned copies and adaptations but in a painting from the following century: Nicolas Poussin’s \textit{Rape of the Sabine Women}. In this “choreography of heroic struggle and brute power,” as Jonathan Unglaub describes it in \textit{Poussin and the Poetics of Painting} (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 169, Poussin reveals lessons learned from Raphael.
“This,” Wölfflin wrote, “brings us to the root of the matter, for the meaning of the picture lies not in its details but in its fugal effect, the dovetailing of all its elements....” The potential exists for such implied symmetry to produce a harsh image, but Raphael subtly inflects the structure underlying the *Massacre*. An alternation between male and female, as well as between adult and child, is already built into the subject itself. To this inherent variation, Raphael couples forward and backward motion, pushing and pulling, clinging and reaching. That such variety within uniformity was Raphael’s primary concern in the *Massacre* is attested to by the fact that the pavement grid was the very last element added to the British Museum drawing. For Raphael, space develops corporeally; perspectival gridlines obey the human architecture of the pictorial field.55

This is Raphael’s choreographic imagination. Beginning with a single figural invention, he then moves on to build up multi-figure compositions out of modulated choreographic units, often duos and trios. In a study for an *Adoration of the Magi*, for instance, Raphael uses recto and verso to produce a composition sewn together by pairs (Figure 5.28).56 Among the careful drawings for the Baglioni *Entombment* is a study for three of the bearers of Christ’s body (Figure 5.29).57 As in images of the Three Graces, two mirrored figures stand in opposition to a third.

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54 Wölfflin, *Classic Art*, 90.


56 See Joannides, *Drawings of Raphael*, no. 52. John Pope-Hennessy discussed this drawing in terms of Raphael’s attention to “the division of the figures into coherent, self-consistent groups.” He goes on to connect this tendency to Raphael’s years in Florence, where he encountered paintings designed around units of figures. Pope-Hennessy, *Raphael* (New York: New York University Press, 1970), 48-50.

To this drawing we might join the contemporary *Vintagers* and *Three Nude Men*, which each approach a composition in triplet form (Figure 5.30, 5.31).

Raphael’s proclivity for designing figural compositions in choreographic units intensifies during his years in Rome. A study for the lower-left register of the *Disputa* is rife with trios, and a preliminary composition for the upper register considers groups in terms of both twos and threes (Figure 5.32). The larger bilateral symmetry informing the figures of Plato and Aristotle at the center of the *School of Athens* affects even subsidiary dialogues, which generally occur in pairs (Figure 5.33).

Duos also pattern the *Massacre of the Innocents*. As the drawings progress, and figures are added and subtracted, the couple remains the preferred figural mode. In the British Museum drawing, for example, Raphael struggles between two positions for the soldier who pulls a mother’s hair (Figure 5.22). The pattern of pricking in the British Museum drawing coupled with a later compositional study in Windsor Castle reveals that Raphael discarded the option at

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58 See, respectively, ibid., no. 45, and Joannides, *Drawings of Raphael*, no. 89.

59 Joannides, *Drawings of Raphael*, nos. 204 and 205. Vasari places emphasis on these figural clusters, writing that “the Holy Christian doctors are portrayed in groups of six, three, and two....” See Vasari, *Le vite de’ più eccellenti pittori, scultori e architettori [1568]*, IV, 336f.

60 A lot has been said about Raphael’s influence upon Marcantonio Raimondi’s style, but the engraver’s compositional intelligence may have already been ideally suited to such choreographic intentions on the part of the painter. This is hinted at by the *Climbers*, Marcantonio’s second engraving after Michelangelo’s lost cartoon for the *Battle of Cascina*, which was most recently described by Joost Keizer as “an assembly of isolated figure drawings.” See Keizer, "Michelangelo, Drawing, and the Subject of Art," *The Art Bulletin* XCIII, no. 3 (Sept., 2011): 304-24. Much of the delight in looking at Michelangelo’s invention does indeed come from the sheer proliferation of body positions, but Marcantonio chose to isolate just three figures, two of which constitute the only mirrored pair from the original cartoon. Reminiscent of the contrapuntal model offered by the Three Graces, Marcantonio’s engraving is less a copy and more the record of a choreographic thought or moment.
the far right but ultimately replaced it with an entirely new duo, the female half of which roughly mirrors the swooning child at the center of final print (Figure 5.34).  

The refinement was decisive, for it made possible a centripetal force that had been stilted in the British Museum drawing. In this study, the figure of the executioner from the drawing for the *Judgment of Solomon* provides an initial entry point into the action, while the female figure at the extreme right provides an exit point. Although her body arches like a bow being pulled by the soldier, she leads our eyes away from the group. To remedy this, Raphael rotated her and her partner ninety degrees, pricking them to secure his decision. In the Windsor study, Raphael creates a new figure that turns gently back into the fold. But the need for a mother fleeing the scene was not forgotten amidst these adjustments. At the extreme left of the final print is a mother who tries her best to escape the violence. She provides the counterpoint to the initial lunging soldier, who catalyzes the momentum of this composition. Indeed, in Raphael’s final solution, beginning and end are joined, as in a circle.

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61 Joannides, Drawings of Raphael, no. 288r, and Gere and Turner, *Drawings by Raphael*, no. 123. All of the figures in the British Museum drawing are pricked, except the discarded pair we have been discussing. See Pon, *Raphael, Dürer, and Marcantonio Raimondi*, 125. Pon also points out that the rejected pair, that of the soldier yanking the mother fleeing to the right, is restudied on the back of the sheet in Windsor Castle, but for a battle of sea creatures. See ibid., 136.

62 Lisa Pon interprets Raphael’s adjustment differently. She surmises that Raphael was unhappy with the fact that in the British Museum drawing, three pairs fall along the same plane. While this is certainly true, the change Raphael makes does not solve what Pon sees to be the problem.

63 Refer back to note 69.

64 A similar change was made to the composition of the *Disputa*. In the earliest of the nearly forty extant drawings for the fresco (Figure 5.35), the left side of the lunette includes a figure who floats on a cloud outside the realm of earthly debate. See Joannides, *Drawings of Raphael*, no. 197. This cloud-born figure was ultimately brought down to earth, made masculine, and included in the human dialogue (Figure 5.36). In formal terms, his graceful turn away from the periphery and towards the center of the picture effectively closes the composition, emphasizing its essential circularity. On Raphael’s attention to each figure’s “choral responsibility,” see Rosand, “Divinita Di Cosa Dipinta: Pictorial Structure and the Legibility of the Altarpiece,” 158f. On the circle as graphic mode and compositional device in Raphael’s art, see idem, *Drawing Acts*, ch. 4 (“Raphael and the Calligraphy of Classicism”).
In thinking about Raphael’s creation of the *Massacre of the Innocents* out of a single figure, we might look back to the beginning of Raphael’s a career, and conclude with a discussion of the *Four Soldiers*, a drawing he made at the age of twenty (Figure 5.37).\(^6\) The sheet is graphic evidence of Raphael’s collaboration with Pinturicchio for the frescoes in the Piccolomini Library.\(^6\) It also shows the way Raphael considers figural relationships, his desire to seek out bodies that harmonically relate. This drawing of four figures in four relatable poses, exhibits something quite precise indeed: the staging of choric order. Foreshadowing the copious figural studies he would come to produce in later years, the young Raphael here peers out from behind the confines of the silverpoint medium to engage in a choreographic act.

This small sheet of bluish-grey paper offers its viewer an ensemble of four bodies spread across the field isocephalically. A solitary figure holding a slender staff stands at the far right. This delicate soldier is isolated: he turns his back away from the accompanying trio, crosses his legs, and gazes inward. However distinct his spatial and postural orientation may be, this figure is not unrelated to the group at the left. Raphael manipulates his form into a complex group of three. He loosens its corkscrew pose by unraveling the legs and opening the arms, allowing the figure’s original in-gathering of energy to unfurl into three more bodies. A spiral then dilates

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\(^6\) While Joannides touts the attribution of this drawing to Raphael (ibid., no. 58r), others have seen the pentimenti as signs of another artist’s hand, usually Pintorricchio’s. For a review of the literature, see J.A. Gere and Nicholas Turner, *Drawings by Raphael from the Royal Library, the Ashmolean, the British Museum, Chatsworth and other English collections* (London: British Museum Publications, 1983), no. 29.

\(^6\) Pinturicchio received the commission to decorate the Piccolomini Library in Siena in 1502, and began work in 1503. Including *The Four Soldiers*, only four drawings connected to the preliminary stages of the design exist. Although the consensus is that Raphael produced this drawing for Pinturicchio’s fresco of *Frederick III bestowing the Poet’s Crown on Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini*, only the two figures at the extreme right and left of the drawing appear in the finished painting. See J.A. Gere and Nicholas Turner, *Drawings by Raphael from the Royal Library, the Ashmolean, the British Museum, Chatsworth and other English collections* (London: British Museum Publications, 1983), 48. The isolated soldier on the right, appears again in a compositional study for the *Adoration of the Magi* reproduced in Pope-Hennessy, *Raphael*, fig. 36, and in this dissertation, fig. 5.29.
across the page; arms, legs, feet, and chests open, stretch, and expand. The two figures at either extreme of the sheet embody this kinetic spectrum, while the central two strike medial poses.

From one figure—a solo figure in a tight spiral—three more are born. To scan this drawing from right to left is to watch a gradual shift take place from concentric to eccentric movement, and from solo to trio.

Raphael always thought in terms of the single body, and how that body could be varied and extended. Looking back to Alberti, it was the solo that served as the artist’s *modus operandi*—his basic choreographic unit, as it were. It is a mode of figural thinking, a way generating the many from the singular. So too is there an important observation to be made about the opposition of solo and trio in Raphael’s drawing, as clusters of three also became a popular studio motif, a way of ordering multi-figure compositions that might have its root in Alberti’s emphasis upon the Three Graces. We saw in Chapter Three, for instance, that repetition serves a choreographic function in Botticelli’s *Primavera*. The poses assumed by Venus and her Three Graces, a dance that is itself generated out of the manipulation of a single figure, reverberate throughout the painting in varying degrees. Ever modulated, the single figure compounds to produce an image not repetitive but intimate, an image bound by figures that cut familiar silhouettes. In *The Four Soldiers*, as well as in the *Massacre of the Innocents*, the result of Raphael’s tightly interlocked corporeal variations is a palpable sense of community, a familial relationship of bodies. This comes from basing four figures on an initial one.67

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67 It has been said that the remarkable coherence of Balanchine’s ballets can be accounted for by the familial relationship of body positions. On *Concerto Barocco* (1941), Nancy Goldner writes, “What I love in the first movement is the way Balanchine manipulates a simple movement into a complex one, then turns it into the central image of the entire section…More delightful, though, are the endless variations Balanchine devises for this theme…You’d have to look hard to find a dance that is as focused on one idea as this one.” On the *Stravinsky Violin Concerto*, she says, “The beauty of their dancing is that, although they move with total intimacy, the figures they cut are separate, sometimes in counterpoint. In the final passage, though, they fuse.” See Goldner, *Balanchine Variations*, 6, 41, 114.
Figure 1.1
Simone Martini
Annunciation
1333
Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi
Figure 1.2
Botticelli
*Pallas and the Centaur*
ca. 1482
Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi
Figure 1.3
Domenico Veneziano (attributed to)
*Studies of Two Men Seated and another Standing*
First half of the 15th century
Pen and brown ink, brown wash, and white heightening on blue paper
Paris, Musée du Louvre, 2688r
Figure 1.4
Lorenzo Ghiberti
Studies for a *Flagellation*
1400-1424
Pen and ink on paper
Vienna, Albertina, 24.409
Figure 1.5
Pisanello
*Six Nude Women*
ca. 1428-32
Pen and ink on parchment
Rotterdam, Museum Boijmans, I, 520r
Figure 1.6
Pisanello
*Studies of Costumes*
c. 1432-35
Pen and brown ink and touches of red and green wash on parchment
Bonnat, Musee Bonnat, 1693r
Figure 1.7
Pisanello
*Study of Bacchantes*
ca. 1430s
Pen and silverpoint on parchment
Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett, KdZ 1359r
Figure 1.8
Pisanello
_Bacchus with Satyrs and maenads_ (top), Pen and ink over metalpoint on parchment
_Indian Triumph of Bacchus_ (bottom), Pen and ink and brown wash over metalpoint on parchment
_c. 1431-40_
Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, F. 214 inf. 15r and F.214 inf. 14r
Figure 1.9
Pisanello

*Studies of Maenads*

c. 1431-35
Pen and ink on parchment
Oxford, Ashmolean Museum, P II 41v
Figure 1.10
Pollaiuolo
*Battle of the Nudes*
ca. 1470s
Engraving
Figure 1.11
Pollaiuolo
*The Martyrdom of Saint Sebastian*
1473-75
London, British Museum
Figure 1.12
Botticelli
_Primavera_ (detail)
c.a. 1478
Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi
Figure 1.13
Pollaiuolo
The Dancing Nudes
c. 1470s
Arcetri, Villa La Gallina
Figure 2.1
Brice Marden
*Annunciation Study I*
1978
New York, The Museum of Modern Art
Figure 2.2
Simone Martini
*Annunciation*
1333
Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi
Figure 2.3
Simone Martini
*Annunciation* (detail)
1333
Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi
Figure 2.4
Donatello
*Annunciation*
ca. 1428-33
Florence, Santa Croce
Figure 2.5
Donatello
*Annunciation* (detail)
ca. 1428-33
Florence, Santa Croce
Figure 2.6
Donatello
*Annunciation* (detail)
ca. 1428-33
Florence, Santa Croce
Figure 2.7
Donatello
Annunciation (detail)
ca. 1428-33
Florence, Santa Croce
Figure 2.7 (continued)
Donatello
*Annunciation* (detail)
ca. 1428-33
Florence, Santa Croce
Figure 2.8
Donatello
*Annunciation* (detail)
ca. 1428-33
Florence, Santa Croce
Figure 2.9
Donatello
Annunciation (detail)
ca. 1428-33
Florence, Santa Croce
Figure 2.10
Botticelli
*Annunciation*
1489
Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi
Figure 2.11
Jacopo della Quercia
Annunciation
1421-26
San Gimignano, Santa Maria Assunta
Figure 2.12
Pesellino
*Annunciation*
1451-53
London, Courtauld Institute of Art
Figure 2.13
Filippo Lippi
*Annunciation*
1467-69
Spoleto, Duomo
Figure 2.14
Lorenzo di Credi
*Study for an Annunciation*
Late 15th century
Black chalk
Paris, Musée du Louvre, 1789r
Figure 2.15
Botticelli
*Annunciation* (detail)
1489
Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi
Figure 2.16
Botticelli
*Annunciation* (detail)
1489
Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi
Figure 2.17
Matteo di Giovanni
Detail from a cassone panel depicting *The Wedding of Antioco and Stratonice* ca. 1460
San Marino, The Huntington Library
Figure 2.18
Matteo di Giovanni
*The Wedding of Antioco and Stratonic* 
ca. 1460
San Marino, The Huntington Library
Figure 2.19
Anonymous, Florentine
*The Marriage of Alceo and Lucrezia* (detail of cassone panel)
Second half of the 15th century
Formerly Richmond, Cook Collection
Figure 2.20
French
Ivory mirror-case
ca. 1300-1325
London, Victoria and Albert Museum
Figure 2.21
Domenico di Bartolo
*The Offering of the Heart* (coffer lid)
ca. mid-15th century
Berlin, Staatliche Museen
Figure 2.22
Follower of Bartolomeo di Fruosino
*Allegory of Love*
ca. early 15th century
Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, MS 1. 69., fol. III, verso
Figure 2.23
North Italian
Ivory mirror-case, fragment
London, Victoria and Albert Museum
Figure 3.1
Botticelli
*Primavera*
ca. 1489-90
Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi
Figure 3.2
Francesco Cossa
April (detail)
1469-70
Ferrara, Palazzo Schifanoia
Figure 3.3
Niccolo Fiorentino
*Portrait Medal of Giovanna degli Albizzi*
1465
Figure 3.4
*The Three Graces*
Roman copy of a Greek original, ca. 2nd century CE
Siena, Piccolomini Library
Figure 3.5
The Three Graces
Roman, ca. 100 BCE
Paris, Musée du Louvre
Figure 3.6
Botticelli
*Primavera* (detail)
ca. 1489-90
Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi
Figure 3.7
Leonardo da Vinci

*Posterior View of a Male Nude*

cia. 1506-06
Red chalk
Windsor, Windsor Castle, RL 12596
Figure 3.8
Leonardo da Vinci
The Pointing Lady
1490s or 1506-08
Black Chalk
Windsor, Windsor Castle, RL 12581
Figure 3.9
Leonardo da Vinci
*Man chasing a Woman* (cut from Codex Atlanticus, f.354)
ca. 1508
Pen and ink
Windsor, Windsor Castle, RL 12708
Figure 3.10
Mantegna
_Parnassus_
ca. 1497
Paris, Musée du Louvre
Figure 3.11
Mantegna (workshop of?)
*Dancing Muse*
1496-97
Pen and brown wash with white heightening over black chalk
Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett
Figure 3.12
Ambrogio Lorenzetti (top), *The Allegory of Good Government* (detail), 1338, Siena, Palazzo Pubblico
Andrea Bonaiuto (bottom), *The Church Triumphant* (detail), 1365-68, Florence, Spanish Chapel, Santa Maria Novella
Figure 3.13
Leonardo da Vinci
*Three Dancing Maidens*
ca. 1503
Pen and brown ink over traces of black chalk
Venice, Gallerie dell’Accademia, 233
Figure 3.14
Botticelli
*The Return of Judith to Bethulia*
ca. 1470
Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi
Figure 3.15
_The Three Graces_
Roman, 2nd century CE
Paris, Musée du Louvre
Figure 3.16
Botticelli
*Mystic Nativity*
ca. 1500
London, The National Gallery
Figure 3.17
Botticelli
*Coronation of the Virgin*
ca. 1490-92
Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi
Figure 3.18
*Sarcophagus depicting the Muses*
Roman, 3rd century CE
Rome, Museo Nazionale delle Terme
Figure 3.19
Agostino di Duccio
Chapel of the Muses (*Urania* and *Melpomene*)
ca. 1450
Rimini, San Francesco
Figure 3.20
Giovanni Santi
*Terpsichore* (left) and *Erato* (right)
ca. 1472
Florence, Galleria Corsini
Figure 3.21
Anonymous Ferrarese Master
*Talia* (Tarrocchi, E series)
ca. 1465
Engraving
Figure 3.22
Cosme Tura
Terpsichore
ca. 1450
Milan, Museo Poldi Pezzoldi
Figure 3.23
Ciriaco d’Ancona
Study after a 4th century *Frieze of Dancing Maidens*
1444
Oxford, Bodleian Library, Ms. Lat. misc. d. 85
Figure 3.24
The Premier Engraver
*Four Dancing Muses*
ca. 1497
Engraving
Figure 3.25
Andrea Riccio
*Bacchic Procession from the Paschal Candelabrum*
1515
Padua, Basilica del Santo
Figure 3.26
Donatello
*Music-Making Angels*
1450
Padua, Basilico del Santo (high altar)
Figure 3.27
Donatello
*Cantoria*
1439
Florence, Museo dell’ Opera del Duomo
Figure 3.28
Donatello
*Pulpit* (detail)
1438
Prato, Museo dell’Opera del Duomo
Figure 3.29
Mantegna
*Bacchanal with Silenus*
ca. 1490
Engraving
Figure 3.30
Mantegna
*Bacchenal with a Wine Vat*
ca. 1490
Engraving
Figure 3.31
Mantegna
*Parnassus* (detail)
1497
Paris, Musée du Louvre
Figure 4.1
Pollaiuolo
*The Dancing Nudes*
ca. 1470s
Arcetri, Villa La Gallina
Figure 4.2
Anonymous Florentine
*The Sausage Seller*
15th century
Engraving
Figure 4.3
Arcetri, Villa La Gallina
Figure 4.4
Pollaiuolo
*The Dancing Nudes*
ca. 1470s
Arcetri, Villa La Gallina
Figure 4.5
Pollaiuolo
*The Dancing Nudes* (detail)
ca. 1470s
Arcetri, Villa La Gallina
Figure 4.6
Pollaiuolo, *Dancing Nudes* (detail) compared to Botticelli, *Primavera* (detail)
Figure 4.7
Anonymous Lombard school
Frontispiece to Guglielmo da Ebreo, *De pratica seu arte tripudii vulgare* (written in 1463)
Second half of the 15th century
Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, f. ital. 973, c. 21v
Figure 4.8
Anonymous Lombard (left), *Sonare et balare*, from the *Tacuinum sanitatis*, end of the 14th century, Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Ms. Series nova 2644, fol. 104

Anonymous Lombard (right), *Sonare et balare*, from the *Theatrum sanitatis*, end of the 14th century, Rome, Biblioteca Casanatense, Liber magistri 4182, fol. 104
Figure 4.9
Pollaiuolo
The Dancing Nudes (detail)
ca. 1470s
Arcetri, Villa La Gallina
Figure 4.10
Botticelli
*Venus and the Three Graces Presenting Gifts*
ca. 1484
Paris, Musée du Louvre
Figure 4.11
Pollaiuolo
*Coronation of the Virgin* (detail)
1483
San Gimignano, Sant’Agostino
Figure 4.12
Google Earth Map
Figure 4.13
Pollaiuolo
*The Dancing Nudes* (and detail)
ca. 1470s
Arcetri, Villa La Gallina
Figure 4.14
Mantegna (top), *Bacchanal with Silenus*, ca. 1490, Engraving
Anonymous Florentine (bottom), *Round Dance all’Antica*, ca. 1470, Engraving
Figure 4.15
Aby Warburg
Mnemosyne (Plate 37)
Figure 4.16
Pollaiuolo
*Battle of the Nudes*
ca. 1470s
Engraving
Figure 4.17
Pollaiuolo
*Martyrdom of Saint Sebastian*
1473-75
London, The National Gallery
Figure 4.18
Sarcophagus depicting *The Triumph of Bacchus*
Pisa, Camposanto
Figure 4.19
Pollaiuolo’s *Dancing Nudes* compared to *The Triumph of Bacchus*
Figure 4.20
Sarcophagus depicting a *Bacchic Procession* (detail)
Roman, ca. 200 BCE
Amsterdam, Allard Pierson Museum

compared to Pisanello’s drawing after it:
Study of *Two Maenads*
Pen and Indian Ink
Oxford, Ashmolean Museum
P II 41v
Figure 4.21
Roman
Maenads
Marble plaque
Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi
Figure 4.22
Roman (after Greek original)
*Bacchic Krater*
1st century BCE
Pisa, Camposanto
Figure 4.23
Roman (modification of Greek torso)
*Satyr Holding Grapes*
Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi
Figure 4.24
Anonymous Florentine
_The Triumph of Bacchus and Ariadne_
ca. 1480-90
Engraving
Figure 4.24 continued
Anonymous Florentine
*The Triumph of Bacchus and Ariadne* (details)
Figure 4.25
Pollaiuolo
*Hercules and Anteaus* compared to a dancer from Villa Gallina
ca. 1470s
Figure 4.26
Pollaiuolo
*Nude Man Seen from Three Angles*
early 1470s
Pen and dark-brown ink and light wash on darkened paper
Paris, Musée du Louvre, 1486r
Figure 4.27
Pollaiuolo

*Prisoner Led Before a Ruler*

no date, presumably ca. 1470s

Pen and brown ink and wash on discolored paper with traces of black chalk

London, British Museum, 1893,0529.1
Figure 5.1
Pollaiuolo
*Battle of the Nudes*

c. 1470s

Engraving
Figure 5.2
Pollaiuolo
*Nude Man Seen from Three Angles*
early 1470s
Pen and dark brown ink and light wash on darkened paper
Paris, Musée du Louvre, 1486r
Figure 5.3
Pollaiuolo
*Martyrdom of Saint Sebastian*
ca. 1470s
London, The National Gallery
Figure 5.4
Antonello da Messina (left), *Saint Sebastian*, 1466-67, Dresden, Gemäldegalerie
Botticelli (right), *Saint Sebastian*, ca. 1474, Berlin, Gemäldegalerie
Figure 5.5
Donatello
*Judith* (and detail of base)
1455-60
Florence, Palazzo Vecchio
Figure 5.6
Pollaiuolo
Hercules and Antaeus
ca. 1470s
Florence, Museo Nazionale del Bargello
Figure 5.7
Verrocchio
Beheading of John the Baptist (detail)
1477-80
Florence, Baptistery
Figure 5.8
Botticelli
_Sodomites and Usurers_ from Dante’s _Inferno_
ca. 1490-1500
Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana.
Figure 5.9
Luca Signorelli
*Flagellation of Christ* compared to Villa Gallina dancer
C. 1482-85
Milan, Pinacoteca di Brera
Figure 5.10
Marcantonio Raimondi (after Raphael)
The Massacre of the Innocents
c. 1511-12
Engraving
Figure 5.11
Raphael
*The School of Athens* (details)
ca. 1511-12
Vatican, Stanza della Segnatura
Figure 5.12
Marcantonio Raimondi (after Raphael)

_Lucretia_

ca. 1510
Engraving
Figure 5.13
Raphael
_Parnassus_
ca. 1511-12
Vatican, Stanza della Segnatura
Figure 5.14
Leonardo da Vinci
Myology of the Shoulder
ca. 1510
Pen and ink with wash over black chalk
Windsor, Windsor Castle, 19013v
Figure 5.15
Botticelli
The Suicide of Lucretia
1496-1504
Boston, Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum
Figure 5.16
Raphael
*Saint Catherine*
1508
London, The National Gallery
Figure 5.17
Raphael
Saint Michael
c.a. 1505
Paris, Musée du Louvre
Figure 5.18
Raphael
School of Athens (detail)
ca. 1511-12
Vatican, Stanza della Segnatura
Figure 5.19
Raphael
Preparatory drawing for the *School of Athens*
ca. 1509
Black chalk and pen and brown ink
Oxford, Ashmolean, P II 552
Figure 5.20
Raphael
Preparatory drawing for the *Judgment of Solomon*
ca. 1511-12
Red chalk
Vienna, Albertina, IV, 189v
Figure 5.21
Raphael
*Study for the Massacre of the Innocents* (top)
cia. 1511-12
Red chalk
Vienna, Albertina, Bd.iv.189v
Figure 5.22
Raphael
*Compositional study for the Massacre of the Innocents*
ca. 1511-12
Pen and brown ink, red chalk, stylus, and pinpricking
London, British Museum, 1860,0414.446
Figure 5.23
Ghirlandaio
*The Massacre of the Innocents*
1486-90
Florence, Cappella Tornabuoni, Santa Maria Novella
Figure 5.24
Bernardino Jacopo Butinone (top), *Massacre of the Innocents*, 15th c., Detroit Institute of Arts
Matteo di Giovanni (bottom), *Massacre of the Innocents*, 1482, Siena, Sant’Agostino
Figure 5.25
Giovanni Angelo del Maino
*Massacre of the Innocents*
ca. 1520
Boston, Museum of Fine Arts
Figure 5.26
Baccio Bandinelli
*The Massacre of the Innocents*
1523
Engraving
Figure 5.27
Baccio Bandinelli (top), *The Martyrdom of Saint Lawrence*, ca. 1520, Engraving

Raphael (bottom), *The Death of Ananias*, 1515-16, London, Victoria and Albert Museum
Figure 5.28
Raphael
Preparatory Study for the *Adoration of the Magi* (Oddi Altarpiece predella)
cia. 1503
Pen over stylus and traces of black chalk
Sweden, Nationalmuseum, 296.
Figure 5.29
Raphael
Preparatory Drawing for the Baglioni *Entombment*
ca. 1506-07
Pen and brown ink over black chalk
Oxford, Ashmolean Museum, P II 532
Figure 5.30
Raphael
*A Group of Vintagers*
ca. 1504-08
Pen and brown ink, squared in black chalk
Oxford, Ashmolean, P II 524
Figure 5.31
Raphael
*Three Nude Men*
ca. 1504-08
Pen over traces of black chalk
London, British Museum, 1895.9.15.628
Figure 5.32
Raphael
Study for upper portion of Disputa (top), ca. 1508-09, Pen over stylus, London, British Museum, 1900.8.24.108
Study for lower left of Disputa (bottom), ca. 1508-09, Pen over traces of black chalk on right, stylus on left, pricked for transfer, Frankfurt, Staedel, 379
Figure 5.33
Raphael
*School of Athens*
1511-12
Vatican, Stanza della Segnatura
Figure 5.34
Raphael
*Compositional Study for the Massacre of the Innocents* (print below)
ca. 1510-11
Black charcoal pounce marks and red chalk over lead point
Windsor, Windsor Castle, 12737
Figure 5.35
Raphael
*Compositional Study for the Disputa*
ca. 1511-12
Brush and wash, white heightening, partly oxidized, over stylus, compass work, squared in black chalk
London, Windsor Castle, 12732
Figure 5.36
Raphael
*Disputa* (detail)
1511-12
Vatican, Stanza della Segnatura
Figure 5.37
Raphael
*The Four Soldiers*
ca. 1503
Silverpoint on blue-grey prepared paper
Oxford, Ashmolean Museum, 1846.154r
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