

**Imago Triumphalis:
The Function and
Significance of Triumphal
Imagery for Italian
Renaissance Rulers**

Margaret Ann Zaho

PETER LANG

Imago Triumphalis

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Introduction



The triumphal procession was a prominent and important iconographical tool used by Italian Renaissance rulers in an effort to create and enforce a powerful personal mythology. Independent rulers in fifteenth-century Italy used the motif of the Roman triumph or *pompa triumphalis*, for self-aggrandizement and personal expression. The image of the triumph, for them, became an immensely significant *concetto* used in the construction of their personal image.

The triumphal motif was personalized and used, often in a propagandistic fashion, to illustrate to the court and the public a ruler's individual admirable qualities. The iconographical construction of the triumphal motif remained virtually unchanged from its Roman prototype while its meaning and intention shifted radically depending upon who used it. Renaissance rulers engaged the motif in a variety of media and in both public and personal manifestations to exemplify and glorify their own personal identities.

The interest in triumphal arches, processions and imagery coincided with and was fostered by the revival of classical antiquity in all its forms which developed during the Renaissance. The triumphal arch and triumphal procession were recognized in the Renaissance as tangible and powerful bearers of meaning which immediately reflected the power and glory of classical antiquity. Furthermore, for Renaissance rulers, triumphal imagery represented a genre which was replete with connotations of power, victory, rulership, and splendor.

Pliny, in his *Natural History*, made clear the function of triumphal arches and their decoration. He explained that the Romans constructed arches in order to elevate the status of ordinary

men. Arches and their decoration were intended as propagandistic monuments that both honored and commemorated the power of the individual for whom they were constructed.

The Greek scholar, Manuel Chrysoloras, wrote a letter in 1411 to Pope John VIII in which he addressed the importance of Rome's ruins as an expression of the Roman mind. Chrysoloras described the ancient arches in Rome as monuments of incomparable splendor and beauty. He believed the arches served as glimpses into the classical past, and marveled at the historical accuracy of the details represented on the arches.¹

The enthusiasm of scholars such as Chrysoloras and Poggio Bracciolini and artists such as Nicola Pisano and Lorenzo Ghiberti helped to ignite the passion for antiquity during the Renaissance. From this resurgence Renaissance artists and rulers drew inspiration for commissions that would serve to honor and commemorate their rulership while echoing the style and sentiment of the classical past.

Alfonso of Aragon in Naples, Federico da Montefeltro of Urbino, Sigismondo Malatesta of Rimini, and Borso d'Este of Ferrara are prime examples of rulers who manipulated the triumphal motif into a grand and eloquent expression of their own personal character. The appeal of the motif and its power as a visual bearer of meaning is evident in each man's decision to incorporate the motif into their life and art. Each, however, incorporated the imagery in such a way as to benefit and reflect his own individual persona.

The versatility of triumphal imagery made it an almost irresistible motif to the Renaissance artist and ruler. The motif has the inherent capability to recall the classical past, the glory of Medieval pageantry as well as represent the humanist aesthetic. Further, it contains within its visual construct aspects of enthronement and coronation that make it quintessentially monarchical. The triumphal procession incorporates visual associations and decorative possibilities that are fundamentally regal and laudatory, qualities that are enticing and complimentary for any ruler. The flexibility and inherently hieratic quality of triumphal imagery made it a significant and dominant feature in

1. Michael Baxandall, *Giotto and the Orators: Humanist observers of painting in Italy and the discovery of pictorial composition 1350-1450*, Oxford, 1971, 80.

the iconographical vocabulary of the Renaissance ruler during the Quattrocento. No other single motif in Italian art has been so widely dispersed with such relative uniformity while being able to express such diverse meaning.

Several studies have focused on an encyclopedic survey of the triumphal motif in art but none has attempted to address why the motif was so prominent or how it was used. One of the earliest studies is Werner Weisbach's *Trionfi* published in Berlin in 1919. It is a brief survey of the motif primarily focused on its appearance in the Renaissance in a variety of media. That work has been superseded by the much more exhaustive survey, published in Italy in 1963 by Giovanni Carandente, entitled *I Trionfi nel Primo Rinascimento*. Carandente's work is a survey of the uses of the motif in art including the decorative arts and manuscripts. His study, which emphasizes the importance of Petrarch on all later manifestations of triumphal imagery, does not attempt an interpretive analysis of the function of the motif. A chronological survey of triumphal events enacted during the Renaissance has been compiled by Bonner Mitchell. His works, *Italian Civic Pageantry in the High Renaissance* and *The Majesty of State*, both include lists with brief descriptions of the triumphal parades, entries and progresses that occurred in Italy from the late fourteen hundreds through sixteen hundred. None of these studies, however, has addressed the purpose triumphal imagery served for rulers who often chose the motif for major artistic commissions in which they themselves were represented. It is the intent of this book to make the association between the use of the motif and its importance as a visual tool for Renaissance rulers as a means to construct images of themselves.

Chapter one addresses the classical origins of the motif and its appearance in both literature and art. It includes a discussion of the particulars of the triumphal event in the Roman world and its basis on Etruscan sources. Literary sources such as Pliny, Livy, and especially Josephus offer rich and elaborate descriptions of actual triumphal processions. Triumphal arches themselves, however, serve as the primary repositories of information about the visual character of the triumphal procession. Triumphal arches, like the Arch of Titus, often displayed a visual representation of the triumph they commemorate. These extant monuments, and fragments from lost monuments, offered artists a readily accessible and relatively uniform classical model to follow.

The triumphal motif as a decorative component on honorific monuments incorporated political propaganda with religious rites and Imperial power. For the classical Roman world the image of a triumph signaled victory, power, honor, and divine sanction.

Chapter two examines the shift in meaning that occurred during the Middle Ages. The Medieval period reinvented the Imperial Roman triumph and gave it a moralizing character. The triumphal procession lost its militaristic focus and became a sort of theatrical pageant whose focus was religious in nature. It became a vehicle, both literal and metaphorical, for the Christian liturgy. The Medieval triumph retained its antique associations of honor, power, victory and divine providence but redirected it into the service of the church and Christ.

It is directly from this synthesis of pagan antiquity and Christian religion that authors like Dante and Petrarch drew their inspiration. Petrarch used as his model classical sources, Dante's *Divine Comedy* and Boccaccio's *Amorosa Visione* to construct his epic poem, *I Trionfi*. In the poem Petrarch incorporated both the classical model of the triumphal procession as well as the allegorical and moralizing quality of the Medieval pageant. The structure of the poem as a series of six successive allegorical triumphs; Love, Chastity, Death, Fame, Time and Eternity, as well as its pictorial quality offered a model for all later manifestations of the triumphal motif, in both art and literature.

The earliest Renaissance representations of the triumphal motif follow Petrarch's model and were widely used in the decoration of wedding chests, birth trays, and other household objects. The narrative quality of the Triumphs and their inherent linear format made it an extremely popular choice for decoration. The popularity of the motif was due, in part, to the wide range of literary and classical allusions that it provided. The motif at once recalled classical antiquity, Medieval pageantry and the victorious triumph of virtue over vice.

During the second half of the Quattrocento the focus on the triumph's inherently decorative quality seems to have shifted. The narrative aspect was elaborated so that the dramatic elements of the triumphal procession became paramount. Moreover, the heightened interest in antiquity helped to realign interest in the motif as one that exemplified the classical world. The motif served to synthesize classical antiquity, Medieval allegory and Renaissance humanism. The representation of a triumph

contained, within one visual construct, artistic, poetic and historic associations that linked the classical and Christian past.

Chapter three focuses on the emergence of the individualization of the triumphal motif by powerful men. Alfonso of Aragon was one of the first of the Renaissance rulers in Italy to adopt the antique triumph as a personal device. Not only did he reenact a grand triumphal procession to mark his victorious entry into the city of Naples, but he had the event recorded in stone on the triumphal arch erected at the entrance to his castle. His early adaptation of the motif also proves to be the most closely linked and classically inspired example of all the later interpretations.

Chapter four examines two diametrically opposed despots and their uses for triumphal imagery. Sigismondo Malatesta, ruler of Rimini, used the triumphal motif in a variety of manifestations in his *Tempio Malatestiano*. He incorporated the triumph as a tool to express his own *all'antica* interests, his role as victorious general, his spiritual link to ancient Roman generals and his love for his mistress. Federico da Montefeltro, on the other hand, chose to have his own portrait, as well as that of his wife, backed with triumphal processions. These processions emphasize the allegorical nature of the triumph and were used to comment on the personal virtues of the ruler and his wife. Comparison of the two reveals the power of the motif to recall the victories of past rulers while maintaining a specificity necessary to serve as a personal commentary on the individual.

Chapter five examines the use of the triumphal motif in the late Quattrocento by Duke Borso d'Este. His commissioning of a series of frescoes for his palace exhibits a new complexity and function for the triumphal motif. The frescoes, which incorporate the iconography of the triumphal procession in combination with astrological, mythological, and daily life scenes, are complex and yet highly personalized. The artist Francesco della Cossa and the court astrologer devised a series of triumphal frescoes which illustrate not only the succession of the months but also the ideal city of Ferrara and the divinely providenced rule of Duke Borso d'Este.

The Quattrocento saw the height of the triumphal image as a personal device. By the early Cinquecento its function had shifted and it became the stuff of carnival pageants and marriage parades. Though it did not lose its popularity as a decorative theme, it did not retain its power as a tool in a ruler's self definition.

In summation, this study's intention is to establish that the revival of the image of the antique triumph during the Renaissance was a powerful propagandistic tool. Its popularity relied on the fact that the image of the triumphal procession could at once suggest victory, antiquity, perpetuity, and power. Moreover, artists and rulers recognized the malleable quality of the triumphal motif to both retain its classical associations and function as a highly personalized commentary. Ultimately, there was perhaps no better single image to convey the wide array of political, hierarchical and humanistic concepts so important in the self promotion and image of the Renaissance ruler.

The History of the Roman Triumph



This chapter focuses on the early history of the triumphal procession and traces its development from Near Eastern militaristic and Greek religious origins. It further examines the Etruscan civilizations' incorporation of the triumphal procession into religious ceremonies and the basic components that were developed in connection with it, including the chariot, dress, insignia and general processional organization. The latter sections discuss the Roman triumphal procession in both its Republican and Imperial manifestations as well as its importance as an honorific ceremony. Finally, there is a discussion of the event and its record in literature and in the triumphal arches which were built to commemorate the event itself.

Eastern Origins

The archetype of the Roman triumphal procession did not originate in Italy. Instead it was an amalgamation of early Near Eastern military parades and Greek religious processions that were then filtered through the Etruscan civilization.¹

The Greeks and Etruscans derived the Near Eastern influence from Asia Minor. Assyrian relief panels from the palace of Ashurbanipal in Nineveh, Mesopotamia, show an early example of a military victory procession (fig. 1). The stone bas-relief panel shows the king seated under a canopy riding in a great two-wheeled chariot. The king's chariot, preceded by soldiers and bound captives, is being led to inspect booty after the victorious

1. Thomas Payne, *The Roman Triumph*, London, 1962, 17.

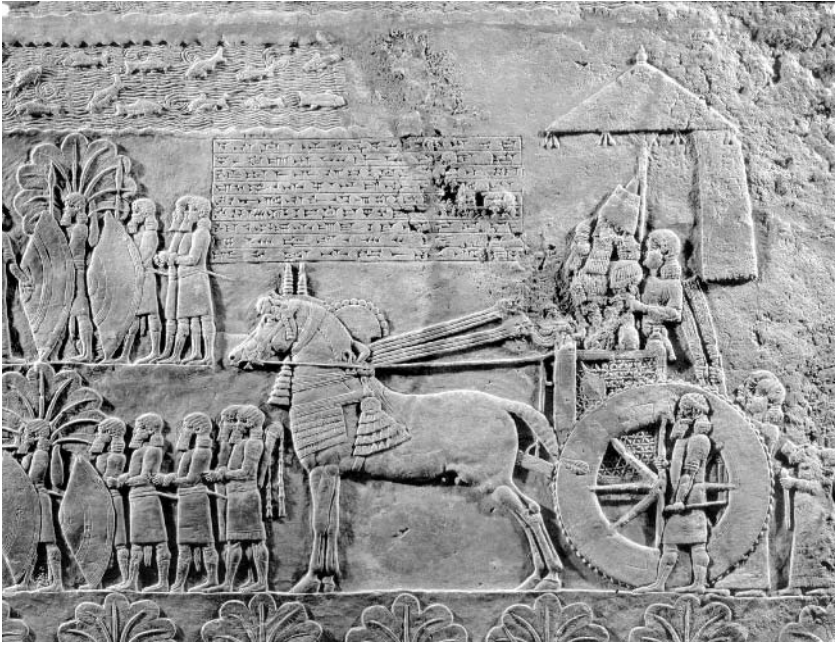


FIGURE 1. *King Ashurbanipal riding in a triumphal procession*, from the Palace of Ashurbanipal, Nineveh. c.668-627 B.C. Stone bas-relief, British Museum, London. Copyright Erich Lessing/Art Resource, NY.

battle against Elam. Some literary accounts survive which record these military processions. One ancient text relates how a victorious king beheaded his opponents and then paraded their severed heads through the streets of Nineveh. The text states that the whole procession was accompanied by musicians who sang and played the harp.²

The event of a grand procession was also an essential element of worship in Greek religion.³ Although the forms of various religious festivals varied, a common feature was an elaborate procession in which a statue or some ritual object would be carried through the streets on a prescribed route stopping at various important points along the way until it reached a temple or sacred site. The most important events of the Greek calendar were punctuated by these types of grand processions;

2. *Ibid.*, 17.

3. E.E. Rice, *The Grand Procession of Ptolemy Philadelphus*, London, 1983, 26.

they were an integral part of the Athenian Panathenaia as well as the Olympic festival.⁴

Alexander the Great and his tradition of victory celebration seems to have altered the original function of the Greek procession to one that included the army as a vital participant. This participation of the army in the procession seems to have gradually subverted the original religious emphasis to one of a more secular nature.⁵ The procession became an honorable ceremony in and of itself and the religious aspect became practically subservient to its secular nature.

The procession of Ptolemy Philadelphus is an example of such a Hellenistic procession. The event was recorded in a work by Kallixeinos of Rhodes entitled *About Alexandria*.⁶ The very long but fragmentary text describes a large and elaborate civic procession in which is contained several smaller processions in honor of the gods, deified mortals and other personifications from nature.⁷ Unfortunately the precise date and purpose of the event are not recorded by the author. However, in a preface to a larger book which contains this fragment another author does state that the procession occurred in Alexandria during the reign of Ptolemy II Philadelphus.⁸ Scholars have dated this event to between 279 and 270 B.C. and speculated that it was a part of one of three major Ptolemeic celebrations of that period.⁹ Also significant is that this fragment is the earliest literary account of a Greek religious festival that has survived.

The most detailed and complete section from this fragment is the portion that relates the procession of Dionysius. It is within this portion that the similarities between this Greek religious festival and the later Roman triumphal processions emerge.

4. Ibid., 26.

5. Ibid., 27. While it is true that the civilian army did take part in the Panatheniac procession and ceremony, as is evidenced in the Parthenon frieze, they did so only as part of the civilian population in honor of the city and goddess and without adding a military connotation.

6. Ibid., 1.

7. Ibid.

8. Ibid., 1. This fragment on the procession by Kallixeinos of Rhodes is included as a part of the fifth book of the *Deipnosophistai* by Athenaeus of Naucratis. It is that author who wrote the preface which includes the information about the date.

9. Ibid., 5. It could have been a part of Philadelphus' coronation, his marriage to Arsinoe II, or perhaps the deification of Ptolemy I.

Most striking perhaps is the general arrangement of the procession with priests and musicians, dressed in purple robes and crowned with ivy, leading a long parade of figures and large 4-wheeled carts displaying images of the gods. From the fragmentary description, there were thousands of participants and a large number of animals, including dogs, sheep, leopards and cheetahs, in the event.¹⁰ The climax of the procession, also preserved, records that some fifty-thousand foot soldiers and twenty-three thousand mounted soldiers led three golden chariots bearing gold statues honoring Ptolemy I, his wife Berenike and their son Ptolemy Philadelphus.¹¹

Greek Etymology

Evidence of a connection between a Greek historical concept and the Roman triumph comes from the Greek language itself. The Latin author Varro attributes the Latin exclamation 'triumpe' to a Greek word θριᾶμβος (*thriambos*).

He further explains that here are no other connections made between the Latin word *triumpe* and any earlier Latin word.¹² The phonetic shift from the Greek word *thriambos* to the Latin *triumpe* is not explained by Varro, since in strict translation the word in Latin should have become *triambos*. The shift to *triumpe* then can only be explained by the intervention of another form of the word which comes from the Etruscans.¹³ Due to the shift in vowel from a to u it would appear that the Greek word entered the Etruscan language at about the end of the sixth century B.C.¹⁴

The function of the word "triumpe" was originally as an exclamation. It is recorded as a shout that was repeated five times at the end of a poem entitled *Carmen Arvale*. The *Carmen Arvale*

10. *Ibid.*, 19.

11. *Ibid.*, 25.

12. H.S. Versnel, *Triumphus: An Inquiry into the Origin, Development and Meaning of the Roman Triumph*, London, 1970. Versnel devotes an entire chapter to the etymology of the word triumph.

13. Larissa Bonfante Warren, "Roman Triumphs and Etruscan Kings: The Changing Face of the Triumph," *The Journal of Roman Studies* 60 (1970): 52.

14. Larissa Bonfante Warren, "Roman Triumphs and Etruscan Kings: The Latin word Triumphus," in *Studies Honor of J. Alexander Kerns*, eds. Robert Loughton and M. Saltzer, The Hague, 1970, 111.

was a poem, or perhaps song, which was addressed to the god Mars and was shouted or exclaimed during a victory procession.¹⁵

Etruscan Influences

The Roman triumphal ceremony, like the word triumph itself, is therefore not an originally Roman phenomenon, but is instead derivative of an ancient Etruscan sacral ceremony.¹⁶ The form taken over by the Romans comes most probably from about the sixth century B.C. the period of the Etruscan monarchy in Rome. All of the most basic components of the Roman triumph come from the Etruscans; the name, the dress and insignia, the chariot, the organization of the procession, and the goal of the procession at the top of the Capitoline Hill.¹⁷ Etruscan reliefs from tombs and sarcophagi, as well as frescoes clearly depict a number of these early processions, some which appear to be religious in nature and others that are clearly more militaristic.

The religious processions of the Etruscan priests, the *lucumenes*, clearly served as a model for the Roman triumph.¹⁸ When the *lucumenes* appeared in public they dressed in elaborate robes and rode in horse-drawn chariots. They were preceded by lictors who carried fasces, the double headed axes which were symbols of sovereignty, while musicians heralded their arrival.¹⁹ A fifth-century B.C. relief from a terracotta sarcophagus from Cerveteri, in southern Italy, depicts an early version of one of these processions (fig. 2). The *lucumene* is depicted wearing a long white robe, standing and riding in a horse drawn chariot. Leading the procession is a group of figures who carry ritual objects and who play music to herald the arrival of the honored man.

Although not much is known about these early ceremonies, it

15. See Versnel for a translation of the "*Carmen Arvale*" and Warren for a description and discussion of the poem as a prayer connected with Etruscan musical processions.

16. *Ibid.*, 7.

17. Warren, *Changing Face*, 57.

18. Payne, *Roman Triumph*, 22. The Etruscan King was called the *Lucumo*.

19. *Ibid.*, 22.



FIGURE 2. *Etruscan sarcophagus of the magistrate of Cerveteri showing a triumphal procession, Cerveteri. c. 5th century B.C. Terracotta, Museo Gregoriano Etrusco, Vatican Museums, Vatican State. Copyright Scala/Art Resource, NY.*

is clear that the Romans subsumed a great portion of this ceremony into the later Roman triumphal ceremony. The historian Florus records that the Romans borrowed from the Etruscans all the implements of the triumph including, fasces, robes of state, official chairs, rings, horse trappings, military cloaks, purple-bordered togas, the gilded chariot drawn by four horses, the embroidered robes and tunics adorned with palms, even the trumpeters who preceded the procession.²⁰

By the second century B.C. the Romans had begun to change and adapt many of the originally Etruscan aspects of the triumphal procession. The ceremony, under the Romans, became more opulent, more luxurious and more Roman. Evidence of this shift toward a more opulent aspect is the fact that the triumphal costume was significantly altered during this period. The originally Etruscan *toga purpurea* (purple toga) was replaced by the *toga picta* which was decorated with elaborate designs in gold thread.

A particularly Roman quality added to this Etruscan ceremony was the personal prestige the procession brought to the individual

20. *Ibid.*, 23.

honored. The Etruscans had kept the focus on the god Jupiter and the sacrificial ceremonies that were performed at the Capitoline. By the second century B.C. the Romans had already begun to focus more and more on the individual victor and the emphasis of the ceremony itself as a public display and exaltation of the triumphator.

The triumphator is in essence, in the earliest examples of the Etruscan triumph, the representative of the god Jupiter. Moreover, in keeping with the Etruscan religion, since the triumphator wore the crown of Jupiter, the *ornatus Iovis*, and the paint that made his face red, he is the god made manifest.²¹

This concept however does not survive into the Republican period and the separation between god and man as representative remains clear. This separation is made evident both during the triumphal ceremony and at the end. During the actual procession a slave rode in the chariot with the victorious general and held a victory wreath above the victor's head and whispered in his ear "look behind you and remember that you are a man."²² Another way in which the victor was humbled was that at the end of the celebration the triumphator was required to return to the god what belonged to him, including the red paint, the robes and the crown.²³

The Roman Triumph

By the Republican period in Rome there was not just one event generally referred to as a triumph, there were three. There was the triumph proper, the event we are concerned with here, the *ovatio*, and the triumph on Mount Albanus.²⁴ In Republican

21. Versnel, *Triumphus*, 92.

22. *Ibid.*, 57.

23. *Ibid.*, 92.

24. Warren, *Changing Face*, 50. The three triumphs are related in that the triumph proper is both the oldest of the events as well as the most honorable, the *ovatio*, first held in 503 B.C. is similar to the triumph except that the victorious general is not called the triumphator and is not dressed as such nor does he ride to the capitol in a chariot. The triumph on Mount Albanus, first held in 231 B.C., is the least honorific event in that the general could celebrate this event without permission, and it is held entirely outside the city.

times the event of a triumphal procession was first and foremost a religious or sacramental rite. It was an event focused on purification and thanksgiving and it was performed in glorification of and supplication to the god Jupiter Optimus Maximus.²⁵ It seems there were at least one hundred triumphs held in the years between 220 and 70 B.C.²⁶

The triumph, whether Republican or Imperial, served three distinct purposes. First the ceremony was a way to acknowledge the power and the victories of the Roman army while it also served to purify the victor, soldiers, and the city, of the blood and guilt associated with war. Second, the ceremony was used to appease and honor the gods for their role in the victory and finally the ceremony was a way to justify military campaigns to the senate and people of Rome.²⁷

The triumphal procession itself, from its earliest manifestation, followed the same general rules and route. Since the triumphal procession was in honor of the god Jupiter and was in its earliest manifestations a sacrificial and cleansing rite the victorious general could not enter the city until after he had informed the senate of his victory from outside the city limits, or *pomerium*, in the temple of Bellona. The senate then voted on the granting of the triumph only if certain specific qualifications had been met.

By the first century B.C. specific qualifications had been laid down as to the terms by which a general could be granted a triumph. First, he must be a magistrate with *imperium*, meaning the right of command. He must have defeated his foreign enemy in a just war; just in the sense that it was originally sanctioned and declared as a war and that it was proven necessary for the survival of Rome. Civil wars and wars against slaves were excluded. The general must have killed at least five thousand men, and by 62 B.C. this number had to be sworn to with an oath. He must return with prisoners and trophies, preferably the gods from the fallen city. Finally, before a triumph could be granted, the war must have been brought to a complete end,

25. *Ibid.*, 14.

26. H.H. Scullard, *Festivals and Ceremonies of the Roman Republic*, Ithica, 1981, 213.

27. Peter Holliday, "Roman Triumphal Painting: Its Function, Development, and Reception," *Art Bulletin*, March 1997, 132.

important because the soldiers needed to be free to return to Rome to take part in the triumphal procession. If all of these conditions were met then the general could be granted the right of a triumph.

The Triumphal Procession and Route

The preparations for the ceremony began outside the sacred boundaries of the city in the Campus Martius northwest of the city center. Here the victorious general would address his troops and here too they were required to leave all of their weapons. The triumphal procession then would enter the city proper through the Porta Triumphalis. The procession then followed a counter-clockwise route past the Forum Boarium and the Circus Maximus around the Palatine Hill and finally onto the Via Sacra. Once on the Via Sacra the procession traversed the whole of the Forum Romanum passing the temple of Vesta and the Regia. The procession then led past the site of the temple of Saturn and up the steep slope to the Capitoline finally reaching the temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus.²⁸

The actual procession and its arrangement remained virtually unchanged from the earliest period.²⁹ At the head of the procession came the magistrates and senators, as the leaders of the procession they were visible reminders of the state's approval of the event itself. Next came the trumpeters and the first of many carts which carried the spoils of war, such as arms and armor as well as treasure, later there would be carts that served as *tableau vivants* with re-enactments of portions of the battles, accompanying the carts would also be paintings carried on large placards as well as slogans. Then came the laurel crowns that had been presented to

28. See several different sources for the route including Payne, Holliday and Versnel. For a later route see Ena Makin, "The Triumphal Route with particular reference to the Flavian Triumph," *Journal of Roman Studies* 11 (1921): 25–36.

29. The actual procession simply became more grandiose throughout time with the additions of more carts and particularly the addition of *tableau vivant*. In some instances the procession of booty and men was so large that the actual ceremony lasted two or three days with specific portions to be held on different days.

the general by the defeated towns and capitals and following them came two sacrificial garlanded white oxen led by priests. Next came the triumphator himself pulled in a four-horse drawn chariot or quadriga. Following the triumphator came the lictors who carried the sacred fasces accompanied by dancers and singers and after them any Roman citizens who may have been freed from slavery as a result of the victory. Behind this grand procession marched the army who shouted praises and "*io triumphe*."³⁰

Numerous literary accounts survive to attest to the grandeur and splendor of such events. Writers such as Livy, Pliny and Plutarch recorded many of these commemorative triumphal processions. However, the most detailed account of any of these processions is by the Jewish author Flavius Josephus.³¹

Josephus recorded the event of Titus' triumphal return to Italy from Jerusalem in book seven of his *Jewish War*.³² Before his description of the procession, Josephus points out that Titus, Vespasian and Domitian decided to have one triumph in common even though the senate had awarded a separate triumph for each of them.³³ The author states rather humbly that he cannot adequately describe the glory and splendor of the event.³⁴

Josephus' account is important not only because it is an eye witness account of an Imperial triumph but also because he includes information about the preliminary events, the triumphal route as well as a vivid and detailed description of all of the major elements involved.

Josephus' account begins with his description of the event on the night prior to the procession. He recounts how the emperors or 'imperatores' spent the evening in the Campus Martius near the temple of Isis and Serapis and that they awoke at dawn and moved to a tribunal where ivory thrones had been prepared for

30. Ibid.

31. Flavius Josephus dates are c. A.D. 37-100. He was spared by Vespasian during the Jewish Revolt and was witness to the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. He was brought to Rome, witnessed the triumphal return of Vespasian and Titus and eventually wrote two important works; *Jewish Antiquities* and *Jewish War*. He was offered Imperial favors hence his name "Flavius."

32. Josephus, *The Jewish War: Books V-VII*, trans., H. St. J. Thackeray, Cambridge, 1997, Loeb Classical Library, 341-353. See also, *The Works of Josephus*, trans., William Whiston Peabody, 1987; 756-758.

33. Ibid., 343.

34. Ibid., 347.

them. They were dressed in triumphal robes of purple silk and wore crowns of laurel on their heads. From this tribunal they addressed the senate and chief magistrates and then devoutly recited prayers. After prayers the soldiers were invited to a breakfast provided to them by the Emperors. After the breakfast the Emperors were escorted to the *Porta Triumphalis* where they performed sacrifices in front of statues of the gods.

From this place the triumph proper began on its way, including in its journey three theaters, so that as many spectators as possible were afforded an opportunity to see the procession.³⁵ Josephus' account includes detailed descriptions of the elaborate costumes and jewels that adorned the participants as well as lengthy descriptions of the booty carried in procession including gold, silver, ivory and other precious materials.³⁶ Another important aspect of his account is his attention to the "moving stages" that were a large part of the procession.³⁷ He described these moving stages as being three or four stories high and being made of a framework of gold and wrought ivory. He continues to explain that the purpose of such moving stages was to show the events of the war to the public by numerous narrative representations acted out on elaborate moving carts.³⁸ The stages even included a captive enemy general of one of the captured cities posed in the attitude in which he had been taken. Following these stages came the carts that bore the spoils from the Temple of Jerusalem, including trumpets, the golden shew-bread table, a seven-branched Menorah and a copy of the Jewish Law. Behind the carts that displayed all the spoils from the temple came a group carrying gold and ivory images of victory.

Finally, at the end of the grand triumphal procession, rode Vespasian followed by Titus and then Domitian who "rode beside them in magnificent apparel and mounted on a steed that was itself a sight."³⁹ The *Imperator's* destination was the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus at which point he halted and waited for

35. Ena Makin "The Triumphal Route, With Particular Reference to the Flavian Triumph," *Journal of Roman Studies* 11 (1921). See for a description of the triumphal route and its variations.

36. Josephus, *The Jewish War*, 347.

37. *Ibid.*, 349.

38. *Ibid.*

39. *Ibid.*

the execution of the enemy's general to be performed. After the executions the Emperor and his sons gave sacrifices and said prayers of thanksgiving.

This elaborate triumph, according to Josephus, served three specific purposes; it celebrated a great victory over Rome's enemies, it ended civil dissension and it brought the city hope for eternal felicity.⁴⁰

Roman Triumphal Arches

The largest and most conspicuous record of these processions survives in the triumphal arches built and decorated to honor and mark these events.⁴¹ The form of the triumphal arch, like the ceremony that prompted its construction, was dependent on the Etruscans. The arch itself, most probably, derived its architectural shape from Etruscan portals. These Etruscan portals were often wide single bay arches that were elaborately decorated and served as gates or portals to cities.⁴²

At its most basic the triumphal arch is both an arcuated portal and a statuary base. The earliest Roman arches however were not referred to by the word arch (*arcus*) instead they were called *for-nix*. Interestingly there was a dramatic shift in terminology at the exact moment that the Republic shifted to Empire. Imperial arches have always been referred to solely as *arcus*. This shift coincides with a change in policy dictated by Augustus that no

40. *Ibid.*, 353.

41. The literature on triumphal arches is vast, see Brilliant, *The Arch of Septimius Severus in the Roman Forum*, Rome, 1967. De Maria, *Gli Archi Onorari*, Roma, 1988. Frothingham, "A Revised List of Roman Memorial and Triumphal Arches," *American Journal of Archaeology* 8 (1904). Hadriell, "Roman Arches and Greek Honors" *The Cambridge Philological Society* 36 (1990). Kleiner, *The Arch of Nero in Rome*, Rome, 1985. Kleiner, "The Study of Roman Triumphal and Honorary Arches 50 years after Kähler," *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 2 (1989): 195-206. Mansuelli, *Studi sull'Arco Onorario Romano*, Roma, 1979. Noack, *Triumph und Triumphbogen*, Berlin, 1925/26. Pallottino, *Arco Onorario e Trionfale*, 1958. Pierce, "The Arch of Constantine" *Art History* 12 (December 1989): 387-418. Planter, *The Topography and Monuments of Ancient Rome*, Boston, 1911. Versnel, *Triumphus*, Leiden, 1970.

42. The cities of Perugia and Volterra both preserve excellent examples of Etruscan portals.

one except an Emperor would be granted a triumphal procession. Therefore the *fornix* is a term which applies solely to arches that were built during the Republican period.

There is a clear distinction both socially and politically between the arches built during the Republican period and those from the Imperial period. The Imperial arches were honorific monuments given by decree of the senate and therefore sanctioned by not only the senate but the people of Rome as a privilege to honor the Emperor and his name. This was not the case with Republican *fornices*; these monuments were put up on the initiative of the honoree himself and paid for with his own money; he needed nor requested any permission to build his own monument.⁴³ It has further been suggested that these early *fornices* were not even necessarily built in connection with any triumphal procession at all. They in some instances may have been erected as votive arches in honor of a wealthy patron.⁴⁴

The two basic forms for the honorific arch, single-bay and triple-bay, were both used as early as the second century B.C. and were not limited to either Republican or Imperial time periods. The first *fornix* constructed in association with an actual triumph was built in honor of Quintus Fabius Maximus in 120 B.C. This *fornix* was the first to be set up in the civic center of Rome, where it stood near the Regia and marked the entrance to the forum Romanum. Information about the arch and its decoration can be gleaned from both literary and physical remains. The arch seems to have been a single bay construction less than five meters wide with a Doric frieze and surmounted by a sculptural group probably representing the three triumphatores of the Fabia family.⁴⁵

In its evolution from a private Republican monument to an Imperial honorific one, the arch and its decoration, acquired a specifically propagandistic role. The monumental decorated triumphal arch became a significant and immediately recognizable

43. Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, "Roman Arches and Greek Honors: The Language of Power at Rome," *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society* 36 (1990): 146. See this for a concise discussion of the terminology of *fornix* versus *arcus* and its literary basis.

44. Kleiner, *Arch of Nero*, 15.

45. *Ibid.*, 17. See for a lengthy description of the monument and a reconstruction sketch.

emblem of the power of the Empire. Its role, particularly outside of the city of Rome and even more so outside of Italy, was to announce and demarcate the presence of the Emperor and the laws of the state.

The Decoration of Triumphal Arches

The decoration of Imperial triumphal arches developed from simple ornamentation to more complex decorative programs. Architectural elements such as moldings, cornices, and columns became more and more elaborate while the entire surface of the monument became more densely and ornately enriched.⁴⁶ The decoration, like the monument itself, served honorific and propagandistic purposes. It was intended to both commemorate and celebrate the triumph and triumphator. The decorations served as constant visual reminders of the glory and splendor of the triumphal procession and also served to record it for history.⁴⁷

The arch of Titus in Rome is perhaps the best example of how the decoration of these arches was intended to illustrate and record the events of the triumph itself.⁴⁸ The arch is a single bay arch erected in 81 A.D. in honor of Titus' victory over the Jewish revolt (fig. 3).⁴⁹

The interior passageway is decorated with reliefs illustrating the actual triumphal procession of Titus. On the right side, as one faces the forum, the relief depicts the Emperor Titus standing, driving his horse drawn chariot. Behind him is a winged victory who crowns his head with a laurel wreath (fig. 4). On the opposite side the relief depicts soldiers parading the spoils of war. Particularly clear are the seven-branched menorah and other sacred objects taken from the temple in Jerusalem (fig. 5). Interestingly, the

46. Brilliant, *Roman Art*, 122.

47. Kleiner, *Arch of Nero*, 17. The first fornix constructed in association with an actual triumph was built in honor of Quintus Fabius Maximus in 120 B.C. The arch seems to have been a single bay construction less than five meters wide with a Doric frieze running below the attic. At least three 'portrait' statues stood on top of the monument probably representing the three triumphatores of the Fabia family, with an attic inscription naming them.

48. Hannestad, *Roman Art*, 124.

49. *Ibid.*, 126.



FIGURE 3. Arch of Titus, Rome. c. A.D. 81. Copyright Scala/Art Resource, NY.

reliefs echo the actual directional movement of the procession that led from the Colosseum toward the Capitol.⁵⁰

Another remarkable triumphal procession was recorded on a series of eleven relief panels dated to c. A.D. 176.⁵¹ The reliefs depict scenes from a triumph (or triumphs) of Marcus Aurelius and

50. *Ibid.*, 128.

51. Inez Scott Ryberg, *Panel Reliefs of Marcus Aurelius*, New York, 1967.

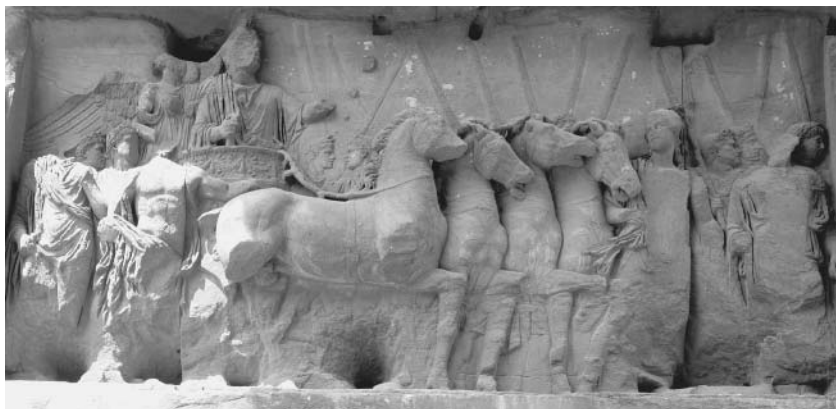


FIGURE 4. *Triumphal procession of Emperor Titus*, marble relief from interior passageway, Arch of Titus, Rome. c. A.D. 81.
Copyright Scala/Art Resource, NY.

were probably a part of a triumphal arch or arches dedicated to him in on the Capitoline.⁵² An arch dedicated to Marcus Aurelius was destroyed in the fourth century A.D. and its reliefs were on display until 1515 in the church of Santa Martina al Foro. One of the panels depicts the Emperor, bearded and wearing a toga, riding in a triumphal chariot drawn by four horses (fig. 6). Directly behind him, perched on the edge of the chariot, is a winged figure of victory who places a wreath upon his head.⁵³ The figure of Commodus once rode in the chariot with Marcus Aurelius, but due to his *damnatio memoriae*, he was erased thereby resulting in the awkward placement of the figure of victory. The upper portion of the chariot is decorated with reliefs depicting three Roman gods. Neptune is at the far left, nude and holding his trident, Roma is seated in the center fully draped except for one bare breast, and Minerva stands at the right wearing a helmet and carrying a shield. The lower portion reveals two winged victories. The chariot is preceded by a single *lictor* and a trumpeter.⁵⁴ The location of the procession is indicated through the low relief image of a temple in the background. Like the Arch of Titus relief

52. *Ibid.*, There is some debate as to the monument or monuments to which these panels once belonged.

53. The position of the winged victory, poised somewhat on the edge of the back of the chariot, is unique.

54. The usual group of ten to twelve *lictors* is here reduced to one.



FIGURE 5. *Procession of Spoils from the Temple in Jerusalem*, marble relief from interior passageway, Arch of Titus, Rome. c. A.D. 81. Copyright Erich Lessing/Art Resource, NY.

panels the procession is depicted at the moment it arrives at the entrance to a triumphal arch.

The type and location of decoration on arches became regularized over time and a triumphal artistic repertoire was created which became relatively standardized throughout the Empire.⁵⁵ The top of the arch was usually topped by a gilded bronze sculptural group representing the triumphal chariot carrying the figure of the triumphator. Often there were also subsidiary figures such as personifications of victory, as well as the animals which drew the chariot. The attic portion of the monument was generally reserved for dedicatory inscriptions which would not only name and praise the victor, including a reference to his military success, but declare the senate's sanctioning of the monument.⁵⁶ A narrow band just below the cornice was reserved for a long continuous frieze which often depicted, in abbreviated forms, an actual triumphal procession. The spandrels surrounding the center arch were almost exclusively reserved for figures of winged victories bearing standards. The piers, the podia which held free-standing sculptures and the interior passageways were also areas of concentration. Even the vaults of the passageways

55. Hannestad, *Roman Art*, 17.

56. *Ibid.*, 18.

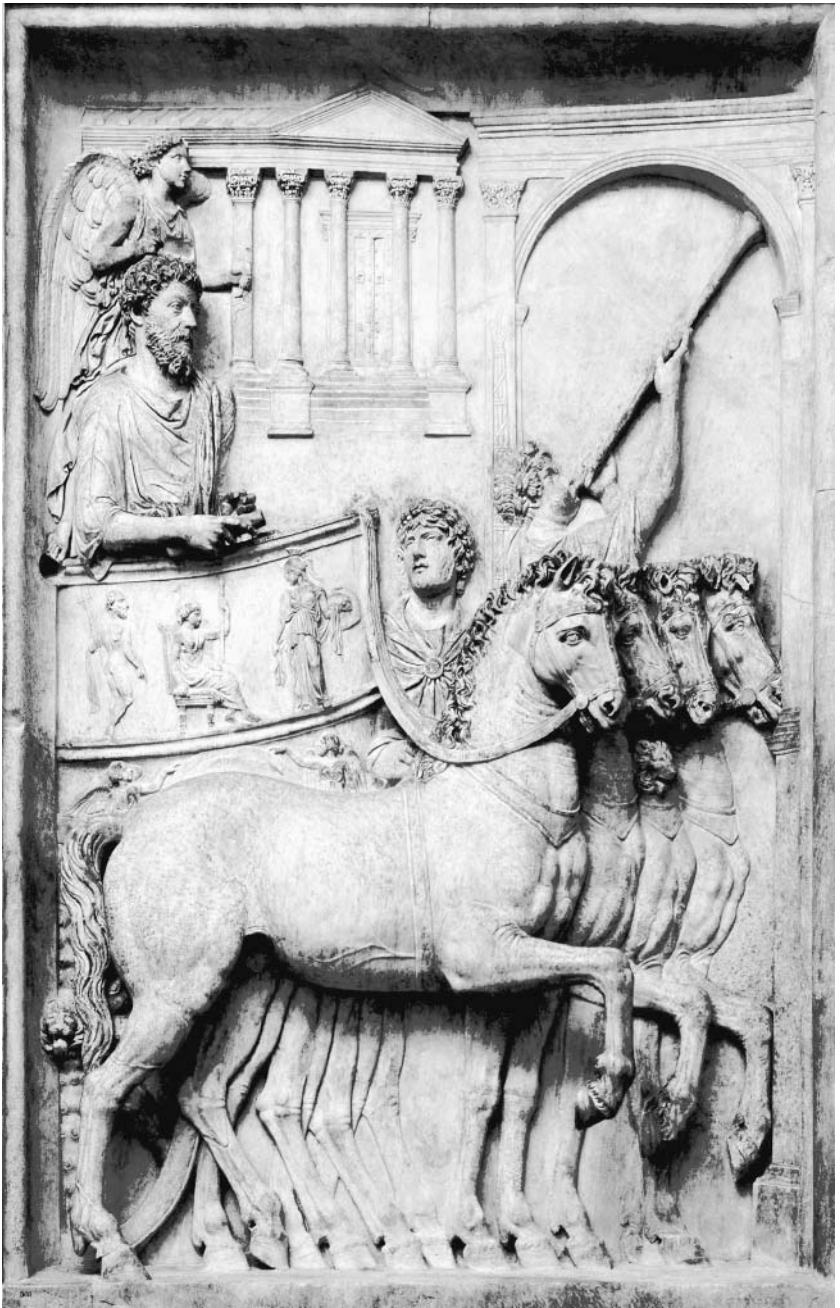


FIGURE 6. *Triumph of Marcus Aurelius*, marble panel from triumphal arch or monument, Rome. c. 176–180 A.D. Palazzo dei Conservatori, Rome. Copyright Nimatallah/Art Resource, NY.

were ornamented with deeply recessed coffers and occasionally a small inset figural panel at the apex.⁵⁷

Ultimately, what the decoration of these monuments reveals to the spectator is a glorious and sometimes ostentatious display of power. The decoration, like the arch itself, is intended to serve as a reminder of the wealth and splendor of the triumphal processions.

The decoration records and illustrates for the viewer the events that led to the monument's erection and reminds future generations of past glories. The arch and its decoration also serves as personal testimony to the *virtù* of the Emperor. Moreover, it acts as huge politically motivated billboard intended to convey messages about honor, conquest, victory, power, domestic wealth and security, and eternity.

57. Brilliant, *Roman Art*, 124. The arches of Titus and Trajan include the small inset panel at the apex, although they show different types of scenes.

The Evolution of the Triumph in Literature and Art



Chapter two examines the development of the antique triumphal procession from a historical event into a literary and artistic motif. It discusses the shift in meaning and function from an event in celebration of emperors, military victories, and pagan gods to one reserved for Christ and the Church. The chapter explores how authors, especially Petrarch, used the imagery of the triumphal procession as an allegorical tool to express the triumph of Christian virtue. The chapter ends with a discussion of the popularity of the triumphal motif in early Renaissance art.

The End of an Ancient Tradition

The classical Roman triumph is generally considered to have ended in A.D. 554 with the triumphal procession of Narses, a Byzantine general in the service of the Emperor Justinian. While his triumph through the streets of Rome possessed all the elements of earlier triumphs, including the victorious general in his chariot, bound captives, carts of booty and soldiers bearing trophies, it did not retain its original impact or meaning.¹

From that point forward processions, once directly related to military victory, took on a more sacramental quality. Triumphal

1. Payne, *Roman Triumph*, 209. It was no longer in honor of the Roman gods, it was not sanctioned by the Senate, and the ruling Emperor who granted it now reigned from Constantinople.

processions evolved into civic pageants that in no way matched the splendor of their earlier Roman predecessors. The once elaborate victory processions intended to exalt the Roman Emperor to the status of the gods were redirected to exalt the one Christian God. Christ became, for the Christian world, the triumphant ruler of heaven and earth and assumed the position formerly reserved for Roman Emperors. Christ himself, the Church personified, the Pope, or the Holy Roman emperors, became the only ones worthy of a triumphal victory parade.²

Charlemagne, with the blessing of Pope Adrian I, was awarded a triumphant entry into the city of Rome on April 2, A.D. 774.³ The processional route was lined with worshipers, nobles, and children who waved branches of olive and laurel. The ceremony was very much as it had been in classical Rome except that the goal was the Vatican and St. Peter's not the Capitoline. Papal triumphs replaced the classical Imperial processions yet they recalled classical notions of power, honor, and splendor. The elaborate papal processions redirected the focus of the event from the pagan Emperors to the Christian ruler of the church on earth.

The triumphal procession of Pope Innocent III in 1198 exhibited a concentrated effort to revive the style of the classical triumph. The Pope rode on horseback through the city, preceded by cardinals, bishops and priests and followed by representatives of civil authority. The city streets were decorated with temporary arches and strewn with flowers marking the processional route. At his consecration ceremony the Pope declared himself the Vicar of Jesus Christ and stated that in his role as Pope he was under God but above man.⁴ The final act of the Pope was to say prayers at the grave of Saint Peter; an act not so far removed from the Roman triumphator's sacrifice at the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus.

It is clear that even with the rise of Christianity the classical triumph did not lose its appeal, it was simply usurped by the Christian church. The themes of victory and triumph remained

2. *Ibid.*, 213.

3. *Ibid.*, 214. See also Roman Catholic Church, *Liber Pontificalis: The Lives of the Eighth-Century Popes*, trans., Raymond Davis, Liverpool, 1995. Pope Adrian is also referred to as Hadrian I.

4. *Ibid.*, 216.

in the collective consciousness only now they were imbued with a Christian meaning and purpose.⁵

Dante and the Literary Tradition

Perhaps more significant for the shift from a classical antique triumph to a 'modern' Christian one was the literary contribution made by Italian authors during the fourteenth century. Authors writing on the subject of the classical triumph took its basic form and grafted onto it ideas of medieval chivalry, classical mythology and Christian ideology thereby transforming the imagery of the Roman Imperial triumph into a vehicle for much more complex and allegorical meanings.⁶

It was Dante, closely followed by Petrarch, who first used the imagery and theme of the classical pagan triumph to express complex Christological and allegorical concepts.⁷ In the *Purgatorio* Dante uses the imagery of the classical Roman triumph to express his allegorical interpretation of the power and glory of the Church Triumphant. In Canto XXIX Dante relates his vision of a heavenly pageant in descriptive terms that recalled the Roman triumph, "Lo spazio dentro a lor quattro contenne un carro, in su due rote, triunfale, ch'al collo d'un grifon tirato venne."⁸ Later, in the same Canto, Dante makes a specific allusion to the classical Roman triumph, "Non che Roma di carro così bello rallegrasse Affricano o vero Augusto, ma quel del sol sarai pover con ello."⁹ Dante chose to use the triumphal motif in the *Purgatorio* at perhaps the most pivotal juncture of the work thereby initiating the motif, in literary terms, as a significant and illustrative emblem to express the highest standards of Christian splendor and

5. See Gordon Kipling, *Enter the King: Theatre, Liturgy, and Ritual in the Medieval Civic Triumph*, Oxford, 1988, for a discussion of the implicit qualities in all processions both religious and civic.

6. Roy Strong, *Art and Power: Renaissance Festivals 1450-1650*, London, 1984, 44.

7. Robert J. Quinones, "'Upon this Bank and Shoal of Time': Triumph Literature in Dante and Petrarch," in *Time, Literature and the Arts: Essays in Honor of Samuel L. Macey*, Victoria, 1994, 36.

8. Dante, *The Purgatorio*, trans., Allen Mandelbaum, Berkeley, 1982, 270; 106-108.

9. *Ibid.*, 272; 115-117.

honor.¹⁰ Aldo Bernardo states succinctly the importance of the triumphal motif for authors:

The triumph form attracted imitators because it allowed a dazzling display of knowledge of the past while celebrating some cause or person in an epic key. It served as pretext for parading the greatest figures of mythology, antiquity, scripture, and even contemporary times in a series of tableaux usually reflecting a moral structure within an allegorical context.¹¹

The vivid descriptions by Dante and the richness of the *Commedia* as a whole prompted its appearing in numerous illustrated editions. The earliest of which were produced in Florence in the second quarter of the fourteenth century.¹² The desire to illustrate Dante's greatest work did not subside and artists continued to grapple with the pictorial translation of the epic poem. Sandro Botticelli even produced a series of drawings illustrating the *Commedia* for Lorenzo Pierfrancesco de' Medici. The drawings, done between 1480 and 1482, were executed in silverpoint and lead and included, often on the reverse, the corresponding passages from Dante.¹³

Boccaccio and the Theme of the Triumph

Between 1342 and 1343 Giovanni Boccaccio, in conscious imitation of Dante, composed in *terza rima*, the *Amorosa Visione*.¹⁴ The *Amorosa Visione* is a long, complex poem in which Boccaccio, as narrator, sees in a dream, a series of huge murals painted on a castle's walls.¹⁵ The murals depict scenes of five triumphs; Wisdom, earthly Glory, Wealth, Love and finally Fortune. It is

10. Aldo S. Bernardo, "Triumphal Poetry: Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio," in *Petrarch's Triumphs: Allegory and Spectacle*, eds., Konrad Eisenbichler and A. Iannucci, Toronto, 1990; 33.

11. *Ibid.*

12. John Pope-Hennessy, *Paradiso*, New York, 1993, 7.

13. See A. Venturi, *Il Botticelli interprete di Dante*, Florence, 1921.

14. Bernardo, *Triumphal Poetry*, 34. *Terza Rima* is a verse form invented by Dante and used in the *Commedia*.

15. Giovanni Boccaccio, *Amorosa Visione*, trans., Robert Hollander, T. Hampton, M. Frankel with an introduction by Vittore Branca, London, 1986, Canto IV; 13-16.

clear from Boccaccio's own words that he, like Dante, envisioned passages in his poem in an artistic or plastic mode. Boccaccio described the frescoes as being so beautiful that it is impossible to believe they were done by human hands unless they were done by Giotto.¹⁶ Boccaccio's writing style has often been compared to the art of Giotto because of its emphasis on nature and the visible world.¹⁷ His characters are based in reality and express themselves in a natural manner through gesture and attitude. Like Giotto's frescoes, Boccaccio's poems lack superfluous detail. It has been suggested Boccaccio's poems were directly influenced by Giotto's art, since he had opportunity to see Giotto's work in Padua and in Naples where he may have even met the artist.¹⁸

Boccaccio continued from Dante the concept of the 'dream vision' as well as the expression of these triumphs in terms of allegory; in this case, however, the poem was dedicated entirely to secular love.¹⁹ In Canto VI Boccaccio describes the triumphal procession of Glory:

"Tutti'altri sovrastava veramante, di ricche gemme coronata e d'oro, nell'aspetto magnanima e possente. Ardita e valorosa tra costoro sovra triunfal carro si sedea, ornat o tutto di frondi d'alloro."²⁰

Like in classical Roman triumphs, the chariot, pulled by white horses, is preceded by countless figures, in this case though, they are drawn from history, mythology, the Bible, and the more recent past. In this Triumph of Glory Boccaccio sees, among many others, Socrates, Plato, Boethius, Cato, Dido and Aeneas, and even Dante.²¹

While Boccaccio seems to have closely followed Dante in his

16. *Ibid.*, Canto IV, 13–18. "Humana man non credo che sospinta mai fosse a tanto ingegno quanto in quello mostrante ogni figura li distinta, eccetto se da Giotto, al qual la bella Natura parte di sè somigliante non occultò nell'arte in che suggella."

17. Patricia Gathercole, *Tension in Boccaccio: Boccaccio and the Fine Arts*, Mississippi, 1975, 35.

18. Boccaccio, *Amorosa Visione*, 1986, 28. See also Charles Osgood, *Boccaccio on Poetry*, Princeton, 1930.

19. *Ibid.*, xvii.

20. *Ibid.*, 29. Canto VI:49–54.

21. *Ibid.*, xxix. Branca states in the introduction that Boccaccio includes some 152 exemplary figures in his Triumph of Glory.

use of the triumph as a poetic device, he does so in a very different mode. Dante had used the motif of a single triumphal event in a highly spiritual context while Boccaccio uses several triumphal processions in succession to assist the reader in moving forward with him in his dream journey. While the aim of the two authors was profoundly different, both have linked the theme and imagery of the classical triumph with anagogical and allegorical meaning. The theme of the triumphal procession has become a poetic device used to illustrate a variety of ambiguous and intangible ideals ranging from the victory of Christian virtue to the baser human desires for fame and fortune.

From this point forward, later authors and artists would be unable, or perhaps unwilling, to separate the triumphal image from the poetic overtones it acquired through Dante and Boccaccio. Furthermore, it would be Petrarch as admirer and inheritor of those earlier poetic works who would exploit the triumphal theme to its fullest expression in a literary work.

Petrarch and The Africa

Petrarch was influenced by his contemporaries as well as classical authors such as Virgil and Cicero. His works, some written in Italian and others in Latin, all reflect his admiration for them and his desire to imitate their works.²² Petrarch's vivid and lengthy passages devoted to detailed descriptions of people and events also reflect his adherence to the classical method of ekphrasis.²³

Petrarch's great Latin epic, *Africa*, is modeled in part on Virgil's *Aeneid*, and takes as its subject the Roman general Scipio Africanus Major (c. 234 B.C.–c.183 B.C.).²⁴ Petrarch chose

22. Paul Oskar Kristeller, *Eight Philosophers of the Italian Renaissance*, Stanford, 1964, 8.

23. Ekphrasis, from the Greek, meaning to describe exhaustively, was a rhetorical method often used by classical authors. See *Pictures into Words: Theoretical and Descriptive Approaches to Ekphrasis*, eds., Valerie Robillard and E. Jongeneel, Amsterdam, 1998.

24. It is unclear exactly when Petrarch began the work, it is estimated to have been between 1337 and 1339. It is also important to note that Petrarch was in Rome for the first time in 1337.

Scipio to serve as a model of what man should strive to be. Scipio is depicted by Petrarch as "a living paragon of virtue, valor and glory."²⁵

Scipio had already been the subject of several classical works, which clearly inspired Petrarch.²⁶ Livy had recorded in his *Ab Urbe Condita* the events of Scipio's victories in Spain and in North Africa. Cicero, in his *Somnium Scipionis*, had related the story of the grandson of Scipio Africanus who had a dream in which his grandfather described for him the paradise to which honorable men will be admitted after death. Dante, in the *Paradiso*, had also expressed his lofty opinion of Scipio through the words of Saint Peter.²⁷ While Petrarch had decided to base his epic poem on the Roman general glorified by Livy, he embellished information contained in Livy's historical account. Livy had allotted only two lines of description to Scipio's triumphal entry into Rome, stating simply that he rode in a most distinguished triumph and that he returned with booty that included over one hundred thousand pounds of silver.²⁸

Petrarch on the other hand, devotes over one-hundred lines to his description of that same triumphal procession. He writes in exhaustive detail of every aspect of the grand procession.²⁹ He begins his account with a poetic description of Scipio's character during his entry describing him as serene and noble.³⁰ Petrarch continues with lengthy accounts of the dissolute and grieving prisoners captured during the wars and the incredible splendor of the treasures seized. Finally, over one hundred lines after the

25. Aldo S. Bernardo, *Petrarch, Scipio and the "Africa": The Birth of Humanism's Dream*, Baltimore, 1962, 10.

26. Scipio had also already appeared in Petrarch's compilation of biographies of famous Roman men the *De Viris Illustribus*.

27. Dante, *Paradiso*, trans., Allen Mandelbaum, New York, 1986, 245. Canto XXVII; 61-63. "Ma l'alta provedenza, cha non Scipio difese a Roma la gloria del mondo, socorrà tosto, sì com'io concipio."

28. Livy, *Ab Urbe Condita: Books XXVIII-XXX*, trans., Frank Gardner Moore, London, 1949, 537. Book XXX; Chapter XLV; 3. "Scipio . . . Romam pervenit triumphoque omnium clarissimo urbem est invectus. Argenti tulit in aerarium pondo centum viginti tria milia."

29. Petrarch, *Africa*, trans., Thomas Bergin and Alice Wilson, Yale, 1977, 234-237; IX; 450-560.

30. *Ibid.*, 235. *Africa*, IX; 338-341. "Exceptura ducem. Facie subit ille serena Ardua purpureo residens sua menia curru Et niveis invectus equis; generisque ferebat Etheri frons alma fidem."

triumph began Petrarch narrates Scipio's arrival at the Capitoline. He claims that Scipio's triumph is the greatest ever seen in Rome, and that he brought with him to the city treasures so incredible and rich that they could sustain Rome for eternity. He further confesses that Scipio, is content enough with the title of triumphator and that he does not keep any of the incredible riches for himself.³¹

In the final lines of the poem Petrarch explains that he wrote this epic for posterity in the hopes that the events will not be forgotten and that the work itself will gain for him, in death, virtue and honor. Petrarch's choice of Scipio as a subject for his epic poem was due in part to his desire for historical truth and in order to commemorate a classical figure who was both a victorious general and, in retrospect, a model of Christian virtue.³²

Petrarch's eloquent and fictitious description of Scipio's triumph was a poetic device in which he could both literally and figuratively relate Scipio's glory. The splendor of the grand triumphal procession was at once the most appropriate, authentic and poetic expression of a historical figure's greatness available to Petrarch. Furthermore, the motif of the triumphal procession offered a narrative format in which the text itself could progress and unfurl much like an actual pageant.

Petrarch's I Trionfi

Petrarch's predilection for classical antiquity and the theme of the triumph is most evident in his *I Trionfi*.³³ The poem, in *terza rima*, was written in Italian with Latin subtitles and composed between 1340 and 1374, the year of Petrarch's death.³⁴

31. Ibid., 237. *Africa*, IX; 538–543. "Sic tandem insueto Capitolia celsa triumpho Ingreditur, gratesque deis persolvit amicis; Immensumque auri montem ingentesque recondit Thesauros in templa Iovis, tempusque per omne Ditavit patriam. Sibi sed cognomine solo Contentus nichil hic proprias invexit in edes."

32. Ibid., x.

33. For a history of Triumphs see W. Weisbach, *Trionfi*, Berlin, 1919, and Giovanni Carandente, *I Trionfi Nel Primo Rinascimento*, Turin, 1963. See also C. Goffis, *Originalità dei "Trionfi"*, Firenze, 1951 and Robert Payne, *The Roman Triumph*, London, 1962.

34. Bernardo, "Triumphal Poetry," 34.

The poem, divided into six parts, describes a succession of allegorical triumphal processions modeled on classical triumphs. Unlike the triumphs witnessed by Boccaccio in the *Amorosa Visione* which had been described as murals that cover the walls of a castle, in Petrarch's work the triumphs are actual processions that are enacted and pass directly in front of his eyes. The parade of triumphs are arranged so that each one triumphs over or vanquishes the one that came before it, building to a poetic climax.

The first triumph is Love which is triumphant over Man, the next is the triumph of Chastity over Love, then Death over Chastity, Fame over Death, Time over Fame, and finally Eternity over Time. The poem begins with Petrarch returning to the place he first met his true love Laura. There he tearfully recalls their love and sitting beneath a tree he is overcome with sleep and begins to dream. His dream sequence begins with the semblance of an ancient Roman triumph. The first triumph, the *Triumphus Cupidinis*, reveals a sight to Petrarch that he describes as wondrous:

I saw four chargers, whiter than the whitest snows, and on a fiery cart a harsh youth with a bow in his hand and arrows at his side. No fear, or armor, or shield, but on his shoulders were two great wings of a thousand colors; but all else was nude. All around were countless mortals: Some taken in battle, some slain, and some wounded by his pungent arrows.³⁵

The remainder of the triumph is filled with the descriptions of the poor souls who have been vanquished by cruel love. In the parade Petrarch sees Caesar and Cleopatra, who lead the way, followed by others such as Odysseus, Hercules, Achilles, and couples such as Mars and Venus, Jason and Medea, Paolo and Francesca and Dante and Beatrice. The strength and victorious nature of the cruel god of love is made abundantly clear for the reader when Petrarch reveals that the greatest and most powerful of all the gods, Jove, is chained to the front of the cart.³⁶

35. Francesco Petrarca, *Trionfi*, reprint, Milano, 1984, 24; 22–30. "Quattro destrier vie più che neve bianchi; sov'r'un carro di foco un garzon crudo con arco in man e con saette a' fianchi; nulla temea però non maglia o scudo, ma sugli omeri avea sol due grande'ali di colore mille, tutto l'altro ignudo; d'intorno innumerabili mortali, parte presi in battaglia e parve occisi, parte feriti di pungenti strali."

36. *Ibid.*, 31; 160. "... catenato Giove innazi al carro."

The second triumph, the *Triumphus Pudicitiae*, or Triumph of Chastity, is directly related to the first and represents a struggle between the representative of love, the cruel Cupid, and the representative of Chastity, Laura, Petrarch's beloved.³⁷ Cupid and Laura engage in a fierce battle, but Laura's virtue serves as armor that protects her from cruel love while a battalion of virtues assists her. Laura is eventually victorious and then she sets free thousands of Cupid's prisoners. The victorious Laura, surrounded by virtuous women from history, such as Judith, Penelope, Juno, and the Sabines, rides in a triumphal procession toward the temple of Chastity in Rome.

The third triumph, the *Triumphus Mortis*, is the darkest and most serious of all the triumphs.³⁸ Death, described by Petrarch as a black-robed hag wielding a sword, is triumphant over Chastity. Laura, the personification of chastity, reminds the reader and Petrarch himself that death is triumphant only over mortal chastity. The Canto continues with a description of the mortal death of Laura and of her soul's ascent into heaven. At the close of the chapter, Aurora arrives to return light to mortals.

The fourth triumph, the *Triumphus Famae*, begins with the triumphal procession of Lady Fame who arrives flanked by Caesar and Scipio Africanus and surrounded by countless figures of valor from Roman history. Also included in the retinue of the valorous are non-Romans such as Hannibal and Philip and Alexander. Other figures from history such as Noah, Adam, Judith and even King Arthur make-up a part of the huge splendid parade of the famous as do contemporaries of Petrarch, Stefano Colonna and King Robert of Sicily. Petrarch also sees the figures of Plato, Aristotle, Pythagoras, Socrates and others who won their fame through philosophy and art and not by battle.

The *Triumphus Temporis*, Triumph of Time, follows the Triumph of Fame. This triumph begins with a soliloquy by the sun who is angry that fame enables a man to prolong his existence beyond death, while he, a heavenly celestial body, is continually performing his duties without such acknowledgment. At the end of the chapter the sun accelerates time and reveals to Petrarch

37. See Aldo S. Bernardo, *Petrarch, Laura, and the Triumphs*, Albany, 1974.

38. Scholars believe that this chapter, written in two parts, was probably composed around 1348, the year of the Black Plague.

that eventually oblivion will prevail even over the most famous men and the memories of their earthly deeds.

The sixth and final triumph is the *Triumphus Aeternitatis*. This triumphal procession includes the sun, moon, stars, heavens, angels, and time itself, in the form of past, present and future. But it is a figurative procession described by Petrarch who now realizes that it is eternal life through the one Christian God that is truly triumphant. Petrarch, referring to his own work, explains that the first five triumphs were witnessed on earth but that the one true triumph, the triumph of eternity, will be seen only in heaven.

I Trionfi and the Arts

The popularity of Petrarch's poem *I Trionfi* coincided with the fifteenth century's taste for narrative, a taste which reflected an artistic shift in painting and sculpture away from traditional late Medieval methods of constructing images in an iconic manner. Leon Battista Alberti in his *De Pictura*, had identified the iconic manner and its use of flat gold backgrounds as archaic.³⁹ He argued that a painting should be a convincing representation of the visible world and that a successful work of art was one that resembles what an individual would see if he were gazing out of a window.⁴⁰

The taste for narrative was further enhanced by a desire in both artist and patron to choose subjects which would offer the widest variety for detail.⁴¹ This is apparent in the popularity of the International Gothic style in Italy and in particular works like the Adoration of the Magi by Gentile da Fabriano. The large altarpiece, dated May 1423, was commissioned by Palla Strozzi for his private burial chapel in the sacristy of Santa Trinita in Florence.⁴² The subject of the altarpiece is the journey of the Magi to Bethlehem and their adoration of the Christ child. The entourage of the

39. Leon Battista Alberti, *On Painting*, trans., John R. Spencer, New Haven, 1966.

40. *Ibid.*,

41. Esther Nyholm, "A Comparison of the Petrarchan Configuration of the Trionfi and their Interpretation in Renaissance Art," in Eisenbichler and Iannuci, *Petrarch's Triumphs*, Toronto, 1990.

42. The work is also often referred to as the Strozzi Altarpiece.

Magi takes on the splendor and character of an enormous triumphal procession that winds its way through the far reaches of the landscape. The focus of the journey of the Magi however, in scripture as in the painting, is not the processional event but rather the ceremony to be performed at the final destination. The procession is only a prologue to the Magi's act of presentation and adoration at the feet of the Christ Child. The sources for the Christian imagery of the journey and the ultimate act of adoration are clearly derived from the ancient Roman triumph and the action of prisoners who were forced, after being led in procession, to prostrate themselves at the feet of the *Imperatore*.⁴³

Petrarch's predominantly secular triumphal processions have a pictorial character that offered a wealth of opportunity for artists to explore. Representations based on Petrarch's triumphs can be found in miniatures, on cassoni, on panels, on canvas, in fresco, as wood-cuts, in engravings, on jewelry, as relief sculpture in bronze and in stone as well as in tapestries.⁴⁴

Petrarch's expressive and vivid visual language combined with his lucid descriptive powers enticed artists to illustrate the *I Trionfi* soon after its publication.⁴⁵

The miniatures that often accompanied the *I Trionfi* were, in most cases, very literal visual translations of the text.⁴⁶ They replicated, in vivid color and detail, the figures, processions, and participants Petrarch described. Often the miniatures even included helpful inscriptions above prominent figures to ensure their proper identification. Artists did however, on occasion, add details and figures, though appropriate to the image, that were never mentioned by Petrarch.

One of the finest illuminated editions of Petrarch's *I Trionfi* is located in the collection of the Medici Riccardiana library in

43. Richard C. Trexler, "Triumph and Mourning in North Italian Magi Art," in *Art and Politics in Late Medieval and early Renaissance Italy, 1250-1500*, ed., Charles Rosenberg, Notre Dame, 1990.

44. Barbara Dodge, "Petrarch and the Arts," in Eisenbichler and Iannucci, *Petrarch's Triumphs*, Toronto, 1990.

45. On the tradition of illumination see Annarosa Garzelli, *Miniatura Fiorentina Del Rinascimento 1440-1525*, Florence, 1985; Ellen Callmann, *Apollonio di Giovanni*, Oxford, 1974; J.J.G. Alexander, *The Painted Page*, London, Prestel, 1994; Michael Jasenas, *Petrarch in America: A Survey of Petrarchan Manuscripts*, New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, 1974.

46. In most cases the illuminated texts of *I Trionfi* include 6 full page miniatures; one for each triumph.

Florence.⁴⁷ The manuscript, dated to the middle of the fifteenth-century, contains six brightly colored miniatures.⁴⁸ Each of the miniatures has a deep lapis-blue sky and fantastical rocky seascape in the background and each of the processions move across the page from right to left. The miniatures have no frieze or border decoration and are simply defined by a black outline.

The first miniature, the Triumph of Love, depicts a nude, winged, male figure holding a bow and arrow riding atop a fiery chariot pulled by two white horses (fig. 7). The triumphal chariot is surrounded by elegantly attired victims, from past and present, who have been defeated by love. Three couples stand out from the crowd, not only because they are positioned in a way that draws attention to them but also because they are labeled. The most prominent couple, Samson and Delilah, are located in the foreground of the picture. Delilah, dressed in a red gown and seated on the ground, is depicted cutting the long brown hair of her lover Samson who is shown naked lying across her lap. Just behind them are Aristotle and Phyllis. Phyllis, wearing an elaborate red headdress, is depicted riding on the back of Aristotle. The figure of Aristotle, depicted old and bearded, is on the ground on his hands and knees clearly distraught by his present situation. At the far right Virgil, wearing a red cape and cap, is shown inside a basket dangling from the window of a crenellated castle. His love, lacking an identifying label, peers out the window at him.⁴⁹

These three couples are meant to display the power of love and its victory over the senses. The couples represent not only the domination of women over men but of love over rational men. Moreover, these couples suggest that love is victorious over

47. Biblioteca Riccardiana, MS1192, 145 x 250mm; See Maria Luisa Scuderi Greco, *Miniature Riccardiane*, Firenze, 1958, 205–208.

48. *Ibid*; The manuscript is undated but believed to be after 1442 but before 1480. The artist is also unknown. The miniatures were originally attributed to Benozzo Gozzoli and then to Matteo da Pasti. The tradition of illumination of the *Trionfi* was widespread during the fifteenth century, however no Florentine manuscripts that illustrate the *Trionfi* date before 1442. The oldest known miniature decorating a manuscript of Petrarch's *I Trionfi* is dated 1414, however that manuscript contains only one small illumination in the border of the chapter on the Triumph of Death.

49. H. David Brumble, *Classical Myths and Legends in the Middle Ages and Renaissance: A Dictionary of Allegorical Meanings*. Connecticut, 1998. See for descriptions of the legends all three couples.

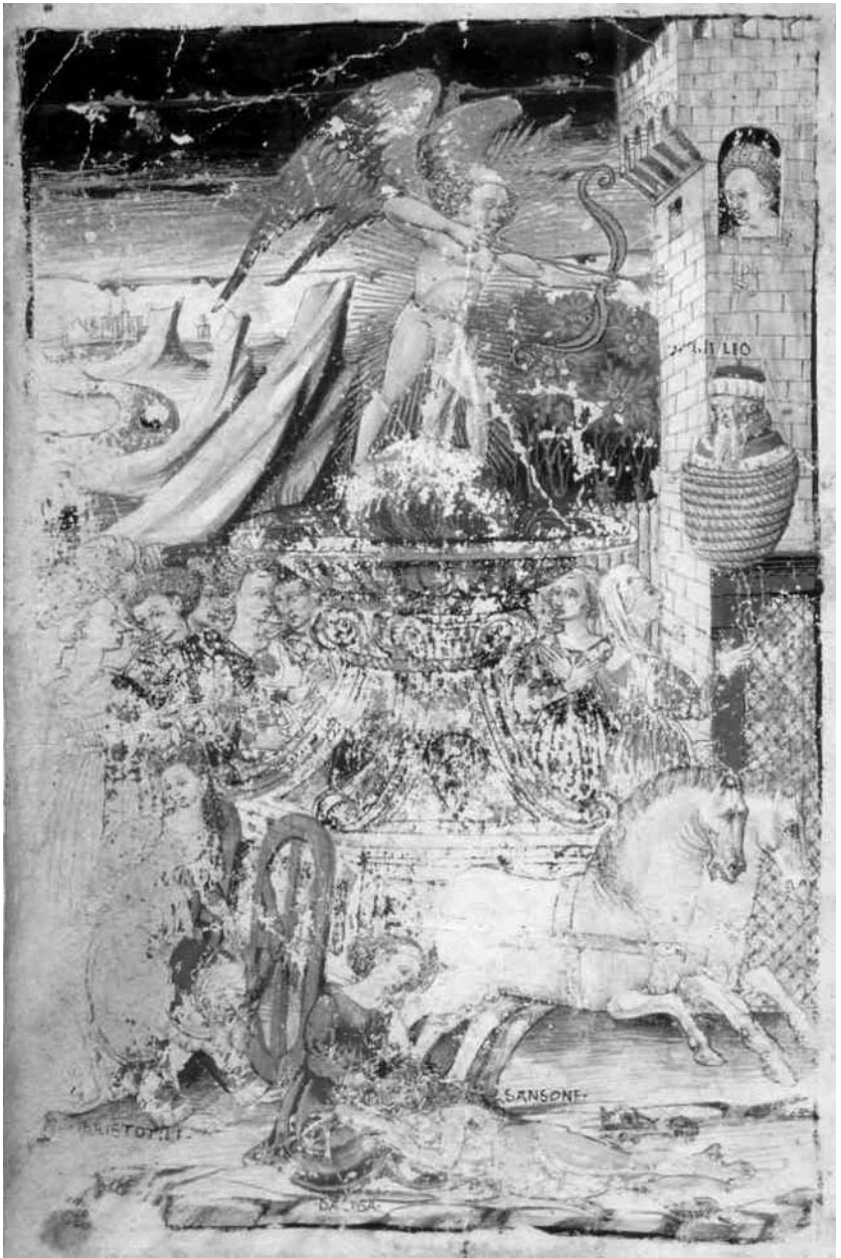


FIGURE 7. *Triumph of Love*, illumination, Manuscript 1129; IV, Biblioteca Riccardiana, Florence. mid 15th century. Photo Courtesy of Biblioteca Riccardiana, Firenze.

physical strength, in the case of Samson, and intellect, represented by Aristotle and Virgil.⁵⁰

The motivation for artists to illustrate the triumphs was based on their content as well as their method of presentation. It was both the linear quality of the narrative and its inherent classicism, replete with antique detail and splendor, that interested artist and patron alike. While all the triumphs were visually compelling for artists the first triumph was perhaps the most important because it was the only one in which Petrarch actually described the triumphal cart. In each of the later triumphs the triumphal cart was implied but never described.

The visual interpretations by artists of each of the triumphs, would however, invariably include a cart. Thus, in translating into visual format Petrarch's great poem, there is a model for only one of the triumphal carts, that of the Triumph of Love. All other visual manifestations are purely the artists' creation. This is apparent in the relative conformity of the images of the Triumph of Love, in all media, while artists representations of the succeeding triumphs reveal a greater variety in form.

A basic pictorial format is evident however, in the representations based on the *Trionfi*. The images, whether small scale manuscript illuminations or larger scale works, share a basic iconographical format that consists of a triumphant figure in an animal drawn cart or chariot surrounded by defeated captives or victims.

While the secular nature of some of the triumphs hindered its use in chapels and churches, the subject became extremely popular in the decorative arts. The triumphs, especially the triumphs of Chastity, Love and Fame, were particularly popular in the decoration of wedding chests (*cassoni*) and birth trays (*deschi da parto*) during the first half of the fifteenth century.⁵¹

50. See Caradente, *I Trionfi*, 46, and n. 138. The addition of figures, particularly to the Triumph of Love, begins to occur almost simultaneously with its illustration. These same three couples recur with some frequency in miniatures illustrating the Triumph of Love and seem to become almost standard.

51. See Victor d'Essing and Eugene Müntz, *Pétrarque: ses études d'art, so influence sur les artistes, ses portraits et ceux de Laure, les Illustrations de ses écrits*, Paris, 1902; Giovanni Caradente, *I Trionfi Nel Primo Rinascimento*, Italia, 1963; Weisbach, *Trionfi*, Berlin, 1919; Jean Seznec, "Petrarch and Renaissance Art," in *Francesco Petrarca, Citizen of the World*, New York, 1980.



FIGURE 8. Francesco Pesellino, *Triumphs of Love, Chastity and Death*, painted cassone panel, c. 1445, Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston. Photo courtesy of Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston.

Both the subject and the linear format of the triumphal processions were perfectly suited to the long narrow panels of *cassoni*.⁵² Two panels from a *cassone*, now in the Isabella Stewart Gardner museum in Boston, reveal perhaps the most complete and literal visual translation of Petrarch's *Trionfi* that survive.⁵³ The panels, executed by Francesco Pesellino c.1445, are of very high quality and were perhaps used as a model by numerous other artists, painters and miniaturists.⁵⁴ Each panel shows three of Petrarch's triumphs (figs. 8 and 9). The first depicts the Triumphs of Love, Chastity and Death, while the second shows the Triumphs of Fame, Time and Eternity.

On the first panel, the depiction of the Triumph of Love is very literal in its visual translation of the poem. The nude and winged figure of Love stands perched on a ball of fire atop a cart pulled by four white horses. Seated at the four corners of the cart are four nude winged *putti*, three of whom hold small flames in their hands. Love, as Petrarch described him, is taking aim with his bow and arrow at the pairs of lovers who surround the cart. The lovers, dressed in contemporary costume, converse with one another as if unaware of Love. The whole entourage, which moves through a rocky landscape dotted with trees, is accompanied by a pair of hounds.

In the Triumph of Chastity, at the center, Love is depicted again although now his arms are bound behind his back and he

52. Charney, *Representations of Petrarch's Famae*, 1990, 228.

53. Carandente, *I Trionfi*, 64. "I due lunghi pannelli sono forse il più compiuto esempio di illustrazione dei Trionfi."

54. See Philip Hendy, *European and American Paintings in the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum*, Boston, 1974.



FIGURE 9. Francesco Pesellino, *Triumphs of Fame, Time and Eternity*, painted cassone panel, c. 1445, Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston. Photo courtesy of Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston.

sits, head bowed, vanquished at the feet of the beautiful maiden Chastity. Now she is triumphant, seated on a brocade platform and pulled on a cart drawn by two unicorns, symbols for purity and chastity.⁵⁵ The crowd which surrounds her is composed only of female figures, maidens of virtue, who closely encircle the cart. The figure of Chastity is as Petrarch described her, dressed in white and holding a frond of laurel in her hand. The illustration even includes Petrarch's description of the banner carried by one of the maidens, with the emblem of an ermine on a green background.⁵⁶ The ermine is an appropriate symbol for the maiden since it had been a considered a symbol of purity and virtue since the Middle Ages. Legend held that the ermine, known for its beautiful pure white coat, would die if it became stained.⁵⁷

From the right, the Triumph of Death heads straight for the maidens. The cart, the top of which is shaped like a sepulcher, is pulled by two black buffaloes. On top of the cart is the ragged and gaunt maiden of death carrying a scythe over her shoulder. The landscape surrounding advancing death is no longer green and flowering as in the previous triumphs but instead is bleak punctuated by only one leafless tree. Rather than a crowd surrounding the cart there are corpses lying along side it and even under the wheels.

The last three triumphs, Fame, Time and Eternity, depicted on

55. Recall that Petrarch only described the first triumphal cart, all others are left to the imagination of the artists, but there is some iconographic consistency such as Chastity is usually pulled by unicorns, Death is pulled by oxen or buffalo, Fame is pulled by elephants or horses, Time by Stags and Eternity by the symbols of the Evangelists.

56. Petrarch, *I Trionfi*, III, 19–20. "Era la lor vittorioso insegna in campo verde un candido ermellino. . ."

57. See James Hall, *Dictionary of Subjects and Symbols in Art*, New York, 1979, for the legend of the ermine.

the second panel reveal a similar arrangement to those on the first. At the far left, the female figure of Fame, seated on a throne resembling an Ionic capital, is pulled on a cart drawn by two white horses. She holds an orb in her left hand and is enclosed in a large circle, which resembles a kind of spherical mandorla. Leading the cart are two bound male captives while other male figures representing those who achieved fame surround it.

The Triumph of Time, in the center of the panel, advances directly toward the Triumph of Fame. Time is depicted as a winged and bearded mature man reclining on an antique throne. His cart is drawn by two stags who seem to leap forward on their hind legs. He has no entourage surrounding his cart and seems rather forlorn as he looks behind him rather than ahead.

At the far right is the Triumph of Eternity, a scene unlike the others in that there is no triumphal cart. Instead, God, bearded and raising his right hand in a gesture of blessing, is seated at the apex of a rainbow. He is surrounded on both sides by music making angels while the lion of St. Mark and eagle of St. John float beneath him. This vision of heaven hovers above a miniature world complete with antique ruins and ships at sea.

These panels, by Pesellino, are of particularly high quality and considered extremely rare because they portray all six of the triumphs. Most *cassoni* usually depicted only three or four of the Triumphs and almost never included the Triumph of Eternity.⁵⁸ The panels are also remarkable for the importance given to the first Triumph, the Triumph of Love, which occupies more than half of the first panel.

These *cassoni* panels, like others from the same period, not only strove to be decorative but to illustrate humanist ideals and images relative to marriage and the triumphs of virtuous figures from history.⁵⁹ The subjects decorating these chests served as a type of *exempla* intended to convey a moral message. They were, in essence, demonstrative of the values and virtues respected and desired in a bride.⁶⁰

Birth trays, often used to bring food to a woman in labor and serve as a commemorative gift, served similar exemplary purposes

58. Hendy, *European and American Painting*, 178.

59. Ellen Callmann, *Apollonio di Giovanni*, Oxford, 1974.

60. For a discussion of *cassone* decoration see Cristelle Baskins, *Cassone Painting, Humanism, and Gender in Early Modern Italy*, Cambridge, 1998. See her bibliography for a lengthy list of further sources.



FIGURE 10. Apollonio di Giovanni (?), *Triumph of Love*, painted desco da parto, c. 1450, Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Copyright Victoria & Albert Museum, London/Art Resource, NY.

and therefore were often decorated with similar scenes. The scenes were by necessity abbreviated due to the trays round or octagonal format. The *Triumph of Love* seems to have been a particular favorite for the decoration of these birth platters. Like the manuscript illuminations the *deschi da parto* show a remarkable similarity in style. They depict, in most cases, almost exactly the same details as described in the poem with a nude and winged cupid bearing his bow and arrow pulled on a chariot drawn by white horses. In each case the triumphal cart is surrounded by amorous couples dressed in elegant contemporary costume. Even the settings and backgrounds are similar often depicting a walled city

on one side and an expanse of water and flourishing countryside on the other. An example from the Victoria and Albert museum, attributed to Apollonio di Giovanni and dated to c.1440-1465, shows that even in the limited space available to the artist, all the relevant details are included (fig. 10). A winged naked cupid rides on his horse drawn chariot surrounded by amorous couples dressed in elegant courtly attire. The whole procession takes place in the foreground of a fantastical landscape animated by mountains, castles and a seascape. Jove, dressed in courtly garb, even sits chained to the front of the cart. The artist has even included the now familiar figures of Aristotle ridden by Phyllis and Delilah cutting Samson's hair.⁶¹

These *deschi da parto*, which were a fairly common object in Renaissance Italy, could also be individualized so that the decoration, though based on Petrarch, would reveal a more personal message or allegory. One example is a birth tray that was commissioned by Cosimo de Medici to commemorate the birth of his nephew Lorenzo (il magnifico) on January 1st 1449. The decoration, which includes on the reverse the coat of arms of both the Medici and the Tornabuoni, is not a Triumph of Love but is instead the Triumph of Fame. This Triumph of Fame, with all it implies, must have seemed a more suitable subject for the son of the illustrious Piero de Medici and Lucrezia Tornabuoni.⁶²

By the middle of the fifteenth century the idea of the triumph began to take on more complex and enigmatic overtones. The strict adherence to Petrarch's literary vision gave way to more personal and private interpretations of the idea of triumph. It came to be used as a commentary on the lives and events of private individuals. The triumphal motif was no longer viewed as a simple decorative theme, but instead became a vehicle by which an artist or patron could construct a personal image. Moreover, this ability to manipulate and individualize the classically inspired Christian allegory of the Triumph became the impetus for Italian Renaissance rulers to appropriate and promote it for their own use.

61. See Cecilia De Carli, *I Deschi Da Parto E la Pittura Del Primo Rinascimento Toscano*, Torino, 1997, and John Pope-Hennessy and Keith Christiansen, "Secular Painting in 15th Century Tuscany: Birth Trays, Cassone Panels, and Portraits," *Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*, Summer 1980.

62. See Caradente, *Trionfi*, 54-55 and fn.128. There is a great deal of scholarly debate concerning the artist of this work and it has been attributed to both Piero della Francesca and Domenico Veneziano.

The Personalization of the Antique Triumph



Chapter three focuses on the individualization of the triumphal motif and its function as an expression of personal character. The motif, in both art and architecture, became a prominent feature in the artistic vocabulary of rulership. Alfonso of Aragon was the first of the Quattrocento rulers to adopt the triumphal *concetto* as a major component in the visual construction of his personal mythology. After his victory in Naples, Alfonso chose the antique triumph, in a variety of its manifestations, to help legitimize and solidify his position as the new King. His commission of a monumental triumphal arch at the entrance to his castle in Naples served as an honorific and propagandistic conceit based on actual Roman Imperial arches.

The Individual as Triumphatore

During the Quattrocento the re-enactment of the triumphal procession, once reserved for Roman Emperors or rulers of the Christian world, was usurped by powerful and independent figures. Individuals of strong personal character adopted the triumphal procession as a means of self-promotion and glorification. They reinterpreted the classical Roman triumph to suit and serve their desire for elaborate self-aggrandizement and promotion.

Perhaps the earliest example of the personalization and secularization of the classical triumph in order to display personal

power was enacted by Castruccio Castracani in 1326.¹ Castracani (1281–1328) was a condottiere from Lucca who, during his lifetime, served Philip IV of France, the Scagligers and the Visconti of Milan, the Venetian Republic and the German King, Henry VII, Holy Roman Emperor. In 1326, after defeating Florentine forces at Altopascio, Castracani returned to his home town of Lucca and celebrated an elaborate entry modeled on the Roman triumph. He was greeted by the whole city at his arrival and entered the city standing in a decorated chariot drawn by horses. In front of him were carts displaying the booty he captured as well as banners depicting the emblems of Florence and Altopascio hung upside down as a sign of their defeat. Leading the procession were captives taken in the battle, all forced to carry candles in honor of Saint Martin the patron saint of Lucca.²

Castracani, both during and after his lifetime was revered like a 'modern' emperor. He was immortalized in 1520 by Machiavelli who wrote the story of his life. Machiavelli compared Castracani to Philip of Macedon and Scipio Africanus, and believed that Castracani was less revered than those two men only because he had only tiny Lucca for an empire instead of Rome or Macedon.³

Another powerful individual who deemed himself worthy of such processions was the Roman born orator and self-appointed rejuvenator of the Republic, Cola di Rienzo.⁴ Rienzo, who was born Nicholas Laurentii in 1314 in Rome, believed that his role in life was to revive and restore Rome to its past greatness. He chose to instigate a revolution in order to revive the ancient Roman Republic and bring about the resurrection of the ancient past. Part of his plan to achieve this *renovatio* was to emulate classical ceremonies, including the ancient Roman triumph.

On August 1, 1347 he arranged for his own triumphal procession, one that led from the Capitoline hill and ended at Saint

1. Louis Green, *Castruccio Castracani: A study on the origins and character of fourteenth-century Italian despotism*, Oxford, 1986.

2. *Ibid.*, 180. See also Strong, *Art and Power*, 44.

3. Niccolò Machiavelli, "The Life of Castruccio Castracani of Lucca," trans., Judith A. Rawson, in *Machiavelli: The History of Florence and Other Selections*, ed., Myron P. Gilmore, New York, 1970, 54. Castracani contracted Malaria and died in 1328.

4. See Mario Emilio Cosenza, ed., *Petrarch: The Revolution of Cola di Rienzo*, Chicago, 1913.

John Lateran.⁵ This unusual reversal of the processional order of the triumph, leading away from the Capitoline instead of toward it, may have been a concession to Christian Rome. Like in classical Rome the streets were strewn with flowers and lined with citizens in anticipation of the spectacle. The procession was led by troops on horseback and musicians who beat drums and blew trumpets. Cola di Rienzo followed on horseback in the guise of a triumphatore, waving a banner of the Republic. When the procession finally reached the church of Saint John Lateran, Rienzo bathed himself in an act of purification and was then made a member of the Order of the Holy Ghost. The following morning Rienzo, believing himself to be the successor of Augustus, addressed the crowds wearing a robe of imperial purple and carrying a sword. At his coronation ceremony he was crowned with six wreaths, one each made from oak, ivy, myrtle, laurel, olive and silver.⁶

Like most of the Roman emperors before him Rienzo became mad with power, and like them he was murdered by some of his own disillusioned followers.⁷ He was stabbed to death on the Capitoline hill in Rome just seven years after his triumphal procession through that city.

Alfonso of Aragon

Alfonso V was born in Medina del Campo in 1396 to Ferdinand I of Antequera and Eleanor of Alburquerque.⁸ He spent his childhood in Castile and at the age of sixteen was already taking part in the government of Aragon under his father's supervision when in 1414 he was given control of that city. In 1416 he was crowned King Alfonso I of Sicily.⁹

5. Payne, *Roman Triumph*, 228.

6. *Ibid.*, Francesco Petrarca, who was crowned poet laureate in Rome in 1341, was an early believer in Rienzo's vision, though he later withdrew his support.

7. *Ibid.*, 230.

8. Alan Ryder, *The Kingdom of Naples Under Alfonso the Magnanimous*, Oxford, 1976, 27.

9. *Ibid.*, See also Benedetto Croce, *History of the Kingdom of Naples*, trans. F. Frenaye, Chicago, 1970, for a brief account of Neapolitan history. As ruler of Sicily and Naples Alfonso V is referred to as King Alfonso I.

In 1420 Giovanna II of Naples approached the young King to ask for his assistance in retaining control of her kingdom. She proposed to adopt him as heir to the throne and in return he would protect Naples from the French.¹⁰ In 1421 Alfonso entered the city of Naples for the first time in a triumphant ceremony that proclaimed him heir apparent to the throne. In 1423, only two short years after his adoption, Giovanna, who was considered crazy, changed her mind and disinherited him.

Alfonso's struggle to reclaim that city began in earnest in 1435 when on her deathbed Giovanna proclaimed Renè of Anjou, brother of Louis III, as King of Naples. Renè, however, was a prisoner of the Burgundians at that time and unable to take control of Naples.¹¹ Alfonso proclaimed himself the rightful heir to Naples and proceeded to gather a fleet in Messina to support his claim. The war he launched to win Naples was not an easy one and it took almost seven years before he could enter that city and finally claim his rightful position as ruler and King of Naples.¹² On June 6, 1442 Alfonso V stormed the city of Naples and took it by force, though he did so with a great deal of popular and diplomatic support from the citizens.

The Triumphal Entry of Alfonso

On February 26, 1443 Alfonso made his triumphal entry into the newly conquered city of Naples. The triumph was intended to be a magnificent and regal affair consciously based on antique Roman triumphs and included all the elements of those classical processions.

The procession began with a group of twelve men on horseback dressed in elaborate and brightly colored costumes.¹³ The horse brigade was followed by three floats, each bearing elaborate allegorical scenes relating to the King, his royal qualities, and

10. Jerry H. Bentley, *Politics and Culture in Renaissance Naples*, Princeton, 1987, 11. See also Ryder, *Kingdom of Naples*, 1976. The adoption was made official on July 8, 1421.

11. Ryder, *Kingdom of Naples*, 25.

12. See N. Faraglia, *Storia della lotta tra Alfonso V d'Aragona e Renato d'Angiò*, Lanciano, 1908, for a full account of the war.

13. George L. Hersey, *The Aragonese Arch at Naples 1443-1475*, New Haven, 1973, 14.

justice. The third float, prepared by the Florentines, bore seven ladies who turned a large globe over which a standing male figure carrying a scepter and wearing a laurel wreath presided. The standing figure, representing Caesar, saluted the new King and then presented him with his throne and crown.

The next float was prepared by the Catalan contingent and represented a scene from Arthurian history. The float depicted the legendary throne whose seat would ignite in flames if an unworthy ruler sat upon it. The seat was surrounded by five figures representing the virtues of Justice, Fortitude, Prudence, Charity, and Faith. The figure of Justice addressed the newly crowned King while Charity distributed gold coins to the spectators.

In the next section of the procession rode Alfonso himself seated on a grand throne. He rode on a four-wheeled cart drawn by four white horses covered in red and white silk whose harnesses were decorated with the arms of Aragon. The cart was decorated like a fortress and had a crenellated top and turrets at the corners. On the cart opposite the throne was the Arthurian flame of the *siege perilous*, now displaced from the seat by the righteous ruler. The *siege perilous* or 'dangerous throne' is a motif taken from the stories of King Arthur. The legend claimed that only a chaste knight who was invincible and pure of heart could sit in the *siege perilous* at the round table and not be consumed by flames. The device of the *siege perilous* was a favorite of Alfonso.¹⁴ Alfonso, dressed in purple robes carried an orb and a scepter and wore around his neck the collar of the Order of the Lily decorated with a gold griffin. The throne on which he sat had the crowns of his kingdoms laid out in front of it and had the mantle of the defeated Renè of Anjou draped across the back.¹⁵

The enthroned figure of Alfonso was covered by a great baldachino held aloft by twelve poles, each of which was carried by a representative of the twelve seats (or neighborhoods) of Naples. Following the royal cart were the most important members of the court, including Giovanni Orsini, the princes of Taranto and Salerno, the ambassador to the King of Tunisia, and the humanists

14. Ebenezer Cobham Brewer, *Dictionary of Phrase and Fable*, London, 1959, 1000.

15. Alfonso's kingdoms were Aragon, Catalonia, Valencia, The Balearic Isles, Sicily, Sardinia, and Corsica. See Croce, *History of the Kingdom of Naples*, 44.

Valla, Panormita and Porcellio. There were thirty-eight dukes and counts, one hundred barons, and countless bishops, knights, and noblemen. In addition to these notables there were also numerous trumpeters and musicians.¹⁶ The city, too, had been decorated for the event with banners, flowers, and pavilions set up in each of the twelve sections of the city. In the area of Largo del Mercato a gilded and painted wooden arch was constructed over the triumphal route so that the triumphal cart and procession could pass through it. At the top of the arch at the four corners were trumpeters dressed in silks, while the walls of the arch were decorated with colored flags and written passages proclaiming the fortune and prosperity of King Alfonso.¹⁷ After the procession the triumphal cart was preserved inside the church of San Lorenzo Maggiore and became revered as a kind of relic from that great triumph.¹⁸ It remained in the church until at least 1580 after which point it seems to have been lost. Bisticci da Vespasiano, the humanist author, briefly mentions the triumph and its antique quality in his work *Le Vite*:¹⁹

"Sonci molte cose memorabili dello andare contro agli infideli, et de l'acquisto fece del reame di Napoli, et dell'asedio dell città di Napoli, del trionfo fattogli a l'entrare in Napoli, come triunfante a modo degli antichi, per l'acquisto di sì degna patria."²⁰

The Triumph of Alfonso in Art

Two important representations of Alfonso and his triumphal procession have survived. Perhaps the most historically accurate is

16. Hersey, *Argonese Arch*, 13-16.

17. Anon., "Racconti di storia Napoletana," in *Archivio storico per le provincie napoletane* 33, 1908; 478-80. ". . . un Arco corrispondente al carro trionfale, tutto di legname inaurato e colorato. Questo carro passava disotto, fatta misura per tutte le strade dove avea a passare . . . alla sommità di ogni angolo li trombetti vestiti di seta all'arme di Napoli, et alla parete per ogni banda . . . con le laude della prospera e buona fortuna del Re Alfonso. . ."

18. Hersey, *Argonese Arch*, 15.

19. Vespasiano di Bisticci, *Le Vite*, ed. Aulo Greco, 2 vols. Firenze, 1976, I, 107. For an English translation see, Vespasiano, *Renaissance Princes, Popes, and Prelates*, trans., William George and Emily Waters, intro., Myron Gilmore, New York, 1963.

20. *Ibid.*, 76-77.

an engraving in Summonte's *Historia della città e regno di Napoli* dated to about 1580.²¹ The engraving depicts Alfonso riding in his triumphal cart through the city of Naples. The triumphal cart displays many of the attributes recorded in the historical accounts. Alfonso is seated on a large triumphal cart drawn by horses. The cart itself, as described, has a crenellated upper portion and round turrets at each of the corners, which were certainly intended to be a reflection of Alfonso's own Castel Nuovo. The king is seated at one end of the cart while in front of him are the flames that he has displaced from the throne. Also included in the engraving are the dignitaries who flank the cart and hold aloft the baldachino. There are four men, however, depicted on the right side of the cart, not the six that were recounted in the literature. This exclusion may simply be due to space in the engraving because it appears by the number of poles represented that six men are intended to be on either side of the cart.

The engraving also includes the crowd on either side of the cart with men kneeling as it approaches. In the background, just behind the cart, there is the suggestion of a triumphal arch, as if the cart has just arrived from passing beneath it. A Latin inscription on the engraving hails Alfonso as King Alfonso V, lists his kingdoms, and refers to him as eternal ruler and new father of Naples.²²

Another less precise yet more decorative image of the same Triumph appears in Lorenzo Valla's *De rebus gestis Ferdinandi Primi*, written between 1435 and 1445 while he was a member of Alfonso's court.²³ The miniature depicts a crowned and seated Alfonso holding a scepter riding on a large triumphal cart pulled by four white horses.²⁴ The cart, however, does not include any of the crenellation or architectural elements described in the

21. G. A. Summonte, *Historia della città e regno di Napoli*, 6 vols., Naples, 1748–9. Summonte died in 1602. See Hersey, *Argonese Arch*, plate 8 for a reproduction of the engraving.

22. "ALFOS 9.REX ARAGON V SICILIE CITRA & CVLRA EARV HVGARIE VALECIE IHRLN MAIORICARUM SARDINIE CORCICIE COMES BARCHINONE ROCILLIONIS & CIRITA N.E DUX ATENARV & NEOPATRIA."

23. Lorenzo Valla moved to Naples in 1435 and spent ten years at the Court of King Alfonso I. See also *Gesta Ferdinandi regis Aragonum*, ed. O. Besomi, Padua, 1973.

24. See Hersey, *Argonese Arch*, plate 9 for a reproduction of the miniature.

literature. It also does not depict the flame from the Arthurian legend that was opposite the king. The baldachino is depicted covering the cart but does not appear to be carried by any attendants, or to be held aloft by more than four poles, one at each corner. Several figures are represented at the sides of the cart though they all appear to be on horseback. An addition, not seen in the engraving, is the horseman who wields a sword and seems to drive the triumphal cart forward.

The figural representations, like the literary descriptions of the actual triumphal procession, lack an overt adherence to classical antiquity. Although the Triumph itself is by nature inherently classical, these representations focus more on historical accuracy than an *all'antica* artistic invention. The triumphal procession, as described, adheres much more to a medieval and Petrarchan idea of triumph than to the classical Roman one. First, King Alfonso does not ride in the traditional two-wheeled chariot of the Roman Emperor but instead is enthroned on the larger four-wheeled cart as envisioned by Petrarch. Secondly, there are none of the specifically classical components of the Roman military triumph such as captives, or carts of booty. Instead the procession, while enacting the format of an antique triumph, is more akin to a Medieval pageant or royal entry. Furthermore, the themes of the carts, including Alfonso's, were allegorical and Christian in nature, not classical. The inclusion of the Virtues and motifs from Arthurian legend reinforce King Alfonso's image as staunchly Christian.

It appears that Alfonso and his court used the theme of the classical Triumph as inspiration in terms of format and perceived honors but not as a model intended to be closely followed. In the Triumph itself and the two figural representations, it is clear that the idea of the classical triumph is inherent but not intended to display an *all'antica* re-enactment of it.

The monumental triumphal arch built to commemorate the event however is much more consciously classical in its function, inspiration, and presentation of the event.

The Argonese Arch at the Castel Nuovo

The Argonese arch, or arch of Alfonso I, was built to serve several different but related functions; as a grand triumphal monument,

a monumental gateway to the Castel Nuovo, and a cenotaph.²⁵ Alfonso's arch, although modeled on antique arches, was quite different from its antique prototypes. Two of the major differences are that the arch is not free-standing and that it was constructed as two superimposed arches one on top of another. The monument's design and decoration, however, point to the primacy of its function as a triumphal monument.

The history of the monument's construction begins at the time of Alfonso's triumphal entry into Naples. According to the sixteenth-century historian Costanzo a small triumphal arch was constructed in front of one of the side portals of the Cathedral but was taken down because it was too intrusive. It was at this time that it was decided by Alfonso that the arch should be rebuilt at the Castel Nuovo.²⁶

The actual construction of the arch began sometime before 1450 and continued sporadically until 1486.²⁷ Most scholars agree that there were at least three main phases of construction. The first phase was between 1444 and 1451 directly following the triumphal entry, the second between 1453 and 1458, and the third and final phase from 1465 through 1486. The first phase seems to have been one of designing and planning while the second phase represents the most concentrated building activity. The later phase, not completed under the reign of Alfonso, represents a late and in many ways unrelated program.

That the arch itself was intended from its earliest inception to be a monumental triumphal gateway in honor of Alfonso is evidenced by a pen and ink drawing dated to about 1446. The drawing, considered to be a preliminary sketch for the arch, is signed Bonanu de Ravena at the bottom.²⁸ This is a reference to a Bonhoms who was administrator of the Castel Nuovo recon-

25. Hersey, *Argonese Arch*, 1.

26. *Ibid.*, 5.

27. There is a great deal of controversy concerning the dates of the monuments construction. See Hersey, and also John Pope-Hennessy, *Italian Renaissance Sculpture*, New York, 1985, reprint, and Charles Seymour Jr., *Sculpture in Italy 1400-1500*, Baltimore, 1966.

28. The drawing is usually attributed to Pisanello (or circle of). See Pope-Hennessy, *Italian Renaissance Sculpture*, 1985, 316. The sketch is reproduced in Alison Cole's, *Virtue and Magnificence: Art of the Italian Renaissance Courts*, New York, 1995, 44, plate 31.29.

struction from 1444–1448. While the drawing shows a much more Gothic-inspired design than was actually built, it does contain the general schema, that of two centralized arches stacked one on top of another, that was later used in the arch's design.²⁹ What is lacking from the sketch's design is the triumphal procession of Alfonso that is such a prominent feature of the actual arch. It was for this reason, perhaps, that the original plan, represented by the drawing, was rejected for a more classically inspired, rounded arch with more traditionally inspired decoration.

The monumental arch is nestled in between two large towers that flank the entrance to the city's Medieval castle. The castle, which was originally built for Charles I of Anjou in 1279–82, was reconstructed by Alfonso from 1445–52 and then later rearranged by Ferdinand IV. The arch, which was a major part of Alfonso's grand reconstruction process, serves the castle as both an elaborate gateway and impressive main facade (fig. 11). It is a striking monument constructed of bright white marble which stands in stark contrast to the dark stone of the castle walls.

The arch, which stands over 40 meters tall, is divided into six registers.³⁰ The lowest portion, serving as the entranceway, is comprised of a single bay triumphal arch which is decorated with rampant griffins at the spandrels. The second register is comprised of the triumphal frieze depicting the entry of Alfonso I into Naples. The third register is a second and smaller single bay arch with victories in the spandrels and double columns at the sides. The fourth register is a series of four large niches which contain large standing female statues of Justice, Temperance, Fortitude and Prudence. The fifth register is lunette shaped and is decorated in relief with two reclining semi-nude figures representing river gods. At the pinnacle of the monument is a statue of Saint Michael.³¹

There are two prominent inscriptions on the facade of the monumental arch. The first is inscribed on the lower architrave just above the entrance arch. It reads "ALFONSUS REX HISPANUS

29. Hersey believes the design may not have been for the arch at all and instead is a preliminary sketch for a different monument.

30. Pope-Hennessy, *Italian Renaissance Sculpture*, 1985, 316.

31. *Ibid.*, This description of the monument in registers follows Pope-Hennessy's description.



FIGURE 11. Triumphal Arch of Alfonso I, Castel Nuovo, Naples, 1453-1471. Copyright Alinari/Art Resource, NY.

SICULUS ITALICUS PIUS CLEMENS INVICTUS."³² The second inscription is on the middle architrave which runs just above the triumphal frieze. It reads "ALFONSUS REGUM PRINCEPS HANC CONDIDIT ARCEM."³³

The question of authorship in terms of the monuments design and decoration is problematic.³⁴ Pietro da Milano, who is recorded as having arrived in Naples in 1453, was the artist most involved with the monuments execution and it is to him that most of the design is credited. He is also considered to be the one who chose from antique sources the classical elements used in the monument. Francesco Laurana, the Dalmatian sculptor, is also documented as having worked on the arch from 1453-1458. A number of specific portions of the monument have been attributed to him, including the relief on the right-hand side of the internal passageway, which depicts Alfonso's departure for battle, as well as the figure of Prudence.³⁵ Other artists mentioned in the works execution are Mino da Fiesole, Paolo Romano, Isaia da Pisa, Guillermo da Sagrera, Domenico Gaggini, and at least thirty-three assistants.³⁶

The triumphal frieze, executed between 1455 and 1458, is considered to be the "key to the interpretation of the entire monument."³⁷ The frieze, executed primarily by Isaia da Pisa and Pietro da Milano, is intended to serve as a monumental visual record of the event of Alfonso's triumphal entry into the city of Naples in 1443 and is of primary interest for this study.

The Triumphal Frieze

The large centrally-located sculptural relief depicting Alfonso's triumph is an abbreviated representation and historical record of

32. "Alfonso King of Spain, Sicily, Italy, Holy Merciful Victor" (author's translation).

33. "Alfonso First Among Kings Built This Arch" (author's translation).

34. See Hersey, Pope-Hennessy, and Seymour for their opinions on the artists involved and their specific contributions. It is outside the scope of this study to begin to address all the issues involved in its attribution.

35. Charles Seymour Jr., *Sculpture in Italy*, 1966, 138.

36. Ibid., See Ricardo Filangieri, "L'arco di trionfo di Alfonso d'Aragona," *Dedalo* 12, 1932, 439-466; 595-626 for a detailed account of each artist, their contribution and the records of their dates and amounts of payment.

37. Hersey, *The Argonese Arch*, 1973, 46.

the actual event (fig. 12). While it was impossible for the artists to include all of the elements of the actual procession in the relief, there is an obvious attempt at historical accuracy. The relief depicts, at its center, the triumphal chariot drawn by four horses, bearing the enthroned figure of Alfonso.³⁸ Alfonso holds in his left hand an orb and in his right a scepter while seated upon a large high-backed throne with claw feet.³⁹ As was described in the record of the actual procession he is seated before the displaced flame of the *siege perilous* and his throne is draped at the back with the rich brocade mantle of the defeated Renè of Anjou. King Alfonso wears a long gown and around his neck the collar of his Order of the Lily. The king is covered by a baldachino that is decorated at its upper edge with a border of small fringed banners which display the arms of Calabria, Sicily, and Aragon. The baldachino is not supported by the twelve men described as supporting it in the record of the event and instead is carried by four men, two of whom stand at the side of the chariot. The chariot itself is decorated with classically inspired bucrania and swags of garlands with bearded male heads at the corners.⁴⁰ The bucrania and swags of garlands reflect the artist's interest in classical models since both motifs were common decorative elements used on many antique sarcophagi. The decoration on the arch, however, does not reflect a basis on any single antique model but instead takes its inspiration from a variety of antique sources including sarcophagi, architectural friezes and other arch monuments.⁴¹

The chariot is led by a classically draped female figure who represents a genius or Fortune.⁴² In front of her, leading the whole procession is a very animated group of musicians who blow trumpets and long double pipes. Included with the musicians is a small nude *putto* playing the cymbals.

38. The chariot was originally described as a four-wheeled cart; now it is represented as the classical two-wheeled triumphal chariot.

39. The right hand and scepter are now lost.

40. Eileen Driscoll, "Alfonso of Aragon as Patron of Art," in *Essays in Memory of Karl Lehmann*, ed. Lucy F. Sandler, New York, 1964, 87-96.

41. *Ibid.*, 90. Driscoll suggests several different sarcophagi preserved in Pisa as possible models for some of the decoration.

42. Hersey describes her as a genius, while Filangieri calls her a representation of Fortune, since she has no specific attributes it is unclear which interpretation is correct.



FIGURE 12. *Triumph of Alfonso I*, detail of central frieze from Triumphal Arch of Alfonso I, Castel Nuovo, Naples, 1453-1471. Copyright Alinari/Art Resource, NY.

Just behind the chariot are the barons and officials of Alfonso's court, some of whom, due to their specificity, must surely be portraits. Filangieri states that the two figures directly behind the chariot represent Ferdinando of Aragon and to his left, the prince of Taranto.⁴³ Just behind those figures, sculpted on the interior side of a small aedicule, are a group of men wearing turbans who probably represent the ambassador of Tunisia and his retinue.

The entire procession passes in front of a row of fluted Corinthian columns which support a long entablature decorated with several rows of classic architectural ornamentation, such as rows of egg and dart, bead, larger bead, square, cable, and feather designs. At either end of the frieze proper, and jutting forward architecturally from the relief itself, are two small aedicules with pedimental tops which contain more members of the procession. The aedicule at the rear of the procession is cramped with thirteen or more figures representing more visiting dignitaries and court members. The aedicule at the right is intended to be read as the front of the entire procession. This aedicule, which exactly mirrors the other in size and shape, shows four horses moving forward and ridden by musicians who play drums, pipes and other instruments. The instruments are a valuable artistic record of musical instruments in use at this time.⁴⁴

Ultimately, the arch is a unique synthesis of Renaissance ideas about antique arches and actual classical arches. It is, in reality, a supreme example of the Renaissance artist's knowledge of antique models and his ability to draw on them for inspiration while using them to create something entirely new. The classical influences reflected in the arch, though not drawn from a single triumphal arch or even a single monument, create a unified and cohesive monument. The sources, as cited by Eileen Driscoll, have come from "triumphal and commemorative arches, sarcophagi, altars, coins (and) statues."⁴⁵ To the Quattrocento observer however, it stood as a quintessential classical monument. The fifteenth-century poet Gonsalvo Cantalico compared the

43. Filangieri, *Dedalo*, 1932, 597. "Tuttavia è certo che le figure messe dietro al carro sono ritratti, e che il primo è Ferdinando d'Aragona e quello che gli sta a sinistra è il principe di Taranto." See also for a description of the arch.

44. See Hersey, *The Aragonese Arch*, 1973, plates 19 and 20 for details of these sections.

45. Driscoll, *Alfonso of Aragon as a Patron of Art*, 87.



FIGURE 13. Pisanello, *Alfonso V*, portrait medallion, cast bronze, 1449, National Museum of the Bargello, Florence.
Copyright Alinari/Art Resource, NY.

monument, which he called a royal triumphal gate, to the arches of Septimius Severus and Titus in Rome.⁴⁶

Alfonso's Imperial Image

A relief portrait medallion on the arch's podium, which one assumes would depict Alfonso, instead is a copy of a portrait of Trajan. The relief, probably copied from a coin, shows a profile bust of the Emperor draped and crowned with laurel.⁴⁷ This homage to and association with Trajan is appropriate for Alfonso, who like Trajan was a Spaniard by birth yet rose to greatness in Italy.⁴⁸ Trajan was regarded during the Middle Ages as one of the greatest and most just of all the Roman Emperor's which must have influenced his appearance on Alfonso's monument. Trajan was also responsible for erecting several magnificent

46. Giovanni Gravier, ed., *Raccolta di tutti i più rinomati scrittori della storia del regno di Napoli* Naples, 1769–72, 65. "Moenia sed post hunc simul aspicias altera pontem, Cumque triumphali consurgit fornice porta Regia quae Alfonso prisct monumenta figurat; Qualis Septimii testatur in urbe Trophaeum aut ibi quale decus demonstrat Flavius arcus felix porta quidem. . ."

47. Laura Breglia, *Roman Imperial Coins*, New York, 1968. See Cole, *Virtue and Magnificence*, 55.

48. *Ibid.*, 92–93.

arches, at Beneventum and in Rome, which may also have influenced Alfonso's decision to associate himself with that Emperor.

It is clear from other commissions by Alfonso, particularly of coins, that he was making a concentrated effort to portray himself in the guise of a classical Emperor and triumphator.⁴⁹ In 1449 Pisanello designed a bronze medal which depicted a portrait of Alfonso on one side and an allegory of Liberality on the other (fig. 13). The medal, one of the largest created during the fifteenth century, is conspicuously classical and imperial.⁵⁰ The obverse depicts a profile portrait bust of Alfonso wearing contemporary armor and flanked on the left by a crested helmet decorated with a shining sun and an open book, and on the right his imperial crown.⁵¹ The sun is often used as a symbol of truth, and was a favorite symbol in antiquity as an emblem of power while the open book probably refers to Alfonso's knowledge and his interest in literature. More revealing than the portrait of the King is the inscription above and beneath his bust. Above him is the inscription "DIVUS ALFONSUS REX" (Holy King Alfonso), while below are the words "TRIUMPHATOR ET PACIFICUS" (Triumphator and Pacifier).

The reverse depicts an eagle perched on a branch above its dead prey. The prey, a rabbit, is generously left for other smaller birds to share. The inscription, "LIBERALITAS AUGUSTA," is a specific allusion to Alfonso's reputation as a generous King and to his resemblance to another Imperial ruler who shared the same virtue, Augustus.⁵²

The choice of the terms *triumphator* and *divus* and *liberalitas*

49. See *The Currency of Fame: Portrait Medals of the Renaissance*, ed. Stephen K. Scher, New York, 1994, 119, catalogue #35. Here is illustrated another classically inspired portrait medal of Alfonso created by Cristoforo di Geremia and dated c.1458. On the obverse is a portrait bust of Alfonso dressed in ornate armor. On the reverse he is shown seated, dressed as a Roman emperor, and crowned by Bellona and Mars. Like in the Argonese arch relief Alfonso holds an orb in his left hand and a sword in his right.

50. Joanna Woods-Marsden, "Art and Political Identity in Fifteenth-Century Naples," in *Art and Politics in Late Medieval and Early Renaissance Italy*, ed. Charles Rosenberg, Notre Dame, 1990, 15.

51. *Ibid.*, 16. The crown and helmet were surely used in order to highlight Alfonso's dual roles as military leader and righteous King. It is interesting to note that it is the symbol of his role as King which is placed before him.

52. See Cole, *Virtue and Magnificence*, 58, and G.F. Hill, *Renaissance Medals*, London, 1967, 30.

all point to Alfonso's desire to be associated with the Imperial rulers of the past. Furthermore, the use of the word *divus* elevates Alfonso in association not only with earlier Imperial rulers but to those Imperial rulers who had been deified. Alfonso has deemed himself on that medal, and on the frieze of the arch, worthy of not just honor and respect but of worship.⁵³

Alfonso's Arch, Intention and Image

The entire triumphal gateway to the Castel Nuovo stands as a shining example of King Alfonso's desire to create and promote himself, his reign and his empire as a reflection of the classical Imperial past. He and his artists chose the triumphal arch as the sculptural bearer of antiquity in his new kingdom. The arch, sharing the same function as it had in ancient Rome, serves as a propagandistic and honorary monument intended to glorify a victorious ruler.

The entire antique notion of the function of the triumphal arch has been realigned by Alfonso in order to more fully display his power and authority. He has forced the free-standing arch of antiquity to serve double duty as a traditional honorific monument and as the triumphal portal to his grandiose castle. Furthermore, he has shifted the militaristic content of the antique arch into one to reflect his own identity as pacifier and harbinger of peace.

Alfonso, and his artists, consciously chose to de-emphasize the military aspect of the arch by not including images of bound and tortured captives, and instead focused on its ability to promote the positive aspects of Alfonso as a virtuous, benevolent victor and chivalric King. Alfonso successfully and ingeniously adopted antique symbols of power, such as the sun and the eagle, as well as Imperial portraits, medals, and titles, to his own devices. He appropriated and reinterpreted the historical significance of the *imago triumphalis* in terms of its grandeur,

53. *Ibid.*, 17. See for a discussion of the term *divus*. The word *divus* as an adjective can simply mean divine or deified, the term was often used as an epithet for dead or deified emperors. Often the use of the term "divus" on an inscription means that the Emperor was still alive at its inscription whereas the term "divi" would be used posthumously. See also Scher, *Currency of Fame*, 1994, 101 for a similar analysis of the use of the term DIVI on a coin of Federigo da Montefeltro.

power and victory, yet retained his image as a Christian ruler and magnanimous prince. Alfonso ultimately proves himself to be one of the earliest Renaissance rulers to fully incorporate the Renaissance's rebirth of classical antiquity into his own personal and political mythology.

Malatesta and Montefeltro



This chapter focuses on two Renaissance rulers, Sigismondo Malatesta and Federico da Montefeltro, and the manner in which both men manipulated the idea of the classical triumph in the presentation of their own images. Both men incorporated triumphal imagery into their own visual identity, but did so in remarkably different ways. Sigismondo used triumphal iconography in his Tempio Malatestiano as part of a decorative program based in pagan mythology and classical literature. Federico, on the other hand, used the classical triumphal procession in association with portraits of himself and his wife as a way to comment on aspects of the couple's respective virtues.

A Pair of Renaissance Despots

Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta of Rimini and Federico da Montefeltro of Urbino were born within five years of one another, in 1417 and 1422 respectively.¹ Both men became powerful rulers, educated patrons of art and literature and successful military leaders. They also became bitter enemies. One of the most significant differences in the life and history of the two men is that Federico and the Montefeltro family enjoyed the support of the Popes, particularly Pope Pius II, while Sigismondo and the Malatesta family were maligned by him.

The two men are often discussed in terms of their patronage. Each had a distinct genius in the dissemination of his own image

1. Sigismondo Malatesta's dates are 1417–1468. Federico Montefeltro's dates are 1422–1482.

as ruler and each had his own unique approach. Sigismondo chose to align himself with pagan imagery while Federico chose Christian images for the basis of his propaganda. Their patronage serves as a reflection of their individual character: the grandiose, arcane and pagan images of Sigismondo stand in stark contrast to the humble, measured, and virtuous Christianity explicit in the art commissioned by Federico.

Sigismondo was respected for his military genius but was equally notorious for his unpredictable nature and for accusations of his having his first two wives murdered.² Federico, on the other hand, was known for his diplomacy and loyalty. He had a reputation as a virtuous and patient man who so adored his second wife that he chose to remain celibate after her death rather than remarry.

Although the two despots appear to be totally different from one another, they both incorporated the iconography of the Triumph in the construction and presentation of their own personal identity.

Rimini: A Malatesta City

Rimini, the ancient Roman city of *Ariminum*, located on the Adriatic coast became a Roman colony in the third century B.C. and was favored by both Julius Caesar and his nephew Augustus. The city's location was important due to its situation at the intersection of two of the most important roads leading to Rome, the via Aemilia and the via Flaminia.³ To underscore this aspect, Augustus had a large single-bay arch constructed here in 27 B.C. to celebrate the restoration of the Via Flaminia.⁴

The early history of Rimini is dominated by the struggles for power between papal and imperial parties during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.⁵ In 1221 Rimini was an Imperial state under the control of Emperor Frederick II, but after his defeat in 1248 at Parma the city denied him allegiance, and from that point forward the city supported the Guelph party.⁶

2. See *Memoirs of a Renaissance Pope: The Commentaries of Pius II*, ed., Leona Gabel, trans., Florence Gragg, New York, 1962, 110.

3. Pernis, Maria Grazia and Laurie Schneider Adams, *Federico da Montefeltro and Sigismondo Malatesta*, New York, 1996, 1.

4. Kleiner, *The Arch of Nero*, 1985, 29.

5. P.J. Jones, *The Malatesta of Rimini and the Papal State*, Cambridge, 1974, 21.

6. *Ibid.*

Malatesta da Verrucchio, the first Guelph leader of the Romagna and the founder of the Malatesta dynasty lived from 1212 to 1312.⁷ The infamy of the family's name began when Dante included Verrucchio and his oldest son Malatestino dell'Occhio in his *Inferno*. The two are confined to the eighth circle of hell for their role in the murder of the leader of the Ghibelline forces in Rimini.⁸

Dante was also responsible for immortalizing yet another Malatesta intrigue in his *Inferno*; the story of Giancotto Malatesta, another son of Verrucchio, and his wife Francesca da Polenta. Giancotto, also called "the Lame," was a cruel man who had won the hand of the young and beautiful Francesca because of his military support of her family in Ravenna.⁹ But Francesca was attracted to Giancotto's handsome younger brother Paolo and one day while they read together they fell in love and kissed. When Giancotto discovered them together he stabbed them to death. Dante, who knew Paolo personally, confined the young couple to the second circle of hell where those who were lustful are tossed about on eternal winds.¹⁰

The historical aspects of the name Malatesta are important because when Sigismondo rose to power he had to contend immediately with the unfavorable associations between his family name, treachery, deceit and murder.

Sigismondo Malatesta

Sigismondo was born June 19, 1417. He was the illegitimate son of Pandolfo Malatesta, an accomplished *condottiere* and Antonia di Giacomino, a noblewoman of Brescia.¹¹

7. Pernis, *Montefeltro and Malatesta*, 1996, 3.

8. Dante, *Inferno*, trans., Mandelbaum, 249. Canto XXVII; 46-48. "E 'l mastin vecchio e 'l nuovo da Verrucchio, che fecer di Mpntagna il mal governo, là dove soglion fan d'i denti succhio."

9. Pernis, *Montefeltro and Malatesta*, 1996, 2.

10. Dante, *Inferno*, trans., Mandelbaum, 109. Canto V; 127-138. "Noi leggiavamo un giorno per diletto di Lancialotto come amor lo strinse; soli eravamo e senza alcun sospetto. per più fiate li occhi ci sospinse quella lettura, e scolorocci il viso; ma solo un punto fu quel che ci vinse. Quando leggemmo il disiato riso esser baciato da cotanto amante, questi, che mai da me non fia diviso, la bocca mi baciò tutto tremante. Galeotto fu 'l libro e chi lo scrisse: quel giorno più non vi leggemmo avante."

11. Pernis, *Montefeltro and Malatesta*, 1996, 9.

The lives and events of the Malatesta family during the latter half of the fifteenth century were recorded in detail in the *Cronaca Malatestiana del Secolo XV* by Gaspare Broglio Tartagli. Broglio was Sigismondo's secretary and ambassador and wrote the chronicle between the years of 1440 and 1480.¹² At the beginning of the text Broglio explains the importance of his work in recording, for the faithful, in a clear manner, the illustrious house of the Malatesta.¹³ He continues by explaining that the house of Malatesta descends from the illustrious house of the great emperor Scipione Africano.¹⁴ The fact that the Malatesta family claimed to be descended from Scipio Africanus will be important for and accentuated by Sigismondo later in his life. Broglio also records the death of Sigismondo's father, Pandolfo Malatesta and describes the three surviving male children; Galeotto who was "holy in life," Sigismondo, who was "warlike and ferocious," and the illustrious third son Domenico, who "remained in Cesena."¹⁵

When Pandolfo died Sigismondo was ten years old and he and his brother Galeotto were entrusted to his uncle Carlo Malatesta, ruler of Rimini, and his wife Elizabeth Gonzaga. From them Sigismondo received an education that emphasized not only the political and military concerns of his uncle but also the humanist and artistic interests of his aunt.

In 1430 Sigismondo led troops against the papal forces of Martin V which had invaded the Romagna. Shortly after this battle Sigismondo fought against the families of the Visconti and Montefeltro in an alliance with Florence and Venice. In 1431 Galeotto

12. Gaspare Broglio Tartaglia, *Cronaca Malatestiana del Secolo XV; della Cronaca Universale*, a cura di Antonio Luciani, Rimini, 1982. Broglio was born in Siena in 1407 and died in Rimini in 1483.

13. *Ibid.*, 3. ". . . per dare a voi ligitori chiara memoria in qual forma discese la illustrissima casa di Malatesti."

14. *Ibid.*, ". . . ho deliberato fare chiarezza de quelli illustrissimi signori disciesi della illustrissima casa del magnio et illustrissimo inperadire zoè capitano dello exercito Romano nominato al suo tempo Scipione Africano. . ."

15. *Ibid.*, 43. "Rimase di questo illustrissimo signore tre figlioli de somma virtù, l'uno chiamato Galeotto Ruberto, el quale per la sua santa vita fo nel cospetto dell'onipotente Dio beato e molti miracoli à facti di poi la sua morte; e questo fo el primogenito segnoregiando la nobile città d'Arimine. Secondo nominato lo illustrissimo signore miser Sigismondo, il quale fo bellicoso e ferocissimo nell'arte militaria e alli di suoi fece de magnanimi facti. Terzo si chiamava lo illustrissimo signore miser Malatesta: a costui rimase la città di Cesena."

Roberto died, mostly due to his own personal asceticism and constant self-flagellation, and Sigismondo inherited Rimini and Fano. Two years later Sigismondo forged an alliance with the Este family in Ferrara by marrying Ginevra d'Este, daughter of Niccolò Este, Lord of Ferrara. By 1433, only one year into his rule, Sigismondo had made some powerful friends and enemies. Wisely, when Eugenius IV was elected Pope, Sigismondo offered his allegiance to him in a fight for Cervia in 1433. In that same year Sigismondo found favor with the Holy Roman Emperor Sigismund, who while on his return to Bohemia, passed through Rimini and knighted Sigismondo and his brother Domenico.¹⁶

While the knighthood seemed to have helped legitimize Sigismondo and his rule in Rimini, he continued to infuriate the Pope and bring dishonor and suspicion to his name.¹⁷ When his second wife, Polissena Sforza, was found suffocated, he ordered his chancellor to report that she had been murdered by her lover. When the chancellor refused, he imprisoned and starved him to death.¹⁸

In 1443, while still married to Polissena, Sigismondo met the twelve-year old beauty Isotta degli Atti. The two fell madly in love and by 1445 Sigismondo had court poet Carlo Valturi compose a love poem in her honor. In 1447 Isotta had a son by Sigismondo named Giovanni. The infant died and was buried in a very grand public funeral in the church of San Francesco, in the same sarcophagus as Carlo Malatesta.¹⁹

Isotta was more than just a mistress to Sigismondo, she became an integral part of his life. She even joined him on the battlefield and when not together the two kept in constant correspondence. Isotta also continued to bear his children, although he did not officially marry her until 1457. Isotta may be most important for Sigismondo's legacy because she had begun the process of rebuilding a chapel in the church of San Francesco in 1447. In 1447 Pope Nicholas V issued a papal bull that granted Isotta the right to rebuild the Chapel of the Angels in San Francesco in Rimini, for the amount of 500 florins.²⁰ That same year

16. Jones, *Malatesta of Rimini*, 1974, 180.

17. Pernis, *Montefeltro and Malatesta*, 1996, 12. Sigismondo conquered papal territory and cheated the Pope out of money from the sale of salt.

18. *Ibid.*, 160. The date of Polissena Sforza's death is recorded in the *Cronaca* as 1448.

19. *Ibid.*, 44.

20. *Ibid.*,

Sigismondo also decided to rebuild the chapel of St. Sigismund, a project which would then develop into the rebuilding of the church as a whole and the addition of his own new funerary chapel dedicated to himself and Isotta.

The Church of San Francesco

The rebuilt church of San Francesco in Rimini, dubbed the Tempio Malatestiano in the 19th century, stands as a monument to Sigismondo's life, loves, learning and ultimately his, and his beloved Isotta's, death. The inscriptions across the facade and at the sides of the church state very clearly his intentions for his rebuilding efforts. Across the facade, in what is perhaps the Renaissance's first truly accurate imitation of a classical inscription, are the words, "Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta the son of Pandolfo the Fifth made it in the year of grace 1450."²¹ On both sides of the building, further insisting on the building's classical origins, are lengthy Greek inscriptions that make Sigismondo's motives and self admiration clear. In them he declares himself the "bringer of Victory" to Rimini and states that in commemoration of his great and courageous deeds, at great personal expense, he erects this temple in honor of God.²²

The choice of architects for this memorial project proves that from its inception the new San Francesco was meant to imitate and rival the buildings of classical antiquity. Sigismondo hired Leon Battista Alberti, perhaps at the recommendation of Giovanni de' Medici, in or near the year 1450 to design and direct the rebuilding of San Francesco.²³ A miniature from an epic poem entitled the *Hesperis*, written by the court poet Basinio Basini

21. "SIGISMUNDUS PANDULFUS MALATESTA PAN(dulfi) FIL(ius) V FECIT ANNO GRATIAE MCCCCL.

22. Marilyn Aronberg Lavin, "Piero della Francesca's Fresco of Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta before St. Sigismund," *Art Bulletin* 1974: 345-374; 345, and Marilyn Aronberg Lavin, "The Antique Source for the Tempio Malatestiano's Greek Inscriptions," *Art Bulletin*, 1977; 421-422.

23. There is some debate concerning the date of Alberti's initial work on the building. See Charles Mitchell "Il Tempio Malatestiano" in *Studi Malatestiani*, ed. Jones, 1978, 77-80. See Helen S. Ettliger, *The Image of a Prince*, Ph.D. dissertation, Berkeley, 1988, 218.

between 1449 and 1457, illustrates the building's reconstruction.²⁴ The illustration, by Giovanni da Fano, depicts the half-finished facade of the Tempio Malatestiano and the activity of the stone masons in and around the building. Standing in the very center is the tiny figure of a man, perhaps Alberti himself, in a short cloak and hat who seems to survey the work. Alberti's design for the renovation was revolutionary and proved to be the earliest example of the reintroduction of the classical temple facade in Renaissance architecture. Alberti did not even have to rebuild the entire church; instead he simply cloaked the old Gothic church with a new marble shell, a classical facade and arcaded sides (fig. 14).

The facade designed and built by Alberti is based on the design of a Roman triple bay arch. The Arch of Augustus, although only a single bay, is a short distance from the church and certainly inspired the design (fig. 15). The Arch of Augustus, perhaps the oldest Imperial arch, was built in 27 B.C. to honor Augustus. Although the Arch is badly damaged and has since been incorporated into the city walls it still retains some of its decoration and part of its original inscription. The facade is decorated with two large fluted and engaged Corinthian columns. The columns support a trabeation and a shallow tympanum which spans the width of the arch itself. At the outermost corners, inside the columns and below the architrave, are small tondi which contain portraits. These tondi, two on each side of the arch, depict portrait heads of Jupiter and Neptune on one side and Apollo and Roma on the other. The keystone is decorated with a bull protome.²⁵

Alberti's new facade is an inventive amalgamation of classical details. The large central arch frames the original doorway to the church while the smaller lateral arches are only shallow niches. Four enormous fluted and engaged composite columns support a large entablature that runs the length of the facade and carries the dedicatory inscription. Alberti's facade even retains the use of small tondi in the corners between the top of the column and top of the arch as seen in the Rimini arch. Alberti continued his use of round Roman arches along the sides of the building. Seven deep arches run down each side of the building between which

24. Otto Pächt, "Giovanni da Fano's illustrations for Basinio's Epos Hesperis," *Studi Romagnoli II*, 1951, 90-111. See also Pier Giorgio Pasini, "Rimini nel Quattrocento," in *Studi Malatestiani*, ed. Jones, 1978, 116-157.

25. Kleiner, *Arch of Nero*, 31.



FIGURE 14. Leon Battista Alberti, *Tempio Malatestiano* (S. Francesco), Rimini, c. 1450. Copyright Scala/Art Resource, NY.

are placed the stone sarcophagi of Sigismondo's favored court poets, authors, philosophers and humanists.

Alberti had also originally planned for a centrally placed domed rotunda, though this portion was never completed.²⁶ A bronze medal created by Matteo de Pasti in 1450 shows Alberti's original design for the church. The medal shows the enormous dome which would have dominated the small church. The medal also clearly shows the elaborate and inspired architecture of the never-completed second story of the building.²⁷

Sigismondo's choice of Alberti and a classically inspired design for his newly remodeled church was part of his desire to encourage an image of himself as an enlightened, learned and triumphant

26. Ludwig Heydenreich, *Architecture in Italy 1400-1500*, 1996, 37. See for medal, plate 33.

27. Rudolf Wittkower, *Architectural Principles in the Age of Humanism*, London, 1962, 37-41. See for a discussion of the Temple and the problem of adding a second story to the one-story design of an arch.



FIGURE 15. Arch of Augustus, Rimini, 27 B.C. *Author Photo*

ruler. The use of the Greek inscriptions on the sides of the buildings was a way to reinforce the idea of the educated ruler. The immediate and clearly visible associations with the Arch of Augustus were intentional. Sigismondo's new church stood as a symbol of his own Imperial qualities as well as his personal descent from Imperial blood. It also recalled, with its adherence to classical triumphal architecture, concepts of victory and legitimate and honorable rulership.

The Interior of the Tempio

Although the external design of the church by Alberti reflects balance and harmony based on classical ideals, the interior, primarily the work of Agostino di Duccio and Matteo de'Pasti, reflects a more complicated iconography that mixes pagan mythology, and Christian ideology.²⁸

The interior is a single nave construction with wooden beam ceilings and four large chapels on either side which open directly off the nave.²⁹ Perhaps the most famous chapel in the church is the Chapel of the Relics which was completed in 1449. In this small chapel is a fresco executed by Piero della Francesca in 1451 which depicts Sigismondo Malatesta kneeling before Saint Sigismund (fig. 16).³⁰ The large horizontal fresco is framed on three sides by a wide band of simulated relief carving. At the bottom in a narrow band is an inscription which identifies the donor and his name saint and is signed and dated.³¹ The fresco depicts the young Sigismondo kneeling in prayer in front of the seated figure of his elderly name saint. Behind Sigismondo are two dogs, one black and one white, which lie on the ground with one facing the donor and the other facing the opposite direction. On the wall just above the dogs is an oculus that reveals a view of the Castel Sigismondo. The fresco is meant as a votive offering to his name saint and is intended to reflect Sigismondo's pious nature and humble respect for Sigismund as both saint and Holy Roman Emperor.

Piero della Francesca also executed a bust portrait of Sigismondo, often dated to just before the completion of the fresco. In the portrait, now housed in the Louvre, Sigismondo is depicted with the same strong profile and stern expression apparent in the fresco and in his portrait medals.

28. Paolo Portoghesi, *Il Tempio Malatestiano*, Firenze, 1965, 4.

29. See Pier Giorgio Pasini, *Il Tempio malatestiano: Splendore cortese e classicismo umanistico*, Milano, 2000. A discussion of the entire interior and all of its decoration is outside the scope of this study, our concern here is with the specifically triumphal imagery.

30. See Marilyn Lavin, *Piero della Francesca a Rimini: L'affresco nel Tempio Malatestiano*, Bologna, 1984.

31. *Ibid.*, 68. The inscription reads "SANCTUS SIGISMUNDUS SIGISMUNDUS PANDULFUS MALATESTA PAN. F. PETRI DE BURGO SS. OPUS MCCCCLI." Pope-Hennessy states that this is "the only work by Piero that is datable with absolute precision." See John Pope-Hennessy, *The Piero della Francesca Trail*, London, 1991, 30.

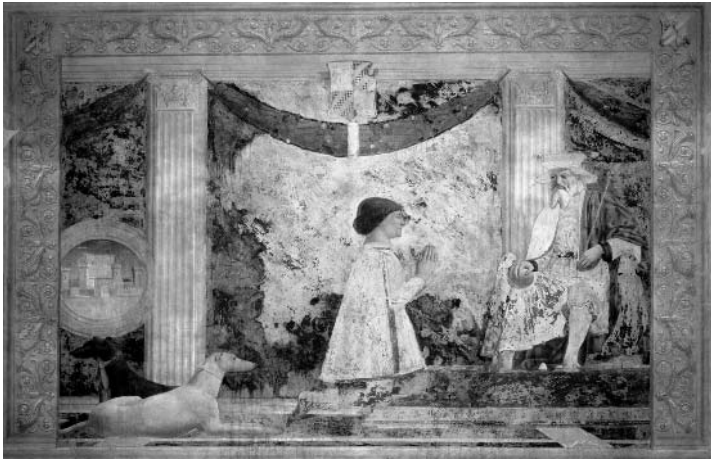


FIGURE 16. Piero della Francesca, *Sigismondo Malatesta kneeling before Saint Sigismund*, fresco, Tempio Malatestiano, Rimini. c. 1451. Copyright Scala/Art Resource, NY.

The Triumphal Images of Sigismondo

There are two specifically triumphal images of Sigismondo within the church of San Francesco. While both depict a portrait of Sigismondo they are based on very different aspects of the antique Triumph. Both images were executed by the sculptor Agostino di Duccio between 1452 and 1454 and are located in the same chapel within the church, the Chapel of the Ancestors.³²

A dramatic triumphal portrait of Sigismondo Malatesta is included as part of the decoration on the front of the sarcophagus which holds the remains of the ancestors of the Malatesta family (fig. 17). The sarcophagus, the Arca degli Antenati, is located within an interior niche in the chapel and is surmounted by gilded and painted blue drapery in the form of a baldachino. Beneath it hangs the same painted gilded drapery which at its center is decorated with the Malatesta coat-of-arms. Two reliefs, separated by an inscription, decorate the front of the sarcophagus and depict the Triumph of Minerva and the Triumph of Sigismondo.³³

32. Maurice Shapiro, *Studies in the Iconology of the Sculptures in the Tempio Malatestiano*, Ph.D. dissertation, New York University, 1958, 49–67. See chapter three for a discussion of the chapel.

33. The inscription reads "Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta, Son of Pandolfo, [out of] the great rewards of his probity and courage, [set up this sarcophagus] for his illustrious family, ancestors and descendants."



FIGURE 17. Agostino di Duccio, *Arca degli Antenati*, Chapel of the Ancestors, Tempio Malatestiano, Rimini, stone sarcophagus. c. 1452.
 Copyright Alinari/Art Resource, NY.

Sigismondo appears in both reliefs in a dual role as himself and as Scipio Africanus.³⁴ These two reliefs are identified in various sources as the Triumph or Temple of Pallas or Minerva or Isotta and the Triumph of Scipio or Sigismondo.

In the Triumph of Sigismondo panel Scipio/Sigismondo is depicted with his eyes closed, dressed in a cuirass with a toga over it and crowned with laurel (fig. 18). In his left hand he holds a palm branch and in his right a scepter. He is seated on a throne decorated with winged lions which is perched atop an elaborate two-tiered cart pulled by four horses. The triumphal cart is depicted at the moment it passes through a triumphal arch, much like the triumphal relief from the Arch of Titus. The arch, however, is not meant to represent the Arch of Titus or even the arch of Augustus at Rimini. The arch is instead an imaginary arch designed specifically for Sigismondo, evidenced by the soffits of the arch which are decorated with the intertwined initials S and I; a favorite emblem of Sigismondo and used throughout the church.³⁵ These soffits prove that the triumphant figure is intended to be identified as Sigismondo.

On the front of the cart on the second tier and just below the seated figure of Sigismondo/Scipio is a small tondo. The tondo is composed of laurel leaves and contains a bust portrait of a man, perhaps of Scipio or Sigismondo or both. Seated on either side of the tondo are two winged putti who are holding swags which are further supported by other such putti. The two standing putti at the corners hold shields which bear the entwined SI of Sigismondo. Standing on the same level and considerably taller than the putti is a large semi-nude male figure who blows a trumpet directed at the small tondo.

The complex iconography of this triumphal image suggests a reading in at least two ways. For the casual observer the triumph is simply a classically inspired triumphal portrait of the ruler Sigismondo, who is both seated on the triumphal cart, as well as incorporated into its decoration. The image successfully recalls the power and honor of the classical triumphal arch and associates Sigismondo with the qualities of the victorious generals who were afforded a triumphal procession. The placement of the

34. *Ibid.*, 60.

35. Pernis, *Montefeltro and Malatesta*, 98. The S if for Sigismondo, the I for Isotta.



FIGURE 18. Agostino di Duccio, *Triumph of Sigismondo/Scipio*, relief panel from the Arca degli Antenati, Chapel of the Ancestors, Tempio Malatestiano, Rimini. c. 1452, Copyright Alinari/Art Resource, NY.

other image on the sarcophagus further associates not only Sigismondo but the Malatesta name with these honors. The Triumph's proximity to the deceased members of the family and its location in a burial chapel in a church may also be read as a comment on the Malatesta's hope for a triumph over death.

A more complex reading is afforded to those who perhaps understood Sigismondo's own family lineage. His image on the cart, with his eyes closed, has been interpreted as Scipio the Younger.³⁶

36. See Pernis, *Montefeltro and Malatesta*, 1996, 97–99.

The closed eyes are significant in that it was the younger Scipio who while asleep dreamed of the elder Scipio who revealed to him the city of Carthage. The image in the tondo then is actually Sigismondo, who is being specifically trumpeted by a figure representing Fame. This combination would serve to reveal Sigismondo as a direct descendent of Scipio Africanus, elder and younger, and as one worthy and destined to share their same victories and honors. Pernis points out that the shallow relief carving of a town in the background of the triumph would then symbolize both Rimini and Carthage; Rimini as conquered by Sigismondo and Carthage symbolizing Urbino which was the city of his enemy Montefeltro, just as Carthage had been the city of Hannibal, Scipio's greatest enemy.³⁷

The triumphal relief fulfills for Sigismondo all his propagandistic desires. It is an image that is quintessentially classical that depicts him as the descendant of a virtuous and victorious ruler. It incorporates the classical ideals of honor and praise for an individual and combines them with the Christian concepts of the triumph over death and eternal victory.

At the entrance to the Chapel of the Ancestors is the second triumphal portrait of Sigismondo. It, too, attempts to incorporate antique concepts of honor and victory with Christian ones of Triumph and Fame. This triumphal portrait, which is quite different from the relief, is actually incorporated into the architecture of the chapel. The portrait serves as part of the base for the pilasters which support the chapel itself so that the pilaster rests on a pair of elephants who in turn support on their backs a portrait of Sigismondo (fig. 19).³⁸ The elephant was a favorite *impresa* of Sigismondo and he had used it often, especially on the reverse of medals.

The portrait of Sigismondo is a profile bust encircled by a wreath of laurel. It shows an idealized image of the mature Sigismondo with his recognizable short cropped hair and aquiline nose. He is crowned with laurel that is tied together at the back of his head. The image immediately recalls the sculpted tondos with portrait busts that decorate Rimini's Arch of Augustus.³⁹

37. *Ibid.*, 99.

38. See H.H. Scullard, *The Elephant in the Greek and Roman World*, London, 1974, for the various meanings of the elephant.

39. The image is also very similar to the portrait of Trajan used by Alfonso on his arch in Naples.



FIGURE 19. Agostino di Duccio, *Sigismondo*, portrait from a pilaster base with elephants, Chapel of the Ancestors, Tempio Malatestiano, Rimini. c. 1452.
Copyright Alinari/Art Resource, NY.

Furthermore, the whole portrait tondo is enclosed within a marble square that recalls, in size and shape, the side of a sarcophagus. Because the tondo is set flush with the top of the heads of the elephants, the tondo seems to be being carried or borne by the elephants in a kind of procession. This pair of elephants is clearly meant to echo Petrarch's use of elephants as the bearers of the Triumph of Fame. In this portrait it seems that Sigismondo has turned to Petrarch, in addition to antiquity, as a source for his triumphal imagery. The elephants, which here carry the image of Sigismondo, are in essence serving to perform for him a Triumph of Fame. Sigismondo was certainly also aware that elephants had been used by Roman Emperors to pull triumphal chariots.⁴⁰ Moreover, with the use of the elephants, he was reinforcing the link between himself and Augustus and the city of Rimini. In addition, Sigismondo was also again linking himself to Scipio Africanus, who after his defeat of Hannibal, included the defeated general's elephants in his triumphal procession.⁴¹

Another aspect related to the use of the elephants at the entrance to a family burial chapel again comes from Petrarch. Petrarch's Triumph of Fame, which was drawn by elephants, is the Triumph in his series of five allegorical triumphs which vanquished death. This imagery works perfectly in association with a family burial chapel so that it is not just Sigismondo but the fame of the Malatesta family name which Triumphs over death.⁴²

For Sigismondo Malatesta his rule and his role as patron provided him the opportunity to construct and disseminate, through art and architecture, the image of a proper Renaissance Prince. His choice to incorporate the antique Triumph, in a variety of circumstances and as a major component of his iconographical campaign proves that the image of the triumph was a significant and powerful tool.⁴³

40. Kleiner, *Arch of Nero*, 1985, 31. Several Spanish coins dated to 17 B.C. depict an arch crowned with a sculpture of a chariot of Augustus drawn by two elephants.

41. The ancient writers Livy and Polybius both record Scipio's triumph and his use of elephants.

42. Many antique coins depicted elephants as the bearers of triumphal carts or chariots. A *sestertius* of Tiberius, c. A.D. 35, shows a seated statue of the deified Augustus riding in a quadriga drawn by elephants. See Scullard, *The Elephant*, 170-178; 254-259.

43. Sigismondo died in Rimini on October 9, 1468 and is buried in his beloved Tempio.

Sigismondo's long time enemy and rival, Federico da Montefeltro, who defeated him in battle in 1453 causing him to lose all of his lands except for Rimini, also adopted classical triumphal imagery as a visual tool in his own self-promotion.

Montefeltro History

Members of the Montefeltro family, like members of the Malatesta family, had also been consigned to hell by Dante. Guido il Vecchio da Montefeltro was even confined to the same circle of hell as was Verrucchio and his son Malatestiano. Guido was committed there for his role as a treacherous counselor to Pope Boniface VIII.⁴⁴ Another Montefeltro, Bonconte, was consigned to purgatory. He is found in the area of the ante-purgatory, the region reserved for those who were late to repent for their sins and died violent deaths.⁴⁵ Bonconte describes his bloody death at the battle of Campoldino in 1289 and how an angel and a devil battled for his soul.⁴⁶

Like Rimini, Urbino was also an old Roman territory. The name Montefeltro comes from the Latin *Mons feretrius*, the Mountain of Lightning. Urbino was also famous in antiquity for its stone carving. The city of Urbino, called *Urvinum Mataurense* by the Romans is located on top of a hill between the Apennine Mountains and the Adriatic Sea. It also sits on the primary route between the North and Rome.⁴⁷

By the late seventh century Urbino was ruled by a bishop of the Church and in 774 was given by Charlemagne to the Pope with other lands from Central Italy. The early Lords of Montefeltro were given the rank of Count by Emperor Frederick Barbarossa in 1160.⁴⁸ Like Rimini, in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries the city was alternately controlled by Ghibellines and Guelphs. Urbino, however, remained mostly on the side of the Guelphs.

The similarities between the Malatesta family in Rimini and

44. Dante, *Inferno*, 247, Canto XXVII; 25–45.

45. Dante, *Purgatory*, 70, Canto V; 88–130.

46. This battle for the soul is traditionally called a 'psychomachia.'

47. Pernis, *Montefeltro and Malatesta*, 1996, 2.

48. James Dennistoun, *Memoirs of the Dukes of Urbino*, 3 vols., London, 1909, vol. I; 24.

the Montefeltro in Urbino continued throughout each family's history. It seems that the two families were intertwined and entangled from as early as the thirteenth century. It was from that point too that the rivalry began, finally reaching a climax in the fifteenth century with Sigismondo and Federico.

Federico da Montefeltro

Federico's paternity is rather uncertain and there have been two major hypotheses put forth. The first is that Federico was the son of Guidantonio, Duke of Urbino and an unnamed woman. The other is that Federico was the son of Guidantonio's daughter Aura and Bernardino degli Ubaldini della Carda.⁴⁹ Giovanni Santi, Urbino's court painter and poet, wrote an account of the life and deeds of Federico in which he suggested that Federico's true origins were not even mortal but instead, divine.⁵⁰ In 1424 Pope Martin V issued a papal bull that recognized and legitimized Federico as the son of Guidantonio and a noble woman.

In 1433, at age eleven, Federico was sent to Venice where he served as a hostage for a peace treaty signed by his father.⁵¹ In Venice, Federico had impressed the Doge and other diplomats and gained their respect. When the plague hit Venice a year later Federico was sent to Mantua and placed in the custody of Gianfrancesco Gonzaga. In Mantua, Federico was taught by the humanist Vittorino da Feltrò. Vittorino had a school in Mantua called the *Gioiosa* where he taught a mixture of Christian theology and the classics. Federico was schooled in Latin, Greek, astrology, music, mathematics, history and philosophy.⁵² Federico, along with other young princes, was also instructed in the arts of war, including lessons in weaponry, dueling, cavalry, and sword fighting.

In 1437 after he had returned from Mantua, Federico married

49. Dennistoun, *Memoirs*, 1909, 61–62. Dennistoun gives seven different hypothesis concerning Federico's paternity, of which the two cited above are included.

50. Giovanni Santi, *La Vita e Le Gesta di Federico di Montefeltro Duca d'Urbino*, 2 vols., A curi di Luigi Michelini Tocci, Città Del Vaticano, 1985, I; 1–96. Giovanni Santi is the father of the painter Raphael.

51. Pernis, *Montefeltro and Malatesta*, 1996, 18.

52. Alison Cole, *Virtue and Magnificence: Art of the Italian Renaissance Courts*, New York, 1995, 69.

Gentile Brancaleoni, the daughter of a nobleman. She had been promised to him when he was only three years old, and with the Pope's consent, they were formally engaged. At his marriage to Gentile, who was five years his senior, he inherited all of her property which included twenty castles and the territory of Massa Trabaria. The young fifteen-year-old Federico was now a Count and began his rule of Massa Trabaria by applying the lessons he had learned in Mantua. He quickly impressed his new subjects with his charity, and his reputation for fairness and accessibility.⁵³

At the age of twenty-one Federico inherited the city of Urbino after his half brother, Oddantonio, the Duke of Urbino, had been murdered.⁵⁴ Oddantonio, who had assumed power in Urbino in 1443 at age sixteen, was murdered a year later due in part to his lavish expenses and cruel nature. When Federico took control of the city it was on the verge of civil war and he was forced to promise not to investigate the murder of Oddantonio to keep peace with the citizens. After accepting this agreement and a list of other demands Federico set about trying to restore order.⁵⁵

Immediately after Federico began his reign as Duke of Urbino Sigismondo Malatesta in Rimini challenged his right to do so. Sigismondo wrote letters to the Pope, several Cardinals, Francesco Sforza in Milan and others claiming that not only was Federico not the rightful heir to Urbino but that he was incompetent and incapable of ruling. Federico intercepted one of these letters and sent a response through his secretary to Sigismondo and the others. Federico's letter, dated January 8, 1445 was a scathing reproach of Sigismondo Malatesta. In the letter, after he affirmed his own right to rule Urbino, he questioned Sigismondo's legitimacy. He compared Sigismondo to a blind leper and accused him of horrible deeds including beating and poisoning his first wife Ginevra d'Este, raping a young Jewish girl, and raping and impregnating eleven nuns.⁵⁶

Sigismondo did not allow the letter to go unanswered, and rep-

53. Pernis, *Montefeltro and Malatesta*, 21.

54. *Ibid.*, 25.

55. Dennistoun, *Memoirs*, 86. See for a translation of the list of twenty concessions drafted by the people of Urbino before accepting Federico as ruler.

56. Pernis, *Montefeltro and Malatesta*, 29. "... el monastero de Fano, reducto da lui come uno postribulo, se po dire che undici monache ad uno tracto se trovarono gravide. . ."

lied to Federico directly in a letter dated February 21, 1445.⁵⁷ In the letter Sigismondo called Federico's accusations libelous and challenged him to a duel. Although the duel never took place, the animosity between the two rulers was solidified for the rest of their lives. In 1459 in an attempt to resolve the issue Pope Pius II summoned the two men to Mantua for a meeting. The meeting ended in a treaty that angered Sigismondo and led to his attacking the Papal armies. After this betrayal the Pope offered his full support and protection to Federico and the city of Urbino. The Pope's disdain for Sigismondo and his crimes was made clear by his decision in 1461 to condemn Sigismondo, although still alive, to Hell. Pope Pius declared that although this kind of premature condemnation was unprecedented, Sigismondo's notorious crimes warranted it.⁵⁸

After the public damnation of Sigismondo, Federico consciously and fervently promoted himself, in both his public and private persona, as the antithesis of Sigismondo. He consciously asserted his right to rule and promoted himself as the just and benevolent ruler that is the embodiment of Christian virtue. Federico not only stressed these qualities in regard to his personal character but also in the art and architecture commissioned by him.

Federico as Patron

It is interesting to note that while Federico consciously crafted his own image in contrast to that of Sigismondo, he chose to employ an artist that had already been in the service of his great rival.

Piero della Francesca, who had completed the fresco of *Sigismondo kneeling before Saint Sigismund* in 1451 for the Tempio in Rimini was commissioned to execute a similar work for Federico and his burial church of San Donato.⁵⁹ The altarpiece, completed c. 1472, depicts Federico kneeling before the Virgin and Child and a company of angels and saints (fig. 20). The large

57. *Ibid.*, 30.

58. Gragg, trans., *Memoirs of a Renaissance Pope*, 185.

59. Cole, *Piero*, 62. There is some dispute concerning the paintings original destination as an altarpiece for San Donato or San Bernardino. Federico's tomb was originally located in San Donato but later moved to San Bernardino, and so also perhaps the altarpiece.



FIGURE 20. Piero della Francesca, *The Brera Altarpiece* (Pala Montefeltro), c. 1472, tempera on panel, Pinacoteca Brera, Milan.
Copyright Erich Lessing/Art Resource, NY.

tempera-on-panel altarpiece, often referred to as the Brera Altarpiece, is intended to immortalize Federico as a powerful and pious Christian ruler. Unlike the fresco for Sigismondo, where the ruler is placed at the center, here the Virgin and Child are given the central position.

Federico is depicted kneeling with his hands clasped in prayer dressed in full shining armor with his baton, gauntlets, and helmet laid out in front of him. The Virgin sits calmly with her hands also clasped in prayer while the Christ Child lies across her lap asleep. Behind her stand four angels and on each side stand three saints. At her right are John the Baptist, Bernardino of Siena and Saint Jerome, while on the left stand Saint Francis, Peter Martyr and John the Evangelist.⁶⁰ Federico kneels directly in front of Saint John the Evangelist, his patron saint, yet no one kneels directly in front of Saint John the Baptist. It has been suggested by Frederick Hartt that this spot, which is so conspicuously empty, was intended for Battista Sforza the Duke's second wife whose patron saint was Saint John the Baptist (Giovanni Battista). This perhaps reflects the fact that Battista Sforza had died in July of 1472 after giving birth to their ninth child and first male heir Guidobaldo.⁶¹ This *sacra conversazione* takes place in the crossing of a church, directly in front of an elegant apse with a coffered vault and large scallop shell in the lunette. Suspended directly above the head of the Virgin is a large ostrich egg, symbolizing life and birth. The ostrich egg was specifically associated with virgin birth because in Medieval bestiaries the ostrich is said to dig a hole for the egg and then allow it to hatch by itself.⁶² While a detailed discussion of all of the complexities involved in this altarpiece is outside the scope of this study, it is important to note that this work stands in direct opposition to the self-centered and politically motivated work done by Piero for Sigismondo. The altarpiece for Federico is intended in every way to highlight the ruler as a humble servant whose role as military leader and victor is subservient to his role as a pious Christian ruler.

60. Ibid.

61. Frederick Hartt, *History of Italian Renaissance Art*, 4th ed., New York, 1994, 286.

62. Hall, *Subjects and Symbols*, 110.

The Triumphal Portraits of Federico and Battista

Some time after 1472 Piero della Francesca was commissioned by Federico to paint a double portrait of himself and his wife (figs. 21 and 22). The portraits decorate the front of a portable diptych that was hinged at the center so it could be opened and closed like a book. The back of the diptych was then decorated with triumphal processions that correspond to the portraits on the front.

The two bust portraits present Duke Federico and Duchess Battista Sforza in strict profile set against a far reaching and continuous landscape. The couple appear regal and severe and are totally expressionless with their chins set just above the horizon line in the background. The proximity of the sitters to the picture plane and the distance indicated in the landscape beyond creates a dramatic effect highlighting the couples role as dominate and powerful figures. Federico is dressed very modestly in a simple deep red tunic and matching hat while Battista is more richly attired in a black gown with brocade sleeves. She also wears an exquisite pearl choker and a long pendant as well as an elaborate hairstyle adorned with jewels.

The portraits, which are highly stylized and rather austere, make the couple appear emotionless and stoic. Federico's left side is shown, as it was in all of his portraits and medals, due to the fact that he lost his right eye and part of the bridge of his nose in a joust.⁶³ He is depicted with olive skin, thin lips, and dark circles around his eyes.

Battista's portrait, which may have been taken from her death mask, reveals a ghostly pale complexion, a high forehead, small round eyes and a long aquiline nose.⁶⁴

These portraits were intended to project the images of the couple as powerful and elegant. They are appropriate in their depiction of what good Christian rulers should exhibit in their countenance and dress. It is the reverse of these portraits, however, that attempts to address the individual personalities of the couple and expose more personal information about them as individuals.

63. Dennistoun, *Memoirs*, v.1; 100–101. He recounts the story of the Duke's injury and his bravery afterward.

64. The idea that the portrait of her was done posthumously is debated. John Pope-Hennessy supports a much earlier date for the portrait and cites a poem written in 1466 which seems to refer to the work. See John Pope-Hennessy, *The Portrait in the Renaissance*, Princeton, 1979, 319, n.8.



FIGURE 21. Piero della Francesca, *Portraits of Federico da Montefeltro and Battista Sforza*, c. 1472, diptych, tempera on panel, Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence. Copyright Nicolo Orsi Battaglini/Art Resource, NY.

The reverse of the portraits shows a triumphal procession of each sitter set against the same continuous landscape. Like the portraits, the triumphs are arranged so that they face each other. The scenes of the triumphal processions take up the upper three quarters of the overall size of the panel while the bottom quarter is reserved for Latin inscriptions that are both four lines in length.

Battista Sforza is depicted riding in triumph on a cart pulled by two brown unicorns and driven by a small putto with white wings. She is seated on a raised platform at the back of the cart holding a small open book, probably a Book of Hours. On the cart with her are four female figures; two are seated at the front of the cart while the other two stand behind her. The figures at her back are identified as Hope and Time. Hope is the figure in white who faces the viewer while Time, dressed in silver, faces away. The seated figures at the front of the cart are Charity who is dressed in black holding a pelican in her lap and Faith who holds a chalice and a long cross.⁶⁵ The inscription beneath this triumph reads, in

65. See Hartt, Cole and Pernis for interpretations of the figures. See also Raffaele Monti, *Piero della Francesca*, Livorno, 1998, 10–11.



FIGURE 22. Piero della Francesca, *Triumphs of Federico da Montefeltro and Battista Sforza*, c. 1472, diptych, tempera on panel, Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence. Copyright Nicolo Orsi Battaglini/Art Resource, NY.

translation; "She who observed restraint in prosperity, honored by the praise of her great husband's deeds, now flies on the lips of all men."⁶⁶

The triumphal cart of Duke Federico is very similar in design and composition to that of Battista. His triumphal cart is pulled by two white horses and is driven by a small nude putto with red wings. Federico is seated on a stool dressed in full armor with his helmet on his knee holding his baton out in front of him. Behind him, perched on a ball or globe, is a winged victory who is in the act of placing a crown on his head. Grouped together at the front of his cart are four women who represent the four Cardinal Virtues. Justice holds a sword and scale and faces outward toward

66. "QVE MODVM REBVS TENVIT SECVNDIS * CONIVGIS MAGNI DECORATA RERV* LAVDE GESTARVM VOLITAT PER ORA* CVNCTA VIRORVM*" English translation by author. See also Cole, *Piero della Francesca*, 135–137.

the viewer, next to her in a rich golden yellow robe is the double-faced image of Prudence who holds a mirror. The figure in blue who holds a broken column represents Fortitude while the figure seen from the back and facing the horizon is Temperance.⁶⁷ The inscription below the triumph of Federico reads, in translation; "Illustrious he is born along in glorious triumph, the eternal fame of his virtues celebrates him as the equal of the greatest leaders, and fitting holder of the scepter."⁶⁸

The triumphs of Federico and of Battista are clearly based on the antique Roman Triumph. Federico's Triumph has most of the essential elements of a classical Imperial Triumph. The victorious general, Federico, is shown drawn in a cart by two white horses. He is dressed in armor yet has an *all'antica* cloak or mantle over his shoulders, and is in the act of being crowned by victory. The fact that he is shown in triumphal procession underscores his military victories as does the figure of victory. Further supporting this is his costume of armor and his baton, both alluding to his power and command. The triumphal scene is a visual image meant to immediately associate Federico with the victorious generals of the past. There are, however, many more levels involved in the triumphal symbolism of this single image.

To contemporaries of Federico the triumphal procession depicted in the panel painting would have been immediately linked to Federico's recent victory over the city of Volterra. The Florentines, who had been unable to recover the city of Volterra after it revolted, hired Federico and his army to subdue and deliver the city of Volterra back under Florentine control. For his victory, which many had viewed as impossible, Federico was celebrated with a Triumph through the streets of Florence. The honors paid to the Duke were recorded in Vespasiano's life of Federico.⁶⁹

The panels serve the same purpose as representations of antique Triumphs in that they seem to record an actual historical

67. Pernis, *Montefeltro and Malatesta*, 102.

68. "CLARVS INSIGNI VEHTVR TRIVMPHO* QVEM PAREM SVMMIS DVCIBVS PERHENNIS* FAMA VIRTVTVM CELEBRAT DE-CENTER* SCEPTRA TENENTEM*" English translation by author. See also Cole, *Piero della Francesca*, 135-137.

69. See Vespasiano da Bisticci, *Renaissance Princes, Popes and Prelates*, trans., George and Waters, New York, 1963, 94-95.

victory celebration. The laudatory inscription that accompanies the image also reflects the use and function of the inscriptions that accompanied antique representations.

The *all'antica* triumphal processions of the Duke and his wife have an equally, if not more significant, function as allegorical Triumphs of Virtue. The basis for these Triumphs is not classical antiquity but Petrarch. These Triumphs are intended to be read as allegorical commentaries on the personal character of each figure. Battista's triumph is clearly a Triumph of Chastity, pulled as in Petrarch, by unicorns, symbols of Chastity. The virtue of Chastity was considered a most honorable and appropriate virtue for the wife of a good Christian ruler. The Theological Virtues associated with her further support her personal identification with the attributes of Faith and Hope. Time who also appears with Battista may underscore her untimely death in 1471 during childbirth.

The same allegorical interpretation is appropriate for the Triumph of the Duke. This one is essentially a Triumph of Love as it was described by Petrarch. His cart pulled by white horses and carrying the Cardinal Virtues makes Federico a victor through his Love of God, Christian Virtue, his wife Battista, and even Urbino itself.

When read in conjunction with Battista's Triumph, the two together reflect the Triumphs of Love and Chastity, which, while vanquished by the Triumph of Death, are vindicated when death is outdone by Fame. Federico's inscription also uses the word eternal which would then incorporate all the elements of Petrarch's six allegorical triumphs into these two images.

It is important also to note that the inscriptions themselves and their location on a stone parapet below the images suggests that they are intended as a type of memorial inscription. They can be interpreted as funerary epitaphs meant to immortalize in words the virtuous qualities represented in the images above.

Ultimately, the allegorical and Christian nature of the Triumph of Federico stands in direct opposition to the antique and pagan inspired image of the Triumph of Sigismondo, his greatest rival. While the two Triumphs served similar functions as memorial images meant to aggrandize and promote their benefactors, they did so in dramatically different ways. The Triumph of Sigismondo drew as inspiration the classical and pagan world of

Imperial Rome while the Triumph of Federico drew on the Medieval world of Christianity and Petrarch. The desire and ability of each of these men to manipulate the imagery of the Triumph into a personal commentary exemplifies its power as a fundamental tool for Italian Renaissance rulers in the construction of their own personal mythology.

Borso d'Este and the Eternal Triumph



This chapter examines the use of triumphal imagery by Duke Borso d'Este of Ferrara whose adaptation of the triumphal motif is distinctly different from the other rulers discussed in this study. In his largest and most important artistic commission as Duke, Borso uses the triumphal image as part of an extraordinary fresco cycle that is intended to promote him as a victorious and eternally successful ruler. The triumphal imagery incorporated in the cycle is intricately woven together with Petrarchan allegory, classical mythology, and astrology to create an unusual and complex image of the quintessential ruler.

A History of Este Ferrara

The establishment of the Duchy of Ferrara dates to the eighth century A.D. at which time it was referred to as "Ducatus Ferrariae." The city's excellent situation on a major river, the Po, and its location between the Papal states and the Republic of Venice made Ferrara a strategically and commercially important site. It also made it the object of continual disputes between its neighbors and the Papacy. On the instigation of the Guelph factions in the city, and with the sanctioning of the Pope, Obizzo Este was elected as ruler, or Marchese, in 1264.¹ After an unstable first century of constant internal fighting, Niccolò II emerged in the

1. Guido Angelo Facchini, *La Storia di Ferrara*, 1993, 60. "Papa Urbano IV si affretto a confermare la elezione di Obizzo.

fourteenth century to consolidate power in Ferrara. The castle Estense was constructed in 1385 after a revolt of the people, and the extensive city walls were extended and fortified. The enormous moated castle served as a powerful reminder of the strength of the Este family and its military might. Further establishing Ferrara as a stable and important city was the establishment in 1391 of the University.

Under the reign of Niccolò III (1393–1441) the house of Este became more powerful and soon governed not only Ferrara but Rovigo, Modena, Parma, and briefly Milan.

Niccolò was radical, violent, and unforgiving, yet aware of the need for a ruler to be educated in classical literature and art. Niccolò had so many illegitimate children that a saying about his indiscretion is recorded as “ di qua di là, dal Po, tutti figli di Niccolò.”²

When Niccolò caught his second wife Parisina Malatesta and his illegitimate son Ugo in an adulterous affair, he had them both beheaded and then proclaimed that any woman in Ferrara convicted of adultery would also be executed.³ But, it was also Niccolò who attempted to reduce taxes for the citizens and encourage private business. Niccolò also invited Greek scholars to the university and helped Guarino da Verona establish a school of Humanism set to rival other cities like Florence and Mantua.⁴

Leonello (1407–1450), Niccolò's eldest son and heir, was a more popular, and sensitive ruler. He was well trained in military pursuits but worked in all instances for peace. He was well educated and mastered not only Latin but also Greek; studied philosophy, law, rhetoric and poetry. He established one of the first public libraries and searched for the best minds to instruct there.⁵ Unfortunately, Leonello died at the age of forty-three.

2. Luisa Vertova, “Ferrara and the House of Este,” *Apollo* 120, August 1984, 86.

3. Werner Gundersheimer, *Ferrara: The Style of Renaissance Despotism*, Princeton, 1973, 79. See for description of the event from *Diario Ferrarese*. “. . . MCCCCXXV, del mese de Marcio, uno luni, a hore XXIII, fu taiata la testa a Ugo, figliolo de lo illustre Marchexe Nicolo da Este, et a madona Paraxina, che era madregna de dicto ugo; et questo perche lui heveva uxado carnalmente con lei. . .” See also Lord Byron's poem *Parisina*.

4. Guarino was summoned to Ferrara in 1429 and served as a tutor to Leonello and Professor at the University until his death in 1460. See R. Sabbadini, *La scuola e gli studi di Guarino Guarini Veronese*, 1896.

5. Gundersheimer, *Ferrara*, 98.

Borso d'Este (1413–1471), Leonello's brother, was the next Este to rule. He was not as articulate and educated a man as Leonello but he did support learning and the arts. Borso's foremost goal seemed to have been the collection of titles and the receipt of flattery and praise. He heavily taxed the citizens of Ferrara and spent much of the money on lavish pageants and other courtly displays.

Duke Borso d'Este

Borso ruled from 1450–1471 and was described as a great politician, a trained soldier, a passionate hunter and an ostentatious egoist.⁶ Duke Borso received the title of Duke of Modena in 1452 from the Emperor Ferdinand III and finally received the investiture from the Pope of Duke of Ferrara in 1471. One of the most revealing descriptions of Borso survives in the memoirs of Pope Pius II. He wrote that Borso was a man of fine physique and that he had beautiful hair and a pleasing countenance. He also wrote that Borso was eloquent and garrulous and loved to listen to the sound of his own voice. He also described Borso as a liar and a vain man who never left his home without wearing copious amounts of precious jewels.⁷

The Pope also described Borso's generosity to his many visitors at Ferrara, though, the Pope points out, it was never without motive. He explains that Duke Borso lavished so many gifts on the visiting Emperor Frederick as he passed through Ferrara on his way to Rome that the Emperor raised the earldom of Modena to a Duchy and created Borso as Duke.⁸

Borso was a popular ruler and epitomized in every way the head of a prosperous and successful state. He had been educated in Naples as a young man and then served for almost twenty years with the best *condottieri* in Italy becoming a polished and successful general. He traveled a great deal through the Ferrarese territories, visiting country houses and spent much of his time hunting and fishing. He was also a very religious man who

6. Luisa Vertova, "Ferrara and the House of Este," *Apollo* 120, August 1984, 88.

7. Leona C. Gabel, ed., *Memoirs of a Renaissance Pope: The Commentaries of Pius II*, trans. Florence A. Gragg, New York, 1959, 114.

8. *Ibid.*

attended mass every morning and observed all festivals. He gave money to convents and monasteries and founded the Certosa of Ferrara, which became the religious center of the city as well as the Este burial place. Borso was and remained a bachelor, living apparently a celibate life.⁹

The Image of the Duke

The many images of Duke Borso d'Este remained uniquely consistent during his rule in Ferrara. In paintings, manuscripts and in portrait medals he was always portrayed as a fairly young man with neck-length wavy hair that curls under around his face, a long straight nose, and double chin.

He is commemorated in a full length portrait in a manuscript entitled the *Genealogia Estense* written in 1470.¹⁰ In the miniature Duke Borso is depicted standing in profile dressed in a richly brocaded short cloak and tunic, and his customary short hat or *biretta*.¹¹ He is immediately recognizable by his short hairstyle, deep set eyes and double chin. He stands rather casually with his weight on one leg with the other slightly bent. He holds a baton in his right hand while his left hand rests in his pocket.¹² This rather casual and informal portrait of the Duke is not uncommon and he seems to have enjoyed being depicted in a variety of moods or attitudes.

A medal made by Jacopo Lixignolo c.1460 depicts the Duke in profile sporting the curled hairstyle and wearing his customary short fluted hat decorated with a large jeweled cross (fig. 23).¹³ The reverse shows a unicorn in the foreground of a rocky landscape, dipping its horn into a stream. Above the scene, in the center of the sky, is a large radiant sun. According to

9. Gundersheimer, *Ferrara*, 133–35.

10. *Ibid.*, 128.

11. Charles Rosenberg, *The Este Monuments and Urban Development in Renaissance Ferrara*, Cambridge, 1997, 89. The cloak and tunic Borso wears is a *palandrana*, the ducal beret is the *biretta*, and the baton is a *bachetta*, a symbol of signorial rulership.

12. See Gundersheimer, *Ferrara*, for a reproduction of the miniature.

13. George F. Hill and Graham Pollard, *Renaissance Medals: A Complete Catalogue of the Samuel H. Kress Collection*, 1967, 12. See for a description of two medals made for Borso.



FIGURE 23. Jacopo Lixignolo, *Borso d'Este*, portrait medallion, lead, 1460, National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C. Photo Courtesy of National Gallery of Art.

Medieval legend the unicorn's horn could purify anything that it touched.¹⁴

In another medal, struck by an unknown artist between 1452 and 1470, the bust portrait of Borso is consistent with the other standardized profile images.¹⁵ The reverse, however, depicts a seated figure of Justice reclining on a rocky outcropping holding scales in her left hand and a sword in her right. In front of her is a small tree in which two eagles are perched.¹⁶ The inscription below the figure of Justice reads, "Haec Tu Unum" (She and You are One).¹⁷ The inscription clearly indicates that Borso is to be equated with Justice, a virtue he stressed in his rule of Ferrara. In the mid-1450s Borso had created the *Consiglio di Giustizia* in Ferrara in order to assist the courts in determining justice in complex legal cases.¹⁸

An image of the Duke in Triumph appears in a miniature illustrating a poem written by Gasparo Tribraço da Modena entitled

14. James Hall, *Illustrated Dictionary of Subjects and Symbols in Eastern and Western Art*, London, 1994, 31. The unicorn was a favorite emblem of the Este family and is found on other coins.

15. It is possible that the artist was Sperandio of Mantua (d.1504) a native of Mantua who grew up in Ferrara and was in the employ of Borso by the early 1460's. See Stephen K. Scher, ed., *The Currency of Fame: Portrait Medals of the Renaissance*, 1994, 91.

16. Rosenberg, *Este Monuments*, 102, plate 37.

17. *Ibid.*,

18. Kristen Lippincott, *The Frecoes of the Salone dei Mesi in the Palazzo Schifanoia in Ferrara*, Ph.D. diss., Chicago, 1987, 136.

Divi ducis Borsii estensis triumphus.¹⁹ Borso, holding his baton and dressed in his usual hat and short cloak, is depicted seated beneath a large canopy or baldachino riding on a triumphal cart drawn by two white horses. The horses are driven by a winged, nude and blindfold cupid. In front of the cart are four women who carry various attributes, they are Justice, Constancy, Clemency and Peace.²⁰ The figure in the center who carries a sword in one hand and a balance in the other is certainly Justice.²¹ These four women are the same four which are described in Tito Vespasiano Strozzi's poem, the *Borsiad*, as surrounding the throne of Borso d'Este.²²

Several written accounts of Duke Borso's participation in actual triumphal processions also exist. One account, from the *Annales Estenses*, records his entry into the city of Reggio in 1453.²³ The entry begins with a description of the Duke's entrance through the city gate and his welcome by the city's Patron Saint, Prospero, depicted floating on a cloud accompanied by angels. Two of the angels, singing the Duke's praises, then presented him with the keys of the city. After the Duke accepted the keys he was entertained by a procession of elaborately decorated carts. The first cart, drawn by horses, bore an empty throne behind which stood a figure of Justice. At each corner of the cart sat gray-haired men who represented lawgivers. The next cart, drawn by unicorns, a favorite emblem of the Duke, bore a figure of *Caritas* holding a burning torch. After the procession the Duke was seated on a golden throne in front of the cathedral, presented with palm branches and crowned with laurel.²⁴

A record of even more elaborate triumphal procession described the Duke's journey to Rome in 1471. Borso, who was summoned by Pope Paul II, left Ferrara in a huge triumphal procession which included two of his brothers, Count Galeotto della

19. Biblioteca Estense, Modena, after 1452. See Gundersheimer, *Ferrara*, 128, fig. 5.

20. Rosenberg, *Este Monuments*, 236.

21. Gundersheimer, *Ferrara*, 129.

22. Rosenberg, *Este Monuments*, 236.

23. Jacopo de Delaito, *Annales Estenses*, Milan, 1731. The *Annales* are a collection of 15th century manuscript entries that were compiled in 1731 by Delaito.

24. See Burckhardt, *Civilization*, II, 412; Strong, *Art and Power*, 44-45; and Payne, *Roman Triumph*, 234-235, for a description of the event.

Mirandola, the Count Niccola da Corregio, the poet Boiardo, and some five hundred other gentlemen in sumptuous gala attire. Trumpeters and pipers followed, along with huntsmen, packs of hounds, falconers, and a band of Oriental keepers dressed in brocade who were in charge of the leopards! Ugo Caleffini, the late fifteenth century notary and Este chronicler, described the elaborate procession of Borso as joyous and resplendent. He stated that the Romans had never seen any King or Emperor enter Rome in such a great triumph as did Duke Borso D'Este.²⁵

Duke Borso's Pleasure Palace

The Palazzo Schifanoia, on the outskirts of the city, was designed as one of several Este pleasure palaces. It was surrounded by lavish and extensive gardens and architecturally arranged for entertainment. The name is an example of the building's main function for the Este family as a *delizia* since the title is a combination of the words "schvar la noi" meaning "away with boredom."²⁶

Under the patronage of the vain and self-aggrandizing Duke Borso, the walls of the Schifanoia palace were adorned with a complex program of frescoes which illustrate and honor him and his role as ruler. Twelve large fresco panels, executed between 1468 and 1470, in a room called the Salone dei Mesi, permit an unparalleled glimpse into the world of Borso d'Este, his ideal city of Ferrara and its courtly magnificence.

The Salone dei Mesi is a large reception hall, measuring roughly twenty-four by twelve meters, with large floor to ceiling frescoes on each wall (fig. 24). The fresco cycle begins on the long south wall, which contains the now badly damaged frescoes for January and February. The east wall has the best preserved frescoes of March, April and May. The North wall has frescoes for June, July, August and September, and is where the original entrance was located. The west wall has frescoes, almost completely destroyed, of October, November and December.

25. Edmund Gardner, *Dukes and Poets in Ferrara*, New York, 1903, 106.

26. See Carla di Francesco and Marco Borella, *Ferrara: The Estense City*, 1988, 56-62, for a history of the Palace and its construction and renovation. It is interesting to note that the frescoes in the Salone dei Mesi had been white-washed over when the building was turned into a Cigar making factory in the late 18th century; the frescoes were not rediscovered until mid-19th century.



FIGURE 24. *Salone dei Mesi*, Interior, Schifanoia Palace, Ferrara. Copyright Alinari /Art Resource., NY.

Artist and Astrology

The artist who executed the majority of scenes in the *Salone dei Mesi* was Francesco del Cossa, a native of Ferrara, born in 1436. Cossa's first recorded activity as a painter is from 1456 for a *Deposition* and some imitation marble paneling in the Cathedral of Ferrara.²⁷

Cossa was the primary artist for the months of March, April and May. An artist referred to as "Maestro dagli occhi spalancati" (wide or gapping) is responsible for the month of June. The other months have been variously attributed to Cossa, his workshop

²⁷ Alberto Neppi, *Francesco del Cossa*, Milano, 1958, 12. In the early 19th century the frescoes were all attributed to Cosme' Tura.

and to Ercole de' Roberti.²⁸ However, it was Cossa who began the project and he certainly set the tone and concept for the program, probably having designed it in its entirety. Unfortunately Cossa left the project unfinished because of a quarrel about a discrepancy in payment. It seems that Duke Borso had set a fixed payment for the work on the frescoes, so that the artists were paid by the foot. Cossa, who felt he deserved more than the others, attempted to make his case in a letter, dated March 25, 1470. In the rather lengthy letter Cossa points out that he is an artist who has made a name for himself and that he is "educated" and should therefore earn more money than the other less accomplished artists. He also indicates that he had used only the finest materials and gold and that he may actually lose money on the project.²⁹ The Duke, unmoved by Cossa's plea, responded only that he should be content with what payment was set for him.³⁰ After the Duke's curt response Cossa left the project.

The complex iconography of the design and its inclusion of arcane astrological figures has been attributed to Pellegrino Prisciani.³¹ Prisciani was a professor of Astronomy at the University of Ferrara who also served as court librarian and historiographer. His studies and writings on astrological divinities and calendars can be used to decipher the unique combination of gods and decans in the frescoes. His sources prove to be the ancient Latin astrologer Manilius, the medieval Arab astrologer Abu Masar (d.886), and Pietro d'Albano who translated Masar into Latin in 1293.³²

That Duke Borso was interested in astrology and astronomy is evidenced by his portrait in a miniature from the codex *Tabulae Astrologiae*. The codex, written by Giovanni Bianchini c.1450-1452, is comprised of a series of astrological tables which state the exact position of the planets from 1450-1460.³³ The

28. Paolo D'Ancona, *The Schifanoia Months at Ferrara*, Milan, 1954, 91.

29. Creighton Gilbert, *Italian Art 1400-1500: Sources and Documents*, Evanston, 1980, 9. The letter in the original Italian is reprinted in D'Ancona, *Schifanoia Months*, 92-93.

30. *Ibid.*, 10.

31. Aby Warburg, "Italian Art and International Astrology in the Palazzo Schifanoia in Ferrara" trans., Peter Wortsman, in *German Essays on Art History*, ed., Gert Schiff, New York, 1988, 234-255.

32. *Ibid.*,

33. Daniele Benati, et al., *From Borso to Cesare d'Este: The School of Ferrara 1450-1628*, London, 1984, 116, plate 64.

duke, in his customary short tunic and fluted hat, is shown presenting Giovanni Bianchini, the court astrologer, to the Emperor Frederick III. Bianchini is shown on his knees presenting the Emperor with a copy of his Astrological tables. The miniature also serves to document the visit of Ferdinand III to Ferrara in 1452 on his way to Rome.³⁴

There is evidence that the Duke believed strongly in the influence of the planets on daily life. Pope Pius II called the Duke to Mantua for a meeting and received a letter from Duke Borso telling him that he could not attend because his astrologers had warned him not to go, because the planets did not favor such a journey. The Pope, enraged, sent another letter demanding Borso's attendance and expressing his disdain with the Duke for believing in such "pagan nonsense." The Duke in the end did not attend and instead went hunting.³⁵ This interest in the planets and their influence on man was not uncommon in late Quattrocento culture.³⁶ It is clearly reflected in the humanist writings of Marsilio Ficino who, in a letter addressed to Lorenzo the Magnificent, explained that all men have an entire sky within them and that each of the planets govern an aspect of their nature.³⁷

The arrangement of the Months and their zodiacal signs in the Schifanoia do not follow the classically established pattern of months and signs. Instead they relate to a specific ancient Roman text by Manilius entitled *Astronomica*, written c.A.D. 43–48.³⁸ In the *Astronomica* the twelve Olympian Gods are connected with the months. The established pattern had been to correlate the guardian for the month with the zodiacal sign that the Sun was in for the beginning of the month. Manilius, who dedicated his work to the Emperor Tiberius, gives the same ordering for the Olympian gods but instead associates them with the constellation that rises during that month. The arrangement of the

34. Facchini, *La Storia di Ferrara*, 117.

35. Michael Levey, *Painting at Court*, London, 1971, 66.

36. Fritz Saxl, "The Revival of Late Antique Astrology," in *A Heritage of Images*, ed. Hugh Honour, 1947.

37. Thomas Moore, *The Planets Within: The Astrological Psychology of Marsilio Ficino*, New York, 1990, Introduction. See also Melissa Bullard, "The Inward Zodiac: A Development in Ficino's Thought on Astrology," *Renaissance Quarterly* XLIII, 1990; 687–708.

38. Manilius, *Astronomica*, trans., G.P. Goold, London, 1927.

deities in the Salone dei Mesi, obviously influenced by these other sources, was taken however, directly from Manilius.³⁹

Unique to the Schifanoia frescoes are the images of the deities of the months, and their existence and participation in the world of mortals. The gods are seen dressed in courtly costumes and riding in triumph through the streets of the city of Ferrara.

The Triumphal Frescoes

The twelve fresco panels of the months are each divided horizontally into three sections. The upper section depicts the triumphal procession of a pagan god, the middle section shows the sign of the zodiac appropriate for that month with attendant symbolic figures, or decans, and the bottom shows scenes from the life of Duke Borso. This arrangement of the frescoes and their complex integration of seasonal and astrological themes with daily life scenes is similar to that of a contemporary Book of Hours. Ultimately, as will be shown, the whole cycle is meant to be read as an illustration of Borso d'Este's triumphant life and rule in Ferrara.

The month of March located on the east wall begins the cycle (fig. 25).⁴⁰ In the upper portion of the fresco is the Triumph of Minerva, the Goddess of Wisdom. She holds in her left hand a book and in her right a sword, while riding on a cart or *biga* which is pulled by two white unicorns, symbols of Chastity.⁴¹ The frontal section of the cart's decoration has turned upward to reveal its wooden construction. This is an interesting feature in which the artist has chosen to reveal the artifice of the cart which negates any notion of an ethereal or heavenly vision. Instead it places

39. Lippincott, *The Frescoes of the Salone dei Mesi*, 1987, 37. See also Eugenio Garin, *Astrology in the Renaissance*, trans., Carolyn Jackson, London, 1983; Warburg, *Italian Art*, 234-255; Saxl, *Revival of Astrology*, 27-41; Charlotte Long, "The Gods of the Month in Ancient Art," *American Journal of Archaeology* 93, 1989; 589-595 and Jean Seznec, *The Survival of the Pagan Gods*, trans., Barabara Sessions, New York, 1953.

40. The month of January, which is located on the South wall in the far right-hand corner may be considered the beginning of the cycle since it is located directly opposite the entrance, however, the Christian calendar begins the year in March, the month of the Annunciation. Unfortunately, January and February are too badly damaged to be discussed at any length.

41. D'Ancona, *The Schifanoia Months*, 11.

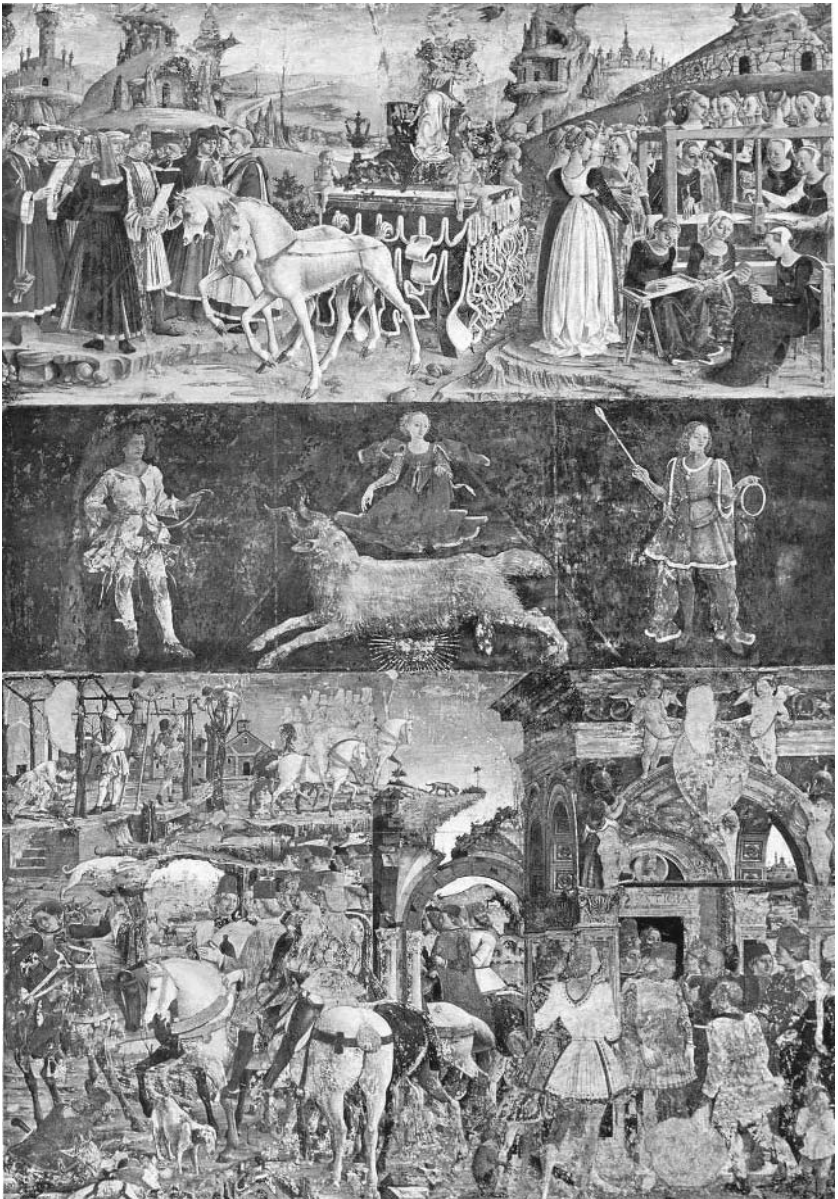


FIGURE 25. Francesco del Cossa, *Month of March/Triumph of Minerva/Aries*, fresco, c. 1468, Salone dei Mesi, Schifanoia Palace, Ferrara. Copyright Scala/Art Resource, NY.

this triumph firmly in the realm of reality, and equates it with an actual festival pageant, common events in Ferrara.

The cart is drawn through an unusual landscape of fantastic rock formations. In the distance are the tall spires of tiny walled cities. In the foreground Minerva's cart is shown passing through two groups of individuals. On her right is a group of scholars and students conversing together or reading. Their inclusion in the scene is surely a reference to the University in Ferrara. On the other side is a group of lovely women, presumably virgins, shown in the acts of weaving and embroidery.

In the center is the sign of Aries, the ram, surmounted by a floating female figure in red and bracketed by two male figures. On the left is a dark skinned figure in a white tunic belted with a rope and on the right a light skinned young man holding an arrow and a hoop. The elegantly clothed youthful figure on the right holding a ring and an arrow has been roughly identified as an allegory of Industry.⁴²

In the lower register are genre scenes and scenes of the Duke in action. On the far right is a highly decorated and classicized arch on which, held by two putti, is the coat of arms of the d'Este with its white eagle in the center. There is also a portrait medallion of the Duke and the inscription 'Justicia,' intended as a political statement about the fairness of the Duke. In the archway the Duke is depicted listening to the pleas of a man who is kneeling before him. In the left-hand foreground Duke Borso d'Este again, with a falcon on his arm, is accompanied by courtiers as he ventures out for a hunt. The group on horseback seems to have emerged from beneath the triumphal arch on the right.

Cossa has used continuous narrative to relate his depiction of the hunt because in the background, at the crest of a hill, we again see the Duke and his entourage headed by the hound. On the extreme left is a scene of men pruning vines; an appropriate seasonal activity and a common representation from Books of Hours for the same month.⁴³

The next panel represents the month of April (fig. 26). The

42. See Lippincott, *The Frescoes of the Salone dei Mesi*, 172-176, for a discussion of the decans of Aries. The decans, none of whom have names, are simply described as attendants of the zodiacal sign and no two lists are identical.

43. D'Ancona, *The Schifanoia Months*, 15-18, and Lippincott, *The Frescoes of the Salone dei Mesi*, 71-76.

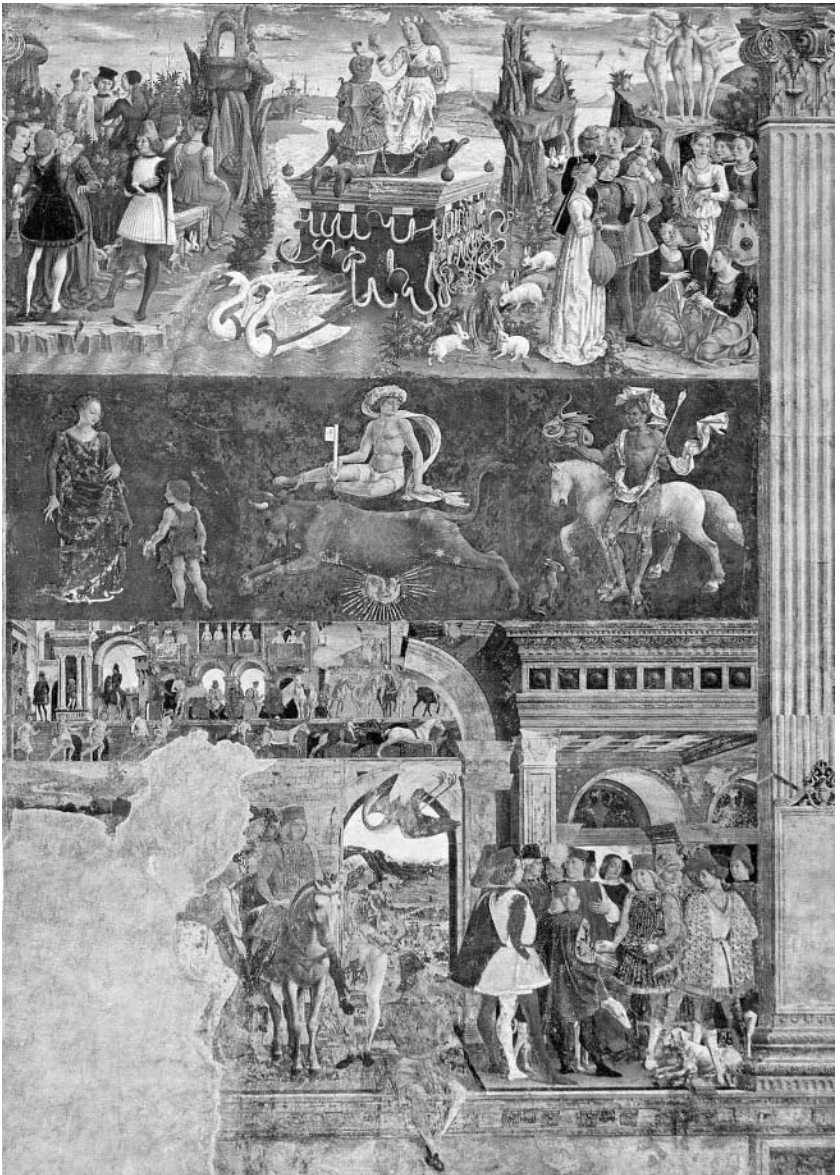


FIGURE 26. Francesco del Cossa, *Month of April/Triumph of Venus/Taurus*, fresco, c. 1468, Salone dei Mesi, Schifanoia Palace, Ferrara. Copyright Scala/Art Resource, NY.

upper portion is again a triumphal scene, although this time Venus is the triumphator. Venus is shown crowned with a wreath of red and white flowers and holding an apple and a bunch of flowers. She rides on a cart pulled by swans, while doves fly above her head. Mars, the God of war, kneels before her chained to her throne. The cart is pulled along on a river that animates a similarly fantastical landscape depicted in the Month of March. On the banks brightly attired young lovers flirt and kiss. The vitality of Spring is represented by all the rabbits, and the blossoming myrtle bush, both symbols of fertility.⁴⁴

On the banks of the river young men and woman kiss and chat. One young man, dressed in a red tunic and seated with his love, is attempting to slide his right hand into the front of her dress. Another young couple sits together on a stone bench facing away from the crowd seemingly lost in conversation. Many of these Venutian inspired youths hold musical instruments, lutes and pan pipes, further heightening the sensual nature of the theme. Finally, in the upper right-hand corner are the three graces, attendants of Venus, who seem to preside over the amorous scene. Neppi in his monograph on Cossa refers to this scene as "Una gran copia di delizie erotiche."⁴⁵

In the middle section is the representation of Taurus, the bull, with its decans. Above the bull is a semi-nude male figure holding a large key, perhaps meant to symbolize the opening of the season of spring. The figure on the right, rather wild in appearance, stands in front of a white horse, holding a small dragon in one hand. The figure to the right is a sweet-faced female dressed in red robes who gazes down onto a small child.⁴⁶

In the bottom on the lower right side of the register Duke Borso can be seen handing a coin to a man identified as his court jester, Scoccola. In the center, partly damaged, we see the Duke and his entourage returning from the hunt. Here too some of the playfulness of Cossa is expressed as he has placed a courtier in our space, seated on the bottom of the picture frame with his feet dangling over the edge.

In the upper portion of this lower section is a representation

44. Hall, *Illustrated Dictionary*, 40 and 152.

45. Neppi, *Francesco Cossa*, 15.

46. D'Ancona, *The Schifanoia Months*, 35-37, and Lippincott, *The Frescoes of the Salone dei Mesi*, 77-81.

from a race which took place in Ferrara every year in the month of April. The race, or Palio of San Giorgio, was a public festival and race of horses, asses, Jews and prostitutes.⁴⁷ The latter two apparently not altogether willing participants.⁴⁸ In the fresco we see all of the mentioned participants reflecting Cossa's conflation of the separate races into one frieze-like image. Deanna Shemek, discussing this fresco, points to the female figure second from the last in the frieze, and suggests that these women were prostitutes based on the fact that respectable women "did not run through the streets, except perhaps in flight from danger."⁴⁹ That the female figure is a prostitute may be evidenced by the precarious position of her skirts which fly up wildly giving the viewer a rather intimate glimpse. Above the race scene are the citizens and courtiers of Ferrara watching from various vantage points, leaning out of windows or standing on balconies on which are hung beautiful oriental carpets. This compositional device of figures leaning over a balcony viewing action below may have been influenced by the works of Donatello or Mantegna.

The next panel represents the month of May (fig. 27).⁵⁰ Apollo, the patron of arts and poetry, is shown riding on a triumphal cart pulled by horses of four different colors. The cart is driven by the figure of Aurora and the colors of the horses are meant to symbolize the four parts of the day.⁵¹ In his left hand Apollo holds a bow and in his right a disc, meant to represent the sun. Above his head fly a black crow and a white swan. To his left are the nine Muses, who reflect his role as the god and inspiration of the arts. In front of them, is a large crowd of putti standing in groups of

47. The *palio* began in Ferrara in about 1259 to celebrate a victory of Azzo d'Este against the vicar of the German Emperor. The race continued in Ferrara uninterrupted until 1860. The race was run twice a year, once on the 24th of April (feast of St. George) and then on August 15th (feast of the Assumption). Asses, Jews and Prostitutes, forced to participate, were all considered unsavory creatures.

48. Deanna Shemek, "Circular Definitions: Configuring Gender in Italian Renaissance Festival," *Renaissance Quarterly* XLVIII, Spring, 1995, 6.

49. *Ibid.*, 8. Shemek points out that the first race of prize steeds is a display of the wealth and power of the Este, while the race of the asses is a comical race run as a satire of the first.

50. The month of May is badly damaged in the lower portion due to a doorway that was cut into it.

51. D'Ancona, *The Schifanoia Months*, 51-54, and Lippincott, *The Frescoes of the Salone dei Mesi*, 81-88.

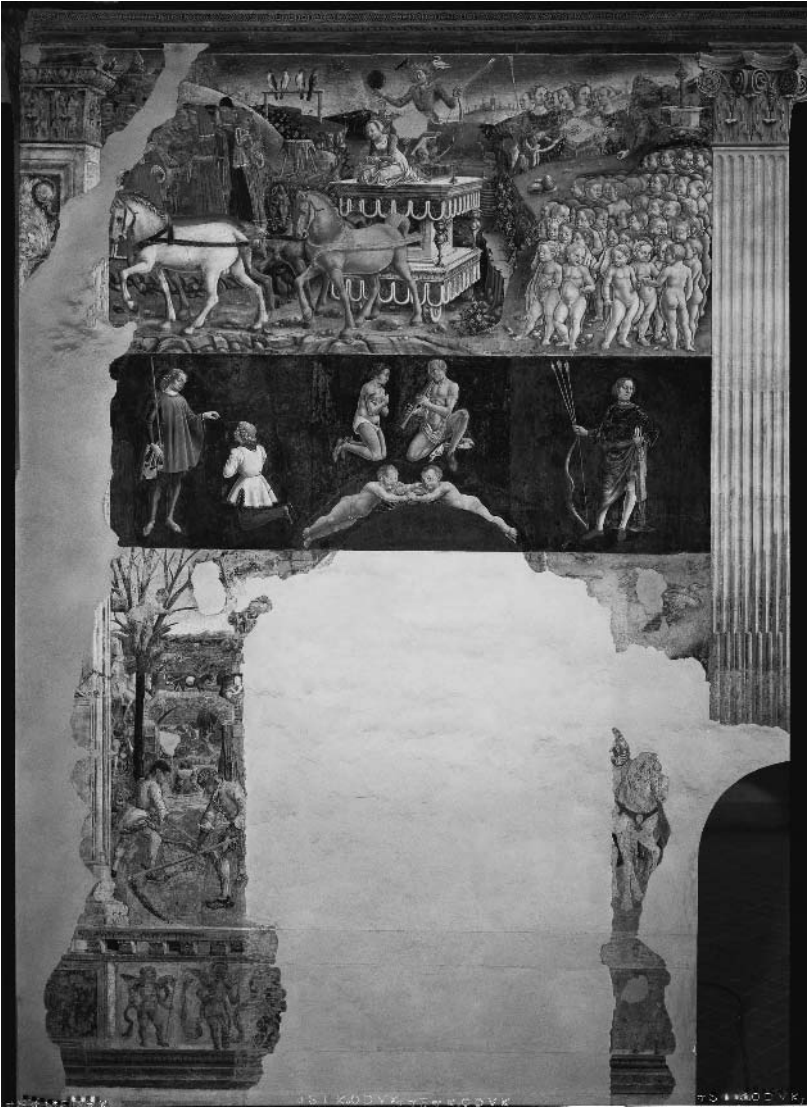


FIGURE 27. Francesco del Cossa, *Month of May/Triumph of Apollo/Gemini*, fresco, c. 1468, Salone dei Mesi, Schifanoia Palace, Ferrara. Copyright Scala/Art Resource, NY.

two, relating to the zodiacal sign of Gemini, the twins, the sign for this month. On the left of the cart is a tripod covered with a python skin, an illusion to Apollo's oracle at Delphi. At the oracle, Apollo slew a python and later fought with Hercules over the sacred tripod, the seat used by the priestess at Delphi.⁵² Above the stool sit a group of four sparrow hawks, the messengers of Apollo.

The zodiacal sign in the center represents the sign of Gemini, the twins. Above the symbol are two figures: one who plays a long thin horn referred to as a *tibia* while the other kneels and listens with his arm crossed over his chest. The decan on the left is dressed as a courtier and holds a baton in one hand as he addresses a kneeling page.⁵³ The decan on the right holds a long bow and three arrows. The lower register was unfortunately badly damaged from the insertion of a doorway in the 18th century. There is, however, an extant description of the panel which describes scenes of pruning and Duke Borso seated in a large chair smiling and receiving a basket of cherries from a kneeling peasant.⁵⁴

The next image, the month of June, is associated with an artist called "The Master of the Gaping Eyes," who was probably a member of Cossa's workshop (fig. 28). It shows the triumph of Mercury, and although his face is damaged, he is identifiable by his attributes. In his left hand he holds the caduceus and in his right the lyre. His chariot, pulled by two eagles, is surrounded by merchants doing business. On the right of the cart are several small shops with customers in front. In the background are a dog, a monkey and a wolf, symbolic of different attributes of the art of trade or commerce.⁵⁵

In the center section is the sign for Cancer, the crab, surmounted by a woman in a long mantle wearing a diadem. The decan to the right is a man with chicken legs and claw feet and very long fingernails. While resting his foot on a small ship the

52. Hall, *Subjects and Symbols*, 28.

53. D'Ancona, *The Schifanoia Months*, 52. D'Ancona explains that the two decans may have some relation to two charioteers or guardians associated with the constellations of Ursa Major and Minor.

54. *Ibid.*, 54. Due to the damaged condition of the frescoes only the upper two portions of the frescoes for June, July and August are illustrated here. See D'Ancona, *Schifanoia Months*, for views of these months.

55. *Ibid.*, 56.

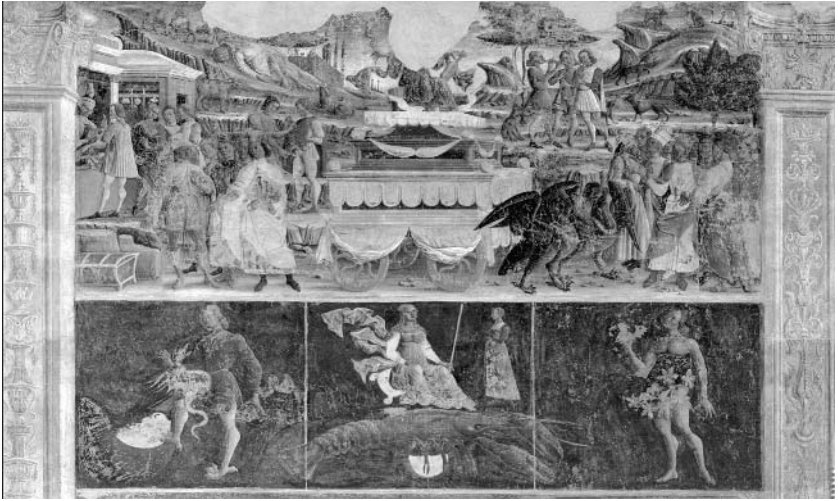


FIGURE 28. Master of the Gaping Eyes (?), *Month of June/Triumph of Mercury/Cancer*, fresco, c. 1468, Salone dei Mesi, Schifanoia Palace, Ferrara. Copyright Scala/Art Resource, NY.

decan appears to be attacked by a small winged dragon. On the left is a man wearing a tunic of leaves and branches.⁵⁶

In the lower section, on the right Borso is shown riding his horse through the city. In the background flows the Po river and various scenes from city life, including small red bricked houses and a large square tower demarcating a portion of the city gate. On the left side under a beautiful painted archway Duke Borso is surrounded by courtiers receiving a letter from a kneeling page.

The next month is the month of July (fig. 29). On the triumphal cart pulled by lions are seated two figures, a male facing forward and a female facing backward. These two figures are Jupiter, who holds a thunderbolt in one hand and a flower in the other, and has an eagle seated next to him, and Cybele, who holds keys and a scepter in her hand. The composition with the two figures together may have an association with unity of the earth, represented by Cybele, and the heavens represented by Jove. On the right hand side of the cart a group of clergy men hold various religious objects. Behind them stands a large group of soldiers in full armor. D'Ancona suggests that these two groups of men may be associated with the figure of Cybele; the *Galli*, or singing priests,

56. Lippincott, *The Frescoes of the Salone dei Mesi*, 183–187.

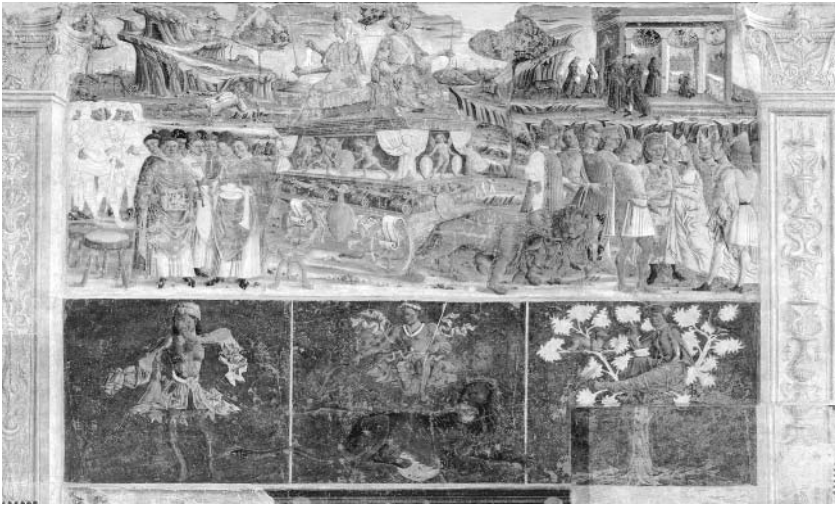


FIGURE 29. Master of the Gaping Eyes (?), *Month of July/Triumph of Jupiter @ Cybele /Leo, fresco, c. 1468, Salone dei Mesi, Schifanoia Palace, Ferrara. Copyright Scala/Art Resource, NY.*

and the *Corybantes*, sword dancers.⁵⁷ In the background is a reclining male figure, probably Attis, who castrated himself as punishment for his infidelity to Cybele.⁵⁸ In the opposite corner is a group of monks in brown habits. Some are shown inside a square building with recessed niches, which is depicted in a kind of cross-section. On the right two monks can be seen approaching the building holding pouches filled with alms. Perhaps this refers to the fact that Borso gave a great deal of money to the clergy.

In the same section just below the monks are several elegantly dressed figures standing in a group. On the left is a group of women with elaborate headpieces and opposite them a group of colorfully attired young men. In the center is a couple who seem to be joining hands, or possibly exchanging rings. It has been suggested that this is a representation of an actual wedding which occurred in Ferrara in 1468; that of Bianca d'Este, sister of Borso, to Galeotto della Mirandola.⁵⁹ The figure in the short red hat behind the couple may even be Borso himself.

57. D'Ancona, *The Schifanoia Months*, 21.

58. Lippincott, *The Frecoes of the Salon dei Mesi*, 94.

59. Gardner, *Dukes and Poets*, 93.

In the center section is placed the zodiacal sign for Leo. Above the recumbent lion is a crouching male figure who holds a bow and arrow. The dark-skinned figure on the right holds a large leg from an animal and may represent a savage, an allusion to the savage nature of the lion. Although the figure with the leg may be a savage, he is shown in beautiful courtly garments.⁶⁰ On the left side is a man seated in a tree and flanked by a blue dog and a hawk.

In the lower section again we find an imposing arch of classically inspired architecture. The Duke is seen standing in the center, framed by the arch, conversing with a group of men. In front of him is a man with dark skin, probably a servant or messenger, who hands him a scroll. In the lower section a man on horseback approaches the edge of the picture plane seeming to ride directly towards the viewer. On the left is another genre scene, showing women at work, bent over a small stream.

The month of August is often attributed to either the "Hercules Master," who was probably another member of Cossa's workshop, or Ercole de Roberti (fig. 30). Scholars debate the attributions of some of these later panels but concur that there are three distinct hands at work on the later frescoes.⁶¹

The chariot in the triumphal procession at the top bears the figure of Ceres, the goddess of Agriculture. Her cart is pulled by two dragons, and she is shown holding a sheath of wheat. The scene of the Triumph is surrounded by scenes of farmers at work. On the left is a farmer tilling fields with his ox drawn cart and on the right a group of men unloading corn into a shed. Behind the cart on the right we see a representation of the myth of Persephone. Persephone is seen riding in a cart with a Pluto pulled by dragons. The hysteria and surprise at the abduction is represented, not by Persephone who is seated so calmly, but instead by her maidens who run in different directions encircled by their very agitated drapery.⁶²

In the central section is the sign of Virgo. The sign is represented by a reclining female figure clad in white. Above her is a man with a writing tablet and a pen. The decan to the left relates specifically to the myth represented in the upper section because

60. D'Ancona, *The Schifanoia Months*, 63.

61. See Rosemarie Molajoli, *Cosmè Tura e i grandi pittori ferraresi del suo tempo: Francesco Cossa e Ercole de'Roberti*, Milano, 1974, and Lippincott, *The Frescoes of the Salone dei Mesi*, 8–27.

62. Hall, *Subjects and Symbols*, 259.

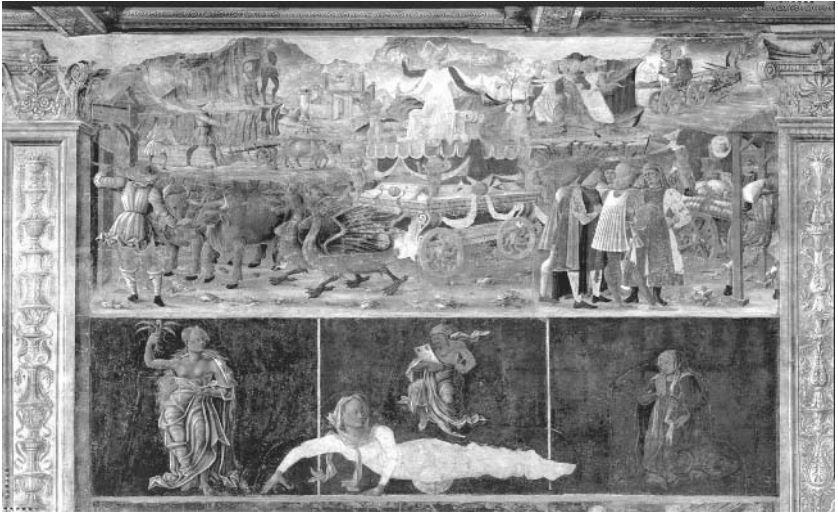


FIGURE 30. Ercole de Roberti(?), *Month of August/Triumph of Ceres/Virgo*, fresco, c. 1468, Salone dei Mesi, Schifanoia Palace, Ferrara. Copyright Scala/Art Resource, NY.

she holds in her hands a sheaf of corn and a pomegranate. The pomegranate represents the food that Persephone consumed while in Hades and the resulting time she was obliged to remain there each year. The figure to the right is a matronly woman, with her head covered, who appears to be kneeling in prayer. She may represent Ceres weeping for her daughter Persephone.

The lower section of the panel, also damaged, depicts Borso receiving visiting dignitaries, who are differentiated by their costumes, under a festooned portico. On the left, Borso departs on horseback with his retinue.

The next scene represents the month of September, and has been attributed to the artist Ercole de' Roberti (fig. 31). It is more unusual than the rest because while Vulcan is the god who presides over this month, the Triumph appears to be a Triumph of Lust. The cart, pulled by monkeys, shows a bare breasted female figure pointing to herself while resting her foot on a globe.⁶³ On the right side a couple is shown lying in a bed against which lays

63. There is some discrepancy about the figure riding on the cart. D'Ancona describes the figure as a woman pointing to her breasts symbolizing a figure of Lust. Others such as Neppi and Lippincott disregard this and identify the figure as Vulcan. Although the figure is damaged it does appear to be female.



FIGURE 31. Ercole de' Roberti(?), *Month of September/Triumph of Vulcan/Libra*, fresco, c. 1468, Salone dei Mesi, Schifanoia Palace, Ferrara. Copyright Scala/Art Resource, NY.

a suit of armor and a dress. The couple is variously identified as Mars and Venus or Mars and Rhea Silvia. Lust may be evidenced by Mars and Venus who had an adulterous affair; as Venus was the wife of Vulcan. However, the attribution of the couple as Mars and Rhea Silvia seems valid because in the left hand portion we see a shield showing the twins Romulus and Remus, the children of Mars and Rhea Sylvia, being suckled by the she-wolf.⁶⁴ To the left of the shield we see Vulcan's forge, with the Cyclops at work and armor hanging on the walls.

In the center section is the depiction of the sign for Libra, the scales. Above the scale is a man who looks upward, holding his hands palms up. The figure on the left holds a trumpet in one hand and a bird in the other. On the right hand side an almost naked figure is seen about to be pierced by an arrow shot from a very determined looking archer at quite close range.

The lower portion, although badly damaged, shows the Duke standing beneath an immense archway receiving a man dressed in a long red robe. Courtiers on horseback are led out to the hunt by Duke Borso who rides a white charger and supports a small falcon on his left arm. On the right, just behind the departure for the hunt, peasants are harvesting grapes from beneath an arbor.

Unfortunately, the months of October, November and December are almost completely destroyed. It is, however, interesting to speculate about the scenes that might have accompanied these later fall and winter months. Perhaps the winter scenes would have shown the Duke in some interior scenes engaged in more contemplative activities as opposed to the active hunting scenes of the earlier months.

The frescoes, which have been described as masterpieces, offer a rare and extensive glimpse into the world of Renaissance life in Ferrara. The style and beauty of Cossa's contributions to the cycle have been compared with the works of Pisanello, Piero della Francesca, Roger Van der Weijden and Alberti.⁶⁵

64. Lippincott, *The Frescoes of the Salone dei Mesi*, 99.

65. Luigi Torti, *L'Umanesimo a Ferrara: Saggio di Estetica*, Pavia, 1980, 49. All of the artists mentioned, including Mantegna, had worked in Ferrara.

The Meaning of the Fresco Cycle

The complex and detailed frescoes of the Salone dei Mesi are indispensable for understanding the court of Ferrara and the rule of Borso d'Este. They serve as a visual parallel to written accounts of the activities of the Duke and his court and a visual record of his success. The scenes offer documentary evidence, albeit idealized, to the daily activities of the Duke. He is seen as an active, vibrant man who pursues the pleasures of riding and hunting. He is documented in his capacity as a just ruler dispensing gold coins to his favorite courtiers and as a cultured host nobly receiving guests and accepting important letters. But, the frescoes in the Salone dei Mesi were not meant to depict reality. Instead, they were meant to be a lavish and idealizing portrait of the regal and benevolent ruler Borso and a depiction of paradisaical life in the Duchy of Ferrara.

The frescoes may even have been created to illustrate Tito Vespasiano Strozzi's epic poem *The Borsiad*.⁶⁶ In the poem, which was a celebration of the life and reign of Duke Borso d'Este, Strozzi describes Borso's birth as a divine and predestined gift from the gods. Strozzi explains how the twelve Olympian gods call an assembly and lament the evil and sorry state of the world until Jupiter offers Borso as his gift to mankind.⁶⁷ Strozzi points out, however, that it is Borso's inherent goodness that leads the wise people of Ferrara to elect him as ruler.

The profusion of images representing the Duke and his court in the Salone dei Mesi is unique in the history of narrative fresco painting. The frescoes are a sophisticated and complex series of mythological and astrological images that are successfully connected to the specific reign of a ruler. What emerges from the cycle is a depiction of an opulent and ideal city ruled by a benevolent and just ruler. The viewer, visiting dignitaries, and guests of the Estes who were received in the salon were permitted an intimate glimpse of the daily activities of the Duke and his courtiers. They were shown the abundance of agriculture and the

66. Kristen Lippincott, "The neo-Latin historical epics of the north Italian courts: an examination of 'courtly culture' in the fifteenth century" in *Journal of Renaissance Studies* 3, December 1989, 414-428. Only four books of the final ten were finished at Borso's death.

67. *Ibid.*,

beauty of the architecture in the city. The wealth of the court is portrayed by the depiction of rich costumes and elegant jewelry. The activities, such as the festivals, races, elegant weddings and music making also reveal the glamorous and elegant life-style of courtiers in Ferrara.

Ultimately, what is vividly depicted in the frescoes is the microcosm of Duke Borso d'Este. Duke Borso, in all his vanity, has commissioned a representation of his universe, how it functions, and in what way it is all dependent on his magnanimous rule.⁶⁸

The implication of the Schifanoia fresco cycle is that, guided by the stars above, Duke Borso reigns supreme over the ideal city of Ferrara. The fact that the frescoes encircle the room further reinforces their cyclical meaning while the inclusion of the triumphal progress of one month over another comments on the victorious nature and timeless triumphs of Borso himself.

The frescoes were not intended to stand as a symbol of a single year of Duke Borso's reign but as a symbol of his everlasting reign. Duke Borso d'Este is, in essence, represented as the eternal ruler of Ferrara. One can imagine Duke Borso d'Este, '*divus Estensi*,' standing triumphantly in the center of the Salone dei Mesi, watching as the city of Ferrara, his courtiers, the planets, and the stars revolve around him.

68. Fritz Saxl, "Macrocosm and Microcosm in Medieval Pictures," in *Fritz Saxl Lectures*, London, 1957, 58-72.

Conclusion



One of the last major artistic commissions depicting a triumphal procession executed during the Quattrocento was a series of nine canvases painted by Andrea Mantegna for Marquis Francesco II Gonzaga.¹ The series, which depicts in minute detail the Triumph of Caesar, was painted between 1484 and 1495 to decorate the *sala grande* in the Palazzo di San Sebastiano in Mantua.²

The significant difference between this triumphal imagery and that of the previous rulers is that Francesco Gonzaga does not appear anywhere in the work. While the images served to illustrate the imagined splendor of the ancient Triumph of Caesar, perhaps implying a similar splendor of the Gonzaga court, they were primarily decorative. The decorative aspect is underscored by the fact that the canvases were portable and described as early as 1501 as forming part of the decoration of a theatrical auditorium.³ Andrew Martindale concedes that “whatever the original purpose of the Triumphs, they soon came to be used with some degree of regularity as decorative stage properties for court theatricals.”⁴ Unlike previous rulers who chose the

1. Andrew Martindale, *The Triumphs of Caesar by Andrea Mantegna in the Collection of Her Majesty the Queen at Hampton Court*, London, 1979. Although there is some debate as to which Gonzaga actually commissioned the canvases it is now generally accepted to have been Francesco II Gonzaga (1466–1519).

2. Vasari claimed that Mantegna's Triumph of Caesar “is the best thing that he ever executed.” Giorgio Vasari, *Lives of the Painters, Sculptors and Architects*, trans. Gaston du C. de Vere, London, 1912; vol. I, 561.

3. Martindale, *Triumphs of Caesar*, 31.

4. *Ibid.*, 32. By the mid-sixteenth century the canvases had been separated and hung in three different locations.

triumphal motif as a specific component of their visual self-fashioning these triumphs were intentionally non-specific; they did not serve as a commentary on any individual Gonzaga family member or event.

The use of the Triumph of Caesar by the Gonzaga as a decorative panorama instead of an opportunity for personal expression and self-imaging seems to reflect a shift in the function and significance of triumphal imagery. Alfonso of Aragon, Sigismondo Malatesta and the other early Renaissance rulers in this study, all used triumphal imagery to link their own personalities and aspects of rulership to the classical Roman *imperatores*. The image of the antique triumph, for them, served to comment on and illustrate specific similarities between them and their classical predecessors. The Gonzaga's use of the Triumph of Caesar is not consistent with earlier rulers' attempts at using the motif to suggest a visual and historical parallel. Unlike Alfonso, whose portrait reflects his desire to be equated with Trajan, or Sigismondo's visual links to Scipio, the Gonzaga commission does not exhibit a personal reflection or correlation of Francesco II to Julius Caesar.⁵

One factor that influenced the shift in the function of the triumphal motif was the discovery in 1546 of the Capitoline tablets or Consular and Triumphal *Fasti*.⁶ The marble tablets, discovered near the Regia in the Roman Forum, listed the triumphs decreed by the Romans from Romulus to Augustus and gave a brief description of their contents. These lists, which had decorated the walls of the Regia, the official residence of the Pontifex Maximus, were excavated under the supervision of Cardinal Alessandro Farnese and then placed in the Sala dei Fasti in the Palazzo dei Conservatori.⁷ The historic accuracy and concrete factual evidence presented by the discovery may have helped to diminish the power of earlier imaginative reconstructions of the antique triumph.

5. The program of the paintings has been identified as representing the Gallic Triumph of Caesar and is a conflation of the literary accounts of the Triumphs of Aemilius Paulus by Plutarch and of Scipio Africanus by Appian. See *Splendours of the Gonzaga*, eds., David Chambers and Jane Martineau, London, 1982, 143.

6. See J. J. Pollitt, *The Art of Rome c.753 b.c.- a.d. 337: Sources and Documents*, New York, 1966, 3 and Scullard, *Festivals*, 48.

7. Rodolfo Lanciani, *The Ruins and Excavations of Ancient Rome*, New York, 1887, 219-220.

The Renaissance tradition of the *all'antica* triumphal procession and its representation in art had changed by the end of the fifteenth century. Its function and meaning had shifted away from its classical origins and was redirected to the service of pageantry and the royal entry. It became a civic procession that was dependent on and a component of a *fiesta* or festival. In 1559 the Florentine author Antonfrancesco Grazzini published a small book entitled *Trionfi* which contained chants, songs and verses to be recited by the audience at triumphal pageants and parades.⁸

During the sixteenth century triumphal imagery became inextricably linked with the entry of foreign Kings into cities. Emperor Charles V and Francis I entered newly conquered cities in Italy with a great deal of pomp and circumstance but did not make an effort to re-enact the triumphal processions of antiquity. Many royal triumphal entries, unlike those in antiquity, were often celebrated without the benefit of any military victory. The triumphal procession became, instead, a common feature of elaborate marriage festivals and holiday pageants.⁹

These festival processions or triumphs, which included many of the same elements of earlier *all'antica* processions, altered the singular focus of the antique triumph. Instead of a specific and intense focus on the victorious honoree these later festivals and entries included multiple points of interest. The festival procession became an elaborate and often disconnected series of *tableaux vivants*.¹⁰ Triumphs no longer served as crucial evidence of any military or moral victory and did not necessarily imply any association with the Imperial past. By the middle of the sixteenth century the function and significance of triumphal imagery had shifted away from its origins as a celebration of achievement and Imperial glory to become a fanciful component of colorful pageants and festivals. Instead of its original significance as an honorific rite of a just and victorious ruler it became the basis for parade processions and floats complete with dwarfs, mimes, masqueraders and acrobats.

The importance of the image as an iconographical tool in the

8. Randolph Starn and Loren Partridge, *Arts of Power: Three Halls of State in Italy, 1300–1600*, Berkeley, 1992, 159.

9. Bonner Mitchell, *The Majesty of State*, 14–15. The author includes a list of seventeen entries of brides in Italy between 1502–1598.

10. Martindale, *Triumphs of Caesar*, 47.

construction of personal identity and legitimate rulership had originally coincided with the humanist interests of authors and artists in the Quattrocento. As art and architecture shifted away from a dependence on and adherence to classic models so too did the focus of rulers.

This study suggests that Renaissance rulers during the Quattrocento shared a common desire to incorporate the antique Roman triumph into their own visual persona. They found that the triumphal motif, with all its classical allusions, could be used to signify a direct connection between themselves and their victories to those of past victors. Artists and rulers drawn to the classical triumphal motif fully recognized the importance of the intervention of Petrarch and his use of allegory. Rulers like Federico da Montefeltro, who wished to express his militaristic and moral victories without emphasizing the motif's pagan origins, chose a specifically Petrarchan inspired triumph. His nemesis Sigismondo Malatesta, however, used the image of the triumph in an effort to visually and theoretically link himself to his pagan ancestors. Borso d'Este, at the end of the Quattrocento, was the ruler who most successfully employed the triumphal motif and exploited it for all its festive, pagan, Christian, and decorative possibilities.

By examining the way in which these four rulers appropriated a single motif one gains an understanding of the shared interests and desires of rulers during the Renaissance. Furthermore, the motif of the antique triumph is revealed to be a significant aspect in the iconographical self-fashioning of four independent and powerful Renaissance despots.

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