

Paolo Uccello and the Confraternity of Saint Peter Martyr: Themes of Reciprocal Obligation in Life and Art

The *Stories of Genesis* in the cloister of the former Dominican convent of Santa Maria Novella (now the Museo di Santa Maria Novella) is one of the most enigmatic fifteenth-century mural painting cycles in Florence. This is due to the almost complete absence of contemporary documentation for the cycle, because of the generally poor state of preservation of the paintings, and—excepting those by Paolo Uccello—their unremarkable quality. These factors have seemingly acted as a disincentive to scholars to work on the problems of interpretation related to the cycle.¹ This paper will draw attention to some previously unconsidered evidence that may illuminate the religious and social context in which the cycle was created and viewed in the fifteenth century. In particular, four propositions will be advanced: first, that the project may be related in a number of ways to the presence of the Confraternity of Saint Peter Martyr at the convent; second, that Uccello can probably be connected with the confraternity directly, and can certainly be connected with it indirectly through his wealthy and powerful relative Deo Beccuti; third, that the iconography of the cycle can be interpreted as an affirmation of the importance of the family in early Renaissance Florence; and fourth, that the culture of reciprocal obligation that existed between the convent and the confraternity, and the wealthy families that supported them also extended to an artist such as Uccello, since he was in fact a member of one such wealthy

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¹ Important recent publications dealing with all or part of the Chiostrò Verde cycle include: Eiko M.L., Wakayama, 'Per la datazione delle Storie di Noè di Paolo Uccello: Un'Ipotesi di lettura', *Arte Lombarda*, 1, 61 (1982), 93–106; W. Hood, *Fra Angelico at San Marco* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1993) pp. 137–45; F. Borsi and S. Borsi, *Paolo Uccello*, trans. by E. Powell (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1994; orig. Italian ed. Milan, 1992), pp. 178–87, 287–90, and 323–25; and Cecilia Frosinini, 'Chiostrò Verde', in *Il complesso di Santa Maria Novella*, series ed. by M. Gregori, Firenze, Musei per la Città (Florence: Edizioni della Meridiana, 2003), 27–37.

family. Despite the loss of his father at a relatively young age, and perhaps his mother also, these relationships of reciprocal obligation most likely sustained him during his early career, even if they did not always work as effectively as he might have wished.

The cloister in which the *Stories of Genesis* are located is called the Chiostrò Verde (the ‘Green Cloister’) because of the colour of the green earth pigment (*terra verde*) that dominates the palette of the cycle. The practice of painting in an almost monochrome palette may be associated with economy on the part of patrons, but is also a matter of taste. *Terra verde* was an inexpensive pigment, readily available from Italian deposits, unlike some pigments such as lapis lazuli, which had to be imported at great cost. Monochrome painting is found on the reverses of some double-sided altarpieces, such as the *Pietà* on the reverse of Giovanni Toscani’s *Virgin and Child with Saints Jerome and Catherine* triptych (Museo dello Spedale degli Innocenti, Florence), where it can be assumed the patron did not wish to lavish expense on costly pigments and the artist’s labour for a subsidiary aspect of the work. It has also been suggested that *terra verde* painting imitates the appearance of bronze relief sculpture, and so lends its subject matter the authority of antiquity.² Traditionally, however, bronze sculpture might be gilded but not otherwise coloured.³ Whereas, when Uccello and the other artists active in the Chiostrò Verde used *terra verde* they included other colours, particularly red and orange, no doubt because these create a lively contrast with green. Monochrome painting is also a feature of many early Netherlandish illuminated manuscripts, and so it may well reflect simply a taste for an abstract mode of representation not related specifically to monumental painting.

The *terra verde* palette of the *Stories of Genesis* cycle is, nevertheless, appropriate for its context, since it does not compete with the architecture of the cloister, and acts as a prelude to the vibrantly coloured mural paintings inside the adjacent chapter house, executed by Andrea di Bonaiuto and other, yet to be identified, fourteenth-century artists. Masaccio’s *Sagra* (now lost) was painted in *terra verde* in the cloister beside the church of Santa Maria del Carmine sometime

² This is the explanation given by Borsi and Borsi (*Paolo Uccello*, p. 181) for the use of *terra verde* in the Chiostrò Verde.

³ A similar debate has surrounded the use of *terra verde* in Uccello’s *Equestrian Monument for Sir John Hawkwood* in Florence Cathedral; see: Hugh Hudson, ‘The Politics of War: Paolo Uccello’s *Equestrian Monument for Sir John Hawkwood* in the Cathedral of Florence’, *Parergon*, 23, 2 (2006), 1–34 (p. 17).

after the early 1420s,⁴ showing that its use at Santa Maria Novella was not an isolated instance in Florence in the early fifteenth century.

The construction of the Chiostro Verde is not well documented, but according to the historian Wood Brown it probably progressed from c. 1350 to c. 1360.⁸ Similarly, the patronage of the project is not clear. The arms of the Benvenuti di Puccio family are found over the door leading from the Chiostro Verde into the vestibule before the Chiostro Grande, the opposite door to the Chiostro Grande, the door to the staircase that led to the dormitory, and the door leading into the church.⁹ The arms of the Guidalotti family are found in the cloister in front of the chapter house, which it financed, while those of the Da Castiglioni are found on the columns on the eastern side of the cloister, and those of the Alberti are found on the columns on the southern and western sides.¹⁰

The document most frequently associated with the mural painting cycle in the Chiostro Verde is the 1348 will of the wealthy wool merchant Turino di Baldese, leaving the enormous sum of 1000 florins to paint the whole of the Old Testament in the nave of Santa Maria Novella.¹¹

⁴ Luciano Berti, 'Da Masaccio, 47. Particolare della *Sagra* [...]', in *L'età di Masaccio: Il primo quattrocento a Firenze*, ed. by E. Andreatta, L. Berti, M. Burresi, M.C. Fabbri, A. Natali, A. Paolucci, M. Scalini, and M. Sframelli, exh. cat., Palazzo Vecchio, Florence (Milan: Electa, 1990) p. 154.

⁸ J. Wood Brown, *The Dominican Church of Santa Maria Novella at Florence: A Historical, Architectural, and Artistic Study* (Edinburgh: Otto Schulze & Co., 1902), pp. 83–84.

⁹ Carl Brandon Strehlke, 'The Princeton Penitent Saint Jerome, the Gaddi Family, and Early Fra Angelico', *Record*, 62 (2003), 5–27 (note 106 on p. 21).

¹⁰ Wood Brown, *Dominican Church*, p. 83. See also: Marcella Castelli, *I chiostrini di Firenze: Entro le mura* (Florence: Becocci Editore, 1982), pp. 76–77.

¹¹ The first author to suggest the project originated with Turino di Baldese's testament may have been Giuseppe Richa in 1755 (*Notizie istoriche delle chiese Fiorentine divise ne'fuoi quartieri*, 10 vols (Rome: Pietro Gaetano Viviani, 1972; orig. ed. Florence, 1754–62), 3 (*Del quartiere di S. M.a Novella*), pp. 80–81). The relevant part of the will, dated 22 July 1348, reads as follows (the transcription is from S. Orlandi, "*Necrologio*" di S. Maria Novella, 2 vols (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 1955), 2, pp. 436–37):

Item pro remedio anime sue legavit de bonis suis libras mille de quibus libris mille disposuit voluit et mandavit pingi in ecclesia sancta marie novelle de flor. ad honorem omnipotentis dei et virginis gloriose et totius celestis curie in dicto loco quo magis placuerit infrascripto suo executori storiam (sic) totius testamenti veteris sad (? forse scil.) a principio usque ad finem.

There are, however, many unanswered questions surrounding the implementation of Turino's bequest. It is not known why there was a delay of about seventy years, why the cycle was painted in the cloister rather than inside the church, why only scenes from the Book of Genesis were chosen from the Old Testament to be depicted, or why artists of indifferent ability were employed for the bulk of the work given the large amount of money originally available. Nor is it clear why a distinguished artist—as Uccello was—received a commission to paint only the first and fourth bays of the east wall.¹²

The function of the Chiostro Verde is relatively clear. It was used by the friars for protection from the elements when moving between their buildings and the church. Access to the dormitory was originally through a door in the left side of the north wall of the cloister, until it was blocked off to allow veneration of a miraculous painting of the Virgin and Child above the door. A door in the northwest corner of the cloister leads to the vestibule before the Chiostro Grande. The old refectory, now housing museum exhibits from the convent, is along the west side of the cloister, adjoining the former Ubriachi Chapel. The door to the chapter house is in the middle of the north wall, the entrance to the Chiostrino dei Morti (a small cemetery) is a little further along the same wall, and access to the church is in the northeast corner of the cloister. Of course, the cloister also provided a secluded space conducive to quiet meditation. Yet the cloister was not solely for the use of the friars. The Dominican order reached out to the urban population of Florence, particularly through preaching, teaching, and diplomacy, and the Chiostro Verde and chapter house were the parts of the convent most accessible to the lay community.

The chapter house mural paintings comprise images of Dominican propaganda, including depictions of Saint Dominic, the founder of the order, Saint Thomas Aquinas, its pre-eminent theologian, and Saint Peter Martyr, its famous preacher. The Dominican iconography extends outside the chapter house into the cloister, where on the right side of the north wall the *Tree of the Dominican Order* was painted by an anonymous artist, possibly in the late fourteenth century,

Et fecit et reliquit ad hec executorem et fidei commissarium religiosum et honestum virum fratrem Jacobum passavantis ord. fratrum pred. de Flor. si tunc viveret et si tunc non viveret fecit et reliquit executorem ad predicta loco dicti fratris Jacobi religiosum virum fratrem Miccaelem Buti Baldi dicti ord. fratrum pred. de Flor.... (se anche questi fosse venuto a mancare lasciava esecutore) priorem fratrum predicatorum florentini conventus pro tempore existentem ...Et predictam storiā pingi voluit et mandavit ut profertur a die obitus dicti testatoris ad unum annum...

¹² Frosinini, 'Chiostro Verde', pp. 27–31.

showing busts of important Dominicans in roundels on the Tree of Life on which Christ is crucified. The vaults around the cloister are also painted with numerous tondi containing busts of Dominicans.

William Hood interpreted the choice of an Old Testament subject for the nave of Santa Maria Novella during the middle of the fourteenth century (and its eventual realization in the Chiostro Verde) as an extension of the Dominicans' self-aggrandising representation found in the mural paintings in the chapter house, inasmuch as the subject recalled Old Testament cycles at important ecclesiastical sites in Rome such as Old Saint Peter's and San Paolo fuori le mura, and the revered Dominican church at Monte Cassino. Drawing attention to the presence of two popes and sessions of the Council of Florence at Santa Maria Novella in the first half of the fifteenth century, Hood described the Chiostro Verde as the setting for dramas of importance to Florence and beyond, and a '*locus classicus*' for self-representation in mural paintings in Florentine cloisters.¹³ This interpretation, though, is somewhat at odds with the modest quality of the majority of the cycle's execution.

In significant contrast, Cecilia Frosinini saw in the subject matter of the patriarchs (on the south and west walls) a possible reference to the Dominicans, but in a more austere light, as mendicants identifying with the patriarchs who lived humbly 'in tents in the promised land as travellers in a strange land', to paraphrase Hebrews Chapter 11: 9, with the restrained palette of the cycle complementing the message of austerity.¹⁴ This interpretation, on the other hand, sits uneasily with the lavish use of marble cladding on the façade of the chapter house and the magnificence of the cloister's architecture as a whole. It is possible, however, that the subject matter is not essentially self-referential, and so does not presuppose a high degree of consistency with the ambience or program (such as it may be) of the cloister and the chapter house. Rather, in this semi-public location, it might contain a different kind of message relating to those who visited the convent from outside.

While Turino's probable patronage of the Chiostro Verde cycle has long been acknowledged in the literature, the relevance of his association with the Confraternity of Saint Peter Martyr to the cycle has not. In 1340, prior to writing his will, Turino served as one of the

¹³ Hood, *Fra Angelico at San Marco*, pp. 137–45.

¹⁴ Frosinini, 'Chiostro Verde', p. 38.

captains of the confraternity.¹⁵ Over a hundred years later, in 1458, Turino's heirs were effectively living rent-free in a house belonging to the confraternity because of a dispute over the family's patronage rights at the church, an indication of the ongoing involvement of the confraternity in the administration of Turino's legacy.¹⁶ As will be shown, the confraternity was involved in facilitating some of the most important patronage at Santa Maria Novella.

The confraternity was established at Santa Maria Novella in the mid-thirteenth century, with a dedication to the Virgin, to rally orthodox lay Catholics to the defence of the faith. It was part of the church's widespread efforts to combat heresy. One of the confraternity's most distinctive activities was the hiring of singers to perform *laude* (songs of praise) at masses, especially for the commemoration of the dead, and at religious festivals.¹⁷ The confraternity first came to prominence in the years 1244–45, at the time of Saint Peter Martyr's presence in Florence, in whose honour it was given a secondary dedication.¹⁸ Its organization was intimately associated with the convent, as friars often held important offices in the confraternity. John Henderson has noted the growing significance of the confraternity's role in accepting bequests from its members and the wider community over the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries for its relationship with the convent. Up to ninety-three percent of the confraternity's income went to the

¹⁵ Orlandi, "*Necrologio*", 1, pp. 457–59, note 24 on p. 529, and p. 538. Following an outbreak of the plague in 1349, Turino added a codicil to his will to give a further 300 florins for the construction of the principal door to the church.

¹⁶ F. William Kent, 'The Making of a Renaissance Patron of the Arts', in *Giovanni Rucellai ed il suo zibaldone*, 2 (*A Florentine Patrician and his Palace*) (London: The Warburg Institute, The University of London, 1981), 9–95 (note 7 on pp. 69–70).

¹⁷ Wilson, *Music and Merchants*, pp. 109–18, and 201–06.

¹⁸ On the confraternities dedicated to Saint Peter Martyr, see: Gilles Meersseman, 'Études sur les anciennes confréries Dominicaines, II. Les confréries de Saint-Pierre Martyr', *Archivium Fratrum Praedicatorum*, 21 (1951), pp. 51–196, especially pp. 62–66 for Florence; and Gilles Meersseman, 'La prédication Dominicaine dans les congrégations Mariales en Italie au XIIIe siècle', *Archivium Fratrum Praedicatorum*, 18 (1948), 131–61 (pp. 135–36). Lay confraternities dedicated to the Virgin were also established, either by Saint Peter Martyr or under his influence, in a number of other Italian cities. On the confraternity at Santa Maria Novella, see: B. Wilson, *Music and Merchants: The Laudesi Companies of Republican Florence* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), pp. 109–18; J. Henderson, *Piety and Charity in Late Medieval Florence* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), in many places, but especially pp. 170–75, 469–70; and Ursula L. Betka, 'Marian Images and *Laudesi* Devotion in Late Medieval Italy, ca. 1260–1350' (unpublished doctoral thesis, The University of Melbourne, 2001), which discusses the confraternity at numerous points, particularly in relation to its Marian devotion.

convent for masses and other commemorative services for the dead. In 1441, when the confraternity had financial difficulties, the convent intervened to keep its assets secure.¹⁹

The friars accommodated the confraternity with privileged places to meet. By the early fourteenth century it met in a chapel on the right side of the transept, but later yielded the chapel to the Bardi di Vernio family. Debate still surrounds the original location of Duccio's monumental *Virgin and Child with Angels* commissioned by the confraternity in 1285 (now in the Galleria degli Uffizi).²⁰ In any event, this magnificent work illustrates the confraternity's importance as a patron at Santa Maria Novella in its own right. Interestingly, the confraternity had a relatively high proportion of painters as members, who may have been attracted by the possibility of gaining commissions in one of the most important and richly patronized churches in Florence.²¹ Artists were also useful to the confraternity for supervising its artistic commissions.²² In addition to spaces to meet within the church, the friars accorded the confraternity's members burial privileges in the Chiostrino dei Morti, the cemetery beside the church where the friars were themselves buried.²³

The confraternity was also involved in the administration of artistic patronage by wealthy individuals and families in Santa Maria Novella that was not directly related to its own activities. Giovanni Rucellai's patronage of Alberti's famous marble façade for the church was implemented in the second half of the fifteenth century partly through the confraternity. Bill Kent has analysed the complex land ownership arrangements that allowed Rucellai to pay for the façade using income from properties formerly owned by his father-in-law Palla di Nofri degli Strozzi. In fact, Rucellai had to win the patronage rights to the façade of the church from Turino di Baldese's heirs, since Turino had also left an endowment for the principal door of the facade in a codicil to his will. Rucellai gave the confraternity the use of land as payment towards his

¹⁹ Henderson, *Piety and Charity*, pp. 171–75.

²⁰ Irene Hueck, 'La tavola di Duccio e la Compagnia delle Laudi di Santa Maria Novella', in *Gli Uffizi studi e ricerche. 6: La Maestà di Duccio restaurata*, series eds L. Berti and A. Petrioli Tofani (Florence: Centro Di, 1990), 33–46 (pp. 41–43); Betka, 'Marian Images', pp. 99–106.

²¹ Wilson, *Music and Merchants*, p. 110.

²² As noted by Hueck ('La tavola di Duccio', p. 35), concerning the presence of the artist Dino di Benivieni as one of the confraternity's two *operai* involved in the commission for Duccio's painting.

²³ Wood Brown, *Dominican Church*, pp. 87–88.

project.²⁴ In such complex and potentially divisive arrangements, the confraternity may have served to keep the negotiation of patronage at arm's length from the convent. Furthermore, as Blake Wilson has observed, the confraternity was perhaps also 'helping the friars sidestep the delicate issue of material ownership by a mendicant order.'²⁵

Another prestigious commission in the church that seems to have involved the confraternity was Ghirlandaio's mural painting cycle *Scenes from the Lives of the Virgin and Saint John the Baptist* in the chapel behind the high altar. In 1486 Giovanni di Francesco Tornabuoni was elected a captain of the confraternity, and in the same year he became provost, at which time he was also given patronage rights over the chapel.²⁶ To gain patronage rights at Santa Maria Novella it evidently helped to have good relations with its confraternity. The transparency of the friars' mutually beneficial arrangements with patrons in the confraternity was gently mocked by Boccaccio in the First Story of the Seventh Day of the *Decameron*:

There was once in Florence, in the quarter of San Brancazio, a wool comber called Gianni Lotteringhi, a man more fortunate in his craft than wise in other things, for, savoring of the simpleton, he was very often made captain of the Laudsingers of Santa Maria Novella and had the governance of their confraternity, and he many a time had other little offices of the same kind, much swelling his sense of self-importance. These were assigned him because, being a man of substance, he gave many good victuals to the friars, and they, getting of him often, this one a pair of hose, that one a gown and another a scapulary, taught him in return many goodly orisons and gave him the paternoster in the vulgar tongue, the Song of Saint Alexis, the Lamentation of Saint Bernard, the Canticle of Madam Matilda and suchlike trumpery, all which he held very dear and kept very diligently for his soul's health.²⁷

²⁴ Kent, 'Making of a Renaissance Patron', p. 49 and note 7 on pp. 60–61. See also: R. Hatfield, 'The Funding of the Façade of Santa Maria Novella', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 68 (2004), 81–127 (pp. 86, 89–93, 95–96, and 98).

²⁵ Wilson, *Music and Merchants*, p. 110.

²⁶ Patricia Simons ('Portraiture and Patronage in Quattrocento Florence with Special Reference to the Tornaquinci and their Chapel in S. Maria Novella' 2 vols (unpublished doctoral thesis, The University of Melbourne, 1985), 1, Chapter 5, pp. 190–233) provided a detailed study of the associations between the Tornaquinci/Tornabuoni family, Santa Maria Novella, and the Confraternity of Saint Peter Martyr.

²⁷ G. Boccaccio, *Decameron*, the John Payne translation, revised and annotated by C.S. Singleton, 2 vols (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1982), 2, pp. 489–90. The quoted translation is by J. Payne.

At this point it is worth considering how Boccaccio's cynicism might reflect on the idea of civil society in early Renaissance Florence, based on a notion of the existence of relationships of reciprocal obligation among its population. Since Jacob Burckhardt's *The Civilisation of the Renaissance in Italy*, published in 1860, an idealised view of the Florentine state has existed of the city's republican government as a model of liberty for modern societies, unoppressed by a dynastic tyranny, as were neighbouring city-states such as Milan.²⁸ Certainly, the greater distribution of power in Florence would have limited opportunities for individuals, families, or factions to abuse their authority, but this begs the question of whether exploitative (or uncivil) relationships may have been less conspicuous but just as pervasive. This is not really the place to try to assess how altruistic the motivations of Santa Maria Novella's donors were, or how genuine was the friars' commitment to honouring them. On the face of it, though, the ubiquitous coats of arms within the convent suggest that donors demanded lasting and unmistakable recognition of their giving. Any lack of faith that the terms of their support would be accepted and their generosity adequately recognised would have been well founded. The friars did not always fulfil their donors' wishes, as is indicated by Turino's unrealised bequests, the first for a mural painting cycle within the church, and a second for the construction of the church's principal door. Furthermore, as shall be explained below, it seems the convent's Confraternity of Saint Peter Martyr did not always honour its debts to donors or artists either. The perhaps inevitable tension between giving and receiving in such transactions could lead to a breakdown of civil society, or at least place strains on it. In such cases two parties could retreat within their relationship towards a position of promoting their own interests. Boccaccio shows that donors' acts of generosity could be interpreted as self-serving, and the friars' acknowledgments of these as half-hearted or even insincere.

Returning to the Chiostro Verde, there are other reasons to associate its cycle with the confraternity, apart from the fact that the presumed donor had been one of its captains. Another of its captains is believed to have contributed to the construction of the cloister in the mid-fourteenth century: Luca Alberti's arms are carved below one of the capitals in the cloister.²⁹ While another important fourteenth-century donor and presumed member of the confraternity, Baldassare di Simone degli Ubriachi, nominated the confraternity in his will as administrators of his bequests to

²⁸ J. Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* (London: Penguin Books, 1990; original edition 1860), especially pp. 65–73.

²⁹ Castelli, *I chiostri di Firenze*, pp. 76–77.

the friars for services to be held in his family chapel along the west side of the Chiostrro Verde.³⁰ The arms on the capitals of the columns in the refectory, which adjoins the Ubriachi Chapel on the western side of the cloister, have been identified as those of Fra Michele de' Pilastrri.³¹ His family had many connections with Santa Maria Novella, including a certain Pilastrro di Cione who served as captain of the confraternity on more than one occasion.³²

Moreover, the Chiostrro Verde was also used by the confraternity, whose members processed from the Chiostrro dei Morti through the cloister and into the church on the second Sunday of every month, as well as on major feasts, and for special commemorative ceremonies for the dead. During these processions members of the confraternity filed in pairs, each holding a lit candle, with an image of the Virgin carried at the head of the procession.³³ Regardless of the route taken by the processions through the cloister, they would invariably have passed at least part of the *Stories of Genesis* cycle: Uccello's *Creation Stories* in the first bay beside the entrance to the church. The confraternity also joined the friars in celebrating *pietanze*—commemorative meals eaten with the family of the deceased in the refectory after a mass had been celebrated in the church for the dead.³⁴ To enter the refectory members of the confraternity would most likely have passed through the Chiostrro Verde.

The intimate relationship between the confraternity and the friars is further suggested by the encouragement given to the confraternity's activities, such as the hundred days' indulgence granted to them by Cardinal Nicola da Prato in 1304 for their processions.³⁵ The reciprocal nature of the relationship is indicated by the financial support given by members of the confraternity for

³⁰ Richard C. Trexler ('The Magi Enter Florence: The Ubriachi of Florence and Venice', *Church and Community 1200–1600: Studies in the History of Florence and New Spain* (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1987; orig. ed. in *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance History*, 1, 1978, 129–216), 75–167 (note 40 on p. 87, and p. 158) speculated that the *Adoration of the Magi* relief over the door leading to the Ubriachi Chapel next to the Chiostrro Verde might depict Baldassare about to be presented to the infant Christ by his namesake Magi. The kneeling donor figure is shown wearing a friar-like habit, which Trexler suggested was that of the Confraternity of Saint Peter Martyr. Ultimately, Baldassare was not buried in the chapel, which was instead donated by a descendent to the Confraternity of the Innocenti in January 1467.

³¹ Wood Brown, *Dominican Church*, pp. 84–85.

³² C.C. Calzolari, 'Il "Libro dei Morti" di Santa Maria Novella (1290–1436)', *Memorie Domenicane*, 11, *Santa Maria Novella, un convento nella città: Studi e fonti* (1980), 15–218 (note 496 on p. 140).

³³ Betka, 'Marian Images', pp. 38–39.

³⁴ Betka, 'Marian Images', pp. 300–01, and 356.

³⁵ Wilson, *Music and Merchants*, p. 111.

the building, decoration, and maintenance of the church, as has been described.³⁶ So when the friars eventually commissioned a cycle approximating the one Turino had wanted, they might well have considered the project in relation to the confraternity to which he and some of their most important donors belonged, in such matters as its iconography, its location within the building complex, and perhaps even the artists commissioned, given that the confraternity traditionally had a high proportion of painters as members.

Reconstructing the execution of the commission and interpreting its iconographic program are, however, not straightforward matters. The cycle is divided between six bays on each of the east, south, and west walls, making eighteen bays altogether, of which the paintings in the fifth and sixth bays on the east wall are now all but completely destroyed. The cycle represents episodes from Genesis, Chapters 1 to 34. Although Uccello painted the *Creation Stories*, the earliest episodes from Genesis depicted in the cycle, it does not necessarily follow that he was the first artist to work on the cycle, as has been supposed.³⁷ In fact, the more archaic style of the paintings on the south and west walls, depicting scenes from the stories of Abraham to Simeon and Levi, suggests they are earlier than Uccello's paintings by about a decade, probably dating to the early 1420s, as Cecilia Frosinini has recently proposed.³⁸ Hood suggested that the Dominican Master General Fra Leonardo Dati might have initiated the execution of the cycle, based primarily on a seventeenth-century archival note stating that in 1423 he 'had some pictures painted in the second cloister'.³⁹ There are three principal cloisters at Santa Maria Novella, which

³⁶ Orlandi compiled records of numerous donations and bequests to the confraternity that would have aided the operation of Santa Maria Novella as a whole (for example: Orlandi, *Necrologio*, 1, pp. 246, 314–15, 322–23, 334, 342–43, 363, 407, 457–59, note 24 on p. 529, and pp. 538, 552, and 612). See also: Betka, 'Marian Images', pp. 31–32.

³⁷ Wakayama ('Per la datazione', pp. 93–106) proposed that Uccello received the commission for the entire cycle, for which he established the design and which he began painting c. 1424–25, but only completed the first bay before leaving to work in Venice. Upon returning to Florence, according to Wakayama, Uccello would have found the cycle completed by other artists, and would have had to execute his painting in the fourth bay in place of a previously existing one. This would have been a special commission to mark the success of the Council of Florence in an allegorical manner through the motifs of the two arks, representing the Latin and Greek churches.

³⁸ Frosinini, 'Chiostrino Verde', pp. 28–29.

³⁹ Hood (*Fra Angelico at San Marco*, pp. 139 and 144) ignored the Chiostrino dei Morti, but thought the Chiostrino Grande (which he interpreted as the 'second cloister') might have been referred to in error for the

are in order of age: the Chiostro dei Morti (it was alternatively referred to as the ‘Chiostro Vecchio’⁴⁰), the Chiostro Verde, and the Chiostro Grande. Thus, it is likely that the ‘second cloister’ referred to is the Chiostro Verde, and so c. 1423 seems a likely date for the painting of its south and west walls.

One aspect of the cloister’s history that does not seem to have been considered in relation to the chronology of its mural painting cycle is the existence of a door leading from the church into the cloister in the 1420s, which seems to have been walled up c. 1430.⁴¹ The door was just to the north of Masaccio’s *Trinity* in the western wall of the church’s nave, and would probably have been aligned with the middle of the east side of the cloister, opposite the opening in the low wall around the perimeter of the cloister providing access to the garden.⁴² Thus, the door would have opened onto the cloister in the third bay, where the *Stories of Lamech and the Annunciation of the Flood to Noah* (above) and *Entrance of the Animals and Noah’s Family into the Ark* (below) were painted. Since these scenes are important to the narrative flow of the cycle on the east wall, it seems probable that the planning of that part of the cycle presupposes the walling up of the door and so may postdate c. 1430, although it cannot be excluded that the plans for the walling up of the door preceded their implementation.

Frosinini has also addressed the difficult question of the identities of the other artists who worked on the cycle, attributing the paintings on the south wall to Mariotto di Cristofano and his workshop, the first bay of the west wall tentatively to Dello Delli based on Vasari’s testimony, and the rest of the west wall to an anonymous artist. Frosinini proposed that the east wall was the last to be painted, in the 1430s and 1440s, attributing the first and fourth bays to Uccello. The second and third bays she gave to Uccello’s workshop, tentatively identifying the assistants as

Chiostro Verde (the ‘first cloister’). He still acknowledged that funds for Turino di Baldese’s unrealised Old Testament cycle in the nave of the church might have been used for the Chiostro Verde cycle.

⁴⁰ W. Paatz, and E. Paatz, *Die Kirchen von Florenz: Ein Kunstgeschichtliches Handbuch*, 6 vols (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1952-55), 3, p. 669.

⁴¹ Orlandi, “*Necrologio*”, 2, p. 402.

⁴² The door was also opposite the door in the east wall of the church that provided the main access to the church for the congregation in the fifteenth century. For a diagram of the location of the two doors, see: John Coolidge, “Further Observations on Masaccio’s *Trinity*”, *The Art Bulletin*, 48, 3–4, September–December (1966), 382–84 (Fig. 1). This door was walled up during Vasari’s renovations in the sixteenth century (Timothy Verdon, ‘Masaccio’s *Trinity*: Theological, Social, and Civic Meanings’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Masaccio*, D. Cole Ahl (ed.), (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 159–76 (pp. 173–74)), but was re-opened in the twentieth century.

Francesco d'Antonio and Scheggia, and the fragmentary paintings in the fifth and sixth bays she gave to an anonymous Florentine artist. For Frosinini, the cycle was begun on the south and west walls as a depiction of scenes from the lives of biblical patriarchs, and completed on the east wall as a more comprehensive account of Genesis, starting with the creation of Adam and Eve and the animals. She noted in particular the curious absence from the Genesis cycle of the story of Joseph, who is traditionally interpreted as prefiguring Christ—an indication that the cycle may have been truncated.⁴³ This absence is indeed curious, since the popularity of the story is suggested by the mural paintings of that subject dating from the mid-fifteenth century in the *altana* (covered terrace) of Giovanni Rucellai's palazzo, in the same quarter of Florence as Santa Maria Novella.⁴⁴ Be that as it may, it is not likely that the original plans for the iconography of the Chiostro Verde cycle and the changes they apparently underwent will ever be entirely clear in the absence of contemporary documentation.⁴⁵

As it was painted, however, the iconography of the cycle represents the lineage of God's chosen people continuing over many generations, sometimes experiencing deliverance from adversity, prosperity, happy marriages, and miraculous conceptions, but also threatened by extinction through infertility, murderous sibling rivalry, and marriage out of the extended family. The tenacity of God's chosen people through trials and tribulations is perhaps to be interpreted as a lesson on the importance of maintaining the integrity of the family and social cohesion by keeping faith with God's injunctions. Genesis contains two of God's covenants with man. First, that after the Universal Flood He would never again send another to destroy the earth, symbolized

⁴³ Frosinini, 'Chiostro Verde', pp. 28–30. The subject of the artists who worked on the cycle was also addressed at length in Georg Pudelko, 'The Minor Masters of the Chiostro Verde', *The Art Bulletin*, 17, 1, March (1935), 71–89. Pudelko attributed the first and fourth bays of the east wall to Uccello, the second and third bays of the east wall and the first bay of the west wall to Dello Delli, all the bays on the south wall to the Master of the Bargello Tondo, and the second to sixth bays on the west wall to the Pseudo Ambrogio Baldese, whom he argued could be identified with Bonaiuto di Giovanni. His opinions have not found general acceptance, but neither has there been any consensus concerning the attributions.

⁴⁴ On these paintings, see: Robert Salvini, 'The Frescoes in the *Altana* of the Rucellai Palace', in *Giovanni Rucellai ed il suo Zibaldone*, 2, (*A Florentine Patrician and his Palace*) (London: The Warburg Institute, The University of London, 1981), pp. 241–52.

⁴⁵ The cycle might originally have been intended to show only scenes from four generations of God's chosen family from Abraham to Simeon and Levi. However, it cannot be excluded that the cycle was always intended to begin with the Creation scenes, even if the execution actually began with the stories of Abraham.

by the rainbow (Chapter 9: 8–17), and second, that God would guarantee the survival of Abraham’s lineage, to be marked by the circumcision of eight-day-old boys (Chapter 17: 1–21). The second covenant was not actually depicted in the cycle, presumably because circumcision is not a Christian rite.

The iconography of the Chiostro Verde cycle can perhaps then be interpreted as a declaration of the Dominican interest in promoting civil harmony through maintaining good relations in Florence within and between families,⁴⁶ a cause to which they had long dedicated great efforts,⁴⁷ and a subject frequently written about by Florentine chroniclers and poets since the thirteenth century.⁴⁸ In 1479–80 Giovanni Caroli (1429–1503), a friar of Santa Maria Novella, wrote his *Vite fratrum* on the history of the convent. In it he described the gradual construction of the conventual complex in terms of its influence over the historical development of the city as a whole, emphasising in particular the influence of Dominican culture over the city’s political life. To quote Salvatore Camporeale’s analysis of the text: ‘in these terms, he sees the original function of the Dominican convent as fulfilled in the larger community of the Florentine people.’⁴⁹

Santa Maria Novella can easily be seen as a locus of communal conciliation. Cardinal Latino Malabranca, originally a friar from the convent, famously reconciled Florence’s warring Guelf and Ghibelline factions in the thirteenth century (the former loyal to the pope, the latter to

⁴⁶ For a recent discussion of Florentine families and their relationship with the state in an ‘Age of Consensus’, see: J.M. Najemy, *A History of Florence 1200–1575* (Malden, Oxford, and Melbourne: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), pp. 219–49.

⁴⁷ Verdon (‘Masaccio’s Trinity’, especially pp. 174–75) argued that the iconography of Masaccio’s *Trinity* in Santa Maria Novella can be interpreted within the context of the Dominicans’ activities dating from the thirteenth century aimed at maintaining social cohesion within and between Florentine families. For a detailed discussion of the Dominicans’ relations with Florentine families and their efforts to maintain peace between them, primarily in the thirteenth century, see: D.R. Lesnick, *Preaching in Medieval Florence: The Social World of Franciscan and Dominican Spirituality*, (Athens and London: The University of Georgia Press, 1989), pp. 63–95.

⁴⁸ Nicolai Rubinstein, ‘The Beginnings of Political Thought in Florence: A Study in Medieval Historiography’, *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 5 (1942), 198–227 (pp. 218–21).

⁴⁹ Salvatore Camporeale, ‘Humanism and the Religious Crisis of the Late Quattrocento: Giovanni Caroli, O.P., and the *Liber dierum lucensium*’, in *Christianity and the Renaissance: Image and Religious Imagination in the Quattrocento*, T. Verdon and J. Henderson (eds) (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1990), 445–66 (p. 462).

the emperor) by calling a parliament of the community including church and civil authorities, at which he called for peace. To achieve this end he espoused, in particular, intermarriage between the city's leading families. The Cardinal laid the foundation stone of Santa Maria Novella's nave the day after his parliament was held⁵⁰—the massive edifice a potent symbol of the convent and its church as a source of stability in the community, which coincidentally forms the east side of the Chiostro Verde.

It is appropriate then that the most compelling scene from the cycle, Uccello's *Flood and the Recession of the Flood*, depicts the moment in which the whole community is held accountable for its actions, and one family alone survives due to its obedience to God, its resourcefulness, and cohesion. The prosperity of the convent depended on the prosperity and peaceful co-existence of Florentine families. The lay members of the Confraternity of Saint Peter Martyr who regularly processed through the cloister, coming from some of Florence's most prominent families, might well have been intended as a key audience for such a lesson. And as a *laudesi* confraternity they might also have been well prepared to receive such a message, since at least one fourteenth-century Florentine *lauda*, *Venite adorare, per pace pregare*, called on the Virgin to bring peace to the city.⁵¹

There is further evidence suggesting the Confraternity of Saint Peter Martyr and Uccello both would have been attentive to a message about social harmony. As Daniel Lesnick has observed, the friars of Santa Maria Novella were drawn disproportionately from Florence's patrician and *popolo grasso* (wealthy merchant and banking class) families, and so had a certain vested interest in advancing the cause of this élite. In the thirteenth century many members of this class were involved in the widespread conflict between Guelfs and Ghibellines, which also had an economic dimension since political supremacy facilitated economic dominance (the property of the defeated faction could be alienated to the advantage of the victor). The Dominicans had a natural alliance with the Guelfs because of their fealty to the papacy. Thus, when Peter of Verona (later Saint Peter Martyr) became active in the Inquisition's pursuit of heretics in the 1240s, it seems he took the opportunity to assist the Guelfs by persecuting prominent Ghibellines. And the

⁵⁰ Verdon, 'Masaccio's Trinity', pp. 174–75.

⁵¹ B. Wilson and N. Barbieri (eds), *The Florence Laudario: An Edition of Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, Banco Rari 18* (Madison: A-R Editions, Inc., 1995), pp. xiii–xiv, xxv–xxxI, xxxvii, lxxiii, and xcii. Two *laude* praying for peace, catalogued in this edition as numbers 43 and 83, are found in a mid-fourteenth-century *laudario* of the Confraternity of Santo Spirito, which met in the Florentine church with the same dedication.

confraternity he founded at Santa Maria Novella initially had a militant aspect, as muscular enforcers of the Inquisition's persecution of alleged Ghibelline heretics. Yet by the late 1270s the Guelfs had grown tired of the conflict, calling upon the Dominicans to help broker a peace with the Ghibellines.⁵²

As a distinguished family in their area, Uccello's mother's family, the del Beccuto, were certainly known to the Dominicans at Santa Maria Novella long before the artist's time. Their names appear in the convent's lists of the deceased in the fourteenth century.⁵³ It is almost certain, however, that the family was already known to the friars by the thirteenth century. A genealogical manuscript by a descendant of the del Beccuto family housed in the Archivio di Stato di Firenze records that two of the family's patriarchs, Lottieri (d. 1295) and his brother Dottore Jacopo were participants at the Battle of Montaperti (where the Guelfs were famously routed), and subsequently were parties to Cardinal Latino's peace ('*Pace Latina*'),⁵⁴ most likely as Guelf *malleadori* (guarantors of the peace).⁵⁵ Thus, Uccello's involvement with the Chostro Verde cycle could hardly be more appropriate in view of the theme proposed here for the cycle as a lesson on communal conciliation. Uccello's maternal family was demonstrably involved in Florence's long history of factional conflict and reconciliation.⁵⁶

⁵² Lesnick, *Preaching in Medieval Florence*, pp. 82–85.

⁵³ The death of his maternal great-grandfather, Castello di Lippo Beccuti of the neighbouring parish of Santa Maria Maggiore, was recorded in the convent's *Libro dei morti* (under 16 January, 1355), perhaps because commemorative ceremonies were held in his honor at Santa Maria Novella, or he may even have been buried there. So too, the death was recorded of a certain Lapa, wife of Vanni del Beccuto (Uccello's grandmother?) (under 12 June, 1340): Calzolari, 'Il "Libro dei morti"' pp. 37–38, and 100.

⁵⁴ Florence, Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Deputazione Sopra la Nobilità e Cittadinanza, 15, section 21, part 1, unfoliated: '*Lottieri +1295 Nella Guerra d'Arbia col Dottore Jacopo/ Suo Fratello, con Jacopo di Cresta Suo Cugino nel 1260 = e nella Pace Latina con i Suddⁱ/ e col Cav.^{re} Adimaro e Fato [?] altri Suoi Fratellis Carnalis nell/ 1290 = fu de' Sig.^{ri} nel 1293 e 1294.*' The '*Guerra d'Arbia*' refers to the river Arbia in the valley in which the town of Montaperti is found. The genealogy was decreed on 17 June 1752, as is indicated on its cover.

⁵⁵ N. Ottokar (*Il Comune di Firenze alla fine del dugento*, second revised edition (Turin: Giulio Einaudi editore, 1962; original edition, Florence, 1926), p. 76) noted that three members of the del Beccuto family were on the list of *malleadori* in the peace of 1280, but did not name them individually.

⁵⁶ Furthermore, two members of the family bore the title '*Dottore*' in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, indicating they were professors (Florence, Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Deputazione Sopra la Nobilità e Cittadinanza, 15, section 21, part 1, unfoliated: Lottieri's brother, '*Dottore Jacopo*' and Lottieri's grandson, '*M' Jacopo Dottore +1320*'). Their expertise was quite possibly in jurisprudence—suggested by

Archival evidence connects Uccello more specifically to the convent's confraternity in a number of ways.⁵⁷ In Uccello's 1433 *portata* (tax return), he reported an outstanding debt of twenty-three florins from twenty years before, owed to him by the Spedale di Sant'Antonio (Hospital of Saint Anthony) in Castello.⁵⁸ Castello was then a rural settlement dominated by wealthy Florentine families, between four and five miles northwest of Florence on the old road to Prato.⁵⁹ Remnants of the façade of the *spedale* survive on Via Reginaldo Giuliano, near the corner of Via della Querciola. A stone doorway bears a carved cross and two monograms on the lintel, with the letters 'MDPM', perhaps standing for Misericordia di Pietro Martire. The monogram also appears on the cover of one of the Confraternity of Saint Peter Martyr's ledgers from the fifteenth century.⁶⁰ Another ledger from the confraternity in the Archivio di Stato di Firenze shows that in July 1413 it reimbursed its *provveditore* (responsible for its day-to-day business) in part for the acquisition of the property with the *spedale*. The *provveditore* of the confraternity and its *spedalingo* (the administrator of the *spedale*) was the painter Michele di Giovanni del Tria, of whom very little is known, except that he painted a crucifix and other minor works for the

the fact that the family owned no fewer than ten volumes on law by the early fifteenth century (C. Bec, *Les marchands écrivains: Affaires et Humanisme à Florence 1375–1434* (Paris: Mouton, 1967; originally PhD Thesis, Université de Paris), pp. 408–09, 411, citing ASF, Registro dei Pupilli, no. 4, fol 7^r: *Inventario de' beni trovammo aveano i figliuoli di Deo di Vanni, di xij giugno, anno mcccclxxxvij*). The contents of Deo di Vanni del Beccuto's small library, inventoried after his death by the *Magistrato dei Pupilli*, was no doubt inherited in full or in part by his son Deo, and sheds some light on the intellectual milieu of Uccello's formation. In addition to the books on law, it included a book on philosophy and medicine, and a book in French (of unrecorded subject). Knowledge of the law in Uccello's maternal family would have been even more appropriate for the artist working on a commission alluding to conflict resolution.

⁵⁷ A summary of this research on Uccello and Beccuti's relationship with the confraternity was presented in Hugh Hudson, 'Paolo Uccello and Fra Angelico in the Early Quattrocento', *Melbourne Art Journal*, 10, 2007, pp. 17–33, primarily discussing the early stylistic similarities in the paintings of these artists who worked at Santa Maria Novella.

⁵⁸ Florence, Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Catasto, 475, fol. 483^r.

⁵⁹ For the history of property ownership in and around Castello, see: G. Lensi Orlandi, *Le ville di Firenze*, 2 vols, 3rd ed. (Florence: Vallecchi, 1978; orig. ed. Florence, 1954), 1 (*Di qua d'Arno*), pp. 13–31.

⁶⁰ Florence, Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Corporazioni Religiose Soppresse dal Governo Francese, 102, 298, Entrata e Uscita, 1455–63. I am grateful to Dr Ursula Betka for suggesting this interpretation of the acronym.

confraternity at Santa Maria Novella.⁶¹ Francesco and Niccolò di Simone Tornabuoni, two of Florence's wealthiest citizens and residents of the Santa Maria Novella quarter, are also mentioned in the document, apparently as financiers for the acquisition.⁶²

The 1427 *portata* of Uccello's wealthy relative from his mother's family, Deo Beccuti, recorded that he owned land in Castello neighbouring the 'singing confraternity of Santa Maria Novella' (*'lachonpagnia dllolalde di santa maria novella'*) and that he had provided Michele di Giovanni del Tria (*'Michele di G^o del tria spedalingho danostro spedale dachastello'*) with the significant sum of fifty-four florins to restore the *spedale* (*'richop[r]ire e aconciare'*).⁶³ In his 1431 *portata* Deo Beccuti specified that the debt originated more than twenty years ago,⁶⁴ as Uccello said of his debt from the *spedale* in 1433. It can hardly be insignificant that Uccello and his relative were owed money by the same *spedale* from around the same period, and neither was paid for two decades. As mentioned, the confraternity experienced financial difficulties in the early fifteenth century, leading to the intervention of the convent in 1441 to secure its assets. After a period in the second half of the fifteenth century in which ownership of the *spedale* was transferred to Santa Maria Novella, the confraternity regained possession, only to sell the property to the Medici in 1534.⁶⁵ However, the buildings on the corner of the property were

⁶¹ Sir D.E. Colnaghi (*Colnaghi's Dictionary of Florentine Painters from the 13th to the 17th Centuries*, with introductory essays by H. Acton, M. Gregory, P. Marchi, and C. Malvani, ed. by C.E. Malvani, (Florence: Archivi Colnaghi Firenze, 1986; orig. ed. London, 1928), p. 181) noted that Michele di Giovanni del Tria was born in 1369, lived near Santa Maria Novella, and was inscribed in the Confraternity of Saint Luke in 1400, but was not able to attribute any work to him securely. Irene Hueck (*'La tavola di Duccio'*, note 14 on p. 35) observed that he painted black letters in the Chiostrino dei Morti, and painted and gilded angels and a crucifix for the confraternity in the late fourteenth century.

⁶² Florence, Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Corporazioni Religiose Soppresse dal Governo Francese, 102, 295, Entrata e Uscita, 1402–14, fol. 212^r. I am grateful to Dr Lorenza Melli for assistance interpreting the document. Further references to the acquisition are found in Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Corporazioni Religiose Soppresse dal Governo Francese, 102, 321, Provvisione, Deliberazione e Partiti, 1401–14, fols 101^r, 103^r.

⁶³ Florence, Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Catasto, 53, fols 711^v and 716^r: Deo Beccuti's 1431 *portata* specified that he owned land adjacent to the 'confraternity of the *spedale*' in the *popolo* of San Michele in Castello: Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Catasto, 380, fol. 549^r.

⁶⁴ Florence, Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Catasto, 380, fol. 550^v.

⁶⁵ According to Orlandi, the confraternity already owned the *spedale* by 1410—although he did not say what evidence he found for this (*"Necrologio"*, 2, note 31 on p. 343); it transferred ownership of the *spedale* to Santa Maria Novella in 1452 (2, p. 583); and Fra Gabriele di Domenico di Niccolò Narucci

subsequently acquired by the del Beccuto family. Their arms are still on the façade, over the door of the *spedale* and near the corner of the streets. Although, it is not clear whether they were placed there by the family when it acquired the property, or had been put there by the confraternity in recognition of Deo Beccuti's financing of its renovations. In 1574, Felice del Beccuto, possibly Deo's great-grandson, sold the property to a Lucrezia Rucellai.⁶⁶

Deo appears regularly in the social context of Uccello's early activities, from Uccello's involvement with the Spedale di Sant'Antonio, in c. 1413 until the early 1430s.⁶⁷ This may be due

conceded the *spedale* back to the confraternity in 1491 (2, pp. 342–43). A 1675 copy of a 1525 record of the goods belonging to the confraternity made for tax purposes included the *spedale* as an asset of the confraternity (Florence, Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Corporazioni Religiose Soppresse dal Governo Francese, 102, 323, Entratto delle Case, fols 25^v–26^v). In 1534 the *spedale* was sold with its farm by the confraternity to Cosimo I de' Medici, who had rented it from them since 1516. From 1486 it had been rented to a Bernardo di Stoldo Rinieri, and from 1494 to a Cristofano di Bernardo Rinieri (Wright, 'The Medici Villa', 2, pp. 472–73). The Medici paid the local church of San Michele the *decima* (wine tax) due on the property from the middle of the sixteenth century until the nineteenth (Castello, Archivio di San Michele a Castello, Decimario della Chiesa di San Michele a Castello, fol. 33^v).

⁶⁶ G. Carocci, *I dintorni di Firenze* 2 vols (Florence: Galletti e Cocci Tipografi Editori, 1906–07) 1 (*Sulla destra dell'Arno*), p. 277) named a Felice di Deo del Beccuto as the vendor in 1574, without citing his evidence. However, it may actually have been a Felice di Ruberto, who appears in the del Beccuto genealogy (Florence, Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Deputazione Sopra la Nobiltà e Cittadinanza, 15, section 21, part 1, unfoliated) with the dates 1537–1620.

⁶⁷ Deo Beccuti's presence has been detected in the social context of three more episodes of Uccello's early career, suggesting that he probably acted as a point of contact between Uccello and his earliest patrons. First, Padoa Rizzo has noted that Deo Beccuti had dealings with the Bartoli family who owned the villa with the del Lippi tabernacle, which Uccello is sometimes believed to have painted (possibly with another, as yet unidentified, artist) in 1416 (Anna Padoa Rizzo, 'L'Età di Masaccio, Firenze, Palazzo Vecchio, Giugno 1990', *Antichità Viva*, 29, 2–3 (1990), 56–59, (pp. 57–58); A. Padoa Rizzo, *Paolo Uccello: Catalogo completo dei dipinti* (Florence: Cantini, 1991), pp. 18–25). Second, Padoa Rizzo also noted that Uccello's involvement with the commission for the Carnesecchi Chapel in Santa Maria Maggiore in Florence in about 1423 may have been facilitated through his mother's family. The del Beccuto and the Carnesecchi families each owned properties near the Piazza di Santa Maria Maggiore; the church would have been a focus for their religious and social activities (Padoa Rizzo, *Paolo Uccello*, p. 8). The del Beccuto genealogy shows that Deo Beccuti was in fact married to one Andreola di Zanobi Carnesecchi, providing some documentary support to the idea of a social connection between Uccello and his patron (For the name of Deo Beccuti's wife: Florence, Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Deputazione Sopra la Nobiltà e Cittadinanza, 15, section 21, part 1, unfoliated). Third, Padoa Rizzo has also associated the *Virgin and*

to the fact that Uccello lost his father at an early age, and perhaps his mother also. Certainly, Uccello's father was dead by the time Uccello wrote his first will at the age of about twenty-eight. In his will Uccello left nothing to relatives, suggesting further that he had been separated from or had lost his immediate family. The fact that his tax return of 1427 was submitted by a distant relative on his behalf while he was away working in Venice also supports this hypothesis.⁶⁸ Deo probably assumed this responsibility because he was the most prominent member of Uccello's mothers' family at the time.⁶⁹ He indicated in the tax return that he was Uccello's attorney, noting also that he was submitting the return for a certain ser Bartolo di ser Donato Giannini (*'Istritta p[er] me dio di dio bechuti p[er]ochuratore del detto pagholo...p[er] ser bartolo di ser donato giannini'*).⁷⁰

Child painting formerly in one of the del Beccuto houses (detached in the nineteenth century and transferred to the Museo di San Marco), with debts owed by Deo Beccuto to Uccello in 1431 and 1433, indicating that Deo may well have commissioned the work in the early 1430s, about the same time that Uccello first worked in the Chiostrro Verde (Padoa Rizzo, 'L'Età di Masaccio', p. 58; Padoa Rizzo, *Paolo Uccello*, p. 26).

⁶⁸ The del Beccuto genealogy (Florence, Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Deputazione Sopra la Nobiltà e Cittadinanza, 15, section 21, part 1, unpaginated) records the male lineage of the leading branch of the family but does not include any reference to Uccello's mother Antonia. From her patronymic, 'di Giovanni di Castello', however, her grandfather's name is known to be Castello. This was not a very common name. There is, however, a Castello in the genealogy: Deo's grandfather's brother. Deo and Uccello's mother were apparently related through their grandfathers. This and further evidence of Uccello's relationship with the del Beccuto family, is discussed in: Hugh Hudson, 'From Via della Scala to the Cathedral: Social Spaces and the Visual Arts in Paolo Uccello's Florence', *Place, An Interdisciplinary E-Journal*, April 2007, 1–12, www.elsewhereonline.com.au.

⁶⁹ Thanks to the detailed analysis of Florentine tax returns by social historians at Brown University, Providence, it has been established that Deo Beccuti was head of the 137th wealthiest household in Florence in 1427: David Herlihy, R. Burr Litchfield, Anthony Molho, and Roberto Barducci (eds), *Florentine Renaissance Resources, Online Tratte of Office Holders, 1282-1532, Machine Readable Data File* (Florentine Renaissance resources/STG, Brown University, Providence, R.1, 2002), 'List of the wealthiest households arranged by wealth' link, sighted 14 April 2005. Uccello's father had been a migrant to Florence (G. Vasari, *Le opere di Giorgio Vasari*, 9 vols, G. Milanesi (ed.) (Florence: G.C. Sansoni Editore, 1981; reprint of 1906 ed.; orig. ed. Florence, 1878–85), 2, cross-shaped note on p. 204), and so might have had fewer and less important relations in the city than Uccello's mother.

⁷⁰ Florence, Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Catasto, 55, fols 707^r–707^v.

In fifteenth-century Florence orphans often came under the protection of the *Magistrato dei Pupilli*, a communal institution providing judges and notaries to oversee the administration of inherited property. Could this explain the reference to a notary in Uccello's tax return? Ser Bartolo was *Notaio* (Notary) of the *Signoria* on three occasions from 1416 to 1438.⁷¹ It is not clear, however, whether he administered Uccello's affairs following the death of his father, or simply asked Deo Beccuti to submit Uccello's *portata* when Uccello was away from Florence, and Uccello's name has not yet been found in the *Pupilli* records. Interestingly, though, ser Bartolo Giannini was made a captain of the Confraternity of Saint Peter Martyr on 5 August 1413, two days after it acquired the *spedale* at Castello,⁷² thus providing another possible link between Deo, Uccello, the confraternity, and the *spedale*.

Although the precise nature of Uccello's relationship with the *spedale* remains undefined, it is not far-fetched to imagine Deo's guiding hand behind Uccello's receiving work there as a youth, even if the nature of such work is a matter for speculation. Since the *spedale* was acquired by the confraternity in 1413 or slightly before, Uccello's employer would most likely have been the confraternity.⁷³ In light of the culture of reciprocal obligation in fifteenth-century Florence, a reasonable hypothesis might be that in return for Deo's support for the renovations to the *spedale*, its *spedalingo*, the painter Michele di Giovanni del Tria, employed Deo's young relative on the project. This may have been as an assistant, or it might even have been an independent artistic commission, since there are documented cases of artists in Florence accepting commissions before becoming masters, sometimes while working in another master's shop.⁷⁴ Uccello would presumably have begun to assume increasing independence as an artist prior to matriculating into the Doctors and Apothecaries' Guild in 1415.⁷⁵

There is a gap of around seventeen years between Uccello's involvement with the Spedale di Sant'Antonio and his painting of the *Creation Scenes*. Is it possible the young artist

⁷¹ Herlihy, Burr Litchfield, Molho, and Barducci (eds), 2002, on-line source, search by 'Giannini': ser Bartolo was elected *Notaio* of the *Signoria* in 1416, 1430, and 1438.

⁷² Florence, Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Corporazioni Religiose Soppresse dal Governo Francese, 102, 295, fol. 214^r.

⁷³ It is not possible to trace any payments made to Uccello by the Confraternity of Saint Peter Martyr after 1433 since the account books (*entrata-uscita*) are missing from 1428 to 1453 in the sources belonging to Corporazioni Religiose Soppresse dal Governo Francese, 102, in the Archivio di Stato di Firenze.

⁷⁴ Irene Hueck, 'Le matricole dei pittori fiorentini prima e dopo il 1320', *Bolletino d'Arte*, 57, 1 (1972), 114–21 (p. 117).

⁷⁵ Florence, Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Arte Medici e Speciale, 21, fol. 69^v.

was remembered at Santa Maria Novella from the earlier episode? Certainly, Uccello did not forget the *spedale* belonging to the confraternity at Santa Maria Novella, which owed him money until 1433. In this respect there might be grounds to consider Uccello among the ‘social discontents’ referred to in the title of this conference, since the network of social support and patronage that might have helped him did not do so financially. Nevertheless, it remains possible that it helped him make contact with significant figures and institutions in his environment, important for the subsequent development of his career.

Deo Beccuti certainly did not forget the confraternity to which he had given money, when he claimed the amount as a tax exemption in 1427 and 1431. Francesco Tornabuoni, who apparently helped fund the acquisition of the *spedale* for the confraternity in 1413 was one of the *operai* (a member of the board of works) of Santa Maria Novella in 1422 and so he might well have been involved in the early stages of the commission for the Chiostro Verde cycle.⁷⁶ As numerous recent studies have shown, patronage in fifteenth-century Florence was not taken lightly, it created privileges for the donor and responsibilities for the recipient that were not quickly forgotten—even if they were not always honoured in a timely or thoroughgoing manner.

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⁷⁶ Orlandi, “*Necrologio*”, 2, pp. 499–501.