

Architecture and Cultural Continuity

The Making of Festival, Experience and Historicity

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Introduction – Festival experience and architectural experience

Since the around the time of the publication of Fischer von Erlach's *Entwurf Einer Historischen Architektur* in 1721 architecture has often been understood more in terms of its form and utility than in relation to its broader cultural value. Whilst Erlach's treatise was not the cause of this transformation, it is certainly a symptom of the culture of his time. So although it is possible to make an argument that earlier treatises (from Vitruvius to Campbell, through Alberti, Serlio and Palladio) also tended, at times, to articulate ideas where the congruence of form with cultural embodiment was not emphasised – such as the separation of ornament from structure and ethos; or engaging in apparently abstract discussions on perspective or proportion – unlike Erlach's work, it was not their main legacy. This is because these earlier treatises were also a part of a tradition within which architecture was recognised, not as an expression of culture, but as a critical part of it: i.e. there was an implicit recognition that architecture was accessible within culture as a pragmatic and paradigmatic experience. Architecture engaged with ontology. Whilst it could also be fairly argued that for Fischer von Erlach it is likely that such an understanding of the depth of architectural embodiment was implicit to the form of the architecture he depicted in his treatise, and the buildings he created during the baroque period, the predominance of formal description in the book allowed many of the architects and historians who drew inspiration from it to continue to separate architecture from its creative source within the ontological conditions of their culture.

Following the growth of this type of limited understanding of architecture in the nineteenth century, and the development of modernism and its progeny in the twentieth century (including the other '-isms' that followed), the separation of architectural form and meaning is now almost total, and any attempt to recapture the idea has become, for many,

a form of nostalgia rather than something akin to a recovery. Nevertheless, this book is one such attempt. The aim of the work is to argue that architecture remains a part of culture – not an expression of it – and that architecture is its own record of participation and mediation between the pragmatic world we now venerate, fragment, and deconstruct, with its paradigmatic shadow we find so hard to recognise at all. For this exercise it will be critical to argue that architecture cannot be understood as an object of material culture (even if it can be appreciated thus), nor should it be seen purely as a setting for intangible culture as many social scientists would have us believe. Instead, it should be seen as a significant part of experience itself – an embodiment of the ontological tension implicit within culture – particularly within cities. Aeschylus acknowledges this in the *Oresteia* when he links the culture of the city with its form, its ethos, and the justice it embodies:

Athena: Are they wise enough though to find the path of the just tongue? In these frightening faces I see great gain for my citizens. If you pay kindness to their kindness and honour them always, you will all live together in a land and city that is most righteous.

The Eumenides, Aeschylus

To try to recover some of this depth (or tension) between culture, form, and meaning, the book situates the experience of architecture together with the experience of festival. This association is useful because even though established festivals are also susceptible to a certain amount of instrumental analysis (where issues of form and power override a deeper sense of belonging), they are still, when enacted, experiential and fleeting whereas architecture is experiential and permanent. In doing this I am not trying to describe architecture that is specifically designed for festival (the argument will extend to all architecture that engages with culture) but rather, in the first place, reveal the similarity of experience inherent to both. This is important because the experience of festivals and architecture both extend beyond the temporal boundaries of their enactment. i.e. beyond

the time of the festival the spaces of the city still bear the imprint of its revelry; just as architecture, whether activated through everyday experience and gestures, or rituals, or left alone, always carries with it the depth and range of culture it embodies.

Nevertheless, the impermanence and repetitive nature of festival makes the recovery of its cultural depth – both spatially and temporally – within a contemporary frame less controversial than it would be to begin with architecture alone, because assessing the cultural value in festival is less challenging than beginning with the description of architecture as some species of enactment. Therefore, in this study, it is only when the nature of festival as a form of civic and cultural representation is described in its full depth that a similar exercise will be undertaken in respect of architecture.

However, in stating that the recovery attempted here is less problematic in relation to festival than architecture does not mean there are no challenges at all. As is the case with architecture, there is currently little consensus regarding the cultural history and meaning of festival. For example, some commentators suggest that the mass visiting of historic sites or the commercialisation of street activity (including festivals) in tourist destinations is something new and contrary to traditional everyday urban life. So much so, in fact, that such excesses threaten the religious and agonistic functions inherent to the city, transforming it into something more akin to a museum:

[Cities] such as Venice and Florence have become museum cities constructed principally for tourist consumption with infrastructures that have marginalised the local population,¹ [...] Heritage tourism in Italy, and particularly in touristed cities such as Florence, appears to be forcing the Catholic Church to reassess the use of its sacred spaces.²

¹ J. Ryde, 'Between Sacred and Secular: Heritage and the Church in Italy', in *Heritage 2010: Heritage and Sustainable Development*, ed. by Amoeda et al, 2 vols (2010), II, 1171.

² Ryde, 'Between Sacred and Secular: Heritage and the Church in Italy', II, 1175.

The situation is, however, more complex than this commentary suggests. The growth in tourism in Italy in the twentieth century was partly the result of the rise in heritage movements across Europe that tended to objectify the past to package it for the present. But in Italy, in the twenties and thirties, it was also developed by the Fascists to restore an idea of what it meant to be 'Italian'. To achieve this, the Fascists developed various 'aggressive' ways in which they thought they could 'reclaim' their heritage from the *forestieri* (the British and Americans) that had controlled it for many years.³ At the same time they hoped that, at a local level, it would develop a stronger sense of civic identity amongst the diverse and conflict-ridden communities that had emerged across Italy in the wake of the First World War. Although these two aims appear to be linked, in fact they are very different. Creating the impression of a unified 'Italian' identity from the outside is much easier than changing the way people feel about their own identity. So when, as a part of this exercise, many historic festivals were revived by the Fascists for the benefit of the Italians living in these historic sites (as well as for tourists from home and abroad) – incorporating lavish costumes and parades that brought to life the historic pageantry of Italy – the festivals also brought with them themes of civic disorder, rebellion, commercialism and political challenge that had always accompanied such carnivalesque revelry. Therefore, in the end, increased tourism has not created a new challenge for the existing order but merely highlighted elements of conflict and community that are inherent to all city life. Only the proportions of the ingredients have changed and, to a certain extent, the themes at stake for all.

³ D. Medina Lasansky, *The Renaissance Perfected: Architecture, Spectacle, and Tourism in Fascist Italy* (2004), 206. Germans should also be included in any list of *forestieri*.

But there is also another issue. The association of tourism with ‘consumerism’, addresses only one way visitors to Florence, Italian or otherwise, engage with the city. The consumer is generally thought to ‘take’ but is not often credited with any ‘giving’ (except for money); their engagement with the life of the city is considered superficial, with their ‘consuming’ extending to culture as well as commodities. The sheer weight of numbers now visiting these ancient sites may indeed contribute to the marginalisation of the local community, but in the festive life of the city, culture and consumption have always been forced together in trade and celebration. And, in the process the city and its architecture – even today – is transformed into a much more ambiguous setting where all these constituent parts come together to celebrate the city (in all its forms) amidst the architecture that continues to supply a suitable setting for such significant activities.

Therefore, this book will begin this task by describing how certain aspects of festal praxis in Florence, though often dressed up as theme park pageant, still maintain links with the pre-twentieth-century past in such a way that they reinforce the current institutional order of the city and continue contribute to the city’s contemporary civic identity. Understood in this way the city and its festivals cannot be seen purely as fragments of a theme park or a ‘museum’ (Fascist or otherwise), but demand to be recognised as valid contemporary articulations of traditional practice where the buildings, rooms, paintings, squares, and streets of the city, along with contemporary dignitaries and spectators, all continue, to some degree, to contribute to an active festive order of Florence. Once this is established the argument will turn more directly to buildings by arguing that, like festival, great architecture of the past can always be better evaluated as lived experience within a cultural context, and that such a recognition should encourage greater acknowledgement of

the importance of the ontological concerns of the art – for the good of the future as well as the past.

The Structure of the book

To explore the possibilities for such a recovery the book begins with the contemporary experience of the Feast of San Giovanni in Florence, discussing its origins and its continual renewal within the political ranges of the city's history.

In this first section it becomes clear that the overall horizon of activity for the Florentine citizen was, and is, guided by the family who combine to form larger associations within the different areas of the city. But the accounts also highlight a host of other institutions that engaged with the festival (and architectural) programme, ranging from guilds, to armies, monasteries, and nascent academies, all of which had their protocols of membership and ceremony, binding the individual (and hence the family) to the city and its architecture. Equally, just as the different ages of architecture have left different imprints upon the contemporary city, the thickness or depth of this ceremonial and ritual life was also embodied in the languages used to describe and celebrate these events throughout its history, which shifted from vernacular dialects through rhetorical Italian to scholarly and liturgical Latin. Thus, whilst in this argument it is made clear that architecture is not a language, its presence within this spectrum of differing accounts carries the opportunity for a similar range of understanding and experience.

Equally, it is in the depth of this ceremonial and ritual life accommodated by the architecture that, whilst maintaining its identity within the vicissitudes of history, the idea of Florence was able to move from necessity to profound insight. Indeed, it could be argued that one does not get Dante, or Michelangelo, or Savonarola, without the depth of culture

present in the rituals and ceremonies that the architecture and institutional ‘bodies’ of Florence provided.⁴ It is for this reason that the architectural and urban settings for this particular festival will be examined even though currently it may appear to be more ‘show’ than ritual, partly obscured, as it is, by contemporary historicism. Once this use of festival as a corollary of architectural experience is acknowledged, it will be possible to evaluate architecture in a way that facilitates the rehabilitation of its broader cultural value – not as an optional extra, but as a part of the way we inhabit the world.

Consequently, the second part of the book develops the language necessary to understand the deeper issues at stake, and uses some buildings from Florence to crystallise a philosophical explanation of the experiences described Part One in order to shift the overall discourse from the particular conditions festival to the broader conditions relevant to architecture. This will include developing political horizons as well as more embodied aspects of experience that are evident in festival which will be termed *Transition* and *Resistance*. Broadly speaking the idea of *Transition* relates to the way festival/architecture in its mediative capacity sits between pragmatic and paradigmatic experience and as such can assist in the understanding of such experiences; and *Resistance* offers an argument that if one accepts the mediative possibilities of festival and architecture (as well as their relation to ethos), it can be argued that architecture – like festival – can reveal aspects of cultural order and so resist superficial co-option of its form for purely pragmatic purposes. Within this dynamic it is also possible that architecture’s resistance to co-option can assert continuity of meaning even when such ideas are denied by the author.

⁴ Here ‘bodies’ refers to Kantorowicz’s description of the king in medieval culture as having ‘two bodies’ in one: an ‘institutional’ one and a ‘personal’ one. Florence can be understood in the same way. Ernst Hartwig Kantorowicz, *The King’s Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology* (1997).

The final part of the book uses the arguments developed in the first two sections to re-evaluate different examples of architecture – past and the present – and argues that such analysis also has value for the way we design architecture that is fit for a future in this unpredictable world, partially of our own making, we now inhabit. In the end I hope to expand Jean Mignot's comment '*ars sine scientia nihil est*' made in a dispute relating to scientific and poetic making at Milan Cathedral in the early fifteenth century,⁵ to include, and perhaps even rescue, the implied second part of the sentence: '*et scientia sine arte nihil est.*'

Relevance of the Topic Beyond the Particular Case Studies

Whilst it could be argued that by using a European festival as an initial study this book has limited geographical relevance, both the analysis of the events and the description of festival experience itself will implicitly situate this exemplar in a much broader context. This is because although the experience of festival is always situated within a specific culture, once the ontological aspect is acknowledged, it is possible to use these ideas to evaluate situations in other cultures. Therefore, as has been indicated already, the descriptive and analytical journey of the book will move from Florence to other settings – from the particular to the universal.

However, that is not to say that the historical dominance of Western culture in relation to architecture will not be touched upon. The difference here is that in this discussion it is the dominance of technological thinking within the European model (art is

⁵ Mignot states an incontestable truth that 'art is nothing without knowledge' (*ars sine scientia nihil est*). I have changed Von Simson's translation of *scientia*. But in both translations the knowledge refers to the skills and knowledge inherent to *geometria* and the other *ars*. Otto Georg Von Simson, *The Gothic Cathedral*, Expanded edition (Princeton, NJ, 1988), 19.

nothing without science) that will be questioned as a way of understanding aspects of colonial and cultural domination because in contemplating any aspects of tradition, identity, and culture, the question of modernity itself inevitably emerges. And this issue affects all cultures.

In the West, although opinions about the nature of divided culture – between technology/science and the humanities in terms of ‘progress’ and ‘well-being’ – have existed for centuries, it is with the technological advances of the twentieth century that the difference became more acute. For example, between 1959 and 1962 in the shadow of the technological destruction of the Second World War and the final collapse of the colonial model of governance that followed, the scientist and author C.P.Snow⁶ and English scholar F.R. Leavis⁷ had a very public spat in relation to this division which became known in the UK as the ‘Two Cultures’ debate. Although Snow’s actual argument veers more towards the distinction between literary theory and technology, his contention was that, as a scientist and writer of fiction, he felt caught between two separate and independent cultures of art and science. He argued that protagonists from these different areas of knowledge no longer communicated with each other and that this ‘western’ issue had become so toxic that it had fostered the development of a form of ‘anti-intellectualism’. Although he characterises this situation as predominantly caused by ‘luddites’ who were against scientific progress – both intellectually and socially – his own prejudice meant that in his essay he too offered views that could be considered limited. For him, anti-intellectuals:

... still like to pretend that the traditional culture is the whole of 'culture', as though the natural order didn't exist. As though the exploration of the natural order was of no interest either in its own value or its consequences. As though the scientific edifice of the physical world was not, in its intellectual depth, complexity and articulation, the most beautiful and wonderful collective work of the mind of man.

⁶ C. P. Snow, *The Two Cultures*, Reissue edition (Cambridge, U.K. ; New York, 2012).

⁷ F. R. Leavis, *Two Cultures?*, 1st edition (Cambridge ; New York, 2013).

The key point here is that the 'scientific edifice' is singular – there can only be one successful scientific paradigm at a time⁸ – whereas there are as many different traditions as there are different cultures. In modernity, therefore, denial of the value of tradition also often results in arguments that deny, at source, the possibility of cultural diversity. Whilst there are other issues with Snow's terminology – for example his use of the term 'natural order' – the main point to be made here is that he is voicing Enlightenment attitudes that pitch science (the future) against tradition (the past).

Leavis questioned this limited, singular, but burgeoning vision of culture common amongst the victors of the war in an essay which, although dismissed by many for its very vitriolic attack on Snow, offered an alternative view useful here:

I recently read in the *Economist* a disturbed review of a book by a French sociologist of which the theme is (not a new idea to us) the incapacity of the industrial worker, who – inevitably – looks on real living as reserved for his leisure, to use his leisure in any but essentially passive ways. And this, for me, evokes that total vision which makes Snow's social hope unintoxicating to many of us – the vision of our imminent tomorrow in today's America: the energy, the triumphant technology, the productivity, the high standard of living and the life impoverishment – the human emptiness; emptiness and boredom craving alcohol – of one kind or another. Who will assert that the average member of a modern society is more fully human, or more alive, than a Bushman, an Indian peasant, or a member of one of those poignantly surviving primitive peoples, with their marvellous art and skills and vital intelligence?⁹

While the language used by Leavis in this essay to describe non-Europeans is as dismissive and patronising as implied by Snow's own disregard of all traditions, the point is significant. Leavis challenges the spurious link between well-being and contemporary culture in the West and implies that in all countries – including those of the colonisers as well as those of the colonised and the decolonised – local cultures continue to be quashed by the ever-

⁸ Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 2nd edn (1970).

⁹ Leavis, *Two Cultures?*

marching brand of technological progress which is of Western origin.¹⁰ Furthermore, he implies that if the focus of such indiscriminate domination is acknowledged, and other aspects of culture not evident to science are recognised as having value, we would begin to understand culture in its true depth.

However, in the post-war period of de-colonisation, across all cultures of the west, Snow's opinions were closer to the norm, and science – that could solve the ills of the world – became the singular, universal, predominantly western, language of the future. To be a part of the growing world economy, all countries had to buy into the idea of progress built on 'the most beautiful and wonderful collective work of man', as defined by the West.

For example, most wealthy cities across the globe look very similar because they have accepted the western utopian vision of the modernist city above local traditions that may have offered a wider variety of outcomes. This means that although cultural differences vary, in most regions the main indicators for progress, power, and success have become science, technology and industrialisation, as well as the economic wealth that results from such activities. And this tacit acquiescence to western values has over time led the west to think their technical superiority is also a measure of their overall cultural superiority.¹¹

¹⁰ It is interesting to note that the Latin term for work is *negotium*, which literally translated is 'not leisure', where leisure (*otium*) in the form of theatre, philosophy, poetry and rhetoric were seen as the worthiest occupations (Supported by the education in the *trivium* of Grammar, Logic, and Rhetoric; and the *quadrivium* of Arithmetic, Geometry, Music and Astronomy). Following the reversal of this in modernity, a successful city is rarely measured by the quality of its 'arts' buildings and the highest form of representation is linked to forms related to productivity – the factory (the most celebrated building type of modernity) and the office block – now the iconic building that is used to represent the successful city.

¹¹ This is not a new situation. For example, a 'crisis in the history of European consciousness ... when providence was replaced by progress' occurred with Voltaire who was 'trying to reconcile the history of the chosen people with the discovery of culture in China.' Karl Löwith, *Meaning in History: The Theological Implications of the Philosophy of History* (Chicago, IL, 1957), 106.

In architecture, although some theoreticians have attempted to address this cultural hegemony and pressed for some variety in the continued propagation of modernism in a more diverse world,¹² they have not, on the whole, challenged the increasing objectification of architecture which followed such concentration on the culture of science and commerce. The irony is that the apparent acceptance of modernity across the globe (in both its architectural forms and its faith in progress through technology) – particularly by governments intent on breaking their links with a colonial past they have overthrown – has, in fact, perpetuated a new form of western cultural dominance that might be termed ‘tacit’ or ‘aesthetic’ as well as economic.¹³

Therefore, although the recovery attempted in this book inevitably hovers around questions of culture, identity, and colonisation that are currently being evaluated in many countries using the language, both local and international, of contemporary architectural humanities, the direct issue being addressed here is slightly different these specific local tensions. By recognising that the underlying issues are, in the modern world, mostly universal and the hierarchy rests upon who is perceived to have authority, this study questions the ideas that led the process of ‘tacit colonisation’ to occur in the first place. After all, we are all currently subjects of the same divided culture.¹⁴

In this book the evaluation of festival and architecture is, therefore, not only presented as an important stage in the re-framing of the links between architecture and experience, but also used an argument for the necessary defusing of modernity as a critical

¹² For Example Kenneth Frampton who, for example, coined the term ‘Critical Regionalism.’ Kenneth Frampton, *Modern Architecture: A Critical History* (London, 1980).

¹³ Tall urban buildings that seem to be de rigueur for any city across the globe often need to import components manufactured, assembled, or designed in the west.

¹⁴ See Dalibor Vesely, *Architecture in the Age of Divided Representation: The Question of Creativity in the Shadow of Production* (Cambridge, Mass.; London, 2006).

reference for future cultural de-colonisation. Because, if we begin this task by removing the ideas of modernity from their position of domination and reclaim the experience of architecture as a manifestation of broader, richer, realities – including a better understanding of the ‘natural order’ – then we are one step closer to the potential for improved multicultural understanding. In the end we are all partially shaped and formed by our places, traditions, and cultures and even if the rehabilitation of authentic architectural experience is not the whole solution to the problem, such a recovery may assist in offering other possible ways forward. Therefore, as a contribution to this process this study aims to show that, contrary to much contemporary theory, if one accepts the ontological nature of architectural experience, any citizen or tourist from anywhere in the world can be seen to be engaging authentically with any building (or festival) in any place with little knowledge of its genus because specific knowledge is not an essential part of cultural participation. What people actually witness in such situations is not a set of objects or power relationships but the cultural setting of justice suggested by Aeschylus in the *Eumenides* because it is our humanity not our politics that binds us to greater truths.

Part 1 – The Feast of San Giovanni Battista, Florence

In Part One of the book, chapter one describes the events that currently make up the festival of San Giovanni in Florence and recounts early descriptions of the festival from the middle ages. Chapter two then describes different stages in the development of the feast up to around the thirteenth century, with chapter three describing the flowering of the festival, highlighting aspects of the history that give meaning to the feast in its current form.

Chapter 1. The Florentine Feast of San Giovanni – 24th June

The Christian calendar has grown over centuries and includes feast days for saints (either related to their birth or death) as well as feasts related to biblical events. Feasts linked to particular dates of the year are called ‘fixed feasts’ (Christmas and saints’ birthdays for example); and those (like Easter), which are set according to specific cosmological conditions, are called ‘moveable feasts’. San Giovanni Battista (St John the Baptist) was a biblical figure and although the date of his birth has never been determined exactly it has been celebrated as a fixed feast on the 24th June at least since the Council of Agde in 506.

Introduction - A Day in the Life of a Festival: The Feast of San Giovanni in Florence

Close to mid-summer every year on the 24th June locals gather in the historic centre of Florence together with visiting dignitaries and tourists to celebrate the Feast of San Giovanni Battista, the city’s patron saint.¹ Beginning early in the morning and ending well into the night these public and private festivities incorporate liturgical masses, processions, parades, elaborate costumes, historic weapons, drummers, flags and banners (*palia*), tributes, games, banquets and fireworks, all within a setting framed by the architecture and the city. These celebrations, like much of the architecture, are not new and it is likely that a feast would have occurred in the city on or around this day since its late Roman Republican foundation. By the thirteenth century, chronicles described the festival in relation to the emerging civic identity of Florence and, therefore, the festival as a whole – tied to the evolving history of the region and the developing form of the city – creates an opportunity

¹ San Giovanni Battista will be used in preference to the English name St John the Baptist throughout this book.

for re-evaluating aspects of the identity of the city, past and present, in relation to its architecture.

Morning Procession - The Donation of the Candles

Morning Mass

At 8.30 in the morning of the Feast Day of San Giovanni Battista mass is held in the Baptistery of Florence in honour of the patron saint of the church and city. The mass is relatively short, lasting around half an hour, with a congregation of around thirty Florentines and tourists most of whom do not take communion. There is no sermon. This mass is the first of a series of events – set within the buildings, streets and piazzas of the city – which, since their emergence in the seventh century, have been revised, developed, and adapted to accommodate the evolving requirements of Florentine civic life.

The Gathering of the Procession

Following the mass, more people begin to gather. Groups of drummers, flag throwers (*Spandieratori*), and ceremonial trumpeters arrive from different parts of the city - many congregating in the Piazza della Repubblica before marching to the Piazza del Duomo.

The Formation of the Procession in the Piazza del Duomo

Once in the Piazza del Duomo they are joined by members of *la Società di San Giovanni Battista di Firenze* dressed in black robes with the insignia of the baptistery on their chests, who, since 1796 have been responsible for organising the events. Amidst this group of (mostly) men, dressed in robes and different coloured period costumes, is a man dressed in

fine garments carrying a mint of candles accompanied by another well-dressed man carrying a small box of coins and a woman, robed in a fine long viridian dress, holding a cushion on which lies another gift.

The Procession to the Palazzo Vecchio

These three gift bearers then lead a procession down Via dei Calzaiuoli to the Piazza della Signoria and the Palazzo Vecchio escorted by two guards (also in ceremonial dress) behind a banner representing *la Società di San Giovanni Battista di Firenze*. Behind these tributes follows a flourish of trumpets and a roll of drummers and the men of the *la Società di San Giovanni Battista di Firenze*. Lastly, a series of colourfully dressed, sword carrying officers are followed by the *Spandieratori*.

Although not participating directly, members of the public often greet or engage with members of the procession thus raising their own profile in the feast for another year. These impromptu exchanges, made possible by the lack of any barriers or marshals, continue to be an important civic component of the festival scene.

The Piazza della Signoria

On arrival at the Piazza della Signoria the group splits into two. The gift bearers, trumpeters, guards, the first roll of drummers, and the representatives of *la Società* enter the Prima Cortile of the Palazzo Vecchio where they await the arrival of the mayor and other civic dignitaries. The rest of the party remain outside the Palazzo in the piazza, mingling with the public, and begin a flag throwing show to entertain the gathered people. Although there is a small police presence, they have little to do with ordering or marshalling this sequence of events. Members of the public are free to remain outside or gather with the advanced

candle group in the cortile. There is no crowd control, and no barriers are placed between participants and observers.

The Arrival of the Mayor

After about half an hour, the mayor and other officials of the city dressed smartly in contemporary suits – the mayor with his sash of office – join the *la Società di San Giovanni Battista di Firenze* and the other celebrants in the Prima Cortile of the Palazzo Vecchio and begin to take their position in the procession.

Once formed, this ceremonial group returns to the Piazza through the west door of the Palazzo Vecchio and the mayor leads the procession back up into the Via dei Calzaiuoli toward the Piazza del Duomo with *la Società*, the candles and gifts, trumpeters and drummers, and the costumed flag-throwers following on behind. This time the whole procession is led by two mounted police preceding the first banner; thus the whole procession is a mixture of contemporary and medieval costume, comprising elected and non-elected participants from both civic and non-civic institutions. To the sound of occasional trumpet fanfares and constant drumming, the procession continues toward the Baptistery and Cathedral past the occasional parked car or van with only a single police officer stationed at each junction to stop moving traffic from holding up the procession. There are no barriers along the streets or any police shepherding members of the public to clear a path for the procession – that happens naturally with crowds parting gently to allow the advancing pageant to pass.

Piazza del Duomo: The Blessing at the Bigallo

Once the procession arrives at the Piazza del Duomo the mayor gives the candles to the senior representative of the church – in this case the Cardinal and Bishop – who then blesses the gifts at the Loggia del Bigallo. There is then a pause while the various members of both entourages pay their respects and reform into a further group that makes its way to the Baptistery.

The Baptistery, the Robing, and the Blessing

The front section of the procession then enters the Baptistery, followed by the city's active clergy, some assorted musicians, and a few members of the public who squeeze through Ghiberti's 'Gates of Paradise'. Once inside, the cardinal makes a final blessing and dons his vestments for the main mass and, accompanied by a short fanfare, joins the other participants in forming the procession as it exits eastwards towards the cathedral.

High Mass in the Duomo

Finally, the mayor, the cardinal, and all present in the baptistery, process into the cathedral through the central doors on the west facade. The clergy and the city dignitaries continue up the central aisle to the crossing where other important members of the city have already taken their seats for mass. The remainder of the procession, made up of lesser townsfolk, visitors and tourists, join the rest of the congregation finding seats where they can.

This mass, intermittently interrupted at the back by people arriving and leaving through the south portal, is policed by ushers and wardens with most attendees demonstrating an understanding of the solemnity of the occasion. Nevertheless, there is continual movement throughout the service that turns into a flurry of activity during Holy Communion. Several priests emerge from the sacristy with the Host and position

themselves at stages along either side of the central aisle of the nave, where they can each serve a small section of the congregation. Once Holy Communion is complete, at about one o'clock, the remaining members of the congregation leave through the south portal and the cathedral reopens for paying visitors who enter through the northern door in the main façade.

The Afternoon Civic Parade, *Calcio Storico* and Fireworks

Piazza di Santa Maria Novella

The morning processions now give way to civic parades that include activities more distinctly representing the agon underpinning the day-to-day functioning of the city. Some of the events, such as the *Calcio Storico* football match can be traced back centuries – even though at certain periods in history they did not occur – while other events that used to occur, such as the city's *Palio* (horse race), no longer feature in the day's events. Although the parade begins late in the afternoon, there are many more people milling around the streets from around an hour before its scheduled starting time. Large numbers of the public mingle with handsomely dressed locals who arrived from all directions into the Piazza Santa Maria Novella as they find their place for the afternoon events. Television and media crews interview spectators and participants. As the parade begins to take shape, horses and cattle along with the formally dressed men, seek shelter from the sun in patches of shadow around the edges of the square. In the run up to four o'clock, floats and trailers holding the flags of the Quartieri, as well as spears and banners begin to appear around the large Piazza in front of the Dominican church of Santa Maria Novella. A prized tethered white bull and a few horsemen were also present.

As the time to depart comes closer the caparisoned horses and their apparently noble riders, along with the other colourfully dressed *Spandieratori*, drummers, trumpeters, swordsmen, artillerymen, crossbowmen, musketeers, and spearmen, followed by the four *Calcio Storico* teams, take their places and begin the march through the city towards the temporary pitch for the final of the *Calcio Storico* due to take place in the Piazza in front of the Franciscan church of Santa Croce.

The Front of the Parade

Led by a handful of militia and two mounted police the parade departs the piazza outside Santa Maria Novella and heads east until it reaches the line of the old Roman walls. Once here it turns right and heads south, continuing anticlockwise on the line of the old Roman walls until it reaches the Palazzo Strozzi, built on the corner of the old Roman *Decumanus Maximus*, the main east-west street of Roman *Florentia*. Following the *Decumanus* (now the Via Degli Strozzi) west the procession crosses the middle of Piazza della Repubblica, laid out at the end of the nineteenth century on the site of the old Roman forum, and heads towards the main medieval route north-south, the Via de Calzaioli.

The front of the parade is all pageant and pomp, full of bright costumes, drums, flags and antique weapons. It is here that the four Quartieri (districts) of the old city, created in 1343, are represented as a part of the identity of the city as a whole: Santa Croce is Azzurri (Blue), San Giovanni is Verdi (Green), Santo Spirito is Bianchi (White), and Santa Maria Novella is Rossi (Red).² Each original Quartier comprises four Gonfalone that were originally the political basis for power in the city. Now, as there is no local military conscription, and

² The modern city currently has 5 Quartieri (Centro Storico, Campo di Marte, Gavinana-Galluzzo, Isolotto-Legnaia and Rifredi). All four of the fourteenth-century quartieri represented here fit inside the current Centro Storico.

elections are national, these groups are predominantly ceremonial, only coming together to represent the old Quartieri in city festivals.

The Rear of the Parade

Amidst the parade is a banner (*palio*) and a bull, both prizes for the winner of the *Calcio Storico* football match to be played later in the afternoon. In between these two prizes are officials of the match who can be identified by the four coloured footballs they carry, one for each team. Lastly, of less interest to the massed tourists but of greater interest to the locals, are four teams, one from each historic Quartieri, who have already competed in the two semi-finals a fortnight earlier. Each team, wearing period costume breeches but contemporary t-shirts displaying their colours and preceded by banners displaying their respective coats of arms, lead their supporters (also wearing the teams' colours) through the streets of the city towards the arena singing songs and playfully (but occasionally with some menace) sparring with the increased police presence that has been dispatched to maintain order. As the main parade heads south towards the Piazza della Signoria, the supporters break off, continuing their path east along the old Roman *Decumanus* until they reach the location of old Porta San Petri (a gate in the first set of Commune walls) where they then turn and head south, zig-zagging through the streets until they reach the Piazza Santa Croce where they take their position to cheer the arrival of their team into the footballing arena.

Crossing the City

Meanwhile, the front of the parade and the *Calcio Storico* teams continue heading south into the Piazza Signoria where, having passed Ammanati's Neptune Fountain (1560-75) and

Michelangelo's David (1501) – a representation of youthful spirituality and virility – the parade passes between the Loggia dei Lanzi (1376-82) – originally built for the use of government officials during public ceremonies – and Bandinelli's Heracles and Cacus (1525-34) – a representation of physical strength – and then on down the narrow Via della Ninna towards the location of the old Porta de' Buoi from the first set of Commune walls.³ From here the parade diverts northwards to the south-eastern corner of Piazza Santa Croce by the entrance to the main church cloister and the Pazzi Chapel where it finally enters the temporary arena.

Preparations for the *Calcio Storico*

The Calcio Storico has been played regularly, but intermittently, in various parts of the city since 1542. However, since its revival by the Fascists in 1930 it has been staged every year. A large, temporary, scaffold arena (built specifically for the tournament) has been assembled inside the Piazza Santa Croce with terraced seating around all four sides, a red padded inner ring, and backup fences and nets set slightly further back. The paved surface of the piazza is covered in 20 cm of earth to protect the players but also to return the square to conditions similar to when the game was first played. Although all tickets for the event are sold in advance, it is also possible to watch the game from the upper windows of the buildings which surround the square, or as a live telecast.

The Calcio Storico

³ For the myth of Hercules and Cacus see Robert Graves, *The Greek Myths* (1990), 132. I, m. David had been a symbol of the Florentine Republic's defence of civil liberties but was later adopted by the Medici, with the combination of Hercules and David designed to represent their spiritual and physical strength in leadership.

After the whole parade enters the arena (excluding the supporters), all four teams are greeted by the baying crowd. Presentations are made and slowly the finely dressed musicians, *Spandieratori* and 'soldiers' of the city gradually disperse from the earth filled arena leaving only the officials – a referee, six linesmen, and a field master as well as several paramedics and physios – and the finalists, twenty-seven on each team, to compete for fifty minutes in a gruelling, ruthless and bloody game that appears almost without rules.

There are fistfights, harsh tackles, knockouts, injuries, blood, and a football. There are no substitutions, no half time, and no change of ends. The aim is to deliver a ball into a low net at the end defended by your opponents that runs the entire width of the pitch. Such a goal scores one point. If the ball crossed the end above the low crossbar but is caught by the cage at the back, it scores a half point. Small, coloured flags are given to the supporters of each team who stand in the 'Tribuna' behind the opposition's goal. Other spectators are accommodated on seats located in stands at the sides of the pitch.

Following the game, the parade returns to the arena for one final fanfare as the supporters and the teams leave (or are carried from) the pitch. The crowd gradually melts into the small streets and bars of the city for refreshment after spending over an hour exposed to the searing midsummer sun.⁴ Members of different groups are absorbed into the city to change, eat, and celebrate the rest of the day with their various associations.

The Evening of the Feast

⁴ The Feast Day of San Giovanni is a midsummer feast just as Christmas is associated with midwinter. Both feasts are also linked to birth rather than death (celebrating creation), and both are tied to the cosmic cycles of the year (increasing and decreasing length of the day): one foreshadows the other just as John preceded Christ. In John 3: 23-30 John the Baptist describes his role in relation to Christ stating 'He must increase, but I must decrease.'

The evening of the feast only has one public event – a great firework display orchestrated from Piazzale Michelangelo on the hill below San Miniato al Monte in the Oltrarno district of the city. However, various social groups gather in smaller parties throughout the city to celebrate the culmination of the day's festivities. Street stages are erected; and gardens, facades, balconies and rooftops are occupied by revellers keen to view the show.

Although there appears to be a mixture of people all through the city, different groups do congregate in different areas. Most of the obvious sites, such as all the bridges and along much of the north bank of the Arno, as well as other parts of the old city centre, are given over to tourists and lovers looking for a setting that will result in the best photographs. However, as the north bank of the Arno moves down from the Ponte alle Grazie along the Lungarno delle Grazie to the wider Lungarno della Zecca Vecchia, temporary restaurants and bars, decked out with canopies and carpets, host cabaret entertainment for the more affluent Florentines and their guests. Here, on the other side of the Arno, but aligned with the Piazzale Michelangelo, they have a commanding view of the fireworks as they explode above the castellated silhouette of Porta S. Niccolò.

While their parents and grandparents sit in these bars, across the river in Lungarno Serristori and Lungarno Benvenuto Cellini, by the base of the Porta S. Niccolò, younger Italians congregate around temporary stalls selling drinks and food that have been constructed in the park on the abandoned wharf alongside the river and on the sandbank below. Here, cramped together on the streets, or picnicking by the river, groups of people watch as the fireworks are set off above, which signal the end of the feast day but also midsummer when the days begin to shorten.

Historical accounts of The Feast of San Giovanni

The first description of events occurring on the feast day of San Giovanni are given in an account by Villani written in the early fourteenth century related to the time of Constantine when, he reports, the Roman Temple of Mars was converted into the church of St Giovanni and activities took place in the city on the date of the saint's nativity:

...they consecrated their said temple in honour of God and of the blessed S. John the Baptist, and called it the Duomo of S. Giovanni; and they decreed that the feast on the day of his nativity should be celebrated with solemn sacrifices, and that a race should be run for a samite cloak, and this custom has been always observed by the Florentines on that day.⁵

In his account Villani also describes some activity related to older rites where a hearth fire is lit in each house from the same holy source 'as in Jerusalem'. This tradition may have had a Christian precedent, but it was also a practice common from antiquity described at length by Fraser in *The Golden Bough*.⁶ Building on this early reference to the festival, Villani describes the feast day activities for 1283 in more detail:

How the city of Florence became a noble court and festival, with all dressed in white robes.

In the year 1283, in the month of June, on the feast of St. John, the city of Florence being restful—quiet and peaceful—and prosperous for the merchants and artisans (especially for Guelphs who lorded over the land) there was in the district of Santa Felicita in Oltrarno, ... a company and brigades of a thousand men or more, all dressed in white robes, with a lord called 'dell'Amore'. The brigade did nothing other than occupy itself with games, and amusements, and dances of women and knights and other popolani, going through the area with trumpets and diverse instruments with joy and gladness, gathering together for meals, dinners and suppers. The court lasted two months and was the most noble that there ever was in the city of Florence or Tuscany; many gentlemen and buffoons filled the court from areas all over the country and all were received honourably and with hospitality ... No foreigner of any name or standing passed Florence whom the said brigade did not compete to invite and accompany on horse through the city and outside as needed.⁷

⁵ Giovanni Villani, *Villani's Chronicle*, ed. by Philip Wicksteed H., trans. by Rose Selfe E. (Westminster, 1896), Bk. 1; Ch. 60. Also referred to in Dante Par. xvi. 25, 47.

Par. xvi. 42.

⁶ Sir James George Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, Abridged Edition (London, 1987), 609ff. See also Fustel De Coulanges, *The Ancient City: A Study on the Religion, Laws and Institutions of Greece and Rome* (1956), 25 ff.

⁷ Villani, *Villani's Chronicle*, BKVII. Ch. 89.

This account suggests that in 1283 the feast was well populated if not highly structured.

Nevertheless, to accommodate such crowds it must have been well organized, the order of the feast apparently centred on a form of civic identity which grew out of the family unit.⁸

Cesare Guasti writing in 1884 brought together several other accounts of the feast over the centuries up to the eighteenth century, and suggests the next account is by Gregorio Dati who describes the feast around 1410, here translated almost in full:

When springtime comes which delights the whole world, every Florentine begins thinking about celebrating a beautiful feast of San Giovanni, which is in midsummer. And right at the beginning each person provides for suitable clothes and adornments and jewels. Anyone having to offer wedding banquets or another *fiesta* waits until that time, so as to honour the feast. Two months beforehand they begin to make the *palio* and the clothes of servants and pennants and trumpets and the cloth *palii* that lands commended to the commune give as *cens* (tributes), and *ceri* and other things they have to offer, and to invite people, and to gather things for the banquets, and to have the horses come from everywhere to run the *Palio*. You see the whole city involved in preparing for the feast and the high spirits of the youth and women involved in such preparations. They do not omit, however, to do all those things that show happiness and spirits full of joy on the festive days preceding the feast, such as S. Zenobius, and for Ascension and Pentecost and Trinity Sunday and for the Feast of Corpus Christi, [such as] dancing, singing, banqueting and jousts and other graceful games. For it appears that they have nothing else to do in those times lasting up to the Vigil of San Giovanni.

Finally, on the Vigil of San Giovanni, early in the morning all the guildsmen made *mostra* (exhibitions) outside their shops, joyfully displaying all their rich offerings, ornaments. Enough reams of golden cloth silk for ten kingdoms are displayed; gold and jewels of silver, caps, painted panels, exquisite carvings, and things that belong to armouries. It would take too long to describe in full.

Close by, elsewhere in the city, at three o'clock there is a solemn procession of all the clergy, priests, monks and friars (from a large number of orders): with so many relics of saints that it appears infinite and a great devotion. In addition to these clerics from many Abbeys of the world – with their marvellous and opulent adornments, rich vestments embroidered with figures of gold and silk – there are many *Compagni* of secular men walking in front of the Order where they are gathered, dressed like angels, playing marvellous instrumental music and songs and displaying beautiful images and statues of the saints and of those relics in whose honour they march. Departing from Santa Maria del Fiore, the whole procession travels around the city (*la Terra*) before returning to the cathedral.

⁸ Paola Ventrone, 'La Festa Di San Giovanni : Costruzione Di Un'identità Civica Fra Rituale e Spettacolo (Secoli XIV-XVI)', in *Annali Di Storia Di Firenze. II* (Firenze, 2007), 54.

Then after midday, a little past the heat of the day, about the time of Vespers [dusk], all citizens gather in their *Gonfalone* (of which there are sixteen), and in order, one after another, each *Gonfalone*, comprising richly dressed citizens led by the oldest and most worthy, then journeymen etc., march two by two to the church of San Giovanni to offer a gift of candles ... [the greater part of the *Gonfalone* will take part in games, amusements, and other representations] ... The walls of the streets they pass through are adorned ... and everywhere is full of young women and young girls dressed in silk and adorned with jewels, precious stones and pearls ... all of it so wonderful that the heat of the sun can be ignored and people wish to return the following day.

On the morning of the feast of San Giovanni, whoever goes to the Piazza della Signoria sees a triumphant and magnificent thing ... Around the great Piazza are a hundred towers, which look like gold; brought in as carts (which are called *Ceri*) made of wood, paper and wax, with colours and gold ... There are men on horseback ... and pedestrians with spears ... and some with dancers ... [also] on them are carved animals, and birds, and different trees, with apples and all things that, in seeing, give delight to the heart.

Nearby, around the *ringhiera* of the Palazzo Vecchio, set in iron rings hang a hundred banners (*pali*) or more; the first are those of the major cities giving tribute to the city, such as Pisa, Arezzo, Pistoia, Volterra, Cortona, and of Lucignano and of Castiglione Aretino, and of some Lords of Poppi and Piombino, (which are recommended by the Municipality). They are made of double velvet and grey squirrel fur, or of silk; or made of other silk draped taffeta, which is marvellous thing to see.

The first offering, done in the morning, is from the Captains of the Guelph Party with the Knights, accompanied by other gentlemen, ambassadors and foreign knights—a great number of the most honourable citizens of the earth—with the *Gonfalone* showing the sign of the Guelph Party, brought by one of their ladies draped in an overcoat on a large palfrey covered to the ground with a white cloth also with the sign of the Guelph Party.

Then follow the other *palii*, brought one by one, each by a man on horseback called by name (each horse covered with silk etc.): and ... thus make an offering to the church of San Giovanni. These *palii* are given by tribute from the lands purchased by the City of Florence ...

The decorated *Ceri*, which seem like gold towers, are the record of the antique city of the Florentines: and so, in order of worthiness go, one after another, to make an offering (of the *Palii*) to San Giovanni. And they are hung around the inside of the church [San Giovanni] where they remain all year until the next feast. The old *Palii* are taken out ... and some are sold ...

After this ... come other offerings ... [brought by farmers of villas] ... Then, on a richly adorned carriage pulled by a pair of oxen covered with the sign and arms of the Mint, the Lords of the Mint come with a gift of a magnificent candle—escorted by about four hundred venerable men (all matriculated in the *Arte di Calimala* ..., and the *Arte de 'Cambiatori*; and each one with beautiful candle in his hands).

Then offerings come from the *Signori*—the Priors and their Colleges— together with their Rectors in companies (i.e. the *Podestà*, *Capitano* and *Assecutor*).

All with so much ornament, and so many servants, and with so much trumpet and pipe, that it seems that the whole world resonates with it.

And when the Signori return all the runners who have come to run the *Palio* horserace; and after them, all the ... weavers of woollen cloths in Florence. And after these, twelve prisoners are presented ...

At the end of all these offerings men and women return home to dine. And, as I said, the whole city is made that day of wedding celebrations and great banquets, with many pipes, sounds, songs, and dances – feasts of joy and ornament that make the earth seem like paradise.

Then, after dinner, past the middle of the day when the people are somewhat rested, and each one is happy; all the women and girls go where they have to see those runners of the *Palio* who follow a straight path through the middle of the city from one end to the other, past many beautiful houses of rich and good citizens, (of whom there are more than in any other part of the city). And, this straight path is full of flowers ... and all of the joys and rich adornments of the city; suitable to go with a big feast. And there are always many foreign gentlemen and knights, who, every year, come from the surrounding lands to see the beauty and magnificence of such a feast. And for this course there are so many people, who seem incredible – foreigners and citizens – that whoever did not see it could neither believe it nor imagine it.

Then, at the sound of the three peals of the large bell of the [Palazzo Vecchio], the prepared runners begin moving; and from the Tower they are seen by the signs of the boys who are there ... and the first to arrive at the finish wins the *Palio* which is brought in a triumphal cart with four wheels adorned with four life-like carved lions ... pulled by two horses covered with a sign of their commune ... This is a very large and rich *Palio*, of fine crimson velvet held in two poles, with a fine gold frieze lined with grey squirrel fur and hemmed with ermine, fringed with silk and fine gold; altogether costing about three hundred florins: although in times past it was made of high and low brocade of beautiful gold and worth six hundred or more florins.

All of the great square of San Giovanni, and part of the street around is covered with blue curtains with yellow lilies making the church [San Giovanni] a marvellous figure; and thus it would require more time to speak of it as a great ornament of the City. It seems to me that today we have already said much, and that it is good to end this glorious feast here and follow on another occasion.⁹

Although the account of the feast dwells upon the *Palio* as well as the candles, meals, banquets and *mostra* more than the church processions that occurred on the Vigil, this race was not only run during this feast; another took place on the feast day of S. Reparata (8th

⁹ Authors translation from Cesare Guasti, *Le Feste Di S. Giovanni Batista in Firenze: Descritte in Prosa e in Rima Da Contemporanei*: (Firenze, 1884). and Goro Dati, *Istoria Di Firenze Di Goro Dati Dall'Anno 1380 All'Anno 1405. Con Annotazioni* (Firenze, 1735), 84.

October).¹⁰ Later, more races were added such as one on the Feast day of St Barnabas (11th June) – commemorating the victory of the Battle of Campaldino (1289) – another on July 28th to commemorate the defeat of the Pisans at the battle of San Vittorio in 1364; and another, on the Feast day of S. Anna (July 26th), associated with the expulsion of the Duke of Athens in 1343.¹¹ At all these events the clergy, the judiciary and the citizens took equal part. However, the race did not have the same relationship to the areas of the city as it does in present day Siena. As suggested by Dati's description, any wealthy owner could run their horse with a professional jockey – as was the case in various other cities.¹²

Over time the civic identity of the feast day itself became more significant (for example with the incorporation of chariots, candles, and *palii*), but the sacred foundation of the events was never overlooked. For example, beginning on the 20th June there were other processions that went through the streets of the city leaving the cathedral and visiting the church of S. Spirito, the next day S. Croce, and the third, S. Maria Novella, all displaying the usual apparatus of the clergy, monks and friars.¹³ The exact itineraries for these processions is difficult to ascertain, however, for the Vigil it is believed that from S. Maria del Fiore, they processed along Via Calzaiuoli to Piazza dei Signori, Via dei Gondi; and then from Badia, passed the Opera del Duomo, and return to S. Giovanni and S. Maria del Fiore.¹⁴ It seems, according to an account by Giambattista Bertini (1509-1550), that this path was partly

¹⁰ Romolo Caggese, ed., *Statuti Della Repubblica Fiorentina. Editi a Cura Del Comune Di Firenze. Vol. 2: Statuto Del Podesta Dell' Anno 1325* (Firenze), II, 436. This race was run on foot.

¹¹ Ventrone, 'La Festa Di San Giovanni : Costruzione Di Un'identità Civica Fra Rituale e Spettacolo (Secoli XIV-XVI)', 55.

¹² Richard C. Trexler, *Public Life in Renaissance Florence* (1991), 262.

¹³ Trexler suggests that these processions were a later addition to the celebrations (early sixteenth century), and were probably undertaken in the specific Quartiere Trexler, *Public Life in Renaissance Florence*, 249.

¹⁴ G. A., *Le feste di S. Giovanni in Firenze antiche e moderne: cenni storici* (Firenze, 1877), 15.

changed when the Medici moved from their palace (near San Lorenzo) to the Royal Palace built by Luca Pitti (1540), eventually running the procession past the palace itself.¹⁵

The offering mentioned at the beginning of the account is set out in the Statutes where it states that candles from all over the municipalities were gathered in the Piazza of Santa Felicità before processing across the Arno.¹⁶ Nevertheless, although the gift remained constant the path of the processions did change, often in response to specific political events, for example in 1343 under the rule of the Duke of Athens where the gathering of offerings occurred in the Piazza Santa Croce before moving past the Palazzo Vecchio – where the Duke was honoured – and then on to San Giovanni.¹⁷ Up until this point, although the candle offerings were a part of the civic ceremony, the homage to the duke before the final journey to San Giovanni would not have had the same form under the Commune.¹⁸ It is also telling that in 1306, the government ‘... abolished the organisation of the procession according to guilds...’ and began to organise them in relation to the military companies of the city.¹⁹

In Dati’s relatively comprehensive description of the day, it is interesting to note that he does not describe the actual path of the main procession on the feast day itself – only that it travelled ‘around the city’ (*e vanno per la Terra*) returning to the cathedral from where it began. Trexler suggests that the procession followed the ‘standard’ path of the old Roman walls (although some did vary to visit Santa Croce and Santa Maria Novella when the

¹⁵ Pietro Gori, *Le feste fiorentine attraverso i secoli: Le feste per San Giovanni* (Firenze, 1926), 24.

¹⁶ Caggese, *Statuti Della Repubblica Fiorentina. Editi a Cura Del Comune Di Firenze. Vol. 2*, II, 303. This is still the case for the candles used today albeit taking a different route. The altering of this original procession occurred when the path, and the form of the gifts, became too garish for the later ‘Romanisation’ of public taste. See Trexler, *Public Life in Renaissance Florence*, 258. and Guasti, *Le Feste Di S. Giovanni Batista in Firenze*, 49.

¹⁷ Giovanni Villani, *Cronica*, ed. by Giovanni Porta, Edizione di riferimento Nuova Cronica, 3 vols (Palma, 1991), 1142, Bk.13, Ch. 8.

¹⁸ Ventrone, ‘La Festa Di San Giovanni : Costruzione Di Un’identità Civica Fra Rituale e Spettacolo (Secoli XIV-XVI)’, 56.

¹⁹ Robert Davidsohn, *Storia di Firenze: le origini* (Firenze, 2009), 463, Vol. IV.

Mendicant orders became more significant for the city),²⁰ only diverting away at the southwestern corner in order to cross Ponte Trinita into Oltrarno before returning over Ponte Vecchio and picking up the path again near the Mercato Nuovo (thus allowing the procession to cross all four Quartieri) uniting the city in celebration.²¹

Trexler's description of this path embellishes that offered by the later chroniclers who use the via Calzaiuoli, but his reconstruction has now been accepted by recent scholars as the path for the procession.²² This procession, therefore, passed the Palazzo Vecchio, the Bargello and the hall of the most powerful guild in the city - *Arte dei Giudici e Notai* – allowing the Law and judiciary, as well as the new civic institutional buildings, to have a physical presence at the festival.

Conclusion: The Feast of San Giovanni in Florence and Festival Continuity

It is clear that the early written accounts of the festival still have echoes in the current festivities described at the beginning of the chapter. However, it is also clear that these actions were not invented at some point in the city's history but link back to the very foundation of the city as well as other significant developments in the city's history. While there are no actual written accounts of these early feasts – Roman or Christian – as they occurred in Florence, it is possible to trace themes, actions, and legacies back to these periods. This will form the basis of the next two chapters.

²⁰ Trexler, *Public Life in Renaissance Florence*, 251.

²¹ As the processions had done with the Sesti that preceded the Quartieri. Trexler, *Public Life in Renaissance Florence*, 250.

²² Heidi L. Chrétien, *The Festival of San Giovanni: Imagery and Political Power in Renaissance Florence* (New York, 1994); Ventrone, 'La Festa Di San Giovanni : Costruzione Di Un'identità Civica Fra Rituale e Spettacolo (Secoli XIV-XVI)', 58. 'The path followed by the various processions was that of the [Roman] first circle of city walls ...'

Chapter 2 – The Origins and Development the City of Florence

Introduction

This chapter addresses the historical depth of the present feast of San Giovanni as an experience bonded closely to the developing urban fabric of the city. Broadly speaking, when examining the development of this festival and its architecture, it appears to fit into four key phases; the first corresponds to the rites of Roman foundation where the ordering of the city was oriented towards 'nature' and the 'Cosmos'; the second phase was primarily feudal and Christian (one could say sacramental) in character where festivals linked the identity and fate of the city to Christian teleology; the third phase, related to the period of the Communal government of Florence from around 1250 until 1530,¹ broadened the iconography integral to the Christian festival by incorporating some aspects of the city's developing civic institutions (such as the judicial arrangements, governmental offices, and guilds etc.); and finally, the fourth phase, which began with the elevation of Cosimo Medici as the first Duke of Florence sometime after 1532. This final phase relates to the moment when the preceding historical and cultural landscape – including the architecture of the city – became subject to perspectival, formal use (and abuse) even if it had not previously been manifested as such. This final Ducal phase ushered in the instrumental order that is familiar to contemporary discourses on power and governance where architectural form is often described as a means of enforcing ideas or values. Consequently, this last phase will be

¹ 'The commune was an association of men bound together by an oath and common interests. They swore to aid and defend one another; they pooled their prestige and minute jurisdictions, if they had any; and they invested their consuls, the official heads of their association, with executive and judicial powers.' Lauro Martines, *Power and Imagination: City-States in Renaissance Italy* (Baltimore, 1988), 27.

considered more thematically than historically and form the basis of much of the discussion in Part Two of the book

However, although it is possible to characterise the development of the feast in these distinct 'phases' or 'layers' each one is not restricted to a particular period but, during the time covered by the discussion, contributes in different proportions at different times to the mediatory possibilities of the symbolisation embodied in the festive experience. Hence, although the contemporary festival appears to be dominated by the fourth 'instrumental' phase of representation, aspects of the previous three continue to be active within the experience and hence can be reconnected to the understanding of the event. As a consequence it may be argued that the constancy of 'Florence' manifests itself through various transformations or re-interpretations, all the while maintaining and renewing themes that create a continuity in history: i.e. because the festival has continually transformed but, at the same time, maintained aspects of its historical identity, the valued 'tradition' of the festival – and the architecture of the city that accommodates it – can be seen as both its link to the past as well as to the security of its future. This chapter aims to explore this continuity by tracing different aspects of the development of the Feast of San Giovanni beginning with Florence's Roman foundation and then the developments under Christian, feudal rule.

Phase One: Order and Cosmos in Roman Florence

The surviving identity of Roman Florence has two strands, the first articulates the direct history associated with the original Roman settlement and the ways in which such foundations reconciled history with cosmic origins through forms of ceremony and rites that

date back to the Ancient Near East and the theatre of the Greek polis;² and secondly through the chronicle, literal and allegorical accounts of the origins of the city. Given the length of time between the Roman foundation and the emergence of the urban festival in the medieval period much of this continuity is implicit and indirect, built into the traditions of the city. Up to this time Rome had remained relevant to the Christian city because it harboured much of the iconography of Christian Imperial rule instigated by Constantine that was later revived by Charlemagne in the ninth century – for example in the Palatine Chapel at Aachen – but also because of the continued presence of Roman urban traditions throughout this transitional period.

Particular continuities of Roman heritage in Florence and much of its surrounding *contado* are evident in the adaption of complete Roman buildings and spaces³ – such as the gates, forum, and stadium (including the spoliation of building elements for use in castles and parish churches) – as well as in the continuing significance of Roman law in church administration. This meant the legacy of Rome remained visible even if it was subject to further transformations required by new layers of faith and governance.⁴ For example, the use of various basilicas for meetings of the senior representatives of the early commune is one such aspect of syncretism even if by 1335 city statutes no longer allowed such civic meetings to take place 'in a church, in a cloister or in a cemetery'.⁵

² 'Far from an abstract space, there was in this dance a complete unity between the movement of the event and the setting in which it takes place, which characterized the Greek understanding of space as *chora*.' Dagmar Motycka Weston, 'Greek Theatre as Embodiment of Cultural Meaning', in *The Cultural Role of Architecture: Contemporary and Historical Perspectives*, ed. by Paul Emmons, Jane Lomholt, and John Shannon Hendrix (London, 2012), 5–17.

³ Bryan Ward-Perkins, *From Classical Antiquity to the Middle Ages Urban Public Building in Northern and Central Italy, AD 300-850* (Oxford, 1984), 14.

⁴ Richard Krautheimer, *Rome, Profile of a City, 312-1308* (Princeton, 1980), 124.

⁵ Giovanni Fanelli, *Firenze, architettura e città* (2002), 26. The Christian Basilica emerged because of a transformation of its original legal function – the local governor/judge (and vicarious representative of the emperor) became, for the Christians, the Bishop representing Christ as *logos* as well as eschatological judgement.

Unlike Rome, which celebrated its Etruscan foundation based around the myth of Romulus and Remus on 21st April,⁶ there is no specific date recorded for the Roman foundation of Florence that took place sometime following the Catiline conspiracy in the first century BCE.⁷ Nevertheless, the rituals of town foundation during the Republic are well documented and it is clear that at least since Vasari's painting of the foundation of Florence completed in 1563-65, the burghers of Florence knew of this practice.⁸ The content of the Roman texts indicates an attitude to ritual and foundation (as well as community, commerce, and allegiance) that formed the basis of many of the urban traditions in the region that continue to this day. In addition to this, it becomes evident from these documents that although these Roman narratives described festive activities, they are not simply descriptions – they were written more as testaments placing the actions within a broader, universal, or sacred and cosmic framework. Virgil's *Aeneas* is one such account where the actions of the Trojan hero were linked to the foundation of Rome and ultimately the time of the gods and the genealogy of Augustus Caesar. The significance of this is relevant here because Dante, writing in the early fourteenth century, built on Virgil's foundations to identify the heritage and iconography of Florence as Roman rather than Gothic – reinforcing its *romanitas* following centuries of gothic rule.⁹

⁶ Joseph Rykwert, *The Idea of a Town: The Anthropology of Urban Form in Rome, Italy and the Ancient World* (London, 2010), 91. Also linked by the proposed date of 28/29th April. Titus Livy, *The History of Rome: The Only Complete and Unabridged Edition in One Volume*, ed. by Jake E. Stief, trans. by D. Spillan, Cyrus Edmonds, and William A. M'Devitte (2018), Bk. V, Ch. 1.

⁷ Lucius Sergius Catilina (108-62BC) was a Roman Consul who attempted to take control of the Republic. Sallust, *The War with Catiline: The War with Jugurtha*, trans. by J.C. Rolfe (2013).

⁸ All larger Roman towns, like military forts and camps (*castrum*), were set out in a rigorous and orthogonal manner. Nevertheless, it does not follow that Roman towns were just enlarged military settlements. As Rykwert suggests, such a convention inverts the truth, '... the Roman military camp [and, therefore, the town] was a diagrammatic evocation of the city of Rome, an *anamnesis of imperium* ... The first act was to plant the general's *vexillum* at a chosen spot ...' Instructions on how to set out a Roman Camp can be found in Polybius, *Histories*, Bk. VI, Ch. 27.

⁹ Philip Jones, *The Italian City-State: From Commune to Signoria* (Oxford, 1997), 52. Dante used Virgil as his guide to the underworld.

The foundation of any Roman city was an evocation of Rome – an *anamnesis of imperium* – and began with the planting a banner (*vexillum*) at a chosen spot.¹⁰ This was then followed by the formation the *Roma Quadrata* and the setting up of the boundary.¹¹ Hyginus Gromaticus writing in the first and second century CE reinforces the meaning of this act by stating:

The origin [of the setting up of boundaries] is heavenly, and its practice invariable ... Boundaries are never drawn without reference to the order of the universe for the *decumani* are set in line with the course of the sun, while the *cardines* follow the axis of the sky.¹²

This ‘quartering’ of a city or piece of land did not begin in Etruria but was also evident in the rites of many civilisations of the Ancient Near East, and even though no direct trace can be made between them, there are clear similarities that suggest continuity.¹³

In the Ancient Near East ‘quartering’ was not only a means of ordering the palace of the king and the city but also a way of centring the order of the ‘known’ world upon the agon of the king.¹⁴ At the centre of these palaces, rectangular four quartered throne rooms were articulated spatially and iconographically to support the rule of the king religiously, politically, militarily, administratively, and economically.¹⁵ And like the Roman world, this order was most explicitly revealed through the rituals manifested in court ceremony. The throne room was a place for the king to greet tribunes, send out war parties, and settle

¹⁰ Rykwert, *The Idea of a Town*, 68. This is evident in Vasari’s painting of the foundation already cited.

¹¹ ‘Romulus accordingly built Roma Quadrata (which means *square*), and wished to have the city on that site.’ Plutarch, *The Parallel Lives*, trans. by J. Dryden (Cambridge, Mass, 1914), 115.

¹² Quoted in Rykwert, *The Idea of a Town*, 90.

¹³ See Christian Frost, *Continuity and Transformation in Symbolic Mediation: The Architecture of Early Christianity* (University of Cambridge, 1993). For example Assurnasirpal III’s palace at Nimrud.

¹⁴ Ancient Near Eastern city-states had walls identifying the physical boundaries of the palace and the city but there was also a notional boundary or limit of the land outside as far as the point where tribunes were paid to the king. Beyond these boundaries lay ‘chaos’, brought into order (creation) periodically by the army sent out from the centre to conquer new lands. In this sense we can see echoes of the classical tradition of *rus vs urb* and the medieval ‘culture’ vs ‘nature.’

¹⁵ Jean-Pierre Vernant, *The Origins of Greek Thought* (1984), 24.

disputes etc., but it was also a universal setting that depicted particular events on the walls mirroring the cardinal orientations of the world outside. As a result, the boundaries of the kingdom and their representation in the throne-room revealed two modes of temporality that were both rooted in the primary experience of ritual; firstly as a mimetic representation of the time of origins linked to creation itself, where aspects of temporality were linked to the repetition of the original cosmogonic act (the origin of time itself) including the possibilities for representing this act as a return or renewal in a sacred context; and secondly, in kingship, with the possibility that this could occur in human praxis. To make such mediative possibilities evident, particular forms of speech or actions were often used to reveal more clearly the reciprocity between the pragmatic and paradigmatic modes of time (i.e. between seasonal earthly time and the cosmic time of the gods).¹⁶ Although in the Ancient Near East, as well as in the early history of Etruria and Rome, this process was manifested most clearly through the person of the king, the rituals themselves, with their implicit temporal reciprocity, were also a critical reference point. Initially this meant that it was the role of the king as well as his body that was sacred – hence the king was always replaceable¹⁷ – but later, once kingship was replaced by the Republic, more significance was placed on the rituals.

Nevertheless, even though the development of this ritual framework inevitably resulted in a symbolic stratification broader than the single room or palace (focussed on one individual), the ‘centre’, as well as the boundary, remained significant – i.e. boundaries maintained their importance in relation to purification of the land and the consequent mimetic repetition of the founding of civic order. Thus, in Rome, the centre became more

¹⁶ Mircea Eliade, *Myth of the Eternal Return: Or, Cosmos and History*, trans. W. R. Trask (London: Penguin, 1989), 112ff.

¹⁷ Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies*.

focussed on the temples of the *Capitol* (a word derived from the Capitoline Hill, site of the main temples of Rome).¹⁸ And, at the same time this Capitol – or *Campidoglio* – was situated on a species of acropolis, the *Arx*, addressing the main Roman Forum (including the Curia where the Senate gathered) which represented the economic, political, and symbolic heart of the town.¹⁹

Thus, by the time Florence was established, although there had been shifts in the political meaning of foundation, the inauguration of the city and its boundaries enacted through the ritual were still understood as the city's discovery (historically, spatially, and temporally), through *anamnesis*,²⁰ rather than something akin to site selection. And, even though it was the fixed boundary that became sacred, it was the rite itself that was understood as the means through which mortals engaged with the divine, particularly in the act of orienting the *templum* as city.²¹ As Rykwert suggests:

The origin of this kind of rite cannot ever be found in speculation, whether 'rational' or 'mythical'. Its origin will always be in a *dromenon*, in an action, and such origins are always lost. The search for the 'pure' and original form of the rite would be entirely fruitless.²²

In the rites the founder moved anticlockwise around the boundary whilst ploughing the first furrow locating the sacred boundary or *pomoerium*. The plough, pulled by a cow (inside) and an ox (outside) was carefully guided by the founder, head covered, ensuring the ploughed earth fell on the inside, and the plough was lifted at every cardinal gate (*porta*),

¹⁸ The palatine hill was originally a settlement of affluent republicans who chose to live on the site of the mythical cave where Romulus and Remus were raised. It was only later when the emperor Augustus built the Palatine Palace that more symbolic focus shifted to this hill. (indeed the word palace derives from this occurrence).

¹⁹ The forum was itself bounded by political spaces, temples, baths, markets etc) as well as the theatres whose form and much of the content was inherited from Greece.

²⁰ In Plato's sense suggested in the *Meno*, that it is a re-discovery of something that was already there.

²¹ See Rykwert, *The Idea of a Town*, 65. And Rykwert quoting Ennius (p. 45) '*Templum* is used in three ways: with reference to nature, in the sky; to divination, on the ground; and to resemblance, underground.'

²² Rykwert, *The Idea of a Town*, 88.

the circuit defining the limits of the city as *templum* and the axes of ‘the sun and the sky’. Thus, this simple mimetic ritual that would have taken place at Florence re-enacted the setting out of the *Roma Quadrata* originally undertaken by Servius Tullius in Rome in the sixth century BCE.²³ A ceremony that, in Rome, defined the boundaries of the city and divided it into four tribes in four areas (Suburran, Esquiline, Colline and Palatine) – an event later celebrated by the Romans as their feast of *Fortis Fortunae*.²⁴

Hence, the festival, at once both ritual and mundane act, was utilised within Roman culture as a way of re-enacting and revealing the pragmatic and paradigmatic aspects of the order of a town. The particular ‘time out of time’ inherent to such events, offered the twofold aspect of temporality mentioned with respect to the Ancient Near East (i.e. the original cosmogonic act and the beginnings of time itself alongside the representation of this act as a return or renewal in a sacred context) but was also able to accommodate more sophisticated ideas inherent to Greek and Roman civic culture. Therefore, the enactment inherent to the festival in Florence was perhaps always understood as the surest way to reveal, evaluate, and celebrate the city’s Roman origins in the past and, at the same time, seen as a way contemporary civic values could be re-confirmed.²⁵

Phase Two: Feudal Florence and the Emergence of the Commune

²³ This focus on a central cross rather than a square perimeter is a point often lost in attempts to reconstruct the possible geometrical ordering of the Roman city. That is not to contest that many towns were square and gridded, only that this was not necessarily the main purpose of the geometry. Carol Martin Watts, ‘The Geometry of the Master Plan of Roman Florence and Its Surroundings’, in *Architecture and Mathematics from Antiquity to the Future*, ed. by Michael J. Ostwald and Kim Williams (ebook, 2015), 177–88.

²⁴ Marcus Terentius Varro, *On the Latin Language*, trans. by Roland Grubb Kent (1938), 41: V. viii, 45.

²⁵ This iconography is visible in a fresco by Ghirlandaio in the *Sala dei Gigli* (1482-85) where the established iconography of Republican Rome is depicted alongside San Zanobi into one of Roman civic virtue that was more easily portable to another location. N. Rubinstein, *The Palazzo Vecchio, 1298-1532: Government, Architecture, and Imagery in the Civic Palace of the Florentine Republic*, Oxford-Warburg Studies (1995).

As was mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the drift away from cities following the fall of Rome had a significant impact on the continuing praxis of the European city. As Duby suggests '... the city, which had been conceived as a stage for the exhibition of public power, was slowly invaded by the countryside ... [and] Imperceptibly the "court" supplanted the city as the primary model of social life.'²⁶ Jones explains this same shift as one '... from "city" to "tribe", *civilitas* to *incivilitas* ...'.²⁷ Nevertheless, as has been shown, in towns and cities such as Florence where the idea of an historic foundation contributed to a continuing Roman civic identity, there was some resistance to this trend. Thus, some towns and cities did maintain aspects of Roman civic influence beyond their walls and were supported in this endeavour by the growing number of monastic foundations that emerged during the period. Like the old Roman towns, these monasteries, according to Braunfels, '... emerged as a political institution' and thus, the task of the middle ages was to find the 'best' ordering of these monasteries as 'cities' that stood in contrast to the un-tamed 'wilderness' beyond their walls.²⁸ The second 'feudal' phase in the development of the festival spans the period from this apparent exile of civic culture from the city to its eventual return, including the impact it had upon the architecture of Florence and the development the first City-States and Communes of Europe.

Tacconi suggests that Florentine courtly life – and thus by implication many aspects of the festive life of the medieval city – was theatrical, orchestrated by heralds and clerks steeped in customs of the time but somehow aware of its representational limitations. She

²⁶ Georges Duby, *A History of Private Life: Revelations of the Medieval World* (1988), 14.

²⁷ Jones, *The Italian City-State*, 28.

²⁸ Wolfgang Braunfels, *Urban Design in Western Europe: Regime and Architecture, 900-1900* (1990), 13. For example when Alcuin was given control of the national shrine in Tours, it included an overall population of around 20,000. Wolfgang Braunfels, *Monasteries of Western Europe: The Architecture of the Orders* (New York, N.Y., 1980), 31. See also fragment of the letter from Gozbert in Braunfels, *Monasteries of Western Europe*, 46. See also Jacques Le Goff, *The Medieval Imagination* (1992), 58.

argues that ‘...the origin of the herald’s ceremonial duties lay in ... two areas: as accompaniment for the prince, and as director of the theatre of chivalry.’²⁹ However, any suggestion that medieval courtly life was related to ‘theatre’ as it is understood today is problematic. It can certainly be argued that courtly manners (particularly *sprezzatura*) did later become distinct from symbolic meaning, but in the medieval period meaning was understood both implicitly and explicitly as a component of reality; word, deed and spirit were one. As such, in the feudal court, manners were imbued with symbolic meaning. The sentiment to which Tacconi is referring is more related to the conscious articulation of manners (*mannieri*) that occurred later and heralded the possibility of considering the form of things as partially autonomous. However, even within this late medieval phase (and throughout much of the Renaissance) the ordering of the world was still understood as immanent, and *mannieri* – no matter how articulated – often still embodied the codes, hierarchies, and values of culture. Hence, at the time, it was seen as a greater offence if someone trained in the arts of the court was revealed to be, at the same time, ethically and morally corrupt.

Consequently, it would be a mistake to assume that feudal architecture and festive activity were understood as purely political or economic manifestations of culture. Or that church rituals were theatrical in the modern sense of the word. All culture was imbued with symbolism to such an extent that any challenges to the apparently mundane political hierarchies inherent to feudalism – such as the stability of the ‘three estates’³⁰ – were always also in danger of being considered heretical. For example, the first clear description

²⁹ Marica S. Tacconi, *Cathedral and Civic Ritual in Late Medieval and Renaissance Florence: The Service Books of Santa Maria Del Fiore* (Cambridge ; New York, 2006), 19.

³⁰ *Oratores* (clergy) intercede for us with God; *Bellatores* (nobility) defend the towns and the countryside from foreign invasion; and *Laboratores* (workers) labour to produce goods to sustain us.

of the hierarchical tripartite division of feudal society has been attributed to Gerard of Florennes (c.975-1051), bishop of Cambrai and Arras, in a sermon of 1025 designed to attack a contemporary heresy that had questioned the authority of the church, the aristocracy, and the truth of the Holy Sacraments.³¹ Gerard's defence led him to describe society in relation to Christ who is both flesh and an intrinsic part of the Trinity; for Gerard, Christ's church was a part of heaven as well as earth '... governed, and instituted, by an order embodied in a two-level edifice' of an 'ecclesiastical' and an 'angelic' hierarchy.³² In the main body of the sermon Gerard described the roles of the two governing estates (the clergy and the nobility) in relation to Christ's role in heaven. Priests, he argued, were responsible for Christ's sacerdotal function, and kings were destined to administer the law and distinguish what is just in the world as Christ does in Heaven. In this way, both the church and the nobility of the middle ages continued to argue for their God-given right to rule. Even though there were times in which the church, the king, and the nobles disagreed on their relative powers – particularly in relation to the investiture of bishops and popes – they never doubted their right to rule those who worked in the mundane world as God ruled in heaven.³³

As a direct result of this hierarchy, the rule of society and the administration of the law by priests and kings was seen as a divine right made visible through the performance of

³¹ For example, the heretics declared that 'Baptism ... was unnecessary for anyone who ... [fled the world, stifled carnal desire, lived by manual labour, forgave one another, and loved all members of the sect ... ; and] for anyone who did not observe it, baptism was not enough.' Georges Duby, *The Three Orders: Feudal Society Imagined* (1982), 30.

³² Duby, *The Three Orders*, 32. See also Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies*, Chapter VIII; Man Centred Kingship: Dante. Although it is unclear whether he had direct access to Pseudo Dionysus' works on the Ecclesiastical and Angelic hierarchies, which had been translated into Latin in the ninth century by John Scotus Eriugena, Gerard does mention Dionysius by name in the sermon along with Gregory the Great (540-604) – who had established the principle of Papal supremacy.

³³ Jacques Le Goff, *Medieval Civilization 400 - 1500* (1991), 164.

rituals or 'sacraments'.³⁴ And in addition, the sacred nature of this order was thought to extend in a contiguous hierarchy stretching from the three estates of the mundane kingdom up to and including the spheres heaven.³⁵ In such a context Gerard had little option but to censure the heresy of Arras (in the same way that the church condemned the later heresies practiced by the Cathars and Waldensians in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries) because these movements challenged aspects of the hierarchies understood to be present on earth and in heaven.

However, it was not only these types of 'heresies' that fell afoul of the church and the governing elites. The perceived continuity of celestial and earthly order meant that even movements that did not overtly challenge an 'angelic hierarchy' – such as those restricted purely to mundane activities of town governance – were also often condemned by the church (especially if there was no profit in it for them!). Therefore, the emergence of the fourth estate during this period (comprising skilled artisans and traders; the town bourgeoisie) was not only a political development but also impacted the symbolic order that framed the spaces and festivals of the city and, thus, asked broader questions relating to Christian hierarchies in relation to form, time, and ultimately, matter itself. Because while in Roman and the Greek descriptions of the world the origin of matter was not a critical part of the discourse surrounding the order of society and the cosmos, in Christianity the God of order and the creator God were one, and consequently, the question of how matter could be formed from non-matter (God), as well as how it was then ordered, were both a critical to the hierarchy. Therefore, for Christians, all rituals (but particularly the Sacraments) fully

³⁴ The seven Sacraments are: Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist (Holy Communion), Reconciliation (Confession), Anointing the Sick, Marriage, Holy Orders. The anointing of a king was not a separate Sacrament but seen as a form of Holy Orders, reinforcing the divine right to rule.

³⁵ As illustrated in Dante's journey in the Divine Comedy which also reveals an unbroken continuity.

engaged in the complete hierarchy from God, through spirit and light, to matter, explicitly attuning the embodiment inherent to architecture and the city to experience in the world.³⁶ Revelation brought with it a clear faith in transcendence but also a greater immanence to the relationship between gods and mortals situated within the growing urban landscapes of the period. Thus, from the twelfth century on, these ideas not only affected the discourse relating to symbolic representation in the Mass, but also shaped the places suitable for its enactment.³⁷

In Florence this is perhaps best explained through an account of the development of the baptismal rite in relation to the Baptistery of S. Giovanni which originally took place in the cathedral and the baptistery and included some movement between the two. This small processional rite was, according to Villani, later extended to include a circumnavigation of the city (probably around the Roman *pomoerium*). Given the political and social changes in the city this 'extension' is likely to have occurred sometime between 1150-1250 and have been coeval with the various building programmes of the baptistery itself.

The fact that the liturgical documents state that the feast of San Giovanni is carried out in the 'same way as the feast of St Philip and St James' suggests that, for the church at least, at the beginning of this process of change it was not the most significant feast in their calendar. The precious relic of St Philip, acquired around the time of the writing of the *Mores* in the early thirteenth century,³⁸ seems to have held much more significance.

³⁶ For example, the word 'transubstantiation' was first used to describe what happens to the bread and wine during the consecration of the host in the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215.

³⁷ See M.-D. Chenu, *Nature, Man, and Society in the Twelfth Century: Essays on New Theological Perspectives in the Latin West*, ed. by Lester K. Little, trans. by Jerome Taylor (1997).

³⁸ There are two Roman Use manuscripts that survive from Santa Reparata; the *Ritus in ecclesia servandi* (written between 1173 and 1205) and the *Mores et consuetudines canonice florentine* (ca.1231). Franklin Toker, *On Holy Ground: Liturgy, Architecture and Urbanism in the Cathedral and the Streets of Medieval Florence* (London : Turnhout, 2009), 277. English translation in Tacconi, *Cathedral and Civic Ritual in Late Medieval and Renaissance Florence*, 106.

Equally, unlike the Feast of St Agatha (apparently structured like a traditional Rogation rite tracing the boundary of the city)³⁹ the path of the feast of San Giovanni was never prescribed in the church documents. The path of the procession in the city was only ever reported after the event, in Villani for example, where it linked the Roman rite of foundation to the Christian order of processions which were set out in the cathedral's service books. This is significant insofar as any changes made to the path over time never challenged the existing church processions but encouraged the civic aspects of the festival to develop as a layer on top of Christian liturgy and the city's Roman layout and order.

Digital reconstructions of the thirteenth-century interior of the baptistery reveal that during the rites of baptism reflections in the font would have varied depending on where you were in the building.⁴⁰ Although it is difficult to establish exactly what these reflections would have been for the various participants, it appears that as the font was approached much of the internal revetment, up to and including gallery level, would have been reflected in the surface. These initial images would have been succeeded by segments of the vault mosaic and finally by the reflection of light from the lantern. These reflections in the font, just like the iconography of the building, would have varied from matter to heavenly light, via material, geometry, proportion, numerology and image, but would have all been present in the font where the mystery of the Sacrament of Baptism occurred. This transformation of the various reflected images (particularly if approached from the East like Jesus into Jerusalem)⁴¹ – changing from stone (tomb), through the image of Christ, to light itself in a

³⁹ See Christian Frost, *Time, Space and Order: The Making of Medieval Salisbury* (Oxford ; New York, 2009).

⁴⁰ Giuseppe Castellucci reconstructed this font and presbytery within the baptistery in 1921. This was revisited digitally in Christian Frost, 'Reclaiming Architectural History: The Baptistery of San Giovanni in Florence', *Art History Supplement*, 3/5 (2013) <<http://arthist.net/archive/5782>>.

⁴¹ The Milan rites for Baptism refer to the font as the tomb. See E. C. Whitaker, *Documents of the Baptismal Liturgy: Third Edition*, ed. by Maxwell E. Johnson, New edition (London, 2003), 180.

reversal of the imagined stages of the materialisation of the world – offer a compelling narrative for the initiation of the catechumen into the death of the old (Adam) and resurrection of the new (Christ). That the reflection was an important part of the ceremony is confirmed by the fact that during the ritual, specified particularly on Holy Saturday, the priest was instructed to breathe on the water,⁴² thus momentarily destroying the reflected images, only for them to reform and change intensity when the Chrism oil is poured onto the surface of the water. These clear shifts of representation reinforce the proposition that the baptistery building, like the re-enactment of the foundation from Roman ceremonies, should be understood more through the activities it accommodated than its form.

Over the same period, it is equally important to recognise the increasing significance of the building as a symbol of belonging to the city, the family, and the Florentine Republic as well as the clergy. This is confirmed by Brunetto Latini in his *Tesoretto* of 1260-66 where he states a child is born to the Commune as well as to his parents,⁴³ and could account for some of the changes in the rite of baptism itself within the building.⁴⁴ For example, although the timing of the shift from immersion to affusion may have been due to increased numbers of catechumens, it could also have been the result of a broadening of the iconographic potential of the event within the city – i.e. by reducing the scale of the ritual within the baptismal room there were more possibilities to shift the locus of the overall initiation into the city as a whole, thus re-prioritising the event as civic initiation as well as a sacrament.

⁴² Whitaker, *Documents of the Baptismal Liturgy*, 189.

⁴³ (Latini, 1824, II, 54)

Ogn'uom, ch'al mondo viene:

Che nasce primamente

Al padre, et al parente,

E poi al suo Comune.

⁴⁴ Such as the different forms of the font over the life of the building as well as the different manifestations of the Scarsella chapel.

The mosaics in the gallery would go some way to support this contention. Although it has been suggested that these were unfinished because they were only complete above the eastern doors (facing the cathedral)⁴⁵ and the southern doors (facing the city),⁴⁶ these were the doors used in the festive life of the building. They represent, within the baptistery, the significant entrances and exits from the building during liturgical Mass, the baptismal rite, and other festivals which used the building – the eastern entry *from* the cathedral and the southern exit *to* the city. It could have been the case, therefore, that the mosaics of the gallery were not completed because they were not necessary, the critical iconography of the building satisfied by the mosaics above the doors.

All these adaptations to the baptistery (and other buildings too),⁴⁷ as well as changes to the form of the rites meant that as the feast grew in significance and scale – including engagement with the city's Roman boundaries – it became a key opportunity for burghers to declare allegiance to political factions and families as well as to the city and the church. And, through such changes the overall feast was able to link themes related to the creation of matter and the celestial hierarchy addressed in Baptism to the creation and upholding of civic order. The implications of these factors is that the shift of parts of the Feast of San Giovanni from 'inside' to 'outside' were orchestrated, in part, to accommodate the increasing significance of civic order within the religious rites of the emerging Commune.

Conclusion

⁴⁵ The cathedral mosaic representing the most significant relics of St Philip and St Matthew

⁴⁶ Represented by images of what appears to be significant city grandees

⁴⁷ The city began the redevelopment of the cathedral of S. Reparata before its ultimate replacement with S. Maria del Fiore. Also, the key Mendicant churches were built alongside many other new monasteries and hospitals etc. See Fanelli, *Firenze, architettura e città*.

Much writing on festival, architecture, and the city situates ritual activity within specific buildings or places rather than in the spaces 'in-between'. Thus, the more ambiguous interstitial locations suggested in this chapter – between buildings and through streets – which also activate pragmatic and paradigmatic meaning, are easily overlooked. Consequently, the evaluation of the 'layering' of history offered here begins to reveal the depth of meaning present in the contemporary feast of San Giovanni which is – at least partly – inherited. If this is accepted then at least some aspects of the Roman iconography can be seen to have remained in the Christian Milieu (and beyond), where, the idea of origins became associated to the idea of creation itself as well as to the foundation of Rome.

That the chroniclers were aware of the earlier classical tradition is confirmed by Brunetto Latini when he described three types of government '... the first of kings, the second of autocracies, and the third of peoples ...'⁴⁸ which has echoes of both Cicero and Plato's *Republic*.⁴⁹ Although it was later in the fourteenth century with Coluccio Solutati (1331-1406) and his pupil Leonardo Bruni (1370-1444) – who were pivotal in the translation and reintroduction of many of Plato's works into Florence –⁵⁰ that Plato's ideas became more important to the city's elite, much of the sentiment was already implicitly acknowledged.⁵¹ This inheritance came firstly through Plato's influence upon Roman writers such as Cicero, who Villani specifically cites in his efforts to write a chronicle of the city in

⁴⁸ Quentin Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought: Volume 1, The Renaissance* (Cambridge, 1978), 41.

⁴⁹ Although Plato's *Republic* was not available until much later in a Latin translation by Manuel Chrysoloras (d.1415) ca.1402 and inspired the first generation of Italian humanists, especially Guarino da Verona (1374-1460) and Leonardo Bruni.

⁵⁰ James Hankins, *Plato in the Italian Renaissance. 1 (1990)* (Leiden, 1990), 29ff.

⁵¹ Up until the fifteenth century the only texts available in the Latin West were Calcidius' partial translation and commentary on the *Timaeus* (17a-53b) and the *Meno* and *Phaedo*. Dermot Moran, 'Platonism, Medieval', in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 1st edn (London, 2016). The complete works of Plato were completed by Marsilio Ficino and printed in Florence in 1491.

1300;⁵² through Boëthius; and finally Augustine, who transformed many aspects of Plato's thought into a Neo-Platonism more suitable for a Christian city.

Such living tradition is not a dogma but involves the continual re-interpretation according to historical circumstances. Therefore, it can safely be said that for Villani, the chronicle was operating within both traditions; it was a story through which the struggle for justice was voiced; but also a history through which the will of God revealed itself. For him, the two were inseparable. This is made very clear by Luca Landucci's first-hand account of the burning of Savonarola in 1498:

On May 23, 1498, a Wednesday morning, the execution ... The friars were divested of all their paraments ... it was claimed by people that Fra Girolamo was being condemned to the stake because he was a heretic and a schismatic. ... everyone expected to see signs from God and thought that on such an occasion the friar would somehow reveal the truth. This is what was expected, especially by the righteous people, who were eagerly awaiting God's glory ... They were disappointed ... As a consequence, many lost their faith.⁵³

It should be remembered that Savonarola was elected by popular mandate and that, even after his death, he could count the educated Sandro Botticelli (1445-1510) amongst his supporters even into the early years of the sixteenth century.⁵⁴

⁵² Villani, *Villani's Chronicle*, Bk. VIII; Ch. 39. Boccaccio was also an admirer of Plato and defended his apparent expulsion of poets from his 'best polis'. Hankins, *Plato in the Italian Renaissance. 1* (1990), 39.

⁵³ This translation from Stefano Ugo Baldassarri and Arielle Saiber, *Images of Quattrocento Florence: Selected Writings in Literature, History and Art* (2000), 281. Italian in Luca Landucci, *Diario fiorentino dal 1450 al 1516*, ed. by Jodoco Del Badia (Firenze, 1883), 176.

⁵⁴ 'Botticelli was a follower of Savonarola's, and this was why he gave up painting and fell into considerable distress as he had no other source of income. Nonetheless, he remained an obstinate member of the sect, becoming one of the *piagnoni*, the snivellers, as they were called then ...' Giorgio Vasari, *The Lives of the Artists*, trans. by Julia Conway Bondanella and Peter Bondanella, Reissue edition (Oxford, 2008), 227; Vol. I.

Chapter 3. Culture, Representation, and the Flowering of Civic

Festival

Introduction:

By the middle of the thirteenth century the ruling elite of Florence – which now included many merchants from the fourth estate – recognised that in order to establish a peaceful city in which their businesses could flourish, new institutions independent from the local nobility and the distant emperor, and separate from the jurisdiction of the Papacy were needed.¹ These new institutions, run by individuals from various strata of society and from various political factions, took some time to settle into a form that could best articulate their new brand of civil society. However, to have any credibility within the fractious and conflict-ridden urban landscape of Florence at the time, these ‘new’ institutions had to be recognisable *as* authority and consequently ‘borrowed’ many aspects of the iconography of rule that they had inherited from the nobility and the church through its architecture, its local history, and its urban traditions. The two most significant buildings that followed this pattern were the Palazzo del Popolo (now the Bargello) and the later Palazzo della Signoria (now the Palazzo Vecchio).

Noted as being among the first civic buildings of the medieval city, construction began on a home for the newly invested *Capitano del Popolo* on via Proconsolo and Piazza San Firenze next to the existing Volognana tower from 1255 to 1261. Although this was the first civic building in Florence, this type of municipal building was not in itself a new phenomenon, northern Italian city-republics had been building palaces for their *Podestàs*

¹ Jones, *The Italian City-State*, 11.

since around 1200.² The building, situated next to the old Roman boundary, was adapted for different uses over the course of the next few centuries but remained in the hands of the city government until the mid-nineteenth century. As Schevill remarks, it is perhaps paradoxical that the first civic building commissioned by the new communal government ‘took rather incongruously the form of a feudal castle’,³ a form reflecting the rule of feudal governance the Commune was trying to replace. But what other ‘forms’ were there to take? The Tuscan castle was an established architectural type designed to accommodate the feudal lord and his court with all its manners, rituals and hierarchies; it underpinned the authority of feudal power and therefore was the perfect model upon which to begin to build a new hierarchy within the city walls that included the other social strata. Equally, many of the Guild houses that were to be built over the next two centuries did something similar, incorporating *salone* that would not have been out of place in the urban buildings of the Florentine nobility.

Near the end of the thirteenth century, as the institutions of the Commune became more established and more complicated, a somewhat similar Palazzo della Signoria was constructed along with a major new piazza – to the south of the Palazzo del Popolo but also near the original Roman boundary.⁴ Both of these buildings will be discussed in greater detail later in chapter four, but for now it is enough to state that they were originally built to house specific government officials employed by the Commune and were situated on the

² Rubinstein, *The Palazzo Vecchio, 1298-1532: Government, Architecture, and Imagery in the Civic Palace of the Florentine Republic*, 7. John White, *Art and Architecture in Italy 1250-1400*, 3rd Revised edition (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 59ff., 225ff.

³ Ferdinand Schevill, *History of Florence: From the Founding of the City through the Renaissance* (New York, N.Y., 1936), 126. John M. Najemy, *A History of Florence 1200-1575* (2008), 87.

⁴ *Mostra documentaria e iconografica del Palazzo del Podestà (Bargello)* (1963), 9. Villani, *Villani's Chronicle*, VII, 40. Bologna had a *Capitano del Popolo* in 1228

main processional routes of the city and thus became a critical part of the evolving civic representation of Florence.

As has been described, the courtly life of the feudal period – alongside the legacy of the Roman colony – had already shaped parts of the city, but the impact of this new layering on the basic topography of the city was, initially, quite limited. The houses built by early officials (apart from the Bargello and the Palazzo Vecchio) may have been large but they were not palatial by later Renaissance standards and of the many churches of the city, it was really only the cathedral, the baptistery, and the two main mendicant churches (Santa Maria Novella and Santa Croce) that appear to have had an identity in relation to the city as a whole. However, over the course of the next hundred years the city changed dramatically to accommodate the growing pressures from the new governing elite and inevitably this change had a direct impact upon the city and its festive landscape—particularly on the Feast of San Giovanni and the development of the form of the civic palace in Florence.

The shift from medieval civic order to the communal rule of the thirteenth and early fourteenth century on one level can be articulated as institutional and economic. The various new layers of government designed to deal with the conflict between the established nobility, the wealthy merchants and bankers, and the rising aspirations of the *popolo* which included aspirational *laboratores* intent on having their say. However, having made that distinction, it would be a mistake to believe that this shift towards a form of governance that relied on discourse and negotiation was considered purely pragmatic. It should be remembered that the chronicle accounts already cited in chapter one which, in places, praised periods of Roman and Feudal rule, were predominantly written during this

period.⁵ Thus, it should be noted that although these chroniclers were writing relatively simple histories of the city, they were also working within a framework that continued to give equal weight to history, myth, theology, and legend. It is because of this that the accounts reflect an attitude more concerned with shaping the city's future than establishing its past. And, therefore, the various forms of writing used are a significant part of the document itself. For example, as in the classical world, the chronicles used myth and legend to articulate ideas of justice and, as a consequence, were designed to contribute to the shaping of the future by explaining the past. Equally, the highly articulated rhetoric of much of the prose was written in accordance with the classical tradition where such writing embodied the ethical grounding of culture alongside the ability to persuade⁶ – thus, these chroniclers were embedded within a medieval conception of the world which was itself deeply rooted in the Classical tradition.⁷

Through an analysis of the city's evolving processional forms, and other manifestations of culture (particularly in art and architecture), this chapter covers the period, following centuries of Christian rule, when Florence began to shift the iconography and structure of its feudal hierarchy towards broader civic and mercantile ambitions – while, at the same time, managing to maintain critical aspects of the traditions that helped secure the continuity and status of the city as a whole.

⁵ Malispini (1220-1290); Bruno Latini (1220-1294) writing his *Tesoretto* just after the fall of the *Primo Popolo* in 1260; Salimbene di Adam (1221-1290) writing his *Cronica* from 1282-1290 during the early years of the Priorate; Dino Compagni (1255-1324) also beginning at the time of the Priorate; Giovanni Villani (1276-1348) beginning in 1300; and although not strictly a Chronicle, Dante wrote his *Divina Commedia* in exile from 1308-21.

⁶ Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, 32.

⁷ Green, *Chronicle into History*, 4. The first university in Florence, the *Studium Generale*, was set up in Florence in 1321.

The Commune and Origins of Civic Festival

As was indicated in chapter one, the important chronicle accounts by Villani and Dati of the Feast of San Giovanni – which were written *for* the Commune – resonate with the present feast day celebration in the city. And in chapter two these events were explored further within the Roman and feudal context, identifying further echoes of tradition evident in the contemporary feast. From this discussion it is clear that the Feast of San Giovanni – particularly given its longevity – has been significant throughout the city’s development.

That the iconography of this festival was linked to the historical order of the city is recalled constantly in relation to the chronicles and reflected in some of the architecture of the city. Villani, it will be recalled, mentioned in his account of the festival the lighting of hearth fires ‘as in Jerusalem.’⁸ In classical Rome, this too was a significant gesture. The rites surrounding the sacred fire almost always involved the annual extinction and re-kindling of the fire.⁹ Most families’ house cult was specific to them as it related to their own ancestors, and as such the hearth flame symbolised continuity because if the flame was extinguished it was considered to be the end of the family. The son of the family would inherit the family cult and assume the role of the priest when the father died but the daughter would adopt the cult of the family into which she married.¹⁰ In the Roman world the fire was ritually renewed on the first of March following strict rules regarding the processes of lighting the fire to preserve its purity. Each family may have had different criteria but generally there was a restriction on the type of woods that were allowed to kindle the flame, or which flame could

⁸ Villani, *Villani’s Chronicle*, Bk. 1; Ch. 60. Also referred to in Dante Par. xvi. 25, 47. Par. xvi. 42.

⁹ Eliade, *Myth of the Eternal Return*, 67–69.

¹⁰ This ritual expulsion and admission was the subject of Sophocles’ *Antigone and Creon* which viewed the background for the relationship between house cults and state religion and the conflict between them.

be the source for its reignition,¹¹ or it was lighted by rays from the sun.¹² Thus, Villani's reference to the event in relation to one of the most articulated festivals in the Christian calendar of the city suggests a very conscious understanding of the legacy of the Roman foundation of the city discussed in chapter two.

Equally, references to the Feast of San Giovanni in Dati's description acknowledge of the iconography of its Roman predecessors. The associated trade, games and markets that accompanied the religious aspects of the day were further augmented by the tributes (in the form of *palii*), as well as the use of oxen to pull the cart of the Mint familiar from the Roman foundation rite, as is the more general iconography of triumph linked to the military prowess of the various Gonfalone. The whole *feste* is primarily the Christian feast day of San Giovanni translated by the Commune through baptism and its link to the Baptistery (also understood to have a Roman heritage) into an initiation into the Commune itself.

But there are also other events and celebrations that help clarify what one might call 'the symbolic landscape of the city' that underpinned much of this civic activity – such as the significant singular 'entries' recorded during this period. The path taken on these entries to the city (excepting the bishops' entry described in Toker *Holy Ground*)¹³ seems to have been influenced by this circumnavigation developed in relation to the celebrations for the feast of San Giovanni. In 1418, for example, Pope Martin V arrived through the northern city gate (Porta S. Gallo), travelled south along the old Roman Road and Cardo until it reached the historic location of the *Pomoerium* (Map 4.13b). From here, at the location of the baptistery and cathedral, the procession turned left in order to circumnavigate the city clockwise along

¹¹ In Rome it was rekindled from the Temple of Vesta.

¹² "The sacred fire, which was so intimately associated with the worship of the dead, belonged in its essential character, properly to each family. It represented the ancestors; it was the providence of a family, and had nothing in common with the fire of a neighbouring family." Coulanges, *The Ancient City*, 37.

¹³ Toker, *On Holy Ground*.

much of the Roman city boundary, continuing west along the Borgo Santi Apostoli before heading north and onward to Santa Maria Novella where the pope was eventually to be lodged. All subsequent recorded ceremonial arrivals also follow the path of this wall at some point during their journey thus cementing the iconography of the Commune into the iconography of the city and its perceived Roman (Republican and/or Imperial) precedent.¹⁴ These events were often accompanied by ephemera (including Triumphal Arches, Elements at Junctions, Isolated Elements, and Ornamental Facades) which further heightened the symbolic representation of the city and, during certain key episodes, renewed the association of Florence and its architecture with a 'New Rome'.¹⁵ In addition to this, the *pallii* given as tributes to the city linked its identity to the surrounding contado and beyond, reinforcing its status as the most significant political entity in the region.

The significance of these relationships is confirmed by the events that occurred during Lorenzo the Magnificent's (1449-1492) unofficial rule of the city when he ordered that these *pallii* (seen as republican relics) were removed from the Baptistery. He then proceeded to interfere with the iconography of the hitherto 'Republican' Christian festivals – particularly the Feast of the Magi – which had already been altered by his father Cosimo de Medici (1389-1464) as set out below.¹⁶

The Feast of the Magi – January 6th

¹⁴ For example; the 1515 Entry of Leo X; 1518 Maddalena de la Tour d'Auvergne; 1539 Marriage: Cosimo I and Eleonora; 1565 Marriage Giovanna d'Austria; 1569 Carlo d'Austria – Entry; 1574 Cosimo I Funeral; 1589 Marriage Cristina di Lorena; and 1608 Marriage Maria Maddalena d'Austria in chapter five.

¹⁵ At this time, Florence was described as the *parva Roma* (Little Rome) and hence the idea of *romanitas* associated with Rome and the Catholic church. Otto Hartwig, *Quellen und Forschungen zur ältesten Geschichte der Stadt Florenz* (Marburg, 1875), 56. and Nicolai Rubinstein, 'The Beginnings of Political Thought in Florence. A Study in Mediaeval Historiography', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 5 (1942), 201.

¹⁶ The Medici were burghers who under Cosimo became the premier merchant/banking family of the fourth estate in the city.

The original Feast of the Magi involved a small procession between the Duomo and the Baptistery,¹⁷ but it was a significant feast for the city because it was on this feast day that San Giovanni is thought to have baptised Jesus in the Jordan. By 1390 it was recorded that on the feast day the ‘... Magi went through the whole city ...’ and performed a play at the site of the baptistery re-enacting the ‘Massacre of the Innocents’.¹⁸ The significance of this procession to the Medici began under Cosimo di Medici who became frustrated by his lack of success in taking control of the ‘stubbornly communal’ Feast of San Giovanni, and found that influencing this less significant – but linked – festival was less of an issue for the communal government and the *popolo*. Thus, his new extended path of the feast went from the Cathedral and Baptistery, past the site that was to become the new Medici palace (1444-84) up to the Dominican foundation of San Marco where Cosimo was a significant patron. From there it returned to the cathedral via SS. Annunziata past another Medici palace of the fifteenth century.

In precipitating (or taking advantage of) these changes the Medici also appropriated much of the iconography for its own benefit. This can be seen firstly in the Gozzoli fresco (1458-61) representing the arrival of the Magi that dominates the small chapel in the Medici-Ricardi Palace (begun 1444). Here, the Medici – represented as the Magi on their way to greet Christ – were portrayed as wealthy, powerful, of international repute, and ‘princely’.¹⁹ Their association with the Magi as ambassadors and envoys of Florence is clear

¹⁷ See the *Mores* in Toker, *On Holy Ground*.

¹⁸ The exact path of this first extended procession is not known. Rab Hatfield, ‘The Compagnia De’ Magi’, *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 33 (1970), 108.

¹⁹ The iconography of the painting itself is thought to have been influenced by the relatively recent arrival of the John VIII Palaiologos (1392-1448) Byzantine Emperor (1425-48) with a magnificent retinue and various scholars who added to the rapidly developing humanist environment of the city such as Gemistus Pletho (c.1355-c.1452), to attend the Council of Florence in 1439, while Cosimo was holding the role of Gonfaloniere of Justice. (All of these men appear in the painting).

and thus the painting suggests an elaborate procession similar to one in the festal cycle of Florence as well as a historical representation of a biblical event. The painting, combined with the fact that the procession passed by the front façade of their new Palazzo, anchored their identity – and that of the Palazzo – to both the city and the church simultaneously. Even before their elevation to the Dukedom, the Medici were civic ‘royalty’, billeting most of the dignitaries who visited the city.²⁰ Thus their palazzo, like the Palazzo Vecchio and the Bargello before, developed the iconography of a civic institution, but here, additionally that of a private dwelling. The family, the processional activities of the feast, and the architecture, all contributed to this iconographic order to such a degree that the religious importance of the event was matched by its civic meaning, and by association, the status of the Medici.²¹ Complex narratives of this significant city festival, which include the representation of processional order, are also evident in the frescoes of the Sassetti Chapel (1478-85) in the church of Santa Trinita and so will be discussed here in some detail as they illuminate further the close links between festival and civic order within the city at the time.

The Sassetti Chapel and the Representation of Urban Processions

The Church of Santa Trinita was re-founded in 1092 by the Vallombrosian Order on the site of an earlier triconch Carolingian Oratory just outside the city walls.²² In 1250, about four years after the onset of the construction of the Dominican Church of Santa Maria Novella, and around the time of the construction of Ponte Santa Trinita, Niccolò Pisano was given the

²⁰ Trexler, *Public Life in Renaissance Florence*, 425.

²¹ The implications of this will be discussed further in chapter five.

²² No evidence survives of this church but it is probably a small pilgrimage chapel dating from ca.775-850. Howard Saalman, *The Church of Santa Trinita in Florence* (1966), 9.

task of rebuilding and expanding the church.²³ By the late thirteenth century Santa Trìnita had lost its status as a key church in the governmental districts of Florence but nevertheless remained on the processional routes for the Feasts of San Giovanni and Corpus Christi as well as all significant entries into the city and as such retained some significance.

Francesco Sassetti acquired his chapel in Santa Trìnita to the right of the main altar from the Fastelli-Petriboni family in 1478-9 after his plans to decorate the main altar at the Dominican church of Santa Maria Novella with a cycle of frescos depicting the life of St Francis faltered.²⁴ This was a step down in prestige but nevertheless resulted in a significant commission and once he had transferred his efforts to the chapel at Santa Trìnita, work progressed relatively quickly and the chapel was completed by 1485. During the years it took to complete the commission Sassetti's own life, as well as that of the city underwent many challenges.²⁵

Sassetti's choice of the life of St Francis (his name saint) was not unusual, in fact documents dating from 1417 suggest that as well as this personal connection, St Francis was already venerated in Santa Trìnita.²⁶ However, the version painted by Ghirlandaio deviates from the authoritative version set out at Assisi, particularly in its relationship to the representation of cities which is relevant to the study here. Cadogan suggests that 'Themes and decorative motifs from pagan antiquity and classical art leaven the traditional Franciscan imagery. There are moreover references to rebirth and resurrection in the chapel

²³ Giorgio Vasari, *Lives of the Most Eminent Painters, Sculptors and Architects [Volume 1 of 10]: Cimabue to Agnolo Gaddi*, trans. by Gaston du C. de Vere (London, 1912), I.

²⁴ Eve Borsook and Johannes Offerhaus, *Francesco Sassetti and Ghirlandaio at Santa Trìnita, Florence: History and Legend in a Renaissance Chapel* (1981). The Patronage of the chapel had been granted to the Petriboni family in 1394. Jeanne K. Cadogan, *Domenico Ghirlandaio: Artist and Artisan* (2000), 233.

²⁵ In 1478 his eldest son, Teodoro, died and his patron, Lorenzo di Medici, narrowly avoided death at the hands of the Pazzi conspirators.

²⁶ Borsook and Offerhaus, *Francesco Sassetti and Ghirlandaio at Santa Trìnita, Florence*, Doc. 2.

program that reflect the secondary dedication of the chapel to the Nativity and which had particular relevance to the family history of the patron.’²⁷ For Cadogan the revelatory themes begin with the mural on the external arch depicting the Tiburtine Sybil prophesising the birth of Christ to Augustus on the Capitoline Hill in Rome²⁸ – an event given more relevance at the time as Poliziano had recently found texts suggesting that it was Augustus who had founded Florence.²⁹ This image – including an obvious depiction of Rome – is next to a painted figure of David (as prophet) who also serves as a civic symbol and therefore another reference to the birth of Rome as well as Florentine Republicanism.³⁰ Further sibyls are represented in the vaults of the chapel, but it is the narrative of St Francis and their urban settings which is striking. The main chapel comprises six major frescoes covering aspects of the life of St Francis (Figs.), and an altarpiece depicting the Adoration of the Shepherds (Fig). The frescos listed in order of occurrence of the event depicted are:

1. St Francis Renouncing his worldly goods (Fig.)
2. The Confirmation of the Rule of St Francis by Pope Honorius III (Fig.)
3. St Francis before the Sultan (Fig.)
4. The Stigmatisation of St Francis (Fig.)
5. The Funeral of St Francis (Fig. 5.)
6. Posthumous resurrection of the Notary’s son (Fig.)

The frescos on the left depict various cities in larger landscapes (as does the altarpiece); the two central frescos depict urban spaces of Florence (Piazza della Signoria and Piazza Santa Trinita); and the frescoes on the right depict internal scenes thus giving an overall movement from left to right of landscape to interior. In addition to this, the top three are

²⁷ Cadogan, *Domenico Ghirlandaio*, 233.

²⁸ Cadogan, *Domenico Ghirlandaio*, 234ff.

²⁹ Angelo Ambrogani (1454-94), known as Poliziano, based his claim for an Augustinian foundation (using the *triumviri* of Antony, Augustus, and Lepidus) on his discovery of the *Liber Colonialium* which Vincenzo Borghini (1515-80) used with Vasari to build the iconography of the painting of the foundation of Florence in the *Salone del Cinquecento* 1563-65. Hans Baron, *The Crisis of the Early Italian Renaissance: Civic Humanism and Republican Liberty in an Age of Classicism and Tyranny* (1966), 71.

³⁰ Borsook and Offerhaus, *Francesco Sassetti and Ghirlandaio at Santa Trinita, Florence*, 32–33.

scenes from the life of St Francis whereas the lower three depict his death (stigmatisation and funeral) and posthumous acts (resurrection of the boy) before the chapel shifts to the birth of Jesus in the altarpiece flanked by images of the donor and his wife and their respective sarcophagi at ground level.

Representations of Cities in the Frescoes

Within the frescos almost all the events depicted appear to be located in different places than they actually occurred. This is most obvious in the two events illustrated in Florence (The Confirmation of the Rule and the Resurrection of the Boy both occurred in Rome) but also continues in the other landscape images and has led to much speculation as to the why these substitutions were made. Cadogan suggest the following:

The persistent change of venue from Rome to Florence has been interpreted by Borsook and Offerhaus as a conscious reference to Florence as the New Rome, seat of republican values. This idea had informed the imagery of the Sala dei Gigli in the Palazzo Vecchio and was invoked here as part of the theme of rebirth.³¹

Having said that, while many of the interpretations of the overall themes offered by Borsook and Offerhaus (1981) and Cadogan (2000) may have some credence, their suggestions as to which specific cities were represented have some limitations. There are some obvious candidates beyond the two clear representations of the public spaces of Florence, but also some that are less clear. The city in the fresco with Augustus is clearly Rome, indicated by depictions of the Pantheon and Trajan's Column (Fig.). However, the supposed second depiction of Rome in the altarpiece is less convincing (Fig.). Borsook and Offerhaus argue that the image includes both the *Torre de Milizie* (Fig.) and Hadrian's Mausoleum as

³¹ Cadogan, *Domenico Ghirlandaio*, 235. The imagery in the Sala dei Gigli has already been referenced in relation to Roman civic virtue in chapter two.

portrayed in Pietro del Massaio's (1420-ca.73/80) view of Rome ca.1450 (Figs.),³² but do not explain why, if Ghirlandaio was using this image, all of the town gates have round towers and what the reason is behind showing a major building with turrets on each corner that has real similarities with the recently completed Lyon Cathedral (1480) (Fig.) which does not appear in Massaio's image at all?³³ It is of course important not to be too literal with fifteenth-century representation but there must be consistency. The representation of the Dome of the Rock in the other city in the distance is more convincing as a depiction of Jerusalem but even here, whether there are one or two cities represented is unclear (Fig.).

Elsewhere, in the image depicting St Francis renouncing his worldly goods (Figs.), Borsook and Offerhaus suggest that the city represented is Geneva and cite another portrait of Sassetti by Ghirlandaio as support for this assumption (Figs.). Rosenberg discussing the same portrait also suggests the city is Geneva arguing that the church behind Sassetti's right shoulder in the portrait is the oratory of Our Lady built by Sassetti whilst running the Medici bank there from 1447 onwards.³⁴ Again there are problems with this specific identification (Fig.). No similar image exists of Geneva at the time, and one of the most significant elements of the image in the chapel is the large hill on the left which seems to form a part of the city (Figs.); a landscape closer to the topography of Lyon rather than Geneva. Borsook and Offerhaus make a case that the portrait was painted around the same time as the chapel but for some reason included a younger image of Sassetti alongside one of his sons.³⁵

³² Torre de Milizie in centre of the right border of Fig. 5.57, compared to tower one third along from the left at the bottom of Fig 5.59; Hadrian's Mausoleum near the centre of Fig. 5.59 (C. sci Angeli).

³³ Borsook and Offerhaus, *Francesco Sassetti and Ghirlandaio at Santa Trinità, Florence*, 34.

³⁴ Charles M. Rosenberg, 'Virtue, Piety and Affection: Some Portraits by Domenico Ghirlandaio', in *Il Ritratto e La Memoria: Materiali 2*, ed. by A Gentili, P Morel, and C Cieri (Rome, 1993), 190.

³⁵ Sassetti's elder son Teodoro probably died in Lyon in 1478/9 shortly before the birth of another son, born in May 1479, who he also named Teodoro. Cadogan, *Domenico Ghirlandaio*, 234.

The ambiguity of this portrait (it is unclear which son is depicted) and a possible link with the fresco depicting the resurrection of the boy offers the possibility that the second Teodoro was seen by his father in equally miraculous terms. As it is likely that his elder son may have died in Lyon at roughly the same time as his younger son was born, probably also in Lyon, the depiction of Lyon rather than Geneva would offer a clearer argument in support of Borsook and Offerhaus' claim for links between the portrait and the chapel image of the resurrected boy. It also presents a possibility that the image of St Francis Renouncing his worldly goods has a setting commensurate with Sassetti's own impoverishment, albeit related to circumstance rather than choice.

The Stigmatisation of St Francis contains relatively clear representations of the Chapel of La Verna, where St Francis did receive the stigmata (Fig.), and of Pisa with its campanile, baptistery and Duomo (Fig). This could be seen as a narrative of the Arno which, soon after its origins north of Stia in the Apennines, flows south about ten kilometres west of la Verna, and eventually joins the Mediterranean at Pisa. It is unclear whether the other two towns visible in the fresco represent generic towns on this river route or relate to some aspect in the life of St Francis or Sassetti. At the time of painting the fresco Pisa would have been controlled by Florence – it was not until 1494 that it gained independence following the invasion of Charles VIII of France – so it is possible that the fresco could be a representation of Tuscany, the rich hinterland of the Florence and source of much of its trading wealth.

Perhaps such recognition that Florence was associated with other places should be asserted even more forcefully across other forms of representation too insofar as these images may not have been seen as substitutions at all, but recognitions of the multivalency of the landscape of Florence. Seen at times as Jerusalem and Rome – but also as a place of

memory, renewal, and return, where the city's symbolic landscape is understood to have a universal significance – the events depicted in the frescoes related directly to the festive activities that continued in the streets and squares of the city beyond, situating the universal events of hagiography in the real places of Florence in the present. This can be supported further by looking at the personalities present in the frescos.

Representation of Time and Movement in the Frescoes

As mentioned above, it appears that Francesco Sassetti and many of his family are depicted in the frescoes. This practice was not uncommon and the appearance of Lorenzo the Magnificent and his sons alongside Sassetti's own family would have been a significant gesture so soon after the attempt on Lorenzo Medici's life (Fig.).³⁶ However, like the chronicles, it appears that the frescoes are designed to look forward as much as back and as a result offer interesting themes relating to the image of Florence as well as the significant figures and families depicted. Ghirlandaio himself appears in the fresco of the *Resurrection of the Notary's Son* alongside his brother Davide (Figs.),³⁷ and there is at least one other artist depicted as the old shepherd carrying the lamb in the altarpiece (Figs.).³⁸ But it is the appearance of the humanists Poliziano, Luigi Pulci (1432-84) and Matteo Franco (1447-94) that is perhaps the most telling (Figs.). Not only do these portraits confirm Sassetti's own humanist credentials (Bartolomeo Fonzio was his librarian,³⁹ and he went on to become a

³⁶ In the Pazzi conspiracy of 1478.

³⁷ Cadogan, *Domenico Ghirlandaio*, 236.

³⁸ The manuscript illuminator Gherardo di Monte di Giovanni di Miniato. Borsook and Offerhaus, *Francesco Sassetti and Ghirlandaio at Santa Trinità, Florence*, 42.

³⁹ Albinia de La Mare, 'The Library of Francesco Sassetti', in *Cultural Aspects of the Italian Renaissance: Essays in Honour of Paul Oskar Kristeller*, ed. by Cecil H. Clough (Manchester, 1976), 165. 'The Aristotle [*Ethics, Politics and Physics*], and Sassetti's copy of Brunini's *History of Florence* ... two volumes of Cicero's letters ... must have been ones by which Sassetti set special store'. de La Mare, 'The Library of Francesco Sassetti', 168. Sassetti's library had copies of 'the *Aeneid*, Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Pliny's *Natural History*, Martial and Macrobius. Borsook and Offerhaus, *Francesco Sassetti and Ghirlandaio at Santa Trinità, Florence*, 11.

governing officer of both the *Studios* of Pisa and Florence) but also alluding to the wider understanding of Florence, its civic status, and its relationship to Rome.

What is clear is that within the fresco cycle there are different levels of representation of the city which relate the exegetical tradition (literal, allegorical/ethical, tropological/symbolic, anagogical/mystical).⁴⁰ But critically, nearly all of the scenes represent transitional moments of time in motion as in a festival not, as is often the case in Renaissance art a moment of pause or a specific gestural movement.⁴¹ If this is seen as the priority then perspective is only a tool used to facilitate this aim; and the receding landscape has become an opportunity to represent different moments in the procession of time that, in a festival, allow the interpretation of spaces to oscillate between different places and their avatar in/as Florence.

For example, the altar piece depicts the moment that the shepherds are to be replaced by the Magi in the adoration, the whole event presented as a sort of procession with the Holy family at the head (as in the Feast of Corpus Christi). The *Death of St Francis* (Figs.), although apparently situated in a chapel depicts the acolytes bearing the necessary elements for a funeral procession. The *Renunciation of the Worldly Goods* appears with a group of civic representatives who together have gathered to witness the scene – the last couple in the centre just arriving in time. In both these scenes the city is represented in its form (*urbs*) and as a body of people (*civitas*). In the *Resurrection of the Boy*, the gathered community, apparently listening to a funeral oration in the street outside S. Trinita, create a foreground vision of solemnity measured against the background which depicts the moment

⁴⁰ See also St Augustine's *De Genesi at Litteram* he suggests: 'In all the sacred books, we should consider eternal truths that are taught, the facts that are narrated, the future events that are predicted, and the precepts or councils that are given'.

⁴¹ Bernard Berenson, *The Florentine Painters of the Renaissance* (New York; London, 1896), 50ff.

of the boy's death counterpointed by a procession emerging from the church, all framed in a classical portico broken by the gaze of the painter standing at the extreme right (Fig.). But it is in the *Confirmation of the Rule of St Francis* that this aspect of the cycle has its most clear realisation. The composition has at least four layers with the act of the confirmation itself depicted in the second layer where St Francis pays homage to Pope Honorius III apparently in front of large set of vaults (perhaps depicting the Basilica of Maxentius) (Fig.). In front of this occurs a domestic scene of Poliziano leading two other scholars (Luigi Pulci and Matteo Franco) with the three Medici children up to greet their father and Sassetti (as if in a salone) – mirroring St Francis and the Pope behind. Such a composition suggests the association of newly discovered classical knowledge (in the form of Poliziano) paying homage to but changing the existing order of the city (represented by Lorenzo the Magnificent and the Sassetti) with St Francis and Honorius III who contributed to changes within the church. Behind these layers the Piazza della Signoria is shown (the Palazzo Vecchio on the left), with the central arch of the Loggia dei Lanzi, which was the focus of many civic ceremonies, as the final threshold and vanishing point.⁴² Although the pope's eyeline is the highest in the front scenes, it coincides with that of the floor of the Loggia in Florence (slightly below the vanishing point), below that of the balustrade of the Ringhiera and the entry to the Palazzo. Whether this is significant is difficult to prove with any certainty, however, what can be seen in this image is something similar to the setting experienced in the contemporary feast of San Giovanni where the waiting civic dignitaries of the city gather in the Michelozzo court before processing into the city beyond. The thresholds depicted in the painting are spatial, political, and temporal, framing the city in

⁴² Public loggia build next to palazzi were common in Florence and were constructed as places for the family to hold public celebrations such as marriages. The Loggia dei Lanzi was built next to the Palazzo Vecchio for the same purpose, but on the scale of the city.

relation to its ordering that is revealed explicitly within civic festival activity. Thus, the architecture is placed within an iconography that is underpinned by movement, most often witnessed in civic festivals and here accentuated by the use of perspective. This transformation of space – using architecture – by Ghirlandaio is supported by the clear development of the composition from an original sketch now held on Berlin (Fig.). It appears that the original composition was more clearly in a room (Fig.) which also plays a role in the Funeral scene (Figs.) that was then transformed to become also recognisable as the city Florence – *parva Roma*.

In short, perspective is not utilised as a replacement for the depth of representation in festival that had evolved since the foundation of the commune, but as another tool in its realisation. Such use of perspective and procession can also be seen in relation to the Gozzoli painting of the *Journey of the Magi* (1458-61) (Fig. 4.16) linked explicitly to the history of the procession of the feast itself which passed the Medici palazzo on the way to the Dominican house at San Marco (Map); and also in Vasari's painting of the *Foundation of Florence* (1563-65) (Fig.) in the Palazzo Vecchio which draws on the Roman past to articulate the new Ducal Rule – where the city is presented in the act of being founded.⁴³ All of these representations contrast with the first known image of the city visible in the bottom section of the fourteenth-century *Madonna della Misericordia* which appears to have a different set of themes less related to the accuracy of their setting.

⁴³ The city is represented by the key buildings which, in the sixteenth century, were thought to be significant examples of the surviving fabric from the Roman city: The twin round turreted northern gates, the aqueduct and the reservoir it fed, the amphitheatre, and finally the temple of Mars (thought to have stood on the site of the baptistery. See Nicolai Rubinstein, 'Vasari's Painting of The Foundation of Florence in the Palazzo Vecchio', in *Essays in the History of Architecture: Presented to Rudolf Wittkower*, ed. by Rudolf Wittkower and others (1967).

City Culture and Processions

In the Palazzo Vecchio, Vasari's relatively accurate rendering of the city's orientation and layout during its foundation (1563-65) is dominated by the founding *triumviri*, identified by their respective helmets,⁴⁴ gifting a Roman *vexillum* in the form of a medieval banner to the people of Florence. In the distance Fiesole can be seen, pictured beneath a ram – the astrological sign under which Florence was founded – as well as a symbol of Christ and the *Arte della Lana* (the wool guild) one of the seven major guilds of the city. While Fiesole appears developed but deserted, Florence is full of activity related to its symbolic Roman origins, its spatial ordering, and its construction, with the founder in the middle of the painting, ploughing the first furrow moving anticlockwise around the boundary. Thus, as described earlier, the painting not only identifies the surviving remnants of the Roman city but alludes to knowledge of the likely form of its ritual foundation – a moment bridging the Republican and Imperial traditions and suggesting the origin of Florence was equivalent to the rites undertaken in the foundation of Rome.

The earlier depiction in the *Madonna della Misericordia* offers a different view of the city where, in line with medieval iconography, order is not established by mimicking real spatial relationships but by, amongst other things, 'gathering' the principal monuments active within civic life into the centre of the image. For example, the decorated tower to the left of the Baptistery in the image is the demolished campanile of San Piero Maggiore, the first church visited by any new bishop of the city following their inauguration. Vasari's later image replaces these hierarchies by explicitly linking the city with its classical – not medieval – origins and subordinating all other possible hierarchies to a more accurate spatial

⁴⁴ Augustus (Capricorn), Antony (Hercules) and Lepidus (equestrian)

representation in line with humanistic perspectivity. Nevertheless, this perspectival image, also displays processional and ritual themes linked to the foundation of Florence as well as Rome. Indeed, Vasari's painting indicates that at the time of its commission, the idea of the ritual foundation of Florence was significant and likely to have influenced part of the annual rituals of renewal of the city – an hypothesis supported by the anticlockwise journey of the medieval procession on the feast of San Giovanni, where the path followed the line of the old Roman *pomerium* inside the walls that bounded the contemporary city. However, in these two paintings there is clearly a shift in representational priority from present to past themes but also between two different ideas of city order that were not sequential but layered. And in addition, although they do manifest different pictorial sensibilities, the locus of activity is the same in both paintings and they both establish aspects of the landscape for festival praxis that is still accessible today. Such layering allowed the feast to develop but also to remain relevant even under very different political regimes.

In contrast to this continuity, the particular significance of the feast of the Magi to the Medici (depicted in their private chapel and in the altarpiece of the Sassetti chapel) and their influence on its form led to its later proscription. In the first instance, following the Pazzi conspiracy in 1478, the Medici themselves were able to affect the event, banning the use of wagons (*edifizi*) for the feast, so that later when it resumed in 1488 it was less spectacular than before.⁴⁵ However, more significantly, by the time that Savonarola was in control of the city in 1494 all lavish celebrations held on the streets of Florence that were not seen by him as a critical part of the religious iconography of the city – such as the Medici controlled feast of Magi – were banned, while the events and processions of San Giovanni

⁴⁵ Hatfield, 'The Compagnia De' Magi', 119.

were allowed to continue. From the events that influenced the growth and eventual decline of the Feast of the Magi it can be inferred that for a feast to survive political change in Florence during this period its representative praxis – in this particular context in relation to Roman republican and Christian virtue – needed to maintain a balance between pragmatic and paradigmatic order. The predominantly sacramental aspects of the Christian feasts of the feudal era had to be adapted for the consumption of the *popolino* of the thirteenth century and beyond. But equally, this episode suggests that if a feast became too obviously representative of a particular government or family then it was also likely to be banned, unsupported, or abandoned once the government changed or the family became less significant (or too important).

The Feast of San Giovanni seems to have managed to negotiate this territory by developing civic identity linked to the original Roman foundation, as well as a religious one linked to its Christian iconography, and in doing so allowed the Commune, the *Podestà*, the *Gonfaloniere*, (and later the princes, dukes, and Fascists) to adapt the feast to suit their own requirements as well as those of the city and the *popoli* (even if they were unaware of the layers of tradition and the order it established). For example, in 1491 Lorenzo di Medici did not suppress the San Giovanni procession but added fifteen floats re-enacting the triumphs of Aemilius Paullus,⁴⁶ an allegory to Lorenzo's own virtues as a leader.

More generally, in relation to the buildings of the city, the obvious point to make is that the main civic buildings, and the cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore and the Baptistry,

⁴⁶ Chrétien, *The Festival of San Giovanni*, 11. Aemilius Paullus (229-10BC) was a Roman Consul and famed Republican General who defeated Macedon. Therefore, in the early Renaissance he could be viewed as a Republican with Imperial 'patriotic virtues'. Ventrone, 'La Festa Di San Giovanni : Costruzione Di Un'identità Civica Fra Rituale e Spettacolo (Secoli XIV-XVI)', 64. For a Roman account of his life see Plutarch, *Roman Lives A Selection of Eight Lives*, ed. by Philip A. Stadter, trans. by Robin Waterfield, Reissue edition (Oxford ; New York, 2008), 36.

were all located on the boundary of the old Roman *pomoerium*. Although there are no documents that establish specific relationships between other buildings of the city and the various festive processions that continually inhabited the streets of the city, it can be inferred that they were at least a factor that contributed to the significance of the streets. For example, the grouping of Black Guelf palazzi belonging to the Albizi, Altoviti, Donati and Pazzi families located on the eastern section of the old Roman *Decumanus* were located perfectly for the entry processions for new bishops (the Blacks were the more conservative papist side of the Guelf party) as well as for the Palio mentioned in Dati's account of the feast day in chapter one. Not only did the bishop travel past these palazzi and onward to San Pier Maggiore on the day of his arrival, but on the second day the first public act undertaken by the bishop in honour of Florence's first bishop took place amidst the houses along the Borgo degli Albizi (now named after one of these significant families).

What becomes clear is that from early in the fourteenth century the church was no longer only institution of the city charged with defining the routes for the processions even though much of the iconography gifted by the church to the events remained intact. Their basic instructions, set out in the consuetudinaries, were not compromised but augmented by additions designed to allow greater representation of the city's civic order. This is made clearer by the various accounts and diaries of the period that recorded aspects of wealth, splendour and pomp rather than the more mundane things such as the exact paths of the processions. And, as has been suggested already, even though the architectural setting was clearly critical for the events, it seems that the chroniclers felt no need to describe them.

It appears then that for the burghers of Florence the architecture of the city was so essential as a background that it needed no description apart from some of the notable temporary additions and shows put on by merchants, traders, and institutions. These

fashionable, wealthy shows, which began with the '*mostra*' on the first days of the feast, were supplemented by personal displays of wealth and power within the later processional rites – as discussed in relation to the Medici above. This is confirmed by the sheer number of men (and sometimes women) with brand new livery listed as being part of various family brigades participating in the festival processions.⁴⁷ However, that is not to say that aspects of route, structure, and hierarchy were left to the whims of the most powerful families. Special institutions (*festaioli*)⁴⁸ were charged with the job of organising the events, and the parameters within which they had to operate were somewhat limited by the Statutes of the city itself. Even the drastic events of the Pazzi conspiracy only resulted in a delay of some events and a cancellation of the parade of *edifizi*.⁴⁹

From Church to City

It appears, therefore, that over this period a shift in control of the processional order from the church to the city took place – even though they were both significant (as indicated by the mosaics within the baptistery mentioned in the last chapter) – with some freedom of expression granted to the citizens and visitors to Florence (as in many of the Roman Festivals favoured by the plebs). It is no surprise then that the Iconography of Roman Republican and early Imperial rule was often used as a means of articulating hierarchies of symbolic and ritual order alongside the more prosaic world of tax revenue and general civic administration which were clearly the main tasks of the *Signori* now housed in their own

⁴⁷ Trexler, *Public Life in Renaissance Florence*, 227ff.

⁴⁸ Trexler, *Public Life in Renaissance Florence*, 247. Such as the *la Società di San Giovanni Battista di Firenze* still active today.

⁴⁹ The parade of *edifizi* was stopped for ten years but resumed with the triumphal entry of the son of Innocent VIII on the occasion of his betrothal to one of Lorenzo's daughters. Ventrone, 'La Festa Di San Giovanni : Costruzione Di Un'identità Civica Fra Rituale e Spettacolo (Secoli XIV-XVI)', 63.

palazzo. The elevation of these men to a quasi-priesthood, replete with accoutrements of state that mirroring the vestments of the church, was designed to elevate the oath of fealty from its feudal origins in birth and privilege to one based upon governance, trade and finance. As Trexler argues, the '... city hall had to be partly a church' with the Ringhiera (added to the building on the 1320s) acting as a virtual altar:

When the steps of the palace became a regular stopping place on the standard processional route – the priors were joined to the procession much as the relics fetched from churches – the building had definitely become one of the centres of ritual activity within the city.⁵⁰

Once the first set of commune walls were built in the twelfth century and the old Roman/early-medieval walls were demolished, a new road around the old city was constructed and this, combined with gaps in city fabric that had resulted from the destructive legacy of the early stages of the Guelph/Ghibelline conflict, allowed for the construction of some new urban spaces linked to the new 'order' of the city. At the time the only existing urban open spaces were the two medieval market squares; the Mercato Nuovo – situated beside the old south gate of the Roman city; and the Mercato Vecchio – a remnant of the old Roman Forum. These spaces, although important for business, and a focus for the successful development of the trading prowess upon which Florence based much of its newfound power, do not appear to have been central to the festive order of the city. Equally, the new guild-houses that were located on or near these piazzas do not seem to have been significant enough to shape the new urban order. However, around 1389,⁵¹ the main north south axis of the city was shifted one street to the west, away from the old

⁵⁰ Richard C. Trexler, 'Ritual Behaviour in Renaissance Florence: The Setting', in *Medieval and Renaissance Spirituality*, ed. by Paul Maurice Clogan, *Medievalia et Humanistica: Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Culture*, NS 4 (1973), 127. This is also confirmed by the fact that the closer someone was to the relics the more power it signified.

⁵¹ Fanelli, *Firenze, architettura e città*, 23.

Roman Cardo (the via Roma / Via Calimala) to the via Calzaiuoli which linked two new urban piazzi that were used for festivals – the Piazza San Giovanni and the Piazza Signoria – bypassing the markets. Thus emerged a further layer to the ordering of the city – a civic layer – which was most evident during the annual festive processions that took place within the city,⁵² sponsored, funded and embellished by the ever-increasing number of (competing) merchants and city grandees. It is as if the spaces and the festivals grew together, rather than one responding to the other.

While Trachtenberg's the *Dominion of the Eye* develops a theory related to the arrangement of these new streets and piazzas that describes their implementation as a form of 'proto' Renaissance planning,⁵³ the argument developed here suggests that even if such tools were used they were not the primary motive. The city was not contemplated as a form of visual 'tableau' where perspective was utilised to structure an idea of 'space', but as a place for festival which maintained other priorities. And even though the new guild houses and civic palazzi, as well as new mendicant churches and monasteries lined the streets of the expanding city and affirmed the gradual administrative organisation of the newly designated districts, the ritual ordering of the city seems to have remained primarily within the curtilage of the first set of communal walls centred on the Roman *pomoerium*. Thus, the tension between the original city boundaries and their significance to Florentine identity were linked to these new areas, beyond the historical boundaries, through new rites. In essence, the original rituals linked to the boundary transformed into ones oriented more

⁵² See Dati's description of Piazza Signoria during the Feast of San Giovanni in chapter one.

⁵³ Marvin Trachtenberg, *Dominion of the Eye: Urbanism, Art, and Power in Early Modern Florence* (2008). This particular theme is also visible in Guidoni's hypothetical construction of the planning of the second set of commune walls (Map 4.6b).

towards Heidegger's broader sense of 'boundedness',⁵⁴ no longer just a commemoration of the *dromenon* at a particular place and time but symbolic act linked to an identity which extended the everyday function of transgression and order into a ritual act or ceremonial performance, one open to different temporalities without having to be directly linked to Christian or Roman ideas of divinity.

Conclusion

Inevitably this chapter has covered a long-time frame and wide-ranging issues of iconography and representation, incorporating some key themes related to the era Trexler describes as the 'Classical Period of Florentine Feste – 1343-1480.'⁵⁵ The unfolding story of this time suggests that the changing rulers (then as now) still utilised the idea, form, and meaning of the *feste* as mechanisms of rule but also as representations of continuity. In this regard the festivities are not just appendages to the civic life of the city but manifestations of the city itself. For the fourteenth-century Florentine, festive life and civic life were the same. Over history, the internecine struggles between various guilds and other civic institutions were inevitably played out in the festivals and their associated activities.⁵⁶ Thus, the city festivals were primary situations where the agon of the city was preserved and manifested.

⁵⁴ 'A boundary is not that at which something stops but, as the Greeks recognised, the boundary is that from which something *begins its presencing*'. 'Building Dwelling Thinking' in Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. by Albert Hofstadter (1975), 154. '[Heidegger's] is a form of boundedness tied to the idea of that from which something begins in its unfolding as what it is, rather than that at which it comes to a stop; a concept of boundary as *origin* rather than as *terminus*.' Jeff Malpas, *Heidegger's Topology: Being, Place, World* (2008), 29.

⁵⁵ Trexler, *Public Life in Renaissance Florence*.

⁵⁶ Such as in the Calcio Storico in Florence. See Christian Frost, 'The Calcio Storico in Florence: Agonistic Ritual and the Space of Civic Order', in *Architecture, Festival, and the City*, ed. by Jemma Brown, Christian Frost, and Ray Lucas, Critiques (Abingdon, Oxon ; New York, 2019), xiv, 97–112.

It is, therefore, this period that sees the beginning of civic festival and offers an opportunity to reveal aspects of the transition from a sacramental to a civic order that, in the end, opens the way for both spectacular new forms of festival as well as heretofore unthinkable abuses. The significance of this moment is that this transition of meaning – from purely sacred through to sacro-civic – opened the way for a clearer understanding of the ontological nature of ritual and, in the process led to the greater opportunities for mundane manipulation. Once the use of Sacramental order – underpinned by faith, blood, and entitlement – was extended into the meritocracy of the urban intelligentsia, and the actions of man within this previously exclusive representational field were accepted, the field itself became accessible to man – exposed and manipulatable. And it is this order which is still visible in the contemporary festival and the architecture that continues to support it. An exploration of the issues at stake in this phase will form the basis of Part Two of this book.

As can be seen from the discussion throughout Part One, the Feast Day of San Giovanni has been, and still is, a significant day for Florence. Since its revival in the 1930s – but also throughout much of the city's history – church processions and civic parades have been augmented by a series of other events that together combine to represent the city to itself and to others. This re-presentation is not a mask that conceals Florence's 'true' identity for foreign consumption, or one that invents something that is not present, but even in today's information driven world, an authentic manifestation of the city where everyday relationships and actions – historic and contemporary, economic and paradigmatic – in both mundane and ceremonial settings are elevated to become the focus of different representations from an architectural to an urban scale.

The current form of the Feast of S Giovanni, although clearly built upon Roman and feudal origins, has more in common with the later medieval festival documented by Villani and the Ducal form that followed. At this time the festival began to develop a more 'communal' character and was adapted periodically to support new manifestations civic order – such as that of the Medici Dukes from the sixteenth century onwards, and the fascists of the twentieth century – before settling on its current form. This changing political and social landscape has affected some aspects of the festival but equally, much has remained constant. Hence, the festive experiences described so far have the quality of typicality, but also move across the spectrum from custom, through ceremony (which would include dramatic performances), to ritual. In this hierarchy, the more the events occupy the latter end of this spectrum, the more they have the quality of conscious or deliberate re-enactment, and, as such, they disclose important content to which the city continually returns in order to maintain 'orientation' in changing historical circumstances – i.e. it is the paradigmatic aspects of ritual that underpin the continuity of the feast even if the pragmatic manifestations change. These changes, or fluctuations of form, might best be characterised as rhythms that carry different levels of intensity or profundity. So, for example, the church the Catholic Mass is celebrated weekly as well as on special occasions, such as weddings or funerals; then, the year, with its seasons and associated weeks and days, are tracked according to the life of Christ and the saints. The Feast of S Giovanni was (and is) celebrated once within such a cycle, aligning the city with its patron saint and therefore with their God as well as with the summer solstice. However, more specifically, while the processions and masses that occur in this cycle can be seen to be linked to symbolic ideas of re-founding, other political parades and meetings that have occurred in the Piazza della Signoria (and elsewhere the city) have their own cycle which, although more explicitly civic in origin, are

also never totally outside the potential for grace. Consequently, within this spectrum of incidence, it is the understanding of aspects of architecture and festival that sit between custom and ritual that play an important role in the unfolding discourse offered here.

It is also important to note that similar alignments in time, place and institution occur in most religions which maintain a calendar that fluctuates between the cyclic renewal of seasonal time and a historical unfolding of time with a distinct moment of creation and a future oriented to an 'end of days.' As such, in a discourse on the nature of festival and architecture, the Feast of San Giovanni can be understood as an exemplar for festival conditions relevant far beyond its European setting.

Part Two – Architecture, Culture and Experience

Introduction

Although throughout the eight-hundred-year history of the festival of San Giovanni in Florence the exact nature and scale of the celebrations has changed in response to different political and social conditions, the first section of this book illustrated that the scope of its embodiment has remained more or less the same. The festival has always been an opportunity; for the city to remind itself of its historical and its contemporary identity; to represent itself to itself, as well as to others; to celebrate its successes over the year; to encourage commerce; and, perhaps most importantly, to reveal, acknowledge and challenge its civic structure and the business of governance. Thus, the festival is never an event with only one narrative governed by one social group but a singular event with multiple narratives and many layers of meaning that together combine to make something that has value to (and for) the city as a whole. It is this process of representation – albeit with what appears to be different layers – particularly in relation to architecture and the spaces of city, that forms the main topic of part two of this book. By the end of this section it is hoped that these ‘layers’ are no longer understood as distinct experiences but more as different horizons of the same situation, thus allowing the overall conditions of the festival and architecture to be seen in relation to the whole. In order to do this each of the next two chapters will take an aspect of the relationship between festival and architecture raised in part one and, through the evaluation of a particular building, or group of buildings, present architecture understood as an experience linked to culture. However, before such an

exercise can begin some of the ideas touched upon in Part One, and some critical terminology, need to be explored beginning with the word 'experience'.

The Experience of Architecture

In English we have one word for experience, albeit with various meanings, but in German there are two: *Erfahrung* and *Erlebnis*. Broadly speaking, *Erfahrung* is used to describe neutral experiences, but also used when describing someone's expertise (to be experienced), whereas *Erlebnis* is used for more interesting experiences and so more often than not is described in direct relationship to a particular event and its meaning or value.¹ The use of the word 'experience' in relation to architecture has a history which relates in some ways to this distinction but is characterised in more pragmatic terms in such a way that once experience is understood more in terms of *Erfahrung* it is possible to lose the idea of the depth implied by *Erlebnis* altogether. For example, in his classic book *Experiencing Architecture* first published in English in 1959, Steen Eiler Rasmussen presents an idea that architecture has to be experienced to be understood properly and one must '... observe how it was designed for a special purpose and how it is attuned the entire concept and rhythm of a specific era.'² But whilst this attunement to experience suggests an interest in understanding architecture as set out in Part One of this book, in fact his call for experience is limited to the pragmatic aspects of architecture – form, utility, material, texture, colour, sound, and light. For Rasmussen the 'rhythm of an era' relates only to these pragmatic aspects of architecture and, therefore, when he begins to describe the 'planned views' of modern towns he perpetuates prejudices towards the objectification of space of modernity

¹ Hans Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. by William Glen-Doepel (1979), 55ff.

² Steen Eiler Rasmussen, *Experiencing Architecture* (Cambridge, Mass, 1964), 33.

(and the primacy of sight) where a purely visual understanding of perspectivity is seen to be the most appropriate method to order an urban *paysage*. While there are moments in the book where he begins to assess how spaces are inhabited and used for activities other than those they were planned for – revealing the possibility of a broader interpretation of the setting for ‘experience’ – even then he does not dwell on the cultural aspects of architecture. This allows him to focus his analysis on the use of historical forms in the making of the present experiential field – like that implied in Fischer von Erlach’s book – but only when these forms are detached from the cultural context that created them in the first place. In his understanding of ‘experience’, cultural continuity is not accounted for except in terms of the objectivity of space and the repeated presence of certain forms. Therefore, in this work, aspects of *Erlebnis* become much more difficult to locate, allowing the reader to ignore such ideas altogether.

More recently, Juhani Pallasmaa has attempted to address this difficulty developing an understanding of the experience of architecture which accounts for a deeper level of engagement:

Architecture articulates the experiences of being-in-the-world and strengthens our sense of reality and self; it does not make us inhabit worlds of mere fabrication and fantasy ... Buildings and cities provide the horizon for the understanding and confronting of the human *existential* condition. Instead of creating mere objects of visual seduction, architecture relates, mediates and projects meanings. The ultimate meaning of any building is beyond architecture; it directs our consciousness back to the world and towards our own sense of self and being. Significant architecture makes us experience ourselves as complete embodied and spiritual beings. In fact, this is the greatest function of all meaningful art.³

While these comments from 2005 resonate with the ideas related to meaning and embodiment being explored here, in *the Eyes of the Skin* Pallasmaa does not expand upon

³ Juhani Pallasmaa, *The Eyes of the Skin: Architecture and the Senses*, 2nd Edition (Chichester : Hoboken, NJ, 2005), 11. (My italics)

these critical issues of embodiment and meaning, instead preferring to open up Rasmussen's analysis arguing for the engagement of other senses as well as sight. Thus, his comment that 'ultimate meaning of any building is beyond architecture' is left underexplored except within the realm of sensory experience and memory – his 'human existential condition' and our opportunity to 'experience ourselves as complete embodied and spiritual beings' lost in the greyness of *Erfahrung*.

Both authors begin by trying to explore the value of architecture through explanations of the experience of it terms of *Erlebnis and Erfahrung* but in the end concentrate on the limits of *Erfahrung*, where Being-in-the-world becomes more related to the components of physical experience rather than its potential fulfilment in *Erlebnis*. But at the same time (even in Pallasmaa) because their arguments related to culture become more focussed on individual experience rather than collective understanding, there is a danger that the reader can come away with the misapprehension that meanings are held in objects separate from their cultural origins – or in the mind of the observer who then projects meanings onto an unsuspecting world. Although this inference does not necessarily represent the view of the authors concerned, one could take this from the text, and it does present some issues. For example, while such an interpretation of experience does not nullify the content or cultural embodiment of the architecture being evaluated (which may continue to embody aspects of cultural value as set out in Part One of this book), nevertheless, the reduction of experience to purely sensory horizons can clearly affect the way architecture is experienced. i.e. without the other articulated horizons of experience revealed in Part One (relating to temporality and origins for example), sensory descriptions that are understood as the limits of experience tend to lead to instrumental descriptions of reality. However, on the other hand, care must also be taken not to over play the cultural

meaning inherent to architecture – it is equally possible that a poor piece of quattrocento architecture from Florence was not massively influenced by cultural themes presented in Part One. As Pallasmaa states, it is only ‘... significant architecture [that] makes us experience ourselves as complete embodied and spiritual beings’.

Nevertheless, it is the contention of this book that because meaning has a history within architecture and culture – whether recognised by the author or society specifically or not – it can still be present in the form of a building even if it was predominantly conceived through instrumental ideas. While it is not being argued that cultural knowledge of each situation is necessary for a true description of architecture to be made, the process through which such a contention can be evaluated demands, at the beginning, that the culture of any period is recognised in relation to its possible embodiment within architecture. Only later, once a deeper ontological connection has been made, can this requirement for knowledge be questioned. This evaluation, therefore, must also include the impact of the ideas of individuals.

For example, although many of his contemporaries appear to have found Le Corbusier’s apparently personal iconography surplus to requirements when it came to appreciating his oeuvre, it is possible to trace at least some of Corb’s ideas onto some themes outlined in Part One. Such a realisation suggests that even his most familiar quotes should be seen in a broader context than modernity.⁴ His written and built work indicate that Le Corbusier was not (contrary to much modernist belief) offering a universal method for the interpretation of architecture for all history in terms of form but, more likely, poetic examples of how to create architecture within the context of what he believed to be the

⁴ See Peter Carl, ‘Ornament and Time: A Prolegomena’, *AA Files*, 23, 1992, 49–64. And Peter Carl, ‘Architecture and Time: A Prolegomena’, *AA Files*, 22, 1991, 48–65.

already existent objectivity of the machine age. i.e. he was trying to reconnect the architectural culture of the time to deeper realities of contemporary cultural meaning including what he considered were critical paradigmatic themes. Therefore, in *Vers une Architecture* (1921) rather than condemning contemporary trends and forms of architecture purely as exercises in objectivity he suggested that contemporary industrial buildings and other new products of technology (cars, liners and aeroplanes etc.) already had an aesthetic reflecting the cultural beliefs of society (like earlier civilisations had theirs) and the poetic implications of this reality should be embraced; hence '*The house is a machine for living in*'. However, this simple statement does not define the limit of his representational aims. He continues this oft quoted '*House Machine*' statement with the comments that the house is: '... morally healthy ... [and beautiful] ... in the same way that working tools and instruments which accompany our existence are beautiful. Beautiful also with all the animation that the artist's sensibility can add to severe and pure functioning elements.'⁵

These juxtapositions of terms in the text ('*House machine*' versus '*moral health*' or '*working tools*' versus '*beauty*') suggest that any use of Le Corbusier to support arguments related to the meaning of architecture, or the way architecture is perceived in history, is fraught with difficulties.⁶ For example, elsewhere in *Vers une Architecture* he suggests (like Rasmussen) that '*The elements of architecture are light and shade, walls and space*',⁷ but also adds (unlike Rasmussen) '*Architecture can be found in the telephone and in the Parthenon*'.⁸ In these statements Le Corbusier is attempting to find a suitable language which can retain the cultural significance of architecture within modern society. His writing

⁵ Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture* (1946), 13.

⁶ These juxtapositions also have resonance from the maxim from Milan quoted earlier ('science without art is nothing').

⁷ Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture*, 11.

⁸ Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture*, 19.

reveals a use of architecture (or other products of industrial society) rooted in his personal vision for space in which conflicts of opposites (metaphorical, mythical and real) can be resolved dynamically – in a similar way to the conflicts inherent to the experience of festival. For Le Corbusier, these conflicts were further mirrored in his descriptions of human affairs, and later led to his use of the *Modulor* as a mediating structure that enabled him to articulate communication between micro and macro scales of involvement with the horizon of existence as a constant presence – reflecting the ultimate boundary conditions keyed to individual perception. This (almost) private iconography of opposites/conflict was eventually represented by Le Corbusier in *Le poème de l'angle droit* (1953) which articulated an effacement of daily realities, an overcoming of these limitations, and a mystical admission into a higher reality. As such it could be argued that, even though he was operating within a contemporary culture that lacked the consensus normally required to argue for established, shared cultural horizons, the breadth and range of Le Corbusier's ideas were closer to that of the trecento than many contemporary examples where no such range is sought. The experience of architecture in relation to the festival experience described in Part One needs, therefore, further clarification and explanation within a language more suited to the present and for this, terms developed in contemporary anthropology useful in the description and evaluation of the experience of culture – particularly ritual – will be utilised.

Separation, Transition, and Incorporation: the value of liminality

Writing in 1909, Arnold Van Gennep attempted to classify the rites of different societies in such a way that he could begin to see patterns of behaviour that transcended cultural difference. Initially this led to him to sub-divide rites of passage into three categories: rites of separation, transition rites, and rites of incorporation:

Rites of separation are prominent in funeral ceremonies, rites of incorporation at marriages. Transition rites may play an important part, for instance, in pregnancy, betrothal, and initiation ... Thus, although a complete scheme of rites of passage theoretically includes preliminal rites (rites of separation), liminal rites (rites of transition), and post-liminal rites (rites of incorporation), in specific instances these three types are not always equally important or equally elaborated.⁹

Although van Gennep offers different descriptions for different rites related to all three of his categories, in the end, he argues they all combine to form ritual. So, for example, he suggests that in pilgrimage there is often the requirement for abstinence from certain practice or food and that this preparatory phase already begins the protagonist's *separation* from their everyday life away from the profane world so that they may eventually be *incorporated* into the sacred world. In this case the pilgrimage itself becomes the liminal transitory, or *transition*, phase.¹⁰ So for him the three stages may refer to the nature of the rite, but also the stage of the process of engagement in a rite experienced by an individual during a ritual, which characteristically involves a journey from the profane to the sacred (via some form of liminality) and back again.

Victor Turner, writing in the middle of the twentieth century, developed this structure further to describe the different levels of engagement experienced by different people simultaneously in ritual practice so that at the same moment in a rite, some may be only separated from simple profanity, but others are totally incorporated while the rest remain in transition. For Turner, therefore, this shared aspect of festival can be best explained as three degrees of detachment from normal social situations. Firstly, everyone who witnesses the event is 'separated' into one community 'out of time';¹¹ and at the other end are the smallest subgroup of the hierarchy, the festival participants, who, in

⁹ Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, trans. by Monika B. Vizedom and Gabrielle L. Caffee (London, 1960), 11.

¹⁰ Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, 184.

¹¹ i.e. out of profane time which measures secular processes and routines.

participating, deny their own identity and as a result are deemed to be 'incorporated'. In between these two states rest the remainder of the population who experience 'transition'—'a sort of limbo which has few [...] of the attributes of either the preceding or subsequent profane social statuses or cultural states.'¹² Such a description, for Turner, was also applicable to the detachment experienced by a pilgrim where, in the act of the pilgrimage, a new community he labelled *communitas* emerged.¹³ For Turner, this *communitas* was formed, revealed, and shaped by the event itself and was related to 'liminality'¹⁴ that emerged in a 'time out of time':

We are presented, in such rites, with a "moment in and out of time," and in and out of social structure, which reveals, however fleetingly, some recognition of a generalised social bond that has ceased to be and has simultaneously yet to be fragmented into a series of structural ties ... It is as though there are two major "models' for human interrelatedness, juxtaposed and altering. The first is of society as a structured, differentiated, and hierarchical system of politico-legal-economic positions ... the second, which emerges recognizably in the liminal period, is of society as an unstructured or rudimentarily structured and relatively undifferentiated *comitatus*, community ... who submit together to the general authority of the ritual elders.¹⁵

In this scenario, the variety of experiences people encounter during the ritualistic aspects of a festival are accounted for on an ontological level which allow the participant to resist identification with normal social conditions. However, although this *comitatus* or *communitas* formed by rites is distinct from profane communities, for Turner, they still have a dialectical relationship which orchestrates the experience. i.e. one always remains in some way connected to both communities throughout the rite through the space in which it occurs and also in so far as the rite itself emerges from the ontological grounds of the

¹² Victor Witter Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre: The Human Seriousness of Play* (Performing Arts Journal Publications, 1982), 24.

¹³ Victor Witter Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre: The Human Seriousness of Play* (1982), 50. For Turner, pilgrimage and festival had similar attributes in this regard.

¹⁴ Victor Witter Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (New York, 1969), 95ff.

¹⁵ Turner, *The Ritual Process*, 96.

profane social conditions. For example, the anonymity (masks) and inversion of power (revelry) which often form the heart of many festivals is a direct response to the hierarchies of the profane world even if they appear to disregard them. Such subtleties are often lost on many critics of Turner and consequently his tripartite experience of ritual is sometimes seen as a mechanism which seeks to sever relationships with the political or social conditions that often contribute to the festival's creation in the first place.¹⁶ And, as a result of this, Turner's theory is sometimes considered as a discourse *about* ritual rather than as a description *of* it.¹⁷

In the end, the apparent conflict between ideas relating to possible effects of separation serves only to confuse the situation. It is clear there is an ontological component to the experience of the festival, but it is one that is rooted in the conditions of the mundane experience, not separated from it. So, while viewed purely psychologically it could be argued that Turner's 'incorporation' (and the associated states of detachment) suggests a separation from the world out of which the actual conditions for the festival originally emerged, it would be a mistake to consider this detachment to be total or solipsistic. Any insistence on complete detachment, or, for that matter, of perpetual political, social or economic engagement cloud any possibility for a satisfactory ontological description of the situation. After all, it is the very specific locations of events – from pilgrimage, through ritual to festival – that link the ontological conditions to the world from which any 'detachment'

¹⁶ John Eade and Michael J. Sallnow, eds., *Contesting the Sacred: The Anthropology of Christian Pilgrimage* (University of Illinois, 2000), 4. ... for Turner, so far from reflecting or reinforcing secular social structure, [such an event] is a liminal phenomenon which betokens the partial, if not complete, abrogation of that structure ... [and tends] towards *communitas*, a state of unmediated egalitarian association between individuals who are temporarily freed of the hierarchical secular roles and statuses which they bear in everyday life.

¹⁷ While there have been more writers who have developed these themes of ritual, social embodiment, and rites of passage since van Gennep and Turner – for example the anthropologist Tim Ingold – the development of the themes of separation, transition and incorporation are sufficient for the exploration being undertaken here.

occurs. Hence, it is the spaces of ritual that do much to maintain the continuity of tradition – the ultimate or foundational reference for the time-out-of-time – even if the activities associated to it, or the political conditions that drive it, are subject to radical change. Consequently, in terms of the above ideas, it can be argued that many of these theoretical nuances debated in relation to festival and ritual are the result of limited exploration of the spatial/architectural components of such rites, and that this lacuna has, in part, facilitated the continued division of paradigmatic experience from its foundations in pragmatic experience. That is not to say that discussion of ‘place’ has not occurred, but that the manner and form of the evaluation has not always been supportive of this dialectical relationship.

To explore these issues further and to recover this dialectical imperative, the narrative into Part Two of this book will develop Turner and Van Gennep’s ideas of Separation, Transition and Incorporation in relation to the architecture of Florence. However, before this exploration can begin it is important to describe the relationship between these levels of engagement with the pragmatic and paradigmatic conditions of both festival and architecture in relation to the idea of ritual. This issue resides in the phenomenon that Voegelin calls ‘reflective consciousness’.¹⁸

Reflective Consciousness

When writing on the relationship of phenomenology to architecture it is easy to comment too quickly upon the experience of buildings and space in terms of the ‘object’ rather than clarifying the broader horizons of the experience itself which extend to the nature of being

¹⁸ Voegelin Toronto Lecture, 1970. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t74UFPNX8Ag>

itself and the idea of origins – natural and artificial – alluded to in Part One. Thus, as suggested in the section on experience above, in some architectural analysis phenomenology is sometimes used as a relatively superficial analysis of a haptic and/or other sensory experience (often presented as a form of data) offered as a panacea for the limited vision of modernity without acknowledging the full horizon of phenomenological experience. This implicit loss of the deeper dialogue on being does not mean that architecture created under such conditions is limited by the conditions within which it was conceived, rather that aspects of the architecture that tap into this deeper cultural meaning occur anyway, albeit not always acknowledged by the creator(s). One of the reasons for this situation is that terms often used to describe the nature of being include terms such as ‘gods’ or ‘divinities’, which many discourses appear to see as problematic. This reluctance to appreciate certain terminology means that critical aspects of the phenomenological experience in relation to architecture are often glossed over quickly allowing the reader to ignore their significance to this type of thinking.

The apparent reticence to use such terms as the ‘divine’ also often leads to a form of theoretical compromise in which an ‘existential’ understanding is offered in its place.¹⁹ In such instances, instead of an allusion to ‘something beyond’ this use of ‘existence’ allows the reader to frame meaning within the limitations of worldly experience – albeit sometimes embellished with ‘mystical’ or ‘psychological’ overtones. For architecture, this suspicion of the role of the divine within a discourse related to culture is awkward and limiting because so much surviving building stock is engulfed, almost completely, in iconographies that had understood and depicted this ‘beyond’ in the very terms that are

¹⁹ See, for example, the shift from ‘being’ to ‘existence’ in Pallasmaa’s quotation in the section on The Experience of Architecture above.

currently shrouded in suspicion.²⁰ Whatever the reason for these developments, God, the gods, the soul, spirit and eternity all appear to have become terms deemed inappropriate or antiquated for a sophisticated dialogue in much of the divided world of modernity. Because of this difficulty, up until this point in the book the split between the facts of an event and the experience of it has been characterised chiefly as a dialectical relationship between the pragmatic and the paradigmatic more in terms of cultural references than being. However, to develop the idea of cultural continuity further and deeper, the more primordial relationship to the world in relation to these words and themes needs to be discussed and a relevant terminology established.

The main concerns appear to circulate around the terms, consciousness, experience, existence and, most significantly, what is meant by 'the divine'. Resistance to such terms has arisen partly through a hasty pairing of any discourse that raises themes related to the limits of being with various 'doctrinal' explanations of it, but also through a confusion between descriptions of the limits of physical perception and the more elusive limits of being itself. However, if one allows the description of what sits between the limits of the horizon of knowledge in-the-world and the limits of being which are beyond worldly knowledge to be labelled 'the divine', or 'divinity', and further to this, ensure that the word has a meaning for us, distinct from any particular religious doctrine, then we can begin to discuss the issue of consciousness properly in relation to architecture and the phases of ritual embodiment. It also begins to create a moment where it is possible to share meaning separate from doctrinal beliefs where direct knowledge is distinguished from experience. Such a moment occurs in Florence when a tourist, without any specific knowledge of the history and

²⁰ It is easy to forget that the term 'atheist' first comes into use in the sixteenth century, gathering momentum with the Enlightenment, and that for many civilisations 'un-godly' referred more to how you worshipped rather than whether you believed in 'god' or not.

meaning of the festival of San Giovanni, can experience Turner's 'transition' as well as acknowledge its cultural value. This is important because otherwise in situations where historical themes – both pragmatic and paradigmatic – are re-presented in rituals and in architecture in a contemporary setting, such themes would otherwise remain invisible, particularly when the population is primarily secular. The divine, therefore, in this context, is not then primarily related to gods but to being, particularly the limits of perception and the self-awareness of mortality (hence its association with existence).

This ability to accept some secular continuity of religiosity can be explained if we begin in the early fifth century CE with John Cassian (*circa* 360–*circa* 435) who articulated a way of understanding scripture, originally conceived as a guide to monastic Bible study,²¹ using various interpretive levels; the literal, the allegorical, the tropological and the anagogical.²² He then applied the same plan to Jerusalem:

Jerusalem can be taken in four senses: *historically* [literally], as the city of the Jews, *allegorically* as the Church of Christ [in the sense of the institution rather than the building], *anagogically* as the Heavenly City of God '*which is mother of us all*', (Gal.4:26) *tropologically*, as the soul of man, which is frequently subject to praise or blame from the Lord often under this title.²³

In much contemporary understanding only the literal aspect of this scheme could be characterised as pragmatic, and the same is true if we consider a phenomenology that does not take into account reflection on the limits of being. In such instances the remaining three aspects of the city (according to Cassian) would have to be subsumed into the broader discourse as 'paradigmatic' – ultimately finding meaning (or not) through the theory or analysis of the event. This may not necessarily have become a problem except that although

²¹ Cassian was the first writer to introduce the rules of Eastern monasticism into the West.

²² These were often described as three levels as allegory and anagogy were often grouped together as one leaving tropology and history to make up the three.

²³ John Cassian, 'Conlationes', in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers: Volume XI*, trans. by Philip Schaff and H Wace (Oxford, 1894), 438.

it can be seen how 'tropology' and 'allegory' could easily form a successful part of a theoretical tract, the 'anagogical' aspects would be more difficult to accommodate in a theory based on mundane parameters. Indeed, this more ontological aspect of the discourse would only become evident to the degree that it impacted upon the other three.

More recently, like Cassian, Paul Ricoeur also suggests that there are at least four modes of discourse that contribute to the ontological understanding of language; the 'scientific', the 'poetic', the 'religious' and the 'speculative'.²⁴ Both Cassian and Ricoeur, therefore, argue that descriptions of experience have multiple layers that belong to the experience itself whether they are revealed by the language or not – i.e. just because someone at an event does not account for its anagogical nature does not mean that this aspect of the experience is absent. As mentioned already, culture can persist even amidst ignorance. Nevertheless, the result of this possible oversight could be that if the description cannot or does not carry all these different levels of meaning, they could, in principle, remain invisible to the observer – as would the speculative or the anagogical to an atheist.

Heidegger explains the problem in a different way. In his essay 'The Thing' he suggests that we cannot develop an understanding of a 'the thingness of a thing' through the 'objectness of the object' or from the 'product's self-support' (the characteristic of the thing that its making has aimed at).²⁵ i.e. scientific analysis that reveals certain facts about a thing will not necessarily bring us nearer to that thing. In fact, participation in this illusion (that such analysis 'reaches the real in reality') has the opposite effect – it 'annihilates the thing' making any attempt at recovery much more difficult. To reveal its true 'thingness' its

²⁴ Paul Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor: The Creation of Meaning in Language* (2004), 304.

²⁵ Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 167.

use/purpose must be acknowledged – even when not in use.²⁶ Therefore, the thing is different from the object in that we are brought nearer to an understanding of its thingness in an encounter with it. And in such an encounter we recognise our position in-the-world in relation to the fourfold – earth, the sky, divinities, and mortals – which dwell together all at once. He then goes on to say that each of these four elements of the fourfold have a role:

Earth is the building bearer, nourishing with its fruits, tending water and rock, plant and animal ...

The sky is the sun's path, the course of the moon, the glitter of the stars, the year's seasons ... the weather ... and the blue depth of the ether.

The divinities are the beckoning messengers of the godhead. Out of the hidden sway of the divinities the god emerges ... [removing] him from any comparison with beings that are present.

The mortals are human beings. They are called mortals because they can die.²⁷

Although more difficult to map onto Ricoeur and Cassian, even in this fragment from Heidegger it can be acknowledged that there is a familiar understanding of experience; literal meaning becomes scientific discourse (earth); allegorical meaning becomes religious discourse (sky/cosmos); tropological meaning becomes poetic discourse (mortals); and analogical meaning becomes speculative discourse (divinities). This simple matching of terms reveals that the literal/scientific/pragmatic interpretation cannot alone reveal the full depth of the situation, but also that the tropological/poetic interpretation is also not adequate to complete the analysis. All four are required – including 'the divine' as a significant recognition of the limits of being – in order to find the common cultural ground that underpins the ontological basis of cultural continuity. Equally, in all the groups of terms there is an implied tension towards 'the divine' that forms a critical part of the total understanding. Phenomenology does not, therefore, purely act in relation to poetic

²⁶ The etymology of the word 'thing' in old German is also useful as it means 'gathering to deliberate on a contested matter'. Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 174.

²⁷ Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 178.

situations, memory and sensual experience, but also in relation to the nature of 'being' itself.

While in many societies and cultures this 'divine' aspect of the fourfold explication of being has been appropriated by religious doctrine the divine is, in itself, not doctrine but a part of the essential make up of being. This has been understood for many centuries and therefore should always remain a significant factor in the interpretation and understanding of different cultures, their language, and the forms they utilise for their own self-expression (including the forms of ritual and festival). For example, in western culture, appreciation of the terms *natura naturata* and *natura naturans* are essential to an understanding of the encounter of man with nature in the Renaissance.²⁸ Nature was created, and also remains creative – a perennial truth that can be acknowledged even in a godless world.

Therefore, even if certain cultures remain faithful to the gnosis of their scriptures;²⁹ and others, stripped of their iconographies of a once powerful transcendental God and various intra-cosmic deities, continue to function while adrift from their past; the need to reflect on such aspects of our being remains common to all humanity in all ages. And, it is this ability to reflect upon our consciousness and its limits that binds us to all cultures and consequently is a significant factor in communicating our current *communitas* when the specifics of our culture seem only to point at 'difference'. This 'Reflective Consciousness' as Voegelin terms it, is the fundamental aspect of our being that is in 'tension towards the divine' and it is this reflection that gives experience 'luminosity': '... reality becomes luminous in consciousness and consciousness then intends the reality for which the reality has become luminous in consciousness.'³⁰ For Voegelin, the understanding of this

²⁸ Jan Białostocki, *The Renaissance Concept of Nature and Antiquity* (Princeton, N.J, 1963).

²⁹ See Eric Voegelin, *The New Science of Politics* (Chicago, Ill., 1952).

³⁰ Voegelin Toronto Lecture, 1970. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t74UFPNX8Ag>

primordial aspect of consciousness is so fundamental to our being that any philosophical use of dialectic that does not address this problem of luminosity he terms a 'heuristic fantasy'.

In raising this point in relation to the argument presented here it is not important to understand fully the philosophical issues raised, rather to recognise that even though some specific aspects of certain cultures could suggest the division, exclusion, or otherness evident in society is irreconcilable – even within the grace of much religious dispensation – there is, below this gnosis, a deeper level of consciousness related to the term 'divine' that allows for connections rather than difference to be prioritised. In this section of the book each chapter is aiming to reveal this moment in relation to different exemplars within the landscape – historic and modern – of contemporary Florence. And recognising this process is active (to varying degrees) within the experience of architecture – in terms of *Erlebnis* – is critical to the understanding of the cultural value of architecture.

Chapter 4 – Hermeneutics and Culture

Introduction

Whilst recognition of the multivalency and ‘layering’ of the experience of festival makes describing it challenging, it also creates demands on the parameters of the discourse itself in that no methodology that focusses too heavily on any particular political, sociological or historical bias will succeed in identifying the possible extents – or horizon – of the festival as a whole and its relationship to the city. Even if it can be argued that using such methodologies – best suited for evaluating power and difference in society – could lead to a more complete understanding of the forces (political, sociological, religious, etc.) driving civic behaviour in the preparation and enactment of the festival, such research would always obscure the commonality of the event itself – what the anthropologist Victor Turner labelled *communitas* – and, more importantly, the ontological nature of the festive experience mentioned in the introduction to this section.

These particular characteristics of the festival – the part that binds the reveller to fellow revellers, to the city itself, and to being – cannot be found in any narrative of difference and are even difficult to determine in work that tries to take account of difference in a meta-narrative of ‘competing discourses’.¹ In the end, understanding of this ‘communal’ aspect of the festival can only be approached through the acceptance of the ontological nature of the situation itself. In such a discourse participation in a festival, on whatever level, is seen to incorporate forms of belonging and togetherness that are distinct from the mundane realities everyday social hierarchies even if the planning for the event discounts such possibilities. Although calling any form of gathering a ‘festival’ does not

¹ For such a meta-narrative see, for example, John Eade and Michael J. Sallnow, eds., *Contesting the Sacred: The Anthropology of Christian Pilgrimage* (2000), 5.

guarantee the event becomes elevated to different horizon than its mundane parameters,² even a festival that appears to be a purely historicist reconstruction (like a pageant in period costume) can manifest – sometimes unintentionally – the ontological components that accompany festival experience. And equally, events appropriated for partisan purposes (such as a political rally) and used to imply unanimous support, often bring with them challenges to such monocultures revealed through the festive experience itself.

What both the historicist reconstruction and political rally indicate is that at the heart of a festival culture lies something that has a special relationship to the temporal experience of the everyday world, and as a result, the festival creates an opportunity to reflect upon both. Gadamer describes this temporality thus:

It is in the nature, at least of periodic festivals, to be repeated. We call that the return of the festival. But the returning festival is neither another, nor the mere remembrance of the one that was originally celebrated. The originally sacral character of all festivals obviously excludes the kind of distinction that we know in the time-experience of the present; memory and expectation. The time experience of the festival is rather its celebration, a present time *sui generis*.³

As such, Part One of this book might then be characterised as an analysis of festival ‘through’ history rather than Festival ‘in’ history.⁴ This next section will further develop relevant ideas relating to the ritual nature of festival as well as how modern hermeneutics can be utilised as a tool to reveal these elusive aspects of the festival and, ultimately help understand possible relevance to architecture.

The Hermeneutics of Festival

² For example, a group of kiosks serving different cuisine does not make the vending of food a ‘food festival.’

³ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 110.

⁴ See the introduction to Jemma Browne, Christian Frost and Ray Lucas, eds., *Architecture, Festival and the City*, 1st edition (London : New York, 2018).

For this section it will be useful for the reader to reflect upon the types, forms and variety of information that was used in Part One to explain the continuity of the festival in Florence because many methods are used within the social sciences to focus attention on different aspects of history and continuity. However, many of these methods are underpinned by the scientific method which searches for objective truths (as set out in the Two Cultures debate) – even in relation to the evaluation of experience – which severely limits the type and form of evidence that can be cited in support of the development of an argument. As Hans Georg Gadamer suggests, hermeneutics challenges this prejudice:

The hermeneutic phenomenon is basically not a problem of method at all. It is not concerned with a method of understanding, by means of which texts are subjected to scientific investigation like all other objects of experience. It is not concerned primarily with the amassing of ratified knowledge which satisfies the methodological ideal of science – yet is concerned, here too, with knowledge and truth. In understanding tradition not only are texts understood, but insights gained and truths acknowledged.⁵

In a study of festival, where experience, situation, and architecture are keenly intertwined, it could be argued that hermeneutics is an essential component of any enquiry intent on discovering insights and revealing truths.

In actuality, meaning within a festival is borne in the form of the event, its participants, its location, as well as the different aspects of temporality evident in the experience itself. Consequently, disclosing and interpreting the festival in its context – including narratives implicit to separation, transition, and incorporation – can only be achieved through a method which can account for information which, though shared and defined, is not a fact, or a thing described by fact, but is, nevertheless, present in the experience of festival. Equally, any attempt at the analysis of a festival and its setting in the

⁵ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, xi.

present is determined by the very experience we are trying to evaluate – linguistically, historically, and spatially. And if the aim is to further understand the event through history, then there are also issues of tradition and continuity that must be addressed. As Gadamer says: ‘We are always within the situation, and to throw light on it is a task never entirely completed. This is also true of the ... situation in which we find ourselves with regard to the tradition we are trying to understand.’⁶ Purely empirical studies, therefore, can be problematic not only because the subtlety of much mediation utilised by pre-modern society is lost through the use of methods devised to measure and analyse a modern, rational world, but also because such studies often tend to change the purpose and meaning of the event itself. For Voegelin this is a critical error:

When the balance of openness and separateness is destroyed through the telescoping of myth and science ... the symbols of the myth become perverted into intra-mundane, illusionary objects, “given,” as if they were empirical data, to the cognitive and active functions of man; at the same time the separate, individual existence suffers an illusionary inflation because it absorbs into its form the more-than-human dimension. Man becomes anthropomorphic ... and revolution can abolish such evils as still exist.⁷

In the context of this study these issues have a twofold impact. Firstly, along with the innate prejudices towards particular forms of knowledge (rational and non-rational) comes the belief that all progress is synonymous with advances in reason and technology, and that, therefore, it is possible to chart the progress of society (or in this case a festival) towards a form of perfection.⁸ Second, in the discipline of history such ‘telescoping’ results in the discrediting of any evidence offered by what Voegelin characterises as ‘myth’—i.e. any form of evidence not open to rational evaluation. Methods operating within such limited parameters believe they can successfully understand the topic they are evaluating (to either

⁶ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 269.

⁷ Eric Voegelin, *Order and History 3: Plato and Aristotle* (London, 1999), 187.

⁸ Eric Voegelin, *From Enlightenment to Revolution*, ed. by John H. Hallowell (1975), 84.

support it or revolt against it) without acknowledging that much of the world within which this topic lies is ignored, or dormant to the analysis undertaken. But as well as this, such encounters with the world imply that the cultural operations of the past that are valued in the study were subject to the same, or similar, aims as in the present.⁹ Such approaches have led to the confusion of *perspectiva naturalis* – which was linked to the developments in medieval philosophy related to light and optics and God – with *perspectiva artificialis* or pictorial perspective.¹⁰ As Vesely points out, these two were different, and the latter was initially only accessible as an ‘ideal’,¹¹ later becoming the visual analogue of the much deeper idea related to perspectivity as a way of thinking that dominated ideas of space that was questioned earlier in the section on the Sassetti Chapel.

In reality the spaces of any city – but particularly late medieval Florence where the festival described in Part One gained its core iconography – tend to be much more multivalent, tied to fragments of culture creating what Vesely labels ‘communicative space’ rather than any one singular vision; ‘... like conventional perspectival space, communicative space generated by positive fragments has the capacity to hold together a plausible solution and a series of possible ones.’¹² In other words urban space can accommodate a festival, a mundane activity, or one more associated to ritual, either at the same time or interchangeably, and it continually carries the possibility of the presence of all three. Thus, any attempt at evaluating the continuity of festival meaning brings with it the need to recognise the relationship between this multivalency of intention, experience, and

⁹ For example, Marvin Trachtenberg’s work on Early Renaissance Florence looks to validate aspects of the past through tracing the emergence of ideas that only later became criteria for value Trachtenberg, *Dominion of the Eye*.

¹⁰ Also known as *costruzione legittima*

¹¹ Vesely, *Architecture in the Age of Divided Representation*, 112.

¹² Vesely, *Architecture in the Age of Divided Representation*, 349.

interpretation that exists within a shared tradition in a shared territory – including Turner’s separation, transition and incorporation.

One of the first people to begin to question this within historical social analysis was Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911) who, in his work on the humanities (*Geisteswissenschaften*),¹³ suggested that if man is understood as a part of nature (rather than outside of it as the scientific method would imply)¹⁴ he is also ‘... determined by nature, which embraces the sparse, sporadic mental processes’ and thus he is placed closer to the ‘great text of the physical world’.¹⁵ However, unlike other contemporary thinkers within the humanities that were developing methods suitable for analysing multiple viewpoints within nature (against the empirical singular view of science), the problem with Dilthey’s proposition was that he argued for a single explanation; his theory ‘... expresse[d] a unity of significance that is expressed in all parts’¹⁶ when in fact no such continuity is experienced (even though it may be possible to articulate something like it after the event). This aporia emerged from Dilthey’s work because, following Schleiermacher, his main focus was on rediscovering original meaning in history through a recognition of the significance of the life-world.¹⁷ In terms of the topic of festival and architecture, such a process does go some way to create favourable conditions for the evaluation of the ‘pre-modern’ culture being evaluated here, but because it was too focused on recovering an original meaning such research tends not to evaluate the experience in a way that could then be used to compare with the present.

¹³ Literal translations of *Geisteswissenschaften* would be ‘spirit science’ or ‘Science of the mind’, originally coined as a German Translation of Mill’s ‘moral sciences’.

¹⁴ The scientific method forms the basis of evaluation within all Natural Sciences (*Naturwissenschaft*).

¹⁵ Wilhelm Dilthey, *Dilthey Selected Writings*, ed. by H. Rickman (Cambridge England; New York, 1976), 172. This phrase has echoes of Snow’s ‘...the most beautiful and wonderful collective work of the mind of man.’

¹⁶ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 197. Gadamer argues that because Dilthey used Kant’s categories as a foundation for his particular hermeneutics he remained tied to the idea of a universal understanding per se—hence the accusation of his romanticism.

¹⁷ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 168.

i.e. past and present forms of the festival would, in such a study, remain at least partially irreconcilable. Solutions to this problem were developed in phenomenological hermeneutics which, in this context, through the recognition of the ontological nature of the festival as a fundamental aspect of the experience, allows discussions of continuity and 'historicity'. Following on from this, it also reveals how studies that reflect upon ontology can reveal deeper issues related to humanity rather than society. It should, therefore, be understood that the communicative aspect of the festival is underpinned by its distinct temporality as well as its multi-valent spatiality, both built off the full extent of the fourfold earth, sky, mortals (time) and divinities (eternity). Thus, Part One of this book was not a 'history' in the traditional sense; it used history, as well as other disciplines, but it did not create a new history, rather situated the present of both festival and architecture historically. This way of thinking is characterised as *Geschichtlichkeit* by Gadamer and Dilthey, translated into English as either 'historicity' or 'historicality'.¹⁸

Phenomenological Hermeneutics in the context of festival

Although much of the philosophical writing on phenomenological hermeneutics relates to the use of language it is clear that the main issues also apply to spatial relationships and more particularly to the idea of the 'poetic' nature of the creative act itself. There are numerous contemporary philosophers who have written on this (most notably Heidegger,¹⁹

¹⁸ Historicity in Gadamer, *Truth and Method*. or 'historicality' Richard E. Palmer, *Hermeneutics* (1969), 114. I will use historicity.

¹⁹ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (Malden, 1978). Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*.

Gadamer,²⁰ Bachelard,²¹ and Merleau-Ponty²² to name but a few), but the discourse itself can be traced back to Plato who, in the *Symposium*, links creativity in language with all other forms of making when he suggests that ‘every kind of artistic creation is poetry’.²³ Aristotle proposes something similar in his *Poetics* when he defines the work of art as ‘mimesis of praxis’ – as a representation of people doing or experiencing something.²⁴ The significance of both these statements is that for Aristotle and for Plato the creative act exists as a form of re-enactment and, seen in this way, the results of such an act can never be fully comprehended if they are considered only as a material ‘object’; i.e. ‘things’, as suggested by Heidegger earlier, should always be understood as something that continues to be re-created through a situation that is already saturated with meaning. In the repetitive and creative/recreative experience inherent to festival such conditions are impossible to ignore because they happen again and again. However, the point raised by Plato and Aristotle is that such creativity is inherent to most encounters with things and in experience generally. That is not to say that a thing only exists if engaged in this process; a direct experience of an object can happen in purely mundane terms without recourse to any symbolic or situated values. However, the separation of the object from the situation does not just artificially limit the investigation, it creates something completely different, and in such a mundane process the cultural meaning over time will not necessarily be revealed at all. Consequently, in his 1951 lecture “ ... Poetically Man Dwells ...” Heidegger argues that meaning is only

²⁰ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*. Truth and Method; Hans-Georg Gadamer, *The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays*, ed. by Robert Bernasconi, trans. by Nicholas Walker (Cambridge Cambridgeshire ; New York, 1987).

²¹ Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, New edition edition (Boston, 1992).

²² Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Consciousness and the Acquisition of Language*, trans. by Hugh J. Silverman, 1 edition (Evanston, Ill., 1979). Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 1 edition (Abingdon, Oxon ; New York, 2013).

²³ Plato, *Symposium*, 204b

²⁴ Aristotle, *Poetics* 1450b3-4

revealed through creative engagement with the world and that acknowledgment of this more creative aspect of the world is not a matter of choice but of necessity:

Making is, in Greek *poiesis* ... [however] ... this does not mean, though, that the poetic is merely an ornament and bonus added to dwelling. Nor does the poetic character of dwelling mean merely that the poetic turns up in some way or another in all dwelling. Rather, the phrase “poetically man dwells” says: poetry first causes dwelling to be dwelling.²⁵

Thus, it is not possible to retain the full meaning of any situation if we separate the pragmatic elements of direct experience in-the-world from the paradigmatic elements that often form the basis of its cultural value, hoping that they can be recombined later. In making any such separation at the outset these processes inevitably change the nature of the experience itself and thus limit future understanding. It is only when the phenomenological ‘creative’ understanding of, in this case, the festival through history becomes a significant part of the assessment process itself that aspects of continuity in meaning as well as form remain active; i.e. when the themes present in the event seen as a re-presentation of another event (mimesis of praxis) are understood as the grounds for the event itself. In such a study these themes of praxis, repetition, and origins underpin descriptions of the form of the event, not the other way around – form is not created and meaning then appended, the meaning comes first. Within such an interpretation there are still many different possible accounts of the event, but the point of the evaluation is to discover the shared, deep, latent qualities rather than concentrate on the surface differences.

However, even given care in rendering accounts of festival locations and events, it is possible that the application of such a process could become an exercise in the

²⁵ Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 215.

interpretation of historical (or historiographical) knowledge resulting in simple historicist descriptions or representations. In such cases knowledge (*scientia*) is presented as the precondition for authentic engagement – the more you know, the more affiliation you appear to have with the events. But this is only partially the case. In the same way that meaning offered by the contemporary festival is mediated through experience in the present (through issues of time, place, praxis, and history) and described through contemporary language, so the festival of the past can be understood through a similar process. Therefore, within a phenomenological investigation, historical meaning (or value) has some currency in the present even though it is not exactly the same as the knowledge of it inherited from history. That is to say that in such a research context the feast cannot be seen purely as a historicist reproduction of an event that is only relevant in its ‘form’, but, that the event relates to an understanding of history in terms of what Gadamer calls ‘effective historical consciousness’.²⁶ The same can also be said of architecture. In such an evaluation the festival in the past and the festival in the present – or an existing building and its current use and value – combine to create a broader horizon of understanding. The process of revealing and utilising this aspect of ‘consciousness’ is, for Gadamer, necessary in order that the symbolic horizons open to festive experience can be truly evaluated:

A person who has no horizon is a man who does not see far enough and hence overvalues what is nearest to him. Contrariwise, to have an horizon means not to be limited to what is nearest, but to be able to see beyond it. A person who has an horizon knows the relative significance of everything within his horizon, as near or far, great or small.²⁷

Therefore, for Gadamer, a ‘horizon’ has a temporal as well as a spatial component but, although it is potentially open to each individual equally in relation to their ‘Being’, it is

²⁶ *Wirkungsgeschichtliches Bewußtsein* (Gadamer 1979: 267 ff.).

²⁷ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 269.

limited by cultural prejudices that often contribute to the framing of any particular activity in any one society.²⁸ So although the horizon of human understanding is ultimately limited only by the limits of being, it is the prejudices of tradition and culture that, at the same time as offering grounds for meaning and belonging, create the most tangible 'limits' to most attempts at understanding – such as those expressed by Snow and Leavis discussed in the introduction to the book. This aspect of the discourse will become more evident as the argument develops but it too is not without difficulties. On this basis, cultural meaning in architecture always involves continuity, or difference within continuity.

This problem of tradition is also raised by Arendt, in that where a culture operates within a tradition that is itself being questioned through multicultural valencies, the understanding of tradition as a singular viewpoint becomes difficult. For Arendt:

Tradition transforms truth into wisdom, and wisdom is the consistence of transmissible truth. In other words, even if truth should appear in our [contemporary] world, it could not lead to wisdom, because it would no longer have the characteristics which it could acquire only through universal recognition of its authority.²⁹

Nevertheless, it is the multivalency of the festival – the fact that in its enactment it has the capacity to operate on many different levels to various (sometimes conflicting) constituencies – and the multivalency of architecture that accommodates this range of experience that offers opportunities to challenge such singular representations of political authority dressed up as tradition. In fact, moments in the history of the feast described in Part One indicate that attempts at appropriating festivals generally can only ever be partial and festivals appear to have been able to offer resistance to such coercion.³⁰ Such resistance occurs because even the most specific historical enactment sits within a culture

²⁸ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 238ff.

²⁹ Hannah Arendt, Introduction to *Illuminations*, Walter Benjamin, p 45

³⁰ For example, on relation to the Medici's relationship to the Feast of the Magi.

that has a defined set of conditions for representation which can accommodate other accompanying narratives, irrespective of how insignificant they may appear to the major protagonists. No matter how politically, socially, spatially, and temporally distinct these narratives are they are always built off the traditions of the city and, as a consequence, reveal the primary conditions of experience which reflect, to some degree, the conditions of order in the governance of the city. A situation revealed in the quotation from the *Oresteia* used in the introduction to this book. Therefore, before the ‘festival’ or ‘experiential’ aspects of architecture can be addressed directly, issues related to the language and meaning of civic order reflected in festival and architecture need to be further described.

Civic Governance: Natural State and Agon

To understand aspects of the continuity of the festival of San Giovanni in relation to the architecture of the contemporary city it is also necessary to indicate what was the context for the ‘natural’ conditions of freedom present in north Italy now and at the time of the beginnings of the festival. The term ‘natural’ here refers to North, Wallis and Weingast’s definitions of ‘natural states’ and ‘open access states’:

[In a natural state] ... personal relationships, who one is and who one knows, form the basis for social organization and constitute the arena for individual action ... Natural states limit the ability of individuals to form organizations ... [in] *open access orders* ... personal relationships still matter, but impersonal categories of individuals, often called citizens, interact over wide areas of social behaviour with no need to be cognizant of the individual identity of their partners.³¹

Florence, at the time of the development of the Feast of San Giovanni was a ‘natural state’, within which, the principal social group was the family. These families then combined (with

³¹ Douglass C. North, John Joseph Wallis and Barry R. Weingast, *Violence and Social Orders: A Conceptual Framework for Interpreting Recorded Human History* (2009), 2.

shifting alliances and feuds) to form the emerging institutions of the commune supported by ceremonies and rituals designed to reveal the broader horizon of each enterprise. From 1343-1480 during the period Trexler calls the '*classical period of Florentine feste*',³² the ruling regimes (communal, oligarchic and autocratic) emerged out of these family allegiances and used the iconography of the various feasts of Florence to build a strong representational power base. But they also used them to curry favour within the populace through spectacle, performance, and ritual. Each different regime adapted aspects of the feasts to best represent their power, prosperity, and success whilst maintaining its core identity. However, within this broad festal activity were embedded tensions, conflicts, and resolutions that mirrored aspects of the day-to-day reality of city life. Trade, business, finance, marriages, allegiances, arguments, and games, all contain an element of conflict, resolution and compromise which is also inherent to events incorporated within the structure of the festival. Therefore, it can be argued that the range of events offered by feasts and festivals create a frame in which the populace can re-enact mimetically and metaphorically the everyday 'agon' of the city in a spectrum of activity that, in Turner's *communitas*, ranged from the reinforcement of mundane power to the reversal of everyday realities.

The term agon derives from the classical Greek word meaning 'struggle' or 'contest' often used in relation to sport or debate. However, it also has themes related to the foundation and order of the Greek Polis and is underpinned by ideas of representation and contest acted out in the theatre, the gymnasium and, politically, in the agora:

Agonism implies a deep respect and concern for the other; indeed, the Greek *agon* refers most directly to an athletic contest oriented not merely toward victory or defeat, but emphasizing the importance of the struggle itself—a struggle that cannot

³² Trexler, *Public Life in Renaissance Florence*, 216.

exist without the opponent. Victory through forfeit or default, or over an unworthy opponent, comes up short compared to a defeat at the hands of a worthy opponent—a defeat that still brings honor. An agonistic discourse will therefore be one marked not merely by conflict but just as importantly, by mutual admiration³³

The agon, therefore, is an intrinsic part of a 'natural state' in which 'one fights only an opponent who is worthy of it'.³⁴ In more recent political theory the term agon is used to describe the tension, conflict, and negotiation at the centre of all political order that seeks to maintain its legitimacy through conflict and constant action. For example, Habermas suggests that:

Hannah Arendt's principle philosophical work *The Human Condition* serves to systematically renew the Aristotelian concept of 'praxis' in so far as she contends that power is built off the agon of words and deeds which together, with the support of the populace, contribute to the legitimisation of rule.³⁵

So, for example, by the time the Medici were elevated to the Dukedom in mid sixteenth-century Florence, many of the city's festivals were more designed to placate the city and reinforce their newly gained aristocratic order rather than display the reconciliation of conflict embedded in the structure and make-up of civic governance. Arendt might have characterised this shift as a partial loss of power for the people of the city:

Power is actualised only where word and deed have not parted company, where words are not empty and deeds not brutal, where words are not used to violate and destroy but to establish relations and create new realities. Power is what keeps the public realm, the potential space of appearance between acting and speaking men, in existence.³⁶

³³ Samuel Chambers, 'Language and Politics Agonistic Discourse in The West Wing', *CTheory.Net*, a098a, 2001 <<http://www.ctheory.net/articles.aspx?id=317>> [accessed 9 April 2017].

³⁴ Krzysztof Ulanowski, *The Religious Aspects of War in the Ancient Near East, Greece, and Rome: Ancient Warfare Series* (2016), 68.

³⁵ Jürgen Habermas, 'Hannah Arendt's Communications Concept of Power', trans. by Thomas McCarthy, *Social Research*, 44/1 (1977), 7. For other uses of Agon see Chantal Mouffe, 'Deliberative Democracy or Agonistic Pluralism?', *Social Research*, 66/3 (1999), 745–58.

³⁶ Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition: Second Edition* (2013), 200.

The association implied here by Arendt that any reduction to the ethical aspects of the representational field in the public realm is also a loss of power seems peculiar when viewed in the light of the spectacles of power created by the totalitarian governments of the twentieth century. But Arendt distinguishes power – which is only evident in the relationships between people and hence volatile – from strength which can be the manifestation of an individual. It is the former that is both the most dangerous and the most important factor for the creation and wellbeing of the city. The implied loss of such a condition at the heart of her statement has an equivalence in relation to the reduction of representational potential within a feast from a creative ‘space of appearance’ into something less interactive and ontologically undifferentiated (something more historicist and pictorial) and can be, to a certain extent, linked with the growth of use of perspective in the evolution of Renaissance art and architecture mentioned earlier.

In truth both art and architecture were subject to the same loss of meaning, particularly after the Enlightenment. However, it would be a mistake to apportion blame on the growing primacy of visual culture and perspectivism on the decline in understanding of the breadth and possibilities of festal practice. Or to suggest that the substitution was total. As has already been mentioned, the ontological nature of festive experience resists such takeovers. In the end the growth of a limited form of perspectivism can certainly be equated with the gradual decline in some positive aspects of festive representation, but in this process a loss of the original idea of perspectivity also occurs; a loss which has affected the way architecture is seen more in relation to its form than in relation to its deep meaning that is evident in, and through, time.

This loss of meaning – or at least the misplacement of a deeper relationship between architecture and festival – has also occurred, in part, through the silence of many of the

chroniclers and historians on the matter. Continuity in the form of the festival and its participants can be fairly taken from most of the accounts, but the architectural component is often absent even though much of the continuity of 'place' can still be ascertained from the persistence of some aspects of the urban fabric. Thus, if the priorities of the narrative are taken at face value – such as in the historic reports of the event from Villani onwards – it would suggest that the activities of the feast were more significant than their setting and, like many theatrical performances, transferable to a neutral 'stage' sited anywhere. In contrast to this, however, often when reportage is offered in relation to particular political rallies or religious processions, the architecture is seen as anything but neutral and is often tainted with the abuses of power;³⁷ or loss of it in Arendt's sense; or acts of generosity or heroism in relation to civic history, perpetrated by the rulers or families who have built, and inhabit, the city. In reality the status of architecture lies somewhere in between these two extremes; it is neither totally neutral nor totally defining. For example, even though one might recognise some echoes from the past, one does not act like or become a Nazi by walking through the Maifeld in Berlin; or become a Fascist by sitting in an office in the Casa del Fascio in Como. Equally, on the other hand, a festival in Rome signalling aspects of its heritage would be different if it took place by the Roman Forum or in the Piazza John F. Kennedy outside the Palazzo dei Congressi in Esposizione Universale Roma (EUR).

The enactment of a festival, therefore, is a symbolic representation of the political and social relationships that are played out within the everyday agon of civic life and architecture plays a significant role in this representational field. In relation to the

³⁷ For example on Nazi architecture see Karl Arndt, 'Paul Ludwig Troost Als Leitfigur Der Nationalsozialistischen Repräsentationsarchitektur', in *Bürokratie Und Kult: Das Parteizentrum Der NSDAP Am Königsplatz in München. Geschichte Und Rezeption*, ed. by Iris Lauterbach (München, 1995), 147. And for Italy see Dennis P. Doordan, *Building Modern Italy: Italian Architecture, 1914-1936* (New York, NY, 1988), 129ff.

development of the architecture, festival and civic life of Florence the representation moves from the analogue of cosmos and order of the Roman world – most often articulated through myth – to one that is an analogy of human existence more attuned to being – in Christianity represented as the *logos*.³⁸ It is this shift, that took place over centuries, that allowed for the engagement of history in the process of ontological understanding outlined already. For Voegelin this shift is key, he argues that ‘...only when man advances from the truth of cosmic-divine order to the differentiated experience of transcendent-divine order, does the order of human existence in society acquire the luminosity of conscious historical form.’³⁹ However, although separate, these two states are not totally distinct, they are both present throughout history – it is their proportions that change – and, with the re-emergence of Greek texts and the subsequent scholarship built of this work in the twelfth and thirteenth century, many of the ideas from both traditions began to re-engage.

Therefore, in the same way that one can recognise a temporal progression of order in the festival moving from the feast’s Roman origins in cosmic order, through the early Christian sacramental order to the commune’s civic order, it must also be acknowledged that these themes associate the development in relation to man’s consciousness of ‘his humanity in participatory tension toward the divine ground’.⁴⁰ As the narrative of these themes progressed, the more complex the understanding of this tension within culture became, resulting in the tendency for new symbolisations to override the previous understanding of the cosmos within which the experience was seen to have occurred – for example in the de-divinising of nature (and also, over time, the *studia humanitatis*) which

³⁸ This shift began with Revelation in the Ancient Near East and the emergence of philosophy in the Greek Polis. Eric Voegelin, *Order and History 1: Israel and Revelation* (1956), 5.

³⁹ Eric Voegelin, *Order and History 2: The World of the Polis* (1957), 3.

⁴⁰ Eric Voegelin, *Order and History 4: The Ecumenic Age* (1956), 8.

was then left open to be explored by science in such a way that important aspects of continuity were ignored.

Nevertheless, the past was not obliterated by these transitions because aspects of the language (that described and acknowledged these differences) and architecture (that continued to accommodate the pragmatic changes to civic order while preserving its paradigmatic core) were able to communicate with each other – within this increasingly complex situation. As Voegelin states, ‘... differentiation of existential truth does not [of necessity] abolish the cosmos in which the event occurs ...’⁴¹ or continues to occur. The relationship of humanity to the divine, although it varies in detail, is constant – a condition not necessarily recognised in modernity. It is delusional to think it is possible to step outside our consciousness (which always remains in tension towards the divine) and it is here that the ontological truth of the continuity of cultural meaning lies.

In the next part of this chapter the themes explored so far will be discussed in relation to the first two civic buildings of Florence, the Bargello and the Palazzo Vecchio. Using the history of the development of these buildings it is possible to discuss political change and civic representation in terms of form, adaptation and experience and, in the process, relocate critical aspects of experience described so far in relation to festival onto architecture.

The Civic Palazzi of Florence

As was mentioned briefly at the beginning of chapter three, it was during the thirteenth century that Florence’s civic landscape began to develop, principally with the construction

⁴¹ Voegelin, *The Ecumenic Age*, 8.

of the two most significant city buildings of the period; the Palazzo del Popolo (now the Bargello) originally built from 1255-61 and the later Palazzo della Signoria (now the Palazzo Vecchio) built in three stages alongside the Piazza della Signoria from 1299-1386 by which time the building volume and piazza, as they are now, were completed.

The Bargello⁴²

The Bargello – built from 1255-61 – was designed as a residence for the *Capitano del Popolo* who formed a part of the new *primo popolo* government of the city which included a council of twelve elders (*anziani*)—two from each district (*sesto*) of the city—who were appointed to advise the *capitano* who would defend the people against any injustices brought about by the *podestà*.⁴³ Initially, the newly appointed *capitano* resided in a house previously owned by the Boscoli family, separate from the *podestà*, who Davidsohn places in the region of St Romolo in the northern section of the present Piazza della Signoria.⁴⁴

The first meeting was held between the *capitano* and the *anziani* in a room of the new palace in late 1259 when the courtyard is also mentioned.⁴⁵ But following the defeat at the hands of Pisa at the battle of Montaperti in 1260, the building was taken over by the *podestà*, and became the centre of civic administration more familiar to the city prior to the control of the *primo popolo*. Although this predominantly Ghibelline government was itself overthrown in 1266, the structure of government remained substantially the same until the

⁴² For information on the history of key buildings of Florence see Repertorio delle Architetture civili di Firenze/ricerche nel Ripertorio <http://www.palazzospinelli.org/architetture/progetto.asp>. For the Bargello see Ameer Yunn, *The Bargello Palace: The Invention of Civic Architecture in Florence* (Turnhout, 2015).

⁴³ *Mostra documentaria; Palazzo del Podestà*, 17.

⁴⁴ Robert Davidsohn, *Forschungen zur Geschichte von Florenz*. (Berlin, 1896), Vol. I: p. 143-44.

⁴⁵ *Mostra documentaria; Palazzo del Podestà*, 9.

introduction of the Ordinances of Justice in 1293 which eventually led to the building of the Palazzo Vecchio for the next arrangement of government.

The podesta was always from another city and although they brought many loyal officials with them their families were not allowed to reside with them for the duration of their office. Although they did not always follow such rules set out by the cities they represented, they appear not to have gone so far as to flout the rules and move their families into the civic palazzo with them. Indeed, given the turbulent history of the city and the occasional breaching of the palazzo's defences by a rioting popolo it would have been a strange decision to do so.⁴⁶ So for the most part, if they wanted to be near to their families, their relatively large salaries allowed them to bring their family to the city and set them up in alternative accommodation, even though this was also in breach of the rules. It is likely that this did indeed occur as the tenure of many podestà was for a year or more—too long to remain isolated from their family.⁴⁷

Over the next hundred years the building developed alongside the evolution of the civic governance of the city itself, changing its form in response to different conditions that emerged. The building was extended from 1260-80 and by 1283 was able to accommodate meetings of the full city council—comprising three hundred members—all summoned by a bell located in the tower of the building. The courtyard is recorded as being completed around 1295.⁴⁸ Over the life of the building it was often attacked and damaged by rioting

⁴⁶ For example in 1294. See Villani, *Villani's Chronicle*, Bk.VIII, Ch. 7.

⁴⁷ Florence was for a year, Siena was only for 6 months, some other cities had podestà for up to two years.

⁴⁸ in the fifteenth century the courtyard was covered by a roof which was later demolished during the nineteenth-century restoration.

townsfolk who identified the building with city governance leading to, in 1296, the addition of further fortifications. Interestingly, during the initial phase of the building the main access was via a stair on the outside which, like the access to traditional Florentine tower houses, could be retracted in times of civic disturbance.⁴⁹ However, there was also an internal staircase in the courtyard of the palace as early as 1267—confirmed by an account of defeated Ghibelline supporters swearing an oath to the Guelph victors at the base of the staircase in the court of the Bargello.⁵⁰ The building was again attacked and looted by the *popolo* during the overthrow of the Duke of Athens in 1343.⁵¹

The distinctive staircase that currently dominates the courtyard was initially constructed out of timber by Neri da Fioravanti around the same time as he added a further storey to the building (1340-45)⁵² and the audience hall, accessed through the courtyard staircase and loggia (designed by Benci di Cione). The internal timber stair was later, in 1367, replaced by a stone version.⁵³ Therefore, it was only in the middle of the fourteenth century, around the time that Boccaccio was writing the *Decameron* and by which time more power had shifted to the Palazzo Vecchio, that the palazzo became recognisable as what we see today.⁵⁴

The Palazzo Vecchio⁵⁵

⁴⁹ *Mostra documentaria; Palazzo del Podestà*, 9.

⁵⁰ *Mostra documentaria; Palazzo del Podestà*, 17.

⁵¹ Villani, *Cronica*, BkXIII; Ch.XVII.

⁵² This work is evidenced by different masonry construction that includes scaffolding holes and stone brackets, also suggesting originally the outside face of the building also had several overhanging wooden balconies.

⁵³ *Mostra documentaria; Palazzo del Podestà*, 13. In 1840, frescoes in the small chapel were discovered, including images of Dante, which led to the restoration of the whole building, removing sections that had been added over the period it had been used as a prison.

⁵⁴ Beatrice Paolozzi Strozzi, *Museo Nazionale del Bargello. La guida ufficiale* (2014), 6.

⁵⁵ For general histories of the building and descriptions of its origins see Alfredo Lensi, *Palazzo Vecchio* (Milano, 1929). Jürgen Paul, *Der Palazzo Vecchio in Florenz: Ursprung und Bedeutung seiner Form* (1969).

Although the priors of the guilds were involved in civic governance from at least 1282, it was not until the drafting of the Ordinances of Justice in 1293 that the city began considering the construction of a further building to accommodate the priori and compliment the Bargello (Map 4.9). When the idea for the new palazzo was debated in 1294 it was suggested that the site for the palazzo should touch at least three of the Sesti (the Bargello touched two).⁵⁶ However, in the end the site chosen was within the Sesto di San Pier Scheraggio which, according to Dati, was 'nearly in the middle of the city',⁵⁷ and for Villani was significant because it covered the ruins of the Uberti houses demolished in 1258 during the *primo popolo*, Bruni remarks that it was placed 'between the church of San Piero Scheraggio and the old theatre'⁵⁸ suggesting the location of the building in relation to the Roman history was also understood at the time.⁵⁹

Permission was granted to begin construction of the Palazzo Vecchio, originally the Palazzo del Priori, in 1298 after the 'Priors which ruled the city and all the republic, did not feel themselves secure in their former inhabitation, which was the house of the white Cerchi behind the church of San Procolo'.⁶⁰ The job was given to Arnolfo di Cambio and his work described thus, by Vasari, the architect later given charge of its conversion to a ducal palazzo:

[Arnolfo] made a beginning for the Palace of the Signori, designing it in resemblance to that which his father Lapo had built in the Casentino for the Counts of Poppi. [Fig.

Rubinstein, *The Palazzo Vecchio, 1298-1532: Government, Architecture, and Imagery in the Civic Palace of the Florentine Republic*.

⁵⁶ When the Quartiere were introduced in 1342, the slightly strange boundary lines of the Gonfalons in the Quartiere di Santa Croce appear to be organised in such a way that allows for all four to touch the Palazzo Vecchio.

⁵⁷ Dati, *Istoria Di Firenze Di Goro Dati Dall'Anno 1380 All'Anno 1405. Con Annotazioni*, 108.

⁵⁸ Leonardo Bruni and James Hankins, *History of the Florentine People* (2004), 389; Vol.1.

⁵⁹ This is particularly significant in that the theatre was the site where the Roman Troops had met to discuss the ruling of the city during the Catiline conspiracy.

⁶⁰ Villani, *Villani's Chronicle*, VIII, 26. San Procolo was just behind the current location of the Bargello

4.7 & 4.8] ... Arnolfo could not bring it about ... that it should be granted to him to put the Palace on a square base, because the governors had refused that the Palace should have its foundations in any way whatsoever on the ground of the rebel Uberti. And they brought it about that the northern aisle of S. Pietro Scheraggio should be thrown to the ground, rather than let him work in the middle of the square with his own measurements; and [it had to incorporate] the Tower of the Foraboschi, called the "Torre della Vacca," in height fifty braccia, for the use of the great bell ...⁶¹

The initial section completed by Arnolfo included the three public halls; the Camera dell'Arme on the Ground floor; the council hall on the first; and the still undivided hall on the second floor. At this point it is likely that the entrance to the building was directly into the Camera Dell'Arme from the north façade facing onto the older town square.⁶² This would have been the main piazza next to the site prior to the beginning of the larger square to the west.⁶³ In 1313, two years prior to the completion of the first phase, the supreme council of the commune moved in. The commune soon began to clear more areas of the city to the west of the palazzo and pave areas of the developing *Piazza della Signoria*. By the time of the rule of the Duke of Athens the next phase of the building was complete and requests were made to demolish two churches which were obstructing the enlargement of the growing piazza which was extended to its present size by 1386. Following his return of from exile in 1434, Cosimo de Medici reformed the *Operai del Palazzo* and began a new phase in the development of the building that would support his own control of the Signoria which had evolved gradually following his return.⁶⁴ Trachtenberg argues that the transformation of the Palazzo cortile by Michelozzo (after 1454) is based on the Palazzo

⁶¹ Vasari, *Lives of the Most Eminent Painters, Sculptors and Architects [Volume 1 of 10]*, I, 25. The great bell was moved in 1304 from the house of the Cerchi where they had been meeting prior to this move.

⁶² Paul, *Der Palazzo Vecchio in Florenz*, 54.

⁶³ Rubinstein, *The Palazzo Vecchio, 1298-1532: Government, Architecture, and Imagery in the Civic Palace of the Florentine Republic*, 9.

⁶⁴ Rubinstein, *The Palazzo Vecchio, 1298-1532: Government, Architecture, and Imagery in the Civic Palace of the Florentine Republic*, 118ff.

Medici, the ‘first of the Renaissance palaces,’⁶⁵ which was begun by Cosimo the Elder in 1445 (Fig. 5.17 & 5.19)).⁶⁶ But it is now clear that this layout was already recognisable certainly by the time of the construction of the Palazzo Busini-Bardi by Brunelleschi in 1427,⁶⁷ and perhaps even earlier in the Palazzo Capponi delle Rovinate early in the fifteenth century.⁶⁸ These palaces of the early quattrocento were the first to have a central courtyard with porticos on each side and a covered staircase. Such palazzi suggest that the change in culture was indeed already well established by the beginning of the century. And Michelozzo’s transformation of the main cortile of the Palazzo Vecchio from something like that at Poppi, into something already familiar to society as signifying urban domestic affluence is telling.⁶⁹ Following these additions in 1472 Benedetto da Maiano was commissioned to build two rooms above the original council chamber – the *Sala dell’Udienza* and *Sala dei Gigli* (or *Sala dell’Oriolo*) were formed out of the pre-existing *Sala Grande* in 1472;⁷⁰ and the *Salone dei Cinquecento* developed during the brief rule of Savonarola from 1494-98 when he envisioned a governmental form similar to Venice providing a room for one-thousand men. Nevertheless, the relatively short periods of rule undertaken by the *Signori*⁷¹ and the need for them to be separated from possible outside

⁶⁵ Marvin Trachtenberg, ‘Archaeology, Merriment, and Murder: The First Cortile of the Palazzo Vecchio and Its Transformations in the Late Florentine Republic’, *The Art Bulletin*, 71/4 (1989), 606.

⁶⁶ Emanuela Ferretti, ‘The Medici Palace, Cosimo the Elder, and Michelozzo: A Historiographical Survey’, in *A Renaissance Architecture of Power: Pringley Palace in the Italian Quattrocento*, ed. by Silvia Beltramo, Flavia Cantatore, and Marco Folin (Leiden, 2016), 264.

⁶⁷ Heinrich Klotz, *Filippo Brunelleschi* (London, 1990), 59. For a description of the palazzo see Leonardo Ginori Lisci, *The Palazzi of Florence: Their History and Art*, trans. by Jennifer Grillo, 2 vols (1985), II, 609.

⁶⁸ Formerly the Palazzo Da Uzzano. Lisci, *The Palazzi of Florence*, II, 665.

⁶⁹ Just as the Palazzo’s tower echoed the earlier tower houses of the city but also surpassed them in height to represent civic authority, the development of a new staircase was essential in order for the continuing value of the Signori to be recognised within the city hierarchy.

⁷⁰ This included a large fresco (1482-85) by Ghirlandaio which explored the themes of civic virtue. See Rubinstein, *The Palazzo Vecchio, 1298-1532: Government, Architecture, and Imagery in the Civic Palace of the Florentine Republic*.

⁷¹ Signori held the role for two months.

influence during their tenure meant that often the inner halls and rooms of the palace were only inhabited by the same person for a relatively short period.

Florence's Civic Palazzi: Time, Space, and Order

The initial designs for both the Bargello and the Palazzo Vecchio would have been familiar to the burghers of Florence from other medieval castles, the buildings comprising tall stone walls, a raised entry, small openings to the street, a central courtyard and a tall stone tower with the addition of a bell that could toll civic time instead of the religious times of the past: The Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 sanctioned an *aggiornamento* in Christian behaviour and feeling which was to open the doors to a self-conscious modernity if not a self-conscious modernism ... The new attitudes arose out of the evolution of a time which was no longer the abstract one of clerics but the actual one in whose network the men of medieval Christendom were entangled.⁷²

By 1353 the bell in the Palazzo – that had sounded the ‘eternally renewed and perpetually unpredictable’⁷³ meteorological time that underpinned all occasions of the period (rural, civic, academic, seignorial and liturgical) was linked to the newly installed mechanical clock (by Niccolò di Bernardo). In Florence, this replaced the period between the church offices of

⁷² Le Goff, *Medieval Civilization 400 - 1500*, 174.

⁷³ Jacques Le Goff, *Time, Work, and Culture in the Middle Ages* (1982), 35.

tierce and nones,⁷⁴ described by Dante, that had been the time of work, with a more predictable and regular time, that also became the time of governance.⁷⁵

As a consequence of the prominence of these buildings (both visually and aurally) – and the institutions they were designed to house – the laws on building within the city began to adapt to the new operating values of the Commune. For example, limiting the height of all domestic towers in the city so they were not higher than the Palazzo Vecchio. The significance of the palazzo was further inscribed upon the city through the shifting of the main north south axis to link Piazza della Signoria directly with the Piazza del Duomo in 1389. A road that remains to this day the key route for the morning procession of the Feast of San Giovanni.

If the city adapted in order to accommodate these new layers of order—linked to both the past and the future—then the same can be said of the architecture commissioned by the city to house the newly appointed civic dignitaries, the iconography of the buildings were as nuanced as the ruling elites that occupied them. The systems of the city were becoming more structured and ordered – moving towards an ‘open access’ society – but at the same time carrying forward the nuances of the private dwelling which linked to the feudal orders of the ‘natural state’, albeit structured around the newly wealthy and powerful fourth

⁷⁴ *Florence, with in her ancient ring of walls—
that ring from which she still draws tierce and nones—
sober and chaste lived in tranquillity.*

(Paradiso XV, 97-99). Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy* (London, 1995), 450.

⁷⁵ The significance of timekeeping for the Commune became even more relevant with the arrival of Lorenzo della Volpaia's planetary clock commissioned by Lorenzo the Magnificent in 1510 that was installed in the Palazzo Vecchio room of the lilies. See Francesco Albertini 'An Artistic Vade Mecum for the City of Florence' quoted in Baldassarri and Saiber, *Images of Quattrocento Florence*, 223. Della Volpaia had previously been commissioned to fix the clock in the tower in 1500. See also Rubinstein, *The Palazzo Vecchio, 1298-1532: Government, Architecture, and Imagery in the Civic Palace of the Florentine Republic*, 103.

estate who financed most of these innovations. Their houses with stacked *salone* above a more practical, fortified and sparse ground floor with apartments spread over the upper floors—including chambers (*camere*); a chapel; and a kitchen⁷⁶—were similar to the castles that had accommodated the court life of the nobility during the feudal period. This domestic form, including rooms for entertaining guests and more private apartments, was then transformed into rooms for the new republican palaces where traditional court ceremony needed to adapt to facilitate new social strata led by the *priori*, the *podestà* and the *capitano*.⁷⁷

Similarly, once the danger of civic unrest became less acute and the need for a more positive iconography of city governance became necessary, the original buildings which had copied the medieval castle with a fortified entrance, concealed internal staircases, and the domestic rooms (where the priors were housed) in the least exposed parts of the palace, all designed for siege protection, had to be adapted for a more open civic brief. Even with these changes, the initial ceremonial functions accommodated seem to have been limited to the rooms themselves and not the circulation—staircases at this time were seen more as a functional necessity than a symbolic possibility. Nevertheless, the buildings were a symbol of the civic rule of the Signoria and so when the city became the centre of a dukedom, the palace was also converted for their use—both practically and symbolically— as indicated by the decision of the Medici to move their principal residence to the Palazzo Vecchio.

⁷⁶ Often on the top floor so that fire damage to the property as a whole could be limited to one floor if tackled swiftly, and also because these rooms were the hottest in summer and the coldest in winter.

⁷⁷ Martines, *Power and Imagination*, 65.

The Medici had purchased the Pitti Palace in 1549 and, once the Vasari corridor linking this and the Palazzo Vecchio was completed in 1564—one year before the transformation of the Palazzo Vecchio into the Ducal palace was completed—the Medici could live in either building while still making clear that their rule had replaced that of the commune. Even if they spent much of their time in the Pitti Palace, for the purposes of civic representation they now permanently occupied the rooms formerly taken by the *Signori* and the *Gonfaloniere di Giustizia*.

Today, even though primary issues of justice and national policy are handled in Rome or in the outskirts of Florence in large new monumental structures,⁷⁸ protests still occur in relation to both of these civic palazzi; and the city council centred on the mayor⁷⁹ still meets in the Palazzo Vecchio in the *Sala di Dugento*, the room where the first meeting of the *Signori* was held in 1302.⁸⁰ Not often open to the public, this room continues to create a setting for the council linking the rich and varied history of governance with the identity of the city—both past and present—even though tourists overrun other parts of the palace. Thus, the Palazzo continues to be both a representative of the institution as well as the history of the city and these functions are brought together on specific days when the partitioned building engages very differently. On feast days the internal boundaries which are normally used to separate users, become borders where different groups interact, and the dignitaries normally accommodated out of view of the public emerge and lead some of

⁷⁸ For example, the *Palazzo di Giustizia* (Firenze), Rifredi Quartiere, 1999-2012 by Leonardo Ricci and Giovanni Michelucci.

⁷⁹ A role created in Florence in 1781.

⁸⁰ Niccolò Rodolico, Giulia Camerani Marri, and Archivio di Stato di Firenze, *Mostra documentaria e iconografica di Palazzo Vecchio: giugno-luglio, 1957*. (Firenze, 1957), 12.

the processions that still contribute the civic identity of the city (as described in chapter one).⁸¹

The change to these buildings was not instant but developed over a long period, but their roots in relation to civic order, defined during the thirteenth and fourteenth century when the Commune was being shaped, continue to play a part in the contemporary life of the city. In the end, together these buildings helped transform the landscape of Florentine civic constitutional praxis at a time when Aristotelian and Ciceronian civic Humanism was beginning to claim attention in the idea of what constitutes ‘the good city’, both physically and ethically and up to the present day.

Conclusion

In the opening sections of this chapter it was argued that within any evaluation of culture – whether architecture or festival – we cannot escape the place and time within which we are situated. If one does attempt such an investigation the result without such an acknowledgement then – while it is perhaps easier to develop a theory about the information gathered – such a process becomes problematic when replaced back into the world. This was characterised through explaining the difference between the ways in which an investigation based upon different forms of common experience – characterised as different horizons – is more likely to lead to a more holistic understanding of experiences that can then lead to analysis of commonality rather than difference. And, in addition to this, an acknowledgment that significant pieces of architecture are able to bear recognisable

⁸¹ See Richard Sennett ‘The Open City’ for a discussion on the difference between borders and boundaries. <https://secities.net/media/objects/articles/the-open-city/en-gb/> accessed 15.02.16.

cultural meaning. Such multivalency was described in relation to what Vesely called 'communicative space' which has the capacity to '... hold together a plausible solution and a series of possible ones ...' at the same time. This type of evaluation can only work if one accepts a multivalency of experience rooted in an ontological experience that underpins any particular occasion. i.e. surface meaning is often a representation of a deeper order that has some constancy even if the scope of reference changes (such as the different ideas and reference points of origin discussed in a Roman and then Christian context in part one). It also places the order of the festival (and hence its meaning) within the realm of its repetition –i.e. it is both a singular event and a series of different ones at the same time. In such experience different narratives are housed within a commonality and contribute to its overall identity, but they are not the building blocks of the common experience – the whole and the individual components exist at the same time, but the existence of the whole is not dependent upon the individual but on the given ontological order of the event that references the cultural history and the places they inhabit.

In referencing the first civic palazzi of Florence (particularly the Palazzo Vecchio) and their adaptation over several centuries – up to and including the present incorporation into the Feast of San Giovanni – it is clear that these examples of the city's civic architecture have been subjects to similar forces which have resulted in some change but also exhibited some moments of resistance.

This process of layering of meaning that was described in the festival has, therefore, resonance in architecture as well. Similar to the way the agon searches for the worthiest opponent to secure the most favourable victory, each layer of meaning etched into the

history of the city continually argues for the significance of its contribution through its relationship to the necessity of the process of dwelling. Such processes are never static or carved into the form of the architecture of the city but are present and demand constant re-evaluation – both of the architecture and of the ethical values of the city. As such the original form of the civic palaces that resembled the feudal castles of the past, and were then adapted to recognise the forms of domestic palazzo that began to emerge in the quattrocento, suggest that the understanding of a shift of civic order from natural order to open access state was also evident in the architecture. Equally, these central courtyards and staircases that became significant elements of the urban palazzi, were designed in such a way that their thresholds to the city were porous and adaptable. So much so that the courtyard can still operate on a daily basis for the museum of the Palazzo Vecchio, as well as occasionally for ceremonies required in contemporary civic feasts. These places remain ‘communicative’ because they were conceived in relation to level of order that was as much paradigmatic as pragmatic.

That the bell of the Palazzo Vecchio both called the city to arms and reorientated the time of the city to its mechanical version is perhaps also a reason why, in regarding city festivals, the commercial activity is often seen as separate and in direct competition with the symbolic. This prejudice between the commercial and cultural aspects of society—both of which are evident and necessary in festival experience—can often share what Trexler calls a ‘frame’ but there still needs to be a clear distinction between two because it is not possible to describe commerce in the same language as culture – they are linked but separate; you cannot buy sacrament, neither could you make a coat of arms holy even though in a festival they can share the same place. Because Trexler does not distinguish clearly enough between

these two factors he suggests that the Florentines of the late medieval period had a similar choice in whether to have faith as to trade whereas in reality they had no such choice. All clerical directions were about the precise nature of the ordering, not the premise of the order itself. Hence, in the emerging commune the ceremonial order mimicked that of the earlier feudal court to give it credibility. It was the role rather than the individual that was honoured (like the kings two bodies),⁸² and so when the person changed, or the role adapted, the iconography could adapt whilst still bearing the core meanings. In the end, although Trexler's authority on the subject is unquestioned and his research of the highest level, his conclusions are at odds with the argument here. He clearly understood that festive rituals were a significant part of the civic life of the city but that, in the end, they sat outside of society; their meaning was based upon knowledge rather than praxis. If this is the case then it suggests, or certainly implies, that only 'knowledge' of the ideas underpinning the structure of the city can deliver authentic experiences; the remainder of the population (including tourists), like spectators in a contemporary theatre, are tricked, charmed and entertained and experience the anxiety that animates Guy Debord's *Society of the Spectacle*,⁸³ not to mention Baudrillard's assault on various forms of simulacrum,⁸⁴ but do not partake in any 'real' experience at all. The shift away from experience understood as knowledge over praxis also reduces the ability for architecture also to be seen in terms of praxis and experience.

Ultimately, the phenomenon of 'continuity' raised by the Feast of San Giovanni in Florence and the use and adaptation of the civic palaces of the city suggests that they all offer

⁸² Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies*.

⁸³ Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle* (Detroit, Mich, 1984).

⁸⁴ Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, trans. by Sheila Glaser (Ann Arbor, 1994).

orientation in history, grounded in spatial orientation or structuring, and that the resulting symbolic Florence, in order to be credible, resonates within a depth acted out in the practical lives of the contemporary inhabitants. Most of the actions performed during the festivals described—walking, greeting, gift-giving, etc.—are heightened versions of actions the citizens would perform anyway, but, in the festival, are performed for their own sake, accompanied by music, chanting and the shared meal/sacrifice of the Mass etc. (whose attunement to rhythm ought to have attracted attention in Lefebvre's *Rhythmanalysis*).⁸⁵ It is possible to see here the reciprocity of action and reflection in the Aristotelian conception of mimesis of praxis mentioned earlier on which Gadamer draws to illuminate understanding generally. With this in mind, the next chapter looks further into the relationship between knowledge and experience and the different ways in which architecture of Florence has contributed to the resistance to the co-option of culture.

⁸⁵ Henri Lefebvre, *Rhythmanalysis: Space, Time and Everyday Life* (New York, 2013).