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In Search of a Hybrid Antiquity, *circa* 1516

ABSTRACT: Architectural and pictorial modes developed in Raphael's Workshop and subsequently in Giulio Romano's work are investigated here in part as a reaction in part to the strictures of Vitruvius against the transspecies transfiguration of *grotesque* ornamentation. It is generally stated that the Renaissance sought to bring back the Antiquity, but one could ask which Antiquity, or rather which Antiquities. A close-reading of Vitruvius' and (seemingly) Horace's objections to such hybrid manifestations of transformative change reveals contradictions and affordances that Raphael and Giulio will intensify in the hybrid transmedial modes of their art and architecture developed within the political and religious changes of that time.

KEYWORDS: Bibbiena, Giulio Romano, grotesque, Horace, hybridity, Raphael, transformative signification, Vitruvius

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I.

In Raphael and Baldassare Castiglione's *Letter to Leo X*, proposing the need for an extensive survey of the extant ancient architecture of Rome—given its destruction by "the Goths, Vandals, and other perfidious enemies of the Latin name" (as well as by, stated but unnamed, a number of Pontiffs)—there is one sentence in particular that stands out, given certain of Raphael's work in the Papal Palace, which may strike one as having a particularly inadvertent ironic aspect. Having stated the perfection of much of architectural and ornamental style of the ancient Romans, the letter sets up the following counter-example:

> And the Germans, whose style still endures in many places, often use as ornament small huddled and poorly made figures, as corbels to support a beam, and strange animals and awkward figures and foliage beyond all natural reason.[1]

If Raphael and Castiglione here are complaining about the lasting influence of Goth modes from centuries earlier, then three centuries hence John Ruskin in his *The Stones of Venice* would mirror a neo-Gothic retort back at Raphael regarding all the strange animals and awkward figures and foliage in the grotesques that cover what has come to be called Raphael's Loggia, which Ruskin stated "may be generally described as an elaborate and luscious form of nonsense [...] an artistical pottage, composed of nymphs, cupids, and satyrs, with shreddings of heads and paws of meek wild beasts, and nondescript vegetables:"

> And herein lies the real distinction between the base grotesque of Raphael and the Renaissance, above alluded to, and the true Gothic grotesque. Those grotesques or arabesques of the Vatican, and other such work, which have become the patterns of ornamentation in modern times, are the fruit of great minds degraded to base objects [...]. If we can draw the human head perfectly, and are masters of its expression and its beauty, we have no business to cut it off, and hang it up by the hair at the end of a garland. If we can draw the human body in

[1] My translation is of the version in the Castiglione family archive in Mantua: "*E li Tedeschi, la maniera de' quali in molti lochi anchor dura, per ornamento spesso poneano solo un qualche figurino aranichiato e mal fatto per mensola a sostenere un travo et animali strani e figure e fogliami goffi e for d'ogni raggione naturale*." (Original text in J. Shearman, *Raphael in Early Modern Sources (1483-1602)*, vol. 1, Yale University Press, New Haven, 2003, p. 505).

> the perfection of its grace and movement, we have no business to take away its limbs, and terminate it with a bunch of leaves.[2]

It might be imagined that Raphael would hardly have been surprised had he read Ruskin's critique of this work as *non*sense (Ruskin's version of Raphael's "beyond all natural reason"), because he had already read a similar critique from centuries prior, by Vitruvius, in a similar moment of pique against what he called the "false reasoning" [*ratio falsa*] of the style of wall painting from antiquity that Raphael had adopted—first for Bibbiena's *Loggetta* and *Stufetta* and then later for the papal Loggia, because whereas previous images

> which were modelled on reality, are now condemned in the light of current depraved tastes; now monstrosities [*monstra*] rather than faithful representations of definable entities are painted in frescos. For example, reeds are put up in place of columns, fluted stems with curly leaves and volutes instead of pediments, as well as candelabra supporting representations of shrines, above the pediments of which tender flowers with volutes rise up [*surgentes*] from roots and include figures senselessly [*sine ratione*] seated on them, and even stalks with half-length figures, some with human heads, others with the heads of animals.[3]

Ruskin, no friend of Vitruvius—"the reader can have no conception of the inanities and puerilities of the writers, who, with the help of Vitruvius, reestablished its 'five orders'"[4]—nonetheless coincides with the latter's characterization regarding the degraded and depraved mentality that would depict heads as detached and suspended or as reattached in hybrid human-vegetative figurations. Coinciding as well with Vitruvius's assessment of these representations as monstrosities: "Raphael's arabesque . . . is an unnatural and *monstrous* abortion."[5]

If for Ruskin these works are "mere idleness" because they have "neither meaning nor heart,"[6] for Vitruvius, their existence is idle and senseless because they seem structure-less:

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[2] J. Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice, Volume the Third. The Fall,* Smith, Elder & Co., London, 1853, pp. 136, 143–144.
[3] Vitruvius, *On Architecture*, Penguin, London, 2009, VII, 5, 3, p. 207.
[4] J. Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice, Volume the Third. The Fall*, p. 98.
[5] *Ibid*., p. 144, emphasis added.
[6] *Ibid*.

> These things do not exist, cannot exist and never have existed. For how, in the real world, could a reed possibly support a roof, or a candelabrum the mouldings of a pediment, or such a thin and flexible stalk support a little figure sitting on it, or roots and stalks generate [*procreari*] flowers or half-figures? But when people see these falsities they do not criticize them but find them delightful [*delectantur*], ignoring the problem of whether any of them can exist or not.[7]

The fact that this is Vitruvius speaking, the very source that Raphael was studying and supposed to be modeling his architecture upon, and whom in the second and particularly the third sentence following the invective against unreasonable arrangements of German ornament in the *Letter to Leo X* is summoned as the arbitrator of certain antique architectural arrangements, should provide a moment of pause: "But there is no need to talk about Roman architecture to compare it with barbarian [*la barbara*] architecture, because the difference is quite recognizable, nor to describe its arrangement [*ordine*] since this has already been so excellently written about by Vitruvius."[8] Yet, while it is generally stated that the Renaissance sought to bring back the Antiquity, one could ask which Antiquity, or rather which Antiquities? And in so asking suggest that the transformation of that Antique past into the Cinquecento present should be stated in the plural, as often conflictual as corroborative in its plurality. Because if there was any aesthetic mode from antiquity Raphael would have been expected to avoid, had he been following Vitruvius to the ("excellently written") letter, it would have been from this moment in the ten books when Vitruvius gets up on his highest horse (as compared to Ruskin, who seldom gets down off of his). The moment, in other words, that Vitruvius is not just merely corrective to what he perceives as errors in proportion to existing examples, but is so clearly exasperated to the extent that he categorically interdicted these pictorial arrangements of monstrous hybridity, as evident in their conjoined characteristics: reed-columns, vegetative-pediments, candelabra-supports,

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[7] Vitruvius, *On Architecture*, VII, 5, 4, p. 207.

[8] This translation is adapted from "The Letter to Leo X by Raphael and Baldassare Castiglione (c. 1519)" in V. Hart, P. Hicks (eds.), *Palladio's Rome: A Translation of Andrea Palladio's Two Guidebooks to Rome*, Yale University Press, New Haven /London, 2006, p. 185, modified slightly to reflect the fact that, in all three extent versions of the manuscript, the original text was a single sentence rather than broken into two. I have also incorporated the Mantua manuscript's *scritto* rather than the *scripto* of the Munich manuscript used by Hart and Hicks.

and vegetative-mammals.[9] Actually, Raphael did follow Vitruvius to the letter, but in an inverse manner, depicting in Cardinal Bernardo Dovizi da Bibbiena's Loggetta, *circa* 1516, each and every one of these four interdicted monstrous items from Vitruvius's diatribe.

The medievalist Caroline Walker Bynum has proposed that it was in response to unsettling questions of identity raised by accounts and images of monsters that "concepts of change themselves began to change in the years around 1200 and that two images in particular, hybrid and metamorphosis—images prominent in imaginative literature, theological, the visual arts, and natural philosophy—were sites of these competing and changing understandings."[10] Bynum characterizes this shift from "change not as replacement but as evolution or development, as alteration of appearance or mode of being."[11] Evoking Isidore of Seville's etymological explication that monsters as omens "derive their name from admonition (*monitu*), because in giving a sign they indicate something (*significando demonstrent*), or else because they instantly show (*monstrent*) what may appear (*appareat*)," Bynum states that this naming from the verb *monstrare* (to show) derives "not from their ontology but from their utility," indicating a category not "merely strange or [...] simply inexplicable [...] but a strange that matters, that pointed beyond itself to meaning."[12] Not just meaning something, but pointing to meaning, making apparent the epistemological process of meaning, as observed by Michel Foucault: "Paradoxically, the monster is a principle of intelligibility in spite of its limit position as both the impossible and the forbidden."[13] *Significando demonstrent*: in the context discussed here, it is not in spite of, but because of, their limit positions that monsters make apparent and intelligible the mutable paradoxes inherent in demonstrations of signification.

In order to examine what these conflictual demonstrations of signification tell us about epistemological changes in the aesthetic and political modes of the Cinquecento, the initial sections here will investigate certain contradictions and paradoxes regarding these matters in the strictures expressed by Vitruvius and (seemingly) by Horace against selected

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[9] S. R. Yerkes, "Vitruvius' *monstra*," *Journal of Roman Archaeology*, 13, 2000, pp. 234–251.
[10] C. W. Bynum, *Metamorphosis and Identity*, Zone Books, New York, 2001, p. 21.
[11] *Ibid*., p. 23.
[12] *Ibid*., pp. 23, 71–72. The English translation of Isidore of Seville is from Isidore, *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2006, p. 244.
[13] M. Foucault, *Abnormal: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1974–1975*, Picador, New York, 2003, pp. 56–57.

transformative changes and exchanges in the aesthetic modes of their Augustan age. In contrast to such strictures, the archeological evidence Renaissance artists encountered in their own explorations of local ancient sites suggested opportunities for creative investigations circulating around these monstrous hybrids and various forms of metamorphosis.

2.

With regard to Vitruvius's *monstra*, this is an epistemological problem of what—to use his own characterization of the false reasoning and present madness in the public reception of these images—may be categorized as *delightful*, and how it may be arranged, and where. Henry Wotten's well-known but incorrect translation of Vitruvius's oft-cited triad as "Commoditie, Firmenes, and Delight,"[14] where the correct translation of the third term *venustas* should be "beauty," ironically points to the fact that there is very little "delight" related to architecture or art to be found in Vitruvius. Which I would suggest became a problem for Raphael and for Giulio Romano, Raphael's main assistant in the Workshop, such that they were compelled to find other antiquities as counterpoints—not to replace but to further develop the restrictive one proposed by Vitruvius—given that their intensive study of the remains of antiquity, across a range of media, revealed to them a much wider range of modalities and styles. And one of the principal ones they chose is the very one Vitruvius rejects, an alternative antiquity made apparent by the mutability in the monstrousness of hybrids.

Benvenuto Cellini confirms the allure and nomination of this mode, saying that the proper name for the style known as grotesques should be "monsters," in a counter-reference to some Turkish daggers whose designs he felt compelled not only to copy but to outdo. Parallel to the North-South rivalry against "the Germans," this is an East-West competition—in keeping with the crusades against the Ottoman empire that Leo X had tried to enlist against Sultan Selim, with the animosity continuing under Adrian VI and Clement VII in regard to Selim's heir Sultan Suleiman.[15] Cellini, unlike Raphael, shows some appreciation rather than distain or at best begrudged acknowledgement in this rivalry, but, like Raphael, evokes a partisan prejudice: "the Turkish leaf-cluster [...]

[14] H. Wotton, *The Elements of Architecture*, John Bill, London, 1624, p. 1.
[15] K. M. Setton, "Penrose Memorial Lecture. Pope Leo X and the Turkish Peril," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 113, 6, 1969, pp. 367–424.

though quite pretty, eventually lose their charm, unlike our foliage." Cellini, who just prior to this sentence has told us how his daggers were "more beautiful and durable" as he made them out of steel rather than the Turkish iron, then enumerates various Italians ways of depicting foliage and their relation to certain pictorial modes from antiquity, which leads to his explanation of the misnomer "grotesque:"

> In Italy we have various ways of creating foliage: the Lombards make extremely beautiful foliage, copying the leaves of ivy and clematis with extremely beautiful spirals that are *delightful* [*piacevol*] to look at; the Tuscans and Romans make a much better choice in this kind of work, because they imitate the leaves of the acanthus [...] Some such figures are [...] accompanied by other beautiful conceits of these talented craftsmen: these things are called "grotesques" by those without much knowledge. These grotesques have acquired this name among the moderns, since they were found in certain underground caverns in Rome by scholars, and these caverns were, in ancient times, rooms, baths, studies, halls, and other such structures. These learned men discovered them in such cavernous sites, since the ancients had erected them on the ground level, where they remained while the ground rose, and because in Rome such underground sites are called "grottos," from this derived the name "grotesques." This is not their proper name, because just as the ancients took *delight* [*dilettavano*] in composing monsters by the copulation of goats, cows, and horses, from which were born the *mixtures* [*mescugli*] they called monsters, so in like manner their artisans created with their foliage this same kind of monsters: and "monsters" is their true name and not "grotesque."[16]

Vasari, in his 1550 edition of *Le vite*, corroborates the monstrously fantastical nature of this mode, first seeming to concur with the negative assessments of both Vitruvius and Ruskin:

> Grotesques are a licentious and very ridiculous [*licenziose e ridicole molto*] sort of painting, executed by the ancients to adorn spaces in

[16] B. Cellini, *La Vita*, L. Belloto (ed.), Fondazione Pietro Bembo/Ugo Guanda Editore, Parma, 1996, pp. 112–115; English translation: B. Cellini, *My Life*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2002, pp. 52–53, emphasis added. I have modified the translation by removing the word "sorry" as qualifying the chimerical "mixtures" in the final sentence, as no such word (and its implied judgment or valuation) occurs in the original text: "*nascendo questi mescugli gli domandavano mostri*."

> which nothing else was appropriate except things in the air. Thus, they made them full of deformed and *monstrous* [*monstri*] things, strictly according to the nature, whim and caprice of their makers. These are made *without adherence to any rule* [*senza alcuna regola*], depicting a thread so fine that it could not possibly bear the weight suspended from it, a horse with legs made of leaves, a man with the legs of a crane and infinite numbers of banners and small birds.[17]

Vasari then states that while the ancients developed these figurations without rule, later they were regulated [*regolate*] into friezes and compartments to beautiful effect, which allows him to invert what appeared as his prior negative judgements into high positive praise: "This practice became so widespread that in Rome, and in every place that the Romans resided, some vestige of these decorations is still preserved. In truth, with their touches of gold and carved stucco, these are cheerful works that are *delightful* [*dilettevole*] to see."[18] How did such licentious and ridiculous pagan monsters without rule come to be regulated as cheerful and delightful works in the Vatican?

You could pin this problem of iconographic non-*sense and sensibility*—this initiative to find delight in antiquity and renew it in a modern way—not on Raphael or Giulio, but on their patron Leo X, as many have, citing his liberal manner and his alleged comment to his brother Giuliano: "Since God has given us the papacy, let us enjoy it." Or even by citing the letter the Pope sent to his friend Cardinal Bibbiena on the 13 July 1516 extolling the virtues of Bibbiena's apartment, saying that even he himself "wished to use that apartment which you inhabited hitherto, for it is especially conducive to joyfulness [*laetitiam*] and good spirits [*exhilarationem*] on account of the wondrous colonnade and its many beautiful views."[19]

Not that Bibbiena got to inhabit it much hitherto, as there was not even a month's lapse between Pietro Bembo's letter of 20 June 1516 telling Bibbiena that Raphael had completed the loggetta, apartment,

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[17] G. Vasari, *Le vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori, e architettori* (1568), R. Bettarini (ed.), Edizone Giuntina, SPES, Florence, 1966–1987, p. 270. http://www.memofonte.it/home/files/pdf/vasari_vite_giuntina.pdf; English translation by B. Edelstein, "The Camera Verde: A Public Center for the Duchess of Florence in the Palazzo Vecchio," *Mélanges de l'Ecole française de Rome. Italie et Méditerranée*, 15, 1, 2003, p. 65.

[18] *Ibid*.

[19] Translation by Shearman in J. Shearman, *Raphael in Early Modern Sources (1483–1602)*, vol. 1, pp. 263–264.

and stufetta before the Pope already had requisitioned it, not for himself but for his own institutional usage. In the 13 July letter, Leo is writing really to tell Bibbiena that his apartment was now to be occupied by Leo X's infirm friend Cardinal Jacopo Serra, but would be returned to him upon Serra's death. When that death did occur the following year, rather than Bibbiena, it was Cardinal Raffaele Riario, accused of being associated with the planned assassination attempt on Leo X, who was the next occupant.[20] On the principal, apparently, not merely of "keep your friends close and your enemies closer," but rather "keep your enemies under house-arrest in your own house until they give you their house," as among the recompense exacted out of Riario was his very grand Palazzo Riario, henceforth called Palazzo della Cancelleria. One wonders what Cardinal Riario would have felt looking at the depictions of the satyrs in the Loggetta that Nicole Dacos has noted were "seated on trophies of armaments, their arms tied behind their backs like prisoners," or the scenes of Apollo restraining Marsyas,[21] stripping him of his skin for having lost in their competition, let alone (in another register) a different sort of stripping depicted in the nearly nude male figures in the act of hanging up the cloths that threaten to unrestrainedly billow away, were they not wrapped (just barely) around their privates.

For Vitruvius and Ruskin it was not the aforementioned restraints, but rather the overall lack of restraint, the unrestrained over-delightfulness, of these architecturally-scaled decorations that concerned them.

You could also pin this on Cardinal Bibbiena, as many have, given his licentious and ridiculously witty play of double-entendres and double-identities, *La calandra*, which may still seem startling that it was performed publicly before Leo X in 1514. In Leo X's letter to Bibbiena, the Pope states that he thought the apartment "would be both useful and delightful [*usui et voluptati*] to you" given "the crowds of people flocking to see you at all hours," and then compares his friend's nature to its design, as rejoicing "in happiness and gaiety [*laetitiis et hilaritatibus gaudet*]."[22] That hilarity may certainly be noted in the broadest, most ribald, moments of *La calandra*. But Castiglione's casting of Bibbiena as a character in *The Courtier*, as the spokesperson throughout Book II

[20] *Ibid*., pp. 263–264.

[21] N. Dacos, *The Loggia of Raphael: A Vatican Art Treasure*, Abbeville, New York, 2008, p. 33.

[22] Translation by Shearman in J. Shearman, *Raphael in Early Modern Sources (1483–1602)*, vol. 1, pp. 263–264.

who extols the hybrid combination of the witty *and* the grave, is in keeping with the Cardinal himself, considering that beyond his oft-cited witticisms, he was, as treasurer and secretary of state [*segretario di stato*] to Leo X, considered by many to be second only to the Pope in power. It is worth noting that spatially the position of Bibbiena's apartment in the Vatican was right over the Pope's apartments, with a staircase connecting the two. Not even a month had passed since Leo X's election when Ludovico Ariosto complained that it was impossible to visit with and to use Bibbiena as a "go-between because he is such a big shot [*troppo Gran Maestro*] and so difficult to get hold of."[23]

It was diplomatic missions for the papacy that instigated Bibbiena's long absences away from his apartment, and although he did return by 11 November 1517, it was following the eighteen-day occupation yet again of his apartment by Thomas de Foix, Seigneur of Leon, "a special envoy sent by Francis I to offer all possible help against the Turk."[24] Bibbiena would then follow after this mission, leaving again in April 1518 as papal legate to the France to foster the pope's plan for a crusade with Francis I against Sultan Selim. This sort of mission is portrayed by Raphael in the *Stanze* in *The Battle of Ostia*, as a hybridized multiverse, temporally seemingly set seven centuries earlier as Leo IV overseeing the defeat of the Saracens (a generalized term for Arab infidels), but in Raphael's depiction Leo X is cast as Leo IV, while arranged standing right behind him at the edge of the fresco are the two most powerful members of his court, his nephew the Cardinal Giulio de' Medici (the future Pope Clement VII) and Cardinal Bibbiena. These geo-religious-political coordinates were already on Bibbiena's mind in 1513, as indicated in the spoken Argument [*Argumento*] of *La calandra*, the plot summary that follows directly after the Prologue. Before the play begins, we are told that the twins' separation from their home city and each other that resulted in the sister Santilla adopting, for her safety, the male role in the attire of her brother Lidio, occurred because "the Turks took Modon and burned it, killing everyone they found there." Modon, as Laura Giannetti and Guido Ruggiero note, was a "Greek city controlled by Venice as part of its maritime trading empire. As an important port city for the

[23] Ariosto writing (from Rome) to Benedetto Fantino, 7 April 1513, quoted in L. Ariosto, *"My muse will have a story to paint": Selected Prose of Ludovico Ariosto*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 2010, p. 41.

[24] J. Shearman, *Raphael in Early Modern Sources (1483–1602)*, vol. 1, pp. 304–305.

Venetian war fleets, it was a regular bone of contention between Venice and the Turks."[25]

A witty performance, then, set within the context of the grave. As Virginia Cox has observed, *The Courtier* shares with Cicero's *De oratore* a casting of characters whose "power and knowledge" are of high social and political status,[26] and it is within such a serious context that both of their excurses on the performance of wisdom through wit are developed. Bibbiena's excursus is more extensive than Julius Caesar Strabo's in *De oratore*, taking up over half of Book II of *The Courtier*, and there are many techniques of critical intelligence in precise correspondence with the aesthetic ideas expressed by Raphael's Workshop and later in Giulio's work—including "ambiguity (*vario significato*)," "counter-balance (*contrapeso*)," "overstatement and understatement," and "that which is contrary to expectations"[27]—to cite just a few of the ones more pertinent to their relational aesthetics in sites of "power and knowledge" in the Vatican Palace.

3.

The epistemological process of change and exchange in these techniques of ambiguity, counter-balance, overstatement and understatement, and being contrary to expectations (by undermining or overturning them) are certainly ways we can understand the problems for Vitruvius—and with Vitruvius—in regard to the pictorial mode of Raphael that came to be known as the *grottesche*. As Decos has observed in Bibbiena's Loggetta, around

> the little temples and the scenes of Apollo and Marysas were depicted grotesques that do not rest on any foundation and appear to be suspended in a void, defying gravity. Raphael even dared to make jokes on the subject, imagining, for example, potbellied old men who stride forth on very fragile stems while one of the Cupids accompanying them is forced to use a pole so as not to lose his balance.[28]

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[25] L. Giannetti, G. Ruggiero, (eds.), *Five Comedies from the Italian Renaissance*, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 2003, p. 3.

[26] V. Cox, *The Renaissance Dialogue: Literary Dialogue in Its Social and Political Contexts, Castiglione to Galileo*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1992, p. 14.

[27] In Book II, see sections 58, 64, 70, 85: B. Castiglione, *Il libro del cortegiano*, W. Barberis (ed.), Einaudi, Turin, pp. 199–200, 208–209, 215–216, 234–236; B. Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier*, D. Javitch (ed.), W. W. Norton, New York, pp. 114–115, 119, 123, 132–134.

[28] N. Dacos, *The Loggia of Raphael*, p. 34.

Verity Platt has provided the most astute reading of Vitruvius's discomfort in this regard, noting Vitruvius's focus on those forms that "are incapable of fulfilling their role as structural devices." That the grotesque for Vitruvius overstate their understated structural capabilities with untenable balancing acts and, in addition, exhibit ambiguous mixtures and hybridity that are contrary to conventional expectations, was not just a technical problem, it was a moral problem. It was not merely that the pictorial structures were at risk, it was the structural basis of society and reasoning that is at risk:

> That such forms may also sprout the heads of humans or animals is simply confirmation of their irrational nature [...]. While the transformation of structural devices into vegetal forms may delight the viewer (*delectantur*), it engenders a contradiction between form and function which, by undermining architectural precepts, typifies a moral malaise (*iniquis moribus* [...] *iudiciis infirmis*) that threatens the very structure of society [...]. The language of structure is thus combined with the language of reason: it is "irrational" (*sine ratione*) that flowers should support seated figures; it is due to "clouded minds" (*obscuratae mentes*) that contemporary viewers are incapable of judging images that exist "by reason of decorum" (*ratione decoris*).[29]

Both Platt and fellow classical scholar Jaś Elsner have noted that in the two paragraph-sections (VII, 5, 1–2) just proceeding his outrage, "Significantly, Vitruvius does not reject illusionism itself as morally dangerous; he has no criticism for the 'subjects copied from real things' (*ex veris rebus exempla*) that typified Second Style *trompe l'œil*." Nor does Vitruvius criticize the wall decoration that he states first "imitated the various patterns and shapes of stuccos made from powered marbles and then various combinations of garlands, decorative mouldings and borders," progressing in their ability "to imitate the forms of buildings and three-dimensional projections of columns and pediments [...] stage-sets in tragic, comic or satiric styles," and "a variety of landscapes." And no criticism for what Vitruvius describes as "sequences of mythological narratives, as well as the battles of Troy, or the wanderings of Ulysses from

[29] V. Platt, "Where the Wild Things Are: Locating the Marvellous in Augustan Wall-Painting," in P. Hardie (ed.), *Paradox and the Marvellous in Augustan Literature and Culture*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2009, p. 55.

country to country."[30] Illusion and mythological fantasy, in other words, "generated by the natural world reproduced on similar principles," are not a problem for Vitruvius. Or so he says, even though of course Roman mythological narratives are filled with hybrid creatures and cross-species transformations—enough to fill two of the most significant literary books of antiquity, the *Metamorphosis* of Ovid and of Apuleius—as well to have crucial roles and poignant appearances throughout the works of Homer that Vitruvius evokes. In the *Iliad*, for example, there appears the very creature whose name will henceforth become the standard term for hybridity, the Chimaira ("lion-fronted and snake behind, a goat in the middle"), and indeed the hero Achilles is son of the sea-nymph Thetis and the human Peleus. In the *Odyssey* there is Proteus's polymorphism ("First he took on a lion's shape, / a serpent then; a leopard; a great boar; / then sousing water; then a tall green tree") as well as the off-scene then on-sense transformations by Circe of Odysseus's men into pigs and back again ("and then behold! their bristles fell away, / the course pelt grown upon them by her drug / melted away, and they were men again").[31] As long as these scenes are enframed and depicted within "a clearly demarcated zone of pictorial 'representation'," they appear to be acceptable to Vitruvius. As Platt notes, in "the *De Architectura*, *monstra* are not, therefore, defined by their subject matter, so much as their violation of the Vitruvian principles of representational verisimilitude (*veritas*), rationality of design (*ratio*), and structural appropriateness (*decor*)."[32]

In other words, delicate decorative elements as supplemental features to these scenes would only be appropriate as décor, as extrinsic to the "real" representations, as the background field against which enframed and cordoned off figural scenes structure the visual experience. They become indecorous as they become ambiguous, overstating their positions by becoming foregrounded figures emanating from the pictorial field, contraposing their supplemental (*paregon*) significance as, contrary to expectations, transforming to take on the work (*ergon*) of structure, envisioned not as some proper stable form but as a precarious (and, to *some*, delightful) balancing-act of identity.

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[30] *Ibid*., p. 55. See also J. Elsner, *Art and the Roman Viewer: The Transformation of Art from the Pagan World to Christianity*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1995, pp. 49–87; Vitruvius, *On Architecture*, VII, 5, 2, p. 206.

[31] Homer, *The Odyssey*, Anchor Books, Garden City, 1963, pp. 66, 177.

[32] V. Platt, "Where the Wild Things Are," pp. 56, 63.

In her passing reference to Immanuel Kant's concept (and Jacques Derrida's gloss) of the *parergon*, Platt suggests that rather than just being decoratively extrinsic (*para-*) as ornament (as Kant stated), for Vitruvius the frame is intrinsic to the real work (*ergon*) of the (painted) wall.[33] Yet, it should be said, the function of the frame within this painted world is still perceived as supplemental to the scene it enframes. And the trouble arises, as Derrida suggested, when that supplemental function calls into question what structures what. In these works of antiquity, and in Raphael and Giulio's work, this questioning is made manifest in two principal ways. The first occurs, as Vitruvius has told us, when the supplemental undergoes a radical transformation of identity to become structural. And the second occurs when what appears to be clearly demarcated identities between the structural and the supplemental become ambiguous, and thus act contrary to expectations, when those identities are optically inverted at the point of their attached interfaces. Platt's very potent example of the latter is the wall-painting from the Augustan time of Vitruvius, that of the Siren caryatid ("a *monstrum*—a hybrid not only of woman and bird, but also of living being and architectural element") from Cubiculum B in the Villa della Farnesina. As Platt observes, "confusingly, although she rests on a pilaster that seems to project from the wall into the space of the room, the panel she holds is painted as if suspended on a recessed plane of red. By blurring the distinction between planes, the siren thus undermines the three-dimensionality of the wall's architectural scheme, dissolving its *trompe l'oeil* effect even as she (literally) upholds it."[34] Thus beyond the indecorousness of individual pictorial figures changing or exchanging—in understated or overstated ways—their supplemental or structural roles, the whole pictorial field is put into an ambiguous unsettling dynamic that again resists, now at the architectural and environmental scale of the wall, the other two key-terms of Vitruvius's triad: durability (*firmitas*) and utility (*utilitas*).

"But when people see these falsities they do not criticize them but find them delightful"—when I said that there is little "delight" in Vitruvius, I meant this not just figuratively but literally, as there are only four other instances of this word being used in relation to aesthetic production in the ten books of *De architectura*. Three of which ironically

[33] *Ibid.*, p. 62. See I. Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, P. Guyer (ed.), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2000, §14, 5:226, pp. 110–111; J. Derrida, *The Truth in Painting*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1987, pp. 7–82.

[34] V. Platt, "Where the Wild Things Are," pp. 47–48.

exhibit the very dangers Vitruvius warned against. The first two of these instances occur in Book IV, in his telling of the origin stories of the Ionic order and the Corinthian order. The Ionic is described by Vitruvius as originally a feminized version of the Doric: "they used the same plans, adapting them to feminine gracefulness," making the former more slender by adjusting its diameter from the Doric's one-sixth of its height to be one-eighth "so that it would appear taller." Supplementing the column shaft, the bottom was lifted up by substituting "a base for the shoe, and on the capital they placed volutes at right and left like graceful curls hanging down from the hair; they decorated the fronts with convex mouldings and runs of fruit arranged like hair, and sent flutes down the whole trunk like folds in the robes traditionally worn by married women." It is amazing that the transspecies mixtures of non-structural entities that he complained about in Book VII—the vegetative (fruit) and the human (for the Ionic not even "half-length" human heads but even more disembodied still as just a wig of hair)—become not only structural but the most "intelligible" (or at least identifiable) attributes of this structural order. A seemingly indecorous decorative overstatement of significance, given the capital's supplemental role as merely the interface between the primary vertical structure and the horizontal structure it supports. And as for the fluting of the column emulating the pliable fabric of robes, with respect to Kant's list of three examples of extrinsic *parergon* elements, after the first example of frames around paintings, the supplement of drapery in sculpture is the second one cited in *The Critique of Judgment*.[35] Yet Vitruvius appears not to notice, in his description of the drive to "ensure that the columns would be capable of bearing the loads and that the beauty [*venustatem*] of their appearance would be assured," that this engendered transformation toward more beautiful ornament

[35] The example of frames was added as the first example in the second edition—thus drapery was first in first edition, then shifted to second in the second edition. In this latter edition, ironically, Kant's third and final parergon example is "colonnades around magnificent buildings." It should be stated that in many architectural traditions, the Western one in particular, an array of columns surrounding a central institutional space defines and structures the very originary moment of built magnificence. Thus, in Vitruvius's discussion of the seven types of temples, all have columns that are integral as thresholds with respect to a central *cella*, either in the form of porticos, or as single or double rows of columnar surrounds. There is, in other words, no way, according to Vitruvius, to separate columns and colonnades as supplemental from the real architectural work that is culturally constituted as a Temple (and equally so with regard to his discussions of the Forum and the Basilica).

[*ornatu venustiores*] begins to put into question the assurance of his own ideas regarding durability and utility.[36]

In spite of his judgmental critique in Book VII, here in Book IV Vitruvius ignores these problems and has no criticism when retailing these piecemeal tales about piecemeal tectonic constructions. Not when he tells us that, with regard to change, "later builders, becoming more sophisticated with regard to elegance and subtlety of judgment, and delighting [*delectati*] in more graceful modules" further accentuate the engendered difference between "one which looked naked, undecorated and virile, the other characterized by feminine delicacy, decoration, and modularity." Nor thus in his origin myth of the change in the orders with the development of the Corinthian capital, as Vitruvius does not seem to notice that when he tells us that Callimachus saw near the tomb of the deceased virgin her fragile "basket with the tender young [acanthus] leaves growing around it: delighted [*delectatusque*] by the style and novelty of the form, he built some columns at Corinth following this example," this very example would seem to be just the sort he would have railed against in Book VII. "For how," to use his own words in that Book, "in the real world, could" such "thin and flexible" hair and festoons of fruit and baskets and tender young acanthus leaves "possibly support a roof, or [...] the mouldings of a pediment"?[37]

Similarly the third reference to delight, two chapters later in Book IV, which begins as instructions to provide the technical assurance of stability [*firmiorem*] by assembling uniform sized masonry blocks with the vertical joints of each row positioned midway on the blocks of the adjoining rows (what Vitruvius termed *opus isodomum*), will end with the suggestion to dress up the blocks in a protruding rusticated manner, an artificed exaggeration, "so its appearance" is delightful [*delectationem*].[38] This exaggeration will become fully fictively non-structural with a trans-material change when Bramante at Palazzo Caprini will dress up common bricks, cloaking this veneer surface in stucco so their appearance will be that of rusticated load-bearing blocks in the *piano rustico* and noble orders in the *piano nobile*. A fictively-structural technique, revealed as non-structural when developed further—with regard to ambiguity,

[36] The Vitruvius quotes in this paragraph are from Book IV, 1, 6–7. Vitruvius, *On Architecture*, pp. 91–92.

[37] The Vitruvius quotes in this paragraph are from Book IV, 1, 7, 8, 10 and Book VII, 5, 4. Vitruvius, *On Architecture*, pp. 92, 207.

[38] Vitruvius, *On Architecture*, Book IV, 4, 4, p. 105.

counter-balance, overstatement and understatement, and being contrary to expectations—in the later palazzos of Raphael and Giulio.

Vitruvius's only other object-related use of delight is in Book X when he refers to the hydraulic and pneumatic "machines of practical use and sources of amusement [*delectationem*]" invented by Ctesibius of Alexandria.[39] Raphael and the Workshop will include in the *Loggetta* and the *Loggia* representations not only of each of the "delightful" examples of grotesque Vitruvius deplored, but also those "delightful" examples Vitruvius extolled: a water-clock in the *Loggetta*, *opus isodomum* and a fluted Corinthian order in the *Loggia*, festoons of fruit (implausibly suspended, for the loads they carry, by thin strands of red cord), Corinthian capitals (but capping the most slender of unfluted reeds, whose diameters are closer to one-forty-third of their height), and acanthus leaves (growing not around the virgin's basket but curling around in empty space or growing into hybrid creatures).

Obviously in spite of—or perhaps because of—Vitruvius's warnings and interdictions, the grotesque was not only delightful for Raphael but exhilarating as a mode, not only to imitate, nor even to evolve within its media in ways not found in antiquity as he indeed did, but, as an artist working across disciplines and media, to comprehend it more generally as a technique, as another dynamic mode of spatialized visual arranging, as those he found in the early relief sculptures on sarcophagi and the Arch of Constantine. Beyond the hybridity of individual figures, these latter examples and those of the grotesque enacted transformative figurations throughout complex fields, which were intensively developed through changes in pictorial and tectonic modes in these early years of the Cinquecento. What Raphael and Giulio encountered in their intensive archeology of the past, in their study of ruins and in other available artistic sources of antiquity—including literary ones such as Apuleius, Horace, and Ovid—were a series of creatively animated and transformational modes quite counter to the static prescriptions and proscriptions of Vitruvius.

4.

Horace and Ovid *were* contemporaries of Vitruvius, and while Ovid has been celebrated for his *Metamorphosis*, Horace has been, and continues to be, marshaled to shore up some united front of contempt for hybrid

[39] Vitruvius, *On Architecture*, Book X, 7, 4 and 9, 7, pp. 296, 303.

mixtures in the Augustan period, with the perpetual citation of the opening transspecies lines from his *Ars poetica*: "Suppose some painter had the bright idea / Of sticking a human head on a horse's neck / And covering human nether limbs up with / Assorted feathers so that a beautiful / Woman uptop was an ugly fish below, / And you were invited to take a look / How could you possibly manage to keep a straight face, my friends? [*spectatum admissi risum teneatis, amici?*]"[40] Elsner is one of the few scholars to note that if Vitruvius responds to the ridiculousness of hybrid form with ire, Horace does so with laughter [*risum*]: "Laughter and caricature [...] which is to say seeing the joke and laughing at the system, is a response far removed from Vitruvian condemnation."[41] Horace's poem continues in the next lines to state that the same principle regarding the fantastic holds true for poetry as for painting, when "You can't tell head from foot nor what it is / that they're attached to." When the narrator imagines his addressee providing the counter-argument "'Poets and painters,' you say / 'Have the right to do whatever they dare to do,'" the narrator's reply is "Well yes. We poets claim that right for ourselves / And recognize that other artists have it. / But it doesn't go so far as mixing up / Savage and civilized, mating tigers and lambs."[42] If there is one specific poet here that Horace could not manage to keep a straight face about, it appears to be himself, with his characteristic self-irony, given that the narrator in his earlier *Ode* II: 20 states his self-designation as *biformis*—"half-bard, half-bird" in David West's translation—and proceeds further to describe an actual transformation from civilized human into wild swan: "Already, even now, rough skin is forming / on my legs, my upper part is changing / into a white swan and smooth feather / are sprouting along my fingers and shoulders."[43] As a further link to *Ars poetica*, the classical philologist C. O. Brink has observed that in the opening lines this spreading [*inducere plumas*] over bodily members [*collastis mebris*] involves placing "feathers on the limbs joined to the neck."[44]

Two centuries later in *The Golden Ass*, Apulieus's narrator will describe his own transformation into a donkey, but prior to Horace's poem,

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[40] Horace, *The Epistles of Horace*, Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, New York, 2001, p. 151 (modified to include the phrase "dear friends" [*amici*] within the opening sentence, as Horace does, whereas Ferry moved it to the subsequent sentence).

[41] J. Elsner, *Art and the Roman Viewer*, pp. 57–58.

[42] Horace, *The Epistles of Horace*, p. 151.

[43] Horace, *The Complete Odes and Epodes*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2008, p. 74.

[44] C. O. Brink, *Horace on Poetry: The "Ars poetica,"* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1971, p. 86.

as Elizabeth Sutherland observes, "However common such metamorphoses may have been in Classical literature . . . We have no other text in which a character narrates his own metamorphosis."[45] With human head and animal foot ambiguously attached and therefore ambiguously tell-able, this ode to the transmutational change of the poet "soaring immortal above earthly trivialities through the fame of his poetry,"[46] with its multiple bi-form mixtures—boasting and self-depreciating, civilized and wild, somber and comical—by turns in each strophe, has disturbed, even infuriated, numerous Horace commentators. Eduard Fraenkel, in the spirit of Vitruvius, claimed this transformation was "repulsive or ridiculous, or both," but D. A. Kidd incisively summarized a less judgmental estimation that the "whole ode [...] shows throughout a characteristic blending of humour and seriousness. It is the technique of the *Satires* all over again, *ridentem dicere uerum* (1. 1. 24)"—Horace's laughing while telling the truth.[47] Or, as Horace will say in *Ode* IV: 12, *Dulce est desipere in loco*, it is pleasant to be nonsensical in due place, the way wit acts as a technique of demonstrating the ambiguous sense and non-sense of any mode of signification.

In his comprehensive commentary on *Ars poetica*, Brink says that not knowing head from foot is "the metaphor proverbially applied to incoherence or inconsistency," but as the narrators of both *Ars poetica* and *Ode* II: 20 speak of actual figural parts—the sense and non-sense of their assembled signification— it is worth noting the long history of debates around questions of (in)coherence and (in)consistency regarding parts of certain figural parts in architecture, such as the capitals and bases of columns, and the problem of their respective attachment, already noted in the origin stories of Vitruvius. The latter part of Ferry's translation "You can't tell head from foot nor what it is / that they're attached to" is hardly literal—the sense of the line being rather, as Brink notes, that of an indeterminate condition, caused by these constituent parts not adding up to the shaping of a coherent and consistent species (*uanae / fingentur species*)[48] due

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[45] E. H. Sutherland, *Horace's Well-Trained Reader: Toward a Methodology of Audience Participation in the Odes*, Peter Lang, Frankfurt am Main/New York, 2002, p. 145.

[46] S. Harrison, "Horatian self-representations," in S. Harrison (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Horace*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2007, p. 29.

[47] E. Frankel, *Horace*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1957, p. 301; D. A. Kidd, "The Metamorphosis of Horace," *Journal of the Australasian Universities Language & Literature Association*, 35, 1971, p. 16.

[48] "*fingentur* is taken from the shaping of forms by the artist. It oscillates between the shaping of poetic elements . . . and the fashioning of ideas in the mind. This is a poetic ambiguity.

to the fact that these parts are not rendered (*reddantur*) as "so assigned to a form that it becomes one (*uni / reddantur formae*)."[49] Nonetheless, Ferry's phrasing points to the crucial technical and epistemological problems regarding the attachment of constitutive parts, such that they deliver, render up, a pre-determinate form of an already "knowable" and thus tell-able species.

In the concluding section of the *Letter to Leo X*, Raphael and Castiglione summarize Vitruvius's origin myths of the various seemingly coherent and consistent species of orders, but while the latter author stated that consequently mixing the orders would be an offensive (*offendetur*) act, the former authors state that they intend to show "Many buildings composed of different styles [*maniere*], such as Ionic with Corinthian, Doric with Corinthian, Tuscan with Doric, depending upon what seems best to the artificer."[50]

More than merely a game of stylistic mix n' match, it is precisely by playing—through ambiguity, counter-balance, overstatement and understatement, and being contrary to expectations—with the technical and symbolic problems involved in the positional arrangement and attachment of architecture's constituent parts that Giulio Romano revealed certain epistemological problems of such cultural determinacy and decorum. For example, in the garden façade of Villa Madama, which Giulio supervised after Raphael's death, the recombination of parts is from within the same species, but now tops and bottom lose some of their knowable distinctions by being made "confusingly" more similar, as segments of the continuous pulvinated frieze in the top entablature meant to express the horizontal distribution of structural loads are incorporated as extremely reduced dados in the pilaster pedestals meant to express vertical compressive loads. In Giulio's later Custom House Portal in Mantua, the compressive sense of this bulging pulvinated segment is shifted right down to the bottom of the pedestal, made all the more expressive as its barely-remaining understated plinth appears pushed almost into the ground, while above the frieze-less entablature has been shifted downward from its expected position as completely over-top the arch to form a ambiguous hybrid intermixture with the latter's keystone linked the two

[Horace's] poetry is full of them." C. O. Brink, *Horace on Poetry*, p. 90.

[49] "*uni*: not 'assigned to one form instead of to several' but 'so assigned to a form that it becomes *one*.'" C. O. Brink, *Horace on Poetry*, pp. 90–91.

[50] Vitruvius, *On Architecture*, I, 2, 6, p. 17, translated as "the appearance would be disconcerting"; V. Hart, P. Hicks (eds.), *Palladio's Rome*, pp. 191–192.

distinctive structural species. And curiously, in regard to that opening quotation from the *Letter to Leo X*, elevated above into the arch spandrels are, contrary to expectations, not higher-order winged angels, but rather small huddled (not badly but rather finely-made) figures, not as corbels to support a beam, but of lower-order porters laboring through Customs, compressed under the weight of their over-full sacked loads.

Regarding such hybridizing transformations, understandably Bynum has warned against any easy elision between the two processes she cited: "a hybrid is not just frozen metamorphosis; it is certainly not the end point or the interruption of metamorphosis. A hybrid is a double being, an entity of parts, two or more [...]. Metamorphosis goes from an entity that is one thing to an entity that is another."[51] And yet in *Ode* II: 20 and in the opening lines of *Ars poetica*, as well as in many works of Giulio, what is narrated within the image or the artifact is the process of metamorphic change within the bi-form hybrid, most often at the points of attachment: "Already, even now, rough skin is forming / on my legs, my upper part is changing / into a white swan and smooth feather / are sprouting along my fingers and shoulders." Such is also the case in Giulio's depiction in the Room of Psyche at Palazzo Te, wherein the satyr's horns and tails are conjoined goat figurations, but the enlarged and pointed human-like ears begin to unsettle, and even more unsettling is that the change in the legs is a phase-change: the partially furred partially fleshed thighs with forward-inclined (humanoid) knees transition down to back-legged (bovid) hocks and hoofs.

Already in his early Palazzo Stati Maccarani, Giulio is mixing the vertical "structural" capital of the *piano nobile* order with the lower element of the horizontal "structural" mid-cornice, visibly creating a hybrid mixture of two distinct structural species—but one that manifest a metamorphic transition, transforming from the clearly distinct pedestal at the level of residence of the noble patron as it changes upward into the de-nobilized abstract framework of the servant attic level.[52] Variations on forms of structural mixture are evident in projects developed in this time through Raphael's Workshop, such as in Palazzo Alberini and in the apsidal pilasters of Villa Madama, an attribute shared later at San Benedetto Po, as Tafuri noted, with the fusion of the capital of the center pilasters

[51] C. W. Bynum, *Metamorphosis and Identity*, p. 30.

[52] M. Rakatansky, "The Transformations of Giulio Romano: Palazzo Stati Maccarani," *Aggregate*, 5, 2017, https://we-aggregate.org/piece/the-transformations-of-giulio-romano-palazzo-stati-maccarani (accessed 11 January 2018).

in the nave aisle to their trabeation.[53] And in the neighboring Corinthian pilasters in this church, as a reflection on Vitruvius's origin stories, Giulio in*corporated* a basket-weave pattern in the capitals, above which unexpectedly are enframed and even in some cases appear to *emerge from* the foliated stalks (which again paradoxically are supposed to support the volutes) the very corporal detached grotesque heads that so infuriated Vitruvius—which Giulio had already been deploying in fresco and in relief all throughout Palazzo Te.

As for Horace's supposed censure of hybridity, it has been observed by Brink that *Ars poetica* is itself a mixture of "a series of violent contradictions," although as he said, as with "other instances of Horatian dialectics," such "contradictions cannot seem strange to the reader of the *Odes* or *Satires*."[54] But what remains to be noted with regard to hybrid mixtures in *Ars poetica* is that the poem is *full of them*—to use Brink's expression regarding the occurrence of poetic ambiguities throughout Horace's work. Just as soon as the narrator of *Ars poetica* proclaims strict segregation between certain classes of entities, he either finds immediately reasons not merely for their mixtures, but for a higher imperative that requires their mixture, or at most he will delay proclaiming this necessity until later in the poem. Merely three strophes after the head/foot comment, the narrator engages another hybrid compound form regarding the poetic invention of words, saying that you can make up new words, especially "if you get them from the Greek" (53). This linguistic mixture is immediately followed by a discussion of drama, with the narrator continuing the "foot" analogy by humorously (and as Brink notes, metonymically) stating that the iambic meter is appropriate for "comic sock and tragic buskin both" (80). And although it is then proclaimed that "every genre should keep to its proper style" (92), yet the very next line states "There are times, to be sure, when comedy raises its voice" in tragic diction, and in tragedy moments when the speaker "must give up / His vaunting high heroic words and use / Instead of these the language of common speech" (93–95). The notable dramatic characters that are then cited—Achilles, Medea, Ino, Ixion, Orestes, Antiphaten and the Cyclops, Scylla and Charybdis—are all notably hybrid or hybridized creatures, descended from or transformed as mortal and immortal mixtures (120–125, 144). Continuing

[53] M. Tafuri, "The abbey church of San Benedetto al Polirone" in E. Gombrich *et al*., *Giulio Romano*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1998, p. 270.
[54] C. O. Brink, *Horace on Poetry*, p. 469.

the discussion of drama later in the poem, the narrator proclaims his own drive for mixtures: "If I decided to write a satyr-play, / Pisos, you wouldn't find me confining myself / To a low colloquial style; when it was right. / You wouldn't find me avoiding a higher tone" (235–236). And even though from the first strophe the narrator stated that one shouldn't "go so far as mixing up / Savage and civilized," near the end of the poem it is stated that nature and art "Each has to depend on the other, and so together / They do the work as friends" (410–411).[55]

As for combining (*mescalanza*) the work of nature (*opera di natura*) and the work of art (*opera di artefice*)—"savage and civilized"—Sebastiano Serlio tells us that no one took more delight (*dilettato*) in this mixture (*mistura*) than Giulio Romano. When Giulio decides to use rustication in Palazzo Stati Maccarani we do not find him confining himself to that low style in the *piano rustico*, and thus rather than avoiding the higher tones of the orders its rustic Tuscan base evolves upward into a Doric capital, a hybrid mixture made more so by being topped with a (counterbalancing) bi-form mixture of social and material class and classification: the refined triangular pediment descended from the *piano nobile* interlocking with the large rustic stones of the *pittabande*. In his house in Mantua, constructed two decades later, his own hybrid upper-middle class was manifested as the low-style of rustication is spread up into the second level, while this upper level's high-toned arch and window-pediment is brought down into the lower level. If the attributes of the head and foot are indeterminate here, not adding up to the shaping of a conventionally coherent species of Roman palazzo design (with expectedly distinct constituent *piano rustico* and *piano nobile* parts), the most telling feature again is how they are attached. The string-course, which is supposed to be the border that keep these two class levels separate, has been hybridized with the upper-level pediment, which gives the appearance at the arched portal that this horizontal divide lifts up to manifest the transformative exchange between levels.

Further mixtures of species and structures were enacted by Giulio at Palazzo Te: the (savage) relief satyrs in the north lunette of the Room of the Eagle are crowned with (civilized) fluted capitals. And in the Secret Garden, as noted by Amedeo Belluzzi and Kurt W. Forster, "Stucco herms with changeable forms—human or satyr-like [...] are turned to an apparently structural purpose, as though they were telemons, or perhaps

[55] All translations in this paragraph are from Horace, *The Epistles of Horace*.

canephorai—given that they support the cornice on small wicket baskets"[56]—the basket not exclusively but more conventionally associated with female figures. In the latter example, equally incongruously and ambiguously headed-capitals are re-positioned attached to (rather than "supporting" from underneath) the frieze-like band under the top cornice. As there is no architrave, this frieze maybe considered as the bottom (or foot), but is spatially ambiguous in that it is a graphic relief against the lower wall rather than projecting forward with the cornice. Thus again an indeterminate structural condition is created by these constituent parts not adding up to the shaping of coherent and consistent species, because they are not rendered as "so assigned to a form that it becomes one." In other words, you can't tell head from foot nor what it is that they're attached to.

In summarizing the opening lines of *Ars poetica*, Brink concludes that Horace "clearly had the creator's love for these misshapen beauties. The caricatures of medieval architecture and the *grotesques* of the Italian Renaissance show how such fantasies can be accommodated in the larger design of another medium." Noting that the "place of unnatural configurations in Roman decorative wall painting [...] is adverted to, censoriously, by Vitruvius," he then, having previously cited no visual artist, nonetheless proposes in passing that the details of Horace's poem inspired "Raphael or his colleagues [...] in the *scherzi* of the Vatican *Logge*."[57]

That an artist (or architect) within the milieu of the Cinquecento might have read and seen through the ambiguities and contradictions of the *Ars poetica*, inspired and encouraged rather than discouraged to make such mixtures, is evident from the remarks of Michelangelo reported by the Portuguese artist Francisco da Hollanda in the *Third Dialogue* from Book II of his *On Antique Painting* [*Da pintura antigua*], published prior to both Cellini and Vasari in 1548. Notwithstanding the everlasting debates around these *Dialogues*, in terms of examining certain artistic responses to Horace in this period it matters little whether Hollanda is putting words into Michelangelo's mouth or Michelangelo is putting words into Hollanda's head and hand. What Hollanda conveys is that Michelangelo was "glad" to tell "why it is common practice to paint that which has never been seen in the world, and how justified such great license is,

[56] A. Belluzzi, K. W. Forster, "Giulio Romano, architect at the court of the Gonzagas," in E. Gombrich *et al*., *Giulio Romano*, p. 111.
[57] C. O. Brink, *Horace on Poetry*, p. 469.

and how it is very truthful, because some misunderstand it are wont to say that Horace, the lyric poet, wrote the following verse in vituperation of painters." The verse then quoted in Latin is: "'Poets and painters," you say / "Have the right to do whatever they dare to do" / Well yes. We poets claim that right for ourselves / And recognize that other artists have it." As narrated, Michelangelo doesn't go as far with the Horace quote as including the ever assumed censures that immediately follow ("But it doesn't go so far as mixing up / Savage and civilized, mating tigers and lambs"), because, he is given to say, "For that verse in no way defames painters, but rather praises and honours them; for it says that poets and painters have power to dare, I mean to dare to do whatever they may approve of."[58] Hellmut Wohl has stated that here in the *Dialogues* "Hollanda alludes to Horace's celebrated condemnation of grotesques at the beginning of the *Ars poetica* (while keeping silent on Vitruvius's equally negative comments)."[59] Throughout Hollanda's Book I Vitruvius is cited frequently in the most laudatory manner, just as Raphael and Castiglione had done in their *Letter to Leo X*, but when Hollanda first addresses the topic of the grotesque in Chapter 44 of Book I, his evocation of Vitruvius's negative comments is not even separated by a sentence from his retort proclaiming the latter's elegance: "The painting of grotesques is criticized by Marcus Vitruvius because it is impossible and fictive; it is very ancient and elegant."[60] Even more so, he inverts Vitruvius's criticism into the very terms of praise in the sentence that follows, and further praises Raphael's assistant Giovanni da Udine in this respect: "The best of these are the rarest and most fictive. Giovanni da Udine in Rome has the prize and reputation for this [type of] painting."[61] So while it is true that Vitruvius is not cited by name in *Third Dialogue*, it would be more accurate to say that at the very least the text responses directly to him, countering point to point.

For its next counterpoint, the text continues its rejoinder to Vitruvius's outrage that "These things do not exist, cannot exist and never have existed" by extolling the virtues of their impossibility, their very fictiveness, with Michelangelo given to propound a seemingly twisting bit of logic regarding truth and falsehood—how at times adding more truth to

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[58] F. de Hollanda, *On Antique Painting*, Pennsylvania State University Press, University Park, 2013, p. 208.

[59] *Ibid*., p. 60.

[60] *Ibid*., p. 148. Translation modified to its original punctuation: "*O pintar do grutesco* é *tachado de M. Vetruvio porque* é *pintura impossivel e fingida; e é muito antigua e galante*."

[61] *Ibid*.

a painting makes it false, whereas falsity in the hands of great painters is "very truthful."[62] This then leads to him further countering Horace's and Vitruvius's and the *Ars poetica* narrator's problem of the hybrid half-figure ("and even stalks with half-length figures, some with human heads, others with the heads of animals") by stating that for the artist:

> in order better to maintain the decorum of a place and time, he should change some of the limbs (in grotesque work, which otherwise would lack grace and be very false) or a part of something into another genus, such as changing a griffin or a stag into a dolphin from the middle down, or from there up into a figure that looks well there, putting wings in place of arms and cutting off the arms if wings look better: the limb that he alters, whether it is that of a lion or a horse or a bird, will be most perfect, being that of a genus to which it belongs. This, even though it may appear false, can only be called a good invention and monstrous.[63]

Next, Vitruvius's exasperation that "when people see these falsities they do not criticize them but find them delightful, ignoring the problem of whether any of them can exist or not" is countered by Michelangelo with "And reason is more enhanced when some monstrosity is introduced into painting (for variety and relaxation for the senses and an object for mortal eyes, which sometimes like to see what they have never before seen or believed could exist) rather than the usual figures (however admirable) of men or beasts."[64]

At this point the text hones in even more directly on specific points of contention in Vitruvius, proceeding from his approval of other forms of fictive painting cited just before his diatribe, such as the imitation of the forms of buildings with "projections of columns and pediments" as "faithful representations of definable entities" in contrast to the fantastical (non)structural grotesque, to which the reply is "And from this, insatiable human desire assumed license to find a building with its columns and windows and doors more tedious at times than another fictively composed of false grotesquerie, which has columns formed of little figures emerging from flower buds, with architraves and pediments of

[62] *Ibid*., p. 208.
[63] *Ibid*.
[64] *Ibid*.

myrtle and boughs, and portals of reeds and other things."[65] The latter two phrases are an implicit reference to the work of da Udine in Raphael's Workshop and in association with Michelangelo in Florence as well as a rejoinder to Vitruvius. This extensive counter-statement in the voice of Michelangelo concludes with a final inversion of Vitruvian values of reality and reason: "which seems quite impossible and beyond reason [*fora de razão*], all of which can even be very great if done by one who knows."[66] As someone who knew how the tedium of conventional columns and windows and doors gives rise to the insatiable desire to assume the license to develop transformative versions, Michelangelo indeed invented his own licentious compositions of columns and windows and doors, making ambiguous the coherence and consistency of these respective species through hybrid and metamorphic transformations, playing with the reasoning behind canonical ways of telling head from foot and what it is that they're attached to.

So if nonetheless Horace continues to be conscripted to corroborate Vitruvius's distain for *un*reasonable and sense*less* hybrid monstrosities, then the leading question of *Ars poetica* could be equally directed back to the origin-order stories of Vitruvius's Ionic and Corinthian to ask: "Suppose some architect had the bright idea of sticking a wig and some fruit on a virile column, covering it down to its nether areas with matronly folds, so that what was graceful womanish curls up top was a massive structural trunk down below—as when in Cardinal Bibbiena's comedy *La calandra* Lidio is dressed up in the manner of his twin sister Santilla in order to be snuck safely into the house of the matron Fulvia for their licentious and ridiculous affair[67]—and you were invited to take

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[65] *Ibid*., pp. 208–209. Translation modified with substitutions regarding two words. As "cornices" does not provide the sense of "peak" in the original *fastigios*, I have substituted "pediments" from Vitruvius's tirade against the grotesque to which this passage is responding. Similarly, while "putti" would be an apt translation of the literal "children" for *crianças*, given its then contemporary usage, the question is whether the speaker is referring to the ancient Roman forms of the grotesque or their current revitalization, thus I have substituted the Vitruvius's "little figures" to cover both historical periods. My thanks to Tommaso Tagliabue for his consultation in the revision of this translation.

[66] *Ibid*.

[67] Ridiculous in the sense of being laughably absurd (Lido dressing up like a woman to sneak into Fulvia's house, Fulvia dressing down like a man to sneak out of her house to run after Lido) and in the sense of being non-sensical that its author was a Cardinal of the highest standing in the Vatican, and that the play was performed before the Pope and warmly received by him—given its mixtures of what were considered to be (in the eyes of the Church) sinful practices: adultery, coveting their neighbor's wife, gender ambiguities, lying, premarital sex.

a look, how could you manage to keep a straight face, my friends?" What if a taller column was made taller still by being topped with large basketry headwear, covered not Carmen Miranda-style with Ionian fruit but with tender acanthus leaves from Corinth, would that hybrid monster be any less risible, have any less false reasoning, make any more sense?

The answer to the question as to how you could manage to keep a straight face and not laugh—in certain works of Raphael and Giulio, and Michelangelo,[68] and certainly in Horace—is, in part, that you could put your tongue in your cheek, to maintain a grave continence for an even wittier delivery. This wit is characteristic of Horace, particularly in the mode of his characteristic direct address whether to another or to others (multivoiced) or as another (taking on the personification of someone else and directing the address back toward himself or the narrator)—that "you" that pervades not only his Epistles (by definition, of course), but throughout his *Epodes*, *Odes*, and *Satires*. It should also be noted that direct forms of address to the audience occurs frequently in other performance modes at this time, notably by the servant-characters who transform their identities as mutable interfaces at crucial moments of exchange with other characters, including, breaking through the fourth-wall, with the characters who are the audience—as occurs indeed in Bibbiena's *La calandra* (which Giulio designed the sets for in Mantua), in Ariosto's *Il supposti* (which Raphael and Giulio designed the sets for in the Vatican), and as the narrator does repeatedly throughout Ariosto's *L'Orlando furioso*.

As for its pictorial equivalent, Horace, it has been claimed, is portrayed by Raphael and the Workshop in the *Parnassus* as the figure in the lower right-hand corner of the fresco, who even extends beyond the frame while pointing directly out in a form of address to us the viewers, the one figure in all the frescos of the *Stanze* to do so. But in these crucial rooms intent on proclaiming the political and spiritual supremacy of the Papacy, it may still seem surprising that in terms of a directed gaze, Raphael peers out from behind those figures of antiquity to us. As does the fashionable 16th century spectator in *The Donation of Constantine*, who having arrived at the right edge of this much-disputed 4th century scene, gazes not toward that scene from the past but instead out to fellow spectators from the future. Their countenance correspondences with

[68] For instances of wit within grave works of Michelangelo, see for example C. Brothers, *Michelangelo, Drawing, and the Invention of Architecture,* Yale University Press, New Haven, 2008, pp. 104–105, 141, 145.

what Castiglione has Bibbiena say in Book II of *The Courtier*, which is that "one who would be witty and entertaining [...] must adapt his behavior, gestures, and face accordingly; and the more grave and severe and impassive his face is,"—as indeed are the faces of both Raphael and the fashionable spectator—"the more pungent and keen will he make what he says appear to be." Alexander Nagel and Christopher Wood have observed in the *Stanze* the anachronic hybridity of time periods in its composition,[69] made even more evident it should be noted in these grave works by the self-consciousness of those gazes and gestures seeking to attach our own selves into that hybrid multiverse across the spatial and temporal limits that separate and join us. Pietro Bembo, secretary to the Pope, mentioned as another individual in *The Courtier* dialogues in direct contact with this artistic circle of the court of Leo X—whose "witty epigram about a self-portrait" Giulio painted may be, according to John Shearman, the earliest literary mention of the artist[70]—stated in a similar mode that "the persuasion of each writer" may be judged according to the mixture of "how much pleasantness and how much gravity they have created and distributed throughout their compositions [...]. I place under the term *gravità* honor, dignity, majesty, magnificence, grandeur, and similar things; the term *piacevolezza* encompasses grace, softness, beauty, sweetness, jests [*gli scherzi*], games, and whatever else falls under this manner [*maniera*]"[71] One year before his death in 1519 at the age of 37, Raphael, in his painting *Self-Portrait with Giulio Romano*, again stares direct out with a grave look, while a delighted Giulio is depicted as keenly looking back to Raphael while pointing, like Horace in the *Parnassus*, directly out to us. A bi-formed meta-portraiture—a mixture of Bembo's pleasantness and gravity—of these professionally joined selves.

5.

Hadrian's Villa—regarding which Bembo writing to Bibbiena on 3 April 1516, two months prior to the previously cited letter, mentions that he will be visiting the "old and the new" in Tivoli the next day in the company

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[69] A. Nagel, C. Wood, *Anachronic Renaissance*, Zone Books, New York, 2010, pp. 347–256.

[70] J. Shearman, "Giulio Romano and Baldassare Castiglione," in *Giulio Romano: Atti del Convegno Internazionale di Studi su Giulio Romano e l'espansione europea del Rinascimento*, Accademia nazionale virgiliana, Mantua, 1989, pp. 293–294.

[71] Quoted in P. L. Reilly, "Raphael's 'Fire in the Borgo' and the Italian Pictorial Vernacular," *The Art Bulletin*, 92, 4, 2010, p. 317.

of Raphael and Castiglione—was just such a mixture of pleasantness and gravity distributed throughout its multiple compositions. And as such, a counterpoint to the limited strictures of Vitruvius, as William MacDonald and John Pinto have noted: "An even moderately detailed second-century description of it, had such a thing existed and survived, would long ago have supplanted a fair part of the conservative treatise on classical architecture Vitruvius wrote a century and a half before Hadrian became emperor."[72] That, for Raphael and Giulio, this site became a principal reference point—or counterpoint—was cited by Giovanni Pietro Bellori:

> In this villa of Hadrian, superb even in its ruined state [...] Raphael of Urbino and Giulio Romano devoted much study at a time when their remains were [better] preserved; thus, whosoever wishes to view ancient painting will admire them also in the ornaments of the Vatican Logge by Giovanni da Udine and other pupils of Raphael, the modern Apelles, as well as at the vigna Madame on Monte Mario, in the Palazzo del Te in Mantua, and in other works by Giulio Romano.[73]

Among what would have been noticed in their devoted study—in the midst of the extraordinary diversity of complex spatial forms nowhere to be found in Vitruvius's ten books—were some very un-Vitruvian Corinthian-type capitals: "with the normal volute rotation reversed (its spiral is upside down, turning in toward the center of the capital rather than out and away from it)" and that rather than the continuous turns that spiral into the center "eye" [*oculus*], these volutes spiral to "enclose small faces, in profile, within the final uppermost volute turn."[74] Those detached heads, composed among the leaves of the capital, so arranged to support a roof, against Vitruvius's proscriptions, are still visible today. As are the equally diverse range of stucco *ornamenti* in the Large Baths: "major fields, outlined in delicately modeled egg-and dart . . . mythological figures . . . within octagonal frames . . . [p]utti, tendrilized arabesques, various Bacchic cult objects, dolphins, and scores of single blossoms,"[75] along

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[72] W. L. MacDonald, J. A. Pinto, *Hadrian's Villa and Its Legacy*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1995, p. 48.

[73] G. P. Bellori, *Nota delli musei, gallerie, et ornamenti di statue e pitture ne' palazzi, nelle case, e ne' giardini di Roma*, Apresso Biagio Deuersin, e Felice Cesaretti, Nella stamperia del Falco, Rome, 1664, pp. 64–65, quoted in *ibid*., p. 214.

[74] *Ibid*., pp. 51, 100–101. See also M. Berton, "I capitelli corinzieggianti figurati della 'Piazza d'Oro' di Villa Adriana," *Orizzonti: Rassegna di archeologia* IV, 2003, pp. 75–80.

[75] W. L. MacDonald, J. A. Pinto, *Hadrian's Villa and Its Legacy*, p. 155.

with the nereids and their associated hybrid transspecies sea-creatures in low relief on the friezes in the Maritime Theater. Beyond the specificity of these hybrid structural/ornamental figurations, the abiding influence of Hadrian's Villa for Raphael and Giulio may be said to be this diverse "application of all available techniques to a wide variety of themes and subjects [...] ruled by the integration and interdependence of media and subjects."[76] This mode of integration and interdependence of media and subjects was developed by these artists not only in their own decorative figurations, but in relation to their architectural (and typological) figurations as well.

In regard to such evident alternative exuberance at Hadrian's Villa, in the grotesque of Nero's Golden House, and in the reliefs of the Arch of Constantine, and other alternative antiquities, the paucity of Vitruvius's account could have led Raphael to the same exasperation that led Alberti to state that what Vitruvius "had handed down was in any case not refined,"[77] but Raphael's outlook appears to have been so measured that one could not label him—nor would I say Giulio—as strictly Vitruvian nor strictly as anti-Vitruvian. According to Celio Calcagnini, who had been Ferrarese ambassador to Julius II and Leo X, Raphael conveyed a deep knowledge of Vitruvius, "whom he not only expounds, but with the surest arguments [*sed certissimis rationibus*] either defends or rebukes, but so disarmingly that no ill-will attaches to the rebuke."[78] And thus, in a letter purported to be from Raphael to Castiglione—but which Shearman attributed as ghost-written by Castiglione in the voice of his friend,[79] in which case it still provides us with certain corresponding senses and sensibilities—we have the oft-cited phrase that while Vitruvius has provided him with much light, he was not enough [*Me ne porge una gran luce Vittruvio, ma non tanto che basti*], not sufficient as a full account of the architectural and aesthetic modes of antiquity. It was through the affordances that Raphael and Giulio perceived across a range of antique media and subsequently transformed within the diverse range of their own transmedial work, which resonated with Raphael's own sense and sensibility of the *not-enough*, both throughout their architectural works

[76] *Ibid*., p. 158.
[77] L. B. Alberti, *On the Art of Building in Ten Books*, The MIT Press, Cambridge, 1988, p. 154.
[78] J. Shearman, *Raphael in Early Modern Sources (1483–1602)*, vol. 1, pp. 546–550.
[79] *Ibid*., pp. 734–741. See also J. Shearman, "Castiglione's Portrait of Raphael," *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz*, 38, 1, 1994, pp. 69–97.

and in the multi-media campaigns in the Vatican against what were perceived as the current northern barbarians of the Reformation.

"And the Germans [...]?" In spite of their own *enough-already* stance against the lavish glorification of pagan imagery by the papacy, nereids and other forms of hybrid vegetative-creaturely-structural monstrous mixtures are extensively evident in reformist imagery, as seen for example on the title pages of Luther's *To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation* and Erasmus's *The Antibarbarians*, as well in the painted depictions of these two reformers by Lucas Cranach the Elder and Hans Holbein the Younger—underscoring aspects of northern Protestantism being not a replacement change from Roman Catholicism but a recent metamorphic mutation thereof in this time, however historically radical this change.

While the Reformists were seeking to distance themselves from paganism, and those artists associated with the Papacy were seeking to engage the ancient Empire further to align with, as the *Letter to Leo X* states, its "great achievements," for both parties pagan antiquity was a problem. In that regard I will end, temporarily here, by going back before the beginning Argument of *La calandra*, to the spoken Prologue that preceded it, which acknowledged with anxiety that the play's plot—the twinned ambiguity and anxiety of identity, the mutable intelligibility of how to know something—had been "stolen" from Plautus's *Menaechmi*, the ancient comedy that already was an exploration of mixed mis-taken identities not only between twins, but between masters and servants, high and low culture, the familiar and the foreign. It still remains startling however to read in this Prologue, which has been ascribed by scholars alternatingly to Bibbiena and to Castiglione, a self-conscious anxiety about such searching in the past:

> If there are those among you who will say that the author has stolen this shamelessly from Plautus, let them complain, for Plautus—that snot-nose!—deserves to be robbed because he left everything unlocked and unguarded [...] if you have doubts, you should look through Plautus's comedies yourself, and you'll see nothing is missing that one usually finds there. . . And if nevertheless someone isn't able to give up on this, at least we beg him not to bring the matter to the attention of the local police chief—instead go whisper it secretly in the ear of Plautus.[80]

[80] L. Giannetti, G. Ruggiero (eds.), *Five Comedies from the Italian Renaissance*, p. 3. Translation modified to the more literal "snot-nose! [*moccicone!*]" from "big lunkhead!" and to "secretly" [*secretamente*] from "quietly."

Such a closing assertive statement of what to do to Plautus should lead us back to the assertion of the change of modernity in the opening sentence of this Prologue: "Today you will see a new comedy entitled *Calandra*—in prose, not in verse; modern, not ancient [*moderna, non antiqua*]; Italian, not Latin."[81] And yet: it is perhaps more startling still to learn that Bibbiena referred ironically to himself—when writing in his courtier manner to the influential Isabella d'Este, mother of Giulio's future patron Federico Gonzaga—by the same snot-nosed term *moccicone*. Bibbiena bi-formed thus, like the play, in his modern separation from and connection with antiquity, within the context of his mutable positions of knowledge and power—like Castiglione, Giulio, Raphael—in the multiple major re-formations of those changing times. *Significando demonstrent*: pointing—in these strangely instable and self-consciously estranged works—beyond themselves to the epistemological processing and paradoxes of meaning. Enlivening the strictures of Vitruvius through some of the livelier arts of antiquity, and in the process making apparent and intelligible the transformative mutability in demonstrations of changing signification.

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[81] *Ibid*., p. 2.

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