

“If So in Adversity”: Mastering Fortune in Lorenzo Leonbruno’s *Calumny of Apelles*

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In the politically fraught first decades of the sixteenth century in Italy, the allegorical figure of Fortune made numerous literary appearances, thereby undergoing a constant and conflicted reinterpretation. Her most famous invocation is Machiavelli’s in *The Prince*, but she is also described by Boiardo, Fregoso, Castiglione, and Ariosto, among others—a list that includes only the authors most relevant to the following essay. Her resurgence in the years of the Italian Wars reflects an *ad hoc* attempt amongst courtier-authors to address a problem of disenfranchised identity initiated by political crisis. That is, as poet-courtiers struggled through a swamp of social and political change, Fortune provided a means of understanding individual circumstances in terms of a larger, temporally specific politics. Because her swings of change prevented the individual from integrating past and future experiences with the present, Fortune simultaneously represented the instability of identity experienced by cultural producers and offered the hope of securing that identity—if only she could be mastered.¹

Yet despite Fortune’s ubiquity as an allegory in the early-to-mid-sixteenth-century literary tradition, her presence in the art of the period is both less prevalent and less sophisticated. In the following pages, I will demonstrate that a little-known, dispossessed, and bitter Mantuan court painter, Lorenzo Leonbruno, in his ca. 1525 *Calumny of Apelles* engages with the proliferating literary investigations of how one might master Fortune to offer his own, uniquely visual solution. Leonbruno’s painting (Figure 1), currently in the Brera in Milan, offers not only new formal strategies but also an allegorical structure that appropriates both the imagery and the narrative devices of several contemporary sources.²

¹ I am indebted to a number of generous scholars who offered comments on previous versions of this essay, a project that originated many years ago and in very different form as a dissertation chapter. Albert Ascoli, Susan Gaylard, Suzanne Walker, and Heather MacDonald all went beyond the call of duty and friendship in reading this lengthy paper at various stages. Angela Capodivacca provided insight regarding Boiardo and Machiavelli, as well as assisting with the Italian translations. Amyrose McCue Gill ably handled all the image permissions. Finally, I benefitted from the sharp eyes and deep understanding of two anonymous reviewers at CIS as well as the astute observations of Deanna Shemek, editor of this issue.

² Lorenzo Leonbruno’s *Calumny of Apelles* is held in the collections of the Pinacoteca of the Museo di Brera, Milan, Italy. It is oil on panel, 100 x 76 cm and, for reasons expanded upon later in this essay, likely dates to 1524 or 1525.



Figure 1: Lorenzo Leonbruno, *Calumny of Apelles*, ca. 1525, Brera, Milan. Under license from Ministero per I Beni e le Attività Culturali – Laboratorio Fotografico – Pinacoteca di Brera.

Leonbruno layers three allegorical frameworks to create a depiction of his own relationship to Fortune: the first of these is the theme of the Calumny of Apelles, Lucian's ancient ekphrasis of a painted allegory of Slander, purportedly by Apelles; the second introduces specifically northern Italian visual sources, primarily Mantegna's imagery for Isabella d'Este; and the third (and most innovative) framing comprises a journey through Fortune's palace modeled on Antonio Fregoso's contemporary poem, the *Dialogo di Fortuna*. Given the painting's complexity—evident at even a cursory glance—I will work through it in sections to emerge with a description of its significance as a whole in relation to its composition and individual figures. Ultimately, these layers of meaning coalesce into a single pictorial purpose: Leonbruno manipulates allegory, space, and time to master Fortune by becoming her. In the process, he stabilizes his own identity in a moment of personal and political crisis, and offers a novel account of the author/artist's own power.

The Calumny of Apelles and Political Allegory

Leonbruno's remarkable painting layers several subjects, each of which initiates a distinct allegorical reading. The most easily recognized of these, occupying the center foreground of the

work, is a Calumny of Apelles. This subject provides the painting's key themes: the artist's vulnerability, the threat to his identity, and his own ability to retaliate through artistic practice—specifically, via allegory. The Calumny was a subject familiar from Lucian, whose writings were enormously popular in the early sixteenth century, thanks largely to Alberti's fifteenth-century recasting of their satirical structure, both in his *On Painting* and the *Intercenales*.³ As Lucian and later Alberti explain, the original *Calumny* was supposedly a painting by Apelles of the effects of slander, depicting a procession of allegorical figures dragging maligned Innocence toward a doomed audience with a corrupt king. In Leonbruno's painting, that sequence stretches from the prince seated at the foot of the stairs on the left to the figure of naked Truth, abandoned at the rear of the procession to the right. Calumny herself is at the center of the group, pointing toward the prince and dragging an innocent youth by the hair. Leonbruno's *Calumny* exemplifies an allegorical method central to Renaissance pictorial practice, whereby the artist represents a moral message by giving physical, embodied form to purely immaterial concepts, and then deploying these embodied concepts as characters across a spatial and temporal arc: one moves visually from one figure to the next across the painting, in a spatial movement that mimics (though it may not actually perform) narrative sequentiality. This idea of time and movement will become key to Leonbruno's struggle with Fortune.

The presence of the *Calumny* (albeit within a work including, as we will see, other subjects as well), in addition to providing an assertively allegorical framework, directs the painting's energies to forming a brief on behalf of the wronged artist. Alberti described the *Calumny* as the ideal *invenzione*, or method of narrating an ennobling subject, intending it as part of the moral education of artist or beholder, including the patron.⁴ Botticelli's 1490s painted version of the theme (Figure 2) included an inscription with a specific message for patrons: "This little painting is a warning to the rulers of the Earth to avoid false judgments. Apelles gave one like it to the king of Egypt; that king was worthy of the gift and it of him."⁵

³ Lucian's works were brought to Italy in the early fifteenth century and translated into Latin by Guarino da Verona, with a printed Venetian edition of Lucian in 1494 pushing the sixteenth-century popularity of his writings. For the history and imagery of the Calumny of Apelles, with appended transcriptions of the relevant texts, see: David Cast, *The Calumny of Apelles: A Study in the Humanist Tradition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981); also, J. M. Massing, *Du texte à l'image, La Calomnie d'Apelle et son iconographie* (Strasbourg: Presses Universitaires de Strasbourg, 1990); and G. Q. Giglioli, "La Calumnia di Apelle," *Rassegna d'arte* 20 (1920): 176-79.

⁴ "Literary men, who are full of information about many subjects, will be of great assistance in preparing the composition of a 'historia,' and the great virtue of this consists primarily in its invention. Indeed, invention is such that even by itself and without pictorial representation it can give pleasure. The description that Lucian gives of Calumny painted by Apelles, excites our admiration when we read it. I do not think it is inappropriate to tell it here, so that painters may be advised of the need to take particular care in creating inventions of this kind." Leon Battista Alberti, *On Painting*, trans. Cecil Grayson (London: Phaidon, 1972; 1991), 88.

⁵ For the inscription and translation see Cast, *The Calumny of Apelles*, 29. The figure of Truth in Botticelli's *Calumny* appears to be a direct source for Leonbruno's Truth, on the far right of the painting. Leonbruno might in fact have seen Botticelli's painting when in Florence in 1505 on a mission for Isabella d'Este. See Leandro Ventura, *Lorenzo Leonbruno. Un pittore a corte nella Mantova di primo Cinquecento* (Rome: Bulzoni, 1995), 24, 246 doc. 8. See also Carlo Gamba, "Lorenzo Leonbruno," *Rassegna d'arte* 6 (1906), 66.



Figure 2: Sandro Botticelli, *Calumny of Apelles*, ca. 1495, Uffizi, Florence. Image via Wikicommons.

A similar sentiment is more succinctly phrased in the inscription running across the bottom of Leonbruno's painting: "If so in adversity then how in prosperity would Leonbruno paint Fortune?"⁶ These inscriptions remind viewers that the *Calumny* was understood as an imprecation against arbitrary exercises of power and a warning of the artist's ability, even his *right*, to represent that power as he experiences it.

Mantegnesque Allegory as Self-Representation

Beyond the *Calumny*, Leonbruno's painting has a second allegorical source, likewise governed entirely by female deities, and drawn from a famous garden of femininity, Andrea Mantegna's *Minerva Expelling the Vices from the Garden of Virtue*, which he painted for Isabella d'Este's *studiolo* (Figure 3).⁷

⁶ "Hec si in adversa quid in prospera Lionbrunus pinxisset fortuna?" Translation mine.

⁷ The literature on the *studiolo* paintings is vast. The most important recent work is Stephen J. Campbell, *The Cabinet of Eros: Renaissance Mythological Painting and the Studiolo of Isabella d'Este* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006) and his "Mantegna's Parnassus: Reading, Collecting, and the *studiolo*," in *Revaluing Renaissance Art*, eds. Gabriele Neher and Rupert Shepherd, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), 69-87. See also Egon Verheyen, *The Paintings in the Studiolo of Isabella d'Este at Mantua* (New York: New York University Press for the College Art Association of America, 1971). For Mantegna, see in particular Suzanne Boorsch et al., *Andrea Mantegna* (New York: Metropolitan



Figure 3: Andrea Mantegna, *Minerva Expelling the Vices from the Garden of Virtue*, ca. 1500-02, Musée du Louvre, Paris. Image via Wikicommons.

Mantegna's *Minerva* was, along with his *Parnassus*, one in the first pair of paintings executed for Isabella d'Este's *studiolo* between 1497 and 1534. It is an allegory depicting a fruitful garden overrun by vices while the Mother of Virtue is imprisoned in a tower on the right. From the left, Minerva enters the garden at a run, accompanied by a team of warriors intent on liberating Virtue from her prison. The entire action of the painting is presided over by three of the Cardinal Virtues, seated in a *mandorla* in the sky. Some of the vices are also labeled, as in Leonbruno's painting, and include Ignorance, Fraud, and Luxury, among others.

Leonbruno had a longstanding relationship with both Mantegna and Isabella d'Este, having begun his career in Mantua while Mantegna was the Gonzaga court artist. His father was likewise an artist, and after inheriting the paternal workshop Leonbruno regularly painted for Isabella d'Este

Museum of Art, 1992). Also Ronald Lightbown, *Mantegna: With a Complete Catalogue of the Paintings, Drawings and Prints* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986); Mauro Lucco, *Mantegna a Mantova: 1460-1506* (Milan: Skira, 2006); and Giovanni Agosti and Dominique Thiébaud, *Mantegna, 1431-1506* (Paris: Hazan: Musée du Louvre, 2008). Leonbruno may in fact have reworked part of this painting (specifically the landscape to the upper left); he was certainly familiar with it, having worked in the *scalcheria* next door to the room where it was hung.

on minor projects and decorative work associated with her *studiolo*.⁸ He painted Isabella's *scalcheria*, the largest room in her private apartments in the *corte vecchia* of the eventual Palazzo Ducale, with a ceiling evidencing specifically Mantegnesque influences: a small oculus forms the focal point for a pattern of grotesque work bridging the entire vault (Figure 4).⁹



Figure 4: Lorenzo Leonbruno, Isabella d'Este's *scalcheria*, 1522, Mantova, Palazzo Ducale. Under license from Soprintendenza per i Beni Artistici Storici ed Etnoantropologici di Mantova — Palazzo Ducale, Mantova.

In the oculus, a woman and child (typically identified as Venus and Cupid) peer down at the viewer. From this single example of decorative painting, one gleans certain facts basic to Leonbruno's career: he was closely familiar with Gonzaga iconography, and he worked very much in the mode of Mantegna, whose oculus from the Camera Picta in the Castello di San Giorgio (part

⁸ The details of Leonbruno's life, and all documents related to him, can be found in: Leandro Ventura, *Lorenzo Leonbruno*, as well as his "Il fascino del noto: tracce per Domenico Morone e Lorenzo Leonbruno," *Venezia Cinquecento* 2 (1992): 25-31. See also: Alessandro Conti, "Sfortuna di Lorenzo Leonbruno," *Prospettiva* 77 (1995): 36-50; Gamba, "Lorenzo Leonbruno"; Giovanni Battista Intra, "Lorenzo Leonbruno e Giulio Romano," *Archivio storico lombardo* 2nd ser., XIV (1887): 568-74; Michele Caffi, "Due lettere inedite concernenti il pittore Lorenzo Leonbruno," *Archivio storico italiano* 26 (1877): 141-44; Girolamo Prandi, *Notizie storiche spettanti la vita e le opere di Lorenzo Leonbruno* (Mantua: Tip. Virgiliana de L. Caranenti, 1825); and Paul Oskar Kristeller, "Ancora del Leonbruno," *Rassegna d'arte* 9 (1909): 186.

⁹ For the decoration of the *scalcheria*, see: Leandro Ventura, "'Camise da homo numero 6, fruste,' Benedetto Ferrari e il mercato artistico a Mantova dopo l'arrivo di Giulio Romano," *Quaderni di Palazzo Te* 1 (1994): 97-99.

of the structure later called the Palazzo Ducale) formed an essential vocabulary for Gonzaga palace decoration even decades after the artist's death.

But Giulio Romano's 1524 arrival in Mantua to become court artist involved a radical reorganization of the Gonzaga patronage system, which had operated in a piecemeal fashion since Mantegna's death in 1506. Leonbruno quickly came into conflict with Giulio Romano, and with Mario Equicola, secretary to Federico Gonzaga—Isabella d'Este's son and the marchese of Mantua. Leonbruno was soon marginalized at court, and within a year he was working primarily as a military engineer rather than a painter. Indeed, by 1530 he had found employment as an engineer in the Sforza court in Milan, aided by a letter of reference from Isabella d'Este. The *Calumny*, along with a pained letter to Mario Equicola, has long been understood as the record of his outrage.¹⁰ That the painting should recall Isabella d'Este's *studiolo* is thus part nostalgia, part accusation: the work seizes on imagery Mantegna intended to portray a golden age of feminine patronage and recasts it as a bitter exposition on the triumph of a set of vices that, while checked during Isabella's (now past) era, have broken loose anew in the court of her son.

To signal this real-world, temporal transition, Leonbruno broadens his *Calumny* to include numerous allegorical figures found in neither Lucian nor Alberti. Many of these are derived from Mantegna's work in general and his *Minerva* in particular, giving historical specificity to the more general allegory of a *Calumny*.¹¹ Leonbruno is depicting not just the concept of slander, but an event occurring at a particular place and time. On the right, Virtue is imprisoned behind a barred window high up in the palace's architecture, as in Mantegna's *Minerva*. Her plea, on a banderole flying out the window, reads: "Here the mother of all the virtues is held by force; o miserable generation, o cruel age!"¹² Mantegna's imprisoned virtue likewise has an inscription: "And you, goddess, run to the aid of me, the mother of virtue."¹³ Leonbruno has directly quoted Mantegna's inscription, but brings the general allegory into the present moment, and to a precise set of personal circumstances, signaled again by the painting's governing inscription: "If so in adversity then how in prosperity would Leonbruno paint Fortune?"

"Prosperity" for Leonbruno has a precise meaning: it is his own and Mantua's past, given figuration via Mantegna's symbolism for Isabella d'Este. Mantegna is a source for multitudinous aspects of Leonbruno's painting, from its figures to its compositional structure—the processional quality, the repetition of the running pose, the cluster of vices, an imprisoned virtue, a governing female deity, are all derived directly from Mantegna's *Minerva*. These are more than simply quotations; rather, they form a specific example within the larger Renaissance notion of *emulatio*—that is, imitating a prior work in order both to situate oneself within the current artistic landscape and to compete with a source.¹⁴ Leonbruno is temporally authorizing a set of allegorical

¹⁰ From 1525 Leonbruno appears in Mantuan court documents primarily as a military engineer rather than as a painter. In 1530 and 1533 he worked as an engineer and as a painter, but only on minor projects. Details of Leonbruno's forced move to Milan, and his position there, can be found in Ventura, *Lorenzo Leonbruno*, 59-65. Leonbruno was recalled to Mantua to paint on several occasions, but only for minor projects and when Giulio's shop was overwhelmed; in 1532, for example, Federico requested him, through an agent, to come to paint portraits of several horses as gifts for the arrival of Charles V (Ventura, *Lorenzo Leonbruno*, 68-9).

¹¹ An obvious example is the figure of Envy, which drapes the form of *Invidia* from Mantegna's *Battle of the Sea Gods* with the sacks of evil thoughts found on the simian creature of Hatred and Envy in his *Minerva*. Leonbruno labels the sacks *mala*, *peiora*, *pessima*, and *suspicio*. Mantegna's are the same, with the addition of *semina*. The same figure, minus the sacks, appears in another Leonbruno allegory in a private collection in Milan (see Ventura, *Lorenzo Leonbruno*, figure 16c).

¹² VIRTUTUM OMNIUM HIC VI RETENTA EST MATER O SAECLUM MISERU; O CRUDELE SAECLUM

¹³ ET MIHI VIRTUTUM MATRI SUCCURITE DIVI.

¹⁴ Thomas M. Greene, *The Light in Troy: Imitation and Discovery in Renaissance Poetry* (New Haven: Yale

signs, clearly identified as “past” relative to a self captured in a dissolute present (“If so in adversity”).¹⁵ Mantegna himself, as Jack Greenfield has argued, reinterpreted Albertian *historia* as an invitation to explore the past *as* past.¹⁶ In the *Calumny*, Allegory allows Leonbruno to stand at a distance from himself as he was, and as he might be.

The identification of a Mantegnan set of signs defined as “past” offers Leonbruno self-recognition, a temporal integration of past and present as distinct and yet connected within the subject, via the vehicle of allegorical movement. The *Calumny of Apelles* is included within the larger painting to allow the artist to travel through the composition, from crippled adversity to, if not prosperity, at least the coherent self that voices the loaded question inscribed across the lower frame. This movement demonstrates an effect that Paul de Man described as “the fundamental structure of allegory”—namely, “the tendency of the language toward narrative, the spreading out along the axis of an imaginary time in order to give duration to what is, in fact, simultaneous within the subject.”¹⁷ A *Calumny* is overlaid with Mantegnesque forms and structures to create an allegory narrating a temporal transition within Leonbruno’s life—and the Mantuan court. The *Calumny*’s corrupt prince sits at the base of the stairs (which fulfill the same compositional role as the rocky cliff in Mantegna’s *Minerva*) and receives *Calumny*’s accusations; he is advised by Ignorance, a figure drawn directly from Mantegna—it appears both in the *Minerva* and in his drawing (later a print) of *Virtus Combusta* (Figures 5 and 6).¹⁸

University Press, 1982), 171-75.

¹⁵De Man concisely characterizes this structure: “This relationship between signs necessarily contains a constitutive temporal element; it remains necessary, if there is to be allegory, that the allegorical sign refer to another sign that precedes it,” with meaning resulting from repetition, and from the temporal distance between signs, the earlier of which is “pure anteriority.” Paul de Man, “The Rhetoric of Temporality,” in *Blindness and Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism*, revised 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1971; 1983), 207.

¹⁶ Jack Greenfield, *Mantegna and Painting as Historical Narrative* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), esp. 59-85. See also Stephen J. Campbell, “Mantegna’s Triumphs: The Cultural Politics of Imitation ‘all’antica’ at the court of Mantua, 1490-1530,” in *Artists at Court: Image-Making and Identity, 1300-1550*, ed. Stephen J. Campbell (Cambridge: Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, 2004), 91-105.

¹⁷ De Man, “Rhetoric,” 225.

¹⁸ The *Virtus Combusta* (Virtue in Flames) is an incomplete drawing by Mantegna that was the basis of one in a pair of prints by Giovanni Antonio da Brescia; *Virtus Combusta*’s pendant is the *Virtus Deserta* (Virtue Abandoned, figure 7), likewise executed after a drawing by Mantegna of roughly 1490-1506. The drawings’ original context is still debated. The images’ themes and figures triangulate with the *Minerva*, Mantegna’s own drawing of the *Calumny of Apelles* (figure 8), and a Lucianic dialogue from Alberti’s *Intercenales*. Boorsch et al., *Mantegna*, catalogue entries 147 and 148; 451-56.



Figure 5: Detail of left side of Lorenzo Leonbruno's *Calumny of Apelles*, ca. 1525, Brera, Milan.



Figure 6: Andrea Mantegna, *Virtus Combusta*; unfinished drawing (later a print by Giovanni Antonio da Brescia); ca. 1500, British Museum, London, England. © Trustees of the British Museum.



Figure 7: School of Andrea Mantegna, *Virtus Deserta*; engraving; ca. 1500, British Museum, London, England. © Trustees of the British Museum.

To draw a moralizing allegory from the *Virtus Combusta* was to use Mantegna's art as Mantegna himself intended: as Stephen Campbell writes, these figures were meant "as *exempla* in a formal as well as a rhetorical sense, in that they are designed as *topoi* for future artistic inventions, or for more programmatic kinds of citation."¹⁹ Leonbruno's citations are programmatic indeed, forming a complete court of vices that laze about on the stairs, at the top of which Time seems visibly to age under the weight of what he witnesses; the source of his disillusionment is emblemized by the culminating figure of a tree in the shape of a woman. She is clearly Mantegnesque as well, drawn in part from his *Minerva*, where she appears in the left foreground wrapped in a scroll that utters a cry for protection; she is also found in Mantegna's print of *Virtus Deserta* (Figure 7).²⁰ In both cases, she invokes Daphne and Apollo, and therefore recognition of artistic accomplishment.²¹ In Mantegna's *Virtus Combusta*, a plaque next to the tree of virtue is

¹⁹ Campbell also writes that these prints "are designed to constitute a new artistic vocabulary." Campbell, *The Cabinet of Eros*, 166.

²⁰ Alberti says in the *Intercenales* that virtue would rather be morphed into a laurel than continue to tolerate the assaults of Fortune. He takes the centrality of Ignorance from Lucian, who begins his "On not believing rashly in slander" with the claim, "Ignorance is a deadly malady, and the source of most evils that afflict humanity." Boorsch et al., *Mantegna*, 455.

²¹ Apollo took the laurel as his sign, and as the mark of heroes, when his pursuit of Daphne resulted in her metamorphosis into a laurel tree. In the Renaissance, the laurel was associated specifically with artistic

inscribed, “Ignorance always opposes Virtue,” adding importance to Ignorance’s relationship to Fortune.²² In Leonbruno’s painting, she is being urinated upon by a satyr. Where once Virtue was a valued inhabitant of a rich (Mantegnan, Isabellian) garden, now she is demeaned and degraded; the fate of the allegorical figures corresponds to Leonbruno’s own.

Thanks to the well-established fame of the *studiolo* paintings and their clear intention to signal Isabella d’Este’s role as a great patron, Leonbruno’s pointed quotation of the *Minerva* in association with a corrupt court and imprisoned virtue delivers a sharp indictment: that where Isabella d’Este’s famed liberality created a fertile ground for art and artists, the contemporary court of Federico Gonzaga deliberately thwarts any such notion. “O miserable generation, O cruel age!” as Leonbruno’s inscription plaintively wails. The court replaces the garden; vice displaces virtue. In a further emblematic reversal, Leonbruno derives his figure of Calumny from the form and pose of Mantegna’s goddess *Minerva* (Figure 8).



Figure 8: Detail of Calumny from Lorenzo Leonbruno’s *Calumny of Apelles*, ca. 1525, Brera, Milan.

Such repeated citations unfold within a perversely systematic inversion of Mantegna’s structure, which had offered that painting’s allegorical meaning a trajectory of the natural and the inevitable. That is, Leonbruno’s *Calumny* travels from right to left, reversing the order of the *Minerva* and of Botticelli’s *Calumny*, though notably repeating the order of Mantegna’s late fifteenth-century drawing of the theme (Figure 9).

accomplishment via Petrarch’s conversion of his beloved Laura into the laurel of poetic achievement, thus making that achievement his true subject. For the seminal article on this subject see: John Freccero, “The Fig Tree and the Laurel: Petrarch’s Poetics,” *Diacritics* 5, no. 1 (Spring, 1975): 34-40.

²² *Virtuti semper adversatur Ignorantia*, written as VIRTUTI S. A. I.



Figure 9: Andrea Mantegna, *Calumny of Apelles*; ink drawing, before 1506, British Museum, London. © Trustees of the British Museum

Now, rather than the inexorable sweep of wisdom, moving toward liberation in the direction of reading, we have the determined, upstream swim of the avid pursuers of political corruption, heading toward its most callous expression, and away from any hope of freeing imprisoned virtue.

Leonbruno's Allegory of Fortune

Leonbruno's Mantegnesque reinterpretation of the *Calumny of Apelles* places this painting within a thoroughly allegorical framework that thematizes the distance between past, present and potential future selves. Integrating these temporalities will demand the defeat of circumstance, metaphorized as Fortune, who is the central figure in Leonbruno's painting. Her inclusion sets off a second cyclical reading of this work—one that scholarship has thus far missed, and that introduces a third allegorical subject holding together the two preceding allegories of ungrateful patrons and courtly decadence. In the *Minerva*, the governing deities, set in a circle of cloud, are three of the Cardinal Virtues; the missing fourth virtue, Prudence, is perhaps imprisoned in the tower—she may be the Mother of Virtues, who will shortly be liberated.²³ But in Leonbruno's painting, the role of governing deity is claimed by Fortune, Prudence's traditional enemy precisely because, by introducing chaotic oblivion, she interferes with the relationship between experience and time.

Leonbruno's Fortune hovers at the center of the painting, dynamically pinning together its various allegorical parts (Figure 10):

²³ Lightbown, *Mantegna*, 230-39. For Prudence as the virtue that channels knowledge into action, and therefore as an equivalent of *virtù*, see: Victoria Kahn, *Rhetoric, Prudence and Skepticism in the Renaissance* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985). Also: Albert Russell Ascoli, "Machiavelli's Gift of Counsel" in *A Local Habitation and a Name: Imagining Histories in the Italian Renaissance* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2011), 161-204; Eugene Garver, *Machiavelli and the History of Prudence* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987).



Figure 10: Detail of Fortune from Lorenzo Leonbruno's *Calumny of Apelles*, ca. 1525, Brera, Milan

Beneath her, an inscription describes her effects:

The happy man is not born so because of his merits, nor is the unhappy man so born because of his wicked acts. This is the responsibility of divine destiny, of fate, and of fortune. No man should be swollen with great pride in his wealth, nor should any man groan too much over his disasters. Fortune is a changeable, slippery, and fragile goddess. At times she blesses the poor with wealth, and at times she burdens the wealthy with poverty.²⁴

As the inscription makes clear, Fortune's disruption of the process of owning one's identity was allegorically associated with her feminine inconstancy (against stable, masculine *virtù*). This is, however, only one of the many dichotomous pairings with which she engages and by which Renaissance power was articulated: virtue/vice, man/woman, wealth/poverty, fame/infamy/ignominy, continuity/disjunction. Fortune's variability, which was, of course, her

²⁴ The inscription reads: "Non meritis foelix, nec inmeritis nascitur miser/hoc divinae sortis, hoc fatic, hoc fortunae est / nullus divitis intumescat nimium/nec ullus cl[a]dibus[ae] ingemiscat nimium / est Fortuna dea varia lubrica et fragilis / nonnunquam inopes beat affluentiis / nonnunquam pauperie gravat beatos." Translation mine, with thanks to Laura Bruck.

vice, was also her discursive power, in that she had extraordinary allegorical versatility with regard to political agency; her ability to apply to multiple subject positions, from triumphant king to dispossessed peasant, allowed imaginative explorations of every alternative in between. She spoke to a sense of instability and loss that were key to Renaissance ideas of identity, a fact made clear by her attributes, particularly the wheel, which accompanies her in Leonbruno's painting.

The wheel was not Fortune's necessary attribute; many sixteenth-century representations used the sail (Fortune is a ship at sea, blown by the winds of chance), the rudder (Fortune guides the ship of life), or the ball (Fortune stands on unsteady footing, as in Dürer's famous print of *Nemesis*).²⁵ Mantegna had used the rudder for a composite image of Fortune: his Ignorance in the *Virtus Combusta* appears with the rudder, and the same attribute reappears with Leonbruno's Ignorance in the *Calumny*. Leonbruno had also used the rudder and a flowering cornucopia for a roundel of Fortune in Isabella d'Este's *scalcheria*. For his *Calumny* Fortune, however, Leonbruno chose the wheel, which was closely associated with concepts of rule—in fact, it was used by Isabella herself in the decorations of her Corte Vecchia apartments.²⁶ In medieval visualizations of Fortune—the *Carmina Burana*, for instance—the wheel shows the various states of sovereignty—*Regno*, *Regnavi*, *Sum sine Regno*, *Regnabo*—with figures arranged around its perimeter bearing attributes appropriate to each state, and in clockwise descending hierarchy beginning with *Regno* at the top (see Figure 11).

²⁵ For Fortune's visual tradition, see: Ernst Kitzinger, "World Map and Fortune's Wheel: A Medieval Mosaic Floor in Turin," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 117, no. 5 (Oct. 25, 1973): 344-73; Marie Tanner, "Chance and Coincidence in Titian's *Diana and Actaeon*," *The Art Bulletin* 56 (1974): 535-50; Howard Rollin Patch, *The Tradition of the Goddess Fortuna in Medieval Philosophy and Literature* (Whitefish: Kessinger Publishing, 1922; 2010); Jean Wirth, "L'iconographie médiévale de la roue de Fortune," in *La Fortune: Thèmes, représentations, discours*, eds. Yasmina Foehr-Janssens and Emmanuelle Métry, (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 2003) 105-28; Alan H. Nelson, "Mechanical Wheels of Fortune, 1100-1547," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 43 (1980): 227-33. For Fortune in general, particularly in the Middle Ages and Renaissance, see: Patch, *The Tradition of the Goddess Fortuna*; Rudolph Wittkower, "Chance, Time and Virtue," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 1, no. 4 (April 1938): 313-21; Francesca Cappelletti, "*Festina Lente*: Fortuna, Prudenza e Fama nell'emblematica del Cinquecento," in *Der antike Mythos und Europa. Texte und Bilder von der Antike bis ins 20. Jahrhundert*, eds. Francesca Cappelletti and Gerlinde Huber-Rebenich (Berlin: Gebr. Mann, 1997), 74-82; Jerold C. Frakes, *The Fate of Fortune in the Early Middle Ages: The Boethian Tradition* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1988); Vincent Cioffari, *Fortune and Fate from Democritus to St. Thomas Aquinas* (New York: [s.n.], 1935); Vincent Cioffari, "The Function of Fortune in Dante, Boccaccio and Machiavelli," *Italica* 24, no. 1 (1947): 1-13; Alfred Doren, "Fortuna im Mittelalter und in der Renaissance," *Vorträge der Bibliothek Warburg* 2, no. 1 (1922-1923), 71-144; Florence Buttay-Jutier, *Fortuna: Usages politiques d'une allégorie morale à la Renaissance* (Paris: PUPS, 2008); Enzo Giudici and Giuseppe Antonio Brunelli, *Il tema della Fortuna nella letteratura francese e italiana del Rinascimento; Studi in memoria di Enzo Giudici* (Florence: Leo S. Olschki Editore, 1990); Mario Santoro, *Fortuna, ragione e prudenza nella civiltà letteraria del Cinquecento*, 2nd ed. (Naples: Liguori, 1967; 1978); Hanna Fenichel Pitkin, *Fortune Is a Woman: Gender and Politics in the Thought of Niccolò Machiavelli, with a New Afterword* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999); Charles D. Tarlton, "Fortuna and the Landscape of Action in Machiavelli's *Prince*," *New Literary History* 30, no. 4 (1999): 737-55; Stephen M. Fallon, "Hunting the Fox: Equivocation and Authorial Duplicity in *The Prince*," *PMLA* 107, no. 5 (Oct. 1992): 1181-95.

²⁶ I am indebted to an anonymous CIS reviewer for pointing this out to me.

commonplace of pronouncements about Fortune, and central to her paradox; yet Leonbruno omits the Boethian conclusion: “For both of them their very distress is an opportunity, for the one to gain glory and the other to strengthen his wisdom.”²⁹ Leonbruno refers us to the Boethian concept of equanimity in the face of reversals of fortune, but ignores Boethius’ suggestion of the opportunity such reversals provide for the exercise of *virtù*.³⁰ With its refusal to rejoice or despair, Leonbruno’s inscription recalls Boethian stoicism, which claims immunity from the highs and lows of unpredictable human experience. But this same philosophy was voiced in the Mantuan court in Leonbruno’s age in Isabella d’Este’s personal iconography; Leonbruno’s inscription echoes the marchesa’s motto *Nec spe nec metu* (Neither hope nor fear), which claimed a similar stability of character in the face of changing circumstance.³¹ Another of her devices, appearing in the ceiling decorations of her first apartments in the Ducal Palace, was a set of lottery tickets, invoking the marchesa’s constant implication in games of Fortune—whether by dint of the risks inherent in her position of rule, or the constant presence of her court ladies, for whom games were favorite activities.³²

Whether Leonbruno intended specifically to invoke Isabella’s *Nec spe nec metu* motto, the notion of virtue that it described was definitive for her court and her iconography. Mantegna’s *Minerva* is, after all, a painting about virtue’s ability to withstand onslaught and invasion. In particular, the echo of Boethius against Isabella’s court should be viewed in tandem with the Calumny of Apelles: the *Consolation* was famously written as Boethius awaited execution after having been slandered for treason at the court of Theodoric. To unfold a Calumny within a contemporary court using language that refers to the *Consolation* is to lay clear claim to a long legacy of abused courtiers and corrupt princes, and Leonbruno’s project serves to remind the viewer that control of the language of representation was itself a means of acting as Fortune.³³ Just as Fortune provides the ruler with his throne, she offers the artist the means, as in the story of Apelles, to unmask the patron’s true self and reveal the court in its corruption. While Leonbruno’s inscription does not mention Opportunity, one might see the painting as a whole as his seizing of it.

That Leonbruno might have been thinking along these lines can be teased out of his extraordinary 1525 letter to Mario Equicola.³⁴ The epistle is clearly a reply to a stinging rebuke

²⁹ Boethius, *Consolation*, 113. See also Patch, *The Tradition of the Goddess Fortuna*, 55-56: “This lady Fortune is so changeable that her variations are to all intents and purposes instantaneous; hence most appropriately the rhetorical formula ‘now—now’ is often used in describing her or her activities. This device, or the conception which prompts it, naturally gives rise to considerable use of contrast and antithesis, even without the particular formula; and this in turn leads to the adoption of paradoxes to express the particular distastes the author in question feels at Fortune’s fickleness.”

³⁰ The structure of the inscription further refers to the Machiavellian idea of the maxim, which, as Barbara Spackman describes, in its “rhetoric of negation” allows “a move of redefinition”; I will argue that such a movement is Leonbruno’s intent as well. Barbara Spackman, “Machiavelli and Maxims,” in *Reading the Archive: On Texts and Institutions*, eds. E. S. Burt and Janie Vanpee, *Yale French Studies* 77 (1990): 145.

³¹ Mario Praz, “The Gonzaga Devices,” in *Splendours of the Gonzaga*, eds. David Chambers and Jane Martineau (London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 1981), 65-72.

³² Praz, “The Gonzaga Devices.” For the *imprese* more broadly, see Ivy L. Mumford, “The Imprese of Isabella d’Este,” *Italian Studies* 64 (1979): 60-70, and Campbell, *The Cabinet of Eros*, 76. For a contemporary account of the games at court, see Lodovico Frati, “Giocchi ed amori alla corte d’Isabella d’Este,” *Archivio Storico Lombardo* 3rd Series, 25 (1898), 351-65.

³³ David Cast points out that the Calumny was “set in the psychological and moral confines of the court,” particularly by the sixteenth century, when it had ceased to be an allegory of judgment in general, and instead was concerned with the evils of courts in particular.” Cast, *The Calumny of Apelles*, 78.

³⁴ The letter is published in its entirety in: Ventura, *Lorenzo Leonbruno*, 271-72, doc. 73. All quotations are taken

from the Gonzaga court secretary over Leonbruno's response to Giulio Romano's arrival in Mantua as court artist.³⁵ Giulio was notoriously monopolistic, and from the letter it is evident that Leonbruno had lost to him both assistants and projects.³⁶ In Leonbruno's writing, the basic subject of the *Calumny* arises through the shadow of Equicola's lost letter. Leonbruno writes: "You write to me that you see, understand and know that suspicion troubles me and is eroding my heart and consuming my brain."³⁷ He goes on to proclaim his own innocence: "Perhaps you think that I am upset that Giulio has come to Mantua to paint. But I am happier in this than you are, for I love him more than you insofar as I know him more than you."³⁸ In the letter, Leonbruno appears as a victim of shifting court favoritism—that is, of Fortune.

And yet the suggestion of another identity is present as well. "I am so sorry I have not learned the Aretinian language well, or at least a bit, in order to reply in kind to your choleric letter," he writes.³⁹ Yet as the mention of Aretine wit suggests, this pretended apology is in fact ironic self-deprecation: "But being stung, I still venture to write you these few words. If I appear melancholic to you, you are stating the truth, and perhaps you say it with reason. And if you were in my state, I think you would have it stranger than I. *But thank your good fortune.*"⁴⁰ Leonbruno explains and even recuperates his melancholic appearance via the choleric letter, and in so doing reverses his own and Equicola's experiences, reminding the court secretary, via an invocation of Fortune, of their shared vulnerability. In the quite choleric painting of the *Calumny* that was the offspring of these ruptured relationships, Leonbruno develops the letter's theme of the role experience plays in mitigating the sways of Fortune.

The Novelty of Leonbruno's Fortune

Leonbruno's letter and painting should be seen in the context of a sudden and unprecedented flurry of writings about Fortune in the early sixteenth century, works attempting to bring individual uncertainty and powerlessness into relation with a broader political culture under abrupt strain. Among these works, Leonbruno's painting is a unique document. As Mario Santoro argues, Fortune's literary prevalence in the first troubled decades of the sixteenth century is directly related to the anxieties caused by the Italian Wars, the series of conflicts beginning in 1494 with the French invasion of Italy, which uprooted the sense of the inevitable victory of individual *virtù* when pitted against the vagaries of Fortune.⁴¹ Machiavelli, in his most famous of discussions of Fortune in *The Prince*, directly invokes the troubled times, bemoaning that those who believe that the events of

from this document; translations are my own, with the assistance of Angela Capodivacca.

³⁵ As pointed out by Intra, "Lorenzo Leonbruno," 572.

³⁶ Leandro Ventura describes a severe contraction in the overall art market in Mantua driven by Giulio Romano's monopoly. See Ventura, "Camise," 97.

³⁷ "Me screvite de vedere, intendere et cognossere che la suspiccione me cruccia et mi rode il core et mi consuma el cervello." Ventura, *Lorenzo Leonbruno*, 271, doc. 73.

³⁸ "Pensate forse che abbia asdegno che Julio sia venuto a mantua adepingere. Jo ne o più apiacer de voi, et lhamo più de voi, perche lo conoscho meglio de voi." Ibid., 271, doc. 73.

³⁹ "Mi doglio non haver intutto o inparte la lingua aretina per poter meglio alla colericha littera vostra respondere." Ibid., 271, doc. 73.

⁴⁰ "Ma essendo ponto, ardischo queste poche parole scrivere. Sel chiufo mio vi par malanconico, voi decite il vero, et forse non è senza causa. Et quando voi fostive nel grado mio, penso che lo havrestive più bizzarro dime. Ma rengraciate la bona fortuna." Ibid., 271, doc. 73. Italics mine.

⁴¹ For the role of representations of Fortune in facing a changing political landscape, see Santoro, *Fortuna*, 24.

the world are controlled by Fortune and God “deem that they need not toil and sweat, but can let themselves be governed by Fortune,” since chance determines destiny anyway: “This opinion has been more prevalent in our time because of the great upheavals that we have witnessed and witness every day, and which are beyond anything we could have foreseen, and there have been times when even I have to some extent inclined to this opinion.”⁴² Machiavelli’s equation of Fortune with God signals that this fatalism rose out of the tradition of Dante, who transferred Fortune from the ancient notion of chance’s role in human affairs to an operation of Divine Will: what appears accidental to men is only so because they lack God’s omniscience. Machiavelli appears conflicted about the possibility (or terror) of human agency in bending Fortune to the individual will. He offers the weak middle ground that Fortune “seems to be the arbiter of half our actions, but she does leave us the other half, or almost the other half, in order that our free will may prevail.”⁴³ When push comes to shove, God is nowhere to be seen. The moment of hesitation, the pulling back inherent in “or almost the other half,” might be taken as a small sign of the broader impenetrability inherent in the individual’s relationship to ideas of Fortune. In the early sixteenth century it was impossible to know where one stood, even to the point of not knowing how much one could not know.

Leonbruno’s own fall from grace in Mantua owed itself directly to these broader shifts in power relations within Italy. As a court artist held over from the era of Isabella d’Este, Leonbruno was identified with the age of Mantegna, whose painting of *Minerva*, as we have seen, formed the foundation of Leonbruno’s own work. But in the 1520s he was working for Federico Gonzaga, who in 1510-1513 had been held as a hostage at the papal court, and who there had seen Michelangelo and Raphael at work on the defining projects of the High Renaissance: the Sistine Ceiling and the Vatican *stanze*.⁴⁴ Upon succeeding to the Mantuan marquisate, Federico avidly (and often dishonestly) pursued a ducal title, finally succeeding in 1530 after a dizzying round of strategic *condotte* and marriage contracts designed to provide him with maximum advantage on rapidly shifting political sands.⁴⁵ An element of this political calculus was to cultivate the Roman monumental style against the local Mantegnesque blend of Paduan and antiquarian influences, fueling the import of Giulio Romano as court artist, and leading directly to Leonbruno’s downfall.⁴⁶ Artistic style in the 1520s had become directly political, and Leonbruno’s letter to Equicola indicates that the displaced painter understood it as such.

⁴² Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince: A New Translation by Peter Constantine*, trans. Peter Constantine (New York: Random House, 2007), 115.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 115.

⁴⁴ The details of the political situation that led to this unusual imprisonment can be found in Alessandro Luzio, “La reggenza d’Isabella d’Este durante la prigionia del marito: 1509-10,” *Archivio Storico Lombardo* 37 (1910): 1-104.

⁴⁵ There are three major sources dealing with these events: Stefano Davari, *Il matrimonio di Federico Gonzaga, V Marchese e i Duca di Mantova. 1517 al 1536* (Mantua: [s.n.], 1874) and *Federico Gonzaga e la famiglia Paleologa del Monferrato 1515-1533* (Genoa: [s.n.] 1891); Robert Oresko and David Parrot, “The Sovereignty of Monferrato and the Citadel of Casale as European Problems in the Early Modern Period,” in *Stefano Guazzo e Casale tra Cinque e Seicento. Atti del convegno di studi nel quarto centenario della morte Casale Monferrato, 22-23 ottobre 1993*, ed. Daniela Ferrari (Rome: Bulzoni, 1996), 11-31.

⁴⁶ Federico had attempted to turn Leonbruno into a more modern artist before bringing in Giulio Romano; in 1521 he wrote to Castiglione in Rome that he was sending Leonbruno there to see works he should imitate. He went on to name specifically Michelangelo and Raphael. Ventura, *Lorenzo Leonbruno*, 258, doc. 44. Clearly, Leonbruno did not sufficiently absorb the Roman lesson, as the provincial interests of the subsequent *scalcheria* indicate. Alessandro Conti notes that even after visiting Rome, Leonbruno’s style, though influenced by the palaces he had seen there, remained remarkably provincial. Alessandro Conti, “Sfortuna di Lorenzo Leonbruno,” 42.

Fortune, Time and Experience

If shifting artistic styles signal the artist's inability to integrate past and present, then literary models developing in Leonbruno's Mantuan milieu both recognized this problem and attempted to address it.⁴⁷ Literary models will introduce *time* to Leonbruno's painting as a key element in establishing the possibility of individual action against unpredictable circumstance; mastering the self across time becomes mastering Fortune. The first relevant source for this effort is Boiardo's romance poem *Orlando innamorato*, wherein time and experience exist in a deliberately disrupted relationship. Indeed, the structure of the *Orlando innamorato* itself acts as Fortune, as the tug of circumstance endlessly delays narrative closure and allows the constant unfolding of intertwined adventures. The hero thus has both the burden and the opportunity of repeatedly confronting Fortune. So it is that in the northern Italian romance tradition, one often sees blended the features of Fortune (chance) with Occasio (opportunity), whereby the abuses of Fortune could offer the circumstances for exercising *virtù*, or reason. If Fortune was the lengthy string of distractions pulling the hero away from ever completing his mission in the romance tradition, Occasio was the hero's ability to meet each of those individual, though disconnected, challenges. Fortune and Opportunity were so merged that often Fortune appeared with Occasio's forelock (one grabs Opportunity by the hair, seizing one's fate), as she does in Leonbruno's painting.⁴⁸ This merging was well established in the Mantuan, Mantegnesque visual tradition, where a fresco (now detached) from Mantegna's shop poises a forelocked and otherwise bald Occasio on the ball of Fortune, from which she springs in pursuit of a sighted chance (figure 12):

⁴⁷ See David Quint, "The Figure of Atlante: Ariosto and Boiardo's Poem," *MLN* 94, no. 1 (1979): 77-91.

⁴⁸ For Fortune, Chance and Opportunity, see: Erwin Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology* (New York: Harper & Row, 1939; 1962), 71-72; Frederick Kiefer, "The Conflation of Fortuna and Occasio in Renaissance Thought and Iconography," *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 9 (1979): 1-27.



Figure 12: Workshop of Andrea Mantegna, *Occasio*, detail of detached fresco, late 15th century, Palazzo San Sebastiano, Mantua. Image via Wikicommons.

In the literary tradition, a self integrated across time is generally understood to require an epic model, one that imposes *telos* by driving the hero, not toward a ceaseless series of adventures, but toward a pietistic end.⁴⁹ But the idea that *experience* might condition the hero's ability to grasp Occasio developed first in Mantuan romance poetry, in Boiardo's *Orlando innamorato*.⁵⁰

In book 2, canto 13 of the *Innamorato*, the hero Orlando makes a trip to the underground palace of the Faye Morgana (a stand-in for Fortune). He had already visited the palace in cantos eight and nine, but had not heeded advice on how to capture the faye, and so failed to liberate the prisoner Ziliante from her clutches. Now, in canto 13, having learned from his previous errors, Orlando frees Ziliante by grabbing Morgana by the forelock, trapping her. "She frolicked, unaware of trouble, / when suddenly Orlando entered, / and *since he had experience* / lost no time as he had done once. / But, reaching her, he seized the lock / of blond hair flowing from her head"⁵¹ (II.13.23-

⁴⁹ For the critical tradition on the move from romance to epic, see Albert Russell Ascoli, "Ariosto and the 'Fier Pastor': Form and History in *Orlando Furioso*," *Renaissance Quarterly* 54, no. 2 (2001): 487-94. Also: David Quint, *Epic and Empire: Politics and Generic Form from Virgil to Milton* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), especially chapters 5 and 6.

⁵⁰ See Wittkower, "Chance," 319, for grisaille and connection to Boiardo. For Fortune in Boiardo and beyond, see: David Quint, "The Fortunes of Morgana: From Boiardo to Marino," in *Fortune and Romance: Boiardo in America*, eds. Jo Ann Cavallo and Charles Stanley Ross (Tempe: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1998), 17-30.

⁵¹ "Standosi lieta e non temendo impaccio, / Orlando gli arivò sopra improvviso, / E come quello che l'avea provata, / Non perse il tempo, come a l'altra fiata; / Ma nella gionta diè de mano al crino, / Che sventillava biondo nella fronte"

4; italics mine). Offered Morgana's riches in return for her freedom—she “promised him treasure and great gains”—Orlando knows better than to accept.⁵² In refusing her, he exercises his prudence (the wisdom gained from his experience) and his fortitude (the brave choice to return to the palace to face Morgana again).⁵³ Not coincidentally, these are the twin virtues Machiavelli nearly two decades later will deem necessary—and yet ultimately insufficient—for the control of Fortune in *The Prince*. But where Machiavelli's doubts will depend on Fortune's victims' inability to know what response to use in which circumstance, Boiardo offers the mediating device of experience to condition the hero's certainty of self-recognition over time: “He'd taken Ziliante's hand / to lead him from the garden, and / he did not fear the fairy's spells / because he held her forelock tight”⁵⁴ (II.13.25).

Experience is knowledge gained across time, and time is key to Orlando's capture of Morgana, playing out as the story does across multiple cantos of the second book and involving both the lapse of substantial time and a memory of the past to inform the present: the hero develops with experience. David Quint writes of Boiardo's conception of time in terms of humanist notions of the relationship between temporality and virtue: “Time is perceived as a series of contingent and heterogeneous events, each the occasion for human exploitation [...] The versatile Renaissance man is the master of the situation, turning any contingency to his own advantage.”⁵⁵ Orlando becomes immune to Fortune's deceits—and so, as Quint says, “has thus conquered time, or at least a certain humanist concept of time.”⁵⁶ But experience also plays out *spatially*, as a series of movements through Morgana's palace. Orlando enters through the door, descends the stairs underground, “then step by step he went a mile / along the floor of marble stones / and reached the treasure plaza of / the king made out of gems and gold”⁵⁷ (II.13.18). At the end of the plaza is Morgana's home, with a fountain beside it. There, Orlando finds Ziliante and begins his grasp of Occasio.

The movement through the palace parallels the knight's movement through the poem, a process that spreads the various temporally distinct confrontations with Fortune across a landscape of narrative. This movement is key to the conquering of Fortune and time, because, though these confrontations may arrive, as Quint writes, as “discrete moments of *occasio* and [...] so many opportunities that will not repeat themselves,” the man of virtù *through experience* develops better responses to these challenges.⁵⁸ Though Boiardo's poem still uses a romance poetry notion of time,

(II.13.22-23; there are slightly different stanza numbers in the Italian edition).

All Italian quotations are taken from: Matteo Maria Boiardo, *Orlando innamorato* (Turin: Ed. U.T.E.T., 1984). Retrieved at: http://www.camelot-irc.it/biblioteca/orlando_innamorato/info.htm Translations are from: Matteo Maria Boiardo, *Orlando Innamorato (Orlando in Love)*, trans. Charles Stanley Ross (Anderson: Parlor Press, 2004).

⁵² “Promette alte ricchezze e gran Tesoro” (II.13.24).

⁵³ As Albert Ascoli writes, “As the temporalized use of philosophical intelligence, prudence is itself always divided into three parts according to the basic temporal divisions—it is memory as regards the past; it is understanding as regards the present; and it is foresight as regards the future.” Ascoli, “Machiavelli,” 234.

⁵⁴ “Ed ha già preso Ziliante a mano, / E fora del giardin con esso viene, / Né della fata teme incanto istrano, / Poi che nel zuffo ben presa la tiene” (II.13.25).

⁵⁵ “The capricious and ever-changing movement of Fortune distributes time in discrete moments of *occasio* and into so many opportunities that will not repeat themselves. The experience of this temporal multiplicity seems to condition the ideal of the universal man formulated by *quattrocento* humanist advocates of the active life: what we have come to know as the ‘Renaissance man.’” Quint, “The Figure of Atlante,” 19.

⁵⁶ Quint, “The Fortunes of Morgana,” 19.

⁵⁷ “Poi caminò da un miglio passo passo / Sopra del suol de pietre marmorine, / E gionse nella piazza del tesoro, / Ove è il re fabricato a zoie ed oro” (II.13.18).

⁵⁸ Quint, “The Fortunes of Morgana,” 19.

where moments of action are sudden, unpredictable, and disconnected, his concept of experience as memory within an individual across time offers an initial avenue by which the fictive traveler can begin to connect the temporal dots.⁵⁹ While the poem is structured to mirror Fortune's unpredictability, the invocation of memory as a way of successfully navigating multiple episodes offers a glimpse of a different temporal structure. Indeed, there are dangers to the knight who ceases to move, and who becomes stuck in a narrative corner; it is from precisely this that Ziliante needs rescuing. Morgana functions as a Circe or Dido, luring the knight Ziliante off his path and imprisoning him, not through force but through desire: "The fairy combed the young man's hair / and often kissed him tenderly. / No painting done by artist's brush / ever portrayed so soft a touch"⁶⁰ (II.8.21).⁶¹ Ziliante has lost his past and future and become Fortune's object.

Ziliante is not Morgana's prisoner but her lover, a warning of the risks of being Fortune's favorite as much as her victim.⁶² And Ziliante, as Morgana / Fortune's beloved, has in fact been merged with his captor: "She stared—his fair face was her mirror" (II.13.21).⁶³ The favorite of Fortune, Boiardo writes, is at least as likely to be corrupted as are her victims, and perhaps the greatest fear is not of poverty or obscurity, but of being absorbed as Morgana's mirror—of losing one's identity.⁶⁴ *Fortuna* and *virtù* are both gendered female in language and often in representation as well; but where *virtù* made a man male, Fortune reshaped him in the image of herself—as a woman, indefinite, unpredictable, and purposeless. Fortune's primary threat is temporal, metaphorized through gender—she is a gendered figuration of the loss of a stable self accrued over time.

Atop her wheel, Leonbruno's Fortune lunges toward the prince on his throne; in his direction she tosses the wealth of rule—coins, scepters, crowns; in the direction of neglected Truth and imprisoned Virtue she rains devices of torture—stocks, shackles, yokes. The prince appears

⁵⁹ Experience is key to the mastery of Prudence, or foresight; so in the war with Fortune, Prudence (gained via experience) has a somewhat special and in fact contrary position relative to the overall temporal structure of the poem, which itself is designed to mirror the chaos of Fortune. As David Quint puts it, "The *Innamorato* de-emphasizes a central plotline in favor of a maximum number of individual, largely peripheral episodes. The episode is a self-contained point of time, the present moment which has no 'before' and 'after.' Each episode presents in turn a new and unique set of circumstances for Boiardo's protagonists to grasp and master." Quint, "The Figure of Atlanta," 82-83.

⁶⁰ For the revival of Fortune via the story of Dido, see Eberhard Leube, *Fortuna in Karthago: die Aeneas-Dido-Mythe Vergils in den romanischen Literaturen vom 14. Bis zum 16. Jahrhundert, Studien zum Fortwirken der Antike*, vol. 1 (Heidelberg: C. Winter, 1969).

⁶¹ "La fata pettinava il damigello, / E spesso lo baciava con dolcezza; / Non fu mai depintura di pennello / Qual dimostrasse in sé tanta vaghezza" (II.13.21).

⁶² Quint, "The Fortunes of Morgana," 20.

⁶³ "Mirando come un specchio nel bel viso, / E così avendo il giovanetto in braccio / Gli sembra dimorar nel paradiso" (II.13.22; note different stanza number in Italian text).

⁶⁴ In this analysis I have been greatly aided by Gordon Teskey's work on allegory, which specifically links allegory as political speech with the author of allegory as attempting to maintain a voice that navigates between an inner self and an outer political realm, and the risks to the author of the loss of self inherent in political action. Gordon Teskey, *Allegory and Violence* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996). "The threat of being devoured is the ultimate expression of political danger," Teskey argues. "It underlies the allegorical confrontation of microcosm and macrocosm, as it does the imposition of form on indifferent substance" (130). "The very concept of the body as something that has a private interior and a public exterior is created by the voice. It is the voice that gives the body an inner sanctum where deliberation can occur and whence speech can issue." Therefore, "Only when the voice is denied them do bodies in the *agora* lose this interiority, becoming an indifferent substance ready to be imprinted by ideology" (124). Later he writes, "Political discourse is speaking with the body at risk and with something to be cared for at stake" (132). As I will argue, Leonbruno uses allegory as an effort to stabilize the self over time against political absorption, externalized as Fortune.

to be the favorite of Fortune and to receive her richest rewards, but as the *Innamorato* demonstrates, this supposed “gift” may well be a curse.⁶⁵ In Leonbruno’s painting, the languid king immerses himself in a world of iniquity and corruption; he is physically at the cross-point of two axes of vice, one before and one behind him, that he does not perceive. Those within the court have become Fortune’s victims: infected with corruption and vice, they do not realize what her gifts have made of them. The king himself looks not toward his own realm, to see what his court has become, but back over his shoulder, toward Calumny. Experience is opaque to the court, absorbed by the chimera of a rich palace and luxurious gifts. Directly behind the king, a blindfolded vice grasps a masked woman by the shoulder; she, in turn, prepares to bring a mask down before the king’s face.⁶⁶ Inability to perceive the truth not only of one’s context, but of *oneself*—these are the true wages of Leonbruno’s Fortune.

Machiavelli and the Space-Time Problem

The fear of absorption—of the complete loss of identity—that Boiardo’s Orlando overcomes and to which Leonbruno’s prince succumbs is articulated most fiercely by Machiavelli. Machiavelli and Boiardo stand on either side of a dividing line forged by the 1494 Imperial and French invasions of Italy, which began the Italian Wars.⁶⁷ Boiardo’s poem famously cuts off in the middle of Book III, curtailed, he says, by foreign invasion and an Italy in flames. The temporal break at the end of Boiardo’s poem—a breach in history that existing poetic models could not bridge—is also a rift in the concept of Fortune and Occasio. Orlando’s encounter with Morgana in Boiardo’s poem stages a version of the battle between virtue and fortune that is distinctly pre-Machiavellian—that is, where *virtù* is stable and in direct opposition to Fortune. As Orlando is told on entering Morgana’s palace, “*Virtù* can conquer anything. / He who persists with *virtù* wins” (Boiardo, *Orlando Innamorato*, II.viii.55).⁶⁸ For Machiavelli, of course, there is no such reassurance. In *The Prince* men can change neither their own characters nor the demands of their moment, so success with Fortune depends entirely on how well one’s character happens to match the clutch of circumstance. Whether one can respond to Fortune’s sudden demands is itself, as Victoria Kahn points out, a matter of *fortune*.⁶⁹ Experience, in the Boiardan sense, is no guide.

Machiavelli offers two successive images of Fortune in *The Prince* that give a visual and allegorical structure to the problem of self-mastery, structures that are key to understanding Leonbruno’s painting. The second of these is the famous description of Fortune as a woman who must be violently subdued. I will return to this characterization, but it can only be understood in the context of his first image, of Fortune as a flooding river, rushing and tumbling, overflowing its

⁶⁵ See Quint, “The Fortunes of Morgana,” 20.

⁶⁶ The blindfolded woman is taken from Mantegna’s *Virtus Combusta*, where she appears to represent Ingratitude, with her hand on Ignorance’s shoulder. Ingratitude is a commonplace of images of Fortune and Calumnies alike. See Machiavelli’s *Capitolo* on Ingratitude as well.

⁶⁷ For crisis and poetry in the sixteenth century, see Ascoli, “Ariosto and ‘Fier Pastor.’” Also, Albert Russell Ascoli, *Ariosto’s Bitter Harmony: Crisis and Evasion in the Italian Renaissance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987).

⁶⁸ “Ogni cosa virtute vince al fine: / Chi segue vince, pur che abbia virtute” (Boiardo, *Orlando Innamorato*, II.viii.55).

⁶⁹ Victoria Kahn, “*Virtù* and the Example of Agathocles in Machiavelli’s *Prince*,” in *Machiavelli and the Discourse of Literature*, eds. Albert Russell Ascoli and Victoria Kahn (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 214-15.

banks—“everyone yields to [its] onslaught, unable to oppose [it] in any way.”⁷⁰ Despite Machiavelli’s exhortation to build dikes and dams in preparation, it is evident from his own imagery that one cannot prepare against such an assault, because one cannot predict the flood’s path—other than that it is bound to go around the defenses erected to stop it.⁷¹ And in fact, in its rush and tumble, the flood itself allows no perspective, and no vantage point. It transforms the landscape to the point of unrecognizability; it tosses its victims and pulls them downstream. In the flood image, the problem of Fortune is in part rendered spatial and becomes a collapse of perspective—one cannot see where one is, or is going, or even has been. Past and future have been *spatially* disrupted relative to the present; there is no way to integrate distinct temporal selves while in the tug of the rushing current.⁷²

The flood image in *The Prince* allows movement without perspective, but it comes after Machiavelli’s previous efforts at establishing perspective had left him, like Boiardo’s Ziliante, in a trap of mirroring Fortune. And the flood allegorization comes, in turn, after an even earlier version of Fortune had similarly failed to offer Machiavelli the autonomy he sought. This occurs in the *Capitoli*, a collection of tercets written between 1506 and 1512 and including a chapter on Fortune wherein Machiavelli describes the goddess’s palace with herself at its summit. The *Capitoli* present a dark and hopeless vision, spawned, like the Calumny of Apelles and Leonbruno’s own painting, by false accusation and a political status free-fall.⁷³ So though the conceit of the palace found in the poem on Fortune is familiar from Boiardo (and, of course, Leonbruno), escape will not be so simple this time: “She is seen, reigning high atop a palace, / Open at every corner; and she lets / Everyone in, but no one knows the exit.”⁷⁴ Through allegorical

⁷⁰ “Et assomiglio quella a uno di questi fiumi rovinosi, che, quando s’adirano, allagano e’ piani, ruinano li arberi e li edifizii, lievano da questa parte terreno, pongono da quell’altra: ciascuno fugge loro dinanzi, ognuno cede allo impeto loro, senza potervi in alcuna parte obstar.” Niccolò Machiavelli, *Il Principe. Note critiche a cura di Laura Barberi. Edizione a cura di Luigi Firpo* (Turin: Einaudi Editore, 1972), ch. XXV. Trans. Peter Constantine (Machiavelli, *The Prince*, 115).

⁷¹ “E, benché sieno così fatti, non resta però che li uomini, quando sono tempi quieti, non vi potessino fare provvedimenti, e con ripari et argini, in modo che, crescendo poi, o andrebbono per uno canale, o l’impeto loro non sarebbe né si licenzioso né si dannoso. Similmente interviene della fortuna: la quale dimostra la sua potenza dove non è ordinata virtù a resisterle, e quivi volta li sua impeti, dove la sa che non sono fatti li argini e li ripari a tenerla” (Machiavelli, *Principe*, XXV). “As this is the torrent’s nature, man should not neglect to prepare himself with dikes and dams in times of calm, so that when the torrent rises it will gush into a channel, its force neither so harmful nor so unbridled. The same is true with Fortune, who unleashes her force in places where man has not taken skillful precautions to resist her, and so channels her force to where she knows there are no dikes or dams to hold her back” (Machiavelli, *The Prince*, 116). Despite the apparent efficacy of the dikes and dams in this passage, Machiavelli famously goes on to demonstrate the impossibility of preparation, given that one cannot change one’s nature, though Fortune’s variations demand that one be sometimes cautious and sometimes bold.

⁷² Giuseppe Mazzotta has written the seminal piece on Machiavelli’s engagement with specifically Albertian perspective, including its importance for the master of Fortune: “In effect, Fortune, as the agency that regulates human affairs in their randomness or fortuitousness, dramatizes the steady shiftiness of all events and, thereby, calls attention to the radical instability of any single viewpoint. In short, perspective is crucial for any act of knowledge and judgment.” Giuseppe Mazzotta, “Politics and Art: The Question of Perspective in *Della pittura* and *Il Principe*,” *Rivista dell’Istituto Nazionale di Studi sul Rinascimento* 43 (2003): 20.

⁷³ As Tusiani says in his introduction to his translation of the *Capitoli*, “They are, so to speak, the masochistic brooding of a man in chains who, so as to dream of his ‘chance’ of freedom, enumerates all the existing obstacles —ingratitude, fortune, ambition”; they are a “sorrowful meditation with no catharsis.” Niccolò Machiavelli, *Lust and Liberty, The Poems of Machiavelli*, trans. Joseph Tusiani (New York: I. Obolensky, 1963), xvii–xviii.

⁷⁴ “Sopra un palazzo d’ogni parte aperto / regnar si vede et a verun non toglie / l’intrare in quello, ma è l’uscirne incerto.” Machiavelli, *De Fortuna in Opere, a cura di Corrado Vivanti* (Turin: Einaudi Editore, 1997), 46–48; trans. Tusiani (Machiavelli, *Lust*, 113).

personification, Machiavelli has managed to give his Fortune a set of clear spatial relations. His unified vantage point is of little use, however, since Fortune, and not he, is in control of the relationship between space and *time*: “The way she pleases, she distributes time;” “She does not like to favor the same man / Forever, nor forever does she crush / Beneath her wheel the one who’s now in pain.”⁷⁵ Where for Boiardo time is the means by which experience is able to condition *virtù*, for Machiavelli time only offers the certainty of the conditionality of the present, not a promise of mastery through the accretion of understanding.⁷⁶ All one can know of the wheel, after all, is that it must *by its nature* turn. The experience of that turn is, for Machiavelli, the only meaning of time: “Therefore, as you can understand and feel, / One always would be happy, or content, / Who could most deftly jump from wheel to wheel; / But since this power is denied to us / By some mysterious force that governs us, / With the turn of the wheel our state must change.”⁷⁷ Though he will in *The Prince* describe a Boiardan sequence of chaotic moments to which one must respond without information, in the *Capitoli* Machiavelli finds that an integrated notion of time is a *hindrance* to the individual’s sovereignty. Past, present and future here are connected, not so that experience can offer mastery of newer circumstances, but simply to lock the subject into an inexorable process of loss. And so it is that Machiavelli’s only answer is to counsel precisely that which he most fears: that in order not to be crushed by Fortune, the courtier will have to mirror her. He writes, “So, let us grab her as she turns and shines, / And, as much as we can, at every hour, / Adjust ourselves to all her whims and signs.”⁷⁸

Written in 1512, at the tail end of Machiavelli’s work on the *Capitoli*, *The Prince*’s second description of Fortune as a woman must be seen against the failure of Machiavelli’s other allegorizations to achieve perspectival distance from immediate circumstance; it should also be considered something of a rhetorical last stand. “Fortune is a woman,” Machiavelli famously writes, “and if you wish to dominate her you must beat and batter her.”⁷⁹ Machiavelli resorts to the gendered metaphor only once his effort to control Fortune by allegorizing her as a flood forces him to admit that, in the midst of flux, he can never have enough information to control his own destiny. Having confessed to a contextual blindness—to an inability, when in the grip of circumstance, to know which response will work, let alone to acquire the necessary skill if one does not have it already—Machiavelli “repersonalize[s] what was becoming an increasingly abstract and *unmanageable* concept of fortune by introducing the figure of Fortune as a woman.”⁸⁰

⁷⁵ “Costei el tempo a suo modo dispone”; “né favorir alcun sempre le piace / per tutti e tempi, né sempre mai preme / colui che ’n fondo di suo rota iace.” Machiavelli, *De Fortuna*, in *Opere*, 37; 40-42; trans. Tusiani (Machiavelli, *Lust*, 112).

⁷⁶ Pocock invokes the dangers of innovation to characterize Fortune’s disruptive relationship to time and memory—in other words, innovation, a necessity of good governance, creates conditions of novelty that knowledge and memory cannot address. J. G. A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), 156-67.

⁷⁷ “Però, se questo si comprende e nota, / sarebbe un sempre felice e beato / che potessi saltar di rota in rota; / ma, perché poter questo ci è negato / per occulta virtù che governa, / si muta col suo corso el nostro stato.” Machiavelli, *De Fortuna* (115-20); trans. Tusiani (Machiavelli, *Lust*, 116).

⁷⁸ “Però si vuol lei preder per suo stella / e, quanto a noi è possibile, ogni ora / accomodarsi al variar di quella.” Machiavelli, *De Fortuna* (124-7); trans. Tusiani (Machiavelli, *Lust*, 116).

⁷⁹ “Perché la fortuna è donna, et è necessario, volendola tenere sotto, batterla et urtarla.” Machiavelli, *Principe*, XXV. Trans. Constantine (Machiavelli, *The Prince*, 118).

⁸⁰ Victoria Kahn writes: “To recognize which situations require which kinds of imitation finally necessitates that the prince imitate the absolute flexibility of fortune itself. But one’s ability to learn is itself, finally, a function of the *fortune* of one’s natural disposition, and is necessarily limited by it. In thus conflating the realm of necessity or nature with the agent of *virtù*, Machiavelli runs the risk of reducing *virtù* to the mere repetition—that is, the willed acceptance—of necessity: the mimetic representation of nature.” Kahn, “*Virtù*,” 214-15. See also Pitkin, *Fortune Is a*

By beating Fortune physically, Machiavelli at least manages to place her spatially and see her in relation to himself, though he still cannot employ experience as the basis of foresight.

Leonbruno's Mastery of Space and Time

Machiavelli's smashing of Fortune in *The Prince* attempts to reconquer individual action through the death of desire and the reassertion of autonomy. Such literary interpretations of Fortune are all the more important for Leonbruno's painting when we consider that Fortune was often depicted in the visual tradition as the artist's sexual foil.⁸¹ In her unpredictable rewards and punishments, Fortune resembles both a perverse lover and the experience of love itself, oscillating between desire and resentment. But a beating will not conquer the subject's own desire, even if it succeeds in containing the actions of desire's object. As Joseph Leo Koerner argues with regard to Dürer's *Nemesis*, rationalized perspectives were a way of controlling not only the object of representation, but also oneself.⁸² Machiavelli's problem is perspectival, as he tacitly admits through his defeated abandonment of the flood metaphor; this means that, in order to conquer Fortune, he will first need to conquer *himself*.

For Leonbruno, self-mastery is both perspectival and temporal. Consider again the inscription at the bottom of Leonbruno's painting, which claims not defeat at the hands of Fortune, but mastery of representation as evidence of self-recognized experience: "If so in adversity then how in prosperity would Leonbruno paint Fortune?" Had I been treated otherwise, the artist asserts, I would represent Fortune differently—and thus change in the present the viewer's perceptions both of the court *and* of the artist himself. The temporal aspect claimed by the inscription also plays out spatially in the painting, though always tensely. Over abandoned Truth, on the far right and below imprisoned Virtue, an inscription proclaims, "Oh unlucky goddess of truth that I am, I can never, never, never reach the ears of the king due to unfair reputation."⁸³ The triple repetition of "never" evokes the artist's desperation—and yet it also announces time's role in the painting. The temporal hindrance—"unfair reputation"—becomes a physical aspect of the work, where the sprawl of Calumny, dragging her innocent victim, and the meddling of Fortune in the affairs of men, intervene *spatially* between Truth and the king on the opposite sides of the painting. The mastery of space and time is the key subject of Leonbruno's work.

In his *Calumny*, Leonbruno's elaborate depiction of Fortune's palace creates a physical framework by which allegory may externalize the artist's experience, and he then fills it with arguably three dramatic allegories: the Calumny of Apelles; the reversal of a Mantegnesque liberation of virtue; and a journey through the palace of Fortune. Like Boiardo, Leonbruno uses allegorical movement as a stand-in for an integrated notion of time and experience, the life-journey

Woman, 292. See also Ascoli, who writes that Machiavelli's hero "becomes structurally identical with *Fortuna* as change personified, since his alterations mirror hers exactly" (Ascoli, "Machiavelli's Gift of Counsel," 197).

⁸¹ Joseph Leo Koerner, "The Fortune of Dürer's *Nemesis*," in *Fortuna*, eds. Walter Haug and Burghart Wachinger (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1995), 239-94.

⁸² "In [Dürer's woodcut of an artist drawing a reclining nude], perspectival distance, 'dy weiten,' which is part of aesthetic composition, takes on the ethical character of composure [...] Indeed the claim of most of Dürer's nudes is that the force of aesthetic construction through measure can control the body and desire." Koerner, "The Fortune of Dürer's *Nemesis*," 266-67.

⁸³ The inscription reads: "O me infelicem deam vendicam; quam numquam, numquam / numquam, aut turpiter mea maxima cum infamia / ad aures principum misella accessi."

that then creates an artistic identity capable of withstanding Fortune through self-recognition. The difference is that the journey in question is the artist's own. This is new, and depends on Leonbruno's engagement with a contemporary re-interpretation of the Boiardan tradition in Mantuan literary circles, by the artist's contemporary Antonio Fileremo Fregoso.⁸⁴ Where Boiardo offers a series of disjunctive moments snatched at by a developing *virtù*, and Machiavelli cedes the terrain of temporal mastery to circumstance, Fregoso's writings use allegorical movement to counter absorption on the artist's journey to self-development and transparency.

How exactly Leonbruno arrived at Fregoso is, like everything about the painting's patronage history, obscure. The *Calumny's* aggressively anti-natural, bi-tonal brown-and-gold seems to offer a context and a mode, if not an answer. The color is meant to recall a series of monochrome and grisaille biblical images by Mantegna for Isabella d'Este's *studiolo*, thus invoking the imagery of a (now-lost) age of Isabellian virtue. It is worth noting that Isabella periodically directly intervened on Leonbruno's behalf with her husband, son and court functionaries, writing to the court's architectural supervisor in 1523, for example, to ask that her son provide a horse and two servants for her long-standing painter. In short, she functioned directly as Leonbruno's protector within the court.⁸⁵ A plea to Isabella for aid was surely one of the painting's pretexts. Moreover, by removing the painting from a natural frame, the color renders the work clearly both an allegory and an ekphrasis. Leonbruno used a similar coloring method for an allegory of Mantuan poets, indicating that the technique may signal a specifically literary mode—and also the artist's proximity to literary culture.⁸⁶ It might for this reason be tempting to associate the work with the Mantuan court's liking for humanist *invenzioni*—for example that of Paride da Ceresara for Perugino's *studiolo* painting. I argue, however, that the represented “text” in Leonbruno's ekphrasis is the artist's own experience, combined with the contemporary writings of Antonio Fregoso, a fellow victim of courtly fortune. This is not to say that a patron may not have acquired Leonbruno's painting, or even commissioned it—though, again, there is no evidence of this. But in acting as a mirror of the artist himself, the painting posits a direct challenge to traditional power structures that no patron would have conceived of, let alone desired.

If anyone gave Leonbruno the *invenzione* for this painting, it must have been Fregoso himself, whether via printed book or personal connection. As we will see, Fregoso was, like Leonbruno, a victim of fortune at court, one who seized this experience as the basis of a creative evolution. Fregoso was a legitimized son of the signore of Carrara; after his father's death he became a member of the Milanese court, and *cavaliere* from the age of 18, though he would later become a victim of Milan's unstable politics and spend his last years in effective exile. Fregoso was a close friend of all of the major Milanese poets of his moment: il Pordenone named him as an interlocutor in his dialogues on love, and he was friends with Guidotto Prestinari and Serafino Aquilano. He stands on the shore in canto 42 of the *Orlando Furioso*, smiling and happy to see his friend Ariosto's poetic ship finally arrive. He was also a relative of Battista Fregoso, who wrote the *Anteros*. Stephen Campbell writes that Isabella d'Este owned Fregoso's 1510 *La cerva bianca*,

⁸⁴ For Fregoso's life and career, see Valeria De Matteis' entry in: *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, direttore Alberto M. Ghisalberti. Rome: Istituto della Enciclopedia italiana, 1960. Retrieved at: [http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/fregoso-antonio-antognotto-antonietto-fileremo-filareno_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)/](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/fregoso-antonio-antognotto-antonietto-fileremo-filareno_(Dizionario-Biografico)/) See also: Millard Meiss, “Sleep in Venice. Ancient Myths and Renaissance Proclivities,” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 110 (1966), 356, n. 64; Campbell, *The Cabinet of Eros*, 212.

⁸⁵ Intra, “Lorenzo Leonbruno,” 571.

⁸⁶ This work, last seen in a private collection and known from copies by the print-maker Mocetto, may be a story of Anymome. Most importantly, it includes two fountains with poets' heads rising from them: one is Virgil and the other Battista Spagnoli. It is described in detail by Meiss, “Sleep,” 356-67; also Gamba, “Lorenzo Leonbruno.”

his most famous text, in which he argues for a rehabilitation of the idea of love central to Mantegna's *Parnassus*.⁸⁷ This text, like the treatise on Fortune, went through several printings in its first years; both poems were evidently quite popular.⁸⁸ In short: if Leonbruno and Fregoso did not know each other personally—which they very likely would have in Milan, if not in Mantua, given the close exchanges between the courts—then they certainly did by reputation. Similarly, Leonbruno's works were familiar both in Milan and in the Mantuan court.

As we will see, Fregoso's 1519 *Dialogo di Fortuna* provides a direct source for many of the figures of Leonbruno's painting; yet Fregoso had already initiated some of the themes that are reflected in Leonbruno's work in his 1506 *Riso de Democrito* and *Pianto de Heraclito*.⁸⁹ In the *Riso* and *Pianto*, Fregoso revives the classical counterpoint between the laughing Democritus, who mocks the vices and weak vanities of the human species, and the weeping Heraclitus, who mourns for life's miseries. These antithetical positions are mediated by the figure of the poet, Fregoso himself, who journeys through the text taking lessons from the ancient interlocutors (among others), and encountering a wide swath of human behavior (rendered in allegorical form) along the way. Time and experience are the key devices, as they were for Boiardo – but Fregoso conceives of both in terms that Boiardo had not explored. In particular, Fregoso's *Riso* and *Pianto*, and in turn his *Fortuna*, are conceived of as processes of the integration of linear time and personal development.

The spatiality and temporal spreading of Boiardo's poem is much more firmly asserted in Fregoso's works, and is specifically attached to an "I" who develops across each of the texts—an "I" who, by the nature of reading itself, is identified with the reader as well as the poet.⁹⁰ This identification is partly spatial: as the poet journeys through each poem on a path to understanding, much emphasis is placed on vantage points, with the poet in the *Riso* moving from valley to mountain in navigating the poem's allegorical landscape.⁹¹

Then gazing at the countryside
Full of that people enveloped in its many woes,
I believed any effort to flee them was worth it:
And thus toward the mountain we turned,
My guide, and I following his footsteps
Once I regained some of my strength;
And the more my eyes gazed down below,
The more the desire overtook me
To climb the hill although I was tired. (Fregoso, *Riso*, 2: 61-69)⁹²

⁸⁷ Campbell, *The Cabinet of Eros*, 72, 273.

⁸⁸ Ausonio Dobelli, *L'Opera Letteraria: Di Antonio Phileremo Fregoso* (Modena: Tipografia di A. Namias e C., 1898), 6-9.

⁸⁹ Antonio Fileremo Fregoso, *Riso de Democrito e Pianto di Eraclito*, Milan: Simplicissimus Book Farm; Kindle Edition, 2011.

⁹⁰ For Fregoso's emphasis on self-knowledge as the route to liberty from Fortune see Clara Liberali, "Una tarsia del coro di S. Maria Maggiore a Bergamo: il tema della fortuna e Lorenzo Lotto," *Artibus et Historiae* 2, no. 3 (1981): 82-83.

⁹¹ For the iconographic tradition of Fortune's mountain, see Patch, who says that while the mountains are a commonplace of representations of "the Otherworld," Fortune's mountain develops its own features. Howard Rollin Patch, "Some Elements in the Medieval Description of the Otherworld," *PMLA* 33, no. 4 (1918): 626.

⁹² Alor mirando la campagna piena
di quella gente in tanti affanni involta,

The spatial nature of the travels allows them to be temporal—to move across the poem’s axis of time—and thus, in turn, they become developmental. By the time he arrives at the end of the poem, the poet/narrator (and reader, if he is successful) will have internalized an objective state of observation from which he can perceive the fallacies of the world while lifting himself apart from them, thus achieving literal distance. As Mario Santoro explains, the journey of the poet, “by demythologizing fortune and leading it back to the realm of humanity, returns to the individual the responsibility for his destiny.”⁹³ Space and time within the poem allow the poet/narrator to return to himself.

There is, of course, a precedent for the importance of the poet’s allegorical journey to a notion of wisdom guided by experience, and it is signaled from the *Riso*’s opening lines, which clearly invoke the journey of Dante’s pilgrim and a corresponding loss of self that that poem’s journey will resolve:

In the sweet time of my youth,
That truly in the human life
Is the fair and beautiful springtime [...]
I found myself, not without grave danger,
Accompanied by a mad crowd (Fregoso, *Riso*, 1: 1-3, 5-6)⁹⁴

But Fregoso frequently frames this loss of self as a response to the challenges of power, whether by temptation or fear; for him, the journey to self-knowledge involves a clearer (even mocking) understanding of power relations, of the cruelties of princes, and of the vanities of riches.⁹⁵

O mob, o ignorant herd! And what does move you,
Lust for reigns and treasures,

per fugarla istimai leve ogni pena:
e così ver il monte diemo volta
il duca mio e io dreto al suo passo,
poi ch'ebbi alquanto la virtù recolta;
e quanto più volgeva gli occhi al basso,
tanto più il desiderio me spingeva
salir il colle ben ch'io fussi lasso. (Fregoso, *Riso*, 2: 61-9)

⁹³ “Demitizzando la ‘fortuna’ e riconducendola nel territorio dell’umano, restituisce all’uomo la responsabilità del suo destino.” (Translation mine.) Santoro, *Fortuna*, 206.

⁹⁴ Nel dolce tempo de mia età primera,
che veramente de la vita umana
è la legiadra e vaga primavera [...]
io me trovai, non senza gran periglio,
acomagnato da gran turba insana (Fregoso, *Riso*, 1: 1-3, 5-6)

For Dante’s poet as a source for the *Riso*, see Santoro, *Fortuna*, 207.

⁹⁵ See Santoro, *Fortuna*, 207: “In fondo il motivo dominante nei *Doi filosofi* è il contrasto fra la folla che insegue il miraggio dei beni terreni e il poeta pervenuto alla autentica libertà e alla coscienza del valore dei beni interiori.”

To do such harsh deeds against your own kind?
 You sell your lives to such great lords,
 For a miserable price, oh chained madmen,
 And those lords use your hearts as shelter,
 Living triumphantly off of your pains,
 Conquering reigns with your deaths
 And barely remembering your names.
 Alas, the only thing I can do is laugh harder every hour,
 To see the world so full of madmen. (Fregoso, *Riso*, 10: 52-62)⁹⁶

Fregoso's Dialogo di Fortuna and the Politics of Self-Mastery

The allegorical movement established by the *Riso e Pianto* plays out again in Fregoso's 1519 *Dialogo di Fortuna* (published 1521 in Venice), in combination with a renewed recognition of experience's role in deconstructing power relations. As we will see, Fregoso's *di Fortuna* was Leonbruno's most immediate source—but his adaptation is not only of Fregoso's iconography; rather, Leonbruno is interested in Fregoso's allegory of the journey of the self for the purpose of mastering one's fortunes in a specifically political realm.⁹⁷ In the *di Fortuna*, Fregoso's entire subject is the vagaries of Fortune, whose cruelties trigger the poet-narrator's troubled wanderings.⁹⁸ He soon stumbles across his friends Curzio Lancino (a minor poet) and Bartolomeo Simonetta (a learned Milanese nobleman and close friend of Fregoso's), placing the entire treatise within a world of intellectual intimacy. The three meet by a fountain and begin to discuss Fortune, with each character offering a different interpretation of the goddess.⁹⁹

⁹⁶ Oh, plebe! oh, vulgo ignaro! E chi te move,
 cupidità de regni e de tesori,
 far contra la tua spezie sì aspre prove?
 Vostra vita vendete a gran signori
 per prezio vile, o pazzi da catena,
 quali se fan repar de' vostri cori;
 vivon trionfanti de la vostra pena,
 regni acquistando con la vostra morte
 e il nome vostro se ricorda a pena.
 Ah! ah! forza è ch'io rida ognor più forte,
 vedendo il mondo sì de pazzi pieno. (Fregoso, *Riso*, 10: 52-62)

⁹⁷ Fregoso's poem has been associated with a work of art in the past—Robert Gaston in a well-known article linked the *di Fortuna* to the iconography of Bronzino's London *Allegory*, in particular the figures of Truth, Time and Fraud. Unfortunately, Gaston seems to have misunderstood a key element of Fregoso's poem: that the poet himself is present on the journey he describes. Gaston mentions only two travelers in the poem, neither of them Fregoso. He thus unfortunately misses the poem's importance in specifically offering the artist/poet an imagery to describe his personal struggles with Fortune. Robert Gaston, "Love's Sweet Poison: A New Reading of Bronzino's London Allegory," *I Tatti Studies: Essays in the Renaissance* 4 (1991): 282-83.

⁹⁸ The text of the *di Fortuna* can be found in: Antonio Fileremo Fregoso, *Opere a cura di Giorgio Dilemmi* (Bologna: Commissione per i testi di lingua, 1976). The poem was published in Milan in 1519, and then by Zoppino in 1521, 1523, and finally in 1531. Antonio Fregoso, *Dialogo di Fortuna del magnifico cavalliero Antonio Phileremo Fregoso* (Venice: Zoppino, 1531). Until recently it could also be accessed online (this link is unfortunately inactive): http://biblita.celata.com/indice/visualizza_scheda/bibit000963. I am indebted to Angela Capodivacca for her assistance with the translations.

⁹⁹ For the Simonetta family see Marcello Simonetta, *Rinascimento segreto. Il mondo del Segretario da Petrarca a*

Simonetta, provocatively, bases his interpretation on the fate of his uncle, Cicco Simonetta, erstwhile ducal secretary to Gian Galeazzo Sforza. Cicco Simonetta was accused of treason and then executed by Ludovico Sforza in 1480. From this history, Fregoso's Simonetta derives an interpretation familiar from Leonbruno's *Calumny*: that Fortune is cruelest to those who most deserve praise. Against this onslaught, Simonetta councils faith in oneself and in the interior gifts that, unlike riches and jewels, Fortune's cruelties cannot touch. Notably, Cicco Simonetta was, like Leonbruno, a victim of courtly betrayal by a duke. The choice of Cicco to represent the paradigmatic victim of Fortune is provocative, given that he was Fregoso's tutor and the executor of his father Spinetta's will. From the age of seven, Fregoso lived with Cicco; he was forced temporarily to leave Milan for Genoa after Cicco's death. Fregoso's struggles with Fortune were legion: he was forced to give up his territories of Carrara and Lunigiana in exchange for the minor fiefdom of Sannazzaro in Lomellina, a territory that, in turn, he was obliged to cede in order to maintain the favor of King Louis XII of France after the defeat of Milan in 1499. The shifts of power in Milan claimed him as a victim several times over. This history underlies a repeated theme of mistaken and eventually displaced rulers in his text, a theme with which Leonbruno clearly had deep sympathy.¹⁰⁰

The poets' discussion is interrupted by an arrival: "Out of the shady waters / a lady emerged all of the sudden / naked as the day she was born" (Fregoso, *di Fortuna*, 6:13-15).¹⁰¹ She is Truth; she voices the authoritative idea of Fortune that will come to be Fregoso's, and provides an iconography found in Leonbruno's *Calumny*. Truth mournfully identifies herself and proceeds to list her own commonplace pedigree: she is the daughter of Time and Experience ("Daughter of Time I was born in light / my mother is called Experience, / and I am called Truth" (*Di fortuna*, 6: 43-4))¹⁰² and herself has a son, Odio (Hatred), who perpetually chases her in the company of his friend, Ignorance:

He has befriended a woman who is
Blind, malicious, base, haughty and strange
And has more defects that I can say:
Ignorance is the name of this insane female,
From which every woe originates among people:
A beast she is inside, and appears human only on the outside.
(Fregoso, *di Fortuna*, 6: 43-8)¹⁰³

Machiavelli (Milan: Edizioni Franco Angeli, 2004).

¹⁰⁰ De Matteis, "Fregoso."

¹⁰¹ "Fuor de l'ombrese acque, / una matrona a l'improvviso emerse, / nuda come nel giorno quando nacque" (*di Fortuna*, 6: 13-15).

¹⁰² "Figlia del Tempo sono in luce nata / e la mia madre Esperienza è detta, / e Verità per nome io son chiamata" (*di Fortuna*, 6: 34-35).

¹⁰³ D'una femina questo è fatto amico
ceca, maligna, vile, altiera e strana,
e molti più diffetti ha ch'io non dico:
Ignoranza si chiama questa insana,
da quale ogni mal vien infra la gente:
bestia è di dentro e par di fuori umana. (*di Fortuna*, 6: 43-8)

Ignorance is the evil from which every other human vice springs; in a final flight from these persistent vices, Truth has hidden herself in the fountain.¹⁰⁴ In Leonbruno's painting, we have seen abandoned Truth in the lower right side, in the pose and position familiar from Botticelli's *Calumny*; in the upper left hand corner of the painting her father, Time, governs the staircase of the court below him. As Wittkower points out, for Fregoso, "Truth is defined as self-criticism, as the knowledge of oneself"—a knowledge acquired through experience and opposed by Ignorance as the forgetfulness of life's lessons.¹⁰⁵ Ignorance sits at the king's feet, and looks up toward him, offering his lazy reign evil counsel on the petitions of Envy and Calumny (crowned by Hatred), who approach with arms extended. Ignorance is the bridge between the Calumny to the right and the corrupt reign of the king to the left as well as the division between the king and Truth. The evils of the court visually begin with Ignorance and wind their way up the staircase on the left, offering a spatial and structural counterpart to Truth's familial relationship to Time.

Fregoso's Truth offers to accompany the pilgrims on a journey to Fortune's palace, but first she explains that Fortune is the daughter of human judgment and opinion—in other words, she is anything but Dante's expression of Divine Will; rather she is a specter created by humanity's own irrationality:

I say she is born from human judgment
 This Fortune is similar to her father,
 Who is almost never fallacious or vain;
 Her mother instead is blind and ignorant,
 She is called Opinion and very rarely sees the truth,
 Even though it is often in front of her own eyes. (Fregoso, *di Fortuna*, 7: 22-27)¹⁰⁶

Fortune's term, then, is clearly fame, either good or bad, which is only a matter of perception, and which may reward ambition with wealth, or spurn skill with ignominy and poverty.¹⁰⁷ Her

¹⁰⁴ For the importance of Ignorance to Mantegna's concept of Fortune, see page 9, especially notes 15 and 17, above. Mantegna's source, like Fregoso's and, in turn, Leonbruno's, is Lucian, who describes Ignorance as the point of origin for most human evil. The connection between Fregoso and a Lucianic *Calumny* is, therefore, explicit.

¹⁰⁵ "Fregoso's Truth is, therefore, a refined form of virtue, and naturally takes over the function of Virtue in the old contest between Virtue and Fortune" (Wittkower, "Chance," 316).

¹⁰⁶ Dico che nata è dal Iudizio umano
 questa Fortuna e al patre è simigliante,
 qual quasi è sempre mai fallace e vano;
 la matre di costei ceca e ignorante
 Opinione è chiamata e il ver rar vede,
 ben che spesso talor l'abia davante. (*di Fortuna*, 7: 22-27)

¹⁰⁷ Poi che pel iudizio umano
 ricchezza e onor son la fortuna bona
 e povertà l'avversa, saria insano
 chi negasse Fortuna esser creata
 da quel iudizio, perché è chiaro e piano. (*di Fortuna*, 8: 2-6)
 (Insofar as according to human judgment,
 riches and honor are good fortune
 and poverty is the opposite, he would be insane
 who denies that Fortune is created
 by this judgment, because it is such an obvious truth.)

contingency is alien to Truth, of course, and her success is often at Truth's expense. For this reason, Truth ends her description of Fortune's realm with the hope that her father, Time, will rescue her:

My immortal father, who never rests,
Will once again pull me out of the fountain
And will saw down that leafy tree:
Then, I will live again among humans
And my crying will cease,
Nor any longer perhaps will I be regarded as vain,
Because in the end Time can do anything. (Fregoso, *di Fortuna*, 7: 85-91)¹⁰⁸

In Fregoso's poem, Time's wish is Truth's liberation—something that can only be accomplished by the pilgrims' successful journey to Fortune's realm, so that through *experience* they can know Fortune—and thus be free of her. The priority of experience over either faith or discourse is key in this narrative; the same priority is established in Leonbruno's painting by the positioning of Time at the head of the staircase of the court (in the midst of false perceptions), and Truth isolated across the painting from him, dragged in Calumny's wake. She requires, in short, the journey of a poet-narrator (or artist) to free her.

Increasingly, Fregoso's poem will play out as a battle for control of Fortune, not by controlling events, but by reconfiguring the experience of time, and thus perception itself. For instance, upon first sight of Fortune's city, the poet/narrator describes it as "a most beautiful city / of which there is no longer any memory, / most populous and rich."¹⁰⁹ But then he goes on to point out that the king who built it is long forgotten:

As Time defeated his worldly fame:
Here such a monarch had a victory
Whose fame has been swallowed by gluttonous time
And now we no longer read about the history of its feats
Thus even fame is won over by time. (Fregoso, *di Fortuna*, 9: 43-46)¹¹⁰

From here, the text goes on to explain, much like Leonbruno's central inscription, that only a fool

¹⁰⁸ Il patre mio immortal, che mai non posa,
ancor mi trarà fuor di la fontana
e secarà quella arbore frondosa:
e allora abitarò fra gente umana
e allora il mio pianto sarà sciutto,
né più tenuta forse sarò vana,
però che 'l Tempo al fin può pur il tutto. (Fregoso, *di Fortuna*, 7: 85-91)

¹⁰⁹ "Una città bellissima / sede, ch'ora di lei non s'ha memoria, / e molto popolata fu e ricchissima" (Fregoso, *di Fortuna*, 9: 40-42).

¹¹⁰ Quivi ebe un tal monarca una vittoria,
che 'l tempo ingordo ha la sua fama estinta,
né più di gesti soi si lege istoria.
Così dal tempo è ancor la fama vinta. (Fregoso, *di Fortuna*, 9: 43-46)

believes in Fortune's gifts, since they are always taken away—but this is phrased, not in terms of a victory of Fortune over human efforts, but in a triumph, again, of time over all worldly things:

Fortune's gifts are not everlasting,
Because we see that everything changes;
I need not reason this through with you further.
Therefore he who loves and believes her too much
Finds himself deceived in a brief time,
For everything in the end yields to time. (Fregoso, *di Fortuna*, 9: 61-66)¹¹¹

The journey to Fortune's palace will therefore be the poet/narrator's mastery of Time by use of experience to clarify perception. Rather than being fooled by appearances, the poet/narrator will learn truly to see, and in so doing will understand events in temporal relation—that is, without the blindness of fame, opinion and fortune.

Upon arriving, the pilgrims discover that Fortune's palace is constructed according to experience: there are paths leading to the doors ("it had four great doors grander than any triumphal arches that were or are in Rome" (Fregoso, *di Fortuna*, 14: 64-5)), a description recalled by the lower arches of Leonbruno's palace. Each of them is associated with the means by which a soul arrives.¹¹² By far the easiest path ("so easy a child could travel it" (Fregoso, *di Fortuna* 15: 48)) is the way of nobility, which corresponds to the staircase behind the king in Leonbruno's painting.¹¹³ But within a few lines it is clear that this ease of ascent comes at a price, since no one has further to fall than the nobleman who does not recognize the precariousness of material gifts, as

¹¹¹ Non son perpetui de Fortuna i doni,
perché il tutto mutabile si vede,
senza che più con voi qui ne ragioni:
però chi troppo gli ama e a lei crede,
se ritrova ingannato in spazio breve,
ché ogni cosa a la fine al tempo cede. (Fregoso, *di Fortuna*, 9: 61-66)

¹¹² "Quatro gran porte avea magior assai / che arco trionfal che in Roma fu né sia." (Fregoso, *di Fortuna*, 14: 64-65). Tellingly, the pilgrims can choose their own road, and thus a guide to lead them to a doorway to the palace. One's perspective appears to be a matter of choice. Most choose the path of industry and patience, but this is plagued by the figures of Audacity and Fraud, among others. Through the other door,

[...]Lealtà e Valore
volta a settentrion mostran la strada
difficil molto, ma non senza onore;
Prudenza e Fortezza con la spada
guidano ancor per questa il peregrino,
ben che per tal sentier raro si vada. (Fregoso, *di Fortuna*, 15: 40-45)
(Loyalty and Valor
turned toward the north show the way
which is very arduous but not without honor.
Prudence and Fortitude with the sword
guide the pilgrim through it,
even though that trail is rarely traveled.)

We should recall that Prudence is, by derivation from Mantegna's *Minerva*, the imprisoned virtue in the barred window on the upper right of Leonbruno's painting. The way of Loyalty and Valor would appear to be temporarily out of service.

¹¹³ "è sì facil che ir glie può un bambino" (Fregoso, *di Fortuna*, 15: 48).

exemplified by the case of Ludovico Sforza, dispossessed duke of Milan and Fregoso's erstwhile patron, whom the pilgrims observe within Fortune's palace:

To one who receives favors from her—
our goddess told us—o friends, yet
a mortal enemy she will soon be:
first she will in a short time
make him triumph in the great palace that you see;
then he will be evicted from it with fury;
and if you want to know who this person is,
who is so far away from you,
(I know you know him) and now you do not recognize him,
Of the populous, rich and beautiful Milan
he was once the governor, and you can see his mantle
and the ducal scepter in his hands.
This is that Ludovico Sforza who was so
loved and favored by her [Fortune],
but she changed her favor into tears. (Fregoso, *di Fortuna*, 16: 37-51)¹¹⁴

On the other hand, the opposite position is no better, as Servitude leads voyagers through the fourth, final, and least-used door. It appears as neither a pleasant nor an auspicious journey in both the poem and the painting: Fregoso describes that point of access as a little-used path with a rough road and a lazy guide; Leonbruno's Servitude ascends a steep staircase high in the architecture, looking accusingly over his shoulder toward the viewer.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁴ A quel che da colei favor receve—,
disse la diva nostra,—o amici, ancora
inimica mortal saragli in breve:
farallo prima in poco spazio d'ora
trionfar nel gran pallagio che vedete,
poi con furor sarà scacciato fuora;
e se saper chi sia costui volete,
che per esser da voi assai lontano
(so che vi è noto) e or nol cognoscete,
dil popoloso, ricco e bel Milano
gubernator fia prima, e in dosso il manto
e il ducal scettro gli vedrete in mano:
questo è quel Ludovico Sforza tanto
da questa amato e molto favorito,
ma cangiarasse quel favor in pianto. (Fregoso, *di Fortuna*, 16: 37-51)

¹¹⁵ A basso, ver la porta occidentale,
antica Servitù, guida assai lenta,
soggiorna, la qual raro il monte sale:
longo è il camin, lei pigra, sì che stenta
qual va con lei e quasi sempre mai
canuto, pria che gionga su, diventa;
ben che la seguan viatori assai,
nondimen pochi a l'alto loco mena

Fregoso's paths may differ in their imagery, but all are governed by false judgment, materialized as bad vision or imperfect perspective.¹¹⁶ To counter these problems, Truth offers Fregoso and his friends magic eyeglasses, right after her discussion of Ludovico Sforza's rise and fall (and the example of Fortune's ability to overturn an unwary prince). Eyeglasses were one of Ludovico Sforza's devices, a metaphor for his supposed political foresight and clarity of understanding.¹¹⁷ Of course, in Fregoso's text these same glasses have just failed the duke, as he sits in defeat on the path. Now, Truth is offering them to the pilgrims, so that they can reveal the reality of the palace and the people in it, not merely their outer appearances. The visitors will, in short, usurp what should have been the duke's all-seeing perspective:

So that each of you can fully learn
 To flee her vanity and her deceptions,
 Take these glasses so rare in the world
 And then look at the excellent seats
 And at the refulgent walls of the castle,
 And you will see to what end each human scrambles. (Fregoso, *di Fortuna*, 16: 64-69)¹¹⁸

e i più lassa stanchi in stenti e in guai:
 breve ventura con sì longa pena
 compra (ben si può dir) quel che a montare
 con questa la salita ha auto lena.

(Down below, toward the western door
 Ancient Servitude, a very slow guide
 Lives, who very rarely climbs the mountain:
 The road is long, and she is so lazy, that the one who goes with her
 Finds it difficult, and his hair almost always becomes white
 Before reaching the summit:
 In fact, even though many travelers follow her
 Few are led by her to the high place
 And most are left tired in pains and woes.
 A brief fortune with such a long effort
 Is bought (we can very well say it) by the one who undertook
 To ascend this climb with her.) (Fregoso, *di Fortuna*, 15: 52-63)

¹¹⁶ As Santoro puts it, the pilgrims view "il doloroso spettacolo dell'umanita attratta dal fallace giudizio verso beni caduchi e illusori" ("the painful spectacle of humanity beguiled by fallacious judgment of illusory and ephemeral goods"). Santoro, *Fortuna*, 207.

¹¹⁷ I discovered this reference via a wonderful paper by Constance Moffatt on the dissemination of Sforza symbolism, delivered at the Renaissance Society of America annual meeting in 2011 in Montreal. Professor Moffatt was kind enough to share with me her knowledge about the Sforza eyeglasses symbolism, and she referred me to additional sources; I am indebted to her for her generous help and encouragement. For eyeglasses as a Sforza symbol, see: Marco Versiero, "Il Moro cogl'occhiali: Allegorie politiche de Leonardo da Vinci (Firenze e Milano, 1481-1494)," *Pittura antica, oltre lo sguardo II* (2006): 6-20, esp. 13.

¹¹⁸ e a ciò ch'ognun di voi più a pieno impari
 sue vanità fugir e soi inganni,
 prendete questi occhiali al mondo rari
 e poi mirate gli eccellenti scanni
 e dil castello le fulgente mura,
 e vedarete a che ogni uman s'affanni. (Fregoso, *di Fortuna*, 16: 64-69)

Truth sends the pilgrims to the palace's highest room, thus again linking the spatial vantage point to the clarity gained by experience; mastery of the visual field is mastery of one's destiny. As Truth explains, the palace will be revealed as fog rather than stone—bringing to mind the illusionistic bronze of Leonbruno's painting, which claims for the surface of the work a set of rich materials likewise revealed as illusion.¹¹⁹ The gaze is hereby rendered authoritative, and the glasses offer the view of the palace, its inhabitants, court and prince in a form reinterpolated by Leonbruno's assertive stage-set architecture, single vanishing point, and centrifugal movement. The painting's viewer is, like Fregoso's pilgrims, meant to inhabit the position of visual mastery. At this point we might notice that Leonbruno's palace has only one open portal of entry, despite the textual description of four: the staircase of nobility to the left has a wide-open door at its top. At ground level, two closed doors face the viewer. There is no fourth door—until one considers the picture plane itself, the Albertian window on the world, as a portal of access to the space of the painting. This authoritative vantage point offers the perception of the space within as a test of the viewer's "glasses," and an alternative point of access to that of nobility, which, as Fregoso's account of Ludovico Sforza made clear, only *appears* easy.

Seeing with their magic glasses in Fortune's palace, Fregoso and company find many of the inhabitants in an altered state:

Some had the head of an ass,
Some of an arrogant and haughty lion,
Some of a rapacious wolf, some of a pig,
Some of an Alpine wolf, and some of a cunning fox,
And some represented a baboon:
A stranger thing has never been seen,
And like a sort of toad, one was so puffed up,
That it had lost its prior form. (Fregoso, *di Fortuna*, 17: 8-15)¹²⁰

Fortune has punitively mutated those who "want too much for themselves, by showing them that it was her power that had elevated them."¹²¹ This revelation is a direct rebuke to Curzio's statement early in the poem that ambition is a net human good. It has created art and cities, he says, and without it, "Humans would be like animals: / Brutish and passive, and always ever idle, / Leading

¹¹⁹ Fortune's palace takes Fregoso well over a chapter to describe; it is: "Un gran pallaggio di materia e arte" ("a great palace in material and art," Fregoso, *di Fortuna*, 13: 16), a wealth directly linked to the sublime skill of the unnamed architect (see in particular Fregoso 14: 1-6). Leonbruno's palace is coloristically undifferentiated from his figures, but all are rendered in illusionistic bronze with gold highlights—a similar credit to the skill of the painter, who likewise works in beautiful fictions. For the tradition and various iterations of Fortune's palace, see Patch, *The Tradition of the Goddess Fortuna*, 123ff, especially 142-43.

¹²⁰ Ch'alcuno avea capo asinino,
alcuno di leon superbo e fiero,
chi di lupo rapace e chi porcino,
chi d'orso alpestro e qual di volpe astuta,
e qual representava un babüino;
più strana cosa non fu mai veduta,
e come un rospo alcun tanto gonfio era,
che la sua forma propria avea perduta. (Fregoso, *di Fortuna*, 17: 8-15)

¹²¹ "Presuman troppo de se stessi, / mostrando gli abbia il valor suo esaltati" (Fregoso, *di Fortuna*, 17: 35-36).

their lives like irrational beings” (Fregoso, *di Fortuna*, 8: 64-66).¹²² As the poem will go on to show us, to court ambition is to tempt Fortune—and unreason. With experience—the accretive journey through space and time—the pilgrims have come to have true perspective, or a vision that brings them to reason. We have, in fact, seen them learn a lesson.

In Leonbruno’s painting, as Servitude climbs the left-hand side of the staircase behind Fortune, a group of various animals emerges from the architecture to descend a parallel staircase to the right. They are shown in their full form (not merely as animal heads on human forms, as Fregoso describes) and rather than the lions and bears that Fregoso mentions, they are deer, sheep, and goats. Their metamorphosis occurs before our eyes: Servitude gives us a last glance as he prepares to pass out of sight into the upper floor of Fortune’s palace; Fortune herself divides the world according to her favor in the center of the high portico; and from the same space behind her emerge, transformed, the animals of the hunt and agriculture who, like Servitude, fulfill the whims of kings. As the beasts of prey and domestication descend the stairs, we might notice one other creature, tucked in amongst the figures of the *Calumny*: a “volpe astute” (cunning fox) as Fregoso describes it, trotting along beside the figure of Fraud.¹²³ The spatial spread of these animals is key to Leonbruno’s meaning: the educated viewer must know the animals’ true identities, whether they are the forms of servitude, metamorphosed even as the viewer watches, or the wily fox, buried amidst a larger perpetration of Fraud, which Fregoso and Leonbruno both thus figure as a failure to pierce *representation*:

Nowadays there is no friendship that isn’t fake,
Because of blind Opinion who is fallacious and haughty,
But down there *Faith is depicted as Fraud*,
To live the true path is lost to her:
That is why I bury myself in the fountain,
Insofar as few soldiers were in my army. (Fregoso, *di Fortuna*, 7: 73-78)¹²⁴

In the end, this clarity of perception is the only solution Truth can offer, since it will keep the pilgrims from falling into the hands of an unseeing, beguiled and unreasoning humanity:

Try to have of worldly goods
Only as much as will secure each of you

¹²² “sarebbero gli uman come animali / bruti e inerti, e sempre mai oziosi, / menando vita come irrazionali” (Fregoso, *di Fortuna*, 8: 64-66)

¹²³ In this I respectfully disagree with David Cast, who reads this creature as a dog and places it as accompanying Envy. Though the painting can be murky, the fox’s tail is clearly visible, and the animal trots directly to Fraud’s right. Cast, *The Calumny of Apelles*, 151.

¹²⁴ Ormai non è amicizia se non finta,
per la ceca Opinion fallace e fiera,
ma in forma di la Fé Fraude è depinta,
per lei perso è dil viver la via vera:
però mi son nel fonte sepelita,
ché avea pochi soldati in la mia schiera. (Fregoso, *di Fortuna*, 7: 73-78; italics mine.)

Against being scorned among humans. (Fregoso, *di Fortuna*, 18: 70-73)¹²⁵

Conclusion: Mastering Representation as Mastery of Fortune

“If so in adversity then how in prosperity would Leonbruno paint fortune?” Leonbruno’s question is pressing not only because the artist’s fortunes are low, but because in prosperity, as Fregoso says, people lose judgment—they no longer *see*. Fregoso uses the glasses as a metaphor for the possibilities of clarity of vision—that he who both decodes and sees from the outsider’s vantage point is not time’s victim, but its master.

Leonbruno’s architecture takes up a cyclical formation: the figures circle from the lower realm to the upper, and then wind their way down again in a rotational movement conducted by Fortune in the center. In effect, the entire composition becomes a giant wheel. One man’s rise is another’s fall. Truth and the prince are pinned on opposite sides of the wheel, such that her voice, as she says, can never reach his ears; *but*, her eventual rise will be his fall, reversing their roles as depicted. Deluded by Fortune’s gifts, the prince fails to foresee his peril: magic glasses are no protection against a view obscured by pride. In fact, the only safe positions are those of Fortune, at the center of the wheel, and the viewer, with a vantage point of mastery. One might note that, for instance, Servitude is both leading the way into the palace of Fortune by the steepest path and himself on the wheel. As master of the wheel, Leonbruno not only claims the clarity of vision that Fregoso describes and that once belonged to a prince; he uses it to *become* Fortune.

Machiavelli’s various incarnations of Fortune have in common that they allow no allegorical journey, no self-development. One is trapped in the palace and on the wheel, or limited by one’s natural abilities; the subject can never see the whole picture, or know which skill is needed when. Fregoso and Leonbruno, however, demonstrate within the Mantuan literary and visual tradition an alternative vision of the individual’s relationship to Fortune: rather than be consumed by Fortune, the poet/artist uses allegorical mapping to take up a perspective of mastery. Control of Fortune is spatial and temporal; as Kahn writes, in Machiavelli’s case, “The distance constitutive of reflection finally collapses altogether” in deciding how to act in the political sphere.¹²⁶ Leonbruno’s mastery of Fortune acknowledges what Boiardo and Machiavelli both knew: that Fortune is the mirror of the artist. Yet by the control of allegory—that is, of a signification of past, present and future spatially organized to permit a journey toward integrated experience—Leonbruno gains a vision of the wheel, the positions and true identities of everyone on it, and the consequences of its next turn. His perspective mirrors that of Fortune, and the fear of Boiardo and Machiavelli—that one might be absorbed by Fortune—becomes his claim of strength. To master meaning, rather than placing oneself within it: *this* is getting off the wheel. Far from pummeling Fortune, the artist takes on her vantage point; he becomes her. The inscription’s query—“If so in adversity then how in prosperity would Leonbruno paint Fortune?”—has for its answer an irony: exactly the same.

¹²⁵ Solo cercate aver de' ben mondani
tanto che ognun de voi securo stia
de non esser scarniti infra gli umani. (Fregoso, *di Fortuna*, 18: 70-73)

¹²⁶ Kahn, “*Virtù*,” 214.

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