

Chapter 10

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Mirrors of Love and Creativity around 1500

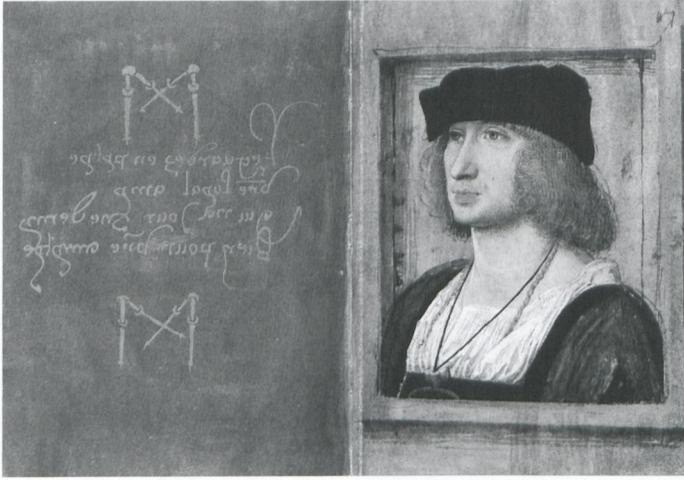
Love is Life! Thus, the best portrayal of love would seem to be the one that partakes most of life. For those who love, other tokens of love, sometimes closer to 'life'—not necessarily the artful portrait¹—offer the best memory of the beloved person. Tito Vespasiano Strozzi, the humanist from Ferrara, for example, carried with him not only a little image of his beloved in a wooden box, but also a lock of her hair.² Similarly, Pietro Bembo boasted about bearing a 'segno d'amore'—the crimson mark of a passionate kiss on his body—in addition to the image of his beloved that was in his heart as well as on

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¹ For the spectrum of functions and the 'power' of portraits in the context of love and erotic desire see—apart from the classic passages in Leon Battista Alberti's *De pictura* and Leonardo's *paragone* (Claire J. Farago, *Leonardo da Vinci's 'Paragone': A critical Interpretation with a New Edition of the Text in the 'Codex Urbinas'*, Leiden et al., 1992, 220–27, cap. 23); Jodi Cranston, *The Poetics of Portraiture in the Italian Renaissance*, Cambridge, 2000; Una Romana d'Elia, 'Niccolò Liburnio on the Boundaries of Portraiture in the Early Cinquecento', *Sixteenth-Century Journal*, 37, 2006, 323–50; Marianne Koos, *Bildnisse des Begehrens. Das lyrische Männerporträt in der venezianischen Malerei des frühen 16. Jahrhunderts: Giorgione, Tizian und ihr Umkreis*, Berlin and Emsdetten, 2006; Ingeborg Walter, Roberto Zapperi, *Das Bildnis der Geliebten: Geschichten der Liebe von Petrarca bis Tizian*, Munich, 2007; Jeanette Kohl, 'Icons of Chastity, Objects d'Amour: Female Renaissance Portrait Busts as Ambiva-

lent Bodies', in *The Body in Early Modern Italy*, ed. Julia L. Hairson and Walter Stephens, Baltimore 2010, 123–41.

² Michael Baxandall, 'A Dialogue on Art from the Court of Leonello d'Este: Angelo Decembrio's *De Politia Litteraria* Pars LXVIII', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 26, 1963, 304–26, here 325–26: 'At Titus facete concludens adiecit. Et ego non ex romanorum antiquis monumentis: sed ex ferrariensium puellarum novis insignibus vultum habeo virginis minima compactum in pyxide aurea coma. pro cuius nuper interitu. cum lacrymabile carmen excudissem. Hoc quoque teneo perpetuae memoriae testimonium in quo nihil videtur praeter vocem deesse. Simul haec dicens pyxidem virginei vultus aperuit: omnibus dulce spectaculum'. See the critical edition Angelo Camillo Decembrio, *De politia litteraria*, ed. Norbert Witten, Munich, 2002, 425–32 (VI, 68). For the 'erotic magic' of blond hair see Giovanni de' Rinaldi, *Il Mostruosissimo Mostro diviso in due trattati*, Ferrara, 1588, 51–52; for later uses of hair as memorial object and miniature portraits see Christiane Holm, 'Intime Erinnerungsgeflechte: Memorialschmuck aus Haaren um 1800', *kritische berichte*, 32, 2004, 29–41; and Patricia Fumerton, *Cultural Aesthetics: Renaissance Literature and the Practice of Social Ornament*, Chicago, 1991.



1. Jean Perréal (?), Portrait of Pierre Sala (with Facing Quatrains in Mirror-Writing), ca. 1500. Miniatures on parchment, page 13 x 9.5 cm. In Pierre Sala, *Petit Livre d'Amour*. London: British Library, Stowe MS 955, fol. 16v–17r.

the precious gift of a medal, which seems to have had such an exclusive circulation that no specimen of it is known today.³

The desire to see one's love come alive and feel close to that person, the belief in the performative presence of the object, governed all sorts of tokens: in the first years of the sixteenth century, the fifty-year old French humanist Pierre Sala gave his long-adored Marguerite Bullioud a tiny book hardly larger than the palm of a hand, consisting of a dedicatory letter and thirteen enigmatic love quatrains that he composed himself.⁴ Furthermore, he arguably wrote the book in his own hand, so that both the spiritual and physical substance of the gift constituted a kind of double contact between the two lovers. To make this contact endure, the booklet was kept in a wooden box in a green leather cover with several eyelets, which allowed his mistress to carry it around on her belt.

Formed as a pair of compasses, the first letters of Marguerite and Pierre, M and P, between the green flowers, symbolize the hope and the intellectual character of this ever-thriving love, which finally was consummated after the death of Marguerite's first husband in 1519. Every piece of poetry on the crim-

³ Pietro Bembo/Maria Savorgnan, *Carteggio d'amore*, ed. Carlo Dionisotti, Florence, 1950, 101: 'Il segno, che io porto di voi nella mia persona, è dentro in tutto 'l cuore, voi tutta viva e movente, e ora dolce e quando amara. ... Di fuori, è una dolce macchia di quel colore, di cui sogliono essere le porporine rose, grande quanto picciol rosa, rimastami la felice sera delle mille cose'. For the medal of Pietro's beloved Maria Savorgnan as gift from her to him see Ulrich Pfisterer, *Lysippus und seine Freunde. Liebesgaben und Gedächtnis im Rom der Renaissance – oder: Das erste Jahrhundert der Medaille*, Berlin, 2008, 118–21.

⁴ A facsimile and comment in Pierre Sala, *Petit Livre d'Amour*. Stowe MS 955, British Library, London, ed.

Janet Backhouse and Yves Giraud, Zurich, 1994, 2 vols.; the proposed dates for the book range from around 1500 to 1519; see also Catherine King, 'Proof of Love or Proving a Will? The Historical Location of the Love Poems Written by Pierre Sala, B.L.Ms. Stowe 955', *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, 6. ser., 112, 1988, 173–84; Elizabeth Burin, 'Pierre Sala's Pre-Emblematic Manuscripts', *Emblematica*, 3, 1988, 1–30.

⁵ 'Reguardez en pytye/votre loyal amy/qui na jour ne demy/Bien pour votre amytye'.

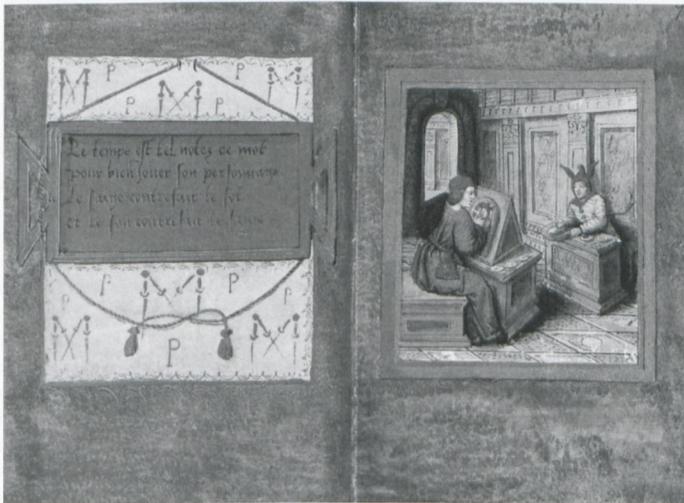
⁶ 'Le tempe est tel notez ce mot/pour bien Jouer son personnage/Le saige contrefait le sot/et le fou contrefait le saige'.

son pages of the book was embellished by an emblem carried out by a professional painter, whom Sala had commissioned for this purpose. Most of these emblems alluded to the flower-metaphor of Marguerite's name. Only the last double page of the book—painted by his artist-friend Jean Peréal—displayed the miniature portrait of Sala himself, framed by a kind of strange wooden window and an exhortation written in mirror writing: 'Look with pity on your loyal friend who for want of your love' has well-being neither for a day nor even half a day' (fig. 1).⁵

Perréal, the painter, had been to Northern Italy where he had met Leonardo da Vinci. Yet this contact alone does not explain the curious mirror-writing in the back of the booklet. But it is the clue to understanding the entire double page. The beloved, Marguerite, would be obliged to use a little mirror to decipher the text. To do so, she needed to hold the mirror above and beside the portrait of Sala, in the course of which she would have also seen her own image in the mirror. Reconstructing, from the conception of this double page, how the token would have been used demonstrates its intensification in several respects. First, the alternation between the painted image of Sala and the mirror image of Marguerite would have been a reminder of the central belief that two lovers become aligned, interchangeable, that they become one. Also, the mirror, since Socrates the instrument for the act of self-awareness and an exercise in virtue—a notion frequently addressed in the Renaissance—would have lent further weight to Sala's admonition that Marguerite take pity on his desire for her love. Finally, the mirror enlivened Sala's portrayal, emphasizing its role as the partner in a dialogue of gazes exchanged by two lovers.

There is other evidence to support this reading: Another double-page of the booklet shows a wise man and a fool depicting one another (fig. 2): 'The wise imitates/counterfeits the fool and the fool imitates/counterfeits the wise', reads the inscription.⁶ Here already—albeit to a different end—the argument focuses on assimilation and the mirror image.

Reports written in sixteenth-century Italy seem to document a similarly ingenious use of mirrors in love-dialogues at the court of Giangaleazzo Visconti (1351–1402). The motive is always the same:



2. Master of the *Chronique Scandaleuse* (?), *The Wise Man and the Fool Portray Each Other* (with Facing Quatraine), ca. 1500. Miniatures on parchment, page 13 x 9.5 cm. In Pierre Sala, *Petit Livre d'Amour*. London: British Library, Stowe MS 955, fol. 8v–9r.



3. Bronzino, *Ludovico Capponi*, ca. 1550/55. Oil on poplar panel, 116.5 x 85.7 cm. New York: Frick Collection.

⁷ Fra Sabba da Castiglione, *Ricordi ovvero Ammaestramenti*, ed. Santa Cortesi, Faenza, 1999, 170–72: ‘Giovan Galeazzo Visconti, duca di Milano ... essendo ancora giovanetto, fu innamorato d’una gentildonna molto virtuosa e bellissima e, come dicono, della casa di Correggio. ... Ma ritorniamo a Giovan Galeazzo, duca di Milano, che per amore di questa gentildonna il buon principe portava per impresa nella gamba dritta sotto il ginocchio, un correggino azzurro, con le spranghe d’oro, come si vede nelle sue figure di naturale. Essendo il povero signore in queste fiamme accese, le quali male si possono celare, più volte da alcune gran gentildonne lombarde, con le quali aveva molta domestichezza, gli fu detto: “Signore, sì come noi siamo certe e sicure che voi siete innamorato, così vi preghiamo per cortesia siate contento farci intendere di chi. ...” Il duca, come persona modesta, savia e accorta ch’egli era, ancora che fosse in quegli amorosi travagli ... le in-

terteneva con parole. Ma per essere alle donne naturale che le cose, quanto più gli sono vetate, tanto più gli cresce il desiderio di saperle, ogni giorno più lo molestavano, onde lo afflitto principe, per liberarsi di una sì noiosa e continua battaglia, si risolse come savio a contentarele e, ordinato un lauto e splendido convito, come era il suo solito, fece invitare tutte quelle gran gentildonne e specialmente la Correggia, la quale ancora essa insieme con le altre instava di sapere quello che essa meglio che ‘l duca sapeva.

Finito il solenne e magnifico convito ... il buon principe di sua mano donò a ciascuna di quelle donne (come alcuno dice) una collanetta d’oro di ducati cinquanta e alcun altro dice che fu un diamante del medesimo valore, poi fece portare in sulla tavola una bussola d’avolio, ornata d’oro e di alcune gioie, nella quale in una parte era una medaglia, ovvero ritratto di naturale di una bellissi-

A lover seeks to reveal himself to his beloved while in the presence of her companions, using the miniature of a beautiful, yet unknown woman with a mirror on the back. Claiming to reveal the identity of his beloved, he shows the anonymous image to all the women. Only when he comes to the lady of his desire does he turn over the image to show the mirror, wherein his beloved recognizes her own image.⁷ Around the same time Bronzino tried to visualize a comparable idea in his portrait of Ludovico Capponi (1550/55) where the young man presents a small portrait-medallion of his beloved and simultaneously hides her identity by covering her face with his finger (fig. 3).⁸

Without further discussion of the love-booklet and portrait of Pierre Sala, the significance of mirrors in the context of Renaissance tokens and images of love should have already become clear through these examples. Taking this a step further, I will argue that also the art-theoretical notion of the mirror was particularly apt to be employed in the context of love, as was the mirror of love in the manifestation of art theory.

One example for this is a medal, crafted around 1473 in Rome, the back of which originally was a mirror. Its medalist, long known only by the pseudonym of Lysippus, has recently been identified as Hermes Flavius de' Bonis.⁹ The medal displays the artist's self-portrait, and most probably was intended, not for his wife, but for a youth whom the artist adored—the sixteen-year old Alessandro Cinuzzi, who died the following year (fig. 4). The connection to Alessandro is established by the posthumous medal that Lysippus crafted for the boy in 1474 with exactly the same border profile (no other medal of Lysippus or of any other artist of the fifteenth century matches this profile) (fig. 5).¹⁰ Astonishingly, Alessandro not only received this medal after his sudden, untimely death of 'fever', but also was the recipient of one of the first printed collections of commemorative poems, written in his honor. This offers a rare occasion to reconstruct the Roman circle of Alessandro and Lysippus and its cultural context in great detail. Homoerotic love was the central passion and fiction that linked these persons. It also shows how this circle adapted images and notions, developed within the heterosexual discourse of

ma giovane, dall'altra banda, per riverso di quella, era un lividissimo specchio e con allegro viso, contra il costume degli innamorati, gli disse: "Donne mie care ... lo amore ch'io porto a tutte voi e le continoe e ardenti preghiere vostre mi costringono a contentarvi, e però ho deliberato (poi che da voi è tanto desiderato) mostrarvi la donna la quale sola al mondo io amo sopra ogni altra cosa e adoro come idolo." E, aperta la bussola ove era il ritratto della bella donna, esso stesso volle mostrare quello ad una ad una a ciascuna di esse. Ma quando fu all'amata Correggia, la qual fu l'ultima (che così era ordinato), con destrezza, querchiando il ritratto, scoperse lo specchio e dissegli: "Questa è la viva, vera e naturale effigie di quella donna, la quale più che l'anima mia amo" ... Questo uso dello specchio del buon duca, ancora che fosse una accorta e ingegnosa vanità, insegnatali per avventura da amore il quale suole aguzzare gli ingegni umani, io no 'l laudo né lo commendo, perché fu una sensuale leggerezza non molto conveniente alla gravità di un gran principe. ... io voglio lo specchio, acciocché mirandosi in esso l'uomo sozzo e laido si sforzi con le virtù riparare e supplire al difetto naturale della deformità. ..."

Another version of this trick is already reported in Gaspare Visconti's *Rithmi* (Milan 1493), see Rodolfo Renier, 'Gaspare Visconti (I.)', *Archivio Storico Lombardo*, 13, 1886, 509–62, esp. 544–45.

⁸ Today in The Frick Collection, New York; see Charles McCorquodale, *Bronzino*, London 2005, 158–59.

⁹ I presented this identification for the first time in 2003 at a conference in Bonn; a summary of my findings was published by Eckhard Leuschner, 'Die Renaissance-Medaille in Italien und Deutschland: Tagung im Kunsthistorischen Institut der Universität Bonn, 24.–25. Oktober 2003', *Kunstchronik*, 57, 2004, 450–54, esp. 451–52; the full argument is presented in Pfisterer, *Lysippus*; in this year Markus Wesche, who wrote a review of the proceedings of the conference in Bonn, published an article: 'Lysippus Unveiled: A Renaissance Medallist in Rome and his Humanist Friends', *The Medal*, 52, 2008, 4–13. Another—unconvincing—identification was proposed by Rossella Bianchi, *Paolo Spinoso e l'umanesimo romano nel secondo Quattrocento*, Rome, 2004, 120–22; the poem quoted 'Ad egregium iuvenem Leonem Mantuanum sculptorem', which compares a certain Leo to the antique sculptor Lysippus, just shows that the name of Lysippus was a common 'marker of quality' in Italy in the late fifteenth century.

¹⁰ The self-portrait was recognized by George F. Hill, *Portrait Medals of Italian Artists of the Renaissance*, London, 1912; for a detailed argument regarding these questions see Pfisterer, *Lysippus*.



4. *Lysippus the Younger alias Hermes Flavius de' Bonis, Medal with Self-Portrait and Mirror (obverse), ca. 1473. Bronze, diameter 8.25 cm. London: British Museum.*

love, to homo-social and homoerotic relations. In what follows, however, I will focus on the correlation between art and love in general.

The mirror-medal shows the profile of a young man, encircled by an inscription in Volgare: 'DI LA IL BEL VISO E QVI IL TVO SERVO MIRA'—'Here admire your beautiful countenance and there that of your servant' (fig. 4). In language, phrasing, and vocabulary, the admiration of 'the beautiful countenance' and the self-abasement as the servant of the beloved, clearly relate to the love-discourse of Petrarch. Petrarch's canzone 77 *Per mirar Policleto*, in which Simone Martini's depiction of Laura is described as the testimony of her heavenly 'bel viso' brought down from heaven, as well as the seventeenth sonnet *Chiara acque* by Lorenzo de' Medici, in which Lorenzo compares first a fountainhead and then his eyes to a mirror reflecting the face of his beloved ('specchio al suo bel viso'), may serve best to illustrate this central aspect contained in the mirror-medal, of which only one example is known.¹¹

¹¹ Francesco Petrarca, *Rime, Trionfi e Poesie Latine*, ed. Ferdinando Neri et al., Milan and Naples, 1951, 115; Lorenzo de' Medici, *Comento de' miei sonetti*, ed. Tiziano Zanato, Florence, 1991, 230–35; there are countless other instances, see Simone Serdini da Siena detto Il Saviozzo, *Rime*, ed. Emilio Pasquini, Bologna, 1965, 228: 'Tu se' lo specchio in cui l'anima mia/semprè si specchia virtuosamente,/vedendo la tua bella leggiadra./E ben ch'io sia

un minimo servente,/ti prego per la tua gran cortesia/che m'abbi accetto in mezzo della mente'. Giovanni Gherardi, *Lirici toscani del '400*, ed. Antonio Lanza, Rome, 1973, 648: 'In paradiso/für fatte quelle membra e 'l suo bel viso'. Bernardo Altoviti, *Lirici toscani*, 156 and 158: 'specchiando nel bel viso e cape' d'oro.../Ma piccol vento mia barchetta pinse,/quantunque abbia di seta e d'or le sarte,/a cantar del bel viso, o porre in carte/suo nobiltà'.

To begin with, the work, when considered in the context of these poems, has to be understood as a token of love in the genuine sense, as a very personal sign speaking without reference to names. As suggested by the eyelet, which has evidently been manufactured with great care, the bronze medal was meant to be suspended from above, thus joining the fixed profile of the token's donor on the front with the ephemeral mirror image of his beloved on the back as a symbol for their enduring love.¹² But this was not the only implication: The mirror, in fact, became a metaphor for the eye of the lover, referring as it does to the 'mirror' formed by the surface of the spring in the poem by Lorenzo de' Medici: Every glance into the water alludes to the glance mirrored in the pupils of the lover, every reflecting surface begins to rival the lover and his eyes, which in turn become the surface onto which the image of the beloved is projected—lover and beloved 'transform' into each other and fuse to one entity.¹³ Lysippus succeeded in translating this interrelation into a new kind of token, by which the glance into the metal mirror reminded the lover of the donor of his gift and at the same time, fixed the mirror of his eyes on the portrayal of his beloved in the effigies.

Still more, the decision to craft the medal's back as a mirror also ingeniously refers back to the topos of immortality, as invoked in Petrarch's poems to Laura: Lysippus might achieve a faithful depiction of his own image, but in view of the fulgent, transcendent 'bel viso' of the beloved, incomprehensible to the human eye and imagination, his art must by necessity fail. Lysippus has to hand over the depiction to the mirror and hence to nature itself. The mirror and its metaphors—by way of the seemingly short



5a. Lysippus the Younger alias Hermes Flavius de' Bonis, Medal for Alessandro Cinuzzi (obverse), 1474. Bronze, diameter 12.4 cm. London: British Museum.



5b. Lysippus the Younger alias Hermes Flavius de' Bonis, Medal for Alessandro Cinuzzi (reverse), 1474. Bronze, diameter 12.4 cm. London: British Museum.

¹² For these aspects Luke Syson and Dora Thornton, *Objects of Virtue: Art in Renaissance Italy*, London, 2001 and Luke Syson, 'Holes and Loops: The Display and Collection of Medals in Renaissance Italy', *Journal of Design History*, 15, 2002, 229–44.

¹³ Lorenzo de' Medici described this process as 'trasformazione', see de' Medici, *Comento*, 288–89, 291 and 313; Antonio Tebaldeo, *Rime*, ed. Tania Basile and Jean-

Jacques Marchand, 5 vols, Ferrara, 1989–92, vol. 3/1, 336–37 (no. 407) laments that he has earlier seen his beloved together with him in a mirror, but now finds only his own face in it. For the broader context see Charles Dempsey, *The Portrayal of Love: Botticelli's Primavera and Humanist Culture at the Time of Lorenzo the Magnificent*, Princeton, 1992 and Koos, *Bildnisse des Begehrens*, 196–200.

and unoriginal inscription—ascend to an art-theoretical panegyric that by far exceeds the topos of the ‘bel viso’ by alluding to Petrarch. That the contention—here raised in regard to the small medium—by no means exceeds its potential, is made plausible by a poem, written only a couple of decades later, around 1531, by the poet-medalist Janus Secundus, that speaks of art’s failure in view of the divine beauty of the beloved in a quite similar way: ‘If only I had the fingers of Praxiteles and those of Lysippus/... at the sight of Julia, I fall short in the composition of heavenly form,/And yet, disobedience to my mistress’ order would be deceitful. ... The sprites they fade, they turn to stone, art is no longer possible’.¹⁴

In spite of this, the question remains why the inscription in its second part calls for the admiration of the ‘servo’, especially even though its big, fleshy, and possibly broken nose so obviously opposes the canon of beauty. The inscription becomes comprehensible only if we refrain from a parallel reading of the syntax, i.e. refrain from admiring the ‘bel viso’ of the depicted, but admire something else about him—which then can only be admiration for the artistry of the depiction itself, and as such the admiration of the medal as an artwork. This provided, the inscription would read: ‘Here admire your beautiful countenance and there the artistic virtuosity of your servant’: A reading that confirms that the portrait in profile must be identified as the self-portrait of Lysippus the artist. Only if the artist who crafted the medal is at the same time the giver of the gift does the inscription develop its potential to the full. And only then does the humble gesture of admitting the artistic inability to model the ‘divine image’ of the beloved develop its utmost force of expression. Only after the death of his beloved Alessandro, could Lysippus craft his commemorative image from memory.

The medals for Alessandro Cinuzzi belong to the best and largest works ever produced by Lysippus—his oeuvre, however, also comprises other pieces produced out of love, albeit the love for a friend, not a lover. The extraordinary inspiration that Lysippus found in Alessandro thus seemingly corroborates the general belief expressed by fifteenth-century poets—not only of those in a neo-Platonic tradition: ‘Only Cupid teaches me that I can write and sing’.¹⁵

Michelangelo, working in the Roman tradition of the tokens crafted by the medalist Lysippus, would recast this thought in diverse variations. If one’s image is mirrored in that of a beloved person, then, according to one of his sonnets, the person is ennobled in a way similar to the block of marble that becomes refined when worked by the artist. To put it differently, *Amor Pictor*, who places the image of the beloved into a person’s heart, thereby transforms him, in varying degrees, into an artist, who seeks to reshape not only himself, but the material crafted by him—whether image or text—into the ideal of the beloved. Ultimately, this is the reason why Michelangelo produced some of his drawings together with Tommaso de’ Cavalieri—a fact best reconstructed through the Phaeton-sheets and their covering letters (fig. 6): While from our perception the young Tommaso of course could not offer artistic advice to the aging Michelangelo, for Michelangelo himself this collaboration was about the belief in the fiction that claimed that the perfect work of art could only arise from the intellectual exchange and the assimilation of two lovers.¹⁶

¹⁴ ‘Nunc mihi Praxitelis digiti, nunc Mentoris essent,/Nunc Lysippeae Phidiacaeque manus./Iulia namque meo sculpti cupit aurea caelo,/Nec tantum in libris nomen habere meis./Non ego sum, fateor, coelestem effingere formam/Qui ualeam, at Dominae spernere iussa nefas./Non ego te, mea lux, faciam de marmore duro,/Illa decet rigidum materies animum,/Quin et caela tuos formabunt aurea uultus,/Non facit ad molles ferrea lima genas./Iam

iam fama meis maior uenit artibus, ipsam/Sculpere mi videor coelicolam Venerem./Sed dum te uideo, et propius tua lumina specto,/Aemula phoebis lumina luminibus,/Ferre negant oculi iaculantem spicula uultum,/Caelaque nota negat languida ferre manus./Deficit, et torpet, nec iam sibi conscius artis/Vilius est animus, nec memor ipse sui./Ah, nulli fas est mortali effingere Diuas,/Mens cadit, obstupeo, heu, et mihi surripior’. See Stefan



6. Michelangelo, *Fall of Phaeton*, 1533. Black chalk, over stylus on laid paper, 31.1 x 21.6 cm. London: British Museum, inv. 1895-9-15-517.

Faller, 'Die Aporie des Bildhauers—Secundus Elegie 1, 6', in *Johannes Secundus und die römische Liebeslyrik*, ed. Eckart Schäfer, Tübingen, 2004, 71–87. Faller's interpretation of the poems should be modified in two regards: He only cites antique sources as precedents and overlooks the importance of Petrarchan poetry and of art theoretical topoi. And he thinks Secundus speaks of a bust of his beloved Julia whereas we know that Secundus made two medals of her. The vocabulary used (*sculptere, caelare* etc.) could easily also refer to medals.

¹⁵ Benedetto Biffoli, in *Lirici toscani*, 285: 'Amor m'insegna ciò ch'io scrivo e canto'. Cfr. Dante, *Purg.* 24, vv. 52–54 and Petrarch, *Canzoniere* 130, vv. 9–11: 'E sol ad una imagine m'attegno,/che fe' non Zeusi o Prasitele o Fidia,

ma miglior maestro e di più alto ingegno'. Saviozzo, *Rime*, 89–90: 'Da lui [Amor] vien l'alto ingegno, inde gli iniziî/d'ogni eloquenza e l'arme trionfante'. The tradition is analyzed by Olivia Holmes, *Assembling the Lyric Self: Authorship from Troubadour Song to Italian Poetry Book*, Minneapolis and London, 2000, esp. 28–29 and 68–69 and Solveig Malatrait, *Die Amor-Motive: ihre Rezeption, Gestaltung und Funktion in der französischen Renaissancelyrik*, Ph.D. diss., Hamburg, 1998, Frankfurt/Main, 1999, 161–91.

¹⁶ See Alexander Nagel, 'Art as Gift: Liberal Art and Renaissance Reform in the Renaissance', in *Negotiating the Gift*, ed. Gadi Aldazi et al., Göttingen, 2003, 319–60 and Pfisterer, *Lysippus*.

The arts and their theory offered Michelangelo and his contemporaries not only a fund of metaphors by which to praise their lovers by alluding to the unportrayability of their beauty. The theory of love and that of art, as well as artistic production itself are all connected in minutest detail. Only from within this context does it become entirely clear why the myths that have to do with the etiology and essence of painting and sculpture—ranging from Butades' daughter, to Alberti's Narcissus and the episode of Pygmalion—all tell stories of love.¹⁷

To conclude: Love is not only life. According to Renaissance theory, love is one of the preconditions—if not the most dignified precondition—and the foundation of art, or as Marsilio Ficino puts it: 'Love is the master of all the arts'.¹⁸ So the best and most creative artist is the one who, through his art, is permanently reflected in the mirror of his beloved.

¹⁷ Victor I. Stoichita, *The Pygmalion Effect: From Ovid to Hitchcock*, Chicago, 2008; Maurizio Bettini, *The Portrait of the Lover*, Berkeley, 1999; Ulrich Pfisterer, 'Cennino Cennini und die Idee des Kunstliebhabers', in *Grammatik der Kunstgeschichte: Sprachproblem und Regelwerk im 'Bild-Diskurs'*. Oskar Bätschmann zum 65. Geburtstag, ed. Hubert Locher and Peter Schneemann, Berlin, 2008, 95–117.

¹⁸ William R. Bowen, 'Love, the Master of All the Arts: Marsilio Ficino on Love and Music', in *Love and Death in the Renaissance*, ed. Kenneth R. Bartlett et al., Ottawa, 1991, 51–60; see Thomas Leinkauf, 'Amor in supremi opificis mente residens: Athanasius Kirchers Auseinandersetzung mit der Schrift "De Amore" des Marsilius Ficinus', *Zeitschrift für philosophische Forschung*, 43, 1989, 265–300.