

6. Rudolf and Margot Wittkower, *The Divine Michelangelo. The Florentine Academy's Homage on his Death in 1564*, London, 1964, pp. 148 ff., 156 f., 161 n. 9.
7. See Wittkower, pp. 97, 121 f., 162 f.
8. Cf. Herbert Siebenhüner, *Das Kapitol in Rom*, Munich, 1954, p. 74 f., fig. 42.
9. See my monograph "Sculptures by Domenico Poggini" (p. 6 and n. 24), *The Metropolitan Museum Journal*, in course of publication.
10. First published by Ernst Steinmann, *Michelangelo im Spiegel seiner Zeit*, Leipzig, 1930, pl. xrv. Steinmann suggested a medallist "Giovanni Poggini" as its author. This is wrong. Gianpaolo Poggini (1518-ca. 1582 Madrid), Domenico's brother, made no medal of Varchi. He went in 1555 to Brussels in the service of Philip II; from 1559 on he remained in Spain. Wittkower, p. 160, n. 6, fig. 6, republished the drawing as anonymous.

A Set of Prints and a Drawing for the 1589 Medici Marriage Festival

Phyllis Dearborn Massar

BESIDES primary sources, there is no lack of published papers on the famous marriage festival for Grand Duke Ferdinand I de' Medici and Christine of Lorraine at Florence in 1589. Most notable are Aby Warburg's fine article (1895) on the costumes and the *Intermezzi*; A. M. Nagler's chapter on the various entertainments in his *Theater Festivals of the Medici* (1964); the volume by D. P. Walker on the music of the *Intermezzi* (1961); and the most recent discussion on the entire festival, found in the excellent catalogue *Feste e Apparati Medicei* (1969).¹ But, except for a page of description in Nagler, little attention has been paid to the jousting tournament which preceded the *naumachia* in the courtyard of the Pitti Palace on the evening of May 11th—this being towards the end of the program of festival events²—nor to a rare set of

unpublished prints, apparently unknown to Nagler, which illustrate it.

Twelve prints show the *sfila*, or entrance procession with chariots, which preceded the *sbarra*, a joust on foot at the barrier; one print shows the tourney ground with two of the floats. Since the *sbarra* was a foot combat, no mounted knights are seen in the parade of combatants and marshals. The set of prints is extremely rare. A bound volume of twenty-nine prints at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, illustrating aspects of the entire festival including the *Intermezzi*, is probably the most complete in existence.³ This volume contains twelve prints of the *sfila*, eleven of which are printed within a repeated decorative frame, probably in order to enlarge their dimensions to that of the other prints in the series.⁴ The decorative border bears at the top a coat-of-arms combining the devices of the bride and the groom. The Metropolitan also owns one separately acquired small print, without the border, but most surely belonging to the set. The Victoria and Albert Museum owns the twelve small prints, without the border, and a fine drawing for one of them. A London dealer, in a 1959 sales catalogue, listed a set of twenty-four prints of the festival, mentioning as known impressions ten in the British Museum (none of which are of the *sfila*) and two in the Kunstbibliothek, Berlin. In 1971, a New York dealer offered twelve of the small prints, without the border. Unless additions to the thirty owned by the Metropolitan turn up, it can be assumed that the total of all known prints related to the festival is thirty-two, the two not in the Metropolitan bound volume being by Agostino Carracci, of the First and Third *Intermezzi* (Bartsch 121 and 122). These are the same size as the bound prints, but may have been issued separately.

The inclusion of a joust among entertainments celebrating a marriage, and the themes of the combatants' triumphal cars are the result of contemporary courtly interest in chivalry and poetry. Rulers and their courtly followers in Italian city states like Florence were not really of noble birth, but rather descendants of merchants or military commanders who had assumed the trappings of royalty. They gloried in their prowess at revived chivalric exercises, such as jousting, and they prided themselves on their knowledge of the revived classical authors.

Current writers catered to these interests also, and from two court poets come those two great epics of knightly adventure, sorcery, and enchantments, loosely related to events of the Crusades—Lodovico Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* (1516) and Torquato Tasso's *Gerusalemme Liberata* (1575). It must be noted here, as regards Tasso and the Florentines, that in the year 1585 a rather artificial controversy was begun by the Accademia della Crusca in Florence in order to prove the superiority of Ariosto's earlier epic over that of Tasso; but whether this had much effect on the Florentine reading public is not known. That both were read and absorbed is attested to by the fact that well into the seventeenth century Florentine tournaments and horse ballets took their themes from these poems.⁴ Of probable influence also were epithalamia (some based on Catullus), particularly those written by Tasso for the D'Este and Gonzaga courts. The nearest in date to our festival was written in 1584 for the marriage of Vincenzo Gonzaga of Mantua, and Leonora de' Medici, and so was surely known to Florentine courtiers. Since one well-known theme both of classical and sixteenth century Italian epithalamia is love as combat, perhaps the joust as an entertainment for a bride and groom is epithalamic in inspiration.

Certainly the specific precedent for the parade of triumphal cars before the joust was the similar one ten years before, for the marriage of Francesco I and Bianca Cappello. This is described as "an incredible marriage . . . of the most disparate theatrical ingredients: the joust, the carrousel, the combat, the masquerade, the metamorphosis, the parade of triumphal cars, allegorical and mythological presentations."⁵ A prize was given for the richest and most beautiful invention.

Unlike the 1579 *sbarra*, our tourney seems to have no title, nor published scenario, nor any author credited with a central theme. The fact that no printed text has come down to us, and the further evidence that the best contemporary source (see below) offers no interpretation of the cars other than simple description, argues that the subtler meanings were not readily accessible to every spectator, but were probably understood by the courtiers. Perhaps at this distance, some speculation is allowable.

What is evident is that the combatants wore full

armor, and carried motifs in and on their triumphal cars which recall the Ariosto and Tasso epics—elements of magic, sorcery, enchantments, and transformations. The joust and the *naumachia* which followed it have a slight plot involving a Turkish fortress captured at the end by Christian knights, bringing in the Crusader theme.

One of the rare sources which describes the *sbarra*, the *Diario descritto da Giuseppe Pavoni*,⁷ indicates that at least two of the triumphal cars were designed by one of the protagonists, Don Virginio, Duke of Bracciano, nephew of Grand Duke Ferdinand I. In all probability, in the absence of an author, or a single designer of the *sbarra*, the courtier-jousters designed, or commissioned designs for, their own entrance vehicles.

One print in the Metropolitan volume, page 9, shows the courtyard of the Pitti Palace arrayed for the tourney, and Pavoni describes the scene as follows:⁸ ". . . and in front of said stands there was an enclosure three braccia high, which encircled the whole Courtyard, which was covered with bitumen so that, it had no hole, made this way on purpose to have there a naval battle. Towards the Garden there was a Castle, simulated in the manner of an impregnable fortress, in which as a guard there were many Turks. In the middle of the Courtyard there was a Barrier across the breadth; this kept the Knights apart when they were fighting; but it was completely filled with fireworks. And around the interior of this Courtyard there appeared an infinite number of lights, which made the dark night appear to be a bright and shining day."

Pavoni's descriptions of the triumphal cars reinforce what can be gathered visually from the prints themselves, and help to place the order of the car's entrances.

After all the audience, including the courtiers, their ladies, and the royal couple, were settled in their places, and after two mortar blasts, the entrance parade began. ". . . and so the first appeared, which was a triumphal car on top of which there was a Necromancer, who while he was going around the stockade, was casting spells. . . ."⁹ This description can be ascribed to page 26 in the Metropolitan volume,¹⁰ which shows a chariot drawn by bears and occupied by a man in a long robe brandishing a wand (Fig. 1).

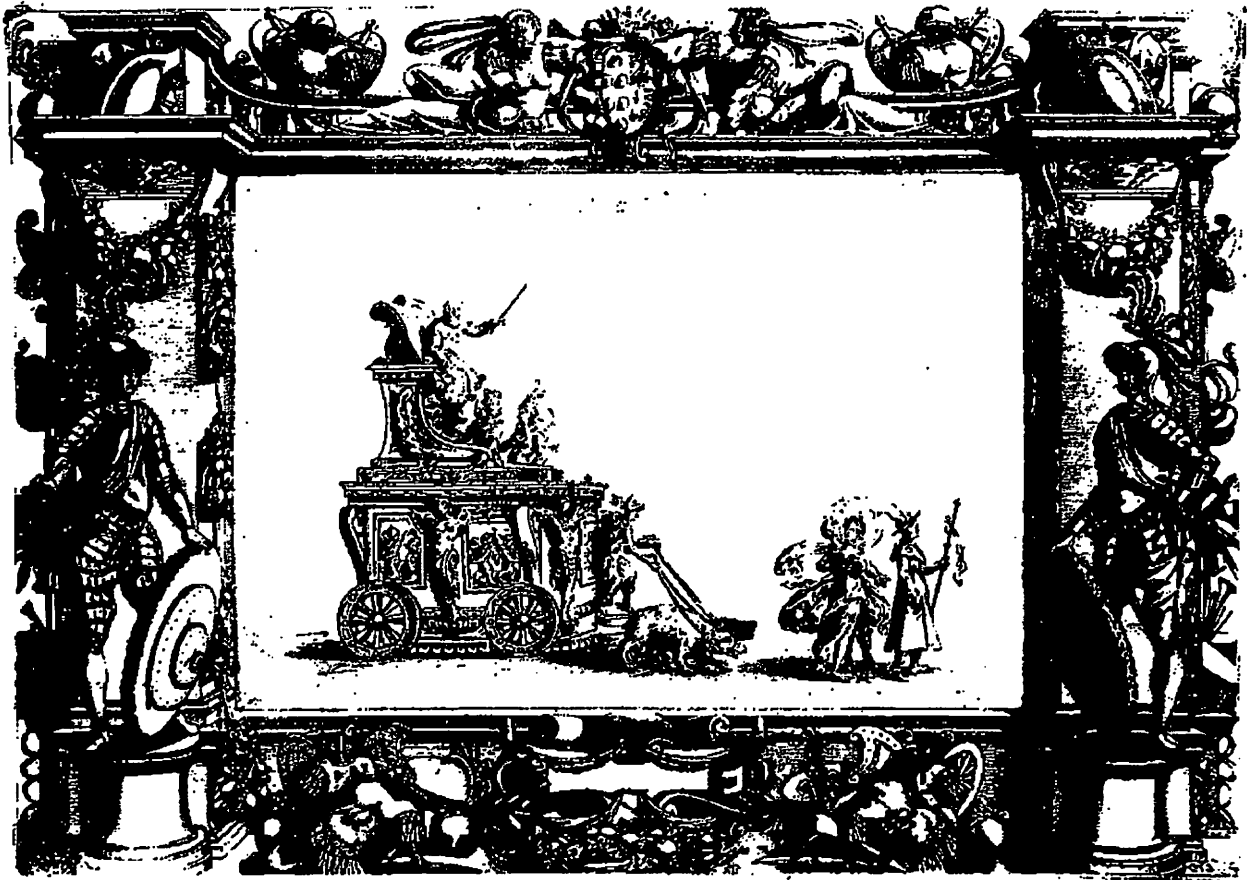


Fig. 1 CHERUBINO ALBERTI. Festival Chariot Drawn by Bears. Etching.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

On the chariot, besides the costumed driver, are two female figures who may impersonate the Sirens later referred to by Pavoni in his description. Preceding the chariot on foot are two more Sirens and another magician with a strange horned hat and a decorated baton. Thus the first car sets the scene for further development of magic and marvels, and with a certain sinister undertone. The Necromancer, entering first, may also be a diviner of the future. Bears traditionally were a symbol of evil. The motifs on the chariot's body may be interpreted as those of profane love.

Next . . . "in an instant appeared another triumphal

car, pulled by a very large Dragon, with inside two Knights and an exceptional music; and they stopped to sing in front where was Her Most Serene Highness the Bride; as did also all of the other inventions." This whole chariot (Fig. 2), shown on page 24 of the volume, has a monster motif on the lower level, the front being a kind of lion's head with open jaws, on which perch two grooms or equerries. A bearded, grisly winged monster, dangling arms ending in claws, decorates the side, and the wheels give off fire like pinwheels. On the upper level, curved and throne-like, supported by herms and reached by steps supported



Fig. 2 ORAZIO SCARABELLI. Festival Chariot Drawn by a Dragon. Etching.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

by wing-like scrolls, sit two plumed and armored knights. The winged dragon pulling the chariot exhales fire, and is held in check by four winged furies, this group recalling the Inferno scenes ubiquitous to Florentine theatricals.

Page 19, which seems to belong next in the series, shows not a triumphal car, but a group on foot—trumpeters, drummers, a pair of shield-bearers, a pair of equerries, and a pair of armored knights wearing plumed helmets and carrying lances (Fig. 3). In all probability they fit the following action described by Pavoni. "The Knights, who were the first to enter the

field were his Highness the Duke of Mantua and his Excellency Signor Don Pietro de'Medici, who were the *Mantenitori*, who having arrived before the castle, dismounted to the ground; and their triumphal car departed. . . ." Presumably their musicians accompanied them to their post.

"... and then suddenly the second invention made its entrance, which was a very large mountain, with its music, and what conducted it was not visible. Thus it stopped before the Most Serene Bride, opened, and out of it came two Knights who went to place themselves on the other side of the barrier." Page 21 shows

EDITOR'S NOTE: For reasons of space, the decorative borders, identical to those shown in Figs. 1 and 2, have been eliminated in Figs. 3 through 11, and only the center panels reproduced. All the prints that are illustrated are in the Metropolitan Museum, New York.



(top)

Fig. 3 ORAZIO SCARABELLI. Musicians, Knights, and Equerries on Foot. Etching.

(center)

Fig. 4 ORAZIO SCARABELLI. Festival Chariot in the Form of a Smoking Mountain. Etching.

(bottom)

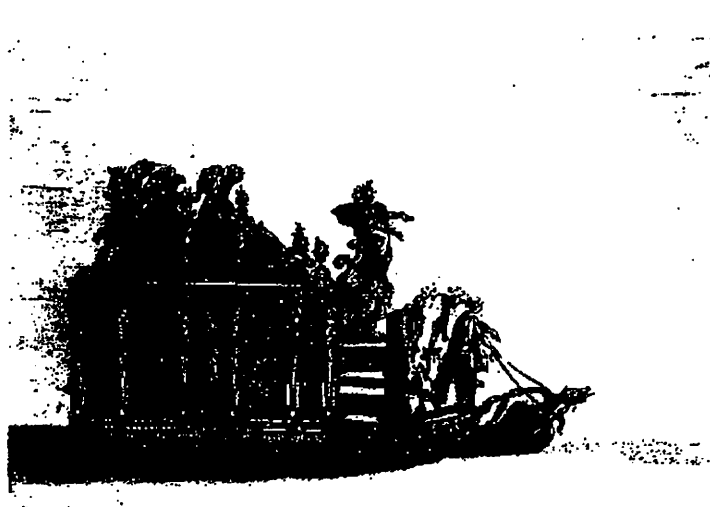
Fig. 5 ORAZIO SCARABELLI. Festival Chariot Decorated with Trellis Work. Etching.



this smoking fiery mountain opened to disclose the two knights inside (Fig. 4). Preceding it are winged devils or furies, whose pitchforks seem to be sputtering like roman candles. Nagler suggests that the mountain is meant to be Mount Aetna, but does not cite his source; the idea may be instead a variation once more on Florentine Inferno scenes.

A combat between the knights at the barrier took place, followed by the entrance of numerous other inventions, not described in detail nor in order by Pavoni, but he says: "... one by one they arrived on the Field: which were to the number of twelve, one more beautiful than the other, and there were strange oddities such as Fountains, Clouds, Forests, Niches, Anatomies of animals on cars, Ships, Cliffs, Sirens, very large Birds, Elephants. ..." Pavoni seems to have been right about the oddities, but due perhaps to his naiveté, or to the dazzle of the torchlight, he did not manage to put down very accurate descriptions. The following five prints contain at least some of the things he itemized.

Page 23 has garden trellis work with herms and a statue in a niche to cover the body of the car carrying

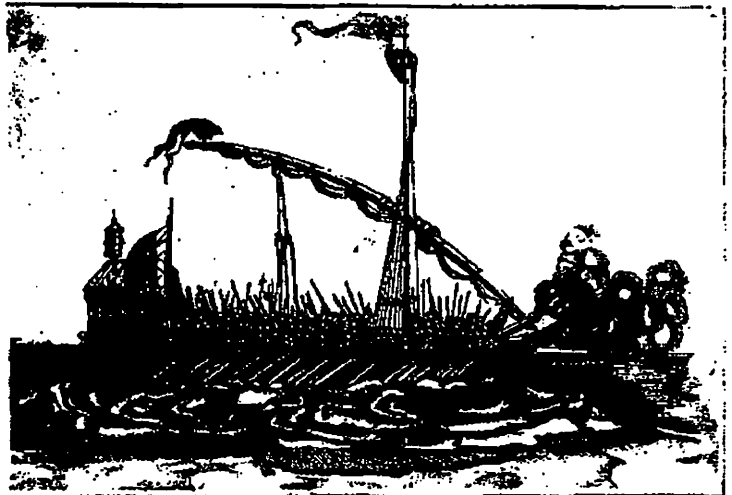


knights and musicians (Fig. 5). But the forward part of it is a rock, or cliff, with steps cut into it, ascending to a throne occupied by a crowned female. The animals pulling this car may be wolves, in which case the enthroned woman may be Circe. Or perhaps she is only a magician and the animals foxes, symbols of cunning.

The next chariot, one of the strangest, page 22 in the volume, is presided over by a female magician with a wand, pointing to two suits of empty armor, and two helmets placed below two empty seats in a niche (Fig. 6). There are musicians and a groom who urges on the two skeletal horses (probably Pavoni's "Anatomies of animals") which pull the car. The sorceress has either rendered the knights invisible or turned them into the strange beasts which draw the vehicle.

There follows a ship float, page 27, representing a galley full of armed men, and bearing cannon belching smoke, the whole floating on simulated waves (Fig. 7). It resembles those in the print of the *naumachia*, page 11 in the Metropolitan volume, and there was a similar galley among the floats in the 1579 *sbarra*.

The print on page 29 probably shows the "very large Birds" of Pavoni's description (Fig. 8). There are five of what appear to be geese, large enough to be



(top)

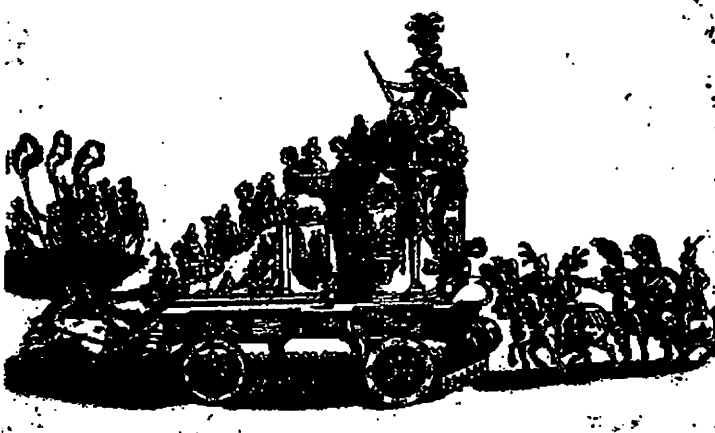
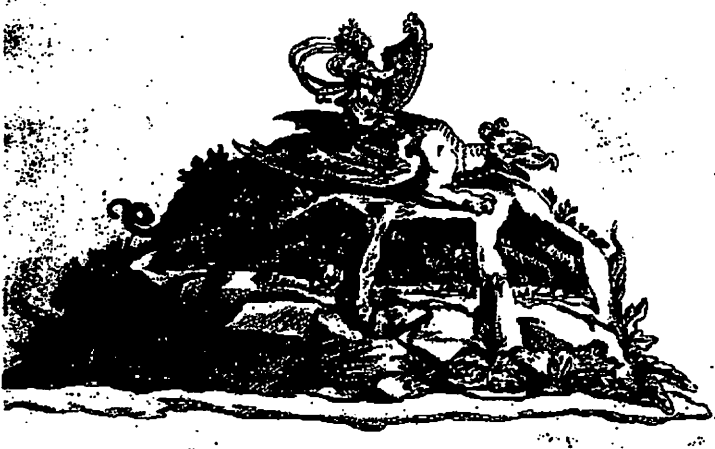
Fig. 6 ORAZIO SCARABELLI. Festival Chariot Drawn by Skeleton Horses. Etching.

(center)

Fig. 7 ORAZIO SCARABELLI. Festival Chariot in the Form of a Ship. Etching.

(bottom)

Fig. 8 ORAZIO SCARABELLI. Torchbearers on Foot and Giant Geese. Etching.



ridden, followed by a large group of torchbearers, four bearers of shields and lances, and four trumpeters. Page 20 shows a car which fits no specific description in Pavoni's diary (Fig. 9). Except for the knight riding on top, and an equerry, the rest of the entourage—weapons-bearers, torch-bearers, and musicians—are all satyrs. The vehicle is pulled by a swan, and preceded by the equerry with a baton, riding a rhinoceros. Since the "Elephants" described by Pavoni don't appear in the prints, he must have confused the exotic animals. Certainly, with all the satyr play, the implication of the motif is sensual love.

For page 28 in the Metropolitan volume, Pavoni's description is quite accurate: "... and finally appeared Don Virginio with his invention, which was a large Mountain, and a crocodile on which was astride an enchanter; ..." The print shows a float in the shape of a mountain apparently stationary, but probably mysteriously propelled from beneath (Fig. 10). The creature on top is winged, but otherwise a fairly plausible crocodile; the enchanter riding him is crowned with laurel and plays a harp. The mountain's side is pierced by caves populated by animals and birds, among which are recognizable an owl, hares, goats and partridges, all symbols of evil, or lust, or Satan, so that this car also can be taken to symbolize carnal love.

Pavoni continues: "... after these followed a triumphal chariot, in which was Don Virginio with eight nymphs, that is four to a side, with beautiful

(top)

Fig. 9 ORAZIO SCARABELLI. Festival Chariot Drawn by a Swan, Accompanied by Satyrs. Etching.

(center)

Fig. 10 CHERUBINO ALBERTI. Festival Chariot in the Form of a Mountain Surmounted by a Crocodile. Etching.

(bottom)

Fig. 11 ORAZIO SCARABELLI. Festival Chariot with Don Virginio as Mars. Etching.



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