Rosso's *Fury*: Engraving, Antique Sculpture, and the Topos of Death

by

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Abstract

This thesis examines an engraving commonly known as the *Fury* (1524) that was designed by the Florentine painter Rosso Fiorentino and engraved by Gian Jacopo Caraglio in Rome. The *Fury* exhibits an indeterminacy of both form and content that was rarely seen in contemporary images at a time that continued to favour narrative clarity. The engraving is methodologically interesting because it brings to the foreground what we do when we look at images – make meaning from form. It is my contention that the *Fury* is very much an image that was made in 1524 Rome, a time and place in thrall with the interpretation of the antique sculptures being exhumed from the earth. It was also a city that was on the cusp of dramatic changes in print production and consumption, a change in which the *Fury* played an important role.

While scholars have observed the references to the *Laocoön* in the engraving, these references have been characterized as a subversion of the famous sculpture's heroic pathos. I contend, however, that the desiccated body of the main figure aligns with contemporary accounts of the Trojan priest as volatile, wild, anguished, and damned. Beyond the specific reference to the *Laocoön,* the *Fury* should be considered in light of the topos of death associated with the rediscovery of antique sculpture during the sixteenth century. This rediscovery introduced material objects into the artistic consciousness that were characterized by disjunction, inconsistency, and discontinuity, both as a result of physical fragmentation and the loss of knowledge and sources due to the vagaries of time. Fragmented sculpture prompted viewers (often artists) to complete the form and in so doing, to determine its content - to make meaning. The *Fury* registers this concern in the indeterminacy of form and content thereby exposing the contingency

of interpretation. I argue that the two media, sculpture and engraving respectively, had shared material affinities, both involving the digging or cutting away of matter, that made engraving a particularly fertile place to explore the hermeneutic issues raised by antique sculpture.

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(1) Introduction

> There is first the archaeological impulse downward into the earth,
> into the past, the unknown and recondite, and then the upward impulse
> to bring forth a corpse, whole and newly restored, re-illuminated,
> made harmonious and quick.
>
> Thomas M. Greene[1]

In 1524, after a disastrous start to his career in Rome, the young Florentine painter Giovanni Battista, better known as Rosso Fiorentino, was approached by a former assistant to Raphael with a relatively unique proposition.[2] This man, known as Il Baviera, suggested that Rosso try his hand at designing a drawing specifically for the purposes of engraving by a young Veronese engraver, also new to the city, named Gian Jacopo Caraglio. Baviera would then arrange for the print's production and sale. Rosso evidently agreed and the result was the haunting image known as the *Fury* (Figure 1).[3]

The emaciated écorché figure of a man screams in terror, or perhaps agony or pain, as the coils of his unruly hair fly wildly about his face. The figure is perched precariously on the back of a beast whose origin is neither wholly natural nor identifiably mythological. The beast turns his head and bellows back towards his unwieldy cargo, revealing his gaping mouth to viewers in the process. To the figure's right is a large swan. Balanced on uneven tree stumps, the fearsome fowl's wings are outstretched as it

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[1] Thomas M. Greene, "Resurrecting Rome: the Double Task of the Humanist Imagination," in *Rome in the Renaissance The City and the Myth*, ed. P.A. Ramsey (Binghamton, NY: Center for Medieval and Early Modern Studies, 1982), 41.

[2] Rosso had recently, and very publicly, lost the prestigious commission for the decoration of the Cesi chapel apparently for speaking ill of the chapel's architect, Antonio da Sangallo.

[3] The engraving seems to have gone without a name until Adam Bartsch listed it with the title of *Fury* in his seminal catalogue of sixteenth-century engravings.

appears to consider taking flight. The male figure holds a human skull aloft in his left hand as a large snake wraps itself around both the skull and the figure's arm. The entire scene takes place in a dark forest with a rocky, uneven ground. The collapsing of the representational space has a dizzying effect and viewers are hard-pressed to differentiate between the writhing and intertwining bodies of the snakes and the gnarled tree stumps, between the twisting tree branches and the figure's out-splayed limbs, or between the rocky outcrops and the beastly body. Nothing is as it seems and the overall effect is disorienting and disturbing.

The *Fury* has received scant attention in the literature, perhaps due to what Eugene Carroll has identified as its unclear "symbolism." Carroll, who has written extensively about Rosso's drawings and prints, suggests that the image may reflect Rosso's frustrations with the slow development of his career, both in Florence and in Rome.[4] According to Carroll, the *Fury* depicts "wrathful frenzy" and "projects a sinister world dominated by rage." He identifies the themes of the engraving as fury, impotence, and death and claims that they act as an allegory for Rosso's life in Rome at the time the image was created.[5]

Stephen Campbell has provided the most thorough analysis of the *Fury* suggesting that the image should be understood in light of the emerging claims of the divinity of artists in the early sixteenth century, in particular, Michelangelo.[6] Campbell persuasively argues that the *Fury* should be seen as a critical statement by Rosso against

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[4] The *Fury* was likely Rosso's first project after losing the prestigious commission for the decoration of the Cesi chapel, apparently for speaking ill of the chapel's architect, Antonio da Sangallo. Eugene A. Carroll, *Rosso Fiorentino: Drawings, Prints, and Decorative Arts* (Washington: National Gallery of Art, 1987), 22.

[5] Carroll, *Rosso Fiorentino*, 72 – 74.

[6] Stephen J. Campbell, "Fare una Cosa Morta Parer Viva": Michelangelo, Rosso, and the (Un)Divinity of Art, *The Art Bulletin* 84, No. 4 (Dec., 2002): 596 – 620.

the idealization of the body. Instead, Rosso's image contributes to an anti-idealizing counter current during this period. According to Campbell, the *Fury* "raises the specter of death and reanimation, together with more sinister insinuations about Michelangelo."[7]

Neither Carroll nor Campbell addresses the issue of how or why the *Fury* exhibits an indeterminacy of both form and content that was rarely seen in contemporary images. Carroll acknowledges the unclear symbolism but this leads him to attribute a biographical interpretation.[8] Campbell on the other hand, provides a context in which to consider the image rather than an interpretation of what is represented. Although he does not explicitly address the issue of the image's ambiguity, his approach implicitly recognizes the fact that the engraving does not offer up a fixed meaning. The absence of engagement in the literature with this conundrum, one that is posed by the singular, even unique status of the engraving, is a departure point for my study.

The *Fury* stands in stark contrast to the images of fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries that held clarity of both form and content as the highest goals of picture-making. An image of extremes - the unbridled screams of the figure and the beast, the desiccation of the body, and the pressure of the background on the foreground – the *Fury* seems to insist that viewers attempt to resolve these extremes, to quiet or calm the image by providing an interpretation. E.H. Gombrich's words with regard to a much more

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[7] *Ibid*, 601.

[8] There is a considerable precedence for interpreting ambiguous or enigmatic images as manifestations of the artist's emotions or inner psyche. For example, Albrecht Dürer's *Melencolia I* (1514) has often assumed that the engraving is representative of the artist's own melancholic or depressive state (see for example, Erwin Panofsky*, The Life and Art of Albrecht Dürer* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1955), 156-71. However, see Patricia Emison's discussion of the lack of evidence for such an interpretation, "Whittling Down the *Istoria*," in *Subject as Aporia in Early Modern Art*, eds. Alexander Nagel and Lorenzo Pericolo (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2010), 81.

famous enigmatic image, Sandro Botticelli's *Primavera*, seem equally apt when discussing the *Fury*:

> …[the] haunting character of Botticelli's physiognomies not only permits but demands interpretations. These puzzling and wistful faces give us no rest until we have built around them a story which seems to account for their enigmatic expression.[9]

This uncertainty of subject, or more precisely, narrative, is paired with the formal aspects of the engraving – the compressed space, the blurring of ground and figure – that prolong the process of looking. The *Fury* is an interesting print methodologically because it makes explicit what we do when faced with an image – making meaning from form.

What is the cause of such terror? Where is this dark and oppressive place? Is the figure dead or alive? If alive, what has caused his mortified bodily condition? And if dead, by what power does he continue to move about? While every inch of the pictorial space is crowded with the details of the forest and the figures, the answers to these questions are disquietingly absent. The *Fury* was not based on any known textual or mythological source. In fact, the engraving was sometimes produced along with a poem appearing in two columns beneath the image but the engraving was likely designed first with the poem added after.[10] The words do little to resolve the questions raised by the image and only serve to reinforce what is left unknown in the engraving.

In my thesis, I will provide both a context for a potential reading of the *Fury* as well as a consideration of how and why the image resists stable meaning – both relating to issues surrounding the rediscovery and interpretation of antique sculpture in Rome at

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[9] E.H. Gombrich, "Botticelli's Mythologies: A Study in the Neoplaontic Symbolism of his Circle," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 8 (1945), 11.

[10] The poem is reproduced in its entirety in English in the proceeding section and in its original Italian in Appendix A.

the time of the engraving's production. In his analysis of the *Fury*, Eugene Carroll writes:

> Unlike all the other prints that are known to have been designed by Rosso in Rome this, apparently the first, is not of an explicit ancient subject, nor does it appear dependent upon the environment of Rome for its theme in any obvious way.[11]

While the *Fury* may not be "of an explicit ancient subject," I will argue that the engraving is more involved with antiquity, and in particular, with rediscovered antique sculpture, than may be "explicit." In order to make this argument, I take specific issue with Carroll's assertion that the *Fury* was not "dependent upon the environment of Rome." It is my contention that this is very much an image that was made in 1524 Rome, a time and place in thrall with the interpretation of the antique sculptures being exhumed from the earth and an environment that was at the cusp of dramatic changes in print production and consumption.

The *Fury* was produced during a period when the medium of print was still in a relative state of flux. Prints were gaining status as autonomous art objects but continued to be relatively unencumbered by norms and conventions. Rome in the 1510s and 1520s was a centre for the development of engraved images led by Raphael and Marcantonio Raimondi. Raphael designed dozens of independent drawings for engraving by Marcantonio as well as other engravers employed in his workshop, a practice that was streamlined and commercialized by the promotion of a print manager to coordinate the production and sale of the prints. While the engravings produced in Rome during this period varied in subject-matter, religious and historical narrative scenes were common

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[11] Carroll, *Rosso Fiorentino*, 74.

and engraving after antique sculpture was so popular that it has been identified by Madeleine Viljoen as a genre unto itself.[12]

This returns me to the epigraph with which I began this essay. Thomas Greene has written of the paradox of Rome in the early sixteenth century – the active encounter with the past to determine the future, the prevailing desire to transform the "corpse" of the past to something "whole and newly restored" and "harmonious and quick." The trope of antique sculptures as dead bodies being exhumed from the earth and field's around the city was popular in sixteenth-century Rome. The rediscovery of antique sculptures was seen as a form of necromancy, a digging up of the dead.[13] I suggest that this trope of death provides an unexplored context for the ambiguous state of the figure haunting the *Fury*.

My research considers not only a visual but also a material manifestation of the paradox that Greene describes. What happens when an ancient medium, laden with history, encounters a new medium, relatively free of conventions and pre-conceived associations? I argue that the two media, sculpture and engraving respectively, had shared material affinities, both involving the digging or cutting away of matter, that made engraving a particularly fertile place to explore the issues raised by antique sculpture.

In his book *Unearthing the Past: Archaeology and Aesthetics in the Making of the Renaissance*, Leonard Barkan argues that "fragmentariness is perhaps the most crucial fact of all about rediscovered sculpture."[14] The fragmentation of antique sculpture is both a literal, physical fragmentation, but also results in a fragmenting of the perceived

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[12] Madeleine Viljoen, "The Restorative Power of Prints," *Print Quarterly* XVIII, no.4 (2001), 392.

[13] Leonard Barkan, "The classical undead: Renaissance and antiquity face to face," *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 34 (Autumn 1998): 16.

[14] Leonard Barkan, *Unearthing the Past: Archaeology and Aesthetics in the Making of Renaissance Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 9.

continuity between form and content in the object as artwork. In their incomplete state, antique sculptures called out for completion thereby initiating what Barkan refers to as a "participatory art."[15] Fragmented sculpture prompted viewers (often artists) to complete the form and in so doing, to determine its content - to make meaning. It is this issue of antique sculpture and its relationship to hermeneutic concerns of the early sixteenth century and the ability of an art object to contain and control meaning or, conversely, the role of the viewer in producing meaning that I will bring forward in my analysis of the *Fury*. In so doing, I will consider one of the many ways that the study of antiquity held implications not just for an understanding of the past but instead, as Greene observes, carried "implications for modern creativity."[16]

In the first section of my thesis, I conduct a closer visual analysis of the *Fury*. A comparison with contemporary engravings demonstrates how the *Fury* alludes to narrative but differs from images that adhered to the Albertian model of narrative clarity still dominant at the time. In the following section, the conditions of production of the engraving are considered indicating the degree to which the *Fury* was an experimental image. The changing viewing practices arising from and influencing emerging print production are also examined. The material affinities between sculpture and engraving are then investigated. I argue that the close associations between the two media made engraving the ideal medium in which to work through some of the hermeneutic concerns that were being raised by the discovery of antique sculpture. The final section considers some specific examples of contemporary engravings of antique sculpture, in particular the *Laocoön*, in order to probe the different ways artists were exploring the reproduction

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[15] *Ibid*, 8.
[16] Greene, "Resurrecting Rome," 41.

of antique sculpture in print. Although the *Fury* does not faithfully reproduce the form or the content of the *Laocoön,* it can be read in the context of contemporary accounts of the Plinian sculpture - accounts that saw the Trojan priest as wild, dangerous, and volatile, and perceptions of the rediscovery of antique sculpture as an exhumation of the dead. The process of identifying and understanding the exhumed sculptures, which were often severely fragmented, brought to the foreground the desire to match form with content and the contingency of the viewer's interpretive role.

(2) *"Obscure darkness"*: *Indeterminacy of Form and Content*

The *Fury* should be considered in light of the prevailing conventions and standards for picture-making in the first decades of the sixteenth century. Almost a century after it was written, Leon Battista Alberti's *De pictura* and his description of the elements of *historia* arguably continued as the "most esteemed model of representation."[17] While the treatise is exclusively concerned with painting, the prescriptions for creating a harmonious, complete image were frequently applied to print. This was particularly true of images such as the *Fury* that were completed works of art, a status that had formerly been restricted to painting and sculpture.[18] The *Fury* differs categorically from prints that sought to document an object or structure in an undifferentiated open space such as the 1543 engraving by Enea Vico of an antique vase (Figure 2).[19] Such images were intended as models for other artists, designers, and craftsmen as well as for the interest of antiquarians and collectors.[20] It also differs from prints that were essentially models of mythological or historical figures. For example, the series of engravings made by Rosso and Caraglio following the *Fury* entitled *Gods in Niches* each show a God with his or her attribute set in an architectural niche (Figure 3). Aside from the niche, there is no background or setting and no further context in which to consider the figure. In the *Fury*, on the other hand, there is a complex background that

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[17] Joost Keizer, "Michelangelo, Drawing, and the Subject of Art," *The Art Bulletin* XCIII, No. 3 (September, 2011), 308.

[18] *Ibid,* 310.

[19] Despite their documentary nature, prints such as Vico's series of antique vases often restored or embellished the artifacts they recorded. The inscription reads "At Rome, obtained from the antique."

[20] While I argue that the *Fury* was not explicitly designed as a model, narrative prints were also frequently kept in artists' workshops and artists often copied elements of such images. Parmagianino was influenced by the *Fury* including the head of a beast with a gaping mouth very similar to Rosso's beast in the *Fury* in the lower right corner of his painting *Madonna of Saint Margaret*. David Ekserdjian, *Parmagianino* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 37.

fills the entirety of the picture plane. Unlike the other examples discussed above, the *Fury* is a narrative image insofar as it involves figures that exist in a mutually shared space and time. This is the type of image, the representation of a narrative, that Alberti's treatise was directed towards. Yet the *Fury* seems to flout if not completely reject the principles of internal consistency and clarity of form and content that Alberti and others held out as imperatives.[21] In order to understand better how radically the *Fury* differed from other narrative images produced around the same time, it is useful to compare it with an engraving that closely adheres to the principles expounded by Alberti – *The Massacre of the Innocents* designed by Raphael and engraved by Marcantonio Raimondi in Rome around 1510 (Figure 4).[22]

Raphael and Marcantonio's engraving is immediately recognizable as a representation of the biblical episode of the slaughter of the innocents when Herod ordered the killing of all boys under the age of two in Bethlehem. The well-established elements of the iconography that had developed for depicting the story are all present, although highly classicized. Men armed with swords and blades attack a group of women who desperately try to shield and protect their babies. Some women attempt to flee, such as the woman in the left background or the woman at the centre who rushes directly towards the viewer; some place their bodies between the soldiers' blades and their babies, most notably the woman crouched in the foreground; and some are already

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[21] As several authors have noted, the translation of Alberti's term *historia* is extremely problematic. It is certainly not restricted to the idea of "history painting" in the way that genre came to be understood in the eighteenth century. Fifteenth and sixteenth-century use of the term had a much broader significance. Charles Dempsey has argued that Alberti used *historia* to signify the representation or "setting forth" of the main components of the image – the figures, their setting, and "every other object worthy to be seen." Dempsey argues that *historia* has most in common with *narratio*. Charles Dempsey, "Response: "Historia" and Anachronism in Renaissance Art," *The Art Bulletin* 87, No. 3 (September, 2005), 418.

[22] For a detailed discussion of this work see Robert H. Getscher, "The 'Massacre of the Innocents,' an Early Work Engraved by Marcantonio," *Artibus et Historiae* 20, No. 39 (1999): 95 – 111.

taken over with grief, cradling the lifeless bodies of their murdered children, such as the woman at the far left. The bodies of two of the dead children lie lifelessly on the ground.

Even though Raphael demonstrates his *invenzione* and *disegno* in the varied and dramatic positions of both the soldiers and the women, their gestures and facial expressions are clearly matched to the narrative action. Most strikingly, the dead children convey with every part of their bodies - their splayed limbs and thrown back heads – their lifelessness. Despite the chaos of the scene and the large number of figures, Raphael has used the lines of the engraving to create a deep perspectival space in which the narrative unfolds. The lines of the tiled ground organize the perspective with the bridge in the background framing the action. The architectural skyline and then the slightly clouded sky create a vanishing, real-world space in which the devastation takes place. The dead body of the baby lying on the ground to the left is expertly foreshortened to seamlessly reinforce the receding space. Marcantonio employed a thinly etched line that allows for fine detail and never overwhelms viewers. The *Massacre* epitomizes the clarity of form and content of the Albertian formula, resulting in an image that is legible and unambiguous.

With the *Massacre of the Innocents* in mind, we can turn to a similar analysis of the *Fury*. Unlike the well-known biblical scene depicted in Raphael and Marcantonio's engraving, the *Fury* does not seem to represent a specific religious, historical, or mythological narrative. Visual representations of torment and death were ubiquitous during in the medieval and early modern period. Religious scenes of violence and suffering and the increasing focus on witches in the sixteenth century meant that early modern viewers were familiar with scenes of pain, suffering, and terror. However, due to

the frequency of such images, they tended to have fairly well established iconography which not present in the *Fury*. The contention that the scene is not based on a textual source is supported by the fact that the engraving was sometimes printed along with its own accompanying text (Figure 5). In some of the prints, a poem in Italian appeared in two columns below the image and reads:

> Through harsh forests and solitary horror
> I go bearded, thin, alone, and nude
> Full of anger and heavy with pain
> Squalid, unkempt, hirsute, horrendous and crude.
> Obscure darkness, nights, shadows and terror
> In my frightening eyes I had and enclose
> Such that if the Swan encounters me loudly
> He sings, since my body seems death to him.
>
> In this horrendous forest of bitter bile
> I feed on discolored and immature grass.
> I drink the most harmful poisons of serpents
> In a skull afflicted with darkness and death.
> My seat is a dragon for I do not know
> Any other support that conforms to my body.
> And thus I sleep among stones and dry twigs
> That like ivy around a tree trunk wind around me.[23]

The poem relates to no known text and Eugene Carroll correctly, I think, argues that the poem was likely written after the engraving was completed since it essentially describes the image rather than providing a text that the artist illustrated.[24] Rather than explaining the image, the poem leaves viewers with more questions – who is the "I" of the poem? Why does he wander the forest? What has caused his solitary horror, his anger and his pain? Is the main figure dead or alive? The state of his body indicates that it is the former but his animation argues for the latter. Looking again at the image, there is no temporal aspect and the lack of a clear narrative is enhanced given that the movements of

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[23] Cited and translated by Carroll, *Rosso Fiorentino*, 72. See Appendix A for the original Italian text.
[24] *Ibid*.

the figures do not allow viewers to identify an action that precedes or follows this moment. Unlike the fear and anguish in the faces and gestures of the women in Raphael's *Massacre*, viewers cannot decipher a cause for the horror and pain expressed in the wild gestures and screams of Rosso's figures.

Instead of a coherent narrative, viewers are struck not only with the sense of horror and pain but also with a pervasive sense of death. In addition to the corpse-like state of the main figure's body, the engraving abounds with symbols of death - snakes, the skull held aloft, barren trees, darkness, and the singing swan. While all of these symbols relate to death, they also held other meanings during the early modern period. The swan is associated with death through its song, but was also connected with melancholy and with artistic creation.[25] The desiccated body is also a reference to artistic creation through its association with the practice of conducting the dissections of corpses, often dug up after burial, to study the structure of the body, a practice that Michelangelo and Rosso himself were known to have practiced.[26] The skull had both strong links to knowledge and also to Adam, linking the fragment of the skeleton to the first man. Snakes bore obvious associations with the male genitalia made all the more potent by the figure's missing penis.[27] Snakes were also frequently depicted tormenting sinners in hell.[28]

The inclusion of so many prolific symbols acts as a call to viewers to engage in interpretation. They are a call to search for meaning and in themselves, act as a promise

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[25] *Ibid*, 73.

[26] For Rosso's involvement with dissection and anatomy see Monique Kornell, "Rosso Fiorentino and the Anatomical Text," *The Burlington Magazine* 131, no. 1041 (Dec., 1989): 842 – 847.

[27] Bernadine Barnes, "Metaphorical Painting: Michelangelo, Dante, and the Last Judgment," *The Art Bulletin* 77, No. 1 (March, 1995), 75.

[28] *Ibid*.

of meaning. However, the multiplicity of potential interpretations of these signs enhances the ambiguity of the image. A "semantic dissonance" is created by the potential for so many frames of reference.[29]

Given that death is a prevailing theme arising from the symbols described above, this is worth further exploration. As Campbell has observed, the figure's condition and pose prompts the viewer to reflect on the cause of his animation and to ask whether a man in his physical condition should be moving?[30] The ambiguity of the figure's condition is only enhanced by the poem when it reads "…if the swan encounters me loudly / He sings because my body *seems* death to him." The flailing body, if dead, is in sharp contrast to the lifeless bodies of the murdered children in Raphael's *Massacre*. The figure's animation recalls the living death of Marsyas or the convention in anatomical illustrations of the corpse as willing participant in his own dissection, both common in the early sixteenth century; however, Rosso's figure is neither Marsyas nor is this an anatomical text.

Campbell advances two possible interpretations for the figure's animation. First, he suggests that the figure may be alive and "in the grip of an obsessive and wasting passion." He relates this to the poetic conventions of the sixteenth century in which passion and erotic obsession manifested themselves in "furor and inspired madness." This madness was often related to a type of hell or demonic possession of the soul, one of the symptoms of which was "a pronounced bodily convulsion and a contortion of the

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[29] Laura Camille Agoston writes of a similar situation with Michelangelo's sculptures of *Night* and *Dawn* in the San Lorenzo Medici Chapel in "Giotto, de Man, and the Allegorical Impulse in Michelangelo," in *Early Modern Visual Allegory: Embodying Meaning*, eds. Cristelle Baskins and Lisa Rosenthal (London: Ashgate, 2007), 24.

[30] Campbell, " *Fare una Cosa Morta,*'" 600.

limbs and facial expression."[31] Although this idea of poetic convention provides a potential explanation for the figure's posture and expression, albeit taken to an extreme, it fails to account for the condition of the flayed, and desiccated body missing its penis. Campbell's second interpretation posits that the figure is dead but "reanimated by means other than natural." He relates this to contemporary beliefs surrounding witchcraft and the "demonic reanimation of the dead."[32] However, the image contains no other context to suggest that this is a scene involving witchcraft, subject matter that had a fairly well-established iconography by the time Rosso designed the *Fury*.[33] The figure's animated state but deathly appearance creates ambiguity in the content of the image that is lacking in the lifeless dead of the *Massacre*. [34]

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[31] *Ibid.*

[32] *Ibid,* 600 – 601.

[33] For a thorough discussion of images relating to witchcraft in the early modern period see Stuart Clark, *Thinking with Demons: the Idea of Witchcraft in the Early Modern Period* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999) and Claudia Swan, *Art, Science, and Witchcraft in Early Modern Holland: Jacques de Gheyn II (1565 – 1629)* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005). Witches and witchcraft were popular subjects for prints in the early sixteenth century, particularly in the North with the influence of Albrecht Dürer's *Witch Riding Backward on a Goat* (1500-01) and Hans Baldung Grien's *Witches' Sabbath* (1510). The latter was also highly influential as an early print of a night scene (although it is a woodcut rather than a copperplate engraving), something that Rosso was clearly interested in with his two first known engravings (The *Skeletons* and the *Fury*) both taking place in darkness. *Lo stregozzo*, an engraving originating in Italy around the second decade of the sixteenth century, bears many similar characteristics to the *Fury* with muscular nude figures in chaotic poses and beasts composed of the skeletal or fleshy parts of natural and mythological animals in a dark forest. Unlike the *Fury*, however, the figure riding the skeletal dragon at the centre of *Lo stregozzo* is identifiable as a witch with obvious links her appearance and pose to Dürer and Baldung Grien's witches. Patricia Emison has convincingly argued that *Lo stregozzo* mobilizes artistic *fantasia* didactically in order to convince the viewer of the reality of witches' processions and gatherings. Patricia Emison, "Truth and Bizzarria in an Engraving of Lo stregozzo," *The Art Bulletin* 81, No. 4 (Dec., 1999): 623 – 636. While the figure's deathly reanimation in the *Fury* may have called up associations to witchcraft for early modern viewers, there is nothing in the image to positively identify it as such, thereby only serving to add yet another potential frame of reference and potential but uncertain interpretation.

[34] The appearance of the lifeless body was of particular importance to Alberti who was foremost concerned that every element of the composition convey the narrative. Hence the body should in every way represent its inner condition. Of representing death, Alberti writes "So in every painting the principle should be observed that all members should fulfill their function according to the action performed, in such a way that not even the smallest limb fails to play its appropriate part, that the members of the dead appear dead down to the smallest detail, and those of the living completely alive…Death, they say, is present when the limbs can no longer carry out the duties of life, that is, movement and feeling." Alberti's comments are particularly interesting in considering the state of the figure depicted in the *Fury*. Alberti, *On Painting*, 73.

Formally, the *Fury* is also very different from Raphael's *Massacre*. Although Raphael's scene is full of figures with extreme gestures, they are supported by the narrative and fully contained and controlled within the pictorial space. In the *Fury,* however, the bird, the écorché figure, and the beast occupy most of the image. The male figure's body is in a precarious and unnatural position with legs spread and his left arm raised so that his limbs and his thrown back head project into all four corners of the image. No matter where viewers look, they are confronted with the disturbed and desiccated body. The effect of the figure's precarious stance, the uneven, sloping ground and the compressed space, gives viewers the sense that the screaming figures may spill out of the boundaries of the representational frame into their space. At the same time, the branches of the trees seem to intertwine with the bird's long, curved neck and the splayed limbs of the écorché figure. The viewer is drawn into the image as the eye carefully traces the curving lines attempting to differentiate snake from tree branch from human limb – a process that seems infinite and constantly changeable. These aspects of mutability call up the Ovidian references so influential in Italian art of the period but the *Fury* does not illustrate any specific fable from the *Metamorphoses*.[35]

The pictorial space is further constrained and crowded by the collapsing of the background and foreground. Rejecting orthogonals and transversals, the incised line is not put to the task of creating a coherent, rationalized perspectival space as in the *Massacre*. In the few spaces and gaps between tree branches and writhing snakes, the tight crosshatching creates an impenetrable wall of blackness. Unlike other prints that

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[35] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. Charles Martin (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2004). For the influence of the *Metamorphoses* on both the iconography and practices of Italian Renaissance art and artists, see Paul Barolsky, "As in Ovid, So in Renaissance Art," *Renaissance Quarterly* 51, No. 2 (Summer, 1998): 451 – 474.

represent a night scene, the *Fury* has no gradations of grey or shading that give the sense of clouds and of a sky that stretches off into a vanishing point. It is difficult to determine whether these closely packed lines signify opaque night sky or simply an abrupt end to representational space. There is once again a refusal of the line to create the illusion of space that is inherent in its potential and integral to narrativity.

In the *Fury* depth is abnegated and the effect is to deny viewers any sense of escape. As Christopher Fulton has observed, in images where the foreground and background have been collapsed, "the pictorial surface gains considerably in potency and…becomes the primary locus for artistic expression, as attention is shifted from the depths of notional space – the place of narrative – to the two-dimensional picture plane."[36] This kind of compression creates what Fulton describes as an image that is "willfully fragmented and disunified."[37] Unlike the *Massacre*, the formal qualities of the *Fury*, deny narrative clarity while foregrounding artistic process. However, while the image formally suppresses narrative, the engraving's content, particularly the agitated, dramatic, and unlikely group of figures, emphatically assert the narrativity of the engraving.

Given the prominence of images that strove for both formal and narrative clarity at the beginning of the sixteenth century, what accounts for the indeterminacy of the *Fury*? In order to consider this issue, it is necessary to look at the circumstances of the engraving's production which, as we will see, provided the conditions of possibility for an image that diverged from the dictates of narrative and formal clarity that were so

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[36] Christopher Fulton, "Present at the Inception: Donatello and the Origins of Sixteenth-Century Mannerism," *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichtei* 60 Bd. H. 2 (1997), 192.
[37] Fulton, "Present at the Inception," 187. Fulton is writing not specifically of the *Fury* but of many of Rosso and other mannerist artist's images that exhibit similar formal characteristics.

prevalent. The lack of restrictions or preconceived expectations of a medium that was still in its infancy; the experimental and speculative nature of the commissioning of the engraving; and, most importantly, the changes to viewing practices that were emerging are all integral to understanding the *Fury*.

(3) "For those who delight in works of that kind": Print Production and Viewing in Rome

Despite the general lack of documentation surrounding early sixteenth-century prints, Giorgio Vasari does discuss the circumstances that led to the production of the *Fury* in his Life of "Marc 'Antonio Bolognese and Others." After a lengthy discussion of the prints of Marcantonio and some of the other engravers working in the 1520s, Vasari writes:

> But to return to the simple copper-plate engravings; after Marc' Antonio had executed the many works that have been mentioned above, Rosso arrived in Rome, and Baviera persuaded him that he should have some of his works engraved; wherefore he commissioned Gian Jacopo Caraglio of Verona, who was one of the most skillful craftsmen of that day, and who sought with all diligence to imitate Marc' Antonio, to engrave a lean anatomical figure of his own, which holds a death's head in the hand, and is seated on a serpent, while a swan is singing.[38]

Vasari's account confirms that the *Fury* was the first of the 31 engravings that resulted from Rosso's collaboration with Caraglio and he further comments that this first engraving "succeeded so well" that Rosso went on to design the subsequent engravings including the *Labours of Hercules,* the *God in Niches*, and two of the *Loves of the Gods* series. Vasari's account intimates that the *Fury* was not just the first of Rosso and Caraglio's engravings but that it was something of a trial print for all parties involved.[39] Baviera had to "persuade" Rosso to design the print and it was not until this first print

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[38] Giorgio Vasari, "Marc' Antonio Bolognese and Others," in *Lives of the Painters, Sculptors and Architects*, vol. 2, trans. Gaston du C. du Vere (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1996): 90. While the veracity of Vasari's claims must often be approached with caution, we can assume that Vasari had some first hand knowledge in the case of Rosso's activities given that Vasari met Rosso shortly after his time in Rome and for the two years prior to Rosso's departure from Italy he acted as something of a mentor to Vasari.

[39] Christopher Witcombe specifically describes the *Fury* as a "trial print." Christopher L.C.E. Witcombe, *Print Publishing in Sixteenth-Century Rome: Growth and Expansion, Rivalry and Murder* (London: Harvey Miller Publishing, 2008): 51.

was a success that Rosso agreed to design further prints.[40] Which criteria Vasari is using to judge the "success" of the engraving is unclear. Was it Rosso's pleasure with the medium; the aesthetics of the final product; the collaborative relationship between all of the parties involved; or the commercial success of the print? Vasari is most likely referring to a degree of success on all of these grounds given that Rosso and Caraglio subsequently embarked on a two-year collaboration of making copper-plate engravings for Baviera.

Vasari's comments indicate that the *Fury* proved to be an important experiment for Rosso, leading the painter to focus his attentions on engraving during his time in Rome. But if we take a broader look at the circumstances leading to Baviera's proposal to Rosso, it becomes clear the extent to which the *Fury* was in fact an experiment for all parties involved that led to a new kind of patronage system and industry for print production that would continue on through the sixteenth century.

The story of the *Fury's* production begins with the most prolific engraving design team of early sixteenth-century Rome – Raphael and Marcantonio Raimondi.[41] By the

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[40] The *Fury* may not have bee Rosso's first attempt at designing a drawing for the purpose of engraving. The engraving known as the *Allegory of Death and Fame* or the *Skeletons* may have been designed by Rosso and engraved by Agostino Veneziano around 1518. The design of the image was often attributed to Baccio Bandinelli (beginning with Vasari) but many scholars now agree that it was likely designed by Rosso. The image displays many similarities to the *Fury* in its dark, macabre theme, constricted space. It demonstrates, along with many of Rosso's paintings from the period, the artist's interest in death, anatomy, and the desiccation of the body. The *Skeletons*, however, differs in several ways from the *Fury*. It has a much sketchier finish, almost giving a sense of being unfinished unlike the highly detailed *Fury*. While Rosso includes several desiccated bodies in his first engraving, they do not have the same classical, sculptural vitality of the figure in the *Fury*. Finally, although the *Skeletons* is not based on any known textual source or mythological subject, the image contains enough information in the actions of the various figures to decipher a narrative. For a summary of the common interpretation of this image, see Carroll, *Rosso Fiorentino*, 54 – 58.

[41] On Raphael and Raimondi's role in the history of engraving see Lisa Pon, *Raphael, Dürer, and Marcantonio Raimondi: Copying and the Italian Renaissance Print* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004); Madeleine Claire Viljoen, "Raphael into Print: The Movement of Ideas about the Antique in Engravings by Marcantonio Raimondi and his Shop," Ph.D. diss., Princeton University, 2000; Konrad Oberhuber, "Raffaello e l'incisione," in *Raffaello in Vaticano*, 337 – 342 (Milan, 1984) and Innis H.

second decade of the sixteenth century, the already well-regarded artist had a busy Roman workshop juggling numerous important private and papal commissions. Despite the demand for his services throughout Rome and his increasing interest in architectural projects, Raphael also identified engraving as a medium of particular interest and during the second decade of the century leading to his death in 1520, he employed several engravers in his workshop to produce prints after his drawings. His relationship with the Bolognese engraver Marcantonio Raimondi was particularly prolific, resulting in dozens of highly influential prints, but Raphael also worked with engravers such as Agostino Veneziano, Marco Dente (da Ravenna), and Ugo da Carpi. While engravers did eventually produce prints after Raphael's frescoes and paintings, his initial interest was in engraving as a medium for independent works of art and the majority of prints produced by his workshop were engraved after drawings supplied by Raphael particularly for that purpose.

Raphael likely never engraved an image himself and the reasons behind his interest in the medium are unclear and likely multi-faceted.[42] Many scholars have suggested that Raphael recognized Dürer's success in making himself and his works famous throughout Europe through the dissemination of prints and sought to advance his

Shoemaker, Elizabeth Broun, and Helen Foresman, ed. *The Engravings of Marcantonio Raimondi* (Spencer Museum of Art, University of Kansas, 1981).

[42] Two recent and compelling suggestions as to Raphael's interest in engraving deserve mention. Lisa Pon argues that Raphael was particularly drawn to engraving because of the similarities between drawing with a stylus, as Raphael preferred, and engraving with a burin. She argues that Raphael's preferred method of drawing gave him a certain "graphic intelligence" that leading to an affinity for engraving: Pon, *Raphael, Dürer, and Marcantonio Raimondi,* 103. Madeleine Viljoen, on the other hand, has argued that engraving was a medium that allowed Raphael, who never really took up sculpture, to compete with the ancient and contemporary sculptors "proving in the process that [he] was capable of excellence not only in painting, but also in sculpture." Madeleine Viljoen, "Prints and False Antiquities in the Age of Raphael," *Print Quarterly* XXI, no. 3 (2004): 247. Vasari indicates that Raimondi may have sparked Raphael's interest in engraving when he, of his own accord, engraved a drawing of Lucretia committing suicide by Raphael and friends of the artist brought the engraving to Raphael's attention. Vasari writes that it was then that Raphael "began to think of publishing in engravings some designs of works by his hand." Vasari, "Marc'Antonio," 82.

fame in a similar fashion.[43] What is clear, however, is that Raphael sowed the seeds for a commercial printed-image industry in Rome. He saw the benefits of a collaborative relationship between a painter, or more importantly, a painter's *invenzione* and *disegno,* and a skilled engraver. He provided purpose-made drawings to his engravers that specifically took into account the needs and limitations of the medium. His initial engraving projects with Marcantonio proved so successful that Raphael decided to promote a *garzone* in his workshop named Baviera da Carocci (or Baviero Carocci) to manage the production and sale of prints. Vasari recounts the circumstances of Baviera's promotion:

> Raffaello had kept an assistant called Baviera for many years to grind his colours; and since this Baviera had a certain ability, Raffaello ordained that he should attend to the printing of the engravings executed by Marc'Antonio, to the end that all his compositions might thus be finished, and then sold in gross and in detail to all who desired them. And so, having set to work, they printed a vast number, which brought very great profit to Raffaello…[44]

Vasari's description indicates an entrepreneurial spirit on the part of Raphael in relation to the print medium.

It is unclear when Baviera took on the role of print manager but he carried out this role so successfully that, upon Raphael's untimely death in 1520, the artist bequeathed control over all of his copper plates to Baviera.[45] Raphael left the rest of his workshop to two of his students, Giulio Romano and Giovanni Francesco Penni (known as Il Fattore), and the two artists continued work on Raphael's unfinished commissions. In addition, Romano completed drawings for engraving by Marcantonio and others, the production of

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[43] Anthony Griffiths, *Prints and Printmaking: An Introduction to the History and Techniques* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 46; David Landau and Peter Parshall, *The Renaissance Print 1470 – 1550* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 103; and Lisa Pon , *Raphael, Dürer, and Marcantonio Raimondi: Copying and the Italian Renaissance Print* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 102.
[44] Vasari, "Marc'Antonio," 82.
[45] Witcombe, *Print Publishing*, 32. [need to check page]

which continued to be overseen by Baviera.[46] In 1524, however, both Romano and Il Fattore left Rome to pursue other opportunities, closing Raphael's workshop.

The final dissolution of the workshop left Baviera in the position of having no new copper plates for production. Reticent to let the niche he had constructed for himself slip away, Baviera sought to continue his commercial endeavor by bringing artists and engravers together to produce new copper plates for printing. It was at this point that he approached Rosso to "persuade" him to design an engraving. With this proposal, Baviera essentially transformed himself from a print manager for a specific artist into the first independent print publisher – likely the first of his kind.[47]

In the proceeding decades, several individuals successfully followed in Baviera's footsteps including Antonio Salamanca, Tomasso Barlacchi, and Antonio Lafreri, all of whom made a living commissioning engravings for printing and sale.[48] The *Fury* was at the cusp of this new commercial enterprise in which a publisher commissioned images for as yet unidentified viewers. Unlike the "vanity press" established by Raphael, Baviera was not interested in publishing his own designs or even those of a particular artist or engraver.[49] What he was interested in was bringing together artists, engravers, and the resources necessary in order to produce images that would sell – that would appeal to the widest possible audience. As Peter Parshall points out, "prints were the first class of art

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[46] These included prints of antique sculpture and reliefs as well as a set of 20 erotic drawings by Romano and engraved by Raimondi. These latter engravings were sold soon after Romano left Rome for Mantua in 1524. Pope Clement VII was so scandalized by the prints that he had Marcantonio Raimondi arrested and thrown in prison. Witcombe, *Print Publishing*, 45.

[47] Landau and Parshall, *Renaissance Print*, 121-2; Bury, *The Print in Italy,* 9; and Witcombe, *Print Publishing*, 51.

[48] Witcombe, *Print Publishing*, 11.

[49] Michael Bury provides a useful summary of the publishing activities of these three entrepreneurs and the development of the print business in Rome between 1540 and 1580 in his book *The Print in Italy 1550 – 1620* (London: The British Museum, 2001): 122 – 124.

object that could truly be said to have entered the consumer milieu on a frankly speculative basis having been fashioned for an anonymous public whose tastes and interests needed to be inferred rather than established through direct negotiation."[50] Who was purchasing and therefore viewing these early prints? Into what circles would an image like the *Fury* have entered and circulated?

Prints played a varied and mutable role and the motivations for the purchase and collection of prints were likely as diverse as the types of prints being produced.[51] Despite a lack of documentation concerning the consumption and collecting of prints in the sixteenth century, scholars agree that artists "were among the earliest and most assiduous collectors of prints."[52] During the late fifteenth century and early sixteenth century, print collections became a common feature of any artist's studio or workshop.[53] Prints were used as models or types for artists to consider and emulate or copy. Young artists were encouraged to repeatedly copy the *disegno* of admired prints, more skilled artists would study them to determine how their peers were solving pictorial problems and many artists would copy small parts or whole scenes into their works in print and other media. In this way, as Parshall observes, prints "bore a protean identity as examples of pictorial art," and artists engaged with prints, most frequently engravings, on a number of practical and intellectual levels.[54]

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[50] Peter Parshall, "Prints as Objects of Consumption in Early Modern Europe," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 28, no. 1 (Winter, 1998): 20.

[51] For a discussion of the collection of prints generally during the sixteenth century, see Michael Bury, "The Taste for Prints in Italy to *c.* 1600," *Print Quarterly* II (1985): 12 – 26; Peter Parshall, "Prints as Objects of Consumption,"; Michael Bury, *The Print in Italy 1550 – 1620* (London: British Museum Press, 2001); and Landau and Parshall, *The Renaissance Print*.

[52] David Rosand, "Raphael, Marcantonio, and the Icon of Pathos," *Source Notes in the History of Art* 3, no. 2 (Winter 1984): 36.

[53] David Landau, "Vasari, Prints and Prejudice," *Oxford Art Journal* 6, no. 1 (1983): 4.

[54] Parshall, "Prints as Objects of Consumption," 19.

Although, for the most part, it wasn't until the second half of the sixteenth century that patrons were asking for prints by specific artists, there are earlier examples of artists seeking out the works of their peers.[55] Albrecht Dürer collected woodcuts, engravings, drypoints, and etchings by his contemporaries and had a particular interest in Italian artists.[56] Dürer wrote in a letter in October of 1520 "I gave Thomas [Vincindor] of Bologna a whole set of prints to send for me to Rome to another painter who should send me Raphael's work in return."[57] We also know that Raphael owned prints by Dürer and the influence of the German artist's *invenzione* and figural compositions can be seen in Raphael's work.[58] The engravings collected by artists during the early part of the sixteenth century were not usually reproductions of works in other media but were independent works of art. They were not just models for other artists to copy but constituted an exchange of ideas about visual representation in which artists became viewers and viewers became artists.

Artists, however, were not the only collectors of engravings in the early sixteenth century. A small but consistently growing group of individuals motivated by an interest not just in collectible art objects generally, but in prints specifically, emerged in the early sixteenth century. Prints were often sold as single images by booksellers.[59] It is appropriate then that these circles of early print collectors were situated mainly in major centres with a strong market for books such as Rome and Venice.[60] This group of print

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[55] Bury, "Taste for Prints," 14.

[56] Jeffrey Chipps Smith, "The 2010 Josephine Waters Bennett Lecture: Albrecht Dürer as Collector," *Renaissance Quarterly* 64, no. 1 (Spring, 2011): 17.

[57] As cited in Chipps Smith, "Albrect Dürer," 24.

[58] Bury, "Taste for Prints," 19.

[59] Eliana Carrara and Sharon Gregory, "Borghini's Print Purchases from Giunti," *Print Quarterly* XVII, no. 1 (2000): 3 and Witcombe, *Print Publishing*, 10.

[60] David Franklin, *Rosso in Italy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 135.

enthusiasts was recognized by Giorgio Vasari when he added the "Life of Marc'Antonio" to the second edition of his *Vite*. At the close of this lengthy section, Vasari writes:

> And let this be the end of the Lives of Marc'Antonio Bolognese and of all the other engravers of prints mentioned above, of whom I have thought it right to give this long but necessary account, **in order to satisfy not only the students of our arts, but also all those who delight in works of that kind**.[61]
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> [Emphasis added]

While Vasari did not hold prints in very high regard as autonomous art objects, he recognized that there were engravers who had achieved a level of long-lasting success and admiration and that there were collectors who held a specific interest in prints as independent artworks.[62]

Due to the fact that prints were relatively inexpensive, print collectors were not necessarily wealthy. Print collectors were inclined not only to collect but also to interpret prints, considering and discussing their aesthetic, iconographic, and technical aspects with other collectors.[63] Given the intellectual engagement with the images, then, collectors were likely educated.[64] David Rosand has labeled this early group of print collectors *intenditori*. The "cultural range and intellectual challenge" of early sixteenth-century printed images attracted "connoisseurs of the *arti del disegno* for whom prints assumed something of the function of books." Rosand argues that it was "upon such

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[61] Vasari, "Marc'Antonio," 101.

[62] For a discussion of Vasari's general attitude towards prints, see David Landau, "Vasari, Prints, and Prejudice." Landau concludes that, although Vasari had prints in his personal collection and relied heavily on print reproductions of the artworks in other media that he discusses in the *Vite*, his general attitude towards print as a medium was dismissive.

[63] Landau and Parshall, *Renaissance Print*, 4 and 261.

[64] Patricia Emison, *Low and High Style in Italian Renaissance Art* (New York: Garland Publishing Inc., 1997), 78.

graphic images they refined their visual literacy."[65] This refinement of "visual literacy" raises the issue of the nature of viewing printed images.

Looking at and engaging with engravings differed from viewing artworks of other media. As Patricia Emison observes, with the development of prints, "habits of looking could not stay the same."[66] This is true on several levels. The viewing of a printed image was a private activity insofar as it was most often carried out in one's own home.[67] In the sixteenth century, prints were usually kept in albums or other volumes and like books, they were held in the hand and engendered close study. A passage by Sabba da Castiglione in his 1549 *Ricordi* recounts the receipt of a new print by Dürer that he immediately took out into his garden so that he could study it closely.[68] We can imagine Castiglione making himself comfortable, scanning the image and considering its subject matter, holding the paper closer and tilting it to get the best light as he traces the lines with both his eyes and his fingers, and examines the different elements of the composition, recognizing familiar references and puzzling over unfamiliar elements, perhaps pulling out other prints in his collection in order to make comparisons, and finally placing the paper carefully into an album until the next viewing. Viewing prints involved a deliberate and conscious decision and, as Rosand argues, a sense of "personal dedication."[69] These were not images in public space where looking may be incidental

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[65] Rosand, "Icon of Pathos," 36. One of the most prolific collectors of prints during the Renaissance, Ferdinand Columbus, was also an avid book collector. His inventory indicates that he owned at least 3204 prints and he has been described as "an omnivorous and obsessive purchaser of books." David Ladau, "The Print Collection of Ferdinand Columbus (1488 – 1539)" in *Collecting Prints and Drawings in Europe c. 1500 – 1750*, eds. Christopher Baker, Caroline Elam, and Genevieve Warwick (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing in association with Bulrington Magazine, 2003), 30 and 32.

[66] Emison, "Prolegomenon," 2.

[67] Emison, "Prolegomenon," 5.

[68] As cited in Bury, "Taste for Prints," 14.

[69] Rosand, "Icon of Pathos," 36.

and interpretation highly reliant on external cues and context. Prints were objects that engendered highly purposeful and decidedly personal looking and interpretation.

While the act of viewing prints was an essentially private one, print collectors were part of a public that shared similar interests and the viewing and interpretation of prints could, therefore, also be conversational and interactive. Prints became an "intellectual commodity" as Emison has observed.[70] In person and through correspondence, print collectors discussed "the subject matter, the clear or hidden meaning of each part of the composition, the emotions or moods expressed, the subtle allusions to classical, historical, or contemporary events, the connections with other works by past or contemporary masters, [and] the ingenuity and skill of the printmaker."[71] The "visual literacy" that Rosand writes of was a literacy that engaged with prints on both formal and iconographic levels. Many artists and collectors viewed large numbers of prints and their viewing was contingent upon and influenced by the other engravings they had studied. Artists and engravers would have understood that the potential consumers of their prints were for the most part individuals, whether other artists or dedicated collectors, who had a particular interest in and knowledge of picture-making. The nature of print viewing allowed artists to explore a much broader range of subjects and pictorial techniques when designing prints.

Given these viewing practices, prints were able to engage their viewers in what Lisa Pon has described as a "practical collaboration"[72] and Mitchell Merback

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[70] Emison, *Low and High Style*, 267.
[71] Landau and Parshall, *The Renaissance Print*, 261.
[72] Lisa Pon*, Copying and the Italian Renaissance Print*, 8.

characterizes as "an exchange relationship."[73] The viewer demanded and was given greater authority as an interpreting subject. As a result, there was increasing opportunity for artists to relinquish some of their *invenzione* to viewers. In the hands of artists and collectors, the *Fury* entered into a discourse about image formation and interpretation. It would have been studied closely, its content debated, its formal aspects carefully examined and compared with other engravings in collections and artists studios at the time.

These changes to viewing practices reflected and built upon similar changes that were being encouraged by the naming and interpretation of antique sculpture. In both cases, the formal qualities and circumstances of production/discovery manifested a more participatory and open approach to meaning-making. The interpretation of antique sculpture is discussed in the last section but before that, it is useful to look at the affinities between the two media in order to establish why, in part, we should be concerned with the issue of antique sculpture when considering engraving.

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[73] Mitchell B. Merback, "Nobody Dares: Freedom, Dissent, Self-Knowing, and Other Possibilities in Sebald Beham's *Impossible*," *Renaissance Quarterly* 63, No. 4 (Winter 2010): 1041.

(4) *Engraving and Sculpture: Material Affinities*

By the time both Rosso and Caraglio arrived in Rome in the early 1520s, it was a city in thrall with the debris of antiquity that littered its landscape. For the past couple of decades, artists, writers, collectors, and church officials had become almost obsessed with the material remains of antiquity being discovered throughout the city on an almost daily basis.[74] From the increasing attention garnered by the architectural ruins that were such an integral part of the Roman landscape to the less visible coins, sarcophagi, and, perhaps most importantly, figural sculptures that were being discovered, buried in the earth, throughout the city. Collectors, most notably the papacy, clamored to obtain the most recent discoveries for their collections, while humanists attempted to associate particular items to classical texts in order to further fill in their account of the classical past.[75]

However, antique figural sculptures, along with other objects of antiquity such as vases and architectural elements, were among some of the post popular subjects for engravings produced in Rome between 1515 and 1525.[76] While artists such as Mantegna and Dürer had shown an interest in the influences of antique art, in particular the classical

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[74] The literature on the engagement of scholars and artists with antique sculpture during the Renaissance is expansive and diverse. The following texts provide a good overview: Roberto Weiss, *The Renaissance discovery of classical antiquity* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1969), accessed on October 12, 2011, http://hdl.handle.net.ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/2027/heb.00044.0001.001; Francis Haskell and Nicholas Penny, *Taste and the Antique: The Lure of Classical Sculpture, 1500 – 1900* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982); Phyllis Pray Bober, Ruth Rubinstein, and Susan Woodford, *Renaissance Artists and Antique Sculpture: a handbook of sources* (London: H. Miller, 1986); and Alina Payne, Ann Kuttner, and Rebekah Smick, eds., *Antiquity and its Interpreters* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

[75] For a recent and thorough historiography of the history of collecting antiquities see Kathleen Wren Christian, *Empire Without End: Antiquity Collections in Renaissance, c. 1350 – 1527* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 2 – 6. See also Roberto Weiss, *Renaissance Discovery of Classical Antiquity*, 180 – 202.

[76] This interest in engravings of antique sculpture and architecture continued long after 1525, particularly with the success of Antonio Lafreri's *Speculum Romanae Magnificentiae* which began print in 1540 and continued with great success for over 30 years.

body, in their engravings in the late fifteenth century, it wasn't until after the discovery of the *Laocoön* in 1506 that artists began to produce engravings specifically depicting antique sculpture.[77] Raphael's workshop and the engravers he had employed were particularly active in this regard.[78] Marcantonio and Marco Dente were among the first artists to reproduce antique sculptures in print.[79] According to Konrad Oberhuber, Marcantonio's oeuvre includes at least 45 prints after the antique during his lifetime.[80] In the years following Raphael's death Giulio Romano designed several engravings that reference antique sculptures and were then produced as prints by Baviera.[81] The sheer number of prints being produced corroborates Bernadine Barnes' assertion that there was an active market for antiquarian prints in the sixteenth century.[82]

One of the reasons for the popularity of engravings of antique sculpture during this period may have been purely practical – print provided a relatively inexpensive and abundant means to document the newly discovered sculptures. The medium was,

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[77] Sarah Cree, "Translating Stone into Paper: Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century Prints after Antique Sculpture," in *Paper Museums: The Reproductive Print in Europe, 1500 – 1800*, eds. Rebecca Zorach and Elizabeth Rodini (Chicago: The David and Alfred Smart Museum of Art and the University of Chicago Press, 2005): 75.

[78] Madeleine Viljoen, "The Restorative Power of Prints," *Print Quarterly*, XVIII, no. 4 (2001): 392. Only some of these prints were made under the direction of Raphael while others seem to have been produced independently by Raimondi, Dente, and Veneziano. The "reproduction" of antique sculpture in print has been identified by some art historians, beginning with Franz Wickhoff's article "Observations on the History of the Reproductive Arts" in 1899, as a pivotal moment in the role of engraving when it goes from being a "productive" medium to being a "reproductive" medium. Pon, *Copying and the Italian Renaissance Print*, 27 – 28. The idea of "reproductive" print has been challenged by several authors in recent years, arguing that even those prints after other artworks are "productive." See, for example Bury, *Print in Italy*.

[79] Crre, "Translating Stone," 76. From the time of his youth in Bologna, Marcantonio had been fascinated with antiquity and, as with many other artists, this interest was likely largely what drew him to Rome. Viljoen, "Restorative Power," 379 n4.

[80] Konrad Oberhuber, "Raffaello e l'incisione," in *Raffaello in Vaticano* (Milan, 1984), 384.

[81] Witcombe, *Print Publishing*, 26.

[82] Bernadine Barnes, *Michelangelo in Print: Reproduction as Response in the Sixteenth Century* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2010),\\ 22.

therefore, able to meet the interest and demand.[83] However, there are also affinities between the media of sculpture and engraving that deserve consideration. The physical creative processes bear considerable similarity. The engraving process involves the use of a metal tool with a lozenge-shaped end. The engraver pushes this tool, most commonly known as a burin through a copper plate creating a v-shaped groove, essentially carving strips of copper out of the plate, a feat that requires considerable precision, physical force, and manual control. The engraver can manipulate the burin to create different thicknesses and depths of line. When this process is completed, the plate is covered in ink and then wiped clean so that the ink only fills the grooves created by the burin. The copper plate and the paper are then put under high pressure so that the paper withdraws the ink from the grooves.[84] As we have seen in the previous section, prints were most often held in the hand and studied closely in the sixteenth century rather than being displayed on walls. Viewing prints therefore had a tactile element and the fingertips would have felt the ridges formed on the paper by the ink pulled from the grooves of the copper plate. The ink becomes a tactile and material remnant of the engraving process and creates, if not a three-dimensional product, something with contours and lines that expand into space.[85]

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[83] Francis Haskell and Nicholas Penny identify print as "the chief way by which knowledge of the most famous and beautiful statues of Rome was spread throughout Europe during the period of the High Renaissance…" in Francis Haskell and Nicholas Penny, *Taste and the Antique,* 17.

[84] For further discussion of the engraving process see Emily Peters, Preface to *The Brilliant Line: Following the Early Modern Engraver 1480 – 1650* (Providence: Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, 2009): 9 – 11; and Griffiths, *Prints and Printmaking.*

[85] Interestingly, Christopher Fulton argues that Rosso's works were heavily influenced by sculptural reliefs, particularly those of Donatello to which Rosso would have been exposed in his native Florence. Relief sculptures certainly bear the greatest similarity to engraving given the fact that the sculpture emerges from a flat plane. Fulton, however, does not make a connection between the similarities of the two media. In fact, he makes the association between relief sculpture and Rosso's paintings and drawings in terms of the abnegation of space into a single plane. Christopher Fulton, "Present at the Inception," 180. David Franklin has also observed the compositional influences of Donatello's relief sculptures on Rosso's

With both sculpture and engraving, the chisel/burin removes matter to reveal form. This similarity is acknowledged by the Latin term *caelum* which was used to describe both the sculptor's chisel and the engravers burin.[86] While painting or drawing with chalk or pencil involves the application of a material to a surface, sculpture and engraving make form *from* matter. Additionally, sculpture and engraving were both considered monochromatic in the sixteenth century and therefore relied more heavily on contours and lines to communicate content rather than painting which relied so heavily on colour.[87]

Analogies between sculpting and engraving were relatively common by the beginning of the sixteenth century.[88] The term "*sulpsit*" ("sculpted by") was sometimes used on prints to indicate the identity of the engraver.[89] In some cases, engravers sought to enhance the similarities between their works and ancient sculptures by employing techniques that replicated certain qualities of antique sculpture. For example, a pumice stone or some other abrasive material would be used to scratch and roughen the surface of the copper plate rendering the print, like the sculpture that was depicted, "pitted, grainy and stone-like."[90] As Viljoen argues, Marcantonio and other engravers enabled artists to 'sculpt' works through the agency of prints, proving in the process that the artist was capable of excellence not only in painting, but also in sculpture."[91] Engraving was, therefore, a medium that allowed artists who did not sculpt, such as Raphael and Rosso,

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paintings, in particular his *Lamentation* altarpiece for the the Borgo San Sepolcro (1527-8). Franklin, *Rosso in Italy*, 172-4.

[86] Viljoen, "Prints and False Antiquities," 244.

[87] The majority of the ancient sculpture being unearthed in Rome during the sixteenth century was in an unpainted state.

[88] Viljoen, "Prints and False Antiquities," 244.

[89] Lincoln, *Invention of the Italian Renaissance Printmaker*," 8.

[90] Viljoen, "Prints and False Antiquities," 235.

[91] *Ibid,* 247.

to compete not only with their classical predecessors but also with contemporary artists such as Michelangelo who held sculpture in the highest regard.

Significantly, engraving was situated between drawing and sculpture. The final product bears similarities to drawing being monochromatic, reliant on the line, and a work on paper. Many engravings, like the *Fury*, commenced as drawings, however, these drawings were usually more than preparatory sketches in that they took into account from their inception the limitations and requirements of the ultimate medium.[92] The process and, as a result, the final product, were also drastically different from drawings. Drawing, or more appropriately for the early modern period, *disegno*, held an element of spontaneity and connected directly to the mind or the *fantasia*, whereas engraving, like sculpture, requires considerable forethought and planning and is highly intentional and purposeful. Since at least the fifteenth century and Lorenzo Ghiberti's *I Commentarii*, *disegno* was equated with theory and the origins of art while sculpture (and painting) was associated with practice.[93] This liminal position between drawing and sculpture placed engraving between theory and practice.

Because engraving was growing in popularity at the same time and in the same place that antique sculpture was capturing the imaginations of artists, patrons, and

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[92] In the case of Rosso Fiorentino, there is no evidence that he ever engraved an image himself, however, Vasari recounts that his close friend Baccio Bandinelli taught him the art of engraving in return for lessons on paining. Cited in Fulton, "Present at the Inception," 179 n 16. Although few of Rosso's drawings made for the purposes of engraving are extant, there is evidence that Rosso made the drawings with the specific needs of engraving in mind. For example, Rosso completed the drawing for the *Skeletons* in reverse making it easier for Veneziano to exactly follow his drawing when incising the copperplate.

[93] Among other comments, Ghiberti writes "disegno il quale è origine et fondamento dell'arte statuaria et della pittura." Lorenzo Ghiberti, *Lorenzo Ghiberti's Denkwürigkeiten (I commentarii) zum ersten male nach der handschrift der Bibliotecca nazionale in Florenz volständig hrsg. Und erläutert von Julius von Schlosser*, trans. Julius Ritter von Schlosser (Berlin: J. Bard, 1912), I 3 (p.8). Joost Keizer provides a discussion of Ghiberti's comments, particularly with regard to drawing/*disegno*, in "Michelangelo, Drawing, and the Subject of Art," 311. See also David Rosand, *Drawing Acts: Studies in Graphic Expression and Representation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), particularly 54 – 60.

collectors; because print provided an efficient and inexpensive way to encounter and interact with antique sculpture; and most importantly, because of the material affinities between the two media, engraving became linked with antique sculpture in early sixteenth-century Rome in a way that other media did not. This was the Rome that Rosso would have encountered – a city engaged with rediscovered antique sculpture on a number of levels and where the medium with which he was about to experiment for the next two years was closely tied with antique sculpture.

(5) *Unearthing Laocoön: Engraving, Death, and Fragmentation*

> The process of raising the dead is, perhaps first of all,
> a process of reading or identifying the remains.
>
> Leonard Barkan[94]

While rediscovered antique sculpture was a primary source and influence for early sixteenth-century engraving, the nature of engravings after antique sculpture varied widely. Some attempted to capture or document the rediscovered sculptural object itself, others placed the sculpture within the narrative its figures represented, while still others focused entirely on the narrative, taking inspiration from the sculpture. Consideration of two popular engravings of one of the most important sculptural discoveries of the Renaissance, the *Laocoön*, will demonstrate two different approaches to engraving antique sculpture and will then allow for an analysis of how the *Fury* may provide yet another approach. Although the *Laocoön* is arguably one of the best-known works of antiquity, some background on the sculpture is necessary before we turn to the engravings.

The unearthing of the *Laocoön* in mid-January 1506 was arguably the most famous discovery of an ancient sculpture during the Renaissance (Figure 6).[95] The story of the Trojan priest Laocoön and his two sons formed a brief but integral episode in Book II of Virgil's *Aeneid*. Following the presentation by the Greeks of the wooden horse, Laocoön prophesied Troy's doom if the horse was permitted to enter the city gates. Despite his warnings, the Trojans, naively accepted the deceitful gift. As punishment for

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[94] Barkan, *Unearthing the Past*, 61.

[95] Given the fact that there had been interest in discovering antique sculpture for some time prior to the *Loacoön*, Barkan characterizes its discovery as a defining moment rather than an inaugural moment. Leonard Barkan, *Unearthing the Past,* 42.

his attempts to warn and save his people, the goddess Minerva, who sided with the Greeks in the war, sent a pair of serpents to kill Laocoön and his sons.[96] While Virgil's story was well known to many sixteenth-century Romans, what was almost equally well known, particularly to humanists, was Pliny the Elder's account in his *Natural History* of a beautiful sculpture by Hagesander, Polydorus, and Athenodorus for the Emperor Titus of Laocoön and his sons in the "clasping coils" of the snakes. Pliny described it as an artwork "superior to any painting or any bronze." [97]

In 1506, Pope Julius II had already demonstrated his taste for antique sculpture, building a special courtyard in the Vatican to house his growing collection. As a result, when a landowner named Felice de Fredis came across the pieces of a large sculpture while tilling his vineyard in the Sette Sale on the Esquiline Hill near Santa Maria Maggiore, he knew that he had stumbled upon something of potential interest and he sent someone to inform the pope. The pope, in turn, sent a page to tell the architect Giuliano da Sangallo and Michelangelo who rushed to the scene to witness the exhumation. According to accounts, the pair immediately recognized the sculptural group as the *Laocoön* of which Pliny had written so glowingly in the *Natural History*.

The sculpture was found in seven pieces. Once reassembled, it was realized that, like so many other rediscovered antique sculptures, there were fragments missing, most notably the priest's right arm was absent. Given the sculpture's size and complexity, it was largely intact in comparison to many other sculptures being unearthed from the Roman countryside, however, as we will see, its fragmentariness was still a defining feature.

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[96] Virgil, *The Aeneid*, trans. Robert Fagles (London: Penguin Classics, 2006), Book II: 76 and 81-82.
[97] Pliny the Elder, *Natural History: A Selection*, trans. John F. Healy (London: Penguin Books, 2004): 347.

The *Laocoön* proved to be one of the most important and influential finds of the sixteenth century. Artists, writers, and art historians have been enthralled with the sculpture since the day it was dug out of the earth.[98] Within ten years of its discovery, prints and drawings of the sculpture were circulating throughout Rome and beyond and by the early 1520s it was a very popular subject for print.[99] On a broader scale, Barkan has observed that, from the time of its discovery, the *Laocoön* "inserts itself into the visual imagination and becomes the basis for new image making."[100]

With this terrain in mind, I would like to look more closely at two engravings of the *Laocoön* completed by Marco Dente in the years preceding Rosso's arrival in Rome in order to explore some of the differences in how engraving was intersecting with antique sculpture and reveal some of the resulting tensions. As Sarah Cree has observed:

> …the artist making a print after antique sculpture had to decide whether to strive for an exact replication, or a more general evocation; whether to make fidelity to the original medium the primary goal, or to exploit the full expressive possibilities of prints. These varying priorities could often come into conflict.[101]

Dente's two engravings of the *Laocoön* represent the famous sculpture in very different ways and after exploring them briefly, I would like to suggest that the *Fury* engages with the *Laocoön* specifically, and antique sculpture more generally, on yet another level.

Marco Dente arrived in Rome from Ravenna around 1516 and immediately began working as a pupil of Marcantonio's in Raphael's workshop. Both Rosso and Caraglio

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[98] Barkan puts it most aptly when he states that "The *Laocoön* bibliography is extensive enough to make *Hamlet* look like a victim of scholarly neglect." Barkan, *Unearthing the Past*, 340 n3. For the sculpture's influence on art see particularly Margarete Bieber, *Laocoön, the Influence of the Group since its Discovery* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1967); see also Richard Brilliant, *My Laocoön: Alternative Claims in the Interpretation of Artworks* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000); and Una Roman D'Elia, *The Poetics of Titian's Religious Paintings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

[99] Roman D'Elia, *Poetics of Titian*, 35.

[100] Barkan, *Unearthing the Past*, 11.

[101] Cree, "Translating Stone," 76 – 77.

would have likely been familiar with Dente's engravings of the *Laocoön* given their popularity in the 1520s and the fact that their production was also overseen by Baviera.[102] The first engraving was probably completed around 1519 and 1520 (Figure 7).[103] Dente depicts a sculpture of Laocoön that Viljoen has convincingly argued is a combination of the Plinian sculpture unearthed in 1506 and the illumination from a popular manuscript of the *Aeneid* known as the *Vatican Virgil*.[104] While the figures are rooted on an inscribed plinth, forestalling any doubt that this is a representation of a sculpture, there are several differences between Dente's representation and the Plinian *Laocoön*. Like the sculpture, the priest is central, flanked by his two sons, with the snakes coiled around their bodies. Rather than the left arm bent down parallel with his body and the missing right arm, however, Dente's priest holds both arms outstretched. Dente has imagined a completed sculpture using the Vatican illumination as his inspiration.

While the sculpture is the main focus of the engraving, it is placed in an intricate setting, located on a hill in the foreground with a classical depiction of the city of Troy behind and to the right of the sculpture.[105] Directly behind Laocoön and his sons is the ocean with a faint, distant rendering of Greece across the water. The scene is essentially a continuous narrative of Virgil's story with the serpents being dispatched from Greece across the ocean, their mouths agape in anticipation of their attack on the priest and his sons while they are then shown already coiled around the muscular bodies of the sculptural figures. The main subject of this engraving is Virgil's narrative, however, the

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[102] Sarah Cree and Madeleine Viljoen both provide insightful discussions of Dente's *Laocoön* engravings. See Cree, "Translating Stone," and Viljoen, "Restorative Power."

[103] Viljoen estimates that it must have been produced after 1517 and before 1521 but argues that it was most likely in 1519-20. "Restorative Powers," 384.

[104] Viljoen, "Restorative Power," 383.

[105] Viljoen argues that the city on the hill should in fact be understood as contemporary Rome rather than Virgil's Troy. "Restorative Power," 392.

actions of the story do not happen to the priest and his sons but to the sculpture that represents them. As Viljoen has argued, Dente combines the visual and narrative aspects of the sculpture making the marble representation, although an imagined and completed version of it, the protagonist of the Virgilian story.[106]

The second engraving by Dente was likely completed between 1522 and 1525 and is a more faithful rendering of the Plinian *Laocoön* (Figure 8). The sculpture is shown directly from the front and takes up the majority of the pictorial space with only a grassy hill in the background. Dente closely follows the sculpture in his representation with the priest and his son's right arms missing, abruptly cut off at the shoulder, and the stump of the other son's arm confronting viewers. Rather than Troy or Greece in the background, there is only a reference to the ground of the vineyard from which the sculpture was unearthed. Sarah Cree has argued that artists who created a faithful representation of the sculpture "privileged its status as a monument over the identity of the figure it represents."[107] With such a privileging, the sculpture's fragmented state was necessarily tolerated and maintained.

What we saw in Dente's engravings of the *Laocoön* was a complicated encounter between the art object and what it represents – between form and content. Engraving becomes a place where the dissonance between form and content, which is being brought out by fragmented antique sculpture, is being worked out. It is a place where the contingency of meaning can be expressed. Only when completed can the form be fully reintegrated with its content.

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[106] Viljoen, "Restorative Power," 387-8.
[107] Cree, "Translating Stone," 78.

Both Carroll and Campbell have commented on the references to the *Laocoön* in the *Fury*. Carroll acknowledges the clear reference of the snake wrapped around the figure's arm, but argues that the image subverts the "tragic pathos" of the *Laocoön*.[108] His characterization of the famous sculpture indicates a reliance on the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century interpretations of the *Laocoön*, an anachronistic approach that, as we will see, fails to take into account contemporary interpretations of the sculpture. For his part, Campbell characterizes Rosso's figure as "a refashioning" of the recently discovered sculpture.[109] Rather than identifying the engraving as a competition with antique art as Carroll does, Campbell sees the image as a "decontextualizing response to ancient sculpture."[110] I contend, however, that the *Fury* reflects contemporary views of the *Laocoön* and the associations of antique sculpture with death.

Aside from the snake that wraps around his left arm, can the figure in the *Fury* really be thought to reference the Trojan priest of the Plinian sculpture? Una Roman D'Elia has reviewed the contemporary writing about the sculpture and argues that, rather than the stoic and heroic overtones that Johann Winckelmann and Gotthold Ephraim Lessing identified in the Trojan priest's countenance in their eighteenth-century descriptions of the statue, many contemporary writers saw the priest as lacking in self-control, wild, and anguished.[111] In fact, in the Renaissance, the *Laocoön* was seen as

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[108] Carroll, *Rosso Fiorentino*, 74.

[109] Campbell, "*Fare una Cosa Morta*," 600.

[110] *Ibid.*

[111] Roman D'Elia, *Titian's Religious Paintings*, 32. Winckelmann and Lessing both write about the sculpture's beauty in the representation of suffering and pain. Nigel Jonathan Spivey summarizes Winckelmann's view of the *Laocoön* as "a paragon of pathetic but ennobling heroism under extreme duress" in Nigel Jonathan Spivey, "The Audition of Laocoön's Scream," in *Enduring Creation: art, pain, and fortitude* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001): 34. Winckelmann's analysis has heavily influenced thinking about the sculpture since the eighteenth century. For detailed discussions of Winckelmann and Lessing's influence on the interpretation of the sculpture see Simon Richter, *Laocoön's*

anything but stoical; instead, "he screamed and struggled with the passionate abandonment of the damned."[112] Roman D'Elia has argued that Aby Warburg's view of the *Laocoön* as "a charged, dangerous, and volatile image in the Renaissance" is much closer to that expressed by sixteenth-century commentators than the stoic and sublime example of suffering that has been the legacy of Winkelmann's analysis.[113]

Given this contemporary view of the *Laocoön* – volatile, wild, lacking in self-control, dangerous, anguished, damned – Rosso's figure in the *Fury* need not be seen as a subversion of the sculptural referent. But even if *Laocoön's* countenance was seen by many as wild and anguished, there can be no doubt that his body was that of the heroic, classical nude. Rosso's figure, on the other hand, is emaciated and desiccated. His desiccation, however, along with the outlined but withered muscles of his arms and legs are a reminder of his former vitality. How then could his condition relate to the virulent body of Laocoön? A consideration of contemporary views on the rediscovery of antique sculpture provides some insight and returns us to one of the overriding themes of the engraving - death.

In the early sixteenth century, while the rediscovery of antique sculpture was celebrated for its perceived ability to shed light on the classical past, it was also closely associated with death.[114] The bulk of the antique objects found during the Renaissance

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body and the aesthetics of pain: Winckelmann, Lessing, Herder, Moritz, Goethe (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1992); Brilliant, "*Laocoön* II: Winckelmann, Lessing, Goethe," in *My Laocoön*; Frederick Burwick, "Lessing's 'Laokoon' and the Rise of Visual Hermeneutics," *Poetics Today*, 20, No. 2 (1999): 219 – 272; and Spivey, *Enduring Creation,* 24 - 37.

[112] Roman D'Elia, *Titian's Religious Paintings*, 54.

[113] *Ibid*, 34.

[114] Not only was antique sculpture associated with death but sculpture even as a contemporary medium was closely associated with death. Laura Camille Agoston analyzes Michelangelo's reflections on the relationship between death and sculpture in his sonnets in "Sonnet, Sculpture, Death: The Mediums of Michelangelo's Self-Imaging," *Art History* 20, No. 4 (December 1997), 542.

were death-related – sarcophagi, funereal monuments, urns, and commemorative inscriptions. Antique sculpture, being figural, particularly became associated with the dead body.[115] This association is one that Viljoen observes in the first of Dente's engravings of the *Laocoön* discussed above. The sculpture had been discovered in an elaborate chamber buried beneath the earth of Fredis' vineyard. The chamber had likely formed part of the Emperor Titus' baths, however, in its subterranean state, the chamber reminded Renaissance commentators of a tomb. In his *Antiquitates Urbis Romanae*, Andrea Fulvio described the chamber as a *crypta* – a term understood at the time to signify "a hidden or underground place of burial."[116] With this in mind, Viljoen notes the prominent placement of the inscribed fragment on the ground directly in front of the sculpture in Dente's first *Laocoön* engraving which reads "*OSSA*," Latin for bones. She argues that in its broken state as a remnant the inscription "evokes a lament on the ancient ruins as a kind of bones."[117]

There was a popular trope, going back at least to Petrarch, of viewing Rome after its fall as a dead corpse that could only be revived and reconstructed with the emerging humanism of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.[118] Anticipation of the revival faded during the papal schism but was renewed with the Holy See's return to Rome following the Council of Constance in 1417. Cencio de'Rustici, a Council secretary wrote optimistically that the Roman people's return had "brought spirit back into that empty

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[115] Viljoen, "Restorative Power," 387.

[116] *Ibid,* 386. Christopher Wood has observed that tombs held a central place in the imagination of the early modern period, Christopher S. Wood, *Forgery, Replica, Fiction: Temporalities of German Renaissance Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 23.

[117] Viljoen, "Restorative Power, 386.

[118] *Ibid,* 387.

city and its dead body."[119] A century later, the allegory of Rome as corpse was still prevalent. In the letter written around 1519 by Baldassare Castiglione and Raphael to Pope Leo X, the authors described how the pleasure they took in studying the ancient architecture was tempered by the "extreme pain – at the sight of what you could almost call the corpse of this great city, once queen of the world, so cruelly butchered." The authors go on to note that the destruction perpetrated by the "beasts" was not complete leaving a framework that could be described as "the bones of a body without the flesh."[120]

Given these tropes of the dead city, the digging up of figures from the earth, even if made from marble and stone, became so linked with the exhumation of dead bodies during the sixteenth century that those who were associated with seeking out such objects were sometimes understood as necromancers.[121] The fifteenth-century antiquarian Ciriaco d'Ancona described his activities as "awakening the dead."[122] While resurrecting a city was within the province of man, the resurrection of man could only be achieved by God. Renaissance antiquarian activities were bound up with atavistic concerns and superstitions about the earth and, as a result, anxiety necessarily surrounded those who dug up the bodies of ancient Rome.[123]

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[119] Wren Christian, *Empire Without End*, 1.

[120] Translation by Vaughan Hart and Peter Hicks. The letter is widely accepted by scholars as a joint work of Castiglione and Raphael with possible input by Antonio da Sangallo the Younger. Vaughan Hart and Peter Hicks, eds. and trans., *Palladio's Rome: a translation of Andrea Palladio's two guidebooks to Rome* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 177 – 192.

[121] Barkan, "The classical undead,"16. On the association with digging up ruins and necromancy, see also Thomas M. Greene, *The Light in Troy: Imitation and Discovery in Renaissance Poetry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982.

[122] Cited in Greene, *The Light in Troy*, 222.

[123] *Ibid,* 235.

With the prevalence of the association between the discovery of antique figural sculpture and the exhumation and resurrection of the dead in mind, the body of Rosso's figure, with its hollow echoes of virility, can be seen in the context of the heroic body dug up from the ground. Simon Richter has noted of the sculpture that, despite his robust body, the prominent protrusion of the priest's ribs as he twists away from the serpent biting into his flesh places the mortality of his body on display.[124] In the *Fury*, marked by the passage of time, the mortality of the heroic classical body is realized and it takes on its true desiccated form. Stephen Campbell has observed that artists like Rosso and Pontormo, rather than working from *fantasia* or idealization, began to represent bodies "marked by aspects of physical existence – aging, discomfort, fear, privation – which are normally reversed and denied in the completion of a work of art."[125] This denial of death is inherent in the topos propagated during the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries of humanism triumphing over mortality.[126] Paradoxically, Rosso's figure in the *Fury* is an acknowledgment of death, of time, and of the contingency of matter.

But is Rosso's figure really dead? Campbell rightly asks whether a figure in such a condition should be moving.[127] Campbell goes out of his way not to settle on a definitive cause for the figure's deathly but animated state and I think he is right because this uncertainty is one of the key characteristics of the image. However, there is another

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[124] Richter, *Laocoön's Body*, 62.

[125] Campbell, "'*Fare una Cosa Morta*," 605.

[126] Greene, "Resurrecting Rome," 46.

[127] Campbell, "'*Fare una Cosa Morta*,'" 600. One of the grounds on which "great" artists were often praised during the Reniassance was the ability to make "the dead seem dead and the living, living" as Boccaccio had praised Giotto. Norman Land. *The Viewer as Poet: The Renaissance Response to Art* (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994), 5. As Martin Kemp notes, Alberti called on painters in *De pictura* to ensure that a dead figure "declare its deadness right down to its fingertips…" Martin Kemp, introduction to *De pictura*, by Leon Battista Alberti (London: Penguin Books, 2004), 15.

possibility that could be understood from the engraving in the context of exhumed antique sculpture.

As antique figural sculptures are dug up from the earth around Rome like so many dead bodies, their exhumation came to be viewed as a resurrection or reanimation. As Barkan explains, the study of history is always an encounter with the dead, "but the encounter itself becomes a way of raising the dead."[128] Returning once again to the epigraph with which this paper began, Greene describes the paradox of the humanist endeavor, the dual impulse to reach down (literally) into the past and the concomitant desire to then restore and illuminate what is found there.[129] He describes the process as follows:

> At the core of Humanism lies this instinct to reach out into chaos, oblivion, mystery, the alien, the subterranean, the dead – even the demonic – to reach out and in the act of reaching already to be reviving and restoring.[130]

When it came to antique sculpture, Greene's words take on a literal, not just metaphorical meaning. Exhuming and collecting, however, were not enough.[131] A true resurrection, as Greene acknowledges, requires revival and restoration. This was particularly true for antique sculpture for two reasons. First, rediscovered sculptures were frequently fragmented and incomplete and therefore required completion to be made whole.[132] Second, because sculptures were figural, and therefore bodily, the need to identify and

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[128] Barkan, *Unearthing the Past*, 61.

[129] Greene, "Resurrecting Rome," 41.

[130] *Ibid*, 45.

[131] Greene, *The Light in Troy*, 235.

[132] Interestingly for the discussion of the *Fury*, antique sculptures of male nude figures were almost always discovered with the penis broken off or completely missing. It was, therefore, one of the most frequently fragmented body parts even for largely intact sculptures.

complete them was even more compelling than with architectural ruins or non-figural artifacts.

Any one of Martin Van Heemskerk's drawings from his tour of Roman antiquities collections between 1532 and 1537 demonstrate the prevalence of fragmentation (Figure 9). His drawings are full of torsos, animal or human heads, a sandaled foot, a dismembered arm, and incomplete inscriptions, often haphazardly arranged or even piled atop one another. The rediscovery of antique sculpture introduced material objects into the artistic consciousness that were characterized by disjunction, inconsistency, and discontinuity, both as a result of physical fragmentation and the loss of knowledge and sources due to the vagaries of time. The encounter between ancients and moderns was one of translation and interpretation of the aesthetic mediating object. There were antique sculptures whose identities and narrative content were clear, but there were an equal or greater number that lacked this clarity. Viewers therefore, entered into the works of art unearthed from the Roman terrain in order to complete both their form and content.

One of the many ways that Renaissance viewers responded to antique sculpture was through poetry. Some writers described the object's aesthetic qualities and perceived narratives in their own voices, while others gave the statues themselves a voice with which to tell their stories.[133] It is this latter form of ekphrasis that is particularly resonant when considering the trope of resurrecting antique sculpture and Rosso and Caraglio's *Fury*.

The phenomenon of placing words in the mouth of a sculptural figure stemmed in part from the Greek poetic tradition and was frequently imitated by Italian Renaissance

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[133] For a thorough and insightful discussion on the different forms of ekphrasis in response to works of art see John Hollander, *The Gazer's Spirit: Poems Speaking to Silent Works of Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995.

poets who wrote of public statues communicating with their viewers.[134] This form of ekphrasis was particularly popular in response to antique sculpture rediscovered during the Renaissance. Barkan has labeled this "bestowing of a voice upon a mute object" – prosopopoeia.[135] Prosopopoeia is originally a Greek rhetorical device but Barkan uses the term as defined by Paul de Man as "the fiction of an apostrophe to an absent, deceased or voiceless entity, which posits the possibility of the latter's reply and confers upon it the power of speech."[136] To dig a statue up from the earth was not enough, it was then interrogated and asked to reveal its secrets and tell its story.

It is in this context then, that we can return to the poem that often accompanied the *Fury*.[137] The poem, added to some printings after the image had been created, can be seen as a prosopopoeic response to the engraving. Written in the first person from the point of view of the nude male figure, he tells of his emotions "Full of anger and heavy with pain;" and his condition "bearded, thin, alone, and nude…Squalid, unkempt, hirsute, horrendous and crude." The poem conveys solitude and suffering amplifying the emotion evident in the engraved screams but fails in the end to answer the narrative questions raised by the image itself, the same interrogation met by unearthed antique sculpture – who are you, what is your story?

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[134] John Shearman, *Only Connect…Art and the Spectator in the Italian Renaissance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 46.

[135] Leonard Barkan, "Making Pictures Speak: Renaissance Art, Elizabethan Literature, Modern Scholarship," *Renaissance Quarterly* 48:2 (Summer, 1995), 332.

[136] Paul de Man, *The Rhetoric of Romanticism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), 75-76.

[137] The engraved lines appearing in their position below the image also brings to mind the inscriptions and epigraphs that would often appear below antique sculptures and public monuments. Antique epigraphs also became the subject of intense collecting and interpreting activities in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. One of the most thorough and popular collections of collected epigraphs, the *Epigrammata antiquae Urbis*, was published in Rome around 1521. For a discussion of Renaissance interest in epigraphic material, see Weiss, *Renaissance Discovery of Classical Antiquity*, 145 – 166; and Barkan, *Unearthing the Dead*, 26-27.

Rather than resolving the indeterminacy of the image, the poem reinforces and amplifies its unwillingness to reveal its narrative. Barkan's comments on a poem written by Evangelista Maddaleni de' Campodiferro in the voice of the *Sleeping Nymph* sculpture in the Vatican collection are equally appropriate in referring to the poem that accompanies the *Fury*:

> While the statue identifies itself as possessing a consciousness, it reveals little of itself – only that it could reveal something if it chose. What the inscription inscribes is the observer; that is, it turns the statue into a work which knows it is being watched and defines the terms for the watching.[138]

The poem, like the image, simultaneously asserts its own agency in refusing to comply with the desires of viewers while also shifting some of the agency to those viewers – the agency to produce rather than just decipher meaning.

The *Fury* then can be understood as an engraving that takes up antique sculpture, particularly the *Laocoön,* and its relationship to both death and hermeneutics as its subject. Unlike Dente's second *Laocoön* engraving, the *Fury* is not concerned with the sculpture's material status as a monument but instead with antique sculpture's metaphysical status in the early sixteenth century. The medium of engraving, an old English word that originally meant "to dig," becomes a site for exploring the anxieties bound up in the humanist project of resurrecting the past. Like Dente's first *Laocoön*, the *Fury* is concerned with narrative, but rather than Virgil's narrative, the Trojan priest's plight is transposed out of the specific moment in time captured in the sculpture – the moment that anticipates the priest's death - into perpetuity.[139] Doomed to wander the dark forest into which it had been relegated by the cruelty of history, as the poem

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[138] Leonard Barkan, "The Beholder's Tale: Ancient Sculpture, Renaissance Narratives," *Representations* 44 (Autumn, 1993), 147.

[139] Greene observes that Rome itself attains a similar sense of perpetuity through the manipulation of its poetry and its history. *The Light of Troy*, 226.

conveys, the statue is perpetually haunted by the serpents that are never fully successful in bringing about his ultimate demise. The blurring between art object and that which it is meant to represent is made much more opaque in Rosso and Caraglio's *Fury* than was only hinted at in Dente's first *Laocoön*.

(6) Conclusion

While print collectors would have recognized the references to the *Laocoön* and the topos of death associated with antique sculpture, the *Fury* is not an image that required the erudition or specific knowledge of a certain class of viewers. Its unexplained screams, violent movements, and cloying darkness make an appeal to all viewers. In this way, it differed radically from those images whose subjects seemed elusive because they were meant as puzzles to be solved by a learned few.[140] With the *Fury*, the desire to interpret the image, to stabilize its meaning, and concatenate it into a story thereby quieting the screams would have been and is still felt by viewers.[141]

In a recent collection of essays entitled *Subject as Aporia in Early Modern Art*, the editors, Alexander Nagel and Lorenzo Pericolo, sought to explore works of art that made it "impossible for interpretation to settle on a single reading forcing the viewer's effort of interpretation to double back on its own procedures."[142] Nagel and Pericolo

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[140] For an example of such an analysis see Christopher K. Kleinbub, "Bramante's *Ruined Temple* and the Dialectics of the Image," *Renaissance Quarterly* 63, No. 2 (Summer 2010): 412-458.

[141] In Julia Kristeva's conception of horror and the abject, the antidote to fear and discomfort is narrative. She writes: " The solution, commonplace and public at the same time, communicable, shareable, is and will be the narrative. Narrative as the recounting of suffering: fear, disgust, and abjection crying out, they quiet down, concatenated into a story." Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 145.

[142] Alexander Nagel and Lorenzo Pericolo, "Unresolved Images: An Introduction to Aporia as an analytical category in the Interpretation of Early Modern Art," in *Subject as Aporia in Early Modern Art*, eds. Alexander Nagel and Lorenzo Pericolo (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2010), 2. The issue of

acknowledge that aporetic works are "highly singular…an exception" but this is only because they "open a possibility that remains latent in art production generally during the period."[143] Rosso and Carglio's *Fury* is very much an exceptional image, and one that opens up new possibilities for interpretation in accordance with the framework of an aporetic work. And yet, the *Fury* also stands apart from this model. For there are a number of circumstances and underlying currents and anxieties that coalesced in the *Fury*, centered, I think, around the aspect of digging, of unearthing matter, common to both the medium and the subject of the image.

Initially, Baviera's proposition may not have been particularly appealing to an artist in Rosso's position who was trying to make his name in Rome after a dismal beginning riddled with failures. What Baviera offered was not a prestigious public commission; it was a wholly speculative endeavor in a medium that was relatively alien to the Florentine painter. Rosso could not have known who, if anyone, would view the finished product. Despite this, the opportunity presented by Baviera would have also held considerable attraction for Rosso, an artist who was constantly pushing at the boundaries of artistic conventions, a trait that had not always held him in good stead with his patrons. The experimental nature of the *Fury* allowed Rosso free reign to demonstrate his skill and *invenzione* and to challenge the limits of the artist's task to visually produce meaning.

early modern images that have a perceived lack of subject or have resisted interpretation has a long and contested historiography with Nagel and Pericolo's contribution as the most recent. I have benefited from the following sources: Creighton Gilbert, "On Subject and Non-Subject in Italian Renaissance Art," *The Art Bulletin* 34, No. 3 (Sept., 1952): 202-216; Salvatore Settis, *Giorgione's Tempest: Interpreting the Hidden Subject* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990); Seymour Howard, "On Iconology, Intention, Imagos, and Myths of Meaning," *Artibus et* Historiae 17, No.34 (1996): 83 – 94; James Elkins, *Why Are Our Pictures puzzles? On the Modern Origins of Pictorial* Complexity (New York: Routledge, 1999); Michael Cole, "Giambologna and the Sculpture with No Name," *Oxford Art Journal*, 31, No. 3 (2008): 337 – 360; Joost Keizer, "Michelangelo, Drawing, and the Subject of Art."
[143] Nagel and Pericolo, "Unresolved Images," 2-3.

That Rosso engaged with antique sculpture in his first engraving for Baviera seems natural given its prevalence at the time as a subject matter for print as well as for the general humanist enterprise. Because of the material affinities between the two media, engraving was a fertile place for exploring the hermeneutic questions being raised by the interpretation of antique sculpture. While some artists recorded the objects in their status as historical monuments, others sought to reintegrate the form and content that had become disjoined over time and through fragmentation. The *Fury,* on the other hand, rejects both of these approaches, recognizing instead the contingency inherent in asking the dead, or the material object, to speak, to tell us its stories. In his *De vita solitara*, Petrarch had privileged the resurrection of the dead "through the act of reading" but he was equally aware that this effort was fraught, dubious, and conjectural.[144] The truth is, the dead can't speak, and when we think they do, it's really our own voices we hear. These anxieties echo in the screams of Rosso's figures.

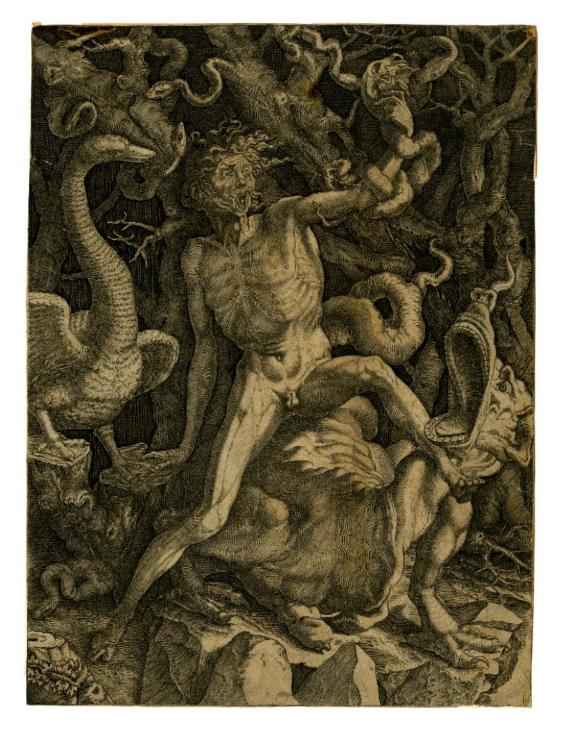[144] Greene, "Resurrecting Rome," 42-43.

Figures

Figure 1. Gian Jacopo Caraglio after Rosso Fiorentino. *Fury.* 1524. Engraving.
245 mm x 182 mm. British Museum, London.
© The Trustees of the British Museum
[AN445515001]

Figure 2. Enea Vico. Plate 8, an antique vase decorated with a head of a bull and a festoon on the body, and two handles terminating in winged female torsos. 1543. Engraving on paper. 248 mm x 205 mm. British Museum, London.
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[AN66741001]

Figure 3. Gian Jacopo Caraglio after Rosso Fiorentino. *Diana set within a niche.* 1526. Engraving on paper. 210 mm x 110 mm. British Museum, London.
© The Trustees of the British Museum
[AN56459001]

Figure 4. Marcantonio Raimondi after Raphael. *Massacre of the Innocents*. 1510 – 1514.
Engraving on paper. 250 mm x 428 mm. The British Museum, London.
© The Trustees of the British Museum
[AN43029001]

Figure 5. Gian Jacopo Caraglio after Rosso Fiorentino (text anonymous). *Fury*. c. 1524.
Engraving. The British Museum, London.
© The Trustees of the British Museum

Figure 6. Marco Dente. *Laocoön*. 1519-1520. Engraving.
395 mm x 281 mm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.
Image withdrawn due to copyright.

Figure 7. Marco Dente. *Laocoön*. 1522-1525. Engraving.
442mm x 328 mm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.
Image withdrawn due to copyright.

Figure 8. Hagesandros, Athenedoros, and Polydoros. *Laocoön and his sons*.
ca. 200 BCE. Marble.
Image withdrawn due to copyright.

Figure 9. Maarten Van Heemskerck. *Antiquities displayed in the Palazzo Santacroce*. c. 1532-7. Drawing on paper. Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett, inv. 79.D.2, vol. 1, fol. 29. Image withdrawn due to copyright.

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Appendix A –Poem Accompanying the *Fury* in Original Italian

Per aspri boschi e solitario horrore
Barbuto magro vo solino e nudo
Di rabbia colmo e carco di dolore
Squalido inculto hirsute horrendo e crudo
Tenebre oscure, notti, ombre e terrore
Ne glicocchi sparentosi albergo e chiudo
Tal che s'el Cigno me'rincontra a forte
Canta, chel corpo mio gli par la morte

Dherba mi pasco in quest'horrido bosco
Di fele amaro tinta et immatura
Bevo di serpi il piu malign tosco
In un teschio di morte afflitta e scura
Il seggio è un drago ame ch'io non conosco
Altro appoggio conforme a mia figura
E dormo sì tra qual che sasso o sterpe
Che, qual tronco, in me l'hedera serpe.