BEAUTY, POWER, PROPAGANDA, AND CELEBRATION:
PROFILING WOMEN IN SIXTEENTH-CENTURY ITALIAN
COMMEMORATIVE MEDALS

by

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*We also certify that written approval has been obtained for any proprietary material contained therein.
To my children, Sofia, Juliet, and Edward
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*Medal images reproduced in this dissertation without collection or museum locations listed were gathered from texts which did not provide this information.*
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Beauty, Power, Propaganda, and Celebration: Profiling Women in Sixteenth-century Italian Commemorative Medals

Abstract

by

CHRISTINE CHIORIAN WOLKEN

In the sixteenth-century, commemorative medals served as some of the most popular objects depicting the ideas and ideals of men and, as I contend, women from Italy. This dissertation considers the personal, cultural, and social significance and function of a select group of medals depicting women in Italy from approximately 1550 to 1620. My examination of this sample group of medals of women can be used to construct a general understanding of the meaning and functions of medals of women in mid to late sixteenth-century Italy which signify the themes and subjects of beauty and chastity, power and propaganda, and the celebration of women as vital members of the Renaissance family as well as individuals in their own right. I further assert that the text and images depicted on the medals both reinforces and contradicts the prescribed behaviors expected of women during this period. All of the medals examined in this dissertation were commissioned by men, but as I explain, many of the women who appear on them most likely took an active role in their own self-fashioning which is reflected in the meaning of the medals.
Introduction

To understand the higher forms of social intercourse at this period, we must keep before our minds the fact that women stood on a footing of perfect equality with men.

Jacob Burckhardt (1818-1897), *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* (1860)  

The issue of the equality of the sexes in the Renaissance has occupied scholars since Burckhardt and has been a popular subject of debate in more recent art historical research. This dissertation contributes to the development in scholarship by contending that, unlike Burckhardt’s suggestion in 1860, women were not considered equals among men in sixteenth-century Italy. Women’s assumed roles and behaviors as wives and daughters positioned them as vital, but not usually equal participants within Italian society. As wives, and more importantly as mothers, they acted mainly as protectors and proponents of the family structure signifying them as important contributors to the overall welfare of the state.

I propose that many noble and non-noble women in these roles contributed to their self-fashioning through medallion imagery. This dissertation describes the prescribed behaviors and expected decorum of women set forth by contemporary literary authors, the Catholic Church, and Renaissance cultural traditions. Furthermore, it examines the position of women as essential members of the sixteenth-century household and as active participants in society as observed through the examination of their commemorative

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2 Marta Ajmar, Elizabeth Cropper, Catherine King, Christine Klapisch-Zuber, Allison Levy, Sara Matthews Greico, Katherine McIver, and Paola Tignali, are just a few authors whose recent work provides crucial information regarding the lives of women during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and whose work I relied on throughout this study of Renaissance women.
medals. My examination of a select group of medals of women between 1550 and 1620 can be used to construct a general understanding of the meaning and functions of medals of women in mid to late sixteenth-century Italy which signify the themes and subjects of beauty and chastity, power and propaganda, and the celebration of women as vital members of the Renaissance family as well as individuals in their own right.

When considered as a group, many questions regarding the medals of women during this period still remain unexplained. What types of medals of women were produced in the period? Who made them and for whom? How were they produced? Why were they desired as objects of commemoration? And, most importantly, how did they function in that capacity? Consensus concerning these and other questions relating to a woman’s role in constructing their image was never uniform. Gendered meaning abounds in the text and imagery of the medals of the late sixteenth century. My interpretation of the multiple meanings of the images and allegories on medals of women reflects the general preoccupation with feminine beauty and noble virtues particularly that of chastity, which was the most valued characteristic of women and that is expressed in their medals.

There were many sixteenth-century women who had the financial means to commission medals, but there is little documentation to support an increase in female

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3 Lorne Campbell asks these same or similar questions in his introduction to his work on Renaissance Portraits of the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries, but I feel the same questions must be asked with regard to sixteenth-century medals depicting women. Surprisingly, Campbell does not discuss even one portrait medal throughout the entire text. Lorne Campbell, Renaissance Portraits: European Portrait-Painting in the 14th, 15th and 16th Centuries (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990), X.

4 Joyce de Vries also includes modesty and loyalty as being characteristics desired of women that are present in the images, inscriptions and mottos of the medals of fifteenth-century women, in particular Caterina Sforza. She also points out that masculinity and in particular a sense of authority is expressed in the medals of men since they are many times shown wearing armor, holding a weapon, and/or astride a horse. Joyce de Vries, “Caterina Sforza’s Portrait Medals: Power, Gender, and Representation in the Italian Renaissance Court,” Women’s Art Journal 24, no. 1(Spring-Summer 2003): 24.
patronage of medals during the period. Consequently, almost all medals of women from the mid-to-late sixteenth century were most likely commissioned by men. Although the majority of women did not commission medals, my research validates the general conception that these medals provided a cultural and artistic means of expression for them. Joan Kelly stated that, “the literature, art, and philosophy of a society, which gives us direct knowledge of the attitudes of the dominant sector of that society toward women also yield indirect knowledge about our other criteria: namely, the sexual, economic, political, and cultural activities of women.” For this reason, I suggest that medals of women be further considered as significant instruments of familial negotiation, propaganda, and self-celebration as well as historical documents from which we can derive information about women from sixteenth-century Italy.

For many of the medals discussed in the following chapters, I contend that the commissioning of medals of women by the men in their lives provided an opportunity for these women to demonstrate their abilities to actively influence their familial legacy and their own self-fashioning through imagery. Roger Crum has put forth a scenario that is applicable to my interpretation of the relationship between the patron, artist, and sitter of the medals examined in this dissertation. He wrote,

Let us imagine that five hundred years from now a historian discovers my father’s checkbook. Therein he or she would find entries for the house, furniture, carpet, drapers, appliances, china, paintings, and other goods and services, all entered in my father’s hand. If we suppose that such documentation is sufficient and self-evident, it might seem an incredible find; with just one document, the portrait of a turn-of-the-century patron could theoretically emerge. But, for me, writing at the present time, that piece of documentation is far too limited, since I am closer to the historical moment and to the circumstances and extent of my father’s “patronage.” The truth is that my mother chose the house and everything in it, and her

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will is supreme – if not exclusive – when renovations are made, a chair recovered, or a painting selected for purchase or removal. My father is far from being a twenty-first-century patron: he just pays the bills. Patronage for my parents is a process, not a solitary act; it involves them differently, and my mother is involved to an extent that is equal to and usually greater than that of my father.  

Crum’s modern analogy implies the incomplete record of patronage that documentary or archival material suggests. I maintain that many of the women examined in this dissertation did make decisions about important things in their lives, including how they are portrayed in portraits or portrait medals, not unlike modern women who also take active roles in how they are portrayed, but whose husbands may have “written the check.” Thus, my study reveals the influence, albeit sometimes subtle, of sixteenth-century women in the subjects and manner of portrait design of their commemorative medals. Through the use of medals, many of these women perpetuated their individual ideas, successes, influences and legacies, as well as their support of their fathers and husbands in the traditional roles of wife and daughter.

This dissertation specifically considers the significance and function of a select group of medals depicting women from the cities of Reggio Emilia, Ferrara, Milan, Florence, Cremona, and Bologna from approximately 1550 to 1620. The most recent and comprehensive medal catalogs, including the two-volume *Le medaglie italiane del XVI secolo* by Guiseppe Toderi and Fiorenza Vannel and the three-volume *Italian Medals c. 1530-1600* by Philip Attwood, focus on medals and medallists ranging in date from 1530 to 1634, the period after George Francis Hill’s *A Corpus of Italian Medals of the Renaissance before Cellini* which stops at 1530. I have taken a similar approach.  

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1550, medal production had been influenced by new changes in medal production technologies, the popularity of the minting process, and the greater availability of the medal medium to non-noble individuals, all factors which either directly or indirectly affected the aesthetic or functional qualities in the medals examined in my dissertation.

While my focus spans 1550 to the first decades of the seventeenth century, medal production reached its zenith in Italy between 1550 and 1560, likely coinciding with the period of an increased popularity of painted portraits and the ability of families and collectors to acquire these commemorative objects. This decade also corresponds with the production of the greatest number of medals in my study, including those of the women of the Este, Sacratì, Trotti, Gonzaga, and Medici families. However, a number of the medals I have analyzed are not dated but were probably produced in the years after 1560. For example, it is likely that many of these medals commemorating non-noble women from Reggio Emilia and Ferrara discussed in Chapter Two belong to the decades after 1560 and before 1600 based on artistic attribution, stylistic analysis, and geographical origin. In Chapter Six, I analyze the medal of Lavinia Fontana, produced by Felice Casoni in 1611 which marks the latest date of a medal examined in this study.

Since the large corpus of medals of women from sixteenth-century Italy precludes a comprehensive examination within the confines of a dissertation, I have selectively chosen to study certain medals of women from the largest medal production centers in Italy made by generally well-known artists. A number of medals I have chosen depict women from some of the most prominent families in the Italian courts from the mid to late sixteenth century. I have also included a smaller number of medals of non-courtly and non-noble women, mainly within the context of Mannerist medals from Ferrara.
discussed in Chapter Two. I believe the medals I have selected based on this criterion are representative of cross-cultural interpretations which emphasize the popular themes of the period as well as correspond to the geographical areas of greatest importance in relation to the production of the medals of women.

Although medals were produced in almost all major cities in Italy in the sixteenth century, I have specifically excluded medals of women from Rome and Venice because the political and socio-cultural atmosphere differed significantly from the courtly cities of Italy, raising issues beyond the scope of this dissertation.\footnote{Two exceptions are the medals of Lavinia Fontana by Felice Casoni, 1611 and the medals of Diana Scultori and her husband Francesco Volterra, 1570 (?) by T.R. Their medals were produced while these women artists were working in Rome. The large city of Naples, which was under heavy Spanish influence, has been excluded as were the medals from Padua. Very few medals were produced in sixteenth-century Naples, possibly due to the lack of Spanish interest in the medium. Philip Attwood, \textit{Italian Medals 1530-1600 in British Public Collections} (London: British Museum Press, 2003) 1:23. Padua had a strong tradition of medal-making in the sixteenth century that was heavily influenced by antiquarian interests. Numerous medals of women by Giovanni da Cavino are good examples of the production of medals of women in Padua, but are not included here since most of his portrait medals were struck, not cast, and represent reproductions of ancient women from Roman, in particular the wives and daughters of Emperors, from ancient Roman coins. Graham Pollard, \textit{Renaissance Medals}, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 1:452.}

Furthermore, a major focus of patrons and medallists in both of these cities was the depiction and celebration of government and religious officials, not women.\footnote{A proportionally smaller number of medals of women were produced in Rome or Venice, but again, they offer varying interpretations and may have been produced for other purposes beyond the reach of this dissertation. For specific examples in Rome see, the medals of famous ancient women from artists such as Alessandro Cesati and the medals of Vittoria Colonna. For more specific information on the medals of Vittoria Colonna, see Marjorie Och, "Portrait Medals of Vittoria Colonna: Representing the Learned Woman," in \textit{Women as Sites of Culture: Women's Roles in Cultural Formation from the Renaissance to the Twentieth Century}, ed. Susan Shifrin (Burlington, VT: Ashgate: 2002), 153-66. For medallic examples from Venice see the medals of Caterina Sandella, mistress of Pietro Aretino by Alessandro Vittoria, and that of Elisabetta Querini by Danese Cattaneo.} This is also supported by the large number of government or papal sponsored struck medals, a medium not explicitly examined here.\footnote{Most medals of private patrons from Rome and some from Venice were also struck, not cast, and are thus not represented in my study.} The aforementioned cities account for the thriving centers of medal production during this period, and my study primarily acknowledges a number of medals
of women cast by the most active artists including Pastorino de’ Pastorini, Alfonso Ruspagiari, Giambattista Cambio called Bombarda, Jacopo da Trezzo, Leone Leoni, and Domenico Poggini from the cities of Ferrara, Reggio Emilia, Milan, and Florence.

Nearly all of the women discussed in the following chapters were the wives or daughters of the most prominent and wealthy families in the court cities of Italy in the mid to late sixteenth century. The limited scope of my study includes only those medals of identified women who were directly related to a family patriarch, either by marriage or lineage. Additionally excluded are the numerous medals of unknown women since a study of their attribution and function would necessitate research outside the parameters of this dissertation. A number of one-sided medals of women analyzed in this study were later combined with reverses from different artists or even later centuries making them hybrid examples which present issues of authenticity and attribution which are beyond the range of my expertise. Consequently, there remain a large number of medals of women from this period that I have not analyzed, and I acknowledge that they may or may or not contribute to the framework I have provided in this dissertation. Furthermore, I have excluded any extensive examination of medals depicting men, except in reference or comparison with medals of women, since they pose other issues than at hand.

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10 Most obvious is the exclusion of the medals of the daughter-in-laws of Cosimo de’ Medici, including those of Joanna of Austria and Bianca Cappello, wives to Francesco de’ Medici, Christine of Lorraine, wife of Ferdinando de’ Medici, and Eleonora di Garzia di Toledo, wife of Piero de’ Medici. These medals belong to a separate, but no less important group of medals belonging to the Medici family but which no longer functioned with the fundamental intent of political propaganda set forth by Cosimo as seen in the medals his wife Eleonora of Toledo and his daughters Isabella and Lucrezia who are the subjects of Chapter Five.

11 Toderi and Vannel point out that in their catalog of 2876 medals, 105 medals depict sitters that are unknown, and of those 76 depict women. This large proportion of unknown medals of women suggests a specific function, possibly that the medals were utilized as betrothal pieces. New research should be directed to these medals which may support the current study on the function of medals of women. Giuseppe Toderi and Fiorenza Vannel, _Le medaglie italiane del XVI secolo_ (Firenze: Polistampa, 2000), 1: 24.
Therefore, I offer a cultural and contextual analysis of several extant medals of women within these limits.

My analysis of these selected medals identifies and examines women and their roles in the preservation and promotion of the legitimacy and authority of their families as well as their adherence to, or rejection of, the prescribed behaviors set down in numerous Renaissance texts related to the moral position of women. One of the principle expectations of women in the sixteenth century was to bear children, male offspring especially, for the continuation of family line. In the Renaissance, women were mainly confined to the home and domestic affairs as was suggested by many fifteenth and sixteenth-century literary texts which prescribed the proper behavior of women, valuing virtue and chastity above all. My dissertation considers commemorative medals of women in the sixteenth century as reinforcing these notions of female chastity and decorum and familial legitimacy and celebration. On one hand, I argue that commemorative medals served as straightforward representations of women and documents of female achievements by their adoption or adaptation of male-centered humanist models of self-celebration. On the other, this female agency, while legitimate, was stifled by the male-centered culture of the Renaissance court which restricted such power for women as can be seen in the artistic and literary tradition of the sixteenth century. I hope to demonstrate that sixteenth-century medals of women functioned in both spheres.

These medals belong to a period during which religious piety and chastity were the most important characteristics for wives and daughters to uphold, and women were expected to conform to the rules of proper conduct and demeanor set forth by men.
These virtues and expectations were firmly set forth in contemporary literature as cultural expectations. I assert that a duality between expectation and actual behavior existed which collides in the imagery on these medals, giving contemporary viewers a sense of conformity alongside individuality in the presentation of text and image and obverse and reverse. The meaning of medal imagery is difficult to discern in many cases, and this is not by accident. The very function of the medal conveys dual, perplexing, or hidden messages which contribute to the reasons the medium was so attractive to patrons, and why their meaning may be so puzzling. My study attempts to clarify a number of underlying messages, some of these which adhere strictly to gender roles while others seem to undermine them.

On the surface, sixteenth-century medals of women reflect their subservient roles described in contemporary writings. In comparison to their fifteenth-century counterparts, these medals reveal the more restrictive role of women imposed by political and religious shifts throughout the century. Upon further analysis though, I demonstrate this large group of women, including those from non-noble lineage who were depicted as wives, mothers, and daughters, and usually associated with the male members of their families, are worthy subjects in their own right, demonstrating their powerful abilities to affect their families’ and their own position in society through medallic imagery, setting them apart from their fifteenth-century counterparts.

The philosophical context in which sixteenth-century medals were created reflect ideas first set forth by Aristotle and supported by later theorists during the period that contributed to the negative connotations of the nature of women based on their subservience and lesser intelligence and strength. This is important first, because the
subjects and mottos represented on these medals on one hand reflect this thinking, but, on another counter it, and second, because the women of the period were required to uphold prescribed proper behavior, especially to maintain their chastity in order to ensure familial legitimacy. In Book III of Della Famiglia, written 1434, Leon Battista Alberti discussed the subject of family and a wife’s role in maintaining and protecting it. He emphasized the importance of the well-managed family and the woman’s responsibilities including “watching over the children, seeing to the provisions, [and] supervising the household.”

He added that women “are almost all timid by nature, soft, slow, and therefore more useful when they sit still and watch over our things. It is as though nature thus provided for our well-being, arranging for men to bring things home and for women to guard them.” Guarding the family also meant maintaining her chastity which Alberti claimed was the “jewel of her family.”

Baldassare Castiglione in The Courtier echoed Alberti’s sentiments in the sixteenth century as he advised men that:

\[\text{it is wisely made the rule that women are allowed to fail in everything else, and not be blamed, so long as they can devote all their resources to preserving that one virtue of chastity, failing which there would be doubts about one’s children and the bond which binds the whole world on account of blood, and of each man’s natural love for his own offspring, would be dissolved.}\]

Thus, the well-maintained family, secured by female chastity was crucial to the continuity of Renaissance society. The importance of the virtue of chastity is paramount to this study of medals of women, and is a theme reinforced in most of the medal imagery discussed in the following chapters.

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13 Ibid., 78.
14 Ibid., 83.
As contemporary authors advised, women were instructed to be passive and private while men maintained an active, public role in society. This coincided with the expectations of female virtue and chastity in order to maintain decorum, and was reinforced by the belief that women were responsible only for domestic duties. Part of the domestic duty was to sustain a good family, and this could only be carried out with the proper behavior exhibited by wives, mothers, and sisters. In many instances the nurturing of the stable family became a symbol for the secure state. Thus, the proper preservation, perpetuation, and protection of the family were representative of the preservation, perpetuation and protection of the state.

Consequently, one consistent motivation for patrons commissioning medals was to preserve or celebrate their families’ rank and position. The medal, produced in multiples and commonly given to family members, also functioned as a public form of art when distributed to and viewed by outside friends and others as tokens of commemoration or celebration. Most of the medals of women depict them as wives, mothers, and daughters, and a number of medals of women that are discussed in this study honor the strategic marriage alliances formed to gain or maintain the power and influence of certain families. Marriages between powerful families are recorded in numerous medals related to these events and to political coalitions specifically from the ruling families of Florence, Ferrara, and Mantua. In addition, powerful families and leaders, such as the Medici in Florence, utilized the art of the period including medals as propaganda on levels not seen during the previous century. Other families such as the Este of Ferrara and the Gonzaga of Mantua used medals not only as records of public
events such as marriages, but also as personal mementoes meant to be viewed by smaller, more private audiences.

My contention is that women played a dual role in preserving their family. They provided legitimate heirs and at times wielded power by taking control of the state or business affairs in the absence of their husbands. They carefully acted as vital participants in the family structure and society which, as a whole, is mirrored in the medals which are both public and private objects pervading the public sphere of the male and the domestic sphere of the female while also representing the passive and active roles of women in the sixteenth century. The medals examined in this dissertation reflect these concepts as conveyed in the inscriptions, mottos, and reverse imagery, most of which identify women as virtuous wives and mothers but also as intelligent and talented individuals. Men commissioned these medals in which the notion of the family and the state is manifest. But, the women depicted on the medals who were connected to these men, participated in the preservation and continuation of the family and the state, an important role fully acknowledged in the sixteenth century. These medals contain symbolism of the popular theories of the time regarding the status and state of women, but also indicate a more public role for women. Specific examples of this are set forth in Chapters Three, Four, Five and Six in a geographically situated study of women in Ferrara, Milan, Florence, and Cremona and Rome.

Although much historical, cultural, and personal information can be derived from the study of medals, medals produced after 1550 and before 1620, have been mostly overlooked in the art historical literature of women to date. Eleonora Luciano’s 1997 dissertation, *Medals of Women from the Italian Renaissance Courts: from Cecilia*
Gonzaga to Isabella of Aragon opened the door to a greater understanding of women during the fifteenth century in relation to their commemorative medals. No similar study of groups of medals of women of the mid to late sixteenth century exists. Therefore, my study expands the awareness of women’s contribution to the visual culture of the sixteenth-century in Italy through their medals.

**Historiography: Unveiling the Lacunae in the Literature on Sixteenth-Century Medals of Women**

There are currently no comprehensive studies on groups of medals of women produced after 1530, an oversight this dissertation corrects. The current literature on Renaissance medals historically has been buttressed by the early works of Alfred Armand, Aloïss Heiss, Cornelius von Fabriczy and most of all, Sir George Francis Hill. But it is in the tradition of these great works, in particular that of Hill, that one finds so little information regarding medals of women as well as a bias against the medals of the sixteenth-century in general. This partiality reflects the taste, not necessarily the aesthetic judgment, of some of these authors.

Scholars’ lack of enthusiasm toward mid-to-late sixteenth-century medals, beginning with Fabriczy and Hill continues to have an effect on the study of these medals today. The work of early British scholars, such as Hill, exemplifies this bias but must be also be qualified within the context of the period. Philip Attwood stated that when Hill began his work in the Department of Coins and Medals at the British Museum, the reluctance to analyze sixteenth-century medals was based on a number of factors including the cheap, mass-produced medals dominating the British market at the time,

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and the influence of Alfonso Legros and other artists as well as members of the
department at the British Museum who attempted to re-popularize the cast medal,
recalling those of the fifteenth century, in particular Pisanello.\footnote{Attwood, \textit{Italian Medals}, 1:71.} Furthermore, many of
the sixteenth-century medals did not find favor among collectors based on the poor
aesthetic quality of the medals, or as questions of authenticity were raised. Both
ostensible issues were new considerations for collectors of the later nineteenth century
who were partial to the medals produced by artists before 1530. Unlike papal medals,
which are identifiable historical objects, the medals of the later part of the sixteenth
century caused early collectors to question their accuracy of identification since details of
the sitter, artist, or historically relevant information may not have been as apparent or
even available. The general bias was also reflected in the ideology of the Pre-
Raphaelites, the mid-nineteenth-century group of British artists who rejected the style of
the sixteenth-century Mannerists and who instead looked to the fifteenth-century artists
for inspiration. Early scholars of medals such as Hill also blamed the popularity of the
struck medal and the adoption of the screw press technology in the latter part of the
sixteenth-century for the lack of skill in the quality of many of the medals from the
period. Furthermore, the lack of reverse imagery on a number of medals, in particular
those made by Pastorino and the other Emilian artists, contributed to scholars’
preconceptions of the medals and the medallists who were viewed as lacking the skills to
create intricate and interesting reverses. These authors’ disappointment in the quality of
the medals additionally reflects an overall aversion to Mannerism, a style evident in the
medals of the aforementioned artists, prevalent in the scholarship of the late nineteenth
and early twentieth century.
Alfred Armand, one of the earliest authors on the subject, compiled a three volume study of Italian medals from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. In his *Les médailleurs italiens des quinzième et seizième siècles*, published in Paris in 1883-1887, Armand listed numerous artists and medals beginning with Pisanello in the fifteenth century and ending with medals produced until 1600. Armand’s volumes span two hundred years of medal production and represent one of the first comprehensive catalogues of Italian medals. As observed by Giuseppe Toderi and Fiorenza Vannel, authors of the most comprehensive catalogue of Italian sixteenth-century medals, one must be aware that while Armand’s work is standard for any student of medals, it is limited in scope because Armand was not able to verify the medals’ attributions, provenance, or physical attributes such as diameter and dimensions.\(^{18}\) According to the later authors, Armand’s knowledge derived mainly from suggestions and descriptions in letters from curators or scholars associated with museums.

Contemporary with Armand, Aloïss Heiss published *Le mèdailleurs de la renaissance*, an eight volume catalogue of Renaissance medals arranged by medallist also beginning with Pisanello which includes image plates to illustrate his entries and which was of great assistance in identifying and selecting the medals for this study. His addition of family biographies, where possible, is helpful as is his inclusion of reproduced portrait prints of many of the medal sitters and family coat of arms where applicable.

A little more than a decade after the volumes of Armand and Heiss, Cornelius Fabriczy contributed research on medals of both the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in his text *Italian Medals*, 1903. He defined the medal by saying:

In both reliefs the artist should express his own artistic character; he should inspire the portrait with intellect and soul, infuse into the allegory individuality and life, the embodiment of his own ideas and talents, so that his work, limited though its sphere may be, may appeal to the beholder as a genuine work of art, revealing to him a glimpse into the mind of its creator.\(^\text{19}\)

Although his definition of the medal holds true for both centuries, in his introduction and his description of the new technologies of the sixteenth-century, Fabriczy stated,

> In the course of our inquiries we shall see how the new method [striking] found ever-increasing favour in the Cinquecento, so that about 1550 the cast medal had been almost entirely driven from the field—no way to the advantage of the artistic quality of the productions of this branch of art, which sank lower and lower, until finally in the seventeenth century it shared in the general degradation of the arts.\(^\text{20}\)

Although not fully comprehensive, Fabriczy’s work was one of the first serious studies in the twentieth century of Italian medals and reflected the growing interest of scholars in the field of numismatics and commemorative medals of the Renaissance. Fabriczy’s contribution is significant and must be taken into consideration in any study of Renaissance medals. However, his overall partiality to fifteenth century medals represents the popular scholarly notions of the time regarding the less-esteemed portrait medals of the sixteenth century which I counter in this dissertation.

No study of medals would be possible without the work of Sir George Francis Hill. Of all scholars in the field, past and present, Hill has contributed the largest corpus of material related to medals of the Italian Renaissance. Hill’s volumes on the medals of the Renaissance must be the starting point for any student of the subject. Hill’s two volume *A Corpus of Italian Medals of the Renaissance before Cellini*, which incorporates Renaissance medals up to the time of Cellini, was initially meant to include the medals


\(^{20}\)Ibid., 1:15.
produced throughout the sixteenth century. With the challenge of the enormous amount of information and material related to sixteenth-century medals, and because his opinions of the lack of artistic skill demonstrated in medals post-1530, Hill neglected to complete this second volume. But, he does not leave his readers lacking information. He reserves a large section for sixteenth-century medal entries in his catalogue of the Kress Collection of Renaissance Bronzes published as the Dreyfus Collection in Oxford in 1931 and as the Kress Collection in the National Gallery in Washington D.C. in 1960. In his numerous publications, Hill definitively became the leading scholar of the Renaissance medal and is today only matched by the breadth of another expert on the subject, Graham Pollard.

Although Hill’s work is indispensable to the modern scholar, his bias against the sixteenth-century Italian medal, based on artistic inferiority, is more than obvious. I believe this has contributed, from a very early date, to the overall lack of interest of subsequent authors in their publications on the subject. Although Hill readily admits that historical information can be obtained from these medals, he constantly reminds his readers of the diminished quality of later sixteenth-century medals. With reference to the medals produced in the later sixteenth century versus those of the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, Hill stated that work of medal-making fell into the hands of inferior artists and as such compares poorly to the painting and sculpture that was produced during the same period. 21

Years later, Hill stated,

The reasons for its decay we have traced, I think, in two things: the neglect of the artist of the maximum Respice finem, to keep before him always the

final product of his art, and not to let himself be carried away by the immediate delight in the material in which he is working; and secondly, in the mechanization of the methods of execution and reproduction, which placed the medal as a convenient tool in the hands of authorities who cared less for artistic than for political aims. 22

Thus, it is in the work of Hill that one encounters indifference based on the perceived diminished artistic value of sixteenth-century medals. Hill bases his claim primarily on the technological changes that occurred in the production of medals by the mid-sixteenth century, beginning with the struck medals by Benvenuto Cellini. From a purely technical standpoint, it may be true that many of the medals and medallists discussed here may not stand up to the quality of the earlier generation of artists, but such statements from leading authors such as Hill has, I believe, dissuaded later scholars to take up the study of medals produced during the sixteenth century to prove otherwise. This is unfortunate because the sixteenth century was a period in which many more medals, including medals of women, were produced than in the preceding century. A large number of medals of the highest quality were also produced from artists such as Leone Leoni. The variety of artists producing and patrons commissioning medals from all over Italy and elsewhere provides today’s scholars with a wealth of information on the artists, individuals, and families of the sixteenth century. The medals also provide some of the most wide-ranging styles seen in Renaissance art that reflect geographical locations and the personal and public functions of the medal.

Even if one may agree with Hill regarding the inferior physical nature of the mid to late sixteenth-century medal, I believe it is even more important to further investigate these medals artistically as well as historically in order to qualify or disqualify his opinion as well as recognize the positive aspects of the medal imagery produced by

exceptionally skillful medallists, a task I have assumed in my examination of these medals.

Graham Pollard’s multiple contributions to the study of medals are a significant starting point for my study. His most important work to date is his extensive catalogue on the medal collection of the Medici in Florence, today displayed in the Museo Nazionale del Bargello. Acknowledging that “The medal in Italy in the sixteenth-century had a remarkable vitality and variety of form,” and that, “…the greatest sophistication and variety in the medal remained in Italy,” Pollard also added that,

the dramatic alteration was wrought by both social and technical changes, the social change was the widespread adoption of the medal as a form of propaganda for the State or the Dynasty and the technical change was the universal production of medals by striking them at a mint rather than casting them under the supervision of a sculptor.

Like Hill, Pollard’s contribution to the study of medals has influenced the literature on medals since the mid-twentieth century. Pollard’s early approach to sixteenth-century medals echoes Hill, but in his latest catalogue, written with the assistance of Eleonora Luciano and Maria Pollard, on the medals from the Kress Collection in the National Gallery in Washington D.C., Pollard acknowledged the original achievements in the production of the medal in the sixteenth century. These achievements included, “the widespread use of striking for the court medal, the development of the pseudo-antique medal, and the powerful survival of the cast personal portrait medal.” He also noted that “the medal began to express autocracy, and for the first time a series of medals appeared that gave contemporary commemoration to the achievements of one reign, that

23 Graham Pollard, Medaglie italiane dell’alto Rinascimento (Firenze: Museo Nazionale del Bargello, 1983), 17, 23.
24 Ibid. 3.
25 Pollard, Renaissance Medals, 1:XXXIV.
of Cosimo de’ Medici, grand duke of Tuscany.” ²⁶ These observations are helpful in offering a new approach in scholarship regarding sixteenth-century medals. Pollard’s National Gallery catalog is also the first of its kind in recent years to provide full details of the metal composition for each medal and to depict images of the medals to scale. His technical notes are comprehensive and provide helpful information to the student of medals as these details may suggest function, a significant consideration for this dissertation. For example, if one side of a medal shows more wear or abrasions than the other, it may suggest the manner in which it was handled or displayed. Information as to holes or punches in the medals can also be helpful and are provided in the text.

Two of the most comprehensive studies of sixteenth-century medals recently published by Giuseppe Toderi and Fiorenza Vannel and by Philip Attwood take a more positive approach to these later sixteenth-century medals and are the basis for this work. Unlike Hill or Pollard, Toderi and Vannel’s Le medaglie italiane del XVI secolo includes medals from public and private collections throughout the world, and corroborates information from all of the existing literature on the subject. They also address Hill’s negative opinion set out in his Corpus. They point out that not all artists of the sixteenth century reached lofty heights of excellence, but that this was also true of artists, in particular anonymous artists, of the previous century whose work was less skillful than artists such as Pisanello.²⁷ In their three-volume work, they deliberately avoid judgments based on artistic value. Their primary concern is the documentation of each medal as well as an accompanying illustration when possible. Their work includes entries of an astounding 2,876 medals, 935 of which were absent from Armand since they were not

²⁶ Ibid.
²⁷ Toderi and Vannel, Le medaglie italiane, 1:21.
known to him.\textsuperscript{28} Updated biographies are provided for each medallist along with as much historical-biographical information as possible on each individual depicted on the medal. Toderi’s and Vannel’s three volume work is an essential tool for any student of medals, but was particularly helpful for my research because it is the most comprehensive text to date.\textsuperscript{29}

Currently, Philip Attwood provides the most complete catalogue of sixteenth-century medals located in public collections throughout Britain. This is significant since these museums, including the British Museum, London and the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, have the largest collections of medals outside of Italy and the Kress Collection in Washington D.C. Attwood noted that no medals discussed in his text are included in Hill’s \textit{Corpus} since Hill ends with medals cast “about 1530,” the date from which Attwood begins his assessment. Attwood’s work on medals not only includes a comprehensive list of medals along with descriptions and biographies, but the most thorough introduction to the sixteenth-century Italian medal to date. He situates the medal within the artistic context of portraiture media and continues with a lengthy description of the major cities involved in the production of medals. He provides some of the most useful information with regard to the function of the medal, and describes at least eight possible reasons for the commission and production of a commemorative medal, many of which are attributed to the medals in the following chapters.\textsuperscript{30} The technical aspects of medal-making and medal production are an important aspect on which Attwood focuses

\textsuperscript{28} Ibid., 1:22.
\textsuperscript{29} The only downfall with the three-volume text is that Toderi and Vannel do not list the collection to which each medal belongs, although they do indicate bibliographic references for each medal entry.
\textsuperscript{30} Attwood lists the following as possible functions of the commemorative Renaissance medal: commemoration of a marriage ceremony; the celebration of a relationship, such as husband and wife; as a show of friendship; for self-promotion; as an exemplar; as a posthumous commemoration; for the display of classical subjects; an object commissioned for profit alone; for propagandistic purposes; for the commemoration of a building project in Attwood, \textit{Italian Medals}, 1:31, 53-59.
on, and he tracks the technical developments of the medal in the sixteenth century while including a section devoted to the materials used in medal-making during the period.

Lastly, Attwood dedicates a chapter to the diffusion of Italian medals in sixteenth-century Europe which sheds some light on the importance and impact of these medals abroad. The exchange of medals as gifts was one their prominent functions, and in the sixteenth century, these medals were passed as gifts between ruling and aristocratic families.

When possible, the following chapters will trace the movement of some of these medals which demonstrates their far-reaching reception and influence in and beyond Italy.

Almost all of the authors from the nineteenth-century onward provide some information on the sitter who is depicted on the medal, but of the most recent catalogues of medals, Attwood supplies the most thorough and reliable biographies, references, and historical information on each individual, sitter and artist alike, for which this study is deeply indebted.

As a connoisseur and scholar of the Renaissance medal, Stephen Scher seems to agree in some respects with Hill and Pollard on the decline in quality of the medal during the period although he also acknowledges the fact that there are a great number of well-executed medals produced in Italy after 1530. In agreement with Hill and Pollard he said that, “the introduction of the screw press which produced struck medals, led to the

31 Scher organized the 1994 exhibition The Currency of Fame: Portrait Medals of the Renaissance and brought together many of the medals from the National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C. and The Frick Collection. The exhibition catalogue, along with a supplement to the catalogue published in The Medal, was an essential tool to my research. Scher, along with number of contributing authors provides a strong introduction to the history and functions of the medal in the Renaissance, followed by a catalogue of medals from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in Italy as well as German, French, and English medals of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Scher and the other authors provide comprehensive biographies of medallists along with detailed descriptions and useful analyses of the medals. Scher’s edited publication, Perspectives on the Renaissance Medal is a collection of twelve essays by leading medal scholars who focused on issues such as medal attributions of sixteenth-century medals, subjects and themes of Renaissance medals, Renaissance developments in coins and medals, and the subject of antiquarianism in the imagery of the Italian Renaissance medal that contributed to my interpretations of the medals.
increasing number of die-engravers responsible for producing medals which then led to a decline in quality and style.”

But, he also stated that, “Beginning in the sixteenth century there are many fine products from the hands of highly competent medalists…but it is still in the cast medal that one encounters the finest and most exciting work.”

Although improvements in striking technology may have contributed to the deterioration of medal design, it must be realized that many of the medals of individuals from the sixteenth century, in particular the women from the Medici, Este, and Gonzaga families, are cast and not struck. Scher is correct when he stated, “The development of the medal in Italy in the sixteenth century was affected by the introduction of the screw press, by drastic changes in the political landscape, and by shifts in taste,” but it should not necessarily reflect the decline of the artistic quality of the cast medal. So, to generalize the artistic decay of the medal of the mid to late sixteenth century is to mistakenly group struck and cast medals into one category that overshadows the artistic talent present in many of the cast medals of the sixteenth century. I agree that some of the effects of these changes in technology affected the production of medals of sixteenth-century women, but I do not believe that it necessarily decreased the quality of artistry. All of the medals mentioned in the following pages are cast, not struck, which should give a good indication of the unwarranted, and many times negative, generalizations by previous experts.

More focused studies on specific issues of Renaissance medals, in particular medals from the fifteenth century, have been published by Luke Syson, an important

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33 Ibid.
34 Ibid.
scholar on many facets of the Renaissance. His chapter in *The Sculpted Object 1400-1700* entitled “Consorts, mistresses and exemplary women: the female medallic portrait in fifteenth-century Italy,” and his contribution with Dora Thornton in *Objects of Virtue: Art in Renaissance Italy*, both contribute to the study of medals of women in the Renaissance, albeit from the fifteenth century.\(^{35}\) His work in *The Sculpted Object* was a starting point for my study since he focused on the most important issues surrounding the medals of women such as Isabella d’Este, Beatrice della Torre Turchi, Lucrezia Borgia, Isotta degli Atti, and Cecilia Gonzaga. He considered the expected behavior of women of the period, the conventions for portraying women on medals, and the functions of medals, depicting both men and women. His concentration on the themes of beauty, chastity, and decorum, provided a foundation to my analysis of similar themes in the medals of women from the sixteenth century.

Eleonora Luciano’s 1997 dissertation currently provides the only large-scale study that deals directly with medals of women, and is the only body of work which directly focuses on the medals of women in Italy as a group.\(^{36}\) It is a patronage driven study of women from the fifteenth-century Italian courts, and includes the examination of medals of women such as Cecilia Gonzaga, Isotta degli Atti, Eleonora of Aragon, Lucrezia Borgia, Elisabetta Gonzaga, Emilia Pia, Isabella d’Este, Jacoba Correggia, a number of women from the Gonzaga court, and Caterina Sforza. Using Hill as one of her


main sources, she considers the medals within the artistic context of the period and attempts to reveal the function of the medal in relation to each patron or sitter, and focuses on the medal as a form of portraiture.37

Luciano’s dissertation is the starting point from which I begin my study of sixteenth-century medals of women. Mine maintains a similar organizational structure, but is concerned with the medals of women from the following century. Regarding the fifteenth century, Luciano states that “By the end of the century, a relatively large number of women, about 100, had medals; however, this represents only about one tenth of the total production of medals during that period.”38 In the sixteenth century, there was a vast increase in the number of medals produced, including those of women. For example, there are more than 100 extant medals of women by Pastorino de’ Pastorini alone indicating a similar scenario for the much larger number of medals produced in the sixteenth century. As stated earlier, I could not examine all medals of women from the century in my study, but this body of work is a necessary expansion beyond Luciano’s timeframe of the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.

Chapter Development

Chapter One situates sixteenth-century medals of women into the history of the medal tradition as well as establishes the effects of new production techniques and stylistic developments in medals of the period.

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37 See especially Chapter Two of her dissertation were Luciano discusses the function of the commemorative medal. Eleonora Luciano, “Medals of Women from the Italian Renaissance Courts,” 25-52.

38 Ibid., 4.
The medals of the women from Reggio Emilia and Ferrara take on a personal tone which I examine in Chapters Two and Three. Physical beauty as a sign of virtue is the theme of these chapters. The medals produced mainly by Pastorino de’ Pastorini, Alfonso Ruspaggiari, Gian Antonio Signoretti, and Bombarda reveal new stylistic innovations that contributed to the more personalized, private, and celebratory meanings of the medal and show some of the most beautifully stylized representations of women on medals from the century. In Chapter Two, the medals produced by the Emilian medallists Ruspaggiari, Signoretti, and Bombarda are viewed in the context of the Mannerist style and their unique characteristics, such as the depiction of unidentified, bare-breasted women and their uniface presentation. The medals from Reggio Emilia and Ferrara exhibit some of the most interesting and beautiful images of women from the sixteenth century but can also be the most difficult to interpret due to their esoteric imagery.

In Chapter Three, the medals of Lucrezia and Eleonora d’Este, most likely commissioned by their father Alfonso d’Este exemplify the Renaissance notion of physical beauty as the manifestation of inner virtue. These medals created personal mementos to be enjoyed and celebrated by close family and friends. A group of medals of women not part of the Este court is also explored in this chapter by considering medals of the women from the Sacrati and Trotti families. These women were not members of the ruling family, but as friends and acquaintances of the Este, also adopted the medal as a form of commemoration. The medals honor the women of these families.

Leone Leoni and Jacopo da Trezzo produced numerous medals of members of the Gonzaga family which are discussed in Chapter Four. Even though Leoni and Jacopo
worked mainly in Milan, the medals of the Gonzaga women reflect a tradition that had been popular with the Gonzaga family in Mantua. This chapter traces the decline of the popularity of the medal in Mantua from the previous century and focuses on one member of the Gonzaga family, Ferrante Gonzaga, who while Governor of Milan, utilized the medal and commissioned Leoni and Jacopo to produce medals of his wife, Isabella Capua Gonzaga and his daughter Ippolita Gonzaga. The style of these medals differs radically from those made in Ferrara, but their function as personal or private mementoes is similar.

The medals of the Medici women in Florence in the sixteenth century are the subject of Chapter Five. The medals of Eleonora da Toledo, Isabella de’ Medici Orsini, and Lucrezia de’ Medici d’Este reinforce the precedent of utilizing the medal as a medium for political propaganda. Cosimo I de’ Medici, most likely the patron of the medals of his wife and daughters, had already established the medal as means of promoting and promulgating his personal message of legitimacy and power as the ruler of Florence. When brought together as a group, these medals, produced mainly by Domenico Poggini, are perfect examples of Cosimo’s use of art to advance his agenda and also as objects that celebrate and commemorate the Medici women who played active roles in supporting Cosimo and his political program.

Moving away from the courts of Italy and the medals of women from these courts or courtly cities, Chapter Six focuses on the medals of three Italian artists of the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. The medals of Sofonisba Anguissola, Lavinia Fontana, and Diana Scultori are examined in relation to the portraits, and in particular, the self-portraits
of these artists. This chapter details how the medals of these woman artists contributed to their own fame, the advancement of their art, and the celebration of their careers.
Chapter 1

Situating Sixteenth-Century Medals of Women: the history, production techniques, and stylistic developments in the medal

Individual fame, artistic self-fashioning, family glorification, and a preoccupation with the antique led to the commissioning and distribution of commemorative medals throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Although not circulated or produced as currency, commemorative medals take as their antecedents ancient Greek or Roman coins, in particular Roman Imperial coins. Unlike ancient prototypes which were always struck, produced by a governmental authority, conformed to specific weights and materials, were issued in great numbers, and always functioned as units of exchange and commerce, Renaissance medals were purely commemorative and celebratory in nature, could be commissioned by individuals, were struck or cast, produced in few numbers, distributed among a select group, and adhered to no standardization of size, weight, or material. In further distinguishing coins and medals, Mark Jones stated that “…medal-making, unlike coining, which is prerogative jealously guarded by government, has been able to develop as an autonomous activity practiced by private individuals for their own gratification.” As this study shows, the popularity of cast and struck medals was maintained throughout the sixteenth century and the function of the cast medal was clearly commemorative, celebratory and promotional. The imagery on the medals lent itself to personal and idiosyncratic interpretations which could be either absent or lost when depicted in other media such as painting or sculpture, but that display personal,

39 Coins, and a number of medals in the sixteenth century, in particular papal medals, were struck using dies. The medals in this study were cast from molds.
professional, and propagandistic messages in both text and image. Medal portraits, while presenting a likeness of a sitter in profile, was not necessarily intended to portray the realistic or naturalistic qualities of a sitter’s physiognomy but rather to offer only a recognizable likeness of the individual focusing more on that person’s individual attributes and accomplishments.

Between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Renaissance medal intrigued writers and collectors mainly as a source of information about certain individuals and families, as well as a way of exploring their own interest in the antique. The connection between the Renaissance and ancient Rome is one steeped in humanist and individualist thought that was reconsidered and reformulated during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The mottos and inscriptions on these medals were written in Latin, an obvious reference to the ancients. The profile portrait used on most Renaissance medals is also reminiscent of the use of the profile to depict ancient Roman emperors and empresses on their coins. Many of the reverse images on fifteenth and sixteenth-century medals depict classical Roman or Greek myths or characters. The manufacture of medals by use of the striking method which found popularity among patrons in the sixteenth century, also recalled the production process of the ancient Roman coin. Thus, classical precedent was established by the sixteenth century and remained an important influence in the commissioning, decoration, and production of medals.

In addition to the classical influences on the depictions and functions of the medal, the assemblage, collection, and displaying of ancient and contemporary coins and medals was also popular in the sixteenth century. This practice coincided with the

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42 Similar to medals, prints also combined text and image.
43 For the majority of the mottos on the medals in this study, I have used the English translations provided by Attwood, *Italian Medals* and Pollard, *Renaissance Medals*. 
installation of galleries of painted portraits and collecting other small objects and
curiosities. One of the most well-known collections was that of Francesco de’ Medici
who stored small objects and curiosities, including medals, in his studiolo in the Palazzo
Vecchio. The Gonzaga of Mantua, including Isabella d’Este, also maintained elaborate
collections. By the 1540s, Paolo Giovio assembled one of the most famous collections of
painted portraits which he displayed in his home near Como. Other collections include,
but are by no means limited to those of Pietro Bembo, Cardinal Granville, and Cosimo
de’ Medici.

Beginning in the Middle Ages, interest in ancient coinage as well as the study of
ancient texts and visual culture appears from the eighth century onwards. From the
collections of antiquities of Charlemagne to the treasuries in numerous Medieval
churches and cathedrals, to the fascination with the antique of Frederick II, ancient
objects, including coins, were revered and preserved. In the collection of the Duke of
Berry were two medals believed to have been known by Pisanello, the “father” of the
Italian Renaissance medal, representing Constantine the Great and Heraclius. In
addition, the Duke also possessed part of a series of struck medals commissioned in 1390
by Francesco Novello da Carrara, Lord of Padua, which commemorated the expulsion of
the Visconti from Padua and also acted as a source for the Renaissance medal. Venice
too shared in the production of early medals when in 1394 the Sesto brothers struck two

44 Although different in nature, it is probable that the Medieval seal also had an influence on the
Renaissance medal as noted in Fabriczy and Scher. Scher states that seals, “manifest the large size, the
beauty of script, the frequent appearance of obverse and reverse, and the statement of social position that
are all associated with the medal.” Scher, The Currency of Fame, 15.
45 George Francis Hill, “Classical Influence on the Italian Medal,” Burlington Magazine for
Connoisseurs 18, no. 95 (February 1911): 260. See also Roberto Weiss, The Renaissance Discovery of
Classical Antiquity, (New York: Humanities Press, 1969), 54 for comprehensive explanation of the
influence of classical antiquity from the Middle Ages through the Renaissance. Weiss believes the medals
were made in Paris in the early fifteenth-century. Scher states that the medals are also copies of originals,
those of which may have been purchased by the Duke on November 2, 1402. Scher, Currency of Fame, 32.
medals of the Emperor Galba with a personified Venice on the reverse. But, it was not until the fourteenth century and through the influence of Petrarch that the ancient coin, predecessor to the commemorative medal, found its place in the world of the humanist elite. Petrarch, an avid collector of ancient coins, looked beyond other collectors whose addition of coins to their repertoire stemmed mainly from an aesthetic and material desire to own an antique object. Instead, Petrarch recognized and appreciated the historical value of these objects.

Historically, Pisanello is believed to be the first to cast true Renaissance commemorative medallions. Born in Pisa around 1385, he moved with his mother and step-father to Verona in 1404. By 1424, Pisanello had established himself as an accomplished painter, and between 1430-1440 worked mainly at the courts of the Gonzaga in Mantua and the Este in Ferrara. In 1438, Pisanello witnessed the arrival of the Byzantine emperor John VIII Paleologus and his retinue to Ferrara. This event marked a turning point in his career. To commemorate the occasion, he created a large medal in lead with the profile image of the emperor on the obverse surrounded by the inscription, “John, king and emperor of the Romans, the Paleologus” and an elaborate reverse illustrating a rocky landscape with two figures on horseback, one of the emperor in profile sitting with a bow and quiver and the other, of a foreshortened page who accompanied him on the hunt. This cast medal of John VIII Paleologus marked the inception of the Renaissance portrait medal. Pisanello, in creating a medal with a profile portrait on the obverse and a detailed narrative reverse, influenced and stimulated

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47 It is not entirely clear where Pisanello produced this medal. It was produced either in Ferrara or Florence. See Pollard, *Renaissance Medals*, 1:5-6, notes 11, 13.
the commissioning, production, and distribution of medals for the next two centuries in Italy, including medals of women.

In 1447, Pisanello cast the earliest known Renaissance medal depicting a woman, that of Cecilia Gonzaga which celebrates her beauty and chastity. Under the influence of Pisanello, artists such as Matteo de’ Pasti, Antico, Moderno and Niccolò Fiorentino cast some of the most noted medals of the fifteenth century including women, such as Cecilia Gonzaga, Isotta degli Atti di Rimini, Diva Giulia, Maddalena Mantuana, and Giovanna Albizzi Tornabuoni.

These Renaissance medals represent the first examples commissioned by or for women in Italy. Similar to those of medals of men, medals of women were inspired by and created in the spirit of the antique. Large numbers of ancient coins depicting empresses, in particular the Empress Faustina the Elder, wife of Emperor Antoninus Pius, and her daughter Faustina the Younger were popular with Renaissance audiences. A coin depicting Faustina the Elder standing with her husband Antoninus with the legends CONCORDIA refers to Faustina’s reputation as being a good mother and wife, albeit she was said by contemporaries to have been “loose-living.” Concord, as well as Pudica are images shown on coins of Faustina the Younger alluding to her fecundity, piety and modesty. Thus, the popularity of the reproductions of the coins of Faustina...

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48 Eleonora Luciano, “Divina Isotta and the Medals of Matteo de’ Pasti,” 3-17. Luciano also identifies a medal by Matteo de’ Pasti of Isotta degli Atti, dated 1446, one year before the Cecilia Gonzaga medal by Pisanello, but she believes it is more of a commemorative date rather than the date of the medal, thus maintaining the 1447 date as the year of the first medal depicting a women in the Renaissance.

49 For a comprehensive explanation of these women and their commemorative medals, see Eleonora Luciano’s dissertation, “Medals of Women from the Italian Renaissance Courts”.

50 Two of the best sources for medals of women in fifteenth-century Italy are Eleonora Luciano’s dissertation and Syson, “Consorts, mistresses, and Exemplary Women.”

51 Syson, “Consorts, Mistresses, and Exemplary Women,” 45.

52 Ibid.

53 Ibid.
and her daughter during the fifteenth century demonstrates that coins such as these were revered as objects commemorating and celebrating these women as model wives and mothers. The influence of these and other coins is easily seen in the medals of women examined in this study. Like the antique coins of women, Renaissance medals commemorated, celebrated or announced the beauty and virtue of individual women and their positions as newly married brides, wives, or widows.

The overall functions of the medals of women from the fifteenth century are quite similar to those of their sixteenth-century equivalents. However, a striking difference exists between the commissioning of some medals of women from the fifteenth and those of the sixteenth century. Unlike the examples of women in my study, there were a number of women from the fifteenth and early sixteenth century who commissioned their own medals. These women included Isabella d’Este, Caterina Sforza, Elisabetta Gonzaga, and Lucrezia Borgia. These noblewomen not only had the financial capabilities to commission their medals, but they also utilized these objects to shape their social positions and to influence the humanist and artistic culture of the Renaissance. A good example is a series of medals commissioned by Caterina Sforza in the position of ruler of Imola and Forli. After her husband’s assassination in 1488, she acted as regent of the territories and commissioned five medals celebrating and promoting her status as ruler.

Although the medals of women and medals in general from the fifteenth century are usually more revered for their aesthetic and technical qualities more than many of

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54 It is probable that Elisabetta Gonzaga also commissioned the medals of her sister-in-law and friend Emilia Pia from Adriano Fiorentino. Luciano, Medals of Women from the Renaissance Courts, 35. 55 See Joyce de Vries, “Caterina Sforza’s Portrait Medals: Power, Gender, and Representation in the Italian Renaissance Court,” Woman’s Art Journal 24, no. 1 (Spring-Summer 2003): 23-28.
those from the sixteenth, it is obvious that the tradition of commemorating and
celebrating individual women first carried out by artists such as Pisanello was continued
on an even greater scale in the sixteenth century.

The number of medals of women produced by mid-sixteenth century artists
sharp synagogue increased which correlates with the increased numbers of medals produced in
general during the century. This overall increase was likely due to improvements and
innovation in medal production as well as because of the availability of the medal as an
economic means of self-representation. Although the medal never lost its
commemorative function, the production and purpose of the medal in the sixteenth
century underwent a number of alterations that reflect changes in technique, as well as
the fluid political, social, and religious climate, and changes in artistic style. New
technologies related to the struck medal and the development of the screw press, which is
discussed in the following section, drastically transformed the method by which medals
were crafted, as well as where they were produced. The struck medal became popular
in the middle to late sixteenth century for a few reasons: one, the struck medal, usually
smaller in size with less detailed design, was closely linked with ancient Roman coins;
two, more copies could be produced faster; and three, the higher cost of a struck versus a
cast medal usually indicated the wealth or status of the patron. In earlier periods, mints
were used to manufacture coins, while medals were cast in the artist’s workshop. In the
sixteenth century, medals, influenced by the production of coins, began to be struck in

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56 From extant medals, it is apparent that increase in the production of medals of women remains
proportionally less than the increase in overall medal production in the sixteenth century. Nonetheless, the
total number of medals of women remaining from the fifteenth century is around 100, whereas the medals
of women by Pastorino de’ Pastorini alone is around 112.
57 Although few, struck medals were produced for private patrons in the fifteenth century. An
eample is a medal of Lodovico II Gonzaga of Mantua.
mints in cities around Italy including Milan, Venice, Florence, Rome, Parma, Reggio Emilia, and Ferrara. The results of the new techniques and production methods not only had an impact on the quantity of medals produced during the sixteenth-century, but also, as some scholars believe, on their overall quality.

Commemorative medals were cast and struck using precious metals such as gold, silver, bronze, and copper alloy as well as the base metals of lead-tin alloy or lead. Based on the precedent of the material used for ancient coins, most medals of the sixteenth century were made from gold, silver and copper alloy. As one may presume, royalty and the aristocracy utilized the more valuable metals while non-aristocrats were usually portrayed using the less costly metals. Other materials such as mother-of-pearl, or more moderately priced materials such as stucco, commonly produced by artist Pastorino de' Pastorini, or even earthenware were also used for medals, but were rare compared to the more common metals mentioned above. Other than the distinction between the very wealthy patron, many of whom could afford medals of gold or silver, and the so-called moderately wealthy patron who may have commissioned medals of less-costly materials, there does not seem to be differences based on gender. Although this is quite difficult to discern based on the lack of gold and silver medals in collections today in comparison

58 See Attwood for comprehensive list of contemporary authors, including Vasari, who indicate that not only did the ancients use these metals, but that the metals used for medals was obviously an extremely important consideration for the patron. Attwood, Italian Medals, 1:46-47. Additionally, results from technical studies of the medals in the Kress Collection in the National Gallery, Washington, D.C. revealed that the majority of fifteenth and sixteenth-century Italian medals were made of copper and zinc which is brass rather than copper and tin which is bronze. Pollard, Renaissance Medals, 1:XIII.

59 This is exemplified in the numerous medals by Pastorino. Although many medals by Pastorino were cast in precious metals, a good majority of them were produced in lead, a much more humble material that was suitable to his clientele, many of whom were from the so-called ordinary ranks of society.
with other materials, examples of such medals of men as well as women still exist.\(^6\)

Jacopo da Trezzo’s extant medal of Mary Tudor is one of the most impressive examples of a medal cast in gold which is in the collection in the British Museum, London. (Fig. 3) It was common practice that the same gold-cast medals would also have been cast in a more economical material such as silver, although a silver medal was also considered a precious object. Gilt medals, such as those of Girolama Sacrati and Lucrezia de’ Medici by Pastorino were also crafted and made popular. The medals of Eleonora of Toledo by Poggini are known in casts of silver, bronze and copper alloy, and documentation indicates that silver was the most luxurious metal used for casts of her medal. It seems logical that silver casts, being less expensive than gold, would have be distributed to a wider audience or purchased by collectors who would otherwise not have been able to afford a medal in gold. Additionally, the size of the struck medal which was gaining popularity in the sixteenth century was usually smaller than the cast medal, allowing some patrons to commission medals in gold or other precious metals since smaller amounts of the material were needed. The metals used for the production of medals not only reveals the patron or sitter’s status, but it also gives insight into the patronage practices of the sixteenth century when medal commissions were more common to a wider range of individuals not just the very wealthy which was more customary during the fifteenth century.

Few contracts for medals have survived. Compared to painted or sculpted portraits, the less costly and less elaborate medium of medals as compared to painted or sculpted portraits, probably did not require comprehensive documentation for a

\(^6\) It can be presumed that many of the gold and silver and bronze medals may have been melted down in subsequent years because of the value of the metal and thus the number of these surviving medals is not representative of the number cast during the sixteenth century.
commission. Thus, it is difficult to know the amount patrons paid for medals or the number of medals produced from one cast or mold. It should be assumed that a patron would commission more than one medal in an edition given the nature of the commemorative medium which was usually cast in multiples. Even when documentation of a medal commission is available, the complexity of such commissions may have included drawings, a proof medal, and the final product which further complicates our attempts to discern the total cost of commissioning a medal. Documentation does exist in the case of the fifteenth century medallist Sperandio who received a commission from a merchant named Giacomo del Giglio and was paid three broad gold ducats just for the lead proof. Pollard pointed out that the sixteenth-century artist Pier Paolo Galeotti received gold to cast the thirteen medals of the military and civil accomplishments of Cosimo I in Florence. Records also indicate that almost ten years earlier, on 1 August 1551, the Poggini brothers received silver for the medal of Eleonora of Toledo, a medal specimen of which is located in the Bargello, Florence. In general, sixteenth-century contracts are scarce and I am not aware of a contract that comprehensively describes the commission of a medal of or by a woman.

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61 Pollard, Renaissance Medals, 1:XIX.
62 Ibid., 1:XX. Domenico Poggini also produced medals as part of the commission. He was responsible for the obverse portrait of Cosimo. The entire medal series is cited in Karla Langedijk, Portraits of the Medici, 486. See The Medici, Michelangelo, and the Art of Late Renaissance Florence (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 235-241 for further description, list and images of the medals.
63 Pollard, Renaissance Medals, 1:401. The medal specimen in the National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C. is of copper alloy.
64 One exception may include Camilla Peretti (1519-1605), the older sister of Pope Sixtus V, who provided funding for the completion of the construction of the church of Santa Lucia, Grottammare, initially commissioned by Sixtus V before his death in 1590. In 1590, Poggini produced a medal commemorating the start of construction. Pollard noted that Daniele Diotallevi, 1992, reported that Camilla sent thirty examples of the medal to be placed in the church as foundation medals. This would suggest that Camilla commissioned and funded the production of the medal, one of the only women in the sixteenth century to do so, which depicts her portrait on the obverse and the church façade on the reverse. But, the evidence is not conclusive. Pollard, Renaissance Medals, 406, note 4. McIver also suggests that Margherita of Austria, Gerolama Farnese-Sanvitale and Argentina Pallavicina-Rangona commissioned
The lack of surviving documents and the misrepresentation of complete editions of medals which do not exist in any contemporary collection as they would have in the sixteenth century, makes it difficult to know the number of medals which were cast in an edition. For that reason, it is also impossible to trace the exact number of medals that would have been cast in different metal materials. As previously stated, it was quite common that a patron would have commissioned a small number of medals in gold and a larger number of the same design cast in silver, with those in gold presented to a more limited audience. Such was the case for the struck medals for Cosimo de’ Medici produced in 1567 by Poggini and Galeotti. Cosimo commissioned fewer medals in gold than he did in silver, and probably many more in copper and bronze. The number of cast medals produced in one edition commonly ranged from just a few to up to fifty while editions of struck medals that had a more public function and would be struck by the hundreds.

My study reveals that, regarding medals of women, one cannot make a conclusive deduction regarding the number of medals produced in each edition. A survey of the medals from the most prominent collections in Europe and the United States also indicates that the predominant trends of production, both in number of medals produced and the metals from which the medals were cast in the sixteenth century cannot be clearly their own medals. Katherine A. McIver, *Women, Art, and Architecture in Northern Italy, 1520-1580: Negotiating Power* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006), 153.

65 The specimen of Cosimo I with the view of the Uffizi and the Palazzo Vecchio in the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. is made of copper alloy, while the medal of Cosimo I with a reverse celebrating his founding of the Order of Santo Stephano in the British Museum is bronze.

66 Papal medals could have been produced by the hundreds. Cellini claimed that he struck one hundred medals for Clement VII while in 1549, a payment for four hundred copper and brass medals of Cosimo de’ Medici was made to Raffaello d’Agniolo di Polo. Attwood, *Italian Medals*, 1:46, 322-323.
understood. There is no noticeable trend indicating that one metal, for example gold, was used for men more than women or vice versa, and not enough documentary evidence exists to fully realize the number of medals commissioned by a patron.

As mentioned, medals were analogous to prints, and were produced in multiples and available to a larger audience than painted or sculpted portraits. Less costly than painted portraits, but more expensive than prints, medals were a popular form of commemoration and the desire for medals increased during the sixteenth century, one result being the economy of the medium. On average, patrons of the medal from the fifteenth century tended to be members of royalty, the noble class, or very wealthy or influential individuals. However, the sixteenth-century medallist was also able to attract commissions from less affluent individuals, as was the case in particular with Pastorino. Regarding Pastorino’s medal of Cassan (Hassan) Ciaussi who, as Hill mentions, was a Turkish court messenger and inferior officer to the court, Hill stated, “Hasan was therefore not a person of any great distinction – too few of Pastorino’s sitters were that!”

The seemingly greater availability of medals to a larger group of patrons from different strata of society sets the sixteenth-century commemorative medal apart from its predecessor in the fifteenth century, a development that my study reflects by the considerable amount of medals of women who were not associated with royalty or the

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67 My research was conducted at collections holding the largest number of sixteenth-century medals of women including the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., The British Museum, London, the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, and the Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence.
68 I surveyed the medals produced by Pastorino in the collections of the British Museum, National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C., and the Bargello. The ratio of lead and bronze medals of men and women were similar overall. All of Pastorino’s medals in the National Gallery, Washington D.C. were made from copper alloy while a larger number of medals in the Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence were created from higher quality metals such as bronze or silver, again with no tendency to differentiate between genders.
nobility as well as the increased number of unidentified or anonymous women depicted on medals. A wide range of metals and other materials characterized the make-up of the medals, but without a more comprehensive assessment of the number of medals cast in each edition as well as the metals from which they were cast, a true representation of the medal medium in the sixteenth century is impossible to reconstruct.

On one hand, a wide range of individuals during the sixteenth century, in particular women, were depicted on medals, while on the other, as an esoteric art, the medal was still naturally intended for a more limited audience, usually close family members and friends who could understand or relate to the sometimes enigmatic messages of the medals, in particular the meaning of the reverse mottos and images. This of course excludes the struck medals whose imagery was intentionally straight-forward, for example, those commissioned by the papacy or the propagandistic medals made for Cosimo de’ Medici, which were produced in large numbers and intended for a very large audience beyond the confines of family and friends. On the contrary, the medals examined in my dissertation belong to a group of cast medals that were most likely produced in small numbers due to their personal commemorative purposes. These medals were constrained in circulation to family and friends, making their meaning highly intelligible and meaningful to those who received them and challenging to those analyzing them today. The very images and mottos that were valued in the sixteenth century can inform us not only of the specific individuals depicted on the medals, but can lead to our speculation regarding the function of the medal as it relates to the patron, sitter, and viewer. Highly knowledgeable, sophisticated, and even ordinary patrons, collectors, relatives, and friends of any sitter took pleasure in viewing different types of
medals. Medals serving a private function provided the viewer with personal connections by way of a likeness of a certain individual and were objects of appeal since the sitter usually had some relationship with the recipient. Medals as forms of public art announced the position or accomplishments of its sitter and were usually supplied to a large number of recipients, not all of whom would have had personal connections with the patron or sitter. My intent is to better understand the complex and varied meanings and messages of the medals of a select group of women from the sixteenth century in order to contextualize them within the culture in which they were produced, used, and enjoyed.

Image and Text and the Design of the Sixteenth-Century Medal

Just as the sculptors of the ancient world had to solve the issue of how to fill the triangular spaces of the pediments on temples, the medallists of the Renaissance had to create their design within the confines of a small-scale, round object, sometimes double-sided, that combined imagery and text. These constraints led to stylistic considerations that are consistent in the medals of the period, such as placement of the figure’s portrait in relation to the text as well as the correlation between text and image on the reverse. New techniques and technologies, most importantly the popularity of the striking method and the advent of the screw press, influenced the craftsmanship of medals in the mid to late sixteenth century. Medals in the sixteenth century, particularly those produced during my period of study, are smaller on the whole than those of the fifteenth century, which is certainly a result of the popularity of the struck medal and a reflection of the desire to emulate antique coins which were small in size. In comparing cast and struck
medals, it is easy to see the clarity and detail of design on the struck medals (as you would see on a coin) versus the imperfect or even rough finish on cast medals. The struck medal was certainly a model for artists designing cast medals in the mid-to-late sixteenth century.

Attwood characterized the aesthetic of the sixteenth-century medal in which the various elements of the medal were smoothly transitioned between border, text, and image and were executed with formal constructions and a hierarchy within the design that emphasized certain parts of the composition, usually the busts on the obverse, while subordinating the lettering and beaded borders.\textsuperscript{70} The overall effect was a harmonious balance of design, although he states that “harmoniousness can sometimes lead to blandness.”\textsuperscript{71} He also referred to the larger size of the busts depicted, the more complex reverse designs that lacked the boldness and clarity of earlier medals, the deliberate lack of expression of movement which gave way to the artist’s use of compositional devices such the contrapposto of the head and body in some Mannerist medals, or the depiction of movement in stasis which can be found in the medals of Leone Leoni and Jacopo da Trezzo.\textsuperscript{72} This focus on the balance of composition, lack of clarity, and lack of movement, misunderstood or underappreciated by early scholars most likely contributed to their criticisms made in the twentieth century.

Such negative opinions were strengthened by the fact that not all medals in the sixteenth century included reverse imagery, a characteristic that was unpopular with these

\textsuperscript{70} Attwood, \textit{Italian Medals}, 1:13.
\textsuperscript{71} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{72} Ibid., 1:14.
same scholars.\textsuperscript{73} Pastorino was particularly discredited by Hill mainly because most of his medals lack a reverse.\textsuperscript{74} As will be apparent in Chapter Two, fellow Emilian artists such as Ruspapiari, Signoretti, and Bombarda also produced medals without reverses. One can see why this criticism was aimed at artists such as Pastorino and the others for their lack of reverses since it was precisely this type of imagery that supplied the viewer with important information and imagery related to the sitter. Depending on reverse text and image, one could identify an allegory, virtuous characteristics, or even events associated with the sitter. For Pastorino, this lack of reverse was not related to his assumed inability by scholars like Hill to produce reverse images, as he demonstrated the opposite to be true in his reverses of medals of Beatrice of Siena, Lucrezia of Rome, Lodovico Ariosto, and Francesco Visdomini. Instead, it was most likely a function of his work as a master in stucco in which his stucco portraits did not necessitate reverse imagery.\textsuperscript{75} Furthermore, in 1582, Pastorino produced a uniface medal of a dog with the ironic motto VIGNI DRITTO A SVO RIVERCIO (Every obverse has its reverse). Pastorino may have created this medal as an attempt to dispel any contemporary disapproval of his one-sided works, or as a whimsical contribution to his oeuvre.\textsuperscript{76} Pastorino’s partiality to medals without reverses must have been well received based on the very large number of medals he produced for a variety of patrons, including Giorgio Vasari who commissioned a uniface medal by Pastorino of his wife, Nicolosa Bacci.

\textsuperscript{73} As used in this dissertation, the term “uniface” refers to a medal without a reverse. Plaquettes, relatively small and usually square or rectangular bronze objects that are close in form and function to medals were also one-sided, but do not attract the same negative attention from scholars as did the sixteenth-century one-sided medals.

\textsuperscript{74} Pollard points out that Pastorino’s medals may have been used in a “Game of Reverses” in which a group of men, in this case recorded as being played in Siena, would come together and suggest different meanings for Pastorino’s uniface medals depicting women’s portraits. Pollard, \textit{Italian Medals}, XXXVI, XXXVIII note 91.

\textsuperscript{75} Attwood, \textit{Italian Medals}, 1:245.

\textsuperscript{76} Ibid.
which was made in 1555.\textsuperscript{77} The popularity of medals without reverses, including many from artists other than Pastorino, could have been due to a number of factors including affordability, a rate of more rapid production than medals with reverses, the status of the sitter, many of which for artists like Pastorino and other Emilian artists, were non-aristocratic members of society, and even the popularity of wax and stucco medals that did not require reverse images. Furthermore, by the mid-sixteenth century, elaborate wooden cases and cabinets were becoming more popular for the storage and display of coins, medals, and other collectables and medals were also known to have been hung on walls for display.\textsuperscript{78} Medals stored in these cabinets or hung would be laid or suspended on one side, possibly indicating that a second side or reverse was not necessary. It is also possible that selected medals without reverses were intended to be worn, either during one’s lifetime or in death, thus negating the need for a reverse. It is quite plausible that uniface medals would have also become increasingly popular during the period since the primary focus of the more personal commemorative medals, with more attention to the physical characteristics of sitter, was desired most.

These medals likely fulfilled a function understood by the sixteenth-century viewer but not appreciated by twentieth-century historians. Furthermore, the attention to the details of the obverse portrait by these artists paralleled the trends in painted portraits of the time that accentuated the fashion, jewelry, and accessories of sitters, in particular women sitters.

\textsuperscript{77} There are over two hundred signed medals by Pastorino in collections today, more than any other medallist of the sixteenth century, attesting to his popularity.  
\textsuperscript{78} For more on the display of medals, see Luke Syson, Holes and Loops: The Display and Collection of Medals in Renaissance Italy,” Journal of Design History, 15, no. 11, (2002): 231-241.
On the obverse of their medals, sixteenth-century artists used a similar configuration as their fifteenth-century counterparts by depicting most portraits in profile with Latin lettering identifying the sitter. The orientation of the sitter, either looking to the left or the right, does not seem to follow any specific pattern based on gender. Even when male and female portraits adorn the obverse and reverse of a medal, there is no standard orientation, for example one would presume that the male figure would look right while the female figure looks left to provide the viewer with something similar to a double-portrait, but this is not always the case. For example, the medals of Paolo Orsini and Isabella de’ Medici and Alfonso II d’Este and Lucrezia de’ Medici by Pastorino shows both figures facing right while the medals of Emanuele Filiberto, Duke of Savoy and Marguerite of France by Alessandro Cesati and the Emperor Maximilian II and the Empress Maria by Antonio Abondio depict the men facing right and women facing left so when the medal is turned over or the portraits are shown side by side, the couples faces each other. Very rarely, as in the case in the Sperandio medal showing Ercole I d’Este and Eleonora of Aragon, are the couple shown facing each other on the obverse. In this case, the positions of the sitters do have significance as the left side from the viewer, the heraldic dexter is the position of honor while the right side to the viewer is the sinister side reserved for the less-important individual. Overall though, the combination of male and female portraits on the obverse of medals was not particularly common in the fifteenth or sixteenth centuries.

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79 One must also take into account the combination of two uniface medals (or later casts of two obverses of medals) of a man and woman for example, in which they were combined as one medal but which were not originally intended to be shown as one specimen.

80 In the sixteenth century, medals bearing portraits of two male sitters on the obverse was much more common than those showing men and women. The medals of Girolamo Panico and Pompeo Ludovisi by Giovanni da Cavino, Charles V and King of Spain and Holy Roman Emperor and Prince Philip of Spain by Leone Leoni are two good examples of this approach.
On some medals, the medallist included incised lines, sometimes still noticeable to guide the artist’s hand while adding inscriptions on the obverse and reverse, seen for example in the medals of Pier Paolo Galeotti’s medal of Chiara Tolentino Taverna and Leoni’s medal of Ippolita Gonzaga. (Figs. 4, 5) As the use of Latin recalls the language on ancient Roman coins and monuments so does the script which is highly legible and neatly arranged around the perimeter of the medals.\(^8\) Greek lettering could also be used as was the case on Ippolita Gonzaga’s medal where Latin and Greek were combined. Together, the text and image informed the viewer of the personal qualities and physical characteristics of the sitter.

The relationship of obverse and reverse inscriptions and imagery supplied the patron with the opportunity to inform, display, or celebrate personal identity, successes or virtues. Inscriptions on the obverse of the medals provided information such as the sitter’s name, title, rank, in the case of women the relationship to a male member of the family, the age of the sitter, the name of the medallist and the year in which the medal was produced. Using Ippolita Gonzaga’s medal as an example again, the obverse inscription reads HIPPOLYTA GONZAGA FERDINANDI FIL[ia] AN [no] SVI and inside the inscription ΛΕΩΝ ΑΡΗΤΙΝΟΣ (Ippolita Gonzaga, daughter of Ferdinando in her sixteenth year) (Leo the Aretine). In most cases, such as in Ippolita Gonzaga’s medal, obverse text and imagery is uncomplicated and informative and adheres to the traditions established by artists of the fifteenth-century medal. Medal reverses, on the

\(^8\) This is true in general, but one must also consider that not all extant medals were original casts and thus aftercasts, or copies made from existing medals, usually later than the original, may not exhibit the same amount of detail or sharp lettering as a medal from the original edition. For definitions of different types of aftercasts, see Stephen Scher, “Connoisseurship of the Medal, a Supplement to the Exhibition Catalogue, The Currency of Fame: Portrait Medals of the Renaissance,” The Medal 23, 1993, 4-5. For more on forgeries of medals, an important subject beyond the scope of this study, see Mark Jones, Fake? The Art of Deception, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).
other hand, can be much more difficult to decipher and in the sixteenth century may not have even been included on medals. Reverses usually have a motto, inscribed primarily in Latin, offering more information about the sitter or sitter’s accomplishments, virtues, or events associated with them. For instance, the reverse images on the struck medals of Cosimo de’ Medici by Poggini and Galeotti celebrate the political and civic accomplishments of Cosimo while, as I argue, the reverse imagery on Ippolita Gonzaga’s medal indicates her virtue of chastity, or as the imagery on the medals of the Pazzi Conspiracy or Camilla Peretti indicate specific events memorialized on the medal. There does not seem to be a formula for the inclusion of text on the reverse. Instead, the artist incorporates the text in spaces not occupied by imagery. The three aforementioned medals are good examples of how the placement of the text in relation to the image is formulated.

While artist’s portrayal of the likenesses of sitters is common, for example Eleonora of Toledo’s medal by Poggini, a large group of medals in this study particularly those of Pastorino, Ruspagliari, Signoretti, Bombarda, and even Leoni, reveal a shift in the sixteenth century toward affectations of style, and a sense of elegance and grace in the medallic portraits of women in particular. This can be attributed to the prevailing shift toward Mannerism in the middle to late sixteenth century. Portraits became more artificial and garments and draperies appear as contrived. Women’s hair was depicted up and pulled away from their faces, fixed with curls, braids, ribbons and other ornaments. These medals exaggerated the physical beauty of the female sitter and exalted her virtue, a subject taken up in Chapter Two.
The Mannerist style is evident in many of the medals in my study.\textsuperscript{82} The distaste for the style well after the sixteenth century led to the late nineteenth and twentieth-century art historians’ disregard for the art and artists of the period and has only begun to be challenged by more recent scholars.\textsuperscript{83} In general, the criticism of the medals of the period resulted more from the overall style and design rather than the general craftsmanship of the medals. The sixteenth-century artists Leone Leoni and Domenico Poggini are often revered in early medal scholarship for their work as sculptors and medallists while, other artists, in particular Pastorino and even Jacopo da Trezzo (in comparison with Leoni) have been criticized for their skill in executing medal designs. The medallist of the sixteenth century was no doubt influenced by the current style made popular by painters, sculptors, and architects of the period, including Parmigianino, Cellini, and Giulio Romano, and the results are fully examined in the medals of Ruspagniari and Bombarda in Chapter Two. Unlike painters, the medallists were limited in their expression of the style because of the size and material of the medals. For some, such as Pastorino or even Leoni, Mannered design is not as evident as it is in medals by Ruspagniari or Bombarda, but nonetheless, affectations of style and the sense of beauty, grace, and elegance, both in the depiction of drapery and in the stylized portrait are evident in their medals. A number of these medals, as I argue in Chapters Two and Three, exemplified the expected position and behavior of women in the sixteenth century.

\textsuperscript{82} For a comprehensive analysis of Mannerist goldsmiths, many of whom designed medals including Benvenuto Cellini, see J. F. Hayward, \textit{Virtuoso Goldsmiths and the Triumph of Mannerism 1540-1620}, (London: Sotheby Parke Bernet Publications Limited, 1976). See especially Chapters Six and Seven.

representing beauty, as shown in these stylized portraits, as the physical manifestation of virtue, particularly the virtue of chastity.

New Medal Technologies

The new processes developed in the sixteenth century associated with medal making are crucial to my study. Even though the medals I examine were cast, it is important to realize that improvements in the striking method had a wide-ranging influence on the production of medals overall. The struck medal was not new in Italy, given that in 1390, struck medals for the Carrara family were produced at the city mint at Padua. The popularity of the striking method increased dramatically in the sixteenth century due to developments in technology as well as the desire by wealthy or papal patrons to commission objects more closely related in size and technique to the coins of the ancient Roman emperors. Cellini, in his treatise on goldsmithing and sculpture, described the technique of striking using steel dies and the new use of the screw press to make medals. Cellini described the die-striking method in which two dies were needed for the obverse and reverse of the medal. He suggested that the artist first strike a medal of lead the size of the desired gold or silver medal, then take an impression of it, and then once the pattern medal is completed, the medallist must remove the edges with a file and polish the file marks. Then, he advised,

you place the cast medal between your dies...when you have them in the middle of your frame, and the frame itself fixed firmly uprights, push them

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85 Graham Pollard, Renaissance Medals, XVII.
86 The invention and use of the screw press is also associated with Donato Bramante and Baldassarre Peruzzi.
87 After the dies were used, they usually remained in the possession of the artist.
down into the frame at one end leaving a cavity of three finger’s space from the edge of it. Into this cavity fix two wedges of iron…then when you want to do the striking, set them with their thin ends over your dies, the point of the one set towards the other. Then take two stout hammers, and let your apprentice hold one at the head of one of the wedges, and do you strike with the other hammer the opposite wedge three or four times, very carefully, alternating your blows first on one wedge and then on the other.  

Although this was the traditional striking production method, Cellini also discusses the advent of the screw press, an innovation that dramatically changed the manufacturing of medals. Overall, the screw press allowed medallists to work more efficiently. Again, Cellini described the process of using the screw press:

You make an iron frame of similar size and thickness to the one described above, but of sufficient length to enable it to hold not only the two dies, taselli, on which the medal is cut, but also the female screw of bronze. This screw is set beneath the male screw of iron…when you have placed your dies, taselli, beneath the screw, with the metal you propose to strike between them, you tighten them up by the insertion of iron wedges so that they cannot possibly shift…round the head of the screw must then be fitted a stout iron ring with two loops to it, and these have to be made to hold a long iron rod or bar, say six cubits in length, so that four men can work at it, and bring their force to play upon your dies and the medal you are striking.  

Cellini recorded the advantages of this process when he wrote that bronze medals did not need to be cast beforehand as in the striking method, and the impressions were better, the dies lasted longer, the metals of gold and silver did not need to be softened before striking, and the process was quicker since it took only two turns of the screw to produce the medal versus the repeated hammering of the die-striking process. Other medallists, such as Leone Leoni, used this method. Generally, and as mentioned earlier, struck medals were smaller in size than cast medals. But, as the century progressed, artists were

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89 Ibid., 77.
90 Ibid., 77-78.
able to produce larger struck medals, but in general, the larger medals, represented by those in my study, are of cast medals.

The ease of production of the struck medal also contributed to use of the medal for propagandistic purposes by individuals, families, and even the papacy to a much greater degree than during the fifteenth century. Patrons of the struck medal commonly utilized the medium to broadcast their personal or political message to large audiences since struck medals could be produced in large quantities, sometimes in the hundreds. For the purposes of this study, Cosimo I de’ Medici is the best example of a patron using struck medals, as well as cast medals in this way.

The result of new technologies in medal-making during the sixteenth century, while innovative, reinforced the views that the medals of the period were inferior to those of the previous century. Referring to the medals produced in the sixteenth century, Hill noted that,

The general improvement in the mechanical side of medal-making, the increasing perfection of the process of striking, may not have been the real cause of the decay in the art; but it was a contributory factor, for it enabled technical excellence to disguise emptiness of conception and design, while C. F. Keary observed that “…even when the process of casting was still used, the art of medal-producing was in these various ways largely influenced through the introduction of the habit of making dies.” Contrary to Hill, Keary also makes the argument that it is quite difficult to compare the medallists of both periods in terms of individual style because there were such a wide variety of styles found among the medallists of the sixteenth century versus that of the fifteenth.

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92 C. F. Keary, A Guide to the Italian Medals Exhibited in the King’s Library, (London: Order of the Trustees, 1881), XIV.
The lack of appreciation of the sixteenth-century medal may seem warranted when comparing a fifteenth-century specimen to a sixteenth-century example, but as is evident in my study, one must take into consideration the changes in production and innovation as well as function and historical context in which these medals were produced.
Chapter 2

Expressing the Link between Beauty and Virtue: some medals of women by artists working in Reggio Emilia and Ferrara

During the Renaissance, external beauty was a signifier for good moral character, which was an idea rooted in the philosophical writings of Plato reestablished in Italy in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Physical beauty as an extension of virtue is the subject of the medals of women examined in this chapter and Chapter Three. These ideas, taken up here, are also reflected in the imagery of many medals of women in the following chapters.

In his *Symposium*, Plato recalls Diotima of Mantinea’s speech to Socrates on the nature of beauty, the vision of the Beautiful, and the achievement of virtue through absolute beauty. He wrote,

> For this is what it is to proceed correctly, or to be led by another, to erotics-beginning from these beautiful things here, always to proceed on up for the sake of that beauty, using these beautiful things here as steps: from one to two, and from two to all beautiful bodies; and from beautiful bodies to beautiful pursuits; and from pursuits to beautiful lessons; and from lessons to end at that lesson, which is the lesson of nothing else than the beautiful itself.  

Plato goes on recall Diotima’s words that when a human being sees the ultimate Beautiful,

> …that only here, in seeing in the way the beautiful is seeable, will he get to engender not phantom images of virtue – because he does not lay hold of a phantom – but, true, because he lays hold of the true; and that once he has given birth to and cherished virtue, it lies within him to become dear to god and, if it is possible, for any human being, to become immortal as well.

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94 Ibid., 274.
Writers and theorists such as Marsilio Ficino, Baldassare Castiglione, and Agnolo Firenzuola based their thoughts on ancient precedents such as this, but went further to imply that good virtue for women was attained by upholding their chastity. Castiglione wrote, “…in some manner the good and the beautiful are identical, especially in the human body.”\(^{95}\) He said that,

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\text{…I say that beauty springs from God and is like a circle, the centre of which is goodness. And so just as one cannot have a circle without a center, so one cannot have beauty without goodness. In consequence, only rarely does an evil soul dwell in a beautiful body, and so outward beauty is a true sign of inner goodness.} \(^{96}\)
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This association of physical beauty and inner virtue was visually evident in the painted and medallion depictions of women from artists such as Parmigianino, Pastorino, Ruspagniari, Signoretti, and Bombarda. This chapter establishes the foundation for beauty and virtue as demonstrated in the medals of known and unknown women in Reggio Emilia and Ferrara in the mid to late sixteenth century. I specifically evoke the prescriptions for beauty, and by extension virtue, by Agnolo Firenzuola who based his work, *On the Beauty of Women* (1541) on ancient precedents. Although the main focus of this chapter are the so-called Mannered medals of the aforementioned artists, it is imperative to understand that images of beauty were developed to signify virtue and chastity in many, or even most of the medals I examine throughout this dissertation. The medals of Reggio Emilia and Ferrara amplify this concept and either influenced or reflected similar artistic trends in depicting beautiful women seen in medals depicting the Este from Ferrara, discussed in Chapter Three, and the medals of the Gonzaga women in

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\(^{95}\) Castiglione, *The Courtier*, 332.  
\(^{96}\) Ibid., 330.
Milan and the Medici women from Florence, analyzed in Chapters Four and Five.97

Fifteenth-century artists had adopted the analogy of beauty and virtue earlier as witnessed in Leonardo da Vinci’s portrait of Ginevra de’ Benci, 1474-1478. (Fig. 6) The poets Cristoforo Landino and Alessandro Braccesi wrote of Ginevra as the most beautiful girl in Florence while emphasizing her virtue and chastity. Further reference to this physical and moral connection is made on the reverse of the painting by Leonardo with the inscribed motto VIRTUTEM FORMA DECORAT (Beauty adorns virtue).98 But, unlike painted portraits a medal lacks color and the ability to emphasize skin tone, hair color, and luxurious fabric. Thus, in addition to mottos, medallists needed to chose other distinct attributes for medallic representations to indicate a sitter’s beauty. For their medals of women, artists such as Pastorino, Ruspagiari, Signoretti, and Bombarda depicted elaborate and sometimes diaphanous dresses and chemises, coiffed hair, elegant necklaces and earrings, and complex folds of garments, all signs of the outward beauty of the sitter. The connection with virtue is further implied in the use of pearls on earrings, pendants, or hair ornaments which are worn by most of the women sitters on the medals. The pearl, an allusion to beauty was a symbol of goodness and was associated with Christ and Mary. A pearl was a sign of Christ and the Virgin birth, for Christ emerged from the womb of Mary like a pearl emerges from an oyster, representing the purity of Christ and Mary.99 Furthermore, biblical associations refer to the value of pearls. The merchant who searches for fine pearls and sells all that he has when he finds it in order to buy them

97 While many of the medals examined here belong to the decade after the majority of medals of the women of the Este, Gonzaga, and Medici were produced, they can be considered the ultimate achievement of the depiction of the beautiful which had its roots in the earlier medals, especially those by Pastorino and Leoni.


is mentioned in Matthew 13:45-46. The merchant searching for pearls in the parable is akin to the kingdom of heaven who casts a net and searches for the best pearls/souls; those that are good will be kept and those that are bad will be discarded. Pearls were so highly valued as symbols of beauty that in 1543, the Venetian Senate declared that prostitutes, for the sake of not being confused with noble or chaste women may “… not wear necklaces, pearls, or jeweled or plain rings, either in their ears or on their hands.”

Pearls were, and still are, associated specifically with marriage, and represented the purity of a bride or wife. It should be noted that many of the women who appear on the medals wearing pearls are commonly identified with the names of their husbands on their medals, suggesting their conjugal relationship. Additionally, it is likely that some medals of women from the sixteenth century were actually betrothal pieces, sent to prospective suitors and their families strengthening the connection between the imagery on the objects and matrimony. The pearls that make up the earrings, necklaces, and head decorations depicted on the women on the portrait medals symbolized their chastity and helped to promote them as suitable wives.

In addition to symbolizing virtue, pearls were one of the most highly valued and expensive gems a woman could own. That most of the siters, no matter their socio-economic class are shown wearing these precious jewels indicates the desire by women to be shown wearing them. For example, in an inventory made in 1589 of the jewels owned by Christine of Lorraine, Grand Duchess of Tuscany, the value of two large pearls for drop earrings was 2000 scudi while the value for a pair of diamond earrings was a

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mere 500 scudi.\textsuperscript{102} To me, this indicates that the women wearing pearls of all types and sizes may not have actually owned the precious jewels, but had their portraits depicting themselves bedecked in the very gems to signify their goodness and chastity. The inclusion of pearls along with the other physical characteristics to be discussed are contemporary with paintings of women such as Parmigianino’s \textit{Antea}, c. 1531-34 (Fig. 7) and the Madonna in his \textit{Madonna of the Long Neck}, begun in 1534, (Fig. 8) just a few years prior to the production of the medals discussed here. Additional attributes on the medal portraits which are suggestive of beauty are fully examined in the following sections.

\textit{The Beautiful and Good Woman}

While the qualities of goodness in women were physically manifest in their portraits, both painted and medallion, they were also described in literary poems and treatises. The earliest Renaissance literary origin for the ideal beautiful woman is found in Francesco Petrarch’s Laura, his lady of the \textit{Rime sparse}. In the poem, Petrarch describes her face, golden hair, rosy cheeks, ruby lips, pearly teeth, shiny eyes, hands and breasts to indicate her physical beauty. Interestingly though, no complete portrait of Laura’s body is ever described in full.\textsuperscript{103} Laura as the feminine ideal beauty persisted through the Renaissance into the mid-sixteenth century until authors such as Agnolo Firenzuola began to reexamine Petrarch’s aesthetic standard of the perfect woman.

Agnolo Firenzuola dedicated his book, \textit{Dialogo delle bellezze delle donne}, (On the Beauty of Women) to the “high-born and fair ladies” of Prato which was first

\textsuperscript{102} Ibid., 60, footnote no. 175.
I contend that Firenzuola’s prescription for beauty, and others like it, while not necessarily adhered to in all ways or by all artists, was an inspiration to the artists of Reggio Emilia and Ferrara as witnessed in their medallic depictions of women.

Firenzuola’s dialogue ensues between one man and four women from Florence who actively discuss the theme of female beauty. His text, written in the Tuscan vernacular, is one of the first that actually challenges the prevailing view of women and beauty which had been established by writers focused on the exemplary women from antiquity. His treatise includes detailed descriptions of the features of a woman’s face and body which are the most desirable, features that the artist can combine to produce the ideal feminine beauty. The participants in Part I of his dialogue consider the issues of universal beauty. Their discussion involves everything from the stature of both men and women, to positions of the features of the face, to the importance and purpose, form and proportion of the limbs. Firenzuola also brings the important qualities of _leggiadria_ (charm) and _grazia_ (grace) into the discussion. He wrote,

> Charm, as some will have it, and according to the sense of the word is nought else than the observance of any unspoken law given and promulgated by Nature to you ladies for the movement and carriage of the whole person as of the particular members, with grace, with modesty, with gentleness, with measure and dignity, in such a manner as that no motion nor act shall lack rule, and method, and measure and purpose; studied, composed, regular and gracious.

These natural, God-given qualities that form the vision of ideal beauty are the guiding principles that lead to the description of the physical composition of ideal feminine beauty in Part II of his text. Whereas Nature rarely bestows ideal beauty onto any one

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person or woman, art, or beauty created by the artist, has the ability to create the perfect, beautiful woman. Firenzuola fragments perfect parts of the body and its features in order to formulate the ideal, a model that even he believed may not exist in reality, again setting him apart from Petrarch’s description of Laura. For example, the hair of a woman should be “fine and fair,” blonde as the rays of the sun, “waving, thick, abundant and long.”\(^{107}\) The importance of beautiful hair is obvious when Firenzuola goes further and translates, from Latin, a similar description of ideal female hair by Apuleius. In one of two translations, he stated,

> So great is the dignity of hair that even if she be most beautiful, and array herself most sumptuously in gold and pearls and rich apparel, and go about adorned in all the fashion and frippery that may be imagined, if she have not disposed her hair in a fair order with pleasing skill, never shall it be said that she is beautiful or elegant.\(^{108}\)

As can be identified in Firenzuola’s treatise and many paintings and portraits of the time, the perfect facial characteristics a woman displays included a spacious forehead, a thin, arched brow, nut-brown eyes, and middle-size ears. The nose, he stresses is the most important feature. “She who has not a nose of perfect beauty can never appear beautiful in profile.”\(^{109}\) The nose must be of proper size, narrow rather than wide, and taper from the top to the base above the mouth, should turn up a very little at the tip and should be colored, but not red.\(^{110}\) He goes on to describe the nostrils and cartilage and finishes the discussion by stressing the most pleasing nose is one which is proportional in all parts so as not to spoil the profile view. The mouth should be small rather than large; neither

\(^{107}\) Ibid., 108.
\(^{108}\) Ibid., 110-111.
\(^{109}\) Ibid., 130.
\(^{110}\) Ibid., 131.
pouting nor flat; should not show more than five or six upper teeth when open.111 Lips need to be not too thin and not too thick and should be vermillion. Teeth are important also and must correspond to the mouth and lips while the tongue too needs to reflect the beauty of the mouth. The chin should be round, slightly red under the lip but lose color as it gets closer to the neck. A slender, long and fair neck is most desirable and when it meets with square, broad, shoulders with a gentle slope true perfection is achieved. The bosom, according to Firenzuola is beautiful when,

besides it breadth, which is its chief grace, it is full so that no sign of the bones is seen, and rising softly from the sides swells so gently that the eye can scarce follow it…and the fresh full breasts heaving as though they were ill at ease from being oppressed and confined by the raiment, seem eager to be free from prison, rising with a vehemence and energy which compels every eye to gaze at them lest they escape.112

These descriptions come together in his analogy between the female body and ancient vases. Firenzuola’s reliance on classical prototypes and Neoplatonic thinking is evident in the many examples he provides of classical influences in his treatise on beauty. Specifically, he provides an analogy between the transition from the woman’s shoulders to the arms and the space where the waist and bust rise above the hips and the throat above the bosom and shoulders, to that of an antique vase.113 He provides numerous drawings of ancient vases and relates how the curves of the vase should correspond to the body. He wrote,

You see that the handles at first rise somewhat and then gently curve downwards as the arms should do…I will show you how the throat has its rise from the bosom and back of the neck and shoulders, and how the best rises from the loins, which I believe will not displease you; nay, it will

111 Ibid., 133.
112 Ibid., 144.
113 It should be noted that the analogy between the vase and the feminine ideal is not a classical reference, but rather an analogy inferred by Firenzuola.
seem to you that either Nature hath imitated art, or that the art of beauty in you ladies hath been derived from those shapely vases.\textsuperscript{114}

These characteristics were evident in the literature and paintings, and as I argue the medals, of the period. In particular, I believe paintings such as Parmigianino’s depiction of Mary in the \textit{Madonna of the Long Neck}, were exemplars for the medallists from Reggio Emilia and Ferrara. Elizabeth Cropper cites Parmigianino’s painting as the quintessential visual example of the beautiful woman realized in painting.\textsuperscript{115} She points out the visual analogy between the body of the Virgin and the vase which is held by the angel to the left as well as that of the Virgin and the column to the right.\textsuperscript{116} Of course, Firenzuola adopted this analogy of the female form and the antique vase just a few years after Parmigianino’s painting of the \textit{Madonna}. Thus, the establishment of these ideals in painting and literature translate directly to the depiction of women on medals, in particular the medals of women produced by Pastorino, Ruspagiari, Signoretti, and Bombarda.\textsuperscript{117}

The purpose of a medal is to combine obverse and reverse, text and image in order to facilitate a more in-depth understanding of either the personal characteristics or virtues of the individual depicted. Yet, most of the medals of women examined in this and the next chapter lack a reverse. As I mentioned in Chapter One, the explicit

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\textsuperscript{114} Firenzuola, \textit{Dialogue of the Beauty of Women}, 141-142.
\textsuperscript{116} Cropper states that the analogy of the woman as a vase was popular in the 1530s. Vasari refers particularly to Raphael’s woman carrying a vase of water in the \textit{Fire in the Borgo} fresco in the Vatican. At the same time, Raphael was studying the works of Vitruvius. Vitruvius supplied Raphael and other artists such as Parmigianino with studies on proportion and thus the analogy of the vase as well as the column in the \textit{Madonna of the Long Neck}, reflect proportional systems of representation in terms of the feminine ideal.
\textsuperscript{117} Gian Antonio Signoretti worked in this same tradition. Other than brief references to him in relation to Pastorino, Ruspagiari, and Bombarda, his contributions are not developed in my study. This is no way indicates that his medals are not important to the overall study of Mannerist Emilian medals.
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motivation for this trend has not yet been fully analyzed in relation to the medals of women of the sixteenth century, in particular, those produced by medallists such as Pastorino, and of the Northern territories of Italy, such as Reggio Emilia and Ferrara. My research demonstrates first, that the number of uniface medals indicates their popularity and importance; second, that these medals, when taken as a group, provide a great deal of information about the motivations of their production; and finally, the intricacies of the portraits provide insight into their function within sixteenth-century society in Italy. In my opinion, the production of medals without reverse imagery was a conscious decision on the part of the patron, sitter, and artist, to emphasize and depict the most beautiful physical features of the sitter and underscore her virtue. Moreover, the non-noble patrons of Reggio Emilia and Ferrara were most likely motivated to commission medals which resembled the ruling family or noble families of the cities who themselves had commissioned a number of uniface medals.

I propose that a one-sided medal, that was almost certainly less costly, provided the ability of men and women outside courtly circles to commission medals from artists like Pastorino, Ruspagiari, Signoretti, and Bombarda. Additionally, this group of medallists purposefully omitted reverse imagery in favor of emphasizing the elegance, beauty, and costumes of the sitters on their medals.

What specifically differentiates the medals of Ruspagiari, Signoretti, and Bombarda from those of other artists, even Pastorino, is that the medals take on more of a private, individualized, and even elusive meaning, leaving behind the notions of earlier

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118 It is also possible that men of lower economic status would be afforded the opportunity to commission medals of the women in their families which may reflect the increased number of uniface medals of women be produced by Pastorino and others. I also suspect that although men may have officially commissioned the medals, the women depicted on the medals may have played an active role in the commission.
medallic images meant to illustrate personal piety or virtue worthy of public admiration and adoration. In his discussion of Mannerism expressed in medals, Richard-Raymond Alasko stated, “…in the practice of the medallist there are emphatic differences indicative not of a matured worldview but of a worldview evolved almost beyond recognition.” The medals of Ruspagiari, Signoretti, and Bombarda display an elegant treatment of drapery and texture, and elucidate the artificiality seen in the other medals and painted portraits of the period.

In the portrait medals by Ruspagiari, women lose the sense of individuality provided by Pastorino and conform to a more contemporary standard of idealized beauty. Two artists, Signoretti and Bombarda, worked in a similar style of Ruspagiari and on a few occasions, went even farther in the stylization of their female subjects. As mentioned earlier, Parmigianino’s *Madonna of the Long Neck* which depicts Mary with elongated features, sensuous drapery, elaborate hair pulled back and crowned with a diadem decorated with pearls, must have been a model for the depiction of women on these medals. (Fig.8) Parmigianino shows the Madonna wearing clinging drapery with beautiful folds to indicate her body underneath. Similar drapery can be seen over the breasts in Ruspagiari’s medal of Camilla Ruggieri and Bombarda’s medal of Leonora Cambi. (Figs. 9, 10) In addition to the treatment of the hair and drapery, these artists utilize straps, similar to the strap that falls from Mary’s right shoulder to the mouth of the infant Christ in Parmigianino’s painting, as additions to the eccentric costumes of the

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120 It is clear that the Pastorino, Ruspagiari, Signoretti, and Bombarda influenced each other’s work. What is not specifically clear is if Pastorino’s medals first influenced the work of the others, or if he was influenced by their work.

121 Also see Parmigianino’s *Madonna of the Rose* (1528-30) for similar drapery revealing right breast.
women on their medals. Examples include the medals of an Unidentified Woman and Camilla Ruggieri by Ruspagiari. (Figs. 11, 9) The hair of Parmigianino’s Madonna is pulled back, the front styled in perfect curls which frame her face while the rest falls gracefully over her right shoulder. She is crowned with a diadem of delicate pearls and a jewel interwoven into the curls of her hair. As was evidenced in Firenzuola’s Dialogue and in Parmigianino’s Madonna, a woman’s hair is one of the most important characteristics of her physical beauty. The description of the importance of hair by Firenzuola is translated not only visually in paintings of the period after Parmigianino, but also in the medals produced by the Emilian artists. The hairstyles shown on the medals, in terms of their elaborate curls, bands, and decorations, go far beyond what earlier medallists had depicted on their medals of women. The thickness of the hair, the braids and curls, and the attention taken to depict such elaborate hairdos is exceptional in the medals of identified woman such as Camilla Ruggieri by Ruspagiari, Costanza Bocchi by Signoretti and Anna Maurella Oldofredi d’Iseo by Bombarda. (Figs. 9, 12, 13) Firenzuola cites the praise of hair by the Greek writer Dion who “esteems as ignorant and of no account those who fail to attend to the care of it, with bodkins and irons proper for curling it.”\footnote{Firenzuola, Dialogue of the Beauty of Women, 109.} The women’s hair depicted on the medals of this group directly corresponds to this insistence on well-maintained and coiffed hair. Beyond the contemporaneous preoccupation with women’s hair, the depiction of such styled hair was also depicted on medals of Roman women from antiquity which not only linked the
Renaissance medal with that of the classical age, but also recalled the literary references to antique authors writing about hair and its relation to beauty in Firenzuola’s text.\(^{123}\)

As proponents of the Mannerist style in portraiture Ruspagiari, Signoretti, Bombarda, and Pastorino whose medals are examined in Chapter Three, exemplified idealized feminine beauty in their medallic portraits of women. These medals are like none other in Italy at the time. Their style, which was not popular among most artists of the period working outside of Reggio Emilia and Ferrara, raises questions which cannot be fully answered due to the lack of documentary evidence regarding the careers and influences of these artists. This leaves scholars perplexed as to the impetus and meaning of their production. I do not propose new evidence revealing their stylistic contributions, but I attempt to situate their medals of women in the framework of the Renaissance notion of beauty and virtue. Pastorino, Ruspagiari, Signoretti, and Bombarda produced medals of beautiful women that signify the established traditions and themes regarding the moral and social status of women in Reggio Emilia and Ferrara.

*Some Medals by Alfonso Ruspagiari*

Alfonso Ruspagiari was an artist whose medals date mainly from around the 1550s.\(^{124}\) He was from a fairly well-to-do family and was born in Reggio Emilia in 1521. He married Ippolita Bonzagi in 1540 and together they had four children. His wealth is evident in the dowry he provided his daughter which amounted to three thousand gold

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\(^{123}\) For example, the hairstyle of women from the Flavian period is depicted in sculpture from Roman antiquity.

\(^{124}\) He cast two medals with his self-portrait and identified himself from Reggio. The medals are not dated, but his portrait is depicted in a Mannerist style and is likely based on a drawing by his contemporary Lelio Orsi. Attwood and Levkoff discuss the androgynous nature of the portrait and its significance to Ruspagiari’s self-fashioning. See Attwood, *Italian Medals*, 280 and Mary Levkoff, *Currency of Fame*, 187-188.
scudi. In addition to his artistic duties, he was also a member of the City Council, supervised many public works, was the treasurer of the Monte di Pietà, a local charity for orphans, and was elevated in 1571 to Master of the Mint in Reggio.\textsuperscript{125} In addition, he translated two religious treatises from Spanish in 1568 and 1575.\textsuperscript{126} Ruspagiari is responsible for casting two medals depicting his own portrait as well as a medal for Ercole d’Este II, various medals of women from Reggio Emilia, and a number of medals depicting unknown or unidentified women.

His first medal is believed to be that of Ercole II which was cast on the occasion of the duke’s entry into Reggio Emilia in 1536. His other medals depict, on a whole, members of his own family or circle of friends.\textsuperscript{127} His style signals the influence of Pastorino’s medals, Antonio Begarelli’s (c. 1490s-1565) terra cotta sculptures, and the Mannerist Lelio Orsi’s (c. 1511-1587) paintings and drawings.\textsuperscript{128} In addition, his medals of unidentified women, including the famous medal of a woman and her admirer, number approximately nine. From his remaining medals today, it seems possible that Ruspagiari specialized in the production of medals of women. Like his contemporaries in Reggio Emilia and Ferrara, Ruspagiari excelled at depicting women as beautiful, elaborate, and stylized.

Ruspagiari’s connection with other artists of the period must be taken into account in a discussion of the style of his medals. One artist in particular, Lelio Orsi, seemed to have a connection with Ruspagiari. Orsi’s own style, influenced first by Giulio Romano

\textsuperscript{125} Attwood, \textit{Italian Medals}, 1:279.
\textsuperscript{126} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{127} Pollard, \textit{Renaissance Medals}, 1:520.
\textsuperscript{128} Levkoff makes the connection between the “soft fullness and decorative impulses” of Begarelli’s female sculptures in his \textit{Deposition} and Ruspagiari’s medals of women. Her comparison between the two is legitimate, but they are by no means a one-to one correspondence as Ruspagiari’s medals are much more ornately adorned. See Levkoff’s remarks in \textit{The Currency of Fame}, 189.
and Correggio, was later solidified after a trip to Rome in 1554 where he absorbed Michelangelo’s late Mannerism. A relationship between Ruspagiari and Orsi is not farfetched. It is even probable that the self-portrait medal by Ruspagiari was taken from a drawing by Orsi. It is also noteworthy that Orsi worked with Signoretti, a follower and fellow medallist of Ruspagiari, on a number of occasions, once providing designs in 1567 for a vase Signoretti made for Alfonso d’Este II, and on another offering designs for coins produced in the mint of Novellara.\(^{129}\) The extent of Orsi, Ruspagiari, and Signoretti’s relationship is still unclear. What is known is that the Emilian style is consistent in the work of a number of artists during the period who were influenced by Parmigianino and Correggio including Ruspagiari, Signoretti, and Orsi. In addition to his possible relationship with Orsi, Ruspagiari also knew the Mannerist painter and sculptor Alessandro Ardenti who was from Faenza, but worked in Lucca and then for the dukes of Savoy in Turin. Ardenti, who also worked as a medallist, cast medals in a similar style to that of Ruspagiari. Ruspagiari’s influence on the medals by Ardenti is evident and is mentioned by Attwood in his discussion of the artist’s career. Ruspagiari depicted Ardenti on a medal which is not dated, but the motto identifies Ardenti as a PICT EXIM (distinguished painter). Unfortunately, the exact circumstances of their correspondence and relationship, beyond the medal, are not known.

The Mannerist style is exemplified in most of the medals by Ruspagiari. However, two medal types of Lucia Ruspagiari, who may have been some relation to the artist are an exception.\(^{130}\) (Figs. 14, 15) These medals differ from others by Ruspagiari

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130 Toderi and Vannel identify both medals as being that of Lucia Ruspagiari, but Attwood also notes that the second medal type may not be the same sitter, but instead reflect Ruspagiari’s “conventional idealization of his female subjects.” Attwood, *Italian Medals*, 1:281.
in that they are more conservative and lack the elaborate, curled hairstyle that is represented on the other medals by him. The medals of Lucia also show the sitter as fully clothed, another characteristic that differs from his other medals of women. The truncated arms and torso are characteristic of Ruspagiari but the drapery, while it flows nicely from the body, is much less fussy than in his other medals. Ruspagiari adds various straps to his sitter’s garments, as noticed in the first medal type, and as a support for a mantle as seen in the second type. Lucia is shown in the second type as wearing a veil and wimple, but her hair is similar in style to the first type which is also covered by a veil. These medals indicate Ruspagiari’s ability to cast medals with traditional features more similar to those by artists such as Pastorino. Conversely, all subsequent medals of women by Ruspagiari correspond with an intense shift away from the conventional poses and depictions of women that were being produced by other medallists outside of Ferrara and Reggio Emilia.

In a style that is similar to that of the men on his medals, Ruspagiari truncated the women’s arms and torsos which seem to float on the medal’s surface while their heads face in the opposite direction from their shoulders. Examples of these medal types include those of Isabella Riario, Claudia Pancalieri (?), Camilla Ruggeri and a number of medals of unidentified women. (Figs. 16, 17, 9) Although none of Ruspagiari’s medals are dated and not one was produced with a reverse, many do display his signature A R (Alfonso Ruspagiari). The focus is on the identification of the woman (when identified) and more on her physical attributes displayed on the medals. Each woman has hair that is styled with piles of curls on top of her head while other curls fall to frame her face. Ribbons drop from the braided hair that is also decorated in many cases, with a volute at
the top of the head. Each of them is shown wearing a gown that consists of numerous, curving folds, fashioned together with straps and detailed brooches. Ruspagiari reveals the breasts of his sitters with diaphanous drapery in a similar manner to the translucent and wet-drapery effect in Parmigianino’s Madonna that reveals her navel and that clings to her torso to accentuate her left breast. Justification for this effect is found in Pliny, *Natural History*, who discussed this type of drapery in his account of Polygnotus of Thasos. He noted that Polygnotus was the first artist to represent women in transparent draperies, which was a detail that became a popular Mannerist motif. In addition to the slightly revealed or exposed breasts of the women on his medals, the v-shaped neckline of the gowns allowed for the decoration of the neck with pearl necklaces and pearl earrings.

The medal of Camilla Ruggeri is a perfect example of Ruspagiari’s flamboyant style. (Fig. 9) Pollard even believes that it may be an allusion to Camilla, the Roman Amazon. Her name and lack of any other identifying detail makes this an attractive suggestion, but typical images of Amazons include one breast exposed. Ruspagiari covers both breasts of his sitter with her gown. His contemporary, Bombarda almost consistently leaves one breast exposed in his medals of women and a discussion of Amazon references seems more appropriate to his medals. There is also no allusion to Diana the Huntress on the medal of Camilla which would also support a more convincing argument in favor of her as an Amazon. Therefore, Ruspagiari must have produced the

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133 Holding the gown in place between her breasts is a brooch that seems to be either a mask of an animal or human face. The identification of the object, which has not been identified and cannot be discerned here, might lead to further interpretation or identification of the sitter or the sitter as an allegorical figure.
medal of Camilla Ruggieri to demonstrate the contemporary ideas of beauty especially in the depiction of her hair, small facial features, long neck, rounded shoulders and full breasts. She is the visual epitome of beauty.

The most difficult medal to assess by Ruspagiari is the medal showing the bust of an unidentified woman and an onlooker.\(^{134}\) (Fig. 18) The medal depicts an unknown woman and another figure to the right, seemingly androgynous, looking back at her. Decorative volutes are on either side which ultimately frame both figures and almost create a medal within a medal. As with most of Ruspagiari’s medals, the main figures’ arms are truncated, but this medal presents a surprising detail in that the initials A R are displayed prominently on the truncated right arm of the figure. Her breasts are bare, and her hair is styled with ribbons and mounted curls, some of which hang down around her face and neck. She wears a pendant hanging from a ribbon or cord around her neck, and a drop earring. The drapery she wears is pulled slightly over one shoulder and the rest is gathered below her exposed breasts. She looks directly into the eyes of a second figure whose whole body, except for the profile face and a thin bit of drapery at the neck, is severely cut off by the frame of the medal. Speculation on the meaning and relationship of the two figures has fascinated all scholars of the medal. To date, the identity of the sitter has not been identified, and the relationship between the two figures is disputed. This representation of the woman on the medal is also aligned with my previous assessment of the medal of Camilla Ruggeri as representing beauty. Thus, Ruspagiari is consistent in his production of medals, even medals that lack specific reference to an identified woman, that display his propensity to represent feminine beauty.

\(^{134}\) Two examples of other double portraits include Fra Filippo Lippi’s, *Portrait of a Woman with a Man at a Casement, c. 1440-44, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York*, and Lelio Orsi’s drawing of the Bust of a Young Women and Naked Torso of an Old Man in the Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence.
The gender of the onlooker or admirer is difficult to discern. Attwood makes it clear that if the figure is a so-called paradigm of beauty, the secondary figure would presumably be male.¹³⁵ Jones, Masson, and Pollard also identify the figure as male. Jones identified the figure as the woman’s lover.¹³⁶ Masson suggested that the woman was a courtesan and the secondary figure her admirer, indicating a male figure.¹³⁷ Pollard, who identifies the figure as “not female,” also suggests that the medal imagery has been interpreted as Youth and Age, but does not provide a source for this reading.¹³⁸ Levkoff offers the subject both as an allusion to the story of Pygmalion, “gazing at his sculpture and wishing it to come to life,” which would indicate the presence of the male artist or an alternative suggestion that the face could be that of a female figure and the imagery an illustration of vanitas.¹³⁹ Further supporting the idea of the inclusion of the artist is his prominent signature on the truncated arm of the figure. If the onlooker is male, and is the artist, he would be gazing at the sculpture he has created which is identified as such by the initials on the arm. The medal as a vanitas is also supported by Attwood who made the observation that the second figure is in lower relief which could indicate a mirror image.¹⁴⁰ Toderi and Vannel stated that the head of the figure is that of an old woman, which indicates a reflection of the main figure.¹⁴¹

In attempting to understand the meaning of the medal and even the gender of the second figure, Attwood calls to mind a drawing by Orsi that illustrates a bust of a young woman facing right accompanied by a male figure. (Fig. 19) It is possible that Orsi either

¹³⁵ Attwood, Italian Medals, 1:281.
¹³⁶ Jones, The Art of the Medal, 64.
¹³⁷ Masson, Courtesans of the Italian Renaissance, plate 22.
¹³⁸ Pollard, Italian Medals, 1:523.
¹³⁹ Levkoff, Currency of Fame, 186.
¹⁴⁰ Attwood, Italian Medals, 1:282.
¹⁴¹ Toderi and Vannel, Le medaglie italiane, 1:407.
provided a drawing for the medal, or that this drawing inspired his subject for the medal, but a one to one correspondence between the two is not achieved. The second figure in the medal is in profile, whereas the male figure in the drawing is frontal. In addition, the male figure in the drawing has his entire face, head, torso and arms visible instead of the cropped figure on the medal. Lastly, the figure in Orsi’s drawing is definitely male while the figure on the medal cannot be identified as male or female. Ruspagiari’s treatment of the hair of the female figure, in particular the curls, braids, ribbons, and volute do testify to his adoption of parts of Orsi’s drawing. And, if Ruspagiari did base this medal on a drawing by Orsi, even loosely, it would not have been the first time. Ruspagiari’s own portrait medal has been linked to another drawing by Orsi in the Galleria Estense in Modena. (Figs. 20, 21) Here, the self-portrait on the medal reveals a close correspondence with the figure in the drawing except for one remarkable detail; the figure in the drawing is female. Like the drawing, Ruspagiari’s medalltic self-portrait appropriates certain feminine elements of the drawing, such as the breasts, while depicting his profile-portrait as clearly male.\textsuperscript{142} The correlation between the second drawing by Orsi and the self-portrait medal by Ruspagiari demonstrates Ruspagiari’s propensity to use seemingly androgynous figures. Ruspagiari’s approach to both figures of his self-portrait and the onlooker suggest his conscious effort to blend, or even confuse the genders of the figures.

If the onlooker is an image of a reflection, it would indicate that the figure is female and would point to the fact that it is not a representational reflection of the woman’s image, but instead the main figure looking at herself as an old woman. As

\textsuperscript{142} Attwood suggests that Ruspagiari may have presented himself on the medal as a universal man in form of Plato’s adrygyne. Attwood, \textit{Italian Medals}, 1:280.
Levkoff proposed, it could be a reminder of her mortality and thus a *vanitas*.\(^{143}\) In this way, the medal itself must be the source of the reflection, making it the mirror, since the primary figure does not have the physical capability to hold such an object because of her truncated arms. The allusion to a reflected image or the presence of a woman with a mirror had been depicted in paintings of the period, in particular those of Venus, the goddess of beauty or as the allegory of Prudence. Venetian artists seem to have taken up both subjects on multiple occasions. Giovanni Bellini’s *Prudence or Truth: Self Knowledge*, c.1490s, presents a nude female figure holding a mirror. (Fig. 22) In the mirror is a reflection of a male face, which actually has similar features to that on Ruspagiari’s medal. The figure on the medal does not seem to be a one-to-one correspondence to previous examples of Prudence because of her half-clothed appearance. Most images of Prudence depict her either nude such as in Bellini’s, or fully clothed such as in Pier del Pollaiuolo’s *Prudence*, c. 1469-70. (Fig. 23) Furthermore, the mirrors held by these figures of Prudence are directed to the viewer not the figure herself, thus providing the viewer with a reflected image. In Ruspagiari’s medal, the large figure is looking directly at the face of the smaller figure indicating either a self-reflection which would be more appropriate to images of Venus or to the presence of another figure, possibly the artist. The figure as Venus would have precedence in the paintings of Giovanni Bellini’s *Woman/Venus with a Mirror*, 1515, and Titian’s *Venus with a Mirror*, 1555. (Figs. 24, 25) If we consider the secondary figure on the medal to be a reflection, then the figures in these paintings and on the medal are similar in that they depict

\(^{143}\) The medal of Gabriele Fiamma, 1578, by Bombarda shows the sitter facing right with a small skull situated next to his left shoulder. The indication that this is a *memento mori* or *vanitas* is obvious and may have been influenced by Ruspagiari’s medal. Bombarda’s was produced after Ruspagiari’s medal of the woman and onlooker as Ruspagiari died in 1576.
Venus/female figure gazing at her reflection. Venus, the goddess of love, would have been an appropriate reference to the depiction of female beauty and the elaborate details of the figure, in particular her hair and breasts, correspond nicely to the prescriptions set forth by Firenzuola. But, there are obvious difficulties with such a simplistic interpretation. The awkward placement of the figure’s right shoulder and the addition of the second, unidentified older figure, make it difficult to discern exactly what Ruspagiari intended. This may have been intentional on his part and could imply a conflation of meanings. It is difficult to dispute that the image is one of beauty, but the inclusion of the other elements also points to the relationship of the artist and his image. The addition of Ruspagiari’s initials on the truncated right arm of the figure is significant to this type of interpretation. While he includes his initial A R on the truncated arms of his other figures, such as Camilla Ruggeri, they are barely noticeable, whereas the initials on the current medal are larger and more prominent. It is as if he signed the figure in a similar way that he would sign a sculpture, thus claiming ownership of the object, supporting Levkoff’s claim that the medal may refer to the story of Pygmalion, or at least a representation of the relationship between the female figure and the artist. In one respect, the decoration of the female figure is consistent with the other female figures in Ruspagiari’s oeuvre which clearly signifies his passion for depicting ideal beauty. Conversely, the inclusion of a second figure, possibly an allusion to the artist, the truncated bust and bare breasts of the female figure all converge to form an image related to Ruspagiari. This should thus be considered as an accompaniment to his shaping of his own image in the same way as the various women he portrayed on medals may have facilitated the fashioning of their portraits.
Some Medals by Giambattista Cambi, Known as Bombarda

Another artist working in Reggio Emilia and in a similar style to Ruspagiari was Giambattista Cambi, otherwise called Bombarda. Bombarda was originally from Cremona and was an engraver and medalist. He produced medals that were conducive to his patron’s wishes whether it was in the more conventional style of Pastorino or the more elaborate style of Ruspagiari. He worked in Reggio Emilia between 1540 and 1548 as a notary and member of the mint, and was described as “conductor” of the mint in 1550. Around 1559, Bombarda moved to Ferrara and worked for the Este court. He produced a medal of Alfonso II d’Este the Duke of Ferrara and another of his wife, Lucrezia de’ Medici. (Fig. 26) The medal of Lucrezia is one of Bombarda’s earliest medals from Ferrara and dates between 1560 and 1561, probably around the same time the medal of Alfonso II was produced, making them matrimonial commemorations. He is known to have signed seventeen medals, and only three of them are dated, two of them 1557 and the other 1570. He is also responsible for casting medals of his wife, Leonora Cambi, and a number of other women some of whom are identified and others who remain unknown. Unlike his Emilian counterparts, a few of his medals do have a reverse.

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144 The artist’s name is still debated by scholars. Armand refers to him as Andrea Cambi which used by later scholars such as Pollard and Toderi and Vannel. Attwood claims his name was Giambattista Cambi whose name is associated with the mint in Reggio in 1557. Attwood’s association seems more probable and thus I refer to him as Giambattista Cambi, or Bombarda.

145 Toderi and Vannel. Le medaglie italiane, 1:410.

146 This medal was produced two years after the medals by Pastorino and two years after her marriage to Alfonso II d’Este in 1558. Lucrezia died in 1561, around the same time that Bombarda produced the medal.

147 Pollard, Italian Medals, 1:526.
The one-sided medal of Leonora Cambi is one of the finest examples of his Mannerist styled medals. (Fig. 27) The inscription reads LEONORAE CAMB. VXORIS (Leonora Cambio, wife) and identifies her as the artist’s wife.148 The medal is not dated, but his trademark signature, BOM is located the lower left of the medal. Bombarda situated the bust on a scroll, an element that again recalls the work of Orsi. (Figs. 28, 29) Leonora is depicted wearing an elegant, diaphanous covering, held together at her shoulder with a brooch in the form of a head, and in the middle of her chest is an object in the form of a mask which situates her sheer blouse, exposing her left breast. Her hair is stacked with curls and decorated with braids, ribbons, a veil which falls on the back of her neck, and a volute. She is adorned with a drop earring and a double strand of pearls around her neck. In a similar style to the women depicted by Ruspagiari, her arms are truncated and her torso is positioned on a scrolled plinth. On the right side of the plinth is a human figure supporting a shield or coat of arms.

The exposed left breast of Leonora is an exceptional detail on a number of female portraits produced by Bombarda, but is not unprecedented in the sixteenth century. The painterly tradition of depicting a female with one breast exposed belongs mainly to the depiction of personifications, allegorical figures, and heroines from the antique world.149 Amazons, the women warriors of antiquity, had been rendered on objects such as ancient Greek vases and sculpture, and Renaissance paintings.150 Their possible reference in the medals of Bombarda comes from the bare breasts, one of the details missing from the medallic portrait of Camilla Ruggeri by Ruspagiari. Edward Olszewski has explained

148 An artist depicting his wife was not unprecedented as this had been done by other artists in the sixteenth century. For example, Andrea del Sarto painted the portraits of his wife Lucrezia del Fede.
149 Pollard, Italian Medals, 1:527.
one of the reasons Amazons were represented pictorially as bare-breasted; “This was based on a mistaken etymology of Amazon as meaning one breast, conflating the Latin ama/senus, or lover of the breast, a misunderstanding repeated by Boccaccio.”

Additionally, amazons were represented with one breast bare, usually the right breast based on a reference to the removal of that breast which was done to improve their military skills; the breast was thought to impede the use of the arrow and thus the cutting or searing off of the right breast allowed for greater accuracy when fighting in battle. A third motive for the removal of the breast, as explained by William Blake Tyrrell in his chapter dedicated to Amazon customs, is that it released the Amazon from maternal attachments, allowing them the freedom from domestic duties of their female counterparts. The nature of the Amazons as primitive others led them to remain unwed since their duty was on the battlefield and in the agricultural fields. But, for the perpetuation of their kind, they retained the necessity of reproduction. But, the relationship between the Amazons and men is more complicated. Although they refuse to marry, they are sexually seductive and arouse men. Thus, the attention to the chastity of the Amazons in the Renaissance comes from this conscious effort of the Amazons to avoid sexual affairs with men. Also, as Olszewski explained, chastity was associated with learning and learned women were associated with Amazons.

Thus, what is most relevant to the medals of Bombarda were the Amazon’s virtues of intelligence and chastity, two traits that would have been readily applicable to the portrayal of women on Bombarda’s medals.

151 Ibid., 26.
As for the exposed breast on the medal of Leonora, it might seem unfitting for a
wife to be depicted in this way, except to project her virtue and learning. However, a
number of images of Diana the Huntress depict her with her breast or breasts exposed
which is in no way a symbol of lost chastity. Furthermore, twenty-five prints by
Aegidius Sadeler (d. 1629) portraying images of Roman emperors and empresses,
although later than the production of Bombarda’s medals, portray bare-breasted woman
or women with one breast slightly exposed. Bombarda’s medals of his wife, as well as
those of Violante Brasavola (Fig. 30), the wife of Giambattista Pigna, and Anna Maurella
Oldofredi d’Iseo (Fig. 13) could have been available to Sedeler as inspiration for his
prints. Sedeler’s print of Pompeia, the wife of Julius Caesar shows her in a very similar
approach to Bombarda’s medal of Leonora Cambi. (Fig. 31) In the print, Pompeia,
whose elaborately decorated hair and costume also recall the Mannerist medals, reveals
her left breast while her right breast is fully covered by her garment. Like Pompeia and
the Amazons, Leonora’s left breast is revealed in Bombarda’s flattery in the medal for an
audience of one, making a correlation with the Amazons probable while remaining a
suitable subject as a wife. The association of Leonora, and Bombarda’s other women
who reveal their breasts, as a warrior is unlikely. Instead, the reference to the virtue and
chastity of the Amazons, as well as allusions to Diana, seems more credible. The women
on Bombarda’s medals, particularly Leonora, were not rulers or even members of the

\[154\] See Parmigianino’s Diana and Actaeon, in the Rocca Sanvitale, in particular the fresco on the
north wall. Diana is shown with her breast exposed, although it is her left breast. See also Rubens’ Diana
and Her Nymphs Departing for the Hunt c. 1615 in the Cleveland Museum of Art, as he depicts Diana with
one bare breast which is her right breast. A medal of Giulia Pratonieri by Signoretti may indicate her as
Diana. On the medal, she holds two arrows which Pollard believes implies her association with the
goddess. Although this is a possibility, she is fully clothed, wears a helmet, and a cuirass-like covering
over her gown. Attwood may be correct in his suggestion that she is representative of the goddess Athena
suggesting that Giulia is the patroness of the arts. See Pollard, Renaissance Medals, 1:525 and Attwood,
Italian Medals, 1:284.
ruling nobility for that matter. It was not necessary to fashion their images, both literally and figuratively, as warriors such as Catherine de’ Medici did in Rubens’ depiction of her as Minerva in his cycle of paintings of her life.\textsuperscript{155} Thus, in the case of the medal of Leonora, the appropriateness of the bare breast may be present in an allusion to a personification of chastity.

A second medal type by Bombarda which the sitter bears her breast is that of Anna Maurella Oldofredi d’Iseo. She is depicted on two medal types by Bombarda. Unfortunately, nothing is known of her life, but it is clear that she was a member of the Oldofredi family from Iseo. The inscriptions on the medals read, ANNA MAVRELLA OLDOFREDI.D.ISE.AET.XV and ANNA MAVRELLA ISEA AET ANN XV (Anna Maurella Oldofredi d’Iseo, aged fifteen). Although she is identified on the medals as age fifteen, the unknown date of her birth contributes to the difficulty of dating the medals. Attwood categorized the medal as a commemoration of her marriage to Oldofredi.\textsuperscript{156} The first medal is a uniface medal with the portrait of Anna, facing right, wearing a gown with a loose covering over her shoulder that curves elegantly around her torso. (Fig. 13) Her hair is decorated with a number of braids, ribbons, and a veil, similar to the hairstyle worn by Leonora Cambi. She appears wearing a double strand of pearls and a brooch between her breasts that cinches the drapery of her garment and exposes her left breast, again like an Amazon. This detail may again associate her with the Amazons as a woman of beauty and chastity. Numerous straps, which can be seen flowing from her hair to her back and around her shoulders and waist adorn her. If Attwood’s assertion that this depicts Anna as the wife of Oldofredi is correct, it is in keeping with

\textsuperscript{155} See Jean-Baptiste Massè’s engraving after Rubens, Marie de’ Medici as Minerva, 1708?, The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

\textsuperscript{156} Attwood, Italian Medals, 1:291.
Bombarda’s flattering tendency to illustrate a wife who reveals one of her breasts. An examination of the second medal type may help in revealing the motivations of Bombarda to represent wives in this way.

Unlike the one-sided medal, the second version of Anna’s medal is combined with a reverse that depicts the Judgment of Paris. (Fig.32) The nude and semi-nude figures of Venus, Minerva, and Juno, stand one in front of the other as they seem to approach a seated Paris who offers an apple to the goddesses with his outstretched right arm while holding a shepherd’s crook in his left. Between them is a smaller, active figure of a cupid. The inscription, HAEC DIGNIOR (Venus is more worthy) is situated around the curve of the top of the medal. Above the figure group, and in between the words HAEC and DIGNOIR, Bombarda depicts the banquet of the gods. This, and the related subject of the Three Graces, is not new to medal imagery.

The story of the Judgment of Paris occurs during the wedding feast of Peleus and Thetis. Eris/Strife, the god of discord disrupted the feast by throwing an apple onto the table into which were inscribed the words, “For the most beautiful.” Each of the three goddesses claimed the fruit as her own, and in order to give it to its rightful owner, Jupiter decided that Paris should judge the fairest of the women and settle the argument. Paris chose Venus, the goddess of love and beauty as the winner of the contest. In exchange for her victory, Venus promises Paris that Helen of Troy will be his wife. The story of the Judgment of Paris likens Anna to Venus as a woman of beauty as well as an allusion to Helen, the wife of Paris.

Around 1510, an unknown Mantuan artist had illustrated the same imagery on the reverse of a medal of Ortensia Piccolomini which is quite similar to Bombarda’s reverse,
in fact, almost mirror images. (Fig. 33) The inscriptions on the medal provide more support for the association of the figures with the notion of feminine beauty. The obverse inscription, \textit{HORENSIAI.PICOLOMINEAI.M[orum ac].P[ulchitudinis].D[oninae]} (To Ortensia Piccolomini, lady of virtue and beauty) and the reverse inscription, \textit{PVLCREA.OPES.ET.ARM.S}[e]D.AMOR.PVICRIOR (Beautiful are the works of Juno, beautiful are the arms of Minerva, but love is more beautiful) reinforce the subject as a reference to virtue and beauty.\textsuperscript{157} That the inscription on the Bombarda medal indicates that Venus is more worthy, and that the subject is unmistakably a reference to the beauty of the sitter, makes the connection between the themes of love and beauty more compelling.

A sixteenth-century medal of Elisabetta Querini, by the Venetian medallist Danese Cattaneo further supports this claim.\textsuperscript{158} (Fig. 34) The Three Graces, popular in contemporary painting and a subject related to the Judgment of Paris, are also depicted on the reverses of numerous medals of men and women including that of Elisabetta, the wife of Lorenzo Massolo. Elisabetta, herself a poet, was revered for her “beauty, learning, and virtue,” and the reverse imagery evokes these virtues, in particular her respectability.\textsuperscript{159} In 1538 she made it clear to Bembo, who offered her a draft of a sonnet that was to feature the choice of Paris that she did not wish to be visualized as a nude goddess.\textsuperscript{160}

The ancient Greek story, or at least parts of the story, particularly the Three Graces, had

\textsuperscript{157} Pollard, \textit{Renaissance Medals}, 1:148.
\textsuperscript{158} Elisabetta Querini, a highly sophisticated Venetian woman, was a friend of Bembo and was praised for her beauty, grace and wisdom by Aretino and Giovanni della Casa. Her portrait was painted by Titian in 1543 for Bembo, now lost, and again in 1544-45 for Giovanni della Casa. Although there is no documentation to suggest that Elisabetta commissioned her medal from Cattaneo, she did send Bembo gifts of a medal and antiquities. Catherine Whistler, “Uncovering Beauty: Titian’s Triumph of Love in the Vendramin Collection,” \textit{Renaissance Studies} 26, no. 2 (March 2011): 235.
\textsuperscript{159} Ibid., 234.
\textsuperscript{160} Ibid., 238.
also been taken up by numerous artists including Botticelli, Raphael, Lucas Cranach the Elder, and Peter Paul Rubens. In Botticelli’s *Primavera*, c. 1482, the Three Graces, in their sheer gowns which reveal their bodies underneath, join hands to the right of the figure of Venus. (Fig. 35) In addition to his print of the *Judgment of Paris* by Marcantonio Raimondi (Fig. 36), Raphael painted the *Three Graces*, c. 1504, for a member of the Court of Urbino. (Fig. 37) While the Judgment of Paris and the Three Graces emphasized the beauty of Venus, the imagery on the medals alludes to the beauty and virtue of the women depicted.\(^{161}\)

Is it possible that Bombarda exposes one breast of his wife and of Anna Oldofredi, and another woman, Violante Brasavola, just as Venus exposed herself to Paris in order to win his praise? Or do the bare-breasted women have something else in common? Violante Brasavola, was the wife of Giovanni Battista Nicolucci, called Pigna, who was a physician, historian and poet, and secretary to Alfonso II d’Este who also compiled a history of the Este family.\(^{162}\) In addition to a medal of Violante, Bombarda also produced a medal of Giovanni Pigna.\(^{163}\) (Figs. 30, 38) Neither medal is clearly dated although there is a reference to Violante’s age, not in the medal, but in a print depicting the same portrait by Martino Rota.\(^ {164}\) Rota’s print depicts Violante with the legend VIOLANTIS PIGNAE.ANN.XXVII. (Violante Pigna of 27 years). Since the print reveals that Violante was twenty-seven years old when the medal may have been produced, it is unlikely that this serves as a marriage medal since most women were

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\(^{161}\) Although the medals of Leonora Cambi and Violante Brasavola are uniface, the obverse image clearly relates to the feminine ideal of beauty and can be linked with the medal of Anna Oldofredi which is styled in the same manner and can be associated with the other two portraits as women of beauty, or “Venus” figures.\(^{162}\) Attwood, *Italian Medals*, 1:290.  
\(^{163}\) A medal of Violante Brasavola was also produced by Pastorino. It is a uniface medal cast around 1559. \(^{164}\) Attwood, *Italian Medals*, 1:290.
married at a much earlier age. The portrait of Violante is even more revealing of her flesh that those of Leonora or Anna. She is shown looking left with her torso twisting three-quarters to the right. She is depicted in a garment made of loose fabric that barely covers her top section. The drapery is held together at her shoulders by a strap on her right shoulder and a clasp on her left which reveals the skin of her upper arms, neck, and right breast. She too has intricately styled hair with coiled braids, a veil and volutes. She is bedecked in a double strand of pearls of Venus, born from the sea, around her neck and a drop earring. In the same manner as the other medals discussed by Bombarda, her bust is supported by a scrolled plinth. The uniface medal bears the inscription VIOLANTIS PIGNAE ANN (Violante Pigna in the year…) and makes a direct correlation between Violante and her husband, who was called Pigna. The similarities in the portraits of these women is considerable and further supports the assertion that these women were figures of idealized beauty, written about in the literature of the period and depicted in the medals of Ferrara and Reggio Emilia. They are the trophies of their husbands, just like Helen was the prize for Paris.

In contrast to these medals, Bombarda portrayed a number of his female sitters with a more traditional approach. He depicts six unknown women as well as a woman by the name of Isabella Mariani Carcass in this manner. All of the women are fully and elegantly clothed in the style of the period. Their costumes resemble not only Italian fashions, but also Spanish and English influences. Isabella Mariani Carcass’ medal is the most elaborate and shows her wearing a brocaded bodice emphasized with shoulder rolls which is more common the English fashion. (Fig. 39) Although he depicts these women in a different manner, there is still a good deal of his stylish approach in the rendering of
the drapery and the truncation of the arms. In Bombarda’s medal of an Unidentified Woman, Pollard points out the absence of the left arm of the figure, a very peculiar detail that is missing.¹⁶⁵ (Fig. 40) Three thick lines are evident where the arm should be, and it may be possible that Bombarda forgot to add the limb. Or was it a conscious omission on the part of the artist so that the lines coming from the sleeve are actually part of the veil that flows around her back and underneath the empty sleeve? Yet, the treatment of her hair, the curls, volute and veil are indicative of his Mannerist approach. These women, shown half length on these medals, without the support of a scroll or plinth, still recall the essence of beauty displayed in all of the medals by Bombarda. These more conservative or traditional medal types demonstrate Bombarda’s abilities to portray his sitters in two very different approaches, while not abandoning his personal style and dedication to the portrayal of feminine beauty.

Because beauty in the sixteenth century was linked to the philosophical and literary ideas of the feminine, the depiction of beautiful women signified their inner virtue. The medals of Ruspagiari, Signoretti, and Bombarda illustrate the way in which the women of the sixteenth century, even if their medals were commissioned by men, could visually identify themselves with possessing beauty and virtue. These medallists focused their attention on the elaborate costumes, ornate hair, and expensive jewelry placing an emphasis on elegance and decoration. In one respect, the medals could be viewed as objectifying women as beautiful beings, imbued with virtue and chastity as was suggested by multiple literary sources and conduct books, but on another, their beauty and virtue empowered them at times to become powerful initiators of their own

¹⁶⁵ Pollard, Renaissance Medals, 1:530.
self-fashioning. Their beauty symbolizes the virtues that they, not just their husbands, thought were important.
Chapter 3

Pastorino de’ Pastoini and the Families of the Este, Sacrati, and Trotti: medals as family mementos

Located slightly north and just to the East of Reggio Emilia was the courtly state of Ferrara. The small principality of Ferrara was an independent state ruled by the Este family who also controlled Reggio. Artists and medallists since the fifteenth century were attracted primarily by Este patronage and by 1554, Pastorino de’ Pastorini was employed by the family in Ferrara. He remained in Ferrara until the 1570s and received commissions from the ruling family as well as a number of individuals associated with the court. His medals from this period show his propensity to produce medallic portraits that focused on the sumptuous details of the costumes and the likenesses of his subjects and exemplified feminine beauty in his medals of women. The medals of women examined in this chapter reveal the social and familial functions of the medal in Ferrara both in depicting women as beautiful and virtuous and demonstrating that the medals were part of an overall visual legacy for a number of families from Ferrara, including the Este. In addition to the medals of Lucrezia d’Este (1535-1598) and Eleonora d’Este (1537-1581) which are analyzed, a number of extant medals showing portraits of women from wealthy or noble families by Pastorino, such as women from the Sacrati and Trotti families, indicate that the production of these medals was no doubt inspired by the medals produced for ruling family. Pastorino and medals from Ferrara indicate the connection both visually and ideologically between the ruling nobility and lower ranking women and reflect the contemporary beliefs of the beauty and virtue of all women and their important role in familial traditions.
In addition to the popularity of the medal within elite circles which was emulated by women (and men) of lesser rank, a strong network existed which facilitated the communication, connection, and influence of these women and their families in Ferrara. Many examples of women’s networks throughout Italy have been identified and discussed by scholars, focusing mainly on networks of women from wealth or ruling families.\textsuperscript{166} Women from Ferrara in particular, including Eleonora d’Aragon, Isabella d’Este, and Lucrezia Borgia were powerful individuals from the late fifteenth through the early sixteenth centuries who contributed, as a group, to the cultural shaping of the city and the status of women.\textsuperscript{167} Unfortunately, their powerful legacies did not seem to be carried on by the women after them to the same degree but, but the later sixteenth-century women of Ferrara did continue to demonstrate their importance through their cultural and artistic influences and many of them were commemorated on portrait medals.

Overall, medal production was less popular in Ferrara in the sixteenth century than in the previous century. The number of medals of women produced in Ferrara during the period, however dramatically increased in comparison with numbers of medals of women from the fifteenth century. Since the medal was a less expensive form of commemoration than a painted portrait and many medals of women lacked reverses, it was more attractive and available to the women of Ferrara as it was for those patrons in the Este-controlled region of Reggio Emilia. It is also plausible that the medal became


\textsuperscript{167} In her dissertation, \textit{Medals of Women from the Italian Renaissance Courts}, Eleonora Luciano discusses the medals of each of these women at length.
especially popular with non-ruling women in Ferrara during this time because of the more personal qualities that it provided to a group of men and women who sought objects, such as portraits, for the specific function of individual celebration and commemoration. Specific portraits, such as those of the Este sisters by Pastorino, reinforce the notion of female beauty and virtue, and establish the influence of these women’s medals on the patronage of medallic likenesses of other noblewomen from Ferrara, in particular those of the Sacrati and Trotti families. The medals of women from families other than the Este also signifies a possible development in Ferrara of the depiction of mothers and daughters as medal groups in non-ruling families that signified their ability as non-ruling elite to fashion their identities as groups, in particular those of the Sacrati family.

**Defending Women**

Ferrara was a city renowned for the literary praise and defense of women which is why consideration of the texts written about, and dedicated to women from Ferrara, are significant to this study. The belief in the inferiority of women, which had its roots in the misogynistic tradition of the weaker biological nature of women, was challenged by a number of authors during the period. Beginning in the fourteenth century, Giovanni Boccaccio brought this issue to the forefront, followed by others in the fifteenth

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century such as Christine de Pizan\textsuperscript{170} and in the sixteenth century by a number of authors including Baldassare Castiglione, Ludovico Ariosto, and to a certain extent Juan Luis Vives.\textsuperscript{171} The writings in defense of women gained popularity in the sixteenth century, and especially in the northern courts of Italy. One reason for the prevalence of these writings was due to the increased humanist education for noble women, including those from the Este family.\textsuperscript{172} The level of education of women provided them with the means to compete with men in artistic and literary patronage, providing a ripe atmosphere for artists and writers. These writers, many of whom were patronized by these women, wrote books, poems, and other prose to defend these women against their inferior position in society.

A number of authors not only wrote in defense or praise of women, but also dedicated their writings to them. The first such example of such a text in honor of women was written in the form of one hundred four biographies of women by Giovanni Boccaccio between 1355 and 1359. In one of the most comprehensive studies of the writings in defense of women during the Renaissance, Pamela Joseph Benson declares that Boccaccio’s \textit{De mulieribus claris} “is the foundation text of Renaissance profeminism” and that all of the texts she discusses in her book, many of which are referred to in this study, are directly or indirectly indebted to it because it establishes the issues and many of the rhetorical methods of the defense, collects evidence useful for demonstrating the political, social, and personal virtue of women, offers the example of a man

\textsuperscript{172} See Juan Luis Vives’ \textit{On the Education of the Christian Woman}, 1523 for an alternative, and some would say, misogynistic view of the education of women in the Renaissance. While Vives believes women should be educated, the mail goal of her education should be the preservation of her chastity.
daring to speak out in favor or womankind, yet never directly advocates social change.\textsuperscript{173}

She points out that the mere necessity for man’s defense on the part of women positions them in a weakened state since they rely on the male authors to “come to the rescue.”\textsuperscript{174}

I contend that the medals of most women, in particular those from the courtly states in Italy, functioned in a similar manner to the literary texts dedicated to and written in defense of women. This may seem contradictory because the medal imagery, inscriptions, and mottos display the noble positions and proper personal attributes demonstrated by these women, yet, the medals of identified women I examine were most likely commissioned by men. In this way, they celebrate and promote these women as wives, daughters, and even sisters, reinforcing their importance within the family lineage but also restricting them to the appropriate and passive roles of women in the sixteenth century.\textsuperscript{175} Although most women did not exhibit a so-called active role in public society, I consider the possibility that women, including many mentioned in this chapter, had to be more creative in their means of wielding power and influence, similar to the ways in which the Renaissance authors promoted women within the context of a male-dominated environment. I think it is plausible to assess how medals show the complexities of women’s position and role in society and to realize the ways in which they utilized their positions as intellectuals or noblewomen in Ferrara and other court cities in Italy.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{173} Benson, \textit{The Invention of the Renaissance Woman}, 9.
\item \textsuperscript{174} Ibid., 136.
\item \textsuperscript{175} Not all medals of women from the sixteenth century are depicted or referred to on medals as wives or daughters. There are many medals of women that are only identified by their first name, first and last name, or by their name and the city in which they resided. Unfortunately, for most of these women, nothing is known of their lives, except in some cases the family from which they belonged, the name of their husbands, and the city in which they lived. For an example of a medal associating women as sisters, see the medal of Camilla Peretti, 1590, by Domenico Poggin. The inscription on the medal, CAMILLA PERETTA SYXTL.V.P.M.SOROR, identified Camilla as the sister of Pope Sixtus V.
\end{itemize}
The cultural influence of the courtly or noblewoman is evidenced by the number of male authors who devote their writings to them in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Treatises, biographies, defenses, and panegyrics to women demonstrate a literary attempt to place women in equal or superior positions to men, a position which had been subordinated in the large corpus of Medieval and early Renaissance literature. For example, in the late 1480s, Bartolomeo Goggio dedicated his treatise on the superiority of women, *De laudibus mulierum* to Eleonora d’Aragon, Duchess of Ferrara. Margherita Cantelmo, friend of Isabella d’Este and resident of Ferrara, commissioned Mario Equicola’s *De Mulieribus* which was published in 1501 in Ferrara and Agostino Strozzi’s *Defensio mulierum*, which was started in 1501 but not published until 1876, which was dedicated to Margherita. Although these texts in defense of women are the first of their kind in Renaissance Italy, Benson makes it clear that none of these texts, or their authors, promotes social reform or provides a program for action in terms of encouraging women’s power. She observes that the texts are in conflict with themselves: they tout the praises of these women, but their methods of rhetoric and praise undermine the pro-feminist theory and evidence that is the subject of their texts. The same observation can be made with the medals of the noblewomen from Ferrara.

Castiglione’s *The Courtier*, published in 1528 and Ariosto’s *Orlando furioso*, first published in 1516 contribute to the arguments first taken up by the authors previously mentioned.
At first glance, Book Three of Castiglione’s *Courtier* seems to make one of the most advanced defenses of women. His dialogue, set at the court of Urbino, mainly occurs between male characters and includes the Magnifico Giuliano de’ Medici and Pallavicino Gaspare among others. Castiglione positions the Duchess Elisabetta Gonzaga and Emilia Pia in the conversation as the leaders or directors of the dialogue, but only rarely do they take active roles in the discussion between men. The subject of Book Three is his “donna di palazzo” or palace lady. She is the exemplary woman who in addition to being beautiful, intelligent, witty, adept at good conversation, graceful, modest, pious and wise, is in theory the female equivalent of the male courtier. The women in the text, the Duchess Elisabetta and her confidant Emilia Pia set the stage for the male characters in this dialogue about what characteristics are best for the ideal palace lady by directing questions and redirecting discussion. However, the female characters only occasionally add their own thoughts to the conversation. In one respect, the women can be described as active participants in the dialogue since they direct the discussion, yet a closer analysis of the text reveals that the Duchess and Pia are actually relegated to the periphery of the conversation. Castiglione further suggests that women should exemplify all of the traits of a courtier with two major exceptions, arms training and horsemanship. These two activities represent the most important activities of a courtier that could grant him the ability to rule actively. In the dialogue, the Magnifico reacts to Gaspare’s question of which recreational activities are proper for a women by stating, “…for I hardly think there is anyone here who does not know, as far as recreation is concerned, that it is not becoming for women to handle weapons, ride, play the game of tennis, wrestle or take part in other sports that are suitable for men.”

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activities from the list of necessary characteristics for a palace or court lady, Castiglione subjects the role of women to the passive bystander just as the Duchess Elisabetta and Pia are relegated to the outside of the conversation between men. The ability of legitimate power to rule is erased without the ability to wield arms. His statement denies women the possibility of legitimate power or authority and casts them back into the realm of the passive and domestic role of the wife, unable to engage in all courtly activities that the courtier or ruler enjoys.

Ludovico Ariosto completed the definitive edition of *Orlando furioso* in 1532. His career depended upon Este patronage, and his female character, the female Bradamante, recalls the founding of the Este dynasty. Like Castiglione’s *Courtier*, the *Furioso* was written in the courtly culture of the Este. Almost contemporaneous to the *Courtier*, Ariosto’s text discusses and defines the roles of women in Renaissance life. Unlike Castiglione’s women, however, Ariosto’s are not as silent or passive, but are active participants in the dialogue. His text provides passages that both support and deny women their independence, similar to the problem found in the *Courtier*. Ariosto’s protagonist Rodomonte is the typical antifeminist whose love for his desired woman Isabella is destroyed when she tricks him into murdering her instead of losing her chastity. As a result of this tragedy, his ideas of women and love are eventually

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181 In 1590, Edmund Spencer published his text the *Faerie Queen* which was the first true defense of a woman’s capacity to rule while almost fifty years earlier, Sir Thomas Elyot justified women’s ability to take up arms in his *Defense of Good Women* (1558).
182 Earlier editions were completed in 1516 and 1521.
183 Benson states that in Canto 13 Bradamante, concerned that her offspring will be beautiful and virtuous, is reassured that Isabella d’Este, Beatrice d’Este, Ricciarda di Saluzzo, Eleonora d’Este, Lucrezia Borgia, and Renata of France will meet such standards. Benson, *The Invention of the Renaissance Woman*, 149.
184 Pastorino da Pastorino produced a medal of Ariosto. He is depicted wearing a laurel wreath on the obverse and the motto PRO BONO MALVM (Evil in return for good) on the reverse. Attwood notes that the medal portrait is similar to the painted portrait by Titian that appeared as the frontispiece of the 1532 edition of the *Furioso*. 
transformed. Physical strength and beauty are captured in Bradamante who is a lady knight, but who also maintains her feminine identity. Her role as a lady knight/soldier is representative of her independence and a means to an end because her goal is to marry Ruggiero, an event that does eventually take place. Even more than Castiglione, Ariosto imbues his female characters with actual male characteristics including the women of arms, Bradamante and Marfisa. However, his defense is stifled as each of the women is either extinguished, as in the case of Isabella, or married, as Bradamante, once again underscoring the submissive position of women in the Renaissance.\textsuperscript{185} These women, either dead or married, no longer pose a real threat to men. To both of these authors, the feminine traits of beauty, chastity and piety are continuously reiterated and encouraged.

Authors dealing with issues related to the proper behavior of women, as described by Castiglione and Ariosto, include Juan Luis Vives who published \textit{The Instruction of a Christian Woman} in 1524. Unlike Castiglione and Ariosto’s defense of women’s virtues, education, and so-called independence, Vives defends the education of women in order for them to maintain their chastity and virtue. His defense of the education of girls is to provide them with the necessary means for achieving proper morality. His insistence on the chastity of women brings his defense into the realm of misogyny more than the defense of women, placing women in a passive role, so much so that the text was originally written in Latin, a language not accessible to most women. In addition to the writings of authors such as Vives, the pressures of the Catholic Church, and the Council of Trent in particular, changed the cultural landscape of the courts, and brought about more traditional, male-centered views of women. Interestingly, the strong literary

\textsuperscript{185} Ariosto’s character Isabella is most likely a reference to Isabella d’Este. For more on the relationship between Isabella d’Este and Ludovico Ariosto see Lisa K. Regan, “Ariosto’s Threshold Patron: Isabella d’Este in the “Orlando Furioso,” \textit{MLN} 120, no. 1 Italian Issue (January 2005): 50-69.
tradition associated with women in Ferrara is not reflected by an increased number of women depicted on medals during the same period. However, the medals that were produced reflect the contemporaneous ideas brought forth by these authors of the so-called defense of women, and the authors on female beauty, discussed earlier in Chapter Two.

The Medal Tradition and the House of Este

The power and politics of the Italian courts, including Ferrara, rested on ancient family lineage, marriage alliances, and the production, display, and magnificence of art that rivaled Florence and Rome and the other courts of Northern Europe. As discussed in Chapter One, scholars believe Pisanello’s cast medal of John VIII Paleologus, likely produced in Ferrara in 1438, was the first true Renaissance commemorative medal. Almost ten years later, Pisanello cast the medal of Cecilia Gonzaga, the first Renaissance medal depicting a woman.\(^\text{186}\) During the sixteenth-century, patrons from Ferrara continued to foster the production of medals.

The Este family successfully ruled Ferrara from the thirteenth through the sixteenth century.\(^\text{187}\) They were proud of their ancient and noble ancestry, discerning in their marriage alliances, skilled as condottieri, and astute in their diplomatic efforts throughout the peninsula. By the sixteenth century, the Este had established their security

\(^{186}\) For a discussion on the legitimacy of this being the first medal of a woman in the Renaissance, see Eleonora Luciano, “Diva Isotta and the Medals of Matteo de’ Pasti,” *The Medal* 29, (1996): 3-17. Luciano identifies a medal by Matteo de’ Pasti of Isotta degli Atti, dated 1446, one year before the Cecilia Gonzaga medal by Pisanello, but believes it is more of a commemorative date rather than the date of the medal, thus maintaining the 1447 date of Cecilia Gonzaga’s medal as the year of the first medal depicting a woman in the Renaissance.

as rulers of Ferrara and celebrated their power and prestige through an ostentatious display of art. Although they remained the most powerful force in Ferrara, the sixteenth century was the last great period for the Este.

The Este court was one of the most dominant in Italy establishing itself from previous centuries as economically successful and attractive to the best artists and writers which was still the case during the sixteenth century. In addition, the Este court seemingly provided more opportunities for women to be involved, and allowed for more control of various aspects of courtly life from artistic patronage to legitimate political rule. Due to the humanistic culture and atmosphere of the courts, courtly women generally exercised a greater degree of unofficial power and control than their non-noble counterparts both politically as well as with regard to commissioning works of art. For example, Eleonora of Aragon (1450-1493), daughter of Ferdinand I, King of Naples and wife of Ercole I d’Este (1431-1505), proved to be a powerful and influential woman at the Este court during the late fifteenth century. Her entry into Ferrara on July 3, 1473 ushered in a new period for Ferrara since a woman had not taken an active role at the court for more than thirty years. Eleonora functioned in the domestic role of wife and mother, but also as stateswoman and ruler of Ferrara in her husband’s absence. She was particularly astute in taking control of the government and Ferrarese forces during

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188 The three wives of Niccolo III d’Este, Ercole I’s predecessor, did not play a major role at court and neither did the two wives of his brother Leonello d’Este. A second brother, Borso d’Este never married.

189 Eleonora’s fecundity was widely celebrated since between May 17th, 1474 and October, 16th, 1481, she gave birth to seven children, including five sons which solidified the Este legacy. Werner Gundersheimer, “Women, Learning and Power: Eleonora of Aragon and the Court of Ferrara,” in Beyond their Sex: Learned Women of the European Past, ed. Patricia Labalme (New York: NY, New York University Press, 1984), 48.
one of the worst moments in the War of Ferrara. She is commemorated in a double-portrait marriage-medal by Sperandio. (Fig. 41) This is not an ordinary marriage medal as Sperandio gives Eleonora prominence over her husband. He positions her on the left, the heraldic dexter, typically the space designated to the more important individual, while her husband is in strict profile on the right. As the daughter of Ferdinand I, her rank brought power and legitimacy to the Este court and, thus, is the subject celebrated on the medal by Sperandio. From contemporary accounts, Eleonora was a chaste wife, devoted Catholic, capable mother, and excellent manager of the Este court who also took on added responsibilities in helping her husband govern Ferrara. Authors such as Antonio Cornazzano, who dedicated his treatise on good government, *Del modo di regere e di regnare*, to the duchess, celebrated Eleonora’s accomplishments. Through the leadership of Eleonora, women at the Este court, including Eleonora’s daughters Isabella and Beatrice, maintained a great degree of independence and created a cultural environment in favor of women. They furthered the power and prestige of the Este duchy not only through advantageous marriages, but also through artistic commissions, literary patronage, and at times, independent governance. Eleonora’s granddaughters, Anna, and particularly Eleonora and Lucrezia, whose medals were produced by Pastorino, did not show the same propensity for, or were not afforded, the same circumstances for similar success in the public realm.

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190 Due to Ercole’s illness, Eleonora governed Ferrara when it was under siege during the war. For more on this, see Werner Gundersheimer, “Bartolommeo Goggio: A Feminist in Renaissance Ferrara,” Renaissance Quarterly 33, no. 2 (Summer 1980): 182-183 and note 17.

191 Eleonora is also depicted on a medal by an unidentified Ferrarese medalist that shows her on the reverse side of the medal with her husband, Ercole I on the obverse. See Syson, “Medals and other Portraits Attributed to Cosimé Tura,” *Burlington Magazine*, (April 1999: 228-229.

192 Gundersheimer extols Eleonora’s personal qualities and talents but also points out that her political success was a result of “exceptional circumstances” including “accidents of birth, an arranged marriage, a sturdy constitution, a particularly receptive public, and an astute and competent, but somewhat lazy husband.” Gundersheimer, “Women, Learning and Power,” 55.
Of all of the patrons of Ferrara, the Este were the most well known for their enthusiastic commission of art, literature, and music. Leonello d’Este, (r. 1441-1450) an intellectual and connoisseur, focused his patronage on large commissions and also had a propensity to collect small, precious objects, including gems, coins, and medals. Pisanello was his artist of choice and it is no surprise that Leonello is credited with reviving the tradition of commemorative medals in Ferrara and in all of Italy. This artistic culture in Ferrara, beginning with Leonello, created excellent opportunities for medallists and set in motion the medallic tradition, a tradition that would be an established art form in Ferrara by the sixteenth century.

The medals produced in Ferrara and created for patrons such as Leonello and later Este family members were personal mementos to be viewed and understood by a small group of family and friends. These medals were stylistically different from those produced in other cities, and as mentioned, they functioned on different levels from those produced for families such as the Medici of Florence. Much has been written on the medals produced in Ferrara in the fifteenth century, including those depicting women, but there remains a lack of scholarship on the Este medals of the later sixteenth-century versus their contemporaries’ medals from families such as the Gonzaga and Medici. From the late fifteenth to the early sixteenth century, Isabella d’Este and Lucrezia Borgia dominated the artistic and literary circles of Ferrara. Medals of both women are extant and reveal Isabella’s and Lucrezia’s fashioning of their public and private personas.

Eleonora of Aragon’s daughter, Isabelle d’Este (1474-1539) and daughter-in-law, Lucrezia Borgia (1480-1519), were the first and most well-known women of Ferrara to

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193 Leonello commissioned 8 portrait medals by Pisanello, the largest group of portraits commissioned by any of Pisanello’s patrons. Pollard, Renaissance Medals, 1:67.
be depicted independently on medals.¹⁹⁴ A great deal of scholarship has focused on the
most well known Renaissance patron, Isabella d’Este, whose portrait medal was
produced in 1498.¹⁹⁵ Though this study will not scrutinize the role of Isabella d’Este in
relation to the influence of Renaissance women in general, it would be remiss not to
mention her importance as a Ferrarese woman and her role in the courtly and cultural life
before her death in 1539.

Isabella was the daughter of Ercole I d’Este and Eleonora of Aragon, leaving
Ferrara at age sixteen to wed Francesco II Gonzaga (1466-1519, r. 1484-1519) in 1490.
Isabella brought strong connections and a new prestige to the Gonzaga court while
maintaining her ties to her native Ferrara. Numerous documents, including letters to and
from her sister, Beatrice, Duchess of Milan reveal her relationships and connections with
women throughout the courts of Italy.

Isabella was well educated, and created a network of male and female friends and
associates. She was an avid collector of antiquities, including her own collection of
antique coins, and a patron of the visual arts, literature, and music the best artists in Italy.
As a collector and active court lady, Isabella was admired in her time. In her collection
was her portrait medal produced by Giancristoforo Romano. (Fig. 42)

This is one of the few medals known to be commissioned by a female patron. A
letter from Isabella to Giancristoforo from September, 1495 refers to Isabella’s request

¹⁹⁴ Most of the medals of women from the fifteenth century, including those of Taddea Pavoni and
Eleonora of Aragon, acted as pendants to those of their husbands whose portraits are depicted on the
obverse of the medals, celebrating them not as independent women, but as wives to important men. For
more on Isabella’s Lucrezia’s medals see Luciano, *Medals of Women*, 100-115 and Pollard, *Renaissance
Medals*,1:136, 138-139. Isabella was the first daughter of Eleonora of Aragon and Ercole I d’Este and
Lucrezia Borgia was the second wife of Alfonso I, Duke of Ferrara and son of Eleonora of Aragon and
Ercole I d’Este.
¹⁹⁵ For the most comprehensive biography of Isabella d’Este see Julia Cartwright, *Isabella d’Este,
for Giancristoforo to make the “engraved sculpture.” Surviving documentation discussing the reception of the medal indicates that it is also one of the only medals for which we undoubtedly know the social function. Isabella distributed the medal among her family and friends. Germaine de Foix, the Queen-consort of Aragon remarked on the medal and poet Giacomo Faella wrote a sonnet about the medal. Upon its arrival in Naples, it was received and kissed by the ladies of the court. The medal was also shown to the humanist poet, Bernardo Accolti and to Elisabetta Gonzaga.

Her medal depicts her portrait on the obverse and the figures of Peace/Victory and Sagittarius on the reverse. Not only does the figure of Peace symbolize her equality with the male rulers of Ferrara or Mantua, but it also identifies her as a peace-keeping ruler and recalls the imagery on the coins of numerous Roman emperors including Augustus, Claudius, and Vespasian. This is a fitting reference to Isabella who controlled the state of Mantua in her husband’s absence and an ideal example of the use of a medal by a woman to celebrate and propagate her important position politically and to associate herself with the most important and powerful figures in Roman history.

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198 Ibid.

199 Syson identified the figures as Peace/Victory and Sagittarius. Luke Syson, “Consorts, Mistresses and Exemplary Women: the Female Medallic Portrait in Fifteenth-Century Italy” *The Sculpted Object,* ed. Stuart Currie and Peta Motture (Brookfield, VT: Ashgate, 1997), 46-47. Pollard identified the main figure as Virgo and the star as Venus, and in his chapter in *Perspectives on the Renaissance Medal,* he identified the figures as Virgo, Sagittarius, and Draco (the snake). Pollard, *Italian Medals,* 1:136; Pollard, “Text and Image,” in *Perspectives on the Renaissance Medal,* 152. Pollard’s attribution of these figures seems inconsistent since the imagery clearly indicates the half human-half beast figure of Sagittarius and contemporaneous images of Peace, including Antonio Lombardo’s *Peace Establishing Her Reign,* 1512, indicate that the figure who holds the same attributes of the stick and snake are also used on the medal. See Jacopo da Trezzo’s medal of Mary Tudor in Attwood, *Italian Medals,* no. 80, to further support this identification.

figure of Sagittarius on the medal is not fully understood, particularly because Isabella, born on May 17, 1474 is not associated with this particular zodiac sign.\textsuperscript{201}

The imagery, meaning, and function of Isabella’s medal reinforces the personal nature of medals distributed throughout the courts and also establishes her as one of the only known female patrons of medals in the late fifteenth century. Her medal is one example of a woman who certainly utilized the medal as a visual form of self-fashioning during the Renaissance.

Isabella’s sister-in-law, Lucrezia Borgia, Duchess of Ferrara (1480-1519) was the daughter of Rodrigo Borgia, Pope Alexander VI. After two previous marriages she wed Alfonso I d’Este in 1502 and appears on at least three medal types.\textsuperscript{202} The first medal type, thought to have been a pendant to a medal of her husband, alludes to her marriage.\textsuperscript{203} (Fig. 43) On another, she is shown independently from her husband with her portrait on the obverse and a reverse depicting Cupid and alluding to the courtly theme of love and above all, chastity. (Fig. 44) Both of these medals are attributed to the circle of Giancristoforo Romano, the same artist who worked for Isabella d’Este and executed a medal for her just a few years earlier. The third medal type, produced by an artist working with Romano depicts Lucrezia’s portrait and an inscription that identifies her as

\textsuperscript{201} Although not her astrological sign, she may have adopted the sign of Sagittarius.

\textsuperscript{202} Information regarding the life of Lucrezia Borgia is abundant. Her tumultuous marriages, one divorce, and her reputation then and now have intrigued scholars for centuries. She married Giovanni Sforza of Pesaro but had the marriage annulled and then married Alfonso, Duke of Biscaglie, a marriage also ended, but this time with the murder of Alfonso in Rome in 1500. Her medals are discussed in detail by Eleonora Luciano, Medals of Women, 100-114.

\textsuperscript{203} Hill believes that the obverse and reverse depicting Lucrezia and Alfonso, was produced by different artists and then were combined. G. F. Hill, “The Italian Medals in the Salting Collection,” Burlington Magazine, 20, no. 103, (Oct. 1911): 23. This idea is furthered by Luciano, Medals of Women, 105-106.
Este, but also Duchess.\(^{204}\) (Fig. 45) All three medals most likely commemorated and celebrated her marriage to Alfonso. Giancristoforo Romano or those working for him produced these medals while he was working at the mint in Mantua. Thus, a further connection was established between the women of the courts of Mantua and Ferrara. We know that as Lucrezia Borgia entered Ferrara in February of 1502, it was none other than Isabella d’Este who was there to receive her. In this way, the medals of women such as Isabella d’Este and Lucrezia Borgia help to establish the medals tradition that sixteenth-century Ferrarese artists and patrons promulgated.

*Pastorino de’ Pastorini and the Medals of Lucrezia and Eleonora d’Este*

The medals of Ferrara functioned as familial commemorations for a more private audience, as demonstrated by the medals of Lucrezia and Eleonora d’Este, daughters of Ercole II d’Este (1508-1559) and Renée of France (1510-1574). Like the literary works dedicated to and enjoyed by the women of Ferrara, their medals seemed to suffer the same fate of a seemingly profeminist approach, whose themes reinforce the passive, domestic role of women. The medals of the sisters are without reverses, which is also the case for many of the medals of Ferrarese women. This seems to support the idea that the medals were personal mementos, reflecting the beauty and physical characteristics of the women, not informative or propagandistic items meant to be used to advance status or power. Like their literary counterparts, the medals of the Este women and others associated with Ferrara represent the most essential attributes of women of the Italian

\(^{204}\) This medal of Lucrezia in the National Gallery is rare since it is pierced at the top, bottom, left and right of the image. This indicates that the medal was at some point sewn onto a piece of fabric and worn. Lucrezia is identified as a duchess on this medal. By her second marriage to Alfonso, Duke of Biscaglie, she was given the title, Duchess of Biscaglie and retained the title when the medal was cast. Pollard, *Renaissance Medals*, 1:138.
courts including the virtues of beauty, chastity, and love. The medals by Pastorino, the most prolific medallist of the sixteenth century, constitute the largest number of medals depicting women in this way. As alluded to in the Introduction, Pastorino’s medals have been widely criticized by many scholars. Although his technique is revered, the design of his medals are characterized as lacking interest, having a superficial quality to their design, lacking reverses due to deficiency of skill, modest and humble, and even as Pollard states, “they are not court art.”205 I believe otherwise.

By 1553, Pastorino was employed at the mint at Reggio Emilia which was under the control of Ercole II d’Este.206 Before his arrival in Ferrara, Pastorino worked in his native Siena. In addition to producing medals, Pastorino was known as a painter and stucco-worker, and also worked with stained glass.207 His reputation with glass work even earned him the commission for the subject of the Last Supper in a large circular window on the façade of Siena Cathedral. He also completed the paintings and stucco ceiling of the loggia of the Ufficiali della Mercanzia. His reputation and skill in medal-making gained him patronage in Siena, and his commissions included commemorative medals. As early as 1550, Pastorino was at work producing a number of medals for the women of the Tolomei family from Siena. In addition to his medals of women from Siena, he soon began to produce medals of women from cities across Italy, including a number from Ferrara. What is most noteworthy is that during his career, Pastorino

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205 Graham Pollard, Medaglie italiane, del Rinascimento nel Museo Nationale del Bargello, 682.
206 Pastorino produced more than 200 medals during his career, more than any other artist of the sixteenth century.
207 Pastorino was commissioned to complete the paintings and stucco ceiling of the Loggia of the Ufficiali della Mercanzia in Siena as well as a number of stained glass windows for Siena Cathedral during the 1530s, including a large round in façade window representing the Last Supper which was completed in 1549. In 1541 he went to Rome to work on the glass for the Sala Regia in the Vatican and was also commissioned by Paul III to complete the windows in S. Marco. Toderi and Vannel, Le medaglie italiane, 2:582-583.
produced more medals of women than any other medallist in the fifteenth or sixteenth centuries.

During Pastorino’s service at the mint in Reggio in 1553, he oversaw the production of new silver coins that were produced in August of that year, which included the first portrait coins of Duke Ercole II.\textsuperscript{208} Pastorino remained in Reggio until 1554 when he moved to Ferrara as Master engraver at the mint, again under the control of Ercole II and later Alfonso II. Pastorino remained in Ferrara until his departure to Bologna in 1572.\textsuperscript{209} While in Ferrara, Pastorino continued producing medals for members of the Este family, members of their court, visiting dignitaries, and private citizens of Ferrara and the surrounding areas.\textsuperscript{210}

During his time in Reggio and Ferrara, Pastorino produced a large number of medals of women, including those of Lucrezia and Eleonora d’Este, the daughters of Ercole II d’Este and Renée of France. Ercole II and Renée, daughter of King Louis XII of France, were married in 1528. Although their marriage was not a love match, their union proved to strengthen ties between Ferrara and France. Renée was a cultured woman whose French influence was felt throughout the city. Pastorino even benefited from Renée’s connections and cultivated a broad base of French patrons for whom he cast medals.\textsuperscript{211} Throughout her life in Ferrara, the Duchess was interested in theological

\textsuperscript{208} Attwood, \textit{Italian Medals}, 1:243.
\textsuperscript{209} Although Pastorino remained employed by Alfonso II in Ferrara, he attempted to find work elsewhere. He went to Florence in 1559 hoping to find employment under Cosimo de’ Medici. He was also in Mantua in 1561, but remained under the direction of Alfonso II.
\textsuperscript{210} Pastorino also produced two medals of Ercole II, two of his successor, Alfonso II, and fourteen medals of various members of the court. Pollard, \textit{Renaissance Medals}, 1:382.
\textsuperscript{211} Pastorino’s medals of French subjects include the following listed by Attwood; Francois Billion, 1553, Henri II, 1554, Cardinal Georges d’Armagnac, 1554, Cardinals Charles de Lorraine and Charles di Bourbon-Vendome, 1555, Raimond, baron of Fourquevaulx and Francois de Montmorency, marshal of France, 1556, Michel Vialar, Francois and Claude Lorraine, 1557, Luigi Gonzaga, duke of Nevers, 1559, and Louis de Lorraine, Cardinal de Guise, 1560. Attwood, \textit{Italian Medals}, 1: 244. What is
Renée’s life and actions at court are reflective of the influence and power of women in her position, and was a lesson no doubt, handed down to her daughters, the next generation of Este women.

During the twenty-seven year marriage between Ercole II and Renée, the Este lineage was firmly secured with the birth of five children. The first heir, Alfonso II d’Este was born in 1533 and a second son Luigi, born in 1538, was made a cardinal by Pius IV in 1561. The marriage alliance of the couple’s daughters, Anna and Lucrezia, afforded Alfonso and Renée excellent opportunities to strengthen Este ties. Anna (b.1531), the oldest of the girls, married Francis, Duke of Aumale and became Duchess of Guise and later the Duchess of Nemours and Genevois. Lucrezia (1535-1598) was betrothed and married to Francesco Maria della Rovere, the Duke of Urbino. The youngest girl, Eleonora (1537-1581) did not marry.

Lucrezia d’Este was born on December 16, 1535 and was known as a beautiful and learned woman. She married Francesco Maria della Rovere, fifteen years her younger, in 1571 strengthening the alliance between Ferrara and Urbino. Unfortunately, the marriage was an unhappy one, and within a few months of their wedding, Lucrezia

notable about these medals is that of all of his French subjects, none of them are women. This may indicate the importance of the aesthetic interests in Italy where the portraits of women appear to demonstrate the characteristic presence of women on medals, in particular in Ferrara and Reggio Emilia.

The French writer Jacques Androuet Du Cereau dedicated his Livre des grotesques of 1566 to Renée in appreciation for his refuge in Ferrara. Renée also established a Huguenot retreat at chateau of Montargis in 1560. According to Emanuele Mattaliano, Ercole, while not pleased by all of his wife’s actions, had a chapel built in the castle without sacred images, conforming to Protestant beliefs and thus placating his wife’s convictions. There is further evidence of Renée’s troublesome actions when on Good Friday, 1554, she ordered lunch consisting only of meats and forbade her daughter from taking communion. For these actions, Renée was put under house arrest in the palace of Saint Francis. In 1555, she renounced her actions and after five more years in Ferrara and the death of her husband, she retreated to Montargis and never returned to Ferrara. Emanuele Mattaliano, “Women, Knights, Arms and Amours of the Estes of Ferrara in the Sixteenth Century, “From Borso to Cesare d’Este,” The School of Ferrara 1450-1628 (London: Matthiesen Fine Art Ltd., in association with Stair Sainty Matthiesen, 1984), 36-37.

abandoned Francesco for the first time. In 1574, Lucrezia officially separated from Francesco and returned to her hometown of Ferrara. In his biography of Lucrezia, Giorgio Boccolari suggested that some believed the separation to be the result of Lucrezia’s fear that Francesco would poison her because she was sterile since the couple did not produce any children. Lucrezia never remarried and returned to Ferrara. Back in Ferrara, according to Boccolari, Lucrezia played a very active and vital role in the negotiations with the papacy on matters of state, particularly the devolution of Ferrara to Pope Clement VIII which began a result of the lack of legitimate heirs to the Este legacy upon death of her brother Alfonso II in 1597. He further pointed out that Lucrezia was appointed by her cousin Cesare to deal with Cardinal Aldobrandini, Clement’s nephew, on these matters. In 1598, one year after Ferrara was relinquished to the papacy, Lucrezia died in her beloved city.

Lucrezia’s sister Eleonora d’Este was the youngest of the three sisters. She was also well-educated and lived a cultured and pious life in Ferrara. She was noted for her beauty, but never married and seemed to have lived a very reclusive life. However, she did catch the eye of one man, Torquato Tasso. Tasso was lauded as the greatest poet and playwright in the late sixteenth-century and had close ties to the Este court and to

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214 Ibid.
215 Ibid.
216 Ibid.
217 Francesco, left without a legitimate heir to the duchy, was nervous that Urbino would be reclaimed by Pope Clement VIII. To remedy the situation, the fifty-year old Francesco married his fourteen-year old cousin, Livia della Rovere. Livia gave birth to their son, Federigo Ubaldo in 1605. Federigo died unexpectedly in 1623, leaving Federico no choice but to relinquish Urbino to the church. This officially occurred on Francesco’s death on Paril 28th, 1631. Sabine Eiche, “Francesco Maria II della Rovere as a Patron of Architecture and His Villa at Monte Berticchio,” Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz 28, (1984): 78-79. For more on Clement VIII’s entry into his new territory of Ferrara, see Karen Meyer-Roux, “The Entry of Clement VIII into Ferrara: Donato Rascocotti’s Triumph,” Getty Research Journal 3 (2011): 169-178.
218 Boccolari, Le medaglie di casa d’Este, 125.
both Eleonora and Lucrezia. His initial patron was the Cardinal Luigi d’Este, but he quickly became associated with the Cardinal’s sisters and dedicated his pastoral drama, *Aminta* (1573) to Eleonora and Lucrezia. Eleonora was also said to have been depicted in the episode of Sofronia in Tasso’s *Gerusalemme Liberata* (1581).

The full history of the relationship between Tasso and the Este sisters is difficult to discern, especially his relationship with Eleonora. Whether or not Tasso and Eleonora had a love affair is unknown, and it seems clear that any reference to a love interest with Lucrezia must actually refer to Lucrezia Bendidio, a Ferrarese noblewoman and singer to whom Tasso dedicated a number of poems. Tasso’s relationship with Alfonso II was strained due to Tasso’s unpredictable behavior and in 1579 he was imprisoned in the mental institution in Saint Anna where he continued to write until his release in 1586. Boccalari stated that legend has it that Eleonora was so saddened by the misfortunes of Tasso that she died prematurely at the age of forty-four in 1581. Like other members of the Este court, the daughters of Ercole II were exposed to the literary traditions of the court and enjoyed the friendships of authors such as Tasso.

Lucrezia and Eleonora d’Este continued the cultural traditions of the Este women. As stated, they were educated and intelligent women who participated in artistic and literary endeavors. Unfortunately, the short lived marriage between the Lucrezia and Francesco did not result in the hoped-for alliance between Ferrara and Urbino. Conversely, the marriage of Anna provided an important and strategic alliance between

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219 Tasso also served Guidobaldo II della Rovere, Duke of Urbino and was the companion to his son Francesco, the husband of Lucrezia d’Este.


221 Any references to a love affair with Eleonora may also be confused with another interest of Tasso, Leonora Sanvitale, another noblewoman and singer at the Este court.

222 Boccolari, *Le medaglie di casa d’Este*, 125.
the Este and the ruling families of France. After her marriage to Francis, Duke of
Aumale, Anna never returned to her native Ferrara or Italy for that matter. Anna,
Lucrezia, and Eleonora represent the importance of daughters and women in the Italian
courts, not only to improve strategic alliances through marriage, but also in cultivating a
courtly culture that increased the power and prestige of the Este family.

As part of the pictorial tradition of the court during their lifetimes, medals of
Lucrezia and Eleonora were produced by Pastorino in 1552, one or two years before he
arrived at the mint in Ferrara. There is no documentation regarding the production of
these medals, but the most logical assumption is either that the commission came from
Ercole II, because Pastorino was under his service at the mint in Reggio at the time, or
Pastorino made the medals exclusive of a patron and presented them to the Duke in order
to gain employment at the mint in Ferrara. Pastorino did something similar when he
cast a medal of Francesco de’ Medici in 1560, hoping to gain employment under Cosimo
I in Florence. The medals of Lucrezia and Eleonora predate a series of medals
produced by Pastorino for the Este family in and around 1554. This group includes the
portrait medals of Ercole II, (Fig. 46) his brothers, Ippolito d’Este (1509-1572), (Fig. 47)
Cardinal of Ferrara and Francesco d’Este (1516-1578), (Fig. 48) marquis of Massa
Lombarda, and Ercole II’s sons, Alfonso II d’Este (1533-1597), (Fig. 49) the future duke

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223 Hill and Pollard, *Medals of the Renaissance*, 87. Hill states that Pastorino did not enter Ferrara
until 1554 but was in the duke’s service in 1552. These dates seem to be disputed or confusing. Attwood
states that Pastorino entered the duke’s service in the middle of 1553 and was working in Parma in late
1552. Attwood, *Italian Medals*, 1:243. Toderi and Vannel place Pastorino in Siena between 1548 and
1552. Toderi and Vannel, *Le medaglie italiane*, 2:583. He was working in Siena and signed a contract for
the rose window of the façade of the cathedral in Siena, but was imprisoned during part of that period due
to his lack of finished stucco work on the Loggia dei Mercanti. By 1552, they state that Pastorino was in
Reggio Emilia and then was summoned to Parma and made Master engraver. They concur that he arrived
in Ferrara in 1554.

224 Pastorino presented two medals to Vasari which Vasari then discussed with Cosimo. In a letter
dated 30 September, 1559, Vasari suggested that Cosimo hire Pastorino, but nothing came of the
proposition, except possibly the medal of Francesco, at the time. Attwood, *Italian Medals*, 1:244, 246 note
35.
of Ferrara and Luigi d’Este (1538-1586), Archbishop of Ferrara in 1554 (Fig. 50). That these were produced as a group is not only probable because of their common dates of circa 1554, but also because of their stylistic similarities.

The medals of Lucrezia and Eleonora show the same features of those of the Este men in Pastorino’s use of a raised, beaded border. The characteristics of the medals of Lucrezia and Eleonora place them between Pastorino’s so-called early and late styles. Most of his medals produced before 1551 display a raised border (or no border at all), lack a signature and measure between thirty and forty millimeters in diameter. His later medals produced after 1554 display a characteristic raised, beaded border, the signature of the artist (usually signed P), a date, and are between roughly forty and seventy millimeters in diameter. The medals of Lucrezia and Eleonora, dated 1552, are signed by the artist, display the beaded border, and measure between forty and forty-one millimeters and precede the group of medals which were produced during his time in Ferrara. Thus, these medals of the Este family not only represent the Este commitment to medallic imagery, but also a stylistic shift by Pastorino which persisted throughout the remainder of his career.

On Pastorino’s medal of Lucrezia, she is shown on the obverse with the inscription LVCRETIA ESTENSIS.A.A.XVII (Lucrezia d’Este, in her 17th year).

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225 Pastorino continued to produce medals of the Este family. Pastorino cast a medal of Luigi d’Este in 1560, of which at least three examples exist today. He also produced a medal of Alfonso II d’Este, Duke of Ferrara in 1563. In 1565, Pastorino made a medal of Barbara of Austria, the wife of Duke Alfonso II d’Este. A series of medals by Pastorino from 1575 include those of Alfonso d’Este, marquis of Montecchio and illegitimate son of Alfonso I, duke of Ferrara, and Cesare d’Este, marquis of Montecchio and son of Alfonso I.

226 Most of Pastorino’s earlier works from the 1540s were smaller in scale and were without the beaded border and signature that is used after his return to Siena in 1548 and later on his medals that were produced in Parma, Reggio and finally, Ferrara.

227 His medal of Beatrice of Siena, c. 1550, is also one of the first medals in his later style, although is measures only twenty-six millimeters. The medal does display Pastorino’s signature and a beaded border. His medal of the Sienese Tolomei family, Tullia Tolomei and Girolamo Tolomei, c. 1550, also displays the characteristics of the later style.
She is shown wearing a collared gown, a chemise, a drop-earring, and a coiled braid secured to the back of her head adorned with pearls. She also wears a pearl necklace with a pendant. The lower section of her bust breaks the incised line around the perimeter of the medal and rests on the beaded border. The attention to Lucrezia’s features, including her nose, mouth and chin exemplifies the physical characteristics of Lucrezia who was praised for her beauty.

Lucrezia’s sister, Eleonora appears on a medal by Pastorino facing left with the inscription ELEONORA ESTENSI. A.A.XV (Eleonora d’Este, in her 15th year). Like Lucrezia, she is depicted wearing a gown with a folded collar, a necklace with jewel that hangs at her neck, an earring, and braided hair adorned more elaborately decorated with ribbons. Eleonora’s high forehead, thin nose and lips and slight chin are indicated in this portrait medal.

These one-sided medals of the sisters are sometimes combined, with Lucrezia on the obverse and Eleonora on the reverse. I am unaware of a date in which the medals were joined, but it is quite possible that the medals were combined during the sixteenth century and functioned as one memento of the sisters. Although it is difficult to trace the function of these medals, in terms of who received them and in whose collection they were kept beyond the Este court, it is clear that they represent the sisters as beautiful, bedecked young women, very characteristic of the women of the Este court and in the style of Pastorino. Hill and Pollard refer to the medals by saying “Quite delightful also in their way are the companion medals of the two pretty daughters, aged 17 and 13, of the Duke of Ferrara, two of the first medals made by Pastorino when he entered the

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228 A bronze specimen of the combined medal is in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.
duke’s service in 1552.” Instead, I suggest that the beauty of the women on the medals is not only a reference to the physical characteristics of Lucrezia and Eleonora, but also associated with the representation of ideal beauty and goodness.

Adding to the focus on the physical beauty, grace, and detail of the women’s portraits are the medals’ lack of reverses. Whatever the reason for omitting reverses on the medals of the Este sisters, the lack of reverse imagery does make a character analysis of Lucrezia and Eleonora quite difficult. There are no attributes to assign or mythologies to compare. The viewer is only supplied with the portraits of the women, adorned so as not to forget their noble rank. The medals of Lucrezia and Eleonora do not proclaim their intelligence, accomplishments, or at first glance, even their chastity. As previously stated, the medals of these sisters may have been commissioned by their father or were provided as gifts from Pastorino. The medals were not betrothal pieces, nor did they celebrate a marriage. Pastorino’s figures should be considered less as true portraits, and more as idealized beauties, aligning him and his subjects with the sixteenth-century tradition that testified to the importance of physical beauty as the manifestation of inner virtue. Thus, the medals are representative of the depiction of beautiful and fashionable women of the cultivated and influential court at Ferrara and furthermore, should also be considered as part of a group of medals dedicated to the Este lineage.

Ercole II’s portraits by Girolamo da Carpi at the Villa at Copparo, completed after 1541 set a precedent for the visual expression of the Este legacy. The uniface medals by Pastorino both of the Lucrezia and Eleonora in 1552 and the Este men in 1554 may have functioned in a similar way. Although the medals of Lucrezia and Eleonora

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230 The impetus for this series of sixteen Este rulers (destroyed in 1808) was the competition between the Este and Medici family of Florence which is discussed in Chapter Five.
predate the medals produced by Pastorino in 1554, these medals could have been the first in that group if they indeed were commissioned by Ercole II. The other possibility, if they were presented as gifts to Ercole II by Pastorino, is that they may have been the stimulus to the production of the second group of medals of Este men two years later. Altogether, these medals seemed to have served as genealogical portraits meant to portray the Este dominance of the courtly cities in Italy, particularly over their Medici rivals in Florence.

These medals of the Este family most likely acted as a stimulus for medal production in Ferrara as the medals of women from the Sacrati and Trotti were produced by Pastorino at least three years after he cast the medals of Lucrezia and Eleonora. These medals produced by Pastorino reflect the status of the women they represent and the desire for objects that fulfilled the purpose of personal and private commemoration and that ultimately connect the concepts of beauty and virtue and familial legacy and legitimacy.

Pastorino's Medals as Groups: Mothers, Daughters, and Sisters

Pastorino’s reputation earned him many commissions from a number of noble families in Ferrara. The increased production of medals of women from outside the Este family signals that families other than the ruling family had the means to commission these objects, and that these same families were most likely inspired to do so based on the precedent that had already been established by the Este.

Groups of painted portraits were common throughout the sixteenth century and noble families throughout the peninsula commissioned artists to produce portraits of their
families, including both male and female members. Some of the most famous of these are the miniatures depicting the Medici family commissioned by Cosimo I. Medals depicting couples, husbands and wives, had been popular since the previous century and medals depicting rulers and their male successors and other sons were also popular.\textsuperscript{231} But, groups of medals depicting men and women of non-ruling families were less common, and appear to have been a practice undertaken by Pastorino. Between 1548 and 1552, Pastorino had produced a group of medals for the Tolomei family of Siena including those of Aurelia, Battista, and Tullia Tolomei along with two male members of the family including Girolamo and Lelio Tolomei. A few years later, around 1555, he produced medals of three women of the Sacrati family from Ferrara. Not much is known about their women except that the Sacrati had close ties with the Este court.\textsuperscript{232} What is unique about the medal group of the Sacrati is that it is made up of only the female members, as no medal of a male member of the family is known. Around 1556 Pastorino was also commissioned to commemorate the Trotti family with medals of Ercole, Lavinia Gallereani, Ginevra and Isabella Trotti.

The medals by Pastorino of the Sacrati women depict Girolama, Caterina, and Barbara Sacrati. Girolama, possibly related to Paolo Sacrata, a canon of Ferrara, was also a lady-in-waiting to Duke Ercole II d’Este.\textsuperscript{233} The medals, unmistakably in the style of Pastorino, measure between seventy and ninety millimeters in diameter, and are signed

\textsuperscript{231} For example, see the medals of male family members from the Medici, Este, Gonzaga, Farnese families.

\textsuperscript{232} The Sacrati name appears in transactions recorded by Bartolommeo Goggio, a notary working in Ferrara and for Ercole I d’Este during the fifteenth century. Goggio was the author of De laudibus mulierum, a feminist treatise of the 1480s that was found in the collection of Eleonora d’Aragon. See Werner Gundersheimer, “Bartolommeo Goggio: A Feminist in Renaissance Ferrara,” Renaissance Quarterly (Summer, 1980):181.

\textsuperscript{233} For relation to Paolo Sacrata, see Attwood, Italian Medals, 1:257 and Kenner, no. 16 and Aloïss Heiss, Les médailleurs de la Renaissance, (Paris: J. Rothschild, 1881-92), 155. For lady-in-waiting, see Toderi and Vannel, Le medaglie italiane, 2:610.
making them representative of his later style. Two image types exist of the medals of Girolama. The first medal, produced in 1555, depicts her in right profile wearing a square-cut dress with a billowed sleeve that interrupts the beaded border. (Fig. 53) Her smocked chemise with high standing collar, and open neckline resemble the fashion at the Hapsburg court and an influence from Spain. She is shown wearing a pearl necklace and earring. Her hair is fixed in coiled braids at the back of her head and wound with strings of pearls. The pearls are also continued in a band on top of her head from ear to ear. The details of her portrait, especially her chin, indicate that she was most likely middle-age or older at the time the medal was cast. A second medal dated 1560 shows Girolama in three-quarter view. (Fig. 54) Pastorino depicts her wearing a different square-cut dress along with a zimarra or overcoat. Both the dress and the zimarra have high collars and open necklines. Unlike the previous medal, her bust is contained within the beaded border in this medal type. Her hair is pulled back in similar fashion to the earlier medal and her jewelry consists of a necklace with pendant and drop-pendant earrings. The three-quarter-view of the portrait was very rare in both fifteenth and sixteenth-century medals and most likely reflects the practice of depicting these sitters from painted portrait panels. Of the three Sacrati women, Girolama is depicted as the oldest, and possibly matron of the medal group.

234 Pollard, Renaissance Medals, 1:256. There are only four medals from the fifteenth century depicting figures in three-quarter-view. The medals of Alfonso II of Aragon, Duke of Calabria, by Andrea Guacialoti and Francesco Sforza, Camilla Covella Sforza and Agostino Bargarigo by Sperandio account for these medal types. Although not customary, sixteenth-century medals of women depicting three-quarter-view portraits are known, including the medal of Bianca Cappello de’ Medici by Pastorino, produced in 1579. Precedents for frontal views existed in the rectangular medal of Beatrice Roverella of Ferrara, the widow of Paolo Manfroni c. 1550 and the medal of Elvira, the daughter of Consalvo de Córdoba, c. 1524, both by unidentified artists. These medal images may have been copied from portraits in other media such as paintings or plaquettes.
Barbara Sacrati, possibly the daughter of Girolama is depicted on a medal at the age of one.\textsuperscript{235} (Fig. 55) Pastorino produced this medal sometime between 1555 and 1565.\textsuperscript{236} She is depicted in a square-cut dress with puff sleeves with her right truncated arm breaking the beaded border while the left sleeve is also visible indicating somewhat of a twist in the torso. She wears a pearl necklace with a pendant and earring. Her young age is indicated by her chubby cheeks and her wavy hair that is not yet long enough to fashion in braids or other styles. Although a medal depicting a sitter this young at the time was rare, it was not unprecedented. In 1477, an unidentified artist from Ferrara produced a medal depicting Alfonso I d’Este at the age of one.\textsuperscript{237} (Fig. 56) He is shown on the obverse as an infant and is personified as the young Hercules on the reverse. Hill believed that the medal was a companion piece to those of his parents, Ercole I d’Este and Eleonora of Aragon.\textsuperscript{238} Syson suggests that the medal was produced for the betrothal of the infant Alfonso to Anna, daughter of Galeazzo Sforza, duke of Milan, the same year of the medal.\textsuperscript{239} The fact that Barbara’s medal may have acted as a pendant to that of her mother Girolama(?) and another family member suggests that the medal functioned as a family memento and was part of a group of medals of the Sacrati women. It may also have been possible that, like Alfonso I’s medal, it would have been used as a betrothal piece.

\textsuperscript{235} Toderi and Vannel, \textit{Le medaglie italiane}, 2:610.
\textsuperscript{236} It is logical to connect these three medals of Sacrati women and to postulate that the medals were commissioned and produced around the same time, closer to 1555. Pastorino was in Ferrara in 1555, visited Florence in 1560 and worked in Mantua for a period during 1561. Although he was still in the employ of Alfonso II, I believe it is more likely that he produced the medal during the earlier period of his stay in Ferrara when he also completed the medals of Girolama and Caterina Sacrati.
\textsuperscript{238} Hill, \textit{A Corpus of the Italian Medals of the Renaissance before Cellini}, no. 117.
\textsuperscript{239} Pollard, \textit{Renaissance Medals}, 1:84.
The third medal in the group, produced in 1555, portrays Caterina Sacrati who appears on a medal by Pastorino at the age of six, a curious age to be shown on a medal similar to the rare portrayal of Barbara at age one. (Fig. 57) She is represented in a similar manner to Girolama and Barbara with an open-necked gown with a collar and puff sleeves, a necklace and earrings. Her hair is pulled back in coiled braids and decorated with pearl bands. By 1555, almost all of Pastorino’s medals included a beaded border as is seen in the medals of Girolama and Barbara. But, the medal of Caterina lacks this border and is replaced by a plain raised border, recalling Pastorino’s earlier style.240 Her relation to Girolama and Barbara cannot be certain, but she was most likely related to them and the date and portrait style of the medal supports this theory. Caterina’s medal completes the set of Sacrati medals that are in existence today. It may not be possible, due to lack of documentation, to place her within the immediate family of Girolama, but it is most plausible that she was either another daughter or possibly her niece. The fact that she is also depicted at such a young age, the same year as Girolama and Barbara, suggests to me that the medals were conceived of as one group and meant to be viewed as such. This is furthered by the fact that there is no evidence that medals of any Sacrati men existed, thus making the group of one woman and two female children all the more probable that these were personal keepsakes.

Pastorino commemorated another family, the noble Trotti of Ferrara. He produced the medals of Ercole, Ginevra, and Isabella Trotti and Lavinia Galleani between 1555 and 1556, around the same time he cast the medals of the Sacrati family. Ercole Trotti, a Knight of the Order of Malta is depicted on a medal by Pastorino dated 1555, 240 This is a poor cast of the medal although the border does seem to have remained intact indicating that a beaded border was never originally intended.
(Fig. 58) as were three female members of the family. Lavinia Galleani was the wife of one of the members of the Trotti family. Ginevra Trotti, must have been a member of the family, but her specific relation to Ercole is not known, (Fig. 59) and Isabella Trotti, depicted at the age of thirty-three, was married to a member of the Negrisoli family as her name on the medal indicates. (Fig. 60) The medals of Ginevra and Isabella are quite similar in style to those of the Sacrati women. Both women wear square-cut gowns, pearl necklaces and earrings. All of the Trotti medals belong to Pastorino’s later style and included a beaded border. The dress depicted on Isabella recalls the smocking on that of the first medal type of Girolama as does the hair style with coiled braids and pearls. The portrait of Ginevra is somewhat different in that the dress is much simpler and without a high collar. Her hair is also more elaborately styled and it is obvious that she is younger than Isabella. Although Pastorino has been criticized for his artificial or superficial portraits, these medals attest to his abilities to showcase costume and decoration as well as recognizable likeness of his sitters.

That the medals make up a group is indicated not only by the individuals depicted, but also by the stylistic similarities of the portraits on each medal. The medals of the Trotti family, which include one male member, ought to be treated as a group, similar to a family portrait.

The Sacrati and Trotti families had ties to the Este court and may have had similar motivations for commissioning these groups of medals, especially since all of the medals date between 1555 and 1556. These uniface medals are additional examples of how the portrait medal, without the need for reverse imagery, was a popular form of

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241 The medal of Lavinia Galleani is referenced in Toderi and Vannel. Toderi and Vannel, Le medaglie italiane, 2:613, no. 1894. Unfortunately, there is no image of the medal or reference to the collection in which it is kept.
commemoration and celebration for the families and women of Ferrara, both ruling and non-ruling families. Pastorino provided his patrons with medals that met their needs, were more economical than painted portraits and even medals with reverses, but still functioned within the humanist culture of the sixteenth-century. The groups of women depicted on medals attests to a powerful display of female presence within the familial and social structure of sixteenth-century Italy. These ideas are also exemplified in the medals of the women from Mantua and Milan, the subject of Chapter Four.
Chapter 4

Maintaining the Tradition: medals of women from the Gonzaga Family

The medals of Isabella Capua Gonzaga (1509-1559) and Ippolita Gonzaga (1535-1563) carry on the fifteenth-century tradition of medal commissions by the Gonzaga family. The five extant medals of these women examined in this chapter are representative of the preoccupation with beauty, chastity, and the association of women as protectors of the family and the state. Jacopo da Trezzo and Leone Leoni produced the medals of these women, in Milan, not Mantua as their Gonzaga name would initially suggest. Thus, the medals also signify the interest of their patron, Ferrante Gonzaga (1507-1557), Viceroy of Sicily (1535-46) and Governor of Milan (1546-55), whose family in Mantua neglected to utilize the medal as they had done in the fifteenth century. The context of the medals of Isabella and Ippolita can be found in history of the medal production for the Gonzaga family which set the stage for Ferrante’s commissioning of the medals of his wife and daughter, the introduction of Jacopo and Leoni, and in the symbolism of the medal imagery to the overall ideas of virtue and familial commemoration are the subjects of this section.

Making the Connection: Mantua, Milan, and the Gonzaga

Milan comes to the forefront of this study because it was the home of Leone Leoni and Jacopo da Trezzo, two of the most important and influential medallists of the sixteenth century and the artists who produced the medals of Isabella and Ippolita Gonzaga for their patron Ferrante Gonzaga. Although these medals were produced in
Milan, mention of the small Marquisate of Mantua is necessary since the medal-making traditions that inspired Ferrante were originated by his Gonzaga predecessors in Mantua. From the early fifteenth century the Gonzaga and other wealthy families of Mantua maintained rich cultural and artistic traditions. Mantua claimed itself as the birthplace of Virgil, a city graced by the artists Mantegna and Giulio Romano, and the home of the Gonzaga ruling family. Lodovico Gonzaga (1412-1478), marquis of Mantua from 1444 to 1478, was the first Gonzaga to place his portrait on his coins and was also an enthusiastic patron of the commemorative medal. As mentioned in Chapter One, Pisanello cast the medal of Cecilia Gonzaga in 1447, the first medal of a woman produced in the Renaissance. Pisanello, Pier Jacopo di Antonio Alari Bonacolsi, called Antico, Bartolommeo di Virgilio Melioli, and Giancristoforo Romano produced more medals of women from Mantua than from any other city during the fifteenth century. In 1460, the Gonzagas attracted Andrea Mantegna to their court where he remained for almost fifty years. Mantegna’s love of the antique, echoed by his patron’s taste, was probably another impetus to the utilization and production of medals in Mantua during the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. In addition to the great medallists and painters of the fifteenth century, humanists and courtiers such as Mario Equicola and Baldassare Castiglione (in Mantua 1499-1504) resided in Mantua and worked for the


\[243\] Mantegna’s influence can be seen in the work of Antico. Antico, a native Mantuan, worked for the Gonzaga family from 1480 under the patronage of Ludovico Gonzaga until the artist’s death in 1528. He was a well-known bronze sculptor whose style reflects that of Mantegna, although his demeanor was good-natured unlike his contemporary. Antico’s name connotes his devotion to the antique which is evident in all of his work. His most celebrated medallic contributions include a pair of medals commemorating the marriage of Gianfrancesco Gonzaga, Lord of Bozzolo, and Antonia del Balzo. He is also responsible for other medals of women including the unidentified Diva Giulia. Antico also produced works and became an artistic advisor to Isabella d’Este. Eleonora Luciano in collaboration with Denise Allen and Claudia Kryza-Gersch. *Antico: The Golden Age of Renaissance Bronzes*, (London: Paul Holberton Publishing, 2011) 1, 45-46.
Gonzaga family. The Marchesa of Mantua, Isabella d’Este was married to Francesco II Gonzaga in 1490 and established herself as the most cultivated female patron of the arts, literature and music in Mantua and in the Renaissance. Her sons Federico II Marquis and Duke of Mantua (r. 1519-1540, Duke from 1530), the Cardinal Ercole, and Ferrante, the Governor of Milan, carried on her tradition of artistic patronage. In 1524, Giulio Romano was lured to Mantua by Baldassare Castiglione and worked mainly for the Gonzagas as an architect and painter until his death in 1546. His most important architectural contribution was his designs for the Palazzo del Te, commissioned by Federico II. In addition to his work for the ruling family, Giulio was also an avid art collector. In addition to his collection of antique sculpture, Giulio also maintained a collection of medals.244

Surprisingly though, in a city full of cultural and artistic fervor and the home to artists such as Giulio Romano, there was a sharp decrease in the number of medals produced in Mantua or for Mantuan patrons by the middle of the sixteenth century. The new generation of Gonzaga rulers after Federico did not utilize the medal as their predecessors had done. The reasons for the lack of interest in the medal may have been a result of the political situation in Mantua at the time. Federico II allied Mantua with Charles V which initially paved the way for many prosperous years for the Gonzaga under the protection of the Empire. The need to formulate an artistic program legitimizing Gonzaga rule and control was not necessary, especially since Federico had been granted the title of Duke in 1530. Federico and his successors Francesco III (r. 1540-1550), Guglielmo (r. 1550-1587) and Vincenzo Gonzaga (r. 1587-1612) may have

244 Rebecchini states that this is confirmed by Jacopo Strada’s books devoted to classical coins. In five of them, 169 pieces were explicitly given a provenance from Giulio Romano’s collection. Guido Rebecchini, Private Collectors in Mantua, 1500-1630 (Roma: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2002), 217.
also considered medallic representation old fashioned or a medium that had become popular with lower-ranking individuals making them less attractive for their courtly taste.\textsuperscript{245} After the death of Giulio Romano, the creative and innovative artistic environment of Mantuan artists, and even art collecting in general, was not supported by later Gonzaga patrons including Federico II’s successors. Instead, the most important projects in Mantua were presented to artists from outside the city.\textsuperscript{246} Not until the early seventeenth century did the Gonzaga rulers, most importantly Vincenzo Gonzaga, begin to collect paintings and sculptures on a scale of their earlier predecessors.

In spite of this, Ferrante had embraced the medal medium for representations of himself and his family. Unlike his brothers Federico and Ercole, Ferrante was the only Gonzaga truly interested in commissioning medals after 1530. He looked to Jacopo da Trezzo and Leone Leoni to produce medals of himself, his wife, Isabella Capua Gonzaga and his daughter, Ippolita Gonzaga.

\textit{Jacopo da Trezzo and Leone Leoni: artists in Milan}

Jacopo da Trezzo enjoyed a successful career as a gem-engraver, medallist and sculptor but is generally, and unfairly compared to his contemporary Leone Leoni, the most revered medallist of the sixteenth century.\textsuperscript{247} Although not much is known from his early life, Jacopo was born in Milan in 1514 and was most likely trained as a gem-engraver. Jacopo began to produce medals around 1550, some of his earliest being the

\textsuperscript{245} For comprehensive list of Gonzaga medals see Alessandro Magnuguti, \textit{Ex Nvmnis Historia IX: Le medaglie dei Gonzaga} (Rome: P. & P. Santamaria, 1965).

\textsuperscript{246} This practice was already in place during the reign of Federico who commissioned paintings from Titian and Correggio.

\textsuperscript{247} For a comprehensive source on the life and work of Jacopo da Trezzo see Jean Babelon \textit{Jacopo da Trezzo e la Construction de l'Escorial: essai sur les arts a la cour de Philippe II 1519-1589}, Bordeaux: Feret & Fils, 1922. See specifically pages 193-198 for Babelon’s discussion on the medals of Isabella Capua Gonzaga and Ippolita Gonzaga.
medals of Isabella di Capua Gonzaga and Ippolita Gonzaga between 1550 and when he left Milan in 1552. His patrons included, but were not limited to Ferrante Gonzaga, Cosimo I de’ Medici, and Philip II of Spain. As mentioned, his medals have been compared to those of his contemporary, Leoni, and have received a somewhat cool reception from modern scholars. He is criticized for copying the style of Leoni and for producing medals of lesser quality and simple design. Some have noticed his dependence upon, and even replication of antique coins for which he is also disparaged. Much of the criticism is directed at the design of his medal reverses. With reference to two medallists, A.V. and Jacopo, Jean Babelon states, “The reverses of these medals generally offer only conventional compositions, which rely on an anaemic mythology.” On the other hand, his portraits on the obverses of his medals were praised by scholars such as Keary who stated, “In his portraiture he is perhaps unequalled among the medallists of the sixteenth century.” His skill in portraiture is apparent in the medals of the Gonzaga women, in particular in the details of the hair, jewelry, and costume design.

As a medallist, Jacopo was commissioned by some of the most prominent patrons in Italy and abroad. His work for Cosimo I de’ Medici must have taken place between 1550 and 1552 and it is believed that in the latter year, he joined Leoni at the imperial

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\textsuperscript{248} Attwood notes that Enea Vico, in his \textit{Discorsi sopra le medaglie de gli antichi} (Venice, 1555), named Jacopo as one of a group of artists that produced imitations of ancient coins. Attwood, \textit{Italian Medals}, 1:113.

\textsuperscript{249} Jean Babelon, \textit{Great Coins and Medals} (London: Thames and Hudson), 1958, 35.


\textsuperscript{251} Jacopo was commissioned by Cosimo de’ Medici for a wide range of objects including a crystal vase, described in a letter of 1552, the restoration of ancient marbles, and other tasks as a gem engraver. Attwood, \textit{Italian Medals}, 13, Toderi and Vannel, \textit{Le medaglie italiane}, 1:60, Pollard, \textit{Renaissance Medals}, 1:502.
court in Brussels. In 1553, he entered the service of Philip II, and was in London by 1554 for the marriage of Philip and Mary Tudor. He remained in Brussels for a time, and eventually accompanied Philip to Spain in 1559 where he remained until his death in 1589.

Like most medalists of the period, Jacopo was involved in a wide range of other commissions including the architectural elements of the tomb of Joanna of Austria in the convent of Las Descalzas Reales and for the high altar of the church of San Lorenzo in the Escorial. In Spain, Jacopo managed a fairly large workshop and collaborated on projects, such as the Escorial, with artists such as Pompeo Leoni, the son of Leone Leoni.

In addition to the medals of Isabella Capua Gonzaga and Ippolita Gonzaga which will be discussed here, Jacopo produced medals of a number of women including Maria of Austria (1528-1603), daughter of Charles V and wife of Emperor Maximilian II, Joanna of Austria (1537-1573), the wife of Prince John of Portugal, and Mary Tudor (1516-1558), the Queen of England and wife of Philip II of Spain. The medal of Mary Tudor, a number of casts of which were produced in gold, is usually acknowledged as his most excellent work. His medallic portraits of women are traditional in style and conservative by sixteenth-century standards, especially in comparison with his contemporaries Pastorino, Ruspaggiari, Signoretti, and Bombarda. A discussion of three medal types in the next sections, one of Isabella Capua Gonzaga and two of Ippolita Gonzaga, commissioned by Ferrante Gonzaga, attest to Jacopo’s skill, particularly in the

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253 Jacopo da Trezzo’s medal of Mary Tudor most likely commemorates the wedding event which was held at Winchester on 25 July, 1554. The medal depicts Mary Tudor on the obverse and Mary Tudor as Peace, setting fire to arms, on the reverse. A gold specimen is in the British Museum.
256 Attwood attributes a medal of Maria Cardona, marchioness of Padua as being by Jacopo. Ibid., 1:117.
portraits of the women but also in the reverse imagery of the medals. Jacopo’s contemporary, Leone Leoni also produced medals for Ferrante, including one depicting Ferrante’s daughter, Ippolita which is especially revered for its reverse imagery.

Leone Leoni maintains a distinctive place in the history of artists and medallists of the mid to late-sixteenth century. He was born in Arezzo in 1509, but like Jacopo, nothing is known of his early training. Early on in his career, Leoni associated himself with the most prominent individuals in Rome, Venice, and Milan. He is recorded as being in Venice by the late 1530s and worked with Jacopo Sansovino, Titian, and Pietro Aretino. In 1537, he was in Padua and by November 1st of the same year was in Rome and had already begun producing medals for the papal mint.

Unfortunately for Leoni, his inability to control his temper plagued him through most of his life. Throughout his career, numerous incidents were recorded that testify to his fiery personality and his often violent actions. In 1537, Leoni was advised by Aretino to control his anger against Pietro Bembo who had not paid him. In 1540, he was also accused by Pellegrino di Leuti, the papal jeweler, of dishonesty, forgery, insulting his wife, and inducing bodily harm to Pellegrino. In an altercation with Pellegrino, Leoni struck his face with a dagger, leaving him maimed and disfigured. Leoni admitted his wrongdoing in this episode, was sentenced, and was condemned to have his right hand cut off. On May 14, 1540 his sentence was reprieved by the pope and he was sent to the papal galleys where he spent several months before being freed by the intercession of

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257 Some scholars, such as Toderi and Vannel, believe that Leoni was born in Como. Toderi and Vannel, *Le medaglie italiane*, 40.
258 Leoni cast medals of Titian and Pietro Aretino. Specimens of these medals are in the collections in the British Museum, London.
Francesco Doarte and Andrea Doria. In addition to these acts, Cellini accused him of attempted murder by poison after Leoni was one of the prime witnesses to Cellini’s accused theft of the papal jewels. Leoni also caused bodily harm to Titian’s son Orazio which irrevocably damages their relationship, and had Martino, an assistant working for Titian, murdered.

In 1541, Leoni was rescued from the galleys in Rome by Andrea Doria and was in Genoa by March of 1541. While in Rome, Leoni became acquainted with Baccio Bandinelli and Michelangelo, both of whom influenced his artistic style.

In less than a year after being set free in Rome, Leoni went to Milan and in 1542 was appointed master of the imperial mint in Milan and by 1546 was working for Ferrante Gonzaga. The next year, Leoni was working in Piacenza, but returned to Milan in December 1548 to meet Philip II, son of Charles V and at that time Duke of Milan. When Philip left the city on January 7, 1549, Leoni accompanied him to Brussels. In Brussels, he was met with favor when he presented a medal of Philip II to Charles V, an act that was suggested and encouraged by Ferrante. In the same year, Leoni traveled to Paris and made plaster casts of ancient statues, an endeavor that he would repeat in Rome and then display in his home in Milan. He was also commissioned by Maria of Hungary.

260 In gratitude for his release made possible by Andrea Doria, Leoni cast two medals depicting him. One medal depicts Doria on obverse and the image of galley sailing in the sea along with a small boat and a fisherman fishing from a rock. The second depicts the portrait busts of Doria on the obverse and Leoni on the obverse.
262 See Letter to Aretino dated 23, March, 1541. Leoni writes to Aretino telling him of his time in Genoa and his warm reception by Doria. Leoni also produced a medal of Doria on the obverse and his self-portrait on the reverse. His portrait depicts him as a galley slave. See Pollard, Italian Medals, 1:490 and Attwood, Italian Medals, 1:91.
263 See Leoni’s medal of Michelangelo. Forrer also states that Michelangelo was the only contemporary artist with whom Leoni associated on a friendly basis. Forrer, Biographical Dictionary of Medallists, 3:400.
264 Attwood, Italian Medals, 1:88.
Charles’s sister, to produce medals of her brother Ferdinand and nephew Maximilian. Leoni did not enjoy his time in Brussels and wrote to Ferrante, “this inhuman culture and deformed country, as different from our customs as butter is from the beer that they down in such a bestial fashion,” and when offered Flemish citizenship from Mary of Hungary, stated, “may God preserve me from such a thing.” By December of 1549, Leoni was back in Milan and resumed work at the Milan mint.

While working in Milan, Leoni cultivated a very close relationship with Ferrante Gonzaga that lasted well throughout his career. Like his contemporary Jacopo, Leoni was commissioned by Ferrante to produce a medal of his daughter, Ippolita. This medal is especially stunning with exquisite details and according to Pollard, represents Leoni’s most Mannerist medal portrait since it recalls the portraits of the Emilian artists Ruspaggiari, Bombarda, and Signoretti.

Leoni was skilled in other media, in particular portrait sculpture. His portraits, mainly in bronze and marble, were commissioned by the same patrons for whom he cast medals. The style of the portrait busts, like that of his medals, is imbued with antique references. He did not resort to merely copying from the antique, but readily adapted antique models to his innovative style.

Throughout his career, Leoni was able to amass a great deal of wealth which afforded him the opportunity to begin his own art collection and to construct a most

265 Ibid.
266 See Pollard, Italian Medals, 1:525. Signoretti depicts an unidentified sitter in the guise of Diana. Although unidentified, the sitter might be Giulia Pratonieri, a member of the Pratonieri family of Reggio Emilia. This is a uniface medal, but the sitter is depicted wearing a helmet and holding arrows, which most likely identifies her as Diana.
267 For an example a large-scale bronze sculpture by Leoni, see Ferrante Gonzaga over Envy, 1560-1594, Piazza Mazzini, Guastalla.
distinctive house in Milan, the Casa degli Omenoni. Leoni was known to have paintings in his collection that included Correggio’s *Jupiter and Io* and *Jupiter and Danaë*, a book of drawings by Leonardo, several paintings by Titian and others by Tintoretto, and Parmigianino. An avid collector of casts of ancient sculptures, Leoni’s most famous cast was the Marcus Aurelius equestrian, which was situated in the courtyard of his home. Leoni’s choice to cast the Marcus Aurelius in particular and place it in the center of his courtyard, making it the focal point, further emphasizes his dedication to the ancients and all the more to his own public persona of a man worthy of membership among the most preeminent aristocrats in Milan.

The medals of Isabella Capua Gonzaga and Ippolita Gonzaga were produced during Leoni’s time spent in Milan under the patronage of Ferrante Gonzaga. Leoni is known to have produced medals with the likenesses of few women including Isabella of Portugal, the wife of Charles V, Ippolita Gonzaga, the daughter of Ferrante Gonzaga and Philippina Welser, the wife of Archduke Ferdinand of Austria. But, as Forrer suggested, it was his medal of Ippolita Gonzaga that appears to be his first medal of note. He also produced a uniface medal of a courtesan whom he called Danaë. None of these women

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269 The house was actually gifted to him by Charles V sometime during Leoni’s visit to Brussels in late 1549 where he met with the Emperor. Michael Mezzatesta, “The Façade of Leone Leoni’s House in Milan, the Casa degli Omenoni: The Artist and the Public,” *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 44, no. 3 (October 1985): 236.


271 For more on the façade decoration and meaning of the Casa degli Omenoni, see Mezzatesta, “The Façade of Leone Leoni’s House in Milan,” 233-249.

272 Leoni worked in the Milan mint between 1542 and 1545 and again from 1550-1559. Between those years, Leoni moved back and forth between cities Flanders and other cities in Italy. Leoni was in Augsburg working for the royal family in January of 1551 but again in Milan by April of the same year. In 1556 Leoni joined Charles V in Brussels but returned to Milan in January of 1557. All the while, Leoni wrote to Ferrante, his patron and confidante of his dislike of Flanders and his desire to not accompany Charles to Spain. From 1557 until 1560, Leoni was in Milan and in 1560 traveled to Rome to be received by Pope Pius IV. Later that year or early 1561, Leoni returned to Milan and remained there until his death thirty years later in 1590. Attwood, *Italian Medals*, 1:87-89.

commissioned their medals from Leoni, although as I argue, Isabella and Ippolita most likely had a hand in their depictions and subjects of their medals.

*Jacopo da Trezzo’s Medal of Isabella Capua Gonzaga*

Isabella Capua Gonzaga was the princess of Molfetta and wife of Ferrante Gonzaga from 1529/30. She hailed from an important and wealthy family of Neapolitan nobility and most likely received a proper education for a noblewoman. Her dowry included the southern cities of Molfetta and Giovinazzo, and other Neapolitan lands as well as sufficient funds that allowed Ferrante to purchase the principality of Guastalla from Lodovica Torelli (1500-1569). While information on Isabella’s life is scarce, scholars do know that previous to her marriage to Ferrante, Isabella had been engaged to her cousin Vincenzo di Capua. But, Ferrante was so determined to marry Isabella in order to reap the benefits of her dowry, that he, according to Pompeo Litta, used violence to end the engagement to Vincenzo. Successful in his quest for her hand, Ferrante married Isabella in 1529. Insufficient evidence prevents scholars from providing a comprehensive description of Isabella’s activities at court, although it is known that she gave birth to ten children by Ferrante, their daughter Ippolita being the firstborn.

Isabella’s fecundity coupled with the Gonzaga’s political position in Milan gave Ferrante ample reason to celebrate and commemorate his wife in a medal by Jacopo da Trezzo. Her medal, although not dated, was probably produced in Milan. Ferrante and Isabella moved to Milan in 1546 when Ferrante was made governor of the city in that

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275 Pompeo Litta, *Famiglie celebri italiane*, (Milan, 1886-1871,) 4:tabola VIII.
year. I posit that the medal, commissioned by Ferrante, was likely made between 1546 and 1553. Evidence to support this can be derived from the dates of the medals of Isabella’s daughter, Ippolita and the known whereabouts of Jacopo during this period before he left to join the court of Philip II. Jacopo produced medals depicting Ippolita in 1549/50 and again 1552. Ferrante commissioned Jacopo’s contemporary, Leone Leoni, to produce a medal of Ippolita in 1551. That the medals of Isabella and Ippolita were commissioned within a few years of each other, or even as a group, is highly likely, and thus the date of Isabella’s medal would correspond accordingly as I have suggested. Furthermore, Jacopo left Italy to join Philip II in 1553 and was already in London for the occasion of his marriage to Mary Tudor in 1554 making it highly likely that Isabella’s medal was produced before his departure from Milan. An indication that this medal probably dates prior to 1552 is that Jacopo’s medals of women after 1551 include Maria of Austria and Joanna of Austria in 1552 and Mary Tudor in 1554, all members of the imperial family. It is possible that he produced the medal sometime earlier than 1549, the year of his first medal of Isabella’s daughter Ippolita. The suggested range of dates for the medal are critical to the understanding of Isabella’s medal as being part of a group that was commissioned by Ferrante and produced within a similar time frame with the medals of Ippolita. The motivation behind the commissions most likely coincides with the Ferrante’s desire to commemorate the female members of his family. In one sense their likeness and mottoes commemorate them in a way that was customary of the Italian courts, and in another they celebrate Ferrante’s legitimacy and legacy as a Gonzaga.

278 The first medal of Ippolita is inscribed (age 15) and the second is inscribed (age 17). A third medal of Ippolita by Leoni is dated 1551 and is inscribed (age 16).
Jacopo’s medal shows Isabella as the Princess of Molfetta and as the wife of Ferrante. (Fig. 61) The obverse of the medal is quite traditional in the sense that Isabella is shown in three-quarter bust, wearing a dress with a double-billowed sleeve, a strand of pearls with a pendant, and a suspended pearl earring, clearly indicating the appropriate attire for a chaste wife and matron of the sixteenth century. Her hair is pulled back by a diadem and covered with a veil that drapes over her back. The inscription, ISABELLA CAPVA PRINC MALFICT FERDIN GONZ UXOR (Isabella Capua, Princess of Molfetta, wife of Ferrante Gonzaga) around the perimeter of the medal indicates Isabella as the sitter and defines her as the wife of Ferrante, putting her individuality second to that of her role as wife.  

The medal is signed at the bottom left IAC TREZO (Jacopo Trezzo) and has a beaded border, similar to the borders used by Pastorino. On the reverse, a veiled female figure, most likely Isabella in the guise of a vestal virgin, stands facing an altar with a burning flame, with the scene set upon a rocky plane. The inscription on the reverse, CASTE ET SVPPLICITER, (Chaste and suppliant/humble) indicates Isabella as a chaste and humble woman. Given that there are two version of this medal, Giovanni Paolo Lomazzo’s description of the medal is important in

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279 Many medals of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries identify the female sitter as either the daughter or wife of a male member of the family. But, the practice of identifying women as independent individuals on medals was not unheard of in either century. It was actually quite popular during the fifteenth century when women were even documented to have commissioned their own medals. Some examples include the medals of Isotta degli Atti by Matteo de’ Pasti, who is referred to in the inscription as only herself, not belonging to any one male, be it a father, husband, or even brother. Similarly, the medals of Eleonora of Aragon by Sperandio, Maddalena of Mantua by followers of Antico, Isabella of Aragon, Isabelle d’Este and Lucrezia Borgia by Giancristoforo Romano and his circle respectively, Elisabetta Gonzaga and Emilia Pia by Adriano Fiorentino, and at least one unattributed medal of Caterina Sforza identify these women independently of their husbands or fathers. This is in large contrast to many of the medals of the sixteenth century where most medals of women, in particular those mentioned in this dissertation, are referred to by their familial association with men.

280 Forrer states that only eight of the medals by Jacopo are signed, this being one of them. Forrer, *Biographical Dictionary of Medallists*, 6:16.

281 The Kress Collection medal is missing the first P in SUPPLICITER indicating that this medal is an aftercast since a suspension hole was filled at the top erasing the P, when this medal was cast.
identifying the differences on the extant medals of Isabella. He said of the medals of Isabella and her daughter Ippolita:

... wonderful are the two of Isabella Gonzaga, Princess of Malfetta and of Dona Ippolita her daughter, whom he gave the dress and look of Diana and in the reverse of the first woman in matronly dress next to an altar, above which burns a fire that scattered the clouds...282

As can be inferred by Lomazzo’s description, the medal exists in two different specimen types. The medals both have the same obverse, but the reverse of the first medal type (Fig. 61) depicts an undecorated altar while the second depicts the image of radiant sun and serpent decorating the altar with the inscription NVBIFVGO (To the cloud chaser).283 (Fig. 62)

Supporting this interpretation is the inscription on the reverse of the medal which refers to Isabella as chaste and suppliant or humble, as does the veiled figure which is representative of a Vestal Virgin who tends to the sacred flame on the burning altar. It is probable that Ferrante commissioned the medal, but it is possible that the image and motto for the medal was suggested or influenced by Isabella or her advisors. The choice to depict Isabella as a Vestal is not surprising since it reflects her virtuous, or at least the perceived qualities that the patron, and most likely the sitter, hoped to convey. The imagery refers to her as a chaste woman and also a wife whose duties included maintaining and protecting the family and home, just as the Vestals did in ancient Rome.

In the sixteenth century, Vestals were understood as the incorruptible virgins of

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282 ...l’unico Giacomo da Trezzo nelle medaglie, trà lequali sono miracolose le due d’Isabella Gónzaga, Principessa di Malfetta, è Dóna Ippolita sua figliola, la quale diele gli’habiti, &l’atia di Diana, &fece nel roversicio della prima una donna in habito matronale appresso un’altare, sopra cui arde un fuoco che avampando dilegua le nubi ... Giovanni Paolo Lomazzo. Trattato dell’arte de la pittura (Hildesheim, Georg Olms Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1968), 434.
283 Attwood believes that Lomazzo must have been referring to the medal reverse with the sun depicted on the altar as is noted by his reference to the “dispelled clouds.” This indicates that this medal type was most likely the original. Attwood, Italian Medals, 1:116.
the ancient city who enjoyed legal privileges not afforded to their matronly counterparts and who also, by way of protecting the sacred flame, acted as protectors of the welfare of the city and the citizens. Although vestals are seldom depicted as subjects in the sixteenth century, an example is found in Mantegna’s painting of The Vestal Virgin Tuccia Carrying a Sieve as part of his series The Introduction of the Cult of Cybele at Rome commissioned by Francesco Cornaro. (Fig. 63) Cornaro commissioned the group of paintings as a way to celebrate the Cornelii family of ancient Rome, from whom the Cornaro had descended, but Allan Braham has suggested that the underlying meaning of the group may be more devoted to the theme of female chastity. The inclusion of the figures of Tuccia, the Vestal who proved her chastity by carrying a sieve of water from the Tiber to the Temple of Vesta, and possibly Sophonisba, a Carthaginian who is shown drinking from a glass, most likely filled with poison in order to kill herself before being taken into slavery, indicate that the virtue of chastity is the primary message. (Fig. 64) Vestals are also depicted in Beccafumi’s paintings in the Hall of Consistory in the Palazzo Publico in Sienna. (Fig. 65) Mariana Jenkins suggested that the figure to the left of the Personification of Justice, kneeling before a brazier might be a Vestal virgin tending to the flame which would indicate that her three companions located around the tondo would also be Vestals. Jenkins proposed that their inclusion with Justice in the

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286 Robert Gaston suggests that three antique statues of women, believed to be Vestals by the artist and architect Pirro Ligorio, were used in his decoration of the Casino of Pius IV in Rome in 1559. At least one, if not two of these statues were sent to Francesco de’ Medici in Florence in 1569. Robert Gaston, “The Casino of Pius IV, the Antiques for the Medici: Some New Documents,” Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes, 47 (1984), 206, 208. Although later than the production of the medal, images of Vestals, such as those proposed by Gaston, were obviously known by the mid-sixteenth century to artists in cities throughout Italy.
painting is logical and that furthermore, when the figures are identified with Rea Silvia, the mother of Romulus and Rhemus, herself a Vestal, the Sienese would identify the Vestals with Siena’s Roman origins and recall the Vestals’ responsibility of assuring the continuing welfare of the state.  

Whether they were the daughters of the Roman kings, or their wives, the Vestals maintained an immensely important role in ancient Rome which was recognized and applied in imagery by sixteenth-century patrons and artists. In ancient Rome, a Vestal was chosen between the ages of six and ten years old and offered to serve the state for thirty years or until death. They were members of the cult of Vesta, goddess of the hearth, and their responsibilities included tending to the sacred flame, preparation of the sacrificial meal or *mola salsa*, the cleaning of the *aedes Vestes* temple with water from a sacred spring, and participating in state festivals.

The reverse of Isabella’s medal depicts her in the act of tending to the flame, the most important duty of a Vestal. The traditional costume of the Vestal, as is depicted on the medal, most likely resembled a *stola*. In general, the Vestals’ garb and hair style most likely resembled that of Roman brides, assuming again the connection between chastity and purity. The image of Isabella as a Vestal depicts her in a similar fashion. She is shown wearing a veil, which is appropriate since the Vestals wore veils, especially

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288 The argument as to whether the Vestals were the daughters or wives of the kings of Rome is taken up by Mary Beard in her article, “The Sexual Status of Vestal Virgins,” *The Journal of Roman Studies*, 70 (1980): 12-27. The argument is not elucidated in my study, but in reference to the medal of Isabella, I will take the position of the Vestals as wives based on their responsibilities as well as the example of the medal which indicates Isabella as a Vestal and as the wife of Ferrante.
290 The exact costume of the Vestals is not known, but ancient sculptures seem to have been the most reliable source. We know that the Vestals wore a chemise, *stola*, and a *stophium* or girdle, and their hair was styled in *sex crines* with a fillet or headband to keep the hair off the face. The fillet, also a signifier of constraint, was an appropriate accessory for the chaste Vestals. Beard states that the stola, girdle, and most likely the sex crines were all associated with the status of brides and matrons.
while performing rituals or sacrifices. Similar to the associations on the medal, these portraits depict their subjects as chaste and virtuous guardians of the family.

The flame, which is depicted on the medals, was symbolic of the purity and virginity of the Vestals/Isabella, but also of the procreative powers of the male/Ferrante.\textsuperscript{291} The flame acted as a symbol of the stability of Rome, and thus, the Vestals were in charge of protecting the flame and stability of the city, just as Isabella would have been charged with tending to the family and protecting the Gonzaga legacy through her chastity and her maternal and familial role as wife and mother.

Virginity was by far the most important attribute of the Vestals and the sanctity of the Vestals’ chastity was linked to the city of Rome. Their virtue was indicative of the fact that the Vestal, “was supremely qualified to be a signifier of political stability. …in a ritual sense the Vestals were Rome.”\textsuperscript{292} Ariadne Staples adds that the virginity of the Vestals was representative of “life and death, stability and chaos for the Roman state,” and that “her identity lay only in Romanness.”\textsuperscript{293} An important distinction must be made between the virginity of the Vestals, which in the strictest sense means a physiological virginity, and the chastity of women such as Isabella which is representative of acceptable sexual behavior. Although this distinction exists, the relationship between the virginity of the Vestals and the chastity of women such as Isabella is clearly connected in the imagery and motto of the medal reverse.

Mary Beard and Holt Parker have both identified the “freeing” of the matronly duties of the Vestals with their association as “men” or a “male aspect” of the Vestal’s

\textsuperscript{291} Referring to ancient accounts, Ariadne Staples suggests that Vesta’s fire had dual symbolism, both as evoking the idea of sexual purity of the female and also as representing the procreative power of the male. Ariadne Staples, \textit{From Good Goddess to Vestal Virgins} (London: Routlage, 1998), 149.
\textsuperscript{292} Ibid., 130.
\textsuperscript{293} Ibid., 143.
status. As soon as a young girl was initiated as a Vestal, her legal privileges, those usually preserved for male citizens, included the right to write a will, bequeath property, and the right to a lictor. Legally, a Vestal was a “free agent” of Rome and was under no obligation to a husband or male member of the family. This status, as some have argued, resembles a male role in Roman society. As Holt argues, this does not indicate that she could or should be identified as male, but rather the rights and privileges afforded her resulted from her being free of masculine ownership. While the Vestals have been identified or associated with men through their legal status it is difficult to associate the same concept with the wives and daughters of sixteenth-century Italy. None of the women discussed here could claim such independent status, even as widows. But, it is clear that Isabella offered at least two important entities to the marriage. First, her dowry afforded Ferrante with the appropriate funding to purchase Guastalla and second, her chastity and fecundity ensured the continuation of the Gonzaga-Guastalla line. Thus, the relationship between chaste or virginal women and the overall status and reputation of the city (Rome/Milan/Mantua) and the family (the Gonzaga) is made clear in the imagery found on the reverse of Isabella’s medal.

The Vestals’ role as virgins goes well beyond the simplistic idea of chastity and incorporates the symbolic idea of the body and the state. The Vestal represents the purity and of the state of Rome and are its guard keepers and Isabella represents the integrity and security of the Gonzaga family and thus the state of Milan/Mantua as a whole. This

295 Staples, From Good Goddess to Vestal Virgins, 145.
296 Holt Parker, “Why Were the Vestals Virgins?,” 574.
297 A widow would return to the patrilineal care of her father if he was alive at the time of her husband’s death.
is evident in other families such as the Medici where the family is symbolic of the state, and the one becomes representative of the other. Just as the Vestals preserved their bodies and thus the body politic of Rome, the women of the Gonzaga family exhibited chastity and acted as the preservers and progenitors of the Gonzaga lineage. That Isabella, the wife of Ferrante and mother of Ippolita and her other children, is identified with and depicted as a Vestal Virgin seems perfectly appropriate.298

Furthermore, Vesta, the leader of the Vestals, was known as the goddess of the hearth, and thus of the family and the home. These references are also appropriate to Isabella as she was the matron of the Gonzaga family. Isabella’s primary responsibility as a wife was the continuation of the family line. Through her children, she fulfilled this responsibility, especially when Cesare, the heir to Ferrante, was born in 1536.

One possible interpretation of the reverse imagery on the medal which connotes the duties, responsibilities, and even independence of ancient Roman Vestals may be associated with the power and obligations of Isabella to protect her immediate family, the Gonzaga line, and by extension, the position of the Gonzaga in Mantua. Isabella provided Ferrante with the benefits of her dowry and her status as a Neapolitan noble benefited Ferrante’s political ambitions while supporting the legitimacy of the Gonzaga family line. Isabella’s power and importance within the Gonzaga family is established by her own lineage as well as in her role as a wife and mother. The medal depicts Isabella as a chaste wife, and not a virgin since she was a matron. As the inscription suggests, her

298 Ippolita (married Fabrizio Colonna and Antonio Carafa) 1535-63, Cesare 1536-75 (Count of Guastalla), Francesco (cardinal) 1538-66, Isabella, Giovanni Vincenzo 1540-91 (cardinal). There are sources that state Isabella and Ferrante had up to ten children, but only the listed descendents survived childhood. Pollard and Luciano refer to Isabella as having ten children, but no other source lists as many. Eleonora, the sister of Ferrante, and her husband Francesco Maria della Rovere did have ten children and thus it is possible that the family lineage of Isabella and Ferrante is confused with that of Eleonora and her husband.
chastity is manifest as a virtuous, honorable, and humble woman and wife, and since the medal is one of a group of Isabella and her daughter, the medal can also be representative of her as a mother when viewed or displayed together, as they may have been during the sixteenth century. Lastly, the obverse inscription describes Isabella as the Princess of Molfetta and the wife of (Ferrante) Gonzaga. She is identified first as the Princess of Molfetta, a title that refers to her position before she married Ferrante and then secondly as her husband. The symbolism of Isabella’s role as a wife and mother cannot be lost on the viewer, nor should the possibility that Isabella and Ferrante collaborated on the possible subjects and themes of Isabella’s medal. Her actual influence or power in relation to her husband’s administrative endeavors or his personal decisions is difficult to discern, but her medal demonstrates that she was a vital and virtuous member of the Gonzaga family by preserving and protecting the Gonzaga legacy. Her medal reinforces her position and it would be remiss to deny Isabella’s influence or even involvement in its imagery and meaning. Isabella’s chastity and humbleness is revered, but her role as a protector, an active role afforded to her in her guise as a Vestal, rather than the passive virgin or chaste wife, is also indicated by Jacopo’s imagery on this medal.

The Medals of Ippolita Gonzaga, Daughter of Isabella and Ferrante Gonzaga

Isabella’s daughter, Ippolita Gonzaga was born to Isabella and Ferrante in Sicily on June 17, 1535 and was praised as an intelligent child and a woman with a propensity for music.299 Litta noted that she was described as beautiful and attractive, full of grace and life, and very talented.300 As a young child, Ippolita spent time in Naples with Guilia

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300 Litta, Familglie celebri italiane, 4: tavola VIII.
Gonzaga Colonna (1513-1566) who enjoyed her time with the young princess writing to Ferrante Gonzaga in a letter of April 4, 1537 that, “I have greatly enjoyed seeing these last few days the Princess and that delicious Nini (a little son of Don Ferrante), and, above all, my darling Donna Ippolita, whom I am never satisfied with seeing and kissing.”  

Ippolita received her early education at Mantua under the supervision of her uncle, Cardinal Ercole Gonzaga (1505-1569) and later at Milan, the city where her father was appointed Governor in 1546. Finding a suitable husband for the young Ippolita was an important responsibility for Ferrante and he was able to secure a betrothal between Ippolita and Fabrizio Colonna, the nephew of Vittoria Colonna. The wedding took place in 1548 but the marriage was short lived since Fabrizio died of fever in 1551 while fighting with Ferrante during the siege of Parma. After his death, Ippolita returned to Milan to live with her father. Within months, she fell in love with Antonio Caraffa, Duke of Mondragone, married him in 1554, and moved with him to Naples. In Naples, Ippolita pursued her love of the arts, even commissioning from Bernardino Campi copies of a series of famous portraits from the museum of Paolo Giovio. Sadly, according to Litta, Ippolita was involved in a dispute with her mother-in-law, Lucrezia del Tufo, and the couple was subsequently forced to leave the palace in Naples. Disgusted with this decision, Antonio left Naples, but Ippolita remained in the city with her mother who was there at the time, most likely around 1557. Ferrante, disheartened to hear of this situation, suggested that Ippolita stay with her mother and that she take care to show 

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301 Hare, Christopher, A Princess of the Italian Reformation: Giulia Gonzaga 1513-1566, Her Family and Her Friends (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1912), 182. Hare’s text on Giulia Gonzaga is a somewhat romanticized account of the life of Giulia Gonzaga although the author based her text on scholarly sources and referenced numerous sixteenth-century letters to and from Giulia as well as letters concerning her friends and family, including those regarding Ippolita Gonzaga.

302 Ibid., 182-183.

303 Litta, Familglie celebri italiane, 4: tavola VIII.

304 Ibid.
decorum in public, even providing witnesses to her good behavior so as to avoid any possibility of revenge from her in-laws.  

It is not fully apparent how this situation resolved itself, but it seems that by 1563, Antonio and Ippolita had reunited for in a letter to Vespasiano Gonzaga (1531-1591), Antonio wrote of his wife’s death and stated:

…On the first of March she was attacked by a little fever and headache, but on the 7th of the month, she was so much better that she thought of asking the doctor’s permission to leave her bed. Then suddenly, at the 18th hour of the same day, she was seized with violent pain, and in the night, about the 7th hour of Wednesday the 8th instant-the most Illustrious Signora Giulia Gonzaga, being present, having with her usual devotion kept loving watch from the beginning to the end-my wife passed away from this life, leaving me in despair…

Ippolita died at the age of 28 in Naples, leaving her husband, family, and friends grief-stricken. In a letter from Luigi Tansillo to Onorata Tancredi, both friends of Giulia Gonzaga, Luigi attests to this when he said, “…All the circumstances which can deepen our sorrow are combined in this death of Madonna, for she was so young, so beautiful, so brave, and such a rare and wonderful lady, that the whole city of Naples is plunged in grief…” The outpouring of sorrow after Ippolita’s tragic death further supports the accounts of her good character and physical beauty.

Several years before her death, Ippolita’s image was recorded on at least three extant medal types including two by Jacopo and one by Leoni. All of the medals depicting her were commissioned by her father, Ferrante between 1549 and 1552. The theme of virtue, first discussed in relation to her mother Ippolita’s medal, is continued in Jacopo’s first medal type of Ippolita. This medal presents Ippolita, aged fifteen. (Fig. 66) The medal is not signed and thus presents an issue with its attribution. Some recent

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305 Ibid.
306 Hare, A Princess of the Italian Reformation, 249. Hare also mentioned that the many funeral odes and elegies to Ippolita were collected in a volume and published the year after her death.
307 Ibid, 250.
scholars, including Pollard and Toderi and Vannel, give this medal to Leoni, while Babelon and Attwood make the case for Jacopo. Babelon stated that this medal was made by Jacopo because it resembles a similar design as the bust of Mary Tudor, cast by Jacopo in 1554. Attwood, who attributes the medal to Jacopo, is further convinced based on Pollard’s suggestion that the medal’s design is “inferior in style” to Leoni’s other medals. While scholars continue to debate the attribution the medal, which I believe is an important task, I prefer to offer a possible interpretation of the meaning of the medal which celebrates and commemorates Ippolita.

This medal depicts Ippolita on the obverse wearing a Spanish-style gown with a high-collared chemise, a double strand of pearls, a mantle, and a drop-pearl earring. Her hair is arranged in coiled braids, secured with fillets, and decorated with pearls. The inscription reads, HIPPOLITA.GONZAGA.FERDINANDI.FIL.AET.AN.XV (Ippolita Gonzaga, daughter of Ferdinando, aged 15 years). On the reverse Ippolita is associated with the muse of astronomy and astrology, most likely Urania, as suggested by Alessandro Magnaguti and Pollard. The figure on the reverse is dressed in a flowing, thin classical gown that clings to her body and reveals her arms, breasts and leg. She is shown standing among a collection of instruments belonging to the arts and sciences, recalling Ippolita’s interests and abilities in the same subjects. The musical instruments

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308 Keary also attributes the medal to Leoni. Lomazzo refers to Jacopo as having cast the medal, but by a design by Leoni. See Alfred Armand, Les médailliers italiens des quinzième et seizième siècles (Paris: Plon, 1887), 1:257. The attribution does not necessarily make an impact on my assessment of the medal, but I agree with Babelon and Attwood and refer to this medal as produced by Jacopo.
309 Babelon, Jacopo da Trezzo, 194.
310 Attwood, Italian Medals, 1:116.
311 See similar clothing style in the medals by Jacopo of Maria of Austria, 1552, Joanna of Austria, 1552, and Mary Tudor, 1554.
312 Alessandro Magnaguti, Ex Nummis Historia IX: Le medaglie dei Gonzaga (Roma: P.&P. Santamaria, 1965), 123. Pollard also suggests the identification of the muse as Urania, but also states that the figure could be Venus/Urania or celestial Venus. He gives no further indication of why this identification is a possibility. Pollard, Renaissance Medals, 1:497.
shown include a guitar, cello, virginals and a harp while the astrological symbols of an armillary sphere, an astrolabe, and hourglass are arranged on a table to the right.\textsuperscript{313} She reaches up with her left hand toward eight stars and the sun as Apollo and holds an open book with her right. The inscription on the reverse, NEC TEMPVS AETAS (Neither time nor age), may refer to Ippolita’s talent and beauty that will not be hindered by the passage of time or her age.

On the medal, Ippolita in the guise of Urania reaches to the eight stars above which is indicative of her as the muse of astrology although Urania is also closely associated with music as can be seen in the woodcut frontispiece of Gafori’s \textit{Practica Musicae}.\textsuperscript{314} (Fig. 67) Gafori places Urania at the top of the musical scale as the highest note of the octave.\textsuperscript{315} Jacopo emphasized the goddess as the muse of music rather than astronomy as indicated by the greater number of musical instruments surrounding her and is a more appropriate reference to Ippolita. The connection between the muses and music was well known in the Renaissance and the medal seems to play on the assumption that the viewer would identify the figure as alluding to the astrological, and particularly in this case, the musical associations of Urania.\textsuperscript{316}

In his research on muses and music in the frescoes of Filippino Lippi in the Cappella Strozzi, Emanuel Winternitz indicates that the muses were suggestive not only of the harmony of the spheres, but also are related to allegories of immortality when

\textsuperscript{313} Pollard does not refer to the armillary sphere and Attwood does not indicate the astrolabe. There are three items depicted on the table which seem to represent all three objects.\textsuperscript{314} Pollard, \textit{Renaissance Medals}, 1:497.\textsuperscript{315} For more on the frontispiece see, James Haar, “The Frontispiece of Gafori’s Practica Musicae (1496),” \textit{Renaissance Quarterly} (Spring, 1974): 7-22.\textsuperscript{316} For imagery of the muses, in particular Urania, and their musical attributes, see Raphael’s, \textit{Parnassus} and Marcantonio Raimondi’s \textit{Clio and Urania}. Urania was also the eighth muse to enter at the Pageant of the Muses at the Wedding of Cosimo I de’ Medici and Eleonora of Toledo.
coupled with funerary sculpture such as sarcophagi. This is an attractive theory based on the fact that a medal of Ippolita by Leoni, subsequently discussed, includes funerary references, but at the time of the production of this medal by Jacopo, Ippolita was married and was not widowed until 1551. Thus, it is more likely that references to immortality would be associated with her after 1551, as in a medal by Leoni, lending this medal as a celebration of her intelligence, talents, and beauty.

In 1551, one year after the first medal by Jacopo and the same year as the death of Fabrizio, Ippolita’s husband, Leoni cast a second medal depicting Ippolita. (Fig. 68) On the medal, Ippolita, aged sixteen, appears in left profile bedecked in a double strand of pearls that suspends a jewel pendant and a drop-pearl earring. Her hair is pushed back by a number of delicately detailed bands that pull it off of her shoulders and into a tight chignon covered by a decorative shell. Leoni shows the fabric of her gown as it wisps around her shoulders and neck and falls in unnatural curves and folds over Ippolita’s shoulders and upper torso, reflecting the Mannered portrait style described in Chapter Two. The inscription on the obverse of the medal reads,

HIPPOLITA.GONZAGA.FERDINANDI.FIL.A.AN.XVI (Ippolita Gonzaga, daughter of Ferrante, age sixteen years). A second inscription, inside that of the main text to the right, reads ΛΕΩΝ ΑΡΗΤΙΝΟΣ (Leoni of Arezzo). The reverse of the medal depicts Diana, the chaste huntress. Ovid offers the story of the virgin goddess preparing for her bath at midday surrounded by her nymph followers. As she readied herself to bathe after the hunt, the hunter Actaeon wanders into Diana’s grotto and witnesses the goddess nude. The nymphs create a frenzy to shield

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318 Attwood, Italian Medals, 1:105.
their goddess, but the damage by Actaeon has been done, and it is his [mis]fortune which will deliver the harshest punishment from a female deity mentioned by Ovid. As a consequence of his gaze upon the chaste Diana, Actaeon is turned into a stag and is left to be mutilated and devoured by his own dogs and hunting group. Even as he attempts to yell to them that it is he, transformed as a stag, he has no voice. Diana’s wrath is witnessed by all and the virgin goddess maintains her chaste identity.319 Ovid believes Diana’s actions were too harsh since the unfortunate Actaeon came upon the nude goddess in error. He said, “In the story you will find Actaeon guiltless; put the blame on luck, not crime: what crime is there in error?”320 The story of Diana and Actaeon, indicates the acceptable (chaste virgin) and unacceptable (vindictive woman) aspects of Diana.321

The reception of the story depends on the gender of the viewer as has been thoroughly discussed in the literature surrounding the paintings of Parmigianino, Correggio, and Titian.322 Besides references to Ippolita’s chastity and the funerary references, the medal by Leoni must be discussed within the framework of the story of Diana and in relation to the other medals of Ippolita and the medal of Isabella Gonzaga.

The story of Diana was a popular subject in Renaissance art and offered artists and patrons various interpretations and depictions of the goddess. Diana imagery, in the Northern courts of Italy in particular, represented the virtue of chastity as well as concerns with family and fertility. In the early years of the sixteenth century, paintings of

320 Ibid., 61.
Diana by Correggio and Parmigianino were commissioned by Giovanna da Piacenza for the Convent of S. Paolo in Parma, and Paola Gonzaga for the Camerino in the Rocca Sanvitale in Fontanellato. Although the iconography of these frescoes has long been debated, it is clear that the subject of Diana was adopted by a small number of women in the Renaissance as appropriate. This did not leave out male patrons who also found it attractive as can be seen in Titian’s Diana and Actaeon commissioned by Philip II of Spain, another patron of Leoni.

On the reverse of the medal by Leoni is Ippolita in the guise of Diana, the virgin huntress. That the reverse image is Ippolita as Diana can be inferred from the same hairstyle given to Ippolita on the obverse as Diana on the reverse. The inscription reads, PAR.VBIQ.POTESTAS (Her power is equal everywhere). On the reverse, Diana, large in scale, is shown blowing her horn which she holds in her left hand and grasping a large arrow which she holds in her right. She is accompanied by three dogs as she makes her way into a wooded landscape. Beyond the wooded landscape to the left is a city scene, which recedes into the background. To the left of Diana is Pluto who carries or seizes Proserpina, and who stands with Cerberus in an arched doorway to a brick building. Above Diana are the moon and the stars. Leoni created this scene with a painterly approach depicting the billowing and clinging drapery on the figure of Diana, and the

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324 The Mannerist influence seen on the obverse is not as fully realized on the reverse, which may indicate an inspiration from the Emilian artists, most of whose medals were uniface, focusing on the depiction and decoration of the portrait image.
nude and modeled figures of Pluto and Proserpina.\textsuperscript{325} The detail in the landscape is impressive as is the depiction of the naturalistic hounds that accompany Diana. The detail of the imagery, the motion and movement of the figures’ bodies, clothing and hair, with the naturalistic depiction of elements set Leoni apart from other medallists. The implication of depth is superbly demonstrated with the combination of high relief for the figures of Diana, Pluto and Proserpina, the dogs, and the architectural structure to the right, and the low relief of the outcropping landscape and cityscape to the right.

This medal was no doubt commissioned by Ferrante. Whether or not Ippolita had a voice in determining the subject of this or other medals remains speculative, but she was most likely back in Milan with her father between 1551 and 1554 when all three of her medals were produced. What is helpful in constructing the reception of any medal are surviving contemporary accounts naming or describing the recipients of the medal. Onorata Tancredi, a close friend of Giulia Gonzaga and companion to Ippolita, sent Pietro Arentino a specimen of the medal.\textsuperscript{326} In a letter to Tancredi, dated January 1552, Arentino thanked her for the medal and praised the imagery on both the obverse and reverse of the medal. Arentino described Ippolita’s portrait as sweet, strong, and majestic and the reverse as illustrating Ippolita’s virginity, marriage, and widowhood.\textsuperscript{327} Above all however, the medal imagery emphasizes the theme of chastity since the figure of Diana dominates the scene.

This medal, considered the most excellent of the medal types, assumes Ippolita in the role of an ancient goddess. The complex imagery is interesting and clearly relates

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\textsuperscript{325} Pollard, “Text and Image,” 155., Titian painted the subject of Diana for Phillip II of Spain in 1556, five years after the medal by Leoni.
\end{flushright}
Ippolita to the triple associations of Diana. She is depicted first as the chaste huntress, second as the goddess of the moon, and third as Hecate, the goddess of the underworld.\textsuperscript{328} As the chaste huntress, Leoni shows Diana wearing a diaphanous gown, in mid-stride, accompanied by her three hounds. This imagery suggests the role of Diana as the virgin huntress. Of the three medal types portraying Ippolita, this medal by Leoni is the only one that overtly casts her as a virgin. The medals by Jacopo, one to be subsequently examined, indicate her chastity, but do not directly depict her as a virgin.\textsuperscript{329} This is an interesting dichotomy since, as we know, Ippolita was a matron, not a virgin. The association of Ippolita with a virgin goddess indicates the meaning as a reference to her chastity and other attributes, indicating that the imagery would have been suitable as Ferrante was attempting to secure her a second marriage contract. It would have been simple, and in this case appropriate, for Leoni to have depicted Diana only as the chaste huntress, as did many other artists of the period, but he includes imagery that alludes to the other aspects of Diana providing the viewer with several levels of interest and interpretation concerning the meaning of the medal.

To the upper left of the figure of Diana is an image of the moon and the stars. As the goddess of the moon, Diana takes on the role of protector of childbirth as well as fertility. Like the cycles of the moon, the cycle of life begins with the fertility of the woman (although it was believed that the semen was the active source of life and the uterus just the passive receptacle). The moon and its cycles are symbolic of fertility as it corresponds to the cycles of the seasons, the menstrual cycle of women, and ultimately, the cycle of life. The relationship between time and the moon is also important because it

\textsuperscript{328} Pollard, \textit{Renaissance Medals}, 1:495.

\textsuperscript{329} Some note that the medal of Ippolita at fifteen is suggestive not only of her as a Muse, but also as Venus, the virgin goddess of beauty. See Graham Pollard, \textit{Renaissance Medals}, 1:497.
was believed that the moon determined one’s fate in life. Thus, Diana/Ippolita becomes representative of the determiner of fate in referencing the fecundity of women/Ippolita and fortune, the continued success and protection of the Gonzaga family.

There are also so-called negative connotations with the image of the moon, more specifically, the image of the crescent moon. The crescent moon, usually seen in Diana imagery, and depicted in the upper left corner of the medal reverse, can also represent the dark side of a woman. Diana is the chaste huntress and protector of women, but she is also responsible for the death of Actaeon, the male figure in the myth. Actaeon, an intricate part of the Diana myth, is not depicted on the medal, nor is his fate alluded to in the imagery. Thus by omitting an obvious reference to Actaeon, Leoni likely intended this Diana to represent the acceptable or desirable feminine associations of the goddess with Ippolita.330

Additionally, the identification of Diana as moon goddess and the image of Pluto and Proserpina signifies the relationship of Diana/Ippolita to the underworld and the realm of the dead. Proserpina, who is shown to the left on the medal, the daughter of Ceres and Jupiter was abducted by Pluto and taken to the underworld as his bride. Leoni depicts Pluto abducting Proserpina as she struggles to be set free from his grip. He goes as far as to show the detail of the muscles and strength of Pluto and the resistance demonstrated by Proserpina. Pluto’s left arm forcefully grabs the right leg of Proserpina as her torso disappears behind the brick wall and archway. A similar archway is shown in Titian’s Diana and Actaeon painted for Philip II just a few years after the medal of

330 See Parmigianino and Correggio’s depictions of the story of Diana and Actaeon. Debate still surrounds the iconography and interpretation of the paintings, but both seem to symbolize the “desirable” feminine attributes of virginity and fertility as well as the “undesirable” feminine traits of acting harshly, acting on revenge, and being too powerful.
Ippolita was produced.\textsuperscript{331} (Fig. 69) The story of Proserpina is suitable for themes associated with Diana. She is associated with the seasons, in particular springtime, and the rebirth of the flora. In the myth, Proserpina emerged from the underworld each spring, free of her husband’s control in Hades, to stay with her mother on earth until the winter when the land was again barren due to her retreat to the underworld. The cyclical nature of the seasons related to Proserpina correlates with the cyclical nature of Diana, especially as Luna or goddess of the moon. The funerary connotation symbolized by Proserpina relates directly to the death of Ippolita’s first husband in 1551.

This imagery seems quite appropriate in relation to the myth of Diana as the triple-goddess, and also to Ippolita’s status as a widow by the time Leoni designed and produced the medal since Ippolita’s husband, Fabrizio, had been killed while on a campaign with her father in 1551, at least one year before the medal was produced. The reference to the dead and the underworld relates appropriately to Diana who is closely identified with Hecate. The triple association of Diana-Luna-Hecate had been well established, although most imagery of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries depicts only Diana-Luna.\textsuperscript{332} That Proserpina appears on the medal makes it clear that Leoni intended to link Ippolita with the triple-goddess, as well as make a specific reference to the afterlife.

This is even more intriguing since none of the other medals associate Ippolita with Fabrizio, but instead as a reclaimed daughter to Ferrante. Even more convincing is

\textsuperscript{331} We know that Leoni and Titian had a volatile relationship and knew each other well. Leoni and Titian were friends from the 1530s until 1559 when Leoni attacked his son Orazio. Between these years, Attwood states Leoni produced a medal of Titian with a reverse that refers to the \textit{Bacchanals} painted by Titian. It is possible that Titian knew the medal by Leoni before he painted the \textit{Diana and Actaeon}. Attwood, \textit{Italian Medals}, 1:94.

\textsuperscript{332} See Parmigianino and Correggio and later Vincenzo de’ Rossi’s sculpture at Clivenden House. Diana is shown with a small crescent on or directly above her head indicating her role as Luna, the moon goddess.
that Pluto and Proserpina are accompanied by Cerberus, the three-headed guard-dog of the underworld, which again, indicates that the medal is a direct reference to the death of Ippolita’s husband and her status as a widow, although not to be confused with her depicted as a widow. The reference to Hecate by Pollard seems to be derived from the connection between Proserpina and Hecate and further distinguishes Ippolita as a protector of sorts. Hecate, as goddess of the crossroads, was associated with the underworld as a cousin to Diana and more importantly for this case, as the attendant and protector of Proserpina. All three allusions of Diana associate Ippolita as protector and caretaker, a similar role symbolized for her mother in her medal by Jacopo. As goddess of the hunt and moon, Diana/Ippolita protects virgins and women in childbirth. As Hecate, she is also associated with looking after women and the afterlife.

In a very similar style to Leoni’s portrait of Ippolita, Jacopo depicts her in a third medal type with her likeness on obverse and the figure of Aurora on the reverse. (Fig. 70) She faces left, and wears a gown with a brooch on the left shoulder, a strand of pearls as well as a necklace with a pendant and a drop-pearl earring. Her hair is pulled back in elaborate braids and adorned with jewels and ribbons. The inscription reads HIPPOLYTA.GONZAGA.FERDINANDI.FIL.AN.XVII (Ippolita Gonzaga, daughter of Ferrante, aged 17), is signed IAC TREX (Jacopo da Trezzo). The denotation of Ippolita as a daughter and not a wife indicates that this medal was also commissioned by Ferrante. The medal was almost certainly produced in 1552 following the death of her husband.

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333 The symbol of Hecate in art, usually the triple-faced statue is not indicated in this medal. I agree with Pollard that the association of Diana and Hecate is feasible, but the identification of Diana as Hecate is not mentioned by Toderi and Vannel or Attwood indicating that Pollard is referring to the connection of Diana-Hecate mentioned by Cartari.

334 See Homer, Homeric Hymn to Demeter.

335 Toderi and Vannel and Pollard date the medal to 1552 while Attwood dates the medal to 1551/1552.
The conclusion is that Ferrante commissioned this and the earlier medal by Jacopo as the artist depicts her neither as a wife, nor as a widow, but instead in her role as a daughter. This would have been even more appropriate since as a widow between 1551 and 1554, Ippolita would have returned to the patrilineal care of Ferrante.

All of the portraits on the medals allude to Ippolita’s beauty and she is shown wearing ornate costumes with elaborate hairstyles. Along with her portrait, the reverse of this medal by Jacopo reinforces the very ideas of beauty and virtue. The inscription on the reverse states, VIRTVTIS FORMAEQPRAEVIA (She who leads the way in virtue and beauty); the image depicts Ippolita in the guise of Aurora, the goddess of astrology and astronomy and the goddess of the dawn. Aurora/Ippolita is shown flying through the sky on a chariot, pulled by Pegasus, holding a torch in her left hand and dropping flower petals with her right. On a cloud in front of the chariot stands a cockerel, another symbol of daybreak while below is depicted a townscape with hills, a river, and a boat.

According to Attwood, a print by Nicolas Beatrizet depicts the same portrait of Ippolita and also depicts the legend from the medal onto the oval surround of the print. In addition, he indicates that the reverse of the medal appears as an impresa of Ippolita in Typotius, Symbola divina et humana.

This medal represents Ippolita’s association with the goddess Aurora who heralds the day and reflects the young sitter who, as the motto indicates, is symbolically linked as a precursor to the beauty and virtue that is to come with her maturity. She is presented by Jacopo, and more so Ferrante, as a young woman of seventeen imbued with the moral and intellectual qualities that will blossom as she matures, recalling the message of the

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336 An impression of this print is located in the Metropolitan Museum of Art but is not available for reproduction.

337 Attwood, Italian Medals, 1:117.
earlier medal by Jacopo. This reflects well on the Gonzaga family and similar to the other medals commissioned by Ferrante, may have been used as an announcement of Ippolita’s qualities that would have been attractive to another suitor after the death of her first husband, possibly her future husband Antonio Caraffa. Her portrait depicts her as more mature than the medal of two years earlier and was produced in the year of her second marriage.

Ferrante must have commissioned the medals of his daughter as well as those of his wife which would have been important additions to his medallic patronage. The medal of Isabella Capua Gonzaga demonstrates her familial and civic dedication, while the medals of Ippolita refer to her beauty, talents, intellectual accomplishments, devotion to her family, and her chastity. Ferrante, the husband and father, celebrated these women through imagery that was personal on one hand, and public on the other. The portraits, mottos, and reverse imagery could be enjoyed by the close family and friends of Isabella and Ippolita, whereas the reverse themes would be easily understood by an outside audience as the medals were gifted beyond the family. The theme of virtue, civic virtue in particular, is taken up in the next chapter with the medals of the women from the Medici family in Florence.
Chapter 5

For the Love of the Family (and State): the medals of Eleonora of Toledo and her daughters Isabella, and Lucrezia de’ Medici

Dynastic promotion and preservation motivated Cosimo I de’ Medici (1519-1574) to commission medals of his wife, Eleonora of Toledo (1522-1562) and his two daughters Isabella (1542-1576) and Lucrezia (1545-1561). An artistic program, which included the patronage of medals, reflected a conscious effort to portray Medici legitimacy and maintain a legacy that had begun well before the rule of Cosimo I (r. 1537-1574). In 1537, as the family reorganized to maintain the dynasty that had been established since the early fifteenth century, their commemorative medals show a preoccupation with the imagery similar in purpose to those produced in the at the height of Medici power during the Golden Age of Cosimo il Vecchio and Lorenzo the Magnificent. It is this conscious connection with the past, and the expectation of a new Medici future through Cosimo, Duke of Tuscany, his wife Eleonora, and his daughters, Isabella and Lucrezia, that informs my study of the medals commissioned by the Cosimo. The medals of these three women advance the propagandistic program set forth by Cosimo during his reign as Duke of Florence with imagery related to fertility, abundance, and Medici power and influence.

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338 A medal of Camilla Martelli, Cosimo’s second wife, was cast by Pastorino in 1584. The medal, now in the British Museum, is beyond the scope of this study since it was produced after Cosimo’s death in 1574.

339 The best examples of this return to the nostalgic past can be seen in the New Sacristy of San Lorenzo and in the frescoes at Poggio a Caiano. See Karla Langedijk The Portraits of the Medici, 15th-18th Centuries 3 vol. (Studio Per Edizioni Scelte, 1981-1987), and Janet Cox-Rearick, Dynasty and Destiny in Medici Art: Pontormo, Leo X, and the Two Cousins (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), for comprehensive studies on the visual legacy of the Medici.
The Medici Rise to Power

The Medici were not originally from Florence, but instead moved to the city in the thirteenth century from the valley of the Mugello. In Florence, the Medici, under Averardo de’ Medici (d. 1363), established themselves as businessmen and began to gain more economic and political clout in Florence. In 1413, Averardo’s son, Giovanni di Bicci de’ Medici (1360-1429) became the banker to the papacy and thus initiated the Medici family rise to political power in Florence. At his death, Giovanni was the second wealthiest man in Florence who had set up an organization that would make his son, Cosimo (1389-1464) the richest man in Florence and in all of Europe. Cosimo, known as il Vecchio or Pater Patriae protected the de facto power of the Medici until their exile from Florence in 1433. After a short stay in exile in Padua, Cosimo returned to Florence in 1434 and increased his family’s wealth, political influence, and control in the city which was maintained under his son Piero il Gottoso (1416-1469, r. 1464-1469). Lorenzo il Magnifico (1449-1492, r. 1469-1492), the son of Piero, was next in line for Medici rule. Under Lorenzo, Florence and the Medici family in particular, prospered politically, socially, and artistically. Unfortunately, Lorenzo’s interests did not align with the administration of the Medici bank, which by this time had suffered a decline in revenue. After Lorenzo’s death in 1492, his young and inexperienced son Piero di Lorenzo de’ Medici (1472-1503, r. 1492-1494), who was left with a business in financial crisis, remained leader of Florence for only two years before he fled the city as French troops approached the city in 1494. The Medici returned to Florence again in 1512 under the leadership of Piero’s brother Giuliano de’ Medici (1479-1516, r. 1512-1513) with the support of a papal and Spanish army. Just one year later in 1513, Giuliano’s son,

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Lorenzo the Younger (1492-1519) took control while in the same year Piero’s brother Giovanni di Lorenzo de’ Medici (1475-1521), became pope taking the name Leo X and thus solidifying the Medici control over Florence. Furthering their control before their expulsion again in 1527, Giulio di Giuliano de’ Medici (1478-1534), Pope Clement VII, was elected to the papacy in 1523. With strong and important connections with Rome, the Medici had succeeded in setting themselves up for the next leader of the family. But, Giulio’s departure to Rome left a vacuum in Florence.

By 1519, through a lack of legitimate heirs, the position of the Medici family was in jeopardy. Two other legitimate heirs, Giovanni’s brother Giuliano, Duke of Nemours (1478-1516), and Lorenzo the Younger (1492-1519), Giovanni’s nephew, provided the only chance for a Medici male heir. Ippolito de’ Medici (1511-1535), the illegitimate son of Giuliano was born in 1511 and became a cardinal in 1531 thus producing no heirs. In 1519, Lorenzo the Younger and his wife Madeleine de La Tour d’Auvergne (a medal of her was cast in 1518) produced a daughter, Catherine, the future queen of France. Both Lorenzo the Younger and his French wife died just days after Catherine’s birth. After Lorenzo’s death, the Medici line, directly descendant from Cosimo I (il Vecchio), was extinct. The only hope for the continuation of Medici rule was left to Alessandro de’ Medici (1511-1537, r. 1530-1537), the illegitimate son of Lorenzo the Younger.

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341 Catherine’s father, Lorenzo the Younger is said to have died of syphilis on 4 May 1519 and her mother died a few days earlier on 28 April 1519 of plague or possibly syphilis that she may have contracted from her husband.
Cosimo I de’ Medici, Duke of Florence

Before Cosimo I’s emergence to power in 1537, his illegitimate cousin, Alessandro ruled Florence beginning in 1531.342 By 1533, with the help of Charles V, Clement VII had secured Alessandro’s position as Duke of Florence, but his reign as Duke was brief, and he was murdered four years later by his cousin Lorenzino de’ Medici (1514-1548), who was a member of the Cadet branch of the Medici family descendant from Cosimo il Vecchio’s brother Lorenzo de’ Medici (1395-1440). Without Alessandro having left a legitimate successor, concern regarding the continuation of the Medici line was once again in question and an heir had to be named in a timely manner so as not to lose Florence to the rule of Charles, Francis I of France or the papacy under Paul III.343 The decision was made to nominate the young Cosimo. Cosimo’s father Giovanni delle Bande Nere, was descendant from the Cadet line of Medici, and his mother, Maria Salviati, the granddaughter of Lorenzo the Magnificent, traced her line from the senior branch of the family. Cosimo was the only descendent who could bring together both lines of the family and was elected by the Florentine Senate as Duke of Florence two days after the murder of Alessandro in 1537. Cosimo’s rule was sanctioned by the Florentine Senate, as well as by the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V. The theme of legitimacy and Cosimo’s destiny as the leader of Florence is seen in the symbolism of his artistic commissions from his earliest days as Duke of Florence to his last years as Grand Duke of Tuscany.344

342 Cox-Rearick identifies Alessandro as the illegitimate son of Lorenzo while Langedijk maintains that Alessandro was the son of Clement VII.
343 Hale, Florence and the Medici, 126. Hale stated that Alessandro’s illegitimate son, Giulio, was too young to be considered as his successor.
344 For more on Cosimo’s propagandistic program, see Henk Th. van Veen, Cosimo I de’ Medici and His Self-Representation in Florentine Art and Culture, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,
At the height of Medici power in the sixteenth century, Cosimo began building his legacy through images of himself, his wife, and his children. The visual program instituted by Cosimo reflected his belief that Florence belonged to the Medici, rightfully and historically. The dynastic theme inspired Cosimo and his artists to create an artistic tradition dedicated to the legacy and legitimacy of the Medici family. These ideas pervaded most, if not all, of the art he commissioned. For example, Cosimo made a grand statement when he transformed the Palazzo della Signoria, once the symbol of Florence as a Republic, into his family’s “princely” residence. Villas, gardens, frescoes, sculptures, even tapestries commissioned by Cosimo revealed themes dedicated to Medici rule over Florence. Additionally, a medal program was established by Cosimo that acknowledged his political ambitions, his many achievements as Duke, and the importance of his family. As Karla Langedijk stated, “Throughout the whole of Cosimo’s life his medals give a faithful picture of his intentions.”

Pietro Paolo Galeotti, Domenico Poggini, and Domenico di Polo were the main medallists employed by Cosimo, although Pastorino also produced a medal of Cosimo’s daughter, Lucrezia.

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van Veen, Cosimo I de’ Medici and His Self-Representation in Florentine Art and Culture, 10.

See sculptures from Bandinelli and Vincenzio de’ Rossi, frescoes by Francesco Salviati, tapestries after designs by Pontormo, Bronzino and Salviati, and building addition by Giovan Battista del Tasso, including monumental gate built between 1550-1552 which displayed the Medici stemma and the diamond, another Medici imprese. See also paintings by Vasari in the Palazzo Vecchio. See in particular tapestry designed by Bronzino, The Arms of Duke Cosimo de’ Medici and Eleonora da Toledo with Apollo and Minerva. Eleonora also played an active role in the commissioning of the art. For more on Eleonora’s patronage of art see Bruce Edelstein, The Cultural World of Eleonora di Toledo: Duchess of Florence and Siena (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004).

Langedijk, The Portraits of the Medici, 1:80.

Pietro Paolo Galeotti was born in Rome, but was in Florence by 1532 and began working for Cosimo in 1550. Domenico Poggini was a native of Florence and worked for Cosimo as Engraver of coins. He was also involved in creating festival decorations for the marriage of Francesco I and Johanna of Austria in 1565. Domenico di Polo was employed as a gem engraver and medalist by Cosimo. Domenico di Polo is thought to have struck the medal of Alessandro de’ Medici in 1541. Pastorino repeatedly attempted to serve Cosimo, but was rejected although he succeed in entering the service of the Grand-Duke.
Of the numerous paintings, sculptures, architectural structures, and other objects that Cosimo commissioned, the most pertinent to my study are his medals, including the series of twelve medals produced by Galeotti and Poggini commemorating Cosimo’s most important civic and political achievements. By commissioning medals, Cosimo was following a precedent set by his Medici predecessors.

A medal of Cosimo (il Vecchio) from c. 1465-69, with his portrait on the obverse, including the initials PPP, and a personification of Florence on the reverse, indicates that the Medici were interested in medallic commemoration as early as 1465. (Fig. 71) The initials have been read at Princeps (leader) or Primus (first) Pater Patriae (father of the country). The reverse depicts the allegorical figure of Florence seated on a faldistorio, a folding chair, holding an orb in her right hand and a triple olive branch closer to her body in the left hand with her foot and legs of the chair resting on a yoke. The image of the yoke, for example, is found on a number of later Medici objects including manuscripts, paintings, coins, and sculptures and implies the message of unity and reconciliation under Medici rule. This and similar types of imagery established the

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Francesco de’ Medici in 1576 as a stucco-worker. Pastorino never left Florence again and died there in December, 1592 at the age of 84.

349. At least seven of the medals depict a building project: the draining of the land, water supplied to Florence, the Uffizi, the building of harbour and fortifications on Elba, the entrance of the Library at San Lorenzo, the fortification of Tuscany, and the Pitti Palace. Other reverses depict the union of Florence and Siena, the column at Piazza S. Trinità with Justitia on top, the founding of the Order of S. Stefano, organizing the army, and Cosimo abdicating (although there are no known examples of this today).

350. This is a posthumous medal of Cosimo il Vecchio, most likely commissioned by Cosimo’s grandson Lorenzo de’ Medici. According to Langedijk and Pollard, the medal was made between 1465 and 1469. Cosimo was not granted the title Pater Patriae until March of 1465, one year after his death. See Hill, A Corpus of Italian Medals of the Renaissance, 1:236-237; Pollard, Renaissance Medals, 1:296 and Langedijk, The Portraits of the Medici, 1:19, 398. The next medals cast for Medici men were done in 1478 depicting the Pazzi Conspiracy. Other medals of individual Medici men continue to be cast or struck after that date.

351. Pollard. Renaissance Medals, 1:296. According to Pollard, the inscription was probably derived from a misread inscription on a Roman coin.

352. The yoke, sometimes coupled with the motto SVAVE (gentle), was utilized by Cosimo’s descendants including Lorenzo il Magnifico and his son Giovanni, Pope Leo X to imply the message of unity and reconciliation under Medici rule. Particularly under Leo, the impresa was employed on the
artistic symbolism utilized by future generations of Medicis. The Medici took advantage of the medal medium in Florence early on and in doing so preserved their images in the tradition of fifteenth-century portraiture as well as the tradition of ancient Roman emperors who placed their portraits on coins.

Thirteen years after the medal of Cosimo as Pater Patriae was produced by an unidentified artist, Bertoldo di Giovanni cast a medal depicting Lorenzo de’ Medici. (Fig. 72) The medal, known as the Pazzi Conspiracy Medal, depicts a bust of Lorenzo on the obverse hovering above the image of the altar at Florence cathedral on the day of April 26, 1478, the day the Pazzi conspirators attempted to assassinate Lorenzo de’ Medici and murdered Giuliano de’ Medici. A number of nude men wielding swords are shown surrounding the altar, representing the Pazzi attackers. On the reverse, the bust of Giuliano de’ Medici is situated in the same way as Lorenzo’s bust above the altar on the obverse, but this time, the nude men are shown in the act of killing Giuliano as his body lays beneath them on the lower right side of the medal. The depiction of this event demonstrates the Medici family’s use of medallic imagery to announce their survival as saviors of the Florentine Republic. Like those of his grandfather, Lorenzo’s medals

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353 The yoke is also evoked in a portrait of Cosimo I’s daughter Isabella by Alessandro Allori. In the portrait, Isabella de’ Medici Orsini with her Son Virginio, 1574, Allori depicts her wearing a clasp with the bust of a woman wearing a yoke. Gabrielle Langdon, *Medici Women: Portraits of Power, Love, and Betrayal* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 150.

354 According to the portraits listed by Karla Langedijk, no medals of Medici women were produced during the 15th century.

355 The medal was probably commissioned by Lorenzo de’ Medici as indicated by a letter from 11 September, 1478 in Archivio di Stato, Florence. Pollard, *Renaissance Medals*, 1:304
portrayed him in ways that strengthened the Medici family traditions. In 1490, Niccolò Fiorentino cast one of the most impressive medals of Lorenzo. This medal was produced just two years before his death and is most likely one of the last living images of him. (Fig. 73) The obverse of the medal depicts Lorenzo in profile to the left with the inscription MAGNVS.LAVRENT IVS.MEDICES (The Great Lorenzo de’ Medici). The reverse represents the personification of Florence seated below a laurel tree and holding the stem of a lily with three blossoms. Clearly, by 1490, Lorenzo continued to utilize earlier Medicean imagery and had even appropriated new devices to represent his family’s position in Florence.

This imagery that had been established on these fifteenth-century medals, as well as ancient prototypes, was recalled by Cosimo in his own artistic commissions that also reaffirmed the Medici status in Florence. Upon Alessandro’s death for example, Cosimo commissioned Domenico di Polo to make a medal commemorating his predecessor. In 1537, Domenico cast a medal with the portrait of Cosimo on the obverse and of Alessandro on the reverse. (Fig. 74) This commission called to mind the Medici line, but also recalled the ancient precedent set by Augustus, who after his predecessor’s assassination, issued coins with his portrait on the obverse and that of Julius Caesar on the reverse.

In the same year, Cosimo commissioned Domenico to strike a medal of him announcing his rise to power that showed his portrait on the obverse and a reverse

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356 See medal of Lorenzo de’ Medici, produced in the style of Bertoldo di Giovanni, c. 1478. On this medal, Lorenzo’s bust is on the obverse and on the reverse stands a soldier in antique armor surrounded at his feet by three figures. One figure holds his head in despair while the other two represent reclining river gods. Pollard believes the medal imitates a bronze sestertius of the Emperor Trajan on the conquest of Armenia and Mesopotamia. Pollard, Renaissance Medals, 1:306.

357 Ibid., 311.

358 The laurel was first used by Lorenzo and is not only a play on his name, “lauro”, but also associates him with virtue, triumph, peaceful rule, and immortality. He also uses it in his poetry as a metaphor of Medici rule in Florence as explained by Cox-Rearick, Dynasty and Destiny, 18.

359 Attwood, Italian Medals, 1:324, no. 776.
with the motto VNO AVVLSO and ALTERNON DEFICIT (If one is removed, another does not fail) and an image of a tree with one broken branch. (Fig. 75) On the obverse, Cosimo is depicted beardless, wearing a scalloped cuirass while the broken tree and legend on the reverse directly refers to his lineage since Pontormo used the same image in his earlier portrait of Cosimo il Vecchio. Two more medals by Domenico, one portraying Cosimo’s portrait on the obverse and Hercules and Antaeus wrestling on the reverse and another displaying Cosimo depicted in armor on the obverse and an image of Capricorn on the reverse furthers his association with the devices of Augustus and emphasizing his strength and power and his preoccupation with antique references.\textsuperscript{360} (Figs. 76, 77) These correlations further emphasize Cosimo’s connection with the past and his establishment of an artistic program intended to remind Florentines of the leaders of the Medici family and associate them with his power and legitimacy. The twelve medals commissioned by Cosimo by Domenico di Polo and Domenico Poggini illustrate Cosimo’s attempt to define himself as a strong leader and provider for the Florentines.\textsuperscript{361} A bearded Cosimo adorns the obverse of the medals, which was designed by Domenico Poggini, while the reverses, designed by Domenico di Polo emphasize Cosimo’s dedication to his work for the Florentines including the politically important unification of Florence and Siena, numerous building projects such as the construction of aqueducts and fortifications and city buildings, the founding of public institutions such as the Knights of Santo Stefano, and military reform. As has been briefly shown, the medallic tradition remained strong under Cosimo and he used the medium to its fullest advantage,

\textsuperscript{360} The Hercules medal was most likely the hat pin represented by Pontormo in his portrait of \textit{Cosimo I (Halberdier)}, 1537/38.

\textsuperscript{361} The number twelve is also significant since it refers to the twelve labors of Hercules, further establishing Cosimo’s association with the ancient Romans.
especially as political propaganda. The significance of these medal commissions also demonstrates Cosimo’s insistence on the continuity of the Medici family lineage and Cosimo’s place within it.

In addition to his own medals, it seems probable that Cosimo commissioned the medals of his wife, Eleonora of Toledo and his two daughters, Isabella and Lucrezia. The propagandistic intent of the medal imagery on the medals of Eleonora, Isabella and Lucrezia may have been dictated by him, but I as I aim to show, was also influenced by the women in his life.

*The Marriage of Cosimo I and Eleonora of Toledo*

In order to legitimize his rule, Cosimo carefully selected the noblewoman Eleonora of Toledo as his bride since the marriage had to reflect political and social connections that would strengthen the Medici position in Florence and throughout Europe. Cosimo’s choice to marry Eleonora, the second daughter of Don Pedro of Toledo, Viceroy of Naples, in 1539 benefited him personally, and, more importantly, politically, for it provided him with an ally whose ties extended beyond Italy and strengthened his allegiance to the Hapsburg Emperor, Charles V. The Alvarez of Toledo, descendants of the ancient kings of Castile, maintained great power and prestige in Spain, Italy, and abroad, making any connection with them a strategic gain.

The festivities in Florence on June 29, 1539 celebrating their marriage demonstrated this vital political alliance, reiterated the importance of Cosimo’s Medici

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362 Although the marriage was a strategic one, no records indicate that Cosimo was unfaithful to Eleonora during their marriage. On the contrary, contemporary letters suggest that he was a chaste husband. His faithfulness, which was an uncommon trait for husbands (and some wives) during the period, could have been a sign of his deep love for Eleonora. Her relation to Charles V and her Spanish ancestry also could have caused Cosimo to be cautious.
ancestors, and emphasized the wish for male offspring to ensure the continuance of the Medici line.  

The wedding festivities included elaborate decorations, music, a banquet, a pageant, and a comedy. Most important for this study is a description of the decorations for the event that provided a starting point to what Claudia Rousseau calls the “three important themes first publicly expressed in the wedding apparato – paragone with the past, the fertility of the ducal couple, and the astrological notions adapted to a divine justification of Cosimo’s accession.” Connections to the past are seen in numerous paintings and painted portraits including Leo X with Cardinals Giulio de’ Medici and Luigi de’ Rossi, (Fig. 78) a pastiche by Battista Franco depicting Clement VII with Alessandro and Ippolito de’ Medici, and of course the portrait of Cosimo Pater Patriae by Pontormo, which were displayed in the loggia behind the bride and groom. (Fig. 79) These acted as visual reminders of Cosimo’s ancestry as well as his opportunity to establish new Medici traditions and associations. For example, Cosimo linked himself and his rule with that of Augustus by adopting the astrological symbol of Capricorn. Astrological symbolism was also evident during the wedding festivities, especially in the performance of Apollo and the muses. During the wedding festivities, the gate of the Medici Palace was decorated with the coat of arms of the Houses of Medici and Toledo

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which were joined and embraced by the Imperial Eagle. As guests approached the palace, they were greeted by decorations in seventeen lunettes containing images and mottos in Latin that evoked Cosimo’s legacy and the anticipated prosperous future of the ducal couple. In the fourth lunette was shown a broken laurel tree with the motto UNO AVULSO, alluding to the assassination of Duke Alessandro and the rise of Cosimo from the cadet branch of the family. This same motto was utilized on the medal of Cosimo by Domenico di Polo two years before the Medici wedding. The yoke and motto SUAVE was displayed in the tenth lunette and referred to Lorenzo the Magnificent and Leo X with the addition of the “N” written above the yoke. This device and motto was also familiar and had been used on the medal of Cosimo il Vecchio.

Most importantly though, the anticipated fertility of the couple was emphasized in the decorations of the arch (Porta a Prato) through which Eleonora entered the city of Florence on June 29, 1539. The Florentine historian, writer and humanist Pier Francesco Giambullari (1495-1555) is thought to have played the largest role in the invention of the celebratory program and the artist Niccolò il Tribolo was in charge of many of the decorations. Giambullari was also charged with documenting the event and in doing described the arch in a copy of a letter written by Giambullari to Giovanni Bandini, the Duke’s ambassador to Charles V, in which he stated:

This part, in the shape of a Arch of Triumph, had in the highest part of its fonton a great figure of a lady, quite isolated, girded in ancient dress, with five beautiful nude children about her – one on her shoulders, one on her lap, and three others around her legs. She was put there to represent

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366 Ibid., 125.
367 Ibid., 125. The motto SVAVE was also combined with the motto N/SVAVE and was connected to Cosimo il Vecchio, Lorenzo the Magnificent and Leo X. Cox-Rearick, *Dynasty and Destiny*, 36.
Fecundity, as will be clearer below from the letters of the frieze of the arch.\textsuperscript{369}

Additionally, boxes for musicians and singers were placed at the end of the arch and as Eleonora proceeded through arch, singers sang this motet which was also carved in Latin into the main frieze of the arch:

Come in, come in, under the most favorable auspices, Eleonora, to your city. And, fruitful in excellent offspring, may you produce descendants similar in quality to your father and forebears abroad, so that you may guarantee eternal security for the Medici name and its most devoted citizens.\textsuperscript{370}

The decorations of the wedding banquet signified Eleonora’s dynastic role and connected her, personally and politically, with Cosimo. Eleonora signaled her willingness to participate actively in obtaining and maintaining Medici legitimacy and primacy, and to establish a strong Medici legacy from the moment she walked through the Porta a Prato.

Giambullari also described Eleonora’s first association with Juno, the goddess of marriage and childbirth and champion of morality, in the lost banquet painting, \textit{The Marriage by Proxy of the Duke Cosimo} by Bronzino. In the painting, which depicted the proxy marriage of Cosimo and Eleonora in Naples, the words DIIS AUSPICIBUS ET IUNONE SECUNDA (Under the auspices of the gods and with a favorable Juno) refer to an early connection of Eleonora and Juno, an association which became more fully developed in subsequent paintings and sculptures. This imagery first established a long tradition of the link not only between Eleonora and Juno but also Cosimo with Jupiter.\textsuperscript{371}

\textsuperscript{369} Ibid., 100.  
\textsuperscript{370} Ibid., 103.  
Eleonora was further personified as the goddess in numerous works including Bronzino’s
dynastic portraits, Francesco Salviati’s *Triumph of Camillus*, and in the frescoes in the
Terrace of Juno in the Quartiere degli Elementi in the Palazzo Vecchio. She is further
associated with Juno in Ammanati’s *Fountain of Juno*, and in a medal by Domenico
Poggini which I consider. (Figs.80, 81, 82, 83).

These associations were well placed since Eleonora’s fecundity provided the
greatest possibility for maintaining the Medici line. Accordingly, Cosimo and Eleonora
fulfilled their marital expectations of securing the Medici lineage with the birth of eleven
children, including five sons. They also knew that their three daughters, Maria,
Isabella, and Lucrezia could take part in promoting the family through betrothals and
eventual marriage alliances to the sons of influential families in Italy.

*Protector of Her family and Florence: the medal of Eleonora of Toledo*

Following the wedding, Eleonora maintained her expected position in the Medici
court as Duchess of Florence, but because of her independent wealth and her social and
political acumen, she was not restricted to the traditional roles of wife and mother. In
1541 and again in 1543, Eleonora assumed temporary control of the government during
Cosimo’s absences from Florence. Eleonora was an astute businesswoman. She

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372 Vasari, in his description of the Terrace of Juno in the Palazzo Vecchio refers to the connection
373 Although Eleonora gave birth to eleven children, three died before the age of one. Also see
Bruce L. Edelstein, “La fecundissima Signora Duchessa: The Courtly Persona of Eleonora di Toledo and
the Iconography of Abundance,” in *The Cultural World of Eleonora of Toledo*, ed. Konrad Eisenbichler,
(Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2004),76 for transcription of letters by Paolo Giovio
gratulating the Medici couple on the birth of their daughter, Isabella and expressing his wonderment at
Eleonora’s fecundity.
374 In 1541 and 1543, Cosimo left Florence for Genoa to tend to dealings with the emperor.
Although Eleonora acted as regent during Cosimo’s brief absences, there is no indication that she
accumulated great individual wealth from her activities associated with, and dominion over the Florentine grain market, providing her an independence that other women could not attain. In 1550 she purchased the Palazzo Pitti and the surrounding land of the Boboli Gardens from Buonaccorso Pitti. Eleonora’s personal assets remained an important source of income for Eleonora and Cosimo. Documentation of Eleonora’s activities at court demonstrates that she was also an active patron of the arts, commissioning portraits and paintings from artists such as Bronzino and Vasari. Eleonora valued precious jewelry and sumptuous fabrics, as indicated in Bronzino’s portraits, including his portrait of Eleonora and Her Son Giovanni, 1546. (Fig. 80) She also took pleasure in gambling, a sign of her independent spirit, and possibly an alternative source of wealth that allowed her to purchase luxurious textiles and costly jewelry. In contrast to her outward affluent appearance, Eleonora was a deeply pious and spiritual woman who was dedicated to the church, as confirmed by contemporary accounts indicating that she was seen “every morning at Mass,”375 and by her private devotional chapel in the Palazzo Vecchio. She was also a particularly influential patron and supporter of the Jesuits later in her life.376 Her propensity to speak Spanish and not Italian, an attribute found objectionable by many Florentine’s, most likely made the Jesuits a welcomed group to Florence and with her help in 1551 they established a Jesuit college in the city.377

Through this account of Eleonora’s public dealings and private relationships, her power and influence on her husband, members of the Medici court, and even the city of

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376 For more on Eleonora’s association with the Jesuits, see Chiara Franceschini, “Los scholars son cosa de su excelentia, como lo es toda la Compañía: Eleonora di Toledo and the Jesuits,” in The Cultural World of Eleonora of Toledo, 181-206.
377 Cox-Rearick, Bronzino’s Chapel of Eleonora, 46.
Florence is apparent. With regard to Eleonora’s artistic self-fashioning and patronage, it must be recognized that although Cosimo’s name appears more frequently as patron, it is naive to think that Eleonora did not have an influence or even complete control over many of the commissions related to the Medici household, including her own portraits, one of which has already been mentioned. We know that Eleonora worked closely with artists on numerous commissions in particular her own private chapel decorated by Bronzino, and as I claim, she played a pivotal role in formulating her own imagery which can be exemplified in a medal of her by Domenico Poggini.

Poggini, a goldsmith, sculptor, medalist and poet who was born in Florence in 1520, began working as a goldsmith at the Medici court in 1540 and began casting medals in the early 1550s. Earlier scholars such as Armand attributed Poggini’s medal of Eleonora to Domenico di Polo, but a letter from August 1, 1551 stating that the silver for the medal was received by the Poggini brothers, and the fact that Domenico di Polo died in 1547 five years before the casting of this medal, secures the attribution to Domenico Poggini.\(^\text{378}\) The medal, produced in 1551, depicts Eleonora on the obverse, facing left, surrounded by the inscription, ELEONORA FLORENTIAE DVCISSA (Eleonora, Duchess of Florence). (Fig. 84) Eleonora is shown wearing a chemise, a gown, and a coat in the Spanish style. Her fashion on the medal recalls similar dresses worn by her in portraits by Cristofano dell’Altissimo and Bronzino, in particular the overcoat and the diamond-patterned chemise.\(^\text{379}\) Her hair, pulled away from her face by a hair net, is also similar in style to the hair nets depicted in her portraits, but without the pearl band as is seen in Bronzino’s 1545 portrait. On the reverse, an impresa designed by Paolo Giovio


in 1551, is a peahen standing with outstretched wings surrounding six chicks and the inscription CVM PVDORE LAETA FOECVNDITAS (Fecundity, joyful with modesty). Although this motif of fecundity recalls her marriage festivities, the medal, most likely commissioned by Cosimo, does not commemorate their union, nor does it commemorate the hope of producing a Medici heir, for Eleonora had already given birth to five boys by this date. However, the medal does reinforce the marital themes and shows the fulfillment of the couple’s anticipated fertility from the marriage decorations.

The intention of the medal to emphasize Eleonora’s virtues is apparent in a letter from Paolo Giovio to Cosimo on August 9, 1551 in which Giovio proposed that the design depict, “the peacock...bird sacred to Juno, queen of the heavens,…the bird of greatest modesty, beauty, and fertility.” In antiquity, peacocks and peahens were associated with beauty and protection. Scholars agree that the imagery on the medal reverse alludes to Juno and also represents Eleonora’s fecundity. I contend that in addition to celebrating her fecundity, the blending of Juno’s attributes with the protective nature of the peahen on the medal implies a more nuanced meaning than previously recognized.

As the motto on the reverse indicates, Eleonora’s fecundity had been clearly demonstrated and widely celebrated. However, the chicks on the medal, which number six, do not represent the number of Eleonora’s own children. By 1551, she had seven living children, four of which were male. Claudia Rousseau proposed that the six sheltered chicks on the medal most likely correspond to the six Medici palle depicted on the Medici coat of arms. This reference is possible, but there is also more to the

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381 Rousseau, “Pageant of the Muses,” 426.
meaning of the medal than a simplified reference to Eleonora’s fertility with I contend is related to Medici civic propaganda.

The protective nature of the peahen, shown in the medal by her wings sheltering her chicks, also has biblical connotations, and seems appropriate for a woman who took her religious devotion seriously. In Matthew 23:37, the connection between the peahen and protection is quite clear: “Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how many times I yearned to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her young under her wings, but you were unwilling!” Here, the peahen, always mindful of her chicks, protects them and is associated with God-given wisdom. Akin to the peahen, Eleonora functioned as the protector of the Medici family, as well as to the city of Florence. Further evidence can be marshaled to support religious undertones of the medal when considering images of the Madonna of Mercy. This Marian image was popular in earlier Italian painting, such as Piero della Francesca’s Misericordia Altarpiece of 1445 (Fig. 85) and Domenico Ghirlandaio’s Madonna della Misericordia in the Ognissanti of 1470-72 (Fig. 86) and a fifteenth-century Tuscan Misericordia sculpture now in the Bargello. (Fig. 87) This type of Madonna imagery recalls the subject on the reverse of the Poggini medal. In Madonna of Mercy iconography, the Virgin is shown as the protector of the people, larger than all other figures, gracefully enveloping the followers of Christ and protecting them under her cloak. The peahen on the medal is depicted in the same manner, and appears at least three times the size of the chicks under her. There is evidence that the Madonna of Mercy imagery was actually appropriated onto medieval seals as early as the thirteenth

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382 Book of Job, reference to neglectful ostrich, the opposite of the peahen, 39:14-17. For more biblical references to the protection of birds(wings) see Psalms 17:8 and 91:4.
century, taking their precedent from ancient Roman coins depicting either Jupiter with an outstretched mantle, (Fig. 88) or more importantly for this study, the image of Juno or the personification of *Fecunditas.*\(^{383}\) (Fig. 89) The connection with *Fecunditas*, the image of the peahen to symbolize Juno, and the association with Mary the Protector indicate a conscious effort on the part of Poggini, Cosimo, and most importantly for my purposes, Eleonora, in fashioning her image as evoking her position as fulfilling her responsibility as matriarch of the future Medici line, her personal commitment to Cosimo by her association of Juno, the consort to Jupiter, and in her role as public guardian of the Medici family and Florence.

Although the imagery on the Poggini medal is not a human figure, I believe that the peahen closely echoes the imagery of the Madonna of Mercy type. On the medal, the peahen stands with outstretched wings, in a similar manner as the Madonna of Mercy does with her enveloping cape, shielding her young and protecting them. Thus, the meaning of the medal cannot be limited to the successful fertility of the couple, but rather points to the protective qualities seen in the Madonna of Mercy type, and by extension Eleonora.

Similar to other portraits of Eleonora, the medal combines the ancient associations of Juno with contemporary religious implications of divinity and associations with the Virgin. In her discussion related to Juno and the Madonna of Mercy, Susan Solway has stated,

> As the tutelary goddess presiding over childbirth, Juno’s preeminent maternal position is guaranteed and extended beyond the birth of the child to encompass its growth, development, and health, and by extension, that

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of the Roman people. It thus parallels the role of the empress and, ultimately, the role of the Virgin.”

Like the Madonna of Mercy, Juno, and the peahen, Eleonora is imbued with wisdom in her role as protector and guarantor of her family and by extension, the Florentine citizens. By evoking the six Medici palle, the medal goes even further to connect the civic and political role of Eleonora as proponent of the Medici legacy and facilitator of Cosimo’s ambitions. By associating her with Juno and the Virgin, Eleonora’s medal depicts her as a powerful matron, successful in her duties as wife and mother, but also as a strong, wise woman who is capable of protecting both her family and Florence, as she did during Cosimo’s absences. Her concerns for the continuation of the Medici dynasty and her family’s increasing power in Florence and abroad paralleled Cosimo’s interests, and as I have shown, are successfully realized in this medal by Poggini.

A second medal type produced by Pastorino is a uniface medal of Eleonora. (Fig. 90) The inscription on the medal reads, ELEONORA FLORENTIAE DVCISSA, (Eleonora, Duchess of Florence). The medal, dated between 1559 and 1560, shows a more mature Eleonora than Poggini’s medal. On the medal, Eleonora appears in a high-collared dress with her hair in coiled braids and drop-earrings. It is an uncomplicated representation of Eleonora in the style of Pastorino’s later medals with the raised beaded border that contains her portrait bust. Pastorino was working in Ferrara at that time, but was attempting to return to Florence under the service of Cosimo. In the same year, he arrived in Florence and presented Vasari with two models of coins for Sienese currency. Vasari was impressed by the models and suggested to Cosimo that

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385 Toderi and Vannel date the medal to 1560 while Kenner dates the medal to 1559.
386 Attwood, *Italian Medals*, 1:244.
Pastorino’s employment would be worthwhile, but Cosimo did not retain his services. A medal of Cosimo’s son, Francesco of 1560 also seems to have been used by Pastorino to persuade the duke. Unfortunately for Pastorino, Cosimo again rejected his request and by 1561, Pastorino returned to Ferrara under the service of Alfonso II. There is no mention of this medal of Eleonora in the accounts of Vasari surrounding Pastorino’s desire to return to Florence. But, the date of the medal may suggest that it was another attempt by the artist to convince the Medici of his skills as a medalist, and, what better way to do it than by way of the Duke’s wife and son?

*Isabella de’ Medici Orsini: the “Star” of the Medici Court*

The Medici court celebrated when on August 31, 1542, Eleonora gave birth to another daughter and gave her the name Isabella Romola.387 As a young girl, Isabella, like her siblings, received a traditional education afforded to the children similar noble or royal status. Their mother, dedicated to her religion, also ensured that Isabella was raised in the spirit of the church. Cosimo’s affection for his Isabella was evident, but so was his plan for her strategic marriage that would inevitably strengthen his position in Italy. In 1553, Cosimo had arranged the marriage of Isabella, then aged eleven, to Paolo Giordano Orsini, a member of one of the most wealthy and powerful families in Rome. This alliance, solidified by the wedding in 1558, strengthened Cosimo’s ties to Rome and recalled his own Roman-Orsini ancestry, since his great-grandmother was Clarice Orsini, married to Lorenzo il Magnifico. It also provided more security and economic stability to the southern areas of Cosimo’s territories, for the Orsini owned land on the border with

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Tuscany which touched the southern territories of Florentine control, thus making that territory easier to manage.

Isabella was a devoted daughter to Cosimo but a less devoted wife to Paolo Giordano Orsini. Events brought about a catastrophic end to her life and the intentional destruction or disappearance of a number of her images. Hence, the examination of two of her medals is an essential step in recovering details of her life, her relationship with her father, and her legacy within the Medici family.

Isabella was known as the “star” of the Medici court because of her liveliness, talent, intelligence, musical acumen, adventurous personality, and loving relationship with her father. She was said to have been full of life, engaging in both intellectual and physical activities such as poetry and music, rides and hunts.\(^{388}\) She was a fervent supporter of the literary arts as well as an active patron to the court artist, Alessandro Allori.

Her husband, Paolo Orsini was known for his impropriety and his irresponsible spending habits, but for Cosimo, the rewards of the marriage alliance seem to have outweighed the risks of such a ruinous affair. Instead of taking up residence in Rome, Isabella remained in Florence throughout her eighteen-year marriage where she was able to maintain and further support the cultural affairs of the Medici court. After her mother’s death in 1562, Isabella was entrusted with more familial duties and acted as consort to her father. Isabella was a loyal daughter to Cosimo, even tolerating accepting his unpopular second marriage to Camilla Martelli (1545-1590).

\(^{388}\) Ibid, 92.
Still under the security of her father’s house in 1564, she began a love affair with Troilo Orsini, Paolo’s cousin.\footnote{\textcopyright Winspeare points out that the proof of Isabella’s infidelity is evident in letters preserved in the Archivio di Stato di Firenze, seven of them written by a woman’s hand and one in particular was definitely written by Isabella. Winspeare, \textit{Isabella Orsini}, 101.} This situation was an embarrassment to the Medici family and after Cosimo I’s death in April of 1574, Isabella no longer benefitted from the protection of her father, or in this case, of the Medici family. The loss of Cosimo deeply affected her and more importantly empowered her brothers, Francesco and Ferdinando to allow or even support Paolo’s revenge on their sister for her unscrupulous behavior. On July 16, 1576, Isabella died at the Medici villa at Cerreto Guidi at the hands of her husband.\footnote{\textcopyright Winspeare stated that the official cause of death was recorded as a fatal seizure, but all indications, including the appearance of the corpse, point to her death by strangulation. Ibid, 168-169. The Medici were already under suspicion since Isabella’s cousin Eleonora di Toledo de’ Medici (Dianora), to whom she was very close, was murdered by her husband, Isabella’s brother Pietro on July 10, 1576 at the Medici villa at Cafaggiolo.}

Isabella’s visual legacy is marred by her deeds in life. Karla Langedijk was one of the first scholars to suggest that a lack of portrait images of Isabella, in particular her absence in the set of Medici miniatures, may be due to a \textit{damnatio memoriae} ordered by her brother Francesco and brought about by her own infidelity and consequent embarrassment of the Medici family.\footnote{\textcopyright The small, square paintings were commissioned by Cosimo and completed by 1553. Langedijk indicates that Vasari speaks of “quadretti” for which twenty-four have survived. They included contemporary portraits of Cosimo’s children, as well as portraits of members of the older branch of the family. Langedijk, \textit{Medici Portraits}, 100. Although Isabella’s portrait may have been destroyed and removed from the set of portraits, a number of surviving portraits of Isabella have been identified and discussed by Langedijk, figs. 63.1 through 63.4, and more recently by Gabrielle Langdon, \textit{Medici Women}, figs., 32, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55(1761 engraving). Strong supporting evidence of the \textit{damnation memoriae} of Isabella can be found in Langdon, \textit{Medici Women}, 167-169. \textit{Damnatio memoriae} was used since ancient times including specific examples from ancient Rome, one of the best being the portrait of the Severan Family, c. 200 C.E. that depicts the portraits of Septimius Severus, Julia Domna, Caracalla and Geta. The face of Geta on the tondo was erased on the order of Caracalla who also had his brother murdered. More contemporary with Isabella is the \textit{damnation memoriae} of Bianca Cappello, the mistress and second wife of Francesco de’ Medici. The destruction of her memory and her images were ordered by Ferdinando de’ Medici after her death in 1587.} (Fig. 91) Although some of her portraits were destroyed, other portraits were either hidden from view or were identified with other
Medici women, for example Bianco Capella was identified as the figure in the portrait *Isabella with Music* (Fig. 92) while Laudomia de’ Medici was identified as the sitter in the portrait *Isabella with a Fur Pelt.* (Fig. 93). Surviving the destruction of her images were two medals by Poggini examined here. The medals reveal an important dimension of the visual iconography associated with Isabella.

On the first medal type, produced by Poggini and dated 1560, Paolo appears on the obverse and Isabella on the reverse. (Fig. 94) Paolo is depicted on the obverse with the inscription PAVLVS IORDANVS VESINVS (Paolo Giordano Orsini) and Isabella’s portrait on the reverse is accompanied by the inscription ISABELLA MEDICEA VRSINA (Isabella de’ Medici Orsini). Paolo is shown wearing a cuirass and a mantle while Isabella is depicted in a dress and mantle secured on her shoulder in a similar manner to that of her husband’s. She wears a pearl necklace and earring. Her hair is decorated with a coiled braid and pearl band secured at the back of her head. Medals depicting husbands and wives could have been cast to commemorate a marriage, as was most likely the case of the medal of Isabella’s sister Lucrezia and her husband Alfonso II d’Este in 1558. Attwood stated that Isabella’s medal may commemorate her marriage to Paolo while Caroline Murphy suggests the medal was cast on the occasion of Paolo and Isabella receiving the titles as Duke and Duchess of Bracciano, declared by Pope Pius IV in October of 1560. While the medal represents the important political alliance between the Medici and Orsini families, and shows Isabella’s position as a wife, it should

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392 If information regarding the provenance of the medals versus the provenance of the lost painted portraits is found, it may shed more light on why the medals were preserved. It is possible that the medals may have survived the *damnatio memoriae* better than the painted portraits because of their size and material make-up since they were small objects and less costly than painted portraits. They could also be kept out of sight quite easily by being stored in boxes or cabinets. Their survival may also be related to the function of the medals as being personal rather than stately and thus less vulnerable to destruction.

not be considered as only a marriage medal because the wedding between Isabella and
Paolo had taken place two years before the medal was produced. It is also doubtful that
the medal would have been cast only to celebrate the occasion of the couple’s new role as
Duke and Duchess of Bracciano given that their new titles are not inscribed on the medal.
Based on the evidence that Isabella and Paolo did not have a loving relationship, and are
not depicted as a couple in other commissions, I believe that Cosimo was most likely the
patron of the medal, and that although Isabella is portrayed as the wife of Paolo she is
celebrated as the daughter of Cosimo who by marriage to Orsini, granted her father
legitimacy and greater prominence in Italy. By depicting Isabella as an Orsini wife and
Medici daughter, the medal visually reflects the valuable role, or “social currency” of
daughters, in particular Isabella, in the Medici court.

A second medal type by Poggini reflects the more personal characteristics of
Isabella, thus promoting her individuality as well as her role as an active proponent of the
Medici family. (Fig. 95) Isabella is shown on the obverse in right profile with the
inscription, ISABELLA MEDICRA VRSINA (Isabella Medici Orsini) with a reverse that
depicts a draped female figure holding a cornucopia in her left hand and ears of corn in
her right hand. The motto on the reverse reads, DONEC MELIVS NITEAT (As long as
it shines better). The obverse is related to the previous medal stylistically. Isabella is
shown wearing a gown with a string of pearls, a drop earring, and her hair braided and
adorned with ribbons and a diadem. On the reverse, Poggini employs Isabella’s impresa,
the cornucopia, held by a figure identified by scholars as Ceres or Abundance standing
under a radiant sun.\footnote{Ceres or Abundance is the Roman goddess of agriculture, grain,}

\footnote{394 Isabella’s mother, Eleonora was also associated with Abundance. See Bruce L. Edelstein, “La
fecundissima Signora Duchess.”}
fertility, and protector of marriage and the social order. As goddess of the harvest and nourisher of the land, Ceres was responsible for instructing humans about how to grow, preserve, and prepare grain and corn. She was the only ancient goddess to have been intricately involved in the daily lives of common people, and thus she presents a public persona. I concur with the identification of the figure on the Poggini medal as Ceres-Abundance, associating Isabella with the attributes of the provider of plenty, on various levels.395

Isabella’s impresa was most likely devised by a member of the Medici court, since she was associated with ‘fruitfulness’ in other court commissioned paintings, engravings, and madrigals.396 A 1567 madrigal by Filippo di Monte further supports this association. In his verse, Filippo refers to Isabella as Flora, alludes to her fruitfulness, and associates her with Rome:

Another dawn brings such happy days
And so sweet and happy a north wind
To beautiful Tuscany
That heaven openly shows
How to rejoice with his friend Flora,
In whose rich valley
Frost is no longer feared
Winter produces there grasses and flowers
And Nymphs and Shepherds
Weave a noble crown with her spheres
Istro has filled the Arno with such joy
Which carries golden sand to the Etruscan sea-
Only I always have damp eyes from weeping
Because I no longer rest on the pleasing knoll
Which raises its summit above the seven hills.397

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395 This does not associate Isabella directly with fertility as her daughter, Eleonora (Nora) was not born until 1571 and her son Virginio until 1572.
396 See the painting after Bronzino, Isabella de’ Medici as a Girl, 1552-54; Antonio Pazzi’s engraving of Isabella, 176,1 includes her motto, ‘Flowers and fruits together’ which was also inscribed on an eighteenth-century medal by Antonio Selvi, reinforcing these earlier associations.
What is noteworthy about the Poggini medal is that the motto does not refer to Isabella as ‘fruitful’ as so many other images and literary works readily did. Instead, her motto refers to something other than her awaited fertility. On the reverse of the medal, the figure of Ceres-Abundance stands under a beaming sun. I assert that the figure and motto indicate Isabella’s powerful position within the Medici family and her influence on Florentine culture. As the “star” of the Medici family, Isabella lit up the court with her exuberant personality, her dedication to the arts, and was Cosimo’s darling daughter. Cosimo looked to Isabella for support particularly after the death of Eleonora and Lucrezia. Her motto on the medal, ‘As Long as it Shines Better’ implied something about her individual personality and her ability to maneuver within Medici circles.

Isabella’s impresa, the cornucopia, traditionally a symbol of abundance and fertility, was also associated with the she-goat Amalthea who nursed the infant Jupiter in a mountain cave on Crete. The cornucopia is also linked with the goat’s horn which was broken off, filled with fruits and flowers, which then provided abundance and plenty. Amalthea was also related in contemporary imprese as a source of Mercury’s gifts of letters and eloquence, with overtones of virtue. While these associations relate to the Medici obsession with fertility and family lineage, and possibly to Isabella’s propensity for letters and music, I claim that there are additional meanings behind the medal that relate to the Medici-Orsini alliance, the public persona of Isabella and the Medici, and the cherished father-daughter relationship between Isabella and Cosimo.

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398 Landon, Medici Women, 116.
Ancient sources for the figure of Ceres or Abundance, such as the Gemma Augustae, were well-known in the Renaissance. Fourteenth and fifteenth century sources can also be traced from large and small scale sculptures including Donatello’s now lost *Dovizia* (Fig. 96) and terra cotta statuettes of the figure of Abundance produced in the della Robbia workshop around 1500. The Medici, including Eleonora, also commissioned numerous representations of the personified figure of *Dovizia* in paintings and sculptures in Pisa and Florence and Isabella even commissioned a large scale sculpture of *Dovizia* for her own gardens at Baroncelli, located just outside Florence.

Although the identity of a specific work that may have inspired Poggini may never be traced, and Donatello’s lost *Dovizia* of 1430 may not be a one-to-one correspondence with the figure on Isabella’s medal, other associations make the connection between the meaning of the *Dovizia* and the medal imagery more explicit.

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399 Panels of the Ara Pacis, including the panel of Tellus, were discovered in 1568 and purchased by Cosimo in 1569, nine years after the Poggini medal was produced. A drawing of one of the panels of the scroll frieze was done by Agostino Veneziano before 1536, so the imagery may have been known to Florentine artists and iconographers. The Gemma Augustae which also depicts a seated figure of Abundance was known to have been in St. Sernin by 1246 and in Paris 1533–1560. It was finally purchased by Rudolf II, the Holy Roman Emperor.


401 See Edelstein, “Le fecundissima Signora Duchessa,” for similar readings of Ceres-Abundance associated with Isabella’s mother, Eleonora. He infers that Isabella’s association with Abundance, as was seen in sculptures of *Ceres* by Baccio Bandinelli, 1548 and *Ceres* by Bartolomeo Ammanati, 1555-63, and Vasari’s decorations for the Terrazzo di Giunone indicates more than a reference to Eleonora’s fertility, but more to her role as provider of abundance to the Medici family, but also to Florence by her sustained by her supply of grain to the city of Florence from her agricultural enterprises. Murphy mentions a statue of *Dovizia* that was placed in the gardens at the villa at Baroncelli. Murphy, *Murder of a Medici Princess*, 145.

402 Francesco Salviati’s ceiling paintings in the Scrittoio della Duchessa in the Palazzo Vecchio, 1545, also relates Eleonora, Isabella’s mother, to the figure in the center which is shown holding an overflowing cornucopia flanked by two small children indicating her as an allegory of *Dovizia*. Edelstein, “La fecundissima Signora Duchessa,” 74-75. The use of this imagery supports the case for a similar association of the figure on Isabella’s medal as Abundance.
In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, Donatello’s *Dovizia* stood atop a column in the Mercato Vecchio in Florence, an area that was once the Roman forum and capital of the city during the ancient Empire. (Fig. 99) The Mercato symbolized the economic prosperity of Florence and connected the city to her ancient Roman past, just as Isabella’s marriage to Paolo ensured greater economic security for Florence and linked Cosimo with his Roman ancestry. Classical images of Ceres or Abundance and Donatello’s *Dovizia* likely served as a visual reminder of civic wealth and charity, virtues exploited as propaganda by Roman emperors, but also virtues appropriated and used by the Medici in their art. These connotations of the *Dovizia*, and the direct reference to Rome, were aligned with Cosimo’s ambitions for his family and for the city of Florence in the sixteenth century. These ambitions were advanced by Isabella.

I suggested earlier that Eleonora’s medal by Poggini carried political and civic connotations, and I propose that Isabella’s medal also refers to civic imagery, positioning it within the propagandistic realm of most Medici commissions. The medal most likely celebrates Isabella’s marriage and Roman alliance for Cosimo, who commissioned the medal, but goes beyond that in implying Isabella’s personal association with, and adoption of the image of Abundance and provider of plenty.

The lack of children as domestic symbols on Isabella’s medal is another indication that the figure of Ceres-Abundance presents a more public or civic image in association with Isabella. The absence of a child or children at the goddess’s side indicates that the medal was not meant to emphasize Isabella’s role as simply a wife or mother or refer to her hoped-for fertility for a male heir. Additionally, David Wilkins stated that in a number of the della Robbia statuettes, which likely served more domestic
functions, the attribute of the cornucopia is gone, indicating that the symbol of the cornucopia can be recognized as “a peculiarly Florentine emblem of civic, or public, Charity.” The inclusion of the cornucopia and the visual reference to the public persona of Ceres—Abundance as teacher and provider for the people alludes to Isabella’s pursuits within the Medici court and the civic activities of the Medici throughout the city of Florence.

On a more personal level, the medal may have also functioned as a visual exchange between father and daughter. In addition to the political and civic implications, the medal also expressed the loving relationship between Cosimo and Isabella. Cosimo’s symbolism in the medal is also invoked by the figure of Ceres who was the sister of Jupiter, with whom Cosimo identified. Isabella’s impresa, the cornucopia, was also an emblem of Hercules, a symbol of Florence since the late Middle Ages and by extension, a symbol of Cosimo. Further, the nymph Amalthea suckled and sustained the infant Jupiter, thus representing Isabella’s unwavering support of her father. As the likely patron of the medal, Cosimo would have welcomed the personal meaning of the Ceres-Amalthea-Isabella, Jupiter-Hercules-Cosimo, imagery and its association with his most loved daughter.

Isabella’s commission of Giovanni Maria Butteri’s 1575 painting of The Medici Depicted as the Holy Family reinforces this proposal. (Fig. 100) I agree with

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404 Attwood. Italian Medals, 415.
405 Amalthea is also connected to Cosimo in the central ceiling panel of the Sala di Giove since she is depicted suckling the infant Jupiter. van Veen emphasizes association with the goat with Capricorn, the sign of the zodiac appropriated by Cosimo and stated that the goat was an explicit reference to Cosimo. van Veen, Cosimo I de’ Medici, 22.
406 Caroline Murphy, Murder of a Medici Princess, 264, and 375, note 8 for attribution of Isabella as the patron of the painting. Langedijk also agreed with Gaetano Pieraccini who identified Isabella with the figure of St. Catherine. Langedijk, Portraits of the Medici, 128.
Murphy’s interpretation of the painting in which she identifies the figures on the left as Cosimo as his namesake St. Cosmas, Isabella’s brother Ferdinando as St. Damien, St. Cosmos’ companion, and Isabella as St. Catherine sitting at the feet of her father.\footnote{407} Isabella’s mother Eleonora of Toledo is depicted as the Virgin Mary and her grandmother Maria Salviati as St. Anne in the central group along with the Christ Child a possible allusion to Isabella’s son Virginio.\footnote{408} To the right of the central group are shown Isabella’s brother Francesco and her husband Paolo Giordano.\footnote{409} Murphy suggests that the close positioning of Cosimo and Isabella is confirmed by the imagery on the cover of the books held by both figures that depicts the Medici coat of arms, proposing that Isabella’s wisdom and inheritance is passed down to her by her father.\footnote{410} Isabella’s connection with St. Catherine of Alexandria may seem peculiar since Catherine was not her patron saint, but the association can be explained by Isabella’s identification with Catherine’s personal qualities and attributes. As a fourth-century woman of noble birth, St. Catherine was known for her intelligence and her bravery as she confronted the Emperor Maxentius. Catherine ignored Maxentius’s demands for her worship the pagan gods, and was subsequently subjected to a debate with his most learned philosophers which to Maxentius’ disappointment, resulted in the conversion of each of the philosophers. Catherine was also persuasive in converting the Emperor’s solders and his wife Faustina while she was in prison. Although she was martyred for her actions, St. Catherine was the epitome of a learned woman, courageous in confronting the Emperor.

\footnote{407}{Murphy, The Murder of a Medici Princess, 264.} \footnote{408}{Ibid.} \footnote{409}{Ibid.} \footnote{410}{Ibid., 265.}
and his men, and a perfect association for Isabella who was forced to deal with her familial adversaries, Francesco and Paolo.

While the figures on the right side of the Virgin emphasize Isabella’s identification with the supportive members of her family, Francesco and Paolo are shown on the other side of the painting in the guise of warrior saints who are physically separated and psychologically detached to Isabella. Thus, the familial connections, as well as the marital distance, are visually expressed in this portrait. Isabella’s allies in the family, her father Cosimo and her brother Ferdinando stand close to her while Francesco and Paolo stand at a distance, thus increasing the tension within the portrait signifying that, like Catherine who fought against the emperor, Isabella too may find it necessary to take up a struggle against her brother and husband once the protection of her father is gone.

The meaning of this medal is three-fold. First, the figure of Ceres-Abundance connects Florence-Isabella to Rome-Paolo and was deliberately fashioned in the Poggini medal to emphasize the political union of two powerful families. Second, the individualized imagery and motto cast Isabella as a provider of plenty for her family and the Medici court, but also for the people of Florence. Last, the medal represents the loving relationship between Isabella and Cosimo. Like Eleonora’s medal, Isabella’s carries individualized connotations that not only position her in her prescribed female role, but that demonstrate her active participation in sixteenth-century politics and culture.

These medals of Isabella should be considered not only as artistic examples of familial commemoration and negotiation, but also as a conscious effort by her to maintain
and advance her personal and public prominence within the Medici court and Florence. Certainly, Cosimo’s wife and daughter contributed to their own self-fashioning in numerous artistic commissions, including their medals. Thus, the medals of Eleonora and Isabella served not only as straightforward representations of these women, but also as important documents of female agency by way of their activities and influence within the Medici court and the city of Florence.

_A Young Tragedy: Lucrezia de’ Medici_

Another female member of the Medici family to be depicted on medals was Lucrezia, the third daughter of Cosimo and Eleonora.411 After the death of her older sister Maria in 1557, whose future marriage to Alfonso II d’Este was intended to strengthen ties between Florence and Ferrara, Lucrezia was quickly betrothed in the same year to the future Duke of Ferrara.412 The unhappy marriage and tragic death of Lucrezia de’ Medici was surely difficult for the Medici family to bear, especially Cosimo. His love for his daughter was apparent as he was devastated by her death, and the loss of an Este alliance also must have been disappointing. The five medal types depicting her portrait indicate her as Cosimo’s daughter and a member of the Medici family, but emphasize her marriage and her new relationship which brought the Medici closer to the Este court.

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411 Lucrezia was the third surviving daughter since another daughter, named Anna died in the first year.
412 Maria de’ Medici was first betrothed to Alfonso II, but soon after her death, Cosimo and Eleonora lobbied for Lucrezia to take her place so as to not upset the union between the families. Maria died of fever on November 19, 1557.
As a young child, Lucrezia had been promised to Fabiano del Monte, the nephew of Pope Julius III but the betrothal was quickly abandoned when the pope died in 1555.\textsuperscript{413} Two years later, with the death of Maria and the opportunity for Lucrezia to replace her as the future wife of Alfonso II, Cosimo solidified a marriage contract in order to create important union with the court in Ferrara, strengthening a relationship that had been strained since the events of the early 1540s.\textsuperscript{414} In 1558, at the young age of thirteen, Lucrezia de’ Medici wed Alfonso II d’Este, forming a vital alliance for Cosimo between Florence and Ferrara.\textsuperscript{415} With the death of Ercole II d’Este on October 3, 1559, Alfonso became Duke of Ferrara. After two years of marriage but still living in Florence where her mother held sway over her, Lucrezia made her entrance into Ferrara in February of 1560, and established herself as the Duchess of Ferrara.\textsuperscript{416} The marriage between Lucrezia and Alfonso was not one of mutual love or passion, and only lasted three years, ending with the untimely death of Lucrezia in 1561. In April of that year, Cosimo sent the Medici family physician, Andrea Pasquali, to Ferrara to tend to Lucrezia who was ailing from fevers, severe weight loss, constant coughing and a

\textsuperscript{413} Langdon, Medici Women, 139.
\textsuperscript{414} In his work on Pirro Ligorio, David Coffin provided an account of the events in the 1540s and 1560s that instigated and continued the struggles between the Medici and Este families. In 1541, Charles V traveled to Lucca to meet Pope Paul III. At this meeting, the emperor upset the usual order of precedence by allowing Ercole II, Duke of Ferrara, to ride at his right hand side, relegating Cosimo to the inferior left side. In 1542, the pope reversed the emperor’s decision, upsetting the Ercole II. Relations between the families remained tense and the most disappointing decision for the Estes came in 1569, when Pope Pius V granted Cosimo the title of Grand Duke, thus promoting Cosimo to a higher rank than Ercole II. The Estes protested to the Emperor Maximilian II who annulled the title, but Pope Pius V and his successor, Gregory XIII continued to support the Medici. David R. Coffin, Pirro Ligorio: the Renaissance Artist, Architect, and Antiquarian (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004), 129. For more on the relationship between the Medici and Este see Guglielmo Enrico Saltini, Tragedie medicee domestiche (Firenze, 1898), 62-67.
\textsuperscript{415} The importance of the betrothal is exemplified with Lucrezia’s dowry of 200,000 scudi, or seventy million dollars in today’s standards. Langdon, Medici Women, 140.
\textsuperscript{416} Ibid., 144.
permanently bloody nose, most likely the symptoms of tuberculosis.\textsuperscript{417} On April 21, just one day after Pasquali wrote to Cosimo informing him of her grave condition, Lucrezia died. To the disappointment of the Medici and the Este, Lucrezia had not produced an heir, although there was talk that she was pregnant at the time of her death.\textsuperscript{418}

Like her sister Isabella, Lucrezia was educated in Greek and Latin and had a propensity for music. In contrast with her vivacious sibling, Lucrezia had a melancholic disposition and was characterized as dull and less attractive than her sisters. Yet, her portraits, and the number of medals representing her suggest the opposite.\textsuperscript{419}

A number of portrait images of Lucrezia survive, including one of the most well-known painted portraits of her by Alessandro Allori in 1560. (Fig. 101) In addition to paintings, three versions of medals of Lucrezia attributed to Pastorino, Bombarda, and Poggini exist.\textsuperscript{420} Unlike the medals of her mother and sister, the medals of Lucrezia pose numerous difficulties in attribution among the medallists mentioned as well as in accurate dating and interpretation.

Around 1558, Poggini apparently produced three medal types depicting Lucrezia. The first medal type depicts Alfonso and Lucrezia and identifies the

\textsuperscript{417} Lucrezia’s symptoms are described by Murphy, \textit{Murder of a Medici Princess}, 87. Andrea Pasquali’s correspondences to Cosimo are reproduced in Saltini, \textit{Tragedie Medicee domestiche}, 102-107.
\textsuperscript{418} Saltini, \textit{Tragedie Medicee domestiche}, 83-84. A pregnancy for Lucrezia would have been impossible as Alfonso was sterile and did not produce an heir with any of his three wives.
\textsuperscript{419} Seven medal types, including a one by the eighteenth-century medallist Antonio Selvi, depict Lucrezia. This is more than any other woman from the Medici family.
\textsuperscript{420} Armand, Boccolari, and Attwood identify a medal by an unknown Florentine medallist as Lucrezia, made in 1558, with her portrait on the obverse and the image of a young man and woman on the reverse. Armand, \textit{Les médaileurs italiens}, 247, Boccolari, \textit{Le medaglie di casa d’Este}, 162, no. 150, Attwood, \textit{Italian Medals}, 1:367, no. 905. Attwood believes the style is close to Poggini’s. Langedijk rejects this medal as being attributed to Lucrezia and states that there is no proof that the motto is connected with Lucrezia.
couple as prince and princess and thus must have been cast before Alfonso’s
elevation to Duke in 1560. (Fig. 102) The medal most likely commemorates the
couple’s marriage in 1558, although a date for the medal is not secured. Alfonso
is portrayed on the obverse with the motto
ALPHON.ESTEN.FERRAR.PRINCEPS. (Alfonso d’Este, Prince of Ferrara), and
is shown wearing a cuirass and mantle, similar to that worn by his brother-in-law
Paolo Orsini. Lucrezia, on the reverse, is identified with the inscription
LVCRETIA.MED.ESTEN.FERR.PRINCEPS (Lucrezia de’ Medici d’Este,
Princess of Ferrara). She is shown wearing an elaborately decorated dress with a
ruffled collared chemise. She is adorned with a pearl necklace and jewel pendant
as well as an earring and hair decorated with a coiled braid at the back of her head
and bands of pearls around her head. This medal signifies the importance of the
Medici-Este alliance, and gives visual expression to the social exchange of
Lucrezia between Cosimo and Ercole d’Este.

The second medal type, attributed to Poggini by Toderi and Vannel, has direct
connotations to Lucrezia and her new home in Ferrara421 (Fig. 103) Poggini represents
Lucrezia’s portrait on the obverse of the medal, and on the reverse, shows Apollo
traveling across the sky over a river-god, identified as Po who embraces a nymph who is
holding a cornucopia.422 The obverse of the medal is almost identical to the previous
medal and has the motto LVCRETIA.MEDIC.FER.DVC (Lucrezia de’ Medici, Duchess

421 Boccolari, Le medaglie di casa d’Este, believes that the attribution to Poggini is doubtful, 162.
Mandel believes that the medal reverse, added by an anonymous artist, is a posthumous addition to the
medal of Lucrezia, c.1561. Corinne Mandel, “Santi di Tito’s Creation of Amber in Francesco I’s Scrittoio:
422 Attwood and Toderi and Vannel attribute the medal to Poggini while Langedijk, Langdon, and
Mandel attribute it to an anonymous artist. I agree with the attribution to Poggini based on the fact that very
few of Poggini’s medals are with a reverse and none of Poggini’s medals of the Medici lack a reverse.
of Ferrara). The inscription indicates that the medal was produced after 1559, the year Alfonso and Lucrezia were elevated to Duke and Duchess. The reverse inscription reads NOVA.ERIDANO.FVLXIT.LVX (Eridanus shone with an extraordinary light) and refers to the myth of Phaeton recounted in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*. The name Phaeton, means “shining” and is obviously connected with Lucrezia on this medal while the Eridinus River, in Este territory, had been associated with the Po since antiquity. In addition, and according to Corrine Mandel, the Ferrarese believed that Phaeton had fallen into the River Po, not in Liguria, but instead near Emilia-Romagna. Mandel goes further and suggested that since Lucrezia is portrayed on the obverse of the medal, she is depicted as the charioteer on the reverse of the medal, consequently proposing that Phaeton is Lucrezia. She comes to the conclusion that Lucrezia is not linked to the youthful Phaeton who ignored his father’s warning and as a result ends up wrecking Apollo’s chariot, but rather she is associated with the Phaeton who is taken into the sky after his death and who becomes the constellation Eridanus, and the “new light” of the Galaxy or Milky Way. For this reason, Mandel asserts that this medal is a posthumous portrait, alluding to Lucrezia’s place in the heavens.

Langdon has another theory. Like Mandel, she maintains that the medal is associated with Phaeton, the Eridanus and the Po and believes the medal associates

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423 Toderi and Vannel date the medal to 1558, but a reference to Lucrezia as Duchess would indicate the medal after 1559.
426 Mandel, “Santi di Tito’s Creation of Amber in Francesco I’s Scrittoio,” 739. See also Eustachio and Boccaccio.
428 Mandel’s theory of the meaning of the medal is in relation to Santi di Tito’s painting of the *Creation of Amber*, located in the studiolo of Francesco I. She believes that the meaning of the painting and the medal commemorate the duchess and act as a reminder to her beloved brother of her life and tragic death.
Lucrezia with Ferrara, but not posthumously. Instead, she stated that the imagery is symbolic of the union between Alfonso and Lucrezia and that the medal indicates that Ferrara will be illuminated by Lucrezia and the union between them made fertile. \(^{429}\)

If the medal was produced in 1559, close to the same time that Poggini produced the medal of Alfonso and Lucrezia and the medal of Paolo Giordano Orsini and Isabella de’ Medici Orsini, it seems logical that the medal was not produced posthumously (Lucrezia died in 1561) and that Cosimo had a hand in the commission since Poggini was in the service of the duke at that time and produced the medals of other Medici women. \(^{430}\)

The medal of Paolo and Isabella linked the Medici with the Orsini and I believe that the two medals of Lucrezia mentioned here connect the Medici with the Este. Thus, the latter medal served both functions of a commemoration of Lucrezia as related to her father and the city of Florence as well as a commemoration of her life in Ferrara that reinforced the Medici-Este alliance. These dual associations would have served an ideal purpose for Cosimo who chose to commemorate his daughter as a Medici and Florentine, but also as the vital connection with Ferrara which provided him, for a short time, with increased political power.

Poggini’s third medal type with Lucrezia’s portrait on the obverse has the inscription FORMA ET MVNDITIIS NITENS (Shining in appearance and elegance), and the motto TE.DVCE.PERVENIAM (With you as my guide, I will

\(^{429}\)Gabrielle Langdon, Medici Women, 139.

\(^{430}\)Posthumous medals were produced, such as that of Cosimo il Vecchio from the sixteenth century and Giovanni di Cosimo de’ Medici from the fifteenth century, but would not be considered a popular form of commemoration of women during my period of study. For medal of Giovanni di Cosimo, de’ Medici, see Pollard, Renaissance Medals, 295, no. 278.
arrive) and the image of a ship approaching the harbor on the reverse.\footnote{This version is not mentioned by Langedijk, but it is recognized by Toderi and Vannel and Attwood. Toderi and Vannel identified the harbor as a rainbow, a misinterpretation on their part, according to Attwood.} (Fig. 104) Poggini also included a star directly above the representation of the harbor. Lucrezia’s \textit{impresa}, a sun shining over water, is implied here.\footnote{See also Antonio Selvi’s medal reverse with a sun over a rocky landscape shown and Adriaen Haelwegh’s engraving, 1675 with the motto \textsc{MOTV ET LVMINE} for other references to Lucrezia and “light”.} The mottoes on this and the previous medal refer to light as well as travel, indicating Cosimo’s love for Lucrezia and her departure from Florence and arrival in Ferrara.

The absence of her name on the medal might imply that this was a gift to her husband since he would have recognized her portrait.\footnote{Attwood, \textit{Italian Medals}, 1:342.} Another medal, by an unidentified Florentine artist, depicts Lucrezia with the motto \textsc{HOC MIRVM EST IN NATVRA} (This is a wonderful thing in nature) on the obverse and a young man and woman on the reverse with the motto \textsc{OPTIMA FIDES} (Good faith).\footnote{This medal is described by Boccolari and Armand, but with no available image of the reverse. Langedijk, who provides an image of the obverse, stated that there is no proof that the inscription is connected with Lucrezia. Giorgio Boccolari, \textit{Le medaglie di casa d’Este} (Modena: Aedes Muratoriana, n. 8) 162,no. 150; Armand, \textit{Les médailleurs italiens des quinzième et seizième siècles}, 3:245; Langedijk, \textit{Portraits of the Medici}, 2:1206, no. 15.} (Fig. 105) This medal, which also lacks a date, is like the Poggini medal in that it does not identify Lucrezia by name. The medal is described to indicate Lucrezia’s beauty while the reverse motto alludes to the marriage and fidelity of Lucrezia and Alfonso.\footnote{Boccolari, \textit{Le medaglie di casa d’Este}, 162.} The absence of Lucrezia’s name on this unattributed medal would indicate that the lack of her identification on the Poggini medal may have had a precedent, or if this medal was produced after Poggini’s, may have set a new precedent. Attwood stated that this medal was produced in celebration of
the Medici-Este marriage.\textsuperscript{436} On the Poggiini medal, Lucrezia’s attributes of physical beauty and elegance are also emphasized, further indicating that this was a medal meant for Alfonso. Similar to the previous medal by Poggiini, one could speculate that this medal was also a commission from Cosimo since the medallist was working in Florence between 1558 and 1560, which corresponds to the years of the production of the medal and may have been sent to him before Lucrezia’s arrival in Ferrara. Poggiini depicts Lucrezia on the obverse in a similar manner to that of Isabella on the reverse of the medal with Paolo. Lucrezia’s costume lacks the ruffled collar, but Poggiini adds a mantle, secured with a brooch at the right shoulder in the same fashion as he did in Isabella’s medal. Additionally, the hairstyle is also like that of Isabella’s in that Lucrezia is shown with a coiled braid around the back of her head and a pearl band around her head. Poggiini added a second coiled braid that wraps around the back of her head horizontally. She is adorned with a pearl necklace with a jewel pendant and an earring.

The reverse alludes to obvious associations with the church. The ship, usually shown with its mast in the shape of a cross, as is depicted on Lucrezia’s medal, was an early symbol of the Christian church signifying the voyage of souls to the safety and salvation of God.\textsuperscript{437} Psalm 32: 6-7 states, “Thus should all your faithful pray in time of distress. Though flood waters threaten, they will never reach them. You are my shelter; from distress you keep me; with safety you ring me round.” The gratitude to for God’s protection and shelter is applicable to the medal imagery in which Lucrezia needed guidance and safety as she left Florence

\textsuperscript{436} Attwood, \textit{Italian Medals}, 1:367.
and began her new life in Ferrara. In 1 Peter 3:19-22, eight people on Noah’s ark, namely his family, were saved through water just as Christians are saved in the water of baptism. Furthermore, the turbulence of the sea is calmed by Jesus in Mark 4:35-41,

A violent squall came up and waves were breaking over the boat, so that it was already filling up. Jesus was at the stern, asleep on a cushion. They woke him and said to him, “Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing? He woke up, rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, “Quiet! Be Still!” The wind ceased and there was great calm. “Why are you so terrified? Do you not yet have faith?

Thus, faith in God to keep Lucrezia safe and guide her, not only to Ferrara, but in her daily life away from her family, must have been the intent of the mottoes and imagery. That this was most likely sent to Alfonso may also have indicated Cosimo’s desire for his new son-in-law to protect his young daughter.

While Poggini was employed by Cosimo, Pastorino was attempting to attract the Duke’s attention as well as his patronage. In commemoration of the Medici-Este alliance, Pastorino cast a medal of Lucrezia. She is shown on this one-sided medal with the inscription LVCRETIA MED. FERR. PRINC. A. A. XIII (Lucrezia de’ Medici, princess of Ferrara, in her 13th year) which commemorates her marriage to Alfonso. By 1558, Pastorino had been working in Ferrara for four years and probably produced this medal to commemorate the marriage of the same year. Lucrezia is shown in profile to the left, wearing a low square-cut dress over a chemise and adorned with an earring, and a two pendant jewels, one suspended by a chain and the other by a strand of pearls. Her hair is braided and also decorated with jewels. This medal is in

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438 The reference to Lucrezia as princess of Ferrara is appropriate since she did not become duchess until 1559 upon the death of Ercole d’Este.
keeping with Pastorino’s style and belongs to the group medals produced after 1554 which display a raised, beaded border, and are larger in size than his earlier medals. The representation of Lucrezia on this medal emphasizes her beauty and indicates her status. Pastorino may have created this medal as a gift to Cosimo, in order to gain employment under the Duke.

In addition to Pastorino, Bombarda, working in Ferrara, produced a medal of Lucrezia that reflects his mannered style. (Fig. 106) Like the medals of Poggini and Pastorino, Bombarda identifies Lucrezia with the inscription LVCRETIAE MEDIC.FERR.DVC. (Lucrezia Medici, Duchess of Ferrara). By 1560, Bombarda was the mint-master in Ferrara and the attribution of the medal is quite secure. This medal is without a reverse and was probably produced for Lucrezia’s arrival in Ferrara in 1560, but no later than 1561 as Lucrezia had died by April of that year.

The medal depicts Lucrezia, in three-quarter view, facing left. The lack of border and a delicate, graceful, elaborate style corresponds to his other medals in the Mannerist style. A thin strap crosses below her left breast and meets at her right shoulder to hold up a thin piece of fabric. Lucrezia’s sheer blouse is pulled up to her right shoulder but is situated in a way to expose part of her left breast. Her hair is arranged in curls and is held back by a band attached to a veil that flows behind her. She wears a drop-pearl earring and a double rope of pearls around her neck. The overall appearance of the medal is that of a beautiful, elegant woman, popular with the Emilian patrons and likely a representation of Lucrezia’s inner virtue. That the medal does not have a reverse is also linked stylistically to the Emilian medals of women. The medal by Bombarda may have

439 See Chapter One for discussion of bare-breasted women and their associations.
been commissioned by Lucrezia’s husband whose one-sided portrait medal was also produced by Bombarda after 1559.

The medallic tradition was upheld by Cosimo to celebrate and commemorate the women of the Medici family to express their vital position within the family and to celebrate their personal virtues. That Cosimo continued to utilize images such as these as political propaganda cannot be overlooked, especially with regard to the medals of Isabella and Lucrezia. When viewed as a group, these medals give visual evidence to Cosimo I’s attempts to construct a narrative for his family that legitimized his rule. Eleonora, Isabella, and Lucrezia were three of the main characters in that narrative that provided Cosimo I with rightful heirs to maintain his power. Furthermore, they represented the influence and power of women who in this case, had the ability to actively engage in familial and stately matters. The meanings of these Medici medals are complex. Cosimo commissioned the medals indicating his theoretical control over the imagery of the women in his family and utilized the medals in own his propagandistic program. However, it is highly likely that Eleonora, Isabella, and Lucrezia may have contributed to this program to secure their own futures as well as to the self-fashioning of their images as evidenced by their active participation in their portraits in other media, in particular paintings. Crafting the medal to provide a message not just a memento, is what characterizes the medals of Eleonora of Toledo, Isabella, and Lucrezia de’ Medici.
Chapter 6

Marketing and Celebrating Women Artists of the Sixteenth Century: the medals of Sofonisba Anguissola, Lavinia Fontana and Diana Scultori

In the previous chapters, I have dealt with medals of women from specific geographical locations throughout Italy. In this chapter, I examine the medals of the painters Sofonisba Anguissola, Lavinia Fontana, and the engraver Diana Scultori, all successful women artists in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. What they have in common, besides having been acknowledged for their talents during their lives, are medals depicting their portraits. I argue that the medals of these three artists were used as modes of marketing their careers or as the celebrations of the successes of their paintings and prints within the framework of the daughter/father, artist/master, wife/husband social structure that functioned in two ways – it provided them the opportunity to work and succeed in a male-dominated occupation, and enabled them to maintain and preserve the traditional male/female roles acceptable in the sixteenth century which contributed to their success.

The women who have been acknowledged in the preceding chapters were largely constrained by the conventions of the patriarchal culture in which they lived. They were known mainly by their association with the men in their lives be it their fathers, husbands, or sons, and only rarely, as was the case with Eleonora of Toledo, were able to fully exert their influence and occasional authority. The women artists in this chapter experienced the same constraints, yet succeeded in establishing careers as painters and

\[440\] A commemorative medal of Properzia de Rossi exists in the British Museum but was likely produced after her death as it is dated to the seventeenth century and thus is beyond the scope of this dissertation.
engravers in an arena traditionally reserved for men. These women’s stories serve as the best examples of the distinction between the genders, and they demonstrate the astute methods utilized by these women along with their fathers and husbands, to launch and maintain their artistic careers.

The challenges for women artists during this period were monumental. Following the conventions set forth by the authors in the many behavioral treatises on the conduct of women, women artists, even more so than their non-artist counterparts, needed to maintain decorum and the proper female traits of passivity while being able to express their artistic talents and most of all their innovations in the paintings and engravings they produced, two traits specifically reserved for the male artist. Already at a disadvantage due to their gender, woman artists of the Renaissance were prohibited from studying the nude model which limited their training in one of the most important skills learned by an artist.441 Women artists were generally not welcome in studio apprenticeships or allowed to join the academies set up in cities throughout Italy. Such was the case with Lavinia Fontana who was barred from joining the academy established by the Carracci in Bologna although she was accepted into the Accademia di San Luca in Rome in 1611. As a result of these constraints on women artists in their training, they were relegated, with a few exceptions, to producing portraits or other subjects related to domesticity. In general, women artists were not given commissions for large public altarpieces, history paintings or mythological subjects. The three artists discussed here broke through some of these boundaries, but in order to do so they had to be more creative, more skillful, and

441 While not allowed to study from male nude models, Lavinia Fontana was able to study from nude statuettes and casts of certain body parts that would have been available to her in her father’s studio. She refers to this practice in her Self-Portrait in the Studiolo, 1579. Women would also have been able to look at themselves as models reflected in glass or mirrors.
more business savvy than most of their male counterparts. The active, public forum of men, traditionally the environment most conducive to lucrative artistic careers, was not available to these women artists, at least not at first glance.

Aristotle related the idea of the active/male and passive/female to procreation, ideas that were received and accepted by Renaissance theorists and reflected in a patriarchal sixteenth-century society.\(^442\) Aristotle, in his theory of causation, stated that in the act of conception, the male had the active procreative powers, his sperm, and that the female’s womb was only the receptacle that could maintain and nourish the male powers of life. His theory was carried on in sixteenth-century thought and also influenced the prevailing attitudes of the creative or procreative powers of the artist. The (male) artist, like the father, had the active powers to create while the artistic materials (female) were similar to the womb in that they were the receptacle for the creative process of the male.\(^443\) The woman artist was again at a disadvantage due to the so-called natural inferiority of her powers of creation and thus creativity. The woman artist had to find and manipulate ways of circumventing these ideas in order to promote and sustain her career as well as preserve her respectable reputation within the public sphere of masculine conventions.

The most popular genre which allowed these women to work within these male-centered standards was portraiture. Anguissola and Fontana were extremely successful portrait painters and became favored among men and women alike. They also utilized portraiture in a self-serving manner with the production of numerous self-portraits.

\(^{442}\) Frederika Jacobs, “Woman’s Capacity to Create: The Unusual Case of Sofonisba Anguissola,” Renaissance Quarterly 47, no. 1 (Spring 1994), 80.

\(^{443}\) Jacobs identifies Galen, who like Aristotle, equated the male with the artist and female with the artist’s material. Thomas Aquinas also subscribed to this way of thinking. Jacobs, “Woman’s Capacity to Create,” 80.
proclaiming themselves to be well-educated, decorous, and yet also creative women. In Anguissola’s case, her self-portraits were produced as gifts for mainly scholarly, noble, and royal patrons and acted as promotion pieces to eventually secure her career at the court of Spain. Fontana’s self-portraits on the other hand were commissioned works, but also promoted her in a similar way as those of Anguissola, but to a public audience with the expectation of future commissions. No self-portraits of Scultori exist although at least two portraits, including a drawing by Federico Zuccaro and an engraving by Cherubino Alberti, depict the woman printmaker. These portraits closely resemble the portrait depicted on Scultori’s medal and were most likely produced in order to spread the fame of the artist.

Just as the medals that have been discussed in the previous chapters functioned as commemorative objects, so too did the painted and sculpted portraits produced by artists throughout the Renaissance and later sixteenth century. The portrait had been an important and revered genre since ancient times. As noted earlier, in Rome, portrait busts of men and women were commissioned by family members and the emperors of Rome readily used their portraits, in particular on coins, to promote their reign. By the sixteenth century, the portrait had become an important mechanism not only for the promotion of self, but also as an object of desire for collectors throughout Italy. The combination of promotion, including self-promotion, as well as collecting made the production of portraits and portrait medals all the more attractive to patrons as well as the recipients of painted or engraved portraits and medals which were given as gifts from such patrons. The ability to commemorate a person and his or her achievements as well as provide obvious references to antiquity, in the medium of the portrait, prompted patrons but also
the artist to take advantage of the commemorative medal in order to promote or celebrate their own career.

Painted and medallic portraits, mainly of noblewomen and women of royalty had been popular since the fifteenth century in Italy. Painted portraits were costly and usually had a limited audience compared with less-expensive medals which could be provided to several individuals. The popularity of portraits continued into the sixteenth century with the most skilled artists portraying women throughout Italy. The portraits of the women discussed in this chapter take on a special meaning as objects depicting women artists. Many of these portraits, including many self-portraits, were collected, requested, commissioned by, and were in the possession of, men. The portraits and self-portraits of women artists were viewed and interpreted mainly as objects of marvel. Their self-portraits in particular were objectified by many as extraordinary curiosities, or paintings to be revered for their skillful execution, because they were produced by women.

Alfonso Chaconio, the Spanish Dominican friar and antiquarian in Rome, requested and received self-portraits of Anguissola and Fontana for his collection of five hundred engraved portraits of the illustrious for his so-called museo, which he planned to publish in a book but which never came to fruition. Speaking directly of his request for a self-portrait of Fontana, Chaconio wrote in a letter of October 1578 that, “…I plan to celebrate and propagate it through the centuries for a kind of eternity.” Whether he desired the portraits to promote them as skillful paintings in and of themselves only or as valuable curiosities can still be argued.

Portraits of and self-portraits by women artists were usually accorded the same accolades as non-artisan women; the woman artist is described by her marital status, her lineage, her beauty and then her abilities as an artist, in that order.\(^{445}\) The works of woman artists and their self-portraits were described by men in similar terms. Horatio Lomellini, Anguissola’s husband described her in this way in his late rite of commemoration in a dedication on her tomb in 1632. The inscription reads:

Sophonisbæ uxori ab Anguissolae Comitibus ducentibus origine, parentum nobilitate, forma extraordinariisque naturæ Dotibus in illustres mundi mulieres relatae, ac in experimèdis hominum imaginibus aedibus insigni, ut parem aetatis suae neminem habuisse sit aestimata, Horatius Lomellinus ingenti affectus maerore decus hoc extremum, etsi tantae mulieris exigium, mortalibus verum maximum dicavit 1632.\(^{446}\)

Male artists from Ghiberti to Raphael, Parmigianino and Titian all produced self-portraits at some point during their careers. Leone Leoni even produced a medal with his own portrait in 1541.\(^{447}\) Why these artists depicted themselves in sculpture or on canvas or on a medal can be explained as a combination of self-promotion and an attempt to elevate of the arts from a manual labor to an intellectual and creative profession that originates inherently in the artist. The goal of artists such as Leonardo and Michelangelo, among others, was to instigate a new way of thinking about the arts, raising them from the medieval association with craftsmanship to that of a cerebral pursuit. Thus artists became agents of the Creator and their work was the product.\(^{448}\) One of the ways artists displayed this inspired creativity was through the self-portrait, in particular the self-portrait portraying the artist at work.

\(^{446}\) Vasari described the artist Irene di Spilimbergo in similar terms. The inscription from Anguissola’s tomb is reproduced in King, “Looking a Sight,” 399, note 79.
Self-portraits were popular among male and female artists of the period as a manner of self-promotion and self-celebration. The popularity of the medal was exploited by artists throughout the sixteenth century, either directly as self-portraits or as portraits produced by medallists. Beginning in the fifteenth century, a number of male artists either cast images of themselves on medals, were patrons of their own medals, or had medals cast of their likeness by other artists. To my knowledge, there are no self-portraits of women medallists or even documented women medallists, although it is quite possible and even probable that at least a few women either worked with medallists or at some point produced medals. Unlike the purely celebratory nature of many of the medals of male artists, the primary functions of the medals of Anguissola, Fontana, and Scultori differ markedly. Anguissola’s medal was most likely a commission in celebration of the invitation by Philip II to join the court of his wife, Isabel. Fontana’s medal was intended for marketing her skills, and Scultori’s was most likely commissioned as one of a pair of medals of her and her husband commemorating their relationship as husband and wife and as business partners. The difference in the functions for these medals is in contrast to those made by or for, male artists. For the male artist in general, portraits, self-portraits, and medallic portraits, tended to celebrate their success as artists and were produced late in their careers. This is not always the case for the woman artist.

449 Leon Battista Alberti Pisanello, Gentile and Giovanni Bellini, and Bramante, each were depicted on portrait medals produced in the fifteenth century. In the sixteenth century, Leoni portrayed his portrait on the reverse of his medal of Andrea Doria, 1541. Pollard states that Baccio Bandinelli designed his own medal which was then cast by Leoni in 1547. Leoni was also responsible for producing medals of other artists including Titian and Michelangelo. The medal depicting Michelangelo was cast in gratitude after the artist provided a commission to Leoni. The reverse imagery of the medal, depicting a blind man with a staff being led by a dog, was chosen by Michelangelo. See Pollard, Renaissance Medals, 501 for more on this medal. Other male artists with their portraits depicted on medals include Jacopo da Trezzo, Domenico Fontana, and Valerio Belli. For a more comprehensive list, see G.F. Hill, Portrait Medals of Italian Artists of the Renaissance (London: P. L. Warner), 1912.
As items of exchange, most of the medals of male and female artists functioned in a similar way which was to represent a likeness of the artist as well as some type of reference to their craft, inspiration, or creativity.\textsuperscript{450} This subject type is depicted on Fontana’s and Scultori’s medals while the medal of Anguissola lacks any reference to her craft and is aligned more with the medals of Titian by Pastorino and Michelangelo by Leoni. The latter medals refer to their subjects as something other than artists. Pastorino’s medal of Titian refers to him solely as a knight and the meaning of the reverse of Leoni’s medal of Michelangelo, while possibly referring to his work as an artist, is still disputed.\textsuperscript{451} To fully comprehend the meanings and functions of the medals of these three women artists in relation to their own careers, their status as artists, and their position as women in the sixteenth century, a discussion of each artist is necessary.

\textit{Sofonisba Anguissola: painter from Cremona}

Sofonisba Anguissola was an artist who built her reputation primarily on her well-acclaimed portrait paintings. She was born in 1532 in Cremona, a city to the southeast of Milan well-known for its textile industry.\textsuperscript{452} Her father, Amilcare was a member of the noble Anguissola family and was married first to Bianca Pallavicini until her death in 1530 and then remarried Bianca Ponzone in 1531, the daughter of Count Ponzino

\textsuperscript{450} See for example Titian’s medal by Leoni in which the obverse inscription refers to Titian not only as a knight, but also a painter and the reverse depicts a bacchante playing a flute, a clear reference, as Attwood attests, to Titian’s Bacchanals from 1518. Leoni also refers to Bandinelli as Florentine sculptor on the obverse of his medal made around 1547. The medal of Jacopo da Trezzo, 1572, by Antonio Abondio, represents Minvera and Vulcan on the reverse imagery, both associated with the arts. The medals of Domenico Fontana, one by an unattributed Tuscan artist and the other by Poggini, both depict one or more obelisks, again a clear reference to Fontana’s work as an architect.

\textsuperscript{451} See Attwood, \textit{Italian Medals}, 1:111.

\textsuperscript{452} For more on the disputed date of Sofonisba’s birth, see Ilya Sandra Perlingieri, \textit{Sofonisba Anguissola, The First Great Woman Artist of the Renaissance} (New York: Rizzoli, 1992), 27.
Ponzone, from the distinguished Ponzone family from Cremona. 453 Amilcare and Bianca had seven children, six daughters and one son. Their daughters, including Sofonisba, were well educated in the subjects of writing and letters, music and painting. 454 Anguissola’s education not only prepared her artistically, but also socially and culturally for her most important appointment as a lady-in-waiting to Queen Isabel (Elizabeth de Valois), wife of Philip II, King of Spain. By 1559, Sofonisba was in Spain at the court of Isabel, the same year that most scholars attribute to the production of her medal.

To consider her medal, it is important first to look at her career as a painter. Traditionally, women artists were trained in their father’s workshops as was the case with Caterina van Hemessen, Marietta Robusti, Lavinia Fontana, and Diana Scultori. As the daughter of a nobleman, Sofonisba did not receive her training from her father or another male member of her family. In 1546, at the age of fourteen, Anguissola and her sister Minerva were apprenticed to Bernardino Campi, a fellow Cremonese painter who welcomed the women into his home and workshop. 455 Campi was trained and worked with artists who produced paintings in the Mannerist tradition. He received most of his commissions from patrons in and around Cremona as well as from the Gonzaga in Mantua and Milan. Anguissola worked with Campi until 1549 when he departed to Milan under the patronage of Ferrante Gonzaga and his wife Isabella di Capua. In May 1550, Isabella commissioned a portrait of her daughter Ippolita, which was painted by Campi

453 Perlingieri, Anguissola, 25. The marriage between Amilcare and Bianca Pallavicini was childless.
454 Ibid., 32.
455 Anguissola and her sister would have needed to have lived with the artist and his wife since, as women, they would not have been permitted to live on their own or without a male chaperon.
and received with great acclaim. While a successful painter, Campi’s career never realized the success of his famous female student.

Anguissola, like many other women artists of the time excelled in portraiture. Because of the restrictions on women artists, portraiture was one of the most accessible subjects which did not require a woman to view male models or encroach onto the male-dominated subjects of history, mythology, or public religious works. Anguissola’s portraits, including self-portraits, were well regarded in her own time and have been the subject of a number of recent studies as well as exhibitions. She is one of seven women artists mentioned in the second edition of Vasari’s Lives in 1568, and the only woman artist who was praised by him for portraying her sitters as appearing to “breathe and look truly alive.” He specifically references her family portraits, in particular The Chess Game, 1555, which he saw when he visited the Anguissola residence in 1566. (Fig 108) Anguissola’s portraits were also praised by Lomazzo, Filippo Baldinucci, Raffaello Sopriani, Gian Battista Zaist, and Annibale Caro. Her portraits, including her self-portraits, demonstrate her remarkable ability to depict her subjects as lively, sophisticated, and sensitive while her religious paintings indicate her skills in portraying elegant and endearing figures and gestures. In an attempt to highlight her abilities and seek guidance from the most sought-after artist in Italy, she provided Michelangelo with drawing samples, including Asdrubale Being Bitten by a Crab, which demonstrates her

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456 Perlingieri, Sofonisba Anguissola, 48.
457 For more on the portraits and exhibitions of Sofonisba, see Ilya Sandra Perlingieri, Sofonisba Anguissola: The First Great Woman Artist of the Renaissance (New York: Rizzoli, 1992) and Sylvia Ferino-Pagden and Marie Kusche, Sofonisba Anguissola: A Renaissance Woman (The National Museum of Women in the Arts, 1995.)
458 Jacobs, “Woman’s Capacity to Create,” 93.
459 Ibid., 74.
brilliant ability to depict emotion.\(^{460}\) (Fig. 109) The crying boy, the compassionate sister, the fine detail in facial features and costume, and the overall warm, yet amusing feeling of this drawing demonstrate her excellent drawing capabilities which were then transferred to her paintings. The sketch must have been very well received by Michelangelo and is referred to by Vasari.\(^{461}\) Michelangelo continued his correspondence and supplied suggestions and even examples for Anguissola. Anguissola spent two years in Rome, most likely around 1554. Like other artists of the period, she took time to study the ancient ruins of the city and most importantly, maintained correspondences with Michelangelo who was also working in the city at the time. His guidance was formative to Anguissola and can be seen in her work after her return from Rome.

Before her departure to Rome, Anguissola produced a self-portrait in miniature. The oval painting is oil on parchment, is set in a simple metal frame and has a loop for suspension attached at the top. (Fig. 110) Anguissola depicts herself in typical fashion as a sophisticated noblewoman, but here holds a large circular object (possibly a mirror or shield) with an inscription along the perimeter of the disc and a series of intertwining initials within the inscribed border. The inscription on the medallion reads, “Sophonisba Anguissola Vir[go] Ipsius Manu Ex Speculo Depictam Cremonae” (The maiden Sofonisba Anguissola painted this from a mirror by her own hand, Cremona).\(^{462}\) The intertwining letters can be deciphered as E, R, A, C, Y, M. All of the letters refer in

\(^{460}\) Perlingieri, *Sofonisba Anguissola*, 71.

\(^{461}\) E non è molto che messer Tommaso Cavalieri, gentiluomo romano, mandò al signor duca Cosimo (oltre una carta di mano del divino Michelangelo, dove è una Cleopatra) un’altra carta di mano Sofonisba; nella quale è una fanciullina che si ride di un putto che piange, perchè avendogli elle messo innanzi un canestrino pieno di gambari, uno d’essi gli morde un ditto, del quale disegno non si può veder cosa più graziosa, nè più simile al vero. Vasari, *Le Opere*, Milanesi, 5:81.

\(^{462}\) Perlingieri, *Sofonisba Anguissola*, 63.
some way to Anguissola’s family. The A being the most prominent would have undoubtedly stood for Anguissola in addition to her father Amilcare and sister Anna Maria and brother Asdrubale. What is most important about this miniature in relation to the medal of Anguissola is that it was most likely completed around 1552, just before Anguissola’s departure for Rome in 1554. The miniature, a personal memento, was probably intended as a gift to her family in her absence, a similar function of her medal of a few years later. The image and inscription of the miniature refer to Anguissola’s noble upbringing and modest disposition. She identifies herself as the daughter of Amilcare and as a Virgo or maiden. Her preoccupation with virtue is not surprising as she was engaged in the male-centered environment of painters and strove to identify herself as proper, decorous, chaste and virtuous so as not to indicate any sense of vanity or improper behavior for which she might be accused and which in turn could damage her career as a painter. She used this identification as *virgo* in many of her self-portraits such as her *Self-Portrait* of 1554 (Fig. 111) depicting herself holding an open book, again in the miniature, in her *Self-Portrait at the Spinet* c. 1555-1556 (Fig. 112), in *The Chess Game* in 1555, and in her double portrait of *Bernardino Campi Painting Sofonisba Anguissola* of 1550 (Fig. 113) Her use of the word *virgo* to identify and describe herself reinforces the idea of her self-fashioning as a well-mannered and respectable noblewoman and one who also excelled as a painter. Anguissola may have used the association in two ways that would have appealed to both a male and female audience and reaffirmed her identification with the term for herself. The most obvious is that the

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463 Ibid.
464 There are at least three other paintings by Anguissola, including *Portrait of a Nun, Portrait of a Dominican Monk*, 1556, and *Portrait of a Woman*, 1557 in which she uses *virgo* in her signature. Her identification with *virgo* was not used in any portraits of her Spanish patrons.
use of the word or description *virgo* immediately identified Anguissola as a chaste and virtuous woman.\(^{465}\) In keeping with this idea, it is important to note that Anguissola did not marry until she was 40 years old. Furthermore, the association of *virgo* had an alternate meaning embracing the idea of independence and self-possession, two attributes that may have been attractive to Anguissola.\(^{466}\) The possibility of a dual meaning also seems in keeping with Anguissola’s efforts to maintain her respectable place among noblewomen, as well as a mechanism to prove her abilities as a painter among the most esteemed artists of the period. Anguissola’s broad-reaching appeal was facilitated in her attention to details, both physically in her paintings and by self-fashioning through her paintings. Her innovation of subject matter, her abilities to adopt the suggestions of masters such as Michelangelo, and her capacity to adapt as a painter whether in Italy or Spain, made her the first successful woman artist of the sixteenth century.

As an innovator, Anguissola is the first artist to depict a group of women, laughing and interacting in a seemingly casual, yet sophisticated way as seen in her well-known painting, *The Chess Game* of 1555.\(^{467}\) (Fig. 108) This portrait of her sisters Lucia, Minerva, Europa, and Anna Maria, as well as a favorite maidservant, is a perfect example of her exceptional abilities as a portrait painter.

The subject of the painting is interesting since from antiquity, chess was considered a sophisticated game of wit and reason, and was identified as being a

\(^{465}\) Mary Garrard, “Here’s Looking at Me: Sofonisba Anguissola and the Problem of the Woman Artist,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 47, no. 3 (Autumn, 1994): 581. Garrard discusses the contemporary associations of *virgo* discussed in Renaissance literature with the ancient goddess Athena, Astraea, and finally Venus.

\(^{466}\) Ibid., 580.

fundamentally male pursuit. For the male chess player, the game included elements of entertainment, but even more than that, a method of practicing and enhancing disciplined intellectual skills and skills in strategy. When men played the game, it became a metaphor of warfare, political skill, and mastery. This association was still popular in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. But, by 1510, a new rule brought more power to the playing piece associated with women – the queen. Mary Garrard sums up the new rules by identifying the new capabilities of the pieces when she says,

> To speed up the game pawns could now advance two spaces rather than one in their initial move, bishops could move an unlimited number of spaces along their diagonal axes rather than only one, and the queen became the most powerful piece on the board, now capable of moving not just one space but an unlimited number of spaces in any direction, horizontally, vertically, or diagonally.

The new power of the queen adds an element of role-reversal in a game still played primarily by men. Anguissola, understanding the newly established power of the “queen,” depicts her sisters and maid servant as free from male domination or intimidation in the scene, yet maintains the traditional association of women as chaste and subservient to men with the addition of her motto presenting herself and her sisters as chaste and as the daughter of Amilcare. Thus, in my opinion, The Chess Game finds parallels with her medal which depicts her as the decorous and well-mannered daughter of Amilcare.

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468 See Patricia Simons, “(Check)Mating the Grand Masters: The Gendered, Sexualized Politics of Chess in Renaissance Italy,” Oxford Art Journal 16, no. 1 (1993): 59-74. Simons also stated that when a woman and a man played the game, it took on overt sexual overtones becoming a game of chance and passion instead of wits and reason. The painting by Anguissola depicts only women, removing any sexual overtones that may have present if the painting were to have included male players.  
469 Simons, “(Check)Mating the Grand Masters,” 59 and Garrard, Here’s Looking at Me, 600 and Garrard, “Here’s Looking at Me,” 602.  
470 Garrard, Here’s Looking at Me, 600.
Anguissola depicts her three sisters and maid servant outdoors gathered around a chess game. The outside background allowed Anguissola to provide an ideal natural setting and her ability to depict the defining characteristics of each of her sisters and the maid servant is evident in the facial features, sophisticated dress, gestures, and emotional connection between the figures. On the left is Lucia, the oldest of the sisters depicted, who connects with the viewer while Minerva looks to her elder sister from across the chess board. Minerva’s hand gesture indicates that she did not win the game as she yields to her sister. The youngest of the sisters, Europa, looks on with delight, a perfect example of Sofonisba’s ability to depict emotion. To the right, Sofonisba depicts the older maidservant, dressed in plain clothes, looking on casually. Her status and age is not missed by the viewer as her wrinkles are defined on her forehead and eyes, and her plain dress distinguishes her from the noble family of women in front of her. One of the most appealing aspects of the portrait is the detailed attention given to the costumes of her sisters and maid servant. Anguissola demonstrates her knowledge of textiles, fabrics, and patterns in her depiction of the girl’s dresses. The sumptuous embroidered and brocade patterned dresses, the rich colors of the velvet fabric, the beautiful linen chemises with lace collars and the simple, but elegant hair styles with braids entwined with jewels and a gold headband are remarkable and are reminiscent of Anguissola’s own self-portraits.

Anguissola’s *Chess Game* reveals her excellent abilities as a painter, probably equal to or better than many of the male artists of the period, including her teacher Campi. The subject and the setting, four women outside enjoying the pastimes of everyday life, place her in the realm of the domestic as was customary for women, including women painters and artists. Although Anguissola was able to break certain
boundaries with her art, here depicting active young women engaged with each other in a highly sophisticated game, the painting remains a commentary on the position of women. In one respect, the lack of a male figure allows the Anguissola sisters to be represented as intellectual participants in this game of strategy without the obvious sexual tension as seen in other paintings where men and women compete. Anguissola demonstrated her invention and creativity in this painting by making her sisters the active participants in an intellectual game, not threatened or objectified by male companions or even fellow players. Anguissola further creates this feminine atmosphere by placing herself as the fourth sister. The oldest sister depicted, Lucia, looks to the viewer and even more appropriately to the artist who is painting this scene, her sister Sofonisba. The artist, by her position, completes the painting as one follows the glances and gestures of the other figures. Anguissola also places herself in the painting by her signature located on the edge of the chessboard, “SEPHONISBA ANGUSSOLA. VIRGO. AMILCARIS FILIA. EX VERA EFIGIE TRES SUAS SORORES. ET ANCILLAM PINXIT. MDLV,” (Sophonisba Anguissola, the maiden daughter of Amilcare, painted this true likeness of her three sisters and a servant in 1555). This painting, discussed in terms of the female intellectual capacity, freedom of creativity and inventiveness, still reminds the viewer of women as subordinate to men and as responsible, modest, and chaste.

Anguissola’s modesty may also be inherent in the portrait that decorates her medal. That Anguissola did not sell one painting during her career points to the fact that her paintings were made for the sole purpose of gift-giving in the hopes of a salaried position that would help maintain the Anguissola household. Sofonisba was one of six

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471 See Lorenzo Costa’s *Two Chess Players*, Giulio Campi’s *Game of Chess* 1540s and Lucas van Leyden’s *The Chess Players*, 1508.

daughters that would have been in need of a dowry which was the responsibility of Amilcare. Although from minor nobility and a businessman and land owner, Amilcare did not have the sufficient funds to provide large dowries for his daughters. Thus, he became a proponent of their humanist education as well as the cultivation of their artistic talents in the hopes that they would be successful enough to attract a position at court which supplied an annual salary. Since Anguissola was not married during her time at court, her annual salary was given to Amilcare, the most senior male figure in the family and Anguissola’s legal guardian. From a document dated September 24, 1560, Perlingieri stated that “Anguissola was paid “wages” (gages) of 21,980 maravedis. The following year, the queen’s household accounts list payment of more than nine thousand reales to Anguissola…”

In addition, Anguissola continued to receive payments even after the queen’s death in 1568 and was also paid in goods, such as expensive pieces of fabric, which was customary at the time. Her salary helped to support her family back in Cremona. By this time, Amilcare could consider his famous daughter a true success, possibly celebrated by the commission of a commemorative medal.

Anguissola’s medal was produced by an unidentified medallist, most likely toward the end of the 1550s. (Fig. 114) King refers to the medal as possibly relating to a group of medals of fellow Cremonese artists produced during the same period. The medallistic self-portrait of Battista Caselli is dated 1551 while the medals of Bernardino Campi and his brother Guilio Campi are not dated, although Attwood attributes them to the 1560s. Not only do the dates indicate that these were most likely not part of a group, but the medals of Caselli and the Campi brothers differ greatly in terms of style.

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473 Perlingieri, Sofonisba Anguissola, 121.
475 Attwood, Italian Medals, 1:155.
Foremost, the medals of Caselli, Bernardino and Giulio Campi all depict the artist on the obverse with a decorated reverse while the medal of Anguissola is uniface. One may argue that since Anguissola was a woman artist, the difference may have been warranted. But other medallic examples of women artists proves otherwise. For example, the medals of Fontana and Scultori both have reverse images. In addition, other medal groups seem to function in a similar manner with consistent imagery on both obverse and reverse. This indicates to me that the medal of Anguissola functioned solely on its own.

The medal depicts Anguissola facing left wearing a gown and high collar chemise, very similar in style to those she wore in her self-portraits. Her hair is pulled back, braided, and the braid set around the back of her head, again contributing to her modest portrayal. Her image on the medal recalls the modest and austere fashion she displays in her self-portraits. As Garrard has noted, Anguissola had the option to wear and depict herself wearing more elaborate and luxurious clothing and jewelry, but she consciously chose to maintain a more sober style with the lack of accoutrements in her hair and jewelry and with the consistent depiction of herself wearing black or dark colored clothing and high collared chemises underneath. This prudent image type assumed by Anguissola balances her rejections of the overtly feminine associations of luxury and opulence and represents her adoption of a more male persona while still

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476 Groups mentioned in this study include the Medici women, the Este women, and the Gonzaga women.

477 Garrard points out that Anguissola, a member of the nobility, could have remained within the sumptuary laws at the time by wearing more flamboyant clothing and jewelry, but instead she chose to avoid such displays which could have associated her with vanity and luxury which was many times attributed to the women of the period. Garrard, Here’s Looking at Me, 583.
maintaining her femininity which would have been well received by future patrons, in particular the court of Spain.

This one-sided medal has the inscription, SOPHONISBA ANGVSSOLA, AMILCARIS.FI (Sofonisba Anguissola, daughter of Amilcare), indicating Anguissola as the daughter of Amilcare. Unlike many of the medals of other artists, there is no indication of her craft on the medal. Instead, she is depicted as a noblewoman and daughter. Most likely cast in the late 1550s or early 1560s, before Anguissola was married, the medal connects her to her father. Perlingieri and King both agree that the medal was probably commissioned in commemoration of the success of Anguissola, celebrating her invitation to serve Queen Isabel as a lady-in-waiting at the court of Philip.\textsuperscript{478} Anguissola accepted the invitation and took up residence at the court in 1559. Assuming Amilcare as the patron, this medal expressed not only the accomplishment of placing his daughter in such a position, but also as a proclamation of his love and devotion to Sofonisba. In a portrait of Amilcare, Minerva and Asdrubale c. 1557-58, Anguissola depicts the three members of her family as a heartfelt representation of her father looking out at the artist while gently and loosely embracing his young son. (Fig. 115) The painting suggests that Amilcare cared deeply about his family, his daughters, and of course his long awaited son. Perlingieri stated that “It is the warmth and sensitivity of this composition that stand out…The caring and kindness [of Amilcare] is quite evident in his gentle face.”\textsuperscript{479} The medal, an intimate object, especially when viewed in the privacy of the home, would have been particularly appropriate for a father who nurtured and loved his daughter and who would miss her during her years in Spain.

\footnote{478 Perlingieri, Sofonisba Anguissola, 114 and King, “Looking a Sight,” 390.} \footnote{479 Perlingieri, Sofonisba Anguissola, 94.}
Just as he was shown tending to his other daughter and son in the aforementioned portrait, he may have wanted to preserve Sofonisba’s likeness on a medal as she departed from his home and his city. The uniface medal emphasizes the portrait of Anguissola but does not provide the viewer with additional information about her personality or accomplishments. Only those close to her would have recognized the achievements of Anguissola the year the medal was produced. The portrait is the dominant feature of the medal and reinforces the idea that the medal served a specific and more private audience, especially for a medal of such a well-known artist. For Amilcare, the medal may have functioned as a reminder or memento that allowed him to keep the image of his beloved daughter close while she was away in a foreign land.

That Amilcare deeply loved his daughter is reinforced in a series of letter correspondences to King Philip on the request of Anguissola’s employment at the court of Spain. In a response to a letter from the King, Amilcare writes,

A few days ago, the duke of Sessa and Count Broccardo told me of Your Majesty’s wishes to have Sofonisba, my dearest daughter, serve her Most Serene Highness, our Queen. My paternal sorrow still is great because she is going so far away from me and my other daughters. Until now, in this my old age, I have been enjoying her rare virtues and company, which she acquired through her own efforts and study, as well as my religious diligence. Nevertheless, as a faithful subject, which I am, of both the late emperor [Charles V] and Your Majesty, I willingly give her with much affection to enter the Queen’s service, being certain that she could not be placed in better service, than that of the well-known fame of Your Serene Highness which surpasses any other Christian prince or king. Owning to your outstanding qualities, I am greatly consoled so that this, in part, diminishes the sorrow which my family and I feel due to the departure of my dearest daughter. By this time, I would think that she should not be too far from God. I humbly supplicate Your Majesty to forgive my boldness in writing this letter and the other one, which will be delivered devotedly by Sofonisba to Your Royal Majesty. With humility, I kiss your
honorable feet and virtuous hands, praying to God to give you a long and happy life.

From Cremona, 17 November, 1559.
Your faithful subject and humble vassal,
Amilcare Anguissola

In the letter, Amilcare goes to great lengths to inform the king that he fully supports his daughter’s employment at the court, which he stated is lead by the King’s “outstanding qualities,” while also stating that he would deeply miss her while she was so far away from home. Anguissola’s medal was most likely commissioned before her departure to Spain in the same year Amilcare wrote the letter to the King. Amilcare’s devotion to his daughter is obvious and the commissioning of a medal would have been an appropriate way to fashion her image in a very personal memento meant for her father and her family. This aligns the function of this medal, as being a personal and intimate object, closely with those produced for the Este from Ferrara and the Gonzaga from Mantua.

One detail on the medal specimen located in the British Museum that has not been thoroughly investigated in the literature particularly on the medal is its frame. This medal, cast in lead, was inserted into a lead frame with a loop for suspension. It is very possible that the frame and loop were added well after the sixteenth century, although both are made of the same material. If we are to assume this frame and loop were added at the time of its production it would indicate a specific purpose in function, one that Syson determined was for display. This is in contrast to the medals that were

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480 Ibid., 113.
481 A few sources identify this medal as cast in bronze, including Catherine King, “Looking a Sight,” 386, no. 9. In consultation with Philip Attwood, he confirmed that the medal in the British Museum Collection is lead. Philip Attwood, e-mail message to author, May 10, 2012.
482 Luke Syson, “Holes and Loops: The Display and Collection of Medals in Renaissance Italy,” Journal of Design History, 15, no. 11, The Design History Society (2002). Syson also points to examples of medals in which holes have been pierced through the tops, sides, or even both which also indicate that they were displayed. Admittedly, it is difficult to know when the holes were made in the medals since most of the medallists did not leave space for piercings, as is indicated by the several number of medals where a
kept in cabinets, boxes or other containers to be brought out and viewed, and meant to be touched, turned over and passed around. Instead, medals that have holes punched either at the tops or at the sides or in which loops for suspension are added, such as Anguissola’s, most likely indicates that they were intended to be hung on a type of display case, not on clothing. Even more convincing is that Anguissola’s medal is uniface, providing no incentive to view the medal from the reverse. Furthermore, this type of display would have been in keeping with Sofonisba’s paintings in the Anguissola household which were hung and admired by her family and visitors to the Anguissola home. Precedents from the fifteenth century of medals with loops exist which may have been an impetus to later medallists or collectors to include such devices in the sixteenth century. A medal specimen cast in gold of Isabella d’Este (possibly from her collection) Giancristoforo Romano displays Isabella’s medal in a gold frame encrusted with jewels with a loop for suspension at the top. (Fig. 116) Sperandio’s medals of Giovanni Bentivoglio, first citizen of Bologna, and Federico da Montefeltro Duke of Urbino, were also originally cast with attached loops for suspension. Many of the devices for hole is poked through the inscription or design, but Syson posits that most of the holes must have been made before 1650 and at times were even contemporary with the production of the medal. There is little evidence from painted or printed images from the fifteenth and sixteenth century that medals in Italy were worn. A large number of medals from seventeenth-century France, especially those by Jean Warin and other contemporaries, have loops specifically for display. Luke Syson, “Holes and Loops,” 231-232.

Isabella stored her jewel-encrusted medal in a cupboard in her Grotta alongside a cameo of Caesar and Livia. The frame of this cameo was similarly luxurious in decoration and Isabella had her name engraved on the frame, making no mistake of the conscious effort of the patron to link herself to the ancient figures. Jennifer M. Fletcher review of La Prima Donna del Mondo: Isabella d’Este Fürstin und Mäzenatin der Renaissance (Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, 1994), The Burlington Magazine 136, no. 1095 (June 1994): 398. Syson believes that the gold specimen of Isabella was intended to be work as jewelry. Syson, “Holes and Loops,” 231. It should also be noted that in a letter to Lorenzo da Pavia on June 30, 1506, Isabella requested sandalwood and ebony for the construction of medallion cases further indicating her storage or display method for her medals. See Clifford Brown and Anna Maria Lornezoni, Isabella d’Este and Lorenzo da Pavia: Documents for the History of Art and Culture in Renaissance Mantua (Genève: Librairie Droz S. A., 1982), 96 for the transcription of the letter. Syson, “Holes and Loops,” 232.
displaying medals, either attached loops or piercings, are found on both fifteenth and sixteenth-century medals. What must be deduced from these examples, including Anguissola’s medal, is that the function of the medal, in particular the uniface medal, was to be displayed and not hidden away in a cabinet or cupboard, but likely exposed for the viewer’s delight. Anguissola’s medal is in keeping with this tradition.

In contrast to the painted portraits by Anguissola which were delivered throughout Italy and beyond and marketed by Amilcare to the most promising patrons, the medal takes on a more private meaning, indicating the pride and love between father and daughter. The Self-Portrait miniature of c. 1552 could have set the precedent for such objects exchanged between Aguissola and her family as it is possible that the small painting was given to her family either before she left for Rome or shortly after she arrived.\(^\text{486}\) Like the miniature, Anguissola’s portrait medal would have been a constant visual reminder for Amilcare of his daughter whom he missed in her absence from Cremona. Here, the portrait medal was not used to secure a commission or to offer Anguissola to some willing suitor, but instead as an object indicating the affection between father and daughter and reinforcing the sophistication and decorum of a woman of sixteenth-century Italy.

_Lavinia Fontana: painter from Bologna_

Another woman painter from the Renaissance whose portrait adorns a medal is Lavinia Fontana. On the first page of Caroline Murphy’s book on Lavinia Fontana and the opening page of Joanna Woods-Marsden’s book, _Renaissance Self-Portraiture_, is the image of Fontana’s portrait medal which was cast by Felice Maria Casoni in 1611. (Fig. 486 Perlingieri, _Sofonisba Anguissola_, 63
117) The reverse imagery on the medal is a representation of *Pittura* at work, active in her creative moment of intellectual inspiration. The allegory is representative of all artists, but in this case, she is specifically identified with Lavinia Fontana, a woman artist from Bologna who, like Anguissola, was known and sought after for her portraits, but was the only lay woman artist in the Renaissance who ventured successfully into the male artists’ territory of public painting. Her career and legacy is celebrated in this portrait medal.

Lavinia Fontana was born in Bologna on August 24, 1552. Unlike her predecessor Anguissola, Fontana did not come from noble roots. Her father, Prospero Fontana worked as a painter, mainly in fresco, in Bologna and Rome. Fontana was trained by her father, as was customary for most women artists of the period. She was heavily influenced by the Mannerist tradition in which her father worked but made great efforts to produce her work in accordance with the new rules set down by the Council of Trent, which was heavily promoted by the powerful Bishop of Bologna, Gabriele Paleotti (1522-1597). In 1582, Paleotti published his five-volume treatise on artistic matters of the period, the *Discorso intorno alle immagini sacre e profane* which set forth his appeal for paintings to follow the rules set down at Trent and encouraged the patronage of the arts in Bologna.\(^{487}\) In 1506 Bologna rejoined the Papal States after previously being under the control of the Bentivoglio family and thrived as an intellectual and artistic center. It was the home to many artists and architects including the Fontana and probably the most notable artistic family, the Carracci. The intellectual, religious, and cultural environment of Bologna encouraged artistic production and patronage and proved to be a well-suited

atmosphere for the most prolific woman artist of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.

Prospero provided Fontana with an artistic education as well as an environment that was sure to stimulate her creativity, strengthen her skills, and cultivate her painting career. Fontana was even made a dottoressa (doctor of letters) from the University of Bologna in 1580.\textsuperscript{488} Prospero welcomed scholars and humanists such as Ulisse Aldrovani and Achille Bocchi into his home and went to great lengths to associate himself with learned men and nobility, going so far as to choose Agostino Hercolani and Andrea Bonfiglioli, both members of the nobility, to be the godparents to the infant Fontana.\textsuperscript{489} These influences were not lost on his intelligent and business-savvy daughter and contributed to her success as a well-respected woman painter. Throughout her career, she demonstrated her ability to obtain prominent commissions from patrons similar to those that her father had so enthusiastically invited into their home when she was a young girl. Although Prospero was a well-known painter, both in Bologna and in Rome where he worked for Pope Julius III, the death of the pope and his own ill-health put a financial strain on the Fontana household. At this time, during the 1560s, it was crucial that Lavinia’s talents be further developed and marketed to help support the family financially.\textsuperscript{490} In the 1560s, she was still working in her father’s workshop, taking on mainly small-scale commissions but by 1575, Fontana was working independently on mainly portraits and religious commissions.\textsuperscript{491} In order to secure Fontana’s status as an independent artist and to promote her career, she needed to find a suitable husband. It

\textsuperscript{489} Murphy, \textit{Lavinia Fontana}, 18.
\textsuperscript{490} Ibid., 19.
\textsuperscript{491} McIver, “Lavinia Fontana’s Self-Portrait Making Music,” 3.
was necessary for a male member of the family to accompany Fontana to meetings with potential patrons as well as manage the family finances and income generated from the sale of her paintings. More importantly, a husband for Fontana would help maintain the public persona of her character as being a chaste and decorous woman, especially for a woman artist whose desire to obtain both private and public commissions depended as much upon her personal characteristics as her painting abilities. The perfect match was made with the marriage of Fontana to Gian Paolo, son of Severo Zappi, an apprentice in Prospero’s workshop. The Zappi were a minor noble family from Imola, a city not far from Bologna. Gian Paolo proved to be the best fit for Fontana for a few reasons. He agreed to move to Bologna and take up residence with the Fontana family. This was important since Prospero needed the income generated by Fontana’s work which meant that she needed to remain associated with his workshop. Gian Paolo also agreed that any income be turned over to Prospero who in turn guaranteed the couple a nice lifestyle and living arrangements. This unusual financial arrangement between Prospero and Gian Paolo proved most beneficial to Prospero who was able to maintain his studio and his livelihood from the profits from Fontana’s commissions.

Fontana is an extraordinary case in the history of women artists since she is the first woman artist who was able to obtain numerous private and public commissions and in doing so had to market her skills and her products. Unlike Anguissola, Fontana produced self-portraits mainly by request and did not utilize them as the gifts of exchange as her predecessor had done. Instead, she used them to market herself and her talent to potential patrons, something not of concern for Anguissola who was destined to be employed at a court with a secured salary. Fontana was also the first woman artist of the
period to receive monetary payment for public religious commissions. She received her first public commission in 1583 for an altarpiece commissioned by the Consiglio Communale of Imola located in a chapel in Imola’s Palazzo Communale. The altarpiece depicting Saints Cassiano and Pier Crisogono kneeling before an ascending Virgin, demonstrated Fontana’s abilities as a Post-Tridentine artist. (Fig. 118) The clarity of subject corresponded perfectly to the artistic guidelines set down by the Council and was characteristic of Fontana’s style. Under the influence and enforcement of Paleotti, many of the Bolognese artists adhered to the Tridentine rules, Fontana included. She established and promoted herself as the ideal Post-Tridentine artist which allowed her maneuverability as a woman artist within the circles of wealthy patrons, including aristocrats, humanists, scholars, members of the religious orders, three popes, and nobility and royalty beyond Italy.

In her *Self-Portrait in the Studiolo*, dated 1579, Fontana depicts herself on a small copper tondo, richly dressed, about to begin her work as she holds her pen in anticipation of creating an image (or words) on the blank piece of paper in front of her. (Fig.119) The portrait was produced in response to a request in a letter by Alfonso Ciaconio, the Dominican friar who requested a portrait of Anguissola and who also asked Fontana, to send me a tiny little portrait…to enable a panel from life to be made, to accompany the [self-portrait] which I have from Sofonisba, so that you can be seen, and contemplated, and recognized by everyone, and I will also [place] it among the 500 illustrious men and women which will be engraved, at the expense of the most serene archduke Ferdinand of Austria…I think of celebrating and propagating you for centuries…493

His request was answered with this small, but evocative self-portrait which was to be displayed in Ciaconio’s collection of portraits of the most illustrious artists, a collection

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492 Murphy, *Lavinia Fontana*, 45.  
that also included a portrait of Anguissola. Fontana used her small portrait to prove her artistic worth in the company of other great artists and as an example of how she could surpass her role model and competitor, Anguissola. In an earlier *Self-Portrait* of 1577, Fontana is dressed in luxurious clothing in an elaborate background setting full of objects denoting her intelligence. (Fig. 120) She utilized objects such as musical instruments, an easel, or blank piece of paper as attributes of her intelligence and her work as an artist. Placed in the background of her 1579 self-portrait in her *studiolo* are antique marble busts and other objects and on her desk is a small nude male statuette. Her surroundings reflect her training as an artist in the workshop of her father and promote her as a learned woman. The blank paper as *tabula rasa* is understood to be symbolic of her *disegno*, her creative genius shown at the moment of contemplation and thought before the image is produced.\(^\text{494}\) It is exemplary of the necessity of the intellect to conceive of an idea or image in the mind before it is depicted, again, stressing the intellectual aspects of the artist. She wears a large crucifix around her neck which functions as a clear reminder to her patron that she embodies the post-Tridentine principles of religious devotion and piety.\(^\text{495}\) She portrays herself as learned, decorous, confident and religious while exuding her talent and professionalism. Fontana’s astute ability to project her professional, yet proper feminine persona gained her the respect and admiration of many throughout Europe. In turn, she was rewarded with both private and religious public commissions from some of the most well-known patrons in Bologna and Rome.

Her religious subjects reflected the prescriptions of Paleotti and in doing so, contributed to the church’s teachings and became popular with a number of religious

\(^{494}\) Ibid.

\(^{495}\) Ibid.
patrons such as Ciaconio. Similarly, her skills in portraiture, especially by the 1580s were sought after by wealthy and learned men and women and remained a genre in which she excelled. Fontana had to prove herself in a male-dominated environment that was hostile to woman in ways that Anguissola, as a member of the nobility, did not.496 She was an astute businesswoman and used her communication and interpersonal skills to establish and maintain a network of nobility, both men and women, and church officials that resulted in numerous commissions over the years. As the sole breadwinner for her family, Fontana must have felt a great deal of pressure to expand her business while competing with the most prominent male artists of the period. Her dedication and determination are evidenced by the fact that she gave birth to eleven children between 1578 and 1595, all the while, continuing to attract more patrons and produce more paintings.497 Her reputation as a talented portrait painter and painter of religious subjects was clearly established in Bologna by the turn of the century. Fontana had demonstrated that her abilities were on par with those of male artists and that she could compete even in the city of the Carracci in order to support her family. She continued to support her father until his death in 1596. After Prospero’s death, Fontana remained in her native city for a time and in 1604, after twenty years of a successful career in Bologna, Fontana, Gian Paolo, their children and Fontana’s mother, Antonia de’ Bonardis left Bologna and moved to Rome, a move which was intended to further Fontana’s career.

Before she left Bologna, Girolamo Bernerio, the Cardinal d’Ascoli, commissioned an altarpiece by Fontana depicting the Vision of Saint Hyacinth which was to be hung in a chapel in the church of Santa Sabina in Rome. (Fig. 121) The success of the altarpiece

496 See Murphy, Lavinia Fontana, Chapters 2-5 for more information on Fontana’s Bolognese patrons.
497 Although Fontana gave birth to eleven children, only four lived to adolescence.
was an impetus to Fontana’s move to Rome with the hopes of future commissions. However, the commission that may have made her relocation to the eternal city even more attractive to Fontana was an altarpiece commissioned by Abbot Angelo Grillo for the Basilica of San Paolo Fuori le Mura. The contract for the *Martyrdom of Saint Stephen*, destroyed in 1823, dates February 19, 1603, and was signed by Fontana’s husband. Although the altarpiece was not well-received and was actually heavily criticized by Giovanni Baglione, it still positioned Fontana as one of the most successful painters in Rome. In the same year, Fontana was invited to become a member of the Accademia di San Luca, the painter’s guild in Rome, providing her with even more credibility as a painter. During her remaining years in Rome, Fontana continued to produce paintings with religious subjects, but her real success was evident in her commissions for portraits. Her most notable patrons included Pope Paul V, and the Cardinal Scipione Borghese, for whom she painted her last painting, *Minerva in the Act of Dressing* in 1613. She maintained close ties with the upper class women of Rome and remained a favorite for their portrait commissions.

As mentioned earlier, the medal of Fontana finds its place on the first pages of books today. In actuality, the medal was produced near the end of Fontana’s career in 1611 while she was still in Rome, aligning her medal with the medals of her male counterparts whose medals were many times produced near the height or end of their careers. At the age of fifty-nine, Fontana was portrayed by Felice Antonio Casoni on a

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498 Murphy, *Lavinia Fontana*, 195.
499 Baglione may have been jealous of Fontana and his review may reflect his personal feelings. As a painter himself, he was in competition with Fontana for the commission but was not awarded the job. Caroline Murphy, *Lavinia Fontana*, 195.
500 Fontana was barred from membership in the Carracci Academy, founded in the 1580s, because drawing nudes was a required skill and as a woman, Fontana was unable to practice that skill.
medal that has received a good amount of scholarly attention in terms of its iconography and the identification of Fontana as *Pittura* on the medal’s reverse.\footnote{There are three extant medals today, now in the British Museum, the Pinacoteca Civica In Imola and in the National Gallery in Washington D.C.} (Fig. 122) What is lacking, and what I hope to establish, is a dual meaning revealing the relationship of Fontana’s medal to her own career and the relationship of her medal to the medals of her male counterparts and what these connections reveal about her artistic self-formation and self-representation.

Casoni’s medal depicts Fontana’s portrait on the obverse with the inscription LAVINIA FONTANA ZAPPIA PICTRIX 1611 (Lavinia Fontana Zappi, painter, 1611). On the reverse, a woman is shown at work at her canvas with the inscription PERTE STATO GIOIOSO MIMANTENE (Through you, joyous state I am sustained). The image can be easily identified as the Allegory of Painting and the figure *Pittura*. The medal was produced by Casoni, an artist and architect who was born in Ancona, trained in Bologna, and worked in Rome in the early seventeenth century. Scholars do not agree on the dates of Casoni’s first years in Rome. Toderi and Vannel claim that he was in Rome no earlier than 1605 while Attwood believes he was in Rome by 1598.\footnote{Toderi and Vannel *Le medaglie italienne* 1:443; Attwood Italian Medals, 1:416.} What we know for sure is that Casoni was in Rome by the time he produced his medal of Fontana in 1611. Casoni’s reputation as a medallist suffered in early twentieth-century scholarship and his inventive designs have only recently been re-evaluated and better understood. In reference to the reverse of the medal of Fontana and its so-called Mannerist design, Hill states, “…and the absurd reverse of her medal, with its affectation of fine frenzy, seems not out of keeping with that school,”\footnote{Hill, *Medals of Renaissance Artists*, 81.} and characterized Casoni as
“a medallist of no great merit.” In contrast, Attwood claims that Casoni’s medals of Pietro Aldobrandini and that of Fontana, “…show an increasing delicacy of touch as the artist refined his technique.” This delicacy is clearly displayed in the medal of Fontana, in particular in the reverse imagery identified as *Pittura*.

The obverse of the medal depicts Fontana looking left in a modest gown, and braided hair covered by a veil that falls over her shoulder. As pointed out by Attwood, Casoni truncates the left arm of Fontana, a detail that undoubtedly was inspired by the medals produced in Emilia. The portrait is in keeping with what was accepted as a traditional depiction of the sitter. It is the reverse of the medal that has garnered so much attention, and in some cases, criticism. The figure on the reverse has been identified as *Pittura*, and correctly so. There is dispute as to whether the figure is an allegory or an image of Fontana herself. Most scholars agree that the reverse depicts *Pittura*, not a portrait of the artist, but instead a direct reference to her and her work as a painter.

*Pittura* is shown seated at an easel wearing a loose gown and a chain around her neck, a band covering her mouth and her hair flowing wildly while she contemplates her design with a brush in her right hand and a discarded mahlstick in her left. Strewn about below her are the tools of her trade, brushes and a palette with dabs of paint. The chair that Pittura sits upon is reminiscent of the chair depicted in Fontana’s *Self-Portrait at the Keyboard* from 1577. (Fig. 120) The inscription on the reverse refers to the joy (GIOIOSO) and sustenance (MIMANTENE) that painting provides for Fontana.

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504 Ibid., 2.
506 Ibid.
507 Attwood, Pollard, Jean Owens Schaefer, and Woods-Marsden agree that *Pittura* is depicted while Hill, McIver, and Toderi and Vannel refer to the figure as Fontana.
Depicted in the outer edge of the medal with the inscription are a square and calipers or dividers, two more tools of the trade.

The association of Fontana with *Pittura* was a natural fit. Only a woman artist could directly associate herself visually with the image because the allegorical figure was traditionally shown as a woman. The allegory of *Pittura* in relation to the artist was established only in the sixteenth century as a result of the successful argument for the inclusion of painting and sculpture to the Liberal Arts. Thus, the pictorial usage of *Pittura* during this period was due to the rise of the status of the artist and the desire of artists to portray them in relation to her. The visual personification of *Pittura* connoted the use of intellectual activity, not purely physical labor and was used to convey this separation.\[508\] Thus, the connection between the allegory and her clear references to both the creative genius of inventing an image and the physical talent necessary to carry out that creative or intellectual idea is combined in the figure of *Pittura*. The allegory could not have been more appropriate for Fontana, an artist who by necessity had to promote the status of her profession and advocate for the inclusion of a woman artist into the male-dominated profession of painting.

In order to strengthen the association between Fontana and *Pittura*, Garrard has pointed to a few disadvantages that the sixteenth and seventeenth-century male artist faced with their association or personification of *Pittura*. First, a direct association with the allegory did not allow for the image to be made as a portrait, thus not permitting the artist to directly increase his status. If artists intended a self-portrait to relate to their profession, certain attributes were necessary such as the tools of the artist which again

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linked him to the manual crafts. If an artist portrayed himself without the tools, but with other objects such as a golden chain, it may not have been possible to identify the artist as a painter unless the painter’s image was well-known by many. Thus, the issue at hand is that the tools of the profession downgraded the status of the artist while a personification did not fully allow for a portrayal of the (male) individual. For Fontana, these were irrelevant issues since the medal imagery portrayed the allegorical figure and the inscription identified the artist. Even further, the obverse of the medal identifies Fontana as both the woman depicted and as a *Pictrix*, painter. The double-sided function of the medal served the purposes of identifying Fontana with *Pittura*. In addition, both figures are women and unlike her male contemporaries, she did not have to provide information for the viewer to connect the two images. *Pittura* refers directly to her profession, a connection that even during this point in her career seemed to be of utmost importance to Fontana who continued to work until her death in 1614. While it is clear that the identification of the female figure on the reverse can be clearly identified as *Pittura* and the connection with Fontana firmly established, is it important to determine the influences and precedents possibly utilized by Casoni for the medal imagery.

The most relevant source may have been the image of *Pittura* as described by Cesare Ripa in his *Iconologia* published in 1603:

A beautiful woman with black hair that is thick, hanging loosely, and curling in different ways, with arched eyebrows, showing imaginative thoughts. Her mouth is covered with a band tied behind her ears, with a gold chain around her neck, from which hangs a mask, written on the front, *imitation*. She holds a brush in one hand, and in the other a tablet/panel. She wears a with a dress of iridescent cloth which covers her feet. And at her feet let there be some instruments of painting to show that

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509 Ibid., 104.
painting is a noble exercise and cannot be done without much application of the intellect.\textsuperscript{510}

As Jean Owens Schaefer noted, Casoni’s depiction is the first pictorial representation of what she considers to be Ripa’s *Pittura*.\textsuperscript{511} The medal imagery corresponds nicely to Ripa’s description; thick and disheveled, curly hair, the band around her mouth and tied at the ears, the chain around the figure’s neck,\textsuperscript{512} a brush in one hand and a light fabric that makes up her gown. *Pittura’s* wild hair is referred to by Ripa as negligence as a result of persistent creativity and the band around her mouth as an indication of the solitude of the artist at work. Where Casoni’s imagery first departs from Ripa’s description is in the lack of arched eyebrows and one hand holding a panel while the other holds the brush. In addition, the fabric of the gown does not cover the feet of the figure, but instead only covers the ankles. Ripa does not mention an easel, nor does he mention a mahlstick, two objects which are critical to the iconography of the medal. Schaefer answers these inconsistencies with suggestions that the “elaborations made Ripa’s image especially flattering to the artist,” and that “while largely based on Ripa’s description, the image on Fontana’s medal goes beyond it in certain ways, while Pollard stated that the imagery is “an original interpretation of Ripa’s text.”\textsuperscript{513} That Ripa’s description was instrumental in the depiction of *Pittura* on Fontana’s medal cannot be

\textsuperscript{510} Cesare Ripa, *Iconologia*, (Torino: Fògola Editore, 1986), 2:121. “Donna bella, con capelli negri, & grossi, sparsi, & riorti in diverse maniere, con le ciglia inarcate, che mostrino pensieri fantastici, si cuopre la bocca con una fascia legata dietro à gli orecchi, con una catena d’oro al collo, dalla quale penda una maschera, & abbia scritto nella fronte, *imitatio*. Terrà in una mano il pennello, & nell’altra la tavola, con la veste di drappo cangiante, la quale le cuopra li piedi, & a’ piedi di essa si potranno fare alcuni istromenti della pittura, per mostrare che la pittura è essercitio nobile, non si potendo fare senza molta applicatione dell’intelletto.”


\textsuperscript{512} It is very difficult to make out the details of the pendant hanging from the chain on the medal, but there does seem to be an object that recalls the shape of a mask hanging from the chain.

disputed, but the extent to which the image depicts only *Pittura* in relation to the craft practiced by Fontana must be re-evaluated in more detail rather than casting these inconsistencies aside as “flattering,” “different in certain ways,” or simply an “original interpretation.” The message of the medal is connected to these inconsistencies and can be related to the self-portraits and self-fashioning of Fontana.

Recalling the small tondo self-portrait of Fontana, one notices the blank page in front of the artist, indicating her intellectual capacity to plan or design an image before actively creating an image. This detail is unique to the portraits of Fontana, just as her career was unique for a woman artist. Anguissola’s *Self-Portrait at the Easel, painting a Devotional Panel* (Fig. 122) from the late 1550s depicts her at an easel with a Virgin and Child already painted on the canvas. Katharina van Hemessen’s *Self-Portrait at the Easel* (Fig. 123) from 1548 also shows the image of a painted head already completed on the canvas. None of these women utilized the association with *Pittura* as Fontana/Casoni did in her medal and both women artists depict images on the canvases they are painting in their portraits. Vasari depicted *Pittura* in fresco at his house in Arezzo in 1542, more than fifty years before Ripa’s *Iconologia* was published, and according to Woods-Marsden, this is the oldest surviving image of *Pittura*.\(^{514}\) (Fig. 124) Like Casoni, Vasari depicts *Pittura* with many, but not all of the attributes later listed by Ripa. Most significant is that Vasari omits the square and calipers that are shown on Fontana’s medal. Ripa suggests adding tools at *Pittura*’s feet to demonstrate that the painting is a “noble exercise that cannot be done without much application of the intellect.” That Vasari neglects these tools and depicts his figure with only a brush and palette, may

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\(^{514}\) Schaefer claims that that Fontana’s medal is the first depiction of *Pittura*, but that is not the case since Vasari’s fresco predates the medal’s production. Woods-Marsden, *Renaissance Self-Portraiture*, 206.
indicate that his fresco was not meant to convey the intellectual activity of disegno or careful planning, but rather Pittura active at work. The stark contrast of this seemingly insignificant detail reveals itself as vital in the imagery and meaning of Fontana’s medal. In the medal, Pittura is shown as being in the creative and intellectual stages of painting, something important in relation to a woman painter, but not so significant for a male painter since this trait was thought to have been understood for the male painter, a detail that Vasari could easily overlook. Other details of the medal reinforce this very idea.

Vasari’s Pittura is shown at work with an image already created on her canvas. As mentioned, Fontana’s medal depicts Pittura at a blank canvas and an unused palette. Casoni must have been inspired or directed by the ideas of painting as an intellectual activity that was reflected in Fontana’s Self-Portrait thirty-two years earlier which also shows her in this stage of creativity. Fontana’s self-portraits and her representation of herself as the allegory of Painting in front of a blank slate, as Woods-Marsden suggests, indicates the desire and need for her to showcase her intellectual abilities, a characteristic usually reserved for the male artist. Casoni’s inclusion of the calipers and square further this interpretation. These tools of the artist are not located at the feet of Pittura, but rather in the border of the medal and again reinforce the planning stages of painting. Around the medal in the same space is the motto indicating the joy felt by Fontana that is maintained by painting or Pittura.

The easel and mahlstick are two more attributes of Pittura that diverge from Ripa’s description, and the meaning of Pittura’s wild hair may also deviate from Ripa. Neither of these tools are mentioned by Ripa and specifically, he mentions specifically that Pittura should hold a brush in one hand a tablet/panel in the other. Here, Casoni has
added an easel, making it clear that *Pittura* is at work on a painting as well as a mahlstick which she sets down rendering it useless. The mahlstick, a guiding tool for the artist, indicates the need for assistance in steadying the hand while painting. In this case, the stick is thrown aside, indicating its lack of necessity to *Pittura* and relating directly to the lack of such devices necessary for Fontana while in the planning stages of her painting. That the figure is inspired is clearly evident by the wild, curly hair that stands on end. This too deviates from Ripa’s description where the idea of the inspired painter is not mentioned in relation to her hair. Instead, he considered the hair to be a result of negligence or focus and discipline since the painter is constantly concerned only with imagination and creativity. Schaefer correctly associates the hair on the figure of *Pittura* on the medal as indicating creative fury or fervor as confirmed by the inscribed words “joyous state” that sustains the artist.\(^{515}\) The combination of the blank easel, discarded mahlstick and wild hair signify the intellectual as well as creative Fontana.

Another small, but important detail that is also ignored in the medal is Ripa’s suggestion that the feet of *Pittura* are covered with her garment. On the medal, the feet of *Pittura* are clearly shown, one foot even resting on the easel support. Garrard pointed out that in Artemisia Gentileschi’s *Self-Portrait as Pittura*, the painter ignored the stipulation by Ripa that the feet of *Pittura* should be covered with a long dress and decides to omit her feet completely. The covered feet are symbolic to Ripa, as Garrard states to “establish a metaphorical relationship between the covered female body and the ideal proportions of painting, set down in the under drawing but disguised in the final work, when the color – the clothing, as it were - is added.”\(^{516}\) With this, Ripa formulates

\(^{515}\) Schaefer, “A Note on the Iconography of a Medal of Lavinia Fontana,” 234.
\(^{516}\) Garrard, “Artemisia Gentileschi’s Self-Portrait as the Allegory of Painting,” 107.
a connection between female beauty and perfection of proportion. The covering of the female body was analogous to the perfect proportions of an ancient vase, as discussed by Firenzuola. Ripa’s suggestion of the covered feet recalls these earlier ideas and reinforces the view that physical beauty was closely linked to intellectual abilities. If Garrard’s interpretation of Gentileschi’s omission of the feet of Pittura altogether has any relationship to the uncovered feet of Pittura on the medal, both women artists may have been making more of a statement than originally thought. The image of Pittura on the medal clearly has her feet exposed, diverging from the prescriptions of Ripa. The uncovered feet literally expose Fontana’s intellectual skills as a painter.

From early on in her career, Fontana drew upon the notions of a woman artist as a curiosity, a marvel and a beautiful woman as a marvel of nature. Anguissola also encountered these ideas when her portraits were sought after as tokens of curiosity or marvels or she was referred to as marvelous or exceptional. As an astute businesswoman, Fontana understood that patrons who were drawn to her because she was a woman artist were nonetheless patrons who were willing to pay for her paintings. Fontana’s brilliance is evidenced by her necessity to play into this notion in order to attract patrons. This can clearly be seen in her portrayals of herself as a gentildonna in her earlier self-portraits as well as in her ability to connote her abilities as an accomplished woman artist as shown in her medal.

The medal, produced in Rome, must have been a celebration of her success in the city. The patron of the medal has not been identified. The question of whether or not the medal could have been commissioned by Fontana must still be entertained although there lacks any precedence for Fontana commissioning art and there are no known
woman artist patrons of portrait medals. But, the possibility remains since Fontana’s career did not parallel those of other women artists of the period, and her need to compete in the larger art market could have either necessitated the commissioning of the medal, or her success in working within this environment could have compelled her to commission such a medal. She is not identified with a male member of the family on the medal, so it is not likely that her husband commissioned the medal. What is clear is that the medal contributed to the self-fashioning of Fontana as a learned woman, a skilled artist, and a woman who overtly and successfully created her professional legacy situated in a time when women artists struggled to garner the respect and business from the wealthiest and most well-known patrons. The competition for commissions must have been daunting. As a woman making a living for her family, especially in Rome, it must have involved intense pressure. That she is depicted as Pittura, the intelligent and inspired painter is representative of her accomplishments throughout her career which came to fruition in the medal by Casoni.

*Diana Scultori: woman printmaker*

Diana Scultori or Diana Mantuana or Diana Ghisi – all of these names refer to the same printmaker active in Mantua and Rome in the sixteenth century. Her father was Giovanni Battista Mantuano as referred to by Vasari, but called himself Giovanni Battista Scultori in surviving letters.\(^{517}\) Today, Diana is commonly recognized as Diana Scultori. Scultori’s career parallels that of her female predecessors, but is also defined by her connection to her husband, Francesco da Volterra, and their lucrative business practices.

The success of her career as a printmaker can be gleaned from her medal produced in the 1570s. (Fig. 125) Even more importantly, her medal casts her as an equal partner with her husband, both personally and professionally. Her medal is reserved for the last pages of this chapter because it reveals the ultimate combination of the celebration of the independent woman artist, the working relationship between artists and husband and wife, and the self-fashioning of one of the few women printmakers in the sixteenth century. That Scultori may have chosen to devise a medal that represents her career as a successful woman printmaker alludes to her role as an equal business partner with her husband, her connection to Mantua and the Gonzaga court, and her career in Rome. These are the tenets which I argue makes her medal function as one of the most successful marketing tools for her and her husband’s work in an ever-increasingly competitive artistic atmosphere.

Scultori was born in 1547 to Giovanni Battista Mantuano, an artist at the court of the Gonzaga who worked under the direction of Giulio Romano for the decorations of the Palazzo del Te during the 1520s. Giovanni was a successful draughtsman, printmaker and businessman and provided drawings to his children who were also taught the art of engraving. He taught both his son Adamo and daughter Diana to engrave and prepared them for their future careers as artists. Adamo eventually left Mantua to work in Rome, while Diana was prepared for a public career first in Mantua and later in Rome.

Scultori is well-known for her print of an Ionic volute which she produced while working in Mantua. (Fig. 126) The print serves two functions in that it announced Francesco da Volterra’s professional status as an architectural draughtsman, and that it

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519 Ibid., 1110-1111.
raised the status and intellectual value of architectural designs in their own right. Francesco da Volterra occupies an important place in the life and career of Scultori. He was her husband from around 1570 and he provided the printmaker with drawings to be printed since she was not a draughtswoman. Her career was set in motion with the main purpose of furthering her husband’s career and winning him commissions mainly in Rome. Like the other women artists of the Renaissance, Scultori’s success rested on her abilities to shape her identity as a virtuous woman artist. Consciously self-fashioned by the signatures she bears on her engravings, Scultori demonstrated her keen awareness of the art market by devising meaningful signatures dependent upon her specific audience.

Evelyn Lincoln went into great detail regarding Scultori’s signatures on her prints. She noted that the manner in which she signed her prints related directly to her Mantuan roots or her new home of Rome or even her patrons. Her signatures also signified her role in the work of art. For example, she signed her engraving of St. Jerome, 1575, DANIEL. VOLATER. INVENT. DIANA ROMAE INCIDEBAT., referring to Daniele da Volterra as the creator of the image and Diana as the engraver who copied the image onto the plate. Her inscription gives credit to the inventor of the image and also associates her with Rome, a detail surely noticed by her patron and other wealthy potential patrons in Rome. The March of the Horseman for Lord Scipione Gonzaga, The Feast of the Gods dedicated to Claudio Gonzaga and Christ and the Adulteress dedicated to the Duchess of Mantua, Eleonora of Austria, all produced in 1575, are dedicated to patrons with connections to Mantua. Thus, her inscription reads DIANA MANTUANA, and directly references her to her native city of Mantua. These two

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\(^{520}\) Ibid., 1103-1104.
\(^{521}\) Ibid., 1123.
different signatures are good examples of how Scultori was able to utilize her Mantuan origin which conveyed her familiarity with the antique and the famous court of the Gonzaga as well as market herself in Rome to patrons who would not only recognize her Mantuan influences, but also appreciate her new-found allegiance to Rome. In choosing her subjects from artists such as Giulio Romano, Scultori went further to engage not only her Mantuan patrons, but also prospective patrons in Rome. These prints by Scultori which were based on Giulio Romano’s paintings reminded Roman patrons of his teacher, Raphael with whom they were quite familiar and whose work was still looked upon with affection. Thus, she was able to reach a broad audience in both Mantua and Rome by appealing to the tastes of the patrons of both cities. She utilized her connections with Mantua while having the ability to also associate herself with Rome indicating just another example of her abilities as a businesswoman.

The importance of her *Ionic Volute* print had its predecessor in a publication by Giovanni Battista Bertani, the chief supervisor of art and architecture at the court in Mantua.\(^{522}\) Mantua was known for its ancient roots and its fascination with all things classical and thus it was the perfect setting for Scultori’s print. The print was modeled from a drawing by her husband, Francesco, and was intended to be an educational model for students of architecture in Mantua and Rome.\(^{523}\)

On June 5, 1575, shortly after her arrival in Rome, Scultori received her papal privileges from Pope Gregory XIII for making and marketing her prints.\(^{524}\) This

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\(^{522}\) The publication of his book, *Gli oscuri et difficili passi dell’opera ionica di Vitruvio* of 1558 clearly indicates the popularity of classical architecture, in particular the ionic volute, and the sophistication of the Mantuan audience for whom Scultori was directing her prints. Lincoln, *The Invention of the Renaissance Printmaker*, 113.

\(^{523}\) Ibid.

\(^{524}\) Ibid., 123.
established her as a legitimate printmaker whose work was recognized and protected by the copyright rules set down by the papal office of the Segrtaria Breviorum. With this document, Scultori was able to secure profit from the sale of her prints and had the rights to market her images as her own invention and property. Anyone caught violating her rights and privileges was punished.

Scultori’s engravings were based on the drawings of other artists, many including those of her husband. She was not trained or skilled in disegno and thus relied on drawings from other artists which could then be copied to a copper plate. In more than one instance, Scultori gives credit to the artist who designed the drawing which was then transferred to the engraved sheets by signing her prints with her name as well as the name of the artist who designed the image. This was an acceptable practice in the sixteenth century, and Scultori’s prints represent an entire tradition in recycling old imagery from artists such Giulio Romano, and using contemporary drawings as guides to her engravings from artists such as her husband. Lincoln cited three earlier mentioned Scultori prints made for Gonzaga patrons in 1575, the designs from which were all taken from paintings from Giulio Romano in the Palazzo del Te including the March of the Horseman, The Feast of the Gods and Christ and the Adulteress. Her career as an engraver was impressive and well-respected by patrons and artists alike, and her creative genius and business sense in partnering with her husband was even more remarkable.

It was not just her business sense that made her and eventually her husband successful. Her training as a young girl at the Court of the Gonzaga prepared her to work within the circles of the nobility, and taught her how to maintain her respectability as a woman printmaker while still promoting and selling her engravings. It should also be
noted, that unlike Anguissola’s and Fontana’s artworks, Scultori’s prints were produced in multiples and widely disseminated thus making her art more public than that of her female contemporaries due to the medium of prints.

In addition to being trained as an engraver, Scultori was also taught the proper behavior for a woman at court. She spent her childhood surrounded by members of the Gonzaga family, and realized early on that she needed to learn how to survive as an artist at court and that skill alone did not determine employment. Wealthy patrons like the Gonzaga were demanding, and artists such as Scultori’s father who worked for them needed to balance court commissions with independent commissions in order to make a good living. Artistic abilities combined with business skills allowed these artists to succeed. For a woman artist in this environment, learning and exhibiting decorum, so as not to arouse suspicion of bad or indecent behavior, was also vital. Like her female contemporaries, Scultori did not have access to nude models and, thus, had to rely on her abilities without such training as her male counterparts would have received. Working in her father’s workshop protected her from suspicion, and allowed her to learn the necessary skills for engraving. In Rome, the expectations were the same, especially in a Post-Tridentine environment. Scultori was able to utilize her skills, both artistically and personally to achieve well-known status and respect among patrons. While in Rome, Scultori was admitted into the Compagnia di San Giuseppe although she was not permitted to engage in many of the activities that her male counterparts would have enjoyed, including displaying her work in the confraternity exhibitions held on the feast

\[525\] Lincoln brings up the point that Scultori’s devotional prints, including the *St. Jerome* were good examples of Counter-Reformation devotional prints that provided clients with an affordable personal devotional aid. Ibid., 140.
day of San Giuseppe. She compensated for her lack of training in disegno and her lack of access to models by utilizing prints and drawings provided to her by family members such as her brother who was also a printmaker in Rome or her husband and his colleagues.

Her familiarity with courtly manners benefitted her career and more so the career of her husband. The two worked as a team, Scultori printing engravings to market her husband’s talents, and her husband obtaining commissions to support the family. In fact, by 1590, Francesco had proven himself a successful architect and the need for Scultori’s prints to promote him were no longer necessary. Thus, no signed prints from Scultori exist after this date. But, up to this point, Scultori’s prints played a major role in her husband’s success, especially in Rome. Despite early obstacles in Guastella with Cesare Gonzaga, Francesco became one of the most sought-after architects in Rome. This business relationship between husband and wife was rare during the period, especially since Scultori was originally the more well-known and well-liked of the two artists. This association with her husband and the art of engraving is further emphasized and preserved in a portrait medal of Scultori.

The medal is one of a pair with Scultori depicted on one medal and her husband depicted on the other. (Figs.125, 127) Both medals are signed T.R., but the artist is not identified by anything but these initials. On the medal, Scultori is depicted on the obverse, facing right, wearing a gown, a chemise, and a veil. Her hair is pulled back underneath the veil and she is depicted in a matronly way, similar to the portrait of

526 Ibid., 137.
527 I agree with Lincoln who believes Scultori did not produce prints after this date. She made a point to sign all of her prints previously and there is no reason why she would have produced prints after this date without a signature.
Fontana shown on her medal. Her representation on the medal recalls an engraved portrait of her by Cherubino Alberti and a portrait of her drawn by Fedrico Zuccaro. (Figs. 128, 129) The inscription on the obverse reads DIANA.MANTVANA (Diana of Mantua). The inscription bears no reference to her husband or to her father.\textsuperscript{528} On the obverse, there is no reference to her as a wife, daughter, or even printmaker. She is depicted as a proper woman. On the reverse, Scultori’s craft and her husband are referred to in the imagery and inscription on the medal. A hand holding a burin in the act of engraving an image of the Madonna and Child on an oval plate is depicted on the reverse. The inscription, AES INCIDIMVS (We engrave the metal) surrounds the image along the border. The medal would not make much sense unless it is viewed in the way it was most likely intended – as a pair - with a medal of Scultori and a medal of Francesco da Volterra indicating the meaning and function of the medals. Francesco’s medal depicts him looking to the right, wearing a ruff and shirt, with a trimmed beard with the inscription FRANCISCVS VOLATERANVS. T.R., (Francesco da Volterra). The medal, signed T.R. is by the same artist as Scultori’s medal, reinforcing the idea that these medals were produced as a pair. The reverse indicates Francesco’s identification as an architect with the depiction of a hand holding a compass and square along with the inscription SI QVISD VALEMVS (If we are worthy), again furthering the assumption that the “we” in both medals refers to the couple. The date for both medals is unknown, but they were most likely produced sometime around 1570. Evidence for this is suggested by Hill who noted that the only dated medals by T.R. are dated to the years

\textsuperscript{528} Even on her most famous print the \textit{Ionic Volute}, she signs her name Diana Mantuana eiusdem Fran(cis)cI uxor Romae incidebat.
1570 and 1572.\textsuperscript{529} By 1570, Francesco and Scultori were in Rome and most likely were married in that year or the previous year.\textsuperscript{530} It is probably that these medals were produced during or close to the year of their marriage. Another factor supporting the date of 1570 is that Scultori began to sign her engravings Diana from Mantua, citizen of Volterra around 1579. The medal clearly refers to her as Diana from Mantua with no mention of Volterra. Most medals of new brides clearly indicated their status as a wife by taking their husband’s name. Even though her medal does not include her newly acquired name of her husband, I believe that the function of this medal was to introduce the newly married couple as well as promote their careers in Rome, reinforced by the inscriptions on both medals, “We engrave the medal” and “If we are worthy.” That the medal was intended to do more than simply celebrate their marriage can be inferred by Scultori’s motivations for most of her prints which was to promote her career as a printmaker and her husband’s career as an architect. An opportunity to continue this message would not have been lost on the couple, especially in the medium of a medal which could be easily reproduced and distributed to friends and family as well as potential patrons.

Before their move to Rome, Scultori and Francesco would most likely have been recognized by patrons in Rome, but again, the distribution of a medal could have helped bolster their recognition. Early on, Scultori’s reputation must have been strengthened by Vasari who mentions her in his second edition of his Lives. Vasari visited Mantua in 1566 with the intent of revising his text and at that time he stated of Scultori,

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\textsuperscript{529} Hill, Portrait Medals of Italian Artists of the Renaissance, 72.
\textsuperscript{530} Woods-Marsden dates the marriage of Diana and Francesco around the year 1576, and dates the medal to the same year.
All in all, from what I saw last time I was in Mantua to this year, 1566, when I returned, the city is so much more ornamented and more beautiful that, if I had not seen it, I would not have believed it. What is more, the number of artisans has multiplied and keeps on multiplying. Inasmuch as this, to Giovanni Battista Mantovano (engraver of prints and excellent sculptor, who story I related in the Lives of Giulio Romano and Marcantonio Bolognese) there were born two sons who engrave copper plates divinely, and what is more marvelous, a daughter named Diana also engraves so well that it is a wonderful thing: and when I saw her, a very well-bred and charming young lady, and her works, which are most beautiful, I was stunned.  

By the 1570s, Scultori’s reputation and the reputation of her husband had reached a level of success that may have warranted the commissioning of the commemorative medals. Who commissioned the medals or the number cast may never be known, but it is clear that the imagery on the medals was developed with a popular audience in mind, and one would be naive to think neither artist had a hand in the medal’s imagery and function. Scultori managed her reputation and later the reputation of her husband so well that the medals seem to fit into their mode of self-fashioning perfectly.

Further analysis may provide evidence of this. The reverse of Scultori’s medal depicts a hand engraving a copper plate with the image of the Madonna and Child. The hand is an obvious reference to Scultori and her work, although, as Hill points out, the image “vaguely resembles some of Diana’s own designs, but with so common a subject it would be absurd to pretend to identify it.” The subject of the artist painting the Madonna and Child was not new, and was probably adopted from other portraits of artists as Saint Luke painting the Madonna. One of the most relevant images could have been Anguissola’s *Self-Portrait at the Easel*, from the late 1550s. (Fig. 122) Here, Anguissola depicts herself at the easel, with brush and mahlstick in hand, finishing work on a panel.

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532 Hill, *Portrait Medals of Italian Artists*, 72.
depicting the Virgin and Child mimicking Saint Luke. As Woods-Marsden suggests, the self-portrait may have had its influence from male self-portraits of the artist identifying himself with Saint Luke the Evangelist, believed to have been the first Christian artist and the patron saint of artists. Many male artists, in particular Northern artists, used the image of St. Luke painting the Virgin as self-representative. Italian artists included Vasari who used Saint Luke as a vehicle for self-portraiture in his *Saint Luke Painting the Virgin* in SS. Annunziata in 1565. (Fig. 130) But women artists found themselves in a similar situation to the men who had difficulties conflating the male artist and *Pittura*. Due to gender differences, the woman artist could not identify directly with Saint Luke. Woods-Marsden suggests that while Anguissola could not portray herself as Saint Luke in her *Self-Portrait at the Easel*, she could call on the previously painted examples of the saint and associate Saint Luke as the patron saint of all artists, including women artists. She goes further to say that the painting within a painting could also have protected her reputation from any accusations of hubris on the part of the artist. Thus, Anguissola’s humility and decorum may have once again been implied in this self-portrait. But, what of Scultori’s medal of the same subject?

In the case of the medal, another obstacle obstructs this identification since the artist herself is not depicted. The medallist shows only what is thought to be Scultori’s hand engraving the image. This imagery had no precedent in images of Saint Luke painting the Virgin or for that matter *Pittura* at work. Further, the image is of an engraving, not a painting or drawing as is usually associated with the images of Saint Luke. 

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Luke or *Pittura* as personifications of individual artists. Thus, the image must signify something other than what had been traditionally accepted as represented by this subject. Scultori did produce religious prints, but I am not aware of any of her prints of the Virgin and Child in the manner in which they are depicted on her medal. The hand depicted is that of a woman, as is obvious in comparison with the hand on the reverse of Francesco’s medal. The hand is shown in the act of engraving, relating the imagery directly to Scultori. What is unusual about the reverse is the inscription which clearly indicates that Scultori is not the only artist at work here. The inscription reads, “We engrave the metal”. One might be tempted to posit that the inscription may signify a connection between Scultori and Saint Luke, Scultori represented on the medal, but linked to Saint Luke by the hand inscribing the plate. But, the details negate this theory since the hand is definitely that of a woman and thus could not be identified as that of Saint Luke. In addition, unlike other self-portraits by Anguissola and Fontana which indicate the presence of the artist outside the frame of the portrait, there is nothing on the medal to indicate more than the artist at work in the image. Thus, the inscription must refer to Francesco, the artist’s husband and business partner, in the meaning of the medal. The link is strengthened by the inscription on the reverse of Francesco’s medal, “If we are worthy”. The inscriptions bring together husband and wife, and the images connect engraver to architect.

The medals reflect the relationship of Scultori and Francesco, both in a personal and professional way. Diana engraves the metal with the assistance and direction of the drawings by Francesco. It is obvious that Diana’s engravings greatly contributed to Francesco’s success, and literally resulted in the accomplishments of her husband in
Rome. The medals celebrate both artists as individuals on the obverse, and as partners on the reverse thus paralleling their careers as individual printmaker and architect and as successful family business partners.

Scultori’s medal refers directly to her status as an artist and to the type of working relationship practiced by the husband and wife artists. Adding to this imagery of a cooperative marriage and business partnership is the fact that the medals are of the same size (40 mm). In addition, both portraits are facing right not providing one figure precedence over the other. These two details, the sizes of the medal and the direction of the portraits symbolize the equality, both visually and figuratively, between the two figures. The inscriptions on the reverse of the medals associate the figures with each other in an egalitarian manner.

Beyond such a literal interpretation of the mottoes to connote the couples’ relationship, one must also put the medals and inscriptions into context. The images and inscription must also have a religious connotation. The message of Scultori’s medal may seem more evident. The hand which engraves the copper plate does in the same manner as Saint Luke painted or as Anguissola drew the Virgin and Child. The subject of the engraving on the medal, while not representative of the Saint, could have acted as a safeguard against any suggestions of arrogance or pretension, especially in the atmosphere of the Counter Reformation in Rome. Her medal, like all of the medals of the woman artists discussed, most likely circulated in public circles. The necessity for Scultori to remain within the confines of proper behavior, even as seen in a portrait, would have been maintained. It is also likely that the medals of Scultori and her husband were circulated together as a pair and thus her image, although independent of and equal
in value to Francesco’s, must have abided by the same rules that governed other images of women and women artists.

With this medal, so early in her career, Scultori was also able to break away from the woman artist traditionally depicted as a marvel or curiosity, as Anguissola was, or women artists depicted as daughters as in Fontana’s medal. Scultori’s medal stands alone in its imagery in reference to the artist and together as an equal to that of her husband. The collaboration of wife and husband, engraver and architect resulted in a long and well-known and respected career for Scultori and a successful career for Francesco. That the medal dates to the early years of their marriage and partnership, is also evidenced in the fact that, as mentioned earlier, Scultori was not known to have produced any engravings after 1590 after her husband had reached the pinnacle of his career in Rome. Her job as his promoter had ceased to be necessary.

The medals of Anguissola, Fontana, and Scultori give evidence of the function of the commemorative medal utilized by woman artists in three different ways. Not surprisingly, the obverses of these medals reinforced a traditional depiction of these woman artists just as the medals of their non-artist contemporaries were shown, as modest and well-mannered. Anguissola’s medal celebrated her success while Fontana’s and Scultori’s medals promoted theirs. The noble Anguissola found her greatest achievement at the court of Spain, most likely commemorated in a uniface medal commissioned by her father to exemplify his pride in her accomplishments and to preserve her likeness after her departure from his household. Interestingly though, the medal could also be seen as a celebration of his success in arranging for his daughter’s invitation to court, an effort greatly rewarded. The medal of Fontana exudes the self-

535 Interestingly, Vasari refers to Scultori as “more marvelous” in his writing in 1566.
fashioning of the artist. Fontana was required to compete against the best male artists of
the period and the imagery on her medal proves that she could do so. Her association
with Pittura is brilliant, and she makes use of the allegory to demonstrate her skills and to
further promote her career. Unlike Scultori who had a husband who worked with her,
Fontana needed to prove her talent and worth in the public domain alone. Her medal
indicates her success in doing so. Lastly, the medal of Scultori exemplifies the woman
artist as independent engraver while at the same time as partner and supporter of her
husband and architect, Francesco. Like Fontana’s, Scultori’s was most likely used as a
promotion piece. Scultori’s medal cannot and should not be interpreted alone, but must
be connected with that of her husband and fellow artist. The medal indicates her
important and equal role in their relationship, especially their working relationship, and
thus can be shown to be one of the only medals to convey this type of information in
connection with an artist. These three medals are perfect examples of the fashioning and
self-fashioning of the woman artist during a time when restrictions on women, especially
within the public sphere, was at its height. The medals were produced in a time of
religious conservatism that supported the constraints placed upon women. The fact that
these medals functioned privately and publicly and the imagery associated with each
woman artist indicates that these women were able to navigate the male-dominated
artistic environment of the period and successfully become recognized as a part of it.
Their medals remain testimony to their personal and public success.

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536 Fontana’s husband was known to have helped her with her paintings, but was a much lesser
figure in her actual painting career than was Francesco da Volterra in regards to Scultori’s career.
Conclusion

The women depicted on medals in the sixteenth century can be characterized as virtuous, intelligent, talented, beautiful, and in my opinion powerful. In the preceding chapters, I have profiled a small number of them whose commemorative medals portrayed the themes of beauty, power, propaganda, and celebration. While this dissertation is by no means an exhaustive study of the sixteenth-century medal, I chose specific medals of women to represent these overarching themes in the sixteenth-century representation of women. Previous consideration of sixteenth-century medals was given priority by scholars such as Attwood, Toderi and Vannel, and Pollard in their more recent catalogues of collections around the world. While these resources have provided indispensable information, for without them this dissertation could not have been written, more attention should be focused on the medals of women from the sixteenth century in particular. This was a time of artistic, social, cultural, religious, political and even technological change that is reflected in these medals from cities across Italy. These objects suffered an undeserved fate as earlier scholars snubbed the so-called poor design and lack of craftsmanship that they associated with many of these medals.

Select medals by Pastorino, Ruspagiari, Signoretti, Bombarda, and even Leoni further established the Renaissance notion of physical beauty and inner virtue, and should be admired for their contribution to the new standard of depicting portraits of women. The images of women on these medals, whether identified or still unknown, exemplify the contemporaneous appeal of stylized beauty in their portrayal of delicate and diaphanous draperies, coiffed hair, adornment with precious jewels, and the sometimes misunderstood features, whether a truncated arm or bust or even the face of an onlooker.
The Este, Sacra ti, Trotti, Gonzaga, Medici, among numerous others are all families that played a role in the maintenance and development of the commemorative medal. Throughout the period examined here, the men contributed greatly by their patronage as well as by their personal commitment to honor and celebrate the women of their families. These women were charged with protecting and preserving the family lineage, upholding the family reputation, and contributing to the power and prestige of the family.

The five medals I examined of Isabella Capua Gonzaga and her daughter Ippolita Gonzaga further emphasized the depiction of female beauty, the importance of female chastity, and the celebration of these women’s talents and intellectual accomplishments. Ferrante Gonzaga commissioned Jacopo da Trezzo and Leone Leoni to commemorate these two members of his family in a way that celebrated their personal attributes as well as their contribution to the important position and legacy of the Gonzaga family.

In the mid-sixteenth century, issues of legacy and legitimacy were at the forefront for Cosimo I de’ Medici who had just taken control of the city of Florence in 1537. His propagandistic program was intended to establish his authority and was constructed by artists from Florence and beyond. Adding to this program were the medallists Domenico Poggini and Pastorino who produced medals of the Medici women including Eleonora of Toledo and her daughters Isabella and Lucrezia. I concluded that the medal of Eleonora by Poggini signified her power and ability to legitimize and propagate the Medici family while it also demonstrated her active role as protector of the Medici family and by extension all of Florence. The medals of Isabella and Lucrezia advanced the ideas of
Medici abundance and underscored the importance of strategic marriage alliances. These women took an active part in promoting their family’s legitimacy and legacy.

The marketing of one’s career was difficult in the sixteenth century, especially if you were a woman artist. In Chapter Six, I analyzed the medals of Sofonisba Anguissola, Lavinia Fontana and Diana Scultori as objects of celebration and promotion. These women were in a precarious situation as they became part of the male-dominated art market yet had to maintain, or at least feign their traditional roles as women. Their success was built not only on their artistic talents, but also on their keen abilities to navigate and participate in an artistic arena controlled by men.

All of the women who adorn the medals examined in my study were confined by prescribed roles established by ancient precedent, the church, early and contemporary male authors, and society as a whole. Domestic duties dominated women’s lives as did the pressure of maintaining a family legacy by producing a male heir. Meeting these expectations was essential for the survival of the family, and were the very ideas that many patrons celebrated or commemorated in the medals of their wives, daughters, and sisters. My contention is that even within such constraints, these women actively participated in the familial, social, and sometimes political realms while maintaining, at least superficially, their private and passive persona that was expected of them. The portraits and reverse imagery of the medals of women from the Gonzaga and Medici families and the medals of the women artists attest to this.

My hope is that this dissertation illuminates the various themes in medal imagery depicting women from the sixteenth century, and that it establishes these medals and the women who adorn them as important individuals in the study of sixteenth-century art. I
believe that these women had a hand in influencing their own representations on these small commemorative objects. While these medals were commissioned by the men in their lives, it would be remiss to think that these women did not take part in their own self-fashioning. The study of these medals is important since they are objects that help reconstruct the context of these women’s, and men’s, lives during the sixteenth century.

My contribution to sixteenth-century medal scholarship is a starting point for further investigation. Fortunately, recent scholarship by Attwood, Pollard, and Toderi and Vannel has contributed greatly to the under-represented literature on sixteenth-century medals. Scholars should realize that the hundreds of medals of women produced between 1550 and 1620 should be taken seriously as objects of artistic value, studied as representative of cultural tradition, understood as meaningful in the study of women in history, and expanded beyond the marginal mention in discussions of painted portraits. These medals offer an abundance of information about sixteenth-century women. My hope is that future scholars utilize the knowledge gained from the study of medals of women to continue to generate a cultural framework in which these medals were created and these women were celebrated.
Figure 1. Pisanello, *John VIII Palaeologus*, 1438, National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C.

Figure 2. Pisanello, *Medal of Cecilia Gonzaga*, 1447, National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C.

Figure 3. Jacopo da Trezzo, *Medal of Mary Tudor*, 1554, British Museum, London.
Figure 4. Pier Paolo Galeotti, *Medal of Chiara Tolentino Taverna*, obverse, 1554, National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C.

Figure 5. Leone Leoni, *Medal of Ippolita Gonzaga*, obverse, Staatliche Museen, Münzkabinett, Berlin.
Figure 6. Leonardo da Vinci, *Ginevra de’ Benci*, c. 1474-78, obverse and reverse, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

Figure 7. Parmigianino, *Antea*, c. 1531-34, Museo di Capodimonte, Naples.

Figure 8. Parmigianino, *Madonna of the Long Neck*, begun 1534, Galleria degli Uffizi.
Figure 9. Alfonso Ruspagliari, *Medal of Camilla Ruggieri*, late 16th century, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

Figure 10. Bombarda, *Medal of Leonora Cambi*, late 16th century, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

Figure 11. Unidentified, *Medal of Unidentified Woman*, Reggio Emilia.
Figure 12. Gian Antonio Signoretti, * Medal of Costanza Bocchi*, 1560, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

Figure 13. Bombarda, * Medal of Anna Maurella Oldofredi d’Iseo*, late 16th century, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.


Figure 15. Alfonso Ruspaggiari, * Medal of Lucia Ruspaggiari*, British Museum, London.
Figure 16. Alfonso Ruspagliari, *Medal of Isabella Riario*, late sixteenth century.

Figure 17. Alfonso Ruspagliari, *Medal of Claudia Pencalieri (?)*, late sixteenth century, Royal Cabinet, Munich.
Figure 18. Alfonso Ruspagiari, *Medal of an Unidentified Woman and Onlooker*, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

Figure 19. Lelio Orsi, *Bust of a Young Women and Naked Torso of an Old Man*, drawing, Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence.
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