Constructing an Ideal Renaissance Persona:
A Study of Italian Renaissance Portraiture of Rulers and Their Underlying Political Messages

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Dating Conventions

1450: Artwork was executed in 1450

c. 1450: Artwork was executed sometime around 1450

1450-51: Artwork was begun in 1450 and finished in 1451

1450/1451: Artwork was executed sometime between 1450 and 1451

c.1450/1460: Artwork executed sometime between the period of 1450-1460

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All, however, agree that painting began with the outlining of a man’s shadow. —Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*

Introduction

The Italian Peninsula in the Renaissance was a battlefield where rulers of principalities fought for their spheres of influence. The overall continued division in the Peninsula prompted Italian rulers to set forth new ways of establishing and legitimizing their rulership. Part of the new approach to statecraft was through the use of art to develop the ruler’s public image, a practice that was actually perfected by the Romans more than a millennium ago. Roman emperors created their official image through the dissemination of identically sculpted portraits of the emperor, hence one could find similar sculptures in different parts of the former Roman Empire. Though they ruled far smaller territories, Italian rulers adapted the Roman tradition of creating official public images through art. This paper will look at the art scene in Renaissance Italy, with a focus on portraiture that was produced in the Republic of Venice, the Duchies of Milan and Urbino, and the Papal States.

I chose these four states because they had a variety of political structures that arguably shaped different political goals. The Duchy of Milan had a powerful secular court that focused on glorifying the individual and family lineage as well as its connection with other European ruling families. For the Papal States, I will primarily focus on the central papal government which needed to reestablish its authority in both temporal and spiritual spheres following the Avignon period. Images of papal rulers will also allow me to examine the intermingling of secular and religious motifs in political visual propaganda. The Venetian Republic was famously stable, unlike Florence and other republics, and it was also characterized by a hybrid political system that included a single head of state, the doge, whose position was however elected and never became dynastic or hereditary. Finally, I selected the Duchy of Urbino for its relatively
small size compared to other states and for its artistic flourishing in spite of its relative lack of power. Examining how a small duchy confidently presented itself among its much more powerful neighbors, and how its rulers navigated the ideas of humanist education and noble prowess in portraits will offer useful comparative materials to my analysis of the other three, much larger and stronger polities.

Political Background

By the twelfth century there was a recognized kingdom in the South, and the pope’s rule over some territories was of long standing, but much of central, and most of northern, Italy was nominally part of the Holy Roman Empire without any universally recognized local powers. Renaissance Italian rulers, therefore, not only competed with neighboring cities, but also with the much more powerful, and legitimate, emperor. Starting in the mid-thirteenth century, stronger regional states such as the Duchy of Milan, the Republics of Florence and Venice, and the Kingdom of Naples emerged as prominent forces in the Peninsula, but Italy still remained largely fragmented. The Peninsula’s dissected reality demanded that Italian rulers take extraordinary steps to secure regional principalities first. The struggle for power among different regional states asked for rulers who were not only fierce generals, but also good Christians, skillful diplomats, cultured patrons, and, at times, wise merchants. To meet such an arduous task, Italian rulers started to sponsor intellectuals who could offer valuable advice based on rediscovered classical history.

Even before the rise of Humanism from the mid-fourteenth century onward, which increasingly devoted itself to the rediscovery and study of the ancient intellectual, literary, and artistic tradition, Italian rulers sponsored a revival of the study of Roman law aimed at affirming the power of states. Jurists like Cino da Pistoia (1270-1336), Bartolus de Saxoferrato (1313-
1357), and Baldus de Ubaldis (1327-1400) were all concerned with arguing through Roman law whether the pope, the Holy Roman emperor, or local Italian princes held the ultimate jurisdiction, that is, final appeal in a legal case. In modern terms, “sovereignty” would be a more appropriate concept than “jurisdiction,” but sovereignty in the late Middle Ages carried a different meaning compared to today. To late medieval jurists, sovereignty was not indivisible, so both the emperor and the ruler of Milan could hold sovereignty over Milan. As Joseph Canning points out: “According to Baldus it is the reality of power which matters, not whether Giangaleazzo [Visconti] is entitled rex [king] or dux [duke].”1 As the political culture of the time increasingly came to be founded on legal concepts, and was thus concerned with laws on legitimacy and jurisdiction, states became patrons of legal scholars who could argue that Italian states had the ultimate jurisdiction over their land.2 The gradual employment of scholars in Italian courts was sparked by, and also a cause of, the increasing tension in the Italian Peninsula.

The Visconti family had been prominent in Lombardy since Ottone Visconti (1207-1295) ruled as Archbishop of Milan starting in 1262 and later Lord of Milan starting in 1277, but the family only gained full control after the reigns of Azzone (1302, r. 1329-1339), and his heirs and uncles, Luchino (1287-1349) and Giovanni (1290-1354).3 Vast territories were acquired during their reigns, among them Alba, Alessandria, Asti, Bergamo, Bologna, Brescia, Como, Cremona, Cuneo, Genoa, Lodi, Novara, Parma, Piacenza, Tortona, and Vercelli.4 While subsequent Visconti were not able to defend all of the newly acquired territories, the core of Visconti rule in Lombardy was established. Then, in the late fourteenth century, two Visconti brothers, Galeazzo

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3 Azzone died without a male heir, so leadership passed to his uncles Luchino and Giovanni who ruled jointly as Lords of Milan.
II (c. 1321-1378) and Bernabò (1323-1385), split the territory, though the division would quickly be reverted by Gian Galeazzo (r. 1395-1402), Galeazzo II’s son and heir, who was “believed by all to be a shy youth.” He proved “all” wrong. Gian Galeazzo captured and poisoned his uncle Bernabò, thus claiming the entirety of Visconti territory for his branch of the family. By the time of his death in 1402, he had also conquered Belluno, Feltre, Padova, Perugia, Verona, and Vicenza, and Pisa and Siena in Tuscany. Perhaps the greatest treasure that he left to his descendants was the official ducal title which he acquired from Emperor Wenceslaus (r. 1378-1400) in 1395. Now, Visconti land was legitimately organized under the Duchy of Milan. The Visconti became the first recognized sovereign dukes in Italy, though the Visconti would not enjoy this privilege for long, as their main male line died out in 1447, and Francesco Sforza (r. 1450-1466) laid claim to the duchy in 1450.

Lordship over Urbino, a town near the Adriatic about two hundred miles south of Venice, was contended between two rival families in the twelfth century—the Houses of Montefeltro and Malatesta. The relatively small town was involved in a contest between the Papal States and the Holy Roman Empire during the Middle Ages. There were two factions in the quarrel, the Guelphs and the Ghibellines, who supported the Papal States and the Holy Roman Empire respectively. The House of Montefeltro sided with the Holy Roman Empire, so in 1155 Emperor Frederick I (r. 1155-1190) made Antonio I da Montefeltro imperial vicar for the town of Urbino, thus marking the rise of Montefeltro in Urbino politics for the next three centuries. Due to Urbino’s small size and strategic position, subsequent Montefeltro faced challenges in maintaining their sovereignty and the town was twice absorbed by the Papal States in the

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fourteenth century. Despite the historically bitter relationship with the papacy, by the fifteenth century the Montefeltro had won papal support through offering their lives to fight for the papacy. Moreover in 1443, Pope Eugene IV (r. 1431-1447) granted Oddantonio da Montefeltro (r. 1443-1444) ducal title as a reward for his military support. Oddantonio had to surrender his newly acquired position as he was murdered the following year, and his sudden death left Urbino without an official ruler, until Federico da Montefeltro (r. 1444-1482), the illegitimate son of Oddantonio’s father, surfaced.⁷

Venetian political history was far less turbulent. By 1300, Venice had become one of the biggest cities in Europe with a population of about 120,000.⁸ Venice’s long success was largely due to its strategic position within Mediterranean trade networks. One advantage it lacked, however, was landed territory. During the fourteenth century, as the rest of Italy was becoming more unified under various princes, Venice also claimed its sphere of influence on the mainland. Venetian landed expansion infringed the interests of the Visconti in Milan, the della Scala in Verona, the Carrarese in Padua, the Habsburgs, and the King of Hungary.⁹ As a commercial empire, Venice’s landed expansion was mostly driven by its commercial needs. Venetian merchants sold imported goods to continental Europe in exchange for goods such as metals from Germany.¹⁰ The event that propelled the Venetians to expand was the death of Gian Galeazzo Visconti in 1402. Within three years, Venice would acquire Padua, Verona, and Vicenza, and for the next few decades, Venice would compete with Florence, Milan, and the Papal States. In fact,

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⁷ Federico ruled as the Lord of Urbino from 1444 to 1474, when he was granted the ducal title.
⁹ Knapton, “Venice and the Terraferma,” 133.
¹⁰ David S. Chambers, The Imperial Age of Venice, 1380-1580 (London: Thames and Hudson Ltd., 1970), 54.
by 1463, the papacy and the Republic of Florence both feared that Venetians’ ambition was to subdue the entire Peninsula.\footnote{Ibid.}

Medieval popes exerted great influence in European politics, though they ever so slowly lost their political grip on Christian states. By 1309, the Roman Curia was moved to Avignon in southeastern France, thus initiating a half-century or more of French papacy. During the popes’ absence from Italy, the Papal States only loosely held together, and the authority of the Church also suffered. From the period between 1378 to 1417, disputes arose between Italian and French papal claimants based in Rome and Avignon respectively. The Great Schism eventually ended in 1417 with the election of an Italian pope, Martin V (r. 1417-1431). When the papacy moved back to Rome, Italian popes would discover that they no longer enjoyed the same authority as their medieval predecessors, so post-schism popes needed to reestablish their authority while the rest of Italy also fought for more influence in the Peninsula. Evidently, all four states that will be discussed in the paper were, at varying degrees, both riven by internal disputes and engaged in struggles with their neighbors, creating a general climate of instability, illegitimacy, and vulnerability, especially when confronted with the stronger new monarchs of western Europe.

Mid to late fifteenth-century pan-European statecraft has been collectively described by historians as marked by the rise of “new” monarchies, when rulers innovatively expanded, unified, and consolidated their kingdoms almost concurrently.\footnote{For more information, see Wallace K. Ferguson, *Europe in Transition, 1300-1520* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1962).} \textit{“Tanto monta, monta tanto, Isabel y Fernando} [They amount to the same, the same they amount to, Isabella and Ferdinand].”\footnote{John Edwards, *Ferdinand and Isabella* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 1.} This was the often-misunderstood motto of King Ferdinand II of Aragon who
ruled in Spain together with his wife, Isabella I of Castile. By 1478, the couple unified Spain through marriage and conquests, and after reclaiming Granada in 1492 they ended almost eight centuries of Muslim occupation in the Iberian Peninsula. Likewise in France, Charles VII (r. 1422-1461) consolidated the Kingdom of France. Under his reign, France came out victorious in the Hundred Years War against England (1337-1453), and he also established a standing French army in the process and issued the Pragmatic Sanction of Bourges in 1438, which limited papal authority in France. Across the Channel, first Tudor King Henry VII (r. 1485-1509) also successfully established his new dynasty.

The year 1453 was a startling year for all Italians. To their north, the Hundred Years’ War between France and England finally ended; to their east, the Ottoman Turks besieged and took Constantinople. These two almost simultaneous events warned Italian rulers that they were now particularly vulnerable not only because of their internal fragmentation but also foreign threats. Realizing the need for unity, the Italians convened and formed the Italic League (1454) with the principal goal of keeping foreign threats out of Italy. The league was led by the major powers in the Italian Peninsula: the Papal States, the Republics of Venice and Florence, the Duchy of Milan, and the Kingdom of Naples. While the league did not unify Italy, it marked a conscious departure from the previous century of ruthless expansion to a period of relative peace and balance of power, which provided fitting conditions for the High Renaissance. The surface-level cooperation among Italian states was still filled with contests for power and influence with a shifted focus toward economic rivalries and cultural competitions.

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14 Ferdinand II was King of Aragon from 1479 to his death in 1516 and King of Castile from 1475 to Isabella’s death in 1504. Isabella I was Queen of Castile from 1474 to 1504 and Queen of Aragon from 1479 to her death in 1504.

15 For more information, see Malcolm Graham Allan Vale, *Charles VII* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974).

**Historiography and Method**

The artistic and intellectual flourishing of the Renaissance has always attracted scholarly study by historians, art historians, literary scholars, and others. A quick review of foundational studies on Italian statecraft in the Renaissance, however, would reveal that analyses tend to treat each state separately while neglecting some of the common trends that influenced the Peninsula as a whole. For instance, Venetian statecraft has been thoroughly examined by William J. Bouwsma in his book *Venice and the Defense of Republican Liberty* (1968). His argument that Venetian republicanism was the manifestation of Venice’s geographical location and cultural history is backed by writings of statesmen and political theorists of the time. Garry Wills’ more recent *Venice: Lion City: The Religion of Empire* (2001) focused more on the way different Venetians experienced, and responded to, the Renaissance and Venice’s particular government structure. David Chambers, Edward Muir, Elisabeth G. Gleason, and Robert Finlay have also explored some aspects of Venetian republicanism in their studies, though they rarely ventured out of Venice. Of course, Venice was a bit unusual in being a longstanding republic, so it might make sense to study it more in isolation from the other states.

Nonetheless, one major obstacle for any comparative study in Italian Renaissance political history is that states indeed adapted different political systems as outlined above. While Venice enjoyed its status as a republic, Milan provides a contrasting political system. Jane Black’s *Absolutism in Renaissance Milan* (2009) investigates the foundation and execution of Milanese absolutism. Black’s research is centered on how the Visconti and Sforza families managed to establish and maintain power over the Milanese state, and why the duchy ultimately declined after the mid-fifteenth century. Gary Ianziti has also conducted substantial research on the history of Milan. His *Humanistic Historiography under the Sforzas: Politics and
Propaganda in Fifteenth-Century Milan (1988) explores how the Sforza manipulated the family history in their claim to power. Scholarship is also plentiful on other regions. For Rome, the majority of studies have focused on individual popes. Gerard Noel, Frederic J. Baumgartner, and Kenneth Gouwens have all written on the legacies of different Renaissance popes who were not only spiritual leaders, but also statesmen, warriors, and patrons. Lastly, there is the Duchy of Urbino, which has received less scholarly attention compared to other states. Nevertheless, Cecil H. Clough has written extensively on the rise of Urbino focusing especially on Federico da Montefeltro’s reign.

The scholars mentioned above use a variety of sources in their studies, but they rely primarily on written documents while neglecting artworks that were also important in the Renaissance. As a result of the emergence and growth of humanism, and then also of artistic accomplishments, educated Italians and Italian leaders began to see cultural achievements—in scholarship, literature, and the figurative arts—as central to Italy’s greatness and glory. Italian states could thus compete with each other on the basis of their cultural policies and splendor. Italian rulers also readily employed artists because aside from taking personal interests in art, they also saw art as a powerful political tool to legitimize and project their rulership. Thanks to these developments, Italian masters left countless wonders for later generations to see. To sixteenth-century painter Giorgio Vasari (1511-1574), the Renaissance was a “rinascita,” or rebirth, of the great culture and art of antiquity.\textsuperscript{17} To nineteenth-century French historian Jules Michelet, “La Renaissance” was a time of great change not only in Italy but all of Europe. In his

opinion, the next time Europe would experience such a drastic turning point was in 1789, the start of the French Revolution.\textsuperscript{18}

Many consider Giotto di Bondone (1267-1337) the first true Renaissance artist. Lorenzo Ghiberti (1378-1455) acclaimed Giotto as a “marvelous genius,”\textsuperscript{19} and Vasari commented that Giotto, “by the gift of God revived…art.”\textsuperscript{20} Looking back at Giotto’s accomplishments, Ghiberti and Vasari could only describe them as revolutionary. One of Giotto’s astonishing skills which both Ghiberti and Vasari commented on was his ability to draw from life. Vasari stated that “Giotto not only captured his master's [Cimabue] own style but also began to draw so ably from life that he made a decisive break with the crude traditional Byzantine style and brought to life the great art of painting as we know it today.”\textsuperscript{21} The emphasis on naturalistic renditions captures the essence of the Renaissance, and Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519) would even instruct artists to learn human anatomy from dead corpses.\textsuperscript{22}

Artists’ dedication to exploring the world around them fostered a revolution in the way subjects were presented in art. Suddenly, there was an interest in human anatomy, linear perspective, and most importantly, the human mind. According to Leonardo, “the good painter has to paint two principal things, that is to say, man and the intention of his mind.”\textsuperscript{23} In praising classical painter Daemon, Leon Battista Alberti (1404-1472) wrote: “the painter Daemon’s remarkable merit is that you could easily see in his painting the wrathful, unjust and inconstant,

\begin{itemize}
\item Vasari, \textit{Lives}, 96.
\item Vasari, \textit{Lives}, 97.
\item Leonardo, “How the Good Painter,” 114.
\end{itemize}
as well as the exorable and clement, the merciful, the proud, the humble and the fierce.”\(^{24}\) In other words, capturing human emotion became the ultimate goal for artists. Renaissance artists’ emphasis on realism and the human mind led to the revival of a genre of secular art that had largely been lost during the Middle Ages: portraiture. Gradually, artworks in various media bearing the likeliness of actual individuals surfaced in Italy. Once again, people were portrayed in bronze, stone, paint, and even gold. John Pope-Hennessy summarized the collective rediscovery of portraits as the “cult of personality.”\(^{25}\) He claimed:

…the portrait in the Renaissance is no more than a watershed between the medieval portrait and the portrait as we know it now. Representationally it is the story of how eyes cease to be linear symbols and become instead the light-reflecting, light-perceiving organs we ourselves possess; how lips cease to be a segment in the undifferentiated texture of the face, and become instead a sensitized area through whose relaxation or contraction a whole range of responses is expressed; how the nose ceases to be a fence between the two sides of the face and becomes instead the delicate instrument through which we breathe and smell; and how ears cease to be repulsive Gothic polypi emerging from the head, and become instead a kind of in-built receiving set whose divine functions compensate for its rather unattractive form.\(^{26}\)

Pope-Hennessy dedicated his scholarly career to studying portraits, though he was less concerned with the political implications and instead focused on portraits’ connection with humanism, for instance in his *The Portrait in the Renaissance* (1963).

I should clarify two things. First of all, while paintings might dominate the portrait genre, I will examine portraits in a variety of media such as paintings, frescoes, medals, and sculptures, to see how rulers used images of themselves to project and legitimate their power. Secondly, I will not evaluate the artistic value of the works that I will discuss since the ultimate goal of the

\(^{24}\) Leon Battista Alberti, “Book II,” in *On Painting*, trans. Cecil Grayson (London: Penguin Books, 1991), 77; we do not know the exact identification of Daemon whom Alberti referred to. A certain artist named Daimon or Daemon appeared in Pliny the Elder’s *Natural History*, though he was not a painter but rather a sculptor. Even if Alberti and Pliny meant the same person, Alberti would not have seen actual works of Daemon because even the works of the most famous classical painters like Zeuxis or Apelles were long-lost by the Renaissance, see Pliny the Elder, *The Elder Pliny’s Chapters on the History of Art*, trans. K. Jex-Blake (Chicago: Argonaut, Inc., 1968), 73.


\(^{26}\) *Ibid.*
thesis is to tease out why rulers in different regimes emphasized different qualities in their portraiture—not which ruler had the best taste in art. Admittedly, most of the works that I will discuss are of top quality because rulers tried to hire prestigious and famous artists. It is also worth mentioning that overall, larger frescoes or bronze sculptures were considered more prestigious than other genres due to the cost of labor and material. Likewise, religious art was more reputable due to its subject matter. Portraits, though they were relatively inexpensive works depicting secular subjects, were quite prized by patrons and collectors, especially moving into the High Renaissance. While it is tempting to categorize these portraits as propaganda, it should be noted that propaganda in our modern sense is a new concept. As Peter Burke claims in his introduction to *The Fabrication of Louis XIV* (1992):

Another modern way of describing this book would be to call it a study of ‘propaganda’ for Louis XIV, of attempts to mould or manipulate ‘public opinion,’ or a study of ideology’…All three concepts—propaganda, public opinion and ideology—were lacking… [The ignorance of these concepts] however do not signify that seventeenth-century viewers and listeners were unaware of attempts at persuasion, or even manipulation. Given the stress on rhetoric in the education of elites at this time, they were probably more conscious of techniques of persuasion than most of us are today…[T]here is a danger inherent in calling a study like this one an analysis of propaganda…The danger is that of encouraging author and readers alike to interpret the poems, paintings and statues representing the king as if they were nothing but attempts to persuade, rather than (say) expressions of the king’s power…As the ancient historian Paul Veyne recently suggested, some works of art are created to exist rather than to be seen.  

Traditionally the field of political history did not rely much on visual evidence or the study of artworks. Although I will not focus on the artistic qualities of the portraits, my aim is to examine artworks like actual documents which require close reading and attention to detail. For example, the composition and the symbolism of portraits will be considered. In addition to that, I

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will also consider things like who was the sitter? What sort of clothing does the sitter wear? Did the sitter prefer lavish or somber representations? What is the setting of the sitter’s surroundings? Is there a vast landscape in the background or is there an enclosed space?

In recent decades more scholars, both historians and art historians, have worked on the connections between visual evidence and political ideas and practices. This has been especially true in the case of Florence. In 2021, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City held an exhibition titled *The Medici: Portraits and Politics: 1512-1570*, which closely explored the topic of my thesis in the particular case of Florence after the end of its Republic. The exhibition was well received, but it offered yet another example of the tendency to reduce the entirety of Renaissance art to that of Florence. Indeed, scholars have tried to tackle the connection between art and politics from different angles. Andrea M. Galdy focuses on one artist in particular in her book, *Agnolo Bronzino: Medici Court Artist in Context* (2013), and Gabrielle Langdon’s *Medici Women: Portraits of Power, Love, and Betrayal in the Court of Duke Cosimo I* (2007) explores the question through a gender lens. Unsurprisingly, a good deal has also been written on papal patronage. Loren Partridge’s *The Art of the Renaissance in Rome: 1400-1600* (1996) is an excellent overview of the art scene in Rome. Jan L. de Jong’s *The Power and the Glorification: Papal Pretensions and the Art of Propaganda in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Century* (2013) offers a more defined connection between art and its political, and sometimes personal, motivations.

There have also been some strong overviews of the Italian art scene during the Renaissance and its connection to political power. Alison Cole’s *Art of the Italian Renaissance Courts* (1995) is a good early example of this kind of work. In her book, she argues that regional courts were hungry for novelty, magnificence, and recognition, and art fulfilled these needs.
However, with her wide span of time, place, and coverage of different art media, her treatment of different states is rather superficial. The same problem exists in Bram Kempers’ *Painting, Power, and Patronage: The Rise of the Professional Artist in Renaissance Italy* (1987), in which Kempers offers a great overview of how different Italian powers used art as political assertions. Like Cole, Kemper’s coverage of such a wide timeframe and region makes it difficult to have in-depth discussions focused on portraiture. *The Image of the Individual: Portraits in the Renaissance* (1998), a collection of essays edited by Nicholas Mann and Luke Syson, deals more specifically with portraits and how different political, social, and cultural circumstances affected the art scene. Mann and Syson aimed the book to examine a variety of media and regions in an attempt to offer an overview of this period’s portraiture.

I intend my paper to take what previous scholars have done and bring different states’ patronage of portraits into dialogue with each other. The sort of questions I will ask are: Why did portraits from both Milan and Urbino stress their leader’s military might? Were there any differences in their representation? Why was there generally an interest in the antique, or how were the ideals of humanists subtly presented in the portraits? I will not be presenting an overview of the states that I picked, but rather I will use portraits to illustrate why the particularities of each state demanded slightly different representations. The works of Bartolus, Coluccio Salutati (1331-1406), Baldus, and Niccolò Machiavelli (1469-1527) will serve as the foundation to understand Italian politics and the intense search for legitimacy in the Renaissance. Art treatises written by Italian masters such as Alberti, Vasari, and Leonardo will also be used to understand Renaissance art through the eyes of artists. Additionally, other contemporary writings such as the autobiography of Pope Pius II (r. 1458-1464), and *The Book of the Courtier* by
Baldassare Castiglione (1478-1529) will be considered in formulating my argument. This ample historical documentation will hopefully outline the context in which portraits were created and displayed.

The thesis will be thematically divided into three chapters. The first two chapters examine how Italian rulers used images to project a virtuous persona. It was universally agreed that a virtuous ruler should be a man of both letters and of arms, yet a close comparison between the four states will reveal that each had a different focus in expressing this ideal. While Milanese rulers, heirs to a more established feudal tradition, tended to be more overt about their military might, popes and Venetian doges, for different reasons, tended to focus more on being men of letters; Federico of Urbino, however, valued both personae equally in his art commissions.

The third chapter will be devoted to examining how and why Italian rulers also appealed to a pious persona through art. The obvious examples are popes whose portraits reinforced their status as the spiritual leaders of Christianity because their claims to power rested on their piety. At the same time, popes like Julius II (r. 1503-13) had ambitions beyond the spiritual realm, so aside from the obvious claims of papal spiritual jurisdiction, various popes also asserted their prominence in the secular world which in theory belonged to worldly princes and rulers. Other Italian rulers, of course, begrudged ambitious popes, and responded with their own images displaying themselves as good Christians. Ultimately, I will argue that although Italian rulers in these states commissioned portraits to construct a persona that was learned, warlike, and pious, due to different states’ intricate contexts, each produced a specific version of these qualities in their rulers’ never-ending search for legitimization and projection of power.

When Alexander had come to the famous tomb of

29 The Book of the Courtier is a philosophical dialogue with many speakers that was published in 1528.
Achilles, sighing, he said: “O fortunate man, to
Find so clear a trumpet and someone to write of
You so loftily!”
—Petrarch, The life of Alexander the Great

Chapter One: Men of Letters

According to Plutarch (c. 46-119), when Alexander the Great (r. 336-323 BCE) reached Troy, he ordered to open the tomb of Achilles and anointed his body. Alexander paid homage to Homer’s mythological hero in the Trojan War whom he must have aspired to resemble, yet Alexander was also envious in that he, too, wanted to achieve immortality through the words of a great poet like Homer. Centuries later, the anecdote would be used by Baldassare Castiglione in his The Book of the Courtier to illustrate the tension between whether a successful courtier needed arms or letters more. It was nearly impossible to conclude the debate, but the fact that Italians pondered such questions implied that they were conscious of this dichotomy. Thanks to universities in Bologna, Padua, and Siena that were founded in 1088, 1222, and 1240 respectively, Italians increasingly contemplated the world around them.

Simply put, graduates from these institutions introduced a new set of values to Italian politics through directly participating in Italian governments, either as rulers themselves or as advisors to rulers. Coluccio Salutati, for example, began his career as a law professor at the University of Bologna and in 1374 was appointed Chancellor of Florence, a position that he held until his death in 1406. Salutati believed that ancient kings had three special functions: “to defend the frontiers of the realm, to rule justly and to settle quarrels.” The first task required the ruler to be a competent commander, but the other two required that he also be educated and

rational, or as Salutati put it: “This duty required bravery of mind and body.”

For the first time since antiquity, the cultivation of the mind was placed on equal terms with the body, and the Italians were the first to acknowledge this. Pietro Bembo in the Courtier asserted his sense of pride in saying that he blamed “the French for thinking that letters are detrimental to the profession of arms, and [he held] that to no one is learning more suited than to a warrior.”

In other words, while the feudal notion of rulership as based primarily on military valor was still common in the medieval monarchies of western Europe, the Italians, who lived in the cradle of humanism, had already realized the importance of both arms and letters.

As a result of the political achievements of humanists like Salutati and Enea Silvio Piccolomini, later Pope Pius II, arms and letters were viewed as equally important and almost inseparable. When Pope Pius denounced the Ottoman Turks, he remarked: “The Greeks, though once courageous and brave, have not kept their former strength. Almost all who are subject to the Turks have become weak and lost their former spirit in military matters and in letters.”

Pius presented a revolutionary way to assess a person in that both arms and letters were considered.

Vespasiano da Bisticci (1421-1498), a Florentine bookseller and biographer, also claimed in his Vite di uomini illustri del secolo XV [Lives of Illustrious Men of the Fifteenth Century]: “It is difficult for a leader to excel in arms unless he be...a man of letters.”

It was under this premise that Italian rulers operated. On one hand, rulers needed to be fierce generals who could defend and conquer territory, and on the other hand, they needed to be patrons of learning who governed with reason and knowledge. In essence, the combination of

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32 Ibid.
arms and letters outlines the concept of a virtuous ruler. Despite the fact that virtue was, and still is, a difficult concept to grasp, all Italian rulers sought after it. Indeed, Renaissance Italians had high praises for a virtuous ruler. Salutati claimed that “there [was] no greater liberty than obedience to the just commands of a virtuous prince.” In a sense, appealing to arms and letters legitimized a ruler’s governance, so Italian rulers did not hesitate to portray themselves as such. The following two chapters do not seek to settle the debate over whether arms or letters was more important for a prince. Rather, I will explore how Italian rulers juggled between the learned and the military personae during the Renaissance in their self-aggrandizing efforts. This chapter will focus on men of letters while the next will focus on men of arms. Ultimately, I will tease out some of the reasons why rulers employed different ways to appeal to both personae.

Milan

Balancing between arms and letters was an important aspect of a young Italian noble’s education, but it was not the case for a *condottiere*, or mercenary commander, of humbler birth like Francesco Sforza. Francesco was still a condottiere working under the Milanese Visconti court when the last Visconti duke, Filippo Maria Visconti (r. 1412-1447), betrothed his daughter Bianca Maria (1425-1468) to Francesco in 1430. The couple’s marriage took place in 1441, and Francesco issued a commemorative medal with a profile portrait of him on the obverse, and a book, a sword, and the bust of a horse on the reverse (Fig. 1.1). Fourteen forty-one was indeed a year worthy of remembering because Francesco successfully married Bianca, and he also mediated the Peace of Cremona between Milan and Venice. The marriage, however, did not grant him any rights to inherit the duchy after the death of his father-in-law, not only because succession laws prevented a son-in-law to claim the inheritance, but also because Filippo

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expressly excluded Bianca from the succession line. Francesco’s ambition, however, was apparent. The combination of the book, the sword, and the horse was a clear reference to the virtuous ruler motif as it proclaimed Francesco’s ability to balance between arms and letters.

Wanting to curtail his lack of education, Francesco tried to appeal to the learned persona by appearing as a patron of learning after he gained power. Francesco Sforza asked Francesco Filelfo (1389-1481) in 1452 to compose the Sforziade, an epic poem acclaiming Francesco’s deeds following the death of his father-in-law Filippo. At the same time, Francesco Sforza asked Filelfo to write a narrative “de vita et rebus gestis Francisci Sforiae [about the life and deeds of Francesco Sforza].” There are no records that Filelfo actually finished the project, and it was Giovanni Simonetta (c. 1420-1492) who eventually finished De rebus gestis Francisci Sforiae commentarii [Commentaries on the achievements of Francesco Sforza] in 1483, seventeen years after Francesco Sforza had passed away. In addition to finishing the Commentarii, Simonetta also served as Francesco Sforza’s secretary, and his brother, Francesco Simonetta (c. 1410-1480) would hold the same position under Francesco Sforza’s heir, Galeazzo Maria Sforza (r. 1466-1476). This patronage of humanist scholars was a common gesture in Renaissance Italy as rulers became increasingly concerned with their legitimacy. These scholars offered valuable advice drawn from the rediscovered gems of antique history that were recorded by writers such as Cicero (106-43 BCE) and Livy (59 BCE-17 CE). Moreover, those who studied law could offer Francesco Sforza tactical advice on how to legally claim his rulership. Without the help of skillful jurists, Francesco could not have claimed Milan because in “the eyes of the law, [he] was

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38 Cited in Ianziti, Humanistic Historiography, 61.
39 Ianziti, Humanistic Historiography, 138; the publication date of De rebus gestis Francisci Sforiae commentarii is still debated. Scholars have suggested several plausible dates with the earliest being 1479 and the latest 1483. For more information, see Ianziti, Humanistic Historiography, 211-219.
a usurper; the duchy was officially vacant, and should devolve to the [Holy Roman] Empire.”

Francesco Sforza enjoyed recruiting scholars to his court, therefore, to amend his reputation and also to strategize in his difficult quest for legitimacy.

Francesco acknowledged the value of humanists and presumably offered promising incentives. Lodrisio Crivelli (c. 1412-1488), another advisor to Francesco, was exiled in 1463 and fled to Rome subsequently. Despite his waning relationship with Francesco, Crivelli composed *De vita rebusque gestis Francisci Sfortiae* [The life and deeds of Francesco Sforza] while he was in Rome, hoping it could truncate his punishment. There was no evidence to suggest that Francesco ever welcomed Crivelli back, but the incident implied that the Milanese court was appealing for scholars. Despite the fact that Francesco Sforza recognized the importance of learnedness and he was indeed a great patron of humanists, not much visual evidence survives that shows this quality of his. Instead, Francesco’s learnedness was implied through his connections with many humanists and their works about the Sforza family.

**Venice**

Unlike in Milan, Venice’s republican context fostered a different kind of artistic climate in that most Venetian doges were subtler with their political messages. For one, Venetian doges tried to blur the image of the doge and the Venetian state. When planning for his tomb, Doge Francesco Dandolo (r. 1329-1339) stated that it should be prepared in a form suitable “*pro honore Ducatus* [for the honor of Venice].” In other words, his lavish tomb supplemented the reputation of Venice, rather than his own or his family’s. To a certain extent, this was true. The Swiss Dominican Friar Felix Fabri (1441-1502) observed that “not even the tombs of the popes

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41 Ianziti, *Humanistic Historiography*, 103-104.
of Rome are the equal of those of the doges of Venice.” Moreover, the longest reigning doge in Venetian history ever, Francesco Foscari (r. 1423-1457) commissioned a sculpted frieze on the Porta della Carta of him kneeling in front of the lion of St. Mark indicating that he was only a servant of the Venetian State, not its head (Fig. 1.2). Despite the fact that Foscari was depicted as a servant of the state, he was eventually forced out of office because his son was expressing political ambitions in a republic that actually favored doges who did not have a spouse, let alone a son in office. This incident, however, did not deter other fifteenth-century doges to aspire to become like the powerful rulers in Milan or Florence.

The political ambitions of Venetian doges were most clearly shown in the reigns of the Barbarigo brothers, Marco (r. 1485-1486) and Agostino (r. 1486-1501). The two brothers were consecutively elected to the office and oversaw a grand project inside the ducal palace—the Scala dei Giganti—where future coronation ceremonies would take place (Fig. 1.3). Contrary to Venice’s republican context, the Barbarigo brothers designed the staircase more like a dynastic project that focused on the Barbarigo family rather than a space that would be used in a republic for all future doges, who, in theory, could come from any family. The main façade of the staircase is adorned with the winged lion dedicated to Venice’s patron saint, St. Mark. Below the façade are two statues of Alexander and Aristotle (Fig. 1.4). On the surface, the project seems well-suited for Venice, yet, as one looks more closely, the Barbarigo coat of arms is actually displayed on the smaller façades just below Alexander and Aristotle, and the corno ducale, or the hat of state, is present on top of the coat of arms to accentuate the Barbarigo’s elevated status (Fig. 1.5). In other words, the Barbarigo brothers almost turned Venice into a

43 Cited in Pincus, The Tombs, 1.
46 Ibid.
secular dynasty and appeared as the founders of a “new” Venice since all future doges would be crowned in a site in the presence of the Barbarigo. Their message was further highlighted by the fact that their coat of arms is just below Alexander and Aristotle as if they were associating Alexander and Aristotle’s valor and wisdom, the traditional virtuous qualities, with the House of Barbarigo.47

In part due to Venice’s political context, and in part due to the deeds of fifteenth-century overambitious doges, by the sixteenth century Venetian doges were further stripped of their power as reported for instance by English traveler William Thomas (c. 1507-1554) in his travel log that was published in 1549:

[The Venetians] have a Duke, called after their manner Doge, who only (amongst all the rest of the nobility) hath his office immutable for term of life…But that is so appointed unto him for certain ordinary feasts and otherlike charges that his own advantage thereof can be but small. And though in appearance he seemeth of great estate, yet in very deed his power is but small. He…is in so much servitude that I have heard some of the Venetians themselves call him an honorable slave. For he cannot go a mile out of the town without the Council’s license, nor in the town depart extraordinarily out of the palace but privately and secretly. And in his apparel he is prescribed an order, so that in effect he hath no manner of pre-eminence but the bare honor, the gift of a few small offices, and the liberty di mettere una parte, which is no more but to propound unto any of the councils his opinion touching the order, reformation, or correction of anything.48

Humanist Donato Giannotti (1492-1573) echoed Venice’s strict political climate: “In nothing is [the doge] given complete power since not only is he unable to make decisions however insignificant, but also he can do nothing out of the presence of his counselors.”49 Starting in the sixteenth century, these so-called “honorable slaves” increasingly accepted that their position was more a ceremonial one than one holding concrete power, and indeed sixteenth-century doges appeared as ceremonial figures in art.

47 Muir, Civic Ritual, 266.
49 Cited in Muir, Civic Ritual, 251.
Painted portraits became an essential, or even the only, way for doges to construct their public image as portraiture was quite a common genre in Renaissance Venice and was readily available to most Venetians. Giorgio Vasari recorded that Venetian artist Giovanni Bellini (1430-1516) “introduced into the city that anyone, even someone of no rank, could have his portrait done by him, or by some other painter, with the result that the houses of Venice are full of portraits.” Every time a new doge was elected, he was expected to commission a portrait of himself kneeling in front of the Virgin Mary as the official portrait to be hung in the palace. Although many of these portraits were lost to a fire in 1577, the ones that do survive explain the popularity of portraiture and also the political climate in Venice.

Venice was revolutionary in the sense that its doges were bound by legislation that limited ducal power and this particularity had a profound impact on the style of Venetian portraiture. While late medieval jurists talked about how a state was composed of the *populus* that could mean “the corporations of citizens, all the inhabitants of a particular place, and a community which is distinguished from the nobles,” rarely did rulers believe that their power was at the mercy of their subjects. Rather, it was more common for European rulers to think of the state as his or her personal property. Even in the late sixteenth century, Henry III of France (r. 1574-1589) referred to France as *mon état* [my state] whereas his ministers referred to France as *l’état* [the state]. French subjects were only then starting to separate the king from the state. In this aspect, Venice was ahead of its time in that Venetians, including the doges, truly believed that Venice belonged to Venetians as a collective, and the Venetians were proud of this

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particularity. At times, they even saw Venice as more successful than the Roman Republic.

Bartolomeo Moro, a Venetian patrician, declared before the Greater Council in 1516 that “the Greek Republics did not last more than four hundred and fifty years, the Roman seven hundred, and this one [Venice] has already lasted more than a thousand.” It was a false claim of course, as Venice was not a free republic immediately upon its founding. Donato Giannotti’s Dialogi de Republica Venetorum [Dialogues on the Republic of the Venetians] (1525-1526) recorded Venetian humanist Trifone Gabriel (1470-1549) denouncing a comparison between himself and Cicero’s close friend Titus Pomponius Atticus (110-32 BCE) because “the Roman republic was corrupt, and [his] republic [was] not.”

As a result of Venetian republicanism and patriotism, ducal portraits were carefully constructed to differentiate Venetian doges from other rulers. One of the ways they did this was through the wisdom that came with aging. While more traditional duchies usually emphasized youthfulness, and with that came military valor, love, and elegance; Venice stressed learning, experience, and wisdom. Much like United States presidents, Venetian doges were expected to be political veterans. Garry Wills claims that the reason why legal minimum age for holding office in Venice was never enacted was that “it was unthinkable that [the doge] should be young.” The actual age of doges supported the claim. From 1400 to 1600, only one doge was elected before he was sixty years old, and the average age of doges at the time of their election was seventy-two. In part, this was due to the fact that patrician men only entered the senate in

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54 Cited in David S. Chambers, The Imperial Age of Venice, 1380-1580 (London: Thames and Hudson Ltd., 1970), 73.
56 Chambers, The Imperial Age, 73.
57 Wills, Venice: Lion City, 96.
58 The calculation excluded doges without recorded birth dates.
their 50s and 60s. Since the Venetians were proud of their republicanism, any attempts from doges that highlighted their individuality were viewed with suspicion.

The political climate in Venice fostered an entirely different approach to portraiture. While Dukes in Milan focused on being supportive of scholars, Venetian doges emphasized the wisdom and experience that came with old age. In a portrait of Doge Loredan by Giovanni Bellini, he is depicted in a luxurious white ducal mantle with gold breaded threads, and his *corno ducale* proclaims his status (Fig. 1.6). Bellini, however, did not conceal the doge’s age as evident in the wrinkles on Loredan’s face. Loredan’s aging features gave him the veteran politician appearance that was vital to a Venetian doge. Loredan realized that the “nobili strove to let only tested and trusted men enter higher office. There were long years of seasoning and observation…preceding elevation to the government’s central positions.” The association between wisdom and age stemmed from antiquity with Athenian statesman Solon (c. 630-560 BCE) claiming: “I age ever deepening in knowledge.” Loredan was not the only doge whose portraiture emphasized the sitter’s age. In an earlier portrait of Doge Pasquale Malipiero (r. 1457-1462), also by Bellini, Malipiero is presented in profile view with red garments, but his ducal crown does not completely cover his hair. There is a slight hint of his actual hair revealing just beneath his crown, which, together with his facial features, emphasizes Malipiero’s age.

Aside from appealing to the old-and-wise persona, Doge Andrea Gritti (r. 1523-1538) appeared in an old-fashioned manner to achieve a similar effect. By the time Gritti was elected, Italian artists had already accepted the influence of Flemish masters like Hans Memling (c. 1430-
whose portraiture departed from medieval aesthetics mainly through presenting figures in frontal or three-quarter view. Even in a devotional image, Memling would present non-biblical figures at an angle instead of the traditional profile view (Fig. 1.7). It was thus against contemporary aesthetics for Gritti to turn to his side in his portrait by Vincenzo Catena (c. 1480-1531) (Fig. 1.8). A portrait that was done in a traditional manner evoked the sitter’s experience and age since he knew of an earlier trend. Through this dated fashion, Gritti hinted that Venice will go back to its republican tradition under his rule, and stability will be restored with Gritti first defaulting back to his accepted role, which was that of a wise and learned individual who governed with reason. The reality of Gritti, however, could not be further from this image. As a successful merchant, witty diplomat, and fierce general, Gritti’s policies were very much a departure from Venice’s republican traditions. The diary of Venetian chronicler Marin Sanudo (1466-1536) recorded ample instances of protests against Gritti’s tendency to forgo the Greater Council. In one instance, a patrician was recorded to have reminded people that they were “under a republic and not under a lord.” Such sentiments, of course, warned Gritti that he needed to follow republican traditions, at least on the surface.

The portrait by Catena also attests to Gritti’s education in that Catena presented Gritti’s hand in a way that showcased his investment in a liberal arts education. The seven liberal arts in the Renaissance included astronomy, mathematics, geometry, music, rhetoric, dialectic, and logic. Rhetoric became an especially important skill in the eyes of Renaissance Italians. In Pope Pius II’s autobiography, he claimed that

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64 Cited in Finlay, “Fabius Maximus in Venice,” 989.
He came into the Council [of Basel] and having got permission to speak through the influence of Giuliano, the papal legate, he spoke for two hours to a most attentive admiring audience, and afterward everyone present had a copy of the speech made…

The incident at the Council of Basel highlighted Pius’s superior rhetorical skills, and rhetoric was an even more valued skill in a republic like Venice because doges were the public faces of the republic who should give well-composed speeches in the Greater Council and when welcoming important foreign visitors. Gritti’s right hand hints at his competence in rhetoric since it is shown in a rhetorical gesture. The gesture of his hand recalls celebrated poets like Dante Alighieri (1265-1321) who were often presented with that gesture (Fig. 1.9). The tradition of emphasizing a speaker’s hand was rooted in antiquity as well. The great Roman educator, Quintilian (c. 35-100), composed the *Institutio Oratoria* [The Orator’s Education] in which he claimed:

As for the hands, without which the delivery would be crippled and enfeebled, it is almost impossible to say how many movements they possess, for these almost match the entire stock of words…Other parts of the body assist the speech; the hands, I might almost say, speak for themselves.

Gritti’s specific representation had a trifold effect. For one, rhetoric was an important skill for all rulers in Italy, but in Venice especially because of its political structure. Secondly, being well-versed in rhetoric hinted that Gritti was invested in the liberal arts, and lastly, the hand gesture suggested that Gritti was familiar with antique works such as Quintilian’s *Institutio*.

A doge’s learning and wisdom were implied through his rhetorical gestures and aging facial features, but there was also another more subtle way of displaying one’s wisdom that was reserved for the most erudite audience. Starting in the late fifteenth century, a new kind of artist’s

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signature started to appear—the Plinian signature. The so-called Plinian signature was usually done in Latin where the artist would use the Latin verb, *facere* [to create] in the active voice. As Sarah Blake McHam points out: “To the viewing audience at large, the signature identified the artist, but to the knowledgeable, it conjured up a series of associations.” An example of this signature can be found in Giovanni Guido Agrippa’s 1501 medal of Doge Leonardo Loredan. The medal has the inscription: “Agripp Faci” on the reverse which challenged the medieval notion that artists were just artisans (Fig. 1.10). Furthermore, since the patron knew of this detail, the patron must have been highly educated because he was familiar with the works of Pliny the Elder (23-79) who wrote about such signatures in his *Natural History*. The political climate in Venice welcomed such carefully constructed images of its doges, even for displaying a seemingly unharmful quality like one’s wisdom.

**Rome**

Milanese and Venetian rulers were not the only ones who focused on presenting themselves as learned men. The tendency was also common in the Papal States. Pope Pius II was an exemplary humanist and had been a celebrated scholar before he was elected pope in 1458. Among the other positions that Pius held, he served at the court of Scotland, and Holy Roman Emperor Frederick III (r. 1452-1493) also crowned Pius, then known as Enea Silvio Piccolomini, Poet Laureate in 1442. The position celebrated Enea Silvio’s literary fame and it carried great prestige as the title had previously been held by Francesco Petrarca (1304-1374). In 1450, the Polish cardinal Zbigniew Olesnicki (1389-1455) asked for a collection of Enea Silvio’s

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correspondences as a further proof of Enea Silvio’s high reputation among the scholarly circle.\(^{69}\) Enea Silvio’s future career in the Church was not a departure from his scholarly pursuits. While a humanist education in the Renaissance focused on rediscovered pagan antiquity, scholars never neglected the prevailing Christian culture. As a result, the study of sacred Christian and Jewish texts was equally valued by humanists as the study of the works by ancient Roman and Greek writers. In a dispatch sent to Secretary of Prague Johann Tuschek in 1444, Enea Silvio wrote:

If you share the opinion of those who believe poets take pleasure only in books containing fables, you will be surprised at my request…What is there pertaining to training for life or fostering good habits which is not desired by poets? What I want, therefore, and what I ask you is that you help me buy a Bible.\(^ {70}\)

Although Pius himself was not fond of portraits, his family members commissioned various pictures of Pius to highlight their connection with the pope. When Pius’s nephew, Francesco Todeschini Piccolomini (1439-1503) who later briefly ruled the Church as Pope Pius III (r. 1503), was archbishop of Siena, he erected a library in the Siena Cathedral to house his uncle’s great collection of manuscripts. In the library, Francesco commissioned Pinturicchio (1454-1513) to paint a series of frescoes with scenes from the life of Pius II. Pinturicchio agreed in the contract to not work on other projects simultaneously and was

…obliged…to do ten stories in fresco, in which he is to paint the life of Pope Pius [II] of holy memory with…apparel necessary and appropriate to illustrate it properly; with gold, ultramarine azure, green glazes and azures and other colors as are in accordance with the fee, the subject matter, [and] the place…\(^ {71}\)

Such an ambitious project was unusual in honoring a pope who was neither canonized, nor of noble sovereign birth, but Francesco persisted.


The frescoes reveal a great deal about what Francesco thought was important about his uncle. Although Pinturicchio was granted stylistic freedom, the subject matter was strictly outlined by the patron. Among the scenes that were included are Enea Silvio crowned by Frederick III as Poet Laureate (Fig. 1.11), a position that must have elevated the family’s reputation, and Pius II calling a crusade against the Ottoman Turks immediately after his election (Figs. 1.12.a; 1.12.b). The Ottomans sacked Constantinople in 1453, and when the initial news reached Enea Silvio, then bishop of Trieste, he reported to Pope Nicholas V (r. 1447-1455) expressing his sorrow for Constantinople. In the lengthy letter, much more space was devoted to the loss of Greek learning and culture than to Constantinople’s strategic position for continental Europe and Christianity. Enea Silvio believed that the fall of Constantinople marked the “second death for Homer, Pindar, Menander, and all the more illustrious poets” and he “cannot but mourn…when [he saw] such a downfall of letters.” Pope Pius called for a crusade immediately after his election just five years after the fall of Constantinople. Although he did not name the loss of Greek learning as his motivation, it was clear from the earlier letter to Nicholas that he was deeply touched by the incident. Despite Pius’ enthusiasm for a crusade, it was never actualized, and the effort ended with Pius sighing: “The Christians do not care as much about religion as we had thought. It is long since we summoned this congress. No one can blame the shortness of time nor the difficult roads.”

Unlike Pius II, other popes actively sought portraits of themselves on more occasions. Pope Sixtus IV (r. 1471-1484), after coming to the office, began an ambitious project in the Vatican Palace—–the Papal Library. Along with the construction of the Library, Sixtus commissioned a fresco to be displayed in it (Fig. 1.13). In this fresco, Sixtus sits on his chair in a

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73 Pius II, Orations, 4:33.
commanding manner, and Bartolomeo Platina (1421-1481) kneels in front of him, showing
gratitude for his new appointment as prefect to the Vatican Library. On Sixtus’ side stand his
nephews, Giuliano della Rovere (1443-1513) and Giovanni della Rovere (1457-1501). The
fresco shows us the intensity of Sixtus’ nepotism as Giuliano would be later elected as Pope
Julius II (r. 1503-1513), and Giovanni was appointed captain-general of the Church at only
twenty-seven years old in 1484. The fresco’s main aim, however, was to celebrate the
construction of the Library. The work illustrates the value attached to learning and the praise
expected for a ruler who supported it. Sixtus inherited the plan for a papal Library from his
predecessor, Pope Nicholas V, whose death had prevented an earlier construction of it. On his
death bed, as recorded by Florentine humanist Giannozzo Manetti (1396-1459), Nicholas called
over the College of Cardinals and remarked:

I have adorned her [the Holy Roman Church] with glorious buildings and decked her
with pearls and precious stones. I have provided her with costly books…In all things I
was liberal, in building and in the purchase of books, in the content transcription of Latin
and Greek manuscripts, and in remuneration of learned men.  

Taking on Nicholas’ legacy, Sixtus was particularly proud of the Library. The inscription at the
bottom of the fresco names the Library as one of his most important projects, and the library is
also depicted in a fresco in the Ospedale di Santo Spirito, a hospital in Rome that Sixtus rebuilt
at the start of his papacy (Fig. 1.14). The Ospedale fresco shows Sixtus in the Library
surrounded by books which highlighted the importance assigned to learning, and the support of

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75 The term “hospital” is somewhat misleading. Medieval and Renaissance hospital was not necessarily an
institution where the sick received medical care, but rather “functioned in a variety of ways, including as a religious
house (often containing a chapel with an altar), a hostel, a shelter, a retirement home, or a temporary place for
physical rehabilitation and convalescence,” see Adam Davis, The Medieval Economy of Salvation: Charity,
learning, for the church and for good rulers. Of course, future Pope Julius is also present with Sixtus to mark a continuation of the legacy.

Pope Julius proved to be an even more fervent patron of art after he was elected pope in 1503. The problem he faced, as a result of his massive spending and quick temperament, was that he had a vile reputation. With regard to a portrait of Julius II by Raphael, Vasari wrote that it was “so true and so lifelike, that the portrait caused all who saw it to tremble, as if it had been the living man himself.”76 Perhaps due to the fact that his contemporaries often criticized him, it became essential for Julius to project a calm and learned persona. Julius’ portraits show that he was a well-rounded pope with many admirable qualities, and his love of classical knowledge is one of the central themes of his rule. During his papacy, Julius continued to build the Vatican Palace through commissioning substantial decorative programs in the papal apartments and designing the art program for rooms destined for the reception of important foreign envoys and visitors. In one of the so-called Raphael rooms, which was intended as a library, the tondi in the ceiling depict various worthy disciplines: philosophy, theology, poetry, and law. The programs for philosophy and poetry carried over to the walls and were rendered through the *School of Athens* and the *Parnassus* (Figs. 1.15.a; 1.15.b) The *School of Athens* depicts numerous pagan philosophers and contemporary scholars who were all important figures in the rise of humanism in Italy. Practically everyone who had been educated could recognize the figures and would have studied at least some of their works. The message was clear that Julius was a pope who welcomed such humanist learning, but also, as the Vicar of Christ, Julius theoretically embodied the worldly support of learning. Even Renaissance scholars who did not pursue positions in the Church recognized the importance of not only the study of theology, but also the notion that

learning itself derived from God. In a letter sent to Antonio of Aquila in 1400, the key humanist figure Coluccio Salutati wrote: “Now then, praise me if you can, and pretend that is mine which you now see cannot come from me! If I have learning—or rather you believe I have it, congratulate me that God has given it to me and pray that His grace may remain.”

More importantly, in the room is the Parnassus which depicts a number of famous writers, among them Homer, Virgil (70-19 BCE), Statius (c. 45-96 CE), and Dante. This is especially powerful when viewed together with the fresco of Sixtus in the Vatican Library, which promotes Julius as an important figure in its construction. The value of the Parnassus to Julius is shown through a subtle symbol on the background of the fresco; behind all of the poets are several oak trees which is a reference to Julius’ family name, della Rovere, and the oak motif was indeed adapted as the della Rovere’s coat of arms (Fig. 1.16). Thus, Julius asserted his authorship in this important fresco, and it helped to convey the sense that he was a protector of classical learning, an image that he inherited from Nicholas, Pius, and Sixtus. As God’s vicars on earth, popes focused more on their protection of learning rather than simply claiming that they were learned themselves.

Urbino

So far, the Milanese dukes focused on their support of learning, the Venetian doges focused on the wisdom that came from old age, and the popes in Rome focused on the preservation of classical learning, yet none of these claims could match those of the Duke of Urbino, Federico da Montefeltro. Perhaps Federico was the closest example of a virtuous ruler who wielded both arms and letters. A successful condottiere in his earlier years, Federico dedicated the latter half of his life to constructing the ideal Renaissance persona of a learned

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77 Salutati, “De Tyranno,” 72.
78 Rovere means oak in Italian.
commander. In 1472, Lorenzo de’ Medici (1449-1492) asked Federico to lead a campaign against Volterra because the town refused to share its rich alum mine with Florence.\textsuperscript{79} Federico gladly took the job, sacked Volterra, confiscated a Jew’s library, and received elaborate praise from Lorenzo.\textsuperscript{80} Since Federico’s martial qualities were self-evident in the victory, Lorenzo gifted an illuminated manuscript, \textit{Disputationes Camaldulenses}, to Federico, knowing that he sought after both a warlike and a learned public image. Florentine humanist, and author of the book, Cristoforo Landino (1414-1498) dedicated the book to Federico, and in one of the episodes in the book Landino praised Federico:

In our times, we have Federico da Montefeltro, prince of Urbino, whom I doubtlessly consider worth comparing to the best captains of the ancient era. Many and most admirable are the virtues of such an excellent man: his penetrating wit is passionate about everything. He gives himself the leisure and the company of the most erudite and cultivated men, while reading many books, listening to many disputes, participating in many debates, as well as being a man of letters in his own right.\textsuperscript{81}

On the front page of the manuscript, Francesco d’Antonio del Chierico (1433-1484) also illuminated a portrait of Federico receiving the book from Landino (Fig. 1.17). Lorenzo’s friendly gestures spoke to Federico’s desire to appear as a fierce general who was also learned, and this desire was known to those who wished to please him.

The book must have sat in Federico’s impressive library, which he had started after securing his rule over Urbino in the mid-fifteenth century. The library rivaled libraries in all of Europe. If anyone, Vespasiano da Bisticci could provide the most accurate account of the library since he helped Federico to acquire about half his collection. Vespasiano claimed that he had the collection catalogs

\textsuperscript{79} Lorenzo had no formal title of rule—he was the head of the Medici family, and was de facto the ruler of Florence.

\textsuperscript{80} Marcella Simonetta, \textit{The Montefeltro Conspiracy: A Renaissance Mystery Decoded} (New York: Doubleday, 2008), 48-49.

\textsuperscript{81} Cited in Simonetta, \textit{The Montefeltro Conspiracy}, 51.
of the papal library, of those of S. Marco at Florence, of Pavia, and even that of the University of Oxford...[yet] on comparing them with that of the duke [he] remarked how they all fail in one respect; to wit, they possessed the same work in many examples, but lacked the other writings of the author, nor had they writers in all the faculties like this library.\textsuperscript{82}

Vespasiano also reported that the duke had thirty or forty scribes working for him at the same time.\textsuperscript{83} Despite the fact that printed books started to become available in Italy, Vespasiano insisted that in Federico’s library “all the books are superlatively good, and written with the pen, and had there been one printed volume it would have been ashamed in such company.”\textsuperscript{84}

Vespasiano’s remarks on Federico’s library emphasized its grandeur, which goes to prove that the library was not merely for personal study, but also an important status symbol. This notion is enhanced by the fact Florentine humanist Angelo Poliziano (1454-1494) declared that Federico’s beautifully illuminated manuscripts were, in fact, full of errors, and the claim has also been verified by modern studies.\textsuperscript{85} Federico’s approach to his library was the opposite of the more practical approach taken by his fellow condottiere Gianfrancesco Gonzaga, Marquis of Mantua (r. 1407-1444). In a letter from Gianfrancesco Gonzaga to an agent in Constantinople, he expressed his wishes that he did not “care whether [the manuscripts] are decorated or in exquisite letter so long as they are accurate.”\textsuperscript{86} Perhaps the Gonzaga approach was more directed toward his personal studies, whereas Federico’s was more for display. This nature of Federico’s library is also evident from the duties of his librarians, which included displaying Federico’s collection

\textsuperscript{82} Vespasiano, \textit{Renaissance Princes}, 104-5.
\textsuperscript{83} Vespasiano, \textit{Renaissance Princes}, 102.
\textsuperscript{84} Vespasiano, \textit{Renaissance Princes}, 104.
\textsuperscript{86} Cited in Cole, \textit{Art of the Italian Renaissance}, 73.
to scholars and other important visitors while pointing out the “beauty, characteristics, lettering and miniatures in the work involved.”

In addition to the impressive library, Federico also constructed a more private, yet often displayed, study room—his studiolo. Luciano Cheles points out that “The studiolo is unlikely to have been used for contemplative activities only. It must also have been shown to illustrious visitors, thus fulfilling a propaganda function. Its very location by the Sala delle Udienze seems to confirm this.” This function of his study, therefore, was dedicated to the political nature of the room as well. The walls of Federico’s study in his ducal palace in Urbino included trompe l’oeil wood mosaics that covered the bottom half of the wall; several portraits of illustrious ancient, biblical, and contemporary individuals whom Federico looked up to were hung over the upper half of the wood mosaics. Federico’s inclusion of other educated individuals in his private study not only highlighted his aspirations to become as educated as them, but it was also a display of political alliance shown to the visitors to Federico’s study.

On the most fundamental level, the studiolo and Federico’s library were a statement of his dedication to learning which itself contributed to his public image, not to mention that he actually had an orator read Livy to him almost daily. Portraits, therefore, contributed to his erudite quality of his. In a group portrait executed by Justus van Gent (c. 1410-1480), Federico and his son and heir Guidobaldo (1472, r. 1482-1508) are shown listening to a lecture with other family members including Federico’s nephew Ottaviano Ubaldini della Carda (c. 1423-1498),

87 Ibid.
89 A complete diagram of the portraits hung on the walls of Federico’s Urbino studiolo can be found in Cheles, The Studiolo of Urbino, 17; among the people included were St. Gregory I, Jerome, Plato, and Aristotle on the west wall; Ambrose, Augustine, Moses, Solomon, Ptolemy, Boethius, Cicero, and Seneca on the north wall; Thomas Aquinas, Duns Scotus, Pius II, Bessarion, Homer, Virgil, Euclid, and Vittorino da Feltre on the east wall; Albertus, Sixtus IV, Dante, Petrarch, Solon, Bartolus, Hippocrates, and Pietro d’Abano on the south wall.
and his son Bernardino della Carda (Fig. 1.18).\textsuperscript{91} All of the figures are actively listening to the lecture, and this scene aligns with Federico’s aspirations for Guidobaldo who, like Federico, had received a humanist education at a young age. This is evident from the fact that a closer inspection of the painting would reveal that the orator is actually speaking to the young prince rather than Federico, who is seemingly the main character of this work, so the painting should be viewed as the orator instructing the young prince. The painting was hung in one of Federico’s palaces, most likely the Gubbio Palace, as an educational tool for Guidobaldo. The painting therefore, served a dual purpose. On one hand, it showed others that Guibobaldo, Federico’s only heir, was an educated future duke, and on the other hand, it served as a reminder to Guidobaldo that he actually should invest in his studies. Again, this aligned with Federico’s high aspirations for his son’s future. At one point, as recorded by Vespasiano, Guidobaldo’s tutors were “expressly charged by… Duke [Federico] to let [Guidobaldo] have no traffic with young folk, in order that he might at once assume the grave temperament which nature had given him.”\textsuperscript{92} It was understandable that Federico had such high hopes for his son given Federico’s struggles to have a male heir. Federico’s first wife, Gentile Brancaleoni (1416-1457) was infertile, and his second wife Battista Sforza (1446-1472) bore him eight daughters before finally delivering a male heir. Within the Gubbio Palace, Federico designed another studiolo similar to the one in his Urbino Palace. The main difference between the two is Federico’s choice of what paintings to hang on the upper half of the walls. Instead of focusing on illustrious individuals, the panels in the Gubbio studiolo focused on the seven subjects of the liberal arts education.\textsuperscript{93} Unfortunately, there are only records of four of the seven panels; two of them are in the National Gallery in

\textsuperscript{92} Vespasiano, \textit{Renaissance Princes}, 107.
\textsuperscript{93} A complete diagram can be found in Cheles, \textit{The Studiolo of Urbino}, 31.
London; the other two were lost in the Kaiser Friedrich Museum of Berlin during World War II. Since the Gubbio studiolo was stripped of its furnishings after the death of Francesco Maria II della Rovere (r. 1574-1631), the surviving records of these panels are limited.\textsuperscript{94} Martin Davies has examined the panels and identified the four panels that survive as depictions of astronomy, music, rhetoric, and dialectic (Figs. 1.19.a; 1.19.b; 1.19.c).\textsuperscript{95} The panel of music is quite self-explanatory with the \textit{organetto} [small organ] on the stairs. A closer inspection of the figure kneeling in front of the personified music would reveal that he bears a resemblance to Bernardino della Carda, the son of Federico’s favorite and trusted nephew Ottaviano Ubaldini della Carda, and both figures are also depicted in the lecture group portrait (Fig. 1.18). Ottaviano reportedly had a very close relationship with Federico: “Ottaviano and Federico would study and examine internal and external political problems together; Federico would make the decisions and Ottaviano would implement them.”\textsuperscript{96} Given the fact that Federico and Bernardino both appeared in one of the panels, it could be inferred that the rest all depicted Federico’s family members, including Ottaviano, which would make the Gubbio studiolo more of a private space used by Federico for his personal studies, or to instruct the young Guidobaldo perhaps, since the Gubbio Palace was erected to commemorate his birth.\textsuperscript{97}

The dialectic panel shows Federico kneeling reverently in front of the personified dialectic and looking at the book that she hands to him instead of her. Federico passed his dedication to learning, or appearing learned, to Guidobaldo. Perhaps as a result of the influence of his father, Guidobaldo also appealed to a learned persona, and several reasons explain why he

\begin{footnotes}
\item[94] Out of the four panels that survived, there are only pictures for three of them, music, rhetoric, and dialectic.
\item[97] Cheles, \textit{The Studiolo of Urbino}, 26.
\end{footnotes}
needed the persona even more than his father. First of all, he was a considerably weaker warrior and ruler than his father. Guidobaldo was eventually forced out of Urbino by Cesare Borgia (1475-1507) and Pope Julius II on separate occasions. Thus, he followed his father’s tradition of welcoming leading scholars to his court. In a portrait by Jacopo de’ Barbari (1450/70-1516), Guidobaldo appears beside Luca Pacioli (1447-1517), a Florentine mathematician (Fig. 1.20). On the table are various objects like the wooden triangle and the compass that allude to the scholarly nature of these two people. More important is the ornate book that is covered with red leather and metal pieces with the inscription Li[be]r R[everendi] Luc[a] Bur[gensis]. It refers to Luca Pacioli’s *Summa de arithmetica, geometria, proportione et proportionalita* [Summary of arithmetic, geometry, proportions and proportionality], that was published in 1494. Although Pacioli’s *Summa* was published in Venice, he dedicated the book to Guidobaldo, which explains the book’s presence in the painting and also why the book cover shares the same color as Guidobaldo’s undershirt. The picture also recalls Federico’s illuminated page with Landino in the *Disputationes Camaldulenses* that Lorenzo de’ Medici had given to Federico (Fig. 1.17).

Furthermore, Guidobaldo might actually have been interested in mathematics like his father, as Vespasiano recalled that Federico was a fervent lover of mathematics and was also invested in architecture which involved an outstanding understanding of arithmetic and geometry. Guidobaldo also had the *Libellus de quinque corporibus regularibus* [On the five regular solids] by Piero della Francesca (1415-1492) in his possession, which further suggest Guidobaldo’s interest in mathematics.

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Historically, however, the portrait has raised doubts because there is no concrete evidence of the identity of the second figure. Scholars have challenged the belief that the second sitter is Guidobaldo on the basis of his secondary position compared to Pacioli. Indeed, even the egos of well-to-do merchants would not permit them to take a secondary position in a portrait of someone else, except in religious images. It was certainly rare for someone of ducal title to appear in this manner, yet we have to keep in mind that Italian rulers, especially humanist ones, celebrated learned scholars such as Pacioli. Guidobaldo’s father, Federico, had kept a portrait of his instructor, Vittorino da Feltre (1378-1446), on the walls of his studiolo, as a sign of his perpetual respect for his instructor. Guidobaldo’s portrait with Pacioli, therefore, can be interpreted as a somewhat uncommon devotion of pupil to teacher that trumped the difference in their status and power.

As mentioned before, supporting scholars was not simply a display of one’s learned interests, but it often carried political motivation too. Thus there was a need for Guidobaldo to appear as if he highly regarded scholars, which could make his court more enticing. The portrait of Pacioli has to be also considered in conjunction with the fact that there were complaints under Federico that scholars were not paid enough. Francesco Filelfo, for example, complained to his nephew Lorenzo Filelfo that over his four years of service under Federico he had only received three hundred ducats, but the promised amount had been eight hundred and fifty. Francesco Filelfo’s son, Gianmario Filelfo (1426-1480), also complained after he went to Urbino in 1476. He expressed to Marquis of Mantua Federico I Gonzaga (r. 1478-1484) that his salary in Urbino was insufficient to support his large family, so he was looking for another court to serve.

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101 Ibid.


103 Cited in Osborne, Urbino: The Story, 97.
was thus important for Guidobaldo to appear as a generous patron who respected scholars since his father had indeed been susceptible to accusations of stinginess. Lastly, historians have suggested that Guidobaldo’s outfit in the Pacioli portrait does not seem suitable in a study setting, but one cannot ignore the portrait of his father reading a book while wearing armor, which will be discussed in-depth in the next chapter (Fig. 1.21). It is unfortunate that the sitter’s identity cannot be established beyond doubt, but there remains sufficient evidence to suggest the possibility that the young man in Pacioli’s portrait is indeed Guidobaldo, and such an identification certainly would be plausible within the tradition of depictions of the Montefeltro rulers. Despite Guidobaldo’s efforts to move out of the towering shadows of his father, his efforts eventually proved fruitless. The legacy that his father left him—the library and the duchy—would suffer great losses in the years following Federico’s death. By the reign of Pope Alexander VII (r. 1655-1667), the entirety of Federico’s library would be transferred to the Vatican Library after the papacy had taken over the duchy of Urbino in 1631.

Admirers today can only imagine what Federico’s library in his Urbino Palace would have looked like at its height. Nonetheless, the cultural policy and the art sponsored by the Montefeltro dukes remain strong evidence of how important the appearance of personal learning, and fame as supporters of learning, was to Renaissance Italian princes. On one hand, rulers genuinely believed that being educated was essential to govern a state, especially after the surge in the knowledge of antiquity brought about by the humanist movement. Moreover, being learned connected one to the celebrated men of the ancient past, and made one also a member of a new elite defined by intellectual accomplishments that could cover up for possible illegitimacies in one’s personal past or path to power for someone like Francesco Sforza. On the
most fundamental level, being educated in the new humanist culture could make one the embodiment of the ideals of the perfect Renaissance man, an incentive no one could resist.
[Manius Valerius Maximus Messala] first caused his victory over the Carthaginians and Hiero in Sicily to be painted on wood, and exhibited the picture at the side of the Curia Hostilia in the year of Rome 490 [264 B.C.E].

—Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*

Chapter Two: Men of Arms

Though the rise of humanism in Italy brought changes to education, political theory, scholarship, and other fields which significantly changed the ideal image of a leader as argued in the first chapter, the traditional connection between a ruler and his militaristic accomplishments was still firmly instilled in Renaissance society. As Salutati stated, a king’s first and foremost duty was to defend his territory.104 Baldus also placed great emphasis on a state’s ability to maintain territorial sovereignty.105 In fact, the title duke, or *dux* in Latin, was derived from the Roman military, so the connection between a duke and a man of arms dated as far back as the title itself.106 Aspiring Renaissance rulers also admired epitomic rulers in history such as Alexander, Julius Caesar (100-44 BCE), or Charlemagne (r. 768-814) who exemplified the ideal virtuous ruler who achieved greatness through his ruthless might, military prowess, and skillful leadership. Aspiring secular princes could, for instance, deploy their military strength in order to buttress a shaky foundation for power and assert the legitimacy of their rule.

The profession that enabled political mobility was that of condottiere. As a result of the unstable politics in the Peninsula, principalities needed to wage war against each other, yet a standing army was too costly for any state to maintain, especially with the added burden of the Black Death. Hiring mercenaries, therefore, became more enticing. Among the notable Renaissance condottieri, Francesco Sforza, Federico da Montefeltro, and Ludovico III Gonzaga

(r. 1444-1478) of Mantua successfully established rulership while Bartolomeo Colleoni (1400-1475), who worked under Venice, acquired massive wealth and a prominent reputation. This chapter will look at how rulers in Milan, Urbino, Venice, and Rome fulfilled the other half of the qualities associated with an ideal virtuous ruler: Milanese dukes appealed to the militaristic persona to cement their legitimacy; Urbinates’ displays were more reserved and balanced well with their appeal to the learned persona; Roman popes and Venetian doges all faced challenges in appealing to a martial persona, but they nonetheless hinted at this quality in their own representations.

**Milan**

Francesco’s father, Jacopo Attendolo (1369-1424), changed his family name to Sforza [strength] to reflect his successful condottiere career. Similarly, Francesco almost changed his name after his marriage with Bianca Maria in 1441 as seen in the Pisanello medal of Francesco in chapter 1 (Fig. 1.1). The inscription “VICECOMES” is not only a reference to his recent marriage with the Visconti daughter, but also echoes the Latin word *victoria* [victory]. The combination of strength and victory bolstered Francesco’s claims for legitimacy as it offered him a way to associate his military competence with that of previous Visconti rulers. Galeazzo II Visconti was the first Milanese ruler to have an image of himself on horseback cast on the reverse of a coin, and Galeazzo II set a precedent for later rulers to issue coins with the same design (Figs. 2.1.a; 2.1.b). Under Francesco’s reign, he reintroduced to the Peninsula the practice of casting one’s portrait on the obverse of coins (Fig. 2.2). It was a bold attempt from Francesco since the Italians were well aware that portraits of great antique rulers like Augustus

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(r. 27 BCE-14 AD), Alexander, and Caesar appeared on coins. While the obverse of Francesco’s coins was an “innovation” in Renaissance Italy, he continued the Visconti motif of a ruler on horseback on the reverse of the coin, though the coat of arms at display is slightly altered. He does keep the Visconti serpent in front of his chest plate and in the front of the horse, but he changed the coat of arms in the rear of the horse to the eagle of the Horse of Sforza (Figs. 2.3.a; 2.3.b).

In a sense, all Sforza faced a dilemma. On one hand, the nature of their rulership was dynastic and hereditary, yet the first Sforza duke, Francesco Sforza, acquired the title through force and a careful manipulation of the family history. This particularity in the Milanese court explains why so many of the works that were commissioned either honored previous rulers or copied them, since establishing a lineage was important. Francesco even falsely claimed that the Sforza family descended from the royal house of Denmark to bolster the family’s reputation. Francesco’s heir, Galeazzo Maria Sforza (r. 1466-1476) came to rule after Francesco passed away in 1466, and Francesco was a hard act to follow. Even Francesco doubted Galeazzo’s abilities when he was alive. Francesco wrote in a letter: “Galeazzo, I want you from now on to apply your brain and your mind to military matters and to what makes a soldier…I want you from now on to put aside boys’ concerns and turn to those of men.”

Galeazzo needed to recall his father’s military might in order for him to be seen as an equally accomplished warrior and ruler, despite the fact that he was far from it. Perhaps the most ambitious project in Milan was the large equestrian statue of Francesco which Galeazzo Maria Sforza commissioned. For one,

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horses became an important symbol in Renaissance Italy because commanding a horse was implicitly and explicitly a metaphor for governing the state. Italians also admired the bronze equestrian statue of Marcus Aurelius (r. 161-180) that stood next to the Lateran Basilica because Marcus Aurelius “had acquired an almost literally legendary status” as an exemplary ruler. \(^{112}\)

Moreover, horses were a ruler’s channel to relate to his subjects since rulers roamed their domains on horsebacks. \(^{113}\) The reputation of an Italian rested so much on his horsemanship that Federico da Montefeltro reportedly became furious after learning that an ambassador witnessed him grimacing when dismounting from a horse due to a recent injury. \(^{114}\) By the Renaissance, horse riding had also become an essential Italian skill, as Count Lewis of Canossa in the *Courtier* outlined:

> It is the peculiar excellence of the Italians to ride well with the rein, to manage wild horses especially with great skill, to tilt and joust, let [the ideal courtier] be among the best of the Italians in this. In tourneys, in holding a pass, in attacking a fortified position, let him be among the best of the French. In stick-throwing, bull-fighting, in casting spears and darts, let him be outstanding among the Spaniards. \(^{115}\)

Galeazzo Maria was assassinated by rival Milanese nobles before he would see the finished equestrian statue. No one, in fact, ever saw the finished project, since it was never realized. Nonetheless, Ludovico Sforza (r. 1494-1499) would continue the project after he became the de facto ruler of Milan following Galeazzo Maria’s assassination. \(^{116}\) When Ludovico resumed the equestrian project, he envisioned the statue to be the biggest in all of Italy rivaling the *Equestrian Statue of Marcus Aurelius* (c. 175 AD) in Rome and the *Equestrian Statue of Marcus Aurelius* (r. 161-180) that stood next to the Lateran Basilica because Marcus Aurelius “had acquired an almost literally legendary status” as an exemplary ruler. \(^{112}\)

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\(^{113}\) McCall, *Brilliant Bodies*, 141.

\(^{114}\) Ibid.

\(^{115}\) Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier*, 38.

\(^{116}\) Although Ludovico only ruled as the duke for five years, he was actually in power for much longer. Galeazzo Maria’s heir, Gian Galeazzo, was only seven when he became duke of Milan, so Galeazzo Maria’s brother, Ludovico, acted as regent to the young prince until Gian Galeazzo’s death in 1494.
Bartolomeo Colleoni (1480-88) in Venice. Leonardo da Vinci worked on the project for almost two decades, yet unfortunately the project never actualized due to funding issues. Even though we are unable to witness the grandeur of the statue, we are certain that the project was initiated by Francesco’s heirs to glorify the first duke in the family and to lead people to associate the current ruler with the fierce warrior Francesco had been. Part of the reason why the Sforza were eager to call attention to Francesco’s military accomplishments was that he was indeed a successful general. In Pope Pius II’s autobiography, he recorded that “when [Francesco Sforza] came to Mantua he was sixty years old…He sat his horse like a young man; he was very tall and bore himself with great dignity.”

Pius praised Francesco based on his horsemanship, yet the emphasis was also given to the fact that Francesco was still able to ride a horse like a young man, despite the fact that he was already sixty years old, which highlights that secular courts valued youth and beauty, whereas republics pushed different themes of wisdom and experience. It is natural to think of a warrior as a person who is young and agile, and Milanese dukes achieved this connection through fashion. Armoring points, for instance, became popular in Italy. They were strings hanging from the shoulder that served as mounts to secure armor, and there are countless images of princes wearing armoring points starting in the mid-fourteenth century (Fig. 2.4). They were especially common in young princes because they were effective indicators that young princes were warriors in-the-making. Aside from armoring points, other fashionable items such as cuirass, giornea, calze, and magetes were all popular garments that were associated with the military and helped Italian rulers subtly establish their military competence. Galeazzo Maria was quite fond of a fashionable appearance. The dominant style for men in Milan was tight-fitting

117 Pius II, Memoirs of a Renaissance Pope, 129.
118 McCall, Brilliant Bodies, 19.
garments that highlighted the contours of the body. The style has its roots in the military because soldiers wore tight-fitting garments in battles to stay agile, so wearing those was a less intrusive approach to constructing a militaristic persona for Milanese dukes. When Galeazzo ordered clothing in 1471, he had specific instructions to make them as tight as possible so they would showcase his silhouette.119 Timothy McCall points out that “fifteenth-century…lords and subjects alike understood that display of courtly male bodies was a fundamental facet of signorial power.”120

The political implication of fashion sometimes went beyond creating a youthful persona as the Milanese court was particular about identifying allies through dress. Within Milan, wearing Galeazzo’s personal colors, red and white, became illegal after the 1460s without permission from the duke, since it was a political gesture and Galeazzo was careful in choosing his alliances.121 Lorenzo de’ Medici even used clothing to express his loyalty to Galeazzo. In a letter sent to Galeazzo, Lorenzo expressed: “As long as I live and no matter who follows me, with respect to your illustrious lordships, we will wear your insignias and devices, not on our shoulders, but sculpted and infixed in the center of our hearts.”122 Galeazzo also displayed such a consciousness of his attire when he visited Florence in 1471. His visit was commemorated by a portrait by Piero del Pollaiuolo that was probably commissioned by Lorenzo since the painting was done in Florence and appeared in a 1492 inventory of the Medici Palace.123 Galeazzo’s attire was purposefully worn because the patterns recalled Florence’s symbol of the giglio [lily

119 McCall, Brilliant Bodies, 27.
120 McCall, Brilliant Bodies, 81.
flower], to highlight the benign nature of Galeazzo’s visit, but there could be another interpretation of this symbol as the French royal family’s *fleur-de-lis*.

The Sforza family had finally established an authentic royal connection in 1468 after Galeazzo married Bona of Savoy (1449-1503), whose sister Charlotte of Savoy (c. 1441/3-1483) was married to King Louis XI (r. 1461-1483). In other words, the lily pattern had two uses for Galeazzo: the first was to show his amity toward Lorenzo, and the second was to boast of his newly acquired royal connection.

Another great reason to appear in bold and colorful attire was that of publicity because Italians were aware of using art to proclaim a certain specialty of a state, almost like modern advertisements. Outside of Florence’s Orsanmichele, the main guild church in the city, various guilds commissioned statues and, unsurprisingly, the armorers’ guild commissioned a statue of their patron saint St. George, who carries a sword and a shield (Fig. 2.5.a). The silk merchants’ guild commissioned a statue of St. John the Evangelist whose robe showcases the airy quality of fine silks (Fig. 2.5.b). Likewise, the Pollaiuolo portrait showcased the quality of Milanese silk production because Milanese silk was in high demand. The Florentine government even allegedly tried to lure Milanese artisans to Florence but Ludovico Sforza intervened to keep the trade secret within Milan.

Galeazzo certainly did not bypass any chance to boast about the success of his state because the prosperity of the local economy was important for a Renaissance prince. According to Bartolus, there were only two things that a prince should not do, regardless of circumstances: impoverishing his subjects, and keeping communities divided.

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125 McCall, *Brilliant Bodies*, 46.
showcased the skillfulness of Milanese artisans and the quality of their fabric, but it also served a dual purpose for Lorenzo, since Pollaiuolo was a Florentine artist who could beautifully render the fabric’s luxurious texture. This task of a ruler was also highlighted in an architect’s advice for planning a city. Sienese architect Francesco di Giorgio Martini (1439-1501) suggested to the governors of Siena that “the Silk Guild should be sited in that street [the Strada Romana], as the principal ornament of the city, because it is most used by foreigners and citizens.”127 Such pride in local products and the awareness of economic prosperity was a main quality of Renaissance rulers. It was also during this period that Galeazzo associated his type of clothing with his court. When Galeazzo ordered garments, he used phrases such as “in our style” or “in the fashion that we wear” which indicated that Milan had a distinct “style” compared to other states.128 Pietro Bembo also commented on the particular style of Milan in the Courtier. “On seeing a gentleman pass by in a habit quartered in varied colors, or with an array of strings and ribbons in bows and cross-lacing,” Bembo would be tempted to call him either “a fool or a buffoon.” “Such a one,” however “would be taken neither for a fool…nor for a buffoon by anyone who had lived for any time in Lombardy, for there they all go about like that.”129

The flamboyant appearance of Galeazzo needed to be balanced as he realized the risk of appearing too vulgar. For one, fashion trends were subject to locality and were unpredictable, just like today. For example, the rest of Italy favored blond hair with artists often emphasizing its gold-like characteristics (Fig. 2.6.a). In Milan, on the other hand, black hair was in fashion because many Sforza had dark hair.130 Additionally, although tight-fitting garments were in

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127 Evelyn S. Welch, *Shopping in the Renaissance: Consumer Cultures in Italy 1400-1600* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 99-100; the Strada Romana was the main street in Siena.
128 McCall, *Brilliant Bodies*, 82.
130 McCall, *Brilliant Bodies*, 129.
fashion for Milanese men, they might not be appreciated in republican regimes such as Florence or Venice where people preferred a more somber style. Due to the potential decline of fashion, Milanese dukes also made efforts to appear reserved. The Sforza emblem of a greyhound under a pine tree was specifically designed to transcend the family’s violent and illegitimate past, as the motif was associated with the motto: *Quietum nemo impune lacesset* [No one shall lightly disturb the peace].\(^{131}\) Shortly after Francesco successfully claimed the succession in 1450, he issued a commemorative medal with the inscription “*FR S福特IA VICECOMES MLI DVX IIII BELLIPATER ET PACIS AVTOR MCCCCLVI* [Francesco Sforza Visconti, Fourth Duke of Milan, Father of War and Maker of Peace, 1456]” and the greyhound emblem on the reverse as if claiming that, however violent the succession contest was, things were now settled and peace should be maintained (Fig. 2.7). The interesting dichotomy of being a man of arms who was also somewhat peace-loving was important to the house of Sforza, so underneath the warlike appearances of Sforza dukes, reservation was also practiced.

**Urbino**

Since Federico da Montefeltro and Francesco Sforza had similar histories, their patronage shared frequent similarities. Both of them, for example, began their political careers as condottieri, and both of them were illegitimate rulers in their domain, though the Montefeltro family had been a prominent family in Urbino for at least three centuries. Federico’s name, therefore, had enough of an association with the historic rulers of Urbino, a privilege that Francesco Sforza did not enjoy. As a result, instead of focusing on Federico’s linkage to his ancestors, Federico could focus more on his personal accomplishments. Justus van Gent executed a portrait of Federico and his son Giudobaldo in 1475, at the height of Federico’s career

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(Fig. 1.21). In 1474, Pope Sixtus IV officially granted Federico permission to pass his title to his heirs, thus making Urbino a dynastic principality, and Federico was appointed gonfaloniere [captain of the papal forces], followed by an extravagant ceremony in Rome. Within the same year, Federico also received two international recognitions. One came from English King Edward IV (r. 1461-1483) who honored the duke with the Order of the Garter.\textsuperscript{132} The other came from Ferdinand of Naples (r. 1458-1494) who gave Federico the Order of the Ermine; its motto, MALO MORI QUAM FOEDARI [I would rather die than be dishonored], certainly spoke to Federico’s characters as a condottiere. Theodore Rabb observes that Federico “fought both for and against the Pope; for and against the Florentines; for and against the Malatestas, the rulers of Rimini; and for the king of Naples and the Sforza rulers of Milan.”\textsuperscript{133} Honor and loyalty were especially important for the duke since the nature of his job demanded that he fight for money instead of nobler causes. When Venice was looking to invade Ferrara in 1482, a special envoy was sent to Federico to suggest paying him eighty thousand ducats if he would not fight against the Venetians. To which Federico responded: “To keep faith is still better, and is worth more than all the gold in the world.”\textsuperscript{134} From this exchange, we get a glimpse into what Federico wanted to associate himself with after he had achieved greatness in battlefields—honor. This was important to Federico who had the official ducal title, a competent humanist education, immense wealth, and a great taste in art, yet struggled to establish himself as an equal among other Italian rulers. Since he relied on fighting for other city-states as his major source of income, he was

\textsuperscript{132} The Order of the Garter was founded in the mid-fourteenth century by English King Edward III (r. 1327-1377) to recognize outstanding knights. Historians have argued on the history and reception of the order, but Federico must have valued it greatly since it also appeared on the wooden mosaics in his Gubbio Palace, and there must have been a sense of envy since Francesco Sforza of Milan and Ferdinand I of Naples had received the honor in 1463. For more information, see Hugh Collins, The Order of the Garter, 1348-1461: Chivalry and Politics in Late Medieval England (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000).


\textsuperscript{134} Vespasiano, Renaissance Princes, 96.
often viewed as an “employee.” In a dispatch sent to his fellow condottiere Ludovico Gonzaga of Mantua (1444-1478), Federico complained that condottieri were being treated like “peasants,” and, as Alison Cole points out, he had to constantly fight “the implication that they were common soldiers driven by mercenary motives, rather than nobles inspired by deeds of ancient valor.”

Federico’s fame also did not stop in Europe. Shah of Persia Uzun Hassan (1453-1478) even recognized Federico’s ability when the Shah called for a crusade against the Turks. Uzun allegedly sent an ambassador named Isaac to Urbino to ask for the duke’s participation. Along with Isaac, Uzun sent a richly decorated hat with pearls (Fig. 2.8). Federico proudly presents all of his recognitions, both international and domestic—the hat from the Persian Shah, the Order of the Ermine from Ferdinand I, and the Order of the Garter from Edward IV—in a single frame. Federico’s fame came from his military skills, yet as discussed in the previous chapter, being a man of arms was not enough for a virtuous prince. It was thus essential for Federico to appear in a setting such as his library to highlight his dual identity as a renowned fighter who was an equally confident erudite scholar; hence his desire to be presented when he is reading. The portrait is clearly an idealized and ideological portrait that aims to convey multiple messages about the sitter. We know people did not wear armor to study rooms, and this is evident from one of the trompe l’oeil wood panels in Federico’s own famous studiolo where his armor was displayed, suggesting that the studiolo was a place to take off one’s armor (Fig. 2.9). Of course, we cannot ignore the fact that armors were hard to paint. Vasari rightfully pointed out that he

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135 Cole, *Art of the Italian Renaissance*, 70.
136 Ibid.
“almost went out of [his] mind trying to make the burnished surface of the armor look shining, brilliant, and natural.”\textsuperscript{138} The presence of armor in a painting was a status symbol itself, given its labor-intensive nature. Rabb argues that Federico’s portrait gives the sense that “this is a warrior in an off moment.”\textsuperscript{139} Federico did not want militaristic accomplishments to overshadow his other qualities, yet as Vespasiano commented, “all who may study [Federico’s] life will read of many victorious battles, much territory conquered…”\textsuperscript{140} Federico therefore, needed to walk a thin line between undermining and overstating his martial qualities.

Much talk has centered on Federico but there is another figure in the lower left corner of the portrait—Guidobaldo da Montefeltro. The young prince has a copious number of pearls to suggest his status and wealth as well as to hint at the purity that was associated with pearls. Wealth, however, was never the focal point of the message, since no one expected a duke to be poor, certainly not successful ones like the Montefeltro. Instead, the emphasis is on Federico’s newly established succession line. The long-awaited heir, Guidobaldo, holds a scepter to symbolize the continuity of the Montefeltro dynasty. Federico was definitely worried during the thirty-five-year interim between his marriage with his first wife and the birth of Guidobaldo. For proud generals like him, female heirs were unthinkable. First of all, fifteenth-century men did not believe women had a place on the battlefield. A later account of Renaissance condottieri recorded that Francesco II Gonzaga of Mantua (r. 1484-1519) told Ludovico Sforza to send his wife to a brothel when Francesco learned that Ludovico had brought his wife to the battlefield.\textsuperscript{141} More generally the lack of female rulers in most Italian states suggests that the practice of female

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{138} Cited in McCall, \textit{Brilliant Bodies}, 33.
\textsuperscript{139} Rabb, \textit{The Artist and the Warrior}, 73.
\textsuperscript{140} Vespasiano, \textit{Renaissance Princes}, 84.
\end{footnotes}
succession was very limited. Given this context, Guidobaldo was Federico’s only hope, so the emphasis of the portrait is Montefeltro’s dynastic succession and establishing Guidobaldo’s status as the heir.

It is natural to associate a man of arms with violence, especially since the Montefeltro family was founded by mercenaries, but, as seen with Francesco Sforza, generals were expected to be also capable of being peaceful and restrained. Count Lewis in the Courtier claimed that “above all, let [the courtier] temper his every action with a certain good judgment and grace, if he would deserve that universal favor which is so greatly prized.”142 It was important for rulers to not simply display their martial side, but also to suggest that there was a peace-loving alternative within them. This is different from the discussion in chapter one on being men of letters, but rather the peace-loving alternative referred to generals who were capable of fighting, yet only fought sparingly as the last resort. Federico was quick to realize this. On the walls of his palace courtyard, Federico had artisans put emblems signifying his ecclesiastical and secular virtues, ranging from martial prowess to the love of peace.143 This idea of restraint was a recurring theme in Federico’s patronage, most notably in a double portrait by Piero della Francesca (1415-1492) of Federico and his wife Battista (Fig. 2.10).144 The painting on the inside of the diptych is an obvious allegory of triumph with connections to the military rulers of the past. Federico’s contemporaries would have also immediately recalled his recent victory over the city of Volterra (1472), but Federico’s message was more symbolic and subtle.145 The duke

142 Castiglione, The Book of the Courtier, 33.
144 The two panels might have been in the form of a diptych, which meant that they were attached by a hinge and worked like a book that could be opened and closed. The bust portraits were on the outside, and the triumphs were on the inside, see Cole, Art of the Italian Renaissance, 83.
145 Margaret Ann Zaho, Imago Triumphalis: The Function and Significance of Triumphal Imagery for Italian Renaissance Rulers (New York, Peter Lang, 2004), 91.
points to the four cardinal virtues—justice, prudence, fortitude, and temperance—with his scepter which symbolizes the direction of the dynasty, one that was to be governed with virtues not violence. Scholars have suggested that Federico commissioned the painting as an educational piece for Guidobaldo.\footnote{Martin Warnke, “Individuality as Argument: Piero della Francesca’s Portrait of the Duke and Duchess of Urbino,” in The Image of the Individual, eds. Nicholas Mann and Luke Syson (London: British Museum Press, 1998). 88.} It was customary for younger rulers to learn from past rulers through objects or images. Francesco Maria della Rovere (r. 1508-1538), Guidobaldo’s heir, reportedly opened Federico’s coffin because he wanted to venerate Federico’s chest hair only to find that Federico’s chest hair was firmly attached to his body. With that, Francesco Maria sighed: “Why was I not born a generation earlier so that I could profit from the example of such a man?" \footnote{Cited in Cole, Art of the Italian Renaissance, 90.}

Despite the fact that Federico da Montefeltro carefully crafted his legacy to be passed within the family, his heir proved incompetent to handle Italy’s harsh political climate. The Montefeltro lost their control in just two generations with Guidobaldo naming Francesco Maria della Rovere as his heir under pressure from Pope Julius II, born Giuliano della Rovere.\footnote{Francesco Maria’s mother was Giovanna da Montefeltro (1462-1514), Guidobaldo’s sister, and his father was Giovanni della Rovere, Julius II’s brother and Sixtus IV’s nephew. The marriage between Giovanni and Giovanna was agreed upon by Sixtus and Federico in 1474, the same year that Sixtus granted Federico the right to pass his title within his family.} The transition, however, was a problematic one. Just five years after Francesco Maria assumed the duchy of Urbino in 1508, Julius II died, and papal authority passed to the first Medici pope, Leo X (r. 1513-1521). In 1516 Leo excommunicated Francesco Maria and removed him from rule in Urbino. Leo’s nephew, Lorenzo II de’ Medici (r. 1516-1519) became duke of Urbino.\footnote{Lorenzo was the lord of Florence and duke of Urbino from 1516 to when he died in 1519.} Both Lorenzo and Leo were short-lived, so Francesco Maria was able to return to Urbino in 1521.

Fully realizing the della Rovere family’s waning influence, Francesco Maria arranged a marriage between his son Guidobaldo II della Rovere (r. 1538-1574) and the Duchy of Camerino’s sole...
heir, the nine-year-old Giulia Varano (1523-1547) in 1532. Arranged marriages were quite common among elites, but equally common was the opposition from the bride, the groom, or both.

Guidobaldo’s opposition to this marriage brings up another usage of portraits during this period which was less concerned with outward expression but more with a personal statement to be understood within the family. At the time when Francesco was arranging the marriage, Guidobaldo had developed an affectionate relationship with Clarice Orsini from a rival family. After he was informed of his planned marriage to Giulia, he commissioned the Florentine artist Agnolo Bronzino (1503-1572) to paint him a portrait (Fig. 2.11). A first glance at the portrait would reveal a strange feature of Guidobaldo—his overly defined codpiece. Codpieces were often worn by Renaissance men to cover their genitals especially after it became fashionable to wear tighter hoses, but codpieces were normally not as pronounced because a large codpiece was associated with lust and gluttony (Fig. 2.12). Therefore, it is strange to see a princely young man to be depicted in such a way. While it was true that codpieces were usually not presented in this fashion, there is evidence that Guidobaldo II was not the only person who enjoyed being seen with a larger than usual codpiece. A surviving armor of Emperor Ferdinand I (r. 1503-64) reveals that codpieces in real armors were sometimes made to be larger than necessary which was even less practical since emperors rode on horses (Fig. 2.13).

Guidobaldo’s codpiece is certainly strange, and it suggests his sexual maturity as a man, but the choice of armor is also interesting. Guidobaldo instructed Bronzino to depict a specific armor on his body—the landsknecht armor. This type of armor was worn by German

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151 Ibid.
mercenaries who participated in the Italian wars and eventually sacked Rome in 1527. The costume was strange for a Catholic and an Italian, but it expressed Guidobaldo’s rebelling against the spiritual father and his biological father.\textsuperscript{152} Guidobaldo might even be suggesting that he was almost preparing to fight his father so he could not determine Guidobaldo’s fate, considering the motto on his helmet which reads: “It will certainly be as I have decided.”\textsuperscript{153}

When Francesco Maria learned of the relationship between Guidobaldo and Clarice, Francesco remarked that Clarice’s father, Gian Giordano Orsini (1460-1517), was insane and such a marriage would “taint the blood of the family.”\textsuperscript{154} Indeed, the father-son relationship reached a freezing point while marriage negotiations were taking place. Francesco wrote to Guidobaldo: “Think about your mother, who is pregnant and can very well produce ten more.”\textsuperscript{155} With this in mind, Guidobaldo married Giulia Varano reluctantly as soon as his brother Giulio della Rovere was born in 1534. For Guidobaldo, then, appearing as a man of arms in the portrait was a way to express his wish to determine his own fate, and suggest that he was somehow willing to fight for it.

Perhaps to respond to Guidobaldo’s disobedience, Francesco Maria commissioned a more reputable painter, Titian (c. 1488-1576), to paint a portrait of himself in a similar manner (Fig. 2.14). As opposed to the arrogant message in Guidobaldo II’s portrait, Francesco is presented as a true ruler who is confident, calm, and authoritative, and, unlike Guidobaldo, Francesco wears a more reserved black armor which contributes to his serene appearance. Francesco’s codpiece is also replaced by a more practical, and less pronounced, chain mail

\textsuperscript{152} Carolyn Springer, \textit{Armour and Masculinity in the Italian Renaissance} (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 77.
\textsuperscript{153} Cited in Springer, \textit{Armour and Masculinity}, 75.
\textsuperscript{154} Cited in Springer, \textit{Armour and Masculinity}, 78.
\textsuperscript{155} Cited in \textit{Ibid.}
shield, and the baton in Francesco’s hand serves as a reminder that he was still in charge. The portrait served as a perfect companion to Francesco’s words: “If I hear that you disobey me, I will first do to you what no one ever imagined a father might do to a son.” Urbinate dukes’ martial qualities arguably carried more meanings than simply appearing as virtuous rulers. While the Montefeltro dukes focused on presenting themselves as virtuous rulers, Francesco and Guidobaldo’s militant personae were actually aimed at each other with Guidobaldo rebelling against his controlling father, and Francesco asserting his authoritative governance over his family and state.

**Venice**

Unlike Milanese and Urbinese dukes, Venetian doges faced difficulties appealing to the military aspect of their rule. The distinct title “doge” as supposed to “duca” spoke of Venetians’ desire to be separated from other Italian states. In reality, however, Venetian doges, quite contrary to their benign public image, needed military knowledge. Of course, due to the nature of Venetian republicanism, doges were prevented from expressing this kind of ambition. In fact, even successful and celebrated Venetian condottiere experienced difficulties when commissioning public displays. Bartolomeo Colleoni, like many condottieri, faced questions about his loyalty. Nonetheless, Venice realized the importance of incentivizing him so they could attract future condottieri, much like what Francesco Sforza did with scholars. At the time of his death, Colleoni left Venice a bitter problem. Colleoni had no sons, so one of the ways that he spent his savings was that he commissioned a colossal equestrian statue of himself. He had intended to place the statue in the Piazza before St. Mark’s Basilica, the most important landmark of Venice, but it was difficult for the Venetian Republic to approve such a request, as

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the place was sacrosanct—no individual raised a portrait statue there, ever. The restrictions were so tight that, when Alessandro Leopardi put a small medallion of doge Leonardo Loredan under the bronze flag pole before the church, Venetians disapproved of the act for it had violated the spirit of the place. Colleoni’s equestrian statue, after careful consideration, was not placed before St. Mark’s, though the statue was executed (Fig. 2.15). An interesting detail that is worth noting is that art historians have argued that the horse’s testicles are rather large and realistic. This feature alludes to Colleoni’s coat of arms, the three testicles that he allegedly had (Fig. 2.16).

Even an actual general was restricted in some aspects of his display of military might, let alone doges, though sometimes in literature doges enjoyed a more authoritative reputation than in figurative arts. In Marin Sanudo’s preface to the De Bello Gallico (1495), he hailed Agostino Barbarigo as “the new Augustus… [who had] more arduous and important matters [happen] under [his] dogeship than under any other prince.” The same rhetoric was echoed by poet Ventura di Malgate when he addressed Agostino as the “prince of my new Rome.” Doges were expected to lead Venice to victory like the leaders of Rome but could not themselves celebrate their military competence.

Doge Andrea Gritti was perhaps the exemplary doge in that sense. As expected for a Venetian doge, Andrea Gritti had a long life prior to his election. At a young age, he accompanied his grandfather, Tridano Gritti (1391-1474), on diplomatic missions to England, France, and Spain. Andrea grew up to be a merchant who went to Constantinople in 1479. As

157 Wills, Venice: Lion City, 63.
158 Ibid.
159 Cited in Chambers, The Imperial Age of Venice, 26.
160 Ibid.
the Venice-Ottoman relationship continued to worsen in the late fifteenth century, Andrea, along with other Venetian merchants in Constantinople, were imprisoned. He eventually returned to Venice after paying a costly ransom. In 1508 he became Provveditore Generale, responsible for the inspection of the fortifications along the border between Venice and the Habsburg Empire; in 1514, he was promoted Capitano del mare [Captain of the Navy], and in 1517s he recaptured the lost territories of Brescia and Verona. This long successful military career helped him secure the ducal title in 1523. Doge Gritti was clearly a man of arms, but this side of him was rarely shown in portraits. Titian’s posthumous portrait of Gritti is the best depiction of the real Gritti (Fig. 2.17). Unlike most other portraits of doges, Titian’s Gritti stands upright with a forceful gaze. The ring of St. Marks and his ducal attire speaks to his status. There is also one detail in the portrait that often gets overlooked in that his right hand seems to be in an unnatural position. Art historians have suggested that Gritti is, in fact, holding a sheathed sword under his garment.\textsuperscript{162} It is a plausible suggestion considering Gritti’s military accomplishments, and also Venice’s political context. If Gritti had commissioned this portrait, he might not have approved of being depicted in such a manner, as he was often criticized by his contemporaries. Gritti’s biographer, Niccolò Barbarigo, wrote: “In giving or receiving compliments, it was impossible to be livelier or wittier in manner [than Gritti]; but if provoked by some malevolence or rancor, there was no aspect more terrifying than his.”\textsuperscript{163} Such a manner would not have paired well with a forceful portrait, certainly not in a republic.

\textit{Rome

\begin{itemize}
  \item Cited in Finlay, “Fabius Maximus,” 988.
\end{itemize}
At least for Venetian doges there were no moral obligations that prevented them from appearing martial. This was not the case for popes. Julius II, for example, was often criticized because of his warlike manners. Since popes should not be fighting other Christian princes, all of the popes had difficulties appealing to the martial persona, yet, at the same time, post-schism popes needed to be more forceful to win influence and recover lost papal territory. Julius, for example, confronted the French King while he also faced threats within the Papal States, so he needed to find the right balance between being an all-loving pope and a forceful commander.

Bologna had become part of the Papal States in 1363. The Bolognese however constantly revolted against the papacy, and by the time Giovanni II Benetivoglio (r. 1463-1506) came to rule in Bologna, the Bentivoglio family had already established firm control over the city. Julius II was blatant when he told Machiavelli just a few days after being elected that he would keep order within the Papal States, with force if necessary, and he certainly did. Julius quickly defeated Bentivoglio and entered the city along with papal troops in 1506. Coins were also thrown into the crowd during his triumphant entry into Bologna which recalled Caesar’s entry into Gaul. These coins’ obverse has the portrait of Julius and the inscription IVL II P M BONONIA ATYRANO LIBERT [The Supreme Pontiff Julius II freed Bologna from the tyrant] (Fig. 2.18). In other words, Julius cleverly concealed his conquest through presenting himself as a liberator. Julius’ coin was also directly responding to medals that Bentivoglio had issued to assert his authority when he was still in power (Fig. 2.19). So Julius’ coin was not only for the Bolognese to physically see, as it was distributed to the crowd when Julius II entered the city, but it also suggested that Julius had brought the city under papal control.

Pope Julius’ various moves to gain total control over the Papal States earned him a good reputation from admirers like Machiavelli who commented that Julius “merits the great praise because he did everything to increase the power of the Church and not of any private person.”

However, as we have come to know, Julius had his adversaries. When Julius entered Bologna in 1506, an observer wrote that he “looked more like a captain putting his horse through its paces than an aged pope with the burdens of the world on him.” The Italian historian Francesco Guicciardini later recounted the Siege of Mirandola:

> It is certainly a strange event, and not seen before, that the King of France, a secular prince of an age not yet past its vigor and in good health, trained from his youth in handling arms, should be taking his repose…and on the other side, to see the highest priest, vicar of Christ, old and infirm, involved in person in waging a war stirred up by him against Christians, as a leader of soldiers; he exposed himself to hardships and perils, retaining nothing of the pontiff but the robes and the name.

A common argument against the aging pope was that he was waging war against Christians. Perhaps Julius acknowledged the criticism from the French theologian Jacques Almain, who wrote: “Did not Jesus tell Peter, ‘Put up the sword!’”? Vasari also recorded an exchange between Michelangelo and Julius regarding a bronze statue to be placed in front of the Cathedral of Bologna. Michelangelo consulted Julius on what to put in Julius’ left hand, to which Julius responded, “Put a sword there. I know nothing about reading.” This exchange perhaps best summarized Julius’ temperament and attitude, yet, besides this statue, Julius appeared rather passive in other works of art. Michelangelo’s statue of Julius was destroyed in 1511, after the Bentivoglio regained control of the city, and the melted bronze was used to construct a large

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170 Vasari, Lives, 349.
cannon amusingly name *La Giulia*. Julius was still alive then, so he must have known about the fate of his statue. In spite of his blatant and indeed proud participation in these military operations, Julius at some level must have been sensitive to the criticism he received for potentially damaging the papal image, and this may explain why he rarely allowed himself to be portrayed in any overt military garb or role.

The portraits of Julius took on another direction, one that is drastically different from what his adversaries described him to be. The surviving portrait by Raphael is a good example of the persona that Julius deployed (Fig. 2.20). There are several unusual elements in this picture. First of all, the pope is not presented with the traditional profile view that we see from so many other portraits from the early Renaissance; instead, Julius takes the three-quarter view which offers more connection with the viewer. It was a bold attempt by Raphael, but the benefits of the three-quarter view are clear. Julius seems old, weary, and worried; his head is tilted downwards not as a gesture of arrogance, but as a sign of concern. The concerned look aligns with the happenings in the Papal States when the portrait was commissioned, which brings up the second element that is unusual in this portrait, namely, the pope’s beard. It was then customary for popes to be clean-shaved, but, as an Italian chronicler stated, “[Julius] let his beard grow in token of vengefulness, insisting that he would neither cut nor shave until he had driven Louis, King of France, out of Italy.”\(^\text{171}\) It was a gesture from Julius that referenced Julius Caesar who famously grew a beard when Gallic tribes rebelled. This reference was well understood by his contemporaries in that, on 10 April 1512, Venetian ambassador Sanudo recorded that “the pope has had his beard cut and shaved, as he sees things are changing for the better.”\(^\text{172}\) Despite Julius’

\(^\text{171}\) Cited in Kempers, *Painting, Power and Patronage*, 255.
personal struggle in combatting criticisms, his image largely stayed the same in the eyes of his contemporaries. In *The History of Italy* (1537-1540), Florentine chronicler Francesco Guicciardini (1483-1540) offered a synthesis of Julius’ infamous accomplishments:

> Nevertheless, [Julius’s] memory is honored and esteemed more than any of his predecessors, especially by those who (having lost the true significance of things, and confusing distinctions and failing to weigh them rightly) consider that the main purpose of pontiffs is to extend, by arms and the blood of Christians, the power of the Apostolic See, rather than to labor by the good example of their lives, and by correcting and curing corrupt manners, for the salvation of these souls for whom they boast that Christ established them as his vicars on earth.\(^{173}\)

Much like Venetian doges, it was nearly impossible for popes to strike a balance between arms and letters due to the particular restrictions of a pope. In terms of restoring the authority of the papacy, Julius succeeded, but he was far from the virtuous ruler image that other rulers sought after.

> Just like being a man of letters, being a man of arms was equally important for Renaissance princes, as they faced real threats within Italy, from the rest of Europe, and also from the Ottomans. Additionally, there was the incentive of being successful condottieri like Francesco Sforza, whose martial character had won him great fame and wealth. Francesco’s successors did not ever deviate from Francesco’s imagery as a youthful warlike duke. On the other hand, being a man of arms did not necessarily mean being violent, but rather someone who could also control his action with reason. In that sense, Renaissance princes placed the learned self above the militaristic self, in theory. In reality, however, cultured princes could only appear in a majestic way because the real power of a ruler lay in his ability, through military endeavors, to secure and expand his territory. Perhaps this reality prevented Italian princes from only appealing to the learned and cultured persona despite the rise of humanism. Instead, rulers in

Italy found a balance between the two. Rarely, however, did one succeed at balancing evenly between the two personae. The Sforza in Milan failed at balancing between the two, as they really lacked a good humanist education. Pope Julius, although a fervent patron of art, earned a bad reputation, with some arguing that his spending on art forever damaged the Catholic Church. Venetian doges, regardless of their abilities, could not appeal to the militaristic persona, an important component of being a virtuous prince. Lastly, Duke Federico da Montefeltro might have been the closest example of a virtuous prince, yet the Montefeltro lost control over Urbino in just two generations. One thing remains true across the four states, that all princes wanted to be seen, and remembered, as virtuous rulers who wielded both arms and letters.
Ahí, Costantín, di quanto mal fu matre,
non la tua conversion, ma quella dote
che da te prese il primo ricco patre!
[Ah, Constantine, how much evil was born,
not from your conversion, but from that donation
that the first wealthy pope received from you!]
—Dante Alighieri, *Divine Comedy*

Chapter Three: Men of God

In the previous two chapters I examined how rulers projected a virtuous persona in their claims to power, yet there was one more piece to the puzzle. Not only did rulers wish to appear as men of both arms and letters, but there was also a religious dimension in rulers’ legitimization and projection of power. Despite the rise of humanism in Italy, with its attendant somewhat more secular attitudes, Catholicism was still the founding basis of Italian society, and thus of those who ruled. Piety, therefore, was the last component of the ideal Renaissance leader. In this sense, the popes had the easiest claim because piety was implied through their position as vicars of Christ, yet popes’ ambitions often reached beyond the spiritual sphere. Of course, secular rulers were not willing to accept papal claims of authority in the temporal realm, especially after the Schism that significantly weakened papal authority. This tug-of-war between secular rulers and popes was also at play in portraiture that emphasized the sitter’s piety. This chapter will focus on the theme of how popes used portraits that showed their piety and devotion to fulfill their political ambitions, and also how rulers in other states responded to such claims from the pope. In particular, popes used portraits to reinstate themselves within the Church following the Schism; it was not enough for papal art to simply display the pope’s right to rule the Church, but it also needed to show the pope’s influence in the secular world. Secular rulers were left to respond to these ambitious claims from popes while proclaiming their status as good Christian princes, and each state would formulate different art projects to address the ambivalent
relationship between secular rule and spiritual qualities. Due to Venice’s belligerent attitude toward the papacy, Venetian doges often presented themselves as better Catholics than popes with a particular emphasis on being devout followers of St. Mark, Venice’s patron saint. The secular courts of Urbino and Milan constructed their personae as good Christian princes while using the Catholic faith to suggest that familial succession was sanctioned by God.

Rome

In part, the Schism that dramatically weakened the Catholic Church was caused by the prolonged tension between secular rulers and the papacy. As a result of the struggle between the French crown and the papacy, the French pope Clement V (r. 1305-1314) moved the papacy from Rome to Avignon signaling the French crown’s influence in the spiritual realm. The papacy would remain in France until Pope Gregory XI (r. 1370-1378)’s accident death on a visit to Rome in 1378. The schism occurred after Gregory passed away and rival factions within the College of Cardinals elected two different popes, one in Avignon and one in Rome. Eventually the secular powers of Europe summoned the Council of Constance (1414-1418), which removed all rival claimants and elected a Roman pope, Martin V. Although the papacy now again settled in Rome, it faced many problems. First of all, due to a century of neglect, Rome had become ill-repaired and its population had almost halved. Additionally, since Martin was elected by a general assembly that also included representatives from secular powers, a struggle emerged between the popes and what was called the conciliar movement. In theory, the council gave Martin his authority, so he was no longer the most powerful person in the Catholic Church.

After the Schism, Pope Martin and his successors would fight for decades to re-assert their supreme power over conciliarism and the whole church. One of the tools available to the

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popes to confront secular rulers consisted of art patronage. The popes of this period supported numerous urban, architectural, and artistic projects aimed at expressing the power of the papacy and of the Catholic faith. In attempts to first stabilize the church, popes realized that the most basic way to establish firmer control over the Roman curia was by appealing to popes’ piety. Piety was important for any leader in the Christian world, but it was the most important for popes since their claim to leadership rested on it. The act of rebuilding Rome came to be one of the ultimate symbols of one’s devotion and piety, so popes did not shy away from doing these good deeds, not to mention that popes practically needed to build Rome into an ideal city that was suitable for the highest office of the Church. Fourteen-fifty was an important year for Rome and the Catholic Church since it was a Jubilee year which meant that Rome welcomed worshipers from all over the Christian world, and it offered a great opportunity for Christians to see that the Schism had ended and the Church stabilized. However, due to Rome’s state of ill-repair, the 1450 Jubilee turned out to be an embarrassing event. Over two hundred pilgrims fell from the Ponte Sant’Angelo because the bridge was not well kept.¹⁷⁵ Clearly, Rome in 1450 was very far removed from an ideal well organized Renaissance city, as outlined in The Ideal City by Fra Carnevale (c. 1420-1484) where the city plaza is simple but grand and offers no distractions (Fig. 3.1). Perhaps responding to these Renaissance calls for ideal cities, post-schism popes were fervent builders, and they also ordered the paving of old and new roads, established new magistracies to keep roads clean, and protected the antiquities, all of which enhanced Rome’s reputation and attractiveness.¹⁷⁶

It wasn’t enough simply to construct an ideal city. More important for popes was to be remembered as the pope who revitalized the city, and portraits offered a good tool to achieve this

¹⁷⁵ Partridge, Art of the Renaissance Rome, 23.
¹⁷⁶ Welch, Shopping in the Renaissance, 102.
goal. An incident that gave Sixtus IV the chance to establish his image arose as soon as he was elected pope. The previously mentioned Hospital of the Holy Spirit in Rome suffered a fire, and, after seeing its ruins, Sixtus ordered that it be rebuilt. The project was important for Sixtus and the della Rovere motif and the inscription *SIXTVS IV FUNDAVIT* [Sixtus IV founded] appeared throughout the building. Inside the hospital, Sixtus commissioned a fresco cycle detailing various deeds that he had done (Fig. 3.2). The frescoes start with a depiction of Innocent III (r. 1198-1216) chartering the hospital and end with St. Peter leading Sixtus into paradise.

The fresco cycle was carefully planned to present Sixtus’ good Christian character and the authority that God bestowed on him. The connection between Sixtus and Innocent was important because Innocent had been a supremely powerful medieval pope, who, among other things, organized the Fourth Crusade (1202-1204). Indeed, the renovation of the hospital served as a sound parallel with Innocent who founded the hospital. It should also be noted that, while Innocent appears mostly in profile view, Sixtus is often presented in three-quarter, which speaks to Sixtus’ ambitions to surpass Innocent (Figs. 3.3.a; 3.3.b). In most of these scenes, Sixtus wears elaborate papal regalia like Innocent and is accompanied by a group of cardinals, Roman nobles, and bishops to suggest Sixtus’ status as the pope and approval within the Church. An incentive for performing good deeds, of course, was the promise of going to heaven, and this is also depicted in the fresco cycle. The cycle ends with a scene of St. Peter leading Sixtus into paradise with the inscription: “As a reward for his piety, St. Peter leads Sixtus IV into the possession of paradise, Christ, for whom you prepared a home for the poor on earth, gives you this home in heaven” (Fig. 3.4). The fresco emphasizes the fact that St. Peter and Jesus himself approved

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Sixtus’ papacy for his good Christian qualities. It gave the viewers a sense that his position was rightfully granted to him because, of course, Peter and Jesus only approved those who were the fittest to rule. Emphasis was placed on the fact that Sixtus has shown his Christian qualities when he provided a home for the poor in this world. Furthermore, there were other building projects that Sixtus oversaw, like the Ponte Sisto which is also depicted in the fresco cycle (Fig. 3.5).

Sixtus placed great emphasis on his building projects for good reason. In Sixtus’ biography written by Raffaele Maffei (1451-1522), he compared Sixtus with Augustus who famously claimed to have transformed a Rome that had been made of bricks into one that was made of marble.179

While there might have been a genuine desire to help the weak and the poor, ultimately, the construction of the hospital helped Sixtus to establish his base in the Catholic Church. The reason why popes needed to emphasize their piety was that most jurists, even those who favored papal authority, agreed that being the vicar of Christ was the only way that popes could argue for their supreme authority in both the temporal and spiritual spheres.180 It was thus important for popes to stress that their position was divinely sanctioned, and this was the central theme during Sixtus’ papacy, especially when he was facing foreign threats from French King Louis, who wanted to call for another general council. In response, Pope Sixtus claimed that “the authority to will or not to will a general council is fixed solely in the Roman pontiff,” which implied that the Roman Church was in the hands of the pope, not some arrogant secular ruler.181

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179 Presciutti, “Dead Infants,” 784.
180 Canning, The Political Thought of Baldus, 40.
The other place where Sixtus commissioned a fresco was the previously mentioned Vatican Library (Fig. 1.13). The fresco’s inscription stresses Sixtus’ position as the new Augustus. It reads:

Rome, once full of squalor, owes to you, Sixtus, its temples, foundling hospital, street squares, walks, bridges, the restoration of the Acqua Vergine at the Trevi fountain, the port for sailors, the fortifications on the Vatican Hill, and now, this celebrated library. Sixtus treasured all of his building projects, but he was especially fond of the Vatican Library, since he also oversaw the transition of the papal residence from the Lateran Palace to the Vatican Palace. Although it was Nicholas V who initiated the move, Sixtus is often credited for finishing the transition and making the Vatican Palace worthy of the highest office in Christianity. He claimed in a papal bull that the Vatican Library was intended “for the honor of the militant church and the augmentation of the faith.” Of course, this contributed to Sixtus’ wishes to appear as the protector of learning and religion, but the project itself also staked a political claim. In fact, the transition from the Lateran Palace to the Vatican was quite symbolic. The pope as bishop of Rome had resided at the Lateran Palace, near St. John Lateran, the old basilica, built by Constantine (r. 306-337) himself, that remains to this day the cathedral of Rome. The Vatican, with its focus on St. Peter’s tomb, emphasized the pope’s role as successor to Peter, as vicar of Christ, as head of the universal church, rather than his role as bishop of Rome. Furthermore, the move to the Vatican conformed to medieval practices where towns throughout Europe would have a fortified bishop’s palace and a cathedral surrounded by merchant and artisan settlements. The practice was popularized after the fall of the Roman Empire, which meant that the Church

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was now responsible for the protection and governance of Christians, and bishops replaced provincial officers as the head of towns.\textsuperscript{185} Moving to the Vatican, which was fortified, symbolized that popes had claimed their temporal authority in Rome, just like medieval bishops throughout Europe.\textsuperscript{186}

Sixtus’ successors built upon his accomplishments and claims, and expanded his repertory of projects and portraits. In 1508 Pope Julius II commissioned Donato Bramante (1444-1514) to design the Palazzo dei Tribunali, a new building for the law courts in Rome. The hall would have been built on the newly constructed street Via Giulia, itself named after Julius.\textsuperscript{187} Unfortunately, the Palazzo was never completed, but Julius acclaimed the plan by issuing a commemorative medal with Bramante’s design on the reverse (Fig. 3.6). Within Renaissance culture, coins and medals held an obvious connection to antiquity and, as evident in his name, Julius was fond of looking back to antiquity for inspiration. The medal contributes to Julius’ desire to continue Sixtus’ good Christian character shown through architectural projects in Rome. Perhaps the most important building project initiated by Julius was Saint Peter’s Basilica, the most renowned Church in all of Christendom. Rebuilding the old Saint Peter’s had been on the agenda of many prior popes, but it was Julius who ordered to build a completely new St. Peter’s. To claim credit for this honor, Julius issued medals around 1506 with his portrait on the obverse and a design of the new St. Peter’s on the reverse (Fig. 3.7). The connection that Julius wanted to make with the new St. Peter’s was obvious. Moreover, since Catholics believed that Peter was directly designated by Christ as the first leader of the Church, the strong


\textsuperscript{186} Ackermann, “The Planning of Renaissance Rome,” 5.

association between Julius and Saint Peter’s Basilica reveals Julius’ ambitions as a pope. Of course, such a building project, like the Vatican Library, would have been seen as the ultimate sign of one’s devotion to Christianity, a quality that all popes needed in the face of challenges.

Aside from building projects, Julius II also presented himself as the protector of the freedom and autonomy of the Church in response to criticisms of his selling indulgences and waging war on other Christians. In the so-called Raphael Rooms, Julius is presented as an observer of the expulsion of Heliodorus from the temple (Fig. 3.8). This biblical scene depicts how the Emperor Seleucus IV (r. 187-175 BCE) ordered his chancellor, Heliodorus, to seize the treasures in the temple in Jerusalem. In response, God sent a horseman to drive Heliodorus out. The focus of the scene is not historical accuracy, because Julius of course would not have been there even if the incident actually happened, yet by seeing Julius as the observer the audience acknowledges that Julius has learned from the past and has assumed the role of the horseman. This notion is further evident in the representation of the horseman in that the golden armor and the blue cape are references to Julius’ coat of arms (Fig. 3.9). Based on the horseman’s helmet, scholars have even identified the horseman as Julius’ nephew, Francesco Maria della Rovere, Duke of Urbino (Fig. 2.14). The fresco shows that, contrary to critics’ claims, Julius was actually protecting Christian wealth, rather than spending it.

We have discussed how portraits could have political messages for the pope, but sometimes these portraits also served the whole papal family as seen in the Vatican Library and the Raphael room frescoes. Although the della Rovere would never see another pope, this practice was continued by their successors. In a portrait of Leo X executed by Raphael around

190 Kempers, *Painting, Power and Patronage*, 261.
1518, the boundary between papal and dynastic art is blurred (Fig. 3.10). We see here that the pope, dressed in traditional papal clothing, is accompanied by two of his relatives. To his left is Giulio de’ Medici, his nephew and the future Pope Clement VII (r. 1523-1524), and to his right is his cousin Cardinal Luigi de’ Rossi (1474-1519). In addition to the presence of his relatives, there are other details in the portrait that suggest the Medici lineage. Namely, scholars believe the book that Leo is reading is a copy of the Hamilton Bible that his father, Lorenzo de’ Medici, had owned. This is a way of showing the family’s longstanding prominence and faith. Moreover, the bell on the pope’s table is an important family symbol. The bell was used to summon servants and Leo’s bell is covered with Medici symbols such as feathers, diamonds, and the recognizable Medici *palle* [balls], which are also on Leo’s coat of arms (Fig. 3.11). The presence of his family members, the bible that his father owned, and the bell and the chair that have the Medici symbols all contribute to blurring the boundary between the family and the papacy.

Portraits were meant to be seen, so the placement of portraits was also important. In 1518, for example, Leo’s portrait was displayed at the wedding feast of Leo’s nephew Lorenzo II and Madeleine de la Tour, daughter of John III, Count of Auvergne in Florence. As Leon Battista Alberti had mentioned in his essay *On Painting*, portraits “make the absent present.” Since Leo was unable to attend his nephew’s wedding, the portrait was sent as symbolic support. Under this condition, onlookers and other individuals who attended the wedding would fully acknowledge the Medici family’s power and connections. The marriage would have been a huge

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step up for the Medici in terms of their connections with the royal families of Europe because Madeleine’s mother was a Bourbon, then a distant branch of the French royal family. The display of Leo’s portrait and the wedding itself represented statements of status for Lorenzo, asserting that his uncle was the most powerful man in the Catholic Church and his wife had French royal blood. The gesture, of course, also benefitted Leo since, just a year earlier in 1517, the College of Cardinals had plotted against him, so his “appearance” at Lorenzo’s wedding clearly spelled out the Medici family tree, buttressing Medici’s foundations of power both in Florence and in Rome.

Papal portraits that showed family lineage, political aims, and other subtle messages had one ultimate agenda—authority in the secular world, because few doubted papal authority in the spiritual sphere, at least not until the Protestant Reformation. Papal ambitions in the secular world date back centuries, and the major expansion of the Vatican Palace in the Renaissance offered a great way to reinforce the Church’s superiority over temporal powers especially for popes after the Schism. The palace was a multi-generational project so each Renaissance pope could contribute to the overall message of the Vatican Palace. In the reception rooms of the Vatican Palace, Raphael and his pupil painted frescoes depicting major events of the Catholic Church. While the frescoes did not show popes’ piety per se, those projects represented the piety of the papacy as a whole, since the depicted scenes all buttressed papal authority. One of the frescoes shows the coronation of Charlemagne (Fig. 3.12). The story itself represented enough of a claim in that it was the pope who crowned Charlemagne, signaling that the latter’s temporal power came from the pope. The political message is further highlighted by the fact that Pope Leo III (r. 795-816), who is crowning Charlemagne, bore the same name and likeness as Leo X. Furthermore, Charlemagne in the scene is actually a portrait of King Francis I of France (r. 1515-
Since France had previously posed a threat to the Catholic Church, the fresco was the ultimate gesture that France had recognized Leo’s authority. Within the same room Raphael painted *The Oath of Leo III* around 1516, with an inscription that reads: “The Pope may be judged only by God and not by man” (Fig. 3.13), thereby echoing what Sixtus had claimed earlier. Since the purpose of this room was to receive foreign guests, the message was apparent that the pope was superior to secular rulers because no man had the authority to challenge the pope.

Out of all four Raphael rooms in the Vatican Palace, the one that makes perhaps the clearest political statement is the Hall of Constantine. Emperor Constantine was an important figure for the legitimacy of the Catholic Church. The Catholic Church claimed that Emperor Constantine had given authority over Italy to Pope Sylvester I (r. 314-335), and medieval popes, in the eighth century, had forged a document recounting the incident to bolster the story. The story and the forged document served as the most significant foundation for the papal claim of superiority over temporal rulers. We now know that the meeting between Sylvester and Constantine was basically a legend, and people during the Renaissance were also suspicious of the authenticity of the story and the document. The humanist scholar Lorenzo Valla (1407-1457) indeed demonstrated, in a celebrated study, that the Donation of Constantine was rather obviously a forged and invalid document. Philologically, the language of the alleged “Donation” was clearly not from the fourth century. Legally, Constantine did not have the right to give any part of his empire away because, according to the Roman law, an emperor could not alienate his empire. Chronologically, Valla argued that Constantine actually presented certain insignificant

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196 This point was up for debate in the Middle Ages. Baldus, for example, argued that the transfer of jurisdiction to the papacy ultimately derived from the will of the people which had the power to override the clause that ordered emperors not to alienate their empire. Baldus wrote: “[the donation] was made by Constantine together with the
gifts to the previous pope Miltiades (r. 311-314), not to Sylvester. Historically, the donation could not be cross-referenced with any other historical account.\footnote{Valla, therefore, claimed: “either the Popes have not understood that the donation…is a forgery and a fabrication, or they have invented it themselves, or else, as followers treading in the footsteps of their predecessors’ deceit, they have defended it as being true, even while knowing it was false.”} Despite these open accusations, Renaissance popes still largely used the story as the basis for a rather flimsy claim, so the donation scene is also represented in the Hall of Constantine (Fig. 3.14). This image expressed a clear statement from Clement VII, whom Sylvester I is modeled after in the fresco. The emperor is half kneeling in front of the pope as a gesture of subordination. Aside from the status hierarchy, this program also served as a validation for the story, thereby confirming the pope’s status and influence in the secular world.

The Hall of Constantine was especially important for popes’ claims of superiority because of its strategic location in welcoming foreign guests into the Vatican Palace. As recorded by Papal Master of Ceremonies Lodovico Bondoni, when the future Grand Duke of Tuscany, Francesco de’ Medici (r. 1574-1587), visited Pope Pius IV (r. 1559-1565) on 2 November 1561:

[They escorted Francesco to the Vatican Palace] where the pope, with his stole, in the presence of all the cardinals with their purple copes, was waiting in the Hall of Constantine, and he received the aforementioned prince for the kiss of the foot, in which only the master of ceremonies preceded him.\footnote{Cited in de Jong, The Power and the Glorification, 84.}

\footnotetext[197]{Lorenzo Valla, “The Principal Arguments from the Falsely-Believed and Forged Donation of Constantine,” in The Civilization, ed. Bartlett, 207.}
\footnotetext[198]{Ibid.}
\footnotetext[199]{Cited in de Jong, The Power and the Glorification, 84.}
The hall was designed to welcome high-ranking guests like Francesco, so its artistic program highlighted the authority of the Church. When visitors entered the Hall of Constantine, they would notice the presence of eight popes painted prominently on the walls. The program on the walls was especially meaningful in that ancient popes were painted in the likeness of contemporary popes. For example, the depiction of Pope Clement I (r. 88-99) appears to be a portrait of Pope Leo X (Fig. 3.15). The reference is highlighted by the lion (Leo in Latin) motif on the rim of the baldachin. Pope Clement VII is also represented as Leo I (r. 457-474). Thus the two Medici popes who oversaw the design of the room were given credit visually. High-ranking visitors would have felt the pressure from the imposing papal portraits, the current pope’s coat of arms on the floor, the reference to the Donation of Constantine, and the direct lineage from Saint Peter, the first pope, to the current pope meeting the visitor. The ultimate purpose of this room was to simply state the pope’s superiority despite, or possibly in response to, the fact that all secular people would regard the donation as a discredited myth. Ambitions popes like Sixtus, Julius, and Leo, thus presented an array of political messages while maintaining the claim that their position was only granted to them because they were good Christians.

Venice

Indeed, appealing to religion was the most useful gesture for popes whose power directly came from God, but secular rulers also used religion to their advantage. The most common form of religious portraits in the secular world were devotional images where the focus was on the sitter’s piety rather than any outstanding political message. However, that is not to say that people did not subtly add elements that hinted at the underlying political messages. In other

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words, piety was only one of the ways in which rulers claimed and legitimized their power, and Venice had a special need to appeal to Christianity. First of all, the foundation of the city was deeply tied with St. Mark, though, like most claims, this was largely a myth. It was said that the Evangelist Mark was stranded in Venice because of a storm on his way into the Adriatic, and he rested on the shores of the lagoon when an angel visited him in his dreams. “Pax tibi Marce Evangelista meus [Peace to you, Mark, my Evangelist],” said the angel. The story would be used by Venetians to claim that Mark was destined to rest in Venice, and therefore Venice had a special covenant with God. This phrase would appear again and again in Venetian art, often under the paws of the lion of St. Mark as if stating that Venice was where Mark decided to land (Fig. 3.16). Because of this foundation story, Venetians regarded themselves differently, as Wills observes:

Most cities had as their main church the cathedral, the seat of the local bishop, who had authority over local clergy by virtue of his place in the ecclesiastical chain of command. But the center of religious life in Venice was a political cult site, where the doge had power to appoint his own chaplains for his own church. The bishop of Venice was shoved to the periphery of its social life, both symbolically and physically—on the island of Castello, where the old cathedral of Saint Peter was located. This expressed an attitude toward Peter’s successor in Rome that would be a continuing feature of Venetian life. The political nature of religion in Venice infringed on papal authority, especially considering that both Venice and the Papal States were looking to expand their influence and at times also fought each other. Pope Pius II openly criticized the Venetians for their unchristian behavior when Venice failed to respond to Pius’ call for a crusade. Pius claimed that the Venetians are not people who embrace splendid projects. They are mostly merchants whose nature, intent on gain, usually shrinks from noble aims which cannot be achieved without expense. The Venetians thought that if war were declared against the Turks, all their trade with the East, on which their livelihood depended, would cease and that after Greece was

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201 Cited in Wills, *Venice: Lion City*, 29.
202 Wills, *Venice: Lion City*, 30.
freed the western princes would not allow the Venetian Republic to have sovereignty in Dalmatia and the East.\textsuperscript{203} 

Pius’ criticism was based on the long history of stigma against the merchant class, which had become increasingly influential in the Renaissance. 

While Venetians had no reservations about Venice’s ruling class consisting of rich merchants, part of the task of Venetian doges, nonetheless, was to respond to sentiments from the clergy that merchants were inherently profit-driven, so they needed to appear as more devout to Christianity than the popes. It became customary during this time that doges would commission a devotional portrait upon their election, and that painting would hang in the doge’s palace. 

Normally, these images depicted the doge in profile kneeling in front of the Virgin Mary. The previously mentioned Agostino Barbarigo, however, had his picture done differently in that the audience can just slightly see his left eye (Fig. 3.17). It is important to take this into consideration because people often noticed small changes like this, and they were seen as controversial especially for a devotional image.\textsuperscript{204} 

The great Venetian painter Titian made a bolder attempt to paint a devotional image with the patron, Broccardo Malchiostro, who was secretary of Bishop Bernardo de’ Rossi (1468-1527), in frontal view, and that picture was met with rage because it was customary for the patron to appear in profile, so he or she does not steal any of the Virgin’s glory (Fig. 3.18). At an ecclesiastical tribunal in 1526, a priest denounced Broccardo’s offensive imagery:

When I go to say mass in the Chapel of Messer Broccardo, I feel ashamed because I am doing reverence to [Broccardo] and not the image of the Madonna. When [Bishop Rossi] was last here...he ought to have had the figure of Broccardo removed, so that he no longer appeared in the middle of the altarpiece.\textsuperscript{205}

\textsuperscript{203} Pius II, \textit{Memoirs of a Renaissance Pope}, 139.  
\textsuperscript{205} Cited in Peter Humfrey, \textit{The Altarpiece in Renaissance Venice} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 314.
Furthermore, the color of the Virgin Mary’s and St. Mark’s robes in Barbarigo’s work deserves attention. While it was common to present biblical figures in ultramarine blue because it was the costliest pigment befitting a biblical figure, for Venice the color had a special connection. Before synthetic blue pigments were created, ultramarine was manufactured from grounding lapis lazuli and the ore was precious due to its scarcity. There are only three places that have large reserves of lapis—Afghanistan, Siberia, and the Indus Valley, all of which were nearly impossible to reach for early modern Europeans. Venice dominated the lapis trade, importing from Afghanistan and distributing the ore to the rest of Europe, and ultramarine’s Latin name, *ultramarinus* [beyond the sea] became associated with Venice.\(^{206}\) The use of ultramarine in the Venetian context, therefore, not only highlighted the patron’s respect for biblical figures, but also signified that Venice’s empire reached beyond the sea.

In addition to dedicatory portraits that were required for all doges, Venetian doges’ role in the spiritual sphere was also evident in the story of the ring of St. Mark.\(^{207}\) The scene when the fisherman hands the ring to Doge Gradenigo was painted in 1534 for the confraternity of San Marco (Fig. 3.19). The composition cannot but remind us of the frescos in the Hall of Constantine where emperor Constantine kneels in front of the pope and offers him power over

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\(^{207}\) The story is as follows: During the reign of Doge Bartolomeo Gradenigo (r. 1339-1342), a fisherman and his son were caught in a sudden storm under the Ponte della Paglia, a bridge in Venice. Amidst the storm, the fisherman heard a voice from a stranger who commanded the fisherman to take him to the island of San Giorgio Maggiore. Believing that the stranger was a celestial being, the fisherman followed the stranger’s order. When they arrived at San Giorgio Maggiore, another stranger entered the boat and commanded the fisherman to sail to San Nicolo del Lido, where another stranger boarded the boat. Together, the three strangers ordered the fisherman to sail to the open seas. After a certain distance, a large vessel emerged in the distance, and on its deck were various demons that were causing the current storm. At this moment, the three strangers manifested themselves as St. Mark, St. George, and St. Nicholas. They then prayed to God to save Venice from the storm, and soon a lightning stroke the vessel thereby stopping the storm. On the fisherman’s way back to the Ponte della Paglia, St. Mark gave the fisherman a golden ring and ordered him to hand it to the doge. The fisherman followed Mark’s order and since then, the ring became a relic of Mark, see The Baroness Swift, “The Ring of St. Mark (A Venetian Legend),” *The New Monthly* 121, no. 762 (Oct. 1882): 635-639.
Rome. The fact that Constantine is kneeling shows his subordinate position, while in this scene, the fisherman with the ring as the embodiment of St. Mark, was in a lower position than the doge. Of course, it would have been too bold for anyone in the Renaissance, even a pope, to suggest that he or she was superior to a saint, but the painting of Gradenigo subtly hinted that the doge’s authority was somehow higher than the Church’s since it was the doge who received this religious relic, not the bishop of Venice. Much like how the Roman Pontiff assumed both the spiritual and temporal responsibility of Rome, the doge’s authority in Venice extended to both spheres as well.

**Milan and Urbino**

Popes’ piety was the foundation of their claim for influence in the secular world, and Venetian doges’ piety indeed outlined a hidden feud with the Catholic Church. It was no different in Urbino and Milan, though, since both courts had amicable relationship with the papacy at one point or another, Urbinate and Milanese dukes usually did not commission works that went against the pope. Instead, both courts focused on using religion to establish family lineage. Family lineage had been a recurring theme in Federico da Montefeltro’s rule. Partly this was due to the fact that he was only granted the right to pass his title to an heir in 1464, twenty years after he had ruled in Urbino. Along with the previously mentioned two portraits of Federico listening to a lecture and reading in armor, there was another portrait of Federico and Guidobaldo together. Justus van Gent had drawn an altarpiece for the Corpus Domini confraternity in Urbino. Although the altarpiece was not commissioned by Federico, he had supported the confraternity generously and the confraternity commissioned the panel as a gesture of gratitude.\(^{208}\) The portrait shows Federico talking to a lavishly dressed Jew who has been

identified as Isaac, the alleged ambassador from the Shah of Persia who gifted Federico the helmet in the portrait of Federico reading with armor (Fig. 3.20). Behind Federico and Isaac, a space was intentionally left empty so we could see the young Guidobaldo and his mother Battista (Fig. 3.21). Thus, this scene served as a continuation of Federico’s aspirations for the young heir; he was to become a leader, a scholar, and a good Christian, just like his father.

The same desire was seen in Milan. Renaissance Europe was full of major architectural projects that developed over very long stretches of time. Among these, perhaps the most famous is the Cathedral of Santa Maria Maggiore in Milan. It was an ambitious project that was initiated in the late fourteenth century, and at the time of its initial plan, it was designed to be the largest cathedral in the Christian world; the project ultimately took more than five hundred years to complete (Fig. 3.22). Its long construction history provided various rulers the chance to leave their personal marks on it. Ludovico Maria Sforza was one of the most involved Sforza. As mentioned before, Ludovico faced a two-fold accusation. First of all, he was a Sforza, a family whose dynastic claim to the dukedom was somewhat shaky, and second, within the Sforza family, Ludovico was also a usurper. Therefore, lineage was of utter importance to him, and appealing to piety became one of his ways to legitimate his rule, though Ludovico was the first Sforza duke to have significantly departed from references to the Visconti rulers. Whereas the previous Sforza were stressing their links to the Visconti, Ludovico, as himself a usurper, could not really stress lineage as intensely, and thus he sought to create a new lineage for himself and his sons. This is perhaps most clearly shown through the names of Ludovico’s sons. While previous Sforza had named their sons after Visconti rulers, Ludovico’s eldest son Maximilian

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209 Welch, *Art and Authority*, 49.
(1493, r. 1512-1515) was given Emperor Maximilian I’s name (r. 1493-1519), and his second son Francesco II (1495, r. 1521-1535)’s name referenced to the first Sforza duke.

After Ludovico claimed the ducal title in 1494, he highlighted his contribution to the cathedral by putting his votive figure and that of his nephew on the new cathedral organ.\(^\text{211}\) Accounts of the inscription on the *tiburio*, the lantern atop the dome, also highlighted Ludovico’s involvement. Evelyn Welch states: “Each of the suggested Latin texts made it clear to readers that the culmination of the cathedral’s central crossing was only possible during the glorious rule of Ludovico and his recently deceased wife Beatrice d’Este.”\(^\text{212}\) Ludovico’s personal involvement was important, but so was his lineage back to the Sforza, not Visconti, family. In the Certosa di Pavia located in northern Lombardy, Ludovico had commissioned two frescoes on the apses of its northern and southern transepts (Figs. 3.23.a; 3.23.b). The southern transept depicts Giangaleazzo Visconti presenting the model of the Certosa to the Virgin Mary, and the northern transept depicts the coronation of Mary with Francesco and Ludovico Sforza kneeling. Although the Visconti family was still given the credit for constructing the monastery, there was a clear separation between the Visconti and Sforza families. Instead of referencing back to the Visconti family, Ludovico seemed more concerned with establishing a connection with Francesco, most definitely due to the fact that Ludovico should not have been the legitimate heir to the duchy. Of course it was not enough for Ludovico to present himself as the rightful successor to Francesco, but he also needed to establish his own line of succession, and that is also shown through a devotional image (Fig. 3.24). This picture was the altarpiece for the Church of Sant’Ambrogio ad Nemus and was commissioned by Ludovico in 1494, the same year that he was officially made duke of Milan. The message is clear, that is, Ludovico wanted to establish

\(^{211}\) Welch, *Art and Authority*, 54
\(^{212}\) *Ibid.*
the position of his intended heir, Maximilian, much like what Federico da Montefeltro had done with Guidobaldo. Both Ludovico Sforza and Federico da Montefeltro were illegitimate rulers in their state, so they could not afford to lose their image as good Christian princes, and since both of them had to establish a new succession line, they readily used religion to do so.

Portraits that showed the sitter’s piety were never simply about appearing as good Christians, rather, appearing as good Christians was a way for rulers to claim authority. Even within papal patronage, which would have purer reasons to showcase the sitter’s piety, the underlying political claims were still clear. Post-schism popes were just as ambitious and powerful as other rulers, if not more so, and they reasserted their authority within the Church by appealing to their God-given title to rule because their personal religious devotion was one of the main justifications for their position. At times, popes even evoked more traditional dynastic values of family lineage in their art projects, echoing the practice of secular rulers. On the other hand, Venetian doges had to respond to these papal assertions of power with their own art by establishing a special relationship with St. Mark. In a sense, Venetian doges played a more important religious role than the bishops of Venice. After all, the golden ring of St. Mark was handed to the doge, not a traditional religious authority. While Venice had a long history of competing with the Papal States, dukes in Milan and Urbino generally accepted the notion that they were primarily secular rulers, whose authority was legitimized by being pious Christians.
Conclusion

“Martinus Lutherus [Luther was here]” was obnoxiously doodled on the walls of the Hall of Constantine after the army of Emperor Charles V sacked Rome. Struck by the Protestant Reformation, the Roman Catholic Church would never again be a towering force in European politics as it had been during the Middle Ages, though internal reforms enabled the popes to continue to rule Rome and some contiguous provinces until 1870. The Papal State was the last traditional Italian state to be absorbed in the modern unified Italian state. The Duchy of Urbino disappeared much earlier. The della Rovere family would remain in Urbino for another century, but the duchy would be annexed to the Papal States in 1631. The Venetian Republic was one of the longest-lasting Italian states, but eventually it fell to the French troops led by Napoleon Bonaparte in 1797 when the last doge, Ludovico Manin, abdicated and ceded Venetian territory to the French Republic and the Holy Roman Empire following the Treaty of Campo Formio (1797), thus ending more than a millennium of the republic’s existence. The Duchy of Milan proved the shortest-lived of these four states. It fell to King Louis XII (r.1498-1515) of France in 1500; some Sforza dukes returned to rule for short periods, but the family’s role ended definitely in 1535 when the duchy became a Spanish possession. The decline of Milan, Urbino, Venice, and even of the Papal States corresponded with the rise of other European powers. Due to Italy’s disadvantageous location and inability to unify, Italian states were poorly positioned to take advantage of the age of discovery, and Italy, like the whole Mediterranean, gradually lost economic centrality to the Atlantic over the course of the sixteenth century. While Italian artists such as Titian, Caravaggio (1571-1610), and Gian Lorenzo Bernini (1598-1680) would continue to acquire international fame, Italy’s prolonged political fragmentation prevented all states in the
Peninsula from competing with other more unified European powers and their growing colonial holdings.

In my thesis I have aimed to show both the connections and differences between the different Italian states. In more secular dynasties like Milan and Urbino, rulers focused on constructing a militant, and, at times, flamboyant persona who was at the same time calm and rational. The Venetian doges were confined by their political particularity which demanded them to appear wise, experienced, and more importantly selflessly devoted to the Republic. The papacy, too, was conscious of its imagery’s implications. Faced with these restrictions, the irascible and tempestuous Julius II was turned into an old man with a slightly hunched back. The three major qualities of a true Italian prince—learning, valor, and piety—were all adopted differently in different states.

Given the realities of the power structure of Renaissance Italy, this thesis has not addressed a number of approaches that have become in recent decades more common among scholars. For instance, all my visual sources have been images of male rulers or male rulers to-be. The traditional lack of scholarship on women has been partially corrected in the past few decades. Joan Kelly’s influential article, “Did Women have a Renaissance” (1977) prompted other scholars to look at women who, in the absence of men and indeed sometimes in the presence of men, also exerted influence. Class is also an issue I have not focused on. My thesis only looked at images of rulers, but, as Vasari mentions, Venice was full of portraits of commoners, so—did commoners also have a Renaissance? Additionally, recent scholarship has shown that globalization might have happened much earlier than we had previously thought. As Irene Backus shows in her Ph.D. dissertation, “Asia Materialized: Perceptions of China in Renaissance Florence” (2014), cultural links across the globe also demand more scholarly
attention. These changes in scholarship could prompt new ways of studying the Italian Renaissance in a gendered or global perspective. Isabella d’Este (1474-1539) of Mantua, for example, was a skillful diplomat and a famous patron of culture who was at least as conscious of her public image as any of her male counterparts. Moreover, how did patrons view female artists? Was the male patron to female artist relationship different in any way compared to when both patron and artist were males? A careful study of such relationships might shed new light onto reconstructing Renaissance masculinity and femininity. Another major question that could benefit from future research is how Italians reconciled with increasing global contacts. How did Italian art change stylistically as the world became more global, and, in turn, what were the forces behind these changes? Were Italian artists and patrons more receptive to certain kinds of change? If so, why? The possibilities for future research are ample with the introduction of these new ways to look at history, even for a well-studied era such as the Renaissance.

Europeans’ intense interest in the classical age, which defined the Renaissance in its original meaning, would undergo significant changes in the centuries after the Renaissance. Although classicism would go through cycles of rise and decline, one truth remained universal—rulers of any kind continued to construct their public personae through art. Queen Elizabeth I proclaimed her contributions to her kingdom in her portrait where she is placed on top of the globe, and her feet are standing exactly on Virginia, the colony named after her (Fig. 4.1). The half-day, half-night background anticipates the bold claim in the eighteenth century that the British had surpassed the Spaniards at building a “vast empire on which the sun never sets and whose bounds nature has not yet ascertained.”

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213 George Macartney, *An Account of Ireland in 1773 by a late Chief Secretary of that Kingdom* (London, 1773), 55.
to Baroque, Rococo, and Neoclassicism, rulers such as Louis XIV, Peter the Great, or Napoleon continued to rely on artists and art to display their image and shape their subjects’ perceptions.

Nor has this interest in visual representations of the power of particular individuals disappeared even today. On the most basic level, the Renaissance art tradition can still be seen today. In 2022, Queen Elizabeth II (r. 1952-2022) passed away, and her heir, Charles III (r. 2022-) issued a coin in memory of her (Fig. 4.2). The coin’s obverse has a portrait of the new king, and the reverse has two portraits of the queen. This emphasis on lineage is just like what Francesco Sforza did after he married Bianca Maria and issued the coin with “Visconti” added to his name. Charles was equally conscious of his public image as relating to his current status. The coin depicts him without a crown since his coronation ceremony is scheduled to take place 6 May 2023, but the inscription CHARLES III.D.G.REX [King by the grace of God] speaks to his position and that it is also somehow divinely sanctioned. In the United States, too, the Renaissance tradition lives on. In the official portrait of Ronald Reagan, one cannot ignore the similarities with Hans Memling’s Portrait of a Young Man (Figs. 4.3.a; 4.3.b). Not only are the compositions extremely similar, but also the hand gesture and the dark outfit. Other examples of these connections with the past are numerous. Fundamentally, this artistic tradition lives on because all political leaders—regardless of the types of regimes—want to project a type of persona. In a more democratic country like the United States, American politicians’ public persona directly correlates to how well they are perceived by the voters. In a less democratic regime like the Soviet Union, the leader’s public image is even more important. Different types

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214 The portrait of President Reagan by Everett Kinstler was not the one shown at the portrait unveiling ceremony on November 15, 1898, but since Reagan did not like the initial portrait by Aaron Shikler, he commissioned a replacement, which was painted by Kinstler, see “Official White House Portraits,” The White House Historical Association. https://www.whitehousehistory.org/press-room/press-backgrounders/official-white-house-portraits; although Hans Memling only worked in the Low Countries, his style heavily influenced Italian masters. In general, the introduction of frontal portraits to Italy came from the emulation of the works of Netherlandish masters.
of images can reach larger audiences and certain audiences are only receptive to a specific type of message. Bluntly put, Italian Renaissance artists to Italian rulers were like campaign managers to American presidential candidates or the PR department to big companies. Concerns for one’s public image would today be tackled in different ways with the help of technology and other inventive ways to influence public opinion, but, at their core, are the same questions of legitimacy and capability.
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Cristoforo Caradosso Foppa (attrib.), *Bust of Julius II with View of St. Peter’s*, c. 1506, Bronze, 57 mm (diameter), National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

Figure 3.8
Raphael, *The Expulsion of Heliodorus from the Temple*, 1511-1512, Fresco, 750 cm (base), Apostolic Palace, Vatican City
Figure 3.9
Coat of Arms of Julius II

Figure 3.10
Raphael, *Portrait of Leo X*, c. 1518-1520, Oil on wood, 154 x 119 cm, Uffizi, Florence

Figure 3.11
Coat of arms of Leo X
Figure 3.12
School of Raphael, *Coronation of Charlemagne*, c. 1514, Fresco, 770 cm (base), Apostolic Palace, Vatican City

Figure 3.13
Raphael, *The Oath of Leo III*, 1516-1517, Fresco, Stanza dell’Incendio del Borgo, Apostolic Palace, Vatican City
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Figure 3.15
Detail of School of Raphael, *Vision of the Cross*, 1520-1524, Fresco, Sala di Costantino, Apostolic Palace, Vatican City
Figure 3.16
Vittore Carpaccio, *The Lion of St. Mark*, 1516, Tempera on canvas, 130 x 368 cm, Palazzo Ducale, Venice

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Titian, *Malchiostro Annunciation*, c. 1520, Oil on panel, 210 x 176 cm, Treviso Cathedral, Treviso

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Marcus Gheeraerts the Younger, *Queen Elizabeth I*, c. 1592, Oil on canvas, 241.3 x 152.4 cm, National Portrait Gallery, London

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Figure 4.3.b
Hans Memling, *Portrait of a Young Man*, 1472-1475, Oil on panel, 40 x 29 cm, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York