



Fig. 1  
Tuscan painter, *Portrait of Leonora Cybo* (detail), mid- to late 16<sup>th</sup> (post-1560) to early 17<sup>th</sup> century, oil on canvas, 59 x 49cm (Palazzo Falson Historic House Museum / Photo: Peter Bartolo Parnis)

## An enigmatic portrait of Leonora Cybo at Palazzo Falson

Roberta Cruciana **uncovers the story of this extraordinary noblewoman**

The portrait of the Italian noble woman Leonora (Eleonora) Cybo, an oil on canvas painting which forms part of the collections amassed by Captain Olof Frederick Gollcher,<sup>1</sup> currently hangs in the bedroom of Gollcher's erstwhile home, now Palazzo Falson Historic House Museum in Mdina.<sup>2</sup> It is unknown when the portrait of Leonora Cybo came to form part of Captain Gollcher's collections, or how and when it arrived in Malta. It may have been purchased abroad by Gollcher, or it could possibly already have been in Malta for centuries, due perhaps to the presence of Italian Knights of the Order, especially those from Tuscany, in Malta during the rule of the Order of St John.

The identity of the sixteenth-century Tuscan lady depicted in this portrait is revealed by the Latin inscription on the upper part of the painting: 'LEONORA CYBO FLISCHI COMITISSA ATQ PRINCIPISSA ANNO DNI M·D·XXXXVII· DEINDE MARCHIONSSA CETONE ·M·D·LX· [...].'<sup>3</sup>

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Leonora was born in Massa (Tuscany) on the 1<sup>st</sup> March 1523 to the eminent family of Cybo-Malaspina, whose members were Marquises and then Princes of Massa and Carrara.<sup>4</sup> She was the eldest child of Lorenzo Cybo (1500-1549), an Italian general of Genoese origin, Count of Ferentillo (he was the nephew of Pope Innocent VIII on his father's side, and the nephew of Lorenzo *il Magnifico* and of Pope Leone X on his mother's side) and of Ricciarda Malaspina (1497-1553), Marchioness of Massa. Because of altercations in her family, the young Leonora was sent to *le Murate*, the monastery of the Santissima Annunziata in Florence, which congregated in it women who wished to retire to a life of prayer out of their own free will. During this time her aunt from the paternal side, Caterina Cybo Varano (1501-1557), a woman of great charm and culture, became a key-figure for Leonora most especially in the pursuit of her studies.

Leonora was married twice. Her first marriage occurred on the 30<sup>th</sup> January 1543, after long negotiations mainly handled by her paternal uncle Cardinal Innocenzo Cybo. Her spouse was the rich and powerful Genoese nobleman Gian Luigi Fieschi *il Giovane* (1523-1547), Count of Lavagna, in Carrara. Two years after the death of her first husband, in 1549, and against her family's will, Leonora married Gian Luigi Vitelli known to all as *Chiappino* (1519-1575 / '*chiappino*' translates to 'bear' in the Tuscan dialect). Vitelli was an audacious *condottiero di ventura*, a man of faith and ambassador of the Duke of Florence, Cosimo I de' Medici, who in 1562 appointed him Knight of the Order of St Stephen Pope and Martyr. Cosimo had in fact played a key part in the negotiations that led to Leonora's second marriage. Vitelli died in 1575, and Leonora retired again, this time permanently, in the monastery of the *Murate*<sup>5</sup>

where she had spent her youth. Her last years were devoted exclusively to prayer and study. She died on the 17<sup>th</sup> February 1594,<sup>6</sup> and was buried in the church of the monastery near her beloved aunt Caterina Cybo<sup>7</sup> with the following epitaph which even describes them as 'sisters'. This epitaph appears to have been composed by her brother Alberico I (1532-1623), Marquis and Prince of Massa:<sup>8</sup> *D. O. M. Catharinae Cybo Camertium Duci amitae et Eleonorae itidem Cybo Comiti et Principi Filiscae prius ac demum Marchioni Caetoni sorori sicut optimis animi dotibus vitae atque morum integritate coniuntis ita unicum tumulum P. C. Albericus Cybo Massae Princeps I. obiit illa anno MDLVII die XXII. Februar. haec autem an. MDXCIV. die XVII. Febr.:*<sup>9</sup>

But what of Leonora's character and accomplishments? The Italian author Francesco Saverio Quadrio refers to Leonora as an eminent poetess,<sup>10</sup> but only one sonnet is known, authored by Leonora and published in 1573 with the Venetian Minor Faustino Tasso's poems.<sup>11</sup> Leonora was a woman of great culture and character who stood out among her contemporaries, especially in erudite and aristocratic circles. She communicated with many Italian writers of the period, persons like the Venetian Bernardo Cappello who in one of his poems praised and called her '*oggetto celeste*';<sup>12</sup> the humanist Lodovico Domenichi in 1563 dedicated to her the translation of his book *Libro della grazia e del libero arbitrio di S. Agostino Vescovo d'Ipbona a Valentino e a' Monaci che eran con lui*. Giuseppe Betussi, the Venetian humanist, in 1577 wrote the treatise on love entitled *La Leonora*: in this work he included Leonora in an important noblewomen's list, calling her '*ornamento del sesso donnesco ed esempio di perfetta bellezza*'.<sup>13</sup> Even the poetess Laura Battiferri,<sup>14</sup> wife of the famous Florentine architect and sculptor Bartolomeo

Ammannati who was also in close touch and carried out projects for Chiappino Vitelli,<sup>15</sup> Leonora's second husband, devoted several sonnets to Leonora, such as the *Inno di Sant'Agostino tradotto in versi sciolti*, and the eclogue *Europa*.<sup>16</sup> In one particular sonnet, Battiferri praises Leonora as '*O di casta bellezza esempio vero, e di rara virtude ardente raggio, donna, che 'n questo uman cieco viaggio, ne mostrate del ciel l'alto sentiero*'.<sup>17</sup> Battiferri was also the author of four compositions in connection with the Great Siege of Malta of 1565. One of these was written to celebrate the figure and heroism of Chiappino Vitelli (*Or c'ha pur l'alto valor vostro invitto*), who took part in the last phase of the Siege in early September of that year, which is known as the *Gran Soccorso*.<sup>18</sup> It is really fascinating that a portrait of his wife Leonora is actually located in Malta.

It is interesting to note how Leonora's name is related to the so-called *congiura dei Fieschi*, a historical event that took place in Genoa during the night between the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> of January 1547; this saw Gian Luigi Fieschi, her first husband, and the Prince-Admiral of Genoa, Andrea Doria pitted against each other: both Fieschi and Giannettino, Andrea Doria's nephew-heir, died in this conflict. Over the centuries that incident has given rise to different historical, political, ideological, economic and social interpretations, all attempting to explain what caused it.<sup>19</sup> One of the theories put forward centered around an alleged rivalry in love between Gian Luigi and Giannettino. It is held that Doria was hopelessly infatuated with Leonora.

The painting on display at Palazzo Falson is an official portrait, in which Leonora poses in a proud and almost distant attitude. Rather than an icy haughtiness, her frozen gaze is intended to show her intellectual and moral virtues which elevated her from the ordinary. Leonora is depicted in half-length, with the painting's dark background throwing into relief her pallid skin. She is richly dressed in an outfit of heavy cloth cut in sumptuous lines, typical of the fashion widespread throughout Europe from the mid-sixteenth century.



below: Fig. 2  
Detail of the painting's inscription  
(Photo: Peter Bartolo Parnis)

opposite: Fig. 3  
The painting in its entirety  
(Photo: Peter Bartolo Parnis)

The costume she wears consists of a surcoat sewn with a 'V' bib which reaches down to the stomach area; it is characterized by swollen and padded sleeves and embellished with gold borders and small floral decorations which show it to be a refined piece of clothing. The tight corset is enriched at the neck with a white ruff with golden edges and gatherings; it is made rigid with a thin iron wire structure which frames the precious luminous pearls adorning the neckline and terminating in a double strand that loops up to the left shoulder and is tied there. Her serious and detached look, her aquiline nose, pursed lips, and, above all, the fact that Leonora's features are not idealized, makes it a striking and realistic portrait. Her elegantly coiffed dark curls, covered by a veil which bears the same decoration as the dress, are crowned with a dainty hairpiece.

The catalogue of Palazzo Falson records the portrait as being attributed to the sixteenth century, Cremonese school.<sup>20</sup> More recently, other artists have been suggested as possible authors of the work, amongst which are Sofonisba Anguissola and Lavinia Fontana.<sup>21</sup> Unfortunately, the archives at Palazzo Falson examined so far have not revealed any indications as to the provenance of the painting and the circumstances of how it entered the collection. This renders more difficult a possible attribution. What can be stated with certainty is that the painting emerges from a late mannerist cultural context, specifically from central-northern Italy. Our painting does however betray precise influences, which we can propose as being Florentine or at least Tuscan, a hypothesis which is also endorsed by Leonora's biographical events. Also, Vitelli, who as mentioned above was Cosimo I's foremost captain, was therefore in close contact with the art of Florence's grand-ducal

court and its most important protagonists; these were able interpreters of the Medici's policy and ideology and included artists such as Pontormo, Giorgio Vasari,<sup>22</sup> Agnolo Bronzino (Fig. 4) and the aforementioned Bartolomeo Ammannati, just to name some of them.

The painter's attention seems to be mainly directed at specifying details of Leonora's clothing, jewellery and hairstyle, emphasising her high rank in society. It is not a coincidence that the 'state-portrait' as a genre spread widely at the time of Cosimo I as an instrument of propaganda; it was an able channel by means of which to strengthen the Medici's ideology of an absolute State and the stability of this power, yet not impervious to the new way of depicting decorum and morality established by the Counter Reformation in the second half of the sixteenth century. An example of this was the work of Agnolo Bronzino (1503-1572),<sup>23</sup> the favorite painter of Cosimo I, author of famous portraits in which the psychology of the characters seems to vanish in the refined and detailed description of the clothes and attributes that allude to social rank, as in the *Portrait of Eleonora of Toledo* at the Uffizi Gallery in Florence or in the portrait of *Laura Battiferri* (Fig. 5),<sup>24</sup> now in Palazzo Vecchio. It is not a coincidence that the portrait at Palazzo Falson seems to be looking at the most famous work of Bronzino, and at the so-called *stile Eleonora*:<sup>25</sup> the arabesques of the corset are reminiscent of those in the black velvet gown of Eleonora of Toledo's dress, and refer to certain decorations of Moorish Spain; equally inspired by the masterpiece at the Uffizi, are also the square neckline that reveals the neck and chest, the sleeves and the presence of the pearls as ornaments in the pendant earrings and at the neck. It can therefore be assumed that the portrait of Eleonora Cybo has been produced in an artistic-cultural area dominated and deeply influenced by the figure and work of Agnolo Bronzino, resulting in fact also approachable to the pictorial sensibility and production of the portraits of Alessandro Allori (1535-1607), who succeeded him as court painter.

opposite: Fig. 4  
Agnolo Bronzino (1503-1572), *Portrait of Eleonora of Toledo with her son Giovanni* (detail), 1544-1545, oil on panel, 115 x 96cm (Uffizi Gallery, Florence)

Leonora's portrait may have had a pendant painting representing her eminent consort Gian Luigi Vitelli, now lost. A surviving portrait of Vitelli does exist, with coat and hat with a feather (and the inscription at the top in capital letters '*CHIAPPINVS VITELLI*'); it is an oil on wood by Cristofano di Papi dell'Altissimo. It was commissioned by Grand Duke Ferdinand I and delivered on the 15<sup>th</sup> May 1587; it presently hangs at the Uffizi Gallery in Florence, in the southern corridor's left wing. It belongs to the series of portraits called '*gioviana*'.<sup>26</sup> Another version, a Florentine oil on canvas attributed to the last quarter of the sixteenth century (1580-1599), is kept in the deposits of Palazzo Pitti's Palatine Gallery and Royal Apartments in Florence. In it Chiappino wears armour with a lace collar, a hat with band and feather, and the painting also bears his name at the top with a legend that reads '*CHIAPPINVS VITELLIVS*'.<sup>27</sup>

If one were to return again to the Latin inscription in capital letters at the top of Leonora's portrait, and compare it with the epitaph on her tomb, a similarity between its form and content emerges instantly ('*LEONORA CYBO FLISCHI COMITISSA ATQ PRINCIPISSA ANNO DNIM·D·XXXVII· DEINDE MARCHIONSSA CETONE ·M·D·LX·*' / '[...] *Eleonorae itidem Cybo Comiti et Principi Filiscae prius ac demum Marchioni Caetoni [...]*'); the parallelism is evident, as is the fact that the painting's inscription also bears two dates (1547 and 1560): the first refers to the year in which her first husband Gian Luigi Fieschi died, and the second to the year in which Leonora, through her second husband Chiappino Vitelli, was given the title of Marchioness of Cetona. So, in both cases Leonora's titles acquired with the first and then second marriage are pointed out, ennobling even more her origins and her already prestigious status at birth. If 1560 is to be considered as the *terminus post quem* for the portrait's date of execution, and a firm *terminus ante quem* is established by her death in 1594, the likelihood is that the portrait was actually painted sometime between 1560 and 1575. In 1575, after the death



Fig. 5  
Agnolo Bronzino, *Portrait of Laura Battiferri*, c.1552, oil on panel, 60 x 83cm  
(Palazzo Vecchio [Palazzo della Signoria], Florence)



of Chiappino, Leonora decided to retire permanently to the monastery of the *Murate*, and it is highly improbable that she would have sat for her portrait after her retirement to the monastery; also, her appearance in the portrait appears to be consistent with that of a woman aged between 37 and 52 years. If so, we could imagine a commission of the painting by Chiappino: in addition to the presence of the ivy at the end of the inscription, which could allude to married life and faithfulness, the pearls, a sign of wealth and abundance, in Christian religion symbolize innocence and pristine purity, and are an attribute of the Virgin Mary as well as of young brides.<sup>28</sup>

On the other hand, the parallelism between the portrait's inscription and the funerary epitaph on her tomb built by Alberico I, Massa's humanist and enlightened ruler, to celebrate his beloved sister's memory, does not seem to have been accidental. It could be possible to conclude that the work was commissioned by Alberico I.

It could also be a work that reproduces a lost painting or engraving which depicts Leonora, perhaps made following her death, that is to say in the last few years of the sixteenth century, or else in the beginning of the following century. On the other hand, preliminary observations carried out on the work's canvas and on the painted surface thus far, seem to confirm that the portrait was executed in the period between the last decade of the sixteenth century and the first two decades of the seventeenth.<sup>29</sup>

Only further analysis and in-depth study can hope to shed more light on the history of this portrait kept at Palazzo Falson, which up to the present is the only one known of this important Tuscan noblewoman.

#### Notes

- 1 Captain Olof Frederick Gollcher OBE (1889-1962) was a man of great culture, a passionate collector, philanthropist and artist. For further information on his personality and his family see M. Galea and F. Balzan, *Palazzo Falson Historic House Museum* (Malta, 2007).
- 2 The painting was previously located in another room of Captain Gollcher's house, titled in the catalogue 'Room on Right'. See J. A. Cauchi, *Catalogue*

*of Paintings Watercolours Prints and Reliefs in the Palazzo Falson known as "The Norman House" Mdina* (Malta, 1973), 95 (Inv. No. 1). For further information on Palazzo Falson's history and collections see Galea and Balzan, op. cit. See also M. Buhagiar, S. Fiorini, *Mdina - The Cathedral City of Malta. A Reassessment of its History and a Critical Appreciation of its Works of Arts*, 2 vols. (Malta, 1996); M. Buhagiar, *The Late Medieval Art and Architecture of the Maltese Islands* (Malta, 2005); Idem, 'The Palazzo Falson at Mdina. An Art Historical Appreciation', in *Treasures of Malta*, Vol. XII No. 2, (Easter 2006), 14-18. I thank Francesca Balzan for giving me the opportunity to study the painting and for her valuable support and cooperation during the period of my research.

- 3 A singular element, which most likely seems to be an ivy leaf, appears at the end of the inscription. It could be there to serve a purely aesthetic function, filling the space to balance the inscription, or it may have a symbolic-allusive function. I thank Prof. John Varriano for drawing my attention to the fact that ivy is usually associated with love, marital fidelity and friendship, which would make sense in this context. The inscription translates as: 'Leonora Cybo Flischi Countess and Princess in 1547, then Marchioness of Cetona in 1560'. Flischi's surname, that Leonora took after her first marriage, refers to the Fieschi family, one of the most important Genoese families in that period.
- 4 For detailed information see G. Viani, *Memorie della famiglia Cybo e delle monete di Massa di Lunigiana* (Pisa, 1808); G. Sforza, *Cronache di Massa di Lunigiana* (Lucca, 1882); Luigi Staffetti, 'Giulio Cybo-Malaspina Marchese di Massa: studio storico su documenti per la maggior parte inediti', in *Atti e Memorie della Regia Deputazione di Storia Patria per le Antiche Province Modenesi*, IV, I, Modena 1892, 18-96; Idem, *Il Cardinale Innocenzo Cybo* (Firenze, 1894); Idem, *Il libro di ricordi della famiglia Cybo pubblicato con introduzione, appendice di documenti inediti note illustrative e indice analitico*. Atti della Società Ligure di Storia Patria, XXXVIII (Genova, 1910); Idem, 'Donne e castelli di Lunigiana. La moglie di Gian Luigi Fieschi', in *Giornale storico e letterario della Liguria*, nuova serie, II (1926), 30-51 and 186-203; U. Dorini, *Il contrastato matrimonio di Eleonora Cybo vedova di Gian Luigi Fieschi con Chiappino Vitelli*, s.l. 1929; *Alberico I Cybo Malaspina: il Principe, la Casa, lo Stato (1553-1623)*, atti del convegno di studi (Massa Carrara, 10-13 novembre 1994), prefate, G. Bocolari, P. Pelù, O. Raffo Maggini (eds), (Modena, 1995); R. De Rosa, 'Profilo storico di Eleonora Cybo, moglie di Gianluigi Fieschi', in *Atti e Memorie della Regia Deputazione di Storia Patria per le Antiche Province Modenesi*, XI, XVII (Modena, 1995), 163-174; *Ricciarda Malaspina, marchesa di Massa e Signora di Carrara*, atti del convegno (Massa Carrara, 10-11 giugno 2006), P. Pelù, O. Raffo (eds), (Modena, 2007); A.F. Celi

- and S. Simonetti, *Memorie nascoste. Carte di donne nel territorio apuano (secc. XVI-XX)*, introduction A. Scattigno (Massa Carrara, 2010).
- 5 Suppressed in 1808, the monastery was later rebuilt in 1845 and converted into a prison. In 1999 work began on the recovery of the area, aimed at transforming the large structure in a public housing complex.
  - 6 Staffetti, op. cit. (1910), 52-53, transcribes the following words of Alberico I: 'Alli 22 di Feb 1594, alli 23 hore, morì la Signora Donna Leonora Cybo, mia sorella, di anni settanta, in Firenze nelle Murate. Il suo male fu una doglia nella spalla con cataro e febre continua, che dissero li medici essere stato una punta bastarda. Li cavorno quatro uncie di sangue e al quinto la mattina migliorò; la sera peggiorò tanto che la tenero pericolosa. Li dierno ancora di poi una medicina leggiera, onde al settimo pur la mattina tornò a migliorare; ma il giorno alle XX hore cominciò a mancare con molto cataro, et doppo preso i Santmi Sacramenti, con grande devotione et contritione, passò a l'ultima vita, et ordinò d'essere sotterata nell' istessa chiesa. Fu portata per la città con molta pompa e concorso di popolo, essendo stata riverita e amata grandemente per le virtù sue e vita esemplarissima che tenne, per il che il priore del monastero, suo confessore, disse et testificò che l'haveva confessata XI anni senza peccati mortali, dal che si può argomentare che sia andata in Cielo, che Idio benedetto gle ne habbi fatto gratia perpetua'.
  - 7 Formerly buried in St Proculus's church in Florence, her remains were then transported to the SS. Annunziata's church and placed next to those of her favorite niece Leonora. See Ibidem, 376-377.
  - 8 G. Richa, *Notizie storiche delle chiese fiorentine divise ne' suoi quartieri opera di Giuseppe Richa della Compagnia di Gesu' accademico fiorentino, e socio colombario* (Firenze, 1754), II, 110; Viani, op. cit. (1808), 87.
  - 9 'To the aunt Caterina Cybo, Camerino's Duchess, and at the same way to the sister Eleonora Cybo, before Countess and Princess Flischi and then Marchioness of Cetona, as they have been united by soul's noble qualities and by honesty of both life and costumes, Alberico Cybo the Prince of Massa [raised] a single tomb. The first died on the 22<sup>nd</sup> February 1557, the other on the February 17<sup>th</sup> 1594'.
  - 10 F. S. Quadrio, *Della storia e della ragione di ogni poesia*, II (Milano, 1741), 262.
  - 11 F. Tasso, *Il primo [-secondo libro] delle rime toscane del r. Faustino Tasso vinitiano accademico detto il Somero. Raccolte da diversi luogbi, & date in luce da Girolamo Campeggio* (Torino, 1573), 51.
  - 12 See *Rime di m. Bernardo Cappello corrette, illustrate, e accresciute colla vita dell'autore scritta dall' abate Pierantonio Serassi, e le annotazioni di Agamiro Pelopide*, vol. 1. [-2] (Bergamo, 1753).
  - 13 G. Betussi, 'La Leonora. Ragionamento sopra la uera bellezza', Lucca 1577, in G. Zonta (ed.), *Trattati d'amore del Cinquecento* (Bari, 1912), 342.
  - 14 Member of the Assorditi's Academy in Urbino and of the Intronati's Academy in Siena, Laura Battiferri (1523-1589) was related to many humanists, writers and artists of her time, which she often received in her husband's villa in Maiano, counting amongst them Agnolo Bronzino, Annibal Caro, Benvenuto Cellini, Luca Martini, Bernardo Tasso, Baccio Valori, Benedetto Varchi, Pier Vettori.
  - 15 For further information see S. Salomone, 'Progetti di Ammannati per Chiappino Vitelli', in *L'Acqua, la Pietra, il Fuoco. Bartolomeo Ammannati scultore*, catalogo della Mostra (Firenze, Museo Nazionale del Bargello, 11 maggio-18 settembre 2011), B. Paolozzi Strozzi, D. Zikos (eds), (Firenze 2011), 314-323.
  - 16 See L. Battiferri degli Ammannati, *Il primo libro delle opere toscane*, Firenze 1560, E. M. Guidi (ed.), (Urbino, 2000). Battiferri also dedicated three sonnets to Chiappino Vitelli (*Se gli antichi scrittori ornar le carte, Non l'alta*

- penna e no' l'purgato inchiostro; Chi mi darà di sacra quercia altera*), while four are composed on the occasion of Caterina Cybo's death (Duchess of Camerino and aunt of Leonora).
- 17 *Lettere di Laura Battiferri a Benedetto Varchi*, C. Gargioli (ed.), (Bologna, 1879), 57-58.
  - 18 G. Bonello, 'Laura Battiferri - A Poetess for the Great Siege', in *The Sunday Times*, July 29, August 5, 12, 2012.
  - 19 See G. B. Cereseto, *La congiura del Fieschi* (Genova, 1850); L. Capelloni, *La congiura del conte Gio. Luigi Fiesco*, A. Olivieri (ed.), (Genova, 1858); E. Bernabò Brea, *Sulla congiura del conte Gio. Luigi Fieschi documenti inediti raccolti e pubblicati* (Genova, 1863); E. Celesia, *La congiura del conte Gianluigi Fieschi: memorie storiche del sec. XVI cavate da documenti originali ed inediti* (Genova, 1865); A. Gavazzo, *Nuovi documenti sulla congiura del conte Fiesco* (Genova, 1886); L. Staffetti, *La congiura del Fiesco e la corte di Toscana. Documenti Inediti*, Atti della Società ligure di storia patria, XXIII (Genova, 1891); J.-F.-P. de Gondi cardinale di Retz, *La congiura del Conte Gian Luigi Fieschi* (Paris, 1665), C. De Marchi (ed.), (Palermo, 1990); A. Mascardi, *La congiura del conte Gio. Luigi de' Fieschi*, Anversa 1629, C. De Marchi (ed.), (Sestri Levante, 2008). Also interesting is the tragedy in five acts of F. Schiller, *Die Verschwörung des Fiesco zu Genua (La congiura di Fiesco a Genova)*, written between 1780 and 1782.
  - 20 Fondazzioni Patrimonju Malti, *Palazzo Falson Inventory*, Lot: 1800; J. A. Cauchi (1973), 95 (Inv. No. 1).
  - 21 I thank Francesca Balzan for informing me.
  - 22 Giorgio Vasari painted Chiappino Vitelli's portrait in the fresco *La presa del Forte presso Porta Camollia di Siena* (1567-1571), on the east wall of the *Salone dei Cinquecento* in Palazzo Vecchio in Florence.
  - 23 For further information see Bronzino, *Pittore e poeta alla corte dei Medici*, catalogo della Mostra (Firenze, Palazzo Strozzi, 24 settembre 2010-23 gennaio 2011), C. Falciani, A. Natali (eds), (Firenze, 2010).
  - 24 Another famous portrait of Laura Battiferri was made by Alessandro Allori in the painting *Christ and the Canaanite woman* of the Florentine church of St John the Scolopi.
  - 25 See R. Orsi Landini, B. Niccoli, *Moda a Firenze 1540-1580. Lo stile di Eleonora di Toledo e la sua influenza* (Firenze, 2005).
  - 26 *Inventario delle preziose antichità ed insigni memorie che si conservano nella Magnifica Imperial Galleria di Sua Maestà Cesarea*, 1753, n. 155; *Inventario Generale di tutte le preziose antichità e insigni memorie che si conservano nella Galleria di S.A.R.*, 14 febbraio 1769, n. 145; *Inventario 1890*, n. 116. I thank Dr Francesca De Luca, for the information kindly given to me. The so-called series 'gioviana', a collection of portraits of famous men on wood (i.e. popes, emperors, kings, noblemen, sultans, saints, religious, artists, writers) with their names in capital letters, is kept in the Uffizi Gallery's corridors. This series was commissioned by Cosimo I; in June 1552 he sent the painter Cristofano dell'Altissimo to Como, to copy the collection of portraits belonging to the bishop of that city, Paolo Giovio. In fact, since 1521, when he was in Florence as a guest of Cardinal Giulio de' Medici, he began collecting an important set that eventually counted 400 portraits. Cosimo's project, which seemed to peter out when Francesco I rose to power, was then continued by Ferdinando I.
  - 27 *Inventario 1890*, n. 5346. I thank Dr Francesca De Luca, for the information kindly given to me.
  - 28 See M.C. Di Natale, *Gioielli di Sicilia* (Palermo, 2000, II ed. 2008), 14-15.
  - 29 I thank Pierre Bugeja of PrevArti, for his valuable suggestions.