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Reviewed work(s):

Source: *Woman's Art Journal*, Vol. 19, No. 1 (Spring - Summer, 1998), pp. 3-8

Published by: [Woman's Art Inc.](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1358647>

Accessed: 09/02/2012 12:24

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# LAVINIA FONTANA'S SELF-PORTRAIT MAKING MUSIC

By Katherine A. McIver

*Something changed during the Renaissance, in women's sense of themselves, even if very little changed for the better in their social condition. That change did have its roots in the spiritual experience of women, and it culminates in the consciousness put into words by the first feminists of the Renaissance...the intelligent seekers of a new way.<sup>1</sup>*

A close reading of Lavinia Fontana's (1552-1614) *Self-Portrait Making Music with a Maidservant* (1577; front cover) will convince that the artist was one of "the intelligent seekers of a new way." Born in the progressive city of Bologna, she was taught to paint by her father, Prospero Fontana (1512-97), a leading Bolognese fresco painter whose pupils included Lodovico Carracci and Gian Paolo Zappi, an impoverished minor nobleman from nearby Imola and Lavinia's future husband. Antonia di Bartolomeo de Bonardis, Fontana's mother, came from a noted family of printers and publishers that was well established in Bologna by 1535. Prospero ran a cultivated household, often entertaining visiting artists and intellectuals. He produced elegant and refined works for his learned and aristocratic patrons (see, for example, *St. Alessio Giving Alms*; San Giacomo Maggiore, Bologna, 1570s)—a manner Lavinia continued in her early altarpieces like *Christ and the Canaanite Woman* (c. 1577; Private Collection, Venice). Lavinia emulated her father's fluid brushstroke and taste for jewel-like coloring, while at the same time incorporating the delicacy of Correggio's devotional paintings, the sweetness of Federico Barocci, and the naturalism of Annibale Carracci (see, for example her *Assumption of the Virgin with Saints Cassiano and Pier Crisologo*, Pinacoteca, Imola, 1584).

During the 1560s and 1570s, Lavinia worked on the small-scale commissions that came into her father's workshop. By 1575, however, she was painting independently—mostly portraits and religious images—and had developed an artistic identity quite separate from her father's. At the same time, Fontana was prevented from joining the academy founded by the Carracci family in the 1580s because of its emphasis on drawing from the nude male, an activity prohibited to females. She nevertheless received commissions for altarpieces both in Bologna (for example, Gabriele Paleotti, archbishop of Bologna and close family friend, ordered an altarpiece for his chapel in San Pietro in 1594) and in Rome, where, like her father, she received papal commissions—first from Gregory XIII and later from Clement VIII. Both popes requested that she enter their service as court painter in Rome, an offer she deferred, remaining instead in Bologna until well after her father's death. By 1603 Fontana had established an independent and successful workshop in Rome and had become a member of the painters' guild, the Accademia di San Luca, which had only recently begun admitting women. Lavinia Fontana died in Rome in 1614.<sup>2</sup>

As Prospero's only child, Lavinia was solely responsible for the family workshop and became heir to the family business. She supported not only her aging parents but her husband and their eleven children, three of whom she taught to paint. An exceptional woman, Lavinia Fontana was at once daughter, wife, mother, and professional painter—a rare achievement at any time. Most women artists of the period operated from the protected environment of either the court (Sofonisba Anguissola, Levina Teerlinck, Katerina van Hemessen) or the convent (Caterina dei Vigri, Platilla Nelli) and had a readymade clientele. An urban workshop like Fontana's operated in a more competitive atmosphere; commissions could not be taken for granted. It is precisely this distinction that sets her career apart from that of most women artists of the period, making it similar to that of many male artists. Moreover, Fontana's marital situation was quite unusual. After her 1577 marriage, she did not give up her lucrative career nor did her production decline; rather, Zappi, her husband, became her promoter, procuring clients and signing contracts. He even painted some of her frames and attended to their children.<sup>3</sup>

In his 1568 edition of the *Lives of the Artists*, Vasari identified the Fontana family among the educated elite of Bologna. Indeed, women had studied at the University of Bologna since the 13th century, and there were many who taught and published scholarly texts. Lavinia Fontana was educated; university records indicate that she was made a *dottoressa* (doctor of letters) in 1580. Family friends included a number of professors, among them Vincenzo Ghini, professor of medicine; Uliise Aldovandi, professor of natural science; and humanists Achille Bocchi and Carlo Sigonio, whose portrait Lavinia painted in 1578. Any one of these men could have tutored Fontana.<sup>4</sup> More importantly, the cult of Caterina dei Vigri, the 15th-century abbess of the Convent of the Poor Clares in Bologna, helped to create an unusually supportive context for educated and skilled women of the city. Of noble birth, Caterina was educated in Latin, painting, and music, and according to Sister Illuminata Bembo, she "loved to paint the Divine word as a babe in swaddling clothes."<sup>5</sup> As a saint and the patron of painters in 16th-century Bologna, Caterina surely inspired young Lavinia Fontana.

Fontana's innovative *Self-Portrait Making Music with a Maidservant* differs considerably from the image projected by her older counterpart, Sofonisba Anguissola (c. 1535-1625), in her similarly titled self-portrait (1561; Fig. 1).<sup>6</sup> Fontana's picture, although it appears to repeat Anguissola's conventions, is also a statement about status, education, and a claim to nobility as outlined by Baldassare Castiglione in his *Book of the Courtier* (1528).<sup>7</sup> The cultivated Renaissance *gentildonna*, with whom Fontana identified, was virtuous and well educated—she wrote poetry, sang, played musical instruments, and participated in the-



Fig. 1. Sofonisba Anguissola, *Self-Portrait Making Music with a Maidservant* (1561), oil on canvas, 33 1/2" x 26". Earl Spencer Collection, Althorp.

atricals. She often received a humanistic education involving the study of grammar, rhetoric, poetry, history, and moral philosophy based on the standard authors in Latin such as Virgil and Cicero, generally from a family member or tutor.<sup>8</sup> In fact, few women were educated, and most who were acquired vernacular reading and writing skills in accordance with their social status. Above all, as Alberti, Castiglione, and others stated, a woman's education should prepare her to be a virtuous and practical wife and mother and a gracious hostess.<sup>9</sup> But some women, including Fontana, demanded more, as her self-portrait certainly illustrates.

Taking up Anguissola's challenge to create a unique self-image, Fontana depicts herself not only making music and with a maidservant but also, provocatively, with an empty easel. Further, unlike the somberly dressed Anguissola, Fontana wears rosy red, and her maidservant, unlike Anguissola's passive bystander set in the shadows, gestures toward the artist with an open book of music. Instead of Anguissola's more conventional blank wall, the viewer looks into Fontana's studio. Equally intriguing is the inscription on the upper left of the canvas: "Lavinia virgo Prosperi Fontanae/Filia ex speculo imaginem/oris sui expressi anno 1577" (Lavinia maiden daughter of Prospero Fontana has represented the likeness of her face from the mirror in the year 1577).<sup>10</sup> Costumed elegantly, demonstrating her musical accomplishment, and suggesting her profession of artist, the 25-year-old Fontana here presents herself as a distinct individual, a woman with character, not just a conventional beauty. Anguissola, also about 25, presents herself as virtuous and talented, but less formidable. While working within the parameters laid out as proper for her status and gender, Fontana concedes nothing.

On the surface, Fontana's self-image is consistent with the prescriptives for the ideal woman set forth in such popular texts as Federico Luigini's *Il Libro della bella donna* (1554), Agnolo Firenzuola's *Dialogo delle bellezze delle donna* (1548), and Giangiorgio Trissino's *I Ritratti* (1524). Unlike Castiglione's or Alberti's instructive manuals for self-modeling (which also were used by 16th-century artists as guides in their efforts to raise their social status), these treatises, which were based on Petrarchan ideals of feminine perfection, focused on how a woman should look, not on her behavior.<sup>11</sup> Still, Fontana's portrait conveys a sense of serious creative and intellectual achievement not typically found in images of women from the 16th century. Hers is a subtle form of self-promotion reflecting two commonly held ideas: that a woman artist is a marvel, and a beautiful woman is a marvel of nature. Lavinia Fontana identifies herself not only as a marvel but also as a *gentildonna*.<sup>12</sup>

A woman's beauty was related to ideas of morality, virtue, rank, and economic and social relationships and often was communicated through deportment, dress, accessories, and body language.<sup>13</sup> Both Moretto da Brescia's *Lady with a Lute and a Dog* (c. 1545; Fig. 2) and *Woman with a Music Book and a Lira da Braccio* (1530-40; Fig. 3) by an anonymous Northern Italian artist visualize these ideas, but differently. Most Renaissance images of women were painted by men for a male patron—the subject twice the object of the male gaze—and conformed to the courtly ideal of beauty. But there were stunning exceptions: although Figures 2 and 3 clearly portray noblewomen, the former is withdrawn, her eyes demurely averting the viewer, while the latter engages us defiantly.

Set against elegant brocade, Moretto's *Lady* wears a black dress and pendant necklace and holds a small dog in her lap. Music, represented by the partial form of a lute to her right, appears to be of little import to either artist or subject. Her costume and setting suggest an aristocratic woman. According to Bolognese noblewoman Lucrezia Marinella, while men could win success and honor in many fields, only ornamentation and dress were available to women as signs of accomplishment.<sup>14</sup> Clearly, this attitude is evident in Moretto's portrait. In contrast, the woman in Figure 3, like Lavinia Fontana, claims music as central to her identity. By placing her right hand on a book of music, she draws our attention to it; next to the music lies a *lira da braccio*, predecessor to the modern violin. Although her black dress, jewels, and feathers are the lavish costume of an aristocrat, she is also a woman with musical accomplishments. The book is open to "Quando Madonna," a madrigal by Philippe Verdelot, perhaps the most popular 16th-century composer.<sup>15</sup> A neo-Petrarchan verse, it speaks of the triumph of the eyes over the tongue and heart and was chosen, perhaps, with a male admirer in mind. Petrarch's love poetry, reinterpreted during the Renaissance, dominated 16th-century Italian lyric verse. Nearly everyone carried a *Petrarchino*, a small book of Petrarchan verse whose celebrations of female beauty were recited by both men and women and frequently set to music.

Like Quattrocento profile portraits of women, Moretto's *Lady* is displayed as an object to be scrutinized and admired—a piece of property.<sup>16</sup> Carnations worn behind her ear and on her pendant symbolize love and marriage; the dog is an age-old symbol of fidelity; and the lute suggests musical accomplishment. More than likely it was a wedding portrait, as the subject fits Alberti's definition of what a man should seek in a bride—"beauty of mind, that is, good conduct and virtue."<sup>17</sup> Moretto's *Lady* is decorously chaste, depersonalized, and passionless; she appears rather than acts in this static form, and her glance neither arouses, distracts,

nor engages.<sup>18</sup> In contrast to the North Italian portrait and Fontana's self-portrait, where the subjects manipulate the attributes of the ideal woman for their own purposes, Moretto's *Lady* is framed by the parameters of property and display.

Fontana, certainly aware of the tradition from which Moretto's image developed, dresses herself elegantly and shows herself making music. However, she confronts the viewer, showing an awareness of her audience. Furthermore, Fontana manipulates her self-image to make a personal statement about herself and her place in the world. The inclusion of music is not necessarily evidence of Fontana's musical skill; rather, along with her elegant costume, it attests to Fontana's knowledge of the ideal of beauty. She too painted portraits of elegant ladies with lapdogs, for example, those at the Galleria Borghese, Rome, and at Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore, both from the 1580s.

To some extent all Renaissance portraits are involved with ideas of status. Vasari, for one, stressed that the significance and value of a portrait lie not so much in recording the features as in preserving for others the vision and memory of an individual of outstanding virtue and talents, and in evoking the sitter's achievements and noble deeds.<sup>19</sup> Fontana, on the front cover and in her other self-portraits (e.g., the 1579 self-image in the Galleria degli Uffizi in Florence), was concerned not only with status but also with projecting such traits as virtue, talent, and achievement. In the Uffizi portrait she depicts herself as prosperous and scholarly—she is writing, surrounded by her collection of antique bronzes and plaster casts. Both portraits place the artist firmly within the context of the learned and cultivated citizenry of Bologna. Although aligning herself with the *gentildonna*, in the cover self-portrait she breaks with that tradition in two ways: the inclusion of her easel, symbol of her profession, and the assertiveness of her pose.

According to Italian scholar, Maria Teresa Cantaro, the image Fontana presents in *Self-Portrait Making Music* is that of an elegant, properly educated woman, well-versed in the arts of music and painting. Moreover, she suggests that Fontana painted this image for her future father-in-law, Severo Zappi, on the occasion of Prospero Fontana's public notice, on January 13, 1577, of his daughter's engagement to Gian Paolo Zappi.<sup>20</sup> However, by the mid-1570s Fontana's career was well established (she had received



Fig. 2. Moretto da Brescia, *Lady with a Lute and a Dog* (c. 1545), oil on canvas, 40<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>" x 34<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>". Private Collection, Milan.

in 1556.<sup>23</sup> Fontana most likely knew of Anguissola's promotional tactics when she conceived of her musical self-portrait, and, in fact, she made at least two copies. The copies vary only slightly from the original, which suggests that they were painted on request rather than as new interpretations. The original and one copy were sent to Rome, and, significantly, the original became the property of the Accademia di San Luca.<sup>24</sup>

Letters to Fontana from patrons in Rome and Bologna attest to her reputation. Hieronimo Mercuriale, secretary to the Duke of Urbino, called her an "excellent painter to say the truth...a most remarkable person."<sup>25</sup> Muzio Manfredi, a Bolognese nobleman, wrote to request "un ritratto di suo mano" (a portrait by your hand).<sup>26</sup> Alfonso Ciaconio, a Spanish Dominican who collected paintings of famous people, wrote from Rome on October 17, 1578, requesting portraits of three famous Bolognese men (Carlo Sigonia, Alessandro Aquiliano, and Ludovico Boccardiferro), which he later described as "very excellent creations" and asked that Fontana send a self-portrait so that he could place it next to the one he owned of Sofonisba Anguissola. In May 1579, Fontana sent him *Self-Portrait Writing at Her Desk*, now in the Uffizi.<sup>27</sup>

Fontana admired Anguissola, noting her "merit and worth" in the letter to Ciaconio accompanying the self-portrait.<sup>28</sup> But Fontana also viewed her as competition, someone to surpass, which indeed she did in her 1577 musical self-portrait. The younger artist surpassing the older, established artist



Fig. 3. Anonymous, *Woman with Music Book and Lira da Braccio* (1530-40), oil on panel, 44" x 34". Galleria Spada, Rome.

was a recurrent theme in *Lives of the Artists*, in which Vasari writes of Giotto surpassing Cimabue, Michelangelo surpassing Donatello, and so on.<sup>29</sup> Although Vasari does not imbue women artists with this competitive spirit, it nevertheless existed. While she operated within the parameters of decorum appropriate for her gender, Fontana painted what both Castiglione and Vasari called “a most pleasurable deception”: her outward appearance as a *gentildonna*, behind which she hides the true significance of her self-image—her easel.

The maidservant in Fontana’s painting prominently displays the music she brings to the artist, suggesting, perhaps, its importance. The text and notation, no longer legible, may have held a clue to her intentions. Although there is no documentation of Fontana’s musical accomplishments, we know that her contemporary, Marietta Robusti (c. 1560-90), daughter of painter Jacopo Tintoretto, received musical training. Furthermore, in Robusti’s self-image (c. 1580s; Fig. 4) the musical text has been identified as another madrigal by Philippe Verdelot, “Madonna, per voi ardo,” from his book of madrigals printed in Venice in 1533.<sup>30</sup> Here, the music is significant for the sitter. The opening lines, “My lady, I burn with love for you and you do not believe it,” suggest that it was painted for a male viewer, possibly Robusti’s future husband. She was married in 1586.

Fontana’s portrait also is related to the Renaissance debate concerning the status of painting. Most painters in the late-15th and early-16th century were considered artisans, although a few, such as Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo, achieved considerable social standing. Renaissance artists themselves, having a vested economic interest in elevating their social status, initiated this shift in perception. They strove to achieve a level of respect equal to that of a musician or poet by having their work valued for the cerebral rather than physical labor inherent in the creative act. Leonardo was one of the first to compare painting and music:

***But painting excels and is superior in rank to music, because it does not perish immediately after its creation, as happens unfortunately with music. Rather painting endures.... Painting satisfying the sense of sight is more noble than music which only satisfies hearing. Therefore, painting is to be preferred to all other occupations.... It is to be more praised and exalted than music...seeing that you have placed music amongst the liberal arts, either you should place painting there, or remove music.***<sup>31</sup>



Fig. 4. Marietta Robusti, *Self-Portrait* (1580s), oil on canvas, 37½" x 36½". Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence.

musical training. Like many other 16th-century academies, the Filarmonica comprised small groups of poets, musicians, artists, and amateurs who met regularly for discussions and musical performances. What is unique about Brusasorci’s self-image (c. 1560s; Fig. 5), which, unfortunately, is now in very poor condition, and what calls for a comparison to Fontana’s, is his inclusion of both musical references, a *cornetto* and a group of musicians, and artistic implements.<sup>33</sup> Brusasorci holds a pen or brush in his hand, the *cornetto* lies on the table to his left, and the musicians are seen in the background to his right. Brusasorci, by documenting a meeting of the Accademia Filarmonica in Verona, who had received



Fig. 5. Domenico Brusasorci, *Self-Portrait* (1560s), oil on canvas, 38¾" x 31¼". Museo di Castelvecchio, Verona.

Vasari, too, took up the challenge, first in his 1550 *Lives* and then again, in the much revised 1568 edition. He crusaded actively, seeking improvement both for himself and for his profession. A woman artist like Sofonisba Anguissola further supported Vasari’s cause; as a member of the minor nobility, Anguissola, whose musical skill was well known, validated the nobility of both painting and (by association) the artist.<sup>32</sup>

Fontana used her self-portrait not only to elevate herself from dilettante to professional but also, by including her musicianship, from one who practices a craft to someone with skills equal to that of the musician, poet, writer, and philosopher. In fact, the self-portrait as a musician was the conceit of many 16th-century painters. Such is the case perhaps with Domenico Brusasorci (1515-67), a founding member in 1543 of the Accademia Filarmonica in Verona, who had received

the viewer a symbol of his cultural achievement as well as a reference to his profession, something, Fontana, as a woman, could do only discreetly. Although Anguissola, as Mary Garrard has suggested, associates herself with her male artist counterparts through her somber costume, Fontana is bolder. The easel may be small and in the background, but the clavichord’s directional lines carry the eye directly to it. While both artists seek to engage the viewer, Fontana does so boldly. The viewer is drawn into her “artistic space,” while she is actively communicating to the viewer, establishing her worth as both professional artist and *gentildonna*.

The use of the word “virgo” in the inscription can refer to the sitter’s virginity, her impeccable morals, or, as the term sometimes implied in the 16th century, her independence and self-possession.<sup>34</sup> According to Castiglione, the ability to play the clavichord and sing well indicated both social status and the accomplishments of

a *gentildonna*.<sup>35</sup> Fontana's musical reference does not necessarily imply that she was a musician—in fact, there is no evidence that she was; rather, it attests to her awareness of the significance of music and the parallel between musical and artistic talent.

In 1611 Felice Antonio Casoni made a medal, now in the Pinacoteca Civica in Imola, in Fontana's honor. The recto depicts a profile bust of the artist with the inscription: "Lavinia Fontana Zappi Pictrix. Ant. Casoni. 1611." The reverse shows the artist seated at her easel, seized by divine inspiration, her luxuriant hair flying wildly about her. At her feet are brushes, behind her a palette, and below, in the border, are calipers and a square. Significantly, Fontana has discarded her mahlstick; she does not need aids to steady her hand. The inscription reads: "Per te stat gioioso mi mantene" (Through you, joyous state, I am sustained).<sup>36</sup> As was customary with Renaissance portrait medals, the reverse epitomizes the subject's personal characteristics and occupation. The wild hair and abandoned mahlstick suggest fury, the joyous state that sustains the artist.<sup>37</sup> The medal confirms her virtuosity and attests to her fame. Bolognese poet Giulio Cesare Croce's tribute to Lavinia Fontana may say it best: "In painting there are those who know the great wonder of nature, Lavinia Fontana, noble painter, unique in the world like a phoenix."<sup>38</sup> Clearly, Fontana's ideas about self-fashioning, evident in the musical self-portrait, were innovative. Her *Self-Portrait Making Music* introduces a new aspect to the genre—that of the creative, intellectual woman, the active subject of the work. Working within the boundaries appropriate for her gender, she, at the same time, surpassed earlier models like Sofonisba Anguissola to establish herself as an "intelligent seeker of a new way." As a successful professional woman artist with a productive workshop and distinguished patrons, Lavinia Fontana helped pave the way for Artemisia Gentileschi and Elisabetta Sirani and others who followed.<sup>39</sup> ●

#### NOTES

1. Margaret King, *Women in the Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1991), 238. This statement is part of King's response to Kelly-Gadol's question: "Did women have a Renaissance?" in Renate Bridenthal and Claudia Koonz, eds., *Becoming Visible: Women in European History* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1977), 132-64. Versions of this paper were presented at conferences of the Renaissance Society of America, April 1995, and the College Art Association, February 1997.

2. Basic bibliography on Lavinia Fontana includes Maria Teresa Cantaro, *Lavinia Fontana, pittrice singolare, 1552-1614* (Milan: Jandi Sapi Editori, 1989); Romeo Galli, *Lavinia Fontana, pittrice* (Imola: Tip. P. Galeati, 1940), and Vera Fortunati, ed., *Lavinia Fontana (1552-1614)* (Milan: Electra, 1994). In the latter volume see especially Fortunati's essay "Lavinia Fontana, una pittrice nell'autunno del Rinascimento" (11-36) and Angela Ghirardi's "Lavinia Fontana allo Specchio" (37-51). See also Caroline Murphy, "Lavinia Fontana and 'Le Dame della Città': Understanding Female Patronage in Late-Sixteenth Century Bologna," *Renaissance Studies* (June 1996), 190-208, and "Lavinia Fontana: the Making of a Woman Artist," in Els Kloek, Nicole Teeuwen, and Marijke Heusman, eds., *Women of the Golden Age* (Leiden: Hilversum Verloren, 1994). For Prospero Fontana see Vera Fortunati, "L'Immaginario degli artisti Bolognese tra maniera e controriforma: Prospero Fontana," in Andrea Emiliani, ed., *Le Arti a Bologna e in Emilia dal XVI al XVII Secolo* (Bologna: Cooperativa Libreria Università, 1982), 97-127. See also Laura M. Ragg, *The Women Artists of Bologna* (London: Methuen, 1907).

3. Ghirardi, "Lavinia Fontana," 37-41, and Murphy, "Making of a Woman Artist," 171-72.

4. M. Massini, *Bologna perustrata* (Bologna, 1668), 666; Cantaro,

*Lavinia Fontana*, 6; Murphy, "Making of a Woman Artist," 176; and Giorgio Vasari, *The Lives of the Most Eminent Painters, Sculptors, and Architects*, Gaston du Vere, trans. and ed., I (New York: Knopf, 1912; reprinted 1996), 918.

5. Paolo Puliati, *Caterina da Bologna* (Modena, 1963), 9-32.

6. For a discussion of the self-portraits of Italian women artists in the Renaissance see Irene Graziani, "La Legenda dell'artista donna," in Vera Fortunati, ed., *La Pittura in Emilia e in Romagna: Cinquecento* (Milan: Electra, 1995), 129-47. For discussions of Sofonisba Anguissola's portraits, see Fredrika H. Jacobs, "Woman's Capacity to Create: The Unusual Case of Sofonisba Anguissola," *Renaissance Quarterly* (Spring 1994), 74-101, and Mary D. Garrard, "Here's Looking at Me: Sofonisba Anguissola and the Problem of the Woman Artist," *Renaissance Quarterly* (Autumn 1994), 556-662.

7. Baldassare Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier*, George Bull, trans. (New York: Penguin, 1967), 94-96, 101. See also Leon Battista Alberti, *The Family in Renaissance Florence*, Renee Neu Watkins, trans. (Columbia: University of South Carolina, 1969), 115-16, 207-29.

8. Paul Grendler, "Schooling in Western Europe," *Renaissance Quarterly* (Winter 1990), 780-81, 784-85. See also Lisa Jardine, "'O Decus Italiae Virgo,' or the Myth of the Learned Lady in the Renaissance," *Historical Journal* 28/4 (1985), 799-820, who discusses the humanist education of Renaissance noblewomen and how these women were viewed by their male counterparts.

9. Alberti, *Family*, 207-29; Grendler, "Schooling," 784-85.

10. Author's translation.

11. Konrad Eisenbichler and Jacqueline Murray, *On the Beauty of Women* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1992), 13-14. See also John C. Nelson, *Renaissance Theory of Love* (New York: Columbia University, 1963). The ideal of beauty evolved out of the neo-Platonic definition of love, and woman's external beauty was linked with inner goodness and virtue.

12. Garrard, "Here's Looking at Me," 566-68. See also, Paola Tinagli, *Women in Italian Renaissance Art: Gender, Representation, Identity* (Manchester, Eng.: Manchester University, 1997), 112-14.

13. Mary Rogers, "The Decorum of Women's Beauty: Trissino, Firenzuola, Luigini and the Representation of Women in the Sixteenth Century," *Renaissance Studies* (March 1988), 73. See also Tinagli, *Women in Italian Renaissance Art*, 84-111, for a discussion of Renaissance ideals of femininity.

14. My paraphrase of Marinella is from Diane Owen Hughes, "La Moda proibita: la legislazione sumtuaria nell'Italia Rinascimentale," *Memoria* 11-12 (1984), 93-94. See also Patricia Simons, "Women in Frames," *History Workshop Journal* (Spring 1988), 15-17, and Sharon Strocchia, *Death and Ritual in Renaissance Florence* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1992), chapter 2, for a discussion of these ideas.

15. H. Colin Slim, "An Iconographical Echo of the Unwritten Tradition in a Verdolot Madrigal," *Studi Musicali* (September 1988), 41-43.

16. Simons, "Women in Frames," 11.

17. Alberti, *Family*, 115-16.

18. Simons, "Women in Frames," 11-12, 21-22.

19. Klara Garas, *Italian Renaissance Portraiture* (Budapest: Corvina Kiado, 1981), 9.

20. Cantaro, *Lavinia Fontana*, 7, 72-74. She, too, compares the painting to Anguissola's 1561 portrait. See also Murphy, "Lavinia Fontana," 190-208, and "Making of a Woman Artist," 171-81. In the latter article Murphy suggests that Fontana's empty easel means that "she is not obliged to slave away at her art, she has time for leisure." (178) This interpretation seems a contradiction of terms and falls within the traditional readings of portraits of women. Catherine King, in "Looking a Sight: Sixteenth-Century Portraits of Woman Artists," *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 58/3 (1995), 381-407, suggests that the easel is a message "that her art comes second to her desire to please with her appearance and musical



accomplishments." (392) Like Murphy's, King's traditional reading may be too limiting.

21. F. Baldinucci, *Notizie dei professori del disegno*, II (Florence, 1681; reprinted 1849 and 1979), 624-25.

22. Garrard, "Here's Looking at Me," 568. See also Elizabeth Cropper, "The Beauty of Women: Problems in the Rhetoric of Renaissance Portraiture," in Margaret Ferguson, Maureen Quillian, and Nancy Vickers, eds., *Rewriting the Renaissance, the Discourses of Sexual Difference in Early Modern Europe* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1986), 117-81. These ideas are established in texts like Agnolo Firenzuola's cited in the text of this paper.

23. Vasari, *Lives*, II, 466-68; Baldinucci, *Notizie*, II, 620-22.

24. One copy is now in the Uffizi; the other is known only through a photograph. The backgrounds in the copies (and of course the dates) differ from the original; the inscription remains the same.

25. Galli, *Lavinia Fontana*, 117, document 8. See Cantaro, *Lavinia Fontana*, 11, 329; also see Carlo Malvasia, *Felsina Pittrice, vite de' pittori Bolognesi*, Giampietro Zanotti, ed., I (Bologna: Arnaldo Forni Editore, 1678; reprinted 1841), 177, who notes that the women of Bologna competed to entertain her and commission her works.

26. Giovanni Bottari, *Raccolta di lettere sulla pittura, scultura ed architettura*, V (Milan, 1822), 44-45.

27. Ghirardi, "Lavinia Fontana," 37-38; Cantaro, *Lavinia Fontana*, 11, 329; and Galli, *Lavinia Fontana*, 93.

28. Galli, *Lavinia Fontana*, 80, 115, n. 5; Cantaro, *Lavinia Fontana*, 305-06; and Ghirardi, "Lavinia Fontana," 43-45. Letter dated May 5, 1579.

29. See Paul Barolsky, *Giotto's Father and the Family of Vasari's "Lives"* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University, 1992) for a discussion of these ideas.

30. H. Colin Slim, "Tintoretto's Music-Making Women at Dresden,"

*Imago Musicae* (Fall 1987), 47.

31. Martin Kemp, ed., *Leonardo on Painting* (New Haven: Yale University, 1989), 35-37.

32. Vasari, *Lives*, II, 466-68, 641. See also Catherine M. Soussloff, *The Absolute Artist: The Historiography of a Concept* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1997) for a detailed analysis of Vasari's models. The low status of artists derived from revered classical literature. See, for instance, Plato (*The Republic*, VIII, 595-601) and Lucien (*The Dream*, A.M. Harmon, ed., London: Heinemann, 1931, 223) for particularly derogatory assessments.

33. For a discussion of Domenico Brusaporci's self-portrait, see my "Music and the Sixteenth Century Painter: Lappoli, Brusaporci and Garofalo," *RdIM Newsletter* (Fall 1994), 49-52.

34. Garrard, "Here's Looking at Me," 582. See also Ghirardi, "Lavinia Fontana," 42.

35. Castiglione, *Courtier*, 94-96.

36. Cantaro, *Lavinia Fontana*, 19.

37. Jean Owens Schaefer, "A Note On the Iconography of a Medal of Lavinia Fontana," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* (1984), 232-34. See also, Garrard, "Here's Looking at Me," 564, for a discussion of Paolo Pino's *Dialogo* and the significance of the mahlstick.

38. This is from his *Poesie nella gloria delle donne* of 1598, published in Cantaro, *Lavinia Fontana*, 329, and Galli, *Lavinia Fontana*, 93.

39. Artemisia Gentileschi, whose self-portrait of 1630 (Royal Collection, St. James Place) is the embodiment of the allegory of painting, shows herself with her hair in disarray, suggesting creative fury.

**Katherine A. McIver**, Assistant Professor of Art History, University of Alabama at Birmingham, is continuing her research on Lavinia Fontana.

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SPRING / SUMMER 1998 VOLUME 19, NUMBER 1 \$8.00

