

A letter concerning coins in sixteenth-century Ferrara

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One of the perennial concerns of art history is the way in which works of art were perceived by their original viewers. A number of texts have survived which give us a fair idea of the main concerns of viewers of Italian renaissance painting and architecture, but the same cannot be said of the so-called minor arts. In this article, I hope to redress the balance by discussing an account of the viewing of coins in early sixteenth-century Italy.

The text in question is a letter from the Bolognese notary and author, Giovanni Sabadino degli Arienti,¹ to Alfonso I d'Este, Duke of Ferrara, and is dated 19 June 1505. Written from Bologna, it reads as follows:

Today, as I was in the presence of several distinguished citizens, Your Most Illustrious Lordship's new coin was shown, struck with your image, breathing and natural. My mind took such delight in it, that I kissed it because of its sweetness. I am pleased [to say] with this [letter] of mine, that Your Excellency was much praised, and we discussed it at length, and with various opinions on the meaning of the reverse, which [shows] when Hercules had killed the wild lion, from whose mouth bees emerged; and then the serpent leaving the base of the trunk, and encircling it, was discussed without reaching a conclusion. The master was greatly commended who had made the die for the ducal coin, or rather *numisma*, which could very well stand comparison with those of the ancient Roman princes. And I, believing [myself] to be the first, went to show this coin to the illustrious Lady Lucrezia [d'Este] your sister. Her Ladyship, laughing, said she had seen it, and that she had one of silver, and [one] of gold worth two ducats, and she showed me the one and the other to our mutual happiness. Certainly the gospel saying on the back, Christ saying *Quae Dei Deo sunt*, is wise.²

Despite the rather rushed tone, characteristic of much of Arienti's correspondence, and a slight misunderstanding, the letter provides enough information for us to

identify the coins mentioned by Arienti. Both were newly-minted by Alfonso. The first showed his portrait on the obverse, and on the reverse, according to Arienti, Hercules and the Nemean Lion. No such coin is known. However, Arienti was more used to the Herculean imagery of Alfonso's father, Ercole I d'Este – who had issued a gold coin with Hercules and the Nemean Lion on its reverse.³ He had, after all, studied at the University of Bologna, matriculated as a notary, and knew the major classical Latin texts.⁴ It is perhaps understandable, therefore, that Arienti, seeing a figure armed *all'antica* and holding a lion's head, would immediately think of Hercules, when he was actually looking at a depiction of Samson and the lion.⁵ The subject-matter is confirmed by his reference to bees leaving the lion's mouth. These identify the coin as one of several silver *quarti* minted by Alfonso at the beginning of his reign, bearing the inscription '*De forti dulcedo*' (based upon the biblical *de forti egressa est dulcedo*, 'Out of the strong came forth sweetness', Judges, xiv.14) (Fig. 1).⁶ Arienti's later reference in the letter to looking at a silver coin with Lucrezia d'Este would also seem to support the identification.

The second coin was a gold double ducat, with a reverse bearing the inscrip-

tion '*Quae Dei Deo sunt*' ('Unto God the things that are God's', Matthew xxii.21 and Luke xx.25). This must be the double ducat issued with a beardless portrait of Alfonso on the obverse, and a reverse showing Christ and the Pharisee's agent together with the inscription '*Que sunt Dei Deo*' (Fig. 2).⁷ Arienti's letter therefore confirms Sacocchi's dating of this coin to 1505, when dies for a double ducat were commissioned from Giovanni Antonio da Foligno.⁸

If we turn to Arienti for an assessment of the coins' artistic quality, we find that his remarks are relatively uninformative, repeating motifs found in antiquity and in other Italian renaissance authors. They are typical of his other writings on art, which include several references to the figures portrayed in frescoes appearing 'breathing and natural', as well as repetitions of the topos comparing a contemporary artist's work with that of the ancient Romans in descriptions of architecture, mural paintings, and sculpture.⁹

Arienti's letter is, however, more interesting in indicating at least some of the reasons for looking at coins. It is clear that these were new coins, which had just arrived in Bologna from Ferrara, where they had been struck following Alfonso's succession to the Duchy nearly six months previously.¹⁰ Despite the proximity

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¹ *Quarto (testone)* of Alfonso I d'Este, Duke of Ferrara, 1505. Silver, diam. 2.9 cm. British Museum. Alfonso's beardless portrait identifies the coin as one of those issued at the beginning of his reign. The reverse shows Samson holding the lion's head (Judges xiv.5-9)

ty of Ferrara, their appearance in Bologna provoked much interest, at least in the comparatively educated and aristocratic circles within which Arienti moved.¹¹ This is unsurprising, given the close links between the Estense and the Bentivoglio, *de facto* rulers of Bologna, embodied in the marriage between Annibale II Bentivoglio and Alfonso's illegitimate half-sister Lucrezia d'Este in 1487, which Arienti had observed and recorded.¹² As Arienti noted, Lucrezia herself had received copies of the new coins, suggesting that they were also circulated amongst Este family members.

Arienti's reasons for interest in the coins were more focused: they represented an opportunity to flatter a potential employer. Alfonso's father, Ercole I d'Este, had helped Arienti in the 1480s, and had been one of his staunchest supporters in the 1490s, a difficult period for the author following the death of Andrea Bentivoglio in 1491, for whom he had worked as secretary for twenty years.¹³ Ercole's support was most clearly manifested in the appointment of Arienti to two positions in Ferrara – one in 1491, and the second from Easter 1497 until at least October 1498 – and the provision of a hundred ducat dowry to help Arienti's daughter Angelica enter the Augustinian convent of S Lorenzo in Bologna in 1493. In return, Arienti dedicated *Le Porretane* (a collection of *novelle*) and *De triumphis religionis* (a treatise on princely virtues) to Ercole – although the Duke seems to have considered the author more useful as a correspondent within Bologna, and so turned down Arienti's requests for further support. Yet Arienti remained dedicated to the Estense, and continued to write to Ercole.

Consequently, the Duke's death must have come as a blow to the ageing author, and his surviving letters reveal that he was anxious to secure Alfonso's patronage.¹⁴ He had already cultivated Alfonso's wife, Lucrezia Borgia, in 1501, by sending her a copy of his *Colloquium ad Ferrariam*, which celebrated her forthcoming marriage to Alfonso.¹⁵ In Bologna, Arienti remained on good terms with Alfonso's sister Lucrezia. She had been present at his daughter's profession in 1493, and several of his letters refer to time spent in her company.¹⁶ His *Descrizione del Giardino della Viola*, written in 1501, provides a more extensive description of a spring day spent chatting, admiring pictures and eating at the suburban villa of La Viola in the company of



2 Double ducat of Alfonso I d'Este, Duke of Ferrara, designed by Giovanni Antonio da Foligno, 1505. Gold, diam. 2.6 cm. Museo Nazionale Romano, Rome. This is the only version of this coin with a clean-shaven portrait of Alfonso. The reverse shows Christ and a figure usually called a Pharisee, but perhaps more accurately identified as one of the Pharisee's agents (Matthew xxii.15-22 and Luke xx.19-26)

Lucrezia and her entourage.¹⁷ A copy of the *Descrizione* revived a flagging correspondence with Alfonso's sister Isabella d'Este, and the Marchioness of Mantua was to prove a steadfast supporter in Arienti's declining years.¹⁸ Arienti's letter, then, is one fragment of his continued attempts to exploit a network of patrons and contacts, built up around Ercole I d'Este and his descendants, in an attempt to secure favour and advancement.

Arienti's letter also indicates those aspects of the two coins which particularly caught his eye. First, and perhaps most significant, was Alfonso's image, 'breathing and natural' – presumably, a good likeness.¹⁹ The coin was important because it literally circulated an image of Alfonso. Those who saw the coin could see what the new Duke of Ferrara looked like – and they in turn could use this image to demonstrate their attitudes to him. In this case, Alfonso was 'much praised' by the 'distinguished citizens' who saw his coins; Arienti was so moved by the sight of his potential patron's likeness that, he would have him believe, he kissed it from devotion. Lucrezia's reaction to seeing her brother's coins was more familiar as, in much the same way as we would now show photographs, she laughed and showed them to Arienti.

But Arienti's mistaken identification of the *quarto's* reverse also implies a mental connection of that coin with those issued by Alfonso's father, Ercole I. If we compare the portraits on Alfonso's *quarto* (Fig. 1) with one issued about ten years earlier by Ercole (Fig. 3), there are certain similarities in the portraits of the two rulers which suggest that Alfonso may, in these early striking, have been empha-

sising the continuity of his rule with his father's. Although the portraits are clearly different, Alfonso appears very much as his father's son, sharing his long nose, and the pronounced bags under his eyes. Likewise, allowing for changes in fashion, Alfonso's long, wavy hair can be compared to his father's distinctively long, somewhat straggly haircut – a similarity enhanced by the lack of colour in such metallic portraits which removes the distinction between Ercole's grey hair and Alfonso's black. The inscription around Alfonso's portrait echoes that around his father's. This image of continuity was, however, soon dispensed with by Alfonso, who quickly adopted the more familiar bearded portrait on his coins.

Arienti's references to the reverses also demonstrate that attention was paid to the more purely symbolic aspects of coins. By quoting the inscription on the reverse of the gold double ducat (Fig. 2), he implicitly draws attention to the coin as an embodiment of Alfonso's authority. It seems likely that anyone able to understand the Latin of the inscription *Que sunt Dei Deo* ('Unto God the things that are God's') would have identified the quotation, and the clause which precedes it, *Reddite ergo quae sunt Caesaris Caesari* ('Render therefore unto Caesar the things which be Caesar's') – a fairly direct biblical exhortation to pay one's taxes, no doubt addressed to the people of Ferrara, and reinforced by the image of Christ and the Pharisee's agent which the inscription encircles.²⁰

Likewise, the depiction of Samson on the reverse of the *quarto* implicitly associates Alfonso with the Old Testament hero: that is, with a biblical warrior. In this context, it seems significant that later versions

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3 *Quarto (testone)* of Ercole I d'Este, Duke of Ferrara, c. 1493. Silver, diam. 2.6 cm. British Museum. The coin is known as the *Idra* from the design on its reverse, which shows the seven-headed Hydra being consumed by fire

of the coin bear on the obverse the inscription S[ANCTAE] R[OMANAE] E[CCLÉSIAE] CONF[ALONERII] ('*Gonfaloniere* of the Holy Roman Church'), referring to Alfonso's appointment as Papal Captain-General in April 1509.²¹ If we compare this with the classicising Herculean imagery found on the reverse of some of Ercole I's coins, we find that, rather than stress continuity with his father as on the obverse, Alfonso used the reverse of the coin to emphasize his Christianity. Likewise, despite the similarity in the features, Ercole's bare breast on the obverse of his *quarto* (Fig. 3) contrasts with the armour worn by Alfonso on the obverses of his coins (Figs. 1, 2): antique hero contrasts with biblical warrior.

Yet even the most basic interpretation of this imagery was beyond Arienti and the 'distinguished citizens' with whom he discussed the *quarto*'s reverse: as we have seen, they mistook the image of Samson for that of Hercules. Clearly, the somewhat condensed symbolism of the coins' reverses was not immediately readable by all those who saw them.²² Such an error might be understandable when viewing coins of a high value and therefore limited circulation, such as the double ducat, which would have been handled only by the wealthy few. It seems likely that the symbolism of these coins was directed to such presumably well-educated viewers. However, it would seem perverse to assume that coins of a much lower value such as the *quarto* under discussion would only be seen by – or addressed to – such a restricted group of viewers: with a value of between 12 and 20 *soldi*, a servant might receive between 4 and 7 *quarti* a month as his salary.²³ Thus, nearly all Alfonso I's lower-denomination silver coins, worth 5 and 10 *soldi*, carry biblical or religious

designs on their reverses, whilst his billon (silver alloy) *quattrini* carry the arms of Ferrara on the obverse and the head of St Maurelius on the reverse.²⁴

Given Arienti's obtuseness, we might feel that to make such direct links between the figure portrayed on a coin's obverse and the imagery of its reverse is to read too much into the imagery of the coin. Yet we know that Arienti made such a connection on at least one occasion. In *De triumphis religionis*, written over the period 1497–99, he compared Ercole I's drainage work in the marshes around the ducal residence of Comacchio to Hercules's labour in drying out 'that swamp in Greece called Hydra'.²⁵ He continued by noting how the task was symbolized by the seven-headed serpent we know as the Hydra, and how 'you, most moral prince, had this serpent Hydra in the fire placed on your rich and beautiful gold *numisma*, worthy of commendation'. Arienti here seems to be referring to the coin known as the *Idra* (Fig. 3).²⁶ Although the design is only known as a silver *quarto* (or its brass proof), Arienti may be referring to a hitherto unknown special striking in gold.²⁷ Grierson has suggested that such striking was not unknown in Ferrarese coins, proposing that Ercole I's gold coin with Hercules and the lion on its reverse was a gold striking made with dies for a silver *testone*.²⁸ On the other hand, Arienti might simply have been flattering Ercole I, implying that only gold would be a fitting support for such an image. Yet whatever the precise coin intended by Arienti, the overall thrust of his text is clear: Ercole intended a direct comparison to be made between his drainage projects and the Labours of Hercules. This has long been suspected, but Arienti's text is the first which, to my knowledge, makes the link explicitly.²⁹

So, despite the pedestrian nature of his

remarks upon the coins' artistic quality, Arienti's letter provides a vivid illustration of the importance of the circulation of these numismatic images for the family, friends, and clients of their issuers, and the excitement which they could generate. This is particularly significant given that it is likely – at least in the case of lower-denomination (i.e. silver and alloy) coins – that the representations on coins were the images with which most people would have had the closest contact on a daily basis. The letter shows how viewers directed their attention to the depictions which appeared upon the coins, whether portraits on the obverses, or the more symbolic images on the reverses. Yet it also provides a salutary reminder that even fairly well-educated viewers might mis-identify these images, and so remain unaware of the messages so carefully directed towards them.

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¹ For Arienti's biography, see Umberto Dallari, 'Della vita e degli scritti di Gio. Sabadino degli Arienti', *Atti e memorie della R. Deputazione di Storia Patria per le Provincie di Romagna*, Ser. 3, vol. VI, 1887–88, pp. 178–218; Siegfried von Arx, 'Giovanni Sabadino degli Arienti und seine Porrettane', *Romanische Forschungen*, vol. XXVI, 1909, pp. 671–824, especially pp. 671–99; S.B. Chandler, *The life and literary works of Giovanni Sabadino degli Arienti*, unpublished PhD thesis, University of London, 1952, pp. 1–41; Carolyn James, *Giovanni Sabadino degli Arienti: a literary career*, Florence, 1996; see also the summary on pp. 21–51 of Rupert Shepherd, *An examination of Giovanni Sabadino degli Arienti's writings on art and architecture*, unpublished PhD thesis, Courtauld Institute, 1997.

² 'Illustrissimo: ac Excellentissimo Principi Domino Alfonso Ferrarie Duci et Domino meo unico: atque observandissimo. Illustrissime: ac Excellentissime Princeps: et Domine mi unico: et observandissime commendationes etc. Questo di essendomi ala presentia de alcuni clari cittadini mostrate la nova moneta dela Vostra Signoria Illustrissima cuniata de la vostra effigie spirante: et naturale. Iudicio meo, ne hebbi tanto dilecto: che per dulcedine la osculai: Del che per questa mia me alegro cum la Vostra Excellentia laudata è molto: et sopra epsa disputato assai: & cum varie sententie del significato del Rovero, che quando Hercule hebbe ociso il fiero leone, dela cui bocha exitte ape: & piu se disputo senza definitione del serpente exiente del piede del troncho: et quello cinzendo. Molto se commende il maestro: che ha facto la stampa de la ducal moneta: ovrei *Numismate*: la quale puo stare ottimamente al parangone [*sic*] de qualuncha deli antiqui Romani principi. Et io credendo essere il primo andai ad mostrare questa moneta ala Illustrissima Madonna Lucretia vostra sorella: Sua Signoria ridendo dixè haverla veduti: et che ne havea una: de Argento: et d oro da dui ducati, & l una, et l altra me mostroe cum iocundita comune, che certo è sententioso lo evangelico decto nel roverso dicendo Christo: *Que Dei: Deo sunt*. L omnipo-tente iDio conservi sana: et tranquilla la Vostra Excellentia che vedo sara splendido exemplo de l opre: [*sic*] et vis... regale. Ala Vostra Signoria Illustrissima devotissime me recomando, qu... valeat semper advota. Ex Bononia xviij Junij MDV. Eiusdem vostrae Dominae Illustrissimae Servis perpetuus Joannes Sabadinus de Arientis Modena, Archivio di Stato, Archivio segreto estense, Cancelleria Ducale: Estero, Ambasciatori Agenti e Cor-rispondenti Estensi: Bologna, Busta 1, filza 7. The first part of the letter has been published by Luke Syson,

'Circulating a Likeness? Coin Portraits in Late Fifteenth-Century Italy', in idem, and Nicholas Mann (eds.), *The Image of the Individual: Portraits in the Renaissance*, London, 1998, pp. 113-25 and 216-21, especially p. 113.

³ Vincenzo Bellini, *Delle monete di Ferrara: Trattato*, Ferrara, 1761, pp. 137-38, no. v; *Corpus nummorum italicorum. Primo tentativo di un catalogo generale delle monete medievali e moderne coniate in Italia o di italiani in altri paesi*, vol. x, Emilia, 2, Bologna e Ferrara-Ravenna e Rimini, Milan, 1927, p. 434, nos. 5-6 (hereafter *Corpus*). For the coin in the context of Ercole I's cultivation of Herculean imagery, see Philip Grierson, 'Ercole d'Este and Leonardo da Vinci's Equestrian Statue of Francesco Sforza', *Italian Studies*, vol. xiv, 1959, pp. 40-48, especially pp. 42-43; and for further examples and a discussion of such imagery, see Giovanni Sabadino degli Arienti, *Art and Life at the Court of Ercole I d'Este: The 'De triumphis religionis' of Giovanni Sabadino degli Arienti*, Werner L. Gundershimer (ed.), Geneva, 1972 (*Travaux d'humanisme et renaissance*, vol. cxxvii), pp. 52, 58, 60 and 67; George Francis Hill, *A Corpus of Italian Medals of the Renaissance before Cellini*, London, 1930, nos. 102 and 119; and Thomas J. Tuohy, *Herculean Ferrara: Ercole d'Este (1471-1505) and the Invention of a Ducal Capital*, Cambridge, 1996, pp. 123 and 289-90. See also the discussion of the coin known as the *Idra*, below. The use of tapestries illustrating scenes from the Legend of Hercules in Ercole I's lodgings in the Palazzo Bentivoglio in Bologna during the celebrations for the wedding of Lucrezia d'Este and Annibale II Bentivoglio in 1487 suggests that Ercole's taste for such imagery was known outside Ferrara: see Arienti's description in his *Hymeneo Bentivoglio*, published in Carolyn James, 'The Palazzo Bentivoglio in 1487', *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz*, vol. xli, 1997, pp. 188-96, especially pp. 195-96.

⁴ For Arienti's education, see James, op. cit. in n. 1, p. 11, and Shepherd, op. cit., pp. 22-23; a summary of his knowledge of the classics can be found in idem, pp. 44-46 and 105-109. Arienti might have known the story of Hercules and the Nemean lion from sources such as Boccaccio, *Genealogia deorum*, xlii; Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, ix.197-98; Seneca, *Hercules furens*, 224; Hyginus, *Poetica astronomica*, ii.24; or, most expansive, Diodorus Siculus, *Bibliotheca historica*, iv.xi. 3-4. All were available in print by 1500: see the *Short-title Catalogue of Books Printed in Italy and of Italian Books Printed in Other Countries from 1465 to 1600, now in the British Museum*, London, 1958, and, where appropriate, Kommission für den Gesamtkatalog der Wiegendrucke und Deutschen Staatsbibliothek (ed.), *Gesamtkatalog der Wiegendrucke*, Leipzig, Stuttgart and Berlin, 1925-.

⁵ The figure's helmet can be compared with that of Athena in an antique cameo from the collection of Lorenzo de' Medici: Nicole Dacos et al., *Il tesoro di Lorenzo il Magnifico: Le gemme*, exh. cat., Florence, Palazzo Medici Riccardi, 1972, no. 22. By 1483, this had been copied by Attavante degli Attavanti and reused in the frontispiece of the missal he illuminated for Thomas James, bishop of Dol: see J.J.G. Alexander (ed.), *The Painted Page: Italian renaissance book illumination 1450-1550*, exh. cat., Royal Academy of Arts, London, and Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, 1994-95, no. 3. Arienti may have learnt something of antique art from Giovanni Marcanova, to whom he presented a copy of Giovan Maria Filelfo's *Glycephila*, which he had transcribed, in 1464: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Patetta MSS. 366. See Federico Patetta, 'Sulla Glycephila di Mario Filelfo in un nuovo esemplare autografo di Giovanni Sabadino degli Arienti, e sulla data di composizione della *Gynevera delle Clare Donne*', *Atti della Reale Accademia d'Italia. Rendiconti della classe di scienze morali e storiche*, ser. 7, vol. ii, 1941, pp. 274-341; idem, *Venturino de Prioribus, umanista ligure del secolo xv*, Vatican City, 1950, pp. 184-85 n. 2. Connections with Marcanova may have led to an introduction to Felice Feliciano, who is the protagonist of *novelle* 3 and 14 in Arienti's *Porrettane*. For Feliciano in Bologna, see C. Mitchell, 'Felice Feliciano antiquarius', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, vol. xlvi, 1961, pp. 197-221, especially pp. 199 and 206-208; and Leonardo Quaquarelli, '"Intendendo di poeticamente parlare": la *Bella mano* di Giusto de' Conti tra i libri di Feliciano', *La Bibliofilia*, vol. xciii, 1991, pp. 177-200, pp. 184-89 and 199-200.

⁶ See Bellini, op. cit., pp. 169 and 189; *Corpus*, pp. 445-46, nos. 21-23, 25-29 and 31 (fig. 1 in n. 21 in the *Corpus*); Museo Nazionale Romano, *Collezione di Vittorio Emanuele III di Savoia: Zecca di Ferrara, parte I, Età comunale ed estense*, Rome, 1987 (*Bollettino di Numismatica*, monografia 3.1), pp. 96-97, nos. 221-25 (hereafter Museo Nazionale Romano).

⁷ Bellini, op. cit., p. 191, no. ii; see *Corpus*, p. 443, no. 6;

Museo Nazionale Romano, p. 92, no. 204, see colour plates 17 and 18.

⁸ In Giovanni Garini, Robert Parrise Labadessa and Andrea Sacconi, *A testa o croce: Immagini d'arte nelle monete e nelle medaglie del Rinascimento: esempi dalle collezioni del Museo Bottacin*, exh. cat., Musei Civici, Padova, 1991-92, no. 60, correcting the erroneous dating to 1509 proposed by Ercolani Cocchi in Museo Nazionale Romano, op. cit., p. 29 (referring to doc. 3 on p. 36).

⁹ 'Breathing and natural': for this expression, see Arienti, *De triumphis religionis*, pp. 61 and 71; idem, *Descrizione del Giardino della Viola*, Section 17 as published in the most accessible edition, Bruno Basile, '"Delizie" Bentivolesche. Il "Zardin Viola" nella descrizione autografa di Giovanni Sabadino degli Arienti', in Bruno Basile (ed.), *Bentivolorum magnificentia: Principe e cultura a Bologna nel Rinascimento*, Rome, 1984, pp. 255-84. For comparisons with the ancients, see Arienti, *Hymeneo Bentivoglio*, published in James, op. cit. in n. 3 above, p. 195; Corrado Ricci and A. Bacchi della Lega (eds.), Arienti, *Gynevera de le Clare donne...*, Bologna, 1888 (*Scelta di curiosità letterarie inedite o rare dal secolo xiii al xvii, fondata e diretta da Francesco Zambrini*, vol. cxxiii) (reprinted Bologna, 1968), p. 65; Arienti, *De triumphis religionis*, p. 64; idem, letter to Isabella d'Este, 24 February 1508, in James, op. cit. in n. 1 above, p. 123. For a more thorough assessment of Arienti's extensive writings on art, see Shepherd, op. cit., particularly pp. 105-58.

¹⁰ Alfonso's rule was confirmed on the same day as the death of his father Ercole I, 25 January 1505: R. Quazza, s.v. Alfonso I, in Alberto M. Ghisalberti et al. (eds.), *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, vol. ii, Rome, 1960, p. 333.

¹¹ The proximity of the two cities meant that the currency of one appeared frequently in the other: for example, on 31 March 1498, Ercole I d'Este issued a proclamation fixing the exchange rate for Ferrarese coins against those of Bologna and other states: Giuseppe Pardi (ed.), *Diario ferrarese dall'anno 1409 sino al 1502 di autori incerti*, in Ludovico Antonio Muratori et al. (eds.), *Rerum italicarum scriptores: raccolta degli storici italiani dal cinquecento al millecinquecento*, Nuova edizione, vol. xxiv, part 7, Bologna, 1928-33, pp. 208-209.

¹² In his *Hymeneo Bentivoglio*, largely unpublished, but preserved in two manuscripts. The copy presented to Giovanni II Bentivoglio is in a private collection, having passed through the hands of Laurence Witten and H.P. Kraus in the late 1970s/early 1980s (see Laurence Witten Rare Books, Catalogue 8: *Precious Books and Manuscripts*, Southport, 1978, no. 9, and idem, *Catalogue 10: Incunabula, Manuscripts, Early Illustrated Books, Early Graphics and Bindings*, Southport, 1979, no. 9; Pasquale Stoppelli, 'Due manoscritti e un incunabolo sconosciuti di Giovanni Sabadino degli Arienti', *Studi e problemi di critica testuale*, vol. xxv, 1982, pp. 25-30, especially pp. 28-29); a second and much less lavish copy, damaged at the end and bearing the Estense arms on its frontispiece, is Biblioteca Palatina, Parma, MS Parmense 1294. Extracts describing aspects of the celebrations are published in Giovanni Zannoni, 'Una rappresentazione allegorica a Bologna nel 1487', *Atti della Reale Accademia dei Lincei*, Ser. 4, *Rendiconti pubblicati per cura dei segretari*, vol. vii, 1891, pp. 414-27, and Arienti's description of the Palazzo Bentivoglio in James, op. cit. in n. 3, pp. 194-196; both are drawn from the Parma manuscript.

¹³ For Arienti's relations with Ercole I, see James, op. cit. in n. 1 above, pp. 53-56, 58-66 and 70-71; Shepherd, op. cit., pp. 27, 29, 31 and 33-36.

¹⁴ James, op. cit. in n. 1 above, p. 90; Shepherd, op. cit., pp. 37-38.

¹⁵ It is assumed that Lucrezia's was the copy now in a private collection, which passed through H.P. Kraus in 1979: H.P. Kraus, *Bibliotheca Philippica. Manuscripts on vellum and paper from the 9th to the 18th centuries, from the celebrated collection formed by Sir Thomas Phillipps: The Final Selection (Catalogue 153)*, New York, 1979, no. 86; Stoppelli, op. cit., pp. 26-27. Arienti also sent a copy to Ercole I: see the letter published in James, op. cit. in n. 1 above, p. 111.

¹⁶ These are published in Arx, op. cit., pp. 806-807 and 811-12, and Giuseppe Campori, 'Giovanni Sabadino e gli Estensi', *Atti e memorie delle RR. Deputazioni di storia patria per le provincie dell'Emilia*, n.s., vol. iv, 1880, pp. 209-24, pp. 217-18; see James, op. cit. in n. 1 above, pp. 86-87.

¹⁷ Arienti, *Descrizione*, ed. cit. in n. 9; a corrected version can be found in Bruno Basile, '"Delizie" Bentivolesche. Il "Zardin Viola" nella descrizione autografa di Giovanni Sabadino degli Arienti', in idem, *L'eliseo effimero: scrittori in giardino*, Bologna, 1993.

¹⁸ Discussion and further references can be found in

James, op. cit. in n. 1, pp. 73-74 and 88-92, and Shepherd, op. cit., pp. 36-40.

¹⁹ See the recent discussion of portraits on coins by Syson, op. cit.

²⁰ A very clear example of Syson's suggestion that 'the design and execution of the coins... might even have been regarded as a factor in persuading the populace to hand over their money': Syson, op. cit., p. 122. On the other hand, Johannes Wilde, *Venetian Art from Bellini to Titian*, Oxford, 1974, pp. 129-130, relates the text *Quae Dei...* to Titian's Dresden *Tribute Money* (apparently painted as the door to a cupboard in Alfonso's Camerino d'alabastro), and with Alfonso's strained relations with the church – but this is a later picture.

²¹ *Corpus*, pp. 446-47, nos. 36-42; Museo Nazionale Romano, pp. 99-101, nos. 232-38. For Alfonso's appointment, see Quazza, op. cit., p. 334.

²² A point made more generally by Syson, op. cit., p. 118. Whilst many *quarti* were worth about 20 *soldi*, Ercole I's *Idra* was substantially lighter, and worth only 12 *soldi*: Grierson, op. cit., p. 42 n. 5. The useful table of salaries in Peter Burke, *The Italian Renaissance: Culture and Society in Italy*, Cambridge, 1986, pp. 218-19, gives a Venetian servant's annual income c. 1500 as 50 *lire*, i.e. 1,000 *soldi*.

²³ Alfonso's ten-*soldi* coins carry the Magdalene washing Christ's feet, a shepherd seizing a lamb from a lion's mouth (i.e. protecting his flock), the Flight into Egypt, or St George on the Dragon on their reverses: *Corpus*, pp. 447-49, nos. 46-62; Museo Nazionale Romano, pp. 102-105, nos. 240-48. His five-*solidi* coins bear images of Hezekiah (identified by an inscription), whilst those issued after 1526 carry the IHS monogram: *Corpus*, pp. 449-50, nos. 664-72; Museo Nazionale Romano, pp. 102-105, nos. 249-52. For his *quattrini*, see *Corpus*, pp. 450-51, nos. 73-81; Museo Nazionale Romano, pp. 106-108, nos. 253-62.

²⁴ Pretermiteremo anchora la tua illustre commendatione de magnificentia per la grandissima valle e de aqua profonda, la quale hai con grande arte desicata, in cui con admiratione già uno fertile paese de belle possessione si vede, per le quale li toi crescenti popoli non puono più de penuria temere. Di che non sei de minor fama eterna che l' forte Hercule antiquo ornato dele illustre fatiche, che consumoe col fuoco quella palude in Grecia chiamata Ydra, che pareo come in uno loco l' aqua levava, in uno altro quella habundantemente oriva, et come tanta fatica moralmente è affigura[ta] in uno serpente chiamato Ydra, con septi capi, che come uno de quilli Hercule con la clave occideva, tre glie ne nascevano, onde col foco a lui, come sai, fue forza leverla de terra. E tu, moralissimo principe, questo Ydra serpente l' hai nel foco posto nella tua richa e bella numisma d' auro, degna di comendatione. Arienti, *De triumphis religionis*, cit. in n. 3, p. 67. For the work's date, see James, op. cit. in n. 1, pp. 60-61. Literary references to the story available to Arienti would have included Boccaccio, *Genealogia deorum*, xlii.i and Diodorus Siculus, *Bibliotheca historia*, iv.xi.5-6.

²⁵ Bellini, op. cit., pp. 163-64; *Corpus*, pp. 435-36, nos. 17-21 (fig. 3 in no. 21); Museo Nazionale Romano, pp. 77-78, nos. 135-41; Garini et al., op. cit., no. 58. See Hill, op. cit., no. 119.

²⁶ The brass proofs are *Corpus*, pp. 435-36, nos. 17-18, and Museo Nazionale Romano, p. 78, no. 140.

²⁷ Grierson, op. cit., p. 43, n. 10; see also *Corpus*, p. 434, nos. 5-6: the coin is significantly lighter than Ercole's other double ducats. The production of similar striking of gold coins with dies made for silver *testoni* is recorded for Galeazzo Maria Sforza, and for Gian Galeazzo Maria Sforza under the regency of Bona of Savoy: Carlo Crippa, *Le Monete di Milano dai Visconti agli Sforza, dal 1329 al 1535*, Milan, 1986, p. 215 no. 21, and p. 238 no. 3 (see p. 216); see *Corpus*, vol. v: *Lombardia (Milano)*, Rome, 1914, p. 162, no. 2, and p. 184, nos. 1-2 (as gold proofs). See B.J. Cook, 'Showpieces: medallion coins in early modern Europe', *The Medal*, no. 26, Spring 1995, pp. 3-25, for the tradition of coins intended for display rather than circulation, and especially p. 5 for renaissance special striking.

²⁸ Grierson, op. cit., pp. 41-42, suggests that the issue of the *Idra* was related to the drainage-work necessary for the creation of Ercole I's grand addition to Ferrara, adding the common date for both events of 1493, and the fact that the tax levied to finance the construction of the addition was 1 *testone* (12 s.) per head – the face value of the *Idra*. Likewise, Maria Teresa Gulinella, 'La bonifica nelle medaglie ferraresi', in Anna Maria Visser Travagli and Giorgio Vighi (eds.), *Terre ed acqua: Le bonifiche ferraresi nel delta del Po*, exh. cat., Castello Estense, Ferrara, 1989-90, pp. 99-110, and especially p. 103, nos. 4-5, associates the *Idra* with drainage work generally.