3. Dress in the Milanese portraits

In the early 1480s Leonardo left Florence for Milan.[1] By that time major renewals, such as the three-quarter pose and a preference for plain dress, had begun to find their way into Florentine portraits of women, as discussed in the previous chapter. By contrast, the small number of Milanese portraits still in existence are much more traditional. The use of sumptuous clothing and lavish jewellery to express status, in court ceremony as well as in portraiture, was more important at the court of Milan than in republican Florence. The portraits of Duke Francesco Sforza (1401-1466) and his wife Bianca Maria Visconti (d. 1468) are a case in point (figs. 63-64).[2] The duke and duchess are depicted wearing expensive dress and are shown in profile, which was considered more dignified and therefore more appropriate for nobility. Even as late as the 1490s, when Leonardo had been working in Milan for more than a decade, the few surviving portraits show that the Milanese upper class, men as well as women, were still being portrayed in profile view. The best known example is the likeness of Francesco Sforza's granddaughter, Bianca Maria Sforza (1472-1510), which was presumably painted shortly before her marriage to the Holy Roman Emperor, Maximilian I (1459-1519) in 1493 (fig. 62). The hieratic pose and the preference for elaborate costume had remained the standard in court portraiture.

Leonardo's two Milanese female portraits, the *Lady with an Ermine* and *La Belle Ferronnière*, respectively painted shortly before and shortly after the likeness of Bianca Maria Sforza, are strikingly different from the usual court portrait (figs. 3-4).[3] Both women are shown in three-quarter view and, although they are wearing some jewellery, their finery is not nearly as lavish as that seen in other Milanese portraits. Moreover, the valuable gold brocades favoured in the ducal household are completely absent. Although these portraits are less austere than the likeness of Ginevra de' Benci, Leonardo was obviously pursuing the notion of dress and beauty he had developed earlier in Florence. This chapter will focus on the contrast between these ideas and those underlying Milanese court portraiture.

Following a short overview of the critical history of the *Lady with an Ermine* and *La Belle Ferronnière*, the importance of dressing up sumptuously at the Sforza court and the characteristics of Milanese fashion will be explained. Next the significance of dress in court portraiture will be addressed, after which a comparison will be made between Leonardo's *Lady with an Ermine* and the portrait of Bianca Maria Sforza in relation to the trousseaux of the two sitters. Attention will be paid to the dating of the *Lady with an Ermine*, taking her dress as a reference point, and the possible meaning of her hairstyle. In addition, Leonardo's interest in the study of drapery and its

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[1] Although the earliest evidence of Leonardo's presence in Milan is the contract for the *Virgin of the Rocks*, dated 25 April 1483, it is assumed he arrived somewhat earlier, probably in 1482. The latest evidence of Leonardo's presence in Florence is a payment for his altarpiece *The Adoration of the Magi*, dated 28 September 1481. See Pietro Marani in: DBI vol. 64 (2005), s.v. 'Leonardo da Vinci', p. 442.

[2] It is not certain whether these pendants were painted during the lifetime of the sitters or posthumously, see Andrea Bayer in: Berlin / New York 2011, p. 253.

[3] There is a possibility Leonardo painted the portraits of Beatrice d'Este and Ludovico Sforza in Donato Montorfano's fresco of the *Crucifixion*, opposite Leonardo's *Last Supper* in the refectory of Santa Maria delle Grazie. Both Vasari and Lomazzo ascribe the portraits to Leonardo, a suggestion that is rejected by most modern scholars, except for Marani, who leaves the option open, see: Marani 1989, p. 90, cat. 17. Because the portraits were painted *al secco*, their condition is very bad, which means their authorship cannot be ascertained, nor can their dress be properly analysed. Therefore I have not included these portraits in this thesis.

importance for the development of his depiction of dress are exemplified. The dating of the dress of the *Belle Ferronnière* is also discussed and the question is raised what this might reveal about the sitter's identity. The chapter finishes with an analysis of the relationship between Leonardo's ideas on dress in painting on the one hand and in his personal life on the other.

1.1. Leonardo's patron Ludovico Sforza

During Leonardo's first stay in Milan, from the early 1480s to 1499, the city was politically and culturally dominated by Ludovico Sforza (1452-1508), known as 'Il Moro' (the Moor) due to his dark complexion. He had assumed power in 1479, acting on behalf of his underage nephew Gian Galeazzo Sforza (1469-1494), who remained the rightful Duke of Milan until his death.[4] It has been noted that the Sforza, and Ludovico in particular, used luxury arts as a means to legitimize their power. All over Italy the Milanese court was known for its lavishness. Ludovico gave many architectural commissions and hired artists like Bramante and Leonardo. In addition, he was a regular buyer of modern silver vases of considerable value. But above all, encouraged by his wife Beatrice d'Este (1475-1497) he spent huge sums of money on dress and jewellery.[5]

Ludovico married Beatrice d'Este, daughter of the Duke of Ferrara, in 1491, having initially asked for the hand of her elder sister Isabella d'Este (1474-1539). Since Isabella was already betrothed to Francesco Gonzaga (1466-1519), Marquess of Mantua, he contented himself with Beatrice. The wedding had been scheduled for 1490, concurrently with that of Francesco and Isabella. Much to the annoyance of the Este, however, Ludovico kept postponing the ceremony. According to the Ferrarese ambassador Giacomo Trotti the cause of this problem was the Duke's mistress, Cecilia Gallerani (1473-after 1536), who lived with him in the *castello* and accompanied him everywhere. In a letter of 8 November 1490 Trotti described her as 'pregnant and beautiful as a flower'.[6] When at last his wedding to Beatrice took place in January 1491, it was celebrated with lavish festivities.[7]

In the meantime, Ludovico's aim was to acquire absolute and exclusive power. He realized this goal on 22 October 1494, two days after Gian Galeazzo's death, when he was officially recognized as 'Duke of Milan', supported by the Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian I. Until this investiture Ludovico and Beatrice d'Este carried the title 'Duke and Duchess of Bari'. From that moment on, Beatrice was the new Duchess of Milan, and the previous Duchess of Milan, Gian Galeazzo's widow Isabella of Aragon (1470-1524), received Beatrice's former status of Duchess of Bari.

In the early 1490s, after Ludovico had married and consolidated his authority, he became more interested in painting. Before that time, like his predecessors, he had preferred luxury arts. Only likenesses of the ducal family were regularly ordered by the Sforza court and in the 1480s Ambrogio de Predis, well-known for his portraits, was the sole painter mentioned as a member of the ducal household. Vincenzo Foppa was the only painter before him to enjoy the luxury of a paid position at the Sforza court. Still, each of them also received commissions from

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[4] For an extensive biography of Ludovico Sforza, see Gino Benzoni in: DBI, vol. 66 (2007), s.v. 'Ludovico (Ludovico Maria) Sforza, detto il Moro, duca di Milano', p. 436-444. For Gian Galeazzo, see: Francesca M. Vaglienti in: DBI vol. 54 (2000), s.v. 'Gian Galeazzo Maria Sforza, duca di Milano', p. 391-397. On Ludovico Sforza's rise to power, see: Black 2009, p. 82-84

[5] Levi Pisetzky 1957, p. 766-768; Giordano 2011, p. 125-126.

[6] 'gravida et bella come un fiore', Giacomo Trotti to Ercole d'Este, Milan, 8 November 1490. Malaguzzi Valeri 1913-23, vol. 1, p. 467.

[7] Luzio and Renier 1890a, p. 76-77.

a broader network in the city. This means that unlike smaller courts like those of Urbino and Ferrara, the Milanese court did not have painters in its exclusive service .[8]

Leonardo's situation was not exceptional. Shortly after his arrival, he started collaborating with the brothers Evangelista and Ambrogio de Predis.[9] Vasari's account that Leonardo was invited to come to Milan by Ludovico himself seems unlikely.[10] Leonardo tried to obtain a position at court by presenting the Duke with a letter in which he emphasized his qualities as a military engineer and, to a lesser extent, as a sculptor and painter.[11] We cannot be sure exactly when Leonardo received his first ducal commissions, or when he obtained a salaried position as a court artist. He may have been working for Ludovico from about 1485.[12] Nonetheless, the most important work by Leonardo and the De Predis brothers executed in the 1480s, the *Virgin of the Rocks*, was not a court commission (fig. 12). The altarpiece was ordered by the Franciscan Confraternity of the Immaculate Conception for their chapel, adjacent to the church of San Francesco Grande.[13] After the completion of this painting in 1484 or 1485, Leonardo seems to have been mainly engaged in designing war machinery.[14] It was not until about 1490 that Leonardo began receiving ducal commissions for paintings, including the likeness of Ludovico's mistress Cecilia Gallerani, known as the *Lady with an Ermine*, and the *Belle Ferronnière*, on a more regular basis (figs. 3-4).

1.2. Critical reception

The *Lady with an Ermine*, part of the Czartoryski collection since the early nineteenth century, has been unanimously accepted as by Leonardo since the 1920s (fig. 3).[15] The presence of the ermine led to the identification of the sitter as Ludovico's mistress Cecilia Gallerani, for the animal's Greek name, γαλέη (galée), alludes to her surname.[16] The earliest source confirming the

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[8] Portrait painters who regularly received Sforza commissions earlier in the century were Bonifacio Bembo, Zanetto Bugatto and Baldassare da Reggio. See: Welch 1995, p. 247-249. Evidence of De Predis' presence at the ducal court is given by Motta 1893, p. 973, who cites a document that reveals Ambrogio de Predis, 'painter of Ludovico Sforza', received 10 *braccia* of blue satin from the ducal wardrobe in 1482, a common type of gift for painters and other artisans in court service.

[9] Syson suggested this may have been a calculated decision, because Ambrogio had already obtained a position at court. Syson 2011, p. 21.

[10] Vasari 1996, p. 631. Bernardo Vecchietti stated it had been Lorenzo de' Medici who sent Leonardo to Milan with a silver lyre as a diplomatic gift for the Duke. See: Von Fabriczy 1893, p. 87.

[11] Published in: Richter no. 1340.

[12] In 1485 Ludovico Sforza promised Matthias Corvinus, King of Hungary, to send him a picture by 'an excellent painter, to whom, having seen proof of his talent, we know no equal'. This suggests that Leonardo was already receiving commissions for paintings from the court by that date, although it is not known whether Matthias Corvinus ever received the promised painting. See: Syson 2011, p. 26.

[13] On the complex commission history of the altarpiece, see Luke Syson in: London 2011, p. 164-175, cats. 31-34.

[14] Zöllner 2003, p. 118.

[15] First stated by Müller-Walde 1889, p. 52. For an overview of the opinions on the painting's authenticity before 1920, see: Shell and Sironi 1992, p. 48-53.

[16] First proposed by the editor of the *Burlington Magazine*, Charles J. Holmes, in a footnote to the article of Hewett 1907, p. 310 and now generally acknowledged. See: Shell and Sironi 1992, p. 53. The ermine was furthermore associated with purity and moderation, two important virtues for women. Leonardo himself noted about the animal: 'The ermine, in its moderation, eats only once a day and, in order to avoid sullying its purity, prefers to be caught by hunters rather than be dirtied.' On another sheet in the same notebook he wrote: 'Moderation restrains all vices. The ermine prefers to die rather than be dirtied.' H[1] fol. 12r; Transcription and translation: Richter no. 1234; H[1] fol. 48v; Transcription and translation: Richter no. 1263. First noted by Möller 1916, p. 319. According to Pedretti, the ermine may also refer to Ludovico, who was decorated with the Order of the Ermine in 1488 by King Ferrante of Naples. Pedretti 1990a, p. 171-172. Pedretti's suggestion was challenged by: Weppelman 2011, p. 74.

existence of Cecilia's portrait is a sonnet by the court poet Bernardo Bellincioni, celebrating her beauty and the portrait's lifelike quality (app. 5D). Bellincioni died in 1492, which means the picture was completed before that time.[17] By stating that Nature should thank Ludovico and Leonardo, who made sure Cecilia's beauty was captured for posterity, the poet moreover confirms that it was Ludovico who commissioned the portrait.

From the sitter's biography it can be deduced that the portrait dates from around 1490. Cecilia became the Duke's beloved early in 1489 and remained so until February 1491, shortly after Ludovico's marriage to Beatrice d'Este. On 3 May 1491, she bore the Duke a son, after which she continued to be a favoured guest at court.[18] After Beatrice objected to her presence, Cecilia was finally married off to Count Lodovico Bergamino of Cremona on 27 July 1492. Martin Kemp suggested the portrait may have been commissioned in 1491, as a wedding gift for Cecilia.[19] Correspondence between her and Isabella d'Este in 1498 confirms that Cecilia indeed owned the picture. As Luke Syson pointed out, however, the style of the portrait is close to Leonardo's first version of the *Virgin of the Rocks*, implying a slightly earlier date of 1489-1490.[20]

Notwithstanding the inscription 'LA BELE FERONIERE LEONARD D'AWINCI' in the upper left corner, Cecilia's portrait should not be confused with another portrait known as *La Belle Ferronnière*, currently in the Louvre (fig. 4). Technical research has shown that the inscription on the Cracow portrait was added at a later date, probably when it entered the collection of the Czartoryski Princes in the early nineteenth century. Another later addition is the black overpainting of the background, which used to be a shade of bluish-grey. A yellowed varnish further obscures the original colour palette. Some parts of the painting have been retouched, most notably Cecilia's lips, nose and hair, several beads of the necklace, the ribbons and the embroidered borders of the dress.[21]

Contrary to the *Lady with an Ermine*, Leonardo's authorship of the *Belle Ferronnière* was often doubted well into the twentieth century (fig. 4). Today there is general consensus that the picture is by his hand.[22] The identity of the sitter and the dating of the *Belle Ferronnière*, however, are still subject to debate. The existence of three Latin epigrams by Antonio Tebaldeo on one of the sheets of the *Codex Atlanticus*, dedicated to a portrait by Leonardo of Ludovico Sforza's mistress Lucrezia Crivelli, has prompted many art historians to regard the unknown lady as Lucrezia.[23] If the panel indeed represents Lucrezia Crivelli, a date between 1495, when she became Ludovico's mistress, and 1499 seems plausible.[24] However, besides these epigrams there is no other evidence to support this identification and it is quite possible the poems are dedicated to a portrait now lost.

Another likely candidate is Beatrice d'Este, Ludovico's wife. Although there are no written sources to confirm the existence of such a portrait, it is not unlikely that Ludovico

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[17] Shell and Sironi 1992, p. 49.
[18] Shell and Sironi 1992, p. 55-58.
[19] Washington 1991, p. 272.
[20] London 2011, p. 112. On the basis of the assumption that Cecilia Gallerani was Ludovico's lover from as early as 1481 (which Shell and Sironi 1992 proved wrong), the portrait has at times been dated to the early 1480s. For an overview, see: Marani 1998, p. 81-82.
[21] Bull 1992, p. 76-78.
[22] On the attribution to Leonardo, see: Marani 1999, p. 182-187; Zöllner 2003, p. 99; London 2011, p. 123. In the past, the panel was often ascribed to Boltraffio. For an overview of all attributions, see: Marani 1999, p. 180-181.
[23] CA f. 456 (167 v.c), fully transcribed by Richter no. 1560. The reverse side of the folio is dated c. 1499-1500 by: Pedretti 1978-79, p. 214. The identification of the lady as Lucrezia Crivelli was first suggested by: Amoretti 1804, vol. 1, p. 39. It is still upheld by: Marani 1999, p. 178-180; Zöllner 2003, p. 99.
[24] London 2011, p. 123-124.

commissioned one of his spouse from his court painter. Several authors have justly noted the resemblance between this portrait and Beatrice's sculpted bust by Gian Cristoforo Romano (fig. 65).[25] To my mind, the sitter's face also resembles that of Beatrice's effigy by Cristoforo Solari (fig. 66). Béguin further refers to Pierre Dan, who described the portrait in 1642 in his *Trésor des merveilles de la maison royale de Fontainebleau* as a 'Duchess of Mantua'. Béguin argues this means that the portrait was still known to Dan as the likeness of an Este princess, although he must have confused the two Este sisters, Beatrice, Duchess of Milan, and Isabella, Marchioness of Mantua.[26] Assuming the portrait represents Beatrice, it is usually dated between 1495 and her death in 1497. Syson, tentatively opting for Beatrice as well, suggested an even earlier date of about 1493-1494 on stylistic grounds.[27] The sitter's dress may confirm this date, as is discussed below.

2.1. Sforza splendour

The poet Antonio Camelli (1436-1502), also known as Il Pistoia, wrote a series of sonnets on women from Siena, Florence, Ferrara and Milan.[28] According to him, Milanese women are notable for their lavish dress (app. 5E):

> Beautiful women in Milan, but too fat, / you know the talking, you know they are pale / slim in the middle, well fattened on the hips / they resemble the plumpest of capons. // They wear a certain type of *giornee* and *cioppe* / that makes them look fuller in the breasts / They go about wearily in low-heeled slippers, / moreover their cleavages are overfilled at the brims. // Their dresses of silk and rose-colour, / their golden head-dresses, on the breast a jewel,
> sleeves embroidered, or made of brocade. // On the shoulder a rich and beautiful balas ruby, / interlaced pearls around the neck, / with an engraved or nielloed pendant, / every finger wears a ring. /When you see them eating from their plates, / they all look like German shops.[29]

The poet ridicules the way women in Milan bedeck themselves with precious fabrics and ornaments as if they were displaying merchandize. The poem is of course intended as an ironical comment on dress and the description of the appearance of Milanese women is probably an exaggeration.[30] Nonetheless, at court, lavish costume was the order of the day and the descriptions of their dress and jewellery are a faithful reflection of Milanese court fashions.

The aforementioned portrait of Bianca Maria Visconti shows many items described by Il Pistoia in his poem, such as the golden headdress, the jewels on the breast and the shoulder, the strings of pearls and sleeves of gold brocade (fig. 64). Bianca Maria's extant inventory of jewellery reveals an enormous display of wealth and includes, among many other items, a brooch that is much like the one in her portrait, which consists of the figure of a lady holding a ruby encircled by four pearls and another gemstone below, mounted on a golden, leaf-shaped base. The jewel in the duchess's inventory of 1468 is described as a 'green angel that has a ruby in the front with a table cut balas ruby, and two pearls below with a point cut diamond, tied in

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[25] Béguin 1983, p. 81; Cox-Rearick 1995, p. 145; London 2011, p. 126. A resemblance between the *Belle Ferronnière* and Beatrice's profile portrait in the Brera altarpiece was noted by: Gould 1975, p. 70.
[26] Béguin 1983, p. 81.
[27] Luke Syson in: London 2011, p. 123.
[28] Cammelli 1908, p. 110-114, sonnets LXVII-LXX.
[29] Translation partially cited from: Syson and Thornton 2001, p. 31.
[30] Inventories of middle class Milanese women show most of their dresses were made of woollen cloth. The use of silk was mostly limited to sleeves and gold brocade was hardly worn at all. Levi Pisetzky 1957, p. 728-729. For three fifteenth-century trousseaux of Milanese middle class women, see: Merkel 1893, p. 101-105.

an oak leaf'.[31] This kind of jewellery was extremely costly. In 1469 Galeazzo Sforza gave his bride Bona of Savoy (1449-1503) a brooch with a point-cut diamond, a balas ruby and two pearls, appraised at 15,000 ducats.[32]

The duchy of Milan was one of the richest city-states in Italy and the Visconti and Sforza rulers were famous for their ostentatious display of wealth. In January 1491, for example, the Ferrarese ambassador Trotti wrote to the Este that Il Moro had appeared in public wearing a gown with a sleeve embroidered with pearls, rubies and other jewels. This single sleeve had, according to Trotti, an estimated value of 50,000 ducats.[33] Recalling the splendour of the house of Sforza, the Milanese chronicler Bernardino Corio (1459-c. 1505) wrote in his *Patria Historia*, published in 1503: 'The court of our princes was very illustrious, full of new fashions, dresses and delights, and this illustrious state was established with so much glory, pomp and wealth that it seemed impossible to attain more power.'[34]

Ludovico's sister-in-law Isabella d'Este, who as marchioness of Mantua had far less spending power, was also impressed by the riches of the Sforza and exclaimed in a letter to her husband:

'Today I was shown the treasure that on previous occasions your Lordship has also seen but with the addition of two chests full of ducats and one of quarters, each perhaps two-and-a-half yards long and one-and-a-half wide and just as high; would to God that we who spend willingly had as much.'[35]

As well as ostentatious, Ludovico was generous and he regularly presented Isabella with costly gifts. In 1495 Isabella's secretary Benedetto Capilupi described the gifts she had received during a visit to Milan in a letter to her husband: 'Sure enough, also this time [Ludovico] Sforza presented her with gifts: first, in January, two fat oxen that she sent to Mantua, next, in February, thirteen *braccia* of gold tissue made with the device of the dove'.[36] This type of fabric, literally 'loop-over-loop cloth of gold', was made of gold thread with little loops to create a pattern and was in fact the most expensive textile of the time. The heraldic decoration left no doubt about the identity of the giver, for the dove was an often-used Visconti-Sforza device.[37]

It was common practice at court to present sumptuous fabrics or garments as gifts. Just as Ludovico did, his predecessor Galeazzo Maria Sforza often bestowed precious clothing and textiles upon court members, including servants, friends and mistresses. Galeazzo's letters to

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[31] 'angelo verde che ha uno rubino in fronte cum uno balasso in schosso in tavolla, perle due in basso cum uno diamante in poncta ligato in una foglia di rovere', Venturelli 1996a, p. 78.
[32] Venturelli 1996a, p. 78.
[33] Giordano 2008, p. 76-77.
[34] 'La corte de li nostri principi era illustrissima, piena di nuove fogge, abiti ed delicie, et questo illustro stato, era costituita in tanta gloria, pompa et richezza, che impossibile pareva più alto poter attingere.' Corio 1857, vol. 3, p. 456. On Corio and his history of Milan, see: Milan 2000, p. 94-95.
[35] 'Hozi ne ha mostrato el thesoro qual altre volte ha anche veduto la S.V., ma con gionta de due casse peine de ducati et una de quarti, che ponno essere lone dua braza e mezo l'una et largo uno e mezo et altrotanto alte; che Dio volesse che nui che spendiamo volunteri ne havessimo tanti!' Isabella d'Este to Francesco Gonzaga, Milan 15 September 1492. Luzio and Renier 1890b, p. 356. Translation cited from: James 2012, p. 331.
[36] 'Lo Sforza infatti anche questa volta le fece dei regali: prima, in gennaio, due bovi grassi, che ella mandò a Mantova, poi in febbraio tredici braccia di panno d'oro rizo sopra rizo facto a la divisa sua de la colombina', Bernardo Capilupi to Franceso Gonzaga, Milan, 28 February 1495. Luzio and Renier 1890c, p. 620.
[37] An altar frontal decorated with this device is now in the Museo Poldi Pezzoli, Milan (inv. no. 58). Surrounded by golden rays each dove holds a scroll with the words 'A BON DROIT' (justly). See: Milan 2009, p. 63-65.

Gotardo Panigarola, his chancellor responsible for keeping track of court finance, list many garments of crimson, murrey or blue satin and gold brocade.[38] In April 1474 he even ordered sixteen dresses and overgarments of silk damask and gold brocade at once for his mistress Lucia Marliani, the countess of Melzo.[39]

In Quattrocento thought, nobility simply could not do without riches and ostentation. The large sums of money that were spent by the ducal family on dress, ceremonial display and gifts all contributed to their *magnificenza*, or magnificence. Like outer beauty for a woman, splendour, as long as it fitted one's rank, was seen as a sign of inner virtue.[40] The humanist Giovanni Pontano explained it as follows in his treatise *De Splendore*:

> We call furnishings all domestic objects, such as vases, plates, linen, divans and other objects of this type without which it would not be possible to live pleasantly. Although men acquire these things for use and comfort, it is the obligation of the splendid man to regard not only use and comfort but to acquire as many of these objects as possible in such a way that friends and the knowledgeable, when it is necessary, can easily avail themselves of them, and to have them of the most excellent quality, with some superiority that is due either to the artistry, or to the material, or to both.[41]

2.2. Dressing the duchess

Besides other luxury arts, Ludovico spent enormous amounts of money on dress and jewels for his wife, Beatrice d'Este. Six months after the marriage had taken place, in January 1491, the Ferrarese ambassador, Giacomo Trotti, wrote: 'every day Lord Ludovico gives jewels and cloths of gold, especially made and very beautiful in superlative, to his wife'.[42] These gifts were often very expensive. For instance in February 1492 Beatrice wrote from the castle in Vigevano to her father Ercole d'Este about a diamond Ludovico had bought her:

> The other day my husband bought a diamond, in his own name [?] that cost him 12,000 ducats; you have to know that it is a big piece and he gave it to me; and I wanted to write to your Highness, because I know that it will give you pleasure and I am obliged to your Highness, because you are the cause of how well I am.[43]

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[38] Herald 1981, p. 247 gives an overview of garments and cloth lengths from these letters.
[39] The letter is published in: Monnas 2009, p. 316.
[40] Syson and Thornton 2001, p. 23-24, 29-31; Belozerskaya 2002, p. 78-84. In this thesis, I have used the words 'magnificence', 'splendour' and 'luxury' indiscriminately. However, Catherine Kovesi recently pointed out that in the fifteenth century 'lusso' and 'lussuria' had a negative connotation, while 'magnificenza' and 'splendore' were used to denote honourable expenditure. See: Kovesi 2013, p. 236-242.
[41] Cited from: Welch 2002, p. 215.
[42] 'ogni die il Signor Ludovico fa donativi de zoglie et de drappi doro facti aposta, bellissimi in superativo, ala sua consorte'. Giacomo Trotti to Ercole d'Este, Pavia 12 July 1491. Cited from: Malaguzzi Valeri 1913-23, vol. 1, p. 352.
[43] '…el mio consorte conprò l'altro dì un diamante, el qu[ale] li è costato dodese milia duchati et a nome desece; è l'un gran pezo che de diamante che se sapia et àmelo dato, et me è parso scriverlo ala Signoria Vostra, perché so la ne [prenderà] piasere, et del tuto son obligata ala Signoria [Vostra], p[erché] lei è causa de quanto bene ò.' Beatrice d'Este to Ercole d'Este, Vigevano, 7 February 1492. Ferrari 2008, p. 39. The phrase 'a nome desece' probably refers to the practice at many courts of making a distinction between the treasury and the sovereign's personal income, the privy purse. Although I have not found any specific references to the existence of privy purses at Italian courts, it was a common practice elsewhere in Europe.

Jewels with a value exceeding 10,000 ducats, like the diamond mentioned in this letter, were no exception at the Sforza court. A few months later, the physician Ludovico de' Carri was shown the Sforza treasure and wrote to Ercole d'Este:

Lord Ludovico has shown me jewels, so much and so beautiful that I do not believe that Cyrus or Darius had such and so much. This morning he gave one in our presence to the Duchess of Bari [Beatrice d'Este] with a value of 10,500 ducats.[44]

When visiting Venice in 1493 Beatrice flaunted two of the most famous Sforza jewels, the first being a balas ruby named 'el Spico' (the excellent), that has probably been depicted in the portrait of Gian Galeazzo by Piero Pollaiuolo, painted c. 1471 (fig. 67). In 1500, when Ludovico had to pawn a part of his jewellery collection to pay for his war debts, the stone was estimated at 25,000 ducats. The other jewel was il Marone' (the chestnut, probably named for its shape), which was pawned for 10,000 ducats.[45]

Apart from a collection of precious jewellery, Beatrice had an extensive wardrobe at her disposal. A letter from the Ferrarese courtier Bernardo Prosperi, who kept Beatrice's sister Isabella informed about all novelties concerning her hometown and relatives, provides an accurate image. He describes how their mother Eleanor was guided through Beatrice's wardrobe at Vigevano castle:

The other day Milady your mother was taken through your sister's wardrobe by Marcolo [the court jester], where all the garments are that her Highness has had made since she went to her husband, which number about eighty-four cloaks and dresses. It was further announced that she also has several others in Milan. Here it was like seeing a sacristy full of copes, as Milady said.[46]

Beatrice most likely already had a vast number of dresses from her trousseau, the account of which has been lost, unfortunately. Her sister Isabella needed no fewer than thirteen *cassoni* (painted chests) to carry her attire when she went to her husband in February 1490. For an alliance as important as that between Beatrice and Ludovico, de facto Lord of Milan, she must have been provided with a trousseau that was even more sumptuous than her sister's. Illustrative are the girdles worked in gold and silver, made by the Milanese goldsmith Fra Rocco, which the two sisters received prior to their marriages. Their father paid 600 ducats for Isabella's girdle and 2,000 ducats for Beatrice's.[47] Prosperi informs us that apart from wedding gifts like these, within the first two years of her marriage Beatrice had at least eighty-four new dresses and cloaks made, a huge number by fifteenth-century standards. Given the comparison with

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[44] 'El Signore Ludovico me ha monstrato tante et cussi belle zoglie che non credeva che Cyro o Dario ne havesse tante e tale. Questa matina ne ha donato una in nostra presentia ala duchessa de Bari de pretio de ducati dece milia cinquecento.' Ludovico de'Carri to Ercole d'Este, Vigevano, 16 October 1492. Malaguzzi Valeri 1913-23 vol. 1, p. 356,.

[45] Malaguzzi Valeri 1913-23, vol. 1, p. 356; Venturelli 2008, p. 157. Besides 'el spico' the variant 'spigo' also occurs, just as 'marone' is sometimes spelled as 'morone', in which case it might be allusion to the Duke's nickname 'Il Moro'. On dress and jewellery in Pollaiuolo's portrait of Gian Galeazzo, see: Venturelli 2000, p. 43, esp. note 18. The list of pawned jewels is published by: Trivulzio 1876, p. 531-534; Venturelli 1999, p. 157-158.

[46] 'L'altro heri madama voistra Madre fu conducta per Marcolo alla guardarobba de V. sorella, dove distese tucte le sue veste che sua Signoria se ha facto poi vene a Marito, che sono computate benrie et maglie circa 84. Secondo fo annunciato, dicevano che anche ne haveva dele altre a Milano. Qui pareva vedere una sacristia apparati di piviali, come la dixe Madama.' Bernardo Prosperi to Isabella d'Este, Vigevano, 6 March 1493. Portioli 1882, p. 333.

[47] Cartwright 1903, p. 14.

liturgical copes, which were usually made of gold brocade and garnished with expensive gold and silver embroidery, these garments must have been truly splendid.

Prosperi continues his letter to Isabella with a description of a dressing room Beatrice had furnished with innumerable perfumes and toilet waters, little crystal and enamel bottles designed in the fashion of Ludovico's collection of silver vases and twenty vials for powder worked in gold. A second room was equipped with more glass and porcelain vases, ivories and hunting equipment like dog's collars, purses and horns, so that it had the appearance of 'a fine shop'.[48]

Beatrice often exchanged designs for dress decorations or accessories with her mother Eleanor and sister Isabella, and even after her marriage her mother remained an important advisor in fashion matters. In April 1493 for instance, Eleanor sent her daughter an embroidery design for a *camora* (dress) made by her own embroiderer Jorba, to which Beatrice replied:

> Tonight I have received the design of the dress made by Jorba, which I like very much. And now that I have shown it to my embroiderer, as your Highness wrote me to do, he reminded me that if he has to make them in the same size from top to bottom, the flowers of the embroidery will be imperfect or askew from the top because the dress is of course narrower at the top than at the hem. But if he makes them narrower at the top, according to the width of the dress, the flowers will be intact and proportioned everywhere. I have not yet decided what to do, but I thought to write your Highness immediately now that I have consulted my embroiderer. Could you quickly advise me what you think, because I will do as your Highness advises.[49]

Like this example, many of Beatrice's letters still testify to her keen interest in fashion. After her untimely death at the age of twenty-one in 1497, a chronicler even described her as 'beautiful and dark, inventor of new dresses'.[50] This qualification is confirmed by Ludovico de' Carri, the physician who assisted her during her first pregnancy. After prescribing bed rest for the duchess, he wrote in a report on her medical condition to her father that she, while in bed, 'orders embroideries and corrects the designs in a way that the masters themselves are amazed'.[51] Ludovico il Moro, too, praised his wife for her ability to design costumes. In a letter to Isabella d'Este he recalled an unplanned party where all the ladies dressed up in Turkish dress 'of which fashion the inventor was my wife and she had it made in one night'.[52]

On the basis of these sources, many historians painted a picture of Beatrice, unlike her sister Isabella d'Este, as a woman without any interest in politics or intellectual endeavours,

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[48] 'una bella bottega', Portioli 1882, p. 333-334.

[49] 'Ho ricevuto questa sera el desegno de la camora facto per lo Jorba, il quale mi è piaciuto assai. Et havendolo facto vedere al mio rechamatore, secondo che me scrive la Excellentia Vostra che volesse fare, epso me ha ricordato che, dovendolo fare in quello medesmo compasso da alto como da basso, gli accade in consideratione che li fioroni del rechamo andarano inperfecti o schavezi da alto, essendo rasonevolmente la camora più stretta de sopra che da bassa, ma che facendoli più stretta de sopra, secondo la larghezza della camora, li fioroni predicti sarano integri et proportionati in ogni parte. Io per questo non me sono resolta al tramente, ma me è parso arne subito notitia alla Excellentia Vostra ad ciò che, inteso questo ricordo del mio rachamatore, la me possi cum celerità avisare del parere suo, perché sono per fare quello che la predicta Excellentia Vostra e consigliarà che fatia.' Beatrice d'Este to Eleanor of Aragon, Milan 10 April 1493. Venturi 1885, p. 253; Ferrari 2008, p. 35-36.

[50] 'formosa ac nigri coloris, novarum vestium inventrix', cited from: Luzio and Renier 1890a, p. 88.

[51] 'ordina recami corrigendo li designi, per modo che li maestrii proprii se ne maraveglian', Ludovico de' Carri to Ercole d'Este, Vigevano, 27 October 1492. Ferrari 2008, p. 46.

[52] 'De la quale fogia è stata lo auctore la p.ta mia consorte et l'ha facta tagliare in una nocte', Ludovico Sforza to Isabella d'Este, Pavia, 12 June 1491. Luzio and Renier 1890a, p. 114.

whose deepest concerns did not reach beyond fashion.[53] Castiglione, however, in the third part of his *Libro del cortegiano*, cites both Isabella and Beatrice as perfect exemplars of the court lady:

If you pass into Lombardy, you will find Isabella, Marchioness of Mantua, of whose most admirable virtues it would be offensive to speak as restrainedly as anyone must do here who would speak of her at all. I regret, too, that all of you did not know her sister, the Duchess Beatrice of Milan, in order that you might never again have occasion to marvel at a woman's abilities.[54]

Earlier in this part of the book, Castiglione had already explained the importance of women to court life:

'just as no court, however great, can have adornment or splendour or gaiety in it without ladies, neither can any Courtier be graceful or pleasing or brave, or do any gallant deed of chivalry, unless he is moved by the society and by the love and charm of ladies.'[55]

With her love for finery and luxury, Beatrice contributed to exactly the adornment and splendour that Castiglione thought indispensable.[56]

The important role for women in conveying splendour and magnificence can be beautifully illustrated with an episode preceding the state visit to Venice in 1493, in which the display of wealth at the Sforza court led to public rivalry between Beatrice and her mother Eleanor. The scene is described in two letters to Beatrice's sister Isabella. The first letter, written by Teodora Angeli, lady-in-waiting to Eleanor, testifies to the competition in dressing up their ladies that rose between mother and daughter, the latter supported by her husband Ludovico:

I already told your Highness about the chains of 200 ducats each that the duchess [Beatrice] had made for her ladies and the dresses are truly in order too. I heard that she gave two to Isabella and Margarita, to the first one of gold brocade, to the other one of crimson velvet that both used to be hers. Milady [Eleanor], wanting to show that she could do that too, had chains made of 220 ducats each on top of the others they used to wear intertwined. And because the duchess had given everyone certain strings of pearls with rosaries, Milady had them promptly made for her ladies, more beautiful and richer. And when Ludovico saw this he said: wife, I want you to make sure your ladies have pearls and that they are beautiful and considerably bigger.[57]

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[53] See: DBI vol. 7 (1970), s.v. 'Beatrice d'Este, duchessa di Milano', p. 350-351.

[54] 'Se nella Lombardia verrete, v'occorerà la signora Isabella marchesa di Mantua, alle eccellentissime virtù della quale ingiuria si faria parlando così sobriamente, come saria forza in questo loco a chi pur volesse parlarne. Pesami ancora che tutti non abbiate conosciuta la duchessa Beatrice di Milano sua sorella, per non aver mai più a maravigliarvi di ingegno di donna.', Castiglione 1972, p. 242, Book III, 36. Translation: Castiglione 2002, p. 175.

[55] 'come corte alcuna, per grande che ella sia, non po aver ornamento o splendore in sé, né allegria senza donne, né cortegiano alcun essere aggraziato, piacevole o ardito, né far mai opera leggiadradi cavalleria, se non mosso della pratica e dall'amore e piacer di donne', Castiglione 1972, p. 210, Book III, 3. Translation: Castiglione 2002, p. 150.

[56] Compare also San Juan 1991, p. 70, who states: 'While cultural acumen and the cultivation of personal charm was required of most members of the court, regardless of rank or sex, Castiglione makes clear that only for women this was the primary occupation [...], whose physical presence was the focus of court ritual.'

[57] 'Già dixi a V.S. de le collane che faceva far la Duchessa a sue doncelle da duc. 200 l'una et cussì ha facto, et anche invero sono in ordine de veste. Intendo che ad Isabella ed Margarita ne ha dato due, ad una de brochato, a l'altra de velluto cremixino che era le sue. Madama, volendo demonstrar che scià fare anchora lei, ha facto cadene da duc. 220 ultra le altre che sogliono portare a treza. Et perchè la ducchessa havea facto anche a cadauna certi vezzi de perle cum paternostri, Madama ne fece subito fare anchora lei a

The same day Isabella's agent, Bernardo Prosperi, wrote to her that in his opinion Eleanor would probably win this contest of luxury in the end:

> Further Milady [Eleanor] gave some of her small pendants to our [company] and the duchess [Beatrice] could not surpass this; except that some of her maidens, that is Camilla and Cathelina Vismara and Isabella as well, did receive some little jewellery. But there is something else that makes me believe the duchess will be the loser […]. Milady has had dresses made of green satin with large strips of black velvet almost two fingers wide for all her ladies to wear in Venice; and she will bring more jewellery to hand to them when they are there. I do not think the duchess will have arranged for this.[58]

Prosperi, belonging to Eleanor's party and aware of the rivalry between Isabella and Beatrice, was probably not completely objective in his assessment of Eleanor's chances of outshining Beatrice. Even he had to admit Ludovico's spending power was impressive, finishing his letter with an account of the arrival of the goldsmith Caradosso with his merchandise: 'Caradosso has arrived here with a good deal of rubies and diamonds that he [Ludovico] bought to attach to the headdresses and I have heard it said that he spent 2,000 ducats.'[59]

In putting on this conspicuous display the competitors' primary intention was not to outdo one another, but rather to impress the Venetians. Ferrari pointed out that Beatrice was well aware of the political goals she could attain through ostentatious dress. She reported Ludovico from Venice that her sumptuous appearance commanded respect:

> I will not hold back from Your Excellency that, as we passed the crowds […] when we approached or left the palace of the Doge, everyone stopped to look at the jewels that I wore on my headgear and my dress with [the device of] the tower [of Genoa] and especially about the point-cut diamond one said to the other 'that is the wife of Signor Ludovico, look at the beautiful balas rubies and point-cut diamond she has!'.[60]

Splendour and lavish dress were no mere pastime for a young duchess; they were considered essential to court life and clearly served political purposes.

The Venetians were impressed by the Sforza display of wealth, but others were not. On 9 September 1494 the king of France, Charles VIII (r. 1483-1498), was solemnly received in Asti by Ludovico and Beatrice, who had invited him after the king of Naples, Alfonso II (r. 1494-

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le sue, più belli et più ricchi. Et vedendo il Sr. Ludovico questo dixe: mogliere, volglio che anchora vui faciati che le vostre habiano de le perle et cussige ne fece de belle et più grosse assai.' Teodora Angeli to Isabella d'Este, Ferrara, 24 May 1493. Luzio and Renier 1890b, p. 374.

[58] 'Madama dete poi certi pendenti de li soi piccoli a le nostre, et in questo la duchessa non ha potuto supplire; excepto che quelle sue spose, cioè Camilla et Cathelina Vismara et anche Isabella pur hanno havuto certi zoglieleti. Ma un'altra ce ne è anchora ch'io credo che la Duchessa starà perditrice […]. La ex. de madama ha facto tagliare mo a tute le sue, camore de raso verde cum liste large quasi due dita de velluto negro, le uale se haverano a vestire a Venetia; et porta altri zoglili da darli quando saranno lì, sì che credo che de quisti la Duchessa non se troverà provista.' Bernardo Prosperi to Isabella d'Este, Ferrara, 24 May 1493. Luzio and Renier 1890b, p. 374.

[59] 'Mai si è ben arrivato qui Caradosso cum parecchij rubini et diamanti che l'ha comperato per alligar in panizole, et secundo me è decto gi ha speso ducati duemilla.' Bernardo Prosperi to Isabella d'Este, Ferrara, 24 May 1493. Luzio and Renier 1890b, p. 374.

[60] 'Non tacerò già anche a la Excellentia Vostra che passando io […] per questo frequente populo, quando ascendevamo et descendevamo dal palazo del Signor Principe, che ognuno firmava la vista verso le gioye quale io haveva sopra l'ornamento de testa et la veste del porto et in spetie sopra la puncta del dyamante quale haveva nel pecto, cum dire l'uno verso l'altro: 'e xè la mugliere del Signor Ludovico, guarda che belli balassi et puncta de dyamante ha!', Beatrice d'Este to Ludovico Sforza, Venice, May 28 1493. Ferrari 2008, p. 157.

1495) laid a claim on Milan. A highly critical passage from the *Vergier d'honneur*, an account in verse of the French expedition to Naples composed by Octovien de Saint-Gelais and André de La Vigne, describes Beatrice's looks in acrid phrases:

With him [Ludovico] came his party / who was the daughter of the Duke of Ferrara: / completely or partly in fine cloth of gold / she dressed herself willingly every day. / Chains, necklaces, brooches, gems, / as is the common saying / she had so much of it that it was devilry. / In short, the tie was of higher value than the nosegay. / Around her neck rings, jewels, collars, / and for her richly adorned head / borders of gold, devices and brocades.[61]

By comparing Beatrice's attire to a tie that is richer than the flowers it holds together, the writers claim she was actually dressed up so lavishly, that she was outshone by her own finery.[62] Though the tactic may have been unsuccessful that time, it is another example of an attempt to impress another ruler with devices, gold brocade and sumptuous jewellery and shows the key role that splendour played at the Milanese court.

2.3. Milanese fashion

An anonymous French letter, with a more positive tone of voice than the *Vergier d'honneur*, provides more detailed information about Beatrice's dress during the reception for Charles VIII:

She wore a dress of green gold brocade, and a finely worked linen shirt, and her head was adorned with a great many pearls and the hair, hanging down behind, was taken together and bound with a silk ribbon, and a headdress of crimson silk that is nothing less than ours, with five or six grey and red feathers on it.

The next day, she appeared in another outfit that was equally impressive:

She was marvellously dressed in the fashion of her country, which was a dress of green satin, of which the bodice was covered with diamonds, pearls and rubies, both at the back and the front, and the sleeves very tight, all slit in such a way that the shirt appeared. The edges of the slits were fastened with a long ribbon of grey silk hanging almost down to the ground, and her bosom was completely bare and fully encircled with large pearls, with a ruby no smaller than our *grand valloy* […][63]

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[61] Avecques luy fist venir sa partie / Qui de Ferrare fille du duc estoit: / De fin drap d'or en tout ou en partie
De jour en jour voulentiers se vestoit. / Chaînes, colliers, affiquetz, pierrerie / Ainsi qu'on dit en ung commun proverbe / Tant en avoit que c' estoit deablerie. / Brief mieulx valoit le lyen que le gerbe. / Autour du col bagues, joyaulx, carcans, / Et pour son chief de richesse estoffer / Bordures d'or, devises et brocans. Cited from: Luzio and Renier 1890b, p. 394.

[62] There seems to have been a considerable difference in the degree of ostentatious display between the French and the Italian courts. On 14 January 1510, Jacopo d'Atri, the Mantuan ambassador in France, wrote to Isabella d'Este about a planned visit by the queen of France to Italy. He warned her that the French dressed far more restrainedly than the Italians, preferring dull black or tawny-coloured fabrics over brocades, because they thought more pomp to be excessive. He added that whenever a Frenchman praised Italian fashions, he only did so to flatter. The letter is published in: Luzio and Renier 1896, p. 466-468.

[63] 'elle [avait] une robbe de drap d'or verd, et une chemise de lin ouvrée pardessus, et estoit habillée de la teste grande force de perles, et les cheveux totillez et abbatus avec un ruban de soye pendant derriere, et un chapeau de soye cramoisy fait ny plus ni moins comme les nostres, avec cinq ous six plumes grises et rouges au dit chapeau. […] Elle estoit merveilleusement gorgiaise à la mode du pays, laquelle estoit une robbe de satin verd, don't le corps estoit chargé de diamans, de perles, et de rubis, et autant derriere que devant, et les manches bien forts estroitres, toutes descoupées en telle façon que la chemise paroissoit. Estoient ces coupes attachées avec un grand ruban de soye grise pendant presque jusque en terre, et avoit

Besides the usual report on Beatrice's impressive jewellery, this letter provides us with an accurate description of several features that were typical of Milanese fashion. The first is the distinctive hairstyle in which the hair is gathered and bound with a ribbon, known as the *coazzone*, that Beatrice wore on the first day of the reception. The Galleria degli Uffizi in Florence and Christ Church Picture Gallery in Oxford still keep two nearly identical portraits of Beatrice in which the *coazzone* can be seen (figs. 68-69).[64] Beatrice's hair covers her ears and is gathered at the back in a long ponytail, covered with a piece of fabric and bound with ribbons. On the back of her head is a golden hairnet, decorated with pearls and held in place by a ribbon that runs along the forehead, called a *lenza*.[65] Beatrice is also portrayed wearing this hairstyle in an altarpiece known as the *Pala Sforzesca*, now in the Pinacoteca di Brera in Milan (fig. 70).[66]

Beatrice's green satin dress, worn on the second day of the French visit, is comparable to the one she wears in the two portraits in Florence and Oxford (figs. 68-69). The dress in the portrait has the same narrow sleeves, slit all the way down so the white linen of her shirt appears. Instead of ribbons as described in the letter, featherlike clips hold the edges of the slits together in the portrait in Florence, whereas in the Oxford portrait the slits are joined together by jewels. The sleeves are attached to the bodice with ribbons, creating a decorative effect that is characteristic of Lombard fashion.

One of the most common types of women's dress in Milan in the 1490s was known as *camora*. The word *camora* is the northern spelling variant of the Tuscan *gamurra*. Although the two had the same cut, at the courts in northern Italy a *camora* was usually far more luxurious than the simple Florentine woollen *gamurra*.[67] *Camore* were suitable for even the most festive occasions, such as the wedding of Ludovico's niece Bianca Maria Sforza, when Isabella of Aragon wore 'a *camora* of crimson satin with cords of gold thread on top'.[68] Inventories show *camore* could also be made of gold brocade, like one of 'green loop-over-loop gold brocade with silver grapes' from Bianca Maria's trousseaux (app. 4C, no. 62), or another one of gold brocade on a green ground that belonged to Chiara Sforza (app. 4A, no. 152). Besides *camora*, the more general term *veste*, or dress, was also frequently used.

The trousseau of Cecilia Gallerani, Ludovico's mistress, lists two examples of a popular type of decoration for dresses in Northern Italy: 'a *camora alistata* of black velvet and green gold brocade, with as much velvet as brocade' and 'a *camora* of taffeta *alistata* in various colours' (app. 4B, nos. 16, 25), which means both dresses were decorated with strips of cloth to achieve a striped effect. In the Brera altarpiece Beatrice d' Este appears in a golden yellow gown with a similar decoration of black and blue strips (fig. 70). The neckline of her *camora* is decorated with gems and according to Lombard fashion the sleeves are attached to the bodice with ribbons.

A second decoration motif, which also appears in Cecilia's trousseau, is the *nodi* or *groppi* pattern (app. 4B, nos. 6, 19, 20, 22). It consisted of a pattern of interlaced cords. A portrait

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la gorge toute nue, et à l'entour tout plein de perles bien fort grosses, avec un rubi qui n'est gueres moins grand que nostre grand valloy…'. Anonymous French letter to the Duchess of Bourbon. Cited from Luzio and Renier 1890b, p. 395. The 'grand valloy' must have been a precious gem, owned by the French and named for the Valois dynasty.

[64] On the identification of the sitter as Beatrice and the date of the portraits, see the section entitled 'The portrayal of splendour' of this chapter, p. 86-87.

[65] For more examples of this hairstyle, see: Gnignera 2010, p. 169-179. Gnignera erroneously considers the portrait in the Uffizi to be a likeness of Barbara Pallavicino and dates it around 1510.

[66] On the commission, date of execution of the Brera altarpiece, and the identification of the child kneeling next to Beatrice as her son Francesco, see: Covini 2008, p. 91-109.

[67] Butazzi 1977, p. 19.

[68] 'una camora de raso cremesino cum cordoni d'oro filato sopra', Beatrice d'Este to Isabella d'Este, Milan 29 December 1493. Luzio and Renier 1890b, p. 386.

attributed to Ambrogio de Predis, currently in the Pinacoteca Ambrosiana, shows a woman wearing a mantle over the shoulder with a slit decorated with *groppi* embroidered in gold (fig. 71). Another name for the motif was *fantasia dei vinci*, which can be found in a letter by Beatrice to Isabella d'Este written in November 1493. Beatrice had to think about a new dress for Bianca Maria Sforza's wedding, but being in mourning for the death of her mother Eleanor, she did not feel up to designing it herself. She asked her sister's permission to use a motif invented by the poet Niccolò da Correggio (1450-1508):

Because I do not remember whether Your Ladyship has used that *fantasia* of the motif with the *vinci* that was proposed by Mr Nicolò da Coreggio when I was with Your Ladyship, and because I would have this invention made in heavy gold to put it on a *camora* of murrey velvet, if Your Ladyship has not used it yet, to wear on the day when the illustrious Bianca marries, for my illustrious husband wants the entire court to wear colour that day and to return to black afterwards, […] I have sent this cavalier, who will return with the speed of a courier from Your Ladyship, to whom I ask not to defer and to write me immediately whether you have or have not used this *fantasia*.[69]

Isabella replied promptly that Beatrice could 'satisfy her appetite' for using the design and Beatrice had her *camora* made, which she described in a letter about the wedding festivities of 29 December 1493 to Isabella:

I was wearing a *camora* of murrey velvet, with the hem of the motif with the *vinci* of pure gold, the outer borders enamelled in white and the *vinci* with green, as is logical, which are half an arm's length high, and I had the bodice in the same way on the front and the back, and the sleeves alike with the same motifs with the *vinci*, and the *camora* had several oblique [slits] lined with cloth of gold, and I had a rope of Saint Francis on it made of large pearls, and at the end, where the button is located, I had a beautiful balas ruby without setting.[70]

The *fantasia dei vinci* motif was probably invented as an *impresa* for Isabella. Kemp explains the term 'vinci' as a word play, for it could mean 'osier', a kind of willow branch used to make baskets with the same interlaced pattern, as well as 'you win'.[71] Pedretti provides a different explanation. He believes the 'vinci' represent the bonds of love, referring to the *Divina*

[69] 'Non havendo io a memoria se la S.V. ha facto qualla fantaxia del passo cum li vincij, quale fu proposta per m. Nicolò da Corigi essendo io cum la S.V., et perchè io faria epsa fantasia d'oro masizo per reponerla sopra una camora de velluto morello, quando fosse che la S.V. non l'avesse facta, per portarla el giorno che se sposarà questa ill.ma Biancha, volendo lo ill.mo S. consorte mio che per quello giorno tutta questa corte vesti de collore et poi se torni el negro passato quello giorno, [...] et per questo ho expedito el presente cavallaro, quale vene cum la celerità de la staffetta da la S.V., la quale prego ad non tenirlo in tempo et scriverme subito se ley habia o si o no facto questa tale fantasia.' Beatrice d'Este to Isabella d'Este, Milan, 12 November 1493. Luzio and Renier 1890b, p. 382-383. It is not clear what is precisely meant with 'passo'. Here translated as 'motif', it is a word commonly used for 'step' or as an indication of a certain distance.

[70] 'io teneva indosso una camora de velluto morello, cum la balzana del passo cum li vincij d'oro masizo, smaltato la mesura de bianco et li vincij de verde, come vole la raxone, quali sono de altezza mezo brazo, medesimamente haveva a li busti de dreto et denanti, et cossi a li maneghini d'epsi passi cum li vincij, et la camora era cum alchuni sguinzi fodrata de tela d'oro, et haveva sopra uno cordone de S.to Francisco de perle grosse, et in fondo, in loco del botone, haveva uno bello balasso senza foglia.' Beatrice d'Este to Isabella d'Este, Milan, 29 December 1493. Luzio and Renier 1890b, p. 386. For Isabella's reply to Beatrice regarding the permission for the use of the motif, dated 13 November 1493, see: Luzio and Renier 1890b, p. 383.

[71] Kemp 1981, p. 187.

Commedia, where Dante writes: 'So much enamoured I became therewith, / That until then there was not anything / That e'er had fettered me with such sweet bonds (*vinci*)'.[72]

An even more sumptuously decorated dress owned by Beatrice is described by Prosperi in the same letter in which he comments on her huge wardrobe of eighty-four pieces. The dress was made of horizontal strips of cloth of gold and crimson velvet. These velvet parts were decorated with an 'almond shaped *zellosia* [lattice?] of silver thread, and where the *zollesia* [lattice?] reached the edge of the velvet, the silver threads were left hanging loose over the strips of cloth of gold, in such a way that it was very graceful'.[73] He adds that she wore the dress on the Sunday before carnival. Rosita Levi Pisetzky identified this dress as the one depicted in Beatrice's tomb by Cristoforo Solari. This dress shows the described decoration of chequered intertwined threads, ending up in tassels (fig. 66).[74]

A similar trimming was applied to the dress in the portrait of an unknown lady attributed to Bernardino de' Conti (fig. 72). The black dress is decorated with even rows of plaited fringing in gold and silver thread with alternating gold and silver pendant tassels. In her survey on lace Levey identifies the technique used to create these fringes as macramé.[75] Macramé is believed to have originated in Moorish Spain and spread through Europe from the late fifteenth century. It was a forerunner of lace, which was very costly and a true fashion novelty in the sixteenth century. Another very early reference to lace-like trimmings is recorded in a Sforza inventory of 1493: 'fringe of gold and black silk, made with bone [bobbins]'.[76] These rare examples of different types of 'pre-lace' show the interest at court for the latest luxury articles. Court fashion in Milan was not only richly adorned and expensive, but also highly exclusive.

A garment that was often combined with a beautifully decorated *camora* was the *sbernia*, a short mantle. A description written in 1494 can be found in the anonymous *Diario ferrarese*: 'And on their *camore* of silk, gold and silver, and of cloth, the women wear short mantles diagonally across the chest, slung over the shoulder in an apostolic manner, named *bernie*'.[77] This way of wearing the mantle can be seen in a miniature of the investiture of Ludovico as Duke of Milan in 1495 (fig. 73). The kneeling women in the foreground all wear *sbernie* in different colours draped over their right shoulder.[78] As can be observed in the aforementioned portrait attributed to De Predis and Leonardo's portrait of Cecilia Gallerani the *sbernia* had a vertical slit to slide the right arm through, allowing greater range of movement.[79] Milanese inventories often list *sbernie*

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[72] Pedretti 1990b, p. 83. 'Io m'innamorava tanto quinci / che 'n fino a li non fu altra cosa / che mi legasse con si dolci vinci'. Paradiso, XIV, 127-129. Translation: Alighieri 1867, p. 538.

[73] 'zellosia a mandoli d'argento filato, et poi quando bènalla fina della zollesia del velluto ze hanno lassato pendere quelle file d'argento lunge suso le liste della tela d'oro, in mò chel gè de grandissima gratia', Bernardo Prosperì to Isabella d'Este, Vigevano, 6 March 1493. Portioli 1882, p. 334. It is not clear how to precisely translate 'zellosia' and zollesia', but it must be a decoration consisting of knotted threads forming almond shapes.

[74] Levi Pisetzky 1964-69, vol. 2, p. 428, 433.

[75] Levey 1983, p. 19.

[76] 'tarneta d'oro e seda negra, facta de ossi', Bruggeman 1997, p. 35; Malaguzzi Valeri 1913-23, vol. 1, p. 211-112. For the inventory, see: Van Overloop 1934, p. 93-126, esp. no. 428.

[77] 'Et le donne suso le camore di seta, d'oro et d'argento, et di panno, […] portano li mantelli corti ad armacollo, buttandoli in spalla a la apostolica, chiamate bernie'. Cited from: Luzio and Renier 1896, p. 456. On the *sbernia*, see also Levi Pisetzky 1964-69, vol. 2, p. 255.

[78] On dress in this miniature, see: Scott 2007, p. 166.

[79] The sitter of the portrait drawing on vellum, known as *La Bella Principessa* and recently attributed to Leonardo by Martin Kemp, wears a *sbernia* as well (fig. 8). On the attribution, see: Kemp and Cotte 2010. Kemp argued that the *nodi vinciani* motif around the slit is indicative of Leonardo's authorship. However, it should be noted that it was a popular motif at the time and could have been employed by any artist.

that were beautifully decorated, like the fifteen examples owned by Cecilia Gallerani with contrasting linings, edged borders or worked in gold and silver (app. 4B, nos. 1-15).

A sole example of a full-length portrait with a height of almost 1.4 metres, now in the National Gallery in London, shows a woman in profile view dressed in the Milanese fashion (fig. 74). Unfortunately, the picture is seriously damaged, but unlike most paintings from this period it is has never been retouched.[80] Moreover, the size of the portrait gives a unique opportunity to see her garments from top to toe. The identity of the sitter is unknown, although she some regard her as Bona of Savoy because of the resemblance between the portrait and her likeness on a medal. The picture has been roughly dated to the last quarter of the century and if it represents Bona, it was most likely painted when she was Regent of Milan, between 1476 and 1480. However, as Davies noted in the 1961 catalogue of the early Italian schools, her dress suggests a later date.[81] In fact, the portrait shows the height of fashion of the 1490s.

The sitter wears a red dress with a floral pattern edged with cloth of gold along the hem of the skirt. The fullness of the skirt, especially visible in the lower abdomen where the sitter rests her hand, is probably created by a *faldia*, an underskirt stiffened with horsehair or cotton, worn underneath the dress. *Faldie* were relatively new in the 1490s and were first worn in Spain about twenty years earlier. The earliest mention in Milan is of three 'faldilie' in a trousseau of 1492 for Ippolita Sforza (1481-1520), the niece of Duke Gian Galeazzo; they are listed as 'garments made in the Spanish style'.[82] A Milanese sumptuary law forbade the wearing of this new type of undergarment in 1498, which confirms its popularity.[83]

On top of her *camora* the lady wears a shorter, sleeveless mantle consisting of the typical *liste*, strips of various fabrics in golden yellow (possibly cloth of gold), red and white. This may be a *sbernia* or another type of short garment often cited in inventories as a *mantellina*. Her sleeve is decorated with *liste* in the same manner and is attached to the bodice with ribbons. The *camicia* has been pulled out through the opening at the shoulder and slits all the way down from shoulder to wrist. Her hair is arranged in a *coazzone* and besides the *lenza* the coiffure is decorated with strings of pearls.

In her hands, the sitter holds columbines along with a highly fashionable accessory known as a *zibellino*, the pelt of a furred animal, most often sable. The first mention of the use of a *zibellino* dates from 1489, when Isabella of Aragon, Duchess of Milan until 1494, was reported

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Moreover, the motif is not confined to a strict border, as it is in works that are unquestionably Leonardo's, such as the portraits of Cecilia Gallerani and *Mona Lisa*, and the portrait in the Pinacoteca Ambrosiana attributed to Ambrogio de Predis (figs. 3, 6, 71). It is extended at the top, which is unusual for fifteenth-century embroidery motifs in Milan, which are strictly repetitive in portraiture. More alarming is the *sbernia*'s slit, which does not run vertically to accommodate movements of the arm, but horizontally, and is thus dysfunctional. I know of no fifteenth-century depictions of *sbernie* with similar dysfunctional slits. Although Leonardo did make adjustments to his sitters' dress during his Milanese years, as is discussed below, he never altered the cut of garments substantially in ways that would change or inhibit their function. Obviously, the artist lacked a thorough understanding of late fifteenth-century Milanese dress. Therefore, unless this specific detail is a later addition, the *Bella Principessa* cannot possibly be by Leonardo and must have been executed at a much later date.

[80] As far as I know, this is the only full-length portrait from Italy dating to the fifteenth century. Both its size and the canvas support are extraordinary. Examination under UV fluorescence reveals no retouches whatsoever. I thank Caroline Campbell for kindly allowing me to inspect the painting in storage at the National Gallery in London and for discussing it with me there on 8 July 2014.

[81] Davies 1961, p. 374; Baker and Henry 1994, p. 344.

[82] Ippolita's trousseau for her marriage with Alessandro Bentivoglio was published by: Santoro 1953, p. 181-182. For more examples of *faldie* in Milanese inventories, see: Butazzi 1977, p. 24. On the *faldia* in Spanish fashion, see: Anderson 1979, p. 211-212.

[83] Verga 1898, p. 65-66.

to have worn one.[84] Dating from 1497, the marble effigy of Beatrice d'Este in Certosa di Pavia, holding a *zibellino* in her hands, is the oldest, firmly dated, visual record (fig. 66).[85] *Zibellini* were still very exclusive in the 1490s, which suggests the sitter of the National Gallery portrait was a notable lady of the Milanese court.

Another feature of Milanese court dress was the use of personal devices, or *imprese*, in jewellery and textiles. Paolo Giovio explained in his *Dialogo dell'imprese militari et amorose*, published posthumously in 1555, that the popularity of wearing *imprese* on garments started after the arrival of the French king Charles VIII in Italy in 1494, whose soldiers were all wearing livery with French devices.[86] However, there are many references attesting to their popularity well before that date. Although no actual garments survive from this period, many smaller pieces of gold brocaded silks and velvets that were made for the Milanese court are still extant. A brocaded velvet in the Victoria & Albert Museum is decorated with the device of burning branches, which represent the fire of love (fig. 75). Normally buckets of water, symbolizing moderation to tame the fire, are suspended from the branches. Here they are lost, probably because they were made of sequins separately sewn on. The device appears on several items of dress. For instance in 1474 Duke Galeazzo Maria bought 1.5 *braccia* of damask brocaded with lions and branches to make sleeves, probably for his mistress Lucia Marliani. Later, in 1518, Bona Sforza (1494-1557) would receive a black dress in her trousseau for her marriage to the King of Poland 'with trunks in gold drawn wires'.[87]

A very popular motif was the *sempervivum tectorum*, an evergreen succulent plant that grows in even the harshest conditions. Francesco Sforza took the sempervivum with the motto 'Mit Zeit' (with time) initially as an emblem to symbolize his persistence as a ruler. Later on it was also used to emphasize the continuation of the dynastic line.[88] The Metropolitan Museum of Art owns a piece of brocaded velvet with the sempervivum device (fig. 76). From the branches of the plant emerge, besides the distinctive sempervivum flowers in the centre, pine cones, pomegranates and quinces, the latter being another Sforza device.[89] The device also occurs in Bianca Maria Sforza's trousseau as a decoration on a sumptuous necklace, with six balas rubies, twenty-four diamonds, six emeralds and many large and small pearls, with a total value of 9,000 ducats (app. 4C, no. 1).

Other devices were inspired by more recent political events, like the *impresa del fanale*, depicting the lighthouse of Genoa. Ludovico started using the device after his conquest of the city. Isabella d'Este described it in a letter to her husband in September 1492:

Yesterday Signor Lodovico sent the Duchesses of Milan [Isabella of Aragon], of Bari [Beatrice d'Este] and me to look at some textiles in the house of a merchant. When we returned, he asked me which I considered the finest. I said to him it seemed to me a loop-over-loop gold tissue with some silver, embroidered with one of his devices, called *el fanale* [the lighthouse], which represents the port of Genoa

[84] Letter of Giacomo Trotti, 18 February 1489, see: Dina 1921, p. 301.
[85] Sherill 2006, p. 121-122. *Zibellini* are sometimes referred to as flea furs, a name that derives from the nineteenth-century myth that the fur would attract fleas, which it does not.
[86] Caldwell 2004, p. 7-8.
[87] Milan 2009, p. 94-95.
[88] Milan 2009, p. 78-79.
[89] 'Velvet fragment with Sempervivum tectorum motif (Milan), inv. 51.139.2a,b', in: *Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History*, New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000-. http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/works-of-art/51.139.2a,b (accessed: January 2013). Several fragments of crimson pile-on-pile velvet in the Victoria & Albert Museum, London (inv. no. 593-1884) show the same design. See: Milan 2009, p. 80, cat. 8.

consisting of two towers with a motto saying: *TAL TRABALIO MES PLASES PAR THAL THESAUROS NON PERDER* [I like fatigue if it brings a treasure].[90]

Isabella excitedly reported how Ludovico praised her for her excellent taste, revealing that he had already ordered a *camora* (dress) for Beatrice made of the same fabric. This dress was later described by Prosperi in a letter to Isabella, after Beatrice wore it on the occasion of an official entry in Ferrara:

> The duchess [Beatrice] wore a *camora* of crimson taffeta embroidered with the *porto del fanale*, and on each sleeve she had two towers and two more at her back, and on each tower there was big balas ruby: further on her head she wore a cap with very large pearls like the biggest of Milady [Eleanor of Aragon], with five other very beautiful balas rubies.[91]

Besides Isabella and Beatrice, Bianca Maria Sforza also received a *camora* made of this fabric. It is listed in her trousseau as 'a camora of loop-over-loop gold brocade on a murrey ground, with the device of the *fanale'* (app. 4C, no. 61). Isabella finished the letter of September 1492 to her husband with the announcement that Ludovico gave her 15 *braccia* of the desired fabric, at the cost of no less than 600 ducats, of which she immediately had a *camora* made of her own to wear before her departure. This is a clear example of the value of these embroidered and brocaded fabrics with heraldic imagery.

3. The portrayal of splendour

The portraits painted and sculpted at the court of Milan discussed so far render the dress and jewellery of their sitters rather faithfully. Local painters and sculptors carefully followed the taste at court and depicted their renowned patrons dressed up as they prescribed. In several cases, dress and jewellery in portraits can be exactly matched with archival sources. The examples cited above are the portrait of Bianca Maria Visconti depicting the angel-shaped jewel that is recorded in her inventory and the effigy of Beatrice d'Este showing a dress that is described in a letter by Bernardo Prosperi (figs. 64, 66).

The two identical portraits in Florence and Oxford make a similar case (figs. 68-69). In both portraits the sitter wears a pearl necklace with a pendant that consists of an emerald and a ruby, both in a gold setting, and a pear shaped pearl that has been tucked into her bodice. As early as 1889, Coceva, unaware of the existence of the Oxford version, identified the Uffizi portrait as Beatrice on the basis of the sitter's physical resemblance to Beatrice's portrait bust by Gian Cristoforo.[92] Byam Shaw found further proof of this identification in a letter by Beatrice's

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[90] 'Heri il S. Ludovico mandò le Ducchesse di Milano, de Bari et me a vedere certi drappi a casa de uno mercadante. Quando fussimo ritornate, me dimandò qual me pareva più bello. Io gli dissi che 'l me pareva uno rizo soprarizo d'oro cum qualche arzento, lavorato ad una sua divisa che si dimanda el fanale, zoè el porto de Genua che sono due torre cum uno breve che dice: Tal trabalio mes plases par thal thesauros non perder'. Isabella d'Este to Francesco Gonzaga, Milan 20 September 1492. Luzio and Renier 1890b, p. 357-358.

[91] 'La duchessa vestite una camora de tabbi cremexino rachamata al porto del fanale, et supra le maniche teniva due torre per cadauna et due altre nel pecto de dreto, a le quale torre uno gran balasso per cadauna; poi in capo havea una scoffia de perle grossissime come sone le più grosse de Madama, cum altri cinque balassi bellissimi.', Bernardo Prosperi to Isabella d'Este, Ferrara 21 May 1493. Luzio and Renier 1890b, p. 373.

[92] Coceva 1889, p. 265. Coceva attributed the portrait to Lorenzo Costa and hypothesized it might have been one of the family portraits by Costa that Vasari saw in the *guardaroba* of the Este family.

mother Eleanor to Isabella d'Este, written in August 1490.[93] In this letter, Eleanor describes a necklace with a pendant that Beatrice received as a betrothal present from Ludovico, which shows a remarkable resemblance with the pendant in the portraits:

> Master Francesco da Casate, ambassador of the ill. Mr Ludovico has returned from Milan and has presented in his name to Milady the Duchess [Beatrice], your sister, a beautiful necklace with large pearls mounted in golden flowers and a beautiful jewel to attach to the said necklace, which contains a very beautiful, huge emerald and a balas ruby and a pearl in the form of a pear.[94]

The only difference between the two portraits on the one hand and the description in the letter on the other is the mount of the pearl necklace. In the portrait the golden flowers are absent. The necklace may have been changed or replaced, or more likely the painter did not have the costly jewel at his disposal in his workshop and had to work after a rough sketch in which minor details had been omitted. The similarities between the pendant depicted and the description are striking and confirm the sitter is Beatrice, wearing one of her engagement gifts.[95]

The examples show that Milanese portraitists conformed to the demands of court taste by faithfully rendering jewellery to a degree that facilitates the identification of the sitter. This is completely different from the situation in Florence, where the jewellery depicted is much more generic and the same jewel may reappear in portraits of different women. Since Milanese painters were not initially trained as goldsmiths like most of their Florentine counterparts, they would not have had workshop props or design drawings readily at their disposal in the workshop.[96] Moreover, as a member of the ducal household, a court painter was much more likely to have had access to costly pieces of jewellery than a painter receiving a single portrait commission from a Florentine citizen.

Because of the emphasis on the lifelike representation of dress and other finery, Milanese court portraiture can be seen as a means of conveying the same message of splendour and magnificence as dressing up did for public court ceremony. This is borne out by a passage from a treatise entitled *De Triumphis religione*, written in 1497 by the humanist Giovanni Sabadino degli Arienti in honour of Beatrice's father Ercole I d'Este of Ferrara. One of the chapters deals with the virtue of magnificence. Sabadino takes the reader on an imaginary walk through

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[93] Byam Shaw 1967, p. 92-93. Even after this publication, the portrait in the Galleria degli Uffizi is still often identified as Barbara Pallavicino, painted by Alessandro Araldi. Although Mina Gregori maintained this attribution in her 1994 catalogue, she acknowledged the portrait actually resembles other likenesses of Beatrice and the picture is stylistically closer to the Milanese *leonardeschi* than to Araldi, see: Gregori 1994, p. 149. McIver still identifies the sitter as Barbara Pallavicino. On the basis of the jewellery, she regards it as betrothal portrait, dating it to c. 1523, see: McIver 2008, p. 94-97. By that time, however, both the dress and hairstyle of the sitter were completely out of date.

[94] 'L'è ritornato da Milano il M.co M. Francescho da Casate, ambasciatore del Ill.mo S. Ludovico et ha presentato in nome di sua Ex. a M.a Duchessa vostra sorella una bella collana cum perle grosse ligate in fiori d'oro et un bello zoglielo da tachare a dicta collana, nel quale è uno bellissimo smiraldo de grande persona, et uno balasso et una perla in forma de pero.' Eleanor of Aragon to Isabella d'Este, Ferrara 31 August 1490. Luzio and Renier 1890a, p. 79-80.

[95] It should be noted that a portrait of an unknown woman, nowadays in the Liechtenstein Princely Collections, shows the sitter wearing a very similar pendant (Liechtenstein Museum, Vienna, inv. no. GE 935). The portrait was attributed to Bernardino Zaganelli da Cotignola early in the twentieth century by Gustav Ludwig. Although the portrait was not included in the catalogue raisonné on the Zaganelli brothers (Zama 1994), the attribution is still upheld by Kräftner 2004, p. 137. However, several details of the sitter's costume and jewellery raise too many doubts for the portrait to be further considered here.

[96] The Florentine situation is discussed in chapter 1 in the section entitled 'Workshop practice', p. 33-35.

Ercole's palace, describing the virtuous display in each and every room along the way. In one of the ducal apartments he encounters a portrait showing:

> your illustrious Lordship naturalistically portrayed, wearing a golden chain, with a very rich jewelled pendant at the chest, and on the cap a very large and a deceptively realistic oriental daisy, and with a small garter of gems of exceptional value on the left leg, which is a device [the Order of the Garter] that was bestowed upon you by his Royal Highness of England, with your Majesty wearing in regal attire […][97]

He goes on to say that the Duke usually wore this attire on solemn occasions. Hence, Sabadino discusses the portrait as an example of magnificence, precisely because the Duke's dress denoted the same in real life.

It is important to realize that the value of a portrait itself is nowhere near that of the dress and jewellery depicted in it. Margaret Scott compared the cost of dress and art in fifteenth-century Italy and concluded that 'art cost less than clothing'.[98] Leonardo, for instance, appraised his own *Virgin of the Rocks* at 100 ducats, an amount that must have been considerable to the painter, but seems trivial when measured against the hundreds of thousands of ducats spent on dress, jewellery and textiles by the Milanese dukes (fig. 12). Gold brocade was in fact so expensive that only the church and princely courts could afford serious lengths of it.[99] With a value of 600 ducats the piece of brocade Ludovico acquired for Isabella d'Este was far more expensive than a large altarpiece like the *Virgin of the Rocks*, let alone a small portrait without costly pigments and gilding.

The difference in price and appreciation is also reflected in the artisan's wage. Rembrandt Duits calculated that a skilled Florentine brocade weaver, with an annual income of 160-170 florins, earned considerably more than a painter.[100] In Milan the situation was comparable to Florence. Few art historians realize that in monetary terms a famous artist like Leonardo was valued less than an accomplished embroiderer. Estimations of Leonardo's wage range from 50 to 100 ducats a year, whereas the embroiderer Jorba was offered 200 ducats.[101] Dress and jewellery were considered more important to court life than painting. In court portraiture, it is dress therefore that plays a leading part.

A striking example of a court portrait that is all about splendid dress and dynastic honour is the aforementioned likeness of Bianca Maria Sforza's (fig. 62). It was painted by Ambrogio de Predis around the time of her marriage to the Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian I in 1493. A carnation tucked in her belt probably alludes to her betrothal.[102] For Ludovico Sforza, Bianca Maria's uncle, the alliance was of great political importance, for Maximilian was

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[97] 'la tua illustrissima Signoria naturalmente depincta, torqueato d'oro, con richissima gema pendente al pecto et in la biretta grandissima e speciosissima margarita orientale et con una picola cintura de geme ala sinistra gamba de singulare valore, chiamata Impresa, dela quale fusti munificato dal Serenissimo Re de Anglia con una regale veste de sua Maiestate [...]', Gundersheimer 1972, p. 61-62. Ercole I received the Order of the Garter in 1481 from Edward IV.

[98] Scott 2007, p. 124-125.

[99] Edler de Roover 1966, p. 262.

[100] Duits 1999, p. 65-66.

[101] On Leonardo's appointment as a court painter and his wage, see: Zöllner 2003, p. 118. On Jorba, see: Ferrari 2008, p. 46.

[102] London 2011, p. 106. David Alan Brown suggests that the portrait was painted at the request of another suitor, the Duke of Saxony. In a letter to Ludovico Sforza, dated 1 September 1492, his courtier Marchesino Stanga reports that the Duke's envoy had asked for a 'retracto colorito' of Bianca Maria. See: Boskovits and Brown 2003, p. 599. However, the presence of the carnation as well as jewellery that was part of Bianca Maria's trousseau suggests that it is a betrothal portrait.

to grant him the title 'Duke of Milan' in 1494. Bianca Maria received an enormous dowry of 400,000 gold ducats and a marvellous trousseau that included jewellery, clothing, fabrics, silverware, liturgical vestments and tapestries (app. 4C).[103]

A comparison between Bianca Maria's portrait and her inventory demonstrates that De Predis depicted existing jewellery. The inventory lists a jewel 'made in the form of a brush with the handle formed by a ruby, with an incised turquoise above, and a faceted emerald on top shaped as a heart, and the bristle of nine diamonds and five round pearls, and on the back an 'L' of diamonds' (app. 4C, no. 8). In the portrait this jewel is suspended from Bianca Maria's *lenza*. The device of the *scopetta*, or brush, was first used by Francesco Sforza and then passed on to Ludovico, who often used it on dress and textiles for various family members.[104] In this case, the complete pendant is shaped into a brush. The accompanying motto 'merito et tempore' (with merit and time) is inscribed on the scroll encircling the handle of the brush. As Venturelli noted, some of the details are lost in the painter's translation. Not all of the nine diamonds can be traced, nor the heart shape for that matter. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that this is the same jewel.[105] The depiction of this heraldic brush jewel from Bianca Maria's trousseau identifies her as a Sforza bride for the contemporary beholder.

The emphasis on Sforza lineage recurs in Bianca Maria's dress of gold brocade, decorated with the device of the *sempervivum*. The motif is shown here as three individual plants on rocky mountaintops, in a roundel on her bodice and her sleeve. The inventory lists twenty-five mule cloths embroidered with this device (app. 4C, no. 239). Although no dress with the *sempervivum* device appears in the inventory, several *camore* of gold brocade are listed, including the aforementioned example with the device of the *fanale*, the lighthouse of Genoa (app. 4C, no. 61).

The ensemble of clothes and jewellery Bianca Maria is wearing must have been very expensive. The brush-shaped pendant was appraised at 600 ducats. Unfortunately, while the value of Bianca Maria's jewellery is specified in the inventory, that of clothing is not, but the above-cited examples of gold brocade purchases suffice to give an impression of the value represented here. The golden hairnet intertwined with pearls, the pearl-studded ribbons, the jewelled belt and the pearl necklace with pendant are impressive as well. Honour, lineage and expense go hand in hand in Sforza portraiture.

4.1. Dress and decoration in *The Lady with an Ermine*

There is a vast difference between Bianca Maria Sforza's betrothal portrait by Ambrogio de Predis and Leonardo's likeness of Cecilia Gallerani (figs. 62, 3). Cecilia's dress is made of a plain red fabric, the only decoration consisting of black ribbon and gold embroidered borders. A dull blue *sbernia*, lined with yellow fabric, is slung over her left shoulder. Cecilia's hair has been gathered in a *coazzone* with a simple black *lenza*. Her head is covered with a light veil, edged with braided gold. Today the veil appears to run under her chin, but this is the result of later overpaint. Originally only a tiny lock of hair was visible, as can still be seen in a portrait of a lady

[103] Ceruti 1875, p. 53-54. Bianca Maria's trousseau is known in two versions, one Italian and the other in Latin, both of which have been published. See: Calvi 1888, p. 131-147 (Italian); Ceruti 1875, p. 60-74 (Latin). The Italian version is given in full after Calvi in app. 4C. Mary Rogers and Paola Tinagli translated the jewellery section of this inventory from Italian into English: Rogers and Tinagli 2005, p. 128-129, no. 7.14. However, their translation contains some mistakes that could have been avoided by comparing the Italian text to the Latin version. For instance, they read 'faciolo' as 'fagiolo', translating it as 'bean'. The Latin 'sudariolo' shows, however, that the compiler meant 'fazolo[etto]', meaning 'handkerchief'.
[104] Milan 2009, p. 178.
[105] Venturelli 1996b, p. 50.

painted around the same time and attributed to Ambrogio de Predis, now in the Pinacoteca Ambrosiana (fig. 71).[106] The jewellery consists of one rather simple necklace of black beads, wrapped around her neck twice. The same kind of necklace is seen in other Milanese portraits, such as the two portraits of Beatrice in Florence and Oxford, where it is combined with a second necklace with a precious pendant, a decorated *lenza* and a head brooch (figs. 68-69). The lack of other jewellery in the *Lady with an Ermine* is therefore striking.

It has sometimes been suggested that Cecilia's lesser status obliged her to dress in a more modest way. As a mistress, it is supposed, she could not afford to dress as ostentatiously as a true court lady of noble birth.[107] Evidence suggests, however, that mistresses dressed just as beautifully and richly as other court ladies. In a letter written in 1479, the Ferrarese courtier Lodovico Fiaschi described the riches of the Sforza that were shown to Ercole I d'Este of Ferrara by the Duchess of Milan, Bona of Savoy. After Ercole had admired all the jewellery, he especially requested to see the jewels belonging to Galeazzo Maria's mistress, Lucia Marliani:

> He also wanted to see those of the Countess [of Melzo], the woman kept by the Duke of Milan [Galeazzo Maria]. Mylady [Bona of Savoy] showed them with difficulty to his Lordship, but she did not want to see them herself and went into another room, and then there was very much to see. Certainly these also are beautiful and I believe they are worth more than 40,000 ducats and [there were] many and beautiful pearls.[108]

We already encountered examples of the huge number of garments made of gold brocade and other costly fabrics Galeazzo Maria had made for his mistress.[109] This letter shows that Lucia also owned a precious collection of jewellery. Like Cecilia, Lucia was not of noble birth and she was only given the titles of Countess of Melzo and Gorgonzola after she became the Duke's mistress.[110] Even though Bona of Savoy did not like it and even literally looked away from Lucia's riches, Galeazzo Maria not only dressed his mistress sumptuously, but also allowed her precious jewels to be shown to visitors.

Cecilia herself was apparently dressed equally well by Ludovico Sforza. In a letter to Ercole d'Este, Giacomo Trotti described how Beatrice had made a scene when she heard her husband was keeping a mistress. She refused to wear a dress of gold tissue that was a gift from Ludovico, because he had presented Cecilia with a similar one. In the end, Ludovico was obliged to marry off Cecilia.[111] Again, this anecdote shows that mistresses were presented with very costly garments. Even though Beatrice finally had her way, Cecilia did wear lavish attire. Therefore, her lesser status is not the sole explanation for her rather plain dress in the portrait.

A comparison between the portraits of Cecila Gallerani and Bianca Maria Sforza gains importance in the light of the existence of an inventory of the dresses Cecilia received when she married Count Bergamino (app. 4B). The final part of the inventory is lost, which means we

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[106] Bull 1992, p. 77-78.
[107] Butazzi 1998, p. 71. Also compare: Ames-Lewis 2012, p. 158, who describes Cecilia's dress as 'fittingly modest and restrained'.
[108] 'Lo Signore volse anche vedere quelle de la contessa zoè de quella femmina che tenia lo Ducha de Milano. Madona cum difichulta le mostrò alo Signore ma essa non le volse vedere che andò in un altra camara et poi ge fu da vedere assai, certo anche quelle sono bello et credo siano de valuta de più de 40 milia ducati et perle assai et belle.' Lodovico Fiaschi to Eleanor of Aragon, 25 September 1479. Malaguzzi Valeri 1913-23, p. 356-357, vol. 1, note 3.
[109] See p. 74-75 of this chapter.
[110] Lucia Marliani came from a Milanese partician's family and was actually bought from her husband by Galeazzo Maria for 8,000 ducats. See: Ettlinger 1994, p. 779.
[111] Cartwright 1905, p. 89-90.

have only an overview of Cecilia's *sbernie* and *camore*. Unfortunately, there is no record of any other garments, accessories or jewellery. The handwriting and the size of the paper correspond with other inventories from the Registri Ducali Sforzeschi, suggesting Cecilia was provided with a trousseau by the ducal household.[112]

Cecilia's wardrobe was not as sumptuous as Bianca Maria's, which was unsurpassed in affluence not only in Milan, but in all Italy. However, it was nearly on a par with the slightly earlier trousseau of Chiara Sforza, the illegitimate daughter of Galeazzo Maria Sforza, dating from 1489 (app. 4A). Cecilia's incomplete inventory lists a total of thirty-five garments (*sbernie* and *camore*) and Chiara's lists thirty-one (*mongini*, *camore*, *turche* and *mantelline*). Both ladies had several garments of gold or silver brocade at their disposal. One of Cecilia's *camore*, 'a camora of black tabby silk edges with murrey velvet all around, made with the device of the lighthouse [of Genoa]', was even decorated with a prominent Sforza device (app. 4B, no. 17). Other decorations, which can also be traced in the trousseaux of Chiara and Bianca Maria Sforza alike, include embroidered letters or numbers, flowers, strips of fabric applied to the garment and hemlines edged with contrasting fabrics. In short, Cecilia's wardrobe was certainly not inferior to those of Sforza women.

The only decoration Leonardo applied to Cecilia's dress in her portrait consists of strips of gold embroidery in a knot pattern along the sleeves, the neckline and the sides of the bodice. It is the well-known *groppi* or *fantasia dei vinci* motif. Cecilia herself owned a *camora* made of green satin that was completely decorated with *groppi* in gold thread and red and black silk. Several other *camore* and a crimson *sbernia* were decorated with black *groppi* around the hem (app. 4B, nos. 6, 19, 20, 22). Leonardo was particularly fond of the *fantasia dei vinci* motif and, being from Vinci, the pun must have appealed to him. He made many drawings of interlaced cords and frequently used the knot motif in his paintings. Vasari later scorned him for it, stating that Leonardo 'even wasted his time in making a regular design of knots so that the cord cannot be traced from one end to the other'.[113]

In Cecilia's portrait, part of the knot decoration is hidden under her blue *sbernia*. Interestingly, a photo of the panel under infrared light made in the 1950s revealed parts of the underdrawing, lightly sketched with a brush (fig. 77). Under the *sbernia* there are two parallel lines that seem to be an initial outline for the border along the neckline of the dress. The shoulder of the dress is indicated as well.[114] Very recently Pascal Cotte made LAM images of the painting that show the inner layers of the paint surface. This revealed that Leonardo not only started sketching the outlines of the dress, but also painted the complete dress including the decorative embroidery border with the *fantasia dei vinci* motif.[115] This means he added the *sbernia* only in a later phase. Also striking is the observation from the infrared reflectogram, published in 1992, that Leonardo carefully followed the dotted outlines of the cartoon for the head, eyes, nose and mouth, but that the neckline of Cecilia's gown was originally planned higher up the chest. The dots indicating the original design appear clearly above the ermine's right eye in the infrared reflectogram.[116] Syson further analysed how the asymmetrical wear of the *sbernia*, slung

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[112] Nowadays, the document is in the Biblioteca Satale di Cremona. See: Rosina 1983, p. 68.
[113] 'oltreché perse tempo fino a disegnare gruppi di corde fatti con ordine, e che da un capo seguissi tutto il resto fino a l'altro', Vasari 1966-87, vol. 4, p. 18. On the use of the *groppi* by Leonardo and his influence, see: Bambach 1991, p. 72-98.
[114] Kwiatkowski 1955, p. 15 and fig. 19; Kwiatkowski 1991, p. 39.
[115] A book entitled *Lumière on The Lady with an Ermine* by Pascal Cotte containing all results of his technical research is forthcoming and will be available very soon. I thank Pascal Cotte for bringing this to my attention.
[116] Bull 1992, p. 80, image on p. 81; Bull 1998, p. 84-85, image on p. 88.

over one shoulder, gives a slight *contrapposto* effect to the figure and at the same time creates a plain background for the head of the ermine. The *groppi* would have been too crowded to set off the animal's profile.[117] The results of technical research suggest that Leonardo indeed adapted details of the dress to suit the needs of the composition.

4.2. Spanish fashion

Notwithstanding the adjustments Leonardo made, Cecilia's outfit is still recognizable as contemporary Milanese dress as dictated at the time by Spanish fashion. Both the *coazzone* and the *sbernia* were perceived as Spanish by contemporaries, as several sources show. In the aforementioned trousseau of Ippolita Sforza, dated 1492, a distinction is made between 'garments made in the Spanish style', under which are listed *sbernie*, *camore* and *faldie*, and 'garments made in the Milanese style', that is *mongini* and *mantelline*, types of garments that were already worn earlier in the fifteenth century.[118] Tristano Calco's report of the wedding festivities of Ludovico and Beatrice in 1491 provides a further description of the Spanish fashion. After praising the splendour of dress of all persons present, which actually could not be expressed in words according to Calco, he describes the dress of the sisters Anna and Bianca Maria Sforza, Beatrice d'Este and Ludovico's illegitimate daughter Bianca:

> It is the task of the eyes only, not the ears, to perceive the entirety, of which you can say that the cloth of gold was only a minor part. All of them went in the Spanish fashion, with their bodices curved below the breasts, and the cloak according to the Gabine rite,[119] from the right shoulder drawn to the left side; and the hair was hanging gathered in a braid down the back, bejewelled with heavy pearls.[120]

The earliest mention of the Spanish style can be found in a description of the wedding festivities of Gian Galeazzo Sforza and Isabella of Aragon in 1490, by the Ferrarese ambassador Trotti. The couple got married the year before, but because the bride was still in mourning over the death of her mother at that time, the festivities had been postponed and on 13 January 1490 the famous 'festa del paradiso', staged by Bellincioni and Leonardo, took place. Trotti described Isabella as 'dressed in the Spanish style with a mantle of white silk on her dress, that was made of gold brocade with a white ground, adorned with other colours, as is the Spanish custom, edged with a large number of jewels and pearls. She was so beautiful and shiny that she seemed to be a sun.'[121]

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[117] London 2011, p. 112.
[118] 'le vestimente [...] facte alla Spagnola' and 'vestimente facte a la Milanese', Santoro 1953, p. 181-182.
[119] It is not clear to me what Calco meant by 'curved bodices'. It may have been a certain type of arch-shaped decoration applied to the bodice. The description of the cloak refers to the way Roman priests wore their toga when performing religious rites, draping it diagonally across the chest to keep their arms free, the so-called 'cinctus gabinus', named after the Roman town of Gabii. See: Scheid 2003, p. 80. Calco thus describes the practice of wearing the *sbernia* slung over one shoulder.
[120] 'Oculis ipsis, non auribus, opus est, ut ea integre percipias, quorum minor pars intextum aurum censebatur. Habitu vero omnes Hispano incedebant, falcatis infra ubera pectoribus, ac pallio ritu Gabino dextro ab humero laevum ad latus subducto: tum sparsi per terga crines, pluribus connexi in tricam, gemmati pendebant, margaritisque graves.' Cited from: Lopez 2008, p. 130, who published Calco's description in its entirety with an Italian translation. I am grateful to Cristoph Pieper for his kind assistance with the translation.
[121] 'vestita a la spagnola, con uno mantello di seta biancha sopra la zuba, quale era de brochato d'oro in campo bianco, adonixato d'altri coluri, como se costuma a l'usanza spagnola, con gran numero de zoglie et perle intorno: la quale era bella et pulita che pareva un sole', Solmi 1904, p. 83.

For a long time, many art historians have dated the *Lady with an Ermine* to c. 1483-85.[122] However, the appearance of the new fashion from Spain in the early 1490s is a reliable *terminus post quem*. On the basis of this dress historical argument, Schiaparelli was one of the first art historians to date the portrait to about 1490. He assumed the style was first worn in Naples, which was under Spanish rule from 1442. He thought the fashion was introduced in Milan then through the marriage of Gian Galeazzo Sforza and Isabella of Aragon, a Neapolitan princess, in 1489, and that of Ludovico il Moro with Beatrice d'Este in 1491, who had spent her childhood at the Aragonese court in Naples. From Milan, it would have spread throughout the region to the courts of Ferrara, Urbino and Mantua.[123]

Schiaparelli's idea had no following until Żygulski took up the argument in 1969. He maintained that Isabella and especially Beatrice were responsible for introducing the style in Milan. However, unlike Schiaparelli, he did not believe that Spanish fashion spread from Milan to the rest of Lombardy and parts of Emilia Romagna, for the earliest visual evidence of the hairstyle in Northern Italy pre-dates the marriages of 1489 and 1491. It is an altarpiece from Bologna with portraits of the Bentivoglio family by Lorenzo Costa, signed and dated August 1488 (fig. 78).[124]

Żygulski's idea has often been repeated, both in dress history literature and by Leonardo scholars, even though neither Schiaparelli nor Żygulski supported their hypotheses with visual evidence or archival sources from Naples.[125] The lack of visual sources is not the only problem with the hypothesis. It is unlikely that foreign princesses, like Isabella of Aragon, were allowed to keep wearing their native fashion. When Galeazzo Maria Sforza married Bona of Savoy in 1468, she ritually changed her French attire for Milanese dress when she reached Pavia.[126] Moreover, the references to Isabella and Beatrice wearing Spanish style dress all date from the period after their marriages. During the wedding festivities celebrated in Naples, Isabella is recorded to have been wearing Neapolitan dress.[127]

Neapolitan women's fashion in the second half of the fifteenth century is a field that is still largely unexplored.[128] There are as yet no indications that the *coazzone* and the *sbernia* were indeed worn at the Neapolitan court. A complete lack of painted portraits from Naples prevents us from establishing a visual history of Neapolitan dress.[129] Two sculpted busts of Aragonese princesses, both dating from the mid-1470s, are the only visual source for the period. The first bust has been identified as Eleanor of Aragon, Beatrice d'Este's mother, sculpted shortly before her marriage to Ercole d'Este (fig. 79). The second represents her sister Beatrice of Aragon (1457-1508), who married Matthias Corvinus of Hungary (fig. 80). Neither of the women wears

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[122] For an overview of scholars adhering to this date, see: Marani 1998, p. 81.
[123] Schiaparelli 1921, p. 135-142.
[124] Żygulski 1969, p. 3-21. The author later repeated the same arguments in: Żygulski 1991, p. 24-26.
[125] For the dress historical literature, see: Butazzi 1977, p. 24; Herald 1981, p. 193-195; Binaghi Olivari 1983, p. 642-644; Scott 2007, p. 141, 165-168; Welch 2008, p. 247-248. For the Leonardo literature, see most recently: Budapest 2009, p. 242; London 2011, p. 112; Ames-Lewis 2012, p. 158.
[126] Bona's change of garments was even the subject of a lost painting in the 'Sala delle Duchesse' in the castle of Pavia, see: Levi Pisetzky 1957, p. 726. See also Welch 2008, p. 247, esp. note 22, who cites a letter by Gian Galeazzo with the order of veils in the Lombard fashion for his bride.
[127] Dina 1921, p. 281-282.
[128] Two exceptions are: Montalto 1922, p. 58-77, who studied the dress of Isabella of Chiaromonte (1424-1465), wife of Ferrante I of Aragon (1424-1494); and Cirillo Mastrocinque 1968, p. 31-49, who devoted a chapter of her book on dress in Renaissance Naples to the fifteenth century, which however is heavily dependent on Montalto. Research is complicated by the unfortunate fact that important parts of the Neapolitan archives were destroyed during the Second World War, see: Scott 2007, p. 141.
[129] On the rarity of portraiture in Naples, see: Leone de Castris 2006, p. 84.

the distinctive Spanish style with the hair gathered in a *coazzone*. Instead, their hair has been put up in a wreath covered with a hair net.[130]

Furthermore, the only known reference to a *sbernia* in an inventory from Naples dates from 1503, several years after the style culminated in Milan.[131] In the north on the contrary, the garment is already present in the inventory of the trousseau of Elisabetta Gonzaga (1471–1526), drawn up in Mantua on 20 February 1488, for her marriage with Guidobaldo da Montefeltro (1472-1508), Duke of Urbino. No less than two luxurious examples are mentioned: 'a *sbernia* of crimson satin lined with ermines' and 'a *sbernia* of murrey fabric lined with blue silk with jewels and pearls and a flounce all round'.[132] Combined with the visual evidence of the Bentivoglio altarpiece, which is firmly dated to 1488 as well, this suggests the Spanish fashion was already prevalent in Northern Italy by that year.

With their dating of the dress worn by Cecilia Gallerani to c. 1490 on the basis of Milanese sources on the introduction of Spanish fashion, Schiaparelli and Żygulski made an important contribution to the research on the portrait. The former dating of the panel of c. 1483-85 is now commonly rejected. Nevertheless, the introduction of the new style of dress through marital connections with Naples is unlikely, because the Spanish fashion was already clearly present in Northern Italy in 1488, before these marriages took place. The slightly earlier date of 1489-90, put forward by Shell and Sironi and recently by Syson, based respectively on the sitter's biography and on stylistic grounds, is therefore perfectly in line with the sitter's dress and hairstyle.[133]

4.3. Conveying coiffures

Taking the *coazzone* as an example, Evelyn Welch recently argued that a headdress was not only a matter of fashion, but also an indication of political and diplomatic relations among court elites. Following the common view, Welch states that Beatrice introduced the *coazzone* in Milan after her marriage. In this view, she continued to wear her native style, unlike other consorts, and then imposed it on other women at court. Welch regards this as a visual sign of Beatrice's pre-eminence in the Milanese court. Her husband may not have been officially Duke of Milan yet and he may have kept a mistress, but it was she who was followed and imitated, as is shown in other portraits of prominent court ladies, such as Bianca Maria Sforza (fig. 62). Welch even regards the portrait of Cecilia Gallerani, who is wearing a *coazzone* as well, as an acknowledgement of her 'subordinate status'.[134]

Welch does not take into account that Cecilia was most likely portrayed in 1489-1490, before Beatrice's arrival in Milan in 1491. As discussed above, notwithstanding her reputation as an inventor of new fashions, Beatrice was probably not responsible for the introduction of the

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[130] Damianaki 2000, p. 68-76, 80-81. On the bust of Beatrice of Aragon, see also: Berlin / New York 2011, p. 311-313.

[131] Result of the study of a large amount of inventories ranging from the thirteenth to the sixteenth century, found in the Neapolitan archives by: Bevere 1897, p. 317.

[132] 'una sbergnia de raso cremesino fodrà di ermellini' and 'una sbergnia de pan morello fodrà de zandal turchino cum zoile et perle e una balzana intorno', Gandini 1893, p. 294. It is noteworthy that dress in Mantua and Milan were considered to be alike in the fifteenth and early sixteenth century. See: Scott 2007, p. 149-152, who cites two requests of fashion dolls from Mantua. In 1460 the Marquis of Mantua wrote to his wife that the Milanese ambassador wanted a fashion doll dressed up in the Mantuan style, even though women in Milan and Mantua wore the same fashion. Later Francis I of France requested a similar doll from Isabella d'Este. She sent him one, stating however that he would see nothing he had not seen before, because 'what we wear, the ladies in Milan wear.'

[133] Shell and Sironi 1992, p. 58; Luke Syson in: London 2011, p. 112.

[134] Welch 2008, p. 248-249.

coazzone in Milan. Moreover, Welch based her view on visual evidence only. Whether it is a sculpted bust, a panel portrait or a Milanese coin, Beatrice is indeed consistently portrayed wearing a *coazzone* (figs. 65, 68-70, 81). Written sources, however, show that she did not wear this hairstyle exclusively. Several letters record very different types of headdresses.

On 12 April 1491, just a few months after his marriage, Ludovico wrote to his sister-in-law Isabella d'Este about a stroll to Milan that Beatrice and Isabella of Aragon had undertaken. They were both wearing *pannicelli*, simple linen veils, which was not appreciated by several women they encountered:

> […] and now that they [Isabella of Aragon and Beatrice d'Este] are here in Milan, yesterday they put on *pannicelli*, or head veils, on their heads, because it was raining, to go together by foot, on the ground, accompanied by four or six ladies, to buy things that are in the city; and because it is not the custom here to wear *pannicelli*, it seems that some women were about to make egregious remarks, and my wife flamed up and started to speak egregiously to them, in such a way they thought to come to blows. Then they returned home completely soaked and tired, so they made a fine sight.[135]

In this letter, Ludovico underlines the fact that *pannicelli* are not usually worn in Milan and it must have been very strange to Milanese eyes to see two duchesses with such plain headdresses. We may have encountered a rare example of Neapolitan fashion here. In Naples, both real and fictional queens were depicted with a simple veil covering their heads. In a miniature in King Alfonso's prayer book, he and his wife are portrayed attending a mass (fig. 82). The Queen, in the right foreground, wears a plain, white cloth under her golden crown. Another miniature in a Neapolitan manuscript about the life of John the Baptist shows the saint in front of King Herod and Queen Heriodas (fig. 83). Heriodas, seated next to her husband on an elevated throne, wears only a humble *pannicelli* on her head.

A second example of a headdress other than the *coazzone* – this one much more luxurious – is described in a letter written by Giacomo Trotti in 1492, in which he reports on the festivities organized on the occasion of the May feast. During a hunting party, Beatrice, Isabella of Aragon and Ludovico's illegitimate daughter Bianca all appeared in the same green dresses and wore the same hairstyle:

> They had their hair coiffed in the French manner, with a horn (*corno*) on the head with long veils of silk. Their horns were decorated with beautiful pearls alternated with many jewels of small diamonds, rubies, emeralds and other very worthy things, which were very sumptuous and rich, but the pearls of the Duchess of Bari [Beatrice d'Este] were much larger and more beautiful than those of the Duchess of Milan [Isabella of Aragon].[136]

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[135] '[…] et essendo hora qui a Milano, se misseno heri che pioveva ad andare loro due cum quattro o sei donne per la terra a piede cum li panicelli, sive sugacapi, in testa per andare a comprare de le cose che sono per la città; et non essendo la consuetudine qui de andare cum li panicelli, pare che per alcune done gli volesse esser ditto villania, et la p.ta mia consorte se azuffò et cominciò a dirli villania a loro, per modo che se credeteno de venire a le mani. Ritornorono poi a casa tutte sguazate et strache, che facevano uno bello vedere.' Ludovico Sforza to Isabella d'Este, Milan 12 April 1491. Luzio and Renier 1890a, p. 110-111.

[136] 'haveano conza la testa alla franzese, videlicit con il corno in capo con li vilii longhi de seda, li loro corni erano guarniti de bellissime perle tramezzate con molte zoglie de diamantini, de robini, de smiraldi et altre deginissme prede ch'era una cosa sontuosa et richa, ma le perle de la Duchessa de Bari erano molto più grosse ed belle de quelle de la Duchessa de Milano', Letter from Giacomo Trotti to the Este family, Vigevano, 1 May 1492. Malaguzzi Valeri 1913-23, vol. 1, p. 558.

The French manner Trotti refers to must be the turret, a conical headdress that was often decorated with veils, worn in France and Flanders starting in the 1450s. A contemporary French writer described it as a 'chimney', stating that the younger the wearer was, the taller the chimney.[137] A fine example of a turret can be seen in the likeness of the Florentine Maria Baroncelli, who was portrayed by Memling around 1470, when her husband was in charge of the Bruges branch of the Medici bank (fig. 56).

In the case described by Trotti there is indeed a visual sign of Beatrice's stature, but it is not the emulation of a hairstyle she invented or introduced as Welch supposes, but rather the differentiation in decoration of the headdresses. Beatrice's jewels are larger and prettier than Isabella's. Trotti continues his letter with a description of the other court ladies in the entourage, who were dressed in the same manner but without jewellery. The message is clear: once again status is conveyed through splendour.

The turret was not the only type of French headgear worn in Milan. In 1492 the Milanese ambassador in Paris, Agostino Calco, described the headdress of the French queen in a letter to Ludovico il Moro. It was made of black velvet 'in the French manner, hanging behind the ears down to the shoulders, loaded with diamonds'.[138] He was referring to a rather new style of women's headgear, which consisted of a gold coif covered with a black frontlet. Queen Anne of Brittany is shown wearing this headdress in a miniature in a copy Ovid's *Heroids*, dating from 1492 or shortly after (fig. 84).[139] A very rare example of a French panel portrait, dated c. 1490-91, depicts Margaret of Austria at the age of ten (fig. 85). Margaret spent her childhood at the French court and is portrayed in French court fashion, consisting of a crimson gown lined with ermine and the same headdress with the typical black frontlet.[140] The style was very appealing to Ludovico and he requested a design of the headdress to be able to recreate the style for the Milanese ladies. His efforts seem to have been effective, for in 1493 a '*chiapparone* (an Italianised version of *chaperon*, French for headdress) of black satin' is listed in the inventory of the Milanese sisters Angela and Ippolita Sforza.[141]

These examples demonstrate that the *coazzone* was not the only type of headgear worn in Milan, as a study limited to portraiture would imply. Interestingly, two of the examples show a strong French influence. French court fashions of the fifteenth century has not received much attention from dress historians, which makes further comparison of French and Milanese styles difficult.[142] From 1500 onward, French sartorial influence in Italy is generally recognized.[143] It seems likely, however, that exchanges between at least Milan and France began earlier. Beatrice d'Este and her husband corresponded with French ambassadors and they supplied her with more fashion novelties, which she occasionally shared with her sister Isabella. In 1491 she sent Isabella 'the drawing of the rope to wrap [around the waist] which I received from France'.[144]

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[137] 'tant plus belles et jeunes elles sont, plus hautes cheminées elles ont', Pierre des Gros in *Le jardin des nobles*, cited from: Van Buren 2011, p. 319.
[138] 'alla francese pendente dietro alle orecchie et fin sulle spalle, carico de diamanti', Agostino Calco to Ludovico Sforza, Paris, 8 April 1492. Cited from: Malaguzzi Valeri 1913-23, vol. 1, p. 415.
[139] Van Buren 2011, p. 252.
[140] On the dating of portrait and the biography of the sitter, see: O'Neill 1987, p. 135.
[141] 'chiapparone de raxo negro', cited from: Levi Pisetzky 1964-69, vol. 2, p. 290. The headdress appears in fresco in the Santuario of Crea in Northern Italy, where it is worn by a female donor. See: idem, p. 269.
[142] A rather general survey of French fashion between 1461 and 1515 is given in: Evans 1952, p. 59-66.
[143] Scott 2007, p. 172.
[144] 'el desegno del cordone d'oro da cingere che m'è stato portato da Francia', Beatrice d'Este to Isabella d'Este, 1 September 1491. Ferrari 2008, p. 37. Isabella had asked for a drawing of the *cordone* in an earlier letter: 'Intendo che Hieronimo de Ziliolo portoe de Franza a la S.V. uno certo cordone da cingere.

Until now, only Spanish fashion was considered to have been a major influence on Milanese fashion in the 1490s. French styles, however, are likely to have been more important for the development of Milanese fashion in this period than previously thought and French hairstyles were worn alongside Spanish ones.

It is unlikely that these foreign styles had political significance. Maria Teresa Binaghi Olivari studied the dress in Milan between 1499 and 1512, when the French were in power. She raised the question whether there were notable differences between the supporters of the French and the Sforza allies. She had to conclude that there are hardly any indications that the different parties wore different dress and in portraiture they dressed exactly the same.[145] The high cost and the novelty of dress, both conveyors of splendour, were much more important than the adoption of the style of an allied ruler.

The *coazzone* seems to have had no specific political meaning in either court ceremony or portraiture. However, its dominant appearance in portraiture, leaving no room for other hairstyles, suggests an intentionally created court iconography that has not been noted before as such. Visually, the hairstyle works very well in profile portraits. It leaves the face free, which the French cap with the black frontlet does not, and the long braid creates yet another surface that can be decorated with ribbons and jewels. Moreover, when individuals are consistently portrayed with the same hairstyle this adds to their recognisability, which is very important for a ruler or a ruler's wife, such as Beatrice d'Este. Returning to the portrait of Cecilia Gallerani, we can assume that her hairstyle does not have any political significance and that she, and Leonardo, were simply following local fashion.

5.1. Folds and wrinkles

When comparing the portrait of Cecilia Gallerani and the *Belle Ferronnière* to the portrait of Bianca Maria Sforza, there is another difference besides the degree of ornamentation that catches the eye. The gold brocade of Bianca Maria's dress is not only decorated with an intricate pattern, it is also rather heavy and stiff. The bodice and sleeve cover the sitter's body so smoothly that not a single wrinkle can be detected. This is of course due to the fact that gold brocades like these were heavy and rigid. The wish to display the pattern of heraldic devices uninterrupted by creases may have been another consideration for the painter. The effect, as Pedretti noted, is rather like a doll enveloped in riches.[146] The same rigidity can be observed in other Milanese portraits, such as the two portraits now in Oxford and Florence representing Beatrice or the National Gallery's full-length portrait of a court lady (figs. 68-69, 74).

The representation of dress in the *Lady with an Ermine* and *Belle Ferronnière* is completely different. Instead of the rigid gold brocade, these sitters are wearing pliable fabrics that show folds and wrinkles. This interest in the depiction of drapery is typically Florentine and was an important part of the education of a painter in Quattrocento Florence. The pupil had to master the ability to convey different textures, ranging from heavy brocades and woollen cloth to the lightest veil, while respecting the volume of the figure underneath.[147]

In his *Trattato di architettura*, written between 1461 and 1464, Filarete (c. 1400-c. 1469) suggested the use of a lay figure as an aid to the painter when having to depict garments:

Pregola voglia per mio singolar contento far fare un designo de epso et madarcelo, che la me farà gran piacere.' Isabella d'Este to Beatrice d'Este, Marmirolo, 11 August 1491. Luzio and Renier 1896, p. 461.

[145] Binaghi Olivari 1979, p. 85-94.

[146] Pedretti 1990a, p. 172.

[147] Florence 1992, p. 82-82.

When you have to clothe a person, whether you wish the dress to be ancient or modern, do as I tell you. Have a little wooden figure with jointed arms, legs and neck. Then make a dress of linen in whatever fashion you choose, as if it were alive. Put it on him in the action that you wish and fix it up. If these drapes do not hang up as you wish, take melted glue and bathe the figure well. Then fix the folds as you want them and let them dry so they will be firm. If you then wish to arrange them in another way, put it in warm water and you can then change them into another form. Draw your figures in the way you want them to be dressed from this.[148]

Several Florentine painters, like Piero della Francesca, Lorenzo di Credi and Fra Bartolommeo, used this technique.[149] Vasari informs us that figurines clothed in drapery served Leonardo as well:

he [Leonardo] studied much in drawing after nature and sometimes in making models of figures in clay, and then set himself patiently to draw them on a certain kind of very fine Reims cloth, or prepared linen: and he executed them in black and white with the point of his brush, so that it was a marvel, as some of them by his hand, which I have in our book of drawings, still bear witness.[150]

A group of sixteen drapery studies on linen is still extant and is either attributed as a whole to Leonardo or to varying members of Verrocchio's workshop, including Leonardo himself, Ghirlandaio and the aforementioned Lorenzo di Credi and Fra Bartolommeo.[151] An example of a study for the drapery of a kneeling woman can be found in the collection of the British Museum (fig. 86). Although the posture of the woman suggests this might have been a study for an annunciation, it is impossible to relate it to a particular painting by Leonardo or the Verrocchio workshop. It seems primarily to have been an exercise in the study of drapery, like

[148] 'Quando n'hai a fare, fa' vestire uno in quello abito che lo vuoi fare, s'egli è moderno; e s'egli è antico, fa' come ti dirò. Fa' d'avere una figuretta di legname che sia disnodata le braccia e le gambe e ancora il collo, e poi fa'una vesta di panno lino, e con quello abito che ti piace, come se fussino d'uno vivo, e mettiglile indosso in quello che tu vuoi ch'egli stia, l'acconcia, e se que' panni non istessino come tu volessi, abbi la colla strutta, e bagnalo bene indosso a detta figura; e poi acconcia le pieghe a tuo modo, e falle seccare, e straranno poi ferme. E se poi la vuoi fare in altro modo, mettilo in acqua calda, e potra'lo rimutare in altra forma. E da questo ritrai poi le figure che tu vuoi che sieno vestite.', Filarete 1965, vol. 1, p. 315 (translation) and vol. 2, Book XXIV, f. 184v-r (facsimile).

[149] For an overview of literary sources on the use of lay figures (both with and without drapery), see: Prinz 1977, p. 204-206.

[150] 'studiò assai di ritrar di naturale, e qualche volta in far modegli di figure di terra, et adosso a quelle metteva cenci molli interrati, e poi con pazienza si metteva a ritrargli sopra a certe tele sottilissime di rensa o di panni lini adoperati, e gli lavarova di nero e bianco con la punta del penello, che era cosa miracolosa, come ancora ne fa fede alcuni che ne ho si sua mano in sul nostro libro de' disegni', Vasari 1966-87, vol. 4, p. 17. Translation: Vasari 1996, vol. 1, p. 626.

[151] Six studies of this group are now in the Musée du Louvre: *Drapery for a Standing Figure* (inv. no. RF 1081), *Drapery for a Standing Figure* (inv. no. RF 1082), *Drapery for a Kneeling Figure* (inv. no. RF 41904), *Drapery for a Seated Figure* (inv. no. RF 41905), *Drapery for a Seated Figure* (inv. no. 2255) and *Drapery for a Kneeling Figure* (inv. no. 2256). The Uffizi Gabinetto Disegni e Stampe in Florence owns three: *Drapery for a Kneeling Figure* (inv. no. 420E), *Drapery for a Standing Figure* (inv. no. 433E) and *Drapery for a Seated Figure* (inv. no. 437E). Two are in the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Rennes, both drapery studies for standing figures (inv. nos. 794.1.2506 and 794.1.2507). Two were at auction in London at Sotheby's on 9 July 2014 (lot nos. 28-29): *Drapery for a Kneeling Figure* and *Drapery for a Figure in Profile* (current whereabouts unknown). The other studies are: *Drapery for a Seated Figure*, Paris, Fondation Custodia (inv. no. 6632), *Drapery for a Kneeling Woman*, London, British Museum (inv. no. 1895,0915.489), *Drapery for a Figure in Frontal View*, Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett (inv. no. 5039). All studies have been published in: Paris 1990, p. 44-75, cats. 1-16. For an overview of the opinions of different experts regarding attribution, see: Viatte 2003, p. 114-115.

Vasari described, rather than a preparatory drawing.[152] Whether it was common practice in Verrocchio's workshop to study drapery so thoroughly or Leonardo was the only pupil to occupy himself with these drawings on linen, it is clear that he had a special interest in the subject from his early years on.

Not only did Leonardo study drapery through drawing; his ideas on the subject make up an important part of his writings as well. As early as the 1490s he began making notes for a treatise on the theory of painting, perhaps on prompted by Ludovico il Moro. After Leonardo's death, his pupil Francesco Melzi collected many of these notes in chapter four of the *Trattato della pittura*. Pedretti dated a considerable part of this chapter to around 1492, shortly after Leonardo painted Cecilia Gallerani (app. 1, nos. 2-7).[153] The study of drapery from nature is an important theme in these writings. For example, Leonardo stresses the importance of using the exact same fabric you want to draw as a model, for if you use another fabric or, even worse, materials like leather or paper, the folds will look completely different (app. 1, no. 3):[154]

How draperies should be drawn from nature: that is to say, if you want to represent woollen cloth draw the folds from that; and if it is to be silk, or fine cloth, or coarse, or of linen or of voile, vary the folds in each and do not represent dresses, as many do, from models covered with paper or thin leather which will deceive you greatly.

The importance of the awareness of different kinds of fabric and their typical ways of forming pleats, is again apparent when he writes about the depiction of garments (app. 1, no. 5):

Garments should be diversified with different kinds of folds which vary according to the kind of garment. If the fabric is thick and loosely woven, make long, thin folds, like macaroni, and if it is of medium thickness and tightly woven, make the folds smooth, with small angles.

Alberti's treatise *De pictura* (On painting), published in 1435 and translated into Italian in 1436, must have been a source of inspiration. Like Leonardo does in his notes, Alberti emphasized the importance of folds to enlivening garments. He recommended including a personification of the wind in narrative painting to justify garments being blown about:

Since by nature clothes are heavy and do not make curves at all, as they tend always to fall straight down to the ground, it is a good idea, when we wish clothing to have movement, to have in the corner of the picture the face of the West or South wind blowing between the clouds and moving all the clothing before it. The pleasing result will be that those sides of the bodies the wind strikes will appear under the covering of the clothes almost as if they were naked, since the clothes are made to adhere to the body by the force of the wind; on the other sides the clothing blown about by the wind will wave appropriately up in the air. But in this motion caused by the wind one should be careful that movements of clothing do not take place against the wind, and that they are neither too irregular nor excessive in their extent.[155]

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[152] Some art historians have tried to relate some of the Louvre drapery studies to Leonardo's *Annunciation* in the Galleria degli Uffizi (inv. no. 1618), but none of them matches the poses of Mary and the angel exactly. The unlikely suggestion has been put forward that only studies for poses that were [rejected?] have come down to us, whereas the final preparatory sketches are all lost. See: Popham 1945, p. 12.
[153] Pedretti 1964, p. 201-202; Pedretti 1977, vol. 1, p. 285-290.
[154] Although Leonardo does not specifically refer to gold brocade, probably because he is not very interested in the depiction of it, Duits discussed an interesting example of a picture by Ghirlandaio, where he obviously used a lighter fabric as a model to depict gold brocade. Duits 2008, p. 24-25.
[155] 'Iam vero cum pannos motibus aptos esse volumus, cumque natura sui panni graves et assiduo in terram cadentes omnes admodum flexiones refugiant, pulchre idcirco in pictura Zephiri aut Austri facies perflans inter nubes ad historiae angulum ponetur, qua panni omnes adversi pellantur. Ex quo gratia illa

Leonardo clearly draws upon Alberti's theory and shows the same interest in the movements and folds of textiles, but his approach is more naturalistic. Whereas Alberti stresses the decorative qualities of fluttering drapery and the possibility of depicting the nearly nude body when garments are blown against it, Leonardo is more concerned with a close observation of nature. He warns painters to be aware that between the body and a mantle there are several more layers of clothing that prevent the shape of limbs showing directly through the upper garment (app. 1, no. 4):

you surely cannot wish the cloak to be next to the flesh, for you must suppose that between the flesh and the cloak there are other garments which prevent the form of the limbs appearing distinctly through the cloak. And those limbs which you allow to be seen you must make thicker so that the other garments may appear to be under the cloak.

The argument is echoed in a slightly later paragraph, dated between 1505 and 1510 (app. 1, no. 11):

If you represent figures clothed in several garments, it should not appear that the topmost garment encloses within itself the stark bones of the figure, but covers the flesh as well, and the fabrics clothe the flesh with as much thickness as is required by the multiplication of layers. Folds of cloth that surround the body must decrease their thickness toward the extremities of the limb surrounded.

The emphasis on studying the behaviour of fabric on the body is clearly visible in the portrait of Cecilia Gallerani. Leonardo minutely observed the folds of the sleeve, created by the bending of her arm, as well as the wrinkles around the slit of her *sbernia* that are caused by Cecilia putting her arm through. The *sbernia* is depicted in a way that is very similar to what Leonardo describes in a section of the notebook MS BN 2038 entitled 'Of the nature of folds in drapery' (app. 1, no. 2):

Everything by nature tends to remain at rest. Drapery, being of equal density and thickness on its wrong side and its right, has a tendency to lie flat; therefore when you give it a fold or a plait forcing it out of its flatness, note well the result of the constraint in the part where it is most confined; and the part which is farthest from this constraint you will see the relapses most into the natural state; that is to say, lies free and flowing.

Like Alberti had done earlier, Leonardo explains here how a piece of cloth has a natural tendency to spread out in a flat manner. This means that a garment is most wrinkly at the point where it is most limited in its movements, like at the end of the slit of Cecilia's *sbernia*, and that it flows more freely the further away it is from that point. He makes a similar observation further on in the same notebook (app. 1, no. 3):

You ought not to give drapery a great confusion of many folds, but rather only introduce them where they are held by the hand or the arms; the rest you may let fall simply where it is its nature to flow; and do not let the nude forms be broken by too many details and interrupted folds.

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aderit ut quae corporum latera ventus feriat, quod panni vento ad corpus imprimantur, ea sub panni velamento prope nuda appareant. A reliquis vero lateribus panni vento agitati perapte in aera inundabunt. Sed in hac venti pulsione illud caveatur ne ulli pannorum motus contra ventum surgant, neve nimium refracti, neve nimium porrecti sint.' Alberti 1972, p. 86-87, Book II, 45.

Throughout Leonardo's notes, whether it concerns the study of water, the effect of the wind on trees or the depiction of drapery, movement receives a great deal of attention. Leonardo discerns three different varieties of draperies with their own specific movements (app. 1, no. 9):

> The draperies with which figures are clothed are of three sorts, that is, thin, thick and medium. Thin ones are lightest and liveliest in motion. Therefore when a figure is running, consider the motions of that figure, because it bends now to the right, now to the left. When it rests on the right foot, the drapery on that side rises from the foot, reflecting by its undulation the impact of the foot on the ground. At the same time, the leg behind relates in the same way to the drapery that rests upon it, while the part of the drapery in front presses, with diverse folds, upon the chest, body, thighs and legs, and all the drapery flies back from the body, except from the leg that is back. Medium draperies show less motion and thick ones almost none, unless a wind contrary to the motion of the figure aids them to move.

The observation of the effect of bending limbs and other movements on textile can also be seen in Leonardo's Milanese portraits. The dress in the earlier Florentine likeness of Ginevra de' Benci, with its rather dull surface, lacks this feature (fig. 1). In the portrait of Cecilia Gallerani however, the slight turn in the sitter's upper body is accentuated by creases in her *sbernia* (fig. 3). Although at first sight more static than Cecilia, the *Belle Ferronnière* is yet another example of how Leonardo used drapery to create the illusion of movement (fig. 4).

The attribution of the latter portrait to Leonardo has aroused a great deal of discussion, not least because of the depiction of the drapery. Wasserman judged 'the heavy stuff and the careful adagio rhythms of the ribbons and the folds along the sleeve of the garment' to be unworthy of Leonardo's mastership.[156] Béguin attributed the portrait to his pupil Boltraffio, as Kenneth Clark had done earlier in his 1939 monograph on Leonardo, although he actually thought the high quality of the ribbons was 'remarkably close to Leonardo'. In later editions, he changed his mind and rightly reattributed the *Belle Ferronière* to Leonardo.[157] Even in his best portraits, like the *Portrait of a Lady in Grey*, Boltraffio is no equal to his teacher in rendering drapery (fig. 87).[158] The ribbons are stiff and completely lack the fluttering quality of those in the *Belle Ferronnière*, and the puffs of the *camicia* are not as fluent as Leonardo's.

Today Leonardo's authorship of the *Belle Ferronnière* is undisputed and its almost sculptural quality is generally recognized.[159] Leonardo's treatment of dress certainly contributes to this quality. Larry Keith already pointed out that the graceful rendering of the sitter's face is a result of Leonardo's studies on light and dark in portraiture and that it is completely consistent with his advice to painters.[160] This is the case for the use of shadow in drapery as well, on which Leonardo wrote (app. 1, no. 10):

> The shadows lying between the folds of cloth surrounding human bodies will be the darker the more directly they are in front of the eye and opposite the concavities where such shadows are created. This applies to instances when the eye is situated in the centre, between the shadowed and the luminous sides of the aforementioned figure.

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156 Wasserman 1975, p. 166.
157 Béguin 1983, p. 81, Clark 1939, p. 52. For the later edition: Clark 1988, p. 105.
158 On this portrait, see: Morandotti and Natale 2011, p. 115-118, cat. 5.
159 On the comparison with sculpture, see: Marani 1999, p. 182-183 and London 2011, p. 126-127.
160 Keith 2011, p. 62.

In the *Belle Ferronnière* even more than in the portrait of Cecilia Gallerani, he made use of these *chiaroscuro* effects in the drapery. The medium heavy fabric of the sitter's sleeve shows big creases, deepened by dark shadows and enlivened with little highlights on top of the gold ribbons.

Another element from Leonardo's studies that reverberates in the *Belle Ferronnière* is the careful distinction between different textiles and the way they form pleats. The more heavy fabric of the dress creates a visually intriguing contrast with the lighter, puffed up linen of the *camicia* at the shoulder and the wrinkly ribbons are a playful addition. Infrared reflectography has revealed that one of the ribbons protruding from the right shoulder was not planned from the start. It is a slightly later addition, painted over the dark background.[161] If Leonardo added this detail himself, he may have done so to increase the suggestion of movement through thin drapery.

It is clear that Leonardo adjusted the rigid court fashions in favour of the suppleness of fabrics. His point of departure was contemporary fashion but rather than rendering court dress in all its magnificence and detail, he omitted details that could disturb the composition. Discussing dress in Cecilia Gallerani's portrait, Syson noted for instance that Leonardo did not include the knot of Cecilia's head veil under her chin that still appears in the underdrawing and was made visible through infrared reflectography.[162] Similarly, the infrared reflectogram of the *Belle Ferronnière* shows underdrawing for what was possibly a dress ornament that was not carried out in the final version.[163]

Leonardo did not avoid the use of gold brocade only in his portraits. According to the contract for the *Virgin of the Rocks*, drawn up in 1483, Leonardo and the De Predis brothers were to dress the Virgin Mary in a cloak of red gold brocade with a lining of green gold brocade and a *camora* of the same fabric in blue painted with ultramarine.[164] The use of gold fabric must have been particularly important to the confraternity that ordered the painting, for it is among the very first stipulations of the contract. However, both versions of the altarpiece, now in the Louvre and the National Gallery, show Mary in plain drapery (figs. 12-13). Leonardo apparently preferred the play of light and shade created by the folds of a monochrome textile to a highly decorated fabric.

Comparison to Milanese court portraiture and inventories has shown that Leonardo replaced the heavy gold brocades with a lighter material, omitted parts of the ornamentation such as embroidered surfaces or borders, and included only a severely limited number of pieces of jewellery. This dates back to his time in Verrocchio's Florentine workshop, where Leonardo came into contact with ideas on beauty and plainness.[165] It was there that he also began studying drapery, which remained an important theme in his art theory throughout his life.[166] Although Leonardo does not portray the dress and jewellery owned by his sitters as naturalistically as other court painters, his focus on the sitter's face and his preference for lighter fabrics, revealing a body underneath through folds and creases, add to the beholder's sense of seeing a living person. This makes other Milanese court portraits, such as the profile of Bianca Maria Sforza, seem stiff and old fashioned. It is no coincidence that prominent art historians such as John

[161] Ravaud and Eveno 2014, p. 131, without specifying which of the two ribbons is the later addition.
[162] London 2011, p. 113.
[163] Ravaud and Eveno 2014, p. 131.
[164] 'Item la nostra donna nel mezzo. sia la vesta . de sopra. brocato doro azurlo tramarino / Item la camora brocato doro de lacha fina in cremisi. a olio / Item de la fodra dela vesta brocato doro verde a olio'. The contract has been published in extenso by Glasser 1977, p. 328-343.
[165] See chapter 2, the section entitled 'The poetics of plain dress', p. 60-65.
[166] The subject of drapery in Leonardo's later writings is discussed in chapter 5, p. 156-157.

Pope Hennessy and Cecil Gould regarded the *Lady with an Ermine* respectively as the first psychological portrait and the first modern portrait.[167] Or, as Leonardo put it himself: 'Draperies that clothe figures should show that they cover living figures' (app. 1, no. 15).

5.2. Dating the dress in the *Belle Ferronnière*

The previous section explained that Leonardo adjusted the rigid and formal court dress in his portraits. This obviously means that some restraint is required when dating these portraits on the basis of dress history. The results of technical analysis, such as underdrawing and alterations to dress, are in Leonardo's case an indispensable aid in dating the sitter's attire as accurately as possible. This can be beautifully illustrated in the case of the *Belle Ferronnière* (fig. 4). Technical analysis of the painting is being carried out at present, but some results have already been published, which allows me to draw some preliminary conclusions on the dating here.[168]

An infrared reflectogram of the *Belle Ferronnière* has revealed the presence of pouncing marks around the eyes, nose and jaw.[169] Other lines, including the dress, were drawn free hand. The underdrawing also showed several modifications. The necklaces, which now fit rather tightly around the sitter's neck, reached a bit further down the chest, whereas the neckline was higher and narrower (fig. 88). As mentioned earlier, the presence of multiple horizontal lines suggests an elaborate ornament low on the chest. Finally, and most importantly for the painting's dating, is the observation that the underdrawing of the left sleeve reveals a narrower shape.

Many art historians have dated the *Belle Ferronnière* to c. 1495-1499. The sitter's dress, however, suggests an earlier date. In 1983 Teresa Binaghi Olivari noted the close resemblance of the *Belle Ferronnière*'s hairstyle, the way the *camicia* is pulled through slits at the armhole and the long silk ribbons to donor portraits on altarpieces dated to c. 1493-1494.[170] Although she admitted that the *Belle Ferronnière* has to be very close in date, she adhered to a date of c. 1496-1500, as favoured by most art historians at that time. However, the recent discovery of the underdrawing showing a tight-fitting sleeve, effectively rules out a date around 1500.

Tight sleeves were very fashionable in the first half of the 1490s. Examples are Ambrogio de Predis' portrait of Bianca Maria Sforza, painted in 1493, and Beatrice's donor portrait in the Brera altarpiece, securely dated to c. 1494-1495 (figs. 62, 70). In 1494 Beatrice was also described as wearing 'very tight sleeves' in a letter by an anonymous Frenchman who attended the reception of Charles VIII of France in Asti.[171] Towards the end of the century, tight-fitting sleeves were replaced by wider models.[172] The *Portrait of a Woman*, attributed to Bernardino de' Conti and dated around 1500, and Boltraffio's Portrait of a Lady in Grey, dated c. 1498-1500, provide an accurate image (figs. 72, 87).f It is typical of Leonardo to have transformed the fashionable tight sleeve of his sitter into a wider model, because it allowed him to elaborate the circular pleats of the fabric around the upper arm. When taken at face value, the

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[167] Pope-Hennessy 1966, p. 108-109; Gould 1975, p. 73. Although neither of them paid any attention to dress and drapery, they both recognized the life-like quality of the figure.
[168] Pascal Cotte of Lumière Technology is planning a publication on the results of technical research on the *Belle Ferronnière* in 2016 or 2017.
[169] Unfortunately, only a small part of the infrared reflectogram has been published, which means I rely here on the comments of Elisabeth Ravaud and Myriam Eveno, published in: Ravaud and Eveno 2014, p. 131.
[170] Her main comparison is an altarpiece, known as the *Madonna delle rose*, by Bernardo Zenale (Oleggio, Museo d'arte religiosa). Binaghi Olivari 1983, p. 650.
[171] See p. 80-81 of this chapter, note 63.
[172] See: Butazzi 1983, p. 59.

wide sleeve suggests a slightly later date for the costume. The underdrawing, however, seems to confirm Binaghi Olivari's suggested date of c. 1493-1494, which coincides with the date that Luke Syson proposed on stylistic grounds.[173]

An early date for the *Belle Ferronnière* has implications for the identification of the sitter. Lucrezia Crivelli became Ludovico's mistress in 1495. Although it cannot be said with absolute certainty that the painting was executed around that time, especially without the visual evidence of an infrared reflectogram, it is not very likely that the portrait represents Lucrezia. The evidence now suggests that Beatrice is the most likely sitter. The physiognomic resemblance to Gian Cristoforo Romano's Louvre bust and to her effigy in Certosa di Pavia as well as the early date point to her (figs. 65-66). Further technical research, especially on the dress ornamentation revealed in the infrared reflectogram, could facilitate a more definite conclusion on this issue.

Several details make the *Belle Ferronnière*'s dress slightly more luxurious than Cecilia Gallerani's, an indication that the sitter is of higher rank (fig. 3). The sitter's bodice is decorated with a pattern of gold strips, a belt accentuating the waistline is just visible behind the parapet, and her *lenza* is adorned with a jewel (fig. 4). Leonardo also paid considerable attention to the rendering of the embroidered band along the neckline. Whereas the embroidered *fantasia dei vinci* motif on the bodice, neckline and sleeve of Cecilia Gallerani's garment are simply interlaced lines, the palmette border of the *Belle Ferronnière* is painted in a far more illusionistic way, showing twisted gold cord and suggesting the thickness of the embroidery stitches. This does not necessarily mean that the embroidered decoration was painted from life and the portrait as a consequence shows the sitter's own dress. Leonardo had already used the very same palmette motif as a border on the blue overgown of his *Madonna of the Carnation* (fig. 10). These palmettes therefore seem to be one of his stock motifs for decoration, similar to the *fantasia dei vinci*. Notwithstanding the slightly more sumptuous ornamentation of the *Belle Ferronnière* in comparison to Leonardo's earlier portraits, the sitter's dress is still a far cry from Milanese courtly attire. If the sitter is indeed Beatrice, her apparel is astonishingly simple for a duchess, especially for one so interested in fashion. It shows that Leonardo adhered to his vision of female beauty even when portraying sitters of the highest rank.

6.1. Leonardo and personal adornment

In his writings on painting, Leonardo argued against depicting rich ornamentation. As my research has shown thus far, he applied this idea to the portraits he painted, adjusting sumptuous court dress accordingly, and to religious paintings such as the *Virgin of the Rocks*, in which he omitted the requested gold brocaded fabrics. In the literature on dress history, however, Leonardo's recommendations are usually not regarded as a theory on painting, but rather as advice on how to dress properly, placed against the background of religious attacks on ostentatious dress.[174] Did he truly advocate dressing down as an ethical principle with implications beyond the artistic?

It is highly unlikely that Leonardo was inspired by any moral condemnation of lavish dress. As in any other time or place, in fifteenth-century Italy voices against ostentatious dress were heard, especially in a religious context. Preachers like Bernardino of Siena and, towards the end of the century, Girolamo Savonarola condemned extravagant dress and display.[175] However,

[173] Luke Syson in: London 2011, p. 123.
[174] Herald 1981, p. 158 and Gnignera 2010, p. 195 both discuss Leonardo's ideas in relation to religious condemnations of cosmetics and finery by people like Savonarola.
[175] On preaching against women's vanities in Italy and its rather limited effect, see: Izbicki 1989, p. 211-234.

they represent only a small minority and their ideas did not permeate society as a whole. Like his contemporaries, Leonardo had nothing against dressing in rich attire. Bernardo Vecchietti described Leonardo as a very handsome man, wearing 'a rose-coloured cloak which came only to his knees, although at the time long vestments were the custom; a beautiful head of hair down to middle of his breast, in ringlets and well arranged.'[176] Leonardo's cloak must have been rather costly, since rose colour was produced from kermes, the most expensive of dyes. From this description a picture emerges of a somewhat vain man, carefully coiffed and clad in extravagant clothes, and having no fear of the limelight.[177]

Leonardo considered it an advantage that a painter, unlike a sculptor, could dress beautifully even when at work. Discussing the different natures of painting and sculpting, he described how painting is mainly a mental exercise, whereas sculpting is physical and dirty. In Leonardo's opinion, the sculptor is always dusty like a baker because of his manual labour and he has to work in a dirty and noisy workshop. The painter on the other hand works in a completely different way, 'because the painter sits in front of his work at great ease, well-dressed and wielding the lightest brush with charming colours. His clothing is ornamented according to his pleasure, and his house is filled with charming paintings, and clean […]'.[178] *Fare bella figura* was unmistakably of great importance to Leonardo.

Leonardo's purchases of cloth and haberdasheries for new clothes for his pupil Salaì reveal the same love of finery. For fifteen *lire* and four *soldi* he bought four *braccia* of silver tissue for a cloak. He spent another nine *lire* on green velvet to trim it and also bought ribbons and little rings to decorate it (app. 2A). Even more was spent on a pair of rose-coloured hose for Salaì, which cost three gold ducats (app. 2B). It was quite common for a master to pay for his apprentice's clothing as a form of salary, but usually the amount spent would not allow the apprentice to dress as sumptuously as Salaì did. In December 1453, for instance, the Florentine painter Neri di Bicci noted in his *ricordanze* the acquisition of 'seven *braccia* of green-brown [cloth] to make a cloak for Cosimo who is learning the art of painting with me'.[179] Cosimo's cheap brownish cloak makes a huge contrast to the silver one Salaì received from his master.

Not only did Leonardo dress himself and his apprentices well, he also made several designs for fancy costume and fashionable accessories, like a pendant, a belt buckle and a bag (figs. 89-91).[180] The drawing of the pendant, formerly in the Christ Church Collection in Oxford but now unfortunately lost, is an example of the popular *groppi* or *fantasia dei vinci* motif. The

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[176] 'un pitoccho rosato, corto sino al ginocchio, che allora s'usavano i vestiri lunghi; aveva sino al mezzo in petto una bella capellaia, et inanellata, et ben composta.' Von Fabriczy 1893, p. 90. Translation by Martin Clayton in: London 2002, p. 110, 158.

[177] On the basis of the expenditure on dress Leonardo listed in his notebooks (see: app. 2C), Monnas argued that he, like other Florentine painters, dressed rather modestly. Monnas 2009, p. 34-35. Being in court service, however, Leonardo would have regularly received dress fabric for garments from the ducal wardrobe, as Ambrogio de Predis did earlier (see note 8 of this chapter). For more examples of artists being supplied with dress by the court, see: Warnke 1985, p. 164-166.

[178] 'imperoché 'l pittore con grand aggio siede dinanzi alla sua opera ben vestito et move il levissimo penello con li vaghi colori, et ornato di vestimenti come a lui paice, et l'habbitataziobe sua piena di vaghe pitture, et pulita [...]', Transcription and translation: Farago 1992, p. 256-257, no. 36, lines 16-21.

[179] 'bracc[i] sette di verde bruno per fare 1° mantello a Chosimo istà mecho a dipigniere', 7 December 1453. Cited from: Bicci 1976, p. 9-10. Translation: Thomas 1995, p. 78-79. See also: Monnas 2009, p. 330-331 for an overview of all of Neri Bicci's purchases of cloth. Neri di Bicci was not a high-end painter like Leonardo and his prices were lower than his contemporaries, but his business was very successful and he was one of the richest Florentine painters, as evinced by his tax declaration of 1480. See: Holmes 2003, p. 214.

[180] Venturelli 1994, p. 113. On Leonardo's activities as a designer of court spectacles, see also: Perissa Torrini 2013, p. 200-209.

motif appears several times in other designs by Leonardo, for instance in the description of a costume for dressing up for a carnival, written in 1497:

A costume for the carnival / To make a beautiful costume take a supple cloth and give it an odoriferous varnish, made of oil of turpentine and of varnish; ingrain and glue with a pierced stencil, which must be wetted, that it may not stick to the cloth; and this stencil may be made in a pattern of knots which afterwards may be filled up with black and the ground with white millet.[181]

In this regard, four drawings of fancy dress in the Royal Collection are interesting as well (figs. 92-95). They show masquerade costumes that are elaborately decorated with ribbons, dagged edges and intricate patterns, exactly those ornaments that Leonardo disapproved of in his writings (app. 1, no. 8).[182]

Notwithstanding his own recommendation to avoid ornamentation and dress figures plainly in pictures, Leonardo himself dressed nicely and more than once designed accessories and costumes for court events. A clear distinction should be made between his ideas on dress in painting and dress in his personal life. To Leonardo it was important that a picture's aesthetic value be preserved through time, hence his advice to painters to avoid excessive ornamentation and the fads of their own day. In his daily life, however, he dressed as elegantly, or perhaps even more elegantly, as any his contemporaries.

6.2. Dress and decorum

This chapter has compared Milanese court fashion and portraiture with Leonardo's depiction of dress in the *Lady with an Ermine* and the *Belle Ferronnière*. Milanese sources unmistakably reveal the importance of lavish dress and splendour at court, which permeated court portraiture. Leonardo, however, portrayed his sitters in decidedly plain dress, breaking away from the heavy and stiff court fashions and parting with the rigid profile view formula. Notwithstanding Leonardo's adjustments to garments and accessories, dress history has proven to be of crucial help in dating both Milanese portraits more precisely, especially when taking into account the results of scientific examination of the paintings.

Although the depiction of dress in Leonardo's Milanese portraits echoes his theory, in which the study of drapery from nature occupies a central place, there is one other important element at play here. The issue of decorum in painting is illustrated both by Alberti and Leonardo himself through a dress example. Alberti writes:

Everything should also conform to a certain dignity. It is not suitable for Venus or Minerva to be dressed in military cloaks; and it would be improper for you to dress Jupiter or Mars in women's clothes. The early painters took care when representing Castor and Pollux so that, though they looked like twins, you could tell one was a fighter and the other very agile. They also made Vulcan's limp show beneath his clothing, so great was their attention to representing what was necessary according to function, kind and dignity.[183]

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[181] 'Vesta da carnovale / Per fare vna bella veste togli tela sottile e dale vernice odorrifera, fatta da olio di tremētina e vernice; ingrana e ī colla stanpa traforata e bagnata, acciò nō si appicchi, e questa stāpa sia fatta a gruppi, i quali poi siē riēpivti di miglio nero e 'l cāpo di miglio biāco.' Paris I f. 49v; Transcription and translation: Richter no. 704.

[182] On the dating of the drawings and the events they might relate to, see: Clark and Pedretti 1968-69, p. 111-112. Leonardo's disapproval of garments with dagged edges in painting is discussed more extensively in chapter 5, p. 164-166.

[183] 'Tum et pro dignitate omnia subsequantur oportet. Nam Venerem aut Minervam saga indutam esse minime convenit. Iovem aut Martem veste muliebri indecenter vestires. Castorem et Pollucem prisci

Leonardo's remarks on decorum derive from the same tradition. He instructs painters, according to the standards of his days, to 'observe decorum in clothing your figures according to their station and their age', (app. 1, no. 19), and elsewhere he adds (app. 1, no. 8):

> The garments of figures should be in keeping with age and decorum; that is an old man should wear a long robe and a young man should be adorned with a garment which does not extend above the shoulders, except for those who have professed religion.

Like other fifteenth-century writers, Leonardo stressed the importance of dressing figures in a way appropriate to their status. As we have seen, in the Renaissance status and displays of riches, especially involving dress and jewellery, were inextricably bound up with each other. Beatrice d'Este was publicly criticized for wearing a headdress that was considered too modest. A duchess was expected to dress like a duchess. Ostentatious personal adornment was essential to court life as a primary means of social differentiation, in Milan even more so than at other Italian courts.

One wonders why a courtly patron, for whom luxury was crucial to his status and identity, would accept Leonardo's depiction of a sitter in relatively plain dress. Unfortunately we lack the sources to answer this question in the cases of the *Lady with an Ermine* and the *Belle Ferronnière*. In the winter of 1499, however, Leonardo left Milan for Mantua, where he would draw the portrait of one the most renowned Renaissance patrons, Isabella d'Este. The letters she exchanged with artists who worked for her, including Leonardo, have survived. The next chapter explores Isabella's relationship with Leonardo and formulates an answer to the question why even she accepted being portrayed without the jewellery and finery that were so crucial to her status.

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pictores pingendo curabant ut, cum gemelli viderentur, in altero tamen pugilem naturam, in altero agilitatem discerneres. Tum et Vulcano claudicandi vitium apparere sub vestibus volebant, tantum illis erat studium pro officio, specie et dignitate quod oportet exprimere.' Alberti 1972, p. 76-77, Book II, 38.