Women during the Italian Renaissance: stereotypes vs. realities

Leslie K. Credit

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Women During the Italian Renaissance: Stereotypes vs. Realities

A Senior Thesis Submitted to The Faculty of the History Department In Candidacy for the Degree of Bachelor of the Arts

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The Stereotypes for Women's Behavior

Life in the fifteenth century was based upon conviction; strong convictions that facilitated the creation of structures in society. For women this meant strict limitations upon acceptable behavior; it was practically impossible for a woman to establish her independence. In Florence, birth place of the cultural and intellectual renaissance and home to the liberal philosophies of the Neoplatonic Academy, women were still expected to fit into the one mold suitable for her description. Women were seen and believed by their male counterparts to be the weaker sex- both mentally and physically- and therefore submissive to the more dominant male. Philosophers, academics, and public leaders supported the common beliefs with research and documentation that justified them. The actual women of the day, however, contradicted the professed norms of faintheartedness, fragility, and ignorance. Many aristocratic women held positions of responsibility within the family and were highly visible in the community. Women such as Isabella d'Este, Veronica Gambara, and Vittoria Colonna were respected and praised by their peers for their achievements both inside and outside of the home. These women campaigned against the stereotypes that limited them into the role of the timid, obedient woman dependent upon the man for her livelihood. Their success began the change that allowed more women to assert their independence.

The stereotypes of how women should behave cover all aspects of their lives. Renaissance men wrote treatises on how the household should be run, how women should dress and look, and what activities were acceptable for a woman to pursue.
"The numerous moral treatises addressed to the medieval woman reflect her condition and character and the trend of her mental activities, as well as the solicitude of her spiritual guides."¹ These texts stem directly from the belief that women were the property of men and the family, and that through her marriage all could benefit. This view exists mainly in the upper classes, but many of the same attitudes towards women and their place trickled down to the lower class males where the ideas took root and strengthened themselves. Generally, women were regarded as "incomplete creatures who required male guidance"². Women needed a male influence in their lives, this was not a frequently argued point, as most men were in agreement about the inferior status of women. "Rational men possessed [the] ability to govern subject women for the good of all society, where women would serve as helpmate to husband-lords as wives and mothers of their children"³.

The roles a woman could fill were two, she could be angelic like the Virgin or a seductress and harbinger of trouble like Eve. The images of the two opposite roles for


³Ibid, pg. 76. Italics added are mine, I feel that the 'their' indicates an emphasis upon the children being the possession of the father, not as an indication of both parties having an equal role in the creation, the raising, or in receiving praise for the grown children. Actual names confirm this, a typical name: Lorenzo di Piero di Cosimo de Medici, or, Lorenzo of Piero of Cosimo of the family Medici. The possessive case of Italian is used in the names of the children, they are of their fathers.
women were portrayed in the art and literature of the day. A woman would have
desired to be compared to the positive image of the Virgin and a strict code of behavior
had to be followed in order to achieve this status. The Virgin "was a unique, perfect
woman, she possessed qualities that could be - or should be ideally- emulated. She
was obedient to God, she respected and trusted her earthly husband, she tenderly
cared for and nurtured her child." Furthermore, a woman had to be virtuous, and
chaste, physically desiring only her husband. She should care about her appearance
and desire to be attractive to her husband, although her toilet should never include the
use of such disguises as make-up. Her education prior to marriage included reading,
writing, and logic, but all were taken from religious materials in order to educate her
with the proper morals, which later would help her to abstain from the temptations of
the flesh. A good wife ran her household efficiently and wisely, unafraid to take full
control in the absence of her husband. Children were her responsibility, and she was
to teach them to be pious and to possess sound morals. In all of her duties, never
should she let her emotions carry her away from making sensible decisions. Overall, a
woman should act rationally, and use her mind to the best of her ability (believed to be
very slight) and to avoid frivolity and foolishness. If she did not fulfill these criteria, a
woman could never attain the lofty, saintly status desired of her by her male
contemporaries, and she was labeled a bad wife and mother her virtue questioned.

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On the other end of the spectrum was Eve, whom most men feared and regarded as the downfall of the human race. A woman who took control of her life and made her own decisions was feared in the community. She presented a threat because she did not have a man to keep her from straying off of the virtuous path she was to follow. That a Renaissance woman could possess strength and persevere was not believed. Previous women who committed acts of strength and demonstrated their possession of male traits, were identified as acting for their country. Judith and Holofernes, a classical tale of a woman acting of her own accordance, represented an underdog battling a giant, not unlike David and Goliath. This was never read from the woman's point of view- a woman revolting against an oppressive husband. Donatello's statue *Judith and Holofernes* shows a woman with little physical structure, subduing and about to decapitate a full grown man. The act is not seen as one of women, but more divine and nationally oriented, making Judith masculine.

The male-based society of Florence created these extreme roles to compensate for the ills of a patriarchal society; "The mechanisms by which a society proves its own innocence by reinforcing the image of insensitive and destructive female."6 Women were denied the roles naturally attributed to them, and the roles they actually filled because these labels would expose the malice within society; the hypocrisy of honor and the lack of emotion. Therefore, women could not nurture, but they had to represent the destructive force present in society, man's temptation, because it took the blame away from the male, who in his perfection dominated society.

The attitudes of the wealthier classes are easy to document, as they were more prolific writers and the physical evidence of documents, letters, and personal effects are abundant and easy to find. For this reason this paper focuses upon three women from this class: Isabella d'Este, Veronica Gambara, and Vittoria Colonna. Their wealth provided them with more opportunities to excel in areas not usually open to women, for wealth seems to increase the tolerance of new ideas regarding women. It is in these circles that some of the more liberal opinions concerning women are found; specifically Baldassare Castiglione, a member of the highly intellectual court of Urbino and contemporary of the three aforementioned women. These aristocratic scholars regarded women as capable of performing more than what was ordinarily expected of them; they gave women more responsibility and lent more credence to the opinions of women. If women had been unable to achieve beyond what was expected, it is possible that they would neither have been so admired, nor taken so seriously by the men in their circles. These women furthered the opinions of their entire sex by contesting the stereotypes and pushing the limits of acceptable behavior. Their dynamism was admired by their intellectual contemporaries.

Women living in Quattrocento Florence assumed many deviant roles and responsibilities that required a much more active role than the literati of the time prescribed for the female sex. Wives of important dignitaries and soldiers were frequently left in complete charge of their husbands' estate and affairs. Widows were also in charge of the inheritances of their children. Rarely, however, did a woman simply have control over her life without at least once being under the wing of a man, her father, brother, husband, uncle, godfather, or priest, if she were a nun.
Three women, Vittoria Colonna, Veronica Gambara, and Isabella d'Este, pushed these roles beyond the limits and exercised these liberties even during their husbands presence. They expressed their minds: they philosophized; they created art; they perpetuated culture; they were a moving force in the Renaissance society. Women passed down the social customs which are now taken for granted—table manners and the use of the fork—through their influence in the household. Through their feminine insights we are able to understand the non-political side of life. Through these heart to heart communications, too, these women became unconsciously the historians of their generation. Family joys and cares, social and political events, personal experiences and longings, all find a place here amidst the more serious business of life.

The stereotypes of women existed in the early days of the Renaissance, beginning with Leon Battista Alberti. Alberti wrote *Della Famiglia*, which explicitly defined the male expectations of women in the early fifteenth century. Alberti begins his explanation of society by thoroughly dissecting the roles of men and women in

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7 Beard, Mary R. *Woman: As a Force in History- A Study in Traditions and Realities*. Macmillan Co., New York, NY 1946, pg. 230. Beard argues that women in fact were the instructors of the habits and manners that we take for granted and fail to consider how we actually know how to do. This is a modern evaluation of what and how it is learned. This is despite the physical writings on manners and mannerisms by Castiglione, della Casa, and Alberti who contend that the male plays the more important role in the teaching of daily manners and etiquette. Beard supports the view that women by authority of their position in the household, had a large impact on deciding culture. As women, especially women of property, were responsible not only for the education of their offspring, but also for the cultural education of those non-blood relations present in the household, i.e. servants. In this manner, items of culture and manners would be assimilated into all economic strata.

8 Cannon, M.A., pg. 15.
In his view, there were two distinct and separate spheres of life, men could easily float between the two, while women were stationary in the one.

...men by nature are of a more elevated mind than women. They are more suited to struggle with arms and with cunning against the misfortunes which afflict country, religion, and one's own children. The character of men is stronger than that of women and can bear the attacks of enemies better, can stand strain longer, is more constant under stress. Therefore men have the freedom to travel with honor in foreign lands acquiring and gathering the goods of fortune. Women, on the other hand, are almost all timid by nature, soft, slow, and therefore more useful when they sit still and watch over our things. It is as though nature thus provided for our well-being, arranging for men to bring things home and for women to guard them.9

Alberti's position stands firm in its belief that women belonged in the home, while men were free to roam about experiencing the world and interacting with others.

One can clearly see the bi-polar world of Alberti. There is a definite association between women/household/private that contrasts with the men/business/public. Men were to dabble in the affairs of the house only long enough to train the wife properly in how to run the household in a wise and dignified manner, and so then she might use her best judgment to overcome any obstacles to continue along efficiently. The husband was to instruct her with methods of kindness and goodwill, neither beating nor threatening her.10 In teaching his wife to act accordingly, the man could garner the respect of his peers, as her actions are a direct reflection of him. "It would hardly win us respect if our wife busied herself among the men in the marketplace, out in the

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9Alberti, pg. 207-208.

10Ibid, pg. 216.
Almost all women were forced into this submissive position because of their economic immobility. Without the ability to acquire personal wealth, a woman was dependent upon a stable male wage-earner. In the few rare cases of women who as executrices of large fortunes were in financial control of their lives, they tended to use the money in a manner that would most benefit the entire family. This perpetuated their role as homemaker, guarding the family wealth but in a public manner. "The Florentine economic system established common ground among women donors. Whether acting as productive but unpaid helpers in the workshops [of the family], . . . as household managers, or as widows wielding power over considerable fortunes, women earned and exercised their economic capabilities within a family context."¹² Therefore, the woman could leave her private role and enter the commercial world, but only for the prosperity of the family; she was not yet her own economic entity. The home and family must be considered like a prison, restraining women, keeping them within the family compound. Even the architecture of the Florentine palazzi supports this idea. The palazzi have "forbidding façade to the street . . . an interior courtyard where family functions took place."¹³

Despite their lack of independence, women were an economic factor. A woman

¹¹Ibid, pg. 207.


¹³Russell, D., pg. 18.
was a commodity, one that could increase in wealth with marriage. Florence during this time was paradoxical, the philosophers espoused love as the ultimate in virtue, but money was the motivating factor in marriage negotiations. Men formed stereotypes and ideals about women in light of their economic importance. A daughter symbolized the advancement through marriage to a better station of life. Despite the importance and emphasis upon the male in society, it was still the daughter's marriage that could make the leap into a better station of life. "Adults shifted their attitude toward the child in function of his or her sex."\textsuperscript{14} Marriage was the climax of a woman's purpose besides bearing children. Marriage represented a beneficial alliance between two families with the woman being the bond. "Through marriage and family alliances, women became signs for the honor and wealth which defined social prestige for Florentine Citizens."\textsuperscript{15} Betrothals often took place when the children were young, or when the woman was a young girl since men commonly married at a later age.\textsuperscript{16} The decision of whether or not a girl should become eligible for marriage, the responsibility of the parents, was made at an early age, since the first installment of a dowry was made before the girl’s sixth birthday. Her physical appearance was the only deciding factor between life in the convent or marriage.\textsuperscript{17} The ultimate goal was

\textsuperscript{14}Klapisch-Zuber, pg. 101.

\textsuperscript{15}Chadwick, W. \textit{Women, Art, and Society}. Thames and Hudson, London 1990, pg. 68.


\textsuperscript{17}Klapisch-Zuber, pg. 109.
increasing one's station. Her fertility and marriage were the possessions of the entire family. Girls and young widows were merely tools of the family in marriage.\textsuperscript{18}

Yet, it was ironic that once involved in marriage, men believed women to always maintain loyalty to their father's household, and therefore, never really becoming a member of the new family and completing the desired alliance. Alberti touches on this idea of loyalty. He states that one should be fully open about matters concerning the house, family, and the children produced in a marriage with one's wife. But he cautions against sharing too many vital secrets concerning matters of business or anything confidential, for women were more inclined to gossip. Gossip was a "frivolous mannerism" attributed to women, and because of which they could not be trusted with matters of great importance.\textsuperscript{19} Alberti further explains that "true prudence or good counsel" do not lie in a woman's brain, but by directing the conversation, a woman can be trained not to concern herself with these matters.\textsuperscript{20} This juxtaposition left the woman isolated, not actually a member of either family. Her husband, if he followed the sage Alberti would not truly confide in her, but her family continued to expect her to use her position to their fullest advantage. "The determination of a woman's identity thus depended upon her movements in relation to the houses of men".\textsuperscript{21}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{18}Ibid, pg. 123.
\item \textsuperscript{19}Alberti, pg. 217.
\item \textsuperscript{20}Ibid, pg. 210.
\item \textsuperscript{21}Klapisch-Zuber, pg. 119.
\end{itemize}
The woman was a gift for the groom and his family, the ritual surrounding marriage supports this statement. The dowry, usually money or property, is given to the groom, who, in return along with other members of his family, showers gifts upon the bride. These nuptial gifts were frequently the possession of the entire family and only in the bride’s physical possession for a brief time. Rings, a circle symbolizing the union and initiation of the bride into her new family\textsuperscript{22}, signified both the groom’s ownership of the bride and his renewed bonds with his family. The groom would provide the dress for the bride on the day of the wedding as well as the linens for the nuptial bed, sealing his rights to possess her.\textsuperscript{23} He would retain this possession until his death, when she would have the option to remain a member of her in-laws family, or she could return to her blood kin, forsaking all ties with any children from the union and leaving them with the paternal grandparents.

Women needed to be desirable for marriage, and their education concentrated upon more feminine attributes. Even from birth, female children were streamlined for life in the domestic sphere.\textsuperscript{24} Female babies were left to live with the wet nurse longer

\textsuperscript{22}Klapisch-Zuber fully describes the iconography behind the ring; “The multiformal symbol of the ring, the circular form of which recurs in many of the objects and ritual presents of alliance and marriage- necklace, diadem, belt, etc.- was widely used by the Florentines of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries not only to link the wife to her husband and the daughter-in-law to her family-in-law, but also to take each marriage as an opportunity to renew all of the already established alliances that still played an important role and were worth preserving” (Klapisch-Zuber 1985, pg. 236).

\textsuperscript{23}Ibid., pg. 236.

\textsuperscript{24}Female children were streamlined for domestic life if in fact they survived infancy. Female babies were more likely to be exposed and killed or abandoned. The high rate of abandonment created the need for foundling hospitals such as the Ospedali degli Innocenti in Florence. The percentage of female babies left secretly in
than males, so they could receive the desired feminine traits that would be transmitted through the milk. 25 The schooling of girls was similar to that of boys, although there was a greater focus upon religion and the morals and virtues that it prescribed. "Let religion and morals . . . hold the first place in the education of a Christian Lady." 26 The ideal woman of the Renaissance would possess the virtues of modesty, piety, charity and most importantly, chastity. "The virtues that spring from religion enabled such women as these to keep steadily on their way, not only amid the dangers of error, but amid the more common dangers of adulation." 27 "Women required education especially to strengthen and stabilize their characters." 28

Chastity was considered the most important attribute of a woman. A woman who remained true to chastity would bear healthy children and keep the lineage pure. Women, however, were commonly believed to easily fall into sinful relations with other men. "Her uterus was said to make her more prone to irrational behavior so that she lacked the mental powers and the control of man." 29 The example of Eve boldly stood out as proof of women's gaiety and weakness of soul. Women could be a liability to

the swinging doors of the Ospedali was 70%. (Russell, D., pg.17).

25Ibid., pg 105.

26Cannon, M.A., pg. 41.

27Ibid., pg. 23.


29Russell,D, pg 17.
the honor of the family, and strict measures had to be followed in order to retain the purity of her reputation.

Girls, everyone agreed, required the most vigilant supervision. "Keep your eye upon [your daughter]," warned Fra Bernadino. "If she does not stay quietly at home spinning and weaving, but runs to the window at every sound- then, if you don't chastise her, you will see her bring you to shame. . . . Beware how you let [young girls] go to feasts or weddings. . . . Let them have nothing to do with servants. Let them not have too much converse even with their relations; for if you then find them pregnant, you need not ask how such a thing came about. Do not trust them in your kinsmen's houses. . . . And never, never, never let them sleep with their own brothers, as they begin to grow bigger; for the Devil is subtle. . . . Hardly trust [your daughter] even to her father.\(^{30}\)

But a contrast of this image, woman as the portent of sin, was the image of woman as the Virgin Mary. In this role, the young woman received an education much like her male contemporaries: she learned Greek, Latin, read the classic authors to understand grammar and acquire vocabulary, read aloud to develop elocution, studied history and poetry. Her education differed in that the main focus was religion and morality.\(^{31}\) For women, "Renaissance theories of education were overtly moral,  

\(^{30}\)Gies, Frances and Joseph. *Marriage and Family in the Middle Ages*. Harper and Row, New York, NY 1987, pg. 288. Italics and bold face my own, The emphasis here is not the honor of the daughter, but the damage that her actions could have on the father and the entire family line. Incest, however, placed guilt upon the male participant for seducing the female, and was punished severely, as was rape, since it was an affront to her family. "With great arrogance . . . he seized the woman and attempted to seduce her against her will, thus bringing obliquy upon her and dishonor upon her husband", an account from a court document, *Archivio di Stato, Firenze, Atti del Esecutore, 877*, fols. 8v-9v., Brucker 1971, pg. 122.

\(^{31}\)Cannon, M.A., pg. 31-36.
enshrining at their center an idea of virtue."32 If the woman fit these qualifications, she entered the role of a 'good' mother, since she respected the lineage of her children and imparted her sense of morality on to them.33

Women also had to live up to the standards of physical beauty that were popular at the time. These standards changed in severity with the times, and can be traced throughout the art being commissioned. Agnolo Firenzuola described the ideal beauty as such:

The hair should be fair but golden-tinted and verging on brown. The skin should be bright, not dull, the eyebrows, full in the middle and tapering off towards the nose and the ears; the eyes large, slightly protuberant, the eyelids white and marked with scarcely perceptible red veins. The white of the eye should be slightly bluish, the eyelashes not too long or too thick or too dark. The brow should be white, rather like a mirror but not so shining as to reflect objects. The borders of the eye must be red and shining like a pomegranate (sic) seed. The pink on the cheek is more marked by the curves. The nose becomes more slender, but by insensible degrees, towards the top. The mouth should not display more than six teeth when the lips (which should have a dimple and not be too thin) are half open... As for the body- the neck should be white, round, and too long rather than too short.34

A woman's physical description was as important as her mental and moral state. It was simply another part of the stereotype that women were supposed to ideally fit into. Alessandra Strozzi considered the beauty of a perspective marriage

32Gibson, pg. 16.

33Klapisch-Zuber, pg. 129.

partner for her son, she sends him a physical description of one prospect.35 Compensating for the lack of beauty, however, was much simpler than hiding the lack of virtue and chastity. There were many cremes and cosmetics available to women that would change the appearance. Make-up to make the skin whiter, cheeks rosier, and a pumice based powder were all frequently found in a lady's toilet. Hair color was also subject to change; the desired color being blond. Women would sit in the sun, apply cremes and lotions endlessly to attain their goal of becoming blond, resorting finally to wigs made of yellow silk or straw if the 'natural' methods did not work.36

Women were subjected to conform to these stereotypes in order to assure their acceptance within their social circle. Frequently, however, these standards were altered by women to suit individual situations. Lower class women usually worked in the market place because the family needed her labor in order to survive, and their position in the family was less passive. Wealthy women often took on more responsibility and accomplished more than it was believed that they could, not only raising children but taking an active role in the intellectual life at court. All considered, women broke the standards set for them by their male contemporaries, and adhered to those aspects that suited them. Isabella d'Este, Vittoria Colonna, and Veronica Gambara are three such women.


Three Realities: Isabella d'Este, Veronica Gambara, Vittoria Colonna

D'Este, Colonna and Gambara moved in the aristocratic and educated circles of humanists whose opinions concerning women were more egalitarian than the masses. Educated men valued women and the insights to philosophy they provided. Women took part in such influential circles as Urbino, Milan, Venice, and Mantua- the court of Isabella d'Este. Several treatises were written voicing this conviction although they were not widely read outside their circles. They did circulate and receive support from both women and men, despite their sometimes radical approach. The treatises frequently argued not only for women's equality with men, but taking it one step further towards women's superiority over men.37

One of these treatises was written for Isabella d'Este, whose court at Mantua was considered highly fashionable and a trend setter by her contemporaries all over Europe. The treatise penned by Mario Equicola entitled De Mulieribus paid homage to Isabella's intelligence and the intelligence of all women, and sought the origin of women's limited position in society.

The theme of the De mulieribus is simple. Equicola argues that men and women, being members of the human race, are equal in all respects, apart from certain physical differences due to their different roles in procreation. If this equality is not apparent in the organisation (sic) of society, the reason lies in the influence of custom and upbringing, which have prevented women from playing more than a secondary part

37Fahy discusses a treatise: De Laudibus Mulierum by Bartolomeo Gogio, in which women are argued to be superior to men. That is not the purpose of this paper, but I feel that I must mention the existence of radical opposite philosophies for it lends more credence to the women discussed and their accomplishments.
in the main activities of life.  

Equicola states that both sexes have a "similar divinely-created soul . . . [and therefore] distinction by sexes is . . . of little value, for in the afterlife, when we become angels, it will lose all significance."  

Equicola's philosophy was agreed upon by many well respected intellectuals; it was not an entirely new idea. Boccaccio believed woman had more potential than was believed of them. The Neoplatonic Academy furthered the ideas of women being equal to men, and even superior in some of the virtues they possessed. The ideal of Platonic love was personified by a woman, Venus. Love existed in a dual nature for the Neoplatonics. Each side of love could be represented by a different form. Physical love, erotic sexual love was personified as a masculine virtue as well as the negative virtue in need of control. Spiritual love was feminine and the desired  

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38 Fahy, C. "Three Early Renaissance Treastises on Women." Italian Studies II. 1956, pg. 37. Klapisch-Zuber also believes that the male based structure of society had a great effect upon the position of women as a whole, but did not alter their essential equality with men. Fahy continues, "By a tyranny unlawfully exercised by men over women's natural freedom, women find themselves in a state of subjection, and virtually restricted to the activities of the house. Equicola does not discuss the origin of this situation, but states that it is maintained by the sort of upbringing women receive, and by the force of custom" (pg. 38- italics mine).  

39 Ibid., pg. 38.  

40 Radcliff-Umstead, ed., "Boccaccio's Idle Ladies" by D. Radcliff-Umstead, pg. 75. The Decameron by Boccaccio, contains some feminist strains, seven of the ten stories are told by women narrators. Boccaccio asserts a woman's control over her body sexually and her ability to control herself in all manners. This is supported by the harsh punishments administered when men forcefully raped a woman (Brucker 1971, 'An Assault Upon a Peasant Family 1381'- Source Archivio di Stato, Firenze, Atti del Esecutore, 892, fols. 8v-9v., pg. 122)
love of the Neoplatonics. Venus represented the latter. Women were recognized as capable of controlling abstract concepts like emotions, as well as being able to overcome mere physical desire. Women represented the conservative balance in life and society that kept a check upon the unstable and volatile males.

The changing attitudes of the elite towards women can be documented in the representations of women in art. The many religious paintings of the Virgin Mary trace the subtle shifts in attitude. In the early Quattrocento, the pictures of the Virgin and child, portray a stiff upright woman holding a baby, whose muscle composition resembles a man's sculpted form more than the soft fat of babies. There is no emotional interaction between the two figures. Later art transforms this cold image into one of warmth, the Virgin mother plays with her child who giggles back at her. The baby is a real baby in form, no longer a man child sitting heavily upon the mother's lap. This shift in the art represents a general refocusing upon motherhood, its importance, and the importance of woman in the family.41

The court of Urbino, whose conversations were the foundations of Castiglione's *Il Libro del Cortegiano*, also held sympathetic views on women's condition and their significance in society and family. The figures in Castiglione's work believed women possessed the same virtues as men; women, however, were denied the opportunities to exercise these virtues. A double standard was recognized, "We men have of our own authority arrogated to ourselves a licence, whereby we insist that the same sins are in us very trivial and sometimes praiseworthy, and in women cannot be
Women had to live by completely different standards despite their similarity with men. There had been some exemplary women throughout history who had defied the norms and made a lasting impression upon their contemporaries and future generations. Not all women were capable of exerting their independence, or where chastised for doing so by their peers. The combination of a dynamic woman in conjunction with accepting peers was not frequent, but whenever it did occur, the lasting implications were immeasurable.

Isabella d'Este (1474-1539) was aristocratic by birth as a member of the d'Este house, the rulers of Ferrara. She received a strong education in the humanities from private tutors she shared with her brothers. Her sex, however, limited her education and increased her obligations to the family, her marriage presented an opportunity to gain strength through alliance to an equally powerful household. At a young age she was betrothed to Frederico Gonzaga, a man who represented the opposite of everything young Isabella cherished. Gonzaga was a man's man, interested in hunting, fishing, and a mercenary by profession, masculine in all manners. Isabella married Frederico, and loved him exclusively, she bore his children and ran his household as it was her duty. Her independent nature began to show in her dealings with her husband, her peers, her children, and her enemies. At this point, Isabella ceases to act conventionally; her actions were calculated and formulated to achieve her own goal. Her unsubmissive behavior kept her from falling comfortably into the

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roles chosen for by her male counterparts. Isabella d'Este because of her station in life, the Marquise of Mantua, had the opportunity to fully enjoy life as a free-thinking individual, not a shadow living behind a stereotype.

Isabella married Frederico in 1490, during an age of exploration and curiosity throughout Italy and Europe. Isabella was not immune to this obsession with the unknown. She, like her intellectual contemporaries, amassed a large collection of curiosities. These objects were kept in a room specifically designed for their storage and safe-keeping, a studiolo. Studiolos previously were the domain of men, who were mentally capable to process and appreciate the items from different cultures and the absurdities of nature. The studiolo was a place to study, so one could attain universal knowledge. It was also the completely private domain of its owner, a refuge. In her studiolo, Isabella kept many objects: cameos, jewelry, books, embalmed freaks of nature (two-headed calves, siamese twins, etc.), even the desirable horn of the unicorn.43

The studiolo was Isabella's place, although she delighted in showing her collections to the many guests who frequented the palace at Mantua. It was customary for the man of the household to entertain the guests, take them hunting, and then at night enliven them with witty conversation. At Mantua, Frederico would take guests out riding or hunting but it was Isabella who would later entertain the group intellectually. Isabella would take visitors to her studiolo and let them marvel at her many

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43The contents of the studiolo were documented in the frequent inventories. The objects within were gathered for many different reasons, some, like the horn of the unicorn to meet the status quo. These notes on the studiolo and its purpose come from my own lecture notes from a lecture and visit to the Pitti Palace Musuems in Florence, Italy, on September 24, 1990, with Prof. Diane Kunzelman.
possessions. She “confronted them with her mythological allegories, submitted symbols to their judgment and forced their intellect to make an effort. And her prestige was considerably enhanced thereby.”\textsuperscript{44} Her intellect impressed her visitors who respected her opinions and would engage in discussion about the newest curiosity to be found. A new object would set Isabella in motion, planning for the next time her husband went to battle to travel on her own and discover the what the world had in store. Isabella often went out to find more things for her studiolo, or simply to visit other courts while her husband was away; a behavior more suited to a man rather than a woman.

Isabella used her trips to make diplomatic ties with those around her which she would later use in order to achieve her goals. Not unlike men, she manipulated people to her advantage. When her husband was captured by the Venetians, she bartered for his release. She decided that her son was of age to be a cardinal and used her influence to have him appointed.\textsuperscript{45} Isabella also saw the advantages of offering shelter to fellow aristocrats whose estates had been captured by enemy forces. It was in this manner that she increased her holdings or fine art and statuary. She was forced due to lack of financial resources to supplement her collection in any way that presented itself.

Isabella was a true lover of fine art, and it is through this devotion of hers that


\textsuperscript{45} Ibid. de la Sizeranne commented frequently throughout his text on the ability of Isabella to bargain and manipulate to get her way, even when dealing with such powerful figures as Cesare Borgia.
one can see how she deviated from the norms prescribed for her sex. Women could appreciate art, but it was not their duty to actually take part in the making of a piece. Young girls were schooled in painting and drawing, solely as a diversion, they were not encouraged to excel in any of the creative arts. Commissioning a piece, especially one of complex and intricate meaning like the many allegories of the Renaissance and Cinquecento was not a female activity. Isabella contradicts the normal behaviors of her sex frequently by being one of the more prolific patrons of the arts during her lifetime. Contracts with artists and correspondence between Isabella and artists working on her commissions number in the hundreds. Isabella commissioned artists from all over Italy, including Raphael, Leonardo, Mantegna, Perugino, and Titian, to paint, sculpt, and create the images she desired. Not unlike her female contemporaries, Isabella had many strong convictions and morals concerning proper conduct. Her commissions reflected her beliefs, like those of men mirrored the ideals they considered to be important. She preferred the subjects of her works of art to be allegorical because, "antiquity was not only a treasury of beauty: it was an ideal of virtue, true loyalty and generosity." Isabella employed the allegories to mask the ideals and virtues that she cherished. Her interest in the classical allegories reflects her generation, but the strong beliefs and their expression through the commission of art was unusual for a woman at this time.

In her correspondence with the artists she employed, the truly masculine sides of Isabella's personality are exhibited. Isabella commissioned Perugino to paint a panel to be installed in her studiolo. She specifically described her expectations of the

46 ibid., pg. 214.
work in no less than fifty-three letters.

    My poetical Invention, which I wish to see you paint, is a battle of Chastity against Love. Pallas will appear as having vanquished Cupid: she has broken his golden arrow and his silver bow and has thrown them at his feet. . . . Some part of Venus’ dress—her mitre, her garland or her veil, perhaps—will be slightly torn.47

The painting represents the dual concept of erotic and spiritual love. Isabella preferred the spiritual love—reason—for Cupid, the symbol of sensuality and erotic love is being punished for his lack of chastity, which was a facet of the esteemed spiritual love. This philosophy was the product of the highly intellectual Neoplatonic Academy of Florence, a bastion of maleness. For although their philosophies looked favorably upon women, they were denied membership in the Academy. Isabella disregarded convention and undertook the ideas as her own, showing her own mental competence.

Isabella further demonstrates the depth of her knowledge of the classics when she describes the background landscape, which she felt was critical in the overall impression of the work.

    In order to express the story more fully and to decorate it more lavishly, an olive-tree, the sacred shrub of Pallas, will spring from the ground at her side and an owl, her symbol, will be perched on one of the branches. By Venus’ side will grow a myrtle, which is her emblem, and to enhance the charm of the whole, there must be a river or the sea in the background.48

She continues describing the vignettes, secondary to the main theme of Venus, Pallas,

47Ibid., pg. 203-204. Italics are my own. Isabella’s language demonstrates the active role she saw herself taking in the artistic creation.

48Ibid., pg. 205.
Diana and Cupid, which included such classic myths as the *Rape of Europa*, *Mercury and Glaucere*, and *Polypheme and Galatea*. All supported the main theme of love and chastity, two ideals revered by Isabella. Her broad range of legends included, as well as the intricacy of detail (including the symbols of the deities) illustrate her education and her complete understanding of what she had learned. Allegory was considered the tool of the highly educated men, who alone could comprehend the many meanings contained within one painting. Isabella insisted upon this complexity and the intellectual stimulation it provided. The work was commissioned for her own viewing and was to be placed in her studiolo, where she and her invited guests could contemplate the many intricate meanings and interpretations reflective of the current philosophies.

Isabella saw herself as an active participant in the creation of the work, an attitude taken by her male contemporaries. She was a demanding patron, her contracts including not only explicit written instructions but sometimes drawings. In one of her letters to Perugino, she states:

*I am showing you* all these details in a little sketch which I am sending, and with this, added to my explanations, you will better understand what I want. If you find that there are too many figures for the subject you can reduce the number, provided always that the main idea is not changed - I mean Pallas, Diana, Venus and Cupid ... *but you are forbidden to add anything of your own.*

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49 Radcliff-Umstead, ed., "Women as Artist and Patron in the Middle Ages and Renaissance" by David Wilkins, pg. 120. Further citations from this article will be listed as Radcliff-Umstead 1975, Wilkins article, followed by the page number.

50 de la Sizeranne, pg. 205. The first italics are my own. Isabella shows through her language how much she is involved in the creation of the canvas. She shows Perugino, the master artist, what to do. She is most domineering in the last phrase,
Perugino was completely controlled by Isabella’s limitations and guidelines. It was *her poetical invention* which she simply hired him to paint. Commissioning art was a forceful and domineering position and Isabella seems quite agile in fulfilling this masculine role.

Isabella resembled her male contemporaries in her desire to be remembered after her death. This desire gave fuel to the art of portraiture and the inclusion of contemporary figures and personages within allegorical settings. Isabella commissioned several portraits of herself from many different artists, rarely being satisfied with the results. The artists were failing to capture her true hidden beauty, and only portrayed her exterior likeness. Artists also included her likeness in the allegories they painted under her commission. Lorenzo Costa painted her in his *Coronation* as being “rewarded for her virtuous life . . . surrounded by the arts which adorned her court.”

Other likenesses included in the painting: Nicola da Correggio, Mario Equicola, Ercole Strozzi, and Lorenzo da Pavia, all of whom frequented her court.

Isabella d’Este challenged life at court by becoming a dominant force both diplomatically and in the arts. She made her opinions known and had her tastes dictated to by those she employed. Isabella did not blandly live her life according to

where the boldface is my own, where she limits Perugino’s personal expression to the form and the placement of the figures.

51 Radcliff-Umstead, ed., Wilkins article, pg. 122.

52 de la Sizeranne, pg. 208.
the options offered to her by the stereotypes of the day. Instead, she lived how she desired and used her femininity when it was needed, but overall exercising traits that were labeled more masculine.

Isabella was not a singular deviation from the norms of the day. Vittoria Colonna (1492-1547), a contemporary and acquaintance of Isabella, followed in the bold steps of the Marquise of Mantua. Vittoria Colonna, socialite, philosopher, and writer, has been praised for her accomplishments, Burckhardt calls her ‘immortal’.53

Colonna lived her early life similar to Isabella, she was born into wealth and aristocracy. She received an education while she lived with her parents, but fulfilled the duty of daughter in her early marriage to Ferrante Francesco d’Avalos for political reasons. In her marriage, Colonna performed her duties as wife briefly, for she was widowed at a young age. It was in her widowhood that she began to free herself from the restrictive ties of womanhood. She moved from convent to intellectual group with ease and the respect of her peers. Her husband’s death allowed her to escape, for widows enjoyed the greatest freedom of action. “Financially independent widows could remarry or not as they wished. A long biblical tradition granted widows the right to marry as they wanted. Paul declared in I Corinthians 7:39: ‘Let a widow marry whom she wills, only in the Lord.’”54 Colonna opted not to remarry but to live a religious and intellectual life, becoming the close confidant and inspiration for

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53Burckhardt, pg 251. Burckhardt views on the position of women tend to be idealistic, as he sees women being equal to men on all levels during the Renaissance. Generally, this would be untrue, but in the cases of Vittoria Colonna, Isabella d’Este, and Veronica Gambara it is more credible.

54Radcliff-Umstead, ed., Radcliff-Umstead article, pg. 85.
Michelangelo and a silent member of such radical groups as the Oratory of Divine Love.

It was Colonna's writing that entered her into the intellectual society. She was renowned and respected for her talents as a poet. Even her earliest works are full of classical references, documenting her full education and exposure to the classical texts. Colonna confirmed her mental acuity in her writings which struck a balance between the current philosophies—Christian, Neoplatonic, Humanism, and Petrarchism. Her work reflected the cycles in her life and the ways she found to make peace with her station in life. The poems mirror what she was feeling: at first they are the physical love she felt for her husband; then the ideal love she felt in her grief after his death; and finally the love she had found to exist in God.

It is possible to view the entire corpus of Colonna's poetry as embodying the Neoplatonic ladder of love, progressing as the poems do from the early declarations of passionate earthly love in the epistle to her husband at war through the Petrarchan delineation of idealized human love in her middle years to the final religious poems that culminate, poetically if perhaps not chronologically, in her Triumph of Christ's Cross.

Vittoria never published her works during her lifetime, although she did send collections the associates she most admired; Francesco della Torre, Marguerite of Navarre, and Michelangelo. For although the writing of poetry was not as unusual for


56 Wilson, ed., Gibaldi, pg. 31. Examples of Colonna’s poetry can be found in Appendix B.
a woman, Colonna’s subjects stood out as they were a reflection of the intellectuals she choose to associate herself with.

Colonna lived through the period which today is labeled mannerism. There was a great questioning of the church and religion that took place in Italy, before Martin Luther broke with Roman Catholicism in 1517. The Neoplatonic philosophy is an early alternative the straightforward Christian doctrine. In the early Cinquecento, there was a group known as the Oratory of Divine Love, which met to discuss salvation and the state of the institution of the church. Colonna was affiliated with several of the members of this masculine group which included: Giovan Matteo Giberti, Iacopo Sadoleto, Reginald Pole, and Gasparo Contarini.\(^57\) Colonna was outstanding in her participation with counter-reformational groups. Women were to learn their catechisms and live piously. They were not, however, according to the stereotypes to contemplate it as to its weaknesses and shortcomings.

Colonna supported the Oratory and other reform groups like the Capuchins. The Capuchins were an approved order of reformed Franciscans. The group was frequently opposed and Vittoria used all of her influence to defend them. The group was confirmed by Paul III in 1536, but not before Colonna’s beliefs were questioned by the Inquisition.\(^58\) Her strong support of a then radical group deviates from the passive role women were supposed to play in society. Colonna felt a passion for religion and knowledge that led her to positions of leadership amongst her peers.

\(^{57}\) Wilson, ed., Gibaldi, pg. 27.

\(^{58}\) Wilson, ed., Gibaldi, pg. 27.
Colonna felt a strong connection towards Mary Magdelene, a woman who moved in a circle of men and through her devotion was recognized as a spiritual model. Her friendship with Michelangelo aided her spiritual growth, as the two troubled minds looked to each other for guidance through the confusion of the times.

Michelangelo writes a sonnet to Colonna:

As much as I flee and even hate myself,  
so much, lady, with truest hope,  
I turn to you; and my soul is  
the less afraid, the nearer I am to you.  
In your face and in your beautiful eyes,  
full of every salvation,  
I aspire to all that heaven promises.

Their friendship went beyond physical attraction and achieved the intense spirituality that was the goal of the Neoplatonics. Vittoria Colonna was respected for her assumption of leadership and for the support she gave her strong convictions. Through her position she defied the roles that the stereotypes provided and choose to be an active participant in her world.

Veronica Gambara (1485-1550) followed in the steps of Colonna, she was a writer, a leader, and a highly respected member of Italian society. During her lifetime, she would be called 'correggio', a word that signified the ruler of the town of the same name where she spent most of her adult life. She was “an Italian Renaissance

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59Wilson, ed., Gibaldi, pg. 32.

gentildonna, or virtuous lady, who acted as governor, patron, writer, wife, and mother."61

Gambara came from a noble and respected aristocratic family. Her education focused upon the different aspects of Humanism. After her marriage to the Signoria of Correggio, Gilberto X, she avidly assumed the role of wife and mother of their two sons, although she never gave up her love of knowledge. "Their small court attracted learned visitors as Gambara’s reputation grew, and soon it became a very fashionable salon for the cultured nobility . . . a circle of intimates began to meet there with some regularity: Ercole d'Este of Ferrara, Isabella d'Este of Mantua, the infamous Pietro Aretino, Bernardo Cappello, and, of course Pietro Bembo."62 When not meeting, Gambara kept in correspondence with her associates, writing on politics, art and philosophy.

Veronica was interested in politics and was the first member of the Italian aristocracy to invite Charles V, the future invader of Italy, to stay at her court. She believed in peace and physically involved herself to attain it; her poems implore her male contemporaries to strive for peace:

Conquer your wrath and ancient hatred,
Charles and Francis, in the holy and blessed name
of Christ, and in his faith, who more than any other

61Wilson, ed., “Veronica Gambara” by Richard Pross, pg. 56. Further citations from the article by Pross on Gambara will be cited as follows; Wilson, ed., Pross, page number.

has been your friend: Be at peace.63

In her own region, Veronica was put into a position of responsibility by the death of her husband in 1518. She had to govern the territories of her husband's estate and promote the careers of their two sons. Gambara's style of governing was more concerned with the actual people under her supervision. Within this usually male position, she allowed her humanistic values, her more feminine side to dominate her decisions. As a ruler she promoted literacy, provided food during famines, and cared for widows, orphans and those who needed social services. She defended her town militarily against neighboring invaders.64 It can be said that she 'mothered' the town, and her rule is an example of a woman in power who exerts her influence in a more private and familial way.

Gambara must be respected for her achievements outside her own personal household. "One cannot help but notice that Gambara was terribly 'traditional.' Far from being 'oppressed' in any sense, she was born into the highest and most affluent level of society, had the best education that could be provided to anyone, perhaps moved in circles that included the most powerful people in Europe, and ruled over a territory for much of her life."65 She singlehandedly kept her town free, by assuming the naturally male role of protector. By breaking with the stereotypes, she attained the

63Wilson, ed., Pross, pg. 59. Sonnet 4 by Veronica Gambara. Gambara is wishing that peace negotiations arrive at some form of solution to stop the fighting between Charles V and the Pope.

64Wilson, ed., Pross, pg. 51.

65Wilson, ed., Pross, pg. 56.
most success and prosperity for all.

The ideas of how women should act that began to be documented in the Renaissance were beginning to show their truly archaic nature. The ideas recorded by Alberti as being ideal for both women and men began to give way to the more tolerant beliefs of the late Quattrocento and early Cinquecento. The new groups of intellectual altered their opinions towards women and their capabilities. Women were successfully doing all of the activities that once were male. They commissioned art, wrote poetry, painted, ran businesses, participated in government, and raised children who became assets to society. The physical and mental limitations once believed to restrict women naturally to inferior positions were discovered to be bogus. The presence of a uterus did not make a woman crazy just like the presence of a beard did not drive a man insane. Although the opposition to women's activity in society differed upon the economic class being studied, the presence of liberal ideas in the top elite signifies the commencement of overall changes in attitude.

Women slowly became active participants of society. The obstacles that faced them were not as immoveable as they seemed. The stereotypes devised by men to label women and keep them from besting the men around them, began to give way. Women started to challenge the norms and succeed, thus gaining the respect of their male peers. Women took on more responsibility, moving out into the once exclusively male public sphere of life. There was never a movement to liberate women per se, but the actions of women would have lent themselves to such. The stereotypes had been created- ideal submissive woman- yet men seemed to prefer women who were not the ideal. Women who are remembered were those like Isabella d'Este, Veronica
Gambara, and Vittoria Colonna who made names for themselves in the ways men achieved greatness.

Stereotypes are invented to create dominance and order over that which is capable of sharing or usurping power. The written and preserved stereotypes survive as well as the memory of those who successfully challenged their limits. The women of the Italian Renaissance who lived namelessly are assumed to have behaved as the stereotypes prescribed, submissive, obedient, and under the control of a man supporting unwillingly the later restriction of women. The stories of the past appear to support these inferior notions of women, as those where women behave differently have been twisted so that we view them as applying in a more general scope. The then brazen women who lived creatively, reminded future generations of the existence of women like themselves who did not sit idly about following to the tee the plans that men laid out for them. It is necessary to frequently uncover those who contested the norms, so that we can better understand how our present society came to hold its views on women.
APPENDIX A
MADONNA AND CHILD WITH SAINTS (St. Lucy Altarpiece)
Domenico Veneziano
c. 1445
Panel.
82 x 84in.
Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence, Italy. (pg. 36)

MADONNA AND CHILD WITH SAINTS AND ANGELS (Barbadori Altarpiece)
Fra Filippo Lippi
c. 1437 (begun)
Panel.
7 1/2 x 8ft.
The Louvre, Paris, France. (pg. 37)

In these early paintings of the Madonna and child, the baby Jesus resembles a sturdy man as opposed to a gurgling, soft, and fat baby. He appears to be self-sufficient, simply smaller than normal. This reflects the attitude toward motherhood, and the woman's role in raising children. There is no real emotion between the mother and child, only the slightest hint of admiration from the mother gazing down at the child. It is obvious here that the baby does not need the protection of its mother, thus reducing the time the two will interact together, a reflection of the wholly masculine society.
SMALL COWPER MADONNA
Raphael
C. 1505
Panel.
23 1/2 x 17 3/8in.
National Gallery, Washington, D.C.

Completed almost fifty years after the other two Madonnas, this one by Raphael reflects the subtle shifts in attitude towards motherhood and women in general. Although the Madonna is still ideal, the child looks more like a baby and there is more emotion shared between the two. The pair interact like a mother and child, caressing each other, as they share a gentle embrace. In the beginning of the sixteenth century, women were recognized as playing a more integral part in the raising of children, hence the greater sensitivity when it was portrayed in art.
Donatello presents Judith as a weak, almost possessed woman who has somehow managed to overcome Holofernes and is about to decapitate him. The stereotype of women as fragile and weak could not permit such an event as the complete overpowering of a man by a woman. Therefore, Judith had to be represented in a manner that would explain to men how this could in fact be true. Here Judith barely lifts the machete over her head. Her gaze is distant as though her thoughts are not with her and she is not in full control of her faculties. This explains why she is committing this heinous act and breaking with the standard submissive behavior appropriate for women.
Parmigianino worked during a later time when women were more accepted especially in his social circles. Yet still, the story of Judith and Holofernes, which is essentially that of a man submitting to a woman, is altered to make it more acceptable to the male psyche. In this image, Judith appears like a triumphant victory, carrying the pride of her country on her shoulders. The story is given a national twist, Judith was acting heroically against a horrible tyrant. Through generalization the theme is more acceptable.
APPENDIX B
LOVE SONNET
by Vittoria Colonna

So many sweet thoughts and high desires
were nourished in me by the sun who chased away
every cloud and made each day on earth bright,
just as the sight of him chased away my sorrows.

During his beautiful, brief stay with me,
he made my tears sweet and my sighs pleasant,
with his handsome, serene glance, oh lovely light,
though now all seems dark to me everywhere.

I see his valor extinguished, his lofty virtues
dead and gone, and, by this great loss,
the noblest minds are sad and confused.

Fervent desire for the glory of ancient times
has, with his death, disappeared from the world;
and I am forever cut off from any happiness.

In this sonnet, Colonna praises and laments her dead husband. She
demonstrates the depth of her love for him and the despair she feels with his loss.

Notice her understanding of ancient Greek ideals in the last stanza when she
mentions the glory of ancient times, which was to die after a worthy fight.

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1Wilson, ed., Pross, pg. 36. Love sonnet number 3.
THE TRIUMPH OF CHRIST'S CROSS
an excerpt from the poem by Vittoria Colonna.

At his right in the car, on a royal throne,
I saw the Virgin, paradigm of all virtues,
through whom we can flee eternal damnation.
She was, before all other temples, temple
sacred to God; and I saw haw with humility
she cast down the proud and the wicked.
At the holy feet I saw that other Mary,
the Magdalene, burning with joyous love,
er radiant golden hair flowing forth.
True piety moved her to weep here;
and thus heaven wills that, with equal measure,
she now reap the seed of glory, not of sorrow.

In this poem, Colonna demonstrates her devotion, her love this time for God. In
this excerpt, she is describing the role of the Virgin. Her description is not unlike her
male contemporaries. Colonna, however, uses active language to describe the Virgin
and her actions. The last section deals with the Magdalene, Colonna's affinity with the
Saint is apparent through her writings.

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2Wilson, ed., Pross, pg. 43.
SOURCES CITED

Primary Sources

-Great explanations of his interpretations of idioms. Gives a bibliography and how each text listed pertains as a reference and could aid in further study of the text.

-Translations of a variety of documents describing business, personal correspondences, marriage, death, and births.

-A lively account of conversations held at a Renaissance court in Urbino. Men and women participated in discussions about all topics.

Secondary Sources

-Beard addresses both sides of the gender issue. She examines general trends and reinforces them with specific examples. Too accepting of unsupported ideas.

-The first assessment of Renaissance. A dissection of the entire society with regards to all influences, art, politics, etc.

-An in depth look at the education of women throughout Europe. Strong focus, a bias on the effects of and strengths of religion on women.

-An in depth look an how women were portrayed in art and how they were treated as artists.

-Dramatic and unscholarly claims made and not supported. Very poetic and idealistic.

-A study of the impact women had on the arts as both the inspiration and the commissioner of works. Good research of the art and at the custom of including portraits of contemporaries in classical allegories.

-A scholarly look at three treatises, the impetus behind them and a summarization of their content.

-A consideration of the ways in which humanist thought and shifting trends affected women. A revisionist approach.

-The book has a wide scope, covering a thousand years, attempting with some success to cover things in detail. The visual references are well chosen.

-This book thoroughly covers all aspects of social customs: from naming a child to demographics. A thorough view of life with a spotlight on women's position.

-Provides a detailed analysis of different groups and in regards to family life. Lots of statistics and data presented scientifically and factually.

-Great for anecdotes about culture. A little banal and unfounded- too general at times, too idealistic and contradictory.

-A compilation of articles on women of different backgrounds during the
Renaissance. An exploration of the different roles and images present.

- An informative visual study of stereotypes through reference to prints. Slightly general however.

- Essay questions how women developed familial ties, what their experience was. It re-examines previous information under feminist pretenses, how gender affected ideas and ideals of family.

- Book contains articles on women who wore literate and writing during the Renaissance from all parts of Europe.