Abstract

This thesis reconsiders a highly mobile form of portraiture, the early modern portrait medal, by examining its active role in the intersubjective relations and networks of diverse individuals. By attending to three distinct moments between 1400 and 1700, the mutability of the role of medaglie – the early modern term for portrait medals, antique coins, and contemporary coinage – is made clear. Examining the representation of medaglie in painted and printed portraits during these years allows for a comparative consideration of the medaglie’s role in historically contingent forms of intersubjectivity. Botticelli’s Young Man Holding a Medal (1473) brings to light the way that medals mediated the intimate and ambiguous interdependence that characterized courtly, middle class, and humanist culture in the fifteenth century. Through their gift exchange and the demand of the face, the portrait medal is shown to be a key player in courtly society that not only reflects the power of the ruler over his subjects, but also the interdependent nature of this power. Titan’s Portrait of Jacopo Strada (1567-8) redirects the discussion of the intimate encounter to the shifting nature of collections of medals, as they became increasingly large and regimented. The medaglie in Strada’s portrait speak to key social attributes and the changing sites where these attributes were founded. Finally, the engraved portrait of Ferdinando Cospì in his museum in Bologna (1677) thematizes an increased distancing between the subject and object in seventeenth century galleries and museums. This distancing is complicated by the continued implication of interdependence in practices of gift giving that support claims to allegiance made by Cospi.

Medaglie most often circulated according to the complex and often hierarchical conditions of friendship that dominated intersubjective relationships in many early modern networks. However, possible strangerhood and equality of membership also characterize some
networks. This shift prompts consideration of the degree to which medaglie were implicated in processes of public formation. The temporally extended nature of this study and the intermediality of the representation of medaglie suggest that, as the medaglie themselves were implicated within forms of sociability, they could be understood as constitutive of proto-publics.
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In loving memory of my saving Grace (1945-2007)
1. Introduction

To address a public or to think of oneself as belonging to a public is to be a certain kind of person, to inhabit a certain kind of social world, to have at one’s disposal certain media and genres, to be motivated by a certain language ideology. No single history sufficiently explains all the different ways these preconditions come together in practice. Yet despite this complexity, the modern concept of a public seems to have floated free from its original context. Like the market or the nation – two cultural forms with which it shares a great deal – it has entered the repertoire of almost every culture. It has gone traveling.

- Michael Warner, Publics and Counterpublics, 10

1.1 Gone Traveling

Near the end of the seventeenth century, Isotta degli Atti of Rimini made the long voyage across the Atlantic to the New World. More precisely, the portrait medal of the fifteenth-century noblewoman made that arduous trip, jostling around in a bag of loot intended for trade with an as-yet unknown other. Isotta’s effigy—and this is one of three extant medals produced with her likeness on it—was found three centuries later and nearly 5000 miles from Rimini on an old Indian trail in Pine Cooley, near Hastings, Minnesota in 1907.¹

Another example of the mobility of the portrait medal stands in contrast to the uncertain circumstances through which Isotta’s visage came to be found in the Americas. The portrait medal of Byzantine emperor John Paleologus VIII was commissioned sometime between 1438 and 1439 to commemorate the Council of Ferrara that had recently been moved to Florence due to plagues. This landmark diplomatic gathering between the Eastern Byzantine Church and the Western Church in Italy was financially supported by courtly powers aligned with the Papacy.²

² Lisa Jardine and Jerry Brotton, Global Interests: Renaissance Art between East and West (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 2000), 26. The Council of Ferrara was held in order to discuss the impending Ottoman threat and possibility of reconciliation between the Eastern and Western Churches. The Byzantine retinue of more
The portrait medal of Paleologus was commissioned by an unknown patron and ostensibly presented to both Italian and Byzantine participants on the council before the gathering dispersed. In this way, the Byzantine emperor, represented in raised relief and cast in precious metal, moved outward from central Italy to locations throughout the Italian peninsula, France, the Holy Roman Empire, and Byzantium in the pockets and travel trunks of ecclesiastic and courtly individuals linked by their attendance at this event.

These two examples foreground the vastly disparate kinds of work that the early modern portrait medal could be called upon to perform across time and despite the stability of the formal and material conventions of the genre. Relatively small, portable, and produced in multiples, the early modern portrait medal is a genre of portraiture which, by virtue of its particular visual and material conventions, demonstrates the power of an object to forge relationships, to gather bodies around it, and to link absent bodies through space. My first example was originally proffered by a powerful princely ruler in Rimini to his courtly and elite acquaintances. Two centuries later, at least three of the medals of Isotta were placed in the palm of a trader who, we are now left to imagine, eventually dropped it on a trail in the wilderness of Minnesota. The latter example was a diplomatic gift that commemorated a momentous gathering and spread out like tendrils between the Christian East and West. Imagined communities were linked together across space by their possession of these identical objects that depicted the penultimate Byzantine Emperor. Although we are not aware of any errant cross-Atlantic journeys made by a medal of John

than 700 individuals arrived in Venice in February 1438 at the invitation of Pope Eugene IV. The Papacy and the Este in Ferrara had found the financial burden onerous, and the Medici bankers were able to foot the bill once the event was moved to Florence.

Ibid., 29. The Greek Byzantine visitors left the Council first, followed by Latinate Byzantine individuals. Scher Currency of Fame, 64. Winchell, 358. Soon after the 1907 discovery two other identical objects were uncovered in St. Cloud, Minnesota and Grand Forks, North Dakota.
Paleologus, their sheer number coupled with their material durability does not preclude such an unintended episode decades or even centuries after their initial dispersal.

This thesis undertakes a rewriting of the work of *medaglie*: the contemporary term used to refer to portrait medals, antique coins and contemporary coins that circulated outside of economic exchanges. My argument will centre upon three instances in which *medaglie* came to be figured in other forms of portraiture: Sandro Botticelli’s egg tempera and gilded plaster *Young Man Holding a Medal* of 1473; Titian’s oil painting *Portrait of Jacopo Strada* of 1567-8; and the printed illustration of the museum of Ferdinando Cospi of 1677. By considering a cluster of representations that differ in terms of both materiality and historical embeddedness, I seek to emphasize the mutable nature of the social agency of *medaglie* over time. Each of these representations thematize key ways in which these objects were active in historically contingent constellations of subjects and objects. *Medaglie* are highly mobile objects. As such, they moved through, and potentially produced, relations between highly interdependent individuals, thereby forming social networks. Moreover, the migration of *medaglie* into representations in other media speaks to the import of the work of these objects. Considering three representations of *medaglie* that fix the mobile object in plaster, oil, and the engraved line, this paper will elucidate the many ways that *medaglie* migrated through time and space, arguing that these translations produced new conditions of possibility for the formation of early modern networks and, sometimes, publics, a term I use to characterize new forms of association of interested, sometimes virtual viewers, patrons, and collectors.

1.2 Currencies

There are several prevailing characteristics of existing scholarship on *medaglie* to which this thesis responds: the predominance of iconographic reading; emphasis on the context of their
original commissioning and an accompanying privileging of that single stable meaning over
time; the lack of attention to their agentive social function; the nature of their social role in
public-forming.

Art historical scholarship on medaglie emerged from a long history of documentation that
began during the sixteenth century, as smaller humanist collections of coins and medals became
increasingly integrated into larger royal or aristocratic collections and numismatic treatises began
to be produced. These detailed inventories reproduced and identified iconographic features of
antique coins, although the collections in which these coins were found most certainly included
contemporary portrait medals as well. Numismatic texts began to be written and published in the
fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and these publications detailed the objects within ever-larger
collections. In the eighteenth century many of these collections were donated to, or purchased
by, those overseeing increasingly large and centralized state collections. With the development
of public state museums, specialist positions emerged as well as the development of art history as
a discipline.

During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the expert individuals into whose
care they were entrusted began to produce connoisseurial catalogues of portrait medals. The
publications of Sir George F. Hill (1867-1948) are exemplary of the interests of connoisseurship.
Hill was a numismatist in the British Museum’s Department of Coins and Medals from 1893 to
1936 and this professional affiliation shaped his connoisseurial interest in attribution,

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6 J. Graham Pollard, *Italian Renaissance Medals in the Museo Nazionale of Bargello* (Firenze: Museo
Nazionale del Bargello, 1983), XXXI-XLIV. Pollard describes the history of the Medici collections from the
fifteenth century through to their entry into their donation to the city of Florence in the middle of the eighteenth
century.

7 John Cunnally, “Changing Patterns of Antiquarianism in the Imagery of the Italian Renaissance Medal,”
in *Perspectives on the Renaissance Medal*, ed. Stephen K. Scher (New York: Garland Publishing Inc with the
iconography, and qualitative valuation.\(^8\) Shaped by Burckhardt’s interpretation of the Renaissance, Hill argued that the medal reflected the genius and spirit of the age, insofar as it not only appropriated, but surpassed, classical antique precedents and thereby demonstrated the Renaissance transcendence of convention and the victory of Burckhardt’s association of the period with individualism.\(^9\)

The numismatic and humanist connoisseurship manifest in Hill’s publications profoundly shaped the iconographic and social art historical scholarship of the second half of the twentieth century. Social art historians endeavor to reveal the meaning of the medal’s iconography; the reception of the medal is understood as a process whereby the visual iconography the medal fully and completely communicates the aspirations of the patron.\(^10\) In this way, portrait medals are primarily considered visual signs that assert the political or social power of a dominant individual upon subordinate others.\(^11\) Sixteenth-century portrait medals are characterized as increasingly propagandistic because they were increasingly made to serve the state and were able to be produced in larger numbers through new “striking” technologies.\(^12\) Such a characterization ostensibly describes the use of imagery in the seventeenth century more accurately than in the

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\(^8\) G.F. Hill, *Portrait Medals of Italian Artists of the Renaissance* (London: Philip Lee Warner Publisher, in association with Medici Society Ltd, 1912), ix. In this publication Hill avoids qualitative judgment and focuses solely upon iconographic investigation.

\(^9\) Cunnally “Patterns of Antiquarianism,” 115-116. Cunnally points to the influence that Burckhardt’s conception of Renaissance civilization had on the qualitative judgments made in Hill’s work.

\(^10\) Joanna Woods-Marsden “Visual Constructions of the Art of War: Images for Machiavelli’s Prince,” in *Perspectives on the Renaissance Medal* ed. Stephen K. Scher (New York: Garland Publishing, in association with the American Numismatic Society, 2000), 47 – 73. Woods-Marsden’s article is an interesting example because it begins with an eloquent passage about the intimate and tactile manner through which these objects were perceived. Another example is Raymond B. Waddington, “A Satirist’s Impresa,” *Renaissance Quarterly* vol 42 no 4 (Winter 1989): 655 - 681. Waddington closely examines the commissioning and iconography of Aretino’s medals in order to “decode” meaning. However, he also sheds light on the ambiguity of meaning through irony and satire. Waddington’s study also intersects with those of my own, insofar as he attends to the intersubjective role of friendship and the role of the medal within ambiguous relations.


\(^12\) Scher *Currency of Fame*. 14. Striking technologies also allowed for more uniform production of medals, finer detail and higher relief.
fifteenth or sixteenth centuries, at which time state centralization was more fully realized. This would be exemplified by the court of Louis XIV, for example, an era that has prompted studies that assert the political role of medals and other imagery. As useful as these studies are to the understanding of the role of imagery in the context of seventeenth-century absolutist courts, it would be misleading to impose such analyses on areas and periods marked by different systems of power.

The propagandistic slant to analyses of later periods is founded on the understanding of medals that originated in the fifteenth century and in the context of Petrarch’s notion of fame or \textit{fama}. Following Burckhardt scholars have traditionally connected the relationship between fame and virtue proposed by Petrarch as a “cult of fame,” whereby the fame attained depends on the virtue of the individual, a connection upon which Burckhardt himself focused in his emphasis on the individual. Petrarch noted the importance of the virtue of the individual. A person’s virtue would result in their acquisition of \textit{fama} based on their merits. Historiographers of the portrait medal have long understood the relationship between this idea and coins of classical antiquity, whereby the Renaissance elite aligned themselves with the \textit{virtus} of classical rulers and the recipients of medals would decipher their classical sources according to humanist learning. In this way, the currency in which \textit{medaglie} traded is ostensibly more akin to what Joanna Woodall

\begin{itemize}
\item[14] Scher \textit{Currency of Fame}, 15.
\item[15] Ibid., 15.
\end{itemize}
has described as a symbolic economy of virtue with respect to painted portraits.\textsuperscript{16} As Woodall elucidates, virtue is innately relational and produced intersubjectively.

The historiographic emphasis on individualism and hierarchical power was most recently reasserted in the \textit{Currency of Fame} exhibition.\textsuperscript{17} The introduction to the catalogue begins with a brief and telling introductory passage:

Consciousness of self has taken many forms throughout history, but at no time was it stronger than in the Italian Renaissance, giving rise to a whole body of literature, philosophy, and visual art devoted to the place of the human being in the universe and the distinct qualities and experiences of the individual. One of the most original and complete means of fulfilling the Renaissance desire for fame and immortality was the portrait medal, for within the confines of this small, durable, portable, and easily reproduced object was contained a wealth of information about the subject represented.\textsuperscript{18}

Positioning the human subject at the centre of meaning, this passage describes the role of the medal as a passive object whose primary function is the transmission of biographical or historical information conveyed through iconography. Although this information is a vital aspect of the value of the medaglie, the focus on iconography and the individual reflects a continued humanist emphasis upon the intentions of the human subject over the artwork or object’s own agency. Admittedly the \textit{Currency of Fame} catalogue describes the “personal” role of the medal, however the title recasts their function as definitively “public,” a term to which I will return in the following section.\textsuperscript{19} Epitomized by notions of currency and fame, the exhibition title characterizes the portrait medal as a vehicle for the self-aggrandizing intentions of the patron. By this formulation, an implicitly private individual would be made definitively public, thus

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{16} Joanna Woodall, \textit{Antonius Mor: Art and Authority} (Zwolle, Netherlands: Waanders Publishers, 2007), 20-1.
\textsuperscript{17} The catalogue augments connoisseurial information with details of patronage, production and distribution. However, it retains a primary emphasis on iconographic interpretation and the original moment of commissioning.
\textsuperscript{18} Scher \textit{Currency of Fame}, 13.
\end{flushleft}
conferring the desired *fama* or fame upon an elite or wealthy privileged personage who desired authority and recognition.

In response to the historiography of the portrait medal, this thesis investigates the notion of currency by shifting attention to conditions of circulation, accumulation, and display of *medaglie* over time. Far from being antithetical to a consideration of the role of *medaglie*, the use of the word currency in the title *Currency of Fame* highlights how crucial the notion of exchange is to their valuation. Of course, the form of currency produced by *medaglie* is different than a purely economic valuation, as evidenced by their circulation and collection outside the economic system. The networks that *medaglie* participated in were not only strikingly distinct from economic channels but were also vital to the preindustrial social fabric, which was highly dependent on interdependent association. Networks of princely patronage, courtly networks, artistic patronage, banking networks, scholarly humanist networks, and the Republic of Letters each intersect with this study at particular historical points. This is true of portrait medals in nearly all cases, of antique coins that have been traded and collected, and of certain contemporary coins that were sent to courts as gifts.

This project has benefited from recent scholarly attention to the display and reception of both portrait medals and antique coins. Luke Syson describes the probable modes of display of portrait medals in a variety of spaces over time as well as their altered significance in these varied situations. A special issue of *Word and Image* addresses issues concerning Renaissance practices of mechanical reproduction of likenesses, both in print and in medals. In this issue,

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20 Woodall, 22. Here Woodall asserts the importance of networks in pre-industrial societies.


Arne Flaten explicitly intervenes in the historiographic context outlined above and presents an impressive array of research regarding the display of medals from both visual and textual sources.\(^{23}\) He argues that the significance of medaglie cannot be divorced from either their display or, more specifically, from the intermediary nature of their movement between so-called public and private spaces. In this way, Flaten asserts that their mediating position is crucial to their unique role in the formation of identity.\(^{24}\)

The current project contributes to the work of scholars such as Syson and Flaten, particularly with regard to their interest in the relationship between the circulation of medaglie, their display, and their mediation of intersubjective relationships. The symbolic value of medaglie produced through gift exchange in non-economic networks is critical to any serious consideration of the role they played in social networks or the creation of “new publics.” This thesis will follow the movements of medaglie between individuals and attend to their changing role within these new relationships. Indeed, the mobility and durability of medaglie guarantees their continued potential to prompt new meanings within new historical situations. By tracing the paths of medaglie and their representation across time and space within networks, their work is elucidated according to multiple competing demands and social reciprocity that characterizes the early modern period.

### 1.3 The Last Word: “Public”

Much of the literature on medaglie either implicitly or explicitly relies upon a general notion of “the public” to describe their social functions. To function as propaganda, for example, medaglie would leave the private realm of the owner’s possession to enter a public sphere in which the recipient is defined primarily as a political subject. In relation to such an assertion, Jeff

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\(^{24}\) Flaten, 59-60.
Weintraub has critiqued the tendency of scholars to equate the boundary between the public and private with the boundary of the political.\footnote{Jeff Weintraub, “The Theory and Politics of the Public/Private Distinction,” in \textit{Public and Private in Thought and Practice: Perspectives on a Grand Dichotomy}, ed. Jeff Weintraub and Krishan Kumar (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 2.} Weintraub points out that such equations obscure the complex protean nature of what the term public can encompass as well as the multiplicity of meanings that overlap and interconnect within it.\footnote{Ibid., 3.} Moreover, such delineation between public and private would obscure the interpenetration of the public and private lives of early modern subjects and their mode of political engagement.\footnote{Michael McKeon, \textit{The Secret History of Domesticity: Public, Private and the Division of Knowledge} (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005).} For this reason, the term public will not be used to refer to a boundary between the political and non-political spheres. Instead, I understand public life as a sphere of sociability that is in constant flux, a particularly productive reconceptualization for this historical period.\footnote{Weintraub, 7; 16-27. This is the third of four definitions of the term public that Weintraub presents.}

In this sphere of intersubjectivity, \textit{medaglie} are understood as active objects that are partially constitutive of networks. The reciprocity of gift exchange and the “social institution” of friendship are given their proper due in the formation of new, ever more modern, forms of sociability and “publics.”\footnote{Peter Burke, “Humanism and Friendship in Sixteenth-Century Europe,” in \textit{Friendship in Medieval Europe}, ed. Julian Haseldine (Stroud: Sutton, 1999).} This paper will consider early modern sociability in relation to the emergence of a distinctive form of publicness that occurred after the seventeenth century. The result of these transformations includes shifts in subjectivity: “a certain kind of person” as Michael Warner observes in the epigraph to the introduction with which I began. Emerging in full form during the eighteenth century, this “kind of person” inhabited his social world in ways theorized by Jurgen Habermas in the 1960s and, more recently, post-Habermasian theorists such...
as Warner.\textsuperscript{30} According to these thinkers, a public is not restricted to a physically bounded audience, nor is it employed as a generalized notion of the space outside the private home.\textsuperscript{31} A public is understood to be a fluid and reflexive form of social “imaginary” that occurs outside of the institutions of the state,\textsuperscript{32} depends upon strangerhood above familiarity, and is constituted by intermedial and metatopical texts rather than bounded to a single text or rhetorical utterance. These are ideas that will be more fully explicated in the conclusion and that form a backdrop to the discussions that follow.

The \textit{medaglie} of Isotta degli Atti of Rimini and Emperor John Paleologus traversed and potentially forged intersubjective connections within webs of the most intimate familiarity and the most profound strangerhood. Whether from within Rimini or to Minnesota, and whether from Florence to Rome or Constantinople, the mobility of \textit{medaglie} and their mutable meanings across time and space form a significant aspect of their valuation in the early modern period. Thus, as \textit{medaglie} traversed space and time, they created the conditions for new forms of sociability to emerge. This is part of a pre-history of modern publics, but only one. For, as Warner observes in the epigraph above: “[n]o single history sufficiently explains all the different ways these preconditions come together in practice.”\textsuperscript{33} Moreover, three representations of \textit{medaglie} will be discussed below in order to demonstrate how this historical passage does not move smoothly forward in a single line, but in multiple paths with fits and starts.


\textsuperscript{31} Warner states that an “audience” is only one understanding of a public. Instead he focuses on alternative ways in which a public is constituted. Warner focuses on issues of metatopicality and intermediality, arguing that publics are not only bounded in a specific time and place. These ideas will be addressed more fully in the conclusion.

\textsuperscript{32} Weintraub, 10-16.

\textsuperscript{33} Warner, 10.
2 Proximity and Interdependence: Association

2.1 The Kiss

Roughly two centuries before Isotta degli Atti’s medals were carried off to the New World, the Florentine artist, Sandro Botticelli, produced a painted portrait of an unidentified sitter holding a posthumous portrait medal commemorating Cosimo de Medici. Painted in 1473, *The Young Man Holding a Medal* is unprecedented for its mixed-media representation of a portrait medal. In contrast to the delicate layers of egg tempera that render the sitter in space, the medal is not painted; it is a plaster reproduction gilded in gold and attached directly to the surface of the panel. The medal in the painting, then, is a translation: a reproduction of an object that was originally produced in multiples which asserts its conditions of production. The juxtaposition of paint and relief provokes a sense of the haptic encounter that a portrait medal would elicit from its owner. The owner would cradle the portrait medal in his or her hands, trace the raised likeness of the sitter with his fingers, contemplate the symbolic *impresa* on the reverse side and consider the epigraphic titles that named the patron and artist. The material juxtaposition of gilded and painted surfaces in Botticelli’s work marks the boundary that temporarily conjoins subject and object. The sense of touch that enacts this imperfect union highlights the intimacy and proximity of the earlier embodied encounter.

The proximity between the sitter and medal in the *Young Man* points towards the particularly intimate nature of the ownership of medals in the fifteenth century. When an individual received a portrait medal as a gift, the object would be kept in the owner’s *studiolo* or workspace within the home. In this relatively cloistered space, medals came to be stored in boxes and bags, or even strewn carefully on one’s table in a self-conscious display of learnedness, as we see in Lorenzo Lotto’s drawing *An Ecclesiastic in his Bedchamber*, c. 1530. The owner of at
least several dozen medals is depicted studying in his bedroom, a common space for study and contemplation in the fifteenth century.\textsuperscript{34} Much like Lotto’s drawing suggests, the 1483 posthumous inventory of the collection of Cardinal Francisco Gonzaga tells us that his medaglie were kept together in different kinds of boxes and cases, such as in cartozeti, or paper folders, a small busoleto, and a damask bag.\textsuperscript{35}

The medals within one’s collection would be both contemplated by the individual in private and shown to friends and visitors to one’s study, or within the court. The studiolo was a space for private contemplation but this ideal was by no means completely instituted in the fifteenth century when, as Syson notes, “studioli not only served as private treasure houses but could also broadcast to select outsiders the wealth, expertise, learning, and connoisseurship of the men whose lives and actions they framed.”\textsuperscript{36} For example, in Bologna in 1505, the scholar Giovanni Sabadino degli Arienti received a coin of a portrait of Alfonso I d’Este, Duke of Ferrara, to whom Sabadino responded as follows:

Today in the presence of various illustrious citizens, [I] was shown the new coin [effigie], breathing and natural in my opinion. I was so delighted by it that I kissed it because of the sweetness [it induced in me]. I am pleased to say that Your Excellency was greatly praised, and we discussed it at length.\textsuperscript{37}

Sabadino’s correspondence demonstrates the power of the medal to stand in for the individual across space. The low relief illusionism of the Duke’s face provokes a particular response in the

\textsuperscript{34} Dora Thornton, \textit{The Scholar in His Study: Ownership and Experience in Renaissance Italy} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 27. Studioli were spaces of business as well as private contemplation. Often in this early phase of collecting, the studioli were within or attached to the bedchamber of the individual; McKeon traces out the shifts in distinction between private and public space in his detailed and lengthy study, cited above; Michael Lingohr, “The Palace and Villa as Spaces of Patrician Self-Definition,” in \textit{Renaissance Florence} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 240-272. This is a useful discussion of the import of private palaces to the negotiation of Florentine identities in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

\textsuperscript{35} Flaten, 64.


\textsuperscript{37} Syson “Circulating a Likeness,” 11.
recipient. The coin is not mute matter, but “breathing and natural” to the extent that it solicits (at least the claim of) an intimate kiss from Sabadino. The courtier’s effusive response to the illusionistic effigie is thus also a bodily response that substitutes the coin for the presence of the Duke, as the physical object is made to stand in for the physical body of an absent individual. At the same time, the tone of the letter and its claims to intimate expression highlight the studied performance of hierarchical relations that both the receipt of the medal and the letter stage.

2.2 An Effortless Perch

The fact that the Ferrarese Duke sent an officially circulating coin to Sabadino in Naples in the same way that portrait medals would be sent between a patron and recipient complicates our modern understanding of the categories of coin and medal and reasserts the blurred categorization of objects known as medaglie. In the fifteenth century, these two seemingly different classes of objects were referred to simply as medaglie, with no differentiation made between them in correspondence or inventories. This juxtaposition of temporalities and spaces, the heterotopic aspect of the studiolo collection, is a result of the practice of storing medals according to the metal from which they were cast. In the previously cited case of Cardinal Gonzaga, for example, gold medals and coins would be kept in boxes, preferably under lock and key, and usually in the top drawer of the storage box. By comparison, lead and tin castings would be stored loose in bags or paper folders. How are we to understand the particular way in which these objects were stored with seemingly little regard for the specificity of the faces they represent? On the one hand, it is likely that the display of these objects side-by-side facilitated

38 In this paper I use the term patron to refer to the individual who gives the medaglia to a recipient: the owner of an antique coin or the person who commissioned a contemporary coin or portrait medal. It is important to clarify that the visage depicted on a portrait medal was not necessarily the patron’s if the medal was made to commemorate an important event for the patron with respect to someone near him such as a son, brother, daughter, wife or friend.

39 Flaten, 60.
comparison of contemporary rulers with exemplary rulers from the classical past. On the other hand, the organization of these objects according to the worth of their metal may signal the appreciation of liquid capital that marks late medieval and early Renaissance valuation. However, the role of the face in producing meaning complicates these assertions: whereas the first hypothesis depends entirely on the signifying function of the face to enable a contemporary individual to lay claim to antique virtues, the latter would essentially annul the status of the face through its valuation solely as an asset or capital. In response to these understandings, I develop an alternative hypothesis that recognizes the social work of medaglie, particularly in relation to the demands made of the recipient through the iconography of the face and the materiality of the object.

Botticelli’s *Portrait of a Youth With a Medal* and Hans Memling’s *Portrait of a Young Man Holding a Coin of the Emperor Nero* visually register the different modes of attention demanded by the medal and the coin. The most striking difference between these two works ostensibly lies in the sculptural nature of Botticelli’s reproduction of the medal, but this is heightened by other visual cues. In Memling’s portrait, the sitter holds the coin of Emperor Nero in a capable and secure position firmly anchored in the lower right-hand corner of the composition. The relatively marginalized position of the coin in the corner of the panel is underscored by the ease embodied in the sitter’s one-handed display, effortlessly perched at the end of his fingertips. By contrast, Botticelli’s young man holds the substantially larger portrait medal on top of his heart, balanced on the inner edge of the palms of both hands. The forced triangulation of the hands around the medal’s circumference draws our attention to the physicality of the sculptural reproduction and the demand that this object makes. This demand is more fully registered in the sitter’s body. The young man is depicted in a more complex and
multi-directional posture, with the face turned to the right, in three-quarter profile, while the torso and gaze turn in the opposite direction to directly face the picture plane. It is within these subtle bodily contortions that Botticelli’s haptic encounter with the sculptural medal is centrally positioned, creating a particularly charged encounter between subject and object.

Although the conditions of its original commissioning and the identity of its sitter remain unknown, Botticelli’s Young Man was first identified in the inventory of Cardinal Carlo de Medici in 1666 and was certainly produced in Florence.\(^{40}\) We know that the work was produced around 1475, during the rule of Lorenzo de Medici, the Magnificent, son of Piero I and grandson of Cosimo de Medici. Whereas his father, Piero, had strained alliances across Italy and prompted attempted coups within Florence, as first citizen, Lorenzo was a more successful diplomat and negotiator than his father.\(^{41}\) However Lorenzo did not often directly commission Botticelli, and neither he nor any other Medici elite has been identified as the sitter in this work.\(^{42}\) Most likely the sitter is either Cosimo’s godson, an elite Florentine merchant, or upper middle class citizen who wished to display his allegiance to the most powerful family in the city. Thus it is possible that the painting would have been displayed in its patron’s home and thereby would have been visible to the many persons who participated in the “intense social activity” in the home during the fifteenth century.\(^{43}\) John Paoletti and Roger Crum describe the importance of the practice of displaying objects in Florentine palaces, objects which “traveled within the culture, where they


\(^{41}\) George Holmes, “Cosimo and the Popes,” in *Cosimo ‘il Vecchio’ de’ Medici, 1389-1464*, ed. Francis Ames-Lewis (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 21-31. Cosimo forged strong connections with the Popes in Rome to secure and maintain their influence in Florence. These relations would be strained by the time of Piero I who called for many of the Medici debtors to pay, including the Papacy.


\(^{43}\) Crum and Paoletti, 273.
gave evidence not only of the wealth of an individual owner but also of the social networks that
governed the life of the city and its inhabitants.” These networks are embedded within
Botticelli’s painting. The careful posturing of the young man and the centrality of the portrait
medal in his possession momentarily fix in place a single claim regarding an object that could
potentially travel far.

The medal of Cosimo de Medici was commissioned in the years following his death in
1464. Through mercantile prowess and subtle political machinations, Cosimo raised the role of
the Medici to unprecedented economic control and political influence as de facto ruler of
Florence. In this role, Cosimo controlled access to government while claiming to be, in his own
words, a mere “private citizen in a free republic.” The medal’s reverse, dedicated to the peace
and liberty of Florence, combined with the profile portrait on the obverse, placed Cosimo on par
with an antique ruler and yet tempered this claim to power by simultaneously setting him in the
service of the Florentine Republic. Cosimo’s medal was cast by 1469 during the rule of his son,
Piero I, who failed to maintain the stability established by his father. Whether commissioned by
Piero or by one of the Medici coterie, the medal would have been distributed to the wealthier and
more elite of Florentine citizens, on whom the Medici were dependent for support of their de

44 Ibid., 289.
45 Allison M Brown, “The Humanist Portrait of Cosimo de Medici, Pater Patriae,” Journal of the Warburg
46 The text and image work together to suggest that Cosimo’s founding role for Medici rule was
instrumental in bringing peace and liberty to the city and respected and maintained the Republican values of the
Signora. On the reverse of the medal there is a seated female figure on a throne. The figure probably represents
Peace signaled by the laurel branch held in her hand and the prominence of the first word: PAX The figure of Peace
implies that the merchant banker both submit to Republican rule and yet was instrumental in the success of the city.
Indeed Cosimo had to be extremely delicate in having direct or explicit involvement in politics. Of course his role
was largely to increase the prosperity of the city – or at least its elite – and interestingly this reverse does not make
any reference to the mercantile power of the family or the family’s reliance on this wealth to assert its dominance in
Florentine government. For the Medici the orb could connote both a symbolic authoritative orb as well as one of the
five palle or balls that formed the Medici coat of arms that was so ubiquitously employed by the family. The orb
could also reference an antique gem (the Fellix gem in Oxford) that depicted the myth of Diomedes in the Paladium
and the status of Pallas the security of Troy. Syson “Circulating a Likeness,” 95.
47 Emison, 446.
facto control of the city: members of their court, important employees in Florence, and other upper middle class individuals. The medals would also have been sent to major diplomatic centers on the Italian peninsula, particularly the Papal court, rulers of other city-states, and humanist scholars traveling between the courts.

Not only courtly and elite networks but also banking networks were of great importance to the Medici, whose social status depended in large part upon the family’s financial capital. Thus Cosimo’s medal would have moved through banking networks established earlier in the century. The object would have been sent to the bank’s associates in locations in Venice, Milan, Rome, London, and Bruges, not to mention the numerous other cities in which they had agents stationed but had no official offices.\textsuperscript{48} Such networks connected the Medici with men such as the Venetian ambassador and humanist, Bernardo Bembo, who worked in Bruges, and who is likely the sitter for Hans Memling’s \textit{Portrait of a Man Holding a Coin of Emperor Nero}.\textsuperscript{49} In the city of Bruges, there was a large Italian community that included employees of the Medici. Like Bembo, these men were connected to the Italian peninsula through the circulation of letters and goods along trade routes.\textsuperscript{50} Moreover the gifts that moved through the banking networks often overlapped and intersected with political relationships in fifteenth-century Italian states and republics;\textsuperscript{51} political as well as financial capital depended upon relations among these individuals. Importantly, all forms of \textit{medaglie} were also circulated in these networks.\textsuperscript{52} Thus the medal that Bembo holds in his painted portrait by Memling can be understood as a similar kind

\textsuperscript{50} de Roover, 319.
\textsuperscript{52} Cunnally “Ancient Coins,” 133. Cunnally remarks on the probability for the transport of coins and collections between Italy at this time from the “Flemish pilgrims and students who had visited Italy” to the “[m]erchants, agents, itinerant craftsmen and military adventurers from Florence, Naples, and other Italian states who were numerous enough in France and Flanders to form their own colonies in some of the towns…”
of agent, one that would have passed through networks similar to those of the sitter who holds it emblematically in his left hand.

2.3 Koine / Koinonia

The delicately balanced interdependence negotiated by the Medici in republican Florence included arrangements of power that affected social relations at every level of society during the fifteenth century. Ronald Weissman’s important work on middle class Florentine identity in the fifteenth century nuances the persistent bias toward individualism in art historical scholarship:

Whereas those who advance an individualist thesis tend to ignore the persistence of group ties, those who have reminded us of the strength of those ties have often neglected the interpretive and interactive process by which Florentines managed the complexity of their relations with each other ... I would argue that the Renaissance urban community was not characterized by anomie, but if anything, by an excess of intimacy and community.53

Weissman’s research shows that the “group ties” of patron-client relations, kinship networks, and neighborhood bonds required that individual citizens negotiate complicated debt and credit networks and deliberately ambiguous friendships in order to assure their own stability and social status. Like Weissman, Jill Burke worked to remedy the misleading nature of Burckhardt’s emphasis on individualism in her work on social and artistic patronage in Florence. Burke draws attention to the immense importance of family, friends, and neighbours, as well as the moral and social roles that patronage played in such interdependent networks.54 Weissman’s interest in the interconnection between the social and the urban has recently been reexamined by Nicholas Eckstein, who argues that the geographical topography of Renaissance Florence was inseparable from the webs of sociability that governed its inhabitants.55

Court society at the time was marked by similar intersubjective negotiations. Rinaldo Rinaldi has demonstrated the ways in which Northern Italian city-states were “bonded in a close network of relations and exchanges,” which, through the practice of courtly patronage, strengthened the bonds between them and asserted the strength and legitimacy of a newly formed regime.\textsuperscript{56} The bonds of patronage were not unidirectional. Patricia Emison describes the importance of the recipient of the medal: “Portrait medals were important signifiers of loyalty… and so the coherence of one’s collection of portrait medals was a real measure of one’s identity, reflecting a sense of political or intellectual clan and its potential extension between cities.”\textsuperscript{57} In this way, Emison importantly draws out the under-discussed role of the medal in the identity formation of its recipient, as well as its patron. However, princely rule during the fifteenth century was not a purely absolutist imposition of power whereby the propagandistic message of the patron was imposed on an unwitting audience.\textsuperscript{58} Instead, as the works of Weissman, Burke and Rinaldi emphasize, rulers were required to stabilize their regime within local, regional and international networks of interdependent relationships.

The mobility and accumulation of medaglie were crucial within these networks, as suggested by their representation in the portraits of Botticelli and Memling. John Cunnally elucidates the practice of giving and receiving antique coins in relation to the interdependence among Italian humanists during the fifteenth century. Antique coins were more freely given and exchanged between friends, acquaintances, and strangers because of their ubiquity. The gift of an antique coin would facilitate the sharing of knowledge between humanist lovers of antiquity and

\textsuperscript{57} Emison, 446.
\textsuperscript{58} Ibid., 449. Emison argues for the increasingly propagandistic role of medals in the sixteenth century, when increased production and circulation would have expanded the scale of their distribution.
would therefore establish social connections among a range of individuals. Cunnally points out that the gift of a coin formed a “common bond or network of communication that enabled lovers of antiquity to recognize and acknowledge one another,” and he identifies the symbolic economy of recognition and reciprocity that connected these diverse individuals as a kind of cultural koine. A Greek word that is etymologically unrelated to the word coin, koine is translated to mean “shared, common or public.” Cunnally’s explication of the term koine describes a shared symbolic currency among humanists.

Medaglie were frequently sent between distant courts enclosed in letters addressed to the intended recipient, by either the portrait medal’s patron or ancient coin’s owner. The import of the letter itself is signaled in another fifteenth-century portrait, Francesco Francia’s Portrait of Bartolomeo Bianchini, painted circa 1500, in which the scholar and collector rests his hand upon a ledge with an opened letter facing his breast. Letter writing was imperative to scholars, collectors, and other elite individuals, enabling them to form and negotiate friendship, patronage, and career relationships. The cultural practice of letter writing that formed the foundation of the Republic of Letters emerged from a long tradition in the antique and medieval periods. The practice, however, took hold after 1500 and was particularly ubiquitous in the eighteenth century. Across vast spaces, diverse individuals could engage with one another through the reciprocity of the written word. Letters contained their own rhetoric through which these interdependent, yet often hierarchically divided, individuals could negotiate—more or less

59 Cunnally “Ancient Coins,” 134.
62 Grafton, 6.
consciously—their social status. Reciprocal communication such as that embodied in letters was of vital import in the networks of fifteenth-century Florence and the interdependence inherent in the process of social maneuvering. Thus, it is in the context of the mediated interdependence of courtly and humanist networks that the letter of thanks from Sabadino to the Duke of Ferrara evokes what Paul McLean calls the “transformative power of connections to powerful others.”

The Republic of Letters not only enabled individuals to converse outside and within political institutions but also to negotiate new and higher positions in society in both settings. In this way, the Republic of Letters was partially “constituted outside of the political” arena during the fifteenth century, a feature that it shared with the circulation of antique coins in humanist networks that was described by Cunnally as a form of cultural koine. The increasingly extra-political circulation of letters and medaglie should be distinguished from the earlier classical notion of koinonia. Greek for society or community, Koinonia was a form of belonging to the polis or republic, in which the private lives of subjects were not divorced from the public

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63 Ibid., 6. McLean also deals with these issues. He opens his introduction with a letter that requests an appointment. This sets the scene for his entire project that takes up the rhetoric of letter writing as a crucial evidence of networking in Renaissance Florence. Although I think this work is important there was a degree of self-consciousness in much of this posturing and self-effacement, it is also important to emphasize the fact that these mechanisms would have also have effected a less intentional level of behavior. This is in part what interests me in looking at intersubjectivity and sociability, as well as the ambiguity of visual materials or a more poetic form of intersubjective communication that stands in contrast to the textual or discursive ‘rhetoric’ of letters. In part I think that this is particularly important because of the high degree of ambiguity required during the period. Visual poetics would offer a distinctly more ambiguous mode of asserting oneself in this regard. On ambiguity in fifteenth-century Florentine identity see Ronald Weissman.

64 See McLean for a general discussion of these ideas in his introduction; Dale Kent, *Cosimo de Medici and the Florentine Renaissance*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000: 6-8. Kent discusses the import of reciprocity and letters to fifteenth-century artistic patronage; Laurie Fusco and Gino Corti, ed., *Lorenzo de’ Medici, collector and antiquarian* (New York : Cambridge University Press, 2006). This is a very useful study of Lorenzo’s careful use of collecting in developing connections and power. It includes numerous letters and primary source materials.

65 McLean, 1.

66 Grafton, 6.

67 Taylor, 191.
political life of the city-state. On this crucial point, Charles Taylor has noted the role of the Republic of Letters in the period prior to the formation of the normative public sphere in the eighteenth century, proclaiming that this “international society of savants in interchange with themselves towards the end of the seventeenth century” were effectively “a precursor phenomenon to the public sphere” and “contributed to shaping it.” If the seventeenth-century Republic of Letters contributed to the more modern form of sociability in the “public sphere of the eighteenth century, only inklings of these later developments were manifest in the humanist practices of writing letters among the courts, a practice that remained partially connected to the princely ruler in the fifteenth century. Nevertheless, the circulation of medaglie in letters and in person were incredibly active within shifting social practices, a point to which I will return throughout this thesis.

2.4 The Gift of a Face

From within this web of humanist and courtly sociability, the scholar Sabadino’s letter reciprocates the gift of the Duke of Naples’ effigie, or likeness, with an excess of intimacy necessary to bridge (albeit partially) the intersubjective, hierarchical, and geographic divide between patron and recipient. Moreover, the emphatically effusive tone of Sabadino’s letter highlights the social potency of the medal in such hierarchical practices of exchange. In a related rhetorical manner, Botticelli’s Young Man Holding a Medal employs the portrait medal of the deceased Cosimo de Medici visually, by positioning it over the sitter’s heart. By contrast, the compositional decentering of the coin of emperor Nero in Memling’s portrait suggests that, although stored together in boxes and bags as medaglie, antique coins and contemporary portrait medals did a different kind of work for the subjects who received them. Despite their differences,

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68 Taylor, 191.
69 Ibid., 191.
the portraits of Memling and Botticelli convey the intimate proximity of *medaglie*—held close to the their sitters—and facilitate the association depicted between these objects and the subjects. However, in Botticelli’s portrait, this association is more forcefully asserted through the compositional centrality of the portrait medal and the encounter the sculptural relief presents to its viewers, and also solicits from them.

Within the patterns of sociability discussed above, the juxtaposition of the antique coin and the portrait medal side by side within the fifteenth-century collection can be reconceived according to their status as gifts. The value of the metal in which the medal or coin is cast signifies the value that the patron or owner placed upon his or her relationship with its recipient; the materiality of the gift comes to signify not only the worth of the relationship but also the status and stability that it confers. Thus, the organization of *medaglie* within the *studiolo* space, according to the value of gold, bronze, or tin is related to a form of social capital that could be understood as a form of currency. However, although both coins and medals ostensibly reference specific social relationships, only the contemporary medal simultaneously acts as an iconic sign of one of the individuals in that relationship, or someone associated with it. Through this dual signification, the portrait medal constituted a doubly stabilized material sign of an immaterial relation, in which the iconicity of the medal makes specific the demands of the relationship that it signifies. Not quite public, nor entirely private, in the fifteenth century the early modern portrait medal maintained and transformed interdependent collectives of elite individuals through the demands of personal indebtedness that were made all the more pressing through the gift of a face.
3. Mobility and Displacement: Attributes

Botticelli’s *Portrait of a Young Man with a Medal* represents a single, clearly identifiable portrait medal carefully pressed up to, or more accurately upon, the picture plane. By contrast, a painted portrait produced in the sixteenth century, Titian’s *Portrait of Jacopo Strada* (1567-8), depicts a loosely accumulated pile of six *medaglie* lying on a tabletop, below and slightly behind the sitter. These *medaglie* are not centrally located, nor displayed by the sitter. Rather, they are oriented horizontally, resting upon the table for the sitter’s contemplation and display to his visitors. In addition, a large *medaglia* is worn by Strada as a pendant, ostentatiously suspended from a thick gold chain that is looped four times around his neck. None of the iconographic details of Strada’s *medaglie* are distinguishable, nor are their status as either coin or portrait medal, as in Memling or Botticelli’s fifteenth-century portraits. While these *medaglie* are clearly significant within the composition, their role is very different from the single unambiguous medal depicted in Botticelli’s *Young Man Holding a Portrait Medal* nearly a century earlier.

3.1 *Medaglie*, a Patrician Collector and an Antiquarian Agent

The loosely grouped *medaglie* that appear on Strada’s tabletop in 1567-8 could be said to reactivate a *topos* of humanist erudition that had appeared earlier in the century.70 The convention of self-conscious display of *medaglie* upon a *studiolo* tabletop was already discussed in relation to Lotto’s drawing, *An Ecclesiastic in his Bedchamber*, and a similar group of *medaglie* is represented by the same artist in his portrait of Andrea Odoni of 1527. Odoni was a

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70 Luba Freedman, “Titian’s Portrait of Jacopo Strada,” *Renaissance Studies* vol 13 no 1 (1999): 39. In contrast to this thesis, Freedman endeavors to “read” Strada’s portrait through iconographic analysis and biographic details. Freedman’s article exemplifies other scholars who treat these *medaglie* as a straightforward symbol of Strada’s profession. Freedman also focuses on the uniqueness of Strada’s posture and the inclusion of so many objects in the portrait. Seeking to account for the posture and objects, Freedman analyses the portrait in relation to its deviation from works in Titian’s larger oeuvre and through its classification within and outside certain “typologies” of portraiture such as the “studio portrait.” See for example: Freedman, 28. Although our methodological approaches differ, Freedman’s article is useful for its presentation of relevant research on Strada’s portrait.
patrician collector depicted with an assortment of objects from his antiquarian collection and scholarly activities. Antique sculpture surrounds the sitter, peeking out from underneath the tablecloth in the foreground, littering the shelves and surfaces in the background, and grasped by the sitter in his outstretched hand.71 More closely ascribed to the sitter’s body are the scholarly book and medaglie that rest on the tabletop. The medaglie are set away from the table’s edge, clustering around the book that is tucked under Odoni’s robed arm. The gathering of medaglie close to the sitter’s body is made more intimate by their position directly below Odoni’s face and near his bare hand.72 To emphasize further this axis of personal identification between Odoni and these objects, his bare hand is pressed to his heart, accentuating the closeness of the medaglie that accumulate below him.

    Much like Botticelli’s portrait, Lotto’s composition discourages movement of the viewer’s gaze outside of the portrait; through fixity and intimacy, the beholder’s attention is tethered to the space of proximity between the face, body, heart, hand, and medaglie. This sense is further produced through the stability of the seated pose and the voluminously robed body that anchors the loosely scattered medaglie. While Odoni’s sartorial bulk recalls the framing of Cosimo’s medal in the cloak of Botticelli’s Young Man, the hands of Lotto’s sitter do not frame the mobile object(s) in place in Lotto’s composition. Nevertheless, the artist’s choice of situating the medaglie between the table’s edge and the body of their owner arrests their potential movement. The fixity of the medaglie between Odoni’s seated body and the table’s edge is matched by the directness of the sitter’s gaze and the sense of proximity is echoed by Odoni’s hand that rests gently upon his breast.

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72 Ibid., 164. Thought to be a gesture of sincerity, this hand originally held a small crucifix and rosary.
Titian’s portrait, by contrast, fundamentally displaces direct association between the *medaglie* and the sitter. Represented in the process of rising, Strada turns to his left to address a client while holding a sculpture to the right of his torso. This twisting posture unsettles the association between the sitter and the objects surrounding him: the axis between the face, hands and objects seen in Lotto’s portrait is disrupted in Titian’s portrait of Strada. Strada’s pile of *medaglie* is depicted to the left of his face, below his hands. Furthermore, the alignment of the subject’s body with these objects is necessarily divided by the pendant *medaglia*. Coupled with the placement of the *medaglie* slightly behind the sitter, as well as his dynamic movement, this division of attention disables the direct association between sitter and *medaglie*.

The lessened intimacy between sitter and *medaglie* in Titian’s portrait is heightened by the lack of a fixed and stable frame. In Titian’s composition, the static posturing of both Botticelli’s young man and Lotto’s Odoni is here replaced by a remarkable sense of mobility and instability. The twist of Strada’s body and the sharp turn of his face produce a dynamic pose that is accompanied by a lack of eye contact, disallowing direct solicitation of the painting’s beholder. Whereas Lotto places Odoni’s *medaglie* upon a vibrant tablecloth in a well-lit interior, the *medaglie* in Titian’s portrait seem to float upon the dark surface of the tablecloth. Titian’s shadowy foreground blends with Strada’s black vest and dimly lit background and stands in stark contrast to Lotto’s depiction of the interior space with its continuation of the green tabletop behind Odoni and the illuminated sculptures resting against the blue wall. In Titian’s composition, while the frame of the tabletop spills over with shadow, the blurred boundaries between the dark tablecloth, vest, and interior space open up the associative possibilities of the *medaglie*, connecting them to a space beyond that of the canvas itself.

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3.2 Collecting Connections

Imperial antiquarian to the powerful Hapsburgh rulers of the Holy Roman Empire, Strada was a highly ambitious figure in the history of antiquarianism who depended upon the attributes of erudition and elite social connections in order to rise in his profession. Luba Freedman notes that during the sixteenth century the professions of antiquarian, historian, scholar and collector were blurred. Working between these roles, the antiquarian described and preserved, rather than interpreted, items from the past. From an early age, Strada frequently professed intimate knowledge of medaglie and, more specifically, antique coins. Strada was “nurtured on numismatics” in Mantua during his training with Giulio Romano, where he studied antique architecture by drawing the reverses of antique coins. Strada described himself as an antiquarian as early as 1553 to emphasize his occupation and rank, in the same year that he published his first numismatic book from the coins in his own personal collection. Emperor Maximilian II nominated Strada to the position of Antiquarius Caesareus in 1567, the time that Strada commissioned this painted portrait.

Under the patronage of Duke Albrecht V at the time the portrait was painted, Strada made several trips to Venice in the hopes of acquiring the works of Gabriele Vendramin for the Duke’s collections. Strada’s collecting practices stand in clear contrast to those of patrician collectors: he identified and negotiated the acquisition of smaller patrician collections, such as Odoni’s, which

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74 Freedman, 17-19. Strada was a courtier to the successive Hapsburgh emperors: the brother of Charles V, Ferdinand I, his son Maximilian II and grandson Rudolph II.
75 Ibid., 17.
77 Jansen “Antiquarian Interests,” 15; 29. Strada accumulated these drawings in thousands of folios from 1550 and they held great attraction for several of his future patrons. Strada gave a collection of drawings to Duke Albrecht V at the same time as he gave him his library. Fugger had also paid a small fortune for a collection of Strada’s drawings.
78 Freedman, 17-8. While working for the Hapsburgh elite, Strada organized antique medaglie chronologically from antique to Charles V in order to serve the claims of his imperial patrons in his second numismatic treatise of 1559; Jansen “Antiquarian Interests” 1991, 59.
79 Freedman, 19.
were coming onto the market in the late sixteenth century. Following the deaths of collectors such as Odoni and Vendramin the impoverished heirs of these men were either convinced to sell their inheritance by men such as Strada or they willfully did so. Smaller collections thus began to be purchased by important patrons such as those who employed Strada for collections of increasing size and scope.

Within this powerful network of scholars and nobility, Strada’s attributes of erudition, persuasiveness and connectivity were imperative to his professional and social ambitions. Attributes based on knowledge and skills were of vital importance to Viennese nobility in the sixteenth century. Karin McHardy notes of Hapsburgh-ruled Vienna:

> Although economic capital … [was] crucial … the power of economic capital became fully effective only when it was associated with immaterial resources, especially social capital (e.g. noble ties, patronage, networks) and symbolic capital (e.g., honour, reputation). And both the successful propagation of this social order and family enhancement depended to a large extent on the assimilation of cultural or informational capital (e.g., knowledge and skills) into the habitus of young nobles.

As McHardy articulates above, “cultural or informational capital” depends upon the knowledge, skills or attributes that are, in turn, requisite for the accumulation of social and symbolic capital. Within this system of valuation, the importance of social capital cannot be overstated. Attributes and associations were mutually reinforcing and indispensable to social success within highly interconnected relations. Strada was a key player among the noble collectors, scholars and nobility who constituted these elite networks in sixteenth-century Europe. The letter that lies directly below the suspended medaglia pendant and beside the pile of medaglie on Strada’s table alludes to the numerous individuals upon whom Strada depended for success.

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82 Cunnally Images of the Illustrious, 31. See footnote 29.
Not unlike Botticelli’s young man who holds the portrait medal of Cosimo the Elder to his heart, the suspended medaglia in Titian’s Jacopo Strada lies against Strada’s chest and signals the most important relationships to which Strada laid claim. It has been suggested that the large medaglia was a gift from one of Strada’s imperial patrons and thus speaks to the patronage that Strada enjoyed at the time the portrait was painted. In addition to the medaglia, the looped chain also locates Strada within a growing network of individuals and nobility of the Holy Roman Empire who were involved in amassing larger collections than seen earlier in the century. An undiscussed aspect of this medaglia pendant is the depiction of similar pendants in several portraits of Albrecht V by Hans Muelich, in which the Duke wears a suspended medaglia on a single or thin double chain. One difference between the portraits of Duke Albrecht and Strada is the depiction of four thick gold chains in Titian’s canvas. The pentimento of Titian’s portrait of Strada suggests that the looped chain was a matter of some deliberation: Titian had begun with a double chain, but later added two additional loops. A portrait miniature, Portrait of Samuel Quiccheberg of 1556, suggests that the quadruple-looped chain connects Strada to another imperial agent and collector, Samuel Quiccheberg (1529–1567). Hans Muelich produced this miniature ten years prior to Titian’s depiction of Strada, c. 1556. It portrays Quiccheberg wearing a thick gold chain, looped three times around the neck with a medium sized medaglia. At the time this portrait was painted, Quiccheberg was favored by the patronage of Albrecht V of Bavaria. Thus, considered alongside the portraits of the Duke and Quiccheberg, Strada’s medaglia might call up the network of courtly individuals with whom he associated.

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83 Ibid., 31. See footnote 28.
85 Jansen “Antiquarian Interests,” 61. According to Jansen, Quiccheberg was also a protégé of Strada’s previous patron Hans Jacob Fugger and participated in that circle of collectors and scholars; Thomas da Costa Kauffman, “Remarks on the Collections of Rudolph II: the Kunstkammer as a Form of Representation,” Art Journal vol 38 no 1 (Autumn 1978): 28 (footnote 16). Here Kauffman notes the proximity of Strada and Quiccheberg.
Two years prior to the commissioning of Strada’s portrait, Quiccheberg authored his seminal 1565 treatise, *Theatrum Amplissimum*, in response to Albrecht’s collections, which were housed at the Duke’s Munich residence, known as the *Kunstkammer* or “art house.” This work has been described as the first articulation of the modern museum in its description of the early modern *Kunstkammer*. This treatise is also the first to articulate and advocate for the newly emergent position of a professional agent such as Strada’s. According to Quiccheberg, the agent offers his patron specialized knowledge as well as necessary social contacts needed to discover and acquire hidden treasures. Dirk Jacob Jansen notes the important stabilizing role that such intermediaries could offer their patrons: by employing a single agent to conduct all of his purchases and correspondence, a prince or noble patron would ensure more stable relationships with the owners and heirs of objects and collections than if these patrons were to approach these individuals themselves. Strada, whose skill in negotiation and international connections greatly enhanced his symbolic and social capital in Vienna, epitomizes this crucial function.

Not only were the *medaglie* moving from smaller, looser collections in the humanist *studiolo* to larger groupings in royal and courtly collections, but within these new sites, they began to be accumulated in new ways, as well. Strada played an active role in these new formations as they emerged in the courts of the Holy Roman Empire in the 1560s. Quiccheberg discussed the organization of objects in these large imperial collections at length:

There is much that can he rolled up or folded and stowed away in slim cabinets, small cupboards or boxes, but for which, when they are otherwise stretched out over the broadest walls or exhibited on the widest tables or on measured display stands, there would scarcely be room enough. But here, in addition to these cupboards, chests, wall cabinets, tables and display stands, one must also call to mind that for these practical

86 Kauffman, 25.
purposes storage magazines may be of great use, as well as portable boxes with square compartments, and small cupboards with folding doors, and likewise books with folding covers, and finally stacked chests containing sundry works of art and prominently labeled.89

The highly regimented forms of storage that Quiccheberg describes in his treatise stand in stark contrast to previous modes of collection and display. This new labeling, stacking and dividing into enclosed boxes, books, cupboards and chests of medaglie and other objects in imperial and noble collections, formed a striking departure from the loose collection of medaglie earlier in the sixteenth century. Cunnally observes the shift in collecting practices during the sixteenth century in relation to the pile of medaglie in Titian’s portrait:

These heaps and piles so typical of early Renaissance storage and display are replaced after the middle of the cinquecento with collections organized and unified according to hierarchical, thematic, or chronological schemes. The Antiquarium of Duke Albrecht V of Bavaria, begun in 1566, was the earliest of the new-style museums; the Duke’s antiquarian Jacopo Strada played no small part in the creation of this collection, housed at the Residenz in Munich.90

Here Cunnally draws attention to Strada’s important role in the radical shifting of paradigms of display that saw the birth of the modern museum. In the later sixteenth century, Strada not only produced and participated in these new forms of display in his profession as an agent to the Hapsburghs but he was also actively involved in the spread of Quiccheberg’s theories through the acquisition and organization of increasing numbers of elite and imperial collections.91 In 1563, Albrecht V commissioned the first Kunstkammer and, by 1567, he commissioned an Antiquarium to be built under Strada’s direction.92 Although Strada was more specifically involved in the Antiquarium, his involvement in the Kunstkammer has also been noted.93

90 Cunnally Images of the Illustrious, 29.
91 Kauffman, 28 footnote 16; Maxwell, 421. Both authors note the proximity of Strada and Quiccheberg in Munich collecting circles; Jansen “Le Commerce d’Art,” 11.
92 Maxwell, 421. Kauffman states the date is 1566.
notes, for example, that Strada’s purchases in Venice in 1566-9 were not limited to antiquities. Strada also purchased stones and a variety of other objects that were used to decorate and embellish the Munich Kunstkammer.\textsuperscript{94} During his involvement with the Antiquarium, Strada also participated in the increasing regimentation of collections. He commissioned large cabinets for the Duke’s “collection de monnaies”, for example, that had grown in size under his watch.\textsuperscript{95}

### 3.3 Fantastical Journeys

Despite the increasing fixity and organization of ever-larger collections, we come across the continued representation of loose and ubiquitous medaglie. John Cunnally notes that in one of his Epistolae, Giovanni Filoteo Achillini (1466 - 1538), a philosopher and poet, chronicles a “fantastical and ridiculous journey that includes a visit to a mysterious underground chamber filled with a chamber of ancient gold coins, no doubt the dream of many a Renaissance collector.”\textsuperscript{96} Mountains of medaglie, here specified as antique coins, were also imagined to flow like veins of gold.\textsuperscript{97} Quiccheberg chose the figure of Ubertas – a fertility goddess who “pour[s] an endless stream of coins from an urn” – for the printer’s device that trademarked his books. In this way, “the most prolific of the sixteenth-century numismatic writers” activated fantasies of unrestrained, unregimented and unending medaglie at a time when these objects were increasingly held in imperial and noble collections.\textsuperscript{98}

The flow of medaglie from Ubertas’ urn brings us to another portrait commissioned by Strada during his travels in Venice: that of his son and protégé, Ottavio, commissioned from Tintoretto in 1568. In this portrait, Ottavio is inserted into a fabulous world where the

\textsuperscript{94} Jansen “Le Commerce d’Art,” 13.
\textsuperscript{95} Jansen “Le Commerce d’Art,” 12.
\textsuperscript{96} Cunnally Images of the Illustrious, 29-30.
\textsuperscript{97} Ibid., 28.
\textsuperscript{98} Ibid., 29. There is some dispute whether the Portrait of Ottavio Strada was painted by Tintoretto. See: W.R. Rearik, “Reflections on Tintoretto as a Portraintist, Artibus et Historiae vol 16 no 31 (1995): 62-3.
personification of Fortune offers an urn replete with golden coins and Strada’s youngest son gently cradles her proffered riches. It is believed these two portraits were to form a diptych in Strada’s study in Vienna.\(^9^9\) Considered together, the image of Ottavio’s hand at Fortuna’s urn forms a compelling counterpoint to his father’s outstretched arm that offers up the statuette in his portrait discussed earlier, and in this way the portraits would suggest a paternal lineage of antiquarianism, a lineage inseparable from the objects accepted by, and offered to, the sitter. The commissioning of Titian and Tintoretto for these two works strengthens the narrative of lineage through the generational parallel between Titian and Strada and the younger painter Tintoretto and Strada’s son. Titian was an illustrious imperial portraitist who had already depicted the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V, among numerous other noble and imperial personages that included the Vendramin family.\(^1^0^0\) Titan’s status and imperial connections made him a perfect candidate to depict the senior Strada, whose own imperial patronage was heightened by both Titian’s skill and his reputation.

Titian’s position in networks of artistic patronage was also served by the production of Jacopo Strada’s portrait. As Michael Baxandall has noted, “painting is the deposit of a social relationship” and, indeed, the relationship between Titian and Strada has often been brought into discussions of this work.\(^1^0^1\) Scholars frequently cite the words of Strada’s rival Niccolo Stoppio who claimed that Titian had no respect for the ambitious antiquarian.\(^1^0^2\) It is more likely, however, that Stoppio’s letter does not accurately describe Titian’s attitude toward Strada, but

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\(^1^0^0\) Cecil Gould, *Titian as Portraitist* (London: National Gallery, 1976). For an interesting study see Woodall and in the introduction: Woodall, 21.
\(^1^0^1\) Michael Baxandall, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), 1.
\(^1^0^2\) Peter Humphrey, *Titian* (New York: Phaidon Press, 2007), 210. Stoppio reported to Fugger that Titian had called Strada “one of the most solemn ignoramus around.” Many scholars take Stoppio’s claims at face value. See for example: Jennifer Fletcher, “Titian as a Portrait Painter,” in *Titian* ed. David Jaffé (London: National Gallery, in association with Yale University Press, 2003), 37.
strategically attempts to undercut his main rival.\textsuperscript{103} Titian and Strada’s relationship has been less frequently discussed in light of their strategic proximity. As David Jaffé observes “[t]he painting is a monument to a painter’s relationship with his dealer. Artists tend to portray those that promote them as powerful men, and the task is undoubtedly tinged with ambiguity about whose career is being better promoted … Strada’s portrait, whatever Titian’s own feelings, called for a flamboyant display, since it would be an advertisement of his skills.”\textsuperscript{104} Considering the likely display of Strada’s portrait in his own studio, Titian’s “flamboyant display” would have surely reached Strada’s powerful patrons. Even more tangibly, Titian sought to establish relationships with Strada’s patrons through the reciprocity of gift exchange; Titian gave Strada copies of a series of paintings in order to distribute them as gifts to the imperial and noble patrons in the Holy Roman Empire with hopes to establish relations and inspire patronage.\textsuperscript{105}

3.4 Attributes in Spaces and Their Relations

The fantastical journeys of the beholder’s gaze called up by the medaglie in Titian’s portrait are accompanied by references to more local sites and the particular courtly networks that Strada navigated in Vienna. Strada had entered the imperial court through claims to erudition and intelligence with regard to medaglie. Such attributes enabled him to form key relationships, creating possibilities for new alliances in the future. The importance of sociability to Strada’s professional rise can be noted throughout his career.\textsuperscript{106} Following his training under Giulio Romano in Mantua, Strada spent a short time under the patronage of the papacy before

\textsuperscript{103} Humphrey Titian, 210.
\textsuperscript{104} Jaffé’s catalogue entry more carefully assesses the claims of Stoppio than does Jennifer Fletcher’s chapter on portraiture in the same volume.
\textsuperscript{105} Fletcher, 34. These paintings were copies of a mythological series that Titian had painted for Phillip II and were painted by Titian’s workshop. It is possible that they were passed off for originals when Strada gave them to Maximilian in Vienna: Stoppio suggested that Strada’s portrait was painted by Titian in exchange for this service and contemporary scholars continue to accept his assertions.
\textsuperscript{106} Howard Louthan, The Quest for Compromise: Peace Makers in Counter Reformation Vienna (Cambridge NY: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 5-7.
entering the service of the patrician collector, Hans Jakob Fugger, in Augsburg.\textsuperscript{107} This led to his eventual entry into the patronage of the court of the Holy Roman Emperors and other nobility of the Empire, such as Duke Albrecht V of Bavaria, through friend and esteemed goldsmith, Wenzel Jamnitzer.\textsuperscript{108} In 1560, the imperial favor he had already received resulted in a prestigious appointment as court architect.\textsuperscript{109} On several occasions the emperor Maximilian permitted that Strada temporarily serve other imperial nobility such as Albrecht V as an antiquarian agent. It was in this capacity that Strada traveled widely, including to Venice in the late 1560s, serving the Emperor and his acquaintances.\textsuperscript{110}

The implications of Strada’s influence within the “intricate web of relationships” at the Viennese court is discussed by Howard Louthan, who suggests that antique coins were a crucial site that gathered individuals together as part of this relational web.\textsuperscript{111} An interesting testament to the charged nature of medaglie is exemplified by a controversy that erupted between Strada and an elder Austrian functionary of the court, Wolfgang Laziус.\textsuperscript{112} Laziус had been commissioned to provide a commentary to the catalogue of the numismatic collection of Emperor Ferdinand, and this work was completed in 1558. Following Laziус’ submission, Strada was asked to review the document, to which he “savagely attacked Laziус’ competence.” Strada ended the letter by suggesting that they remove Laziус and assign him to a task in which “he could do no injury to the medals and coins.”\textsuperscript{113} The language used by Strada suggests a unique agentive role to these objects. Unlike the effigy that solicited the intimate kiss of the courtier to the Duke, here the

\textsuperscript{107} Cunnally \textit{Images of the Illustrious}, 29. While working for Fugger, Strada was offered gifts or exchanges from individuals as powerful as the Medici Duke Cosimo I who was working to improve the family’s collection of medaglie; Pollard, xxxvii.
\textsuperscript{108} Louthan, 5.
\textsuperscript{109} Louthan, 5.
\textsuperscript{110} Cunnally \textit{Images of the Illustrious}, 29-30.
\textsuperscript{111} Louthan, 7.
\textsuperscript{112} Louthan, 26-9.
\textsuperscript{113} Louthan, 28.
objects solicit the protection of an imperial agent and intermediary, whose identity and status rest upon their presence as a group. Louthan goes on to cast Strada and Lazius in opposition to one another, as they maneuver in the struggle for power at court. In the course of their feud and in their participation within courtly society, Strada emerged as the more powerful agent of the Emperor. Lazius emphasized patriotism to argue for the outsider status of Strada, whereas Strada argued that Lazius was not cosmopolitan enough to prove his knowledge, claiming he lacked certain key assets because of the absence of connections in Italy and other antique centers.

Arguing for the success of Strada’s social mobility at court, Louthan compares Titian’s portrait of the Italian to an engraving of Lazius. Whereas the print of Lazius was part of a series of local personalities, Titian’s portrait “reflects the cosmopolitan and urbane circles in which Strada moved.” Moreover, Louthan claims that the capacities of these two men were signified by the proximity between the sitter and object(s) depicted in each portrait. Whereas Lazius rests upon a book, “Strada is actually handling artifacts from the past. Coins are spread out before him while he gently cradles a small replica of Praxiteles’s Aphrodite Pselioumene.” Thus, although Strada did not lay claim to an intimate and direct association with his depiction with medals, as Botticelli’s sitter had, for example, his continued proximity to a displaced relationship with *medaglie* bespeaks their import to his social position and identity in Viennese courtly life.

Finally, *medaglie* can be traced to the residences of these two courtly men. Lazius lived in a residence outside the city of Vienna. His residence featured local architectural details, such as Carolingian references to an indigenous right to Imperial rule. Strada, by contrast, positioned himself in the centre of Vienna. In 1566, he purchased the original Austrian building,

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114 This episode speaks to the ways in which *medaglie* – and objects or “things” have both the capacity to divide and gather: to occasion debate as well as association.
115 Louthan, 31.
116 Ibid, 30-1.
117 Ibid., 33.
only to have it torn down to construct a replica of an Italian palazzo. Strada’s residence housed an extensive graphic collection, a large library and numismatic collection, as well as a studio delle antichita et pitture locupletissime. Strada’s Vienna residence became noted for its collection of antique objects and decoration, and it soon became an important site of gathering for the Viennese nobility or, as Louthan states it, “… a frenetic centre of social activity, where visitors were often entertained in lavish fashion.” These gatherings would have included members of the Emperor’s court and the city’s elite nobility. Alongside the visits of familiar personages, certain unknown individuals would also have also visited the residence. Imperial guests were invited to the residence in order to impress them with the accomplishments of the city, and tourists visited the many collections that it housed.

By tracing the filaments of association prompted by medaglie to imagined and physical sites of sociability, it becomes clear that the attributes signified by medaglie were deeply enmeshed within the social relations of collecting and courtly relations. The medaglie in Titian’s painting not only mimetically represent objects that reference sites and spaces associated with the body of the sitter himself but also stand as symbols of the imagined, remembered, and present sites at which the attributes were claimed. The medaglie in Titian’s portrait do not work as indexes of a particular object in time and space, as they do in Botticelli’s Portrait of a Young Man Holding a Medal. More akin to Lotto’s Portrait of Andrea Odoni, Strada’s medaglie are not traceable to any specific or iconic individual. The iconicity of the painted medaglie signifies a general kind of object that guarantees an intellectual and social capacity.

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118 Ibid., 33-4.
119 Ibid., 33.
120 Ibid., 33.
121 Ibid., 34.
By attending to the formal issues of composition and framing in Titian’s portrait, in tandem with the specific historical location of Strada and his position as antiquarian and agent to the Hapsburghs, I have not only sought to uncover the ways in which this one painted portrait might thematize the work of *medaglie* within the rapidly changing constellation of collecting subjects and collected objects, but also to symbolize attributes that, within elite and imperial networks, could generate social prestige and success. Titian’s mimetic mastery facilitates the attention of the beholder’s gaze that moves between, and beyond, the shadowy foreground and background of the composition. In contrast to this ocular demand, Botticelli’s *Young Man Holding a Medal* elicits a haptic response from the beholder, whose engagement with the portrait rests in the intimate relation between the owner of the portrait medal and the object itself in all its foregrounded specificity. Moreover, through composition the *medaglie* in Botticelli’s *Young Man* Lotto’s *Andrea Odoni* and are more closely aligned with the body of their patrician owners. Thus, working in a much different way, the *medaglie* in Titian’s *Portrait of Jacopo Strada* thematize a less direct association between *medaglie* and the identity of their agent-owner.
4. Distance and Fixity: Allegiance

4.1 Proximities and Distances

Produced during the seventeenth century, Henrik van der Bosch’s *A Collection of Ancient Objects* (c. 1650) represents a similar array of statuettes and *medaglie* as were included in Titian’s *Portrait of Jacopo Strada* nearly a century earlier. In this work by van der Bosch, statuettes and *medaglie* are crowded among vases, bowls, and antique paintings upon a tabletop. Piled upon one another and layered from foreground to background, diverse classes of objects of differing materials are brought into intimate conversation with one another. The human subject has disappeared entirely, although an absent presence is implied by the accumulation of select objects upon the table. Elizabeth Honig has argued against scholarship that considers such still lives to be primarily related to commodity status and proto-capitalist subjectivities. Honig argues instead that their emergence conforms more readily to the logic of collecting than consumption.\(^{122}\) Honig notes the social nature of both collecting and beholding when she argues for the notion of the “painting as collection.”\(^{123}\) The imagined connections between things in paintings such as van der Bosch’s are made possible by a fundamentally “social process.”\(^{124}\)

However, Honig’s argument is directed less toward the social practice of collecting and more at the nature of beholding: “[t]hat creative process of making sense is a shared or social process, one that is only initiated by those [who] gather the things …” In this way valuation, or the social process of “making sense,” is connected to the historically-located practices of accumulation in seventeenth-century collections. Thus, Honig’s argument locates the representation of things in a


\(^{123}\) Honig, 183.

\(^{124}\) Honig, 183.
process of valuation that is open-ended and attentive to the subject, without anachronistically imposing modern individualism upon a proto-modern moment.

Unlike van der Bosch’s *Collection of Ancient Objects*, in which the subject is merely implied by the gathering of objects, Franz Franken’s painting, *Kunstkammer*, of 1636, explicitly represents the socialization that occurred in the spaces of collection. In the foreground, Franken’s *Kunstkammer* represents a selection of objects from a collection upon a table beside an abutting wall that forms of enclosed interior. Juxtaposing nature and culture, contemporary paintings of landscapes, portraits and religious scenes are hung on the wall alongside a preserved seahorse, fish, and a stuffed ostrich. Art objects are also displayed on the tabletop: small portraits, religious paintings, and drawings abut a wide range of other items; antique sculptures, an overturned candlestick, numerous shells, and a pile of *medaglie* are all displayed there, such that the table is literally overflowing. In the background, adjacent to the right of the tabletop, a separate room is glimpsed through an arched doorway. Two men have assembled in front of a set of shelves and a table that display statues and classical fragments. The back of a figure in a red cape takes a step toward the group and the turn of his head suggests he is engaged in conversation. This man’s red cape draws attention to his presence in the scene and it is possible that this figure is the owner of the collection. A striking counterpoint to this figure is the small painted portrait displayed on the far right side of the tabletop, very near the body of the caped man in the anterior room. The portrait depicts the upper torso of an individual in a red shirt who displays two small objects to its beholder.\(^{125}\) The brilliant sartorial hue that is worn by both men, whether or not they represent the same man or even the owner of the *Kunstkammer* collection, conjoins two depictions: that of the body in the background with that of the mind in the fore. However, the darkened corridor that

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\(^{125}\) I have not found a scholarly source that identifies these items. They may be a ring and either a letter or a shell.
separates the foreground and background, thereby dividing the cloaked figure and the painted portrait, unequivocally severs this tenuous connection.

4.2 Another Division, In Print

In contrast to Franken’s depiction of a collection’s owner in the midst of conversation, a seventeenth-century printed engraving of the museum of Ferdinando Cospi represents an illustrious Bolognese collector and condottiere within the same interior space of display as the objects and without any apparent social interactions. This illustration formed the frontispiece to a massive inventory of the collection produced in 1677, commissioned by Cospi ten years following the donation of his collection to the city of Bologna.126 The frontispiece represents an interior view of a large room in which Cospi’s collection is displayed. To the far right of the scene, Cospi stands upright and gestures toward the collection; in the centre, his custodian holds up a figurine, and, to the left, a large bust portrait of Cospi is superimposed upon the illustration of the interior.127 Whereas Franken depicted the collection of objects in the foreground of a Kunstкаммер, the artist of Cospi’s print details the collection in the background of the scene. Largely because of this reversal, the representation of medaglie in Cospi’s print also differs significantly from those depicted in earlier portrait paintings. The scale of the medaglie is dramatically minimized. Situated within a vast expanse of shelves and open cabinetry that covers the three walls of the museum space, the medaglie are identifiable only by the circular line with

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126 Paula Findlen, Possessing Nature: Museums, Collecting, and Scientific Culture in Early Modern Italy, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 26-7. Cospi’s museum was annexed into the Studio Aldrovandi in 1657 and in 1660 the senate allotted the collection a permanent room. Cospi’s donation was formalized in 1667; Jay Tribby, “Body/Building: Living the Museum Life in Early Modern Culture,” Rhetorica vol 10 no 2 (Spring 1992): 160. Tribby’s article is entirely devoted to the catalogue and Cospi.

127 I have found two versions of this print. The first includes the framed bust portrait of Cospi. It is cited in Patrick Mauriès’ monograph Cabinets of Curiosity. Very little information on the image is provided by Mauriès. The second version of the print is located in Paula Findlen’s book Possessing Nature and does not include the framed bust-length portrait. Jay Tribby’s article, does not include a reproduction of frontispiece. It is possible that because the author does not consider the framed bust portrait, we might assume that he uses the same source as that of Findlen. An online version does not include the framed portion and identifies the the artist as a G. Mitelli. www.historycooperative.org/.../110.1/starn.html (accessed October 14, 2009).
which they are summarily represented. The majority of these *medaglie* are displayed together and pinned side by side around the lower level of the shelves. Some similar objects that were surely also *medaglie* are interspersed in other areas of the collection, being hung at all levels among antiquities and exotic objects, such as horns, large sabers, and figurines. Contained within the rectilinear lines of the display shelves, these objects lack the sense of loosely haphazard accumulation self-consciously demonstrated in the portraits of Titian and Lotto. There is no mobility here.

In addition to the full figure portrait within the space of the collection, a framed portrait bust of Cospi is contained within a linear frame that separates the sitter radically from the scene of the museum. The separation between the representation of Cospi’s full figure and his upper torso is reasserted through a number of additional visual devices. The portrait bust is produced in a significantly larger scale than is used for the representation of the collection space and the framed representation of the collector is of a different perspectival order. Whereas the interior view of the collection is reproduced above eye level, looking down upon the space, Cospi’s large framed portrait is level with the viewer’s gaze. The marks used to describe these two portraits also differ: the sitter within the frame is voluminously rendered, using careful linear marks that follow the face, hair and costume. By contrast, the illustration of the museum relies on graphic lines to articulate the shapes of the small objects and figures that are affixed to the linear organization of the shelves. The architectural frame that contains the objects also frames the collection as a whole and in this way individual *medaglie* are subsumed within a static constellation of objects. In this way, *medaglie* that had previously mediated intersubjective relationships through their mobility are fixed and distanced from the subject through multiple frames, scale and mark making.
The separation between Cospi and the collection is underscored through his lack of tactile engagement with the objects in his ownership. Whereas Cospi gestures grandly towards the objects on display, his favorite custodian, a dwarf named Sebastiano Bivati, touches a statuette either to clean it or display it to the beholder. Through touch, Bivati’s body is more closely aligned with the objects on display than his patron, as fits his intermediary role as custodian. In contrast, Cospi stands at a slight remove from the shelves, thereby accentuating the divide between the owner of the collection and the objects within it. Through this dissociation the medaglie are more intimately connected to other objects and the physical space of the collection than to the collector himself.

These distancing effects imply a separation between mind and body that relate to an evolving conceptualization of subjectivity in the seventeenth century. The publication of René Descartes’ *Discourse on the Method of Rightly Conducting One’s Reason and Seeking the Truth in the Sciences* in 1637 articulated these shifts. In the *Discourse*, the immateriality of the human mind is positioned against the world of material objects. According to Descartes, the self’s “apartness” depends upon the mind, and thus the human “being” is essentially and ontologically distinct from the bodily matter of extension. According to this view, as one’s mind and body are “separated from the physical world of nature and from the social world of human beings,” there is an “almost irreparable chasm” between them. This constitutes a key historical moment, in which the agency of the human subject manifests itself in a new way. As Charles Taylor observes:

> What one finds running through all the aspects of this constellation… is the growing ideal of a human agent who is able to remake himself by methodical and disciplined action … Descartes’ picture of the *disengaged* subject articulates the understanding of agency

128 Findlen, 119.
which is most congenial to this whole movement, and that is part of the grounds for its impact in this century, and beyond.\footnote{Hall, 20-1. Hall cites Charles Taylor.} (My emphasis)

Taylor draws attention to the emergence of a form of subjectivity that values the control of the human mind in opposition to that of the body: a dualism that extends to the separation of the subject and object as well.

Kryzstof Pomian and Louis Marin trace some key aspects of seventeenth-century cultural production that participated in the surfacing of an increasingly Cartesian subjectivity.\footnote{Krzysztof Pomian, Collectors and curiosities: Paris and Venice, 1500-1800, trans. Elizabeth Wiles-Portier (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990); Louis Marin, “Mimesis and Description: from Curiosity to Method, from the Age of Montaigne to the Age of Descartes,” in On Representation, 64-84 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001).} Pomian’s important work on practices of collecting in this period draws attention to the subordination of sense knowledge to intellectual knowledge and its “utilitarian ends” and the institutional impact of this estrangement.\footnote{Pomian, 61.} The pre-Kantian emphasis on the human mind and cognition is found in Descartes’ favoring of reason and method in opposition to “blind curiosity.”\footnote{Pomian, 62.} Drawing on the work of Pomian, Marin argues that Descartes’ critique of curiosity was characterized by an advocacy for the control of fascination through explanation.\footnote{Marin “Mimesis and Description,”80.} Particularly relevant to the printed portraits of Cospi is the subjectivity of the “scholar-technician” that is described by Marin.\footnote{Ibid., 80.} Such descriptive scriptural endeavors could be suggested by the text produced for Cospi’s catalogue in 1668. Transforming the perception of the object from marvel to artifact, this position reorients valuation from the particular power of the object in its fascinating or marvelous state to an appreciation of the subject’s control and appreciation of that object.\footnote{Ibid., 80.}
In rebuttal to a wholly modern conception of self, it is crucial to note that the control of the self through the mind is never complete and that the imperfect control of the Cartesian subject is even more fraught with failure during the seventeenth century.\textsuperscript{138} The pre-Enlightenment period of the seventeenth century did not adopt such a conception of the human subject, as this was a time when the culture of marvels was still at play in Baroque collections.\textsuperscript{139} The moment in which Cospi’s printed catalogue was produced came at the cusp of the Enlightenment or, as Pomian aptly describes it, a moment of “interim rule between … theology and science.”\textsuperscript{140} Thus, Cospi’s catalogue and the double portrait must be situated in a complex moment between a Baroque fascination with the marvelous and an emerging culture of science and observation.\textsuperscript{141} Both Marin and Pomian recognize the complexity of these shifts during the seventeenth century: the rupture between the pre-modern and modern worlds was not a swift, but “a lengthy process…[that was] far from automatic and… not exempt from rifts and conflict.”\textsuperscript{142} In order to provide a counterpoint to seventeenth-century understandings of Cospi’s collection, Tribby quotes an eighteenth-century scholar who, in 1742, interpreted the “copiousness” of Cospi’s collection as a sign of his lack of scientific rigor.\textsuperscript{143} Thus, to understand Cospi’s double portrait and its depiction of medaglie, it is crucial to locate the illustration within the context of shifting subjectivities and the role of objects in relation to human agents.

\textbf{4.3 Cataloguing Relations (Between Curiosity and Method)}

Although the printed frontispiece suggests a degree of disinterest in the ownership of collected objects, such an assumption is problematized once the illustration is properly situated

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{138} Hall, 21.
\item \textsuperscript{139} Findlen, 27.
\item \textsuperscript{140} Pomian, 64.
\item \textsuperscript{141} Marin “Mimesis and Description,”83.
\item \textsuperscript{142} Pomian, 64; 92.
\item \textsuperscript{143} Tribby, 159.
\end{itemize}
within the context of the catalogue as a whole. In the catalogue, textual entries describe each object in terms of its provenance. The descriptions in each catalogue entry foreground the means through which 2,300 objects came to be in Cospi’s possession. On this point, Tribby’s research on the catalogue proves invaluable. He notes that the catalogue text placed great emphasis on the provenance of these objects and, more particularly, their frequent status as gifts from the Medici Duchy in Florence. Born in Bologna into intimate connection with the Medici Duchy in Florence, Cospi spent his childhood in the court with the young prince where he acted as a Gentleman. During this time the Medici court mastered and manipulated the display of objects and their collection. Cospi returned to Bologna in 1624 where he acted as principal Medici agent in the Emilian region. In this position, Cospi developed relations with famous Bolognese painters and mediated disputes between families. He began acquiring thousands of objects, many of which came from the Medici connections he maintained in Florence.

In relationship to the catalogue entries that describe these connections, the illustrated frontispiece reasserts the social agency of medaglie and other collected objects through visual references to Medici patronage. Cospi’s relations with the Medici are made visually prominent through the inclusion of the Medici coat of arms and palle between two cherubs in the centre bottom of Cospi’s print. The foregrounding of the Medici symbols framing the image functions as a sign of Cospi’s important allegiance to a most powerful noble family. In Cospi’s print, the representation of an alliance fostered by a gift of a medaglie is now far removed from the iconic example of Botticelli’s Portrait of a Young Man Holding a Medal in the fifteenth century.

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144 Tribby, 159.
145 Ibid., 155.
146 Ibid., 155.
147 Ibid., 156.
148 Ibid., 155.
149 Ibid., 155.
150 Tribby, 155.
century. Two centuries later, the interdependence that such mobile objects continued to create is represented in a radically different form. Rather than signifying intimate associations or aspirational attributes, the medaglie in Cospi’s printed portrait display the ownership Cospi asserts over their provenance. Visual and textual references to provenance assert Cospi’s claims to allegiance. Fixed within the architectural spaces of collection, the represented medaglie are put to work in tandem with the other objects displayed in the room. The collection as a whole situates and symbolizes the accumulation of relationships that are outlined in the museum catalogue’s text. In this way, the representation articulates a different kind of object than Descartes described in his mechanistic system of nature or the “soulless things” of the eighteenth century. These objects symbolize connections outlined in the textual description itself. They are rendered in with inscribed lines in the frontispiece, and inscribed text throughout the catalogue.

The graphic lines that represent the objects in the catalogue frontispiece differ significantly from both the sculptural impression of Cosimo’s medal in Botticelli’s Young Man and the painted visual mimesis of Titian’s Jacopo Strada. The materiality of the graphic line can be connected to Marin’s discussion of a Cartesian descriptive priority. Marin traces epistemological changes from sixteenth-century “curiosity” to the later Enlightenment notion of “method” through the reversal of mimesis whereby the mimetic representation of the world is transformed into schematism and metaphorism. Through explanation, Descartes could turn marvels into artifacts and through such production of knowledge, sought to suppress the wonder

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151 Here I am amending Findlen’s emphasis on ownership in her study of Natural History more generally.
152 Marin “From Curiosity to Method,” 82. Marin references Descartes’ mechanistic system of nature; Joanna Woodall “Laying the Table: The Procedures of Still Life” (paper presented September 12, 2009 entitled at the conference Vision and Visibilities at the Vancouver Art Gallery). According to Woodall, the phrase “soulless objects” was used in 1709 by Gerard de Lairesse.
153 Marin “Mimesis and Description,” 81-82.
and curiosity previously prompted by Baroque collections such as Cospi’s. Thus was achieved, “in the age of Descartes, the methodical conversion of the documentary image and the descriptive mimetics that governs it into an instrument of scientific knowledge by means of imaginary experimentation on abstract models of representation of the world and of humankind.” Turning marvels into documents is, Marin argues, a symptom of the cultural imagination of the post-Cartesian moment. However, Marin acknowledges that the shift to “abstract models of representation” remained only partially formed in the seventeenth century, the period in which Cospi was compelled to document his collection.

Cospi’s catalogue takes part in this uneven historical passage, manifesting the tension between an imperfect mimesis in the illustration of the museum and textual description in the catalogue text. And yet the text does not describe the objects in an objective or scientifically disinterested manner. Rather, the continued import of social relations and sociability in the catalogue text demonstrates the complexity and unevenness of the historical passage from a pre- to a post-Cartesian moment. Tribby has situated Cospi’s catalogue in between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries. As was noted above, the “copiousness” of Cospi’s collection was deemed unscientific by the eighteenth century, and, in the sixteenth, a descriptive text of Aldrovandi’s collection would have emphasized the monstrous or “curious” physiognomy of certain items, as opposed to the connectivity between Cospi and key patrons. In this way, Tribby argues that the objects in Cospi’s catalogue “serve as a visual statement and temporal marker of one moment in the grand narrative that a museum constructed.” The more statements or markers in the

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154 Ibid., 80.
155 Ibid., 84
156 Ibid., 68. Like Marin I have chosen to focus my analysis on key examples in order to avoid “vague surveys and hasty generalizations.”
157 Tribby, 159. In the examples he provides, Tribby notes that such entries are indicative of all 2,300 entries in the catalogue.
158 Ibid., 158.
museum, the more capable the courtier seems: as a collection grew in size and value, whether financial and symbolic, the intertwining of identities of collector and objects increased. As Tribby notes here, objects made it possible for a subject to extend himself with regard to other subjects, recognizing the active role of the museum collection as a whole upon the identity of the subject and his or her ability to distinguish himself. In this regard, Cospi is located in proximity to highly significant objects that signal his allegiance to powerful social agents. The continued attention paid to social relations in Cospi’s catalogue speaks to the staggered nature with which the Cartesian descriptive priority began to enter, ossify and objectify relations between subject and object.

4.4 The Galleria and the Gift

The continual interplay between visual distancing, connective provenance, and allegiance-building ownership in Cospi’s printed catalogue is embedded within the highly social spaces of aristocratic collecting. The social connectivity described in the catalogue text’s descriptions of the provenances of the objects in Cospi’s collection is coupled with its capacity to participate in changing forms of sociability within the physical space of collections in the seventeenth century. Paula Findlen compares the sixteenth-century collections of Aldrovandi in Bologna with the seventeenth-century collection of Cospi in her important work on the emergence of natural history. Contrary to Aldrovandi’s original wish to organize his collection according to knowledge and science, his collection became a showpiece for the city during the seventeenth century. It became a “sprawling, highly socialized affair” at the centre of the city, providing a space that “naturalists, virtuosi, dwarves, senators, the legate, and his entourage

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159 Ibid., 159. “The copiousness of the collection made a public statement about the collector’s life as a life full of social interactions, and his enduring status as someone worthy of note became more or less inseparable from the objects it contained.”
160 Ibid., 158. Four sets of documents over three centuries show increasing identification as the collection grows.
inhabited simultaneously.”\textsuperscript{161} Findlen thus describes an increasingly open grouping of diverse individuals who could congregate at these sites of collection.

Within this diverse and unpredictable population, natural history museums and aristocratic collections were social spaces interconnected by networks of elite individuals with scientific interests who participated in the Republic of Letters. Although spaces of display were increasingly open to strangers, the practice of letter writing maintained some control and limited access. Reference letters were required of travelers or other unknown persons who wished to gain access to a \textit{galleria}, whereby an esteemed individual would write on the visitor’s behalf.\textsuperscript{162} By giving the letter of reference to the custodian, access would be gained. Findlen notes the gesture of giving a letter and the power of this topos to epitomize the “quintessential gesture of access – communication and exchange – that defined the gallery as a ‘room to walk through … This gesture … perhaps more than any other represented in the images of early modern Italian museums, marked the transformation of the \textit{studio} to a \textit{galleria}.”\textsuperscript{163} Thus, the \textit{galleria} was not entirely open to the public: “[t]he protocols governing the display of objects derived entirely from the rhetoric of friendship and community that shaped the humanist republic of letters and urban social relations.” However, in Cospi’s print, there is no indication of acceptance of another into the space of collection. Instead, Cospi enacts a symbolic ownership and mastery as he gestures grandly to the objects as a whole. Findlen notes that Cospi’s stance “makes it clear that a seventeenth-century courtier was capable of imposing upon the objects he collected an order that was every bit as complex as the taxonomic order imposed on those same objects in 1742.”\textsuperscript{164}

\textsuperscript{161} Findlen, 126.
\textsuperscript{162} Ibid., 129-132. Findlen notes the continued division of the social world into “friends” and “strangers.” Findlen discusses this practice in relation to an illustration of the Kirchner museum, in which a visitor gives the custodian his letter of referral, highlighting the way in which letter writing enabled the entry of certain individuals into the \textit{galleria}.
\textsuperscript{163} Ibid., 119.
\textsuperscript{164} Tribby, 155.
This seventeenth-century representation is therefore partially distinguished from later Enlightenment categorizations and its complexity more socially embedded.

The shift from studio to galleria can be located in the material conditions of Cospi’s catalogue. The inexpensive nature of print and its reproducibility allowed objects such as his catalogue to be distributed on an exponentially larger scale than either paintings or portrait medals. Produced in an edition of 800, the catalogue was distributed as a gift to elite and courtly individuals across Europe.\(^\text{165}\) The shift in mobility from medaglie to print bespeaks a partial relocation of their mediating role. The printed catalogue moves between subjects in seventeenth-century courts asserts Cospi’s allegiance to the Medici through the act of giving in much the same way as the gift of a medaglia once did. Similar to the interdependence of the gift explored at length in the first section of this thesis, the materiality of print enabled the participation of Cospi’s catalogue within networks similar to those enjoyed by portrait medals and medaglie for several centuries.

5 Conclusion

The relationships that in the aggregate constitute networks are built, rebuilt, sustained, and transformed across time. Thus we have to think about social networks and networking dynamically … agency within networks is ever adapting to an unfolding social structure as well as an evolving repertoire of discursive gestures.

- Paul McLean, *The Art of the Network*, 7

5.1 Within History, Through Time

Scholars have long mused upon the fact that portrait medals and other objects described as *medaglie* enjoyed prolific popularity during the early modern period. Their efflorescence took place during centuries that witnessed the shift from the courtly political friendship of the medieval period to the egalitarian strangerhood of the eighteenth century. Hierarchical aristocratic culture, the social and political institution of friendship, and the interpenetration of domestic life with that of courtly politics are only some of the factors that define the fifteenth through seventeenth centuries. Thus, early modern sociability was implicated in the complex and uneven development of a radically different notion of public life that took form during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. According to Habermas, the modern “bourgeois public sphere” emerged from the Republic of Letters and reached its ideal form in the eighteenth century.166 Habermas describes the public sphere as constituted by equal individuals coming together as disinterested participants in rational critical debate concerning issues outside the rule of the state. The public sphere was constituted by debate occurring in salons and coffee houses and in the journals and newspapers of a newly emergent “traffic in information.”167 Habermas recognizes the complex historical transformations that occurred between the medieval and

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166 Habermas, 9-12.
167 Habermas, 15.
modern periods, noting that early modern forms of sociability were more closely linked with political rule than with the later egalitarian openness of the public sphere.\(^{168}\)

As a cultural phenomenon that overlapped with the emergence of print culture, *medaglie* moved through networks of information, trade, banking and scholarly circles and friends. The continued importance of gift exchange to the constitutive role of *medaglie* in networks of patronage and friendship signals an important shift from a more political form of friendship during the medieval and early modern period to more modern “private” friendship. Allan Silver has described the modern idea of friendship as “ungoverned by the structural definitions that bear on family and kinship … grounded in the unique and irreplaceable qualities of partners, defined and valued independently of their place in public systems of kinship, power, utility, and esteem…”\(^{169}\) Echoing the words of Silver, Warner describes friendship as a “demanding social phenomenology” that “feels quite unlike that of contexts organized by kinship, heredity status, local affiliation, mediated political access, parochial nativity, or ritual.”\(^{170}\) Such individuals are located within proximity to shared affiliations and, therefore, “on a path to commonality.”\(^{171}\) Within this milieu of the particular social demands of friendship *medaglie* were constitutive of a mode of sociability that was not, in most cases, a public.

Warner has productively expanded upon Habermas’ conceptualization of the public sphere. Warner echoes Habermas’ assertion that stranger-sociability and openness of access are characteristic of modern publics and also asserts that the formation of a public occurs outside of institutionalized political power.\(^{172}\) This kind of formation produces a particular “kind of person”

\(^{168}\) Habermas, 1-26.


\(^{171}\) Warner “Publics and Counterpublics,” 61.

\(^{172}\) Ibid., 61.
in a “certain kind of social world.” Warner elucidates the particular qualities of the social world that constitute publics. A key way in which publics are brought into being is by the reflexive circulation of texts over time. It is crucial that the “rhetorical address” of a text cannot be limited to a single physical or temporal location: publics are constituted by texts but these must be intermedial and metatopical. He states that “[n]o single text can create a public. Nor can any single voice, a single genre, or even a single medium. All are insufficient to create the kind of reflexivity that we call a public, since a public is understood to be an ongoing space of encounter for discourse. Thus, a public is not only a physical audience, “[it] is the social space created by the reflexive circulation of discourse.” The circulation of discourse overlaps, contests, and is in constant flux and in this way Warner nuances Habermas’ emphasis on dyadic debate within a singular, discrete public sphere.

Warner’s theorization is particularly useful for a reconsideration of the role of circulating forms of cultural production over time. His emphasis on text as a rhetorical address need not preclude consideration of the possible role of art and other forms of visual culture in the formation of publics. Indeed, the concatenation of the idea of *medaglie* across media, genres, and centuries has been the focus of the current thesis. The idea of *medaglie* was translated from one material form to another and from one genre to another in the portraits of Botticelli’s young man, Jacopo Strada or Ferdinando Cospi. Such representations employ *medaglie* rhetorically as a means of visual persuasion within their respective compositions. Thus, the intermediality with

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173 Ibid., 51; The latter turn of phrase come from the epigraph to the introduction.
174 Ibid., 50.
175 Ibid., 61. Warner states that “[i]t is not texts themselves that create publics, but the concatenation of texts through time.”
176 Ibid, 61.
177 Warner “Publics and Counterpublics,” 62; Warner *Publics and Counterpublics*, 13-14. Here are two rare examples where Warner mentions the circulation visual imagery.
which *medaglie* circulated across time and space suggest their possible role as a condition for the summoning of a public.

**5.2 Gone Traveling Again**

The epigraphs chosen to preface the introduction and conclusion of this thesis have raised the issues of publics and networks, respectively. At the outset of the thesis, a long citation from Warner set out the compelling metaphor of travel. Indeed, movement and motion underline Warner’s interest in both the circulation of text and its relation to the constant changeability of publics. In the epigraph to the conclusion, McLean speaks in similar terms, foregrounding the inherent flux that characterizes early modern networks. Connecting these insights, it could be argued that networks provide the conditions of possibility for the formation of publics for, as Warner states, “it is not mere consecutiveness in time, but a context of interaction” that the social character of a public is made clear.\(^\text{178}\) Thus *medaglie* could provide a condition for the formation of publics. In moving through networks, highly mobile *medaglie* could activate forms of association that not only moved into and out of states of publicness, but, more frequently, forged bonds of intimate interdependence within communities of individuals that were known to one another. Beyond this physical existence, their representation in other media and genres suggests their powerful potential to summon the attention of unknown and diverse subjects in an imagined social space that could be called a public, at least for a time.

\(^{178}\) Warner *Publics and Counterpublics*, 62.
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