The *Granata Svampante:* Alfonso I d'Este's Projections of Strength and Prudence

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Alfonso I d'Este, duke of Ferrara (r.1505-1534), had a reputation for military skill rooted in his innovation and employment of gunpowder artillery during the Wars of the League of Cambrai. He bolstered this image through patronage, memorialising his victories with imagery featuring humanist allusions and implicit threat. Alfonso's ubiquitous personal emblem of the *granata svampante* [exploding grenade] manifested his desired message of restrained power, of fortitude and prudence. His command of this destructive weapon, to be used at the right place and time (*Loco et Tempore*), reflected evolving views of warfare and noble virtues in the first decade of his rule.

In a portrait painted near the end of his life, Alfonso I d'Este, duke of Ferrara (1476-1534), was depicted by court painter Battista Dossi as first and foremost a warrior (fig. 1). He appears ready to join the battle in the background, holding a mace in one hand, while the other rests on a cannon. Wearing partial armor over rich velvet and silk, a sword on his hip, he stands tall and wide, a figure of steady, powerful nobility. The silver cross on his chest of the French forces, and the chain and pendant of the chivalric Order of St. Michael, are evidence of his credentials as a superior *condottiere* and his loyalty to his powerful ally (Pyhrr, 24, 27 n.49). Overall the impression is of chivalric and aristocratic virtues, strength, and military prowess. However, his gauntlets are set aside, and he looks not to the battlefield, but to an ambiguous point in the distance, eyes downcast. His solemn countenance gives the impression of a ruler wearied by a life of war and uncertain rule. This portrait, more than the famous painting by Titian and its imitators (fig. 4), provides insight into the challenges faced by Alfonso, his character, and how contemporaries remembered him. It emphasizes his past successes on the battlefield, visualized in the scene of one of his victories behind him, but there is a tension and ambivalence to the portrayal, characterized by the contrast between his active right hand and his resting left. This was representative of his personal motto, *Loco et tempore*: at the (right) time and the (right) place. A good ruler in the sixteenth century was expected to know when (and where) to fight and when to rest; to exercise wise judgement and restraint, as well as be capable of defending his people when necessary. In essence, to have the skill and fortitude of a warrior, but restrained by prudence.

These two sides of his role and of his nature also reflected his reputation, both contemporaneously and now. Alfonso is remembered for his artistic patronage and his passion for craftwork, from ceramics to munitions, as well as his military victories in several key battles

which brought him renown for his leadership, skill, and the strength of his artillery. The attributes of patronage, technical innovation, and martial capability were combined in his development of gunpowder weaponry, for which contemporaries largely credited his success. Alfonso bolstered these facets of his reputation by using art and other material culture to emphasize his innovations and victories, reminding his enemies and his allies alike of his military strengths. During an era where small northern Italian states had to constantly defend their territories from the great powers fighting to dominate Italy, Alfonso used both subtle and explicit motifs to intimidate and dissuade potential challengers. This included commissioning works using humanist allusions to Mars and Vulcan, and portraits featuring cannons and armor, such as in the above example.

However, this campaign of self-fashioning and propaganda is shown most emphatically in his personal *impresa* of the *granata svampante*, or exploding grenade. The device was used as a repeating motif on everything from prayer books and furnishings, to palazzo columns and church panels. This investigation explores Alfonso's use of this emblem to impress and intimidate his allies and enemies during the Wars of the League of Cambrai (1508-16), as a significant part of his campaign to protect his state's sovereignty and highlight his own virtues of strength and prudence. A discussion of Alfonso's reputation as a warrior and innovator in artillery, and his use of patronage as propaganda, is critical to contextualize the decision to use canons, grenades, and other warlike imagery to represent himself and his duchy. Following that, the *granata* and its use will be discussed at length, along with other iconography used to emphasize similar virtues and aspects of his reputation.

This inquiry began with the hypothesis that during the first decade of his rule (1505-1515) Alfonso used this iconography to remind his enemies of his successes in battle in order to preserve his state, and that the use of the emblems like the *granata* increased during and after his victories. This remains true for the early years of the League of Cambrai. However, following the Battle of Ravenna in 1512, and the death of his greatest enemy, Julius II, in 1513, Alfonso adopted a subtler approach. Adapting to a new conception of war as necessary for peace, and the need for strategy and judgement in addition to brute martial ability, Alfonso toned down his pugnacious image, emphasizing restrained power rather than overt threat. No longer needing to assert his legitimacy like his predecessors, he now highlighted his virtues as a Renaissance prince, including magnificence, piety, and humanist knowledge. Above all, he repeatedly stressed his prudence, discerning the time and place for active governance and war, and for contemplation and peace. Alfonso's campaign was not unique, but it was arguably more effective, and in the first decade of his tenure certainly more explicitly threatening, than those of his peers.

Alfonso I: condottiere and artillery innovator

The d'Este duchy of Ferrara was one of several small autonomous states in northern Italy, caught between the great European powers battling for control of the peninsula during the early sixteenth century. Alfonso and his father Ercole I (1431-1505) were key military figures in many of the prominent campaigns, as well as being a thorn in the side of the larger states. Despite being located in the center of the battleground, and under near constant attack, they were able to preserve their state's sovereignty, and for the most part their domains. Their state was also remarkable for its stable rule in a period where aristocratic factions fought for control in many of the former communes and feudal principalities.

However, they had bigger problems than rivalling factions: the great powers of western Europe and adjacent Italian states challenged their territories and their authority. The powerful Venetian republic to the north had expanded its *terraferma* empire to within four miles of Ferrara's city walls. To the south, the increasingly territorially-minded Papacy threatened Estensi dominion, with warrior pope Julius II seeking dominance of his vassalages. The Italian Wars (1494-1559). following the incursion of France and then Imperial forces into Italy were often fought under the command of Italian *condottieri* [aristocratic mercenary commanders], including the Estense dukes. This was a period of extreme instability in Italy, as shifting combinations of these powers battled for supremacy over each other and the smaller states. Ferrara's geographic location, as well as Alfonso's advanced artillery, meant that they were often either a key ally or a target. Alfonso had been a *condottiere*, as well as a diplomat on behalf of his family and his first in-laws, the Sforza of Milan. This diplomacy continued throughout his life; it cannot be ignored that he spent significant effort on trying to avoid war, as well as waging it. His ducal accounts bear witness to this: the second highest ducal expense was for diplomacy, although half as much as was spent on defense (Guerzoni, 50). He cemented relationships through marriage, mutual favors, and formal alliances with other northern Italian ruling families, which paid off during the heavy periods of fighting. As Alfonso's secretary wrote in his hagiographic biography of the duke in 1530, he was "more inclined to peace than to war" (Pistofilo, X:496). However, for most of his fifty-eight years Ferrara was at war, and it was the mix of aptitude, experience, and innovation which Alfonso brought to the battlefield that allowed him to maintain control of his territories.

The chapter of the Italian Wars referred to as the Wars of the League of Cambrai can be further broken down into two phases.[1] The first saw Ferrara join the French, Papal, and Habsburg

[1] For timeline: https://www.tiki-toki.com/timeline/entry/1366912/Alfonso-I-dEste-and-the-Wars-of-the-League-of-Cambrai/

Spanish and Imperial forces in seeking to reverse Venetian expansion into the *terraferma*. They agreed to partition Romagna between them, returning the Polesine to Alfonso. Because of his success leading papal troops, Pope Julius II made Alfonso *gonfalonier*, or standard bearer for the Church. The second phase, when this had been (temporarily) achieved, saw the Pope switch sides to align with Venice, with the intention of driving France out of Italy. Ferrara played a central if essentially defensive role in both of these phases, and in two key battles which defined them, at Polesella (1509) and Ravenna (1512). These marked critical junctures in the Wars. In both Alfonso's artillery was crucial to his allies' victory, which allowed protection and reclamation of Ferrarese territories. Although Alfonso continued fighting to protect his state's sovereignty right up until his death in 1534, temporarily losing Modena and smaller cities, he faced less challenge to Ferrara itself. Alfonso's victories, and his reputation thereafter, were critical to his state's protection, which he was keen to emphasize to enemies and allies alike in the years that followed.

Numerous contemporary accounts of Alfonso's military triumphs circulated widely through Europe's courts, and were preserved by diarists, allowing us to see how others viewed Alfonso. After a minor skirmish in 1511, bystanders reported that Alfonso 'slaughtered [papal forces] across a wide field in such a way that the enemies' commanders had been of the opinion that it could not have been carried out more vigorously or completed more quickly' (Giovio 2013, 131). Other courtiers emphasised Alfonso's steadfastness, fortitude, discernment, and good judgement (Pistofilo, 496; Giovio, 2013, 131; Giraldi, 114). For a popular audience, balladeers in Ferrara and the surrounding towns described Alfonso's chivalric virtues and his miraculous artillery in *ottava rima*, of which over a dozen are extant. Whether written for Ferrarese or Venetian audiences, they are universally flattering of 'the great duke', who was 'worthy…noble and royal'(Bighignol, 345:8; Anonymous 1511, 390:11). One anonymous writer, discussing the battle of Ravenna, is particularly effusive on Alfonso's virtues, describing his wisdom and strategic mind, and comparing him to the Roman god of war:

> Mars himself of the fast and ready arms,
> of sweet blood and good nature,
> liberal, gracious, humane and honest,
> and riding strong, without fear,
> vigilant and so full of wisdom,
> that what to say about him could not be said in full (Anonymous 1520, 436:12-13).

Mars was an exemplar used by Alfonso to emphasise his martial abilities, going back to a medal issued before he became duke. The young prince is on the obverse, and on the reverse is Mars driving a chariot, as if in triumph (Farinella, 53). As will be shown, he returned to this allusion following his victory in Ravenna.

A consensus emerges from these written accounts that Alfonso's artillery, with its 'great tempestuousness' (Bighignol, 347:32), was a decisive factor in many of the League battles. Pro-Venetian balladeer Francesco Maria Sacchino's described Alfonso at Polesella 'unloading artillery with such ruin that in the space of an hour, [the boats,] unable to turn were all broken' (Sacchino, 368:83). The speed with which he could break down city walls, sink ships, and force opposition armies to flee was noted by many writers (e.g.: Bembo, XII:44). The increasing devastation caused by cannons was a trend seen from early in the Italian Wars, as French gunpowder weapons overpowered both the opposing armies and their castle walls (Calegari, 62-3). The battles at Cerignola (1503), Genoa (1507), and Agnadello (1509) had shown artillery could be a decisive factor in warfare (Murrin, 125). New fortifications, and the adoption of similar artillery, made the field more equal, but also allowed *condottieri* who adapted to these new methods to gain prominence. Battles during the League of Cambrai became increasingly decided by artillery, and Jeremy Black points to the Battle of Ravenna as a turning point, demonstrating the effects of cannons and firepower (Black, 71-3).

The Estensi were quick to adopt this technology, and Alfonso's expertise and skill in the use of cannons and other artillery meant they were more effective, and more destructive, than his opponents'. Alfonso's munitions were in demand amongst his peers and the larger powers, and he was able to make advantageous alliances in trade for supplying other states.[2] As important to Alfonso's reputation for effective use of these weapons was the fact that he was known for innovating and even making them himself. He spent hours in the foundry working with his artisans, who doubled as bombardiers on the battlefield (Locatelli, 35). His father had begun the Estense investment into advanced artillery, seeking to gain independence from Venice. Ercole built a huge forge near their Garfagnanian iron mines, imported experienced bombardiers, and built a factory for the production of iron, rather than stone, cannonballs. He, like Alfonso, recognised the commercial potential for these munitions, as a commodity to be sold or traded for favours (Ansani, 368; Calegari 63-7). Alfonso expanded on this infrastructure, switching to bronze from iron, building three new factories for various components, and getting personally involved in the formula and design of the munitions (Calegari, 67, 70, 75-6; Locatelli, 46). While projectile weapons had been used since ancient times, he was one of the first to use the metal balls filled with lit fire (as in fig. 2) that were the ancestors of modern grenades, and is credited with inventing a hydraulic machine for grinding and mixing gunpowder (Cavaliere, 378-9;

[2] Eg: the success of his cannons at the siege of Padua in 1509 led Emperor Maximillian to give Alfonso ducal investiture in the cities of Este and Montagnana (Locatelli, 36, 40, 60); and William Wallace describes 1529 diplomatic negotiations wherein Florence attempted to secure Ferrarese artillery and military support. Ferrara's non-acquiescence was seen as a major factor in Florence's capitulation to Emperor Charles V (Wallace, 473-99).

Locatelli, 55). He also changed how cannons were used, including them alongside cavalry against groups of pikemen which would prove especially effective at Ravenna (Murrin, 124-25; Calegari, 72; Locatelli, 39).

Ferrara had roughly seventy pieces of large artillery in arsenal inventories later in the century, and Alfonso was rumoured to have more than 300 pieces total, more than all the other princes of Italy combined (Angelucci, 285-96; Wallace, 491; Calegari, 60). With barrels measuring up to six and half meters, weighing over twenty thousand pounds, and bearing cannonballs of up to a hundred pounds each, these were hard to manoeuvre on the battlefield (Locatelli, 50-52). Placed at a strategic position though, they could have devastating effects on Ferrara's enemies. Even as a method of intimidation they were successful: erected at the gates of the city they dissuaded enemies from approaching (see reproduction of one of his largest, the *Regina*, outside Castello Estense, fig. 3). Alfonso placed one of his largest cannons on a mound at the gates to the city in 1512, warning visitors as they approached (Locatelli, 38; Williams 2005, 18-19, 40).

Alfonso's massive cannons, with names like *Gran Diavolo* [Great Devil] and *Terremoto* [Earthquake] are identified in contemporary literature, and the story of his most famous cannon, *La Giulia*, is repeated by many of the chronicles and accounts. A massive statue of Pope Julius II designed by Michelangelo was torn down from in front of Bologna's basilica during the city's uprising against the Papacy in 1511. The bronze from the statue was exchanged for artillery with Alfonso, who used it to create one of his prized cannons (Vasari, IX:27; Sardi, 219; Angelucci, 294-96). Named after his greatest foe, and using metal with so symbolic a provenance, *La Giulia* was an unsubtle rebuke to Julius, whom he was actively resisting at the time. Although at 3,000 kilograms not the largest of his cannons, and with half the shot-power, it was possibly his favourite for this sentimental reason.

La Giulia is likely the cannon in the most famous painting of Alfonso, produced by Titian in the late 1520s, which we only know through copies (fig. 4) (Williams 2012, 85).[3] In many ways a typical representation of a ruler, there are minor variances, most notably the inclusion of the cannon. In this painting, like the aforementioned Dossi portrait, his authority and its obvious source is explicit. Even far from war, he is still ready for battle. With his hand resting lightly on the cannon, he shows his dominance and control over this deadly tool. It is a reminder of the power he had harnessed, and the threat he still posed.

However, it must be noted that Alfonso's gunpowder weaponry was often described in ambivalent terms by contemporaries, exhibiting the awe and fear with which it was viewed, and

[3] Multiple copies of this painting were produced, including another version by Titian for Alfonso, and one now in Florence's Pitti Palace in which he is wearing the St. Michael's chain.

Renaissance writers expressed a distrust for these weapons and their destructive abilities, with most opposed to their 'blasphemous' use (Hale, 393-400). In Venetian Luigi Da Porto's recounting of Polesella, the firing of the weapons' 'great thunder mixed with the screeching of voices was incredible, and every daring soul was appalled', 'it was most terrible to see so many men killed by iron above the galley, so many by the artillery' (da Porto, 161-62). Jacopo Guicciardini wrote of Ravenna that 'it was a horrible and terrible thing to see how every shot of the artillery made a land through those men-at-arms, and how helmets with the heads inside them, scattered limbs, halves of men, in vast quantity, were sent flying through the air' (Shaw, Mallett, 290).

A dissonance between medieval military virtues and the destructive power of cannons and guns is evident in these elite writings, illustrating that these changes in warfare were not always welcomed. Francesco Guicciardini wrote retrospectively that 'the art of war' had changed, and battles became increasingly 'sudden and violent', 'fierce and bloody'(Respocher, 79-85):

> 'Before 1494, wars were long, campaigns were relatively bloodless, and methods of conquest were slow and difficult. And although artillery was already in use, it was handled so unskilfully that it did little damage. Thus, those who held power stood in little danger of losing it. When the French came to Italy, they introduced such efficiency to the war that, up to 1521, the loss of a campaign meant the loss of a state' (Guicciardini, 57-58).

Similarly, in later revisions of his allegorical tale *Orlando Furioso*, which praises Alfonso's chivalric virtues and role as protective lord to his subjects, Ferrarese court poet Ludovico Ariosto became harshly critical of gunpowder weaponry (Shaw, Mallett, 349). The introduction of firearms is credited to the devil, and humans' adoption of it compared to the fateful decision of Eve to eat the apple, and the terrible consequences:

> 'Italy, France, every nation of the world came to learn the cruel science. . . It splits steel, smashes stone to pieces, wherever it goes nothing can resist it. Unhappy soldier, turn in your weapons to be melted down, even to your very sword: carry a musket on your shoulder or an arquebus— else you will go without wages!/. . . [they] have destroyed military glory, and dishonored the profession of arms; valour and martial skill are now discredited, so that often the miscreant will appear a better man than the valiant. . . no longer will boldness and courage go in to the field to match their strength./ Many a baron, many a knight now lies in earth, and so shall many more on your account, before this war is ended which has brought tears to all the world but most of all to Italy. . . The man who invented such abominable contraptions was crueller by far than all of the most evil of evil geniuses the world has known' (Ariosto, XI:22-26).

As is evident in this excerpt, larger issues were at play, in particular the loss of the intimate, gallant forms of warfare practised by knights previously. Now a tradesperson or peasant could kill a noble-born commander from a distance. There was also a de-emphasis on the skill required to win this way, and also implicitly a suggestion that the theatre of

war, the display of knightly virtues so important in the formation of noble reputations, had been replaced by a blunt instrument of destruction. However, there was also an argument for the defensive properties of cannons, and their use to protect the peace (Tom, 74). As even Ariosto wrote, the Ferrarese victory at Polesella convinced the Venetians to retreat: Alfonso 'had so crushed the Golden Lion of Venice, tooth and claw, that from that day I have never felt his menace' (Ariosto, XL:3).

Alfonso I: patron and humanist

These written accounts of war have been relied on by scholars extensively, contributing to a stagnant view of Alfonso's role as a *condottiere* and despot, uninterested in art or cultural expression (e.g.: Muratori; Frizzi). However recently attention has been paid to his competition with other courts in art patronage and the collection of ancient works (Colantuono, 205-208; Sheard, 314-57; Bayer, 29). Like many of the Renaissance princes, he was an enthusiastic patron and collector of art and antiquities, as well as music, architecture, and crafts. Having received a thorough education from prominent humanist Battista Guarino, he knew the motifs, pagan references, and propagandistic tools used by the ancients to bolster their own reputations. And although written accounts of Alfonso's life and victories had arguably the largest impact on his reputation, since they were reproduced and sent throughout Italy and Europe, it is in the visual and material culture commissioned by Alfonso that we can get a sense of how he wished to be seen.

Stephen Greenblatt argues that with a change from feudalism to princely rule in the Renaissance came the desire, even necessity to create an individualised image of oneself, suggesting that *condottieri* and their supporters had to find new models of virtue to emulate, and ways of demonstrating and projecting those virtues (Greenblatt, 1-3, 162). By Alfonso's time the humanist trend of classical allegory and emulation had been established, and he was often explicitly represented in these emblematic works. And as will be shown, whilst the chivalric ideals of the high medieval age were still valued, they were being replaced by a new emphasis on princely authority and *virtù*.

This representation could include visual forms of image projection, such as portraits and spectacle, intending to assert an impression of power, authority, virtue, and nobility on the viewer. The ruler required the cooperation of his subjects, peers, and other viewers in order to construct this identity, and this required constant reinforcement (Sharpe, xxiv, 8–9, 15, 18). Tools like coins, statues, and architectural accents were especially effective, since they were widely seen, and referenced existing iconography familiar to even those who were not classically educated. These became propaganda when, as Kevin Sharpe stated, the ruler

used ‘systemic orchestration directed to the end of controlling the image projected’ (Sharpe, 20). It would be hard to argue that the methods of representation and image construction used by the Estense dukes, and particularly Alfonso, were not propagandesque. In order to gain and retain legitimation they used a consistent strategy of visual metaphor and iconography to persuade and intimidate (Ellenius, 1-4). This strategy included using emblematic devices to reinforce the acts of protection and magnificence witnessed by their subjects, such as the reclamation of arable land under Borso, city expansion under Ercole I, and fortifications under Alfonso.

The Este rulers in the fifteenth century had used classically-inspired visual art to build an image of authority and legitimacy, alongside other means of ‘dynastic mythology’ like genealogical charts (Gundersheimer 1973, 278-79; cf: Martin, 609-11). Public-facing commissions, such as equestrian statues, civic buildings and churches, and circulated coins, connected them to their purpose as protectors and governors of their subjects, but were primarily focused on reinforcing their dominion. Heraldry and personal iconography emphasised their connections to the French, Papal and Imperial courts, the sources of their titles, as well as their roles as good stewards. This can be seen in their personal *imprese*, such as the first duke Borso’s use of the unicorn (protection, purification) and *paraduro* fencing (reclamation of land, and protection from outside threats), and the baptismal font, a symbol of regeneration (Di Pietro, 199-206; Lottici, 21, 96). And as Ricardo Bruscagli noted, Estense patronage became ‘more extroverted, spectacular, and magnificent’ during the politically tenuous period of the Italian Wars (Bruscagli, 28).

For the most part Alfonso continued a patronage programme initiated by his forebears, using the same methods and means, even while introducing new motifs and references, and relying more heavily on allegorical rather than historical allusions. He also moved from the public expressions of authority, necessary for those establishing a ruling dynasty, to an emphasis on representations of himself as a refined humanist prince, and an obedient Christian one, ambitiously attempting to place himself on a par with the great rulers. By tying his state’s sovereignty to his success as a *condottiere*, and later, to his own responsible governance, he emphasised his own virtues and strengths. Paintings subtly comparing himself to the ancient gods of war and fire, semi-public martial portraits, and the forceful and ubiquitous use of his personal *impresa*: these were all part of a public-image strategy which highlighted his military persona. Inversely, the means and method of this patronage also bolstered his image of nobility and humanist legitimacy, in many ways contrary to the idea of a belligerent warrior. In creating spaces dedicated to these artistic

pursuits, he showed that he valued time away from the business of war and politics to study and contemplate, creating the image of a thoughtful, deliberate, and prudent ruler.

It is important to note that few of Alfonso's commissions are still extant, and those that are have been dispersed widely. A major earthquake in 1570, the papal reclamation of Ferrara, and redecoration or destruction of the urban palaces and country homes, have left little of the frescoes described by contemporaries. Interpretation of the work that remains is challenged then by its incompleteness, since we can only presume that the lost work fitted within Alfonso's iconographic and thematic plans. But there are several reoccurring motifs in his surviving commissioned artwork which represented personal characteristics he wanted emphasised as part of his self-fashioning. I will return to these following analysis of his personal *impresa*, which has been relatively unstudied as a critical component of Alfonso's image projection.

The *Granata Svampante*

From early in his dukedom, Alfonso had adopted an *impresa* [emblem, often made up of a motif and a motto] that was uniquely blunt and unsubtle amongst his other tools for propaganda. The *stemma*, or motif, a fifteenth-century trend, was used to represent the bearer on official and unofficial documents, banners, etc. (Rosenberg, 148). When combined in the sixteenth century with a motto, devised by a courtier or other literary figure, this symbol became further refined, and even took on new meaning (Caldwell). Like heraldry, an *impresa* was meant to signal the innate nobility of its possessor. But unlike the allegiances demonstrated in arms, which represented the family and its history, this form of emblem represented the virtues and strengths of the individual. Alfonso continued to use the Estense heraldry without alterations (as in fig. 5), composed of equal quadrants representing their French and Imperial lords, the *aquila bianca* [white eagle] adopted by first duke Borso, and from 1474 the papal keys (Pasini-Frassoni, 176; Ferrari, 19-20, 28, 34). However, it appears even for official documents he preferred his personal emblem of the *granata svampante*. This became the motif for a campaign of identity projection, both for himself and his retainers and acolytes. The term 'campaign' is used advisedly – the sheer ubiquity of the *granata* can only be intentional. The *impresa* was used in a variety of formats, many of them public-facing, and with its omnipresence on extant buildings, furnishings and art, we can imagine how prevalent it may have been (see *Appendix* for known examples). The device, featuring a silver ball with three red flames shooting out each side and on top, was quite stylized, and easily recognizable.

Dorigen Caldwell has provided a comprehensive summary of *imprese* history and contemporary interpretation, and Paola di Pietro examined Estensi *stemme*, particularly their continuity between 1431-1534 on manuscripts (Di Pietro, 183-232). But thus far, the only study dedicated to the *granata* is by Chiara Cavaliere, which outlines Alfonso's prolific use of the motif, but is

limited to few examples. This essay therefore provides the most complete analysis thus far of Alfonso's primary emblem.

Paolo Giovio's book on *imprese* described the *granata svampante* (fig. 6) as a 'metal ball full of artificial fire, that blazed [*svampava*] flames from certain crevices, and was of such device that at place and time the fire broke free' (Giovio 1559, 71). This is clearly the gunpowder-filled cannonballs which Alfonso had made infamous, illustrated in figure 2. Ariosto provided the motto, *Loco et Tempore*, translated into fashionable French as *In Lieu et Temps* (Giovio 1559, 71). This addition, introduced after Ravenna's victory, alters its meaning to include elements of caution and restraint to the overt threat of the deadly bomb. Interestingly, the *impresa'*s name, likely derived from Giovio's description, contains a paradox, as *svampare* means both 'to enflame' and 'to extinguish', often metaphorically (GDLI, 591). The bomb could be both incendiary and terminate conflict, and thus required judicious use, in the right place and time, to be most effective.

Giovio claimed that Alfonso did not begin using this device until his success at Ravenna, which is repeated by much of the secondary scholarship. However, the earliest known use of the *impresa* in relation to Alfonso was on a Ferrarese slipware plate believed to be celebrating the marriage of Alfonso to Anna Sforza in 1491.[4] The *granata* on one shield is matched by the Sforzesco *biscione* emblem on the other (Wilson, Thornton, n. 439). It is next seen on medallions commemorating his marriage to Lucrezia Borgia in 1502, on his armor's chest plate (fig. 7) (Hill, 58). The motif was also added by Alfonso to his father's Breviary, although the timing is unclear (Milano, 19). The stylised *granata* appears nine times throughout the book (e.g.: fig. 8), in small cameos rather than features as in Alfonso's own *Libro d'Ore.*[5] He replaced the motifs of his forebears with his own on several manuscripts, which can be read as either emphasising dynastic continuance or imposing his own authority (Cavaliere, 376). The first use of the device may have been by Alfonso's uncle Leonello (r.1441-1450), on a *c.*1445 medal designed by Pisanello, with an allegory of peace on the reverse (fig. 9). Two figures hold baskets of olive branches, under which the rain from clouds extinguish two flaming grenades, each with three distinctive flames.[6] There are also some similarities with one of first duke Borso's *stemme*, a *bacinella* [basin] with three flames (fig. 10), and a related motif had also been used by Urbinese *condottiere* Federico da Montefeltro (1422-1482) (Cheles, 1; Kirkbride, 2.7, 6.26).

[4] British Museum inv. 1855, 1201.70.
[5] BibEst, ms Lat. 424/V.G.11, 26v, 29v, 34r, 37r, 145v, 261r, 279v, 422r, 439v.
[6] It has been suggested the *granata* was found in 1449-50 book illustrations or in the fifteenth-century Palazzo Schifanoia, but I was unable to confirm this. Galvani, 26–27; Mezzogori, 100, 435.

In addition to coins, another 'official' use of the emblem was on statutes and charters, seen as early as 1505 when Alfonso became duke. A 1505 charter supporting the Certosan charterhouse, a document granting guild privileges the same year, and a statute of 1509 (fig. 11) display the *granata* in their borders, sometimes multiple times.[7] This was alongside other *imprese* used by Alfonso and his family, the Este arms, and both Christian and classical references. His wife Lucrezia also used the *impresa* on a 1517 document regarding Ferrarese Augustinians.[8] The last official use of the *impresa* may be a document investing Alfonso with Carpi, signed by Emperor Charles V in 1530.[9] The *granata* is in a pendant to Charles's initial, possibly symbolic of Alfonso's subservience to the authority which could grant him territory.

The *impresa* is ubiquitous in Alfonso's *Libro d'Ore*, or Book of Hours, created between 1505-1510. The *granata* appears at least 19 times, on all of the illustrated folios, in various sizes. Usually figured on top of an island of grass (as in fig. 12), it was also depicted engraved on a gem in one religious image (fig. 13). This is alongside Estensi arms in a variety of formats. Several of his other *imprese* are also used, including a bundle of broken arrows (figs. 14 & 15), and flaming branches (fig. 16).[10] The branches' meaning is elusive, possibly symbolising regeneration, but the arrows may represent the cities under Alfonso's domain: twice there are seven arrows, but in most cases five, possibly after the loss of Modena and Reggio in 1510. The arrows have been interpreted as a reference to Alfonso's martial nature, a symbol of unity, or, in their shattered condition, a sign of peace (Farinella, 372). There are other noteworthy representations in the *Libro,* including an image of Alfonso in full armor praying to God inside the initial on the first illustrated page (fig. 17). This depiction is almost identical (if reversed) to several other works, including the Reliquary of St. Maurelius to be discussed later, and the depiction of Alfonso praying to the Virgin Mary and Christ seen on the Charter of the Charterhouse of Certosa (fig. 18) (Pantone, xii). Typically for this style of personal religious book, amongst the floral motifs and mythical and classical images, there are repeated illustrations of gems. One cannot help but be reminded of the *granata* when seeing the pearls which are liberally reproduced on every page (fig. 19). Aside from the flames, they are almost identical, down to the highlighting, although we cannot know if this was intentional.

A few pieces of material culture remain from the Estense households. In addition to the wedding plate mentioned above, two other fragments of pottery from the early sixteenth century were located, unsurprising since Ferrara was a centre of ceramics production under Alfonso (Wilson,

[7] ASMi, ms. Trivulziano 1440 1r; BibAr. ms. Fond. Stat. 38, 3r; BibAr. ms. Cl. I.478, 23v.
[8] ASMo ms. ASE Caso e Stato, Doc. b. 5.40
[9] ASMo, ms. ASE, Caso e Stato, Inv. Cass. 22.
[10] "Offizuolo Alfonsino," Lisbon, Museu Calouste Gulbenkian, MA:149; Zagreb, Strossmayerova Galerija, SG:39-352, branches: 15r, 16r, 46r, 50r, 53r, 58r; arrows, 5: 17r, 28r, 50r, 67r, 123r; 7: 14r, 94r.

Thornton, n. 439). One, a bowl reconstructed from fragments, has a roughly drawn shield displaying the *granata*. From another dish only the base remains, in a more sophisticated tin-glazed Faenza maiolica (Ferrari, 122). There is also a carved wooden mirror frame at the Victoria and Albert Museum, believed to have belonged to Lucrezia, which has the emblem gilded at its top (fig. 20) (Farinella, 69; V&A Collections, Inv. 7694-1861). And according to Cavaliere, *granate* were embroidered on soldiers' standards and their horses blankets, as well as embossed on furniture, carriages, storefronts and ships, and etched into jewels and arms (Cavaliere, 375).[11]

Examples of the motif remain on Estense buildings, including prominently on columns in the Loggia degli Aranci at the Castello Estense, Alfonso's primary residence (fig. 21).[12] Heraldic symbols had been used on buildings from the medieval period, but the use of *imprese* as a branding device, to "impress their presence" was relatively new (Caldwell, 217, 225, 252). This loggia was adjacent to Alfonso's art and antique collections, and therefore visible to his guests (Borella, 101, 164). Also in the castle, but in a more private space, a *granata* was discovered in the anteroom leading to the chapel, constructed in 1508 (Borella, 125; Bayer, 32).[13]

Another spiritual space with a significant collection of *granate svampante* is the church of San Cristoforo alla Certosa. Initiated by Borso, it was built primarily under Ercole and Alfonso from 1501, and unlike other churches in Ferrara, its foundation and decoration were directly tied to the Estensi. Alfonso likely commissioned the interior's marble bas-reliefs from the workshop of Antonio Lombardo in the first decade of his rule (Farinella, 436-37). The timing is unclear, so whether the war imagery was added during the period when Alfonso was *gonfalonier,* or when he was excommunicated is unknown. But likely Alfonso wanted to explicitly link himself and his family to the church as Ferrara's spiritual leaders. The *imprese* of all three dukes appear on the bases of the twelve pilasters (*Certosa di Ferrara*; *Biagio Rossetti 500*). The *granata* is seen at least four times in the church: twice on its own (as in fig. 22), and twice as part of other images (as in fig. 23). There are also a number of armorial and martial images, and repeated use of fire motifs, in bowls, horns, and bombards.

It is rather unusual to have secular iconography of war within a religious space (as opposed to images of warrior saints such as St. George, the patron saint of Ferrara). This convergence of spiritual and secular repeats throughout this study's examples, and suggests Alfonso saw his military gifts as being God given. Like in Lombardo's reliefs in Alfonso's *Studio di Marmi,* and

[11] Cavaliere doesn't provide evidence of these uses, but points to the expected reproduction of the lord's *impresa* by his subjects, p. 382, n.1.

[12] For locations geographically, please see: https://tinyurl.com/yb98jrpt

[13] The emblem may have been added by Garofolo, recorded as working on a "little chapel in the castle" in the 1510s. Vasari, *Lives*, VIII:26.

the illustrated *Libro d'Ore* from the same period, these military images appear alongside portrayals of peace and abundance, as represented by flowers and bowls of fruit. Whilst they roughly alternate on the pilasters which separate the twelve chapels alongside the nave for the first half the church, the military and fire imagery notably lessens in proximity to the altar. Presumably the inclusion of such secular iconography would have been seen as inappropriate for a religious space, and it is noteworthy that even while stamping Estense familial and personal emblems on the church, Alfonso and the sculptors transitioned to iconography of serenity towards the holiest spaces. The only other known use of the *granata* in a religious building was its inclusion in the choir stalls at Ferrara's cathedral, the Basilica di San Giorgio. Its refurbishment in 1499-1500 included wooden inlays with Ercole and Alfonso's *imprese*, within the trend for heraldic symbols placed in an area reserved for nobility (Tuohy, 174, 177; Cavaliere, 376).

One of the reliefs in San Cristoforo, of an eagle protecting a sash full of fruit (fig. 24), is particularly metaphorical. The eagle, representing the Estense *aquila bianca*, is actively protecting the ripe fruit. The fruit resemble pomegranates, which related to grenades both linguistically and in appearance. The use of pomegranates could be a metaphor, even a pun, since the word *granata* was used for both, derived from the Latin for "filled with seeds" (Cheles, 34; Kirkbride, 6.32; Farinella 377; GDLI, 1033). Like a cannonball with its granules of gunpowder, the fruit would also be ready, or ripe, at the right time. Paola Frau notes a use of this metaphor in the décor of an Estense courtier, painted by Garofalo in approximately 1517 (Frau, 146, *Museo Archeologico*).

Homes of other supporters of Alfonso also bore the *granata*, demonstrating allegiance and clientage. On Palazzo Roncagalli-Stancari (now Rondinelli) the motif was placed prominently on the corner column of the loggia (fig. 25), facing Ferrara's new civic square. The owner was an munitions officer, and therefore likely keen to display his association with the Ferrarese artillery (Donisi, 139; Marchesi 2019*; Biagio Rosetti*). At least five other palazzi within the city are believed to have born the *granata,* including a pavilion in the garden of Alfonso's mistress Laura Dianti (Marchesi 2015a, 95). It was also included in the heraldic emblems on the ceiling of the Galleria delle Battaglie at the Castello Spezzano owned by the Pio family, Este clients (Calegari, 59). The walls of this room were frescoed with scenes of Alfonso's battles, most notably Ravenna (Barreto, 204-5). A *granata* is inexplicably found in the Galleria degli Antichi near Mantua, which was decorated under Vespasiano Gonzaga in 1587; the connection is unclear (Comin; Bazzotti, 383). The Estensi also rewarded loyal supporters and successful military commanders with their own former palazzi and villas, including a Este *delizia* [countryside villa] in Ospedale Monacale, 14.5 miles from Ferrara (Frizzi, 52; Colantuono, 215-16, 219-20). The

repeated use of the *granata* under the roof's fascia is very similar to its appearance in manuscripts such as the *Libro d'Ore*, down to the polychromed highlights (Pertegato, Alberti, 48).

Contemporaries wrote about Alfonso's favorite *delizia,* the Villa Belvedere on an island across the Po from Ferrara, which had a large *granata* on its walls (Williams 2005, 40, 47-48). There are also records of an Este building at Ferrara's San Benedetto gate, which had a large *granata* on the tower's roof, visible from a significant distance away. Sketches are extant (fig. 26), and a seventeenth-century visitor noted the impressive "golden copper ball that sent flames" above the lead dome (Penna; Marchesi 2015b, 253). Both of these large and public-facing manifestations would have been visible to visitors or potential attackers as they approached Ferrara from the north or west. In addition, the *granata* is featured in two architectural drawings in Sebastiano Serlio's book on architecture (figs. 27 and 28), included after he had visited Ferrara (Serlio, XXX, LXI; Beltramini, 313; Mattei, 11).

There are challenges to analysing the *granata svampante'*s uses chronologically. Many of the instances are difficult to date, either because of the lack of documentation, or because they are on buildings which were decorated over a period of time. And as has been shown, the emblem was employed by Alfonso even before he became duke, and had been in existence for at least a half century. The medals and coins with this device issued from 1502, one of the statutes, and likely the choir inlay prove that his campaign started well before the League of Cambrai. This shows that Alfonso had always wanted to emphasise his strengths, associating himself with the latest innovations in artillery, and his own part in developing them. However, by looking at how they would have been read and understood by those that viewed them, and how the use of the motif changed over the period, we can begin to imagine Alfonso's intent, and the possible impact of the *impresa*'s ubiquity. That the image declined in usage after Ravenna supports my argument that in the changing circumstances Alfonso adjusted his strategy of image projection to emphasise prudence and restrained power over skill and blunt force.

Firstly, we can attempt to discern how contemporaries interpreted the *impresa*. Art historians have worked to decode the meaning behind this and other personal emblems, suggesting the *granata svampante* symbolised fortitude, a courage against adversary and without fear that was critical to military virtue (Kirkbride, 6.26). However, the *impresa* also expressed prudence, especially when used in conjunction with the Ariostian motto *loco e tempore.* A cannonball filled with gunpowder was lit just prior to use; before that its potential power lay inert, awaiting activation. The bomb in effect was power restrained, harnessed for its optimal usage. Even Ariosto, defender of chivalric values, acknowledged that Alfonso, "who combined knowledge and power with purposes, would so endow the city… that it would stand secure against the

world" (Ariosto, XLIII:59). To know when to use this destructive weapon, and in what place, demonstrated restraint and good judgement, key aspects of the highly valued virtue of prudence (Hale, 408).

Prudentia was highly valued in the Renaissance, written about by humanists who saw it as uniting all the moral virtues (Williams 2005, 22, 47-48). A subtle shift in this conception of prudence was occurring in the early sixteenth century, based on changes in governance and the discourse around political philosophy, particularly in former republics such as Florence. Niccolò Machiavelli (1469-1527) defined prudence in contrast to *virtù*, or the manly virtue of action for the good of the state. Military leaders and rulers were expected to display this dynamic quality, to act in their state's best interest. Machiavelli's ideal prince was one that was successful through their own character and actions, strong, brave and innovative in response to *fortuna,* and preferably, though not necessarily, morally virtuous. Protection of their state was above all the measure of *virtù,* and success in this regard in turn reinforced their claim to noble rule. *Prudentia* was seen by Machiavelli and contemporaries as the virtue of caution that tempered their audacious nature (Hörcher, 39-41). The chivalric virtues which had marked a lord were now being replaced by a more pragmatic vision of authoritative and judicious rule.

It is understandable why Alfonso chose this emblem, and what it symbolised as a representation of himself. The artillery on which it is based was made with his own hands, updated and improved by him and his bombardiers, and as was shown at Polesella, Ravenna and other battles, was used most effectively under his military command. It represented the potential for severe damage on the battlefield, and Alfonso's expert control of this means of devastation, and his prudence in reserving it for the right time and place. Possibly he hoped that by showing this device, by warning his potential enemies, he could prevent having to use it.

A second mode of analysis is the spatial use of the *granata svampante,* and how that changed over the period being studied. The temporal nature of this is complicated by the inexact dating of many of its instances, especially the architectural features, which could have been added many years after the building was completed. But there was a transition in the use of the *granata,* from one amongst many *imprese,* as in the codices and the *Libro d'Ore* at the beginning of his rule, to a more focused use of it as a means of ownership and personal and state branding, on buildings in particular, peaking approximately 1510-11. Its use seems to have been almost discontinued around 1513, when Julius II died. For almost a decade after this, as will be discussed, his self-fashioning focused on his role as Christian lord, and an emphasis on contemplation rather than war. Formal and informal literature circulated about Alfonso's heroism and artillery skill during this period, and so possibly the need for visual propaganda outside of his dominions was less critical. It was only with the returned threat under Leo X in the 1520s that Alfonso returned to

martial imagery, in the form of mature and aristocratic cannon portraiture. The rare later uses of the *granata* could be attributed to Alfonso's heirs, keen to burnish his memory and build their own identity on top of his reputation.

The *granata svampante* is still in use today, in forms clearly descended from Alfonso. The Estense region of Garfagnana, which continued to be ruled under the Este dukes of Modena after the papal reclamation of Ferrara, issued coins with the *granata* in the seventeenth century, and still use both the motif and motto as the region's *impresa* (Spaggiari, 53; *Patrimonio Culturale*). One of Ferrara's city quadrants, Santo Spirito, has adopted it as their emblem, adorning their banners and costumes during the competitions and parades of the annual *Palio di Ferrara* festival, where participants carry replica *granate* (*Palio di Ferrara*). And Italy's *Carabinieri* [domestic police] still have a form of *granata* as their insignia, possibly derived from the *impresa* of Alfonso's commander of artillery (Giusti, 7).

Other iconographic projections of *Loco et Tempore*

While little attention has been given to Alfonso's *imprese,* significant scholarship has focused on his other patronage, particularly his two galleries: the *Studio di Marmi* installed in 1507-12, and his *Camerini d'Alabastro* designed approximately 1511 and built after 1513, under his direction (Bayer, 32-34, 37; Hope, 646). These contain allegorical works featuring Roman myths and scriptural narratives, commissioned from some of the best-known artists of the period. Vincenzo Farinella argues that these rooms were created in reaction to the massive decorative campaign commissioned by Julius in the Vatican, which Alfonso viewed on his visits to Rome in 1508 and 1512 (Farinella, 343, 352). Despite being located within his apartments, these rooms were shown to his visitors, both personal and diplomatic. The majority of the works within these galleries fall outside of the purview of this study, but several pieces relate to the iconographic program Alfonso instituted during and after the wars. Most critically for this project, they show the transition in the allegorical messages Alfonso commissioned, from an emphasis on military strength, to that of prudence. They reflect a contemporary understanding that while there was a right time and place (*loco et tempore*) for war, so also was there a need for study and contemplation in pursuit of good governance.

The *Studio* contained a series of marble friezes by Antonio Lombardo, a Venetian who worked in Alfonso's court from 1508-11. Overall, they feature dichotomous imagery of war and peace, and *Ars et mars*, a convergence of learning and arms, which was deemed essential for a sixteenth-century ruler (Gundersheimer 1973, 269). Scholars have interpreted the latter as articulating Alfonso's desire for *otium*, or time for contemplation away from war and active governance (Williams 2005, 29; Tom, 326–27; Bayer, 29). A few of the reliefs bear inscriptions making explicit this balance between *otium* and war, the contemplative and the active. One says,

"In 1508 Alfonso, the third duke of Ferrara, established this for his leisure and tranquillity," alongside the image of armor being laid beside palms, a Christian symbol of peace (Williams 2005, 172).

Another piece, *Mars Divesting the Arms of War*/ *Mars in Repose* (fig. 29), likely commissioned in 1512 after Ravenna, more than any other epitomises the room's meaning.[14] The Latin engraving in its bottom right reads "I, Mars, cannot wage war well, if I have not set aside my armor," stressing the need for strategic thinking and prudence alongside strength and courage. Mars' armor has been removed and laid aside; scholars are divided on whether he has just removed it, or is just about to take it up (Lewis, 233-44; Williams 2005, 173-75). This ambiguity may be deliberate; either way, it offers a view to changing ideas of the ideal warrior, one that takes time for careful thought and strategy, and the pursuit of peace. Like Alfonso's motto, it suggests there was a correct time and place for war.

Mars' position in this frieze prefigures Alfonso's posture in the later Dossi painting (fig. 1); the triangular composition formed by their arms, and the twist of their torso, is virtually identical, but mirrored. Where Mars rests his left hand on his helmet, Alfonso's is on his cannon. In both works their right hands are either placing down or picking up the tools of war, as the warrior looks away wearily, reluctant to return to battle. Whether Dossi was intentionally emulating the pose is unknown, but it seems likely. The theme of a warrior turning away from war would be just as important to Alfonso in the 1530s, as in 1512.

While Mars remained its personification in the sixteenth century, the conception of war was changing. As mentioned previously, rather than fierce and brutal warriors, the emphasis moved to ordered combat, strategy, and the pursuit of peace. John Hale suggested the idea of associating Mars with gunpowder was unimaginable (Hale, 370-72). However these weapons became part of a civilising process which made war efficient, impersonal, and pragmatic, rather than passionate and intimate. Rulers like Alfonso were still keen to build reputations through warfare, but their military careers had to be balanced with their new circumstances as lords of their own domains, demonstrating the virtues of prudence and rationality, and not just fearlessness and martial strength. It is probable that this particular relief was made following the Battle of Ravenna, when Alfonso himself was hoping to divest his arms. Mars was also associated with tyranny, and by portraying him absent his armor, and therefore vulnerable, Alfonso may have also hoped to separate himself from the conquest which had made the Este territorial lords. Not wishing to be seen as a despot but as a magnanimous protector, his authority legitimised by inherent nobility,

[14] Galleria Estense claims it was Lombardo *c.*1506-1511, whereas the National Gallery (Washington) suggests his circle *c.*1515-1520. Douglas Lewis's argument for Lombardo's pairing with Peace, and the dating, is persuasive. Lewis, 233. Cf. Williams 2005, 173–75.

Alfonso could use this allegory to reflect his own civility and dedication to peace, prosperity, and stability (Sheard, 329).

Douglas Lewis argues that this frieze was part of a set, with its counterpart of *Peace Establishing her Reign* as an allegory for the victory at Ravenna (Lewis, 233, 237). However, this suggests that Alfonso believed this victory had earned him peace, which seems unlikely. It is only with hindsight that the period of respite is clear; for Alfonso the threat was still imminent, at least for another year. This trend in his patronage towards allegories of peace may have instead been aspirational, perhaps meant to inspire himself and others towards diplomacy, rather than war. Certainly, Alfonso wanted to demonstrate his strength, but in the pursuit of peace, to allow Ferrara to prosper economically and culturally.

Classical gods are represented throughout Alfonso's galleries, with Bacchus a theme of the *Camerini*, but there are also several representations of Vulcan. The god of fire, he symbolised the ability to keep civilisation alive (Panofsky, 38, 50). He was also the smith-god, working at the forge, and so easily associated with the hands-on Alfonso. He appears in at least four works in Alfonso's collection, including Lombardo's *Forge of Vulcan/Birth of Athena* (fig. 30), which was produced during the height of the League Wars. Scholars have conjectured that the figure of Vulcan, second from the right, at the forge, depicted Alfonso (Sheard, 321, 329). Therefore, Vulcan's role as the instrument which brought Athena (and therefore Athens) to life, prefigures Alfonso's role in bringing Ferrara to the forefront of cultural expression, a new Athens (Sheard, 330; Williams 2005, 185-89). Vulcan also provided a foil for Mars: as his rival, he represented an alternative to the war and tyranny which Mars represented. Thus, he was the perfect symbol for Alfonso's image as the provider of fire, able to protect his state; the craftsman and innovator; and the shepherd of a new direction towards culture and intellectual pursuits, when not at war. The eagle (representing the Este) resting on the cast-off armor then indicates the Estensi mastery over warcraft, and a prioritising of cultural production over military pursuits.

In less allegorical terms, Alfonso was also portrayed as a Christian Prince, defender of the faith as well as of his people. This increased in the period following Julius's death, when Alfonso and Ferrara were reconciled with the church. A portrait plaque made for the reliquary of Saint Maurelius in approximately 1513 displays Alfonso still in armor but with his helmet set aside, kneeling before the saint.[15] As mentioned earlier, this commission echoes similar manuscript images of armored Alfonso praying (figs. 17 and 18). The Estensi associated themselves with Maurelius, a seventh-century Ferrarese bishop, as a way of representing their civic and religious responsibilities, and Alfonso was likely trying to emphasise his role as the

[15] Giannantonio da Foligno, *Plaque for Reliquary of San Maurelius* (*c.* 1513), Musei Civici di Arte Antica, Ferrara.

spiritual leader of his state, now that the interdict on the city was lifted (Tom, 35-36, 47; Williams 2005, 43, 56-60). Tom also argues that this indicates another change in Alfonso's image-projection: he no longer wanted to be seen as a papal vassal, but now as a protector standing up to the tyranny of the Papacy (Tom, 46).

The Venetian artist Mario Equicola, who assisted Alfonso in designing the *Camerini*'s theme, remarked in 1513 that "at present he cares only for commissioning pictures and seeing antiques" (Bayer, 29). Devoting himself to art, and through it his image recreation, Alfonso was clearly shifting his resources and attention away from warcraft and into a more refined and intellectual direction. The *Camerini*, which focused on images of bacchanalia and love, reflected this transition, as it featured illustrations of gods at leisure, and in peace (Shephard, np).

Conclusion

Alfonso used visual art and iconography as a form of self-representation, combining conventional messages of nobility and authority with explicit reminders of his military capabilities. From early in his rule, Alfonso was careful to exude a public image of strength and good governance. Just as his father connected himself to his mythical namesake, Hercules, Alfonso used artistic means to align his image with that of ancient Roman gods. His public facing commissions, in coin form, painted, or sculpted, emphasised his martial ability, even if the secondary message changed over time as political and personal circumstances changed. His personal *impresa* of an exploding grenade is the ultimate example of the attention Alfonso wanted drawn to his technological and military accomplishments. Despite their controversial use in battle, and perception as an affront to gallantry and chivalrous virtues, Alfonso's mastery of artillery was central to his self-fashioning. Used defensively, the cannons and other weaponry demonstrated his potency and skill at protecting his state, the essential duty of a Renaissance prince. The use of munitions and artillery in visual works was then a warning to the other states, a defensive means of avoiding conflict, even as his own representation became more aristocratic and intellectual.

At the beginning of his rule Alfonso used his personal emblem of a flaming grenade prolifically on a wide range of public-facing materials. This peaked during the early years of the League of Cambrai, when his state was under the greatest threat. Following his widely-acknowledged victories at Polesella and particularly Ravenna, the use of the *granata svampante* declined. Alfonso's commissioned works went through a transition period, with classical allusions comparing himself to Mars the triumphant warrior and Vulcan the craftsman and controller of fire. He still retained the association with warcraft through the wearing of armor, but emphasised his piety, contemplation, and restraint. This refinement of his image was reflected in written works as well: Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* highlighted the defensive nature of Ferrara's battles,

suggesting he only fought when provoked, and Alfonso's success as a protector of his people (Ariosto, XLI:2).

The contemporary elite's disdain for gunpowder weapons may have also led Alfonso to de-emphasise his *imprese*, and to instead stress his humanist and noble attributes. Whilst the threat of his cannons was still ominously present in portraits, and his personification and representation in other works retained the armor marking him as a warrior, these aspects were diminished. Instead he used metaphors of ancient deities and portrayals of himself as a pious Christian soldier or an aristocratic and learned ruler to highlight his preference for peace over war, and study over action. This duality of military strength and technical skill, restrained and balanced by prudence and intelligent strategy, and the paradox of peace through strength, formed the basis for most of the representations of Alfonso post-1512.

So, returning to the Battista Dossi portrait which began this paper, what should be made of the choice in the 1530s, by either Alfonso or his immediate family, to portray him as a warrior? There is more obvious threat than in the Titian portrait, and no reference to the contemplative or peaceful works of the post-League of Cambrai period. Perhaps the answer is in his look of resigned despair, and his half turn from the battlefield, like the frieze of Mars. The 1520s brought a new series of challenges from the Papacy, with a volatile relationship which changed with each pope, as well as tenuous diplomatic alliances with France and the Holy Roman Empire. He was involved in further battles, including against the Imperial forces in 1521, a rare defeat, and his artillery played a role in the Sack of Rome in 1527. By the end of his life, Alfonso had regained Modena, Reggio and his other territories, more often through diplomacy than through conquest. But the endless threats and need for defensive posturing required him to remind potential challengers of his reputation as a warrior until the end.

In many ways, Alfonso's success and reputation came from being "at the right place at the right time" as his motto stated. His expertise and innovations in gunpowder weapons and military strategy came during a transition in battlefield practices, from lengthy face-to-face combat to decisive artillery victory. This allowed his personal prestige and his state's political fortunes to rise, as other princes were intimidated by his power, or wished to align with him. Capitalising on his success, he used prolifically a personal *impresa* which reinforced this reputation. As the pressures of war eased in the 1510s, he commissioned works which memorialised his victories, whilst also emphasising his humanist and noble virtues. This stressed his prudence, his intellect rather than intrepidity, representing a contemporary change in the conception of an ideal prince.

Appendix: Known Examples of the Granata Svampante

(those unconfirmed by the author are cited)

Architecture

Wood panel on choir stall, Basilica di San Giorgio, Ferrara, *c.*1499-1500.
Capital of a column, Palazzo Rondinelli, on the Piazza Ariostea, *c.* post 1500.
Repeating motif on the cornice, Villa Vincenzi Pasi, Ospital Monacale, *c.* post 1502 (Pertegato, Alberti, 48).
Four Panels lining aisles, San Cristoforo alla Certosa, Ferrara, *c.*1505-1515.
Baratelli Monument, Certosa Charterhouse, Ferrara, Antonio Lombardo, *c.*1506-1515 (Farinelli, 279, 436-37).
Capital of column in inner courtyard, Palazzo on Vicolo del Leoncorno, Ferrara, date unknown (not extant) (Pertegato, Alberti, 48).
Houses at corso Giovecca 153, via Settembre 46, and via Quartieri 1, Ferrara, date unknown (Righini, 118-19).
Gilded relief on outer walls, Villa Belvedere, Ferrara, *c.*1513 (not extant) (Williams 2005, 47-48).
Garden pavilion at Palazzo della Rosa, Ferrara, *c.* post 1519 (not extant) (Marchesi 2015a, 95).
Tower at San Benedetto gate, Ferrara, date unknown (not extant) (Penna; Marchesi 2015b, 253)
Capitals of two columns, Giardino degli Aranci, Castello Estense, Ferrara, *c.*1531.
Wood panel, Galleria delle Battaglie, Castello Spezzano, Fiorano Modenese, *c.*1531 (Calegari, 59).
Fresco, Galleria degli Antichi, Piazza Castello Ducale, Sabbionetta, Giovanni and Alessandro Alberti, 1587 (Bazzotti, 383).
Wall painting in niche of the Ducal Chapel, Castello Estense, Ferrara, *c.*1590-91 (Borella, 125).

Material Culture

Medal of Leonello d'Este, copper cast, Pisanello, Ferrara, *c.* 1443.
Plate commemorating marriage of Alfonso and Anna Sforza (BM 1855, 1201.70) slipware, Ferrarese school, *c.*1491.
Bowl fragment, (unknown collection), slipware, likely Ferrara school, date unknown.
Medal commemorating marriage of Alfonso and Lucrezia Borgia, (V&A 208.1866, 233.1910; GalEst 8852) bronze, after Giancristoforo Romano, Ferrara, *c.*1502. (also with different reverse, *cf.* BM G3,FerrM.55, 1502-5)
Bagattino coin (unknown collection) copper, unknown artist, Ferrara, *c.*1505-12.
Banners of soldiers, and Alfonso's breastplate at the Battle of Ravenna, 1512 (not extant) (Giovio 1559, 71; Ferrari, 125).
Mirror frame (V&A 7694-1861) carved wood, unknown artist, Ferrara, *c.*1502-20.
Plate fragment (unknown collection) maiolica, Faenza school, first half of the 16th century (Ferrari, 122; Wilson, np).
Medal (GalEst 8782) copper minted, Giovanni Antonio Leli da Foligno, *c.*1523-25 (possible).
Grossetti coin issued by Cesare d'Este, (Castello di Udine, 3014) copper, minted, unknown artist, Garfagnana, *c.*1606.

Manuscripts and Printed Works

Breviario di Ercole I d'Este, (BibEst ms. LAT. 424, 26v, 29v, 145v, 261v, 279v, 422r, 439v), Matteo da Milano, 1502-5.

Charter recognising Charterhouse at San Cristoforo (ASMi, ms Trivulziano 1440, 1r) Matteo da Milano, 15 May 1505.
Statute frontispiece (BibAr. ms. Fond. Stat. 38, 3r) unknown artist, 1505.
19 folios, *Libro d'oro di Alfonso d'Este*/ *Offiziolo Alfonsino* (Lisbon, Museu Calouste Gulbenkian, MA. 149; Zagreb, Strossmayerova Galerija, SG. 339-52) Matteo da Milano, 1505-1510.
Statute frontispiece (BibAr. ms. Classe I.478, 23v) unknown artist, 16 February 1509.
'Impresa di Alfonso Duca di Ferrara', Paulo Giovio, *Dialogo dell'impresa militari e amorous* (Lyon, 1559) p. 71.
Arms of Lucrezia Borgia, on 'Bolle di fratellanza' (ASMo ms. ASE Casa e Stato Doc. b. 5.40) unknown artist, 1517 (Spaggiari, 83).
Investiture of Carpi by Charles V (ASMo, ASE Casa e Stato, Inv. cass. 22), unknown artist, 1531.
Architectural drawings, wood print, Sebastiano Serlio, *Regole Generali Di Architetvra* (Venice, 1537) p. XXX, LXI.

Abbreviations

ASMi	Archivio di Stato, Milan
ASMo	Archivio di Stato, Modena
BibAr.	Biblioteca Ariostea (Ferrara)
BibEst.	Biblioteca Estense (Modena)
DBI-2	*Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani, v.2*
GalEst	Galleria Estense (Modena)
GDLI	*Grande Dizionario della Lingua Italiana*
V&A	Victoria and Albert Museum (London)

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