VIRTUOUS LOVE: MESSAGES FOR BRIDES AND GROOMS
IN THE FIFTEENTH-CENTURY “OTTO PRINTS”

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ABSTRACT

A series of forty-two circular and oval engravings dating from 1465 to 1475 depict playful scenes of lovers, putti, and exemplary women. These engravings, known to scholars as the “Otto prints,” were likely pasted onto small boxes called forzierini, which were presented to women after their betrothal by their future groom. The goal of this thesis is to place the “Otto prints” within the extensive network of fifteenth-century marriage art by comparing the style and content of the engravings to other objects exchanged during the betrothal period. The engravings display subject matter and inscriptions that can be found on cassoni, mirrors, maiolica dishes, and boxes produced during the same time period. The “Otto prints,” like these other objects, contain messages for the bride and groom encouraging virtuous and gender-specific behavior. Many of the engravings encourage chastity, especially for the bride, and discourage lust outside of the marital union. Three subjects found on six of the “Otto prints” will be examined in detail, Judith and Holofernes, the punishment of Eros, and a woman stealing her lover’s heart. Each of these subjects represents a variation of the Wiebermacht; that is, the theme of the power of women over men. This thesis examines the ways in which the artist uses these subjects to educate the bride and groom on their roles within their union.
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CHAPTER 1

THE “OTTO PRINTS”

Lively lovers, putti, and exemplary women embellish a series of prints that are among the earliest of Italian engravings. Known as the “Otto prints,” these engravings were likely pasted onto small boxes that were presented to women after their betrothal by their future grooms. The “Otto prints” contain messages for their viewers that relate to fifteenth-century gender roles within marriage. Many of the prints encourage chastity, especially for the bride, and discourage lust outside of the marital union. These messages are communicated, often with a great deal of playfulness, through simplified compositions and iconic rather than narrative subjects. As part of a large network of art that was intended for consumption by brides and grooms, the “Otto prints” succinctly represent the expectations placed on the young couple as individuals and within a marriage.

The “Otto prints” were produced during the early era of printmaking in Italy, a period that scholars are still working to understand. Intaglio printing was being employed in Italy at least by the middle of the fifteenth century and may or may not have developed separately from German printmaking, which predates it by several decades.¹ Most scholars credit Florence as the Italian birthplace of the print; however, the dearth of existing prints from these years make any claims speculative at best.² The “Otto prints,” which date from circa 1465 to the mid 1470s, represent some of the earliest known engravings from Italy, thus they are of great interest to

² Jay A. Levenson, Konrad Oberhuber and Jacquelyn L. Sheehan, Early Italian Engravings from the National Gallery of Art (Washington: National Gallery of Art, 1973), xvi.
scholars of Italian prints. The “Otto prints” take their name from Ernst Peter Otto, the man who first assembled them in 1783. Otto owned twenty-four of the forty-two engravings that now make up this cohesive group; the remainder were added by Arthur M. Hind, the first scholar to address the prints on the basis of their format and subject matter.

Thirty-seven of the “Otto prints” can be attributed to a single workshop, generally recognized as that of the Florentine Baccio Baldini. The only documentary evidence for Baldini is a date of death in December of 1487 and a brief mention in Vasari’s Lives of the Most Eminent Painters, Sculptors, and Architects. Vasari writes that Baldini followed Maso Finiguerra, a Florentine goldsmith and niellist whom Vasari credits with the invention of engraving. Baldini, he claims, had little power of design himself and based his works on the inventions of Sandro Botticelli. Baldini’s relationship to Botticelli is otherwise unsupported, though at times his elongated, floating figures and idealized faces do have a Botticellian air to them. Despite the scarcity of information pertaining to his life, Baldini has been credited with the creation of many prints as well as the illustrations in the Florentine Picture-Chronicle, a volume of pen drawings depicting the history of mankind from Adam and Eve to shortly before the Christian era. Whether Baldini or some other unidentified artist was responsible for the “Otto prints,” the engravings clearly were made by the same hand, or at least workshop, in Florence during the

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4 For a description of the collection and copies of the prints included see Zucker, “Early Italian Masters: Part One,” 127-158.
third quarter of the Quattrocento. The small selection that survives must represent but a percentage of what once existed. At least two Ferrarese prints, which mimic the “Otto prints” in their circular shape and secular imagery, suggest that the prints were circulated or that a similar market existed in other parts of Italy. The popularity of the prints may well have stemmed from their function in the nuptial practices of the era.

The “Otto prints” depict a range of subjects related to love and marriage. Seven prints show two lovers on either side of a circle, sometimes left blank for the insertion of arms (Fig. 1). Occasionally the figures are identified as a specific couple, such as Jason and Medea. More commonly, the figures are idealized and dressed in contemporary clothing, and meant to symbolize the betrothed couple who could further personalize the image through the inclusion of their coats-of-arms. Another five of the “Otto prints” represent couples in other occupations—dancing, being crowned, reclining, and lounging in a “garden of love”—all related to the courtship of the two individuals who were intended to view the box.

Some “Otto Prints” allude to marriage in a more oblique way. Six show Cupid or putti engaged in a variety of activities that imply love and sexuality. Several others depict hunting scenes, referencing an analogy popular in contemporary poetry that compared courtship, the pursuit of a woman, to the chase between the hunter and the hunted. One of the most interesting themes found in the “Otto Prints” is the Weibermacht, or the power of women over men, which is represented at least three times in the series: Judith with the head of Holofernes, the chastisement of Eros, and a woman removing the heart from her male captive. These subjects can each be found in two surviving formats within the series; the Judith and the Eros as near replicas, and the captive as the primary subject in one instance and as part of a more extensive

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composition in another. Though these prints appear to be unusual in their portrayal of women in positions of power, a closer reading suggests they contain messages encouraging chastity and loyalty in the bride that are also found on other fifteenth-century marriage goods.

The “Otto prints” most likely were made to be pasted on the inside or outside of small boxes. Their size and shape and the survival of boxes with similar imagery painted or embossed on them indicate this function. For example, a box from the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston (Fig. 2) shows a format very similar to one of the “Otto prints” (Fig. 3). Both contain petal-shaped spaces reserved for the insertion of coats-of-arms, as well as imagery associated with courtship. The idea that the prints were pasted inside boxes is supported by a series of contemporaneous boxes from France that have religious prints pasted on the inside (Fig. 4). This indicates that this type of box decoration was not uncommon in the late fifteenth century. The prints could also be pasted on the outside of the box, as shown by an early sixteenth-century cassone at the Sforza Castle in Milan (Fig. 5).

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12 Marta Ajmar-Wollheim and Flora Dennis, eds., At Home in Renaissance Italy (London: Victoria and Albert, 2006), 327.
CHAPTER 2
THE SOCIAL CONTEXT OF THE “OTTO PRINTS”

Like the boxes on which they may have been pasted, the prints were probably made for an open market rather than commissioned. The medium suggests they were a cheaper alternative to painted boxes, though the buyers would likely have been upper class because engravings were still fairly expensive at this time. Moreover, the men and women in the prints wear the type of expensive clothing favored by wealthy Florentines. Even if the viewer did not need to be particularly well educated to enjoy the subject matter, many of the prints have inscriptions in either Latin or French, indicating that the audience must have been literate. At least one print suggests a relationship to the Medici family (Fig. 1). In the engraving, the man’s cloak shows a diamond ring with three feathers, one of the more famous Medici devices, and the couple has been identified as Lorenzo il Magnifico and his neoplatonic love, Lucrezia Donati.13

The position of the “Otto prints,” and the betrothal chests they decorated, must be considered within the larger practice of material exchange during marriage. In the fifteenth-century, the public exchange of goods between the families of the bride and groom drew the community’s attention to the union, announcing the marriage and displaying the families’ wealth.14 The trousseau and countertrousseau, which made up the bulk of the goods exchanged, were essentially under the control of the fathers of the bride and groom. The groom himself,

13 Aby Warburg was the first to note this connection. This does not indicate that the prints were commissioned by the Medici, only that the artist and his customers were aware of the public courting of Lucrezia by Lorenzo. See Aby Warburg, “On Imprese Amorose in the Earliest Florentine Engravings,” in The Renewal of Pagan Antiquity (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute for the History of Art and the Humanities, 1999), 431-434.
however, was expected to give his bride-to-be little trinkets that symbolized his affection for her. These were given after the betrothal but before the marriage ceremony and could include jewelry, mirrors, combs, or other small presents. They were often packed inside a small chest called a forzierini, the type of box with which the “Otto prints” are associated.¹⁵ The practice of bestowing these boxes went back to the fourteenth century and was a vital part of the betrothal process. They were often presented to the bride with considerable ceremony, and sumptuary laws sought to limit the types of goods that could be included in them, indicating that they were often expensive or elaborate. Bernardino of Siena noted this practice in a sermon from 1425, saying “that little chest: you know, the one in which you keep your ring and pearls and [marriage] jewels, and other similar things; and sometimes you place there the letter which your lover sends you…”¹⁶ The fact that Bernardino notes a lover’s letter proves how closely associated these boxes were with love and courtship. Of the few items that truly belonged to a woman, these chests must have been particularly treasured for their association with such an important rite of passage and for the fact that they held other important items from the betrothal period.

The practice of giving gifts that indicated strong feelings of love dominated nuptial customs even though most marriages at this time were political alliances rather than love matches. The “Otto prints,” as well as the imagery found on cassoni, mirrors, and other marriage goods, all revolve around the love that supposedly existed between the betrothed pair. Though this love was essentially fictional, the images do present the hope for a loving marriage. The importance of love was also stressed in contemporary wedding orations. The orators often spoke of the couple’s mutual appreciation of each other’s beauty and the physical pleasure that would

¹⁵ On forzierini see Jacqueline Marie Musacchio, Art, Marriage, and Family in the Florentine Renaissance Palace (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 128.
be known to them through their union. Although the betrothed couple might not know each other well, they were encouraged from the beginning to nurture feelings of love for one another.

Both the bride and groom were expected to conform to certain gender-specific ideals within their union, which they were taught through the study of exemplary men and women. Leon Battista Alberti, for example, urged fathers to teach their sons by praising the virtues of good men and condemning the vices of the immoral. Similarly, women were presented with examples of behavior to emulate and avoid in books such as Boccaccio’s *De mulieribus claris*. Examples could be given verbally, but were also included in contemporary art. The “Otto prints,” for example, contain clear messages for the bride, who was intended to be their primary viewer. Many of the “Otto prints” present an exemplary woman or a text that encourages virtuous qualities in women. This does not mean that the groom could not find meaning in the imagery. On the contrary, these same prints, when considered from a male perspective, often hold complementary messages. Perhaps the bride and groom were meant to enjoy the imagery together. It is notable that small boxes that were meant for a man’s study exist with exemplary males on them. For example, a Ferrarese box from the second half of the fifteenth century depicts scenes from the lives of Atilius Regulus and Mucius Scaevola, two ancient Roman heroes (Fig. 6). This supports the theory that objects such as these often contained moralizing messages.

While men were praised for showing a variety of virtues, a woman’s honor was essentially one and the same as her chastity. Therefore, it is unsurprising that many of the “Otto

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19 Syson and Thorton, 21.
prints” encourage chastity and discourage lust in the female viewer. For instance, the “Otto print” of the *Woman with a Unicorn* represents the traditional story of the legendary creature that could only be caught by a virgin (Fig. 7). In the engraving, the woman is even able to put a collar on the unicorn. The woman’s dress includes an inscription reading *Marietta*. The word is part of the original print, which was intended for a wide audience, thus it is unlikely that it refers to a single viewer. It may allude to the famous Florentine beauty Marietta Strozzi, or it may imply that the woman depicted is like a “little Virgin Mary.”

Comparable images can be found on medals and majolica. For example, Pisanello’s 1447 medal of Cecilia Gonzaga depicts on the reverse a seated woman with a unicorn, a scene that would have attested to the purity of Cecilia, who was a nun (Fig. 8). A similar scene can also be found on a maiolica plate from the late fifteenth century (Fig. 9). This dish, which was created to celebrate a marriage, as evidenced by the coats-of-arms at the top, acts as an example of chastity for the bride in the same way that the “Otto print” does.

The inscriptions on the “Otto prints” also encourage virtuous behavior. Various prints encourage the viewer to “uphold the right,” or to “beware the fire [of lust].” By far the most common inscription in the “Otto prints” revolves around the theme of faith: “love requires faith and where there is no faith there can be no love” is included in three prints. Another print shortens this to “love requires faith” and another simply to “faith.” These phrases can be traced back at least to Boccaccio, who wrote in his *Rime* that, “Love requires Faith and with him are

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bound Hope with Fear and Jealousy, and always Loyalty and Humanity.”22 They indicate the role of faith in the marriage for both the bride and groom. Both being faithful as well as trusting in the love of one’s partner are implied. Similar inscriptions can be found on all manner of wedding goods from this time period, indicating the importance of the concept.23 Because many of the items exchanged, such as mirrors, boxes, and maiolica plates, were small in size, the stories depicted on them often had to be condensed down to an iconic representation. In this context, the inscriptions were helpful for establishing the meaning of the imagery.

The designs on fifteenth-century marriage goods were meant to encourage a loving relationship as well as virtuous behavior by the bride and groom. The subjects and inscriptions depicted in the “Otto prints” are similar to those found on many other items purchased at the time of marriage. For women, chastity was the most important quality to cultivate and this is reflected in the items they were given. Several specific engravings from the “Otto prints” contain moralizing messages for the bride and groom, and especially encourage chastity on the part of the female viewer.

23 For examples see Bayer, cats. 15a and 32c, and Syson and Thorton, 53.
CHAPTER 3

JUDITH AND HOLOFERNES

Two of the “Otto prints” depict Judith and Holofernes, a popular subject of theological debate and for representation in the visual arts throughout the Medieval and Renaissance eras (Figs. 10-11). In the Book of Judith, Judith is described as a beautiful and virtuous widow who leaves her life of seclusion to save her town, Bethulia, from the invading Assyrians. After dressing herself in her most beautiful garments and gaining permission from the town elders, she travels to the enemy camp with her maid under the pretense of becoming an informant. She ingratiates herself to the general Holofernes, who is immediately captivated by her beauty and holds a banquet with the intention of seducing her. Holofernes drinks great quantities of wine and Judith takes advantage of his drunken stupor to cut off his head with two strikes of his sword. Though her victory ensured the salvation of the Jewish faith, the nature of her defeat, which involved the deliberate deception of a man and the exploitation of her physical beauty, earned her a controversial place in Christian discourse. Theologians debated Judith’s chastity and the morality of her actions, coming to a variety of conclusions about her virtue.

Though Judith clearly states after her return to Bethulia that Holofernes, “wrought no deed of sin with me to defile me or cause me shame,” (13:16) many male writers later found this hard to believe and accused her of luring Holofernes into her trust by sleeping with him. In the sixth-century John Malalas wrote that Judith insisted that she and Holofernes sleep together in a

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25 The complicated and conflicting theological discussions of Judith will not be discussed in full here, but are addressed by Elena Ciletti, “Patriarchal Ideology in the Renaissance Iconography of Judith,” in Refiguring Woman: Perspectives on Gender and the Italian Renaissance, eds. Marilyn Migiel and Juliana Schiesari (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 35-70. This chapter forms the basis of my discussion.
tent for three nights before she killed him, implying that she had a sexual relationship with the general. Other scholars simply point to her deceit and entrapment of Holofernes through the use of her beauty. Perhaps most relevant to the subject of the “Otto prints,” the fourteenth-century writer Meistersinger Heinrich von Meissen stated of Judith, “she comes with her bright appearance, and she plays him a lover’s trick.” These writers worried that a woman might use her beauty for such dangerous purposes, for in this case, the “lover’s trick” is quite gruesome.

Not all theologians found fault with Judith’s means of attaining victory. In fact, many praised her for her ability to remain chaste in a situation that was so certain to produce desire. If women were essentially lustful, Judith, in their minds, deserved more credit than a man would in the same circumstances because she was able to contain herself. So much emphasis was placed on her chastity, in fact, that a connection was forged between Judith and the Virgin Mary as two virtuous women who defeated evil through their dedication to their faith. In this context, Judith was offered to women as an exemplary figure of the type memorialized by Boccaccio in his *De mulieribus claris*. Unlike many of the other famous heroines popular at this time, however, Judith is not famous for the dramatic preservation of her purity, like Lucretia, but for deliberately risking her chastity for the greater good of her city.

Judith’s character, with its mixture of virtue and vice, seems closer to the Renaissance attitude towards women than that of any other popular heroine during this time. Fifteenth-century females were expected to possess beauty and grace, the attributes necessary to attract the advances of men, as well as the virtue and moral excellence to resist these advances. Perhaps this is why Judith was such a popular figure in late fifteenth-century Florentine art; she is represented

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in panel paintings by Botticelli and Matteo di Giovanni, a small bronze by Pollaiuolo, and, perhaps most famously, the large bronze by Donatello created for the Medici Palace garden. Almost all of these images favor a representation of Judith that emphasizes her heroic rather than seductive nature, though the implications of female sexuality are always lurking below the surface.

The Judith of the “Otto prints” represents the chaste and virtuous heroine in a manner that sends a very clear moral message to the bride-to-be. Both prints depict Judith standing in a simplified landscape, holding the head of Holofernes in her left hand and the sword in her right. She stands in a classic contrapposto position, looking off to her right with a thoughtful expression, while the body of Holofernes lies sprawled behind her, blood pouring from the neck. Contrary to the Biblical text, Judith’s maid is not present and the pair are not inside his tent. This was probably done for simplification purposes, as it would be more difficult to make a clear print with the figures depicted inside the tent, and two figures fit within the frame easier than three would. The composition also indicates that this is not one scene from the narrative, but a simplified and symbolic representation of the story that follows the standard iconography of fifteenth-century representations of Judith.

The pose of Judith in the larger print is clearly indebted to Donatello’s bronze (Fig. 12). The arm is raised at exactly the same angle and, although the head of Holofernes is no longer attached to its body, the arm that holds it is similarly placed, and the finger wrapped through his

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27 The prints are 135 and 115 mm in diameter.
28 The larger of the two prints is superior in terms of the engraver’s abilities. Judith’s figure is more elongated, her facial features more accurately shaded, and her hands and clothing more delicately rendered. Scholars tend to believe, with good reason, that the prints were made by the same workshop, leading to the conclusion that perhaps the master, Baccio Baldini, created the larger print and left the smaller to a well-trained but heavier handed assistant. That another version was made at all attests to the popularity of the subject.
hair mimics Donatello’s. Considering the fame of this sculpture, it is not surprising that other artists would be inspired by it, yet the pose is fairly typical in representations of Judith, as evidenced in Ghiberti’s version on the East Doors of the Baptistery (Fig 13). Baldini employed this pose in *The Florentine Picture Chronicle*, in which two drawings show Semiramis (Fig. 14) and an Amazon (Fig. 15) in the same *contrapposto* with one arm relaxed and one arm holding a weapon above their heads. This pose represents a warrior topos. Representing Judith in the warrior pose emphasizes her power and the manliness of her act. The smaller “Otto print” of Judith depicts her in a more relaxed pose, with her sword at her side. Though her pose is less aggressive than in the large version, this Judith wears fantastic armor, thereby reiterating her relationship to the warrior type portrayed by Baldini in the *Florentine Picture Chronicle*.

The clothing of Judith in the larger print also places her firmly within the realm of “good Judith” imagery. She wears a pseudo classical gown, though with oddly contemporary sleeves and neckline. The classicizing dress implies that the figure is allegorical, as do the wings on her headdress, which are associated with representations of goddesses and nymphs. Thus, Judith seems superhuman rather than worldly, indicating that her actions go beyond what would be possible for the average woman. The poses and clothing of Judith seem to suggest that she took on masculine qualities in her victory, making it clear to the viewer that she is superior to the average woman, and thus to be admired. Nowhere in either “Otto print” does Baldini suggest licentiousness in the character of Judith. Rather, she is the chaste heroine, a role model for female viewers.

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29 Randolph, 269-271. Randolph suggests that this proves a relationship to the Medici, but it seems more likely that the engraver was simply quoting from a very well known Florentine artwork.  
30 It seems probable that this was done to save space, as this print is approximately 20 millimeters smaller than the large version.
These two Judths are meant to act as inspiration for the viewers, both male and female. The larger version contains a space for the insertion of coats-of-arms, relating the virtues of Judith directly to the betrothed couple. The engravings encourage the bride and groom to embrace chastity and virtue, and reject lust and luxury. There is a reminder to both bride and groom of the dangers of yielding to lust, thus encouraging them to keep any expressions of sexuality firmly within their marriage. Judith is an especially appropriate heroine for a bride because she is loyal to her deceased husband. Before her defeat of Holofernes, she is living in seclusion as a widow and she returns to that life after her deed. A new bride would easily understand these messages, including the implication to remain dedicated to her husband, even after his death.

[31] Although there is only one blank space for arms on the print, both the bride and groom’s family arms could be depicted by including half of each. For an example, see Bayer, cat. 1.
CHAPTER 4
THE CHASTISEMENT OF EROS

Moralizing messages for women, like those found in the Judith prints, can also be found in two “Otto prints” depicting a scene from Petrarch’s *The Triumph of Chastity* (Figs. 16-17). A popular theme for cassone decoration, *The Triumph of Chastity* is one of a series of triumphs written by Petrarch that describes the defeat of Eros by Chastity. The “Otto prints” depicting *The Chastisement of Eros* both show a group of four women armed with weapons beating Eros, who stands in the middle, blindfolded and bound to a tree stump. The scene depicted in the engravings represents the part of Petrarch’s narrative when Chastity, aided by her virtuous followers, among whom Judith is included, “binds the winged god, and makes him subject to her rod.” The moment of the beating is only briefly described. The poet states, “Lucrezia came on her right hand: Penelope was by, those broke his bow, and made his arrowes ly split on the ground, and pull'd his plumes away from off his wings.” The artist of the “Otto prints” depicts this scene, including the breaking of the bow and arrows and the de-feathering of Eros’ wings. The women in the print reference the virtuous exemplars described in Petrarch’s text; however, their contemporary dress and lack of identifying attributes indicate that they do not represent

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specific figures from the poem. Rather they are chaste and virtuous women in the act of defeating lust.

Though the prints are similar in many ways, there are some slight differences between the two, including size and composition. The larger print depicts Eros with his hands bound above his head, while the smaller print portrays them tied behind his back. Both poses bring to mind St. Sebastian, Marsyas, and the flagellation of Christ, other men who were brutally punished. The use of this pose creates meaning that is gender-specific. From the standpoint of the male artist, and potentially male viewer, it would make sense to compare Eros to the types of figures meant to induce sympathy. From the perspective of the bride-to-be, however, it would be natural to feel some satisfaction from the women’s actions. In a culture that allowed upper-class men to have mistresses, the anger of the women in Baldini’s print would seem justified.

One of the most obvious distinctions between the two prints is the dress of the women. The engraver has altered each woman’s attire, including the headdresses. There is no clear reason that would explain why this was done, as the clothing in both prints can be identified as contemporary Florentine dress. Though the larger print seems to depict styles of a more courtly nature, especially in the woman directly to Eros’ right, contemporary paintings indicate that this

34 In the larger print, one woman holds a distaff, suggesting that she could be identified as Penelope; however, this weapon is changed in the smaller print and none of the other figures can be identified based on their weapons. It does not seem likely that the figures would be interpreted as specific women.
35 The prints are 189 and 168 mm in diameter.
36 As with the Judith prints, this was probably done to conserve space.
37 Randolph, 239, and Zucker, 135, have pointed to a similarity between this figure and Schongauer’s St. Sebastian; however, since his print has been dated to the 1480s, it seems unlikely that they are actually related. See also Aby Warburg, “Artistic Exchanges Between North and South in the Fifteenth Century,” in The Renewal of Pagan Antiquity (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute for the History of Art and the Humanities, 1999), 279.
type of dress was worn in Florence as well. Fra Filippo Lippi’s Portrait of a Woman with a Man at a Casement, for example, shows a woman in a very similar gown and headdress (Fig. 18). The costumes of the women in the smaller print are no less rich in appearance. The women in the engravings are meant to represent wealthy upper-class women, presumably like the bride herself. The contemporary dress allows the viewer to relate more directly to the scene.

Two inscriptions appear in these engravings and strengthen the message to the viewer. The writing appears on the women’s sleeves and is meant to replicate the sleeve embroidery that was popular at this time, as visible on the sleeve of the woman in Lippi’s painting. In the large print, the sleeve of the woman on the far left reads DROIT MANT, meaning “righteous mantle” or, alternatively, “hold to what is right.” The use of French, a language that in Italy was spoken primarily at courts, indicates an upper class, educated audience. It also supports the idea that these women are punishing Eros for his incitement of lust, for “what is right” is chastity and virtue. The small print includes the words AMOR… VVOL FE, or “love requires faith,” an inscription found in several of the other “Otto prints” and associated with contemporary poetry. The use of Latin again points to a literate audience, though without the courtly associations of French. The meaning of this inscription is less clear. Either the women are punishing Eros because their husbands or lovers have not been faithful, or it is a general declaration that the bride-to-be can be trusted to be chaste and ward off the lust incited by Eros.

Another difference that should be noted between the two prints involves the means by which the women punish Eros. In the larger version, the weapons include a small sword, held by the woman on the far left, who also gently touches Eros’ wing. The woman to her right

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brandishes a distaff, while on the other side of Eros’ the two women each grip half of his broken bow, while beating him with a lady’s shoe and his own arrows. In the smaller print the sword of the woman on the far left has been changed to shears, the distaff has become a large sword, and the woman with the shoe now wields Eros’ arrows. The woman on the far right in the smaller print is not using a weapon at all but instead aggressively grips the feathers of Eros’ wing with both hands. In this aspect, the smaller print is more violent and closer to Petrarch’s description. At least two of the weapons used in the larger print, the shoe and the distaff, have feminine associations, while this is not the case in the smaller print. Why these changes were made one can only speculate, but perhaps it relates to the inscriptions. The words “uphold the right” clearly indicate that the women are upholding chastity, thus it would follow that they would use weapons appropriate to their gender. They should be interpreted as exemplary, not violent, women. The smaller print, with the words “love requires faith” might point to an interpretation that these women are punishing Eros for tempting their unfaithful lover, hence the more violent weapons would suit them.

The two engravings hold separate messages for the viewer depending on the weapons and inscriptions included by the artist. These messages overlap and elements of each can be found in both prints. In both depictions of The Chastisement of Eros, the god is an adult and he is blindfolded. According to Panofsky, who studied the evolution of the imagery of Eros from ancient depictions to those of the Renaissance, the addition of a blindfold, as in the “Otto prints,” changed Eros from an allegory of divine love to that of worldly lust. Thus, based on Panofsky’s argument, the Eros of both prints is a representation of lust restrained, which supports the identification of the women as personifications of Chastity. Furthermore, the body of Eros,

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which is that of a young man rather than a boy, indicates that this is lustful Eros, or cupiditas, which was seen as the opposite of caritas, or chastity. While the women depicted can be interpreted as personifications of Chastity or angry lovers, Eros remains a representation of Lust restrained. The prints act as a warning to both the bride and groom of the dangers of lust, while also reminding the bride of the importance of her virtue.

Of all the “Otto prints,” The Chastisement of Eros relates most closely to the type of imagery found on cassoni. Petrarch’s Triumphs, especially those of Love, Chastity, and Fame, were extremely popular as decoration for the marriage trunks. The cassone panels, however, tend not to show the actual punishment of the god, but rather the triumphal parade held for Chastity after her victory. For example, Francesco di Giorgio’s Triumph of Chastity from a cassone of around 1464 depicts Chastity enthroned on a triumphal cart drawn by unicorns and surrounded by her followers (Fig. 19). Eros is paraded in front of the group, bound and blindfolded. This cassone panel, which shows a standard interpretation of the story, is more narrative in scope than the “Otto prints” of the same subject. The artist includes a detail in the right background of Eros receiving his punishment and Chastity’s band killing his horses, closely following Petrarch’s text. The primary focus is on Chastity’s triumphal procession, a fitting subject for a wedding that could be rendered on the large space of the panel. The artist responsible for the “Otto prints” had a much smaller composition to work with and therefore had to simplify that narrative into one representative scene, which highlights the most important message of the text, that of defeating lust.

While The Triumph of Chastity was popular as a decoration on marriage furnishings, images showing the actual punishment of Eros are surprisingly rare. The compositions of the

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42 Baskins, 109, n. 1.
*Chastisement of Eros* prints do not seem to be based on any model, though they are similar to a medal depicting the death of Orpheus (Fig. 20). Like the engravings, the medal shows a nude male tied to a tree, with two female figures on either side beating him. Orpheus, who invoked the wrath of the Maenads by spurning their advances and was torn apart by them during a Bacchic frenzy, would be an appropriate model for the engraving. Painted versions of the punishment of Eros exist as well, for example, Girolamo di Benvenuto’s *Cupid Chastised*, in which the artist places his figures in an arrangement that is similar to the “Otto prints” (Fig. 21). The painting is a *desco da parto*, a circular painted tray given to pregnant women, indicating the appropriateness of this imagery on items relating to love and marriage. The “Otto prints” seem more playful than other representations of the scene. The contemporary dress, as well as the woman making eye contact with the viewer, serves to engage the audience. The frenzied nature of these women, who in reality were expected to be docile, likely would have struck the viewer as quite humorous.

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43 It has been noted that these prints bear a resemblance to banners used during the jousts of Lorenzo and Giuliano de’ Medici. According to contemporary descriptions, at the joust of Lorenzo, Luca and Piero Antonio di Luigi Pitti carried a banner that showed a woman in red damask who had bound Eros’ hands behind his back, taken his bow and arrows, and plucked the feathers from his wings. Furthermore, Giuliano himself carried a banner at his joust that was painted by Botticelli and depicted Eros overcome by Pallas. See Randolph, 202-206.
CHAPTER 5
WOMAN WITH A CAPTIVE’S HEART

One last subject depicted in the surviving “Otto prints” represents a variation on the Weibermacht theme. *Woman with a Captive’s Heart* depicts a man tied to a tree, in much the same way as Eros, though he is fully clothed and seen from a three quarter rather than frontal view (Fig. 22). A woman in contemporary dress forcibly holds him against the tree as she holds up his heart, which has been taken from a gaping slash visible in his chest. The implied meaning is that the woman, meant to represent the bride-to-be, has “stolen” the heart of the future groom, presumably through her beauty and her virtue.

The basic theme of this print stems from late-medieval and contemporary love poetry, where the male lover accuses the female of piercing his heart, or other similar variations. Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio all make allusions to the heart as the core of one’s love and use imagery involving the stealing or giving of the heart.44 In his *Canzoniere*, Petrarch remarks, “I have a thousand times, dear enemy, in order to have peace with your bright eyes, offered my heart to you.”45 This type of poetry goes back to Biblical sources. Perhaps even more relevant to this print, in the Song of Solomon 4:9, the lover says, “You have stolen my heart, my sister, my bride; you have stolen my heart.” The “Otto print” illustrates a moment like the one described in the Song of Solomon in which the bride has “stolen” the heart of her future groom. Both the poem and the engraving use this imagery to imply that the bride has inspired a deep love.

44 Watson, 87.
The love that is celebrated in early Renaissance poetry is inspired by a woman’s beauty and her virtue. The lover in the Song of Solomon goes on to say, “you are a garden locked up, my sister, my bride; you are a spring enclosed, a sealed fountain” (4:12). The image of a locked garden implies that the object of his desire is as chaste as she is beautiful. Petrarch also lists purity among the virtues of his beloved, Laura. In the another sonnet from the Canzoniere, he says of Laura, “as Laurel keeps its foliage green, so she her chastity… such virtue and such beauty as together shine in her eyes.”

The female viewer of the Woman with a Captive’s Heart would be flattered by the notion that she had inspired love and would know that this love was as much dependent on her virtuous behavior as on her physical attributes. The relationship of the man and woman in the print to the betrothed couple would be solidified through the addition of the couple’s coats-of-arms on either side of the two figures.

Unsurprisingly, images relating to love poetry were common on items exchanged during betrothal and marriage. The scene of two lovers holding the male’s heart occurs on dishes, mirrors, and other marriage goods. A North Italian ivory mirror case of the type that might be included in the bride’s forzierini shows a similar scene (Fig. 23). Here the man offers the woman his heart, while she reaches out to take it, their hands meeting in the middle.

A very similar scene can be found on a betrothal chest from around 1438 that has been attributed to Domenico di Bartolo (Fig. 24). The painting on this coffer, which unfortunately was destroyed during World War II, shows the man, head bowed, extending his heart, which his lover reaches out to accept. The women in the ivory and the painting are much more passive in the exchange of the heart than the woman of the “Otto print,” who forcefully removes the heart from her lover and

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46 Francesco Petrarca, Canzoniere, 30.
48 Watson, 86.
holds it up in victory with the hint of a smirk on her face. As with the women in the *Chastisement of Eros*, the aggression of the woman likely provided some humor.

If the woman in this print is somewhat aggressive, that violence is amplified in a second instance of this theme in the “Otto prints” (Fig. 25). A woman “stealing” the heart of a man can be found as part of a larger, more dramatic, composition, *Roundel with Four Love Scenes and Four Animals within a Border of Fruit* (Fig. 3). The woman swoops down on her victim like some sort of mythological creature, though she wears contemporary dress, and her face appears angry rather than triumphant. She holds the man down forcefully with her knee conspicuously placed on his groin.

This scene is found within a larger composition that is the most sexually explicit of the “Otto prints.” The imagery includes a man groping his naked lover in the bath, young Eros bound to a rock, another nude woman being escorted by a clothed man, and the woman presumably taking the heart of her lover. Alongside these scenes are four animals relating to the hunt and referencing the chase of courtship, while the border is formed by fruit, clearly alluding to fertility. Perhaps within such imagery a woman delicately accepting the heart of her lover would seem incongruous. As with the *Woman with a Captive’s Heart* print, there is a sense of playfulness and humor to be found. The sexiness of the scenes as well as the fruit would have sent a clear reminder to the couple of their duty to reproduce.

Two inscriptions adorn this engraving, the popular *AMORE VUOL FE E DOVE FE NONNE AMOR NON PUO*, and *DUM FATA SINU[N]T*, or “while the fates permit.” As discussed in relation to *The Chastisement of Eros*, the first inscription implies both a warning against unfaithfulness and attests to the virtues of the betrothed couple. This inscription is placed on a scroll winding

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around the border of the print starting with the word AMORE directly above the figure of Eros. It seems relevant that the words DOVE FE NONNE, “where there is no faith,” are located directly under the woman and her male captive. This proximity, and the meaning of the inscription in general, points to a reading of the woman and captive as a warning against lust and infidelity. The inscription declaring “while the fates permit,” which is on a scroll wound around the figure of Eros, implies that the brevity of life could cut short the love of the betrothed pair, thus urging them to take advantage of their time together, perhaps by partaking in the activities depicted.

The aggressive woman holding down a male captive in this engraving relates to a theme found on a majolica plate from the early sixteenth century (Fig. 26). Though the composition is much like Woman with a Captive’s Heart, no heart is visible and an inscription reads ME DOL L’INFAMIA TUA PIU CHE IL MORIRE, or “your infamy hurts me more than death.” It seems some type of betrayal has taken place, leading to this scene of violence. The inscription is almost the exact counterpart to the “love requires faith” motif. There is a similarity between the “Otto print” and the dish in that no heart is visible, though a slash has been made in the man’s chest. Both scenes show an angry woman taking matters into her own hands. Both these images seem to warn the viewer, especially the groom, of inciting jealousy through infidelity.

The “Otto prints” of Woman with a Captive’s Heart, Judith and Holofernes, and The Chastisement of Eros send moral and poetic messages to the viewers, both the bride and groom. While the bride is primarily reminded of the importance of her chastity, both viewers are warned against the dangers of lust. The engravings present examples of the virtues that were most essential to a marriage, including chastity and faithfulness. Woman with a Captive’s Heart presents the hope for a loving relationship by presenting the groom-to-be as already a slave to the

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50 Bayer, 91.
charms of his betrothed. Similar scenes are found in the decoration of other marriage goods, though the “Otto prints” almost always present a more simplified composition and are often more playful in nature. The engravings, like other items exchanged during marriage, were meant to encourage a loving and faithful relationship between two people who often knew very little of one another before the betrothal.
Fig. 1. Attributed to Baccio Baldini, *Young Man and Woman Holding an Armillary Sphere*, c. 1465-1475, engraving, diameter 146 mm, Musée du Louvre, Paris.
Fig. 2. Italian, Lid of Marriage Casket, early fifteenth century, tempera on wood, diameter 275 mm, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

Fig. 3. Attributed to Baccio Baldini, *Roundel with Four Love Scenes and Four Animals within a Border of Fruit*, c. 1465-75, engraving, diameter 203 mm, Cabinet Rothschild, Musée du Louvre, Paris.
Fig. 4. Anonymous French, *The Madonna and Child in a Rosary*, c. 1490, hand-colored woodcut pasted into lid of box, 222 x 158 mm, Arsène Bonafous-Murat, Paris.

Fig. 5. Northern Italian, *Cassone*, 1500-1520, pine and poplar decorated with woodcuts, Castello Sforzesco, Milan.
Fig. 6. Ferrarese, Casket with scenes from the lives of Atilius Regulus and Mucius Scaevola, c. 1450-80, pastiglia and gold leaf on wood box, 170 x 94 x 82 mm, The British Museum, London.

Fig. 7. Attributed to Baccio Baldini, Woman with a Unicorn, c. 1465-75, engraving, diameter 160 mm, British Museum, London.
Fig. 8. Pisanello, Medal of Cecilia Gonzaga, reverse, *Seated Girl with a Unicorn*, 1447, bronze, diameter 84 mm, Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

Fig. 9. Italian, probably Pesaro, *Dish with an Allegory of Chastity*, 1476-c. 1490, tin-glazed earthenware (maiolica), diameter 47.9 cm, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.
Fig. 10. Attributed to Baccio Baldini, *Judith with the Head of Holofernes*, c. 1465-75, engraving, diameter 135 mm, Graphische Sammlung Albertina, Vienna.
Fig. 11. Attributed to Baccio Baldini, *Judith with the Head of Holofernes*, c. 1465-75, engraving, diameter 115 mm, British Museum, London.
Fig. 12. Donatello, *Judith and Holofernes*, c. 1455, bronze, Palazzo Vecchio, Florence.

Fig. 13. Lorenzo Ghiberti, *Judith*, c. 1455, gilded bronze, Museo dell’Opera del Duomo, Florence.

Fig. 15. Attributed to Baccio Baldini, *Theseus and the Amazon* (detail), from *The Florentine Picture Chronicle*, c. 1470-75, brown ink on paper, British Museum, London.
Fig. 16. Attributed to Baccio Baldini. *The Chastisement of Eros*, c. 1465-75, engraving, diameter 189 mm, Graphische Sammlung Albertina, Vienna.
Fig. 17. Attributed to Baccio Baldini, *The Chastisement of Eros*, c. 1465-75, engraving, diameter 168 mm, British Museum, London.
Fig. 18. Fra Filippo Lippi, *Portrait of a Woman and a Man at a Casement*, c. 1436-38, tempera on wood, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Fig. 19. Francesco di Giorgio, *Triumph of Chastity*, c. 1464, tempera on wood, 37 x 121 cm, J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles.
Fig. 20. Moderno, *Orpheus Beaten by Maenads*, before 1503, bronze, diameter 61 mm, National Gallery of Art, Washington.

Fig. 21. Girolamo di Benvenuto, *Cupid Chastised*, c. 1490-1500, tempera and oil on panel, diameter 648 mm, Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven.
Fig. 22. Attributed to Baccio Baldini, *Woman and a Captive’s Heart*, c. 1465-75, engraving, diameter 101 mm, British Museum, London.
Fig. 23. Northern Italian, Ivory Mirror Case, 1390-1400, ivory, diameter 87 mm, National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

Fig. 24. Domenico di Bartolo, *The Offering of the Heart*, lid of a coffer, formerly Schlossmuseum, Berlin.
Fig. 25. Detail of Fig. 3. Attributed to Baccio Baldini, *Roundel with Four Love Scenes and Four Animals within a Border of Fruit*, c. 1465-75, engraving, diameter 203 mm, Cabinet Rothschild, Musée du Louvre, Paris.

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