**Tales from the Crypt: Tracing the origins of the myth surrounding Eleonora of Toledo’s burial dress**

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*The body of Eleonora of Toledo, Duchess of Florence, was exhumed in 1857. Over a century later, after extensive restoration work, her burial dress was first displayed to the public. Prior to its restoration, a widespread myth emerged claiming the burial gown was the same dress as the one the Duchess is depicted wearing in Bronzino’s 1545 state portrait, which hangs on the walls of the Uffizi Gallery. Although this misconception has long been dispelled – the two dresses are not similar – this story is nevertheless often repeated and has continued to influence the ongoing scholarship surrounding both dresses. This article traces the origins of this misidentification, arguing that it stemmed from a frequently cited secondary source. Based on this, it also examines how research practices, assumptions, and referencing methods contributed to the myth’s endurance. In turn, the existence of this myth is shown to demonstrate the ongoing importance of dress history in cross-disciplinary research.*

**Keywords**: Eleonora of Toledo, Medici court dress, Italy, sixteenth-century dress, research methods, art history

INTRODUCTION

The study of dress history is often shaped by stories, as garments acquire meaning not only through their materiality but through the narratives attached to them. While many of these accounts have their roots in family traditions passed through generations, some garments have acquired historical importance through their supposed links to royalty or other prominent figures, regardless of whether such connections are substantiated. Such associations elevate the cultural value of a garment, even when its provenance remains uncertain. Over time, repeated retellings solidify these narratives into widely accepted myths, blurring the line between history and legend.

One of the most persistent dress history myths concerns the burial attire of the Florentine Duchess, Eleonora of Toledo (1522-1562). In 1857, the Medici tombs in San Lorenzo, Florence were opened, and a damaged coffin was discovered with no identifying marks. Despite the lack of name, the story goes that Eleonora’s body was recognised instantly, as she had been buried wearing her most famous dress: the same lavish black, white and gold gown that she had been depicted wearing in Bronzino’s (1503-1572) 1545 portrait of her with her son Giovanni, now in the collection of the Uffizi Gallery, Florence (Figure 1).[[1]](#endnote-1) This is a compelling story, but one that is entirely untrue. The dress Eleonora was actually buried in has survived, so it is possible to conclusively prove that she was interred wearing a completely different dress. Her burial dress was examined during her first exhumation in 1857, removed from her tomb in 1949, and is now in the collection of the Palazzo Pitti (Figure 2). Not only are the two dresses different, they share no obvious similarities that could account for confusion.

It is exceedingly rare to have garments from the sixteenth century that can be confidently linked to named historical figures. Therefore, the funerary clothes of Eleonora of Toledo, her husband Cosimo I de’ Medici (1519-1574) and their son, Garzia de’ Medici (1547-1562), are of particular note. These unique survivals can be directly linked to the people who wore them, as these clothes were removed from their exhumed remains. In the case of other garments, when precise identification is uncertain, various narratives often emerge to fill the gap. Storytelling that associates garments with specific places, historical moments, or individuals serves both to animate the past and to humanize historical figures, creating an emotional connection for contemporary audiences—an act of cultural myth-making that has proven to be an effective tool for conveying knowledge in museological contexts.[[2]](#endnote-2) The Bristowe Hat is one example of this, dating from the same period as the burial garments. Often described as belonging to King Henry VIII (1491-1547), its provenance is well-documented, having been passed down through the family of Nicholas Bristowe (1495-1584), who claimed to have caught it when Henry threw it into the air during the surrender of Boulogne in 1544. However, there is no documentary evidence that can definitively link this hat to the king, and research by Maria Hayward dates the hat to long after the king’s death, to between 1590-1610.[[3]](#endnote-3) A similar story surrounds a sixteenth-century doublet in the collection of National Museums Scotland, which is said to have been worn during the 1535 Siege of La Goulette; cuts in the sleeve are presented as evidence supporting this claim.[[4]](#endnote-4) Although made of red silk and more aligned with fashionable dress than battle attire, Janet Arnold suggests that it may still have been intended for combat – or at least for fencing – although she dates it to much later in the sixteenth century. [[5]](#endnote-5) Both of these tales are grounded in partial truths, giving them a degree of plausibility that makes them convincing. The absence of complete historical records often necessitates a degree of informed speculation, however, for earlier periods, the scarcity of sources and reliance on anecdotal evidence have, at times, resulted in inaccuracies, misreadings, and even outright fabrications. Although the Medici funeral garments can be definitively linked to the family, this has not prevented similar myths and legends emerging around them.

This article traces the history of the misidentification of Eleonora of Toledo’s burial dress, the origins of the myth surrounding it, and how this story was promulgated to the point of such wide-spread confusion. Although various scholars, including Mary Westerman Bulgarella, one of the conservators who worked on the restoration of the actual burial dress, attribute this tale to a throwaway line in the initial report made during the 1857 exhumation, which notes the similarity of the hair and the style of clothing on Eleonora’s body to the way in which she was depicted in Bronzino’s famous portrait of the Duchess, this does not fully explain how this story became a legend.[[6]](#endnote-6) As with all persistent falsehoods, the origins of this myth are more complex, and reveal deeper questions over the role of historical dress research.

THE LIFE AND AFTERLIFE OF ELEONORA OF TOLEDO’S BURIAL DRESS

Eleonora of Toledo was born on January 11, 1522, in Salamanca, Spain. She was the daughter of Don Pedro Álvarez de Toledo (1484-1553), the Viceroy of Naples, and a distant cousin of Emperor Charles V. In June 1539, at the age of seventeen, she married Cosimo I de’ Medici, the new Duke of Florence. The union was a successful one; Eleonora gave birth to her first child just over nine months after her marriage, and the couple went on to have eleven children in total. In addition to her role at court, Eleonora also served as regent of Florence on three separate occasions between 1541-45, during her husband’s military campaigns and periods of illness. In 1543 she sat for the first of many portraits that would be undertaken by the court painter Agnolo Bronzino. Depicting Eleonora in resplendent attire, Bronzino’s numerous portraits played a crucial role in establishing her enduring legacy whilst also codifying the visual representation of the ruling couple and their dynasty.[[7]](#endnote-7) However, her health declined throughout her later years, after contracting pulmonary tuberculosis.[[8]](#endnote-8) The final portraits of Eleonora show her thin and ailing, and in December 1562 she succumbed to a fatal malaria infection that also claimed the lives of two of her sons, Giovanni (1543-1562) and Garzia (1547-1562). Her funeral, held at the Basilica di San Lorenzo, was the grandest ever held for a woman in the Medici family. [[9]](#endnote-9) Although contemporary sources record details of the funeral procession and decorations, as Eleonora’s body arrived in Florence in a closed casket these first-hand accounts do not document the dress she was interred in.[[10]](#endnote-10)

After being laid to rest, Eleonora’s body remained undisturbed for 295 years, before the Medici tombs were first opened in 1857 to relocate the family, ostensibly following a series of graverobbing incidents.[[11]](#endnote-11) Detailed notes were made documenting this process, and the bodies were returned to their tombs in the condition they had been found. In 1945, the Medici family remains were controversially exhumed again, and the burial garments were ultimately removed as a part of this work in 1949.[[12]](#endnote-12) The surprising condition of garments that had been entombed, at this point, for some 387 years was remarked on at the time of re-exhumation - allegedly ‘some pieces of silk were as fresh as if just out the shop’ - and this was the likely impetus for removing them from the tomb.[[13]](#endnote-13) However, commentary from this excavation, dated 1947, notes that although the condition of Eleonora’s dress was as described at the time of the first exhumation, by this point there had been ‘a greater deterioration of the fabric which, when lifted, turns to shreds.’[[14]](#endnote-14) Judging by this comment, the act of removing the dress from her tomb inevitably damaged it further. The burial clothes were initially stored in the Museo Nazionale del Bargello, but the storage conditions were poor, with archival photographs showing Eleonora’s gown kept in one large heap, and the garments were largely neglected until the 1980s.[[15]](#endnote-15) Following a complex restoration process, they are now housed in the Galleria del Costume in the Palazzo Pitti, Florence. Eleonora’s signet ring, depicted in Bronzino’s first portrait of the Duchess, was also found in her tomb; this was removed in 1948 and is now also in the collection of the Palazzo Pitti.[[16]](#endnote-16) Her gold hairnet, which was described in the report made when the tombs were opened 1857, is not recorded as ever entering the Museo Nazionale del Bargello. Janet Arnold reports it likely disintegrated in the years between exhumations, and must therefore now be considered lost.[[17]](#endnote-17)

Despite the myth that exists around it, Eleonora’s burial dress is surprisingly simple, albeit appropriate for a woman of her rank. The dress is a satin *sottana* (literally ‘underdress’ but worn as an outer garment in this period), variously described as being white, gold or yellow in colour.[[18]](#endnote-18) The original colour of the dress remains an object of debate, but most commentators describe it as originally being white, although now discoloured. When the dress was documented during the first exhumation it was described as being white, and has apparently become soiled through further age-related decay and exposure to ‘body fluid’ from her unembalmed corpse.[[19]](#endnote-19) Although dye analysis has suggested the dress may have originally been yellow, Roberta Orsi Landini, who has extensively studied Eleonora’s *Guardaroba* records (the official Medici inventories), explains that the dye from the brown velvet embroidery elsewhere on the dress likely contaminated the sample, and the dye ‘leaked with the decomposition of the body.’[[20]](#endnote-20) The brown velvet embroidery is positioned in stripes down the bodice and around the hem of the skirt, and will have once displayed metallic threads of gold and silver.[[21]](#endnote-21) Landini and Niccoli describe this embroidery as ‘tiras’ characteristic of Spanish fashion.[[22]](#endnote-22)

Evidence of crude repairs at the neckline and alterations at the waist indicate that the dress had been worn during Eleonora's lifetime, and was therefore part of her everyday attire. The alternations, making the gown smaller, provide insight into the physical changes she experienced during her final years of illness.[[23]](#endnote-23) Eleonora’s body was additionally found to have been dressed hurriedly, likely due to a fear of infection from the malaria that killed her. Bulgarella notes that one of her stockings was put on her body inside out and that her bodice had been ‘haphazardly laced, skipping eyelets.’[[24]](#endnote-24) Art historian Gabrielle Langdon suggests that the suddenness of Eleonora’s death from an infectious illness may have led to the choice of ‘mended everyday attire’ to serve as her burial gown, rather than a newly commissioned or more elaborate burial dress. [[25]](#endnote-25) This would account for the gown’s simple design, though the dress also reflected Eleonora’s personal taste at the time of her death, as a number of similar *sottana* featuring this style of embroidery are documented in the *Guardaroba* records, dating to the last years of her life.[[26]](#endnote-26) Landini and Niccoli note that this kind of embroidery was fashionable in Florence only for a brief period, from c.1550 until the mid-1560s, and Landini additionally suggests that the burial dress may have been the final *sottana* made for Eleonora by the court tailor, Master Agostino, in July 1562, which featured embroidery work undertaken by Ulirieri.[[27]](#endnote-27) This dress is absent from inventories taken after Eleonora’s death, supporting the notion that she was buried in it.[[28]](#endnote-28) It is also similar in style to a further rare survival from this period, a crimson velvet *sottana* recovered from the convent of San Matteo in Pisa. Although this dress cannot be definitively linked to Eleonora herself, it is consistent with the styles the Duchess was wearing in Siena in 1561 and ordered for herself and her entourage upon her return to Florence that same year.[[29]](#endnote-29) It is therefore apparent that Eleonora’s burial dress was in line with contemporary fashion at the time of her death in 1562.

As discussed above, the original garments from the Medici tombs did not reach the Palazzo Pitti until 1983, over thirty years after their removal, and substantial restoration work was necessary to give the damaged garments any recognisable shape.[[30]](#endnote-30) This was undertaken by Mary Westerman Bulgarella, with the support of Janet Arnold and Sheila Landi of the V&A Museum, alongside Kirsten Aschengreen Piacenti and the Conservation Laboratory of the Galleria del Costume at the Palazzo Pitti, and took place over a ten-year period.[[31]](#endnote-31) However, the analysis necessary to determine the original appearance of Eleonora’s garments was complete by 1984, and Janet Arnold produced illustrations and a pattern for this dress that appeared in the third volume of her *Patterns of Fashion* book series, published in 1985.[[32]](#endnote-32) Eleonora’s dress was first displayed in the Palazzo Pitti from December 1987 – March 1988.[[33]](#endnote-33) The complete collection of Medici garments were then exhibited together in June 1993, where they remained on display in a darkened gallery until they were eventually deemed too fragile to continue to exhibit.[[34]](#endnote-34)

BRONZINO’S DRESS: A CASE OF MISTAKEN IDENTITY

The survival of Eleonora’s burial dress confirms that she was not interred in the gown depicted in Bronzino’s 1545 state portrait, *Portrait of Eleonora of Toledo and Her Son Giovanni* (Figure 1), as the preserved garment now housed in the Palazzo Pitti differs significantly from the one long believed to have been her burial attire. The 1545 portrait of the Duchess depicts her in a sumptuous white and black velvet brocade dress, with an elaborate gold pomegranate motif. The popular myth that this was the dress that Eleonora was buried in has been so pervasive that there are a number of sources that repeat this claim.[[35]](#endnote-35) However, although both are predominantly white, the two dresses do not otherwise strongly resemble each other. Given the lack of similarity, the persistence of this long-standing myth is all the more puzzling; however, its endurance can be partly attributed to the striking beauty and grandeur of Bronzino’s depiction of the dress in his portrait of the Duchess. Indeed, Langdon comments that the very existence of this myth demonstrates the hold the 1545 dress has on the historic imagination.[[36]](#endnote-36)

 This portrait is the most famous image of Eleonora, and has hung on the walls of the Uffizi Gallery since 1798. Since academic interest in Eleonora as a historical figure did not emerge until the late twentieth century, public perception of the Duchess and her appearance has largely been shaped by this iconography. Completed over the summer of 1545, the image is life-sized, and generally considered to be one of Bronzino’s greatest masterpieces.[[37]](#endnote-37) Art historian Bruce Edelstein highlights Bronzino’s ‘minute attention to the depiction of luxury fabrics, and the profusion of pearls,’ in Eleonora’s attire, elements likely intended to emphasize her status in this dynastic portrait, where her opulent dress dominates nearly two-thirds of the frame and naturally draws the viewer’s attention.[[38]](#endnote-38) Edelstein additionally notes that the painting ‘must have caused an immediate sensation’ in Florence, as other paintings executed shortly after would echo this composition.[[39]](#endnote-39) Numerous copies of the portrait were made throughout Eleonora’s lifetime and after her death, linking even her posthumous image to this dress.[[40]](#endnote-40)

The dress Bronzino depicted here has not survived, and some consider that it may have been at least partly invented by the artist, perhaps worked up from a textile sample.[[41]](#endnote-41) Bronzino was known to alter how he painted garments on request; for another portrait in 1549, Eleonora asked that he not render her dress in brocade, and instead select another cloth so he was able to complete the work faster.[[42]](#endnote-42) Supporting this theory, Edelstein notes that there is no record of this dress in the court inventories at the time the portrait was begun.[[43]](#endnote-43) However, systematic documentation of the *Guardaroba* did not commence until 1544—the year the dress was likely created —which may account for its absence from the records.[[44]](#endnote-44) There is compelling evidence to support the previous existence of the dress; a number of textile fragments preserved in the Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence and in the Museo Civico d'Arte Antica, Palazzo Madama, Turin, closely resemble the fabric depicted in Bronzino’s portrait.[[45]](#endnote-45) Due to their similar pattern these pieces are sometimes identified as remnants of the same fabric commissioned for the gown, although they cannot be conclusively linked to the garment, as brocades with arabesque patterns were popular at this time, and used for wall hangings, ecclesiastical vestments as well as fashionable clothing.[[46]](#endnote-46) However, it is certain that surplus fabric remained, as far more was ordered (46 *braccia*) than was likely needed to make Eleonora’s gown (17-18 *braccia*).[[47]](#endnote-47) Additionally, records indicate that samples of this textile were distributed among family members and even sent to Emperor Charles V (1500-1558).[[48]](#endnote-48) Although the dress itself has not been definitively identified in the *Guardarob*a, a bodice and skirt described as ‘silver tabby patterned with black pile’ could be a potential match.[[49]](#endnote-49) Janet Cox-Rearick has hypothesised that the 1545 dress may have been among the garments donated to the San Lorenzo Basilica after Eleonora’s death, and then reworked into liturgical garments.[[50]](#endnote-50) This claim is supported by a cape in the collection of the San Lorenzo, made from brocade with a strikingly similar pattern.[[51]](#endnote-51)

The fabric of the dress depicted in this painting has been the subject of much discussion. Based solely on its value, it seems likely that this dress was made from silk velvet brocade, unlike the burial dress which was made from satin. Although both silk products, ‘satin’ in sixteenth-century wardrobe accounts referred to a particular type of twill weave, which was lighter than velvet and cheaper to produce.[[52]](#endnote-52) Elizabeth Currie writes that Florentine satin typically cost around 7 or 8 lira per *braccia* (about 0.7 metres), whereas Sheila Barker’s research in the Medici Archives indicates that the 1545 gown was made from far more expensive fabric; 46 *braccia* were purchased at the cost of 390 gold scudi.[[53]](#endnote-53) It is difficult to pinpoint the exact value of the scudo at this time, as it was known to fluctuate, but assuming a conversion rate of 7 lira to the scudo (correct to documents of 1561), this tells us the fabric cost an astonishing 59 lira per *braccia*.[[54]](#endnote-54) That this fabric cost as much as seven or eight times more than the usual amount for Florentine satin should not be altogether surprising; as Barker comments, the fabric displays all the skills of the best Florentine artisans of the day, and required 6 different weaving processes to complete.[[55]](#endnote-55) The ‘rounded loops of spun gold’ seen in the pomegranate pattern are thought to be gold brocade, which was known to cost around 20 lira per *braccia* alone*,* and contributed to the sheer cost of this fabric. The surviving textile fragments, if they can be linked to the gown, support this identification, as they are likewise made of silk velvet brocade.[[56]](#endnote-56)

Eleonora’s wardrobe accounts do however reveal a wide variety in her clothing, showing her owning ‘at least ninety *sottane*, made in different styles, fabrics and colours’ mostly made out of satin, with the remaining few in wool, damask and velvet, reflecting the changing tastes of Florentine women in the latter sixteenth-century towards lighter dress silks.[[57]](#endnote-57) Fashions would begin to change shortly after Bronzino’s 1545 portrait was completed, as the silk industry in Florence was rapidly shifting away from the production of expensive velvets and brocades enriched with gold and silver threads, replaced by fashions of simpler patterns and lighter silks.[[58]](#endnote-58) In 1546, the Venetian ambassador to France commented that the Florentine tastes were for ‘cloths that cost little and last even less.’[[59]](#endnote-59) By the late sixteenth-century, the preference for dress silks had shifted to ‘grosgrain, satin, taffeta and sarcenet’, even for the nobility at grand occasions.[[60]](#endnote-60) Expensive luxury silks and brocaded velvets were replaced with more affordable fabrics that allowed for wardrobes to be updated more frequently. Additionally, Eleonora’s use of opulent fabrics, like those seen in Bronzino’s portrait, was limited to special occasions, such as baptisms and state visits, conscious that frequent displays of excessive luxury by a foreign-born Duchess may not be well-received by the people of Florence.[[61]](#endnote-61) While the valuable brocade of the 1545 dress was essential to her depiction in her iconographic representations, it is notable that Eleonora’s everyday dress continued to reflect the changing fashions in Florence at the time and, unlike the precious brocade, were of a style that other noblewomen at court could imitate.[[62]](#endnote-62)

Few records document burial attire in Florence during this period, though the exhumation report notes several Medici family members were buried in fashionable garments made from silk, satin or velvet. Amongst those whose attire was documented was Giovanna d’Austria (1547–1578), wife of Eleonora’s eldest son Francesco (1541-1587), who was known to emulate Eleonora’s style; she was reportedly buried in a crimson satin and velvet dress.[[63]](#endnote-63) Francesco himself was recorded to be wearing crimson silk, while the body of their daughter Anna (1569-1584) was dressed in a blue silk gown with lace at the neck.[[64]](#endnote-64) While the clothing of many members of the family is vividly described in the exhumation report, the only other burial garments to be recovered from the tombs belonged to Eleonora’s husband Cosimo I, and their son Don Garzia, which are now preserved in the collections of the Palazzo Pitti. Like Eleonora’s dress, evidence suggests their burial clothes had also been part of their everyday attire before death. Landini identifies the modest doublet that Cosimo was buried wearing as one made a year prior to his death.[[65]](#endnote-65) Garzia’s burial attire was more elaborate but had been well-worn during his lifetime.[[66]](#endnote-66) Few other burial garments from this time have survived, but evidence from a later period and a different country suggests the practice of using everyday dress for this purpose was relatively widespread. Like Eleonora, Margaretha Franziska de Lobkowitz (1597–1617), who was buried in Moravia in 1617, was also found to have been interred wearing everyday clothing that showed signs of alteration.[[67]](#endnote-67) More elaborate garments were used for funeral effigies – in contrast to his simple burial attire, Cosimo’s wax effigy was dressed in *la vesta reale* [royal garments] of gold brocade – but clothing was otherwise kept to be repurposed by the family or donated to the church, as appears to be the case with the 1545 dress.[[68]](#endnote-68)

Eleonora was known for personally supervising all clothing and furnishing made for the court, so assuming she would have been as meticulous over her burial clothes is not unreasonable.[[69]](#endnote-69) Documents indicate that noblewomen often included instructions for their burial garments, particularly concerning religious attire, in their final testament.[[70]](#endnote-70) Yet, no evidence exists to suggest that Eleonora provided any directives regarding what she would be buried in. As previously noted, Eleonora’s funeral was considered to be very grand occasion, so her burial attire therefore perhaps does not fit sufficiently with the ceremonial splendour of her interment.[[71]](#endnote-71) This may go some way to explaining why it was more believable to imagine the Duchess being buried wearing a more opulent garment, more fitting with her depictions as in life. Although the motivation for removing Eleonora’s burial garments during the second exhumation in 1949 - while those of many of her relatives were left undisturbed – is unknown, one possible explanation is that the excavators were surprised to find her dressed in a simpler garment rather than the elaborate gown from her 1545 portrait, as they had anticipated.

TRACING THE ORIGINS OF THE MYTH

The blame for the misidentification of Eleonora’s burial attire is usually laid on the officials responsible for opening the Medici tombs in 1857. The initial report of the exhumation of the tombs, titled ‘Esumazione e ricognizione delle ceneri dei Principi Medicei fatta nell'anno 1857 [Exhumation and recognition of the remains of the Medici Princes made in the year 1857]’, was completed by Guido Sommi Picenardi (1839-1914) and first published in 1888.[[72]](#endnote-72)

There are a number of problems with the way in which this report was compiled that could have led to inaccuracies; principally that it was published 31 years after the opening of the tombs in 1857, and its author was not there to witness this event first-hand. Rather, Sommi Picenardi collated his report from a number of unpublished notes made by the officials present at the time, chiefly Luigi Passerini and Domenico Moreni, which he accessed in the National Central Library of Florence.[[73]](#endnote-73) Compounding this, the original exhumation notes were made under difficult conditions; the body clearly had not been embalmed, the casket was broken and had no name on it, and the examination was conducted by candlelight, evidenced by the drops of candlewax left on the dress.[[74]](#endnote-74) It is also generally noted that those present at the opening of the tombs were not art or dress historians, and so the confusion over the dress is attributed to the ignorance of the government officials compiling the information that would contribute to the report. Historians have therefore long assumed that the myth surrounding the burial dress was borne out of these issues; Konrad Eisenbichler believes that the story was started by an ‘uninformed comment by the 1857 commission of bureaucrats, doctors and notaries that examined the remains in the casket’.[[75]](#endnote-75) Similarly, Martha McCrory writes that this report was ‘probably responsible for the long-standing assumption that Eleonora di Toledo was buried in the gown shown in the famous portrait by Bronzino in the Tribuna of the Uffizi,’ and Gabrielle Langdon attributes it to romanticization in Sommi Picenardi’s report, pointing particularly at his apparent description of the dress as being ‘similar to that in Bronzino’s portrait.’[[76]](#endnote-76)

However, this criticism is difficult to reconcile with the written content of the report, which merits close reading:

In una cassa di legno (2), ridotta in pessimo stato ed evidentemente violata, giaceva un cadavere di donna che non era stato imbalsamato. Nessuna memoria fu ritrovata, che indicasse a cui fossero appartenuti quei resti, ma dall'età dell'individuo, accertata dall'ispezione medica fatta sulle ossa (3), fu dato indi che fossero quelli gli avanzi della Duchessa Eleonora di Toledo moglie di Cosimo I, che per l'Atto solenne del millesette- centosettantuno sapevansi depositati nel sotterraneo. Le ricche vesti, foggiate secondo la moda della metà del secolo XVI, e più alcune treccie di capelli di color biondo tendente al rosso, attorte da una cordicella d'oro e simili in tutto a quelli dipinti dal Bronzino nel ritratto di questa Principessa, conservato nella R. Galleria degli Uffizi, ne porsero certezza per stabilire l'identità del cadavere. La veste che lo ricuopre, noli poco lacera, è di raso bianco, lunga fino a terra e riccamente ricamata a gallone nel busto, lungo la» sottana e nella balza da pie ; e sotto questo primo vestito ne è un altro di velluto color chermisi. Dello stesso colore sono le calze di seta, nere le scarpette di pelle, ma lacere.

[In a wooden box (2), reduced to a very poor state and evidently violated, lay a woman's corpse that had not been embalmed. No memorial was found to indicate to whom these remains belonged, but from the age of the individual, as ascertained by the medical inspection of the bones (3), it was clear that they were the remains of Duchess Eleonora di Toledo, wife of Cosimo I, who was known to have been deposited in the crypt in the solemn act of 1771. The rich robes, shaped according to the fashion of the mid-sixteenth century, plus a few strands of blonde hair tending to red, twisted by a golden cord and similar in all respects to those painted by Bronzino in the portrait of this Princess, preserved in the Royal Uffizi Gallery, made it certain that the identity of the corpse could be established. The robe that covers her, quite torn, is of white satin, long to the ground and richly embroidered in braid on the bust, along the skirt and in the flounce; and under this first dress is another of crimson coloured velvet. Of the same colour are the silk stockings, black the leather slippers, but torn.][[77]](#endnote-77)

Although Sommi Picenardi does refer to the Bronzino portrait earlier in his description, he describes Eleonora’s burial attire with clarity, as being made of white satin and embroidered in braid.[[78]](#endnote-78) This description matches the burial dress now held in the Palazzo Pitti, and does not bear any obvious resemblance to the dress in Bronzino’s 1545 portrait. Explaining this discrepancy, Bulgarella writes that the ‘simple reference’ that Sommni Picenardi made to the painting was enough incite the myth.[[79]](#endnote-79) McCrory likewise attributes the legend to the passing mention of Bronzino’s portrait, whilst going on to confirm that the real burial gown is actually ‘as described’ in Sommi Picenardi’s report.[[80]](#endnote-80) This raises questions as to why the misidentification was made to begin with and how it was able to spread; the dress was evidently described accurately at the point the tombs were opened, even if the association with Bronzino was a potential point of confusion.

It is difficult to ascertain precisely when this myth took hold and began to spread. Reflecting the nature of the way myths circulate, the story is sometimes told in reverse: that it was believed that Eleonora was buried in the 1545 dress until the tombs were opened, and it was to the surprise of the excavators to see she had been buried in a different gown.[[81]](#endnote-81) Bulgarella comments that this myth has been repeated for ‘150 years’, dating this story to the opening of the tomb, although it actually seems to have arisen later than this.[[82]](#endnote-82) It is certain that this story did not pre-date the initial exhumation in 1857. The claim does not appear in Jacopo Riguccio Galluzzi’s 1781 history of the Medici, that many nineteenth-century historians consulted, and no eighteenth or nineteenth-century sources that discuss Bronzino’s painting make any mention of the myth.[[83]](#endnote-83) Early discussions of the exhumation itself also omit any mention of the family’s burial garments: an 1896 issue of *Cosmopolitan* magazine discusses the first Medici exhumation, but only comments that the bodies of Eleonora, Cosimo I and their eldest son Francesco were ‘apparently as fresh as when first buried’, with no mention of Eleonora’s burial dress. [[84]](#endnote-84)

However, the myth had certainly taken hold by the time of the 1945 re-exhumations of the Medici family. Expecting to find Eleonora’s body clothed in ‘a richly pearl-set dress (probably that in which she sat for her portrait by Bronzino)’ those involved with this exhumation believed that it had been reduced to shreds by graverobbers. [[85]](#endnote-85) In fact, the dress remained very similar to its initial appearance, despite its age-related deterioration and discolouration. That the clothing then remained out of the public eye, held in the repository of Museo Nazionale del Bargello for around thirty years before finally be moved to the Galleria del Costume in Palazzo Pitti in 1983 for conservation work, did nothing to dispel the fiction.

It is therefore evident that this myth took hold sometime between the publication of the report of the first exhumation in 1888, and the second exhumation in 1945. Attempting to trace back citations to the original source of the myth leads to an early English translation of the exhumation report, that has subsequently influenced the scholarship surrounding the dress in the English-speaking world. The initial error seems to stem from the book *The Medici,* by George Frederick Young (1846-1919), originally published in 1909, and republished in many subsequent editions. G.F. Young explicitly makes the connection between the burial gown and the 1545 *Portrait of Eleonora of Toledo and Her Son Giovanni,* stating that not only was Eleonora buried in this gown, but was also ‘dressed as she appears in this portrait,’ complete with her pearl necklace and girdle.[[86]](#endnote-86) He reproduces an image of the portrait on the facing page, visually underscoring the association of the burial dress with this painting. Ostensibly quoting from comments made at the time of opening the tombs, Young gives the following:

The body was recognised with certainty by the rich dress of white satin richly embroidered with 'galloon' trimming all over both the bodice and the skirt, exactly as she is depicted in the portrait painted by Bronzino which is in the Gallery of the Statues, together with the same net of gold cord worn on the hair. Beneath this dress was an under-gown of crimson velvet ; and on the feet shoes similarly of crimson velvet.[[87]](#endnote-87)

Young references a work titled ‘Official Report of the examination of the Tomb in the Medici Mausoleum, 1857’ as the source for this paragraph. This was the year the Medici tombs were opened, and while Luigi Passerini made notes concerning Eleonora’s burial attire in this year, with the intention of publication, a work of this precise title does not exist and various factors prevented Passerini from publishing his work in the years following the exhumation.[[88]](#endnote-88) There is no earlier version of a complete report in existence, although Sommi Picenardi collated from a number of sources, in manuscript form, in the preparation of his text.[[89]](#endnote-89) While it is possible that Young consulted Passerini’s notes directly, Sommi Picenardi himself describes the original notes he worked from as being largely formless.[[90]](#endnote-90) A side-by-side examination of the section in Sommi Picenardi’s text that addresses Eleonora’s burial attire reveals the similarity of this original to the contents of Young’s reference, and therefore the issues with his translation and interpretation of the material. As Young also appears to reference other material collated by the 1888 text, and given the substantial overlap in content and descriptions of his quotation, it is reasonable to assume that Young worked from this source.

It remains uncertain whether Young’s mistaken assumption that Eleonora’s remains were identified based on her dress stemmed from a mistranslation or a misinterpretation of the original source. It seems likely it was a translation error, given the general similarity between Young’s quotation and the 1888 text, and that Young was allegedly unable to read Italian well.[[91]](#endnote-91) There are other apparent inaccuracies with the translation that support this assumption; Young identifies Eleonora’s black leather slippers as being ‘shoes of similarly crimson velvet,’ whereas this was actually the colour of her stockings. Additionally, Young does not appear to understand what ‘galloon’ is. Young assumes that ‘riccamente ricamata a gallone’ [richly embroidered with braid] refers to the arabesques and pomegranate pattern in the brocade of the dress in the 1545 portrait, whereas actually galloon trim is generally a ‘narrow ribbon or braid of cotton, wool, or silk’ used for edging garments.[[92]](#endnote-92) In sixteenth-century records, ‘galons’ referred to wide bands of ribbon featuring extravagant patterns, typically found on luxury clothing.[[93]](#endnote-93) However, by the seventeenth century, ‘galloon’ was usually used to describe a type of passamaine lace, which continued to be the accepted use of the term through to the nineteenth century.[[94]](#endnote-94) Examining nineteenth century examples of this type of lace (Figure 3), which bear a very slight visual resemblance to the embroidery on Eleonora’s burial dress, offers insight into how the officials present at the tomb’s opening may have understood and described the garment. Given that the excavators were not dress historians, their choice of terminology in 1857 likely reflected a general rather than precise interpretation of historical textiles, correct to the nineteenth century.

Any differences between the two sources may be attributed to Young’s broad and imprecise translation that elides over important details. Young assumed that identification of the corpse was made on the basis of the gown, whereas close reading of the original source indicates that the identification was made in archaeological terms, by an inspection of the Duchess’ remains and the age of her bones. The phrasing of Sommi Picenardi’s report does leave room for interpretation as to whether the comparison made to Eleonora’s appearance in Bronzino’s 1545 portrait was based on the red-blonde colour of a lock of hair found in the grave, or due to the ‘cordicella d'oro’ [golden cord] found twisted through it. Edelstein believes this reference was intended to allude to the colour Bronzino painted Eleonora’s hair, whereas McCrory argues that if Eleonora was identified based on her appearance, this was due to the ‘golden cord’ worn in her hair.[[95]](#endnote-95)

Given Eleonora’s documented preference for golden hairnets, the ‘golden cord’ seems a highly plausible means of identification. It is clearly visible in her 1545 portrait, and Bronzino’s many other portraits of her (Figures 4 and 5) demonstrate her continued preference for this hairstyle, making it a likely reason for the exhumation report’s reference to the portrait. Typically listed as a *scuffia* in wardrobe inventories, it is believed that she brought this particular fashion to Florence from her native Spain. [[96]](#endnote-96) A letter by Cosimo I’s secretary, Pierfrancesco Riccio (1501-1564) records Eleonora wearing her hair in this style during her procession into Florence on the occasion of her wedding in June 1539, suggesting she had been wearing hairnets of this design prior to her marriage.[[97]](#endnote-97) These hairnets were made from gold-wrapped thread, and sumptuary laws of 1546 gives indication of the value of them, stating they must not exceed two ounces of gold.[[98]](#endnote-98) After her marriage Eleonora’s hairnets were generally made for her by one of her Spanish ladies-in-waiting, identified as Ysabel de Renoso.[[99]](#endnote-99) She would continue to wear these throughout the rest of her life – and, apparently, to the grave.

Comparing Young’s translation with the original source, it can be safely said that the initial errors in the identification of the dress did not originate in Sommi Picenardi’s 1888 report; the dress had been described accurately at this stage, and the reference to Bronzino’s painting was clearly not in direct relation to the dress from the full context of the passage in the report. Published in *Archivio Storico Italiano*, this has been available to scholars to refer to directly; however, the language-barrier to the original source alongside the more ready availability of Young’s book, which became an influential history of the Medici family and remained in print for many decades after its initial publication, was apparently what fuelled the spread of the myth of Eleonora’s burial dress. Much of Young’s work has subsequently been dismissed by Renaissance scholars as little more than ‘romantic nonsense’ and ‘subjective divagations of a sentimentalist with a mind above history.’[[100]](#endnote-100) The same can be said for the tale he inadvertently devised about Eleonora’s burial dress. The origin of the myth is apparently based on a simple factual error in Young’s book that was then repeated by subsequent scholars. Given that no references to this myth appear in texts published before 1909, it is reasonable to conclude that the legend of Eleonora’s burial dress originated here.

ON DRESS HISTORY, PRIMARY SOURCES AND MYTH-MAKING

Legends like this one generally arise from collective attempts at making sense or meaning in situations where information is missing.[[101]](#endnote-101) In the case of Eleonora’s burial dress, no sixteenth-century sources definitively confirm what attire she was buried in, so the claim that she was buried in the lavish gown from her famous portrait is plausible in several respects, which helps explain how the story gained credibility and continued to spread over time. Historian Carolyn Steedman describes the desire for lifelike historical representation that reduces the ‘gap between the thing and its image’ beginning in the nineteenth century, which is coincidentally around the time of Eleonora’s first exhumation.[[102]](#endnote-102) This fascination with authenticity fostered a tendency to accept compelling narratives uncritically, particularly when they seemed to offer a direct connection to the past. Legends like these endure because of their sense of ‘immediate and tangible reality.’[[103]](#endnote-103)

The 1545 dress has such a demonstrable hold on the historic imagination that this is not the only legend that has been attached to it. The dress, in addition to being referred to as Eleonora’s burial dress, has also erroneously been described as her wedding gown. A 1995 edition of the Uffizi Gallery catalogue refers to the 1545 dress as being ‘probably the one she wore as a bride’ without evidence.[[104]](#endnote-104) This claim is decidedly untrue – Eleonora’s wedding gown was described by eyewitnesses as being ‘crimson satin richly embroidered all over in gold lamella.’[[105]](#endnote-105) She was very likely depicted in this attire in an earlier portrait by Bronzino, dated 1543 (Figure 6). The belief that the 1545 dress was Eleonora’s wedding gown likely stemmed from its white colour, despite white not becoming a traditional bridal colour until the nineteenth century. While brides in sixteenth-century Italy could marry in various colours, including white, Eleonora’s choice of red for her marriage was likely symbolic, with the colour representing her integration into the Medici family.[[106]](#endnote-106) Although this story never gained traction to the same extent as the burial dress myth, it serves as an example of how such narratives emerge.

It is additionally worth noting that Eleonora was indeed buried with an item that she had previously been depicted wearing in portraiture. Bronzino’s 1543 portrait of the Duchess, believed to depict her in her wedding attire, shows Eleonora wearing two rings (Figure 7). The smaller of the two rings, a gold band set with a carved onyx, was found in her tomb and is now part of the collection at the Palazzo Pitti. (Figure 8). While this coincidence does not seem to have played a role in the origins of the burial dress myth, it underscores the element of truth that often forms the basis of such narratives.

Academic debate is as subject to the transmission of myths and legends as any other type of information, and academic texts can be particularly prone to misrepresentations and distortions due to the way information may be repeatedly cited across multiple sources, ultimately compounding the initial error. [[107]](#endnote-107) While it is apparent that Young’s misinterpretation of the exhumation report was responsible for the creation of the burial dress myth, how it spread and became so well-known illustrates how fluidly such legends can be passed through written sources. After the publication of Young’s book in 1909, his story about the burial dress was soon repeated across various texts and gradually became embedded in dress and art history narratives. Notable examples include Arthur McComb’s 1928 biography of Bronzino, and Florence Lewis May’s 1965 study on brocade textiles in sixteenth-century dress.[[108]](#endnote-108) Both cite Young as the origin of the story, although Lewis May specifies that the information came from Young’s translation of an original source.[[109]](#endnote-109) Across the passing years this story became accepted fact, appearing without citation in a 1968 catalogue of the Uffizi Gallery, and in Jane Ashelford’s *A Visual History of Costume* in 1983.[[110]](#endnote-110) Such was the power of this myth that it even took hold in Italian sources, despite the origin of this legend being from a mistranslation into English.[[111]](#endnote-111)

Although the publication of the third volume of Janet Arnold’s *Patterns of Fashion* in 1985, which contained detailed illustrations of the actual burial dress, should have firmly refuted this myth, the ongoing impact of this misidentification can nevertheless be seen across subsequent research. This claim is further repeated in a 1994 article by Joe A. Thomas, despite being published after the restoration work on the burial dress was complete and the garment had been displayed twice to the public in the Palazzo Pitti.[[112]](#endnote-112) Following the erroneous belief that these dresses are one and the same, the article uses descriptions of the burial dress from Young’s book as the foundation of an analysis of Bronzino’s painting. Thomas asserts that the 1545 dress must be made from ‘brocaded satin’, entirely based on Young’s flawed translation which states the burial dress was made from ‘white satin’.[[113]](#endnote-113) Thomas dismisses any notion that the 1545 dress could be made from velvet, as Eleonora was buried with a velvet under-gown, and ‘since the textures are easily discernible in a side-by-side comparison of actual fabric’, determined that the eyewitnesses at the opening of the tomb would have been able to tell the difference between velvet and satin. [[114]](#endnote-114) The actual burial dress is indeed made from satin, but the fabric of the 1545 dress is now generally considered to be convincingly identified as ‘brocaded velvet’.[[115]](#endnote-115) This case highlights the challenges that arise when scholars from adjacent disciplines, such as art history, engage with dress history without a thorough understanding of its specialised terminology and established scholarship. In this instance, the failure to engage with existing dress history sources has led to misinterpretations that could have been avoided with a more interdisciplinary approach.

The misapplication of textile terminology, compounded by the ongoing confusion between the two garments, has potentially reinforced misinterpretations in the scholarship surrounding both Eleonora’s burial dress and the dress of the 1545 portrait. Although Thomas’ work was refuted a year after its initial publication, his conclusions in regard to the fabric in the gown have nevertheless been referenced by scholars in subsequent studies.[[116]](#endnote-116) Additionally, several art historians, in discussions of Bronzino’s painting, continue to passingly identify the fabric of the 1545 dress as being ‘white satin’ or ‘white satin brocade.’[[117]](#endnote-117) While this distinction may seem minor to an art historian, for dress historians, precise terminology is essential, as differences between fabrics like satin and velvet reflect technological advancements, distinctions across geographical regions and courts, as well as broader sartorial changes. Additionally, as discussed above, the velvet brocade of Eleonora’s dress was a far more costly textile, commanding a price many times higher than that of satin at the time. Describing this gown as satin not only misrepresents its material value but also affects how Eleonora’s image and the cultural significance of Bronzino’s portrait are understood. Although these historians do not cite their source for the claim the 1545 dress was white satin, it is interesting that this choice of fabric terminology can be directly tied to the description of the burial dress, and seemingly originates in the inaccurate identification of this dress. Art historians may not always need to place much emphasis on this distinction, but the continual citation of these accounts perpetuates and reinforces the original mistake.

CONCLUSION

Whatever the issues with the nineteenth-century exhumation report – and there are many, due to the way the report was constructed from notes and manuscript sources many years after the exhumation – the myth that Eleonora was buried in the grand dress she wears in the 1545 Bronzino portrait did not originate there. Instead, the tale seems to have been started fifty years after the opening of the tomb, through G.F. Young’s misleading English translation of the Italian source material, and spread through scholars referencing this translation rather than returning to the original. It is an interesting case of how fictions can spread through referencing and illustrates the value of fact-checking secondary sources.

It is somewhat ironic that this myth originated from G.F. Young’s misinterpretation of the 1888 exhumation report. In his book, Young aimed to debunk another long-standing Medici legend surrounding the sudden deaths of Giovanni, Garzia, and Eleonora.[[118]](#endnote-118) According to a popular belief that arose shortly after the deaths, Garzia had murdered Giovanni, Cosimo killed Garzia in retribution, and Eleonora died of grief. Young refutes this legend, writing that this fiction was spread by historians who, unable to access private documents from the Medici family, were forced to rely on more dubious information.[[119]](#endnote-119) Historical and archaeological evidence corroborate that all three members of the family succumbed to malaria, contracted while hunting in the marshlands of Maremma, southern Tuscany. [[120]](#endnote-120) In his attempt to correct one historical inaccuracy, Young unintentionally gave rise to another.

 The assumption that Eleonora was buried in a dress that was fashionable some seventeen years prior to her death is one that should always have been met with some scepticism. Due to the circumstances of her death, from a sudden infection whilst away from Florence, her body was dressed in the attire available to her at the time. Even if she had reserved a particular gown for the purpose of her burial, the idea that this would have been one that a woman of forty had worn at age twenty-three treats sixteenth-century dress as monolith, eliding over almost twenty years of developments in Eleonora’s own personal taste, as well as new sumptuary laws and more general fashionable change. The very existence of this myth about Eleonora’s burial gown highlights the importance of detailed historical dress research not only to the study of fashion history, but also the continuing relevance of such work to art history and related disciplines. Yet, the existence and propagation of myths and legends within art and dress history serves as a reminder that researchers must seek a delicate balance between working from the conclusions of previous studies and the proper use of primary research sources. Misidentifications like this emphasise the necessity of cross-disciplinary research and the continued relevance of the study of dress as a conduit to fully understand the past and how individuals once materially existed in the world.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am sincerely grateful to my anonymous peer reviewers for their valuable advice and guidance on an earlier draft of this article. I also extend my appreciation to Alexandra Kim and Christine Stevens for their generous support and encouragement throughout the completion of this work.

1. There has been some debate over the identity of the child in this portrait, who has also been identified as Francesco and Garzia. However research indicates a date of August 1545 for this portrait, so the child is generally accepted to be Giovanni. See: Gabrielle Langdon, *Medici Women: Portraits of Power, Love, and Betrayal from the Court of Duke Cosimo I* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), pp.62-3. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Margaret DiBlasio and Raymond DiBlasio, ‘Constructing a Cultural Context through Museum Storytelling’, *Roundtable Reports,* 8.3 (1983), 7–9. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Eleri Lynn, *Tudor Fashion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), p.168; Maria Hayward, *Dress at the Court of King Henry VIII* (Leeds: Maney Publishing, 2006), p.113. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Helen Wyld and Calum Robertson. ‘Dressed to Kill? A 16th Century Doublet in Historical Context’. *National Museums Scotland Blog*, 10 June 2022. <<https://blog.nms.ac.uk/2022/06/10/dressed-to-kill-a-16th-century-doublet-in-historical-context/>> [Accessed 5 February 2025] [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Janet Arnold. ‘Two Early Seventeenth Century Fencing Doublets’. *Waffen- und Kostümkunde*, 21.2 (1979), 107–20. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. Mary Westerman Bulgarella, ‘The Burial Attire of Eleonora Di Toledo’, in *The Cultural World of Eleonora Di Toledo: Duchess of Florence and Siena*, ed. by Konrad Eisenbichler (London: Routledge, 2017), pp.207-224 (p.215). [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. Bruce Edelstein, ‘Bronzino’s Portrait of Eleonora Di Toledo with Her Son Giovanni: The Invention of a Secular Icon for the Early Modern State’, in *Portraiture, Gender, and Power in Sixteenth-Century Art*, ed. by Noelia García Pérez (London: Routledge, 2024), pp.27-53 (p.27). [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. R., V. Giuffra Bianucci, B. E. Bachmeier, M. Ball, C. M. Pusch, G. Fornaciari, and A. G. Nerlich, ‘Eleonora of Toledo (1522–1562): Evidence for Tuberculosis and Leishmaniasis Co-Infection in Renaissance Italy’. *International Journal of Paleopathology,* 2. 4 (2012), 231–35. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijpp.2012.11.002>. [Accessed 6 November 2024] [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. Janet Cox-Rearick, ‘La Ill.Ma Sig.Ra Duchessa Felice Memoria: The Posthumous Eleonora Di Toledo’, In *The Cultural World of Eleonora Di Toledo: Duchess of Florence and Siena*, ed. by Konrad Eisenbichler (London: Routledge, 2017), pp.225-266 (p.229). [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. Cox-Rearick, ‘La Ill.Ma Sig.Ra Duchessa Felice Memoria’, p.228. [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. G. Sommi Picenardi, ‘Esumazione E Ricognizione Delle Ceneri Dei Principi Medicei Fatta Nell’ Anno 1857 Processo Verbale e Note’, *Archivio Storico Italiano,* 1.165 (1888), 333–60 (p.334). [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. Janet Arnold and Mary Westerman Bulgarella, ‘An Innovative Method for Mounting the Sixteenth-Century Doublet and Trunk-Hose Worn by Don Garzia de’Medici’, *Costume*, 30.1 (1996), 47–55, <https://doi.org/10.1179/cos.1996.30.1.47>, p.55. [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. ‘The Tombs of The Medici: Opposition to Exhumation of Twenty-Three Bodies’, *The Times*, 12 May 1956, p. 7. [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. Original Italian: ‘*un maggior deterioramento delle stoffe, le quali, sollevate, si risolvono in brandelli’.* Donatella Lippi, *Illacrimate sepolture: curiosità e ricerca scientifica nella storia delle riesumazioni dei Medici* (Firenze: Firenze University Press, 2006), p.146. [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
15. Janet Arnold, ‘Preliminary Investigation into the Medici Graves Clothes.’ *Il Costume nell’età del Rinascimento*, ed. Dora Liscia Bemporad (Firenze: EDIFIR, 1988), 149-157 (p.154). [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
16. Bruce Edelstein, ‘Bronzino’s Portrait of Eleonoa Di Toledo and Her Son Francesco: A New Public Image for the Duchess’, in *Women’s Agency and Self-Fashioning in Early Modern Tuscany: (1300-1600)*, ed. Autori Vari (Rome: Viella Libreria Editrice, 2022), 123–47 (p.123); Maria Sframeli, ‘Ring with a Carved Stone’. Uffizi Galleries. <<https://www.uffizi.it/en/artworks/ring-carved-stone>> [Accessed 29 January 2025] [↑](#endnote-ref-16)
17. Arnold, ‘Preliminary Investigation into the Medici Graves Clothes’, p.154. [↑](#endnote-ref-17)
18. Bulgarella, ‘The Burial Attire of Eleonora Di Toledo’, p.215. [↑](#endnote-ref-18)
19. Bulgarella, ‘The Burial Attire of Eleonora Di Toledo’, p.222. [↑](#endnote-ref-19)
20. Bulgarella, ‘The Burial Attire of Eleonora Di Toledo’, p.215; Roberta Orsi Landini, ‘The Clothes That Have Survived’, in *Moda a Firenze, 1540-1580: lo stile di Eleonora di Toledo e la sua influenza*, ed. Roberta Orsi Landini and Bruna Niccoli (Firenze: Polistampa, 2005), 70-75 (p.72); Landini, ‘The Clothes That Have Survived’, p.73. [↑](#endnote-ref-20)
21. Landini, ‘The Clothes That Have Survived’, p.71. [↑](#endnote-ref-21)
22. Roberta Orsi Landini and Bruna Niccoli, ‘Images of a New Power: Fashion at the Florentine Court in the Mid Sixteenth Century’, in *Spanish Fashion at the Court of Early Modern Europe,* ed. José Luis Colomer and Amalia Descalzo, (Madrid: Centro de Estudios Europa Hispanica, 2014), pp.37-62 (pp.43-44). [↑](#endnote-ref-22)
23. Bulgarella, ‘The Burial Attire of Eleonora Di Toledo’, p.217. [↑](#endnote-ref-23)
24. Bulgarella, ‘The Burial Attire of Eleonora Di Toledo,’ p.222. [↑](#endnote-ref-24)
25. Langdon, *Medici Women,* p.249. [↑](#endnote-ref-25)
26. Roberta Orsi Landini, ‘The Individual Garments’, in *Moda a Firenze, 1540-1580: lo stile di Eleonora di Toledo e la sua influenza*, ed. Roberta Orsi Landini and Bruna Niccoli (Firenze: Polistampa, 2005), pp.76-169 (p.91). [↑](#endnote-ref-26)
27. Roberta Orsi Landini and Bruna Niccoli, ‘Images of a New Power: Fashion at the Florentine Court in the Mid Sixteenth Century’, in *Spanish Fashion at the Court of Early Modern Europe,* ed. José Luis Colomer and Amalia Descalzo, (Madrid: Centro de Estudios Europa Hispanica, 2014), 37-62 (pp.43-44); Landini, ‘The Clothes That Have Survived’, p.71; Landini, ‘The Clothes That Have Survived’, p.71. [↑](#endnote-ref-27)
28. Landini, ‘The Clothes That Have Survived’, p.73. [↑](#endnote-ref-28)
29. Janet Cox-Rearick, ‘Power-Dressing at the Courts of Cosimo de’ Medici and François I: The “Moda Alla Spagnola” of Spanish Consorts Eléonore d’Autriche and Eleonora Di Toledo’. *Artibus et Historiae* 30.60 (2009), 39–69 (p.61). [↑](#endnote-ref-29)
30. Kirsten Aschengreen Piacenti, ‘Developments in the Textile Collections in Palazzo Pitti’, *The Burlington Magazine*, 126.975 (1984), 339–40 (p.340); Arnold, ‘Preliminary Investigation into the Medici Graves Clothes.’ [↑](#endnote-ref-30)
31. Arnold and Bulgarella. ‘An Innovative Method for Mounting the Sixteenth-Century Doublet and Trunk-Hose Worn by Don Garzia de’Medici’, p.47. [↑](#endnote-ref-31)
32. Piacenti, ‘Developments in the Textile Collections in Palazzo Pitti’, p.340; Janet, Arnold, *Patterns of Fashion - the Cut and Construction of Clothes for Men and Women C1560-1620* (London: Macmillan, 1985). [↑](#endnote-ref-32)
33. Bulgarella, ‘The Burial Attire of Eleonora Di Toledo,’ p.214. [↑](#endnote-ref-33)
34. Martha McCrory, Review of *Moda alla corte dei Medici: gli abiti restaurati di Cosimo, Eleonora e Don Garzia*, by Kirsten Aschengreen Piacenti, *The Burlington Magazine*, 136.1095 (1994), p.394; The dress was excluded from the 2023 exhibition ‘Eleonora di Toledo and the Invention of the Medici Court in Florence’, Pitti Palace: 7 February - 14 May 2023. This exhibition contained other items of clothing from the 16th century, along with Eleonora’s funeral bodice and stockings, but presumably the dress itself was deemed too fragile to display. See: Bruce Edelstein and Victoria Conticelli, eds*. Eleonora Di Toledo e l’invenzione Della Corte Dei Medici a Firenze* (Livorno: Le Gallerie degli Uffizi, 2023). [↑](#endnote-ref-34)
35. See for example: E.V. Lucas, *A Wanderer in Florence* (1912), Arthur McComb, *Agnolio Bronzino: His Life and Works* (1928), Jane Ashelford, *A Visual History of Costume* (1983), Jacques Anquetil, *Silk* (1996), L.E. Semler, *The English Mannerist Poets and the Visual Arts* (1998), Gloria Fossi, *Uffizi: Art, History, Collections* (2004) and T.S.R. Boase, *Giorgio Vasari: The Man and the Book* (2023). [↑](#endnote-ref-35)
36. Langdon, *Medici Women,* p.71. [↑](#endnote-ref-36)
37. Langdon, *Medici Women,* pp.62-3. [↑](#endnote-ref-37)
38. Edelstein, ‘Bronzino’s Portrait of Eleonora Di Toledo with Her Son Giovanni’, p.33. [↑](#endnote-ref-38)
39. Edelstein, ‘Bronzino’s Portrait of Eleonora Di Toledo with Her Son Giovanni’, p.45. [↑](#endnote-ref-39)
40. Serena Urry, ‘Evidence of Replication in a “Portrait of Eleonora of Toledo” by Agnolo Bronzino and Workshop’. *Journal of the American Institute for Conservation* 37.2 (1998), 211–21. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3179803>.; Cox-Rearick, ‘La Ill.Ma Sig.Ra Duchessa Felice Memoria’, p.243 [↑](#endnote-ref-40)
41. Roberta Orsi Landini, *Moda alla corte dei Medici: gli abiti restaurati di Cosimo, Eleonora e don Garzia* (Firenze: Centro Di, 1993); Gaylord Brouhot, ‘Le portrait du costume : panégyrique de la Florence des Médicis (1537-1590)’. In *Le miroir et l’espace du prince dans l’art italien de la Renaissance*, ed. by Philippe Morel (Tours: Presses universitaires François-Rabelais, 2012), 81–121. <https://doi.org/10.4000/books.pufr.7857>. [Accessed 13 September 2024] [↑](#endnote-ref-41)
42. Langdon, *Medici Women,* p.70. [↑](#endnote-ref-42)
43. Edelstein, ‘Bronzino’s Portrait of Eleonora Di Toledo with Her Son Giovanni’, p.44. [↑](#endnote-ref-43)
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