

The Making of Women's Autobiography in Eighteenth-Century Italy

By

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Note on Translations and Transcriptions

Regarding translations, I have left longer citations in the text in the original language, providing English translations in the footnotes. When one or more English translations of a work exist, I have tried to cite from the most recent edition, though I have occasionally chosen a specific translation, or offered my own rendering, in order to emphasize specific elements or terms in the original texts. All other translations, unless otherwise indicated, are my own and are aimed at facilitating the reading and discussion of this dissertation by the members of the evaluating oral committee, and thus do not preserve the specific literary, orthographic, dialectal or historical characteristics of the original text.

Regarding transcriptions from primary source material, I have cited from modern editions whenever possible, providing details about the editor's particular conventions, interventions, and modernizations in the footnotes. In my own transcriptions of primary manuscripts, I have generally avoided the use of [*sic*] given the high incidence of orthographic, dialectal, and grammatical variants. I have made the following changes: Replacement of ampersands (&) and conjunction *et* with *e* or *ed*; modernization of spelling (replacement of the cluster *-ji* with *-ii*, doubling of single consonants, as in the substitution of *sarebe* with *sarebbe*, replacement of the cluster *-tio* with *-zio*, as in the substitution of *atione* with *azione*); use of lowercase for common nouns (e.g., *Genitore* becomes *genitore*); elimination of the etymological *h* where no longer adopted in modern Italian; addition of etymological *h* where missing (e.g., in conjugated forms of the verb *avere*); omission of cancellations unless otherwise noted; expansion of common abbreviations; modernization of accent marks and apostrophes; introduction of em dashes (–) to distinguish dialogue and direct discourse; frequent replacement of colons and commas with

periods or question marks to separate long clauses; addition of periods or question marks to clauses unmarked by any form of punctuation.

List of Abbreviations

AAP	Archivio Arcivescovile di Pisa
ACDF	Archivio della Congregazione per la Dottrina della Fede
APFM	Archivio Provinciale Frati Minori
ASL	Archivio di Stato di Lucca
ASR	Archivio di Stato di Roma
BSL	Biblioteca Statale di Lucca
Ms. 638	Manoscritto 638 (Teresa Bandettini), Biblioteca Statale di Lucca
Ms. Ital 180	Manuscript 180 (Petronilla Paolini Massimi), Houghton Library, Harvard University

Il conoscere se stesso è la scienza di tutte le scienze.

- Blessed Maria Maddalena Martinengo

Introduction

The following study traces the development of the autobiographical genre in women's writings across the long eighteenth century in the Italian Peninsula. In particular, it is the examination of a series of shared narrative structures, devices, sources, and themes that indicate the influence of the spiritual autobiographical tradition on forms of self-writing in lay contexts, including legal testimonies, private memoirs, and intellectual, courtly, and literary autobiographies. Starting with a selection of seventeenth-century autobiographical narratives by devout women (nuns and tertiaries, who practiced monastic values without necessarily taking religious vows), noblewomen, and aristocrats, and concluding with several autobiographies by eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century female poets affiliated with Italian literary academies, I assess how women's autobiographical writing transitioned from a context of legal and ecclesiastical authority to one in which women voluntarily embraced or initiated private and public forms of self-writing.

The history of scholarship on the origin, definition, and rise of the modern "autobiography" is too lengthy to outline here in depth, but it is necessary to at least acknowledge that my own adoption of the term, which was first used in the nineteenth century in reference to European texts of the preceding century, is admittedly anachronistic.¹ In his foundational studies on the development of the genre, Philippe Lejeune situated his definition of the autobiography within the context of post-1770 Europe and what Rudolph Dekker has referred to as the "discovery of the individual" in the context of "the rise of the bourgeoisie, and a

¹ Felicity Nussbaum attributes the origins of the term in German to J.G. Herder's 1796 collection of "Self-Biographies of Famous Men," whereas the first usage of the term in English is attributed to Robert Southey in the *Quarterly Review* of 1809, and one of the earliest known uses of the Italian term *autobiografia* is found in an etymological dictionary from 1828. See Felicity Nussbaum, "Ideology of Genre," in *The Autobiographical Subject: Gender and Ideology in Eighteenth-Century England* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 1; Lorenzo Tomasin, *Scriver la vita: lingua e stile nell'autobiografia italiana del Settecento* (Florence: F. Cesati, 2009), 15; and Giuseppe Nicoletti, "Introduzione all'autobiografia italiana del Settecento," in *La memoria illuminata. Autobiografia e letteratura fra Rivoluzione e Risorgimento* (Florence: Vallecchi, 1989), 11.

widening gap between public and private spheres.”² More recently, scholars including Lejeune himself have recognized that such a periodization has marginalized other forms of autobiographical writing. A wider array of definitions and terms (*egodocuments*, *self-writing*, *life-writing*) have been introduced to describe forms such as memoirs, diaries, and literary self-portraits, which fail to meet one or more of the conditions of the genre as codified by Lejeune.³ In the Italian context, Giuseppe Nicoletti and Bartolo Anglani have concurred to some extent with Lejeune’s view of Rousseau’s *Confessions* as marking a turning point in the history of the genre, but have argued for the necessity of better contextualizing eighteenth-century secular forms of autobiography with regard to the earlier spiritual tradition, starting with Saint Augustine.⁴

Motivating this study is the regrettable lack of scholarship on the history of women’s participation in the traditions of both spiritual and “modern” autobiographies between the late seventeenth and early nineteenth centuries. Although both the spiritual autobiography and the modern autobiography have been the subject of a vast range of critical studies, little effort has

² *Egodocuments and History: Autobiographical Writing in its Social Context since the Middle Ages*, ed. Rudolf Dekker (Hilversum: Verloren, 2002), 13.

³ Lejeune’s initial definition of the autobiography included four specific categories: Form (prose narrative), subject (the story of an individual life), the historical coincidence of the author and narrator as the same person, and the chronological position of the narrator (retrospective narration of the author, who is the main character). See Philippe Lejeune, “The Autobiographical Pact,” in *On Autobiography*, ed. Paul John Eakin, trans. Katherine Leary (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 4. Lejeune himself has noted that “like periodization, the generic definition seems to pose a kind of insoluble problem, a sort of vicious circle: impossible to study the object before having defined it, impossible to define it before having studied it. Some stand out by arbitrarily defining a corpus of a hundred autobiographies (May), others by contriving a definition (Lejeune): the illusion is to believe that these two methods are opposed, and to believe that they are ‘methods.’ It matters little how we get into the vicious circle. It’s all part of the same merry-go-round.” Philippe Lejeune, “The Autobiographical Pact (Bis),” in *On Autobiography*, 121. On the use of the term “life-writing” to encompass the “whole range” of autobiographical narratives, including “journals, memoirs, diaries, and oral histories,” see *Representations of the Self from the Renaissance to Romanticism*, ed. Patrick Coleman, Jayne Lewis, and Jill Kowalik (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 1.

⁴ For Anglani, the major flaw in Lejeune’s codification was the desire to consider autobiographical writing before Rousseau as “prehistory” instead of adequately considering “la specificità di ciascuna epoca e di ciascun insieme di testi” and the internal history and “interrelazioni reciproche fra generi.” Bartolo Anglani, *I letti di Procuste. Teorie e storie dell’autobiografia* (Bari: Laterza, 1996), 20. See also Nicoletti, 22.

been made to argue for the continuity between these two traditions, especially with regard to women writers. Elena Brambilla, Armando Maggi, and Graziella Parati are among the relatively few scholars that have attempted to reappraise the place of women writers in the transition of Italy's autobiographical tradition "from the heart to the mind" ("dal cuore alla mente").⁵ While Maggi has argued that the Italian canon has excluded female Catholic writers after the Renaissance, Parati has responded to the "preponderant absence" of women writers from critical histories of the Italian autobiography by including the seventeenth-century narratives of Camilla Faà Gonzaga (1599-1662) and Cecilia Ferrazzi (1609-1684) in her study, *Public History, Private Stories: Italian Women's Autobiography*.⁶ However, aside from these two "isolated testimonies of female identities,"⁷ Parati focuses exclusively on nineteenth- and twentieth-century narratives, providing no eighteenth-century examples. She thus addresses, but does not fill, the gap in current scholarship within which my own research is focused.

The lack of scholarly attention to autobiographical women's writing between the late seventeenth and early nineteenth centuries is difficult to explain, especially considering the numerous studies of the topic dedicated to the period between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, and from the mid-nineteenth century through the present. During the seventeenth century, several major factors led to changes in the ways women were encouraged to examine and describe their lives. These factors, which I address in greater depth below and in chapter 1,

⁵ Elena Brambilla, "Riforme dei segni di santità," in *Corpi invasi e viaggi dell'anima. Santità, possessione, esorcismo dalla teologia barocca alla medicina illuminista* (Rome: Viella, 2010), 186.

⁶ See Armando Maggi, "The Place of Female Mysticism in the Italian Literary Canon," in *Strong Voices, Weak History: Early Women Writers and Canons in England, France, and Italy*, ed. Pamela J. Benson and Victoria Kirkham (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005), 200, and Graziella Parati, *Public History, Private Stories: Italian Women's Autobiography* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 29. Maggi follows Giovanni Pozzi's assertion that the Italian literary tradition absorbed the "produzione religiosa volgare del Due e Trecento; ma ha trascurato il resto." Giovanni Pozzi, "L'alfabeto delle sante," in *Scrittrici mistiche italiane* (Genoa: Marietti, 1988), 25.

⁷ Parati, 44.

include a shift in attention on the part of the Inquisition away from prosecuting heretics and towards controlling and reforming Italy's own Catholic population, as well as the influence of new religious and philosophical currents, particularly Quietism and Cartesian dualism.

As historians such as Anne Jacobson Schutte, Jonathan Seitz, and Elena Bottoni have discussed in their studies of the Italian Inquisition, by the late seventeenth century the threat of Protestantism in Italy had waned. Inquisitors of the Holy Office in Rome and its branches in other cities, such as Venice, had thus begun to focus their efforts on deviant behaviors within the Catholic community, with the aim of enforcing conformity to certain cultural, political, and religious ideals. As a consequence, devotional practices and beliefs that had long been considered acceptable were rapidly "reclassified as illegitimate or prosecuted with a new vigor by ecclesiastical authorities."⁸ This new environment of control and conformity had an effect on the kinds of writing women produced, as well as on the texts they read. Owing to the censorship of the Congregation of the Index (the objective of which, unlike that of the Holy Office, was to protect rather than punish the faithful), for the entire seventeenth century and much of the eighteenth, all Italian editions of the Bible were banned, and many of the "lives" of aspiring saints were inspected and prohibited because of the Church's preoccupation with false mystics.⁹ At the same time, women were encouraged and often forced to write about their mystical experiences as a means of exposing false ecstasies and exorcising demonic impulses.¹⁰ By

⁸ Jonathan Seitz, *Witchcraft and Inquisition in Early Modern Venice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 5-6. See also Anne Jacobson Schutte, "Religion, Spirituality, and the Post-Tridentine Church," in *Early Modern Italy, 1550-1796*, ed. John A. Marino (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), and Andrea Del Col, "Strumenti di ricerca per le fonti inquisitoriali in Italia nell'età moderna," *Società e storia* 75 (1997): 147.

⁹ Cf. Jacobson Schutte, "Religion and the Post-Tridentine Church," 129, and Adelisa Malena, "La mistica e la censura romana nel Seicento" in *L'eresia dei perfetti. Inquisizione romana ed esperienze mistiche nel Seicento italiano* (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2003), 250-251.

¹⁰ Cf. Massimo Lollini, "Scrittura obbediente e mistica tridentina in Veronica Giuliani," *Annali d'Italianistica* 13 (1995): 352-355.

requiring penitents to provide written confessions, priests were able to circumvent the sacramental seal of confession, which they believed was limited to oral confessions and did not apply to written documents drafted outside of the confessional. In this way, priests were able to explicitly assist inquisitors by investigating the behavior of their parishioners.¹¹

The rapid growth of “inquisitorial” self-writing in the seventeenth century, strictly controlled by Church authorities, emerged alongside at least two other major currents of thought about subjectivity and the self in relation to God. First, as scholars Jerrold Seigel and Patrick Riley have argued, the publication of Descartes’ *Discours de la méthode* (1637) represented a “pivotal moment” in the development of the autobiographical genre “toward secular inwardness” and the “sovereignty of the subject,” without severing ties with Catholicism, and the Augustinian tradition in particular.¹² Secondly, despite heavy opposition from the Church, the rise of a “new mysticism” inspired by Quietism’s emphasis on mental prayer had an enormous influence in changing how individuals perceived themselves in relation to God and religious authorities.¹³

¹¹ It should be noted that spiritual writing before this time had also often been controlled by confessors, but usually with the aim of identifying expressions of holy or saintly behavior, whereas forced writing (“scrittura obbligata”) is closely linked to the new role of the confessor as “inquisitor” that emerged during this period. Cf. Gabriella Zarri, “Le scritture religiose,” in *Carte di donne. Per un censimento regionale della scrittura delle donne dal XVI al XX secolo: Atti della giornata di studio, Firenze, Archivio di Stato, 3 Febbraio 2005*, ed. Alessandra Contini and Anna Scattigno (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2007), 56.

¹² Patrick Riley, *Character and Conversion in Autobiography: Augustine, Montaigne, Descartes, Rousseau, and Sartre* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2004), 73. Seigel has commented on Descartes’ “ties to both Christian spiritual exercises and Stoic moral training” with regard to *The Passions of the Soul*. See Jerrold Seigel, “Between Ancients and Moderns,” in *The Idea of the Self: Thought and Experience in Western Europe Since the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 72-73; Erica Harth, *Cartesian Women: Versions and Subversions of Rational Discourse in the Old Regime* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992); and Etienne Gilson, “Le cogito et la tradition augustinienne,” *Etudes sur le rôle de la pensée médiévale dans la formation du système Cartésien* (Paris: Vrin, 1930).

¹³ Marilena Modica has observed that “tutta la cifra mistica della spiritualità secentesca risiede sull’incerto equilibrio, gravido di contraddizioni, tra orazione mentale ‘metodica’ e ‘orazione mentale’ passiva. Alla fine del secolo, porre l’accento su quest’ultima significò, spesso, appartenere alla schiera dei quietisti: ‘nuovi mistici,’ vennero chiamati, a sottolinearne la distanza dai mistici antichi.” Marilena Modica, “Misticismo e quietismo nel Seicento,” in *I monasteri femminili come centri di cultura fra Rinascimento e Barocco*, ed. Gianna Pomata and Gabriella Zarri (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2005), 209.

Alongside these transformations in religious culture, several major historical and social changes facilitated the conclusion of what Elena Brambilla has described as a period of “great segregation” of Italian women from the public sphere from approximately 1560 to 1680. The diffusion throughout the Italian peninsula of French salon culture and the Cartesian view of women’s intellectual capacities and *esprit* as equal to those of men contributed to the emergence of a number of prominent Italian *salonnières* and gave women greater access to opportunities for conversation and cultural and literary exchanges. Private reading was increasingly considered as a legitimate pastime for women and was accompanied by a new interest, especially within literary academies, in advocating women’s education.¹⁴

In chapter 1, I examine the influence of spiritual autobiography on the *Vita* of Capuchin nun Maria Domitilla Galluzzi (1595-1671), the *Historia* by Camilla Faà Gonzaga (1599-1662), who was an educated noblewoman forced out of marriage and into a convent, and the autobiographical testimony of Cecilia Ferrazzi (1609-1684), who was tried and convicted of heresy by the Inquisition. The heterogeneity of these women’s linguistic, religious, political, and social circumstances begs the question of what, if anything, these texts share with one another and with the tradition of the spiritual autobiography as a whole. In what ways, if any, can they be considered as part of a nascent autobiographical genre as it was extended into an increasingly secular context? These questions can in part be answered through an analysis of the autobiography of Queen Christina of Sweden (1626 Stockholm-1689 Rome), the single most representative figure in illustrating these religious, cultural, and historical changes and how they affected women. Christina’s unfinished autobiography is a fundamental text that marks and

¹⁴ A series of debates on women’s education was inaugurated by the Academy of the Ricovrati in Padua between 1723-1729 in their *Discorsi accademici di varj autori viventi intorno agli studj delle donne; la maggior parte recitati all’Accademia de’ Ricovrati di Padova* (Padua, Stamperia del Seminario, 1729). See Elena Brambilla, “Il dibattito sulle ‘conversazioni’ e sull’educazione femminile da Antonio Vallisneri a Paolo Mattia Doria, in *Sociabilità e relazioni femminili nell’Europa moderna. Temi e saggi* (Milan: Franco Angeli, 2013), 192-214.

elucidates the blurred boundaries between spiritual, intellectual, and courtly traditions of autobiographical writing. In addition to her strong ties to the papacy and certain factions of the Sacred College, she also had close personal relationships with Descartes and Miguel de Molinos, the Spanish priest at the forefront of the Quietism movement in Rome. By founding a Royal Academy at her Roman residence in 1674, Christina made a lasting contribution towards the acceptance of women's education and participation in cultural circles. In 1690, one year after her death, her academy was reestablished as the Academy of Arcadia, which was the first Italian academy to fully embrace the notion of female membership.¹⁵

Along with other literary academies in various Italian cities that followed suit by similarly opening their spaces to female poets and performers, the Arcadia provided women, including some with only a moderate level of education, with a legitimate context for public self-expression. Professional poets like Petronilla Paolini Massimi (1663-1726), Teresa Bandettini (1763-1837), and Angela Veronese (1778-1847), whose autobiographies occupy a significant portion of my analysis, all benefitted from the network of literary, cultural, and financial support offered by their admission into academies. One of the primary goals of this study is therefore to showcase the vital role of the Arcadia, starting with its symbolic founding by Christina of

¹⁵ The Arcadia was not the first academy to admit women, but it was the first to admit women with regularity and in relatively high numbers. See Elisabetta Graziosi, "Arcadia femminile: presenze e modelli," *Filologia e critica* 17 (1992): 328-329, and Susan Dixon, *Between the Real and the Ideal: The Accademia degli Arcadi and its Garden in Eighteenth-Century Rome* (Newark, Delaware: University of Delaware Press, 2006), 105. Rare examples of women who were admitted to other academies in the seventeenth century are Margherita Sarrocchi (c. 1560-1617) and Elena Cornaro Piscopia, but these were isolated cases and the participation of women in seventeenth-century academies was largely symbolic and often criticized (cf. Graziosi, 321-323). The first women admitted to the Arcadia, in 1691, were Anna Beatrice Spinelli Carafa, a Neapolitan aristocrat, and Maria Selvaggia Borghini, a poet from Pisa. Here, again, their membership was for the most part honorary (Selvaggia Borghini did not travel to Rome for the occasion and Spinelli Carafa was present only because her brother was admitted to the academy on the same day). Starting in approximately 1695, women were admitted to the Arcadia in somewhat greater numbers and from more diverse backgrounds, and they played a more active role than their predecessors by attending some of the academy's meetings in Rome (cf. Dixon, 105). In 1700, the custodian of the Arcadia formally outlined the requirements for female membership, including that all female members be married women of at least twenty-four years of age (Graziosi, 332). See also Susan Dixon, "Women in Arcadia," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 32, no. 3 (Spring 1999): 371, and Brambilla, *Sociabilità e relazioni femminili*, 87; 192-200.

Sweden, in the making of women's autobiography across the eighteenth century. In chapter 2, I further explore the topoi shared by spiritual and secular forms of self-writing through a comparative analysis of two women: The renowned Arcadian poet, Petronilla Paolini Massimi, whose manuscript *Vita* (1704) remains to this day unpublished and inadequately studied, and Veronica Giuliani (1660-1727), a Capuchin nun sanctified in the early nineteenth century who was forced by her confessors to write series of autobiographies.

In chapter 3, I turn to the late eighteenth-century private autobiographical writings of two noblewomen: the *Mémoires* of Luisa Palma Mansi (1760-1823) and the *Portrait* of Giuseppina di Lorena-Carignano (1753-1797), both written in French for personal use and not publication. These private explorations of self reveal the areas of confluence between several different forms of self-writing, including diaries, literary portraiture, and family chronicles. They also bear striking similarities with Vittorio Alfieri's *Giornali*, which are a more famous example of private self-writing in French and which have been viewed by scholars as a crucial step in the formulation of the playwright's later autobiography, the *Vita*, written in Italian. Finally, in chapter 4, I return to professional women poets and performers associated with literary academies, specifically Teresa Bandettini and Angela Veronese, whose autobiographies were written for publication and with the clear intent of providing readers with details of their personal, intellectual, and professional development as writers.

Perhaps the most significant obstacle presented by the attempt to chronicle the "making" of a genre across such a wide temporal, geographical, and socio-historical chasm is that of establishing a useful framework for analyzing the intertextual dialogue between these narratives without reducing them to a series of thematic similarities or failing to consider the highly unique circumstances in which each was composed. My theoretical and methodological framework

relies heavily on the invaluable scholarship of Frank Paul Bowman and Franco Fido regarding the major topoi that unite the traditions of spiritual and secular autobiography. Without ignoring the distinctive characteristics of each of the autobiographical narratives considered in the following chapters, I use Bowman and Fido's taxonomies of seventeenth-century religious autobiographies in France and eighteenth-century secular autobiographies in Italy, respectively, to establish some criteria by which a systematic comparison of the salient traits of women's autobiographical writing can take place.

In his article, "Suffering, Madness and Literary Creation in Seventeenth-Century Spiritual Autobiography," Bowman identifies some distinguishing qualities of spiritual autobiographies, which he claims flourished in the interim between the late-Renaissance autobiographies of figures like Montaigne and Benvenuto Cellini and the emergence of eighteenth-century narratives like Rousseau's *Confessions*.¹⁶ He describes a number of retrospective, introspective, first-person narratives that draw on saints' lives and earlier spiritual autobiographies – from Augustine's *Confessions* to the autobiographies of Saint Teresa of Avila and Saint Ignatius Loyola – as a model for providing an account of spiritual gifts, visions, prophecies, sleepless nights, physical mortification as a form of penitence, union with Christ and a general conversion from sinfulness. In particular, Bowman focuses on *La vie écrite par elle-même* of the French Roman Catholic nun Saint Marguerite-Marie Alacoque (1647-1690), the autobiography of the French Quietist mystic Madame Guyon (1648-1717), written in approximately 1688, the two autobiographies, the *Vie intérieure* and the *Vie extérieure*, of the

¹⁶ See Frank Paul Bowman, "Suffering, Madness and Literary Creation in Seventeenth-Century Spiritual Autobiography," *French Forum* 1, no. 1 (January 1976): 24-48, and Franco Fido, "At the Origins of Autobiography in the 18th and 19th Centuries: The Topoi of the Self," *Annali d'Italianistica* 4 (1986): 168-180. See also, in the same issue of *Annali d'Italianistica*, Marziano Guglielminetti, "Per un'antologia degli autobiografi del Settecento," 140-151. The Italian version of Fido's article was printed several years after the English translation: Franco Fido, "Topoi memorialistici e costituzione del genere autobiografico fra Sette e Ottocento," *Quaderni di Retorica e Poetica* 1 (1989).

Quietist Antoinette Bourignon (1616-1680), the *Autobiographie* of Jeanne des Anges (1602-1665), an abbess who gained notoriety during a famous case of demonic possession that supposedly afflicted various nuns, and the third-person autobiographical account, or *Science expérimentale des choses de l'autre vie*, of Jean-Joseph Surin (1600-1665), the Jesuit mystic called to assist in the exorcism of the Ursuline convent where Jeanne des Anges lived.¹⁷

A decade after Bowman's study, Franco Fido's seminal essay on "The *Topoi* of the Self" traced the development of the modern autobiography between 1720 and 1840, focusing in particular on the "climax of autobiographical productivity in the 1780s and 1790s, between Rousseau's *Confessions* and the French Revolution."¹⁸ Whereas Bowman analyzes women's spiritual autobiographies in France, but not in Italy, Fido's analysis excludes spiritual narratives. In fact, he insists on a clear break between religious and "modern" autobiographical traditions, following Georges Gusdorf's assertion that the latter emerged only after a period of "religious incubation" in the seventeenth century.¹⁹ Yet, this view, as Shari Benstock has argued, fails to address the influence of spiritual autobiographies on "the later secular genre."²⁰ A comparative analysis of Bowman and Fido's studies reveals many similarities, not only in the methodological structure they adopt, but also in the themes and narrative devices they identify in the texts they analyze. By combining and building on the *topoi* delineated in their respective studies, I create a foundation for discussing and comparing women's autobiographical narratives in order to

¹⁷ On Jean-Joseph Surin and Jeanne des Agnes, see also Michel de Certeau, *The Possession at Loudun* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

¹⁸ Fido, 168.

¹⁹ Ibid. Cf. Georges Gusdorf, *La découverte de soi* (Paris: P.U.F., 1948) and "De l'autobiographie initiatique à l'autobiographie genre littéraire," *Revue d'histoire littéraire de la France* 75 (1975): 957-994.

²⁰ Shari Benstock, *The Private Self: Theory and Practice of Women's Autobiographical Writings* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 56.

illustrate the transition and development of the genre between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, as women began to narrate the history of their literary rather than their spiritual vocations.

Like Félix Vernet, who defined the spiritual autobiography as the “story of a conversion,”²¹ both Bowman and Fido focus on the discovery of one’s vocation as a unifying trait of the autobiographical tradition, which is applicable to nearly all of the narratives examined in this study. For some women, as in the case of Camilla Faà Gonzaga’s forced monachization and Petronilla Paolini Massimi’s attempt to feign a religious calling in order to escape her marriage and enter a Carmelite monastery, it is the absence of a religious conversion or an innate vocation that comes to occupy a central role. For others, conversion and vocation become indistinguishable from political and literary aspiration, as in the autobiography of Queen Christina of Sweden. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, we instead find that the autobiographies of professional women writers like Teresa Bandettini and Angela Veronese describe what Fido refers to as “philosophical, scholarly, or literary” vocations rather than religious callings. At the same time, as Fido intimated, the spiritual origins of this topos can still be glimpsed in the modern autobiographer’s view of her vocation as a “a blend of natural disposition and premonitions.”²²

Many women writers trace their vocations to the moment of their birth, or even their conception, describing their arrival into the world as “marked by presages and prodigies” and often adopting the topos of the “difficult birth, dangerous for the child and sometimes mortal for

²¹ Félix Vernet, “Autobiographie spirituelle,” in *Dictionnaire de spiritualité ascétique et mystique* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1937), 1141-1159.

²² Fido, 173.

the mother,” as in Rousseau’s *Confessions*.²³ Whereas Maria Domitilla Galluzzi (1595-1671) recounts how her mother suffered a serious fall during her pregnancy, which was feared to have killed her unborn child, Queen Christina of Sweden describes predictions that her mother’s pregnancy would result in the death of either the king or queen, or their unborn child. Maria Domitilla Galluzzi also describes the dangerous moment of her birth itself, as her umbilical cord was wrapped around her neck. Most often, and perhaps following a topos of orphanhood that goes back to Saint Teresa of Avila, whose father died when she was sixteen, it is the death of one or more parents in early childhood that creates a situation of emotional, social, and financial duress for these women, while also becoming the catalyst for discovering their spiritual, political, or poetic vocation: Queen Christina of Sweden, Camilla Faà Gonzaga, Petronilla Paolini Massimi, and Teresa Bandettini are all rendered defenseless by their fathers’ deaths; the death of Veronica Giuliani’s mother leads her to embrace a new maternal model in the form of the Virgin and Child; and Cecilia Ferrazzi loses both of her parents in the plague of 1630. Moreover, these events are often prophesied, representing a unique topos of women’s autobiographical writing: Cecilia Ferrazzi and Petronilla Paolini Massimi both predict their fathers’ deaths, while Veronica Giuliani prophesies that her writings will be diffused throughout the world; even Teresa Bandettini describes how her confessor predicted her future fame as a poet during her first religious confession.

Whereas Fido describes the topoi of the mother’s premature death and the strained father-son relationship, women writers tend to reverse this dynamic, recounting their intellectual affinity with their fathers and their particularly fraught relationships with their mothers, which are often exacerbated by the traumatic effects of the father’s death. In particular, many women use the imagery of breastfeeding to represent strained relationships between daughters and

²³ Ibid., 172.

mothers. Maria Domitilla Galluzzi and Veronica Giuliani both draw on the topos of nursing and being nursed by Jesus, which is common in spiritual narratives like the mid-seventeenth century diary of Jesuit nun Brigida Morello.²⁴ Galluzzi also brings this theme into a secular context by describing her family's resistance to the idea of a wet nurse and her own refusal to drink any milk other than that of her mother. Petronilla Paolini Massimi is likewise critical of wet nursing, which she believes caused the differences between her mother's character and her own, while Teresa Bandettini laments her mother's temporary inability to breastfeed due to the emotional turmoil caused by the death of Teresa's father.

In addition to the circumstances of one's birth, childhood occupies a central place in these narratives and illustrates a major shift from the perception of childhood as a locus of error, waywardness, and the dominion of primary instincts (as in the lives of Saint Augustine, Saint Teresa and other canonical spiritual autobiographies), towards a new emphasis on education, upbringing, and the effects of one's social surroundings.²⁵ Many of these narratives also reflect the emergence of what Jacques Gélis has described as the competing seventeenth-century models of the "child-saint" (diffused by the Church with figures such as Catherine of Siena) and the "child prodigy."²⁶ Whereas Cecilia Ferrazzi and Maria Domitilla Galluzzi emphasize qualities that, already as children, indicate their social and religious vocations, Christina of Sweden

²⁴ In an entry from Brigida Morello's spiritual diary, dated November 2, 1650, she describes being pulled to Jesus's breast after taking communion: "Mi tirò tutta alle sue santissime mamelle. E io mi vedevo atacata a quelle e mi sentiva tutta liquificare interiormente di consolazione celeste." Cited in Pozzi, 480. The diary is located in the archives of the Institute of the Ursuline sisters of Mary Immaculate in Piacenza.

²⁵ Cf. Carmela Covato, *Sapere e pregiudizio. L'educazione delle donne fra '700 e '800* (Rome: Archivio Guido Izzi, 1991), 31. See also Philippe Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973).

²⁶ Jacques Gélis, "L'individualizzazione del bambino," in *La vita privata dal Rinascimento all'Illuminismo*, ed. Philippe Ariès and Roger Chartier (Bari: Laterza, 1987), 249-251.

acknowledges both a natural inclination towards certain behaviors, as well as a childhood innocence that was gradually corrupted by her social environment.

Many women also explore the themes of childhood illness and accidents that foreshadow their vocation. Both Bowman and Fido describe these topoi, focusing in particular on the prophetic “physical fall through space,”²⁷ such as that of early eighteenth-century autobiographer Giambattista Vico, who describes the severe fall he suffered at the age of seven, which led to his development of a “melancholy and irritable temperament such as belongs to men of ingenuity and depth.”²⁸ Women writers adopt this topos with zest: Cecilia Ferrazzi describes her immediate recovery after falling into a fire; Queen Christina is miraculously unharmed by a beam which fell into her crib when she was an infant; Veronica Giuliani falls and hits her head while climbing to reach a sacred painting; Angela Veronese’s fall from a donkey leaves her with a permanent scar. Petronilla Paolini Massimi goes a step further by establishing a pattern in which each new environment she enters is characterized by a fall that presages both imminent dangers and her ability to overcome them: she falls twice into a fire, once into a vase full of water, and once from the window of the monastery.

In addition to describing accidents that, as Fido has argued, are “seen in hindsight as the marks of destiny,” women writers also embrace the topos of illnesses caused by too much studying, especially at night, which is prevalent in many eighteenth-century autobiographies and was also the subject of various medical and literary treatises. Drawing on a long tradition of nocturnal solitude, Maria Domitilla Galluzzi is criticized for wasting candles to study at night, a

²⁷ Bowman notes, for example, that Bourignon’s *Vie extérieure* opens with a description of being born with a harelip that repulsed her own mother, and Madame Guyon describes a prolonged illness during childhood (Bowman, 29). She also describes falling several times in a cellar, whereas both Alacoque and Surin claim to have been pushed or to have fallen because of demonic forces (Bowman, 30-31).

²⁸ *The Autobiography of Giambattista Vico*, trans. Max Harold Fisch and Thomas Goddard Bergin, rev. ed. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), 111.

practice which also has negative consequences for her health; Veronica Giuliani likewise sacrificed sleep in order to read and write without distraction; as a child, Petronilla Paolini Massimi is chastised by her mother for staying up late at night to read, a habit that continues into her marriage, when she often forgoes sleep in order to secretly write and compose poetry; Teresa Bandettini and Angela Veronese both describe an obsessive dedication to reading, despite suffering from severe headaches and a series of serious illnesses. For these women, studying at night, in secret, or in direct defiance of orders from their parents or superiors, means that reading and writing become explicitly transgressive acts.²⁹ Following one's vocation also often requires other forms of illicit behavior and disobedience, particularly theft – a topos that can be traced to Augustine's *Confessions*: Veronica Giuliani steals candles, oil, and wood to build altars; Teresa Bandettini secretly acquires paper and books, which she hides from her mother under her mattress, and she steals oil for her lantern in order to read at night; in general, women describe hiding books with varying degrees of success, often lamenting the confiscation of their reading materials by their parents (Bandettini and Veronese) or spouses (Petronilla Paolini Massimi).

Much like for Saint Teresa of Avila, who describes in her autobiography hiding chivalric romances from her father, the transgressive nature of studying depends not only on *how* and *when*, but also on *what* these women read. Many women carefully document their readings, revealing a series of possible sources for their own narrative forms of self-representation. The lives of saints, often read aloud by one's mother or other members of the family or local community, remain one of the most prevalent sources of literary inspiration for young women, occupying an important place in the autobiographical narratives of Cecilia Ferrazzi, Veronica Giuliani, and even nineteenth-century professional writers like Teresa Bandettini and Angela

²⁹ See Stefania Buccini, "Letture clandestine e 'apprendisti lettori' nelle autobiografie del Sette-Ottocento," *Yearbook of Italian Studies* 10 (1993): 29-39.

Veronese, who both describe reading legendaries of saints' lives.³⁰ A secular tradition of life-writing is also highly influential: Queen Christina of Sweden, Giuseppina di Lorena-Carignano, and Angela Veronese all mention having read the lives of "illustrious" or "great" men, from Plutarch's *Lives*, to personal and political memoirs, to literary portraits of contemporary writers, such as those found in the early nineteenth-century *Ritratti* of Isabella Teotochi Albrizzi.

Interestingly, reading is not always described as a solitary or transgressive act. From Cecilia Ferrazzi's descriptions of being read to by her mother and later by the young girls in her shelter, to Angela Veronese's recollections of the friend who would read aloud passages from Homer, Cicero, Ariosto, and Tasso to her family, women's autobiographical narratives provide rare depictions of private reading practices among lower- and middle-class women throughout the long eighteenth century. Related to this emphasis on an oral transmission of literary knowledge are frequent references to memorization: Petronilla Paolini Massimi claims to have recited prayers from memory by the age of three and to have memorized all of Tasso by the age of six; Teresa Bandettini and Angela Veronese similarly boast of their ability not only to improvise but also recite poetry from memory, which allowed them to experience reading not as a private pastime, but as a shared, communal activity.

Beyond the traits that unite women's narratives with those written by men, there are also two specific topoi that distinguish women's autobiographical writing, which I argue are a means of asserting their agency and legitimacy: The practice of cross-dressing and the reversal of the hierarchical relationship between knowledge and ignorance. Related to the topos of disobedience, cross-dressing is often used to emphasize women's "virility," their resemblance to

³⁰ On the history of women's readership in Italy and the boundaries between sacred and profane literature, see Tiziana Plebani, "Caratteristiche del pubblico di lettrici dal tardo medioevo alla prima età moderna," in *Il «genere» dei libri. Storie e rappresentazioni della lettura al femminile e al maschile tra Medioevo ed età moderna* (Milan: Franco Angeli, 2001), 46-47.

their fathers, and their differences from their mothers. The phenomenon of transvestism has both historical and literary precedents. Women often disguised themselves as men simply to pass unnoticed during travels or in order to escape from home.³¹ Moreover, there were various occasions in which it was common or even acceptable for women in Early Modern Europe to dress as men for a short time, such as during Carnival.³² Cross-dressing was also a popular theme in European literature of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and was frequently referenced in chronicles, magazines, collections of anecdotes, folk songs, and biographies of famous women, such as the Italian physician Giovanni Bianchi's mid-eighteenth-century biography of Caterina Vizzani.³³

Examples of cross-dressing abound in the autobiographical narratives examined in this study: Cecilia Ferrazzi disguised herself as a priest to hear confessions; Maria Antonia Colle (1723-1772), who was accused by the Inquisition of aspiring to become a pope, was first encouraged by her mother to dress as a boy in order to be able to play the cello in public;³⁴ Queen Christina's disdain for female attire and her occasional adoption of male dress is well-documented in various sources, including in her own autobiography, in which she consistently

³¹ Bowman mentions, for example, Bourignon's description of escaping from home disguised as a male (27).

³² Bowman provides the example of Alacoque's sense of regret over having dressed as a male with other girls during Carnival (39-40). See also Rudolf M. Dekker and Lotte C. van de Pol, *The Tradition of Female Transvestism in Early Modern Europe*, trans. Judy Marcure and Lotte van de Pol (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989), 6-7. Dekker and Van de Pol's study of over one hundred Dutch women who dressed or lived as men during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries provides useful information about the general history of this phenomenon in Denmark, Spain, Italy, France, and Great Britain.

³³ On the history of the *Breve storia della vita di Caterina Vizzani Romani, che per ott'anni vestì abito da uomo, e che in fine fu uccisa, e che fu trovata pulcella nella sezione del suo cadavero* (Venice, 1744), which was published a year after her death, see Paula Findlen, "The Anatomy of a Lesbian: Medicine, Pornography, and Culture in Eighteenth-Century Italy," in *Italy's Eighteenth Century: Gender and Culture in the Age of the Grand Tour*, ed. Paula Findlen, Wendy Roworth, and Catherine Sama (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 216-250.

³⁴ Cf. Elena Bottoni, *Scritture dell'anima. Esperienze religiose femminili nella Toscana del Settecento* (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2009), 173-175.

refers to herself as a king rather than a queen; Veronica Giuliani describes dressing in male garments and sword-fighting, injuring a young man in the process; Petronilla Paolini Massimi is punished when discovered wearing her husband's wig and, following her escape to the convent, volunteers for the male roles in theatrical performances put on by the nuns. Cross-dressing also has clear origins in the hagiographic tradition, with representations of saints and martyrs from Catherine of Alexandria to Joan of Arc, who were depicted in terms of their mental and physical strength and their heroic virtues.³⁵ Starting in the seventeenth century, depictions of Saint Teresa of Avila as “virile” and “manly” in accounts related to her beatification and canonization (in 1614 and 1622, respectively) were especially influential, given Teresa's enormous popularity during this period.³⁶

Saint Teresa, who is frequently invoked as a point of explicit comparison and a source of inspiration by women writers, also provides a model for the topos of “ignorance.” In the context of spiritual autobiographies, “holy ignorance,” or rather divine knowledge received without the mediation of human knowledge, is a common theme and part of what Alison Weber has described as a “well-established tradition of rhetorical humility.” This is not unlike the “introductory topos” described by Franco Fido, in which authors justify their autobiographical project in order “to avoid accusations of presumption and vanity.” Yet, whereas such “self-deprecatory remarks” are generally “confined to the introduction for the purpose of *captatio*

³⁵ On “holy transvestites,” see, for example, Kristi Upson-Saia, “Narrating Cross-Dressing in Female Saint's Lives,” in *Early Christian Dress: Gender, Virtue, and Authority* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 84-103. See also Romeo De Maio, “L'ideale eroico nei processi di canonizzazione della controriforma,” in *Riforme e miti nella Chiesa del Cinquecento* (Naples: Guida, 1973), 257-278. On the extension of the figure of the “femme forte” from a purely biblical context to the wider social environment of “heroic deeds of notable women,” see Ian Maclean, *Woman Triumphant: Feminism in French literature, 1610-1652* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 81.

³⁶ Cf. Alison Weber, *Teresa of Avila and the Rhetoric of Femininity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 17, and Ottavia Niccoli, “Il confessore e l'inquisitore. A proposito di un manoscritto bolognese del Seicento,” in *Finzione e santità tra Medioevo e età moderna*, 418.

benevolentiae,”³⁷ spiritual autobiographers consistently emphasize their ignorance and lack of a formal education as evidence of their purely divine knowledge: Maria Domitilla Galluzzi describes her limited interest in books and great difficulty in reading spiritual texts, and Veronica Giuliani emphasizes that her ability to read and write were divine gifts, claiming that everyone was stunned by her sudden and miraculous capacity to read Latin when she entered the monastery.³⁸ Such an instrumentalization of ignorance on the part of women writers continues throughout the eighteenth century and into the early nineteenth century as the genre transitioned into a secular context. Much in the way that spiritual autobiographers invoke divine will as a means of subtly undermining the power of church authorities over their narratives, professional writers like Teresa Bandettini and Angela Veronese emphasize their autodidacticism, arguing that a combination of natural talent and tireless dedication – and not their teachers or mentors – led to their literary fame. Just as spiritual autobiographers like Maria Arcangela Biondini (1641-1712) had described God as their sole “maestro,”³⁹ Bandettini and Veronese claim to have taught themselves how to read and write.

This series of shared autobiographical topoi – from birth, family relationships, reading practices, and the presence of various precocious and premonitory indications of one’s vocation – all show how women participated in the emergence of the modern autobiography from an earlier spiritual tradition. Of course, as Fido is careful to point out, some topoi are simply inherent to the autobiographical genre, and the consistency with which they recur in

³⁷ Cf. Weber, 49-50.

³⁸ Two other spiritual autobiographers who embrace the topos of holy ignorance are Brigida Morello (1610-1679) and Maria Arcangela Biondini (1641-1712), who both claim that their knowledge came only and directly from God, employing a narrative device which, whether intentionally or unwittingly, serves to undermine the authority of their confessors (cf. Pozzi, 483).

³⁹ Cited in *ibid.*, 491.

autobiographical texts is not necessarily an indication of a conscious intertextual dialogue.⁴⁰ The autobiographical narratives examined in this study arose out of extremely diverse contexts, and before the term “autobiography” had even been invented. Yet, what unites them is most often the story of a change of state – from lay woman to nun, from virgin to wife, or from one national or political affiliation to another as a result of exile or emigration.⁴¹ The crossing of boundaries between secular, sacred, political, and social identities that is common to nearly all of these texts speaks to the transgressive nature of women’s autobiography during this period.

In some cases, however, the intertextuality and integration of certain autobiographical themes is intentional and actually does suggest “the knowledge of, and the reference to, certain recognizable models of autobiographical writing.”⁴² As evident in the following four chapters, some instances of intertextuality can be found in women’s autobiographies, not only in spiritual autobiographies in which the lives of saints are consciously evoked as models, but also in women’s recognition of strong contemporary female models. Much in the way that Christina of Sweden and Anne-Marie-Louise d’Orléans referred to each other in their respective autobiographies, Petronilla Paolini Massimi describes her real-life encounter with Christina, Luisa Palma Mansi mentions having seen Teresa Bandettini perform in Lucca, and Angela Veronese praises Isabella Teotochi’s literary portraiture as a precedent for her own attempt to capture the literary personages that populate her life story. By carefully comparing these texts, and using Bowman and Fido’s frameworks as a model, my analysis aims at facilitating a

⁴⁰ Fido, 171.

⁴¹ On the unique space occupied by exile in the history of the autobiography, see Carolyn Chappell Lougee, “Emigration and Memory: After 1685 and After 1789,” in *Egodocuments and History*, 104.

⁴² Fido, 175. Fido’s examples of intertextuality in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century autobiographies include Rousseau’s derision of Montaigne’s “fausse naïveté,” Goldoni’s ironic reversal of the tragic conditions of Rousseau’s birth, and Alfieri’s refusal to visit Rousseau as a reference to Goldoni’s account of his own disappointing encounter with the French writer.

dialogue between these diverse autobiographical contexts and at showing how Italian women writers actively participated in the making of the modern autobiography with an increasing degree of self-consciousness and awareness of the genre, which have traditionally been attributed almost exclusively to male writers.

Chapter 1

Seventeenth-Century Background

I.1 Sacred Roots: Spiritual Autobiographies

In recent years, there has been an increased awareness in scholarly studies of the need to re-evaluate the history of the modern autobiography in relation to the earlier tradition of spiritual autobiographies in the Italian context. Franco Fido's studies on the genre have followed Georges Gusdorf's assertion that the modern autobiography emerges only after a period of "religious incubation" in the seventeenth century, during which the majority of autobiographical texts, such as Brigida Morello's *Diario Spirituale* (1642-1648), continued to be focused on "records of conversion and spiritual itineraries."¹ While Gusdorf sees a clear break with the tradition of religious autobiography, scholars such as Shari Benstock and Marie-Florine Bruneau have contested a periodization that fails to "recognize the importance of early Christian spiritual autobiographies for the later secular genre."²

In *Women Mystics Confront the Modern World*, Marie-Florine Bruneau refers to scholars, such as Yves Coirault, who agree with most definitions of the modern autobiography but contest the common periodization of the genre and "the restriction of the term autobiography to modern manifestations alone."³ Supporting Coirault's proposal that some seventeenth-century spiritual narratives be considered as autobiographies, Bruneau proposes that such a revision of the canon, despite the difficulties inherent in searching for "sources and generic ancestors," would also help to expose the "false problematics" that have characterized the debate over definitions of the

¹ Franco Fido, "At the Origins of Autobiography in the 18th and 19th Centuries: The *Topoi* of the Self," *Annali d'Italianistica* 4 (1986): 168.

² Shari Benstock, *The Private Self: Theory and Practice of Women's Autobiographical Writings* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 56. For a general overview of the "massive phenomenon" of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century spiritual autobiographies, see Hilaire Kallendorf, *A New Companion to Hispanic Mysticism* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 20-21.

³ Marie-Florine Bruneau, *Women Mystics Confront the Modern World: Marie de l'Incarnation (1599-1672) and Madame Guyon (1648-1717)* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), 198-199.

autobiography.⁴ Rather than define the genre and then search for works that comply with the category, Bruneau suggests looking more broadly at how representations of the self developed over the centuries. One of the foremost scholars of the genre, Philippe Lejeune, has not only heeded the call to re-evaluate the origins of the modern autobiography, but has further stated that such a study must be executed “without our attempting to show that a particular aspect is ‘already’ part of autobiography, or, in the opposite sense, without our wanting to prove that autobiography ‘is only’ the secularization of the centuries-old genre of religious confessions.”⁵

By focusing specifically on women writers in Italy, one of the main objectives of the present study is to trace the development of the genre in Italy by closely examining the autobiographical narratives that emerged during the period of transition from spiritual to secular self-representations starting in the early seventeenth century. Anne Jacobson Schutte, one of the leading scholars of Early Modern women’s writing in the age of the Counter Reformation, has suggested that, unlike the autobiographies produced in this period by laywomen and noblewomen in other European countries, and particularly in England, spiritual autobiographies have often been deemed less important or peripheral to the autobiographical genre on the grounds that women writers “within a religious paradigm were not capable of understanding their own lives.”⁶ The questionable degree of authorial agency, the lack of a voluntary autobiographical intention and the frequent linguistic and cognitive limitations of these texts are

⁴ Ibid. Bruneau cites the examples of the autobiographies of Cardinal de Retz (1671-1675) and the Duke of Saint Simon (1699).

⁵ Philippe Lejeune, “Autobiography and Literary History,” in *On Autobiography*, ed. Paul John Eakin, trans. Katherine Leary (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 145. See also Philip Stewart, *Imitation and Illusion in the French Memoir-Novel, 1700-1750* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969) and Marc Fumaroli, “Les Mémoires du XVII^e siècle au carrefour des genres en prose,” *XVII^e siècle* 94-95 (1972): 7-37.

⁶ Anne Jacobson Schutte, “Inquisition and Female Autobiography: The Case of Cecilia Ferrazzi,” in *The Crannied Wall: Women, Religion, and the Arts in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Craig A. Monson (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992), 105.

among the factors which have often led to a consideration of spiritual autobiographies, particularly those written by women under the direct orders of their confessors, spiritual directors or the Holy Office, as a secondary or separate category of autobiographical writing. Scholars like Jacobson Schutte, Dante Della Terza and Romeo De Maio have challenged this perspective in their efforts to trace the origins of the Italian autobiography to the seventeenth century, a period during which the tradition of spiritual autobiographies underwent significant changes.⁷

First, De Maio distinguishes between “spontaneous” and “obedient” spiritual autobiographies. Whereas the “autobiografia spontanea” is written voluntarily and motivated by the author’s individual desire for self-expression, the “autobiografia per obbedienza” or “autobiografia coatta” is written against one’s will and motivated by external pressures from religious or legal authorities, or both.⁸ Following De Maio’s division, Jacobson Schutte uses the phrase “forced autobiography” to refer to texts “conditioned by confessors who ordered their most promising (or dangerous) female penitents to dictate or write their life stories and then exercised powers of censorship over what they said or wrote.”⁹ The related term of the “inquisitorial” autobiography, on the other hand, is not limited to the Roman Inquisition as such, but is rather adopted in a broader sense to distinguish those autobiographies which are written under the direct orders of a legal – and not merely a spiritual – authority, though the lines between religious and legal authority often overlap in this period.

⁷ Cf. Dante Della Terza, “Misura dell’uomo e visione del mondo nelle autobiografie degli scrittori napoletani tra il Seicento e l’Ottocento,” in *Forma e memoria: saggi e ricerche sulla tradizione letteraria da Dante a Vico* (Rome: Bulzoni, 1979) and Romeo De Maio, “La donna nella biografia,” in *Donna e Rinascimento* (Milan: Mondadori, 1987).

⁸ De Maio observes a greater degree of independence in women writers in England based on the higher production of “spontaneous,” or voluntarily written autobiographical accounts (De Maio, 168).

⁹ Jacobson Schutte, “Inquisition and Female Autobiography,” 106. See also Id., “Orride e strane penitenze.’ Esperimenti con la sofferenza nell’autobiografia spirituale di Maria Maddalena Martinengo,” in *I monasteri femminili come centri di cultura fra Rinascimento e Barocco. Atti del convegno storico internazionale, Bologna, 8-10 dicembre 2000*, ed. Gianna Pomata and Gabriella Zarri (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2005), 262-263.

Both “forced” and “inquisitorial” autobiographies have historical precedents dating to the medieval period. De Maio traces the inquisitorial autobiography to Marguerite Porete, who was tried in 1310, while arguing that heavy-handed additions to or redactions of spiritual autobiographies by confessors or other editorial hands can be traced even farther back to the autobiography of the Flemish nun, Beatrice of Nazareth (1200-1268). In the Italian context, Angela of Foligno (1248-1309), Catherine of Siena (1347-1380) and Maria Maddalena de’ Pazzi (1566-1604) are among the most well known spiritual writers of the Middle Ages and Renaissance whose authorship continues to be debated because their writings were transcribed by a third party.¹⁰ Ann Matter identifies some of the recurrent questions that can be applied to nearly all of women’s “self-reflexive literature” between the thirteenth and seventeenth centuries: “Where are the women speaking, the confessors shaping or censoring? Does this text tell us more about a woman’s life or about the expectations of her society?”¹¹ Giovanni Pozzi, in his anthology of Italian mystics, bases his selection not only on texts written by mystics in their own hand, which are rare before the Quattrocento and limited throughout most of the Renaissance to educated women of the upper classes, but also on secondary sources and various forms of third-party transcriptions, all of which reveal the need to adopt a broad definition of authoriality when dealing with women’s monastic writings.¹²

¹⁰ *Scrittrici mistiche italiane*, ed. Giovanni Pozzi and Claudio Leonardi (Genoa: Marietti, 1988). Maria Maddalena de’ Pazzi’s status is further compromised by the fact that she, unlike Catherine of Siena and Angela of Foligno, was unaware that her speech was being transcribed by other nuns in the convent: “Le sue compagne, con interminabile pazienza, ne trascrissero le parole, dandoci un documento pressoché unico per la sua natura di totale e autentica oralità, sicuramente unico per l’estensione” (Pozzi, 419).

¹¹ E. Ann Matter, “The Personal and the Paradigm: The Book of Maria Domitilla Galluzzi,” in *The Crannied Wall*, 87.

¹² Cf. *I monasteri femminili come centri di cultura fra Rinascimento e Barocco*, xxxi. As Pozzi notes, “Una raccolta come questa si presenta diseguale nella documentazione, che si compone non solo di autografi, copie manoscritte e stampe, ma di testi provenienti da fonti secondarie, come leggende, relazioni colte dalla viva voce e trascritte nei modi più diversi, che vanno dalla riproduzione in diretta alla rielaborazione compiuta da una persona o da un intero

Anne Jacobson Schutte argues convincingly that Early Modern spiritual autobiographies merit more serious consideration in relation to contemporaneous autobiographical “texts written voluntarily by laymen.” However, she also concedes that one of the most persuasive arguments behind the “dubious status” of spiritual autobiographies within the canon is that in texts like *The Book of Margery Kempe*, dictated to two priests in fifteenth-century England, and the Life of Saint Teresa of Avila, “one cannot be sure exactly where and how the hand of the scribe or the confessor intervened to shape, censor, and thus inevitably distort the author’s conception of her life.”¹³ At the same time, Jacobson Schutte notes that by the seventeenth century many women were aware of the formal aspects of the genre of the autobiographical spiritual confession. Thus, in addition to their deference to religious authorities, they were also conscious of the literary models provided by earlier texts, from Saint Augustine to Saint Teresa of Avila.¹⁴

The degree of control over first-person accounts and the number of inquisitorial autobiographies increased exponentially during the Early Modern period, first in Spain, as in the case of Saint Teresa of Avila (1515-1582) and later in Italy.¹⁵ Gianna Pomata and Gabriella Zarri, in their seminal study on women’s monasteries between the Renaissance and Baroque

gruppo devoto [...] Viene così rimessa in discussione la nozione di autore, coinvolgendo problemi di attribuzione” (Pozzi, 685).

¹³ Jacobson Schutte, “Inquisition and Female Autobiography,” 105.

¹⁴ As Jacobson Schutte observes: “L’autrice di una confessione in forma di autobiografia non operava come un soggetto letterario libero, poiché quella di scrivere non era un’iniziativa sua propria, ma un ordine al quale essa doveva sottostare. Sapeva di avere un pubblico di almeno un lettore: un uomo investito dell’autorità di valutare e criticare il suo resoconto, di mostrare il suo lavoro ad altri e di punirla se essa aveva deviato dal sentiero dell’ortodossia. Inoltre era vincolata a determinati modelli. Dalla lettura dei testi fondanti di questo genere letterario – le *Confessioni* di Sant’Agostino e di santi a lei più vicini nel tempo, come la *Vita* di santa Teresa – aveva ricavato un’idea precisa di come doveva configurarsi un’autobiografia spirituale. La sua libertà di innovazione nel presentare le proprie idee ed esperienze risultava dunque notevolmente ridotta” (Jacobson Schutte, “Orride e strane penitenze,” 263).

¹⁵ De Maio, 166-167. On the influence of Saint Teresa’s writings in Italy, see also Valentino Macca, “Presenza e influsso del magistero teresiano in Italia,” in *Teresa De Jesús: Estudios Histórico-Literarios* (Rome: Teresianum, 1982), 121-150.

periods, attribute the “explosion” of women’s spiritual autobiographies between the mid-sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to this increase in ecclesiastic control;¹⁶ on the basis of documentation of religious women’s civic duties and participation in public life, they argue that it is during this period that women’s spiritual writing gains a wider diffusion not in spite of, but in part because of the greater degree of ideological vigilance to which nuns were subjected without interrupting their relationships with the outside world.¹⁷ The close monitoring of women’s writing granted such texts a public aspect that forced women to consider both their intended audience and their status as writing subjects.¹⁸ Thus, for Pomata and Zarri, despite the “intrinsic ambivalence” of forced autobiographies and the external impetus for the production of many of these texts, women were nonetheless provided with an extraordinary instrument for developing self-awareness as the abnegation of the subject, typical of the mystic’s experience, became contingent upon the attempt to define the subject. In short, in order to deny the self, one must first identify and define it.¹⁹

Rather than focus on specific historical events, scholars like Jacobson Schutte prefer to consider the overall period between approximately 1580 and 1789 as bearing witness to “a

¹⁶ Pomata and Zarri, xxxii. See also Adriano Prosperi, “Diari femminili e discernimento degli spiriti: le mistiche della prima età moderna in Italia,” *Dimensioni e problemi della ricerca storica* 2 (1994): 77-103.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, xix.

¹⁸ In her study of seventeenth-century mystics, Marilena Modica focuses on the “public” aspect of spiritual autobiographies basing her argument on the codified, institutional relationship between women mystics and their spiritual directors. Modica argues that it is necessary to consider this relationship in order to understand the conditions under which women wrote and the degree of interdependence and oscillation between male and female roles and power (cf. Marilena Modica, “Misticismo e quietismo nel Seicento,” in *I monasteri femminili come centri di cultura fra Rinascimento e Barocco*, 207).

¹⁹ Pomata and Zarri define mystic writing as self-writing (“scrittura del sé”) on the very grounds that, paradoxically, the goal of mystic writing is to deny and transcend the self: “Per negare il sé occorre infatti prima definirlo e individuarlo.” Thus, for women between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, even “forced” writings offered “una straordinaria opportunità di ricerca sul sé [...] Questi materiali salvati dal naufragio della storia solo grazie ad un atto di repressione ci dicono che la scrittura del sé, pur se imposta dall’esterno, poteva trasformarsi in cura del sé, in un processo di auto-riconoscimento e auto-affermazione” (*ibid.*, xxxiv).

process of confessionalization and social discipline.”²⁰ Although the Roman Inquisition and its “clear mandate of combating Protestantism” had been formalized in 1542 with Paul III’s papal bull *Licet ab initio*, followed by the formation of the Sacred Congregation of the Index in 1571, the mission and focus of the Holy Office underwent a significant change in the 1580s as the number of native and foreign Protestants dwindled.²¹ Roman Inquisition tribunals began to focus on reforming Catholics rather than Protestants and correcting deviant behavior or heretical beliefs.²² During this period, women both inside and outside of convents and of diverse social and economic statuses throughout the Italian peninsula were increasingly asked to record their mystical experiences; some even learned to write in order to fulfill the orders of their confessors.²³ Written confessions of this nature were compromised by Pius V’s bull *In coena Domini* (1568), which, as Jacobson Schutte notes, “seriously compromised” the seal of confession, since only inquisitors, and not confessors, could grant absolution to penitents who confessed to heretical beliefs or actions.²⁴

²⁰ Jacobson Schutte argues that “conventional chronological markers” and “critical moments associated with persons or institutions” should be given less weight in current scholarship than a more general analysis of broader historical processes. Accordingly, she claims that “a distinctive phase in early modern Italian Catholicism” begins in approximately 1580 and initiates a phase that cannot be characterized by “a seamless continuation” of the Catholic Reformation initiatives of the fifteenth century with the Counter Reformation and decrees of the Council of Trent. Anne Jacobson Schutte “Religion, Spirituality, and the Post-Tridentine Church,” in *The Short Oxford History of Italy. Early Modern Italy 1550-1796*, ed. John A. Marino (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 125.

²¹ The first Index of Forbidden books was issued in Venice in 1549, followed by the first Roman Index issued by Paul IV in 1559. The Sacred Congregation of the Index, formed in 1571, was tasked with updating the Index as well as attempting to reinstitute the rigor of the Pauline Index. As historians such as Mario Infelise have noted, the responsibilities of the Holy Office and the Congregation of the Index often overlapped during the latter years of the sixteenth century. See Mario Infelise, *I libri proibiti: Da Gutenberg all’Encyclopédie*, 6th ed. (Rome: Laterza, 2006), 41.

²² Jacobson Schutte, “Religion, Spirituality, and the Post-Tridentine Church,” 127-128.

²³ Cf. Pomata and Zarri, xxxii.

²⁴ Jacobson Schutte, “Religion, Spirituality, and the Post-Tridentine Church,” 128. Elsewhere, Jacobson Schutte has noted that because the seal of confession did not apply to autobiography, a confessor was able to share autobiographical excerpts with others: “egli poteva farla leggere ai suoi colleghi per ottenere il loro giudizio sull’autrice, sia per dare risonanza ai suoi prodigi, sia per diffondere riserve e critiche nei suoi confronti. Se aveva

I.2 Forced and “Inquisitorial” Self-Narratives: Maria Domitilla Galluzzi and Cecilia Ferrazzi

Saint Teresa of Avila was canonized in 1622 by Pope Gregory XV. Little more than a decade later, in 1633, Galileo Galilei was convicted of heresy by the Roman Inquisition and spent the remainder of his life under house arrest until his death in 1642. These two well-known and well-documented events help to frame the spiritual and legal context in which many lesser-known women’s spiritual life narratives were produced under pressure from religious authorities. Two of these narratives, the *Vita* (1624) of Maria Domitilla Galluzzi and the 1664 testimony of Cecilia Ferrazzi, who was tried and convicted of heresy by the Venetian Inquisition, are examples of seventeenth-century women’s autobiographical texts that, as in the earlier tradition of spiritual autobiographies, conform to specific objectives, themes and models.

As Marina Caffiero has discussed, the orthographic and grammatical errors, along with the general sense of immediacy and the colloquial tone of many of these autobiographical accounts, could easily be mistaken for a degree of spontaneity that does not, in fact, characterize the writing of these texts.²⁵ At the same time, Caffiero believes that even while conforming to strict models, forced autobiographies offered women a space for personal reflections, greater autonomy, and truthful accounts.²⁶ More importantly, as I hope to show through the seventeenth-

dubbi sull’ortodossia delle esperienze spirituali della penitente, poteva redarguirla o addirittura sottoporre il documento che aveva in mano ai giudici dell’Inquisizione, come notoriamente accadde nel caso di Teresa d’Avila” (Jacobson Schutte, “Orride e strane penitenze,” 263).

²⁵ Caffiero argues that, like other genres, autobiographies conform to precise models and codified forms that were often mediated and approved by religious authorities: “Il carattere apparentemente immediato e colloquiale di queste altre fonti, la semplicità della redazione, l’ortografia e la sintassi non perfette non devono trarre in inganno sulla loro ‘spontaneità’.” Marina Caffiero, “Le scritture della memoria femminile a Roma in età moderna: la produzione monastica,” in *Memoria, famiglia, identità tra Italia ed Europa nell’età moderna*, ed. Giovanni Ciappelli (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2009), 242. Romeo De Maio has similarly noted that the limited command of linguistic and orthographic conventions characteristic of many forced autobiographies has condemned these texts to a relatively obscure position in critical studies of the Italian autobiographical tradition (cf. De Maio, 169).

²⁶ Caffiero, discussing both women’s spiritual autobiographies and women’s biographies edited by other women, argues that forced writing occasionally produced new linguistic and literary forms: “Può spuntare l’invenzione di un

century examples analyzed in this chapter, the need to assert and defend oneself while also adhering to specific spiritual and formal conventions is a determining factor in the continuity of themes and structures and the awareness of and sense of fellowship with earlier texts in the same tradition.

The lives of saints, particularly Catherine of Siena and Teresa of Avila, had a great impact on these women autobiographers and their own self-representations. For example, Giovanni Pozzi has discussed the tremendous influence of Catherine of Siena's life on Caterina Palluzzi (1573-1645), who describes in her autobiography hearing of the saint for the first time as a child from a young student from Siena. Believing in error that Saint Catherine was still alive, Palluzzi was inspired and hoped to meet her in person, often searching the unfamiliar faces on the street in the hope of a chance encounter with her role model.²⁷ Upon learning from her confessor that Catherine of Siena is not alive, the future Dominican nun is inspired to learn how to read in order to be able to study the life of the revered saint. In describing her active pursuit of a literary education in order to access a female literary model, Palluzzi anticipates some of the

nuovo linguaggio e di un rapporto più libero – e disordinato, meno codificato – con la pagina scritta; da esse emergono con vivacità spunti personali e di affermazione autonoma che disegnano un'autobiografia e un racconto di sé sostanzialmente veritieri" (243).

²⁷ "Incontrai per caso un giovane che era stato agli studi a Siena, il quale ragionava con certe [persone] di santa Caterina da Siena. Mi fermai a sentire, e intesi che era zitella ed era santa. E mi parve di sentire una cosa nuova, perché io non l'avevo mai sentito, poiché a quel tempo non era come adesso che nella chiesa sempre si sente qualche cosa spirituale [...] E dopo aver inteso di questa gloriosa santa Caterina, pigliai animo che lei mi avrebbe potuto aiutare e mettermi sulla strada per servire Dio. E credevo che lei fosse ancora viva, e l'aspettavo se per caso fosse passata, che le avrei voluto parlare, acciò mi avesse insegnato qualche cosa. E quando vedevo venire qualche donna forestiera, stavo pensando se per caso fosse lei, e sentivo ogni giorno più sentimento di lei e devozione" (Pozzi, 451-452). Pozzi notes that, aside from these explicit references to saints, Caterina Palluzzi's autobiography also reveals the influence of both Saint Philip Neri and Saint Teresa of Avila (ibid., 448-449). See also Giovanni Antonazzi's complete modern edition of Palluzzi's autobiography, "Caterina Palluzzi e la sua autobiografia (1573-1645): Una mistica popolana tra San Filippo Neri e Federico Borromeo," *Archivio italiano per la storia della pietà* 8 (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1980): 167-243.

themes of later intellectual autobiographies, such as the topos of studying at night in order not to take time away from one's other obligations.²⁸

Whereas Palluzzi makes explicit reference to her literary models, in other spiritual autobiographies there is frequently a reluctance to acknowledge any source of inspiration aside from God and divine intervention. An emphasis on the innocent and humble nature of the writer, whose authority and authorial presence is derived solely from divine inspiration, creates a major obstacle in reconstructing the literary models absorbed and consciously adopted by these writers. The autobiographical treatise, *Della presenza di Dio*, written in the third person by Brigida Morello (1610-1679), a Jesuit nun forced by her confessors to keep a diary, provides a good example of this ambivalence towards scholarly education. Morello recalls feeling a desire to dedicate herself to spiritual books,²⁹ but also valorizes her scholastic shortcomings as proof that her understanding and inspiration are derived directly from God, claiming that her knowledge and understanding stem only from herself without the aid of any books or "other light or direction" aside from that bestowed on her from God.³⁰

In reality, Morello's reading material, chosen by her spiritual directors, was likely based on a selection of Jesuit authors such as Rodrigues and La Puente and supplemented by oral lectures drawn on the treatises of Alvarez de la Paz.³¹ Yet, this considerably rigorous theological education is further masked by her poor orthography and grammar, and such a divide between

²⁸ "Intesi che santa Caterina era morta, e, persa la speranza di poterle parlare, mi venne voglia di imparare a leggere per leggere la sua vita, ma, per i miei peccati, non ebbi mai chi mi insegnasse. E mi mettevo con la santa croce [l'alfabeto] in mano la notte, poiché il giorno non avevo tempo, a piangere e a chiamare lei che mi insegnasse" (ibid., 452).

²⁹ Morello writes of herself in third person: "Si senti desiderio di occuparsi in leggere libri spirituali, e questo per più intendere e conoscere quello che era più necessario per piacere a Dio" (ibid., 470).

³⁰ "Quello che dico di queste materie è quello che conosco, intendo, sperimento in me stessa solamente [...] non leggendo io libri che trattano di questa materia [...] intendevo e sperimentavo in me stessa senz'altro lume e indirizzo se non quello che mi dava il Signore" (ibid.).

³¹ Ibid., 467.

the quality of writing compared with a substantial religious education is fairly common in spiritual autobiographies of the period. According to Pomata and Zarri, the discrepancy between actual learning and feigned ignorance is especially common in spiritual autobiographies, which are aimed primarily at self-representation and leave less room for cultural references, whereas the “profane” writings of the same nuns often reveal a much greater familiarity with classical and Renaissance literature.³²

“Auto-hagiography” and the *Vita* (1624) of Maria Domitilla Galluzzi (1595-1671)

The *Vita* of Severetta (Maria Domitilla) Galluzzi, which was written in 1624 and circulated in manuscript form but was not printed until the twenty-first century, is an example of a forced autobiography, as it was most likely written in short segments for her confessor.³³ The text was later combined with two other documents, the *Passione*, which consists of a series of accounts of Galluzzi’s mystical experiences, and various letters written in testimony of her sanctity.³⁴ According to Ann Matter, these three texts, which circulated together as the *Vita*, can be viewed as a kind of “autohagiography” that shows how even forced autobiographies were

³² Pomata and Zarri, xxiii. See also Elissa Weaver, *Convent Theatre in Early Modern Italy: Spiritual Fun and Learning for Women* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), and Id., “Le muse in convento: la scrittura profana delle monache italiane,” in *Donne e fede: Santità e vita religiosa in Italia*, ed. Giulia Barone, Lucetta Scaraffia and Gabriella Zarri (Rome: Laterza, 1994), 253-276, and J.F. Hamburger, *Nuns as Artists: The Visual Culture of a Medieval Convent* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

³³ As Galluzzi explains in her autobiography, “Vostra Reverenza mi comanda che si dichiari qui, più chiaramente che posso, che cosa operò in me quel lume interno e che profitto ne feci.” Maria Domitilla Galluzzi d’Acqui, *Vita da lei narrata*, ed. Olimpia Pelosi (Chapel Hill: Annali d’Italianistica, 2003), 71. Pelosi’s edition is based on what is presumed to be an autograph copy of the manuscript, comprised of 468 double-sided and numbered pages, located in the Biblioteca Ambrosiana of Milan (ibid., xxxii). Ann Matter also quotes primarily from this copy, which is the most “carefully structured” and includes a table of contents that summarizes each section (Matter, 100).

³⁴ The *Passione*, in which Galluzzi describes her visions in much greater detail, was written before her autobiography and redacted as the second book of the *Vita*. Matter notes that it was Galluzzi’s most “popular” work, “extant in at least five manuscripts by itself, and in another five codices that also contain the *Vita*.” On the autobiographical aspects of Galluzzi’s other writings, see Ann Matter, “The Canon of Religious Life: Maria Domitilla Galluzzi and the *Rule* of St. Clare of Assisi,” in *Strong Voices, Weak History: Early Women Writers and Canons in England, France and Italy*, ed. Pamela Benson and Victoria Kirkham (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 2005), 78-98.

self-consciously modeled on the lives of saints such as Catherine of Siena and Catherine of Alexandria, and on sixteenth-century autobiographies like that of Teresa of Avila.³⁵

Although Galluzzi was never canonized, the wide diffusion of her autobiography was probably the result of efforts to recognize her as a saint; extant seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century copies of the manuscript attest to the diffusion of her writings, which were inspired by hagiographic models and themes common to seventeenth-century spiritual works.³⁶ As Ann Matter has observed, Galluzzi adopts the “spiritual rhetoric” of a saint to narrate the events of her life from her birth to her entrance in the convent and to describe her mystical experiences. In the opening of her narrative, Galluzzi clearly addresses the desire of her confessor to know the minute details of her life, starting with her parents, while she emphasizes having entirely rejected her past in order to dedicate herself fully to God.³⁷ In this respect, Galluzzi’s autobiography is “extraordinarily traditional” and traces her rejection of material interests in order to dedicate herself fully to Christ and to pattern her life *in imitatio Christi*.³⁸

³⁵ Ibid. 87-88. Matter claims that Galluzzi casts herself as “a kind of post-Tridentine Catherine of Alexandria,” but also points out that, given the role of confessors and scribes in the writing and redaction of women’s spiritual texts, women like Galluzzi were actually modeling their own self-representation on an image mainly constructed by men: “Two hundred years after Raymond of Capua recast the life of Catherine [of Siena], Maria Domitilla seems consciously to model her own life on an image of female sanctity that we are beginning to recognize as Raymond’s rather than Catherine’s” (ibid.). Saint Catherine of Alexandria, on the other hand, was one of various early Christian martyrs associated with female virtuosity and a lack of sexuality. As Ann Matter has observed, the best example of the “virile” woman saint is found in Saint Perpetua’s literal transformation into a man. See E. Ann Matter, “Subordinate or Equal?” in *Women and Gender in Medieval Europe: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Margaret Schaus (New York: Routledge, 2006), 137-138.

³⁶ Cf. Manuela Belardini, ed. *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, vol. 51 (Rome: Istituto della enciclopedia italiana, 1998), <[http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/maria-domitilla-galluzzi_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)/>](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/maria-domitilla-galluzzi_(Dizionario-Biografico)/>) (9 June 2014).

³⁷ “Volendo Vostra Reverenza saper minutamente tutto il corso di mia vita, e chi forono gli miei genitori e che vita facessero, potrei dire che a me non sta bene il dir questo, atteso che il ragionar di se stesso e de’ suoi è sempre sospetto” (*Vita da lei narrata*, 4).

³⁸ Maria Domitilla entered the community of Capuchin nuns in Pavia in 1620 against her family’s will. The Capuchins represented a relatively new congregation “based on a combination of the vision of Clare of Assisi with that of the Catholic reformers of Trent” and displayed the “most stringent ideals of enclosure and poverty” (Matter, 91).

At the same time, it is important to consider the text in relation to Galluzzi's immediate cultural and geographic surroundings and the representation of her active role in her community. Galluzzi, who was born in Acqui, Piedmont and spent most of her life as a Capuchin nun in the monastery of Santissimo Sacramento in Pavia, was known not only for her miraculous visions and stigmata, but also for playing an important part in defending the city of Pavia from disease and foreign invasion.³⁹ Given this role, she was probably equally influenced by the historical renown of sixteenth-century "living saints" (*sante vive*) who had used the reputation of their spiritual gifts to exercise social and political influence. While maintaining a place in popular culture, by Galluzzi's time the living saints had lost their political and prophetic role, which helps to explain why Galluzzi herself ultimately lacked the patronage and political support needed for canonization.⁴⁰ Nonetheless, she had contacts with influential ecclesiastical and lay figures in places as far as France and Prague, which brought her a certain degree of fame. Her active social involvement also challenges common stereotypes about cloistered life that, as Pomata and Zarri observe, have endured in various literary representations of seventeenth-

³⁹ Galluzzi had garnered a certain notoriety in the city as one "whose spiritual powers were thought to be efficacious against a number of evils: disease, the armies of the French, or infertility. When the plague hit Pavia in 1630, Maria Domitilla organized thrice-daily processions with a reliquary cross in her cloister in imitation of the solemn procession of the relics of Carlo Borromeo that had averted the plague from Milan; like Bishop Federico Borromeo, she was credited with saving the city" (ibid., 93).

⁴⁰ Ibid., 94. On the "living saints," see Gabriella Zarri, *Le sante vive. Profezie di corte e devozione femminile tra '400 e '500* (Turin: Rosenberg et Sellier, 1990) and Id. "Living Saints: A Typology of Female Sanctity in the Early Sixteenth Century," in *Women and Religion in Medieval and Renaissance Italy*, ed. Daniel Bornstein and Roberto Rusconi (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 233-248. As Adriano Prosperi notes, reverence for "living saints" gradually transformed into mistrust of "false saints": "il dibattito su visioni e rivelazioni che percorse in lungo e in largo la cultura ecclesiastica tra '500 e '600 cambia natura: il misto di cautela e morbosa attrazione, che caratterizza gli atteggiamenti di confessori, direttori spirituali, vescovi e cardinali nei confronti di monache visionarie ed estatiche, lascia il posto a una fredda diffidenza." Adriano Prosperi, "L'elemento storico nelle polemiche sulla santità," in *Finzione e santità tra medioevo ed età moderna*, ed. Gabriella Zarri (Turin: Rosenberg & Sellier, 1991), 109.

century nuns as somewhere between novelistic parody and Manzoni's tragic vision of the Nun of Monza.⁴¹

In contrast to the fictionalized and “caricaturally negative image of the monastery as a prison,”⁴² Galluzzi offers a testimony of the active social role played by many nuns, consistently conflating the real and the ideal in her representation of life in the monastery. Ann Matter has mapped the actual locations of nearly every episode of the *Vita*, further verifying the historical accuracy that accompanies Galluzzi's self-conscious adherence to a traditional hagiographic narrative structure. Galluzzi's parents had “participated in the spiritual reforms of Catholic-Reformation Italy as Franciscan tertiaries who joined confraternities and made pilgrimages to miraculous sites.”⁴³ After her father's death in 1607 and until she was fifteen, she lived with her aunt, Domitilla Beccaria, who took an active role in her religious education. Galluzzi's narrative contains a series of commemorative reflections of her aunt, whose name she adopts upon entering the convent and whom she compares to a certain “Signora Lampugnana,” or Cornelia Lampugnana Rho, a Milanese noblewoman praised for her extreme piety.⁴⁴ Ann Matter notes:

⁴¹ Pomata and Zarri, ix-x. Pomata and Zarri emphasize the lasting effects of stereotypical and parodical representations of nuns in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century literature, from Diderot's *La religieuse* (1796) to Giovanni Verga's *Storia di una capinera* (1870), which contributed to the view of monasteries as isolated, prison-like spaces.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Matter, 90.

⁴⁴ Matter specifies that Maria Domitilla “spent long periods of time with her mother's sister, Domitilla Beccaria, in Genoa and in two towns in the Genoese new territories on the Piedmont/Lombard border, Bosco (now Bosco Marengo) and Novi (now Novi Ligure). Aunt Domitilla Beccaria shaped the spirituality of her niece, emphasizing the litanies and devotional exercises encouraged among the laity by the Barnabites, the various Franciscan orders, and by Maria Domitilla's patron saint, Philip Neri. At her aunt's house in Genoa, Maria Domitilla's girlhood devotions were allowed to become her major activity. Here she made herself ‘a little monastery’ under the stairs and, in general, abjured the social privileges and pleasures of a girl of her class” (ibid.).

When she died in 1620, Cornelia was immediately commemorated with a *Vita* written by a Milanese gentleman named Hippolito Porro. This book was extremely official, dedicated to Federico Borromeo, and prefaced by a series of sonnets written by ecclesiastical figures and included her portrait. When Maria Domitilla compared her aunt to this holy woman, she was emphasizing a model of lay sanctity, even claiming that Domitilla Beccaria was more holy than the celebrated Signora Lampugnana. But this passage from Maria Domitilla's *Vita* also functions to call the reader's attention to this form of pious commemoration. Maria Domitilla may very well have desired, or intended, her life to be told in that way.⁴⁵

Galluzzi thus models her own life story not only upon saints' lives but also on the sixteenth-century living saints and on holy women of her own generation. Ann Matter describes Galluzzi's *Vita* in terms of Geoffrey Harpham's notion of autobiography as "an understanding of the self as an imitation or repetition of other selves"⁴⁶ and this definition is useful in identifying some of the themes drawn from the earlier hagiographic tradition that are eventually absorbed in a lay context in eighteenth-century autobiographies. For example, Galluzzi's account of the events surrounding her birth is clearly intended to prefigure her religious vocation. First, she emphasizes the significance of being born on the day of Saint Philip Neri's death (Neri, who was canonized in 1615, two decades after Galluzzi was born, thus eventually became her patron saint). She also describes being born entangled in the umbilical cord and with the markings of a "crown" and a "necklace" on her head and neck, which she interprets as symbols of her religious vocation.⁴⁷ Galluzzi's miraculous birth is preceded by an earlier event, her mother's nearly fatal fall towards the end of her pregnancy:

⁴⁵ Ibid., 95.

⁴⁶ Ibid. See Geoffrey Gait Harpham, "Conversion and the Language of Autobiography," in *Studies in Autobiography*, ed. James Olney (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 44.

⁴⁷ Galluzzi writes: "Il venerdì dopo la festa del Santissimo Sacramento, giorno a ponto che il mio caro S. Filippo Neri andò al cielo, nell'apparir del sole, io nacqui con molti segni, li quali diedero assai che pensare a chi li vide. Dicono che io havevo in capo il segno di corona et una collana di cinque fili al collo et che ero tutta segnata e tanto involtigliata, che hebbero che fare in disvilupparmi da tali cose. Tutti li circostanti, al mio nascere, diedero molti significati a quei segni" (*Vita da lei narrata*, 6). Matter views this episode as marking a "special relationship with the suffering Jesus" in which "she crosses over the boundary between imitating a lover of Jesus (like Catherine of

Più volte mi disse mia madre che, arrivata al settimo mese di mia concetione, essendo ella giovinetta di sedeci anni, non havendo alcun riguardo [...] volse ricreativamente correre e nel corso ella cascò con la faccia innanzi, sì che diede nel ventre sì gran colpo contro la terra [...] ella stessa dubitò assai che io fussi morta, poiché [...] per tal colpo, stetti tre giorni e notti senza ponto movermi, né dar alcun segno d'esser viva [...] Il terzo giorno, all'hora di vespro, si sentì sforzata da Dio a levarsi, e [...] consecrarmi al suo divino servizio, che così io sarei tornata in vita.⁴⁸

Thus, from before the moment of her birth, Galluzzi's "death" and return to life, following her mother's fall and subsequent sacrifice of her daughter's life to God, are used to establish parallels with the life of Christ.

At the same time, Galluzzi also expresses views that are particular to the social and religious concerns of post-Tridentine Italy.⁴⁹ For example, she recalls how her uncle had encouraged her mother to nurse her newborn herself and that the infant Galluzzi had refused milk from all other sources.⁵⁰ Galluzzi's concerns with natural mother breastfeeding are based on the belief that infants absorbed the nature of the person who nursed them and are indicative of a criticism of wet-nursing that originated in the Middle Ages but became exacerbated in the mid-sixteenth century.⁵¹ Thus, while the image of the nursing Virgin Mary and, in some cases, of

Alexandria), to being one. In this, she shows the influence of the model of holy woman created by Raymond of Capua from the life of Catherine of Siena" (Matter, 90).

⁴⁸ Ibid., 5-6. [More than once my mother told me that, having reached the seventh month of pregnancy, being only sixteen years old and lacking any regard ... she wished to run around in jest and, while running, fell face first, hitting her stomach against the ground ... she herself believed I had died, since ... because of the impact, I did not move at all for three days and nights and gave no sign of being alive ... On the sunset of the third day, she felt compelled by God to rise and ... consecrate me to His divine service so that I might come back to life].

⁴⁹ Cf. Monson, 7.

⁵⁰ "Mi tenne a battesimo il signor Bartolomeo Corano, mio zio, all'hora podestà dell'istessa Aiqui [...] Elli esortò mia madre a nutrirmi ella, come pur fece, e si diceva che io non volsi gustar altro latte che il suo" (*Vita da lei narrata*, 6). The importance of the natural mother's breast milk in determining character will remain an important feature of early eighteenth-century women's autobiographies, such as that of Petronilla Paolini Massimi (see chapter 2).

⁵¹ For example, Ognibene Ferrari's treatise, *De arte medica infantium* (Marchetti, Brescia, 1577) emphasized the advantages of avoiding a wet nurse unless the natural mother was ill or incapable of breastfeeding. See Emily E. Stevens, Thelma E. Patrick, and Rita Pickler, "A History of Infant Feeding," *The Journal of Perinatal Education* 18, no. 2 (Spring 2009): 32-39.

nursing or being nursed by Christ, is a common theme of many sixteenth- and seventeenth-century autobiographies and one which Galluzzi herself adopts later in her narrative, her initial use of the imagery occurs in a lay context.⁵²

Yet, despite her clear use of spiritual and literary models, Galluzzi is reluctant to acknowledge any external influences or sources. Though she was undoubtedly familiar with the works of Saint Teresa and she references Saint Augustine on more than one occasion, she also claims to prefer to let love speak through her rather than to speak through the words of others, noting for example her preference for a loose paraphrase of Augustine's words rather than risk misquoting passages that may have come from sacred scripture.⁵³ Such a stance allows Galluzzi to cast herself as ignorant, enlightened only by her encounters with the divine.⁵⁴ Her education – or lack thereof – is an important element of the narration of her childhood. Describing the Lenten season of 1618, she recalls wishing to dedicate herself more fully to God, but focuses on her scarce interest in books and limited reading ability in order to underscore her complete

⁵² Galluzzi assumes the role of both the infant, nursed by the Virgin Mary, as well as that of the nursing mother. During one of her early visions of Christ, she places herself in the maternal role: “Essendo una volta nel detto riposo, mi pareva pur d'essere in chiesa, et fosse portato un Christo deposto di croce, bellissimo di rilievo, e che tutte le madri, adorandolo e riverendolo, ogn'uno s'affaticava starli più appresso che poteva; e chi li baciava le sante mani, chi li piedi; et io poverella me ne stavo tutta sconsolata, perché non havevo luogo d'avvicinarmi a così bellissimo Signore, al quale dissi con il cuore: ‘Et io, Signore, non sarò degna di toccarvi.’ E mi parve che quella statua subito alzò il capo, come se fosse stata viva, e mi accennò che m'accostassi. M'accostai, et il Signore inchinò il suo santissimo capo sopra il mio petto, e sopra d'esso riposando, mi faceva carezze e vezzi amorosi, come sogliono fare li bambini alle loro madri e nutrici” (*Vita da lei narrata*, 95). Later, she describes being nursed by the Virgin Mary (*ibid.*, 196-197).

⁵³ “Se bene io non havevo mai havuto intelligenza, né pratica di cose di spirito, né letto tali cose, all'ora intesi il tutto e sentivo che l'anima mia andava replicando più volte quello che diceva Sant'Agostino, quando elli ancora conobbe Dio, cioè: ‘Io t'ho amato tardi, bellezza antica, ma nova per me.’ E perché io non sapevo se tal cosa fosse vera e fosse nella Scrittura della Santa Chiesa, non volsi mai proferirle, temendo di dire qualche heresia; sì che io non volevo parlar nel linguaggio dell'amore, ma che l'amore parlasse in mia lingua, così, alla grossolana; onde dicevo: ‘Deh, come tardi t'ho conosciuto, amor mio dolce’” (*ibid.*, 69). Galluzzi also references Saint Augustine when justifying her writing as an act of gratitude (*ibid.*, 29) and, while she does not explicitly mention Saint Teresa of Avila in her autobiography, her personal letters provide insight into the works she had read, including those of Saint Teresa (*cf.* Pozzi, 463).

⁵⁴ Pelosi writes that despite Galluzzi's frequent allusions to biblical passages, including explicit references to Paul, Gregory and Augustine, she ultimately prefers the cliché of the *illetterata illuminata* (vii-viii).

dependence on divine “light.” She claims to read poorly and without pleasure and to have great difficulty and little practice in reading spiritual texts,⁵⁵ and attributes the interruption of her studies at the age of eight to God’s desire to preserve her “simplicity and ignorance.” Galluzzi claims to have never learned to read well and to struggle with writing, emphasizing that only divine inspiration provided her with the ability that her intellect lacked.⁵⁶

Despite this insistence on her ignorance, Galluzzi also expresses some regret for her interrupted education in this passage, and elsewhere she emphasizes her precocious willingness to learn.⁵⁷ Throughout the text one notes an extreme tension between her desire for a literary education and, on the contrary, the advantages of assuming a stance of humility, self-denial and ignorance. Moreover, we know from other documents that Galluzzi was not only much better versed in theological texts than she implies, but also that she was a prolific writer. Maria Grazia Bianchi has commented on the frequency of literal quotations from the Gospels in Galluzzi’s other writings, which are often justified as “supernatural” knowledge.⁵⁸ Moreover, in her *Lume*

⁵⁵ “Non sapevo il modo, né alcuno me lo insegnava, né hebbi cognicione d’appigliarsi a qualche libro spirituale, poiché io non hebbi mai gusto nel leggere, perché leggevo tanto interrotto, che non intendevo ciò che leggevo, né capivo le sostanze; né v’era modo di farmele capire, onde il mio leggere era di fastidio a me stessa et alle altre. Per questo non havevo pratica, né indicio de’ libri spirituali. Così [...] il Signore [...] quando piacque alla sua immensa bontà, mi diede il suo santo lume” (ibid., 67).

⁵⁶ “Mentre stetti in Genova, fu mio maestro nel leggere un Padre della Trinità, il quale bramava farmi uscir bene in tal virtù del leggere; ma il Signore, che voleva che io stessi nella semplicità e mia ignoranza, permesse che, nel più bello dell’imparare, mia zia avesse occasione di ritornare in Aiqui, dove parendo a tutti che per fanciulla sapessi legger bene, perché sapevo dire l’ufficio della Madonna, quasi a mente, non si curava farmi più imparare; per lo che, havendo io appresa la pronuntia in lingua genovesa, la quale non compisce le parole, mi suefecì a leggere tanto malamente, che ancor adesso è imperfetto il mio leggere [...] e Vostra Reverenza ben sa quanto sono ignorante, havendo veduto, quando mi comandò in principio [che] gli accennassi in scritto quello [che] m’occorreva nell’orazione, che appena sapevo metter insieme le parole [...] però che m’era di tal travaglio l’obbedirlo, che il Signor fu servito darmi l’abilità necessaria alla mia meschinità” (ibid., 19-20).

⁵⁷ Discussing her religious education, Galluzzi recalls wanting to learn prayers even at the age of three: “Essendo nelli tre anni ero molto sollecita in farmi insegnar l’orationi da una mia zia giovinetta, sorella di mio padre [...] non volsi mai toccare boccone se ella non si levava e mi facesse dire tali oracioni [...]” (ibid., 7).

⁵⁸ “La citazione quasi letterale del Vangelo non è certo inconsueta negli scritti di suor Domitilla, che altrove la giustifica con una conoscenza soprannaturale.” Maria Grazia Bianchi, “Una ‘illuminata’ del secolo XVII: Suor

sopra la prima Regola di S. Chiara, a commentary and defense of the rule of Saint Clare and the first of her four treatises, which likely circulated outside of the monastery,⁵⁹ we find further evidence that despite her claims of having received a limited education, “her ability to quote, translate, and comment on the Vulgate Bible is evidence that she has a basic education in ecclesiastical Latin.”⁶⁰ It is thus safe to assume that Galluzzi intentionally adopts a posture of ignorance in her autobiography, perhaps out of a need to adhere to authoritative models of humility and ignorance in order to gain access to legitimate modes of self-expression. Only in this way, as Ann Matter suggests, could the disadvantages of her life of “enclosure, subservience, poverty, hunger” be balanced “by the advantages of a spiritual tradition – credibility, space, a voice.”⁶¹

Various passages of the text are in fact focused on Galluzzi’s struggles to find adequate intellectual and physical conditions for writing. She recalls how, because during the day she was bothered by “curious souls” who were anxious to know what she was doing in her cell, she began to write at night so as not to be disturbed:

Per consiglio di Vostra Reverenza e della Madre Abbadessa, mi fu dato per ispediente il scrivere di notte, il che fu anco da tali osservato et investigato ciò che facevo, notando che era contro la povertà il tener il lume acceso.⁶²

Maria Domitilla Galluzzi, Cappuccina a Pavia,” *Bollettino della Società Pavese di Storia Patria* 20-21 (1968-69): 58.

⁵⁹ Cf. Ann Matter, “The Commentary on the Rule of Clare of Assisi by Maria Domitilla Galluzzi,” in *Creative Women in Medieval and Early Modern Italy: A Religious and Artistic Renaissance*, ed. E. Ann Matter and John Coakley (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994), 203. Matter suggests that the treatise was read and distributed outside of the monastery since copies are found in libraries in Pavia and Milan.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 208.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² *Vita da lei narrata*, 186. [On the advice of Your Reverence and the Mother Superior, I found the solution of writing at night, which they observed, and they studied what I did, noting that keeping the candle lit was against the vow of poverty].

Writing at night, “not once or twice, but continuously for many years,” also caused Galluzzi to suffer from “weakness and nerve pain.”⁶³ The detrimental physical effects of her nocturnal studies (a recurrent motif in later Italian autobiographers) and the criticism she receives from the other members of the monastery for the wastefulness of burning candles through the night reveal her ambivalence about the act of writing. On one hand, she associates writing with obeying God’s will and spreading a divine message, even while the devil (“il Nemico”) creates obstacles in her writing:

Mentre scrivevo, alcune volte [il Nemico] mi soffiava nella lucerna longamente, senza smorzarla; ma lo faceva solo per mostrarmi e portarmi quel fastidio in quell’incomodo vedere la luce del lume tremare. Quando mi avvidi della sua astucia seguitavo con pazienza a scrivere, egli mi faceva buttar dalla piuma acqua e non inchiostro; onde bisognava restar di scrivere sino che la carte asciugasse. Nel qual, mentre io, sorridendo della sua pazzia, facevo il segno della Santa Croce sopra la carta, piuma, et inchiostro; e così seguitavo la mia obbedienza con forte anima.⁶⁴

On the other hand, Galluzzi also associates writing with a “divine offense” and the devil’s work.⁶⁵ Whereas God is described as a lover (*amante*), the devil is described not only as a nemesis, but also as the author (*authore*) of her temptations and as a reminder of the prodigality inherent in the conditions of her writing:

Uno de’ travalii che mi soleva dare il Nemico si era perché, scrivendo tanto spesso, consumava tanta carta, che nel fine ogni volta dicevo a Vostra Reverenza che letta,

⁶³ “Spesso restava con fiacchezza e dolori de’ nervi [...] spender la notte in combattimenti e simile fatica di scrivere, non una volta o due, ma continuamente tanti anni [...] penso si saria in fiacchito un robusto giovine, non che la pochezza della mia vita” (ibid.).

⁶⁴ Ibid. [Sometimes as I was writing, the Enemy would blow on my lantern continuously, not extinguishing it, but only to show me and cause me the inconvenience of seeing the light of the lantern flicker. When I became aware of his cunning, I continued writing patiently; he would cause me to spill water and not ink from my pen, so that I had to stop writing until the paper dried. Meanwhile, smiling in the face of his actions, I would make the sign of the cross over the paper, pen and ink; and I continued my obedience with determination].

⁶⁵ “Il Nemico mi assalisse con terrori e dubbii della divina offesa; sicché mentre ero disposta e preparata per scrivere, all’improvviso mi veniva hora un terrore horribilissimo delle pene infernali [...] e rimirando la ragione di ciò, altro non m’era suggerito se non perché camminavo per quella via, hora perché raccontandone a Vostra reverenza lo ingannavo, hor un’altra cosa che mi metteva spaventosi affanni d’esser per tali cose separata da Dio” (ibid., 185).

l'abbruciasse, a ciò non fosse d'altri veduta; et il Nemico mi mostrava che ciò era contro la povertà et che elli me ne avrebbe fatto tanto fuoco nell'Inferno di tanta carta che inutilmente imbrattavo.⁶⁶

As an expression of herself and her will, her writing, like her occasional impulse to reject monastic life, is described negatively as a manifestation of reason (*ragione*) and self-love (“amor proprio”).⁶⁷ Ultimately, the story of Galluzzi’s vocation shares a number of features not only with other spiritual autobiographies but also later literary autobiographies, and reveals the tenuous balance between her obedience to God and her superiors on one hand and, on the other hand, a desire to assert herself that she understood to be contrary to the objectives and expectations of her confessors.

The Inquisitorial Autobiography of Cecilia Ferrazzi (1609-1684)

Whereas Maria Domitilla Galluzzi’s *Vita* belongs to the tradition of forced autobiographies written at the request of priests or confessors, the first-person testimony in court of her contemporary, Cecilia Ferrazzi, merits consideration within the contiguous category of the inquisitorial autobiography. Whereas forced autobiographies were not only commissioned in cases of suspected heresy, but also – as in the case of Galluzzi – in cases of potential sainthood, inquisitorial autobiographies always resulted from suspicions of heretical or unfavorable

⁶⁶ Ibid., 186. [One of the pains the Enemy used to cause me was because, writing so often, I used so much paper, which at the end of each session I told Your Reverence to burn after reading, so that no one else could see it; and the Enemy made it known to me that this was against the vow of poverty and that he would create as many flames in hell for me as the paper on which I had scribbled uselessly].

⁶⁷ Galluzzi blames the devil for her negative thoughts about monastic life: “mi faceva pensare che certamente era la volontà di Dio [che] io restassi al secolo, et che la pena et resistenza che io sentivo nasceva d’amor proprio e da rispetto humano, perché havevo sempre detto di voler esser monaca; e mi dava, il Maledetto, così gravi battaglie d’abborrimento alla Religione, che mi metteva in cuore di maledire chi m’haveva insegnato a dire che io volevo esser monaca e che dicessi a tutte le madri che torcessero il collo alle loro figliole, se dicevano d’esser monache” (ibid., 40).

behavior.⁶⁸ Although transcribed by a third party rather than written in her own hand, Ferrazzi's narrative, which was dictated to a friar on July 9, 1664, in a prison of the Venetian Inquisition, was written at her own request. Unlike the religious "autobiographies" transcribed by spiritual directors or confessors who almost always censored or edited their transcriptions, Ferrazzi's words were recorded by a notary who was bound by the rules of the Holy Office to faithfully transcribe her account, including her grammatical errors, dialectal phrases, pauses, facial expressions, and gestures.⁶⁹ It is in part for this reason that Anne Jacobson Schutte suggests a more liberal interpretation of the "-graphy" of Ferrazzi's autobiography as "composition" rather than as handwriting.⁷⁰

During her first two interrogations, Ferrazzi did not respond to the inquisitor's questions, but instead provided a lengthy account of her life during which her inquisitor did not interrupt her. Jacobson Schutte suggests that the inquisitor's familiarity with other "false saints" of the period, combined with Ferrazzi's "self-assurance and eloquence" and her reputation in the city

⁶⁸ Anne Jacobson Schutte's analysis of Ferrazzi's testimony builds on Romeo De Maio's analysis, in *Donne e Rinascimento*, of the autobiographies of Marguerite Porete, Joan of Arc, Anneken Jans and Anne Askew, which aims at demonstrating the similarities between inquisitorial autobiographies and forced autobiographies (cf. "Inquisition and Female Autobiography: The Case of Cecilia Ferrazzi," 106).

⁶⁹ Cf. Cecilia Ferrazzi, *Autobiografia di una santa mancata: 1609-1664*, ed. Anne Jacobson Schutte (Bergamo: P. Lubrina, 1990), 14-15. Jacobson Schutte specifies that beyond requirements that the exact words used in the proceedings be transcribed, the accused parties and witnesses would also listen to the transcript, making corrections if necessary, in order to confirm the validity of the document. According to Jacobson Schutte, Ferrazzi's signature, along with a small correction to the transcript, proves that this procedure was followed and that the testimony was never subjected to any form of censorship (ibid., 104-105). See also Id., "Piccole donne, grandi eroine. Santità femminile, 'simulata' e 'vera,' nell'Italia della prima età moderna," in *Donne e fede: Santità e vita religiosa in Italia*, 277-301. On the relationship between "writing" and "transcription" in medieval autobiographical accounts, see Catherine M. Mooney, "Brother A. in the Composition of Angela of Foligno's Revelations," in *Creative Women in Medieval and Early Modern Italy*, 34-63. Mooney's analysis of the authorial role of the scribe and his aims in shaping the text provides a useful point of contrast with the relative autonomy that Ferrazzi was able to exercise over her own testimony.

⁷⁰ See Cecilia Ferrazzi, *Autobiography of an Aspiring Saint*, ed. and trans. Anne Jacobson Schutte (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 11. All subsequent quotations in English of Ferrazzi's testimony refer to page numbers in this edition, in which Jacobson Schutte has left spelling errors and variations intact, while modernizing the punctuation and capitalization, eliminating abbreviations and providing translations of dialectal words.

for providing a social service that was “much appreciated by leading figures in the Venetian government,” explain why Ferrazzi was initially allowed to speak freely and without interruption.⁷¹ Much of the information provided in her testimony is repeated in the manuscript that she dictated in the prison of San Giovanni in Bragora to Antonio da Venezia, a consultant of the Venetian branch of the Holy Office and a “reader in theology at the monastery of San Francesco della Vigna.”⁷² These transcripts were used later in her trial, when she (and approximately three hundred witnesses) were questioned. While recognizing the need to contextualize Ferrazzi’s narrative as a legal document not intended for posterity but for the members of the court by whom she had already been interrogated multiple times, Jacobson Schutte nonetheless argues that the seventy-one-page autobiographical testimony produced during the trial is an autonomous and freely composed text that sheds light on the social, cultural and intellectual status of women in seventeenth-century Venice and challenges the notion that women’s autobiographies originated with noble Englishwomen of the same period.⁷³

Ferrazzi’s trial ended in 1665 with her condemnation as “gravely suspect” (*suspicio vehemens*) on 131 counts of false sainthood, for which she was sentenced to seven years of imprisonment on September 1, 1665.⁷⁴ Following her trial, which is one of the most significant

⁷¹ Jacobson Schutte, “Inquisition and Female Autobiography,” 107.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 107-108.

⁷³ *Autobiografia di una santa mancata*, 14-15.

⁷⁴ Jacobson Schutte, “Inquisition and Female Autobiography,” 108. Regarding the implications of a “gravely suspect” sentence, Jonathan Seitz explains that “after the defensive stage of the trial, the Inquisition could come to one of several possible conclusions. The Holy Office could decide not to issue a formal verdict at all but rather simply to release the defendant after having admonished him or her to behave better in the future and to avoid certain illicit practices. If, on the other hand, the tribunal decided to issue an official verdict, it could declare the charges unproven and release the accused or declare the defendant guilty (a ‘formal heretic’). Between these poles, a defendant could be found ‘lightly suspect’ (*suspicio levis*) or ‘vehemently suspect’ (*suspicio vehemens*) of the religious crimes alleged, depending on the weight of the evidence that the Holy Office had gathered.” Jonathan Seitz, *Witchcraft and Inquisition in Early Modern Venice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 53-54.

cases documented in the Venetian State Archives,⁷⁵ Ferrazzi appealed to the Congregation of the Inquisition in Rome, which led, in October, 1667, to changes in the conditions of her imprisonment to house arrest in Padua, followed by her early release on January 29, 1669, after which she returned to Venice for the remainder of her life.⁷⁶ Unlike other similar trials, Ferrazzi's case was highly publicized not only in Venice but also in other Italian cities and even abroad. In 1669, the year in which Ferrazzi was released from prison, a modified version of her life as a "false saint" was printed in English.⁷⁷ How and why did Ferrazzi's trial attract such an exceptional degree of public attention? One reason may be that she was not a nun but rather a *pinzochera*, an uncloistered laywoman who adhered to the values of monastic life without taking religious vows or living in a cloistered community.⁷⁸ As such, she was able to live and to work partially outside of the physical and authoritative boundaries of the church hierarchy.⁷⁹

A second reason for her visibility in her local community is that Ferrazzi actively strove to become, if not a living saint, at least a nun, though her aspirations were destroyed when her entire family, except for her sister, died in the plague of 1630. After a period of time spent with

⁷⁵ In terms of physical documentation Ferrazzi's trial is one of the most substantial inquisitorial records held in the Archivio di Stato di Venezia (Jacobson Schutte, *Autobiografia di una santa mancata*, 13).

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 117-118.

⁷⁷ Cf. Jacobson Schutte, *Autobiografia di una santa mancata*, 14.

⁷⁸ Katherine Gill describes the diversity of the women who belonged to noncloistered communities: "They might be wealthy widows or unmarried women who wished to exercise their minds in meditation and their patronage on religious projects. Frequently, they were women from middle-class families associated with one or more charitable or even semiprofessional enterprises. They could be former prostitutes, concubines, or simply women whose unsettled lives had left them outside a clearly respectable category. In both ecclesiastical Latin and local vernaculars, they went by many names: *mulieres religiosae*, *mulieres de penitentia*, *sorores*, *pinzochere*, *bizoke*, *mantellate*, *terziarie*, *monache di casa*, *monacelle*, *sante*, and *santarelle*" (Katherine Gill, "Open Monasteries for Women in Late Medieval and Early Modern Italy: Two Roman Examples," in *The Crannied Wall*, 16). Although Gill's essay, which traces the roots of noncloistered communities from fourth-century Rome, arrives only at the sixteenth century and thus before Ferrazzi's time, her study provides a useful history of the *pinzochere*, their social role and their participation in church hierarchy. See also *Id.*, "Women and Religious Literature in the Vernacular," in *Creative Women in Medieval and Early Modern Italy*, 67.

⁷⁹ Cf. Jacobson Schutte, "Inquisition and Female Autobiography," 111-112.

her maternal uncle, who attempted to arrange a marriage for her, Ferrazzi spent nearly two decades in the homes of various wealthy Venetian families who offered her guidance and protection. Like Maria Domitilla Galluzzi, she assumed an active role in her community and founded, at the age of forty, a shelter in Sant'Antonio di Castello for "putte pericolanti," young girls who were unable to live at home or in monasteries and were thus at risk for sexual exploitation. Ferrazzi, who recalls a vision in which the Virgin Mary assured her that "there would be no martyrs if there were no tyrants,"⁸⁰ describes having saved over 120 orphans, beggars, deformed children and daughters of prostitutes,⁸¹ and thus effectively transforms her court record into a document of her dedication to offering alternatives for young girls who, like herself, were precluded from the traditional pathways offered by marriage or life in a monastery. More generally, despite her religious devotion and aspirations, her narrative is focused largely on the social, financial and physical rehabilitation of women in a lay context.

It is possible that Ferrazzi's social role had been inspired by earlier models of female holiness that had fallen out of vogue. In many cases, accusations of false sanctity ("santità affettata") in the seventeenth century can be attributed to the persistence, as well as the decline, of fourteenth- and fifteenth-century ideals of female mysticism and Medieval sainthood; as these ideals fell out of favor in the late sixteenth century, feigned saintliness became a specific target of the Inquisition.⁸² In fact, as Craig Monson has observed, Ferrazzi's role as "a kind of freelance mother superior" made her an extremely controversial figure since, following Pius V's *Circa*

⁸⁰ "Non vi sariano martire se non vi fossero stati tiranni" (*Autobiografia di una santa mancata*, 81).

⁸¹ See *ibid.*, 23, 58, 76.

⁸² Cf. Gabriella Zarri, "'Vera' santità, 'simulata' santità: ipotesi e riscontri," in *Finzione e santità tra medioevo ed età moderna*, 15. See also Zarri's analysis of two treatises written to aid church authorities in identifying false saints, Cardinal Scaglia's *Prattica* (1636), a manual for inquisitors, and Giorgio Polacco's *Pratiche per discernere lo spirito buono dal malvagio e per conoscere gl'indemoniati e maleficiati* (1638), written for priests (Zarri, 21).

pastoralis (1566), which demanded the enclosure of all female religious communities, the *pinzochere* no longer occupied an acceptable place in Counter-Reformation Italy.⁸³

As Jacobson Schutte has shown, it was exactly Ferrazzi's profession that ultimately led to her troubles with the Holy Office. In May of 1664, she was denounced by two women, Chiara Bacchis, a relative of girls living in Ferrazzi's shelter whom Ferrazzi had refused to release because she feared that they would be forced into prostitution, and Chiara Garzoni, a former resident of one of Ferrazzi's shelters. The specific charges against Ferrazzi vary and are often related to both the spiritual as well as the patriarchal hierarchy in which Ferrazzi lived: She was accused of having herself represented in two different portraits as Saint Teresa and the Virgin of the Seven Sorrows;⁸⁴ of giving birth to a child that she later abandoned; of being possessed;⁸⁵ of having sexual intercourse with men in the monastery;⁸⁶ of disguising herself as a priest to hear confessions;⁸⁷ and of claiming that Jesuit priests were interested in writing a biography of her "vita santa."⁸⁸ In her testimony, Ferrazzi continuously emphasizes her saintly qualities and describes various phenomenal events, such as the miraculous recoveries of some of the children under her care and her own inexplicable and immediate recovery after falling into a fire.⁸⁹

⁸³ Cf. Monson, 7-8.

⁸⁴ See Jacobson Schutte, "Inquisition and Female Autobiography," 106-107.

⁸⁵ *Autobiografia di una santa mancata*, 95.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 96.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 29. On other cases of women accused of hearing confessions from other women, see also Giovanna Paolin, "Confessione e confessori al femminile: monache e direttori spirituali in ambito veneto tra '600 e '700," in *Finzione e santità tra medioevo ed età moderna*, 372-373.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁸⁹ "Un giorno, standomene al foco a far alcuna facenda, pensando alla grandezza d'Iddio, che se ne sta coperto sotto li accidenti di quell'hostia consecrata, cadei con la faccia et petto nello stesso foco. Et venendo a caso detta signora Capello nella cucina, mi ritrovò parimenti ivi, quale mi levò fuori con non poca sua mortificatione, ritrovandomi senza offesa alcuna dello stesso foco" (*ibid.* 53). Ferrazzi also describes the miraculous return to health of Marietta Capello's daughter, who had been born with deformed legs (*ibid.*, 91).

All of the accusations imply that Ferrazzi had challenged the traditional gender and religious hierarchies during a time when, as Zarri has argued, most accusations of false sainthood can be attributed to the transformation of the confessor from “hagiographer to inquisitor” and of the act of confession into an instrument of social disciplining, often aimed specifically at women.⁹⁰ Adriano Prospero has made a similar argument, claiming that the history of sainthood and witchcraft is primarily the history of male power exerted over women.⁹¹ At the same time, it is important to point out that the initial impetus for the accusations against Ferrazzi probably resulted from an altercation with local prostitutes whose daughters she had taken under her care, as she herself claims.⁹² The practice of taking personal squabbles before the Venetian Holy Office was not uncommon; Jonathan Seitz, discussing trials between the mid-sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries in Venice, has noted the frequency with which citizens “pursued their personal, professional, or political quarrels in various legal fora, of which the Inquisition was just one. Such underlying motives often came to light when the defendant made his or her case.”⁹³

Given her limited education, it is difficult to broach the question of Ferrazzi’s possible literary models. While she was able to sign her own name in the testimony, it is possible, especially given the high illiteracy rates in Italy at this time, that Ferrazzi was unable to read or

⁹⁰ Zarri, 24-25.

⁹¹ “Le storie di santità e di stregoneria sono anche storie di potere maschile esercitato prevalentemente su donne: potere di scrittura – dalla scrittura dei processi canonici e inquisitoriali a quell’altro tipo di scrittura di direttori spirituali e biografi che traduce esperienze e rivelazioni femminili in relazioni e libri – prima e più ancora che potere sulla vita e sulla libertà delle donne” (Prospero, “L’elemento storico nelle polemiche sulla santità,” 89).

⁹² “Io ho inimiche alcune meretrici, quali havendomi dato le lor figlie in custodia, e perchè non ghe le ho voluto restituire acciò non andassero a male, esse mi odiano e hanno procurato dir ogni male di me” (*Autobiografia di una santa mancata*, 33).

⁹³ Seitz, 49.

write.⁹⁴ As scholars such as Jacobson Schutte and Roger Chartier have shown, her ability to sign her name on the court transcript is not indicative of any specific degree of literacy, since not everyone who had learned to sign his or her name was actually able to write.⁹⁵ While she never mentions reading any books on her own, Ferrazzi describes being read to by her mother, brothers, protectors, and the young girls in her shelter. Jacobson Schutte also refers to the testimony of Francesco Querini, who recounted how Ferrazzi went into ecstasy while he read aloud to her from Aretino's *Umanità di Cristo*.⁹⁶ As in the case of other contemporary laywomen tried as "false saints," such as Maria Janis, who had been condemned the previous year, Ferrazzi's account was likely modeled on knowledge transmitted from her confessor since, as a laywoman, Ferrazzi had no means of direct contact with cloistered nuns that could have served as living models and, unlike the "successful holy women" of the period, she lacked the education to refer systematically to saints' lives in formulating her own life story.⁹⁷

⁹⁴ Though her mother certainly knew how to read, it was not uncommon in the seventeenth century to find households in which the parents, but not the children, were literate (cf. Jacobson Schutte, "Inquisition and Female Autobiography," 104). And although we lack documentation regarding Ferrazzi's actual abilities, autograph records do show that her sister, Maria Ferrazzi, was able to read as well as to write; she left behind handwritten records documenting various investments and finances that regarded the monastery she had founded (cf. Jacobson Schutte, *Autobiografia di una santa mancata*, 103).

⁹⁵ As Roger Chartier notes, "nelle società dell'*Ancien Regime*, nelle quali l'apprendimento della scrittura è successivo a quello della lettura e concerne solo una parte dei ragazzi studenti [...] non tutti coloro che sanno mettere la propria firma sanno senz'altro scrivere, o perché la firma ha costituito il punto d'arresto del loro processo di apprendimento culturale, o perché essi hanno perduto, per mancanza di esercizio, la capacità di scrivere, pur appresa un tempo, capacità di cui la firma rimane dunque come una specie di reliquia." Roger Chartier, "Le pratiche della scrittura," in *La vita privata dal Rinascimento all'Illuminismo*, ed. Philippe Aries and Roger Chartier (Bari: Laterza, 1987), 77.

⁹⁶ Jacobson Schutte, "Inquisition and Female Autobiography," 117.

⁹⁷ Cf. Id., "*Per Speculum in Enigmate: Failed Saints, Artists, and Self-Construction of the Female Body in Early Modern Italy*," in *Creative Women in Medieval and Early Modern Italy*, 189. See also Id., *Aspiring Saints: Pretense of Holiness, Inquisition, and Gender in the Republic of Venice, 1618-1750* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001). Regarding the sixteen confessors named in the autobiography, see "Inquisition and Female Autobiography," 112-113. The "pretense of holiness" was not a phenomenon limited to women; on men accused of false sainthood, see chapter 11, "Gender and Sex," of *Aspiring Saints*.

Even if we assume that Ferrazzi could not read or write on her own, it is clear that her request for a written transcription of her testimony was aimed at gaining control over a hagiographic representation of herself. Ferrazzi's familiarity with various saints' lives is evident in the division of her own narrative, which follows the structure of a standard hagiography. She begins with a chronological account of her life from the age of five through the moment in which she discovers her vocation, followed by a second part consisting of visionary episodes, organized thematically rather than chronologically. As Jacobson Schutte notes, in hagiographies, this section is traditionally organized into chapters or sections dedicated to specific virtues, although in Ferrazzi's case the discovery of her true vocation does not, of course, regard a monastic profession or

a direct call from or union with God, as in the lives of the female saints (the great majority of whom were nuns), but rather with the beginning of her self-designed vocation as protector of "girls in danger." Then, sequential narrative gives way to a topical arrangement: the visions she had, the extraordinary graces she received, the miraculous occurrences of which she was the protagonist, the predictions of the future she made. The only structural feature of this autobiography that differentiates it from the *vita* of a saint is that, since she was still alive, Ferrazzi could not conclude with postmortem miracles.⁹⁸

In her testimony, as in the self-portrait she had earlier commissioned,⁹⁹ Ferrazzi seems especially interested in drawing a parallel between herself and Saint Teresa. Whether or not she had read or heard an Italian translation of Saint Teresa's autobiography, Ferrazzi was certainly familiar with the saint's struggles with authorities. She explicitly likens herself to Saint Teresa

⁹⁸ Jacobson Schutte, "Inquisition and Female Autobiography," 108-109.

⁹⁹ In addition to the portrait of Ferrazzi that was "retouched" to represent her as Saint Teresa, Jacobson Schutte refers to a further example of Ferrazzi's attempts to construct a saintly persona: "When she returned from trips, the girls in her charge were required to process along the bank of the canal where her gondola landed intoning the *Te deum* and a hymn to Saint Cecilia. The intended function of the autobiography, the recycled portraits, and the rite is evident: to project an image of her body as similar, even identical, to those of certified holy women" ("*Per Speculum in Enigmata*," 193-194). For a more detailed history of the portraits, see Id., "Questo non è il ritratto che ho fatto io': Painters, the Inquisition, and the Shape of Sanctity in Seventeenth-Century Venice," in *Florence and Italy: Studies in Honor of Nicolai Rubinstein*, ed. Peter Denley and Caroline Elam (London: Westfield College, 1988), 419-431.

when she describes her plans to open a Carmelite monastery and recounts a vision of the Virgin Mary that occurred during a period of severe illness:

Mi sopragionse una malattia mortale [...] m'apparse al letto la santissima Vergine con li cinque santi sant'Angelo carmelitano, sant'Alberto et sant'Elia pure carmelitani, assieme con sant'Ignatio martire, de' quali tutti ero divota, quali mi stavano intorno il letto. Et la Madre santissima mi chiamò, dicendomi che non era tempo di morte, ma di maggior vita [...] La ricerca fu questa: che dovessi restar al mondo per patir maggior travagli et [...] che dovessi acconsentire di fondare il monastero di S. Teresa qui in Venetia, sarebbe stato di gran utile per li peccati e per la salute della Republica, et che guardassi que' santi che erano assistenti per testimoni della verità, con questo, che osservassi la vita di Teresa con tanti travagli che hebbe in questo mondo, et che io ne havevo da havere quanti che lei e anco qualche cosa di più.¹⁰⁰

Whereas Ferrazzi's attempts, in approximately 1638, to establish a Carmelite monastery in Venice were not successful,¹⁰¹ her sister did found a convent of Carmelite nuns. Though Ferrazzi never formally entered her sister's convent, she spent time there and adopted the constitutions of the order as a model for her shelter.¹⁰² At the time of her trial, then, Saint Teresa's life might have provided Ferrazzi with a model of "how to behave and how to cope with hostility" from Church superiors while also serving "as a stimulus to rethink her life and construct an image of herself that, when put on paper by her amanuensis, would, she hoped, help her confront the difficulties in which she found herself."¹⁰³

¹⁰⁰ *Autobiografia di una santa mancata*, 55-56. [I was overcome by a mortal illness [...] the Most Holy Virgin appeared with five saints – the Carmelites St. Angelo [of Jerusalem], St. Albert [degli Abbati], and St. Elias, along with St. Ignatius the Martyr, to all of whom I was devoted – and stood around my bed. And the Most Holy Mother called me, telling me that it was time not for death, but for greater life. What She sought was this: that I stay in the world in order to suffer greater travails [...] and [...] to agree to found the convent of Santa Teresa here in Venice, which would be of great efficacy for the sins and salvation of the Republic, to regard those saints assisting Her as witnesses of the truth, to observe the life of St. Teresa with all the travails she had in this world, for I would have as many as she and even some more (46)].

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 56.

¹⁰² Jacobson Schutte, "Inquisition and Female Autobiography," 109.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

Further evidence of Ferrazzi's use of saints' lives can be found in the erroneous details she includes in her testimony. For example, she claims that she was orphaned at the age of sixteen, though in reality her parents died in 1630 when she was twenty-one.¹⁰⁴ While she claims not to know her exact age at the time of her trial, it is possible that she intentionally altered her age in order to conform to some of her models, such as Saint Teresa of Avila, who was sixteen when her father first sent her to a convent, or Saint Catherine of Siena, who was sixteen when she entered the Third Order of St. Dominic.¹⁰⁵ Moreover, Ferrazzi reports having been one of twenty-three children, but according to church records she actually had many fewer siblings. Although it is possible that some births or baptisms, especially given the high rate of infant mortality, were never recorded, it is more likely that Ferrazzi deliberately exaggerated the size of her family in order to align herself with Saint Catherine, who likewise came from a family of twenty-three children.¹⁰⁶

Also like Saint Catherine, Ferrazzi suffered from lifelong digestive difficulties and kidney stones that, while reminiscent of other well-documented cases of "holy anorexia," are described only in physiological terms. Although she recalls visions in which the Virgin Mary urged her to tolerate the pain out of love for Christ,¹⁰⁷ Ferrazzi never claims a direct association between her inability to eat and her voluntary desire to suffer. As Jacobson Schutte notes,

¹⁰⁴ "E restai orfana di padre e madre d'anni circa 16 [...] morti dalla peste qui in Venetia [...] fui posta a star con Defendi mio barba, col quale steti intorno 6 mesi, neanche, perché volendomi egli maritare [...] e havendo io repugnanza al maritarmi, fugii di casa sua et andai in chiesa" (*Autobiografia di una santa mancata*, 20-21).

¹⁰⁵ Perhaps modeling herself after these saints, Ferrazzi claims to have desired to enter a monastery at a young age: "Essendo in età 15 incirca, il padre et la madre mi persuasero al matrimonio, ma io non havendo mai voluto acconsentire, li pregavo che mi metessero monaca in una delle religioni più strette che vi fossero, per essere più separata dal mondo" (ibid., 49).

¹⁰⁶ Cf. *Medieval Women Writers*, ed. Katharina M. Wilson (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1984), xv.

¹⁰⁷ Cf. *Autobiografia di una santa mancata*, 45-46.

for female saints, of course, an infirm body was almost obligatory, but in most cases their illnesses began later, in adolescence or after a year or so in the convent, closely associated with developments in their spiritual lives. Ferrazzi's most serious physical problem, also common among female saints, was stomach trouble, which often made it impossible for her to keep down food. Perhaps sincerely – but it is just as likely that she was following Saint Catherine of Siena's prudent line – she never claims that this is anything other than a physical problem.¹⁰⁸

Ferrazzi's first serious signs of illness coincide with her first encounters with devotional literature, around the age of five, when her mother would read to her from saints' lives.¹⁰⁹

Interestingly, it is during this same period that Ferrazzi also claims to have her first previsions.

She predicts her father's death, and the accuracy of her vision is confirmed when he returns home wounded:

Essendo nella stessa età, un giorno adormentata sopra il petto di mia madre, mi svegliai con grandissimo spavento et dissi a mia madre che allhora ammazzavano mio padre. Et nello stesso tempo fu condotto a casa da molti, pieno di stilletate, ma con poco suo danno, perché era solamente forata la pelle del suo corpo.¹¹⁰

Among various childhood previsions, Ferrazzi also claims to have predicted the suicide of one of her father's employees, a vision which she initially believes to have been created by the devil to

¹⁰⁸ "Inquisition and Female Autobiography," 109-110. Ferrazzi does, however, liken her suffering to that of Christ, describing how forty days of intense pain were followed by a vision of Christ and her recovery after drinking from his wound: "Subbito, essendo sola nella stanza, mentre stavano li preti, medici et nobili passeggiando nel portico, che piangevano, saltai fuori dal letto con gran forza datemi non dalla natura, che era affatto destituta, ma da Iddio benedetto et presi per il traverso nostro signore Giesu Christo, et messi la bocca nel suo costato, dal quale succhiai un'acqua tanto preciosa che si sparse per tutto il mio corpo, che mi refrigerò tutta et estai affatto libera d'ogni male" (*Autobiografia di una santa mancata*, 74). At times, the pain was sufficient to lead Ferrazzi to contemplate suicide, an urge she later attributes to demonic temptation (*ibid.*, 62-63; 72).

¹⁰⁹ "Sono sempre stata inferma dal principio della mia nascita fino all'ora presente, et in particolare cominciò a crescermi il male essendo in età di 5 [...] mi venne un grandissimo sentimento d'amare et godere Iddio benedetto, acquistato dal buon esempio et educatione della mia madre, sentendola legger libri devoti et in particolare le vite de santi e sante, recitare il rosario con li suoi figliolini, che erimo tutti piccioli" (*ibid.*, 45-46).

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 45. [At the same age, one day when I was asleep on my mother's lap, I awoke very frightened and said to my mother that at that very moment they were killing my father. And just then a crowd of people brought him home covered with knife wounds but not badly injured because only his skin was cut (39)].

distract her from prayer, but which is revealed to be true when the young man falls to his death.¹¹¹

Her visions, frequent illnesses and allusions to saints' lives show how Ferrazzi, whether consciously or not, drew elements of the spiritual autobiography into an inquisitional court testimony. As mentioned previously, unlike forced autobiographies solicited by confessors, Ferrazzi was not asked by anyone to write or dictate her life story. Instead, she actively sought an Inquisitor to transcribe her narrative, perhaps in order to more carefully organize and present her life story and defense. Yet, like many spiritual autobiographies written out of obedience to a religious authority, she turned to hagiographic models in order to create a narrative of her own life and to defend her position in society. Moreover, like Maria Domitilla Galluzzi, she used her autobiographical account to document her active social presence; just as Galluzzi's Capuchin convent in Pavia was refounded and "artistically refurbished"¹¹² by the women of wealthy families and Cecilia Ferrazzi's sister was able to open her own convent with financial assistance from affluent supporters, Ferrazzi herself had contacts with important religious intellectuals, for example the Jesuit priest Daniello Bartoli, who was one of her confessors.¹¹³ Thus, the spiritual devotion and mysticism of these women do not inhibit their practical involvement in the daily life and organization of the convent. The conscious weaving of personal and public history in these narratives, as we will see in the following section, is one of the aspects that unites

¹¹¹ "Con occasione che mio padre faceva mercanzia, teneva anco molti giovani in casa, uno de quali, chiamato Pietro, diede in delirio. Et una notte, mentre me ne stavo in oratione et lo raccomandavo al Signore, mi parve di vedere che si volesse precipitare giù dall'altana della casa, per il che maggiormente m'infervoravo di racomandarlo a Dio e vedevo gran tentatione verso quell'anima, parendomi che il demonio volesse precipitarlo. Et io credevo che questa fosse un'illusione del demonio per distrarmi dall'oratione. Ma fatto il giorno, alle due hore di sole, il detto Pietro si precipitò dall'altana nel mezo della strada" (ibid., 48).

¹¹² Cf. Monson, 5-6.

¹¹³ Cf. *Autobiografia di una santa mancata*, 35.

seventeenth-century spiritual accounts with autobiographical narratives written voluntarily and for non-religious motives.

L.3 The “First” Italian Women’s Autobiography?: Camilla Faà Gonzaga

First published in 1895, Camilla Faà Gonzaga’s sixteen-page *Historia*,¹¹⁴ written in approximately 1622, has been branded by scholars such as Natalia Costa-Zalesow and Graziella Parati as the “first” women’s autobiography in the Italian literary tradition. Parati uses the *Historia* to challenge both the traditional periodization of the genre as well as the exclusion of women writers from critical studies of Italian autobiographies written before the nineteenth century.¹¹⁵ Camilla Faà Gonzaga’s narrative spans from her sixteenth birthday to her arrival in the monastery of Corpus Domini in Ferrara. Motivated by personal and political rather than spiritual events, the text describes how she, the daughter of a noble family in the Gonzaga court in Mantua, was forced into the convent and separated from her son after Ferdinando Gonzaga, Duke of Mantua, sought to annul their marriage in order to obtain a more politically advantageous union with Caterina de’ Medici.

Though written in the monastery where Faà Gonzaga spent the last years of her life, her narrative differs considerably from seventeenth-century forced and inquisitorial autobiographies, not only because of her high social status but also because she does not draw on saints’ lives as a model or describe her personal inclinations, vocation, or spiritual development. At the same time, especially considering Faà Gonzaga’s explicit request that the contents of her narrative not be made public, some scholars have argued that the *Historia* does, in fact, belong to the tradition

¹¹⁴ Giuseppe Giorcelli, “Storia di donna Camilla Faà di Bruno Gonzaga,” *Rivista di Storia, Arte, Archeologia della Provincia di Alessandria* 10, no. 4 (1895): 90-99. The text was republished by Fernanda Sorbelli-Bonfà as *Historia della Sig.ra Donna Camilla Faà Gonzaga*, in the appendix of her volume, *Camilla Gonzaga-Faà: Storia Documentata* (Bologna: Zanichelli, 1918). Manuscript copies are also found in the private archives of the convent where Faà Gonzaga spent the last years of her life, in the Biblioteca Comunale di Mantova and in Casale, property of the Faà heirs (cf. Valeria Finucci, “Camilla Faà Gonzaga: The Italian Memorialist,” in *Women Writers of the Seventeenth Century*, ed. Katharina M. Wilson and Frank J. Warnke [Athens and London: The University of Georgia Press, 1989], 125). Camilla Faà Gonzaga narrates the events of her life until 1622, the year during which she took her religious vows, thus providing a *terminus post quem* of the manuscript.

¹¹⁵ Cf. Graziella Parati, *Public History, Private Stories: Italian Women’s Autobiography* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996) and Natalia Costa-Zalesow, *Scrittrici italiane dal XIII al XX secolo* (Ravenna: Longo, 1982).

of forced autobiographies and was likely written at the request of her confessor or the abbess as evidence of her forced monachization.¹¹⁶ Like the spiritual autobiographies of many of her contemporaries, Faà Gonzaga's narrative is also essentially the story of a conversion, or the change of her legal and social status by means of her marital and, later, monastic vows.¹¹⁷ The document may also be the product of an attempt to confirm the validity of her marriage in order for her son, Giacinto, to be recognized as the legitimate heir after the marriage between Ferdinando Gonzaga and Caterina de' Medici had failed to produce any children.¹¹⁸ Here, again, what the text shares with the other autobiographical narratives examined in this chapter is the attempt to assert and defend oneself in the face of strict societal expectations and limited opportunities outside of marriage and monachization. In this way, Faà Gonzaga's "story" is an attempt to gain visibility within the Gonzaga's political "history."

Scholars have debated both the historical and the literary value of the *Historia*. In the preface to her 1918 edition, Fernanda Sorbelli-Bonfà described Faà Gonzaga's reflections as "extremely moving" ("assai commoventi"), but lacking artistic merit.¹¹⁹ Federigo Amadei, in his *Cronaca universale della città di Mantova* (1956), took a similar stance in suggesting that Faà

¹¹⁶ Like Giorcelli before her, Natalia Costa-Zalessow believes that it was the Mother Superior of the convent who "encouraged" Camilla to write her life story. Graziella Parati argues that "ideal as it might seem, such friendship is hard to prove" (Parati, 38) and Elisabetta Graziosi likewise discards the theory, adopting instead the position of the Gonzaga family's historian, Antonio Possevino, who claimed the document was written upon the suggestion of Camilla's confessor. See Elisabetta Graziosi, "Scrivere dal convento: Camilla Faà Gonzaga," in *Sentir e meditar. Omaggio a Elena Sala di Felice*, ed. Laura Sannia Nowé, Francesco Cotticelli and Roberto Puggioni (Rome: Aracne, 2005), 96-97. According to Graziosi, the *Historia* was written in order to prove the validity of her marriage and the invalidity of her monastic vows.

¹¹⁷ As Graziosi has emphasized, the text begins and ends with a "cambiamento di stato," opening with her father's plans for her marriage and ending with her forced entry into the convent (ibid., 90).

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 89.

¹¹⁹ Sorbelli-Bonfà, vii.

Gonzaga's account was hyperbolized in its "blind passion."¹²⁰ More recently, Elisabetta Graziosi has taken the opposite approach, claiming that, despite the emotional charge of the events narrated in the *Historia*, Faà Gonzaga was not at all interested in documenting her emotional states but rather in providing an objective and unembellished testimony of historical events.¹²¹ Graziella Parati takes a more moderate approach, recognizing that while Faà Gonzaga may have intended to provide a historical testimony in order to defend herself from the accusations of the Gonzaga and others in power, critics have tended to ignore "the innovative structure of her autobiographical text as a retrospective narrative in prose, the fictional creation of a metaphor of self and of history."¹²²

Whether viewed as a historical or fictionalized account, it is important to consider Faà Gonzaga's decision not to discuss her birth or upbringing and to concentrate only on the relatively short period between her clandestine marriage in 1616 and her religious vows in 1622. Though her own narrative begins *in medias res*, some background information is needed to understand the context in which her marriage to Ferdinando ostensibly took place. At the age of thirteen, Camilla Faà had become a lady-in-waiting to the Duchess Margaret of Savoy, wife of Francesco II Gonzaga, Duke of Mantua. After a brief stay in Turin following the duke's death in 1612, Camilla returned to Mantua. She first met the duke's successor, Ferdinando, in 1615, when Camilla's father was attempting to arrange a marriage between his daughter and a nobleman of the Gonzaga court, Ottavio Valenti. In attendance at a ball held at the Palazzo del Te, Faà

¹²⁰ "Sarò piuttosto a credere che donna Camilla, per lasciare al mondo una giustificazione de' suoi amori e del frutto de' medesimi, abbia in iscrivendo esagerato con troppa cieca passione contro il duca e contro l'abate vescovo." Federigo Amadei, *Cronaca universale della città di Mantova*, vol. 3 (Mantua: CIEM, 1956), 347.

¹²¹ "Anche se questi sono gli ingredienti di un romanzo di seduzione e abbandono, il testo che li narra non è un'autobiografia, ignora gli stati d'animo e le passioni, ma vuole essere una nuda testimonianza di eventi, un documento che risponde ad altri documenti scritti che per la protagonista di questa storia erano oramai inaccessibili e imm modificabili" (Graziosi, 88).

¹²² Parati, 28-33.

Gonzaga describes how she was first made aware of Ferdinando's interest in asking for her hand in marriage. Under pressure to find a suitable wife, he tells her that in spite of her engagement he hopes to marry her:

Essendo un pezzo che io porto i miei pensieri nella vostra persona ho procurato di accomodar le cose in maniera che io possa pigliar voi per moglie. Ma avendo li negotii in questo tempo mutato faccia, mi rende adesso difficile quello che già mi era facile: non sono però ancora fuori speranza di poter ciò fare e perciò non vi meravigliate se così presto non permetterò che il Valenti vi tocchi la mano.¹²³

Ferdinando succeeded in convincing Camilla and her father of his intentions to marry her and a secret ceremony took place the following year, but growing pressure on the duke to enter into a more politically favorable marriage meant that a lasting union with Camilla was not a possibility. During the months in which she waited for the marriage to be made public, she became pregnant with Ferdinando's child. Her father's death, the same year, left her defenseless and, in 1617, she was given a choice between marrying someone else or retiring to a monastery like many "malmaritate" or "pericolanti." Camilla spent more than a year in a convent in Mantua before entering the monastery of Corpus Domini in Ferrara in October 1618 as a "secolare," without taking vows. In 1622, when she was again pressured to either marry or take her religious vows, she chose the latter.¹²⁴

In relating these events, there are several key ways in which Faà Gonzaga asserts power over her narrative and, as Parati suggests, essentially rewrites the history of Ferdinando Gonzaga's "mishandling" of their marriage, offering a perspective that would otherwise remain

¹²³ *Historia*, 120-121. ["It has been a long time since I first placed my thoughts upon you and I have managed to arrange things in a way that it is possible for me to take you for my wife. Lately, circumstances have changed, though, and I find it now difficult to accomplish what once seemed easy. However, I have not lost hope that this can be done. Do not feel surprised, therefore, if I do not allow Valenti to marry you too soon" (129)]. All Italian citations in the present study come from Sorbelli-Bonfà's edition, which is based on a manuscript copy held in the Biblioteca Comunale di Ferrara; the English translations are those provided by Valeria Finucci, whose translation is based on Giorcelli's edition.

¹²⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, 132, and Graziosi, 94-95.

hidden from the public sphere.¹²⁵ First, she claims to have doubted Ferdinando's sincerity from the beginning and to have attempted by her own initiative to enter a monastery in order to avoid the marriage. In describing her reaction to his first advances during the ball, Faà Gonzaga claims to have responded with skepticism:

Io di questo mi burlai, credendo sicuro che mi dicesse queste cose per scherzo e per scorgere s'io fossi facile a crederle. Perciò gli risposi: Signore io avrei a grazia particolare il poter servire alla moglie di V. Alt. e queste parole che mi ha ditto le piglio come debbo in burla per passar l'ora di questo ballo.¹²⁶

Secondly, she consistently portrays Ferdinando as a powerless pawn rather than a calculating politician, and this characterization is arguably one of the clearest indications of the fictionalization inherent in Faà Gonzaga's representation of the events surrounding her marriage. When Ferdinando changes his mind and proposes that Camilla settle for being his lover ("donna"), she writes that she resolved to enter a convent, despite having no religious vocation, in order to escape the personal dishonor that would result from such an arrangement:

Dissi a mio padre, che lui procurasse di trovar strada di levarmi fuori di Corte e condurmi a Casa ch'io avevo pensato di far azione tale che avrei soddisfatto all'onor mio e forse anche a S.A. e questo col farmi Monaca, ancorchè a questo non avevo mai inclinato [...] essendo io risoluta più presto di morire che di far cosa disonorata.¹²⁷

In this way, Camilla demonstrates control over both her own situation as well as that of Ferdinando, who appears so impressed by her resolve that he immediately retracts his earlier proposition and tells Camilla of his plans to expedite their wedding:

¹²⁵ Parati, 28.

¹²⁶ *Historia*, 121. [I laughed, thinking that for sure he was saying these things jokingly and in order to find out whether I could be easily duped. Therefore, I answered: "Sir, it would be a great favor for me simply to serve Your Highness's wife. I take your words as being said to while away this hour of dance" (129)].

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 123. [I asked my father to find a means to take me away from the court and bring me home; that, as for me, I had thought to follow a course of action which would satisfy my own honor—and maybe that of His Highness as well – by becoming a nun. Also I told him to remain assured that God would take care of this affliction, being myself resolute to die rather than do anything disgraceful (130)]. Finucci's translation omits the sentence in which Faà Gonzaga openly states that she lacked a spiritual vocation ("a questo non avevo mai inclinato").

Queste parole erano poche ore che da me furono dette, che S.A. (e non so come) lo seppe. Trovò mio padre e li disse che sapeva molto bene quello che io avevo risoluto, e che questo mio pensiero li aveva portato tanto gusto che lui senza aver mira a nessuno suo interesse, era risoluto di non voler restare privo di me e che però mi voleva per moglie, che presto lo vedrebbe in effetto. Dopo venne da me accompagnato col Vescovo [...] e mi disse: Donna Camilla, la risoluzione che voi avete fatto di volervi monacare per vostra riputazione et anche per darmi gusto, mi obbliga tanto che mi sono risoluto di sposarvi adesso se vi contentate.¹²⁸

Faà Gonzaga thus not only portrays herself as a model of virtue, but also as an astute observer of Ferdinando's impulsive and irresponsible nature. In fact, it is she who again, this time in the apparent interest of Ferdinando's well-being rather than her own honor, attempts to dissuade him from such a rash decision:

Signore lui è prudente, e come tale lo prego a governarsi: si ricordi nel termine che si trovano gli interessi della sua casa e del suo Stato e non voglia per levarsi un suo capriccio, pregiudicare se stesso perchè con l'occasione di far parentado, può anche aggiustar molte cose sue; però li pensi bene, acciò non abbi a trovarsene malcontento.¹²⁹

Faà Gonzaga ultimately consents to Ferdinando's marriage proposal, but following their impromptu wedding ceremony, she again raises concerns regarding the legal validity of the ceremony, first in private and then in the presence of her father.¹³⁰ Camilla's fears were well-founded since, despite the lack of documentation regarding Ferdinando's true motives and whether his marriage proposal to Camilla was sincere or if he intentionally deceived her, the union did not last long.

¹²⁸ Ibid. [Two hours later His Highness was somehow aware of what I had said to my father. He looked for him and told him that he knew very well what I had decided to do. This thought had amused him so much that, without having in mind any of his interests, he had determined not to deprive himself of me. He wanted me as a wife and soon my father would see the result of his decision. He later came to my place together with the Bishop of Cesarea ... He said to me: "Donna Camilla, the resolution you have reached to take the vows in order to save your reputation, together with the fact that I relish the idea itself, obliges me so much that I have resolved to marry you right now, upon your consent" (130-131)].

¹²⁹ Ibid., 123-124. ["Sir, you are a cautious person and for this reason I pray you to look after yourself. Please keep in mind what is best for your house and your state and do not jeopardize your chances just to satisfy a whim, because relationships acquired through marriage may help you to solve your problems. Think about it so that you will not find yourself unhappy after" (131)].

¹³⁰ "Io dissi al Vescovo: Mons. In questo mio spozalizio vi ritrovo una cosa che mi dà fastidio, ed è se V.S. R.ma possa fare questa funzione se bene è Vescovo, non essendo Parroco" (ibid., 124-125).

Later, even while underscoring her financial and social vulnerability as a fatherless, expectant mother, Camilla continues to strengthen her own self-representation against that of Ferdinando, whom she describes as having been too humiliated to address the issue of their marriage annulment directly:

Come mi vedeva si mutava di colore et in somma pareva non sapesse come fare a venire dove io fossi, per il che mi risolsi una mattina di somministrarli occasione acciò potessi sapere qualche verità e così come biscia all'incanto, con mille scuse e mascare disse che alla pazzia di suo fratello non si poteva rimediare in altra maniera e che riceveva continuamente egli lettere di Francia della Regina sua Zia, che lo tormentava sopra di questo fatto [...] Havendo dunque inteso il tutto pigliai per ispediente il levarmi di Mantova, perchè havendo lui mutato pensiero, dovevo ancor io mutar maniera di trattare.¹³¹

Whereas Camilla portrays the duke's avoidance of confrontation as symptomatic of his weakness and deference to the political interests of his family, in reality his reticence and refusal to leave anything in writing was probably a strategic attempt to avoid incriminating himself in Camilla's forced monachization.¹³² Unlike Ferdinando, Camilla claims to take immediate action, describing how, with some difficulty, she succeeds in obtaining permission to leave Mantua and join her brothers in Monferrato. Apparently fearful of losing his wife and child, Ferdinando tells Camilla that he has appealed to the bishop for assistance:

¹³¹ Ibid., 127-128. [The duke himself ... in seeing me, would change color and seemed no longer able to find his way to where I was. One morning I decided to meet him in order to know something. He seemed surprised and used a thousand excuses and pretenses to say that there was no remedy to his brother's foolishness and that he was receiving letters from the Queen of France, his aunt, instigating him on the matter ... Having therefore understood it all, I decided to leave Mantua. Since His Highness had changed his mind, I had to change my own behavior (133)].

¹³² Cf. Graziosi, 95. In a letter to one of his emissaries, the duke explains the need to avoid a written order in order to eliminate any cause for the annulment of Camilla's forced monachization. All arrangements were thus made by a third party in order to protect the duke. Graziosi cites from *Lettere inedite*, ed. Giulio Monselice (Stabilimento Tipografico Mondovì, Mantova, 1881), 9-10. Sorbelli-Bonfà instead suggests that Camilla's portrayal of Ferdinando as weak but genuine in his affection is historically accurate. She refers to a letter in which Ferdinando implores Camilla not to doubt his love: "Imaginatevi Sig.ra mia ch'io non son ponto mutato nell'amarvi et che vi adoro come prima et quello che dentro di me sento per voi Dio lo sa. Adesso il Gr. Duca mi soccorre di gente et dinari et mia moglie ha fatto quanto ha potuto per spuntar questo soccorso, il quale con mille difficoltà s'è ottenuto, voglio dire che bisogna ch'io vada lesto in certe materie per non mi pregiudicare, ma l'intrinseco è così vostro come era et lo vedrete agli effetti, perchè vi servirò col sangue quando bisognerà" (Sorbelli-Bonfà, 57). Sorbelli-Bonfà cites from the Gonzaga letters (*Lettere originali dei Gonzaga*) housed in the Archivio Storico Gonzaga in Mantua.

La mattina avanti mi partissi, S.A. fu a vedermi e fra le altre cose mi disse: Io ho ditto al Vescovo di Diocesarea che studii ben bene questo nostro caso e vegga quello che posso fare perchè non vorrei poi arrivare a segno di pormi le mani ne' cavelli, e dire: Povero me che havevo figlioli e li ho annegati.¹³³

Based on passages such as this, Graziella Parati argues that Faà Gonzaga consciously constructs a series of oppositional structures in order to assert her power over the duke and her personal circumstances.¹³⁴ Parati identifies a similar dichotomy in the representation of other female characters in the *Historia*, noting that both Ferdinando's aunt, the Queen of France, and his wife, Caterina de' Medici, "represent threatening figures of women in the public sphere who are accomplices in the male plot to isolate and to silence Camilla's voice."¹³⁵ Parati reflects on the significance of Camilla's assumption of Caterina's name in the convent:

Ferdinando's two wives acquire very different roles after his death: Camilla is forgotten in the cloister and Caterina becomes the ruler of Siena. However, Camilla [...] seems determined not to accept her destiny as just another woman forced to take vows. She renames herself in the convent and becomes "Suor Caterina Camilla." She adopts Ferdinando's second wife's name and publicly becomes Caterina (Camilla Faà) Gonzaga, a mirror image of the "other" wife, and therefore proclaims her identity as Ferdinando's wife, as the rightful duchess. She creates her final identity, her renamed body, as a segue to the text of her life, which ends with the description of her isolation within the silencing walls [...] By renaming herself, Faà once more mocks imposed rules and, even in her defeat, attempts to be self-affirming and to challenge the duke's power.¹³⁶

Faà Gonzaga's entrance into the convent concludes the concise narrative arc between her two false marriages, first to Ferdinando and then to the church. Even after agreeing to seek refuge in the convent, Camilla refuses to oblige Ferdinando in his persistent requests that she

¹³³ *Historia*, 128. [The day after, before leaving, His Highness came to see me. Among other things he told me: "I asked the Bishop to study our case very well in order to see what I am to do, because I do not want to throw my hands up in the future and say: Poor me! I had children and I renounced them." I replied: "Sir, you know a lot and do not need others to study things for you. By examining your conscience you will know what to do" (133)].

¹³⁴ Parati, 31.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 38.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 38-39.

remarry, reminding him instead of the continued validity of their union.¹³⁷ Similarly, at the end of her narrative, she asks to be forgiven for her lack of a religious vocation, echoing her earlier affirmation that she had never had a spiritual inclination, and hopes that her desire to obey “those who can order” her is evident in the text.¹³⁸ Her refusal to remarry and her reluctance to take her religious vows are perhaps intended to showcase her respect for the sanctity of both institutions, in direct opposition to the Gonzaga family’s apparent disregard. In exposing the counterfeit nature of both vows, Faà Gonzaga is careful to represent herself as both powerful enough to recognize and resist the deceitful circumstances surrounding her marriage and monachization, but also as powerless to prevent them. This is perhaps why, in requesting that the manuscript not be diffused among a wider audience, she expresses a fear of being mocked for her ignorance.¹³⁹

Despite the differences between Faà Gonzaga’s testimony and the spiritual autobiographies of her contemporaries, there are also some important similarities to be noted in these early examples of Italian women’s autobiographies. Graziella Parati has pointed out, for example, that the autobiographical narratives of both Camilla Faà Gonzaga and Cecilia Ferrazzi are among the few documents that prevent their voices from being “suffocated by the socioeconomic and political context of their century.”¹⁴⁰ Elisabetta Graziosi similarly reflects on the absence of Faà Gonzaga’s other documents, noting that, aside from her memoirs, a few letters, and her testimonies to the bishop and the court notary, all other pieces of writing –

¹³⁷ “Signore chi è maritato due volte può maritarsi anche la terza per mantenere la parola, non già me [...] mi lascierei piuttosto tagliare a pezzi che maritarmi” (*Historia*, 131). Moreover, Finucci writes that Camilla agreed to stay in the convent only after threats had been made on her son’s life (133).

¹³⁸ “Supplico mi sia condonato tutti gli errori e mancamenti non essendo questo mio mestiere” (*ibid.*, 134).

¹³⁹ “Supplicando per grazia degnarsi che la presente scrittura non sia veduta, perchè trattandosi di persone grandi, la verità suole partorire degli odi, come anco acciò non sia burlata la mia ignoranza” (*ibid.*).

¹⁴⁰ Parati, 43.

including her sonnets – have been lost.¹⁴¹ Moreover, in the limited context in which they attempt to defend their position in society and address the oppressive religious and political systems of their time, both Gonzaga and Ferrazzi challenge traditional female roles and use their testimonies to explore a point of intersection between their individual stories and public, documented history. Whereas Parati ultimately concludes that larger questions of “how to construct a dialectic of public and private” and to use literature “as a realm in which public history and autobiographical stories can meet as equals”¹⁴² will not be resolved until the twentieth century, I would instead argue that already in the seventeenth century, and particularly in the representation of Rome and the Catholic Church in the unfinished autobiography of Christina of Sweden, such an interaction between public and private is already present and consciously perceived.

¹⁴¹ Graziosi, 98.

¹⁴² Parati, 43.

I.4 Christina of Sweden's *Vie* and its Impact in Rome

While Queen Christina of Sweden's profound cultural influence in late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century Rome is widely recognized among scholars and historians of the period, the importance of her autobiography has been relatively overlooked. Few, if any, scholars have made a serious attempt to connect the text to the tradition of women's autobiographical writing in Italy. Posed culturally and geographically between the inheritance of Reformation and Post-Tridentine tensions and a new tendency towards greater religious tolerance and intellectual freedom, Christina was both celebrated as a cultural icon and severely scrutinized for her unorthodox conduct and beliefs.¹⁴³ The debate surrounding her abdication of the Swedish throne, her conversion to Catholicism, and her relocation to Rome not only provides the context for her autobiography, but also helps to illustrate the general relationship between religion, culture, and politics in late seventeenth-century Rome.

As the only child of King Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden and Maria Eleonora of Brandenburg, Christina received an education tailored for a future monarch and, following her father's death in the Thirty Years War, she ascended the throne at the age of six. Though the reasons for her abdication in 1654 are still debated, a combination of personal, religious, and political factors undoubtedly contributed to her decision. First, Christina had a responsibility to her nation to provide a successor, which meant that she would need to marry and produce a natural heir. In her autobiography, Christina claims to have had a natural inclination towards both love and ambition, and that she learned to do without the former only thanks to the latter:

Mon tempérament ardent et impétueux ne m'a pas donné moins de penchant à l'amour que pour l'ambition. En quel malheur ne m'eût pas précipité un si terrible penchant, si votre grâce n'eût employé mes défauts mêmes pour m'en corriger. Mon ambition, ma

¹⁴³ Cf. Carlo Santini, "Indirizzo di Saluto," *Cristina di Svezia e la cultura delle accademie: Atti del convegno internazionale, Macerata-Fermo, 22-23 maggio 2003*, ed. Diego Poli (Rome: Il Calamo, 2005), 4.

fierté, incapables de se soumettre à personne [...] m'ont servi de merveilleux préservatifs.¹⁴⁴

In addition to her desire to preserve her independence, a second motive in her abdication was her growing interest in Catholicism; during her brief reign, Stockholm's court enjoyed an unprecedented degree of foreign influence and Christina, who was known as the "Minerva of the North," was in close contact with various scientists and philosophers.¹⁴⁵ These relationships, particularly her friendship with the French minister in Stockholm, Pierre Chanut, who was also responsible for introducing Christina to Descartes, fostered her initial interest in Catholicism, which was furthered by a series of secret discussions with Jesuits between 1651 and 1652.¹⁴⁶ In fact, she cites a religious calling as one of the foremost reasons for her abdication, claiming to have been called to the glory of sacrificing herself to God and obeying her vocation and to have been given a heart meant only for God.¹⁴⁷ Christina's conversion, whether driven by a sincere intellectual and spiritual inclination or used strategically to earn support for her abdication, was

¹⁴⁴ *La vie de la reine Christine faite par elle-même, dédiée à Dieu*, in *Apologies*, ed. Jean-François de Raymond (Paris: Les éditions du Cerf, 1994), 125-126. [My ardent and impetuous temperament gave me no fewer inclinations towards love than towards ambition. What disgrace such a terrible inclination might have brought me, if Your grace had not used my very flaws to correct me. My ambition, my pride, my inability to subject myself to others ... have been an extraordinary protection]. Marie-Louise Rodén argues that Christina's nomination in 1649 of her cousin, Karl Gustavus, to succeed her on the Swedish throne was motivated by a sense of responsibility to maintain Sweden's hereditary monarchy: "That she did not look to the example of Elizabeth I of England, a powerful monarch and an unmarried woman, was surely a result of her conviction that a nation-state lacking a clear hereditary succession would lay itself open to factional and dynastic strife, and perhaps aristocratic rule." Marie-Louise Rodén, *Church Politics in Seventeenth-Century Rome: Cardinal Decio Azzolino, Queen Christina of Sweden, and the Squadrone Volante* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 2000), 116.

¹⁴⁵ Rodén, 118.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid. See also Susanna Åkerman, *Queen Christina of Sweden and Her Circle: The Transformation of a Seventeenth-Century Philosophical Libertine* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1991), 5. At the same time, it is important to keep in mind that Christina's relationship with these Catholic intellectuals was based on scientific and philosophical interests as much as on questions of a purely doctrinal nature. Veronica Buckley notes that "Christina was particularly interested in the Church's attitude to the new scientific thinking. How could Catholic teaching be reconciled, she asked, with what Copernicus and Bacon and Galileo had said? What about the Inquisition? Its reputation was terrifying. What kind of intellectual liberty could be expected with such a force against it?" Veronica Buckley, *Christina, Queen of Sweden: The Restless Life of a European Eccentric* (New York: Harper Collins, 2004), 138. See also René Pintard, *Le libertinage érudit dans la première moitié du XVII^e siècle* (Geneva: Slatkine, 1983).

¹⁴⁷ "Mais vous m'aviez donné un coeur qui ne devait être occupé que de vous" (*La vie de la reine Christine*, 126).

also inextricably linked to her political aspirations.¹⁴⁸ In contrast to her representation in her autobiography of her abdication as a sacrifice of her temporal power, Susanna Åkerman has defined the queen's abandonment of the Swedish throne as a theologico-political act that allowed her to transfer political control of Sweden to others more capable of controlling the military, while freeing herself to establish alliances that might enable her to form a new "political constellation" in Europe.¹⁴⁹

Christina's conversion to Catholicism and relocation to Rome, announced by Pope Alexander VII on November 29, 1655,¹⁵⁰ inaugurated a long and complex relationship with the papal court. The pope, in addition to hosting the queen at the Vatican during her first week in Rome, also nominated Cardinal Decio Azzolino to serve as Christina's personal escort,¹⁵¹ which marked the beginning of a lifelong political and personal relationship. As Marie-Louise Rodén has asserted, from the time they met until their deaths in 1689, Azzolino and Christina, who shared religious ideals and political views and collaborated on numerous official communications and church decisions, "worked together, acted as one and were perceived by colleagues, diplomats, and princes as a team."¹⁵² Thus, Christina's abdication in no way

¹⁴⁸ Cf. Åkerman, xi.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 6.

¹⁵⁰ Before she was able to relocate to Rome and publicly announce her conversion to Catholicism, Christina spent almost eighteen months in Antwerp and Brussels under the protection of King Philip IV as she finalized the Abdication Agreement with Sweden that allowed her to maintain financial control over some Swedish territories (Rodén, 119).

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 120-121. As Rodén notes, being hosted in the Vatican was an exceptional honor: "She arrived on December 20 and was brought directly to the *Torre dei Venti*, where she would stay until December 26. The day after her confirmation at a Pontifical Mass on Christmas Day, Christina left the Vatican and moved into the Palazzo Farnese" (ibid).

¹⁵² Cf. Marie-Louise Rodén, "Cardinal Decio Azzolino and the Problem of Papal Nepotism," *Archivum Historiae Pontificiae* 34 (1996): 123. Rodén mentions numerous "drafts in which one of the two has begun a letter and the other continues it on the same page" (ibid). Upon Christina's death, Cardinal Decio Azzolino was named as her only heir and inherited all of her writings. According to Christina's testament, now held in the Archivio di Stato di Roma, Azzolino was to destroy all of her private documents.

suggested her disappearance from the political scene. On the contrary, her conversion to Catholicism allowed her to make important contacts with the papacy, which in turn allowed her to attempt, albeit without success, to acquire both the Polish throne and the Kingdom of Naples. Between 1656 and 1657, not long after her arrival in Rome, she traveled to France to solicit support from Cardinal Mazarin for her plans to conquer the Kingdom of Naples with the help of French forces and to name Philippe of Anjou as her successor. The plan, which failed when Gian Rinaldo Monaldesco betrayed her and Mazarin to Spain, resulted in the execution of Monaldesco in Fontainebleau in 1657, a decision made by Christina which would greatly strain her relationship to the papacy.¹⁵³

Christina's relationship with Azzolino helps to elucidate both Åkerman's definition of the queen's abdication as a theologico-political act as well as her motivations for writing her autobiography. The origins of the project can in fact be traced to her efforts, starting in 1666, to promote an alliance between Louis XIV and the *Squadrone Volante*, a faction of the Sacred College led by Azzolino.¹⁵⁴ Between 1666 and 1668, Christina was abroad while Rome underwent a tumultuous period during which Pope Alexander VII died and the cardinals of the *Squadrone Volante*, with Christina's assistance, were actively involved in the papal election that resulted in their successful nomination of Giulio Rospigliosi as Pope Clement IX in 1667. Christina's first *Mémoires* were written during this period, at Azzolino's suggestion, and were

¹⁵³ Rodén, *Church Politics in Seventeenth-Century Rome*, 127; Buckley, 202 and 227-248. See also Diego Poli, "Tradizione e ragione: i termini del percorso di Cristina di Svezia," in *Cristina di Svezia e la cultura delle accademie*, 13. On her attempt in 1667, with the support of the Pope, to gain the Polish throne, see Åkerman, 239-240 and Buckley, 286.

¹⁵⁴ Rodén focuses on Christina's role as a "patron" of the *Squadrone Volante* who negotiated with foreign diplomats and European royalty on its behalf. Azzolino's faction was organized around a political platform that attempted to strengthen papal authority by adopting a position of political neutrality in relation to the Catholic sovereign states. As Rodén has shown, Christina's presence in Rome was central to the primary concerns of Alexander VII's pontificate, including ecclesiastical reform and the papacy's relationship to France (Rodén, *Church Politics in Seventeenth-Century Rome*, 14).

aimed at communicating information about Vatican politics to France.¹⁵⁵ The choice of French as the language of her autobiography was thus dictated primarily by her intended audience, though she had already attempted to write an autobiography in Italian a decade earlier, after reading the *Mémoires* of La Rochefoucauld.¹⁵⁶ Veronica Buckley attributes Christina's abandonment of this earlier autobiography, which the queen apparently destroyed herself, to her frustration with her written Italian, which did not improve substantially in the ensuing decade as she continued to rely on others, including Azzolino, to translate letters for her. Her autobiography in French was also ultimately left unfinished, despite her second attempt to complete the work during the last decade of her life, starting in 1681.¹⁵⁷

Though not written in Italian, Christina's autobiography marks an important moment in Italian cultural history, especially in light of its affinities with the tradition of spiritual autobiographies. Maria Conforti places the narrative within the general confines of Catholic autobiographism, while also acknowledging that Christina's dedication of the work to God is problematic. Like Conforti, Ilaria Morresi and Veronica Buckley have noticed similarities

¹⁵⁵ Whereas as Jean-François de Raymond argues that Christina's early attempts to write her autobiography were informed by "les conseils du cardinal Azzolino, lorsqu'elle séjourna à Hambourg en 1666 (*La vie de la reine Christine*, 72), others claim the autobiography was written as a political document during Christina's attempt to gain the Polish throne (See Åkerman, 284; 308). Letters exchanged between Christina and Azzolino in 1668 regarding the drafts of her autobiography were published in Carl Bildt's *Christine de Suède et le Cardinal Azzolino: Lettres inédites (1666-1668)* (Paris: Plon-Nourrit, 1899). See also Id., *Christine de Suede et le Conclave de Clement X*, which is based on Christina's correspondence with Azzolino.

¹⁵⁶ Cf. Buckley, 284. Christina was raised speaking Swedish, German, and French, in addition to her studies of Dutch, Italian, Spanish, Latin, Greek, Hebrew, and Arabic (*ibid.*, 97-101), but French seems to have been her preferred language even among friends and family in Sweden, a preference that was likely influenced by her longstanding contacts with French intellectuals and by the prevalence of French in European cultural circles (*ibid.*, 53).

¹⁵⁷ The unfinished, partially autograph manuscript, begun between 1666 and 1681, was originally held in the Albani library of Rome and is now located in the library of the Faculté de Médecine in Montpellier. Other manuscript copies, with variations, are located in the National Archives (Riksarkivet) of Stockholm in the Azzolino collection. As De Raymond mentions in the introduction to his edition, a marginal autograph note in one of these manuscripts states that the queen began to write the text in June of 1681 (*La vie de la reine Christine*, 72). De Raymond's edition, which is based on the manuscript copies in Stockholm, is shorter and contains variations with respect to the early modern edition published between 1751-60 by Johan Arckenholtz, *Mémoires concernant Christine, Reine de Suède* (A Amsterdam et a Leipzig, Chez Pierre Mortier, Libraire, 1751).

between the content and structure of Christina's autobiography and the general tradition of Catholic spiritual autobiographies from Augustine's *Confessions* to the sixteenth-century autobiographies of Saint Ignatius of Loyola and Teresa of Avila, especially with regard to Christina's division of the narrative according to events preceding and following her religious conversion. Christina, like Teresa of Avila, divides her past self from her new life in Christ,¹⁵⁸ and though Christina's autobiography is "by no means a spiritual document," Veronica Buckley believes that the dedication to God must be read as "a reference, pious or ambitious," to Augustine that reveals Christina's desire to both "compare herself to the great men of the ancient world" and to frame her autobiography "in a spirit of humility."¹⁵⁹

Morresi, referring specifically to the 1683 publication in Amsterdam of the autobiography of the quietist mystic, Antoinette Bourignon, further emphasizes the influence of quietist thought on the later stages of Christina's autobiography.¹⁶⁰ Other scholars have likewise interpreted the document as a record of Christina's acceptance of Quietism, especially considering her close relationship to Miguel Molinos (1627-1696), one of the movement's most prominent representatives and Christina's personal theologian.¹⁶¹ In addition to Christina's longstanding interest in Quietism for its simplicity and the possibility of a direct contact with God, the movement had gained increasing ground in late seventeenth-century Rome following

¹⁵⁸ Cf. Ilaria Morresi, "La vie de la reine Christine faite par elle même, dédiée à Dieu," in *Cristina di Svezia e la cultura delle accademie*, 246, and Maria Conforti, "Avvertenza," in *La vita scritta da lei stessa*, trans. Antonella Moscati, Marina Santucci, and Maria Conforti (Naples: Cronopio, 1998), 12-13.

¹⁵⁹ Buckley, 285.

¹⁶⁰ Morresi, 244-245. See also Luigi Fiorani, "Per la storia del antiquietismo romano. Il padre Antonio Caprini e la polemica contro i 'moderni contemplativi' tra il 1680 e il 1690," in *L'uomo e la storia. Studi in onore di Massimo Petrocchi*, ed. Rita Chiacchella and Giorgio F. Rossi (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1983), 299-343.

¹⁶¹ See Åkerman, 284-294. On the debate over Quietism and the persecutions of Quietists in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, particularly in France, see also Charly Coleman, *Virtues of Abandon: An Anti-Individualist History of the French Enlightenment* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014), 5. On Quietism in Italy, see Massimo Petrocchi, *Il quietismo italiano nel Seicento* (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1948).

Molinos' arrival in 1664.¹⁶² The period during which Christina wrote her autobiography corresponds almost perfectly to the rise and fall of Quietism in Italy and, when Molinos was tried and convicted in 1685 by the Inquisition, Christina took an active role in petitioning to free him from the prison at Castel Sant'Angelo.

Yet, not all of Christina's autobiographical models belong to a religious context. Maria Cristina Lombardi proposes a second possible literary source of inspiration in her study of seventeenth-century noblewomen's autobiographies. Lombardi focuses on the autobiographies of Agneta Horn, a noblewoman from Christina's Swedish court, and a Danish noblewoman, Leonora Cristina (1621-1698), sister of King Frederick III of Denmark. Both women had a personal connection with the Queen of Sweden; Leonora Cristina and her husband were imprisoned for over two decades for their secret ties with the Swedish monarchy and their support for Sweden in the war against Denmark, which ended in 1645.¹⁶³ These autobiographical texts correspond with the gradual emergence of a female self-awareness that, beyond its basis in an earlier religious tradition (in addition to the frequent invocations of God, Lombardi traces the use of biblical expressions and quotations, particularly from the Psalms, in all three autobiographies), also seems to grow out of the greater diffusion of reading and writing practices available to upper-class women in post-Reformation Protestant countries.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶² Cf. Rodén, 294 and Buckley, 206 and 311.

¹⁶³ Cf. Maria Cristina Lombardi, "L'autobiografia di Agneta Horn, nobildonna svedese alla corte di Cristina di Svezia," in *Cristina di Svezia e la cultura delle accademie*, 136.

¹⁶⁴ Lombardi argues for a direct correlation between women's autobiographies and the diffusion of new reading practices among women in Protestant cultures: "il fiorire nel 1600 di opere autobiografiche femminili è stato ricondotto, concordemente da parte della critica, agli effetti della diffusione della lettura tra le donne (e della scrittura, ristretta, questa, tuttavia, alle cerchie femminili aristocratiche) cui la Riforma protestante aveva fortemente contribuito. Le nobildonne cominciano a utilizzare questo mezzo per fissare la storia della propria famiglia, i fatti e gli aneddoti più importanti; talvolta la scrittura femminile assume, come nel caso della danese Leonora Christina e di Agneta Horn, un respiro più ampio, sfociando in autobiografia, un'autobiografia spesso caratterizzata dalla denuncia di una precaria condizione individuale" (ibid., 137).

Discussing the similarities between Agneta Horn's autobiography, written in 1657, and that of Christina, Cheri Register warns against seeing these autobiographies as part of a "conscious and deliberate female literary tradition," since these works were not published and thus could not have been read by women of the period "or even those of the generations immediately following."¹⁶⁵ Nonetheless, a certain degree of specularity is present in these texts, as in the autobiographies of Christina and another famous noblewoman of her time, Anne-Marie-Louise d'Orléans, Duchess of Montpensier, known as La Grande Mademoiselle, who is featured prominently in Christina's autobiography and likewise includes the Queen of Sweden in her own memoirs. Like the autobiography of the Queen of Sweden (as well as that of Leonora Cristina of Denmark), the Grande Mademoiselle's memoirs were likely begun as a political document following her exile from Paris after the Fronde.¹⁶⁶

Finally, beyond the traditions of spiritual and courtly autobiographies, Christina's contacts with Catholic intellectuals and philosophers provided her with a third possible autobiographical model. As Susanna Åkerman notes, even before Christina's official conversion, her contact with Descartes had served as a "Catholic" influence and contributed to her "irreligious scepticism."¹⁶⁷ Ilaria Morresi has likewise discussed the influence of Descartes' *Discours de la méthode* (1637), which adheres to both the paradigms of intellectual

¹⁶⁵ Cheri Register, "Women Writers," in *A History of Scandinavian Literatures*, vol. 3, ed. Sven H. Rossel and Lars G. Warne (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press in cooperation with the American-Scandinavian Foundation, 1996), 475-476.

¹⁶⁶ On the history of the text, which was written over a period of approximately thirty years, between 1659-1690, and was in part inspired by her reading of the memoirs of Marguerite de Valois, see P.J. Yarrow's Introduction to *Mademoiselle de Montpensier: Memoirs*, ed. William Brooks, trans. P.J. Yarrow (London: The Modern Humanities Research Association, 2010). In her autobiography, the Grande Mademoiselle describes in detail the Queen of Sweden's visit to France in 1656-1657, including their various encounters, the queen's physical appearance and reputation for "odd" fashion choices, her decision to dress as a Turk during a masked ball, her "ridiculous manner" of dancing and her general tendency to blaspheme and behave inappropriately (ibid., 92-93 and 115-119).

¹⁶⁷ Åkerman, xi.

autobiography and, though not in a religious context, speculative confession.¹⁶⁸ Morresi views Christina's text as part of a much broader network of seventeenth-century intellectual autobiographies, in which the notion of the confession had already begun to enter into the "modern panorama" of the autobiographical tradition.¹⁶⁹ Morresi argues that Christina is already responding to certain "norms of the literary genre,"¹⁷⁰ which may be true given that she does make reference to her autobiographical models early in her autobiography when she claims to follow the example of those "great men" who succeeded in writing of themselves without vanity and without compromising the truth.¹⁷¹

If Christina had finished her autobiography, we may have had a more complete record of her reading material and the works that influenced her own writing. Instead, because her autobiography ends abruptly with her childhood, such clues can only be found by attempting to reconstruct a list of potentially influential texts, for example by examining the contents of Christina's personal libraries in Sweden and Rome.¹⁷² Sten G. Lindberg's study of Christina's

¹⁶⁸ Cf. Morresi, 247-249.

¹⁶⁹ Focusing in particular on the 1679 autobiography of Thomas Hobbes, Morresi argues that "l'autobiografia proposta come testimonianza di sé o come confessione era allora una prassi comune sia nei paesi cattolici sia in quelli riformati [...] non vi è pensatore, intellettuale o persona di potere il quale nella seconda metà del Seicento non produca un'autobiografia: da Hobbes a Ledere, da Boyle a Malpighi, per citarne solo alcuni, per cui si può parlare di un vero e proprio 'modello pedagogico' a diffusione capillare" (Morresi, 244).

¹⁷⁰ Morresi claims that Christina's autobiography corresponds to the "norms" of the genre in terms of the narrator's relationship to her past self: "propone e predispose un io presente che scrive e che si volge verso il passato per costruirne la narrazione e per esaminarlo" (ibid.). Maria Conforti falls prey to the same *ex post facto* attribution of literary norms: "segue le regole di questo genere letterario: l'io presente di chi scrive si rivolge all'io passato per esaminarlo. Lo 'specchio' autobiografico svolge la sua funzione di emblema della vanità ma anche della prudenza [...] la regina è intenzionata a confessarsi in pubblico, ma anche a fornire la versione autentica su una serie di punti critici della sua vita" (*La vita scritta da lei stessa*, 12).

¹⁷¹ "Je veux suivre votre instinct à l'exemple de tant de grands hommes, à qui vous avez donné la confiance de parler d'eux-mêmes sans vanité, et sans donner aucune atteinte à la vérité" (*La vie de la reine Christine*, 76).

¹⁷² Cf. Sten G. Lindberg, "Queen Christina Bindings," in *Queen Christina of Sweden: Documents and Studies*, ed. Magnus von Platen (Stockholm: Kungliga boktryckeriet, P. A. Norstedt & Söner, 1966), 199. Christina's library, which she brought with her from Sweden to Rome, was open to the public and expanded with the help of her librarians. After Christina's death, the library was left to Cardinal Azzolino and later acquired by Pope Alexander

private library reveals that, in addition to numerous saints' lives and sixteenth- and seventeenth-century memoirs, including the *Mémoires de Martin du Bellay* (1569), the *Mémoires du Cardinal Richelieu* (1649), the *Mémoires de Philippe de Commines* (1648) and *La vie de Gaspar de Coligny* (1643),¹⁷³ she also had a substantial collection of biographies of great leaders, including Alexander, Tamerlane and Theodosius the Great, which profoundly influenced her autobiographical project. The margins of these volumes are filled with "records of the Queen's own inward trial, with History as prosecutor and herself as judge, to determine whether she had been as great a Queen as she had wished to be."¹⁷⁴ Her private library thus reveals that the traditions of spiritual, courtly and intellectual autobiographies provide a foundation for the formal and thematic characteristics of her autobiography, many of which recur in eighteenth-century Italian autobiographies.

In explaining her motivations for writing her autobiography, far from the context of the forced and inquisitorial autobiographies written under external pressure and for very clear purposes, the queen must defend her autobiographical project and protect herself from accusations of pride. She claims to write not to justify her actions, but rather to provide an authentic and sincere testimony of the truth.¹⁷⁵ Christina claims, alongside the tenuous pretense of her gratitude to God and the apparent religious framing of the work, to have an obligation to

VIII, but much information about the history of the collection had already been lost by that time, since the Royal Palace in Stockholm burned down in 1697 and Christina herself had scattered her collection among various locations, often giving away books as gifts or as payments to her librarians. See also Renato Badali, "Il fondo Reginese della Biblioteca Vaticana," in *Cristina di Svezia e la cultura delle accademie*, 363-364.

¹⁷³ See Christian Callmer's list of biographical works in "Queen Christina's Library of Printed Books in Rome," in *Queen Christina of Sweden: Documents and Studies*, 59-73.

¹⁷⁴ Lindberg traces the changes in the queen's preferred reading material, underlining the fact that in the later years of her life, there is only one saint's life in comparison with a much greater number of saints' lives "at the beginning of her Roman period" (221).

¹⁷⁵ "Je n'écris pas pour me justifier; j'écris pour me confesser coupable à toute la terre, comme je le suis à vos yeux, d'avoir cruellement abusé de toutes vos grâces et bienfaits, de vous avoir mal servi, et de m'être rendue indigne de toutes vos bontés" (*La vie de la reine Christine*, 75).

provide a truthful account of her illustrious life for posterity.¹⁷⁶ She expresses the fear that she might be accused of vanity, but also the desire to preserve the memory of her accomplishments both for herself and for future readers:

Faites, Seigneur [...] que tout ce que je dirai porte témoignage à la vérité, qui n'est autre que vous-même [...] Bannissez de mon cœur toute vaine complaisance et vanité. Éclairez mon entendement, afin qu'il connaisse vos grâces et mes défauts. Rappelez en ma mémoire ce que le temps en a effacé, et ce ne doit plus y être rappelé que pour vous rendre toute la gloire, qui vous en est due. Donnez-moi la force de dire la vérité aux dépens de moi-même, quand il le faudra [...] Vous seul savez si je me trompe dans l'opinion que j'ai, que cet ouvrage n'est pas une production de mon amour-propre, ni de ma vanité. J'aurais peut-être mieux fait de laisser ensevelir dans l'oubli une vie, qui le méritait par son néant. Je sais que cet ouvrage ne l'en tirera pas, il périra si vous le voulez et on m'oubliera comme on a oublié tant d'autres qui valent plus que moi. Cependant des gens, aux sentiments desquels je dois déférer m'ont persuadé, que pour l'intérêt de votre gloire il fallait la mettre au jour.¹⁷⁷

While Christina's motivations clearly differ from those of the standard spiritual autobiography, her representation of the circumstances of her birth appeals to some of the same themes found in the autobiographical accounts of Cecilia Ferrazzi and Maria Domitilla Galluzzi, including premonitions, predictions, the significance of the death of one's parents or father and the lasting effects of an illness and fall during infancy. Christina writes that her birth on December 18, 1626, was marked by a "terrible astral configuration" and accompanied by predictions that her mother's pregnancy was likely to result in the death of either the king or

¹⁷⁶ "Je me crois obligée de publier à toute la terre les grâces que vous m'avez faites, en écrivant l'histoire d'une vie, que vous avez rendue illustre et glorieuse" (ibid., 74).

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 74-75 [See to it, God ... that everything that I say will be testimony of the truth, which is nothing other than you Yourself ... Banish from my heart all fatuous complacency and vanity. Illuminate my intellect so that I might know your graces and my shortcomings. Restore to my memory all that time has erased from it, and all that should be remembered if only to bestow upon You all the glory You deserve. Grant me the strength to tell the truth at my own expense when necessary ... You alone know if I am mistaken to believe that this work is not a product of my own self-love or vanity. I would have perhaps been wiser to let my life sink into oblivion; it deserved as much for its insignificance. I know that this work will not protect it from being forgotten. If this is your will, it will perish and I will be forgotten, just as many others more worthy than myself have been forgotten. But some people, whose opinion I must take into consideration, have persuaded me that in the interest of Your glory I should make it known].

queen, or their unborn child.¹⁷⁸ Christina also describes having been miraculously saved when a beam fell onto her crib just days after her baptism, and having recovered from a nearly fatal illness during her first years of life.¹⁷⁹ Christina's conversion to Catholicism is likewise presented as predestined; she recalls her father's precautions against the prediction of his daughter's future religious conversion and the fact that during her baptism she had been mistakenly blessed with the sign of the cross, foreshadowing her enrollment in Catholicism's "militia."¹⁸⁰

The difficulties that Christina's mother had faced in her two previous pregnancies, which had resulted in a stillbirth and a miscarriage, meant that her third pregnancy was critical to the family's future. The need for a successor to the Swedish throne also meant that a male offspring was strongly desired. Christina describes her parents' conviction, aided by various signs, dreams

¹⁷⁸ "Des astrologues, qui se trouvèrent présents à ma naissance, assurèrent unanimement que le point de ma naissance, qu'ils voyaient approcher, était tel qu'il était impossible qu'il n'en coûtât la vie au roi, ou à la reine, ou à l'enfant. Ils assurèrent aussi que si l'enfant pouvait survivre les vingt-quatre heures, il serait quelque chose de fort grand. C'est dans une si horrible constitution des astres que je vins au monde l'année 1626, le 18 décembre, une heure avant minuit. Il faut remarquer que le roi Gustave le Grand, mon père, était né le 19 du même mois, de sorte qu'il n'y eut que peu d'heures de différence entre le point de notre naissance" (ibid., 91).

¹⁷⁹ "Il arriva, peu de jours après qu'on m'eut donné le baptême, qu'une grosse poutre tomba et faillit écraser mon berceau sans me donner la moindre atteinte. Ce fut un miracle qui me sauva et qu'on admira comme tel, car je devais périr. Mais votre puissante main me défendit et me conserva" (ibid., 94-95). The accident, beyond its figurative function in the text, is based on actual occurrences, since records show that injuries from a fall during infancy had caused a slight permanent deformity in the queen's upper body, with one shoulder higher than the other (cf. Buckley, 44).

¹⁸⁰ "J'ai ouï dire à des gens de digne foi qu'on avait prédit au roi que je ne devais pas mourir dans la religion où j'étais née et que je devais tout quitter pour mourir catholique. Cette prédiction [...] fit une si forte impression sur l'esprit du feu roi, que toutes ses pensées ne visèrent qu'à y mettre des obstacles, et il espéra de l'empêcher en me mettant entre les mains des Suédois seuls, dont il croyait être en sûreté, ordonnant surtout d'empêcher qu'aucun catholique n'approchât de moi" (*La vie de la reine Christine*, 119-120); "Le ministre luthérien, qui me baptisa, qui était le grand aumônier du roi, me marqua le front du signe de la croix avec l'eau du baptême, et m'enrôla sans savoir ce qu'il fit, dans votre milice dès ce moment heureux" (ibid., 92-93). Veronica Buckley instead describes the circumstances of Christina's baptism as unremarkable, since the kind of blessing she describes was common in Sweden during the early period of Lutheranism: "the pastor's sign, far from a presaging, was a gesture made instinctive from the force of long habit. And Christina's claim, as so much of her life was to be, was no more than a ruse to persuade her audience" (20).

and astrological predictions, that they would have a son.¹⁸¹ This hope, combined with the fact that Christina was born with her torso partially covered by the amniotic membrane, led to the premature announcement of a male heir that filled the royal palace with “false joy.”¹⁸² This gender ambiguity is fully embraced by Christina. From the moment of her birth, close to midnight the day before her father’s birthday, she emphasizes her proximity to her father and her distance from her mother:

On me voyait riante et tranquille entre les bras du roi mais on ne pouvait me consoler quand j’étais entre les bras de la reine. Ce récit paraîtra aux lecteurs comme à moi-même des bagatelles, mais on me force à le dire; et que peut-on dire d’un enfant qui naît quand on est forcé d’en parler pour le faire connaître.¹⁸³

Throughout the first sections of her autobiography, in which Christina traces her family history through her father’s death in 1632 and her subsequent nomination as queen elect, she consistently refers to herself as a king rather than as a queen, including herself in Sweden’s male line of rulers.¹⁸⁴ Her father’s death and her ascendance to the throne are announced according to

¹⁸¹ “Elle se trouva grosse de moi dans Abo, ce qui leur donna à tous les deux une fausse joie, puisqu’ils se persuadèrent que l’enfant était mâle. La reine ma mère m’a assuré que tous les signes la trompèrent, et lui persuadèrent que je l’étais. Elle eut des songes qu’elle croyait mystérieux, et mon père en eut aussi qui leur présagèrent la future grandeur de leur enfant. Les devins et les astrologues, qui sont toujours prêts à flatter les princes, les assurèrent que la reine était enceinte d’un mâle” (*La vie de la reine Christine*, 90-91).

¹⁸² “Je naquis coiffée depuis la tête jusqu’aux genoux, n’ayant que le visage, les bras, et les jambes libres, ce qui fit croire aux femmes occupées à me recevoir que j’étais un mâle. Ce bruit remplit tout le palais d’une fausse joie, qui abusa le roi même pour quelques heures. Outre l’espérance et le désir qui aidèrent à tromper tout le monde, ce fut encore une espèce de rugissement impérial et extraordinaire, d’une voix grosse que je fis entendre dès le moment que je fus sortie du ventre de mère” (ibid., 91-92).

¹⁸³ Ibid., 94-95. [I was calm and smiling while in the king’s arms, but would not stop crying when held by the queen. To my readers, this fact will seem banal, and I agree. But I’m forced to say these things, and what can one say of a newborn child when one must say something to describe it?].

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 25-28. The first seven chapters are dedicated to Sweden’s political and religious history with a clear focus on how these aspects created the favorable conditions for Christina’s ascension as queen; she traces the history of Catholicism in her native country from 940 to 1523, when Gustavus I, her great grandfather, liberated Sweden from political tyranny, establishing a hereditary monarchy while also introducing what Christina refers to as the “heresy” of Protestantism. Gustavus’s son and Christina’s grandfather, Charles IX of Sweden, is recognized for the 1609 decree that extended the rights of the hereditary monarchy to female offspring.

the standard proclamation, “The king is dead, long live the *king*.”¹⁸⁵ The desire to represent herself as a powerful and adept ruler is perhaps one of the primary reasons for which Christina not only likens herself to her father, but also frequently emphasizes her masculine nature and qualities. She describes having always been repulsed by female traits, clothing and occupations and expresses gratitude for her “completely virile” soul with none of the “typical weaknesses” of her sex.¹⁸⁶ Various anecdotes attest to her lack of feminine qualities, such as her description of a voyage to Kalmar with the king when she was less than two years old:

Où il arriva, et me mit à une petite épreuve, qui augmenta fort son amitié pour moi [...] On douta s’il fallait faire les salves de la garnison et des canons de la forteresse pour le saluer selon la coutume, à cause que l’on craignait de faire peur à un enfant de l’importance dont j’étais; et pour ne manquer en rien, le gouverneur de la place lui demanda l’ordre. Le roi, après avoir balancé un peu, dit: “Faites tirer; elle est fille d’un soldat, il faut qu’elle s’y accoutume.” Cela fut fait [...] J’étais avec la reine dans son carrosse, et au lieu d’en être épouvantée, comme sont les autres enfants à un âge si tendre, je riais et battais des mains; et ne sachant pas encore parler, je témoignais, comme je pouvais, ma joie par toutes les marques que pouvait donner un enfant de mon âge, ordonnant à ma mode qu’on tirât encore davantage. Cette petite rencontre augmenta beaucoup la tendresse du roi pour moi; car il espéra que j’étais née intrépide comme lui.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 101 (my emphasis). “Ce fut la victoire qui prononça mon nom sur le funeste champ d’une bataille, où l’on venait de perdre le plus grand roi du monde. Ce fut elle qui servit en Allemagne de héraut d’armes à me proclamer selon la coutume. Le roi est mort: le roi est vivant. Mais quelle différence entre ces deux rois! Le mort était le plus grand des hommes vivants, et le vivant était la plus faible des créatures.” Jean-François de Raymond notes the general tendency to adopt the male noun *roi* over the female *reine*: “Le souverain, homme ou femme, était proclamé roi, dans la tradition de la Suède. Christine fut particulièrement consciente de cette désignation” (ibid., 101).

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 93. “Car moi, Seigneur, je vous rends grâces de m’avoir fait naître fille, d’autant plus que vous m’avez fait la grâce de n’avoir fait passer aucune faiblesse de mon sexe jusque dans mon âme, que vous avez rendue par votre grâce toute virile, aussi bien que le reste de mon corps. Vous vous êtes servi de mon sexe pour me préserver des vices et des débauches du pays où je suis née; et après m’avoir condamnée au sexe plus faible, vous avez voulu m’exempter de toutes ses faiblesses ordinaires.”

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 97 [When we arrived, he subjected me to a little test that greatly increased his love for me ... No one knew if it was appropriate to fire salvos from the garrison and canons from the fortress to greet him according to the custom because they feared frightening a child of such prestige; to avoid any confusion, the local governor asked to be given orders. The king, after a brief hesitation, said: “Go ahead, fire; she is the daughter of a soldier and must become accustomed as such.” The order was followed ... I was with the queen in her carriage and instead of being afraid as other children of such a young age, I laughed and clapped; and, having not yet learned to speak, I expressed my delight as best I could, with all the gestures that a child of that age can use, and I ordered in my own way for more canons to be fired. This banal circumstance greatly increased the king’s affection for me, because he hoped that I had been born fearless like him]. The Grande Mademoiselle includes a similar anecdote in her own memoirs, in which she describes a fireworks display she attended with Christina in France: “She held my hand during the

Though elsewhere Christina admits that such anecdotes were perhaps hyperbolic attempts to praise the king and his future successor,¹⁸⁸ contemporary representations, such as that of Sforza Pallavicino, who claimed of the young Christina that there was “nothing childish about her aside from her age” and “nothing feminine about her aside from her sex,” corroborate with Christina’s representations of herself as a precocious child with an innate aversion to feminine characteristics:

J’eus une aversion et une antipathie invincibles pour tout ce que font et disent les femmes. Leurs habits, ajustements et façons m’étaient insupportables; je n’avais aucun soin de mon teint, de ma taille ni du reste de ma personne; je ne portais jamais ni coiffe ni masque, et rarement des gants. Je méprisais fort tout l’apanage de mon sexe, à l’honnêteté et à la propreté près. Je ne pouvais souffrir les habits longs et ne voulais passer que des jupes courtes.¹⁸⁹

Christina claims to have realized late in life that her masculine dress and behavior had contributed to a negative perception of her character. She observes, for example, that two of her flaws – laughing too much and walking too quickly – would not be considered negatively if she

display, in which some rockets came very close to us; I was afraid of them; she laughed at me, and said: ‘What! a young lady afraid, who has seen fighting and done such fine and great things?’ [...] She said that what she most wanted above all else was to be in a battle, that she would not be satisfied till then” (*Memoirs*, 93-94).

¹⁸⁸ In another passage dedicated to her childhood, Christina writes: “Je ne témoignais aucune impatience d’enfant: que je ne m’endormais pas durant de si longues cérémonies, et tant de harangues, qu’il me fallait essayer. On en a vu souvent d’autres s’endormir ou pleurer à chaudes larmes en de semblables occasions: mais on me vit recevoir tous les hommages avec un air d’une personne âgée, qui connaît qu’ils lui sont dus. Il faut si peu de chose pour faire admirer un enfant, mais de plus en enfant du grand Gustave: et peut-être que la flatterie qui naît et meurt avec nous, en a aussi exagéré tout ce qu’on m’en a dit” (*La vie de la reine Christine*, 111).

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 121. [I had an invincible aversion to everything that women do and say. I found their clothing, ornaments and manners intolerable; I took no interest in my complexion, figure, or appearance. I never wore a hat or veil, and rarely gloves. I hated all the trappings of my sex, except for modesty and hygiene. I hated long dresses and wanted to wear only short skirts]. Describing her early studies at around the age of ten, she recalls the admiration of one of her tutors, Chancellor Oxenstierna: “ce grand homme fut forcé plus d’une fois d’admirer un enfant dans lequel vous aviez mis de tels talents, et surtout un désir de s’instruire et une capacité d’apprendre, qu’il admirait sans le comprendre, étant si rare dans l’âge où j’étais. Mon précepteur avait le même plaisir. J’étais assidue. J’aimais les beaux livres. Je les lisais avec plaisir. J’avais un désir insatiable de tout savoir. J’étais capable de tout. J’entendais tout sans peine. Quelquefois je lui expliquais ce qu’il n’entendait, ou ce qu’il faisait semblant de n’entendre pas” (*ibid.*, 124). On Pallavicino’s comments, see Rodén, 153.

were a man.¹⁹⁰ Stating that it is too late to correct her ways, she refuses to apologize for failing to adhere to prescribed gender roles, since having never been predisposed towards certain feminine or female attributes, she should have felt no obligation to adhere to them.¹⁹¹ Never, however, does she express a desire to have been born of the opposite sex. On the contrary, she expresses gratitude to God for her unique role as a woman in power:

Après m'avoir condamnée au sexe plus faible [...] Vous avez voulu m'émanciper aussi de toutes ses dépendances, en me faisant naître sur un trône où je devais commander seule. Vous avez voulu me faire connaître, dès le berceau, l'avantage de cette indépendance si grande, que j'ai su conserver, et que je conserverai jusqu'à la mort. Si vous m'eussiez fait naître homme, peut-être que la coutume et l'exemple m'auraient pervertie. J'aurais peut-être noyé dans le vin, comme font tant d'autres, toutes les vertus et tous les talents que vous m'avez donnés.¹⁹²

Here, again, it seems that a combination of social and literary models is at work. Maria Cristina Lombardi connects Christina's preference for male dress and traditionally masculine activities to the female hagiographic tradition and compares Christina's self-representation to images of

¹⁹⁰ "Je ris trop souvent et trop haut, et [...] je marche trop vite. Mais parce que je ne ris jamais mal à propos, j'ai négligé ce défaut, aussi bien que celui de marcher trop vite, qui est un effet de l'impétuosité de mon naturel, ennemi de toute lenteur. Tous ces défauts ne seraient que peu considérables, s'ils ne se trouvaient dans une fille" (ibid., 127-128). On the continued debate over Christina's sexual and gender identity, see Marie-Louise Roden, "Cesare Macchiati, Queen Christina's First Italian Physician: The Hamburg Letters," in *Sidereus Nuncius & Stella Polaris: The Scientific Relations between Italy and Sweden in Early Modern History*, ed. Marco Beretta and Tore Frängsmyr (Canton: Science History Publications, 1997). While Susanna Åkerman has examined the representation of Christina's body in various pamphlets, such as *La vie de la reine de Suede* (Stockholm: Chez Jean Pleyn de Courage, 1677), which claims that Christina's surgeon, Surreau, had been paid to "restore her virginity" following an abortion (cf. Åkerman, 313), Carl-Herman Hjortsjö has discussed in depth the 1965 opening of Christina's sarcophagus, aimed in part at providing an answer to lingering questions regarding her "possible intersexuality." Carl-Herman Hjortsjö, "The Opening of Queen Christina's Sarcophagus in Rome," in *Queen Christina of Sweden: Documents and Studies*, 140.

¹⁹¹ "J'ai encore un défaut dont j'oubliais presque de m'accuser, c'est celui d'avoir trop méprisé les bienséances de mon sexe, et c'est ce qui m'a fait paraître souvent plus criminelle que je ne suis: mais j'ai reconnu trop tard ce défaut pour pouvoir le corriger, et je n'ai pas voulu m'en donner la peine. Je suis même persuadée que j'aurais mieux fait de m'en émanciper tout à fait, et c'est l'unique faiblesse dont je m'accuse: car n'étant pas née pour m'y assujettir, je devais me mettre entièrement en liberté là-dessus, comme ma condition et mon humeur l'exigeaient" (*La vie de la reine Christine*, 73).

¹⁹² Ibid., 93. [After condemning me to the weaker sex ... You have also wished to render me free of its subjections, allowing me to be born on a throne where I had to rule by myself. In this way, You have also wished for me to know, since birth, the advantages of such great independence, which I have been able to preserve and which I will preserve to my death. Perhaps if You had made me a man, custom and examples could have corrupted me. I, like many others, might have denied the virtues and talents that You have given me].

saints and martyrs, such as Catherine of Alexandria, depicted in terms of their mental and physical strength.¹⁹³ At the same time, some alternative or secondary sources for Christina's disregard of gender roles are perhaps to be found in the Cartesian view of the soul as having no sex, a notion that Christina reiterates in her *Maximes*,¹⁹⁴ and in various seventeenth-century galleries of "femmes fortes" and treatises that challenged the Aristotelian view of women's natural inferiority. One example of the latter is Francesco Pona's *Della Eccellenza, et Perfettione ammirabile della Donna* (1653), dedicated to the "inimitable" Queen of Sweden. In the treatise, Pona, a Veronese doctor, academician, and prolific writer, provides historical, anatomical, and biblical examples of female superiority.¹⁹⁵

Describing the ideal education of princes, she not only identifies herself with a male rather than female role, but emphasizes the influence of society in shaping one's identity, referring to education as a "second nature" and arguing that, while a "natural disposition" may exist, a proper education can both improve a good disposition and impede the development of a

¹⁹³ Cf. Lombardi, 150-151. Lombardi references Eva Bergström's analysis of Christina's habits and clothing from a social rather than a biological perspective, arguing that Christina constructs an ambiguous image of herself in order to transcend the limits of her gender. See Eva Bergström, *Drottning Kristina och hermafroditens tankefigur* [Queen Christina and the Ideal Figure of the Hermaphrodite] (Stockholm: Scandinavian University Press, 1998).

¹⁹⁴ "Il est vrai que l'âme n'a point de sexe." Christine de Suède, *Maximes* (Paris: Editions Payot et Rivages, 1996), 58. See also Genevieve Lloyd, *The Man of Reason: 'Male' and 'Female' in Western Philosophy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984); Susan Bordo, *Feminist Interpretations of René Descartes* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999); and Erica Harth, *Cartesian Women: Versions and Subversions of Rational Discourse in the Old Regime* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992). Whereas Bordo qualifies Christina's understanding of body and soul as more Stoic than Cartesian (Bordo, 241), Harth connects Cartesian and Augustinian dualism, claiming that a "major source of Descartes' initial appeal was the apparent universality of his message that his rules and method for discovering truth could be used by anyone, of either sex. His dualist separation of mind and body strengthened the Augustinian concept of mind as a place 'where there is no sex'" (Harth, 3).

¹⁹⁵ Cf. Paola Cosentino, "Dee, imperatrici, cortigiane: la natura della donna nei romanzi degli Incogniti (Venezia)," in *The Italian Academies 1525-1700: Networks of Culture, Innovation and Dissent*, ed. Jane E. Everson, Denis V. Reidy and Lisa Sampson (Oxford: Legenda, 2016), 294. The full title of Pona's treatise is *Della Eccellenza, et Perfettione ammirabile della Donna. Panegirico di Franc. Pona. Cav. Consacrato Alla Incomparabile Regina di Svecia* (In Verona, Presso Antonio Rossi, et Fratelli, 1653). See also *The Equality of the Sexes: Three Feminist Texts of the Seventeenth Century*, ed. and trans. Desmond M. Clarke (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

poor one.¹⁹⁶ As Christina turns to her own education by the agents of the court who were nominated in 1631 to govern the country and oversee Christina's tutelage and finances until she was old enough to ascend the throne, she again shows a disregard for female and feminine attributes:

Le roi avait ordonné à toutes ces personnes de me donner une éducation toute virile, et de m'apprendre tout ce qu'un jeune prince doit savoir. Il déclara positivement qu'il ne voulait pas qu'on m'inspirât aucun des sentiments de mon sexe, que les seuls de l'honnêteté. Il voulait que dans tout le reste je fusse prince, et prince digne de régner. Ce fut en cela que mes inclinations secondèrent merveilleusement bien ses desseins.¹⁹⁷

Christina seems to have actively and wholeheartedly embraced the king's plans for her "virile" education, claiming that, beyond her formal dance and equestrian training, she was self-taught in weaponry and, ignoring the admonishment of her tutors, pursued her passion for hunting, horse racing and gambling alongside her formal studies.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁶ "Ceux qui ont attribué à l'éducation la force et le nom d'une seconde nature, ont sans doute connu combien elle était importante à tous les hommes, mais celle des jeunes princes l'est d'une manière si singulière, que ceux qui la leur donnent mauvaise, ne sont pas moins criminels, que ces monstres (s'il y en a) qui empoisonnent les sources des rivières et les fontaines, où tout le monde va puiser l'eau. Un enfant, qui naît pour le trône est un bien universel d'où dépend la gloire de l'État et la félicité de tous les particuliers. On ne saurait en avoir trop de soin. Il faudrait cultiver ces jeunes et royales plantes avec une application et un art digne d'elles. Cependant l'erreur populaire et les malheurs des princes sont si grands, que le commun des hommes est persuadé qu'il ne faut que travailler à rendre les princes sots, stupides et malhabiles gens, pour se mettre en sûreté d'un pouvoir qui fait tout trembler. Les hommes ont peine à croire, que c'est s'opposer à son propre bonheur, que de se refuser un maître habile homme, rien n'est pourtant plus vrai, et tous les hommes doivent être persuadés, s'ils ne veulent se tromper, que le dernier des malheurs est d'être exposé à la direction d'un sot et malhabile homme [...] Il est vrai que tous les soins et tous les travaux sont perdus si le naturel manque, mais je suis persuadée qu'une bonne éducation rend un excellent naturel plus merveilleux et empêche, du moins pour un temps, un mauvais naturel d'éclater" (*La vie de la reine Christine*, 117-118). Passages such as this reveal Christina's precocious adherence to the notion of the enlightened monarch or "prince éclairé" which, as De Raymond notes, would be embraced a century later by Gustav III. According to De Raymond, "Cette conception allie, avant les exemples du 'gouvernement' de l'enfance des princes par de grands précepteurs comme Bossuet, Fénelon, etc., et les théories pédagogiques du siècle suivant, l'action formatrice et l'appel au 'naturel.' Dans cette théorie essentialiste de l'éducation, Christine s'appuie sur le fondement du 'naturel' où elle trouvait sa justification dans sa filiation à son père comme héros" (ibid.).

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., 121 [The king ordered them to give me a completely virile education and to teach me everything that a young prince needs to know to be worthy of ruling. He openly declared that he did not wish that I be encouraged in any sentiments of my sex, except for kindness. He wished that in all else I be a prince and that I be instructed in all that a young prince must know. In this, my inclinations complied extraordinarily well with his designs].

¹⁹⁸ "J'appris seulement un peu à danser et à monter à cheval. Je sais pourtant les autres exercices, et je me sers de toutes les armes passablement bien, sans avoir presque appris à les manier" (ibid., 122). On Christina's passion for arms, see Brynolf Hellner, "Queen Christina's Private Armoury," in *Queen Christina of Sweden: Documents and*

Beyond the king's demands, formal stipulations for Christina's education were also provided in 1635 by the Swedish Parliament, according to which Christina was to focus on biblical history and avoid "frivolous" and "pernicious" books. As documented in the records of her preceptor, John Matthiae, her religious education was focused on Bible passages, psalms and hymns in German, Latin and Swedish, the Old Testament and Lutheran theology. Under Matthiae's instruction, she also studied Latin grammar and the works of Curtius, Livy, Cicero and the plays of Terence, arithmetic, geography, astronomy and, most importantly, politics.¹⁹⁹

Christina's lengthy meditations not only on the general value of education, but on her own childhood and the effect of her upbringing on the formation of her character have led scholars like Morresi and Conforti to see Christina's autobiography as an exceptional precursor to the late eighteenth-century autobiographies that, following the publication of Rousseau's *Confessions*, dedicate ample space to reflections on childhood.²⁰⁰ Although childhood is certainly an important aspect of many earlier spiritual autobiographies, Christina's careful consideration of the relationship between an individual's natural inclinations and the social climate of the times does show a departure from the way childhood is typically depicted in the religious autobiographies of the seventeenth century, and anticipates many central themes of the major secular autobiographies of eighteenth-century Italian writers.

Studies, 100-117. Hellner suggests that several of the target and hunting guns in the collection, based on their size and elaborate craftsmanship, were probably used by Christina herself. Regarding her passion for "la chasse, la course, le jeu," Christina notes that none of her hobbies distracted her from her studies: "On fit tout ce qu'on put pour m'en empêcher, mais il fallait avoir patience et me laisser faire [...] J'aimais les chevaux, les chiens; mais aucun divertissement de plaisir ne m'a jamais fait perdre un moment, ni de mes études, ni de mon devoir" (*La vie de la reine Christine*, 123).

¹⁹⁹ Cf. M.L. Clarke, "The Making of a Queen: The Education of Christina of Sweden," *History Today* (1978): 228-235.

²⁰⁰ Cf. Conforti, *La vita scritta da lei stessa*, 13 and Morresi, 243.

Her representation of childhood illustrates what is often viewed as one of the primary tensions between spiritual and secular autobiographies, the former being focused on the “conversion” of the corrupt youth who, as in the case of Saint Augustine and Saint Teresa of Avila, embarks on a path towards divine perfectibility, while in the latter the development of the self is often portrayed in terms of a gradual loss of innocence and a movement away from a state of perfection towards one of corruption. Writing of the loss of her “innocence” and her acquisition of “guilt,”²⁰¹ Christina continuously implicates social norms and perceptions, claiming that children are like “monkeys” who imitate the behavior of others, but also like “wax,” which assumes the form that is forced upon it.²⁰² Whereas the comparison to monkeys is a common seventeenth-century analogy for the education of young women, also found in the writings of Maria Domitilla Galluzzi and the Venetian nun Arcangela Tarabotti (1604-1652),²⁰³ Christina’s second metaphor is perhaps a reference to the “wax argument” of Descartes’ Second Meditation.²⁰⁴

²⁰¹ “Pourquoi, Seigneur, n’avez-vous pas permis que je mourusse dans mon innocence? Que j’aurais été heureuse de périr avant que d’être coupable et ingrate envers vous!” (*La vie de la reine Christine*, 94-95).

²⁰² “Les enfants sont comme les singes, ils font tout ce qu’ils voient faire: ils sont comme la cire, susceptibles de toutes les formes qu’on leur imprime” (ibid., 127).

²⁰³ Maria Domitilla Galluzzi, describing her own upbringing, also compares children to monkeys (*simie*): “O Reverendo Padre, quanto giova alli figlioli il bon esempio de’genitori! Io sono stata tanto cattiva che, se gli havessi veduto a far altre cose, forse le haverei imparate; ma non vidi mai in casa nostra far se non del bene e quello imparai [...] Si vuol dire che li figliolini e le simie fanno tutto quello che vedono fare, onde, per questo, doveriano le madri procurare che li loro figlioli vedessero a fare cose bone” (*Vita da lei narrata*, 10-11). In her treatise against forced monachization, *La semplicità ingannata*, Arcangela Tarabotti refers ironically to the false etymology relating nuns (*monache*) to a species of monkey (*mona*): “gli huomini [...] assignarono il titolo di monache à queste infelici, forse per derisione, come derrivato da quel sozzo animalo, che favolescamente si racconta esser stato formato dal Diavolo, quando volve immitar’ il Celeste Creatore, nel formar, una creatura simile all’huomo. Simie veramente sono le monache sforzate; mà più irragionevoli delle simie sono quelli, che ingannevolmente senza spirito veruno vogliono farle adherire alle loro opinioni, e acciò che immitino quello c’hanno veduto far all’altre, le violentano à racchiudersi frà Chiostri.” Galerana Baratotti (Arcangela Tarabotti), *La semplicità ingannata* (Leida, Apresso Gio. Sambix [Elzevier], 1654), 16-17.

²⁰⁴ See René Descartes, “Second Meditation,” in *Meditations on First Philosophy: With Selections from the Objections and Replies*, ed. and trans. John Cottingham (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996). See also

The presence of diverse literary models in Christina's autobiography helps to illustrate the continuance rather than the division of the genre in Italy as it transitioned from a religious to a secular context. Moreover, as important as determining Christina's literary models is the need to recognize her own influential role in Rome's religious and cultural circles. Christina helped to inaugurate a period of cultural flourishing in Italy that produced new spaces and contexts for women writers. For example, she founded a new convent in 1658 in Genoa under the rule of Santa Brigida,²⁰⁵ and her influence extended far beyond her political and religious ties to the papacy. Less than a month after her arrival in Rome, in January of 1656, she opened her first academy, which met for a brief period during Carnival in her temporary residence in Palazzo Farnese.²⁰⁶ Christina's close circle of intellectuals in Rome gained formal status as the Accademia Reale in 1674, which was based in Christina's residence in Trastevere.²⁰⁷ Comprised of twenty-eight members, including scientists, musicians, priests and cardinals (among whom was the future Pope Clement XI), and important literary figures such as Vincenzo da Filicaia, Giovanni Mario Crescimbeni, Francesco Redi and Alessandro Guidi,²⁰⁸ the Accademia Reale

Londa L. Schiebinger, *The Mind Has No Sex?: Women in the Origins of Modern Science* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989).

²⁰⁵ Monson, 6-13.

²⁰⁶ Christina's interests in forming an academy date to the period of her reign in Sweden, thanks to her numerous contacts with intellectuals such as Blaise Pascal, Saumaise, Claude Sarrau and Pierre Chanut. See Ruth Stephan, "A Note on Christina and her Academies," in *Queen Christina of Sweden: Documents and Studies*, 365. Beyond preliminary plans for both an Academy of Theology in Germany, aimed at uniting the Protestant religions, she also hoped to establish an Academy of Philosophy in Stockholm. Christina had likely hoped that Descartes, who arrived at her court in 1649, would serve as the Director of the Academy. In February of 1650, shortly before his death, he drafted its articles at her request. Her plans were delayed following Descartes' death and two years later, when "she sponsored a series of meetings that some called an academy, neither the rules nor the serious spirit of the French philosopher were kept" (ibid.).

²⁰⁷ Vera Nigrisoli Warnhjem, "Le accademie svedesi della regina Cristina," in *Cristina di Svezia e la cultura delle accademie*, 19. Christina's former apartment in Palazzo Riario is now open to the public as part of the gallery in Palazzo Corsini.

²⁰⁸ Cf. Poli, 13-14.

promoted the study of philosophy and poetry with an emphasis on a return to classicism and the cultivation of the Tuscan language.²⁰⁹

After her death in 1689, Christina was named symbolically as the queen, or “Basilissa,” of Ciampino’s physico-experimental academy.²¹⁰ The Accademia Reale was similarly reinstated in 1690 in her memory under the new name of the Accademia dell’Arcadia, which would become the most important literary academy of the eighteenth century in the Italian peninsula.²¹¹ Such posthumous homages show the lasting effect of Christina’s royal patronage and the importance of the support she had provided to scientists, artists and intellectuals during a transitional period of Roman history. As will be addressed in the following chapter, Christina’s literary activity and role as a female founding member of an academy greatly influenced the female members of the Arcadia during the early eighteenth century, particularly Petronilla Paolini Massimi, in whose autobiography, written in 1704, Christina makes a brief but significant appearance.

²⁰⁹ Ruth Stephan’s analysis of the Accademia Reale’s twenty-eight articles is focused in particular on the queen’s promotion of the use of Italian in spite of her lack of complete fluency. Although foreigners were allowed to submit discourses in Latin or their native languages, which would then be translated into Italian, Stephan notes that Christina emphasized the study of “the purity, the gravity and the majesty of the Tuscan tongue” and warned against “the modern style, turgid and bombastic” (367-368). See also Francesca Chiusaroli, “La concezione della lingua ‘volgare’ nelle accademie del Seicento,” in *Cristina di Svezia e la cultura delle accademie*, 119.

²¹⁰ Cf. Åkerman, 260.

²¹¹ Christina’s memory is preserved in the works of various members of the Arcadia, starting with Crescimbeni’s *Arcadia*, the 1709 and 1711 editions of which contain his “apoteosi della regina nella ‘favola’ del viaggio delle ninfe da cui si dipana l’allegoria dei fatti e dei personaggi dell’Accademia,” and continuing with Vincenzo da Filicaia’s dedication of *Elevazione dell’anima a Dio* to Christina (Poli, 15).

Chapter 2
Early Eighteenth-Century Forms of Self-Expression

II.1 Petronilla Paolini Massimi's *Vita*

Like Camilla Faà Gonzaga nearly a century earlier, Petronilla Paolini Massimi (1663-1726) recorded the events of her life from within the walls of a convent even though she was married and had no apparent religious vocation. Despite a privileged background, Petronilla's fortune was reversed early in her life when, following the assassination of her father, she and her mother were forced to seek refuge in a Roman convent. Petronilla eventually returned to the convent in order to escape an abusive marriage and dedicate herself to her studies. She was admitted to the Academy of Arcadia in 1698 and was considered even by her contemporaries as one of the most representative women poets of the academy of her time. She documented the events of her life and career in her 220-page manuscript autobiography, the *Vita della Marchesa Petronilla Paolini Massimi da se medesima descritta*, completed in 1704.

Currently, no printed editions of the *Vita* exist and no scholarly studies have addressed the document in its entirety. Because the original manuscript was lost in the early twentieth century and its whereabouts remain unknown, the editors of the most recent and comprehensive critical edition of Petronilla's life and works, the four-volume *Petronilla Paolini Massimi. La vita e le opere* (2004-2006), lament the loss of the document.¹ Their analysis is based solely on a few short excerpts of the manuscript concerning the period of her marriage, between 1670-1690, which were published by Prospero Colonna in 1911 in his biography of Petronilla's husband.²

¹ *Petronilla Paolini Massimi. La vita e le opere*, ed. Antonella Gamberoni, Mauro Martelli, Luca Ricciardi and Rosa Tignanelli, 4 vols. (Avezzano: C.d.C. Editrice, 2004-2006).

² Prospero Colonna, who was married to a descendant of the Massimi family, discovered the document in the family archives and published the excerpts in *Francesco Massimi e i suoi tempi (1635-1707)* (Rome, 1911), 52-72. Benedetto Croce expressed a desire to consult the archives himself, and in the meantime supplied some additional information about the various documents and their location: "Un'ulteriore indagine sulla nostra scrittrice sarebbe da condurre (e volevo farla io, ma me n'è mancato l'agio) con lo studio delle sue carte letterarie, che erano nell'archivio dei Massimi, cioè del ramo che si estinse nei Colonna di Paliano e ora si serbano in quell'archivio dai figli di Piero Colonna e di Adele Luisa Gregorini." Benedetto Croce, "Fidalma Partenide ossia la marchesa Petronilla Paolini Massimi," *Quaderni della "Critica"* 4, no. 10 (1948): 65. Among the titles of documents found in

Without access to the full manuscript, the work of previous scholars on Petronilla's autobiography has lacked both depth and accuracy. Although at present no further information or studies regarding the history of the manuscript have been published, it is now possible to consider the autobiography in its entirety, thanks to a manuscript copy that was donated to Harvard from a private collection in 1997 and digitized in 2012.³

It is difficult to discern Paolini Massimi's motives for writing her autobiography. According to Mauro Martelli and Luca Ricciardi, who base their argument only on the short excerpts published by Colonna, her autobiographical project may have grown out of a request for legal separation from her husband, since one or more written testimonies regarding her marital life would probably have been required, under legal and religious counsel, in order to justify her abandonment of her husband and children and entrance into the monastery.⁴ If this had been the case, Paolini Massimi's narrative would have found a precedent in Camilla Faà Gonzaga's autobiographical testimony, in which entrance into a monastery is presented as the only viable option following a failed marriage. Martelli and Ricciardi's hypothesis is logical, especially considering that the excerpts of the autobiography to which these scholars had access perfectly correspond to the years of Petronilla's marriage and she acknowledges having written the work at the request of a third party. However, had these scholars been able to consult the entire manuscript, they would have realized that Petronilla's narrative, unlike that of Faà Gonzaga, is

the archives, Croce lists the *Memorie di famiglia*, her prose and poetic works, nearly all of the letters addressed to her, and her correspondence with her sons from the years between 1707-1709. See also Martelli and Ricciardi's introduction to the "Memorie della mia vita," in *Le prose. Opere letterarie e scritti privati*, vol. 3 of *Petronilla Paolini Massimi. La vita e le opere*, 128.

³ *Vita della Marchesa Petronilla Paolini Massimi da se medesima descritta li 12 Agosto 1703* (Houghton Library, Harvard University, Ms. Ital 180), hereafter *Vita*.

⁴ Without access to the full manuscript, Martelli and Ricciardi can only make conjectures regarding its date of composition and the purpose of the autobiography: "Non [...] possiamo indicare con esattezza il periodo in cui le memorie furono scritte. Esse potrebbero costituire una narrazione completa della vita della poetessa, se fossero state scritte durante gli ultimi anni della sua esistenza, oppure limitarsi al racconto della sua vita matrimoniale, magari come testimonianza o memoria redatta a fini puramente processuali" (127).

not limited to a description of the years of her marriage. Instead, she recounts the entire story of her life, from her birth in 1663 to the time of writing in the monastery, between 1703 and 1704. In the concluding paragraph of her autobiography, Paolini Massimi addresses her reader directly, noting that by narrating the events of her life from cradle to grave (“dalla cuna [...] alla tomba”), she has satisfied his or her curiosity to know all of the events of her life up to the present date:

Così dalla cuna aspersa di pianto vado a gran passi avvicinandomi alla tomba centro di lacrime, e se talvolta mi lusinga la speranza, e vuol farmi credere un giorno sia per girare la rota la mia fortuna, e dimostrarmi più lieta la sua faccia, la riguardo come una consolazione tormentatrice, e mi rivolgo a considerare che li disegni umani sono per lo più vani e fallaci, e se noi non siamo che un'ombra, essi sono fumi, se la vita non è che un sogno, essi sono chimere e larve. Il marchese mio marito vive ancora in Ferrara settuagenario, et ecco sodisfatto, la vostra amichevole curiosità, di sapere tutti quelli avvenimenti della mia vita sino ad oggi 26 Aprile, 1704.⁵

A second hypothesis is that Petronilla wrote her autobiography at the request of her confessor. As with most spiritual autobiographies, she addresses a single reader and does not initially appear to anticipate the diffusion of her narrative among a larger audience. Moreover, she refers to her reader as the individual “who holds my soul in his hands” (“chi tiene in mano la mia anima”), a phrase that is marked with an asterisk in the manuscript copy and accompanied by a marginal note that suggests that Petronilla was referring to her spiritual director (“cioè al suo Padre spirituale”):

Il descrivere da se medesima la propria vita qual era dovesse destare agl'occhi esposta del mondo sarebbe un'intrapresa sì malagevole, che mi apporterebbe spavento, poiché se mi uscisse dalla penna una lode dei miei genitori, o di me stessa sarebbe un orgoglio superbo che mi sarebbe rimproverato per sempre, e se volessi sopprimere gli encomi a chi mi diede la vita [...] sarebbe un'umiltà ipocrita che nel tradire la verità mi renderebbe ingrata al genitore e al cielo; Porta anco seco la narrativa il biasimo di alcune persone a me sì congiunte che mi si renderia quasi impossibile descrivere il decorso della mia vita

⁵ *Vita*, c. 221v. [Thus from a cradle sprinkled with cries, I rapidly approach my tomb, center of tears, and if at times hope deceives me and leads me to believe there will come a day when fortune will turn to show me her better side, I see it as a torturous consolation, and I turn to consider how human designs are for the most part vain and deceptive, and if we are nothing but a shadow, they are nothing but smoke, and if life is but a dream, they are Chimaeras and larvae. The Marquis my husband, now in his seventies, stills lives in Ferrara, and now I have satisfied your friendly curiosity to know all the events of my life until today, April 26, 1704].

fedelmente; e nel perdere lor quel rispetto, che devesi conservargli sin alla tomba illibato; ma se rifletto che deve solo osservarsi da chi tiene in mano la mia anima mi farò animo di palesargli ogni più interno nascondiglio del mio cuore.⁶

Ultimately, it is impossible to know whether the individual who first encouraged Petronilla to record the events of her life was a legal or religious authority, or simply a fellow writer, academician, friend or family member. It is, however, immediately clear from the incipit of the narrative that Petronilla's implicit trust in her reader seems to allow her to overcome her fears of undertaking so arduous an enterprise (“un'intrapresa sì malagevole”) as that of writing her life story and sacrificing both her humility and the respect of many of her family members in order to expose the truth. By addressing, or claiming to address, a trusted confidante as her sole reader, Petronilla is able to lay the foundations for a narrative that promises to be enticingly truthful without compromising her reputation.⁷ Moreover, she demonstrates an autobiographical self-consciousness that will only be found in later male autobiographers: she is aware that her status as an autobiographer is unique, since her life has been neither “holy” nor “royal.” Distinguishing her story from hagiographic and courtly models of life-writing (of which she nonetheless continuously avails herself), she claims that her narrative will fill her reader with “wonder” and illustrate how nobility, wealth, marriage, and children are not sure indicators of happiness:

Mi accingo a descrivere una vita che non è santa, non è reggia, ma ripiena di quei accidenti che sorprende di meraviglia il lettore [...] è la mia vita uno specchio in cui si può l'umanità miserabile riconoscere essere fallace il riporre il colmo della felicità

⁶ Ibid., c. 9r. [Describing one's life as it was, should it be exposed to the world, would be such an arduous enterprise that it would cause me great fear, since if praise for my parents or of myself were to spill from my pen, I would be forever reproached for such arrogant pride, and if I wished to suppress praise for those who brought me into this world ... it would be a hypocritical humility that, by betraying the truth, would make me ingrateful to my parents and God. My narrative also requires the condemnation of several individuals who are so tied to me that it would be almost impossible to describe the events of my life faithfully without losing their respect, which must be conserved until death; but if I consider that it will be observed only by he who holds my soul in his hands, I will find the resolve to illuminate for him the most hidden corners of my heart].

⁷ “Senza alterare il vero, palliare il male o il bene, e senza timore di taccia” (ibid., c. 2v).

nell'oro, nella nascita, avvenendo matrimonio e prole poiché queste insieme formano le miserie del viver mio.⁸

Petronilla Paolini Massimi's autobiography merits critical attention not only because of its literary and historical value, but also because it predates the major eighteenth-century Italian autobiographies authored by males and anticipates a number of autobiographical topoi, including her emphasis on the ostensible truthfulness of the narrative, the presence of premonitory events that indicate a natural (and sometimes supernatural) inclination towards the arts, lengthy descriptions of the books she encountered during childhood and adolescence, and the extreme measures taken to cultivate her passion for literature, including theft and studying through the night.⁹

As a child bride with many financial hardships and a limited formal education in the monastery, the unique circumstances of Petronilla's life help to illustrate the changing cultural environment in which she lived and the new opportunities afforded to women writers who did not necessarily belong to elite, aristocratic circles. Born in 1663 in Tagliacozzo (Abruzzo), an important administrative center under the governance of the Colonna family, Petronilla was the only child of Silvia Argoli and Francesco Antonio Paolini. Both of her parents were of noble lineage and enjoyed considerable wealth; her father had traveled in France and Spain with Lorenzo Onofrio Colonna and was named baron of two nearby territories, Ortona dei Marsi and Carreto, in 1666. In 1667, when she was four years old, her father was murdered by unknown

⁸ Ibid. [I am preparing myself to describe a life that is neither holy nor royal, but full of those accidents that surprise the reader with wonder ... my life is a mirror in which miserable humanity can recognize that it is wrong to associate the peak of happiness with wealth, noble birth, marriage and children, since these together form the miseries of my life].

⁹ Cf. Franco Fido, "At the Origins of Autobiography in the 18th and 19th Centuries: The *Topoi* of the Self," *Annali d'Italianistica* 4 (1986): 168-180, and Stefania Buccini, "Letture clandestine e 'apprendisti lettori' nelle autobiografie del Sette-Ottocento," *Yearbook of Italian Studies* 10 (1993): 29-39.

assailants, an event which left she and her mother without protection.¹⁰ They were temporarily given shelter in the nearby city of Sulmona by her father's sister and her husband, the Baron Sanità; Francesco Paolini's brother, Giacinto, took over the administrative duties of the household but also attempted to change Paolini's will in order to increase his own inheritance.

Under increasing pressure to remarry, Petronilla's mother sought refuge in the monastery of St. Catherine of Siena in the same city, where her sister-in-law was a nun, and managed to keep Petronilla with her. After six months spent in relative quiet, Petronilla and her mother were forced to exit the monastery and received an order stating that their property would be confiscated if they left the territory. Despite these warnings, with no support from her relatives and fearing a second order revoking her custody of Petronilla, Petronilla and her mother fled to Rome in 1670, accompanied by one of her husband's chaplains (and Petronilla's future teacher), Giuseppe Venanzi, where they were offered protection by Pope Clement X.¹¹ After a brief stay with relatives, who were reluctant to provide assistance given the conditions under which Petronilla and her mother had fled, they moved into a small apartment across from the monastery of Spirito Santo.¹²

Under the pretext of helping to prevent the sequestration of their goods and restore their property rights, Petronilla's uncle followed them to Rome, but his true intentions were revealed when he left with all of their documents, requiring them to move again and forcing Petronilla's

¹⁰ Cf. Natalia Costa-Zalessow, "Fragments from an Autobiography: Petronilla Paolini Massimi's Struggle for Self-Assertion," *Italian Quarterly* 38 (2001): 27. Costa-Zalessow adheres to the periodization offered in Pietro Antonio Corsignani's *Vita di Petronilla Paolini Massimi marsicana, detta Fidalma Partenide* (1727), in which he establishes the date of Francesco Paolini's murder as taking place in 1667. Luisa Ricaldone instead suggests that Petronilla was between six and seven years old at the time of her father's death (Luisa Ricaldone, "La donna di pietra: i versi di Petronilla Paolini Massimi," in *La scrittura nascosta: Donne di lettere e loro immagini tra Arcadia e Restaurazione* [Paris-Fiesole: Honoré Champion-Cadmo, 1996], 141); Petronilla herself claims the event occurred in February of 1671 (*Vita*, c. 28v).

¹¹ Cf. *Vita*, c. 38v.

¹² *Ibid.*, c. 40v.

mother to begin considering a second marriage in the hope of reestablishing financial security for herself and her daughter. A marriage agreement was stipulated but never formalized, and Petronilla and her mother instead moved into the monastery of Spirito Santo in 1671, with the result that their property was officially sequestered and Petronilla's uncle gained control over their finances.¹³

In what initially appeared to be a stroke of good fortune, Pope Clement X's nephew by marriage, Cardinal Paluzzi Altieri, proposed a marriage agreement between both Silvia and Petronilla (who was only eight years old at the time) and two of brothers of the Massimi family, who were related to the Altieri family.¹⁴ Despite her initial reservations, her mother agreed to the marriage, hoping to remain close to her daughter by marrying into the same family.¹⁵ Ultimately, however, only the arrangements for Petronilla's marriage were concluded; an agreement between she and Francesco Massimi (1635-1707), who was nearly thirty years her senior, was formalized in 1673 with the special papal approval ("dispenza sopra l'età") needed to sanction the marriage of such a young child.¹⁶ Given her age, Petronilla did not immediately move into Francesco Massimi's home, but instead remained in the convent for a period of time before moving into the family property in the Palazzo Massimi, where she was placed under the care of Francesco Massimi's relatives. At the age of eleven, she moved into Francesco Massimi's private

¹³ Ibid., c. 47r.

¹⁴ Cardinal Paluzzi Altieri sought help from Silvia's friends and family members to arrange a marriage between Petronilla and one of Massimo Massimi's children. Massimi, the pope's cousin, had died in 1652, leaving his numerous children with financial difficulties. At the time, Pope Alexander VII had assisted the family by placing the girls in monasteries and the boys in courtly and military occupations. Under Clement X, most of the sons were called back to Rome and given various duties.

¹⁵ Cf. *Vita*, cc. 59r-60v.

¹⁶ In the majority of marriages during this period, the groom was between fifteen and thirty years older than the bride, thus the age difference between Petronilla and Francesco was not unusual (cf. Costa-Zalessow, 30).

apartments in the Castel Sant'Angelo, where he was employed as the vice-commander (*vice-castellano*) of the prison.¹⁷

Though scholars have often depicted Petronilla's marriage and life in Castel Sant'Angelo in terms of physical brutality and isolation, the early years of her marriage were not without positive aspects, including opportunities to play music, write and meet important intellectual and cultural figures. Petronilla was also permitted frequent visits with her mother and her in-laws, who were very fond of her. Despite a harrowing miscarriage early in her marriage, she subsequently gave birth to three sons, Angelo, Domenico and Emilio, born in 1679, 1681 and 1682, respectively. A significant obstacle, however, remained the question of her finances, as Petronilla had no access to what she believed to be rightfully hers and no solid evidence of the terms of her dowry.¹⁸ Meanwhile, in 1685 her husband was granted control over her father's properties in Ortona and Carreto.¹⁹ Desperate to escape her husband's increasingly controlling and often violent behavior, in 1690 Petronilla succeeded in obtaining permission to join her mother in the convent of Spirito Santo, claiming that her mother's ailing health required her physical presence. Though liberated from her husband's jealousy and restrictive regulation of her social interactions, Petronilla was prohibited from seeing her children or leaving the convent and

¹⁷ Petronilla's exit from the convent is estimated to have taken place between December of 1773 and 1775 (see Ricaldone, 141 and Martelli and Ricciardi, "Quale vittima innocente al sacrificio," in *La vita*, vol. 1 of *Petronilla Paolini Massimi. La vita e le opere*, 43). Based on Massimi family documents, 1673 is the more likely date, but there is a discrepancy in Petronilla's account, since she claims to have arrived at Castel Sant'Angelo at the age of eleven in 1678, but in 1678 she would have been fourteen years old: "Correva l'anno 1678 e a me l'età di 11 anni compiti e entrata nelli 12, e il mio sposo (che sin dal primo giorno dei miei sponsali cominciò a tirare i frutti dei miei beni) volle compire il matrimonio e nonostante la ripugnanza di mia madre che avrebbe voluto spirato anche il duodecimo anno, stabili l'ultima domenica di carnevale 20 febbraio nel quale giorno si fecero le nozze e mi condusse nel castello" (*Vita*, cc. 78v-79r).

¹⁸ The exact amount of the dowry is listed in the "Inventario Paulini e Ca[pito]li matrimoniali col M[es]ser Fran[ces]co Massimi" (ASR, "Fondo Famiglia Massimo dell'Aracoeli," fascicolo 399) which lists all the property, animals and income of the Paolini estate from 1666-1673 at an estimated value of 75,915 scudi (cf. Costa-Zalessow, 29).

¹⁹ *Vita*, c. 106v. See also Costa-Zalessow, 31.

she still had no access to her finances. On the other hand, she gained the tranquility and space necessary to dedicate herself to reading and writing and, ironically, to participate in a larger network of intellectuals and poets.

In the monastery, Petronilla was able to resume her studies of Latin and contemporary literature, exchange poetry with various men of letters, and become affiliated with several literary academies, including the Arcadia.²⁰ She also began writing her autobiography, in which she included descriptions of her personal relationships with important literary figures, including Queen Christina of Sweden, Alessandro Guidi, and Antonio Ottoboni. Paolini Massimi's narrative is thus a valuable historical document that provides a firsthand account of the growing importance of female poets in the Arcadia. Illustrations of herself as eschewing traditional gender roles, firing weapons, and adopting male dress both on stage and in public are reminiscent of certain prominent themes of Christina of Sweden's autobiography, thus further suggesting a degree of intertextuality.²¹ Like Christina of Sweden, Petronilla was the third-born child and the only one to survive past infancy.²² Also like Christina, she describes her parents'

²⁰ In addition to the Academy of the Infecondi and the Arcadia, several scholars have found documentation of her membership in academies outside of Rome, including the Intronati of Siena, and the Insensati of Perugia (cf. Costa-Zallessow, 31).

²¹ Although I have not yet found evidence of the circulation of Christina's autobiography in Rome during Petronilla's lifetime, it is possible that parts of it may have been read by those with ties to either the papal court or to Christina's academy, two environments to which Petronilla had access in the years prior to writing her own autobiography. It was common practice, especially in academies, to circulate manuscripts among friends and fellow academicians. Moreover, it is known that Cardinal Pietro Ottoboni became the owner of the queen's books in 1690, soon after his great uncle was named Pope Alexander VIII in 1689. As Christian Callmer has noted, most of Christina's manuscripts were transferred to the Vatican library in May of 1690, while her printed books "were instead moved to the Palazzo delle Cancellerie where Pietro Ottoboni (1667-1740), the son of the pope's nephew, lived." Christian Callmer, "Queen Christina's Library of Printed Books in Rome," in *Queen Christina of Sweden: Documents and Studies*, ed. Magnus von Platen (Stockholm: Kungliga boktryckeriet, P. A. Norstedt & Söner, 1966), 61-62.

²² Both of Francesco Paolini and Silvia Argoli's first children, Paolo Alessandro and Maria, died at around the age of one (*ibid.*, c. 11r).

hope and belief (having fulfilled the proper devotional obligations, consisting of prayers and money)²³ that she would have been male.

Aided by a series of predictions and premonitory signs, her parents were certain that Petronilla, whose kicks from inside the womb were strong enough to knock a pillow from her mother's lap onto the floor, would have been a boy.²⁴ Shortly after her birth, a famous physiognomist visiting their home predicted great adversity in her future, concluding that if she were to overcome various dangers and threats on her life, she would become a "virile" friend of the liberal sciences.²⁵ Whereas Petronilla's siblings had been baptized by influential religious and political figures (a Spanish cardinal and an ambassador), Petronilla's baptism by an impoverished potter is meant to illustrate her parents' sense of charity but also to indicate that, from the moment of her birth and despite being born into a wealthy family, Petronilla lacked a network of financial, social and political support.²⁶

Predictions of Petronilla's "virility" are confirmed by her close ties to her father and the distance that she immediately establishes from her mother. Fearing that breastfeeding Petronilla would delay chances of another pregnancy, Petronilla's father hired a wet nurse shortly after her

²³ This also included lighting twelve candles, each inscribed with one of the names of the Apostles, during her mother's labor, with the intent of naming their child after the last candle to burn out, which ended up being that of Peter: "Si consumarono ben presto 11 candele restando per ultima accesa quella, portava il nome dell'Apostolo Pietro [...] sul far dell'alba invece del sospirato bambino nacqui io alla luce del mondo, a cui non sembrando bene adattarsi il nome di Pietro lo convertirono nel battesimo in Petronilla Anna Maria Antonia" (cc. 12v-13r).

²⁴ "Lusingava l'animo della mia genitrice la speranza di dar alla luce un maschio, e per la timidezza del ventre, e per non sentire alcuna gravezza, ed anche per la velocità con cui si moveva nel corpo il feto dal di cui moto fu sin una volta respinto a terra il cuscino del suo lavorio dal grembo" (ibid., c. 12v).

²⁵ "Disse io dimostrare una buona indole, ma venire sottoposto a grandi avversità e travagli [...] qualche segno mi presagiva pericolo di morte, ma se superava l'ascendente benefico sarei stato una donna (lo dirò con rossore) forse virile amica delle scienze liberali" (ibid., c. 17r).

²⁶ "Nel battesimo si praticò un'altra non so dir mi debba umiltà o sia divozione [...] fu così il mio battesimo lontano dalle pompe, e dall'interesse de' regali o protezioni" (ibid., cc. 13r-14v).

birth.²⁷ Petronilla is highly critical of this common social practice of submitting infants to “mercenary breasts” (“poppe mercenarie”) and believes it is the cause for the differences between her mother’s character and her own:

Questa credo io sia l’origine della diversità del figlio da loro genitori; poiché con il latte bevono i figli anche le inclinazioni [...] così credo io che da fanciulla sdegnassi una tal pratica e come avessi in sì tenera età una perfetta cognizione.²⁸

Petronilla believes that her parents would have eventually succumbed to her refusals to nurse at any breast but that of her mother had her wet nurse not appealed to the Virgin Mary promising to make a pilgrimage to the Holy House in Loreto, a famous shrine venerated as the birthplace of the Virgin, in bare feet and a hair cloth if Petronilla would begin to accept her milk.²⁹

Anecdotes such as this, in which the wet nurse’s prayers to the Virgin were answered, reveal the influence of spiritual autobiographical models in Petronilla’s description of her infancy and childhood. Many other events in the early years of her life are described in terms of miraculous or divine interventions; for example, Petronilla learns to walk very late, at the age of two, only thanks to her attraction towards a figure of the Madonna and Child.³⁰ Petronilla was

²⁷ “Volle mia madre lattarmi col proprio latte, ma non glielo permise mio padre che per poco tempo, poiché appena toccavo il quarto mese mi si provvide di balia” (c. 14v).

²⁸ Ibid., cc. 14v-15r. [I believe this is the origin of the diversity of a child from its parents, since along with milk, children also imbibe their inclinations ... for this reason I believe that as a baby I disdained this practice as if in such a tender age I had a perfect understanding].

²⁹ “Mossi a pietà i genitori già si risolvevano soddisfarmi, quando la nutrice tutta in lagrime per il timore di perdere il buon lucro attendeva dal mio allievo si gettò a piedi d’una devota Imagine della Vergine di Loreto facendo voto di visitare la Santa Casa a piedi scalzi e con cilicio, se mi piegavo a prendere il latte dalle sue poppe. Gran forza della fede! [...] io che sin a quel tempo avevo mostrato tanto abborrimento mirandola [...] sorrisi e incominciai a bere il suo latte senza altra contradizione” (ibid., cc. 15r-16v).

³⁰ “Giunta io al vigesimonono mese non sapeva muovere un passo senza essere sostenuta, lo che molto affligeva i miei genitori, successe però che essendo portata in mia casa una bellissima figura della Vergine Santissima del Rosario col Bambino nelle braccia [...] mi portò la nutrice in quella stanza ove era detta Imagine e io mostrando gran piacere a guardarla volli a forza scendere dalle braccia, da che incoraggiata una di [...] mie zie prese il bambino, e dilungandosi lentamente da me pregò la Santissima Vergine voler in tale occasione sciogliere i miei passi ordinando alla balia mi lasciasse, quando ecco vedendomi intorno abbandonata, mi incamminai tutta sola a quella parte ove era detta Imagine e vedendomi più volte delusa perché ella si ritirava mi diedi alle lagrime sin chè

fascinated by sacred images and claims to have been saved by “divine grace” from several accidents, including falling into flames and into a vase full of water while trying to reach some figures of the Virgin Mary and Saint Anthony.³¹ At the same time, Petronilla is equally drawn to books from an early age; after forcing Petronilla to relinquish the infant Jesus that she carries around with her in order to lend the figures of the Madonna and Child to their church, her father succeeds in quieting her tears only by substituting it with a Book of Psalms, confirming her natural inclination towards reading and writing (“natural genio al leggere et alle lettere”).³² She describes demanding paper from her father and scribbling on top of his own pages as she sat next to him pretending to write and read:

Vollì mi dasseto nelle mani certe carte, di che mi mostrai molto contenta facendo prova di leggerle con un certo mormorio, onde mio padre godendone, e prendendomi spesso nelle braccia soleva dire – Se questa figlia vivrà voglio fargli apprendere tutte le scienze, e spero sia per diventare una gran donna [...] mi teneva frattanto al più delle volte sopra un’alta sedia presso del tavolino ove egli di continuo scriveva, senza che ne dimostrassi alcuna noia, anzi mi divertiva nel rivolgere delle carte e libri imitando gli atti di mio padre sino a fare delli tratti di penna sopra dei suoi scritti, senza però egli ne dimostrasse alcuna alterazione. Oppure mi poneva in atto di leggere quello mi pareva avere scritto, il che molto divertiva, e dava piacere a mio padre.³³

Thus, while scholars of the Italian autobiographical tradition have often argued that the *Vita* of Vittorio Alfieri (1749-1803) is among the first autobiographies in which childhood memories are

potei ottenere nelle mani il bambinello, quale mi vezzeggiava tenendolo stretto per molto tempo, e da allora in poi caminai sempre di piè fermo senza aiuto” (ibid., c. 25r).

³¹ At the age of three, while her father is away and her mother is at church, Petronilla falls into an open fire in their home, but is pulled unscathed from the flames by two servants (ibid., c. 21r). A second incident occurred not much later, when Petronilla’s godmother brought over some vases and Petronilla fell headfirst into the water while trying to reach some sacred figures in the vases (ibid., cc. 22v-24v).

³² Ibid., c. 18v.

³³ Ibid., c. 19r. [I wanted them to give me some papers, and I seemed very happy trying to read them with a certain babbling, whereupon my father, enjoying this and taking me up in his arms, would often say, “If this daughter lives, I want to teach her all of the sciences and hope she will become a great woman” ... In the meantime, he would sit me on a tall chair near the desk where he continuously wrote, without my demonstration of the slightest boredom; on the contrary, I delighted in turning the pages and books, imitating my father’s actions even to the point of making pen marks over his writing, without him showing any anger. Or else I would start to read what I believed I had written, which greatly entertained and pleased my father].

given particular attention as indicative of the author's personal and professional future development,³⁴ Petronilla's autobiography, concluded a century before the publication of Alfieri's *Vita*, provides a much earlier instance of the topos of the prophesied literary vocation and illustrates the transition from religious to secular models of childhood development.

As many spiritual autobiographies, Petronilla describes two concurrent models of behavior and holiness, the first represented by the influence of the Church and holy images, and the second represented by the charitable actions of her parents. Her father's interest in promoting female education is evident not only in his attitude towards his daughter, but also towards their local community. When the family acquires their additional properties in Ortona and Carreto, her father establishes a school and a hospital for the poor, and Petronilla learns from her parents to deprive herself in order to share with others, offering food to those in need.³⁵ She describes stealing goods from her household when she lacked personal objects to donate.³⁶

Moreover, as in the autobiographies of Camilla Faà Gonzaga, Cecilia Ferrazzi, Maria Domitilla Galluzzi, and Christina of Sweden, the death of a parent is a singular and transformative event in Petronilla's life. Like Cecilia Ferrazzi, and perhaps likewise influenced by hagiographic models, Petronilla associates a period of poor health during her recovery from

³⁴ See Angelica Forti-Lewis, "Paralleli tematici tra le *Confessioni* di Rousseau e la *Vita* di Alfieri," in *Italia autobiografica* (Rome: Bulzoni, 1986), 81.

³⁵ "Stabili una scuola per fare apprendere le lettere a fanciulli, e un ricovero per li poveri lavoratori infermi [...] tal volta serviva con le proprie mani, si come visitava i fanciulli e gli allettava co' premi per stimolarli alla virtù, e al di lui esempio anche mia madre chiamando le povere donne al palazzo Baronale ove abitavamo, a lavori, oltre il pagamento dava loro rinfreschi ed elemosine e in tutte le festività della Vergine e Apostoli, ambidue facevano distribuire a poveri [...] pane, e minestra" (*Vita*, cc. 24v-25r).

³⁶ "Ed io ugualmente inclinata alla compassione donava a mendici anche talvolta la propria merenda o altro poteva sin una volta mi privai d'un filo di corallo aveva in giro al collo, e qual ora non aveva importunava io mio padre per loro il quale godendo di quei teneri pietosi sentimenti, nel tornare una volta a casa si finse povero e con mendicata voce chiedendomi soccorso non avendo che dargli gli porse per sotto la porta il piattino di argento ove solevano darmi a mangiare; quanto fa' in un tenero petto l'esempio de genitori" (ibid.).

falling into the fire with accurate predictions of her father's death, who was away on travel.³⁷ Petronilla's fears, quickly dismissed by her father upon his return, were verified when he was murdered near their home by two assailants.³⁸ Her father's death changes their lives drastically; Petronilla, her mother and her nurse leave their home, first for the city of Sulmona and later for Rome. Meanwhile, Petronilla's mother, distraught and having also suffered a miscarriage, had given her brother-in-law, Giacinto, control over the family's finances.

It is during this period that Petronilla begins to distinguish herself from her mother, whom she describes throughout her narrative as beautiful but weak.³⁹ Petronilla, on the other hand, demonstrates unusual strength and spirit; her future legal battles with her uncle regarding her family's property are foreshadowed by two events during her childhood. First, when asked why she does not feel greater remorse after her mother's miscarriage, she expresses her awareness that, as an only child, all of the property would now be hers.⁴⁰ Giacinto was later discovered standing over Petronilla's bed with his hand over her mouth, although, accused by her mother of

³⁷ “Una mattina mi destai con pianti e grida sì dirotte che prima dell'alba feci sorgere tutta la famiglia, e mia madre, e balia richiedendomi che cosa avessi, risposi con lingua più che spedita – Piango perché tata è ferito e morto [...] Spaventati tutti da queste voci e più d'ogni altro mia madre, si forsava quietarmi e darmi a credere non esser vero, ma io replicava pertinacemente – È vero, è vero, eccolo lì, è morto, eccolo lì – senza potermi racconsolare. L'amore di mia madre non potè trattenerla di rinviare un messo speditamente ad avvisare mio padre, il quale ritornando a casa sano e libero rimproverò la debolezza dimostrata in dar fede a ditti d'una fanciulla” (ibid., c. 22v).

³⁸ Describing the events surrounding her father's murder, Petronilla writes that after mass, while her pregnant mother stayed behind to pray, her father exited with a group of servants and encountered two servants of the Colonna family, claiming to request permission to hunt on the grounds, who stabbed her father to death before escaping on horseback (cf. ibid., cc. 28v-29r). Petronilla assures her reader that divine justice eventually caught up with the traitors, one of whom, Domenico Cortese, was later murdered while the other, while imprisoned in Livorno for other crimes, eventually confessed to the murder and was executed (ibid., c. 38v). As for possible motives for Paolini's murder at the hands of Colonna's servants, Petronilla notes that tension between her father and Lorenzo Colonna had been mounting for some time despite their longstanding friendship and travels together. Paolini had refused two of Colonna's requests, first that Petronilla's mother serve as the principal lady in waiting to his wife (Maria Mancini, niece of Cardinal Jules Mazarin) and, secondly, that Paolini defend Colonna in a duel against an offender.

³⁹ “Soavemente graziosa, ma di poco spirito” (ibid., c. 5r).

⁴⁰ “– Per sapere che tutta la robba sarebbe mia – risposta da perdonarsi alla tenera età d'una fanciulla ma però non presa in buon senso dalle interessate rimostranze del zio, il quale parve mi trattasse in avvenire con qualche minor affetto” (ibid., c. 34v).

trying to kill the family's only heir, he claimed to have been attempting only to quiet her.⁴¹ The event prompted Petronilla's mother to leave the house and seek refuge in the monastery of St. Catherine of Siena in the same city.⁴² Here, three-year-old Petronilla received attention for her vivacity and ability to recite prayers from memory.⁴³

Giacinto's intention to acquire his deceased brother's lands became increasingly evident and, after being forced to exit the monastery, Petronilla and her mother sought refuge away from their relatives, first in the home of the Savelli, a noble Roman family, where a marriage agreement was stipulated between Petronilla's mother and a nephew of Cardinal Marzio Ginetti, and then in the monastery of Spirito Santo. As these events unfold, Petronilla's suffers a series of serious accidents and injuries, including falling out of a moving carriage in Rome and falling into a fountain while playing with other children in the garden of the Savelli home.⁴⁴ These accidents, while indicating to some extent her precocious nature and ability to thrive even in the precarious state induced by her father's death, are also used to illustrate Petronilla's continued dedication to furthering her studies. The first accident that occurs in Rome is, in fact, caused by her desire to write. At only four years old, and dedicating entire days to reading a small prayer book, Petronilla was overcome by a desire to copy some of the pages. Finding her uncle at his desk and

⁴¹ Describing her mother's reaction, Petronilla writes: "Avendo sorpreso il zio che stando appresso la mia culla e tenendomi una mano alla bocca, voleva a forza impedire il mio pianto comincio a sgridarlo per scelerato e nemico del suo sangue, e tirandolo via per i capelli si accese tra di loro una querela, una accusando il zio come se fusse venuto per uccidermi, e l'altro difendendosi con dire aver ciò fatto per quietarmi" (ibid., cc. 34v-35r).

⁴² Petronilla reports having heard this from others, but her mother claims that her choice to leave was caused less by her brother-in-law and more by growing pressures on her to get remarried.

⁴³ "Io veniva da tutte parzialmente amata, e particolarmente per la vivacità dello spirito in fare alcune orazioni straordinarie all'età tenera di poco sopra 3 anni [...] ero divenuta lo spasso di tutte, e molto più di Suor Anna Gelmida mia zia" (ibid., c. 37r).

⁴⁴ Ibid., cc. 41r-44v.

attempting to imitate his work with a penknife, she deeply cut her finger.⁴⁵ Similarly, describing her relationship with her mother's betrothed, Petronilla claims to have remained steadfast in her refusal to be won over by the offerings of gifts and food and only on one occasion, persuaded by the promise of some books, did she comply with his request that she call him "Father."⁴⁶

It is only in 1671, when Petronilla's mother decides to re-enter the monastery of Spirito Santo rather than remarry, that Petronilla is truly able to dedicate herself with regularity to her studies. She was instructed in music and the harpsichord, in addition to becoming an avid reader. By the age of six, she was often chastised by her mother for staying up late at night to read chivalric romances and fables, and was admired by the nuns for her ability to memorize long passages of prose and verse:

Amava molto la lettura dei libri in che passava non solo i giorni, ma anche le notti, tanto che conveniva a mia madre sgridarmi e battermi perché mi dassi al sonno. Aveva una ritentiva mirabile [...] leggeva volentieri, aveva io per le mani li libri di cavalleria, e per farmi sprezzare un libro era assai dirmi, *erano favole*. In età di 6 anni sapeva a mente tutto il Tasso, e leggeva tutto con tale attenzione, che bastava una volta scorressi un'ottava, o sonetto che l'apprendeva di tanto stupore a quelle religiose che facendo venire una volta alla grata un virtuoso ne volle far prova con allettarmi con regalo de libri, se leggendo per 2 sole volte un'ottava della metamorfosi dell'Anguillara, cioè quella del caos - *Pria che il Ciel fusse, il mare la terra* - l'avesse per la terza volta recitato a mente il ch'è eseqij con tal di lui soddisfazione e meraviglia, che volle accompagnare il regalo de libri anco con uno d'agrumi, però fu a me assai più grata il primo, che il secondo.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ "Ecco a me nuove disgrazie e pericoli, leggeva io come tutta inclinata al piacere di rivolger le carte ancorchè di soli 4 anni un picciol libro di orazioni del P. Marigiani, e in esso più di frequente i dolori di Giuseppe e Maria, passandosi con detto letto le intere giornate, un giorno desiderosa, copiarne qualche parola per apprendere a ben scrivere non osservata da Don Giuseppe Venanzi mio maestro, corsi al scrittoio per una penna e trovando ivi mio zio che con un temperino qualche cosa oprava, partito ne fu per imitare anch'io l'altrui lavoro, dato di mano al ferro, inesperta mi tagliai gran parte d'un ditto" (ibid., cc. 40v-41r).

⁴⁶ Describing the arrival of her mother's future husband and his brother, the Abbate Croce (who had plans of proposing a marriage contract between himself and Petronilla), she writes: "Con questo matrimonio arrivò in nostra casa la discordia, lo sposo non divenne mai marito di mia madre benché molte notti dormissero in istesso letto [...] Io ancorché fanciulla [...] mi sentiva [...] piuttosto abborrimento [...] Provavano allettarmi con regali o cibi grati a fanciulli, ma neppure mi lascia vincere, e solo una volta per l'avidità di alcuni libriccioli mi indussi a chiamarlo padre ma poi quasi pentita ne fuggii dilegiandolo col nome di padre di legno" (ibid., c. 46v).

⁴⁷ Ibid., cc. 51r-52v. [I very much loved reading books, an activity in which I spent not only my days, but also my nights, so much so that my mother had to yell at me and hit me to get me to go to sleep. I had a marvelous memory ... I happily read whatever I could find, chivalric romances, and to get me to dislike a book it was enough to tell me,

Petronilla's precocious nature and love of stories often gets her into trouble. During the Feast of the Holy Innocents, she convinces a group of younger girls to reenact Herod's massacre of infants by throwing all of their dolls into the fire.⁴⁸ Petronilla believes that the accident that occurred following this event, in which she fell out of a window of the monastery while attempting to climb down on a ladder, was punishment for her irreverence.⁴⁹ In general, the various injuries and illnesses she suffered during her brief years in the monastery, including falling again into a fire in the monastery and contracting measles,⁵⁰ confirm a pattern in which each new environment she encounters seems to presage both imminent dangers and her ability to overcome them.

The greatest threat arrives with arrangements for Petronilla's marriage to Francesco Massimi. Whereas Petronilla had displayed an increasingly tenacious and rebellious spirit in the years following her father's assassination, her mother had instead consistently deferred to external advice. Petronilla, though challenging her mother to provide adequate reasons for an arranged marriage at such a young age, eventually acquiesces:

– Signora, – le risposi – e quale è questa necessità che mi obliga a maritarmi sì presto? –
Il non esserci alcuno che assista alle nostre liti, – soggiunse ella, – il poco affetto mostra

“Those were tall tales.” At the age of six, I knew all of Tasso by heart, and I read everything with such attention that it was sufficient to skim a stanza or sonnet once and I understood it, surprising the nuns so much that one time, calling a virtuoso to the gates, he wished to prove this by offering me a gift of books if after reading a stanza of Anguillara's *Metamorphoses*, the one about chaos – *Before there was earth or sea or the sky* – only twice, I was able to recite it by heart the third time, which I executed to such satisfaction and marvel that the man wished to accompany his gift of books with another of citrus fruits, though I much preferred the former to the latter].

⁴⁸ “Cercai persuadere a quelle fanciulle d'imitare Herode rivolgendo la strage nelle loro pupazze [...] le tagliarono in mille pezzi gettandole all'aria, e al fuoco con infinito lor piacere e nostro riso” (ibid., c. 53r).

⁴⁹ Petronilla claims that God punished her (“Volle però Iddio ben presto punirmi con un castigo”) with the injuries that she suffered after falling from the window: “Oltre essermi fracassate le membra ricevei una ferita nel ventre da che fui costretta guardar più mesi il letto” (ibid., cc. 54v-55r).

⁵⁰ Ibid., c. 50v. The burns on her face and arms, which were so severe that Petronilla describes herself as looking like a monster (“rassembrava ad un mostro”), were treated with a solution of salt and vinegar. Over the next several months, she also suffered from measles, but notes that neither of the incidents left any scars or marks on her face.

vostro zio, l'essere io donna di poco spirito per far testa a chi vi contraria – [...] Così le risposi da femina adulta più che da fanciulla, – Che occorre consultare la mia volontà? Facciassi il suo volere e l'accetto.⁵¹

The Massimi family rigorously prepares Petronilla to be interrogated by priests and prelates regarding her willingness to agree to the marriage. She promises to give her official consent when required, but adamantly refuses to practice her responses ahead of time as if rehearsing lines for a play, a spirited refusal that incites laughter among her future in-laws.⁵² When, as promised, Petronilla declares in front of the prelate that she plans to enter the marriage willingly and does not fear the difference in age, the prelate expresses his fears that she had been supplied with answers by her mother and the Massimi family.⁵³

Despite Petronilla's obedience, she blames her mother's weakness for the circumstances of her marriage and describes the finalization of her marriage agreement as a sacrifice worse than that of Isaac, since no divine hand appeared to save her.⁵⁴ Petronilla's mother was initially assured that she would be able to move into the Massimi household, even though the Holy Congregation had denied her request to dissolve her previous marriage agreement. Ultimately, however, Petronilla was not only forced to exit the convent before the agreed-upon age of

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, c. 62v. ["Madame," I answered her, "what need is there that I marry so young?" "The fact that there is no one who can help us in our disputes," she added, "that your uncle shows little affection, that I am a woman who lacks the spirit to challenge those against us" ... Thus I responded to her, more like an adult than a child, "What need is there to ask my willingness? Do what you will and I will accept it."].

⁵² "Risposi con maturità a tutte le interrogazioni e dimandandomi i Massimi come avrei risposto quando sarebbe esplorata la mia volontà, dissi senza punto pensarci, – Lo sentirà quello verrà a questo effetto. – Ma non potrebbe prima farlo sentire a noi? – ripigliò Muzio. – O, – risposi io, – non sarà questa una risposta di comedia che debba studiarla avanti. Ridevano tutti alle mie risposte, ma il mio cuore avrebbe dovuto piangere se avesse potuto prevedere il bel stato che lasciava, e l'imbarazzi del mondo ne quali mi poneva" (*ibid.*, cc. 62v-63r).

⁵³ As the prelate leaves, she hears him say, "Non è possibile, l'hanno troppo ben istruita nelle risposte [...] Iddio ne guardi" (*ibid.*, c. 65r).

⁵⁴ "Si compì dunque il mio sacrificio più funesto di quello di Isacco, poiché non comparve la mano dell'Angelo per ritenere il braccio che mi sacrificava" (*ibid.*, c. 70v).

twelve, but also to leave her mother behind in the monastery.⁵⁵ She was placed in the care of a relative of the Massimi family and then moved to the Massimi's house in Aracoeli, where she stayed until her confirmation and official wedding ceremony to Francesco Massimi when she was eleven years old.⁵⁶ Petronilla then moved into her husband's apartments in Castel Sant'Angelo, which she describes as dark, sparsely furnished and melancholic.⁵⁷

Although Massimi shows consideration for Petronilla's young age, her new living situation and the difficulties of living with a man who "seemed more like a father than a husband" weighed heavily on her.⁵⁸ She describes the embarrassment of experiencing her first menstruation just as she moved into Castel Sant'Angelo and at being informed by her new spouse that the lace corset with red ribbons, which her mother had told her to wear, was unfit for an honest woman.⁵⁹ This first interaction foreshadows the frequent criticism that Petronilla would receive regarding her clothing and behavior. Francesco often reacts with cruelty and

⁵⁵ "Cercò mia madre ritenermi appresso di sè sino giungessi all'età di 12 anni, ma li Massimi temendo forse dall'età qualche mutazione non vi aderirono, e mi sollecitarono ad uscire nel fine dell'anno santo 1675" (ibid., c. 70v). According to Petronilla, she left the monastery on December 2, 1675, and was taken in by a relative of the Massimi family, Barbara Orsini, who was to serve as Petronilla's guardian in the interim before she reached the legal maritable age of twelve.

⁵⁶ To placate her mother's concerns that she might "become a wife before she became a woman" ("temendo che prima di essere donna divenissi moglie"), one of Francesco's in-laws, Prudenza Buratti, the wife of his brother, Angelo, was brought to live in the house with her. Buratti's unhappy marriage and the anecdotes she shares with Petronilla, with whom she forms a lasting friendship, seem to foreshadow the unhappy events of Petronilla's own marriage: Buratti had been taken to a party when she was several months pregnant and, when she refused to dance, a piece of candy had been tossed at her in jest, hitting her in the left eye and leaving her blind.

⁵⁷ "Non posso esprimere quanto recasse a me commozione questa prima mutazione in vedermi in una casa in sito malinconico, oscura, non ricca di arredi" (ibid., c. 72v).

⁵⁸ "Un uomo d'armi che a me rassembrava più padre che marito" (ibid., c. 79r).

⁵⁹ Describing her arrival in the castle, Petronilla writes: "Essendosi però frapposto alla consumazione l'impedimento ordinario delle donne, che per me quella volta fu il primo, ebbe egli la discrezione di lasciarmi donzella sin tanto terminasse, et io dormii quella notte [...] senza alcuna molestia, colla sola soggezione porta seco lo stato d'una fanciulla [...] e molto più perché portando io quella notte un bustino guarnito di merletti e fettucce color di fuoco, con scuffia compagna, robba dell'acconcio fattomi da mia madre per guarnirvi una sposa, vedendomi così lo sposo, con mezzo sorriso mi disse [...] – Mi stupisco di lei [...] spogliate, – disse – di questi ornamenti non propri ad una dama onesta" (ibid.).

violence, on one occasion tearing ribbons from her hair and cutting them to pieces before hitting her across her back while still holding the scissors in his hand. Petronilla often seeks solace in the company of her in-laws, who justify Francesco's bursts of violence as jealousy ("gelosa passione"), but also encourage him to treat her with more kindness.⁶⁰

Despite the repressive environment of her new home, Petronilla was warmly embraced by the Massimi family and often granted unique liberties. In particular, like Queen Christina of Sweden, Petronilla finds that she has a particular passion for weaponry and firearms; not only is she caught shooting a rifle while visiting the vineyards of one of her in-laws, but also fires a gun inside of Castel Sant'Angelo, narrowly missing the cook.⁶¹ Petronilla is continually chastised by her husband, who laments the need to keep her under constant watch.⁶² Throughout the Lenten season of 1678,⁶³ Francesco provides Petronilla with a series of formal instructions on the proper comportment of a noblewoman, such as avoiding eye contact and not laughing or joking with

⁶⁰ "Egli non so da qual passione mosso, mi si presentò avanti delle scale, e levandomi dalla testa quei nastri, me li trinciò, in ben più di cento pezzi [...] diedero incentivo ad alcune risposte piccanti, e anche un urtamento di mano nella schiena, co' quali teneva le forbici" (ibid., c. 85r).

⁶¹ Describing her love of weapons, Petronilla writes: "Fra le mie inclinazioni quelle delle armi non era la più debole, e qual ora potevo aver in mano, un strumenda o da fuoco sentiva in me brillare i spiriti per il piacere" (ibid., cc. 89r-90v). Her "gran genio" for weaponry is affirmed in several anecdotes. Soon after moving into the castle apartments, Petronilla awakes one morning and sees two of her husband's pistols on a table: "Scorgendo io sul tavolino due pistole, armi da me più non vedute, le presi con piacere nelle mani, senza sapere se fussero cariche, e ben osservatele comprendendo come si sparavano, mi approssimai a una fenestra, e le sparai con tutta franchezza, ma quasi che colpì il cuoco, che in quel mentre si ritirava da un fenestrone per le sue faccende, non furono pochi i rimproveri, e l'agitazione del mio consorte" (ibid.). Later, while visiting her relatives' vineyard, Petronilla observes some family members shooting at a target and asks if she can try: "Essendo il marito occupato a discorrere co' fratelli, e osservando io dalla fenestra con piacere il tirare al bersaglio, che facevano alcuni di nostra famiglia con uno schioppo, calai anch'io abbasso inavvedutamente e richiesi farne anch'io una prova, di che alla prima risero coloro, ma vedendo poi lo spirito con il quale l'eseqij, mi fecero un applauso co' grida, il che mosse il consorte ad affacciarsi, e vedendomi ivi, grande fu l'incitamento gli diede questa azione, che ancorché non conveniente al mio grado, poteva essere scusabile alla mia età" (ibid., cc. 91r-92v).

⁶² "A me dicendo, che se non fussi stata tenuta a freno, non mi sarei portata con quel decoro si deve" (ibid., c. 93r).

⁶³ Again, since these pages of the autobiography correspond to Petronilla's first year of marriage, the year was likely 1675 and not 1678, as she instead states.

servants.⁶⁴ Her refusal to comply with his “very dull” advice is reminiscent of Queen Christina’s similar refusal, in her own autobiography, to apologize for walking too fast and laughing too much, qualities considered unbecoming for women but not for men.

The parallels between Christina and Petronilla’s autobiographical descriptions is perhaps not coincidental, since at the conclusion of that Easter holiday, Petronilla receives a visit from the queen at Castel Sant’Angelo. Describing their encounter, Petronilla notes Christina’s reputation for taking little pleasure in the company of other women, scorning their excessive use of makeup and lack of spirit:

Terminate le feste di Pasqua incominciai le mie visite con quella della Regina di Svezia Cristina di cui mi conviene dire alcuna cosa. Questa gran donna non mostrava troppo genio con la generalità delle dame, o perché si pingessero il volto, o perché credesse avessero poco di spirito a paragone del suo che era massimo, e pareva si prendesse alle volte del piacere a mortificarle, come dicono facesse una volta nel giardino in tempo di state, invitando alcune dame a rinfrescarsi il volto appresso una fontana, attingendo essa medesima un fazzoletto nell’aqua, e per finezza fregandole alquanto il volto, nella quale occasione restò il panno tinto di rosso, con molto loro confusione.⁶⁵

When Christina asks about life at Castel Sant’Angelo, the young Petronilla says that she likes it very much, especially because of her great love of weaponry, to which Christina replies ironically that women need no weapon but their beauty.⁶⁶ Petronilla, who would have known that

⁶⁴ “Passò la quaresima e egli in quel tempo mi volle dare alcune lezioni intorno al mio comportamento e secondo il suo genio come sarebbe il non mirare le persone sulla faccia, non ridere con la servitù, e simili, che per brevità tralascio, l’esecuzione delle quali riusciva a me assai noioso” (ibid., c. 81r).

⁶⁵ Ibid., cc. 81r-82v. [At the end of the Easter holidays I began my visits, starting with that of the Queen of Sweden, Christina, of which I must say a few things. This great woman showed little interest in other women, either because they wore makeup or because she believed they lacked spirit compared with her own, which was the greatest, and it seemed she often took pleasure in embarrassing them, as they say that once in a garden on a summer day, inviting some ladies to cool their faces in a fountain, she wet a handkerchief in the water and rubbed their faces, staining the handkerchief red, to their great confusion]. Christina puts Petronilla to a similar test, wiping her face and neck and inspecting her handkerchief: “La Regina mi rassetteva i nastri, e minutamente osservava ciò aveva sul dosso dimandandomi se l’orologio era di francia e cose simili, e con un fazzoletto mi volle pulire un poco il volto, e seno dalla polvere di cipro, che da longhi ricci pendenti vi era caduta, ma ben compresi dall’aver essa poi mirato nel detto fazzoletto [...] che si volle assicurare se io portava belletto” (ibid., c. 84v).

⁶⁶ “Mi presentai alla Regina per farle riverenza quale con serietà fattemi diverse interrogazioni dimandandomi come mi gradiva la dimora del castello, io le risposi doveva piacermi non solo perché vi abitava il consorte, ma anche per

the queen was often referred to as the “Minerva of the North,” replies that Christina herself provided a counterexample of a woman who favored arms over beauty. The queen, smiling, advises her young admirer only to take care to love books as much as weapons.⁶⁷

As their discussion turns to literature, Petronilla describes her indiscriminate love of a variety of genres and her desire to spend all her time reading.⁶⁸ When the queen asks what book she is currently reading, Petronilla promptly responds by likening Christina to a book full of the wisdom and glory of the female sex:

- Qual libro ora leggete? – disse ella.
- Adesso madama, – soggiunsi io con prontezza, – ammiro un libro nuovo che contiene tutte le scienze.
- E qual è questo? – dimandò avidamente la Regina.
- Quello che vedo nella Magnificenza Vostra splendore e gloria del nostro sesso. Parve gustasse quella gran donna di questa lode, e prendendomi per mano con riso di sodisfazione – Bella figlia, – mi disse, – voi prendete con molta galanteria gli equivoci, io volli dire quale libro leggete di presente nel castello.⁶⁹

After discussing her current interest in *La corte santa*, a book that Petronilla claims to enjoy because it provides her both with pleasure and knowledge, Christina compliments her choice in reading material.⁷⁰ In bidding farewell to Petronilla and preparing to depart, the queen turns to

essere il mio genio inclinato all’armi. – Ad una donna, – soggiunse la Regina, – non si confanno altre armi che quelle della bellezza” (ibid., cc. 82v-83r).

⁶⁷ “– Lo crederei madama, – risposi io, – se nella Magnificenza Vostra non mi vedessi avanti agli occhi una Pallade che sa sprezzare l’une, e aggradire le altre. Sorrise la Regina dicendomi, – Bisogna che voi non gustiate men dell’armi che dalle lettere” (ibid., c. 83r).

⁶⁸ Asked what kinds of books she likes to read, Petronilla replies: “Tanto o madama [...] che vi spenderei tutti i giorni di mia vita” (ibid.).

⁶⁹ Ibid. [“What book are you reading now?” She asked. “Right now, Madam,” I added promptly, “I am admiring a new book that contains all knowledge.” “And what book is this?” the Queen asked eagerly. “That which I see in your Magnificence, the splendor and glory of our sex.” The great woman seemed to take pleasure in this praise and, taking me by the hand and laughing with pleasure, said, “Dear girl, you take advantage of ambiguity with great gallantry; I meant what book are you presently reading in the castle.”]

⁷⁰ *La Cour sainte ou l’Institution chrestienne des grandes*, by Father Nicolas Caussin, the Jesuit confessor to Louis XIII, appeared in 1624. The anti-Stoical work became something of a best seller and was translated in Italian and Spanish. See Mario Rosa, “The ‘World’s Theatre’: The Court of Rome and Politics in the First Half of the Seventeenth Century,” in *Court and Politics in Papal Rome, 1492-1700*, ed. Gianvittorio Signorotto and Maria A.

the count who had accompanied her to Castel Sant'Angelo and comments under her breath that the young girl, though as yet an "unripe fruit," would one day be savored by many.⁷¹ The story of their brief visit illustrates Petronilla's lively spirit and willingness to challenge gender and social norms while also foreshadowing her future literary success. Her outspokenness, rebellious nature, and love of weapons and books also pay homage to Christina as the honorary founder of the Arcadia and signal Petronilla's initiation from an early age onto the path that would eventually lead to her own admittance into the academy. Moreover, despite the common representation of Petronilla by her biographers as a child bride confined within prison walls, anecdotes such as this offer a more balanced and often humorous representation of the early years of her marriage.

Nonetheless, life was to get much worse for Petronilla before it could get better. As a young wife, she was often reproached for lacking grace, civility, and an interest in motherhood, and of having too small a frame to bear children.⁷² Petronilla did become pregnant early in her marriage but was unaware of the pregnancy until she suffered a painful miscarriage and was accused by her husband of hiding the pregnancy and failing to seek proper medical care.⁷³ She

Visceglia (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 78-98. Petronilla explains the reasons for which she has enjoyed the book: "Non solo mi diletta, ma puole erudirmi e insegnarmi il ben vivere," to which the queen replies, "Sapete ben profittare di ciò che leggete" (*Vita*, c. 83r).

⁷¹ "Essa nel licenziarmi pose una mano avanti in luoco della veste a baciare, e mostrò molta soddisfazione della mia visita, ed essendo io alquanto discosta sentii disse al detto Conte: — Questo frutto è un poco troppo acerbo ma nella sua maturità vuol piacere a molti" (ibid.).

⁷² During a visit with the Altieri princes, Petronilla is told that because of her narrow hips ("vita assai sottile") she probably would not be able to have children; Petronilla was already one-month pregnant at this time but did not know it (ibid., c. 87r).

⁷³ "Abortii, d'una massa informe, e inanimata, che fu creduta d'una femmina come più tarda ad animarsi. Oltre il male che soffrii, molti furono i rimproveri mi facevano il marito [...] scrupoleggiandomi il gran peccato fatto in disperdermi, e che io sapeva bene esser gravida, e l'aveva aver celato, per non venire sottoposta ad avermi cura, e che forse vi aveva cooperato anche la madre, che doppo non essergli attesa la promessa di farla uscire non aveva più amore per la casa Massimi. Tutto questo affliggeva me [...] parendomi essere spezzata, come che mi stimavano inabile a far più figli" (ibid., c. 88v).

spent the following year in fear that she would not be able to conceive again and began praying to Saint Francis Xavier, whose Life she had been reading.⁷⁴ In November of that year, Petronilla gave birth to her first son, whom she baptized with the name Angelo Francesco Xaverio in honor of his godfather, Francesco's brother, and the saint who had answered Petronilla's prayers. His birth was followed by those of two more sons, Domenico and Emilio.

Motherhood provided some limited opportunities for Petronilla to continue her studies through her childrens' education. She was able to spend her free time after the daily mass reading and teaching her sons to read and, once they began studying Latin formally, she would often ask them to transcribe her own translations in order to have them reviewed by their teacher.⁷⁵ However, the more she attempted to broaden her social and literary sphere, the more repressive Francesco Massimi became: When one of her brothers-in-law compliments her on a hat, her husband forces her to take it off;⁷⁶ after receiving praise for an oratorio that she had written at the request of another in-law and which had been performed in their home, her pen and inkstand are taken away from her;⁷⁷ and, after discovering that she has worn one of his wigs during Carnival, Petronilla is stripped of her social privileges, losing the right not only to enjoy

⁷⁴ Ibid., cc. 95r-96v.

⁷⁵ "Insegnava a figlioli li principii del leggere [...] mi dava nelle ore di più solitudine alla lettura di qualche libro, da cui potessi apprendere nella congerie delli altrui avvenimenti la fortezza, e pazienza per soffrire i propri" (ibid., c. 128r). Describing how she took advantage of her childrens' education in order to further her own, Petronilla writes: "In occasione che i miei figli ritornando alle loro cammere doppo la lezione del maestro di grammatica, e ripetendo la lezione, sentiva da essi, o mi faceva dire quale a loro era stato insegnato [...] tanto che in breve mi aveva fondato nelle principali regole della grammatica e faceva anche io i miei latini, che fatte trascrivere da uno di loro li faceva rivedere dal maestro, senza egli sapere il mio studio" (ibid., c. 162r).

⁷⁶ Ibid., cc. 126r-127v.

⁷⁷ "Un altro cognato dimandato che gli volessi comporre un oratorio, io promisi farlo benché sin allora non avessi altro composto che sonetti o madrigali, e il marchese a cui ne dimandai licenza non volle contradirmi, e in verità riuscì (doppo fatto e posto in musica da buon soggetto) d'applauso molto, e si cantò in casa Massimi da virtuosi cavalieri, ma essendo stato da uno dei miei cognati proपालato esserne l'autrice, e aumentava la lode, dispiacendo ciò a mio marito, che da lungi in altra camera aveva ascoltato, parve se ne offendesse, e per consiglio di altro mio cognato, mi privò del calamaio e penna, e con questi i miei più cari divertimenti" (ibid., c. 128r).

the company of the women employed by her husband, but also to play the harpsichord.⁷⁸ Francesco begins to check on her in her room at night, yells if she sings or laughs, and often beats both Petronilla and their sons.⁷⁹ His jealousy is further provoked when word spreads throughout Rome of the growing friendship between Petronilla and the Arcadian poet Antonio Ottoboni.⁸⁰ Undeterred, Petronilla seeks solace in her room, where she reads, prays and stays up while the rest of the household is asleep in order to write and compose poetry, but when her husband discovers that she has procured a second pen and inkstand from a servant, he has all of her books removed from her room as punishment:

La mia cammeretta nondimeno era il mio refrigerio e sollievo, quando ivi soletta mi ritirava, e in leggere, lavorare, e orando passava il mio tempo, sin che allorché tutta la casa dormia, con l'aiuto d'un piccolo calamaio donatomi nascostamente da una donna di servizio mi applicava ove il mio genio tendea in comporre qualche poesia e in altri studi. Però pure questo innocente divertimento fu tolto dal marchese mio marito, il quale ricercando per la mia stanza mi privò del detto calamaio [...] mi diede la mortificazione di farmi levare [...] i maestri di ballo, pittura e musica, et anche il cembalo [...] unici e geniali miei divertimenti.⁸¹

⁷⁸ “Accadde in tempo di carnevale che fu veduta [...] con la perucca di mio marito il che fu subito riferito al marchese la sera, venendogli detto essermi io mascherata con le donne, e che li soldati, e ufficiali del castello avevano goduto del festino, se non con vederne il ballo, almeno con sentirne il suono e canto. Questa relazione servi per un sopracarico di collera per lui, e afflizione per me, poiché doppo gravi rimproveri, mi privò del cembalo e carte di musica, licenziò tutte le donne” (ibid., c. 125v).

⁷⁹ “Batteva avanti i miei occhi quei teneri fanciulli, il ché causava in me interna passione, mentre l'amore solo di questi mi tratteneva a non risolvermi di separarmi dal marito” (ibid., c. 130). Petronilla resolves to find a way out of her marriage after Francesco – upon discovering that she had watched a boat race through a broken window closure in the castle – throws her against a wall, causing her nerve damage and months of pain (ibid., cc. 145v-146r).

⁸⁰ Ibid., c. 142r. Ottoboni, the nephew of Pope Alexander VIII and the father of Cardinal Pietro Ottoboni, first met Petronilla in 1689 when he came to Rome on the occasion of his uncle's succession to the papacy. Ottoboni so enjoyed meeting with Petronilla in the home of Maria Teresa Benzoni Ginnetti, where they discussed and recited poetry, that he and his wife, Maria, began to invite her to attend public events with them. When Maria Ottoboni warns her husband to be cautious of Francesco Massimi's jealous nature (“non vi dimesticate molto con questa dama, perché il marito che ne vive geloso vi volgerà contro cannone”), Ottoboni assures Petronilla that, if she wishes to attend a party with the couple, his wife will personally accompany her, but word of the conversation spreads throughout Rome and provides Francesco with a further motive for limiting his wife's contact with the outside world.

⁸¹ Ibid., cc. 131v-132r. [My room was nonetheless my solace and my relief when I would withdraw there, and I spent my time reading, working and praying since, once the whole house was asleep, with the help of a small inkstand given to me in secret by a servant, I followed my inspiration in composing poems and in other studies. Yet, even this innocent pastime was taken away by the marquis, my husband, who, searching my room, deprived me of the inkstand ... and punished me by having the masters of dance, painting and music taken from me, and even the

Deprived of her own books, Petronilla begins to read the lives of saints lent to her by her confessor.⁸² Claiming to have been particularly inspired by her reading of the Life of Saint Teresa of Avila, Petronilla convinces her husband to allow her to visit a Carmelite monastery.⁸³ Motivated by a growing longing to escape her husband's repressive behavior rather than by a true spiritual calling, Petronilla expresses a desire to retire permanently to the convent and adopt the rules of the order.⁸⁴ At least one of the Carmelite nuns doubts her motives, a suspicion that Petronilla herself seems to confirm when she expresses fears that her new dedication to spiritual life seems not to please the devil, who begins to torment her with strange visions and disturbances.⁸⁵ In the end, although the Carmelite nuns agreed to accept Petronilla without requiring her to take vows, provided she pay the requisite sum, Petronilla ultimately succumbs to pressures from her mother to instead request papal permission to return to the monastery of Spirito Santo, under the pretext of providing care for her ailing mother.⁸⁶

harpichord ... my sole, brilliant pleasures]. This passage echoes the opening verses of Petrarch's sonnet 234, "O cameretta che gia fosti un porto / a le gravi tempeste mie diurne."

⁸² "Ne esiggeffi maggiore compatimento esortandomi a leggere le vite di alcuni Santi, per apprenderne le virtù" (ibid., c. 142r).

⁸³ "Tra libri io leggeva mi si presentò la vita di S. Teresa Carmelitana alla quale religione tanto mi affezionai, che proposi qualvolta mi desse il mio marito la licenza di vestirmi dell'abito, ma prima ne volli io stessa assaggiare la pratica" (ibid., c. 136r).

⁸⁴ "Communicando il mio desiderio di vestire l'abito della religione, esse mi diedero la regola da osservare, e il breviario loro particolare, il che cominciai ad eseguire con maggiore esattezza comparandomi a loro imitazione le ore del giorno, e notte, vestii sotto l'abito di secolara il loro abito" (ibid., c. 137v).

⁸⁵ One of the nuns tells her: "Figliola, il Signore vi dà il desiderio di questa Santa religione nel modo stesso che a Sant'Antonio quello del martirio, ma siccome egli non ne ottenne l'effetto ancorché il desiderio buono si fusse voi non conseguirete il vostro" (ibid., c. 138r). The devil himself seems displeased with Petronilla's newfound conviction ("questo con causarmi mille spaventi nel tempo mi levavo la notte per le consuete orazioni o con farmi parere camminare gente per la stanza, o tirare il lembo della vosta, o altri simili timori"), prompting her confessor to suggest that she pray for the dead who had been incarcerated in the castle.

⁸⁶ Ibid., c. 150r. Costa-Zalessow mistakes Petronilla's initial intention with the actual turn of events, writing that Petronilla "left Castel Sant'Angelo on November 16, 1690 for the tranquility of the protective walls of the convent of the Carmelites of St. Theresa at Sant'Egidio in Trastevere, not Santo Spirito as some write" (Costa-Zalessow, 31).

On September 16, 1690, Petronilla left Castel Sant'Angelo for the monastery and, despite her hopes of being granted a private room, she was forced to share a space with her mother and other women.⁸⁷ In addition to frequent complaints from her mother regarding her sleeping habits and pastimes, Petronilla was plagued by Francesco Massimi's continuous refusals to pay for her expenses and the control that he continued to exert over her social liberties. When news of her entrance into the monastery spread throughout Rome, Petronilla received some support but also criticism for her decision, and also had to address rumors that her husband had forced her to enter the monastery out of jealousy of her friendship with Antonio Ottoboni. Ottoboni, hearing this, visited her in the monastery, praising her strength for being able to leave her children in order to care for her mother, but also emphasizing his willingness to attempt to repair the damage done by gossip. Ottoboni also commends Petronilla's literary abilities and asks to see some of her poems and a drama, *La Tomiri, o il tradimento vendicato*, which he hopes to put to music. Discovering this, Francesco asks Petronilla's mother to prohibit her from receiving any visitors and from accessing her books and writing materials, threatening to have Petronilla forcibly returned to Castel Sant'Angelo should his wishes not be respected.⁸⁸ Restrictions such as these led Petronilla to conclude that she had escaped from one prison only to enter another.⁸⁹

Life in the monastery did, however, provide her with ample opportunities to resume her artistic and literary endeavors. Her new confessor introduced her to a Dominican priest, Father Giustiniani, who rekindled her interest in Latin and inspired her to begin composing some Latin

⁸⁷ "Fui costretta a dormire tra mia madre e la sua confidente [...] così passai più notti, sperando venuti fossero i mobili per le mie stanze, avrei avuto il piacere di leggere, scrivere, orare, e divertirmi senza la soggezione apporta una compagnia di diverso genio" (*Vita*, c. 154r).

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 158r.

⁸⁹ "Mi avviddi che da un carcere era passata ad una galera" (*ibid.*, c. 154r).

verses of her own.⁹⁰ Like Ottoboni, other well-known literary figures began to take interest in her work. In particular, Luca Antonio Cipriani, who was initially curious to meet Petronilla because he doubted that a woman could have produced the works that had been attributed to her, once assured of her poetic talent, became a trusted friend with whom Petronilla consulted about all of her works.⁹¹ Petronilla also became actively involved in theatrical performances in the monastery, where she often volunteered for the most difficult parts and those reserved for men. In her second year in the monastery, she was chosen to play the part of the King in a comedy;⁹² the following year, as the nuns prepared for a performance of the martyrdom of Saint Agnes, and amid the superstitious fears of the other nuns, Petronilla volunteered for the role of the devil.⁹³ Dissatisfied with the flames provided for her final exit from the stage, she ordered her servant to acquire ten additional pounds of explosives.⁹⁴ As a result, Petronilla burned her hair and one of her hands and, while able to finish the performance, she could not prevent word of the accident from reaching her husband.

⁹⁰ “Cominciai anche a fare qualche rozzo verso, animandomi poi sino a rispondere al detto Padre Giustiniani ad un epigramma da lui fatto in mia lode, la mancanza però avuta in altro tempo del calamaio, e de libri mi aveva tolto l’effetto di quella avidità io aveva alle scienze come l’idropico all’aque. Con questo piccolo fondamento mi diedi al detto nuovo studio, e mi apprese il detto padre qualche regola alle imperfette mie cognizioni. Io da buona discepola mi applicava con ogni studio alle di lui lezioni, e mi posi anche con molto di lui soddisfazione a dichiarar in versi Toscani quello esso mi dettava [...] e mi vidde in breve il maestro capace di applicarmi alla scolastica, e alla mistica” (ibid., cc. 162r-163v). According to Corsignani, Petronilla also studied French and Spanish, but she provides no mention of this in her autobiography (cf. Costa-Zalessow, 27).

⁹¹ *Vita*, cc. 171v-172r. Although Cipriani was at first skeptical (“avendo veduto alcuna delle mie opere non poteva persuadersi, diceva egli, una donna giungesse a tanto”), he was assured of Petronilla’s talent when she was able to improvise a poetic response to some of his own verses. Francesco Massimi does, however, eventually succeed in prohibiting Cipriani’s visits to the monastery.

⁹² “Mi invitarono a recitare la parte del Rè in una loro comedia” (ibid., c. 160r).

⁹³ “Ridendomi de vani timori, o superstiziose riflessioni degli altri” (ibid., c. 165v).

⁹⁴ “Non facesse che un’insipida fiamma, quando io avrei voluto accompagnar l’azione con maggiore strepito e spavento degli ascoltanti” (ibid.).

Petronilla, who had continued to spend many sleepless nights reading and writing by candlelight, received official recognition as a poet when she was admitted to the Academy of the Infecondi on November 14, 1695:

Fu aggregata per arcada nell'Accademia degli Infecondi di Roma, e benchè ad altro era intenta la mia applicazione non potei rifiutar l'invito, e convenne a caricarmi di comporre il primo discorso accademico la domenica della Passione il che debolmente feci, e fu recitato alla presenza di molto concorso, e di 8 Porporati, tra quali il Cardinale Albani oggi Pontefice Regnante, e ne riportò una commune da me non meritata lode, e tra miei pari qualche invidia, e se bene volgarmente si cerca essere più invidiata che compatita, perché l'invidia suppone il merito, e la compassione l'infortunio del soggetto invidiato o compatito, ancorchè io fussi più infelice che virtuosa, pure ogni regola in me era contraria.⁹⁵

Several years later, the Custodian General of the Academy of Arcadia, Giovanni Maria Crescimbeni, was interested in publishing one of Petronilla's sonnets in his anthology of Italian poetry and, because academy regulations required that only official members be published in the collection, she received an official invitation to join the Arcadia.⁹⁶

Despite these accolades, Petronilla remained confined to the monastery with limited access to her funds, which remained under the control of her husband. She also began to suffer from persistent digestive problems, which were eventually diagnosed as cachexia. Moreover, the ulterior motives of many of the men who offered to come to her aid led her to become increasingly wary and independent; she began to refuse assistance of any form except in the case

⁹⁵ Ibid., 178r-179v. [I was admitted to the Academy of the Infecondi in Rome and although this had not been my intent, I could not refuse the invitation and found it necessary to compose my first academic discourse for Easter Sunday, which I did feebly, and it was recited before a large audience and eight cardinals, among whom Cardinal Albani, now Pope [Clement XI], and it resulted in general, undeserved praise and envy among my peers. And though one commonly seeks to be envied rather than pitied, since envy suggests merit while compassion suggests the misfortune of the envied or pitied subject, although I was more unhappy than talented, the rule was reversed in my case]. See also Michela Volante, "Discorsi Accademici," in *Le prose. Opere letterarie e scritti privati*, vol. 3 of *Petronilla Paolini Massimi. La vita e le opere*, 79.

⁹⁶ In her response to Crescimbeni in March of 1698, Petronilla writes: "Sì come non posso io ricevere questo favore per non essere annoverata tra le pastorelle arcadi, così le di Lei grazie che sono per compartirmi il primo onore, ascriverò a mia somma gloria che mi partecipino anche il secondo, col pormi nel catalogo di tante dame erudite" (Martelli and Ricciardi, "Tra accademie e letterati," in *La vita*, vol. 1 of *Petronilla Paolini Massimi. La vita e le opere*, 77).

of those who offered to provide her with books. Only once, with the help of her legal representative and the Arcadian poet, Alessandro Guidi, was Petronilla granted a temporary license to exit the monastery during the day in order to get fresh air and to see her servant, Teresina, take her vows in another monastery.⁹⁷ During these brief twice-weekly outings, Petronilla was able to watch books being printed and to visit the Vatican library,⁹⁸ but once her license expired she was again prohibited from leaving the convent walls under all circumstances, even when her son, Domenico, died in 1694 at the age of thirteen.⁹⁹

During this period, Petronilla describes feeling suspended between diverse social roles, none of which fully apply to her:

Il considerarmi in uno stato che non essendo della donzella, di religiosa, di maritata, o di vedova, mi costringe a portare sulle spalle il peso delle croci di tutte, talvolta mi opprime lo spirito.¹⁰⁰

Her circumstances improved with two important events in 1707: First, the legal dispute over her separation, property rights and dowry was concluded in her favor and, secondly, Francesco was called away from Rome to serve as the Sergeant General of the pontifical troops in Bologna and

⁹⁷ Upon hearing of the request, the Mother Superior tells Petronilla that it is improbable that she will ever be able to exit the monastery before her death: “– O Signora Marchesa, voi avete dato un memoriale per uscire, ma credo uscirete come me co’ piedi avanti, – cioè morta” (*Vita*, c. 201v).

⁹⁸ “Talvolta in mia compagnia vedendo le chiese e strade e altre cose degne a vedersi tra quelli, il vedere stampare i libri in che ebbi gran piacere e molto più in vedere la Biblioteca Vaticana ove mi trattenni per ben sei ore, e non ne sarei quasi mai partita, perché mi trovava ove dar pascolo al mio genio” (ibid., c. 208r).

⁹⁹ Ibid., cc. 169v-170r. Her first-born son had stopped visiting Petronilla after she had complained about her lack of clothes and money, imploring him to appeal to his father on her behalf. Shortly before Domenico’s death, Petronilla’s other son, Emilio, was run over by a carriage and treated by the Queen of Sweden’s physician, Alessio Spalla, for two broken ribs. It was only shortly after Emilio’s recovery from this accident that Domenico fell gravely ill with a fever, vomiting and, eventually, the loss of his eyesight. In response to these events, Francesco Massimi tells Petronilla that God is beginning to punish her for the abandonment of her family.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., c. 221v. [To consider myself in a state that – not being that of a maiden, a nun, a wife or a widow – requires that I bear the weight of each of these crosses sometimes oppresses my spirit].

Ferrara and took their sons with him.¹⁰¹ These changes provided Petronilla with greater independence and time to devote to her studies and writing in the monastery.¹⁰² Petronilla's autobiographical project and reflections on her upbringing, education and relationships perhaps inspired her to reestablish communication with her family. In 1703, the same year in which she began to write her autobiography, she also began an intense epistolary exchange with her son, Emilio. In encouraging her son to supplement his military education with formal studies, Petronilla begins to share the history of her own education with him:

Ridotti di novellisti, discorsi di sfaccendati, conversazioni di donne e uomini vani, sono i divertimenti degli oziosi, che non sanno divertirsi più nobilmente e con maggiore profitto [...] godo dunque delle vostre virtuose occupazioni, e nello studio delle lingue straniere, e molto più della filosofia, e non posso voler male a quello che voi chiamate ozio, e malinconia della città, perché questo vi dà campo di esercitare il talento che Dio vi diede, ed aprirvi la mente alle virtuose cognizioni [...] Nella filosofia naturale feci anch'io qualche studio ne primi anni della mia dimora in convento, a solo oggetto di fuggir l'ozio che suol regnare nei chiostri [...] ma poi tralasciai un tal studio, vinta dalle cure e dalle molestie della mia vita che non mi lascian tempo da spendere a mio genio.¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ Ibid., cc. 216r-217v. Petronilla requested a legal separation in 1694, which Francesco Massimi contested on the basis that his wife had unlawfully abandoned the family, thus exempting him from financial responsibility to her. The first sentence, in 1697, in Francesco's favor, permitted her to remain in the monastery (Volante, 84). On the reasons for and frequency of marital separation between the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, see Gianna Pomata, "Family and Gender," in *The Short Oxford History of Italy. Early Modern Italy 1550-1796*, ed. John A. Marino (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 82-83. Pomata notes that the kind of legal separation granted to Petronilla (*a mensa et thoro*) was rarely conceded, though it became more common in the later eighteenth century, "possibly thanks to wives' greater economic independence. In one of the few contexts where this issue has been studied quantitatively, the city of Siena, the number of separations doubled: from 1.22 percent in 1600-40 to 2.12 percent in 1750-99." Pomata provides examples found in eighteenth-century family chronicles and literature, such as in the works of the Bolognese poet, Teresa Zani (1664-1732). On Teresa Zani, see also Elisabetta Graziosi, *Avventuriere a Bologna. Due storie esemplari* (Modena: Mucchi, 1998).

¹⁰² "Terminate le liti, e io vivendo con qualche quiete [...] e dimenticando il passato, attendevo a fare una vita a me stessa [...] mi divertiva nella lettura di libri in prosa, e versi ove trovava tutto il mio divertimento" (ibid., c. 217v).

¹⁰³ *Le prose. Opere letterarie e scritti privati*, 101-102. [The meeting places of writers, the discourses of the indolent, the conversations of vain women and men are the amusements of the idle who don't know how to entertain themselves more nobly and with greater profit ... I am thus happy to hear of your virtuous occupations, and study of foreign languages and, even more so, of philosophy, and I cannot be displeased by what you call the idleness and melancholy of the city, because it gives you the space to exercise your God-given talent and open your mind to virtuous knowledge ... I also studied natural philosophy in my first years living in the convent, if only to escape the idleness that often reigns in the cloisters ... but later I abandoned this study, overcome by the concerns and troubles of my life, which leave me no time to spend in my talents]. The letter, which has been dated to December of 1703, is located in the private archives of the Massimi family (*Archivio Massimo 1698-1710*).

Although Petronilla's autobiography concludes in 1704, the events of the subsequent years are well documented by other sources, such as in her private letters. Following Francesco Massimi's death in 1707, she was able to leave the monastery and move into Palazzo Massimi with her mother and sons. In addition to traveling to Abruzzo in 1709 to visit relatives and regain control over her properties in Ortona and Carreto, she also continued to focus on her literary career, frequenting salons in Rome and becoming affiliated with two other literary academies, the Ricomposti of Anghiari and Rin vigoriti of Foligno, in 1705 and 1708, respectively.¹⁰⁴ Petronilla also began hosting her own weekly *conversazione*, inviting other poets and intellectuals into her home.¹⁰⁵

Petronilla died on March 3, 1726 at the age of sixty-two and she was buried in the church of Sant'Egidio, where a marble funerary monument was erected portraying the poet wearing a laurel wreath and surrounded by books and a lyre. Without the presence of her autobiography, the monumental status she achieved as an Arcadian poet would quite literally overshadow the importance of lesser-known events surrounding her upbringing, education, marriage and experiences in Castel Sant'Angelo and in the monastery of Spirito Santo, which help to illustrate the sacrifices she made in order to pursue her literary aspirations. Petronilla Paolini Massimi's autobiography provides readers with unprecedented insight into the quotidian experiences of a woman as she gradually and painstakingly broke free from a traditional role. Her autobiography

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 104n.

¹⁰⁵ Paolini Massimi's salon was one of three important gathering places for Arcadian poets hosted by women, alongside those of Faustina Maratti and Teresa Grillo Panfili, which were held on certain days of the month (Graziosi, 334-35). See also Vittoriano Esposito, "Il 'caso' umano e letterario di Petronilla Paolini Massimi: Bilancio critico," in *La vita*, vol. 1 of *Petronilla Paolini Massimi. La vita e le opere*, 156.

thus seems to embody on a larger scale the same hopes that she later expressed for her deceased husband – that he might, in death if not in life, finally come to truly know her.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁶ “Sperando che saprà amarmi e conoscermi più nel luogo di verità in cui si trova che non seppe fare nel mondo” (*Le prose. Opere letterarie e scritti privati*, 107). It was only on his deathbed, in 1707, that Francesco Massimi finally sought forgiveness from Petronilla. This exchange is documented in a letter from Petronilla to her son in which she confirms having received the letter and grants her husband’s request for forgiveness, though it is unlikely that Francesco Massimi had a chance to read it before his death (cf. *ibid.*, 106).

II.2 The Forced Spiritual Autobiographies of Veronica Giuliani

The first half of the eighteenth century in Italy was characterized by the continued influence of several religious currents that had gained force in the late seventeenth century. Foremost among these was Quietism, which continued to pose a threat to the Catholic Church despite having been formally condemned in 1687, and which the eminent French historian Paul Hazard described as having undermined “the foundations of organized religion” as “of one the many forms of the flowing tide of mysticism [...] in the name of the emancipation of feelings.”¹⁰⁷ Quietism is thus one of many elements that illustrate the transition from a culture based on authority to one based on individual privileges and the right to practice and profess religious beliefs in private; this trend was paralleled by the increasing number of women who attempted to exercise their legal marriage and property rights.

The roots of this transition belong in the late seventeenth century and, although one might assume that by the early eighteenth century both the appeal and the threat of “Baroque” mysticism would have given way to an era of greater religious moderation, scholars such as Elena Brambilla and Elena Bottoni have emphasized the necessity of distinguishing between the skepticism of an elite class of religious and political authorities on one hand and, on the other hand, a superstitious branch of the Church that maintained an interest in votive offerings and thaumaturgy. Brambilla specifies that the latter, though reduced in size, influence, and visibility, was equally erudite and thus not to be confused with “popular religion.”¹⁰⁸ The tension between these two views had a profound influence on the ways in which devotion was perceived, marking

¹⁰⁷ Paul Hazard, *The European Mind. The Critical Years (1680-1715)* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953), 424.

¹⁰⁸ Elena Brambilla, “Riforme dei segni di santità,” in *Corpi invasi e viaggi dell’anima. Santità, possessione, esorcismo dalla teologia barocca alla medicina illuminista* (Rome: Viella, 2010), 159. On the history of Quietism and the roots of this tension between “elite and popular religion,” see Domenico Sella’s chapter on “Religion” in *Italy in the Seventeenth Century* (London: Longman, 1997), 101-160.

a shift from the tenets of a weakened Spanish orthodoxy towards what would become the moderate Catholicism of the later eighteenth century.¹⁰⁹

As Brambilla has discussed in her study of the reforms of the criteria for sainthood and canonization, many texts on discerning false sainthood appeared during the late seventeenth century.¹¹⁰ One such treatise, Cardinal Giovanni Bona's *De discretione spirituum* (1672), provides an example of the Church's reaction against the excessive number of requests for beatification. As discussed in the previous chapter, the possibility of beatification and canonization had led many spiritual directors to encourage women to write spiritual autobiographies, such as that of Maria Domitilla Galluzzi, whose confessor probably believed that her *Vita* would prove useful if the Capuchin nun was eventually considered for canonization. Cardinal Bona was one of many who instead viewed Maria Domitilla's autobiography as a potentially heretical document and he was officially tasked with examining her writings. Bona criticized Maria Domitilla's works for lacking an account of true spiritual trials, for her numerous examples of self-satisfaction, insubstantial evidence of sanctity in the narration of her visions, and a representation of nursing at the breast of the Virgin Mary that was not only too literal in its emphasis on drinking the Virgin's "true milk" (*veri lactis*), but also too creative in its descriptions of her physical interactions with the Mother and Child. Bona provides a summary in Italian of his critique in which he questions the motives behind the autobiography:

Benché a prima vista, paia che suor Domitilla camini per le sicurissime strade dell'obediencia et humiltà, mentre professa scrivere la propria vita solo per eseguire li comandi del suo confessore, tuttavia si ha gran'occasione e ragionevole motivo di temere che questa donna sia sedotta et illusa dal demonio.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 186.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 134.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 139. [Although it would appear at first glance that Sister Domitilla walks the straightest path of obedience and humility as she professes to write her autobiography only to fulfill the commands of her confessor, we nevertheless have the great opportunity and reasonable motivation to fear that this woman has been seduced and

As evident in Bona's criticism, and as scholars like Adelisa Malena have observed, the saints' lives that once provided nuns with a model now provided inquisitors with a narrative structure against which they could ostensibly expose false saints. In an analysis of the official inquisitorial records against another seventeenth-century "false saint" forced to keep a spiritual diary, Francesca Fabbroni (1619-1681), Malena observes how traditional hagiographic topoi were invoked by religious authorities in order to create a "counter-hagiography" to expose the crimes of the accused.¹¹²

Yet, despite the Church's attempts to suppress potentially heretical manifestations of holiness and miracles, during the early eighteenth century there continued to be many cases of "forced" autobiographies written by nuns under the encouragement or orders of their spiritual directors, which present the same motifs, superstitions, visions and supernatural occurrences found in early hagiographic models and in the spiritual autobiographies of the previous century. In short, even in a new era of heightened skepticism and a turn towards observable, rational explanations, the popular image of the living saints of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and a general fascination with spiritual gifts and prophecies continued to coexist and influence autobiographical narratives even as these texts were viewed with increasing incredulity.¹¹³ Elena Bottoni has made a valuable contribution to this field of research with her study on four women authors of forced spiritual autobiographies in eighteenth-century Tuscany. While emphasizing

illuded by the devil]. Brambilla cites the text as quoted in Paolo Fontana, *Santità femminile e Inquisizione: La "passione" di Suor Domitilla Galluzzi (1595-1671)* (Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2007), 76. The Latin and Italian versions, respectively, are found in the Archive of the Inquisition (ACDF, Sanctum Officium, Stanza Storica, R3-c and R3-g, *Mediolanen. contra Franciscum Borrum et alios. Summarium Processus et vitae Sor. Domitillae Papien*, 372 r-v).

¹¹² See Adelisa Malena, "Francesca Fabbroni. Una finta santa quietista," in *L'eresia dei perfetti: Inquisizione romana ed esperienze mistiche nel Seicento italiano* (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2003), 83.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 54. A fragment of Fabbroni's diary was preserved in trial records held in the branch of the Holy Office in Pisa.

that their works cannot be extricated from the rise of anti-mysticism and a transition away from an emphasis on miracles and towards a model of sanctity based instead on heroic virtues, Bottoni also notes that all four women adopt the model of fifteenth-century living saints in their autobiographical works.¹¹⁴

Despite these continuities, some religious autobiographical writing during this period also suggests a transition from autobiography as a form of control over women to autobiography as an instrument of self-reflection and maturation.¹¹⁵ One such example is Maria Maddalena Martinengo (1687-1737, beatified in 1900), who took her vows in 1705 in the Capuchin convent of Santa Maria della Neve in Brescia and was only ten years old when she was first asked by her confessor to record her conversations with God. Her first spiritual autobiography, of which there are currently no known extant copies, was written in 1715; a second autobiography was completed in 1725 at the request of another confessor.¹¹⁶ Martinengo, like Maria Domitilla Galluzzi, wrote her autobiography largely at night or during breaks from her other responsibilities and she experienced similar fears and repulsions regarding the need to present her life as “sublime” instead of sinful.¹¹⁷ Her *Autobiografia* begins with a standard declaration of

¹¹⁴ Elena Bottoni, *Scritture dell'anima. Esperienze religiose femminili nella Toscana del Settecento* (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2009). Bottoni focuses on the writings of Caterina Biondi (1667-1729), Maria Antonia Colle (1723-1772), Maria Caterina Biondi (1684-1719) and Maria Virginia Boccherini (1761-1801), all of whom belonged to the Third Order.

¹¹⁵ Malena notes that these autobiographies, “concepite come forme di controllo di esperienze interiori di per sé incontrollabili [...] diventavano, – d'altra parte – preziosi strumenti di maturazione interiore per chi scriveva” (Malena, 50). Bottoni similarly describes a transition from forced autobiographical writing as an instrument of “guida e controllo” to “cura di sé” (Bottoni, xi).

¹¹⁶ Anne Jacobson Schutte, “‘Orride e strane penitenze.’ Esperimenti con la sofferenza nell’autobiografia spirituale di Maria Maddalena Martinengo,” in *I monasteri femminili come centri di cultura fra Rinascimento e Barocco*, ed. Gianna Pomata and Gabriella Zarri (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2005), 262. See also Gerardo Maurizio Pugnetti, *L'autobiografia della beata suor Maria Maddalena Martinengo contessa di Barco clarissa cappuccino* (Brescia: Fratelli Geroldi, 1964). Seven volumes of her various works, including treatises, testimonies, and letters, were examined during her process of beatification. No modern edition of her autobiography, which is located in the Archivio dei Frati Minori, Rezzato, in Brescia, has been published.

¹¹⁷ Cf. Pugnetti, 95.

humility and an acknowledgement of the physical and spiritual discomfort caused by the necessity of writing about herself:

Per obbedire scrivo e captivo il mio giudizio, non ostante la repugnanza che mi sento, la quale è tanto grande che mi si sconvolgono tutte le viscere. E questo procede per non aver io ben incenerita la mia volontà. Spero però che con questo colpo li presterò l'ultime esequie e la seppellirò in una perpetua oblivione.¹¹⁸

Martinengo's initial repulsion in response to being forced to write gradually gives way to her elevation of self-knowledge as the greatest of all sciences,¹¹⁹ illustrating what Pugnetti refers to as a transition from mysticism to art that Martinengo manages to achieve by claiming the act of writing as a form of divine obedience.¹²⁰ Aside from her autobiography, she wrote numerous works of her own volition, and in her writing she demonstrates a particular devotion to female literary models, such as Saints Catherine of Siena, Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi and Catherine of Genoa.¹²¹

Another example of how forced spiritual writing occasionally offers a means of gaining self-awareness is found in the writings of the Bolognese seamstress, Angela Mellini (1664-1707), described by Giovanni Pozzi as the most "pathetic" (*patetico*) example of a nearly-illiterate woman (she knew how to read but was taught by her confessor to write) obliged to keep a diary as a component of her spiritual guidance. Though initially forced to write, Mellini gained increasing pleasure from and command over her narrative, to the point that the hierarchical woman-confessor relationship was reversed as she became a maternal figure and model for her

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 94.

¹¹⁹ "Il conoscere se stesso è la scienza di tutte le scienze" (ibid., 104).

¹²⁰ "Il dramma del passaggio dalla mistica all'arte non consiste nel rimpianto di lasciare un'attività divina, che perfeziona l'uomo, per un'attività umana interessata alla perfezione dell'opera. Rimane pur sempre la relazione a Dio 'non avendo altra mira che obbedire per incontrare in tutto e per tutto la sua santissima Volontà significatami nell'obbedienza'" (ibid., 95).

¹²¹ Cf. *Scrittrici mistiche italiane*, ed. Giovanni Pozzi and Claudio Leonardi (Genoa: Marietti, 1988), 553.

spiritual “son.” Had she not been denounced to the Holy Office in 1698 for this inappropriate relationship with her confessor, her writings likely would not have been preserved. As Giovanni Pozzi and Marilena Modica Vasta have observed, ecclesiastical authorities began to prohibit Mellini from writing as soon as they realized it had become an instrument of self-knowledge, a source of pleasure, and a means of challenging the traditional church hierarchy.¹²²

“Tutto viene perché non sono morta a me medesima”: The Forced Spiritual Autobiographies of Veronica Giuliani (1660-1727)

Many scholars, such as Massimo Lollini, Michel David, and Armando Maggi, have referred to Saint Veronica Giuliani (who was beatified and sanctified in 1804 and 1839, respectively), as the most representative spiritual autobiographer and diarist of her time.¹²³ Born in Mercatello (Marche) as Orsola Giuliani to Benedetta Mancini and Francesco Giuliani, a commander of the pontifical army in the Duchy of Urbino, Veronica Giuliani was the last of seven daughters, two of whom died in infancy and one of whom was confined to the home because of a physical disability. While her other three sisters entered the Monastery of Santa Chiara in Mercatello on the same day in February of 1676,¹²⁴ Veronica instead entered the Capuchin monastery in Castello the following year. Here, she was eventually accused of being possessed for claiming to have received the stigmata. In 1688, she was denounced by the Mother Superior to the Holy Office, marking the beginning of years of torturous accusations and

¹²² See Pozzi and Leonardi, 565, and Marilena Modica Vasta, “La scrittura mistica,” in *Donne e fede: Santità e vita religiosa in Italia*, ed. Giulia Barone, Lucetta Scaraffia, and Gabriella Zarri (Rome: Laterza, 1994), 375-398.

¹²³ See Massimo Lollini, “Scrittura obbediente e mistica tridentina in Veronica Giuliani,” *Annali d’Italianistica* 13 (1995): 352; Michel David, “Il problema del diario intimo in Italia,” in *“Journal Intime” e letteratura moderna: Atti di Seminario, Trento, Marzo-Maggio 1988*, ed. Anna Dolfi (Rome: Bulzoni, 1989), 79-107; and Armando Maggi, “The Place of Female Mysticism in the Italian Literary Canon,” in *Strong Voices, Weak History: Early Women Writers and Canons in England, France and Italy*, ed. Pamela J. Benson and Victoria Kirkham (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005).

¹²⁴ *Le lettere*, vol. 6 of *Diario di S. Veronica Giuliani*, ed. Maria Cittadini Fulvi and Lázaro Iriarte (Assisi: Edizioni Porziuncola, 1989), 47-48.

punishments; the *Summarium* of Veronica Giuliani's trial consists of six hundred pages of documentation.¹²⁵ One year after her official accusation, she was removed from her position as mistress of the novices ("maestra delle novizie"), isolated from the community and subjected to abuse and imprisonment until 1704, when she was successfully re-elected to her former position. Between 1712 and 1716, she was again inspected and tortured by the Roman Inquisition, but eventually succeeded in being elected as Abbess and went on to direct the convent for the rest of her life.¹²⁶

Under the direction of thirty-nine confessors and other church officials, Veronica was forced at various times to provide written accounts of her life in the form of letters, diaries and a total of five autobiographies, written between 1693 and 1721, which comprise over twenty thousand pages.¹²⁷ The involuntary nature of her writing is made clear from the incipit of her

¹²⁵ Giacinto D'Urso, "Veronica Giuliani testimone di se stessa," in *Testimonianza e messaggio di Santa Veronica Giuliani: Atti del Congresso Internazionale di studi su santa Veronica Giuliani, Roma, Pontificio Ateneo Antonianum, 27-31 Ottobre 1982*, ed. Lázaro Iriarte (Rome: Editrice Laurentianum, 1983), 32.

¹²⁶ Cf. Monique Courbat, "Veronica Giuliani: scrittura e riscrittura," *Annali d'Italianistica* 13 (1995): 336.

¹²⁷ On Veronica Giuliani's confessors and their roles in the writing and redaction of her diary and autobiography, see Courbat, 335, and Massimo Baldini, "Il linguaggio di Veronica Giuliani tra esperienza sacra e profana," in *Il "sentimento" tragico dell'esperienza religiosa: Veronica Giuliani, 1660-1727*, ed. Maria Duranti (Naples: Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, 2000), 234. Veronica's first two *Relazioni*, written in 1693 and 1699 under the orders of two different confessors, both cover the period of her life from the age of three to her entrance in the monastery when she was sixteen; in the second autobiography we find the additional account of her first year as a novice. The following year, in 1700, she wrote a third autobiography for Bishop Eustachi covering the years of her life between the ages of three and thirty; it is this version, which culminates with her reception of the stigmata in 1697, that is known as the "Pius XII" version since the pope retained a copy of the document for over a decade as Veronica was being considered for sanctification. A fourth autobiography briefly summarizing her childhood and youth was likely also composed in 1700 (though Fiorucci maintains Pizzicaria's dating of the manuscript to 1714) with the intent of filling in some missing details for yet another confessor (Giovanni Pozzi, "Il 'parere' autobiografico di Veronica Giuliani," *Strumenti Critici* 54 [1987]:164). The fifth and final *Relazione*, dated between 1720-21 and written for Bishop Codebò, is written in second person as if dictated to Veronica Giuliani by the Virgin Mary. On the so-called "Pius XII" autobiography, see Armando Maggi, "When the O. Moves in the Heart: The Annunciation of the End in the Journal of Saint Veronica Giuliani," *Annali d'Italianistica* 18 (2000): 240. Veronica Giuliani's writings are located in the Archivio del Monastero delle Cappuccine di Città di Castello. Publication of her works was complicated not only by the sheer volume of pages, but also by the dispersal of sections of the manuscript as relics in various churches. Her writings were first published by Francesco Beniamino Dausse (*Scritti di Santa Veronica Giuliani cappuccina nel Monastero di Città di Castello*, con i tipi di S. Lapi di Città di Castello, 1883, 1884, 1885), whose project was interrupted by his death. In the modern edition of her works, the order of the autobiographies of 1699 and 1700 is reversed, thus the latter is referred to as the "Second" autobiography and the former as the "Third."

first autobiography of 1693:

A maggior gloria di Dio e per adempire il suo santo volere, con mia mortificazione e rossore, descrivo tutto questo che qui sotto stenderò, solo per pura obbedienza.¹²⁸

As in the case of Angela Mellini, Veronica Giuliani did not have a strong command of written Italian; despite coming from a considerably wealthy family, when she entered the monastery she did not know how to write and was barely able to read.¹²⁹ That she wrote poorly and against her will raises the question of if and how her writing can be evaluated from the perspective of the Italian female canon, or if any attempts at an “aesthetic interpretation” of her works would distort their original purpose and historical value.¹³⁰

Unlike Angela Mellini and Maria Maddalena Martinengo, Veronica rarely describes writing as a means to self-knowledge, though it is certainly a tool for accessing traditional mystic values such as self-abnegation.¹³¹ Rather than demonstrate an increased awareness of the self, Veronica’s autobiographies reveal a progressive suppression of the self; this is most evident in her last autobiography, written between 1720-1721, which concludes with Veronica’s reception of the stigmata on Good Friday, 1697. In this version, Veronica makes the radical transition from a first-person to a second-person narration, presenting her autobiography as a dictation from the Virgin Mary. The loss of the first-person narration, often considered one of the primary tenets of

Veronica Giuliani, *Un tesoro nascosto, ossia Diario di S. Veronica Giuliani*, ed. Pietro Pizzicaria, 8 vols. (Prato, 1895-1905). Reprint, ed. Oreste Fiorucci, 5 vols. (Città di Castello: Monastero delle Cappuccine, 1969-74). All page numbers cited in this dissertation refer to Fiorucci’s edition, which has nonetheless been criticized by various scholars for the imprecise editorial criteria used in the transcription of the manuscript (See Pozzi, 162, and Courbat, 334).

¹²⁸ *Un tesoro nascosto*, 5:1.

¹²⁹ Pozzi, 163.

¹³⁰ Maggi, “The Place of Female Mysticism in the Italian Literary Canon,” 206.

¹³¹ One of the few exceptions can be found in this fragment from one her diaries: “Per obbedire descrivo tutto ciò [che segue]. Adesso fra tutte le grazie che mi fa Dio, la maggiore è le viste che mi dà dei propri difetti. Questo è un modo che mi fa conoscere me stessa, mi spoglia da tutto e qualche volta mi dà special dolore di tutti i miei peccati” (*Un tesoro nascosto*, 5:111).

the autobiographical genre, corresponds to the final stages of Veronica's mystical self-abnegation: As the self is subsumed in God, the voice of the narrating and narrated selves must disappear.¹³²

Veronica Giuliani represents a unique case in the history of the autobiography not only because of this suppression of the self, but also because of the cyclical quality of her narrative. The same mystical events and visions are not only repeated in the multiple versions of her life story, but also within each version; Veronica claims to have had to repeat various phases of the typical spiritual trajectory of a saint, such as the exchange of rings and the mystical marriage with Christ, which are traditionally singular, irrevocable rites of passage. Instead, for Veronica, these spiritual gifts are often retracted and then reinstated. The repetitions within and across each version of the autobiography have led Pozzi and Courbat to claim that Veronica's narrative is unique in its absence of the "conversion" that is generally considered to be a fundamental characteristic of the autobiographical genre and one that creates a dividing point between the narrating (converted) and narrated (errant) selves.¹³³

We must consider, however, that the repetitive nature of the text was likely a result of the conditions under which Veronica Giuliani was forced to write. Her diary, which she began in the same year as her first autobiography, provides valuable information about the structure, organization and conditions of her writing. The thousands of pages of the diary, which span from 1693 to shortly before her death, were distributed to her in bundles of twelve pages or less that

¹³² Pozzi writes: "Alla scomparsa dell'io narrato è fatta corrispondere la scomparsa dell'io narrante; all'avvento d'un alter ego sull'io narrato risponde quello d'un alter ego dell'io narrante. Ma a questo punto si dissolve l'istituto stesso dell'autobiografia, impossibile dove manchi un io che racconti di se medesimo" (Pozzi, 192). Similarly, her diary reveals what Courbat refers to as "un'evoluzione progressiva della scissione e distruzione dell'io personale il quale finisce con la sua catastrofe totale" (Courbat, 340).

¹³³ Félix Vernet was among the first to define the spiritual autobiography as the "story of a conversion" (Félix Vernet, "Autobiographie spirituelle," in *Dictionnaire de spiritualité ascétique et mystique* [Paris: Beauchesne, 1937], 1141-1159). Describing Veronica's narrative, Pozzi writes: "L'io, mentre sta narrandosi, si riconosce via via uguale al se stesso d'una volta [...] non c'è né rottura, né conversione" (Pozzi, 174). See also Courbat, 338.

were taken from her as soon as she finished writing; in order to prevent her from manipulating or altering the text, she was not allowed to re-read previous entries.¹³⁴ The result is what Baldini has referred to as an almost entirely irreflective (“quasi totalmente irriflessa”) form of expression, not unlike that of spoken confessions.¹³⁵

Moreover, during the early phase of her diaristic activity, Veronica’s confessor required her to provide two separate accounts each day: One account of her physical and psychological experiences, followed by a separate description of mystical phenomena.¹³⁶ The forced practice of separating exterior and interior experiences (what Courbat calls the “diario sdoppiato”),¹³⁷ with a clear preference on the part of her confessors for accounts of outward manifestations of Veronica’s spiritual gifts, must have influenced the organization of her autobiographies, in which readers are rarely provided with descriptions of Veronica’s relationships with other nuns in the convent or of her reactions to being subjected to humiliating punishments and accusations, such as being confined to a dark room, barred from communion, stripped of her administrative role, and accused of demonic possession.¹³⁸ According to Pozzi, such aspects would have been consciously ignored or suppressed in the narrative because Veronica would not have imagined that her readership would one day extend beyond the close circle of her confessors, all of whom

¹³⁴ Cf. Pozzi, 163, and Courbat, 342.

¹³⁵ Baldini, 236.

¹³⁶ Courbat, 342.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 337. Courbat distinguishes between the “diario sdoppiato” and the later phenomenon to which she refers as the “diario raddoppiato” when Veronica was tasked (between 1715-1716) with writing three separate diary entries for her confessor, spiritual director and a prelate. While the content of these accounts remains essentially identical, Veronica’s tone and sense of trust varies in accordance with her addressee; according to Courbat, “quando scrive per il direttore spirituale che tende a condannarla, redige nel modo più distanziato e meno personale possibile; quando scrive per il confessore che sente vicino non solo spiritualmente, ma pure umanamente, scrive più personalmente e più sinceramente” (344).

¹³⁸ D’Urso, 36.

were already familiar with the circumstances of her daily life.¹³⁹ While this may be true, Veronica does predict in 1697 that her writings would be diffused throughout the world (“questi scritti hanno da andare per tutto il mondo”).¹⁴⁰ Moreover, although writing under the direct obligation and guidance of her confessors undoubtedly forced Veronica to shape her narrative in specific ways, in this chapter I explore some signs of rebellion against these constraints within the various versions of her autobiography in order to suggest that it is possible to at least partially reconstruct the narrative that Veronica must suppress in order to comply with her confessors’ demands.

Beyond Veronica’s inability to control the conditions of writing and her limited understanding of her audience, many other aspects have led scholars to view her autobiography as a *sui generis* work, impossible to place within the larger autobiographical tradition. For example, Giovanni Pozzi has argued that Veronica’s writings, even while adhering to the broadest definition of autobiography as a biography of one’s life written by oneself, are incompatible with the general norms of both spiritual and secular autobiographies.¹⁴¹ Among the aspects that distinguish Veronica’s autobiography from others in the genre, Pozzi notes the

¹³⁹ Pozzi observes: “L’interlocutore è dunque esclusivamente il confessore o il prelado di turno; sull’orizzonte mentale di Veronica non spuntò mai l’idea di un pubblico di lettori; le sarebbero apparsi degli intrusi (e tali siamo noi se osservati nella logica in cui si realizzarono i suoi scritti) [...] Il destinatario potrebbe scrivere in gran parte egli stesso la medesima storia che lei narra, almeno in qualità di spettatore dei fatti e di depositario dei detti” (Pozzi, 166). Massimo Baldini has similarly suggested that “le parole di santa Veronica sono *parole clandestine*, parole che non sono nate per circolare, né tantomeno per essere stampate e lette da lettori i più diversi e occasionali, esse furono scritte per essere lette da pochissimi: il suo confessore e i suoi superiori” (Baldini, 234).

¹⁴⁰ See Monique Courbat, *Dico e ridico e non dico niente: Il fenomeno del diario sdoppiato in Santa Veronica Giuliani* (Siena: Cantagalli, 1994), 189. This prediction suggests that, contrary to the private nature of most spiritual diaries, Veronica Giuliani may have been aware of the possibility that her writings would reach a larger audience. She also predicts, in 1698, that one of her fellow nuns would be elected as Abbess and, in 1725, that her confessor would fall ill (ibid. Courbat cites from Veronica’s diaries).

¹⁴¹ Cf. Pozzi, 162. Pozzi argues that self-knowledge is a necessary condition of the autobiography, whereas in Veronica Giuliani’s writing there is a constant interplay between knowledge and ignorance that leads to the negation of the former. He further emphasizes that while one of the “laws” of the autobiographical genre is the impossibility of writing a conclusion to the story of a life that has yet to be concluded, “Veronica sigilla con un ‘fine’ la sua ultima relazione per bocca della madonna che gliela detta” (179).

emphasis on repetition rather than progress, the suppression rather than the strengthening of her individual identity, her emphasis on exterior spiritual manifestations rather than interior experiences, the lack of a conversion story, the use of supernatural phenomena to explain events in her life, the lack of descriptions of her daily life in the convent, and the absence of quotations from prayers and hagiographic and sacred texts.¹⁴²

Without discounting these unique and unconventional characteristics, my analysis aims to challenge the view that Veronica Giuliani cannot be considered within the larger autobiographical tradition in Italy. Though lacking many details of her daily life and important events such as the entrance of her older sisters in the convent, Veronica's account of her early life adheres in many ways to the genre of the spiritual autobiography.¹⁴³ Pozzi himself has acknowledged the presence of some common elements between her writings and other spiritual autobiographies based on hagiographic models, including her early initiation into religious life through both prayers and penitence, the imitation of holy models, the attraction towards monastic life, childhood games centered on sacred objects or rituals, an inclination towards charitable acts, an attraction to devotional images and miraculous recoveries from a fall.¹⁴⁴ Veronica's

¹⁴² See Lollini, 366, and Pozzi, 177. Pozzi does note, however, studies of implicit biblical references in Giuliani's diary. See Silverio Zedda, *La Bibbia nella vita spirituale di santa Veronica*, in *Testimonianza e messaggio*, and Lázaro Iriarte, *Esperienza e dottrina mistica: Pagine scelte* (Rome: Editrice Laurentianum, 1981), 27-38.

¹⁴³ D'Urso has noted the emphasis on Veronica's early religious experiences and the lack of some specific details regarding her family life: "Vi si rispecchiano soprattutto gli anni della fanciullezza e le prime esperienze di vita religiosa. Ne esulano in buona parte le informazioni che non hanno un colore morale, quelle che riguardano la vita di famiglia, la monacazione delle sorelle, i rapporti umani con la parentela, le descrizioni dei luoghi dove trascorreva la prima età, ed altre cose di ordine sociale. C'è invece ciò che può interessare un uomo di chiesa: il carattere, le tendenze, buone o meno buone, le manifestazioni di pietà infantile, il sorgere e la difesa della vocazione, i primi fervori della vita religiosa, le esperienze mistiche e le grazie soprannaturali" (D'Urso, 33-34).

¹⁴⁴ "Il racconto dell'esistenza esterna dai primi passi al compimento del progetto cui è destinato il protagonista (punto obbligato d'ogni autobiografia) in Veronica risponde a molte ricorrenze dell'autobiografia spirituale (che son poi luoghi comuni dell'agiografia): la precocissima iniziazione al mondo della santità, con preghiere e penitenze volontarie, l'imitazione del santo modello, l'attrattiva per la vita monastica senza effettiva conoscenza dei dati, il compiere giochi infantili a soggetto sacro (come il fare altarini), la suggestione delle immagini devote, specialmente di Gesù bambino e di Cristo piagato, il gusto dell'elemosina ai poveri, le cadute nel vuoto senza farsi male" (Pozzi, 176-177).

autobiography also contains explicit and implicit references to the models that likely influenced her narrative; for example, the death of her mother when she was a young child, her childhood fascination with martyrdom, her father's staunch opposition to her desire to become a nun and her rejection of worldly temptations are all characteristics reminiscent of the life of Saint Teresa of Avila, a text with which she was very familiar and which was available to her in the library of the monastery.¹⁴⁵

Despite Pozzi's claim that Veronica's narrative lacks a conversion story, ample space is dedicated to the errors of her youth, especially in her first autobiography. Being forced to write her autobiography and diaries provided Veronica with a legitimate channel for describing her childhood in detail. Her first autobiography, like the first part of Saint Teresa's autobiography, is clearly focused on an exposition of her sins and Veronica, like Saint Teresa, seems more than happy to comply with the order from her confessor to relay everything that she remembers, including her "greatest flaws" ("difetti maggiori"):¹⁴⁶

Io racconto tutto, acciò V.R. venga in cognizione di quanto sono stato cattiva [...] ma tutto però veniva che io non stimavo i sentimenti interni che di continuo avevo. Durai così sino all'età di 13 anni e più ancora.¹⁴⁷

It is thus in her earliest autobiography, in which Veronica is asked to speak honestly of her past, that one finds several autobiographical topoi that have been overlooked or overshadowed by the

¹⁴⁵ Veronica claims to have been four years old, but was actually six, at the time of her mother's death (cf. *Un tesoro nascosto*, 5:40). She recalls arguing with her father about her spiritual intentions: "Non vedevo l'ora per venire a sposarmi con Dio [...] Con ogni istanza lo dicevo a nostro padre, ma esso faceva tutto l'opposto" (ibid., 16).

¹⁴⁶ "Eccole tutto il racconto della mia vita. Ho detto tutto quello che mi sono ricordata. Se altro mi ricorderò, lo manderò di nuovo. Ho scritto in fretta; l'intenderà per discrezione. I difetti maggiori pare d'averli messi. Di quelli più piccoli sono senza numero; ma tanto, come io posso, vi voglio distender tutto" (ibid., 25).

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 16-17. [I am telling everything, so that Your Reverence might understand how bad I have been ... but everything happened because I did not value the internal feelings that I continuously had. I continued on like this until the age of thirteen and even beyond].

more unusual circumstances of her autobiographical enterprise.¹⁴⁸ Examples of wayward behavior during her childhood and adolescence include including gambling, sword-fighting and dressing in male garments, her enjoyment of being courted for her beauty, cheating at games in order to win, and making frivolous demands of the household servants, even allowing one of them to be accused of something that Veronica had done.¹⁴⁹

Starting with her birth, Armando Maggi notes that Veronica's claim that her mother, due to a burning sensation in her abdomen during her pregnancy, had referred to her unborn daughter as a "fire" ("fuoco") echoes Saint Augustine's *Confessions* and symbolizes "the first manifestation of Veronica's sinful nature, even before her actual birth."¹⁵⁰ Adopting another topos of the autobiographical tradition that can be traced to Saint Augustine, theft is an important part of Veronica's spiritual and moral development. In her first autobiography of 1693, Veronica describes how, at around the age of seven, she, like many spiritual autobiographers before her, spent much of her time constructing small altars, a hobby which required that she steal candles and significant quantities of oil and wood.¹⁵¹ Veronica also donates many of her family's goods to the needy without asking permission from her father or older sisters. On one occasion, Veronica refused to admit to having given away several bushels of grain along with some plates

¹⁴⁸ Giovanni Pozzi and Massimo Lollini have both observed that, following her entrance in the convent, Veronica includes fewer autobiographical references as she is increasingly encouraged to provide descriptions of supernatural phenomena. Pozzi thus argues that in her first autobiography, in which she was able to dedicate more space to the "atti ordinari" of her daily life, one finds the most lively descriptions of her childhood, character and surroundings. See Pozzi, 175, and Lollini, 366.

¹⁴⁹ According to Pozzi, Veronica Giuliani describes these characteristics without the self-denigrating tone that is often employed in spiritual autobiographies in order to distinguish the narrator, who has already experienced the enlightenment of conversion, from his or her wayward past (Pozzi, 174-176).

¹⁵⁰ Maggi, "When the O. Moves in the Heart," 248.

¹⁵¹ "Incominciai di nuovo a fare gli altarini, e tutto il di non facevo mai altro; e logoravo tanto olio e candele, che molte volte mi veniva scrupolo. Ma non davo retta a niente, ed ogni volta moltiplicavo furti di più. E per fare i detti altarini io feci un difetto notevole, il quale è questo, che fra due o tre volte rubai alcuni pezzetti di legno, e non me ne confessavo; anzi pensavo che non fosse niente" (*Un tesoro nascosto*, 5:6).

and brass candleholders, even after one of the family's servants was accused of stealing them.¹⁵² As the youngest child, Veronica was coddled and spoiled by both her sisters and her father, who gave in to her every whim, even allowing her to dress in costume during Carnival and gamble with him in the city of Piacenza.¹⁵³ This anecdote is one of several that shows how Veronica, at around the age of thirteen, began to challenge gender roles and expectations. She exhibits a propensity for both weaponry and male dress, injuring a young man with a sword¹⁵⁴ and convincing her sisters to dress up with her as men. Her description of this event is used to highlight her flaws and reluctance to heed her spiritual calling:

Un giorno, fra l'altro, io mi vestii da uomo, e feci che tutte le mie sorelle facessero l'istesso. Con questo travestirmi n'ebbi gran gusto: mi feci vedere da più persone. Io tutto feci senza pensiero nessuno; ma, per via di ciò, dopo ci ho pensato, penso che in quel dì fossi causa di qualche offesa di Dio. Mi sentivo stimolo di ciò non fare mai più; ma pensate! dopo l'ho fatto anche più volte, e sempre con l'istesso stimolo. Dico tutto acciò conosciate quanto sono stata ingrata a Dio, di non corrispondere a tante sue chiamate.¹⁵⁵

Her descriptions of her youth, both in terms of her errant behavior and her precocious inclination towards repentance and suffering, are explicitly derived from hagiographic models. Veronica's fascination from a young age with stories of saints and martyrs echoes that of Saint Teresa, who described in her autobiography having been so inspired by stories of female martyrs

¹⁵² “Davo via della roba senza saputa di nessuno. In particolare una volta diedi di più staia di grano ed anche alcuni piatti e candelieri di ottone. Di questo vi ebbi molto scrupolo, stante che dei piatti e di quei candelieri se ne avvidero ed incolparono una serva: ed io non volli mai dire che gli avevo avuti io. Bensì feci che la detta serva non patisse niente, e nemmeno volli che la mandassero via, come di già volevano fare” (ibid., 14).

¹⁵³ “In quest'età feci molti errori. Di già vedevo che mio padre mi voleva contentare; così gli chiesi molti passatempi e gusto proprio. Ebbi tutto. Fra l'altro, in tempo di carnevale, gli chiesi di voler andare immascherata con esso lui al lotto, che si faceva in questa città. Così esso subito mi contentò di questo” (ibid., 16).

¹⁵⁴ See Courbat, “Veronica Giuliani: scrittura e riscrittura,” 338.

¹⁵⁵ *Un tesoro nascosto*, 5:17. [One day, for example, I dressed up as a man and made my sisters do the same. I greatly enjoyed this cross-dressing and showed myself to various people. I did all of this without thinking, but, because of this, I later reflected on things and think that on that day I must have caused some offense to God. I felt an instinct not to do it ever again; but just think! I did it again after that more than once, and always with the same instinct. I am saying all of this so that you will know how ungrateful I have been to God, not to have answered his many calls].

that she and her brother dreamed of running away from home to ask Moors to kill them.¹⁵⁶

Similarly, Veronica writes:

Una volta, sentendo leggere la vita di certo santo Martire, vennemi desiderio di morire anch'io martire; ed ogni volta che sentivo queste vite, mi veniva voglia di fare tutto quello che avevano fatto *questi santi*.¹⁵⁷

In her 1693 autobiography, she writes of a specific desire to suffer by fire when she was only three years old and, stirred by having heard the lives of some saints, placed her hand in a fire:

Essendo io in età di tre anni, sentendo leggere la vita di certi santi martiri, mi venne un desiderio di patire. Fra gli altri patimenti, che essi avevano avuto, fu l'essere abbruciati. In quel punto che ciò si leggeva, anche io sentivami questa brama di abbruciare per amor di Gesù. Tanto fu, che misi, essendo tempo d'inverno, una mano in un cocchio di fuoco, con pensiero di volere abbruciare come facevano quei santi martiri. La mano si scottò tutta; e se non mi levavano il detto fuoco, di già si arrostita. Io non mi ricordo bene; ma mi pare che in quel punto non sentissi nemmeno il fuoco, perchè stavo come fuor di me pel contento che avevo. Bensì dopo sentì il dolore del cotto, e di già mi si erano ritirati i diti. Tutti di casa piangevano; ma io non mi ricordo di aver gittato una lagrima, io. In questa tenera età non mi pare di avere avuto lume particolare di Dio. Queste cose le facevo, perchè sentivo che le avevano fatte quei santi martiri.¹⁵⁸

Veronica clearly specifies in her account of this incident that her actions were motivated only by a desire to imitate the stories she had been told rather than by any particular spiritual calling. Yet,

¹⁵⁶ In her autobiography, Saint Teresa writes: "When I read about certain women saints who endured martyrdom for the sake of God, I concluded that death was a small price to pay for the utter joy they were given in return when they were whisked away to heaven. I desperately wanted to die like this [...] My brother and I would discuss how we could best make martyrs of ourselves. We decided to head off to the country of the Moors, begging bread along the way, and ask them to please, for the love of God, chop off our heads." Saint Teresa of Avila, *The Book of My Life*, trans. Mirabai Starr (Boston: New Seeds Books, 2007), 6.

¹⁵⁷ *Un tesoro nascosto*, 5:35-36. [One time, hearing of a certain martyred saint, I was overcome by a desire to become a martyr too, and every time I heard these lives, I wanted to do what *these saints* had done].

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 2. [At the age of three, hearing read the lives of certain martyred saints, I was overcome with a desire to suffer. Among the various kinds of suffering they had was that of being burned. Hearing of this, I, too, felt the desire to burn with the love of Jesus, so much so that, it being the middle of winter, I put my hand in a boiling pot, with the thought of wanting to be burned like those martyred saints. My hand was scalded and if they hadn't removed the fire, it would have been burned. I don't remember well, but I seem to recall that in that moment I didn't even feel the fire because I was beside myself with the contentment I felt, though I felt the pain of the burn later, and I had already pulled my fingers away. Everyone in house was crying, but I don't remember shedding a tear myself. At that tender age I don't recall having had a particular light from God. I did these things because I had heard that the martyred saints had done them].

her 1699 version of the same event contains some significant alterations; here, instead of reiterating the influence of reading saints' lives, she claims to have felt compelled towards suffering out of a love for God.¹⁵⁹ Her vague curiosity has been transformed into a specific desire for martyrdom and, whereas in her first account she claims not to have felt any pain (“non sentissi nemmeno il fuoco”) and to have withdrawn her hand almost immediately, she now describes having experienced great pain (“un dolore così grande”) and burning her hand severely.¹⁶⁰ She thus transforms herself into a martyr in an apparent effort to accommodate the expectations of her readers.

This was only the first of many incidents of self-injury inspired in particular by the Life of Saint Rose of Lima (1586-1617), a copy of which had been given to one of Veronica's older sisters.¹⁶¹ Veronica's extreme behaviors include: Beating herself, at the age of only three or four, with a whip she made out of a frock;¹⁶² intentionally placing her fingers in the frame of a door as it was being shut;¹⁶³ hitting herself with stones;¹⁶⁴ binding her arms and legs to cut off

¹⁵⁹ “Avevo queste brame, ma non conoscevo cosa fosse. Solo di presente mi sovviene, che [...] sentivo certo stimolo di fare tutto per amor di Dio” (ibid., 35-36).

¹⁶⁰ “Mi venne voglia di mettere una mano in detto fuoco, per vedere se avessi potuto essere martire. Così feci. Tosto s'avvidero le mie sorelle, che mi levarono la mano dal fuoco, la quale si era così malamente cotta, che tutti i nervi s'erano ritirati. M'avevo un dolore così grande, ma non dicevo niente. Anzi mi pare di ricordarmi che io ridessi; ed avevo animo di voler morir martire” (ibid.).

¹⁶¹ The beatification and canonization (in 1667 and 1671, respectively) of the Latin American saint made her a popular figure during Veronica's childhood. Many biographies of Rose of Lima's life circulated at the time. Veronica writes in her 1699 autobiography: “Mi ricordo che fu donato un compendio della vita di S. Rosa da Lima ad una mia sorella maggiore. Così, sentendo leggere la detta vita, mi venne desiderio di volere imitare detta santa. La stavo a sentire con grande attenzione, e tutto quello che ella aveva fatto, io volevo fare” (*Un tesoro nascosto*, 5:35-36).

¹⁶² In her 1693 autobiography, she writes: “Un'altra volta, essendo pure in età di circa tre o quattro anni, sentendo leggere il compendio della vita di S. Rosa di Lima, sentendo quelle sue grandi penitenze, venne voglia anche a me di fare come faceva lei; e fra le altre cose io la volevo imitare in quelle sue discipline. Ma perchè, non avevo con che battermi, mi cavavo il zinale, facevo più e più nodi alle bindelle di esso, e poi mi mettevo dietro a qualche porta, e mi battevo” (ibid., 2).

¹⁶³ Ibid., 3. Veronica's version of the story changes seven years later, in her autobiography of 1700, in which she claims that the entire incident was an accident and that she had placed her fingers in the doorway only inadvertently,

circulation;¹⁶⁵ and fashioning a large cross for herself to bear.¹⁶⁶ In the early versions of her autobiography, Veronica repeatedly insists that her actions were motivated by no other spiritual instinct or calling than her desire to imitate Saint Rose of Lima and her interest in the stories she had been told.¹⁶⁷ Lacking a true religious or penitential intention, her eager imitations take on the humorous undertones of typical childhood mischievousness. She recalls, for example, her mother's abundant laughter upon discovering the young Veronica as she hid behind a door and tried to beat herself with her dress.¹⁶⁸

In addition to her childhood fascination with martyrdom, Veronica provides examples of many other early signs of her spiritual vocation. She describes having displayed a natural inclination towards charity, recalling how she would often donate household objects and clothing to people on the streets.¹⁶⁹ In early versions of her autobiography, such behaviors are attributed less to a religious vocation than to the positive influence of her mother and older sisters, living models that are supplanted only in later versions of the autobiography by direct supernatural

but that she was happy nonetheless when she realized the parallel with Saint Rose of Lima's own injury: "Una volta mi misi un dito inavvertitamente fra una porta e mi feci un gran male; ma perchè mi ricordai che anche la mia Santa aveva messo un ditto fra una cassa e sopportò detto male con tale pazienza, io, nell'essermi fatta così male che si vedeva il nervo, tanto ridevo e sentivo sommo contento" (ibid., 14).

¹⁶⁴ "Altre volte mi acciaccavo le dita con sassi" (ibid., 35-36).

¹⁶⁵ "Delle volte anche pigliavo qualche bindella o cordellino, e mi legavo le gambe e le braccia così strette, che venivano quasi ad entrare dentro la carne. E questo ancora lo facevo, perchè sentivo che legavano quei santi con tale empietà, che le ligature loro toccavano le ossa" (ibid.).

¹⁶⁶ "Un giorno parvemi sentire che detta santa portava una pesante croce. Io ancora volevo portarla; ma non sapevo come mi fare. Presi due legne, e feci una croce. Ma pensate! Non potevo portarla. Ad ogni passo ero per terra" (ibid., 37).

¹⁶⁷ "Di queste cose ne facevo più e più, non perchè io avessi questo istinto, ma perchè sentivo che le avevano fatte i santi" (ibid.).

¹⁶⁸ "Ma pensate! Non sentivo pena di niente. In un subito mi trovò mia madre. Io ebbi tal rossore che lei m'aveva veduta! [...] Ella rise, e non poco" (ibid., 35-36).

¹⁶⁹ "Tutto quello che potevo avere (piatti, robe di qualsiasi sorta) tutto portavo in strada ai poverini; e come non avevo altro, cavavo il zinale che avevo" (ibid., 14).

interventions.¹⁷⁰ When urged by her confessors to move away from the descriptions of her flaws and accounts of her errors prevalent in her first autobiography, and to instead focus on describing the graces and gifts she had received, writing became significantly more difficult and she began to associate writing with vanity (“amor proprio”).¹⁷¹ Like other spiritual autobiographers before her, perhaps most notably Saint Teresa of Avila, Veronica would have preferred to focus her narrative on her spiritual trials and challenges. This is clear in her 1700 autobiography:

Questo scrivere che faccio mi serve di gran rossore e confusione. Scrivo più con lacrime che con inchiostro. Vorrei poter manifestare me stessa come sto avanti a Dio, acciò tutti conoscessero la gran necessità che tengo di orazioni. Ma questo non posso nemmeno farlo capire con parole; solo capirà ciò chi ha sentito tutta la mia vita passata. Qui non dico niente, perchè ho obbedienza di non dire i difetti, ma solo le grazie e doni.¹⁷²

In her second and third autobiographies, Veronica begins to develop the theme of divine intervention, most often in the form of appearances of the Madonna and Child. The number of times that a holy image comes to life, moving and speaking directly to Veronica, increases dramatically in later versions, whereas in her first autobiography Veronica focuses only briefly on the significance of a Madonna and Child and a wax statue that provide comfort after her

¹⁷⁰ See Courbat, 337-338.

¹⁷¹ “Molte volte mi pare che il Signore nella santa Comunione mi abbia comandato che io dicessi tutto quello, che Esso operava in me, a chi stava in suo luogo, e che non voleva che io tenessi più nascosti i suoi tesori e grazie che faceva coll’anima mia. Così facevo, perchè tutte queste cose mi davano gran pena, che non fossero qualche inganno del nemico, ed in particolare perchè sentivo tal ripugnanza in dire queste cose. Non mi pareva che potesse essere Dio, perchè sapevo la mia mala vita e dicevo fra me stessa: *Non può essere Dio, perchè non sta bene amor proprio ed amore di Dio*. Ed io vedevo che l’amor proprio ne avevo la mia parte; e qualche volta andavo dicendo: *Come può essere che queste cose siano di Dio, se io sono così piena di imperfezioni?* Mi sentivo il mio naturale così collerico!” (*Un tesoro nascosto*, 1:26-27).

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 63. [This writing that I am doing causes me great embarrassment and confusion. I write with more tears than ink. I would like to show myself how I am before God, so that everyone would know the great need I have for prayer. But I cannot show this with words; only those who have heard my entire past will understand this. Here I say nothing, because I have orders not to speak of my faults, but only graces and gifts]. Pozzi notes that in her first autobiography, Veronica “dedica maggior attenzione agli atti ordinari, orientatavi dell’intento di descrivere i propri difetti; intento che sarà poi neutralizzato nelle successive relazioni dai committenti, vogliosi di esplorare il mondo dei fenomeni non ordinari” (*ibid.*, 175).

mother's death.¹⁷³ Pozzi notes that the phenomenon of the “animated image” (“immagine animata”) seems to replace the theme of voluntary mortification, which dominates Veronica's descriptions of her childhood in her first autobiography. This shift from an emphasis on her family and the faults of her youth towards an increasing emphasis on supernatural phenomena is one of the most compelling aspects of the multiple versions of her autobiography, because it raises the question of whether Veronica's perception of her past had actually changed or whether the alterations in her text reveal a concerted effort to satisfy her confessors by providing evidence of divine intervention in the earliest years of her life.

In all versions of her autobiography, two specific events, also common to the autobiographies discussed in the previous chapter, shape Veronica's spiritual development: Her mother's death and a physical fall during early childhood. Veronica shares early memories of her mother's extreme love and affection for her daughters, and towards Veronica in particular as the youngest daughter; she remembers crying inconsolably even before being told that her mother had died, to the point that her sisters had difficulty dressing her and putting her to bed.¹⁷⁴ To quiet her tears, her sisters give her an image of the Madonna and Child, which she carries with her everywhere.¹⁷⁵ In the absence of her real mother, Veronica not only transfers much of her love towards images of the Virgin Mary, but also attempts to assume a maternal role towards the infant Jesus, whom she attempts to breastfeed:

¹⁷³ Cf. Pozzi, 168.

¹⁷⁴ In her first autobiography, written in 1693, Veronica writes: “Mia madre mi voleva gran bene, e sempre mi teneva appresso di sè, di giorno e di notte. Finiti i quattro anni io rimasi senza madre; e, con tutto che ero così piccolo, la sua morte mi dispiacque molto. Avanti che nessuno me lo dicesse, io piangevo dirottissimamente; e mi ricordo che non mi potevano vestire, tanto era il mio pianto, e che la notte veniente non volli andare a letto, perchè non v'era mia madre” (*Un tesoro nascosto*, 5:4).

¹⁷⁵ Describing having received the figure from her sisters, she writes: “Per farmi racchetare, mi diedero una Madonna che aveva il bambino Gesù in collo. Io tutta mi rallegrai, e dove andavo portavo la detta immagine” (ibid., 5).

Mi ricordo che noi avevamo in casa una figura di queste antiche, che v'era dipinto la Beata Vergine, che allattava il bambino Gesù [...] Dicevo al Bambino: *Gesù mio, guardatemi un poco. Lasciate coteste poppe. Venite a me, che io vi allatterò* [...] Così lo chiamavo e richiamavo, ma non veniva mai. Io non potevo più stare di non dargli un bacio. Presi un non so che in mano, e feci cascare il detto quadretto in terra. Mi pare che gli dessi tanti e tanti baci, e poi lo posi non so dove. Così mi pare. Mi cominciai a spogliare. Feci tanto, che cavai il busto che avevo, e dicevo: *Mio Gesù, lasciate coteste poppe. Venite a pigliare il latte qui da me*. E gli porgevo la mammella. Esso si staccò da quelle della Vergine, e si attaccò alle mie.¹⁷⁶

Veronica's act of playing with the baby Jesus is part of a common practice during the period. As Sara Grieco's study of inventories of Early Modern domestic objects has shown, sacred dolls were considered an important part of the religious education of young girls:

Another means of inculcating the maternal and devotional model of the Mother of Christ was through play. Household and dowry inventories often mention a *putto* or *bambino Gesù*, a painted doll made of wax, plaster, or wood representing the infant Christ, whose often elaborate wardrobe implies that it could serve the purposes of both piety and play. Found as often in the trousseaux of young brides as in that of nuns entering the convent, these dolls doubtless served a variety of purposes: from a directive, ludic pastime considered suitable for young girls to the "impression" of a gestating fetus or, in the case of spiritual mothers, a compensatory and devotional function wherein the nun could identify herself with the Mother of God.¹⁷⁷

Veronica's abrupt transition from the anecdote of breastfeeding the baby Jesus to a description of her mother's last communion, and then back to the image of the Madonna and Child, reveals how she conflates her feelings of love for her real mother and the Holy Mother:

Quando morì mia madre, dissero che avevo quattro anni finiti; ma però mi ricordo bene di tutto, in particolare di questo. Quando ella si comunicò per l'ultima volta, io volli stare ivi daccanto a lei, avanti al letto, ritta in uno sgabello. Quando il sacerdote teneva l'Ostia in mano, io vedevo quell'Ostia tanto risplendente, che con la mia mano la volevo pigliare; ma non potevo arrivarci. Questo non mi pare di averlo notato più. Ora mi è

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 38-39. [I remember that in our house we had one of these old figures and on it was painted the Blessed Virgin nursing the infant Jesus ... I told the infant: *My Jesus, look on me a little. Leave those breasts. Come to me, I will nurse you* ... I called and called him, but he never came. I couldn't stand not being able to kiss him any longer. I took I don't know what in hand and used it to knock the painting to the ground. I seem to recall that I gave him many, many kisses and then I put him I don't know where. I think this is what happened. I started to undress and removed my corset, saying: *My Jesus, leave those breasts. Come to take your milk from me*. And I offered my breast to him. He detached himself from her breasts and latched on to mine].

¹⁷⁷ Sara F. Matthews Grieco, "Models of Female Sanctity in Renaissance and Counter-Reformation Italy," in *Women and Faith*, ed. Lucetta Scaraffia and Gabriella Zarri (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 163-164.

sovvenuto. Sia tutto a gloria di Dio. Mi ricordo che, quando veniva qualche fanciullino in casa, io subito lo menavo a fare riverenza alla mia Beata Vergine, e gli facevo dire l'*Ave Maria*. A quelli, che facevano ciò, io davo loro da mangiare, facevo loro tante carezze che mai. Delle volte venivano alcuni così ostinati, che loro non potevo far chinare il capo, e non volevano dire l'*Ave Maria*. A questi io davo de' schiaffi, e li mandavo fuori della porta, e dicevo: *Non tornate più che non vi voglio, perché non volete bene alla mia Madonna.*¹⁷⁸

As made evident in these passages, the authority that Veronica observes in the priest and her reverence for both her suffering mother and the host are subsumed in her devotion to the Madonna and the position of authority that she asserts over the “animated” baby Jesus and the children she commands to pray before the image.

The second event connected to Veronica's religious calling is her physical fall. While attempting to climb up to reach the painting, she falls to the ground and hits her head. The incident, repeated in almost all of her autobiographies with slight variations, is described in her 1699 autobiography as follows:

Vi volevo arrivare per dargli almeno un bacio [...] vi montai e cascai e mi ruppi il capo malamente. Tanto non temetti niente. Lo feci più volte, e sempre fu l'istesso. Io mi istizzivo con il bambino Gesù. Gli andavo avanti con il capo legato e gli dicevo: *Vedete che cosa mi avete fatto! A causa vostra ho rotto il capo. E perché non venite da me?* Mi pare di ricordarmi che il detto Bambino ridesse; ed io gli dicevo: *Venite adesso: non mi state a ridere. Se voi non venite, io mi romperò il capo di nuovo, perché in fatti vi voglio.*¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 40. [When my mother died, they said that I was only four, but I remember everything well, particularly this. When she took communion for the last time, I wanted to stay next to her, in front of the bed, sitting up straight on a stool. When the priest held the host in his hand, I saw how resplendent it was and wanted to take it in my hands, but couldn't reach it. I remember that when children would come to the house, I would take them immediately to see my Blessed Virgin, and made them say the *Ave Maria*. To those who did it, I gave something to eat, and was more affectionate than ever. Sometimes some of them were so obstinate as to not bow their heads and they didn't want to say the *Ave Maria*. I would slap them and send them outside, and I would say: *Don't come back here, I don't want you because you don't love my Madonna*].

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 30. [I wanted to reach it to give it at least a kiss ... I climbed up and fell and hurt my head badly. Still, I didn't fear anything. I did it again many times, and it was always the same. I grew irritated with the baby Jesus. I went up to him with my bandaged head and said: *Look what you did to me! Because of you I hurt my head. And why don't you come to me?* I seem to recall that he smiled, and I said to him: *Come now, don't laugh at me. If you don't come, I'll hurt my head again, because I want to have you*].

In subsequent versions of this anecdote, Veronica assumes an increasingly active role; in the 1700 version, “Look what you did to me” (“Vedete cosa mi avete fatto”) becomes “Look what I did to come to you” (“Vedete cosa ho fatto per venire a voi”), and by the fifth version, she claims to have lured the baby Jesus down to her by laying out some trinkets.¹⁸⁰ The supernatural phenomena that characterize her interactions with these sacred images suggest an element both of self-assertion (in which Veronica assumes a position of maternal authority) and of divine intervention (in which holy images miraculously come to life).

In reality, Veronica likely drew on a much broader foundation of spiritual texts than she suggests. For example, Lázaro Iriarte has focused on her use of religious models beginning with her childhood fascination with Saint Francis, Saint Catherine of Siena, Saint Philip Neri and Saint Rose of Lima.¹⁸¹ Although Veronica’s literary and cultural knowledge at the time of her arrival in the monastery was limited, it is reasonable to assume that she possessed a rudimentary understanding of grammar and a basic knowledge of the saints’ lives that had been read aloud to her in childhood.¹⁸² To some extent, she may have exaggerated her ignorance in order to emphasize writing as a divine gift; for example, she claims that she surprised both herself and the prelate with her ability to read Latin when she was examined by the bishop before being granted entrance into the Capuchin monastery, an event that her uncle described as a “miracle.”¹⁸³

¹⁸⁰ Cf. Pozzi, 173.

¹⁸¹ Lázaro Iriarte, “Fonti e bibliografia,” in *Esperienza e dottrina mistica: pagine scelte*, 25. On the role of Saint Francis in Veronica’s diary, see Umberto Piacciafuoco, “San Francesco nella pietà e nell’esperienza mistica di santa Veronica, secondo il Diario,” in *Testimonianza e messaggio*, 447-466.

¹⁸² Iriarte, 28.

¹⁸³ “Così, subito che fummo arrivati al Prelato, esso disse: *È troppo giovane per prendere una vita così rigorosa*. Mi cominciò a esaminare. Io risposi a tutto con animo generoso, e gli dissi che speravo in Dio di poter far tutto. Così mi addimandò se sapevo leggere. A questo io risposi no; ma che però ne sapevo un tantino, e che mi dava cuore d’imparare. Esso volle sentire come sapevo. Fece portare un Breviario. Oh! Dio! Che pena che ebbi! Con tuttociò provai a leggere, e lessi bene. Tanto il Prelato, come quelli che v’erano presenti dissero che il leggere passava bene.

Veronica's entrance in the convent provided her with access to a wider range of spiritual texts, since the convent had a relatively large library. According to Iriarte, of the 232 books still held in the library that would have been available during Veronica's lifetime, many books are labeled in Veronica's own handwriting ("Questo libro è delle Madri Cappuccine di Città di Castello") and others are dedicated to her as the mistress of the novices ("maestra delle novizie").¹⁸⁴ Among the various works in the library to which Veronica had direct access and which likely influenced her own writing, Iriarte lists the *Vita* of Saint Catherine of Siena, three editions of the works of Teresa of Avila, the works of Saint John of the Cross and Saint Francis de Sales, some of the works of Mary Magdalene de' Pazzi and her *Vita*, written by the Florentine priest Vincenzo Puccini.¹⁸⁵ The influence of these works on Veronica's writings is evident in references to these figures found in her autobiographies, diary, and private letters.¹⁸⁶ For example, in her diary entries between February 17-28, 1695, she describes how Jesus assigned Saint Catherine as her intermediary and guide ("mezzana e maestro"); in August of the same year she describes being accompanied and supported by Saint Catherine and Saint Rose of Lima in her vision of the Virgin Mary.¹⁸⁷ Two years later, during Lent of 1697, she relies on the words

Il nostro zio, che sapeva del certo che io non sapevo leggere, disse: *Questo è un miracolo di S.D.M., perchè, ella non sapendo leggere quasi niente, ora sento che legge bene*" (*Un tesoro nascosto*, 5:67).

¹⁸⁴ Iriarte, 29. Iriarte further specifies that all of the books were in Italian and all but three were of a spiritual nature. He provides a generic breakdown of the collection, noting for example the presence of sixty-five saints' lives, but also considers the likelihood that numerous books were lost starting in the years of the Napoleonic invasion.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 30-37.

¹⁸⁶ Cf. *Le lettere*, 62.

¹⁸⁷ *Un tesoro nascosto*, 1:946-948.

of Saint Teresa of Avila and Mary Magdalene de' Pazzi in order to describe receiving the stigmata.¹⁸⁸

Veronica draws on these models in describing her own spiritual itinerary; she establishes parallels between herself and Saint Catherine, including the crown of thorns, marriage to Christ, stigmatization and drinking from Christ's wound, in her accounts of celebrations of the latter's feast day in 1694, and again in 1697.¹⁸⁹ Similarly, the chest inflammation from which Veronica begins to suffer during the Feast of Saint Philip Neri is reminiscent of the pains experienced by the saint himself. Moreover, in addition to her frequent references to Paul, the most frequently and directly cited saint in her writings,¹⁹⁰ and her adoption of expressions easily attributed to Saint Teresa and Saint Mary Magdalene de' Pazzi, Veronica's emphasis on certain saints varies according to the confessor to whom her writings are addressed – when her confessor is Oratorian (of the Congregation of the Oratory of Saint Philip Neri), she gives preference to Saint Philip; to a Servite confessor, she favors Saint Philip Benizi and Saint Peregrine Laziosi; and, when

¹⁸⁸ “Andavo dicendo: *Mio Signore, palesatevi, io non posso più* [...] e come impazzita dicevo quelle parole di S. Teresa: *o patire o morire*. E poi dicevo anche quelle di S. Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi, *pati et non mori*. Ed io dicevo fra me stessa: O Signore, che posso dire?” (ibid., 75). In one of the repeated visions of her marriage with Christ, Veronica provides a detailed list of the saints with which she was most familiar: “Mi pareva vedere gran moltitudine di santi e sante. Parvemi di conoscerne alcuni di essi, quali son questi: il Padre S. Francesco, S. Paolo, S. Agostino, S. Filippo Neri, S. Bonaventura, S. Antonio di Padova e S. Bernardino da Siena. Le sante furono queste [...] S. Chiara, S. Teresa, S. Caterina, S. Rosa di Lima con molte altre, delle quali non avevo cognizione così distinta come di queste” (ibid., 147).

¹⁸⁹ Iriarte, “Fonti e bibliografia,” 25. Iriarte cites from Veronica's diary entry from the Feast of Saint Catherine in 1694: “Il Signore mi significò che, in questa mattina mi aveva fatto provare lo stesso dolore che la santa provò in vita sua, quando ella fu coronata di spine.” On the same date three years later, God tells her: “Ora voglio fare con te quello che colla mia sposa Caterina io feci, quando era vivente.”

¹⁹⁰ For example, one finds Pauline references in her description of her fifth year in the convent: “Tutto ciò parmi che mi lasciasse tutta disposta e pronta a quanto il Signore voleva da me; e bene spesso venivano a me dette quelle parole di S. Paolo: *Domine, quid me vis facere?*” (*Un tesoro nascosto*, 1:42). She goes on to quote the Letter from Saint Paul to the Philippians: “Di nuovo parevami conoscere, che mi sentivo accendere il cuore al desiderio di più patire e mi pareva di provare certa pace interna. Non mi curavo più di niente: ogni cosa mi dava nausea di questa vita: dicevo quelle altre parole del mio S. Paolo: *Cupio dissolvi et esse cum Christo*” (ibid., 43).

addressing her Jesuit confessors, she privileges Saint Ignatius of Loyola and Saint Francis Xavier.¹⁹¹

Given the number of explicit references and carefully constructed parallels with various holy models, one may wonder why the view that Veronica lacked knowledge of mystic or erudite texts has persisted from the time of her trial to recent critical studies. Iriarte attributes this perspective to the declarations of a nun called to testify on Veronica's behalf, Maria Costante Spanaciari, who claimed that Veronica kept no books of any nature, mystic or otherwise, in her room. Spanaciari was perhaps attempting to protect Veronica from accusations of Quietism and other forms of interiorized religious experience, of which the Church had become increasingly suspicious in the wake of the condemnation of Miguel de Molinos and Fénelon, in 1687 and 1699, respectively.¹⁹² Yet, Spanaciari also testified that Veronica had often forgone nights of sleep in order to dedicate her time to reading spiritual texts, and many other nuns and priests likewise attested to Veronica's love of books and saints' lives, which she not only studied but also read to the other nuns during her time as Abbess.¹⁹³ More recently, Iriarte's *Indice biblico* has provided a systematic analysis of Veronica's use of Latin and Italian expressions that correspond directly to biblical passages from both the Old and New Testaments.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹¹ Iriarte, "Fonti e bibliografia," 26. St. Peregrine was not canonized until 1726, but he had been beatified in 1702.

¹⁹² Ibid., 27. See also Paul Dudon, *Le quietiste espagnol, Michel Molinos (1628-1696)* (Paris: Gabriel Beauchesne, 1921) and Massimo Petrocchi, *Il quietismo italiano del Seicento* (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1948).

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ Lázaro Iriarte, "Indice delle citazioni bibliche nel diario," in *Testimonianza e messaggio*, 271. Iriarte lists the number, frequency and sources of these citations, including various repetitions of seventy-nine different quotations from the Old Testament and 103 from the New Testament, with a prevalence of quotations from the Psalms and the Gospels of John and Matthew. Iriarte's *Indice* provides a useful supplement to Fiorucci's edition of the diary, which indicates biblical citations in Latin but fails to highlight the substantive biblical references, allusions and literal quotations in Italian. Iriarte concurs with the view that Veronica's knowledge of biblical texts and Latin expressions comes primarily from liturgical elements and priests. See also Silverio Zedda, "La Bibbia nella vita spirituale di santa Veronica: I testi citati nel secondo volume del Diario" and Stefania Monti, "Risonanze bibliche e liturgiche nell'esperienza del mistico spozalizio in santa Veronica, both published in *Testimonianza e messaggio*,

Like other spiritual autobiographers, such as Maria Domitilla Galluzzi, Veronica chose to write at night so as not to be disturbed by others or distracted from her other duties;¹⁹⁵ she also claims to have faced similar obstacles presented by the devil, who blew out her candles, poured ink over her pages and told her she would be punished for wasting too much paper.¹⁹⁶ By associating her reluctance to write with the devil rather than with pressures from her confessors, Veronica is able to deprive the latter of their power over her text.¹⁹⁷ Veronica must continue to write, not simply because her superiors force her to do so, but as an act of defiance against the devil and thus also obedience to God. In her autobiography of 1700, she writes:

Ora sento più che mai ripugnanza a descrivere tutte queste cose. L'obbedienza del Prelato mi fa vincere. E mi pare di conoscere che sia anche volere di Dio, perché io non so come mi faccia a potere scrivere, stantechè mi trovo in questo stato. Contuttociò vi scorgo una grande assistenza di Dio, perché io piglio la penna in mano senza avere in mente cosa nessuna da scrivere.¹⁹⁸

As in the case of other spiritual autobiographies, including that of Queen Christina of Sweden, Veronica uses God's will as a means of legitimizing her authority over her narrative, a mechanism that ironically reaches its apex in the moment in which Veronica transfers the power of narration to the Virgin Mary in her final autobiography, effectively eliminating all traces of

279-330. Zedda provides a detailed analysis of short Latin and Italian formulas repeated consistently in Veronica's second diary, which covers the period from 1697-1702; Monti focuses on Veronica's use of liturgical expressions and passages from the Song of Songs.

¹⁹⁵ "Non so cosa sia, ogni volta che mi metto a scrivere vengono tutti i bisogni, ora mi sono risolta di farlo di notte, così nessuno mi chiamerà" (cited in Courbat, *Dico e ridico e non dico niente*, 26).

¹⁹⁶ Cf. *Un tesoro nascosto*, 5:vii. Veronica writes: "Ho scrupolo di sprecare tanta carta" (cited in Courbat, *Dico e ridico e non dico niente*, 27).

¹⁹⁷ "Molte volte, quando io scrivevo, in un subito vedevo tutti i fogli imbrattati, e non potevano servire più a niente [...] Pare che mi vada dicendo che mi farà scontare questo mio scrivere. Sia tutto a gloria di Dio. Io intendo fare ciò per sola obbedienza, e vi sento gran repugnanza a farlo" (*Un tesoro nascosto*, 1:125-126).

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 119-120. [I feel more than ever an aversion to describing all of these things. My obedience to the prelate prevails. And I seem to gather that it is also God's will, because I don't know how I am able to write under these conditions. With all of this, I see a great assistance from God, because I take the pen in my hand without having anything at all in mind to write].

human subjectivity and fallibility from her text. Rather than be judged by her confessors, Veronica preemptively stages her divine judgment by God; after a guardian angel is called upon to list all of Veronica's sins, the Virgin Mary intervenes to ask forgiveness on Veronica's behalf.¹⁹⁹ God then issues a series of twelve rules by which Veronica must abide, including her obligation to describe all of the daily graces and gifts she received to her religious superiors.²⁰⁰ This tactic – in line with the spirit of religious reform and the internalization of spiritual authority typical of early eighteenth-century mysticism – allows Veronica to circumvent the accusations and the authority of her confessors by reminding them that her obedience is to God, who will be the sole judge of her actions.

Through this act, the nature and intention of Veronica's writing shifts in two key ways. On one hand, she gains power over her narrative by transferring control over its content, form and the conditions under which it is produced from earthly to divine powers and by elevating

¹⁹⁹ “Il Signore in un subito chiamò il mio Angelo custode perché egli mi accusasse di tutto. Così esso con brevi parole disse tutto distintamente, chiaramente. In persona mia disse tutte le colpe e difetti, in quel modo che si trovavano davanti a Dio. Io mi ricordo che cominciai dai pensieri, parole ed opere, in specie l'ingratitude, in particolare quello che avevo fatto contro i voti e di tutto quello che avevo mancato contro la santa Regola. E di più in modo più chiaro mi accusò che non avevo corrisposto alle divine chiamate ed ispirazioni, d'aver occultato molte grazie e doni, i quali sarebbero stati per bene mio e di molte e molte altre persone [...] Di già stavo aspettando la sentenza di separarmi per tutta la eternità da Dio: i miei peccati la meritavano [...] In quel punto mi pareva vederli tutti ivi davanti al Giudice [...] Ed il Signore rivolto verso la B. Vergine così parmi che dicesse: *Che cosa si ha da fare di quest'anima?* La B. Vergine si prostrò ai piedi del suo Figlio e pose una sua mano sopra il mio capo. Così diceva: *Figlio, pietà, perdono a quest'anima*” (ibid., 114).

²⁰⁰ “La 1^a voleva fedeltà operante a cooperare in tutto quello che Esso operava nell'anima mia. La 2^a voleva un'obbedienza cieca al Superiore con tutti quelli che stavano in suo luogo. La 3^a voleva che nel mio operare avessi la pura e retta intenzione di piacere a Lui e di fare tutto a sua maggior gloria. La 4^a mi ordinò silenzio rigoroso. Non parlassi se non di Lui e per gloria sua in ordine alla carità. La 5^a cercassi le mortificazioni e i disprezzi. La 6^a che io andassi scalza ed offerissi detto patire per la conversione de' peccatori. La 7^a mi comandò che io per l'avvenire manifestassi tutto a chi stava in suo luogo e che descrivessi tutti i doni e grazie che giornalmente mi faceva. L'8^a mi disse che, prima di dare consiglio a nessuno in qualche occorrenza, non dicessi parola, se prima non mi ero consigliata nell'orazione con Lui. La 9^a che avessi una ferma speranza in Lui e diffidenza di me. La 10^a mi confermò per mezzana fra Lui e i peccatori. L'11^a mi disse che stessi sempre nell'esercizio della sua divina presenza ed, in qualunque stato mi trovassi, stessi ferma nella pura fede. La 12^a mi disse che mi voleva tutta trasformata in sé [...] Che fossi spogliata della propria volontà, ma tutta uniforme colla volontà sua; che mi spogliassi di me stessa” (ibid., 140-141).

writing from an act of physical suffering to one of spiritual love.²⁰¹ On the other hand, by placing complete control over the narrative in the hands of God and the Virgin, Veronica also claims to relinquish agency over her text, becoming an instrumental object rather than an authoritative subject. Emphasizing the ineffability of her spiritual experiences, she affirms that people will learn more from her silence than from her words.²⁰² With this transition, one notes a decline in references to other religious texts and authorities, while ignorance and the negation of individual knowledge are given increasing priority. Veronica Giuliani's assumed stance of ignorance has contributed to the erroneous perception that she lacked a religious education but such representations of "holy ignorance," or of receiving divine knowledge without the mediation of human knowledge, were actually common topoi of women's spiritual autobiographies.²⁰³

Veronica's move away from direct citations towards an increasingly impersonal form of writing happens gradually. There are some indications of this change already in her 1700 autobiography, for example in Veronica's refusal to consult books in the period following the completion of her third year in the novitiate:

Parevami capire che esso sarebbe stato mio maestro, mia guida e che non leggesi in altro libro che in lui. Parevami comprendere che Gesù crocifisso avesse da essermi libro e guida: però io tanto leggevo qualche cosa. Bensi che appena avevo serrato il libro non mi ricordavo più di niente; in un subito mi si metteva Gesù crocifisso nella mia mente e mi

²⁰¹ Monique Courbat observes: "Redigere un diario per obbedienza al confessore veniva vissuto dalla santa come calvario e compito fastidioso, ma a partire dal momento che è Dio a dirigere la volontà del confessore e quindi ad ordinare di redigere il diario, la santa trasforma la scrittura in un atto d'amore: 'Se sto senza scrivere ho pena'" (Courbat, *Dico e ridico e non dico niente*, 127).

²⁰² "Vi vorrebbero racconti, come per esempio dare ad intendere qualche cosa per via di detti dei santi e cose dei santi Padri; ma io non voglio uscire dalla mia semplicità. Tanto chiunque leggerà ciò, intenderà tutto più col mio silenzio, che se dicessi parole: però taccio" (*Un tesoro nascosto*, 1:64). Monti notes that the highest incidence of quotations and references are found in the diaries between 1693 and 1697, before Veronica received the stigmata (328). In fact, in recounting the events of 1697, one notes the clear loss of autonomy as she describes having her heart removed from her chest by Christ: "nella rinnovazione dello spozalizio [...] il Signore [...] mi cavò il cuore [...] Lo teneva in mano, e mi diceva: Questo non è più tuo, ma mio" (*Un tesoro nascosto*, 1:147).

²⁰³ Cf. Bottoni, "'Noi donne haviamo il capo addabbato per sognare.' Scrittura mistica e direzione spirituale nel diario di Barbera Fivoli (1717-1764)," 280.

sentivo del tutto unita a lui.²⁰⁴

At the same time, Veronica gives no indication that the relinquishing of her will was a natural or easy process; on the contrary, the disparate desires of her body (“l’umanità”) and spirit (“lo spirito”) are expressed in the third person:

L’umanità sentiva al vivo ogni minimo disgusto. Io fra me stessa dicevo: *Veronica, pensa a che fine sei venuta alla Religione: il patire sarà tua delizia*. Ella rispondeva: *altro non trovo*. Tutto mi si rendea difficile ed aspro. Ella piangeva e lo spirito godeva fra le croci; ma delle volte per i contrasti della umanità stavo per più giorni che non sapevo cosa mi facessi: l’abito, i muri e tutto quello che vedevo mi dava melanconia [...] Chiunque leggerà questi scritti, mi faccia avvisata, se per l’avvenire devo raccontare, quando mi sono occorse cose simili. Scrivo per obbedire. Del resto mi pare che non siano cose da mettere in carta. Benchè l’ho fatto anche più volte, quando i confessori me l’hanno imposto [...] Io tutti i miei giorni ho avuto ripugnanza a dire le mie cose interne; contuttociò ho sempre obbedito.²⁰⁵

Veronica illustrates her feelings of alienation and dissociation from herself by using the third person to describe her body and spirit and, lamenting the fact that she is not yet “dead” to herself (“tutto viene perché non sono morta a me medesima”),²⁰⁶ she uses self-injury and starvation as a means of forcing her body into submission:

Sentivo che l’umanità si doleva. Non voleva stare più a pane ed acqua. Io la sgridavo e le facevo fare delle penitenze, ma tanto ella si doleva, e delle volte piangeva. Per questo mi faceva ridere. Il tentatore mi tentava fuor di modo con tentazioni di gola. Fui con simili tentazioni bene spesso tentata e tutto vincevo per via di mortificazioni e penitenze.²⁰⁷

²⁰⁴ *Un tesoro nascosto*, 1:39. [I seemed to understand that this would be my teacher and guide and that I need not read any book outside of him. I seemed to understand that the crucified Jesus was to be my book and guide, but I occasionally read other things, even though as soon as I had closed the book I didn’t remember anything. All of a sudden the crucified Jesus would come to mind and I felt completely united with him].

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 44-45. [My humanity felt firsthand every slightest disgust. And I said to myself: *Veronica, think about the reasons why you came to the Church: suffering will be your pleasure*. She would respond: *I find nothing else*. Everything became difficult and bitter for me. She cried and the spirit delighted among the pains; but sometimes because of the protests of my humanity, I spent days not knowing what to do: my habit, the walls and everything I saw made me melancholic ... Whoever will read this should advise me if in the future I must say when similar things occur. I write to obey. Otherwise, it seems to me that these are not things to put down on paper. Although, I’ve done it other times, when confessors have forced me to ... All my days I’ve hated to tell of my inner things, but I have always obeyed].

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 62.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 26-27. [I felt that my body was in pain. She didn’t want to live on bread and water any longer. I yelled at

Veronica's abstention from food and self-induced vomiting, even after her confessors attributed these behaviors to demonic temptations, resemble the "holy anorexia" of other mystics and saints, such as Saint Catherine of Siena.²⁰⁸

In addition to her struggle to gain control over her body, Veronica also struggles to gain control over her text. She often expresses uncertainty about the content of her writing and her ability to express her feelings, inciting her confessors to point out "errors" in her writing.²⁰⁹ She also attributes certain lexical choices to the advice of her confessors, noting, for example, that they supply her with technical terms to describe her spiritual experiences.²¹⁰

Finally, despite Veronica's attempts to distance herself from her human desires, emotions and needs, the process of writing her autobiography most likely also prompted her to reflect deeply on her childhood and her relationship with her sisters.²¹¹ In an interesting parallel to

her and made her do penitence, but she still complained and sometimes would cry. She made me laugh. The devil tempted me greatly with temptations of gluttony. I was often tempted with similar temptations and I overcame them all with mortifications of the flesh and penitence].

²⁰⁸ On the accusations of the other nuns and her confessors that her abstention from food (and frequent vomiting when forced to eat) was the work of a demonic force, see *ibid.*, 86-89.

²⁰⁹ "Non davo credenza a quanto sentivo in me, ma solo eseguivo i comandi ed ordini dei confessori e persone dotte. Con tuttociò non avevo inquietudine, ma bensì sempre una certa pena di non farmi ben conoscere e di non sapere dire le cose come veramente stanno [...] Ancora sto con questo timore; dubito che per mia semplicità ed ignoranza non mi sappia ben dichiarare [...] In questi scritti mi sono allungata in qualche cosa, e mi pareva che una parola bastasse; ma per mia quiete ho detto di molte cose che non erano necessarie. L'ho fatto, acciò meglio si comprenda se vi è inganno nessuno. E per carità chiunque leggerà questi fogli, se vi trovasse qualche errore sopra questo punto, venga con tutta libertà, acciò io possa emendarmi. Intendo di fare questi scritti solo per la maggior gloria di Dio, e per obbedire al Prelato. Del resto vi sento gran repugnanza e rossore" (*ibid.*, 95).

²¹⁰ "Parmi di ricordare in questo punto una visione intellettuale (dico così, perché quando raccontai tutto al confessore, esso mi esaminò e mi disse che era stata visione intellettuale)" (*ibid.*, 54).

²¹¹ Cittadini Fulvi and Iriarte, noting that the first of Veronica's letters were written during the same year that she began her spiritual diary, provide a series of useful tables comparing the dates of composition and addressees of letters and diary entries. Beyond the thirty-seven extant autograph letters to her sisters conserved in the archives of the monastery, many of her earlier letters were lost or intentionally destroyed: "La corrispondenza tra Veronica e le sue sorelle dovette essere abbastanza frequente dopo il tempo del noviziato. Ciò nonostante, non è rimasta nessuna delle lettere inviate ad esse nei primi vent'anni di vita claustrale. Pare che le sorelle, soltanto quando ebbero notizia della vita straordinaria della sorella cappuccina, dopo la stigmatizzazione, cominciarono a conservarle con cura, il

Petronilla Paolini Massimi, whose autobiographical project seemed to incite her epistolary relationship with her son, Veronica's first extant letters to her sisters were written in 1700, the same year in which she was working on a version of her autobiography, and the period following her forced autobiographical and diaristic writing was marked by prolific and voluntarily epistolary activity.²¹² She apologizes for the many scandals ("tanti scandali") of her youth and her shortcomings as a sister, a concern that may have emerged through her other writings.²¹³

The hundreds of letters she wrote to her sisters and to the bishop of Città di Castello also provide a glimpse into Veronica's daily life and her practical duties as the Mother Superior.²¹⁴ While some of her letters describe spiritual or mystical experiences, many others focus on projects aimed at improving life in the monastery, such as building repairs, funds for clothing and the installation of a new water main.²¹⁵

Unfortunately, unlike her diaries and autobiographies, many of Veronica's letters have been lost, first because it was only after she received that stigmata and gained notoriety that her sisters began to take particular care to conserve her letters and, secondly, because many fragments of her letters were later distributed as relics.²¹⁶ Nonetheless, as evident in Cittadini

che dovette essere intuito dalla Santa, giacché nella lettera del 17 luglio 1699 scrisse [...] 'Per carità, queste lettere abbruciatele tutte'" (*Le lettere*, 49-50).

²¹² Veronica herself notes this change: "Gli scritti non li faccio, perché quello che passo lo dico nelle lettere" (cited in Courbat, *Dico e ridico e non dico niente*, 29).

²¹³ Veronica writes to her sisters: "Se potessi venire a chiedervi perdono in tanti scandali e occasioni che vi ho dato con le mie male inclinazioni e cattivi abiti, con essere stata tanto di proprio capo, per non aver mai rotto la mia volontà, per aver voluto tutto a modo mio! Oh, con che angustia e dolore mi trovo! Sorelle, ora vi chiedo perdono di tutto quello che vi ho dato occasione" (*Le lettere*, 61).

²¹⁴ Massimo Baldini has commented that Veronica's ability to dedicate herself to questions of a practical or bureaucratic nature is reminiscent of Saint Teresa of Avila (237).

²¹⁵ Cf. Cittadini Fulvi, 137-138.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.* Cittadini Fulvi observes that while many letters have been lost or truncated due to their distribution as relics, others were preserved in eighteenth-century manuscript transcriptions. See also Baldini, 237.

Fulvi and Iriarte's critical edition of 443 letters written by Veronica Giuliani to her family members and confessors between 1693 and 1727, it is clear from the letters that have survived that Veronica was not merely a victim of forced writing. On the contrary, her letters show a desire and a capacity to communicate the vivid details of both her material and spiritual life and also reveal that the extreme degree of self-abnegation and suppressed subjectivity found in her later autobiographies was perhaps less the result of a mystical progression than of the gradual discovery of literary tools that she adopted in order to appease her confessors and give authority to her text. From this perspective, a closer look at Veronica's early autobiographies and the presence of certain salient traits, from her mother's death and her childhood errors, accidents, injuries and miraculous recoveries, to her prediction of the widespread diffusion of her writings and her rebellion against traditional gender roles, all indicate that Veronica Giuliani's writings can and should be re-evaluated from the perspective of both the spiritual and male and female secular autobiographical traditions of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.

Chapter 3
Life-Writing in the Late Eighteenth Century

III.1 Continuations of the Sacred Tradition

Although Veronica Giuliani and Petronilla Paolini Massimi's autobiographies share many traits, including their emphasis on childhood inclinations, illnesses, premonitions and deaths in the family – all of which play an important role in their representation of the development of their respective spiritual and literary vocations – the vast differences in the motives and circumstances governing their autobiographical projects are illustrative of why there have been so few comparative studies of women's autobiographical writing in religious and secular contexts during the eighteenth century.¹ Instead, such an analysis is valuable not only because many Italian aristocratic women continued to be educated in monasteries, but also because women's spiritual writing was likewise influenced by shifts in the wider cultural and political landscape.

Throughout the first half of the eighteenth century, the Catholic Church's stance towards women was characterized by a continuation of Counter-Reformation values regarding the enclosure, practices and daily lives of nuns.² Gradually, however, the Baroque model of venerating women who claimed to have established direct contact with God through ecstatic, visionary or penitential experiences was supplanted by the growing opposition to Quietism. The quietist emphasis on spiritual autonomy and a direct connection with God was replaced by a preference for more moderate forms of devotion in which a larger number of nuns were able and

¹ Cf. Elena Brambilla, *Sociabilità e relazioni femminili nell'Europa moderna. Temi e saggi*, ed. Letizia Arcangeli and Stefano Levati (Milan: Franco Angeli, 2013), 171. Brambilla addresses the division between studies on women's spiritual writing and women's participation in lay culture, and specifically the lack of scholarship that examines the end of the Counter-Reformation model of sanctity and the beginning of women's participation in cultural circles of the Enlightenment.

² Cf. Paola Vismara Chiappa, "De Monialibus (secoli XVI - XVII - XVIII)," *Rivista di storia e letteratura religiosa* 33 (1997): 695. As Vismara Chiappa observes, the role of the confessor remained that of "padre e giudice, medico e maestro," as shown in Benedict XIV's emphasis on the importance of the confessor's role in his *Pastoralis curae* (1748) (*ibid.*, 697). See also Mario Rosa, "Lumi, stregoneria e magia nell'Italia del Settecento," in *Storia d'Italia, Annali 25: Esoterismo*, ed. Gian Mario Cazzaniga (Turin: Einaudi, 2010), 359. Rosa likewise observes a rather continuous course ("una linea pressoché continua") of Counter-Reformation practices through the first half of the eighteenth century.

encouraged to participate. As scholars such as Mario Rosa, Paola Vismara Chiappa, Elena Bottoni and Marina Caffiero have indicated, the miraculous, mythical and legendary qualities of holy women lost the privileged status they had enjoyed in the previous century, giving way to a new model of female holiness based on moral and social virtues and practical contributions to society.³ As Caffiero has noted, according to this new “anti-mystical stance,” the nun’s role was conceived in terms of active social involvement and an emphasis on work, charity, taking care of the sick, educating younger girls and founding and managing new female religious institutions.⁴

Not surprisingly, the shift in models of holiness promoted by the Church was reflected in the reading material diffused in convents. While both private and communal reading practices remained a central aspect of women’s monastic life and saints’ lives (and the life of Saint Teresa of Avila in particular) continued to be among the most popular and common sources of reading material available to nuns and laywomen in convents, the nature of hagiographic literature changed in response to what Caffiero has referred to as the Church’s “growing dissatisfaction with the hagiography of the previous centuries, with its background of prodigies and legends that now seemed so fragile and unreliable as to be useless.”⁵ As one might expect, changes in reading

³ See Vismara Chiappa, 702; Mario Rosa, “Prospero Lambertini tra ‘regolata devozione’ e mistica visionaria,” in *Finzione e santità tra Medioevo ed età moderna*, ed. Gabriella Zarri (Turin: Rosenberg & Sellier, 1991), 546; and Elena Bottoni, *Scritture dell’anima. Esperienze religiose femminili nella Toscana del Settecento* (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2009), x. According to Rosa, the decade between 1740-1750 marked the end of the “mystical-visionary” tradition and the “sedimentata condizione spirituale precipita, per così dire, in un particolare clima di razionalismo storico-critico e, a livello di cultura e di istituzioni cattoliche, nel contesto di una ‘regolata devozione’ e di un più attento controllo gerarchico [...] si determinano nuovi statuti, si modifica una tradizione, si aprono nuovi orizzonti” (521-522).

⁴ Marina Caffiero, “From the Late Baroque Mystical Explosion to the Social Apostolate, 1650-1850,” trans. Keith Botsford, in *Women and Faith*, ed. Lucetta Scaraffia and Gabriella Zarri (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 191.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 191. Caffiero provides the example of Carlo Ignazio Massini’s collection of *Vite di sante vergini e di alcune ss. fondatrici di monasterj e congregazioni di religiosi* (1768), in which only fifteen of the 161 saints’ lives regard women who lived between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries, while the majority focus on remote times. See also Vismara Chiappa, who describes the circulation of prohibited or “forbidden” texts via lay contacts outside of the monastery (701-702).

material also led to changes in the production of spiritual autobiographies, both in terms of the ways in which women wrote about themselves as well as how these documents were received and interpreted by confessors and church authorities. To some extent, writing played a fundamental role in both the continuation and, on the other hand, the attempted eradication of the characteristics that had come under increasing scrutiny, especially those associated with mysticism. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, spiritual writing had become an institutionalized practice that provided women with a form of expression both within and outside of the traditional church hierarchy; in the eighteenth century, forced spiritual autobiographies and accounts written out of obedience to confessors did not totally disappear but often displayed a diminished emphasis on exceptional, visionary and mystical elements and an increased emphasis on contemporary political and religious issues.⁶

Elena Bottoni's extensive studies of the spiritual diaries and autobiographical narratives of Tuscan women tertiaries are a valuable resource for understanding how the tradition of forced spiritual writing and the interventions of the Holy Office persisted well into the eighteenth century while also undergoing several notable changes. As during preceding century, writing for these women served as both a form of ecclesiastical control as well as an opportunity for personal expression and growth; some women, like their predecessors, only learned how to write

⁶ Cf. Vismara Chiappa, 706-707. Vismara Chiappa also notes that it became more common for confessors to urge women to destroy their writings: "L'impressione di prosciugamento rispetto all'epoca della invasione mistica richiama il prudente atteggiamento dei confessori, che frequentemente invitavano le loro penitenti a scrivere sì, ma anche a distruggere i propri scritti, come ben risulta da alcune 'vite' di monache [...] Non si può tuttavia considerare chiusa la fase della scrittura femminile. Essa continuava a manifestarsi nelle consuete, seppur più controllate, modalità autobiografico-spirituali" (707). Elena Bottoni similarly notes that cases of intervention from the Inquisition were almost always due to the presence of prophetic or mystical characteristics in women's behavior or writings (*Scritture dell'anima*, ix).

in order to comply with orders from their confessors.⁷ Among the texts considered by Bottoni are the diaries of Barbera Fivoli (1717-1764), whose predictions, visions and supposed divine communication led her confessor to request daily accounts of her experiences. Despite the fact that Fivoli learned how to write only in 1760 after receiving these orders, she went on to produce nearly four thousand pages in which she narrates the events of her life from 1725 to 1764.⁸ As in the case of Veronica Giuliani, Fivoli's diary entries were written on loose pages provided by her confessor and collected on a daily basis. This practice created many interruptions in her narrative since she would abruptly end her account when she had filled the pages provided for that day, and she did not have the chance to edit or continue her work the following day.⁹ In 1761, one year after she had begun her diary, she was asked to begin a record of her life from the period between 1725-1759, which shifted her focus from a daily account of her interior spiritual experiences to a more traditional autobiographical narration. Thus, although Fivoli, unlike Veronica Giuliani, never wrote a spiritual autobiography to accompany her diary, the length and retrospective nature of her narrative make it worth including in a discussion of the autobiographical tradition during this period. Barbera does not name any particular texts in her diary, but she does mention reading and, based on the saints who appear most frequently in her

⁷ Literacy rates in eighteenth-century Italy varied widely in terms of both social and geographical provenance, but were significantly higher in the north. See Susan Dalton, *Engendering the Republic of Letters: Reconnecting Public and Private Spheres in Eighteenth-Century Europe* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003), 18.

⁸ See Elena Bottoni, "'Oh se avessi per carta la vasta mole del cielo e per inchiostro l'acqua del mare.' Imparare a scrivere per intraprendere un percorso spirituale: i diari di Barbera Fivoli," in *Sul filo della scrittura. Fonti e temi per la storia delle donne a Livorno*, ed. Lucia Frattarelli Fischer and Olimpia Vaccari (Pisa: Edizioni Plus, 2005), 193-196. The six volumes of loose pages of Fivoli's diary are located in the AAP, *Tribunale ecclesiastico, Beatificazione e canonizzazione, Memorie e scritti, Barbera Fivoli*. Bottoni notes that Fivoli's first attempt at writing, which consisted of a transcription of a prayer, is conserved in the first volume of the diary. She probably began her diary only several months later, making rapid progress in her penmanship thanks to the fact that she already knew how to read (*ibid.*, 197). Since I have not yet been able to consult the manuscripts of Barbera Fivoli, Maria Antonia Colle and Maria Virginia Boccherini in person, all citations in the present study refer to Elena Bottoni's studies on these texts.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 200.

visions, it seems that she was most influenced by the lives of Saint Catherine of Siena and Saint Teresa of Avila. She also frequently references the lives of Mary Magdalene de Pazzi, Phillip Neri, Francis Xavier and Francis of Assisi.¹⁰

Like many other spiritual autobiographers, Barbera Fivoli considers her writing to be foremost an act of obedience to God rather than to her confessors, and she claims to have received divine orders to write.¹¹ Similar to Veronica Giuliani's adoption of a second-person narration in her final autobiography, Fivoli describes having felt her hand guided alternately by the Virgin Mary and Christ and allowing them to take over her narration:

Mentre così scrivevo, sentivo il contatto della mano divina di Gesù che per sua carità guidava la mia penna e con gli occhi dell'anima scorgevo l'apertura del chiodo e da quella sagratissima ferita scaturiva un tanto luminoso sole che a mò di raggio, penetrò il cuore mio e come amoroso maestro, mi significava ciò che scriver dovevo per gloria sua.¹²

Additionally, some portions of the diary covering the period 1725-1759 are written in the third person, as she preferred to dictate the narrative to one of her confessors rather than write in the first person. As Bottoni observes, such a narrative device allowed Barbera to become the object rather than the subject of her account and to confer greater credibility to her story by casting a priest as the narrator. Finally, she often claimed to have written the sections in first person in a state of ecstasy or while asleep.¹³

¹⁰ Ibid., 197.

¹¹ "Scrivi, figliola, e questa è la mia volontà" (*Diario 1760*, cited in *ibid.*, 202).

¹² *Diario 1763*, cited in *ibid.*, 210. [While I was writing, I felt the divine hand of Jesus guide my pen out of love and with the eyes of my soul I glimpsed the opening of the nail and from that most sacred wound flowed a luminous sun whose rays penetrated my heart and like a loving guide showed me that which I was supposed to write for his glory].

¹³ Ibid., 209.

Nonetheless, Barbera must have come to recognize the agency she gained through her visions and writings, especially given the interest of her confessors in her experiences.¹⁴ As in the autobiographical narratives analyzed in the previous chapters, Barbera associates power with masculinity and the acquisition of male characteristics. For example, describing a vision that occurred in 1762, she incorporates the topos of transvestism as a means of asserting her authority:

Mi comparve [...] un giovane con alcune armature da guerra e mi pareva che mi volesse vestire come da bravo soldato e ponermi la spada e il pugnale alla mano, onde io, riguardando quell'armi stupivo di timore, oimè, dissi, cosa si fa di me? Che strana mutazione è questa? E come mai povera donnicciola avere a combattere, e tenere spada al mio lato e pugnale alla mano? [...] conobbi con lume divino che quello era il mio santo angelo, il quale mi fe intendere per similitudine di spada e pugnale, come che i Dio [...] nella santa comunione mi aveva più fortificato e perciò come bravo e valoroso soldato combatta senza tanti timori e spaventi.¹⁵

Many of Barbera's other visions contain more concrete and immediate references to the contemporary political and religious landscape, often including local inhabitants of the city or important church and political figures such as the governor, archbishop and pope, in which she advocates spiritual conversion and reform. Barbera writes that the Church, which she believes to be immersed in "amor proprio," had turned a deaf ear to its divine teachings in order to make itself more attractive to its followers.¹⁶ This active interest in religious reform is reminiscent of an earlier model of holiness that can be traced from Saint Catherine of Siena's letters and appeals

¹⁴ According to Bottoni, writing facilitates Barbera's "progressiva presa di coscienza di sé," which the scholar suggests might have occurred when Barbera fully realized her confessor's interest in her writing as a useful instrument for himself as well (ibid., 210).

¹⁵ *Diario 1762*, cited in ibid., 211. [A young man in war armor appeared to me and it seemed he wanted me to dress like a soldier and carry a sword and dagger, whereby I, observing those weapons, was stupefied with fear. Oh my, I said, what is becoming of me? What strange mutation is this? And whysoever should a poor little woman need to combat, and carry a sword at my side and a dagger in hand? ... I understood with divine knowledge that he was my holy angel, and he showed me through the sword and the dagger that God ... in his holy communion had fortified me so that I might fight like a brave and courageous soldier without fear].

¹⁶ According to Fivoli, the Church "fa il sordo ad ogni suo lume e divine spirazioni sopra di ciò e per non perdere l'amicizia delle creature, e non disgustarle, vuol più tosto disgustare" (*Diario 1761*, cited in ibid., 215).

in the late fourteenth century to the sixteenth-century emphasis on prophetism in holy women, even though such models were no longer viewed as favorably by the Church in the eighteenth century.¹⁷ At the same time, Fivoli's attempt to involve herself in contemporary events is a common trait in eighteenth-century spiritual autobiographical writing, and is found in the writings of other women from Tuscany such as Maria Antonia Colle (1723-1772) and Maria Virginia Boccherini (1761-1801). Both Maria Antonia Colle and Maria Virginia Boccherini were tertiaries who wrote out of obedience to their spiritual directors. Their autobiographical writings reveal many other similarities; both came from poor families in Lucca and their education and entrance into religious conservatories were financed with the help of local aristocrats, and both gained notoriety for their spiritual gifts and miraculous experiences, including the reception of the stigmata. Most importantly, both of their narratives attest to the continuance of several fundamental characteristics of spiritual autobiography: They rely on specific hagiographic models and write out of obedience to confessors or Church superiors; they reveal the lasting influence of the sixteenth-century model of the "living saints" and the popular belief that certain spiritually gifted women could intercede on behalf of other members of their community; and, finally, they show that suspicious cases were still being tried before the local tribunals of the Inquisition. Moreover, both women not only refer to events, accidents and illnesses in childhood that indicate their spiritual vocation, but also provide important documentation of the social changes within the Church through their attempt to reconcile earlier models of holiness with the new emphasis on women's involvement in practical social activities.¹⁸

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Bottoni, *Scritture dell'anima*, xi.

Maria Antonia Colle was arrested by the Holy Office in September of 1756 and imprisoned under accusations of false sainthood.¹⁹ Following the precedent set by Anne Jacobson Schutte in her analysis of Cecilia Ferrazzi's legal deposition as a form of autobiography, Elena Bottoni interprets Maria Antonia Colle's trial records as an autobiographical narrative given that, as in the case of Cecilia Ferrazzi, they consist of long, uninterrupted passages of transcriptions that provide a clear, linear narration of her life that includes personal anecdotes of her family and daily activities from early childhood through her trial.²⁰ Considered together, Maria Antonia's court transcripts, short autobiography (the *Ricordi di tutta la mia vita*, which she was forced to write during her trial between 1756-57), and lengthy epistolary exchanges with her spiritual directors are three documents that allow us to reconstruct her childhood and youth, education, relationship with her family, spiritual models, periods of illness, and predictions of death. As is typical in spiritual self-writing, Maria Antonia's depositions also emphasize her "continue disubbidienze" rather than present her behavior as exemplary in order to underscore her conversion and spiritual growth. Her acts of disobedience to her parents and confessor include, for example, her illicit relationship with a young waiter employed by a noble family from Lucca, and a public cello performance in which she disguised herself in male attire.²¹

¹⁹ Bottoni, "Maria Antonia Colle (1723-1772): 'Il Papino di Mulazzo,'" in *ibid.*, 129.

²⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, 152.

²¹ *Ibid.*, xiv and 130. Though I cite from Bottoni's study, the primary documentation related to Maria Antonia and her trial is housed in the Vatican (ACDF, *Sant'Offizio, St. St.*, C2d). Bottoni has suggested that two possible reasons why Maria Antonia's *Ricordi* consist of only a few pages may have been her tenuous command of written Italian and the absence of a confessor with whom she was able to establish a relationship of trust and obedience. According to Maria Antonia's deposition in her first trial, she received cello lessons from her father, who was a musician. She describes practicing for several hours a day and often playing for visiting relatives and later recalls being encouraged by her mother to dress up as a boy in order to perform publicly: "Una volta mia madre volle che andassi a suonare ad una veglia in casa di certi preti, dei quali non mi ricordo né nome né cognome et insieme con me vi erano due giovani suonatori che sonavano il violino. La veglia durò fino alle sei ore di notte circa e ballavano nella stanza dove si suonava, uomini e donne ed io ero vestita da uomo" (*Costituito 5 dicembre 1756*, cited in *ibid.*, 175). In addition to

The *Ricordi*, in which Maria Antonia recounts the events of her life starting from the age of eight, also incorporate topoi of hagiographic literature and earlier women's spiritual autobiographies, such as the discovery of her religious vocation and the most important moments in her spiritual development, including influential religious texts, her first confession, her entrance into the conservatory in Pontremoli, the exchange of rings with Christ, her desire for mortification and penitence, her visions and ecstasies, long periods of fasting, and the divine orders she received to establish a monastery or "Romitaggio" in Mulazzo. Like Veronica Giuliani, she concludes with her reception of the stigmata on Holy Thursday of 1750.²² Beginning with her early religious education, Maria Antonia notes that she attended school with a group of other girls until the age of twelve where she learned how to read and write and was primarily introduced to religious texts and the lives of saints and martyrs.²³ She then continued her education privately, reading devotional texts on her own at home; she refers to some specific books that directly influenced her behavior, including the life of Caterina Brondi da Sarzana, which she claims inspired her to begin practicing (without the guidance of a confessor) acts of penitence that in the eighteenth century would have been viewed with suspicion:

In casa leggevo la vita di una certa serva di Dio Caterina Brondi da Sarzana, nella quale vita si riferivano molte penitenze praticate da detta serva di Dio, fra le quali cilizi, discipline, digiuni lunghissimi fino a chiudersi in una casa senza mangiare per molto tempo, portare nel petto un crocefisso con le punte che penetravano la di lei carne. Onde

Jacobson Schutte, Bottoni further refers to Adrienne Schizzano Mandel, "Le procès inquisitorial comme acte autobiographique: Le cas de Sor María de San Jerónimo," in *L'autobiographie dans le monde hispanique. Actes du Colloque international de la Baume-lès-Aix 11-12-13 mai 1979* (Aix-en-Provence: Publications Université de Provence, 1980), 155-169.

²² Bottoni, "Maria Antonia Colle," 152-154. On the stigmata (the wounds of which were never witnessed by anyone), Maria Antonia writes: "Mi parve il Signore o sia Gesù Cristo, mi dicesse che voleva che io patissi i dolori della sua Passione, e che voleva farmi partecipe delle sue pene con darmi le stimmate" (*Costituito 9 novembre 1756*, cited in *ibid.*, 134).

²³ She was taught by a woman she identifies as Maddalena Lucchesi in Lucca who "in cert'ore della scuola faceva leggere da qualche sua scolara maggiore d'età alcune vite di sante martiri" (*Costituito 28 settembre 1756*, cited in *ibid.*, 131).

io, in leggere le suddette e altre penitenze di questa donna, mi posi in capo d'imitarla, anzi di superarla, con il desiderio di fare ancora di più di quel che aveva fatto lei.²⁴

Maria Antonia's prolonged periods of fasting and practice of self-mortification led to episodes of fever and illness during which she claims to have experienced visions. At the same time, she continued to attend school and work, making socks and spinning silk, often arguing with her mother and sisters, who criticized her for neglecting her duties in order to spend time in prayer in church, while her father defended and encouraged her religious vocation.²⁵ After some hesitation, her spiritual director consented to her desire to enter a convent; when she was approximately twenty years old, and with the support of a local nobleman from Lucca who assumed responsibility for most of the costs, she entered a Capuchin tertiary conservatory, the Ospitale in Pontremoli, where she remained for a decade.²⁶ The choice of a tertiary organization was most likely dictated by the family's financial status, since it was less expensive than a convent and would have allowed her to continue to work outside, free from the constrictions imposed by enclosure. Maria Antonia's life in the conservatory reflects many of the structural changes that took place in religious organizations of the time, including the new emphasis on practical rather than mystical occupations; the inhabitants of the Ospitale relied not

²⁴ *Costituito 28 settembre 1756*, cited in *ibid.* [At home I read the life of a certain servant of God, Caterina Brondi da Sarzana, in whose life were described many penitential acts practiced by this servant of God, among which cilices, penitential disciplines, very long fasts to the point of shutting herself in a house without food for long periods, wearing a cross around her neck with edges that pierced her skin. Thus I, in reading the above and other penitential acts of this woman, set out to imitate her or rather to exceed her, with the desire to do even more than what she had done]. The letters that Maria Antonia received during a later period of her life, between 1754-1756, from a Carmelite priest, Giovanni Colombino, to whom she turned for advice, guidance, spiritual discernment and book recommendations, provide further indication of texts that may have influenced her. Specifically, Colombino recommended the works of Saint Teresa and Mary Magdalene de' Pazzi and José López Ezquerro's "*Lucerna Mystica* che è molto buono e metodico e un altro in volgare intitolato *Santa Teresa maestro di spirito*" (*Lettera del padre Colombino 16 marzo 1755*, cited in *ibid.*, 147). In addition to the examples analyzed in chapter 1, Bottoni mentions other seventeenth-century cases of false sainthood, such as that of Maria Simonetta Scorza, who was accused of appropriating in her own autobiography themes from religious texts that had influenced her. See also Daniela Berti, "L'autobiografia di una visionaria. L'«affettata santità» di Maria Simonetta Scorza," *Rivista di storia e letteratura religiosa* 3 (1992): 473-508.

²⁵ Cf. Bottoni, "Maria Antonia Colle," 132.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 132-133.

only on charitable donations but also on concrete activities to support themselves, such as cloth-making and providing lessons to young girls. Yet, while most of the women divided their time between prayer and work, Maria Antonia claimed that she often remained in an ecstatic state and pretended to be asleep in order to hide her experiences from her peers and superiors.²⁷ She eventually stopped working entirely because of the pain in her hands and feet supposedly caused by the stigmata, even though she refused to show her wounds. Maria Antonia gained notoriety among locals and was revered by the other tertiaries as a saint, yet despite the numerous donations that her popularity brought to the conservatory, her behavior aroused concern among political authorities and Church officials and was believed to exert a negative influence over the other tertiaries by distracting them from their practical duties.

The governor of Pontremoli had previously overlooked the activities of the Ospitale – even though it violated the law in the Grand Duchy of Tuscany that prohibited new cloistered organizations – because of the conservatory’s valuable contributions to the local community.²⁸ Now, however, he began to adopt a critical stance; he hired a doctor to investigate Maria Antonia’s claims of having received the stigmata and a priest was also sent to provide additional surveillance. On two different occasions, Maria Antonia drew crowds to Mulazzo by prophesying the day and time of her death, further arousing the suspicions of church authorities. Consequently, a series of priests and bishops and a representative of the Holy Office were called to investigate and Maria Antonia and her supporters were forced, under threat of exile, to abandon the city in June of 1753.

²⁷ Ibid., 134.

²⁸ Ibid., 135.

Seeking refuge in the home of a noblewoman in Mulazzo, Maria Antonia became the leader of a small female religious community, in which she claimed to serve as an intermediary between God and the Church authorities and called for rigorous reform.²⁹ While she was visiting her parents in Lucca in 1755, the archbishop, Giuseppe Palma, ordered an examination that lasted nearly two months and led to a formal declaration to the Holy Office of Colle's false stigmata and deceptive claims. Following her arrest and trial, which lasted from September 1756 through January 1757, she was ordered not to return to Mulazzo and to instead remain in Lucca with her parents or in a conservatory.³⁰

Maria Antonia was not deterred by these new limitations; in addition to claiming to have again received the stigmata during the Lenten season of 1758, the following year she went to Rome to present to the Pope the divine orders she had received to establish a monastery in Mulazzo, leading to her second arrest and trial, during which she began to deny her previous claims. She stated that she had come to Rome simply on a pilgrimage to various holy sites and that she did not believe she had received the stigmata, claiming to be "free of such illusions" ("libera da tali illusioni").³¹ Without sufficient cause, the trial ended after only a couple of weeks with repeated orders (which she would continue to ignore) that she not return to Mulazzo.

²⁹ Cf. *ibid.*, 135-138. In this context, Bottoni notes that the boundaries between spiritual and legal confession continued to be blurred; as in cases of suspected false sainthood during the seventeenth century, the confessor's role was often similar to that of the Inquisitor, and confession was viewed an instrument of control.

³⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, 139-159. The archbishop of Lucca complied with these orders, and Maria Antonia moved into her mother's home in May of 1757. It is important to note, however, that the Republic of Lucca had long been characterized by its unique resistance to the Inquisition and had refused to institute a local tribunal within its territory. As Bottoni observes, this stance is indicative of the Holy Office's increasing difficulty in maintaining control over political authorities. See also Simonetta Adorni Braccesi, "La Repubblica di Lucca e l'aborrita' Inquisizione: istituzioni e società," in *L'inquisizione romana in Italia nell'età moderna. Archivi, problemi di metodo e nuove ricerche. Atti del seminario internazionale, Trieste, 18-20 maggio 1988*, ed. Andrea Del Col and Giovanna Paolin (Rome: Ministero per i beni Culturali e Ambientali, Ufficio Centrale per i Beni Archivistici, 1991), 233-252.

³¹ Bottoni, "Maria Antonia Colle," 163.

She established her religious community, or “Romitaggio,” in clear opposition to the corruption of the ecclesiastical hierarchy. Just as in childhood she had been encouraged by her mother to adopt male attire in order to perform publicly, in her role as a religious leader Maria Antonia again wore male clothes in order to reinforce her position of authority. She evoked and embodied the ancient prophesy of the Angelic Pope who was supposed to bring renewed purity and unity to the papacy by referring to herself as the “papino” and celebrating masses, baptisms and weddings, hearing confessions and secretly ordaining priests.³² Although her experiment came to an end in 1769, when she was finally denounced by the other women in the community and both of the priests who had previously served as her spiritual directors, the changing religious climate worked in Maria Antonia’s favor; by the end of the eighteenth century, some Italian states were already dismantling their tribunals of the Inquisition and no further trials against Maria Antonia appear to have taken place.³³

Unlike Maria Antonia Colle, Maria Virginia Boccherini (1761-1801), another tertiary from Lucca forced to provide a written account of her life, never incurred the suspicions of the Inquisition, but she, too, relied on the tradition of the “living saints” and used her notoriety as a holy woman to advocate for concrete religious and political reform and her actions similarly shed light on the changing social, political and religious climate of the times.³⁴ Boccherini had various revelations, including a prediction of the arrival of the French troops in Italy and of Lucca’s fall

³² Cf. *ibid.*, 171-173. On the history of the Angelic Pope, see David Keck, *Angels and Angelology in the Middle Ages* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 152-154. According to Bottoni, “Maria Antonia prevedeva una tappa ulteriore in cui sarebbe divenuta uomo [...] Non si trattava dunque solo di proporsi nel ruolo di ‘divina madre’, ma si stravolgevano gerarchie e poteri attraverso l’assunzione, da parte della donna, di una identità maschile” (*ibid.*, 173). Moreover, by assuming a male role, she is able to imply “uno sviluppo ulteriore: il trasfigurarsi in Cristo” (175).

³³ *Ibid.*, 176-178.

³⁴ As Bottoni notes, she began to write “resoconti per obbedienza pochi anni dopo il suo ingresso in conservatorio e riuscì a fare della scrittura un momento di riflessione e maturazione personale proponendosi all’interno del conservatorio nel ruolo di carismatica di santa vita” (Bottoni, *Scritture dell’anima*, xv).

to French control.³⁵ As in many of the autobiographical narratives examined in this study in which the loss of one or both parents in early childhood is presented as inextricably tied to the discovery of one's vocation, Maria Virginia acknowledges in her autobiography, written in approximately 1794, that her devotion to the Madonna was a consequence of being raised away from her birth mother. Her aunts, who assumed responsibility for her after her parents moved to Venice for work, initiated her religious education when she was five years old and told her that the Virgin Mary would compensate for her absent mother.³⁶ They likewise took advantage of her fears of desertion by telling her that the Madonna would abandon her if she misbehaved.³⁷ Like Veronica Giuliani, Maria Virginia recalls conversing with an image of the Virgin, to whom she refers as "la mia mamma," in her room:

Vi facevo tutti i miei discorsi, secondo la mia capacità: le dicevo che le voleva tanto bene, che mi dicesse cosa voleva da me che ne le avrei data, che poteva fare per piacere al suo Gesù, che tutto avrei fatto e sarei stata buona.³⁸

Thus, more than a precocious religious inclination, it was the traumatic experience of being abandoned by her birth parents that inspired Maria Virginia's good behavior and devotion to the Madonna.

As in the case of Maria Antonia Colle, Boccherini's placement in a tertiary institute rather than a monastery was likely dictated by financial constraints. She appealed to an uncle in

³⁵ Elena Bottoni, "Maria Virginia Boccherini (1761-1801): 'La mistica lucchese di S. Elisabetta,'" in *ibid.*, 278.

³⁶ In her autobiography, she writes: "Principiando quando era di cinque anni [...] mi avevano insinuato la devozione alla ss. Vergine" (APFM, *Lucca, Maria Virginia Boccherini*, fascicolo 11, *Qui si contiene quanto la serva di Dio operò negli anni dell'infanzia, della fanciullezza nel secolo e ne primi anni della vita religiosa, notato brevemente di sua propria mano dopo averne avuti tre espressi comandi dal Signore col precetto di s. obbedienza senza neppure ripassarlo, il consegnò al confessore medesimo* – hereafter referred to as *Autobiografia* – cited in *ibid.*, 251). As Bottoni notes, most of the writing is in Boccherini's own hand, though she occasionally dictated to other women in the convent during periods of illness.

³⁷ "Se per disgrazia cadevo in qualche difetto [...] mi faceva tanto timore, di più che mi dicevano che non mi avrebbe più voluto per sua figliola e mi avrebbe rigettata" (*ibid.*).

³⁸ *Ibid.* [I told her about everything, as best I could: I told her that I loved her very much, that she should tell me what she wanted from me and I would do it, what I could do to please Jesus, that I would do it all and be good].

Lisbon who agreed to finance her entrance and, because the conservatories required that their inhabitants knew how to read and write, a family friend and noblewoman offered to provide her with a basic education, allowing Maria Virginia to live in her home during the year prior to her entrance in the conservatory in 1776. She writes that she attended school daily, was able to read and write and took particular pleasure in reading saints' lives. Like earlier Counter-Reformation spiritual autobiographers, Saint Teresa of Avila was one of her primary models and later appeared in her visions as a spiritual guide.³⁹ Even from a young age, the life of Saint Teresa was an especially influential text, twice inspiring Maria Virginia to run away from home:

Tentai due volte di fuggirmene ma non mi riuscì perché la prima volta fui ricondotta a casa da un giovane da me non conosciuto [...] un'altra volta non mi riuscì di aprire la porta per quanto mi affaticassi, non potei.⁴⁰

Maria Virginia arrived at the convent of Santa Elisabetta in Lucca, where she would spend the rest of her life, when she was fifteen years old. Almost immediately after her arrival, she began suffering from various illnesses and exhibiting signs of divine favors, culminating with the stigmata in 1792. Consequently, her confessor, Giuseppe Lenzi, asked her to provide a written account of her experiences while he began to draft his own *Memorie* in which he described their conversations and provided annotations to her writings based on their discussions.⁴¹ After her supposed miraculous recovery from a grave illness, recorded in the

³⁹ Cf. Bottoni, "Maria Virginia Boccherini," 253-255. Maria Virginia referred to Saint Teresa as her namesake since her full name at birth was Maria Teresa Antonia Gaetana. She adopted the name Maria Virginia at the age of seventeen, in 1778.

⁴⁰ *Autobiografia*, cited in *ibid.*, 253. [I tried to run away twice but was unsuccessful because the first time I was brought home by a young man whom I didn't know ... another time I wasn't able to open the door, no matter how hard I tried, I couldn't].

⁴¹ Cf. *ibid.*, 270-278. Along with another of her confessors in the convent, Serafino Pieretti, Lenzi provided Maria Virginia with guidance and encouraged her to write; after her death, he organized her accounts and wrote her biography, likely between 1804-1806. Bottoni does find evidence of censorship in Lenzi's *Memorie*; he omitted portions of her text in his transcriptions and destroyed the original. At the same time, the document, together with Pieretti's *Memorie*, reveals his great respect for Maria Virginia; the annotations of both confessors, written over the

Cronaca of the convent in 1794, word of her divine gifts spread and people began to seek her assistance for spiritual intercession. That same year, likely in response to her increasing fame, she also began to record the events of her early life at the request of her confessor, starting with her childhood and first years in the convent.⁴² Thus, like Veronica Giuliani's "diario sdoppiato," Maria Virginia left two distinct records, one dedicated to the retrospective narration of her past and another dedicated to daily accounts of her mystical experiences, temptations and visions. Also reminiscent of Veronica Giuliani was Maria Virginia's inability to re-read her writings; she wrote two or three times per week on paper provided by her confessor, which he collected from her shortly thereafter.⁴³

As is common in spiritual autobiographies, Maria Virginia describes her desire as a small child to practice penitential acts without knowing how, giving away her food at school and intentionally exposing herself to particularly hot or cold temperatures. At the same time, she never withdrew from practical duties in the convent, which included working as a nurse, sacristan and mistress of the novices ("maestra delle novizie"), and singing in the choir.⁴⁴ She also claimed to use her powers of divine mediation to intercede on behalf of Lucca; her visions were often directly related to current events, such as the election of Pope Pius VII, and she openly criticized the wayward behavior of many priests of her time.⁴⁵ Maria Virginia died of smallpox in 1802 at the age of thirty-nine. When, after four days, her cadaver was inspected and

course of approximately fifteen years, suggest that both men believed the signs of sainthood she demonstrated were authentic.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 249-250.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 260.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 256.

⁴⁵ Of the corruption of priests, Maria Virginia writes: "Anche i sacerdoti, non vivono da sacerdoti e questo è quello che più affligge il cuore del mio ss. Figlio e il mio" (cited in *ibid.*, 272). On her prediction of the election of Pius VII, see *ibid.*, 279.

found to be odorless and free of rigor mortis, pieces of her clothing and bandages were distributed as relics and her confessor began to collect testimonies of her miraculous recoveries and spiritual gifts, though no formal process of beatification ever took place, perhaps because of the difficult political situation in Lucca at the time and the general stance against mysticism that had become increasingly prevalent.⁴⁶

Considered together, these autobiographical writings indicate that the tradition of forced spiritual writing, both as a form of control and as a means of collecting documentation in the hope of canonizing holy women, continued well into the late eighteenth century: on one end of the spectrum, Maria Antonia Colle's accusers were unable to bring her to trial again for her heretical behavior while, at the other end, Maria Virginia Boccherini's confessors failed to provide adequate grounds for her canonization. These narratives also show how the changing political and social landscape altered the reception of these writings and the consequences for the authors themselves and how, compared to female spiritual autobiographers of the previous century, women were more actively invested in contemporary political events.⁴⁷

The greater permeability of convent walls, evident in the practical occupations and activities undertaken by tertiaries like Maria Antonia Colle and Maria Virginia Boccherini, led to what can also be considered as a contamination or diffusion of the genre of the spiritual autobiography outside of the convent. As illustrated by Marina Caffiero's studies of the diaries of Anna del Monte and Enrichetta Caetani Lante, the eighteenth century saw the emergence of several spiritual diaries written by women far removed from convent life.⁴⁸ Anna del Monte was

⁴⁶ See *ibid.*, 284-285.

⁴⁷ However, as Bottoni suggests, there is also a strong Medieval precedent to be found in Saint Catherine of Siena's efforts to reform the church in the fourteenth century (*ibid.*, 272).

⁴⁸ See Marina Caffiero, "Testi e contesti. Le scritture femminili private a Roma nel Settecento: i diari tra soggettività individuali e appartenenze socio-culturali," *Giornale di storia* 3 (2010).

a Jewish woman who in 1749, at approximately eighteen years of age, was taken from her home and imprisoned in the House of the Catechumens in Rome. She kept a record of her experience in a diary that, although likely intended for circulation and publication, remained unpublished until 1795 when the manuscript was discovered and transcribed by her brother. What most interests Caffiero about the text is the intersection between personal, family and community history that is evident both in the writing and the transcription of the diary.⁴⁹

Enrichetta Caetani Lante, a Roman noblewoman, likewise kept one of the relatively few spiritual diaries written by Italian laywomen during this period.⁵⁰ Enrichetta and her siblings were educated by their mother in their family's villa, which was an important salon and meeting place for scientists, intellectuals and writers. After the deaths of her mother and father in 1752 and 1759, respectively, she and her siblings were separated in various schools and monasteries. In 1764, Enrichetta married the Roman nobleman, Luigi Lante, with whom she lived until her death from smallpox in 1772 at the age of twenty-eight. Her substantial involvement in cultural and literary circles is confirmed by the fact that her death and prior illnesses are mentioned not only in archival records but also in the letters of intellectuals such as Pietro and Alessandro Verri.⁵¹ Given her wealth, prominent social and cultural status and lack of a religious vocation, it is interesting that Enrichetta kept a spiritual diary. Because the first part of the manuscript is

⁴⁹ Ibid., 2-8. On the history of the House of the Catechumens, an institution founded for Christian converts, see also Marina Caffiero, *Forced Baptisms: Histories of Jews, Christians, and Converts in Papal Rome*, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012).

⁵⁰ Ibid., 8 and Serena Proietti, "Il diario spirituale di Enrichetta Caetani Lante (1768-1770)," in *Scritture di donne. La memoria restituita*, ed. Marina Caffiero and Manola Ida Venzo (Rome: Viella, 2007), 79-95. The diary (ASR, Fondo Lante, *Diario spirituale*, b. 433) consists of an octavo binding with a vellum cover. I cite from the transcription provided by Proietti, who notes that the volume "contiene al suo interno due quinterni sciolti rilegati a mano ed una parte rilegata direttamente alla coperta di pergamena. In tutti si rileva continuità grafica e tematica. I primi due quinterni presentano nella pagina anteriore una doppia numerazione: una è relativa agli anni di compilazione del Diario (1768-1769); l'altra enumera le parti seconda e terza dello stesso, rispettivamente riferite agli anni 1768 e 1769. Risulta così mancante la prima parte, della quale non si è trovata notizia in nessuno degli archivi consultati" (85-86).

⁵¹ See Proietti, 80-84.

missing, it is impossible to know if she included information regarding the origins and intended function of her diary, which she wrote between 1768-1770. While it may have originated as part of an attempt to canonize one of her relatives in order to increase her family's prestige, her narrative shares several features with spiritual autobiographies.⁵² Enrichetta initiated the project with great reluctance out of obedience to her confessor and employs various expressions and topoi of mystical writings, associating physical pain with penitence, describing visions, and offering herself in a mystical union with Christ.⁵³

At the same time, the extant portions of her diary lack the kind of detailed descriptions of her past and daily life that would generally be found in an autobiography. Instead, her narration of external events is limited to references to her family's health, their homes, her relationship with her confessors, her volunteer work in a Roman hospital, and the vices she sacrificed in the name of spiritual progress, including attending the theater and salons and wearing elaborate clothing.⁵⁴ Yet, as Marina Caffiero and Serena Proietti have emphasized, Enrichetta's diary does not contain precise or detailed references to meaningful events, places or individuals in her life and it is primarily an account of her spiritual journey, organized not according to the chronology of her life but the liturgical calendar.⁵⁵

⁵² Proietti hypothesizes that the first part of the diary may have been "convogliata in qualche causa di canonizzazione" (89), but she does not make any conjectures as to which relative was being considered for canonization.

⁵³ Ibid., 86-89. Enrichetta claims to write "per ubbidire soltanto e non senza [...] sommo ribrezzo" (*Diario spirituale*, 27 maggio 1769, cited in *ibid.*, 86) and "con infinita mia ripugnanza" (*Diario spirituale*, 30 novembre 1768, cited in *ibid.*, 95). Regarding the topos of the female mystic's fear of writing as an act of immodesty, see Caffiero, "Testi e contesti," 9.

⁵⁴ She writes of depriving herself of "i teatri [...] le conversazioni [...] li divertimenti ben che leciti [...] le pompe, abbigliamenti ed ornamenti nel vestire" (*Diario spirituale*, 6 novembre 1769, cited in Proietti, 85).

⁵⁵ See Caffiero, "Testi e contesti," 9. Proietti specifies that the chronology of the text is dictated by "le fasi della preghiera, delle festività cattoliche e culmina nella comunione eucaristica" (91).

Ultimately, Enrichetta fails, at least in her writing, to reconcile her spiritual identity with her role as a noblewoman with an active social role in the lay culture of her time. Furthermore, aside from occasional references to prayers, her diary does not provide a record of any specific texts that might have served as literary and spiritual models and which would have provided a better understanding of the intersection between her two distinct and contrasting social identities. Nonetheless, the very presence of her diary and its limitations are themselves indicative of the larger conflict between the Church and lay culture. The clear division between her traditional, “anti-modern” devotional practices and her family’s prominence in Enlightenment cultural circles reflects the contradictions that characterized the lives of many aristocratic women of the period.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ Cf. Caffiero, “Testi e contesti,” 10.

III.2 Giuseppina di Lorena-Carignano's *Portrait*

The late eighteenth century also saw the emergence of several autobiographical narratives written by aristocratic women whose literary and cultural influences differed significantly from the tradition of spiritual self-writing; experimentation with diverse forms, such as literary portraiture and diaries, contain few references to religion but, like the spiritual autobiographies considered in the first section of this chapter, reveal a greater degree of involvement in political and cultural environments. Moreover, many of these texts, such as Giuseppina di Lorena-Carignano's *Portrait* (1771), were written in French rather than Italian and thus reflect the influence of French salon culture and politics in Piedmont during the Jacobin period.

Born Marié Josèphe Thérèse de Lorraine Harcourt Armagnac, the princess of Carignano (1753-1797) was a descendant of the Lorraine family, which had played an important political role in eighteenth-century Austria, Italy and France. Giuseppina, as she was known in Italy, left her family at the age of fifteen in order to enter into a marriage arranged by the House of Savoy with Vittorio Amedeo Luigi di Savoia-Carignano. As an intellectual, writer, and translator, the princess became active in cultural circles in Turin, where she arrived in November of 1768, and her husband's death when she was only twenty-seven years old provided her with a further degree of freedom that allowed her to make important contacts with many intellectual and literary figures associated with the Enlightenment in Italy and abroad, including Cesare Beccaria, Pietro and Alessandro Verri, Vittorio Alfieri, Giuseppe Parini, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Voltaire, and Benjamin Franklin, in addition to her friendships with prominent female figures and *salonnières*.⁵⁷ These contacts gave her a wide understanding of the historical, political, moral and

⁵⁷ See Gaetano Gasperoni, *Giuseppina di Lorena Principessa di Carignano* (Turin: G.B. Paravia, 1938), 6-7 and Luisa Ricaldone, "Giuseppina di Lorena-Carignano, ancora," in *Lumi inquieti: Amicizie, passioni, viaggi di letterati nel Settecento. Omaggio a Marco Cerruti* (Turin: Accademia University Press, 2012), 157. Ricaldone notes, however, that Giuseppina was never greatly restricted, even during her husband's lifetime, since her husband was

social problems of the time.⁵⁸ Although her premature death in 1797 prevented her from becoming a more integral part of the court at Turin and none of her works were published during her lifetime, Lorena-Carignano was nonetheless a prolific writer. Her explorations of diverse forms and genres include philosophical, historical and scientific treatises, among which a defense of suicide; several dramatic works, including a comedy; travel accounts of her sojourns in Italy, Germany and England; French translations of the poetry of Young and several of Alfieri's tragedies; and collections of maxims written by others and herself. She also wrote a series of novels, which are of particular interest considering that although the mid-eighteenth century saw an increase in the popularity and availability of foreign novels in translation, few Italian men and even fewer women actually read and wrote novels compared with France and England. Lorena-Carignano's participation in the genre can be attributed to her French education, especially given the cultural vicinity between Piedmont and France at the time.⁵⁹

With the exception of Giuseppina's historical pieces and translations, Luisa Ricaldone

not heir to the throne and belonged to one of the most independent branches of the Savoy family. On Piedmont's intellectual and cultural environment during this period, see Vincenzo Ferrone, "The Accademia Reale delle Scienze: Cultural Sociability and Men of Letters in Turin of the Enlightenment under Vittorio Amedeo III," *The Journal of Modern History* 70, no. 3 (September 1998): 519-560.

⁵⁸ Giuseppina di Lorena-Carignano met Verri and Beccaria in Milan and Rousseau and Voltaire in Paris; Benjamin Franklin supposedly asked her to appeal to Louis XVI on his behalf to obtain support for American Independence. See Gasperoni, 74 and Luisa Ricaldone, "Una letterata a corte: Giuseppina di Lorena Carignano," in *L'alterità nella parola. Storia e scrittura di donne nel Piemonte di epoca moderna*, ed. Cristina Bracchi (Turin: Thélème Editrice, 2002), 49.

⁵⁹ Cf. Luisa Ricaldone, "Giuseppina di Lorena-Carignano, ancora," 157; *Scelta di inediti di Giuseppina di Lorena-Carignano* (Turin: Centro studi piemontesi, 1980), xi; "Una letterata a corte," 50; and "La donna forte, l'amica e la riformatrice: il Portrait di Giuseppina di Lorena-Carignano (1753-1797)," in *La scrittura nascosta: Donne di lettere e loro immagini tra Arcadia e Restaurazione* (Paris; Fiesole: Honoré Champion; Cadmo, 1996), 167. Ricaldone mentions, among the few Italian novelists of the period, Pietro Chiari, Alessandro Verri, Antonio Piazza and Ippolito Pindemonte, noting that, along with Spain, Italy was the least "fecondo di invenzione romanzesca" of all European countries.

has loosely defined all of the princess's works as "self-narratives" ("autonarrativa").⁶⁰ Indeed, Giuseppina takes every opportunity to offer personal reflections on her status as a woman and mother, not only in her private letters in which it is possible to glimpse the practical concerns of her daily life, such as motherhood and vaccinations for her children, but also in other documents inspired by autobiographical incidents, such as her *Réflexions sur le suicide* (1772).⁶¹ While the sixty-five-page autograph manuscript is largely an impersonal compilation of thoughts on the morality of suicide gleaned from various English and French philosophers, Lorena-Carignano includes an explanation of her decision to retreat to her room to write the treatise because of her inability to publicly challenge her mother when the question of suicide had come up in a conversation with others in their home.⁶²

The best example of Lorena-Carignano's interest in "self-narrative" is the autobiographical self-portrait she wrote in 1771, three years after her arrival in Turin. The *Portrait* is the first of eleven literary portraits in her *Recueil de portraits faits par la P. de C.*, in which she depicted classical figures like Hector and Aeneas, friends, contemporary figures and famous women from antiquity, and which she had perhaps intended to publish under a

⁶⁰ Ricaldone observes in Lorena-Carignano's corpus "un indirizzo di scrittura che potremmo definire autonarrativa. Ad eccezione delle traduzioni e degli scritti storici infatti, gli autoritratti, i romanzi, i pensieri e le riflessioni filosofiche costituiscono un corpus la cui compattezza è data dalla centralità dell'io" (ibid., 164-165).

⁶¹ Several of Lorena-Carignano's private letters have been published in Ricaldone's *Scelta di inediti*, while the manuscript of the *Réflexions* was thought to have been lost but was rediscovered by a librarian at the Biblioteca Reale di Torino, who found the manuscript catalogued by mistake among the documents of Margherita of Savoy. See Luisa Ricaldone, "Nota Critica," in *Il "genio muliebre": Percorsi di donne intellettuali fra Settecento e Novecento in Piemonte*, ed. Marco Cerruti (Alessandria: Edizioni dell'Orso, 1993), 3.

⁶² Lorena-Carignano's sources for her *Réflexions sur le suicide* included Montesquieu's *Lettres Persanes* (1721), Maupertius's *Essai de philosophie morale* (1749), letters 21-22 of Part Three of Rousseau's *Nouvelle Héloïse* (1761), and the French translation of David Hume's "Of Suicide" (1755), which appeared in 1770. The manuscript is also heavily influenced by Lorena-Carignano's deep interest in the stoicism of Seneca and Epictetus. Luisa Ricaldone has described the *Réflexions* as rooted in materialist Enlightenment thinking but also espousing an essentially pessimistic view of societal and natural indifference that anticipates the considerations found a half-century later in Giacomo Leopardi's *Zibaldone* and *Operette morali*. See Ricaldone, Introduction to *Réflexions sur le suicide*, in *Il "genio muliebre,"* 5.

pseudonym.⁶³ The *Portrait* happens to be one of very few significant autobiographical narratives written by women in the Italian peninsula during this period in a lay context. Like most of the documents considered in this study, the manuscript was never intended for publication or distribution among a wide circle of readers. Moreover, although French was Giuseppina's native language, and despite the intellectual rigor of her works, the *Portrait* contains numerous grammatical and lexical imprecisions. Lorena-Carignano directly addresses these stylistic flaws in her work and attributes them not to a lack of ability or education, but rather to her limited interest in correcting a piece of writing that she does not intend to share with others:

Tous ces différents ouvrages pourraient être écrits avec infiniment plus de correction et d'élégance qu'il ne sont, mais je n'ai pas la patience de les écrire avec soin ni de les corriger, d'autant plus que mon intention n'est pas qu'ils soient vus, et d'ailleurs il faudrait toujours recommencer, car à mon âge l'on acquiert tout les jours des idées et l'on est souvent bien étonné de celles que l'on a eu par le passé; ainsi je ne les conserve que pour juger moi-même du progrès de mon esprit et comparer ma façon de penser présente à la passée.⁶⁴

Luisa Ricaldone has instead associated Lorena-Carignano's linguistic difficulties with an existential crisis caused by her forced relocation from France to Piedmont and exacerbated by her solitary personality and the societal expectation that women's intellectual pursuits remain

⁶³ Cf. Ricaldone, *Scelta di inediti*, 3. The "Portrait 1^{er} de l'auteur de ce recueil fait en 1771" (hereafter referred to simply as *Portrait*) occupies the first nineteen (though the last two are illegible) of the sixty-seven pages of the collection. The manuscript is located in the Biblioteca Reale di Torino and was published for the first time in Ricaldone's *Scelta di inediti*. I cite the French text as it appears in her edition, in which she leaves intact Lorena-Carignano's agreement errors in French and missing circumflex accents. See Luisa Ricaldone, "Il secolo XVIII come laboratorio della modernità," in *Geografie e genealogie letterarie: Erudite, biografie, croniste, narratrici epistolieres, utopiste tra Settecento e Ottocento*, ed. Adrianna Chemello (Padua: Il Poligrafo, 2000), 21; *Scelta di inediti*, xxiii; "La donna forte, l'amica e la riformatrice," 162; and "Una letterata a corte," 51.

⁶⁴ Lorena-Carignano, *Portrait*, 10. [All these different works could be written with infinitely more correctness and elegance than they are, but I do not have the patience to write or revise them carefully, especially since my intention is not that they be seen, and anyways it would be necessary to start over, because at my age one acquires all the joys of ideas and is often astonished by those one entertained in the past; so I conserve them to judge for myself my mind's progress and compare my present manner of thinking to that of the past].

private.⁶⁵ Lorena-Carignano herself acknowledged the limits she faced as a woman in a letter to Paolo Maria Paciaudi, with whom she engaged in a long epistolary relationship:

Pour nous pauvres femmes notre première vertu est de ne point faire parler de nous [...]; nos talents sont toujours si restraints par notre délicatesse notre éducation notre position [...] qu'il faut [...] renoncer à la gloire et suivre la raison.⁶⁶

On the other hand, the fact that Giuseppina did not intend to share her *Portrait* with a wider audience afforded her a degree of freedom of expression that would not have otherwise been possible.

Aside from the private nature of the *Portrait* and its deviation from grammatical and stylistic norms, however, Lorena-Carignano's narrative shares little with the forms of autobiographical writing explored in chapters 1 and 2. It was in no apparent way inspired by hagiographic literature and there are several key characteristics of the *Portrait* that distinguish it from canonical definitions of the autobiographical genre: First, given her literary models and the cultural context in which she lived, it is not surprising that Lorena-Carignano wrote her *Portrait*, and most of her other works, in French and not Italian, nor that the spiritual tradition of the autobiography as confession is entirely absent from the narrative.⁶⁷ Secondly, as a well-established genre in its own right, the literary portrait was clearly distinct from the genres of the

⁶⁵ See Luisa Ricaldone, "Un naufragio felice: L'île di Giuseppina di Lorena-Carignano," *Italies. Littérature-Civilisation-Société* 2 (1998): 135-143; "Il secolo XVIII come laboratorio della modernità," 21; and "La donna forte, l'amica e la riformatrice," 160-161.

⁶⁶ Cited in Ricaldone, "Una letterata a corte," 51. [For us poor women, our primary virtue is not to talk about ourselves ... our talents are always so restricted by our delicacy, our education, our position ... that it is necessary ... to renounce glory and follow reason]. The letter was published in its entirety by Ricaldone in "Tre lettere inedite di Giuseppina di Lorena-Carignano," *Studi Piemontesi* 12, fasc. 2 (November 1983): 428-432.

⁶⁷ As Gaetano Gasperoni observed, during the years of Giuseppina's adolescence, France under Louis XV was already characterized by a new "anti-Christian" and "cosmopolitan" consciousness that revealed "i caratteri essenziali del secolo, che vedeva distrutta l'idea Cristiana mentre l'idea della Patria, di fronte al cosmopolitismo, andava progressivamente affievolendosi. Gli scrittori ed i pensatori, movendo dalla critica delle istituzioni e delle credenze del passato, affermavano il regno della ragione, collocavano l'uomo al centro della natura, combattevano il soprannaturale e la religione, animati dal proposito di rinnovare la società" (3).

autobiography and the memoir and enjoyed great popularity in Early Modern Italy and through the nineteenth century. Among Italian women writers, one of the most well known participants in the genre was Isabella Teotochi Albrizzi, the prominent *salonnière* of early nineteenth-century Venice whose *Ritratti* (1807, 1808, 1816, 1826) consisted of physical and moral portraits of contemporary literary figures, as well as some important writers of the past, such as Vittoria Colonna.⁶⁸ As Susan Dalton has observed, the popularity of portrait books developed in part out of the tradition, mainly inspired by Plutarch's *Lives*, of collecting biographies and engraved portraits of exceptional individuals.⁶⁹ Dalton also describes a distinctly seventeenth- and eighteenth-century tradition of literary portraiture popularized by Jean de La Bruyère's *Caractères* (1688) and employed by *salonnières* like Mademoiselle de Scudéry (1607-1701), Anne Marie Louise d'Orléans, Duchess of Montpensier (1627-1693), Madame du Deffand (1697-1780) and Julie de Lespinasse (1732-1776), which reveal a greater interest in contemporary literary figures than famous historical personages, and focus more heavily on moral character than deeds or important events in the portrayed subject's life.⁷⁰ Lorena-Carignano was clearly influenced by both of these traditions of literary portraiture; she documented her reading of Plutarch's *Lives* in her notebooks and explicitly states in the incipit of the *Portrait* that the work was inspired by her reading of the Duchess of Montpensier's

⁶⁸ The 1807 edition of the *Ritratti* included engravings and short written descriptions, each under ten pages, of Ippolito Pindemonte, Dominique Vivant Denon, Lauro Quirini, Giuseppe Albrizzi, Francesco Franceschinis, Ugo Foscolo, Antonio Teotochi, Pierre-François Hugues d'Hancarville, Aurelio de' Giorgi Bertola, Giovan Battista Cervoni, Melchiorre Cesarotti, Benedetto Chiteauneuf, and Vittorio Alfieri. See Susan Dalton, "Searching for Virtue: Physiognomy, Sociability, and Taste in Isabella Teotochi Albrizzi's 'Ritratti,'" *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 40, no. 1 (Fall, 2006): 88.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.* The great popularity of Plutarch's lives in the eighteenth century resonates, for example, in Alfieri's *Vita*, in which the tragedian refers to it as "il libro dei libri" (90).

⁷⁰ *Ibid.* Specifically, Dalton mentions Mademoiselle de Scudéry's portraits in the novel *Clélie* (1654-1661) and Mademoiselle de Montpensier's *Divers portraits* (1659), in addition to Madame du Deffand and Julie de Lespinasse's unpublished portraits. In the Italian context, Dalton further notes the model provided by Gasparo Gozzi, whose moral portraits appeared in his *Osservatore Veneto* (1761-1762).

portraits.⁷¹

As might be expected given her social standing and self-proclaimed need to keep constantly busy, Lorena-Carignano's descriptions of her daily occupations and pastimes are reminiscent of those typically included in courtly autobiographies; she was trained in painting, music and horseback riding and often attended dances, parties and horse races.⁷² Yet, while she admits to the pleasure she takes in these activities, she also mentions her preference for more private forms of reflection:

J'aime naturellement la magnificence le faste et ce qui a l'air de la grandeur, mai j'y préfère la gayeté l'aisance les douceurs de l'amitié et la société des gens aimables, plaisirs qui n'entraiment après eux ni la vîde ni le soucis, suite ordinaires des amusemens plus bruyants; s'il était à mon choix je voudrais en jouir alternativement mais en me servant des uns que pour faire valoir avantage les autres. On peut me reprocher dans la conversation d'y porter peut-être trop loin de goût de la plaisanterie.⁷³

Descriptions such as these have led Luisa Ricaldone to view the *Portrait* as a critique of traditional feminine characteristics in which Lorena-Carignano proposes a new ideal based on traditionally masculine virtues, such as moral strength, pride and a refined intellect cultivated through studies.⁷⁴ Indeed, while Giuseppina never kept a diary, she did keep a log of her *lectures*, or rather the books that had been a fundamental part of her education between 1765, when she

⁷¹ “Les portraits que j’ai lus dans les mémoires de M.lle de Montpensier me firent venir l’idée d’écrire le mien” (Lorena-Carignano, *Portrait*, 3).

⁷² “La peinture la musique m’occupe aussi quelque instantes agréablement car je ne sais pas rester sans rien faire [...] je sais jouir des plaisirs plus vifs que ceux que je viens de citer, tel que [...] les fêtes, la chasse et monter à cheval” (ibid., 10-11).

⁷³ Ibid., 11. [I naturally love pomp, splendor and that which has the air of grandeur, but I prefer the gaiety, ease and pleasures of the friendship and company of agreeable people that bring with them neither the emptiness nor the cares of the usual, noisier pastimes; if it were up to me, I would enjoy myself differently, but I am in need of some activities in order to enjoy others. One could perhaps reproach me for being too removed from the pleasantries of conversation].

⁷⁴ Cf. Ricaldone, “La donna forte, l’amica e la riformatrice,” 163-164.

was twelve years old, and 1779.⁷⁵ Her list included historical and philosophical texts, the works of H elvetius, Montaigne, Buffon, Hume and Newton,⁷⁶ classical literature from Homer to Seneca, Cicero and Virgil, Plutarch’s *Lives*, which she had read by 1769, and the lives of illustrious men from Cicero to Richelieu and Mazarin, epistolary works from Pliny to Madame De S evign e, and travel books such as *Les voyages en Turquie*, *Les voyageurs franais*, *Les voyages d’Italie*.⁷⁷ Finally, she carefully documented her studies of Italian literature and theater in her letters and notebooks, which contain excerpts and French translations of Dante and Petrarch and eighteenth-century playwrights such as Pietro Metastasio, Francesco Albergati Capacelli and Vittorio Alfieri.⁷⁸ She also explicitly describes reading and writing as her most beloved pastimes:

La lecture surtout le remplit de la mani re la plus analogue   mon go t, surtout celle des livres de morale et de po sie. Je n’aime pas moins    crire qu’  lire, tant t ce sont mes r flexions tant t des notes sur ce que j’ i l  d’autrefois, je m’amuse   jeter sur le papier les diverses id es qui me passent par la t te sur des objets presque toujours s rieux.⁷⁹

At the heart of Giuseppina’s narrative is a strong desire for moral self-improvement. In fact, the writing of the *Portrait*, as we are told in the opening paragraph, is intended as a useful exercise that the princess hopes will allow her to conduct a serious examination of herself, with the ultimate goal of correcting her flaws:

⁷⁵ Gasperoni, 4.

⁷⁶ Ricaldone, “Una letterata a corte,” 51.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 53. Ricaldone believes that *Les voyages d’Italie* refers to the *Description historique et critique de l’Italie, ou nouveaux M moires sur l’ tat actuel de son Gouvernement, des Sciences, des Artes, du Commerce, de la Population et de l’Histoire naturelle* (Paris, 1770).

⁷⁸ See Gasperoni, 4-6 and Ricaldone, *Scelta di inediti*, xii. Angelo Maria Bandini, the librarian of the Laurentian and Marucellian libraries in Florence, describes Giuseppina’s love for Italian literature, and Petrarch in particular, in an entry of his diary: “Molto si parl  di letteratura Toscana e mi disse che per suo esercizio aveva tradotto in francese buona parte di sonetti di esso Petrarca” (cited in Gasperoni, 48).

⁷⁹ Lorena-Carignano, *Portrait*, 10. [Above all, it is reading that best suits my tastes, especially moral books and poetry. I love writing no less than reading, sometimes I write my thoughts, sometimes notes on the ancient texts I have read, I enjoy jotting down the various ideas that pass through my mind, almost always on serious subjects].

Ce qui me confirma le plus dans ce project fut la pensée que ce me serait une occupation d'autant plus utile qu'en m'obligeant à sonder les replis de mon âme et à faire un examen sérieux de moi-même je puiserais dans cette connoissance les moyens de me corriger de bien de déffauts.⁸⁰

The opening pages of the *Portrait* thus distinguish the text from other examples of literary portraiture in Italy during this period, since while most *ritratti* were meant to provide moral exempla through depictions of illustrious characters, Lorena-Carignano veers away from the tenets of the genre by choosing instead to focus on herself and her imperfections. In addition to viewing writing as an instrument of self-awareness and self-improvement, the princess anticipates tropes found in other autobiographical narratives, such as Rousseau's *Confessions*. She opens her narrative by providing a list of her shortcomings and their causes, attributing her "mauvaise humeur" to an inability to change her naturally "lively and ardent" mind, but she also admits that her attempts to reflect upon and improve her character have not led to real change.⁸¹ She describes *amour-propre* as her greatest weakness and the "faithful companion" ("compagnon fidèle") of all her words and deeds and admits to suffering from a pridefulness that makes her reluctant to rely on the whims of others. Finally, she claims that, had she been born amongst the pagans, freedom and independence would have been her gods.⁸² Yet, among the

⁸⁰ Ibid., 3. [That which most convinced me of this project was the thought that it would be an especially useful exercise because it would force me to search the depths of my soul and conduct a serious examination of myself and I could draw from this knowledge the means to properly correct my flaws].

⁸¹ "La mienne est d'autant plus difficile à deffinir qu'elle n'est pas égale et l'on n'en sera pas étonné lorsque je dirai que mon esprit et mon imagination, étant vive et ardente, la vie que je me suis trouvé obligé de mener, les personnes avec lesquelles j'en passe la plus grande partie et les contrariétés que j'y ait portée au sérieux et à la réflexion; mais cette habitude n'est pas encore assez forte en moi pour y changer entièrement le caractère que j'ai reçu de la nature" (ibid., 4).

⁸² "On peut juger delà que mon humeur n'est rien moins que souple et docile, aussi disais je souvent, que si j'étais née parmi les payens. La liberté et l'indépendance auraient été les divinités que j'aurais choisie pour leur élever des autels" (ibid., 6); "D'ailleurs j'avouerai que j'ai en moi en'espèce de fierté qui me fait dédaigner de rendre mon Bonheur dépendant du caprice d'autrui, fierté bien differente de la hauteur puisqu'elle convient à tous les états et nous est conseillée par la raison et la vertu" (ibid., 7-8); "L'amour propre est mon déffaut favori et habituel, le compagnon fidèle de mes actions et des mes paroles" (ibid., 10). Such affirmations have led Luisa Ricaldone to identify in Lorena-Carignano's writings "un confuso mélange dei due aspetti: gusto della vita libera, diritto al

various *contrariétés* with which she grapples, Lorena-Carignano focuses primarily on the tension between reason and passion, which she associates with elective friendship and tyrannous love, respectively. She believes that the most effective means of gaining self-control is to cultivate the former while avoiding the impulses of the latter:

L'amour, cette passion que je méprise et crains n'est cependant pas un sentiment que je sois incapable de sentir, ma [...] m'y ont décidé que je crois pouvoir répondre non de ne jamais aimer, mais de combattre si bien mes penchants que, si je ne vurrâi pas à bout de le détruire je saurai au moins les cacher à quiconque en sera la cause.⁸³

She expresses a similar view in her philosophical essays, *Sur l'amour platonique* and *Confronto dell'amicizia con l'amore* (one of her few writings in Italian), in which she again argues in favor of the superiority of friendship over passionate love:

Si ponga al confronto l'amore coll'amicizia, e alla esatezza di un esame si troverà l'amicizia essere il risultato di una ferma nostra elezione che suppone la potenza di riflettere e l'attuale esercizio della ragione, che si crea nell'anima stessa [...] quando per l'opposto l'amore non è se non che un trasporto cieco, non guidato dalla ragione, all'anima straniero; anzi un'anima costretta in lui come per violenza, ad amare un corpo, e ad amarlo suo malgrado e anche con qualche vergogna.⁸⁴

Here, as in the *Portrait*, friendship is associated with an almost scientific degree of control (“nostra elezione”), exactitude (“esatezza”), analysis (“esame”) and reason (“ragione”), against the “blind transport” of passions.

godimento senza freni di essa, e insieme il richiamo a una precisa, seppur rinnovata, moralità” (*Scelta di inediti*, xviii).

⁸³ Lorena-Carignano, *Portrait*, 7. [Love, this passion that I despise and fear is not, however, a sentiment that I am incapable of feeling, but ... I have decided that I believe I can respond not by never loving, but by fighting my inclinations so that if I do not ultimately want to destroy them I will at least know how to hide them from whoever causes them].

⁸⁴ Lorena-Carignano, “Confronto dell'amicizia con l'amore,” in *Scelta di inediti*, 29. [Compare love with friendship, and one will find by careful analysis that friendship is the result of a firm resolution on our part that requires the power of reflection and the exercise of reason, which is created in the soul itself ... while on the other hand love is nothing but the blind transport, unguided by reason, towards a foreign soul; rather, it is a soul forced on him as if through violence, to love a body and to love it against one's will and even with some shame]. The manuscript of *Sur l'amour platonique* is held in the Biblioteca Reale di Torino (ms Varia 176,4).

The danger of passionate love was often a playful subject of discussion among Lorena-Carignano and her friends; in homage to Goethe's ill-fated protagonist, she named one of her dogs Werther and had a statue of her pet erected in her garden at Racconigi with inscriptions in Hebrew, Greek, Latin and Italian.⁸⁵ Yet, the fate of those who had fallen prey to their passionate impulses was also a matter of serious concern for the princess and she describes her willingness to forgo one of life's greatest pleasures in order to protect herself from the worst grief:

Je sens que par cette conduite je me prive de ce que bien des gens regardent comme le plus doux plaisir de la vie, mais je mérite aussi les chagrins les plus cuisants qu'on y puisse éprouver et le gain à mon avis l'emporte de beaucoup sur la perte, car soit faiblesse en moi ou raison, j'avoue que j'aime moins les plaisirs que je ne crains; ces genres de peines qui affectent réellement le Coeur et qu'une âme sensible rencontre plus souvent dans l'amour qu'elle n'y trouve de jouissance, je pourrais aisément le prouver mais comme ce n'est pas un traité contre cette passion que je prétend écrire j'en revins aux raisons qui m'en ont donné tou déloignement. Elles son tirées des mes principes d'un grande attachement à mes devoirs, à ma reputation et surtout d'une extrême sensibilité, qui me fait regarder comme le plus grande des malheurs de rompre avec ce que j'aime ou de n'en être pas aimé comme j'aimerais, malheurs qu'il est aisé de prévenir en amitié par un bon choix.⁸⁶

In this passage, Lorena-Carignano insists that her intention remains that of creating a literary self-portrait and not a treatise against passionate love, yet she is so drawn to the latter topic that it begins to overtake her project:

C'est assez me tendre su un objet dont je n'aurais pas parlé avec tant de détail si l'opinion que l'on a de mon coeur m'avait obligé à en faire la justification plutôt que le portrait et

⁸⁵ Tommaso Valperga di Caluso, who was asked by the princess to compose the distich for her dog in four languages, describes the event in his "L'Apoteosi di Verter," in *Omaggio poetico di Euforbo Melesigenio alla serenissima altezza di Giuseppina Teresa di Lorena, principessa Carignano* (Parma: Nel regal palazzo, co' tipi Bodoniani, 1792).

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 7. [I feel that through this conduct I deprive myself of what many people regard as the sweetest pleasure of life, but I also save myself from the most bitter grief that one can experience and the gains in my view far outweigh the losses ... I admit that I fear these pleasures more than I love them; these types of pain that truly affect the heart and which a sensitive soul encounters so often in love that she no longer finds pleasure in them. I could easily prove this but as this is not a treatise against such passion that I am attempting to write, I return to the reasons that have distracted me. They come primarily from my great attachment to my duties, to my reputation and especially from an extreme sensitivity, which makes losing what I love or not being loved as I would love seem like the greatest of misfortunes, woes that are easy to avoid through the good choice of friendship].

si j'ai désiré montrer que je ne suis pas incapable d'amour; je désire encore plus prouver que je suis capable d'amitié et peut être même de mériter celle des autres.⁸⁷

The remainder of the *Portrait* continues to be centered on rejecting violent passion in order to pursue more active and voluntary forms of social interaction guided by reason.⁸⁸

While this detour from the original intent of the *Portrait* makes it even more difficult to consider Lorena-Carignano's narrative as an autobiography, the document nonetheless provides an essential key to understanding the autobiographical elements in many of Lorena-Carignano's fictional works, which Luisa Ricaldone identifies as "novels of the self" ("romanzi dell'io").⁸⁹ The superiority of friendship over love is the central theme of both *L'amour vaincu* and *Conte moral. La coquette punie par l'amour ou les dangers de la coquetterie*, in which friendship is proposed as an antidote to social ills such as vanity and to the damaging and short-lived nature of passionate affairs that threaten the possibility of reciprocal, intellectual friendships between men and women of letters.⁹⁰

Giuseppina di Lorena-Carignano's novel, *Aventures d'Amélie*, uses the exotic setting of a female-dominated utopian society in order to critique contemporary gender hierarchies. Through her tale of a group of women who escape an attack by Turkish pirates and found their own

⁸⁷ Ibid., 7-8. [I've dwelled quite long on a subject about which I would not have spoken in such great detail if the opinion that one has of my heart hadn't forced me to make a justification rather than a portrait and if I wish to show that I am not incapable of love, I wish even more to prove that I am capable of friendship and perhaps even to deserve that of others].

⁸⁸ Ricaldone argues that the "structural duplicity" of the text is a result of the tension between passion as *pathos* ("come πάθος, violenza appunto, patita dall'animo") and friendship as a "disposizione attiva e consapevole [...] un tipo di intelligente cauta lucida controllata gestione di sé e dei propri rapporti con gli altri" (*Scelta di inediti*, xix).

⁸⁹ Ricaldone's classification is not surprising, given that – as argued by Giuseppe Nicoletti, whose approach to defining the autobiographical genre differs markedly from that of Lejeune – eighteenth-century Italian novels frequently applied the same narrative techniques found in various forms of self-writing ("letteratura dell'io") such as memoirs, letters and autobiographies, creating an "osmotic" ("osmotico") relationship between autobiography and novels. See Giuseppe Nicoletti, "Introduzione all'autobiografia italiana del Settecento," in *La memoria illuminata: autobiografia e letteratura fra Rivoluzione e Risorgimento* (Florence: Vallecchi, 1989), 30.

⁹⁰ Cf. Ricaldone, "La donna forte, l'amica e la riformatrice," 166-168. The manuscript of *L'amor vaincu* is found in the Biblioteca Reale di Torino (ms Varia 176 1/2, s.1, b.14).

civilization on a Persian island, she explores Enlightenment themes such as the relationship between social reform, reason and happiness. The governing laws of the island include legal and financial equality for all, the transmission of the mother's name to her daughters, an educational system for boys and girls aimed at eliminating male privilege, a shared responsibility among parents in childrearing, and the abolition of war and weaponry.⁹¹ Not only is the question of romantic love absent from the description of the island, but the reintroduction of a dominant, male presence has a destabilizing effect on its social harmony. The society is destroyed when a Persian king falls in love with its leader, Amélie, illustrating that love is an irrational force that precludes women from the possibility of egalitarian, peaceful relationships.⁹²

Finally, the most clearly autobiographical of Lorena-Carignano's fictional works is her epistolary novel, *Les aventures du Marquis de Belmont écrites par lui même ou les nouveaux malheurs de l'amour*, which opens with a young noblewoman, the Marchioness de Lucé, as she begins to resume daily life following her husband's death, and which contains a series of letters sent by the marchioness from Paris to her sister.⁹³ The protagonist is thus, like Lorena-Carignano herself, a widow who, despite her many suitors, plans to remain unmarried and associates freedom with her well-being ("le premier de tous mes bonheurs").⁹⁴ In short, in both her fictional works as well as in the *Portrait*, Lorena-Carignano distances herself from traditional models of female aristocracy by rejecting vanity, frivolity and love in favor of education, reason and the freedom to socialize with men of letters from a position of equal footing, and by associating

⁹¹ Cf. Ricaldone, "Una utopista nel Piemonte del Settecento," in *Geografie e genealogie*, 204.

⁹² Ricaldone, "La donna forte, l'amica e la riformatrice," 166-168.

⁹³ Cf. Ricaldone, "Giuseppina di Lorena-Carignano, ancora," 158. The manuscript is located in the Biblioteca Reale di Torino (ms Varia 176 1/2, s.2, b.16).

⁹⁴ Letter I of *Les aventures du Marquis de Belmont*, cited in *ibid.*, 159.

friendship with liberty, independence and a more lasting and democratic form of interaction than passionate love.⁹⁵ These themes are symptomatic of a widespread sentiment during the period, typical of Enlightenment reformism, in which control over passions was associated with well-being. It is for this reason that Elena Brambilla has emphasized in her studies of female sociability the eighteenth-century view that women could find happiness not through their sensations or emotions but by exerting control over their passionate impulses.⁹⁶

Yet, just as the fictional Marchioness de Lucé admits to her sister that her happiness is dependent upon her indifference, one might ask if Lorena-Carignano was able to find true happiness in her rejection of passion and how successful she actually was in avoiding love.⁹⁷ According to Louis Dutens (1730–1812), the diplomat and writer who met Giuseppina while working at the Court of Turin as secretary to the English minister and later *chargé d'affaires*, her self-portrait is quite accurate. In his *Memoirs*, Dutens paints a picture of the princess as a woman in control of her emotions who had willfully elected friendship over “the dangers of passion,” though he also describes her clear interest in the latter as a topic of analysis:

She possessed an enlightened mind, accomplished, quick, just, and solid [...] She had a good, generous, noble, and elevated soul, and a heart highly susceptible of friendship.

⁹⁵ Such a position serves, as Ricaldone has argued, as a criticism of aristocratic women of the period, or rather “il ripudio del modello consueto di una muliebrità concentrata sul proprio corpo, frivola [...] l’aspirazione alla libertà e all’indipendenza completano un quadro di valori fortemente connotato dalla *raison*” (“La donna forte, l’amica e la riformatrice,” 163-164).

⁹⁶ Brambilla affirms the Settecento as the century of “sensibilità” in which “la felicità che si addita alle donne non sta nell’esaltarne le sensazioni, ma tutt’al contrario, nel raggiungere la pace dell’anima mediante il controllo delle passioni” (*Sociabilità e relazioni femminili*, 149). Dena Goodman has observed that the “belief in women’s incapacity for friendship goes back at least to Cicero; its most important articulation in French was by Michel de Montaigne in ‘De l’amitié,’ in *Essais*.” Dena Goodman, *The Republic of Letters: A Cultural History of the French Enlightenment* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 84. On the persistent medicalized and philosophical debate in the eighteenth century regarding women’s greater susceptibility to passions, see Elena Brambilla “Genere ed eguaglianza nell’Illuminismo,” in *Sociabilità e relazioni femminili*, 116-118 and *Felicità pubblica e felicità privata nel Settecento*, ed. Anna Maria Rao (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2012).

⁹⁷ The Marchioness claims: “Je mis mon bonheur dans mon indifférence” (Letter II of *Les aventures du Marquis de Belmont*, cited in Ricaldone, “Giuseppina di Lorena-Carignano, ancora,” 159). As Ricaldone observes, for Lorena-Carignano “la felicità sembra collocarsi tra la stoica abolizione delle passioni [...] e la consapevolezza che è sbagliato credere che questo stato sospensivo conduca a una reale e duratura felicità” (ibid., 159-160).

Perhaps it might have been equally susceptible of love, if the extreme delicacy of her sentiments had not rendered the choice of an object too difficult. This disposition, and a certain elevation of character, frequently the guard of female virtue, had always preserved the heart of the Princess from the dangers of that passion; but though she did not yield to its attacks, she was fond of making it the subject of conversation, and nobody knew better how to analyse the sentiment. The Princess de Carignan was also fond of proposing in conversation subjects for discussion, and questions to resolve [...] and I produced that, to shew the fatal effects of love, which she had desired me to write upon.⁹⁸

In accordance with Dutens' reference to Giuseppina's careful avoidance of love's "fatal effects," it seems that over time she was able to find a balance between passion and friendship in her unique relationship with the abbot Tommaso Valperga di Caluso (1737-1815), the Torinese poet, mathematician, scholar of Hebrew and Arabic, secretary of Turin's Accademia delle Scienze, and active participant in Piedmont's literary élite.⁹⁹ Soon after her arrival in Turin, Lorena-Carignano established an intellectual and personal friendship with Caluso, often inviting him to her residence at Racconigi. Their *amitié amoureuse* is affirmed by the fact that she was the dedicatee of many of Caluso's Latin and Italian poems, which he composed for various occasions in her life, including one of her birthdays and following the deaths of her husband and sister-in-law.¹⁰⁰ Moreover, he named Giuseppina as the heir and guardian of his library and all of his works, and she likewise left her library to him in her will.¹⁰¹

⁹⁸ Louis Dutens, *Memoirs of a Traveller, Now in Retirement. Written by Himself. Interspersed with Historical, Literary, and Political Anecdotes, Relative to Many of the Principal Personages of the Present Age. Translated from the French, under the Superintendance of the Author* (London: Phillips, 1806), vol. 4, 63-65.

⁹⁹ Cf. Gasperoni, 39-41. On Caluso's cultural, literary and scientific activity, see Guido Santato, "Un Montaigne vivo," in *Nuovi itinerari alfieriani* (Modena: Mucchi, 2007), 135-174.

¹⁰⁰ On Caluso and Lorena-Carignano's *amitié amoureuse*, to borrow the phrase used by Santato (135), see: Marco Cerruti, *Il piacer di pensare. Solitudini, rare amicizie, corrispondenze intorno al 1800* (Modena: Mucchi, 2000), 43-57; Ricaldone, "Giuseppina di Lorena-Carignano, ancora," 154, and Gasperoni, 39-41. Caluso wrote the canzonetta "L'augurio" on the occasion of her trip from Genoa to France in 1781 and "E alla gran donna, a Gioseffina il suono" for her pilgrimage to Vaucluse.

¹⁰¹ Gasperoni, 78. See also Ricaldone, *Scelta di inediti*, xi and "Una letterata a corte," 50.

While not the only Italian poet to address Lorena-Carignano in verse (more well-known poets such as Giuseppe Parini and Vittorio Alfieri similarly dedicated sonnets to her), Caluso's friendship and emotional connection with the princess was singular and publicly acknowledged by friends of both parties. His most famous poetic work, the *Omaggio poetico di Euforbo Melesigenio alla Serenissima Altezza di Giuseppina Teresa di Lorena Principessa di Carignano* (1792), is not only dedicated to Giuseppina, to whom he refers as his muse, but also includes poems about her travels from Genoa to France in 1781 and her pilgrimage to Vaucluse.¹⁰² In the opening stanzas of another poem in the collection, "La Ragione Felice" (1779), which consists of six cantos written in terza rima, Caluso writes that, more than Homer and Demosthenes, it is the familiar face and cultured mind of the princess that inspire him:

A me più agevol torna innanzi farme
 La dolce maestà d'un noto volto,
 Che pur co' guardi incende a nobil carne:
 Ed io più addentro lo splendor del colto
 Ingegno affisso, e nel femminile petto
 Di maschili virtù bel coro accolto.¹⁰³

This depiction of the princess coincides with the image of herself that she projects in her *Portrait* as endowed with the "fortitude, courage and strength" usually attributed to men:

Quoique la fermeté le courage et la force d'esprit ne soyent pas regardés comme l'appanage de mon sexe [...] je crois les avoir assez montrées dans les suffrances et les petites occasions qui se recontrent journellement pour fair juger quelles sont dans mon caractère, n'étant pas d'ailleurs susceptible de ces craînteries pueriles et foiblesses que

¹⁰² "La mia musa sei" (Caluso, "La Ragione Felice," in *Omaggio poetico*, 6). In his review of Marco Cerruti's study, *La ragione felice e altri miti del Settecento* (Florence: Olschki, 1973), Franco Fido underscores that while Caluso is best remembered for his relationship with Vittorio Alfieri, who "considered him his true mentor and most precious literary advisor," Caluso was himself actively engaged in the moderate Enlightenment climate of the Turinese elite during the 1760s, the period of "happy reason" that he evokes in his poem (Franco Fido, "La ragione felice e altri miti del Settecento," *Modern Philology* 75, no. 1 [August, 1977]: 91-94).

¹⁰³ Ibid. [Rather, it is easier for me to turn to / the sweet majesty of a known face, / whose gaze inspires a noble poem: / And further within is affixed the splendor of a cultured intellect / and a beautiful chorus of masculine virtues gathered in a female heart].

l'on attribue aux femmes et encore moins de cette coquetterie si commune parmi elles [...] si je cherche à plaire, c'est par mon caractère et mon esprit.¹⁰⁴

Taken together, the emphasis in both “La Ragione Felice” and the *Portrait* on Lorena-Carignano’s “masculine virtues” attests not only to her moral fortitude and intelligence but also to the egalitarian nature of her relationship with Caluso, whom she saw as an equal in their friendship. As Milena Contini has observed in her studies of Caluso’s corpus, the poet, like Lorena-Carignano, often juxtaposes reason with passion and suggests that the former should be employed to dominate the latter and that extreme emotions cause suffering while friendship is the basis of true happiness.¹⁰⁵

Yet, as in the *Portrait*, Caluso’s praise for personified Reason (“Ragione”) often gives way to descriptions of its opponent, Desire (“Voler”). The poet acknowledges in the first canto of “La Ragione Felice” the difficulty of cultivating reason against the natural weaknesses and blind emotions of the human spirit:

Data a principio alla natura umana
 Ragion fanciulla, inesperta regina
 Di ciechi affetti infra la turba insana,
 Or scossa da crudel guerra intestina,
 Or disviata di volgari inganni [...]
 In pochi, ahi troppo! anco negli ultimi anni

¹⁰⁴ Lorena-Carignano, *Portrait*, 6. [Although fortitude, courage and strength of mind are not regarded as the appanage of my sex ... I think I have shown plenty in my pains and the small occasions one encounters daily to make known those which belong to my character, besides not being susceptible to the childish arrogance and weaknesses that are attributed to women, and even less to the coquetry so common among them ... if I try to be pleasing, it is with my character and mind]. Ricaldone has similarly identified in Lorena-Carignano’s other works an attempt to shape an ideal female character founded on “virile” traits such as moral strength, pride, stability and a refined intellect (“Una letterata a corte,” 62).

¹⁰⁵ Referring to “La Ragione Felice,” Contini has noted: “La ragione ha anche il fondamentale compito di dominare le passioni: il Caluso ripropone la celebre esortazione platonica alla misura, ripresa da molti autori, tra i quali Rousseau, che in più luoghi sottolineò come la ragione avesse la funzione di equilibrare i moti violenti dell’animo. L’abate era convinto che i sentimenti estremi causassero soltanto sofferenza [...] crede che solo ‘i casti amori,’ congiunti a ‘l’arti e gli studi,’ possano regalare la felicità; questo riferimento all’amore platonico è un omaggio alla principessa di Carignano [...] che aveva teorizzato come la felicità si fondasse sulla rinuncia alla passione.” Milena Contini, “Il corpo martoriato. L’interesse di Tommaso Valperga di Caluso per quattro atroci fatti di sangue,” in *Il corpo, l’ombra, l’eco*, vol. 7 of *Metamorfosi dei Lumi*, ed. Clara Leri (Turin: Accademia University Press, 2014), 5.

Giunge dal docil cor con certo impero
I furori a bandir, e i pazzi affanni.¹⁰⁶

In these verses, Caluso appears to succumb to the realization that Reason, the “inexpert” ruler, is ultimately destroyed by the tyranny (“certo impero”) of violent, irrational desire, which is similarly described in the fifth canto as a despotic sovereign (“dispotico sovrano”). Contini has thus described Caluso’s view of reason as twofold, on one hand providing the necessary elements for acquiring happiness, while also leading to an understanding of the limitations of our ability to control external events.¹⁰⁷

Giuseppina di Lorena-Carignano’s untimely death at the age of forty-four from kidney disease was a devastating event for Caluso. Alfieri wrote a poem for his mourning friend and also sent him a letter, dated February 20, 1797 from Florence, to express his condolences and warn his friend that it may be impossible to resume his intellectual life after such an emotional blow:

Non vi lusingate però per un pezzo di potere attendere allo studio. Voi leggerete lei, vedrete lei, troverete lei in ogni azione e pensiero vostro, e senza pure averla giammai.¹⁰⁸

Though emphasizing Caluso’s friendship with the princess, Alfieri’s unsteady handwriting and the various cancellations prove that the letter is much less an homage to rational, dispassionate

¹⁰⁶ Caluso, “La Ragione Felice,” 6-7. [Conferred from the beginning to human nature / Young Reason, inexpert queen / Of blind emotions below the mad throngs, / Now shaken by civil strife, / Now led astray by base deceptions ... So few, alas too much! Even in recent years / It comes from my docile heart with a sure command / the furies to be banished, and the mad breathlessness].

¹⁰⁷ “L’indagine sulla felicità porta inevitabilmente il Caluso a ‘scontrarsi’ con lo studio della ragione. Secondo l’abate, la ragione ha un duplice ruolo: da un lato ci fornisce gli strumenti adatti a conquistare la felicità, dall’altro ci fa acquisire la coscienza di non avere sempre il dominio su ciò che accade” (Contini, 4).

¹⁰⁸ “Una lettera di Alfieri per la morte della principessa di Carignano,” in *Per far di bianca carta carta nera: prime edizioni e cimeli alfieriani*, Torino, Biblioteca reale, 29 novembre - 29 dicembre 2001, ed. Vittorio Colombo, Giovanna Giacobello Bernard, Clemente Mazzotta and Guido Santato (Savigliano: Editrice artistica piemontese, 2001), 146. [Don’t delude yourself that for awhile you will be able to dedicate yourself to your studies. You will read her, you will see her, you will find her in your every thought and deed, and without ever being able to have her again]. See also Gasperoni, 79.

friendship than an impulsive reflection on the emotional devastation and destruction of reason (“violenza di ragione”) caused by his friend’s loss:

Io per me, se mai è destino che io sopravviva, non so in quale età, in quali disposizioni d’animo e di corpo mi potrebbe ritrovare tal disgrazia; ma certamente qualunque violenza di ragione valesse a fare alla mente, non ne potrei mai fare pur tanta al core, ed al corpo, che io non soccombessi ben presto.¹⁰⁹

Alfieri’s emotionally charged condolences reinforce his friendship with and sympathy for Caluso. Not only does he imagine the despair he would feel in the event of a similar loss, but just one year earlier, in 1796, he had been portrayed alongside his own companion, Luisa Stolberg D’Albany, in an oil painting by François-Xavier Fabre in which the poet is depicted with his right hand propped under his chin as he gazes at the countess while his left hand rests on a copy of Caluso’s *Omaggio poetico di Euforbo Melesigenio alla Serenissima Altezza di Giuseppina Teresa di Lorena Principessa di Carignano* that is opened to display the third canto of “La Ragione Felice.”¹¹⁰ It is also important to recognize that Alfieri had a personal connection with Lorena-Carignano outside of his friendship with Caluso, which may have contributed to the impassioned tone of his letter. Alfieri and the princess both belonged to Turin’s literary and intellectual élite during the 1770s and Alfieri’s first tragedy, the *Cleopatra*, debuted on June 16, 1775 in the Carignano Theater, which had been commissioned by Prince Luigi Vittorio di Savoia Carignano in 1752 and designed by Alfieri’s uncle, Benedetto Alfieri.¹¹¹ There are also some interesting parallels between the *Portrait* and Alfieri’s journal, or *Giornali* (1774-77), which is

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 146. [As for me, if ever fate would have it that I should live through such a thing, I don’t know at what age, in which state of mind and body such a tragedy would find me, but surely whatever violence of reason it would do to the mind, I could never withstand the same in my heart or body, without quickly succumbing].

¹¹⁰ Cf. Santato, “Un Montaigne vivo,” 158. Fabre’s painting, *Vittorio Alfieri e la Contessa Luisa Stolberg d’Albany*, is found in the Museo Civico di Torino.

¹¹¹ Cf. Gasperoni, 66. Alfieri describes his uncle’s role as “primo architetto del re” in his autobiography. See Alfieri, *Vita*, 34.

often considered a precursor to his autobiography, the *Vita*, which was published posthumously in 1804.¹¹²

Aside from similarities that may be attributed to some common sources – foremost among which were travel accounts, Plutarch’s *Lives* and the works of French philosophers such as Helvétius – the circumstances surrounding the writing of the *Giornali* and the *Portrait* are also similar, not only because both were written in French in Turin in the early 1770s, but also because, like the *Portrait*, Alfieri’s journal was intended for strictly personal use and not publication.¹¹³ Additionally, although eighteenth-century “journaux intimes” and literary portraits belonged to distinct genres with unique formal characteristics, Alfieri’s *Giornali* and Lorena-Carignano’s *Portrait* both show great fluidity, even instability, in terms of their content and structure. In fact, Alfieri never uses the French term *journal* at all, and refers to the document with the Italian *giornale* only once, on the last page of the diary.¹¹⁴ Instead, he uses more general, descriptive phrases to define his project, which he calls “a healthy examination”

¹¹² See Ezio Raimondi, “Giovinezza letteraria dell’Alfieri,” in *Il concerto interrotto* (Pisa: Pacini, 1979), 65-190. Building on Raimondi’s observations, Michel David has described the *Giornali* as representing the “prehistory” of Alfieri’s autobiography, noting that the cultural, thematic, ideological and stylistic background of the diary reveals its “posizione transitoria e di esperimento verso un’elaborazione di stile, verso la conquista d’una prosa di memoria, verso l’autobiografia.” Michel David, “Il *Giornale* di Alfieri,” in *Vittorio Alfieri e la cultura piemontese fra Illuminismo e Rivoluzione, Atti del Convegno internazionale di Studi (San Salvatore Monferrato, 22-24 settembre 1983)*, ed. Giovanna Ioli (San Salvatore Monferrato-Cassa di Risparmio di Alessandria-Regione Piemonte, 1985), 59-60.

¹¹³ Though he conserved the journal during his lifetime, Alfieri requested in his will that it be burned by his companion and beneficiary, Luisa Stolberg, the Countess of Albany, but for reasons unknown she did not respect his wishes. Upon her death, François-Xavier Fabre, the painter and close acquaintance of the couple, inherited the document, which he donated to Florence’s Laurentian Library in 1824 (cf. David, 85).

¹¹⁴ Alfieri acknowledges the “lunga interruzione del giornale” between the portion written in French in 1774-1775 and that which he added in Italian between April and June of 1777. Michel David also recognizes that the lack of consistency and the brevity of the text make it hard to classify the *Giornali* – which span a total of nineteen days over a period of nearly four years – as a true diary (86). See also Arnaldo Di Benedetto, “Questo salutare esame di me stesso: Alfieri diarista,” in *Le passioni e il limite. Un’interpretazione di Vittorio Alfieri, nuova edizione riveduta e accresciuta* (Naples: Liguori, 1994), 21-35; Franco Fido, “Specchio o messaggio? Sincerità e scrittura nei giornali intimi fra il ’700 e ’800,” in *Le muse perdute e ritrovate: Il divenire dei generi letterari fra Sette e Ottocento* (Florence: Vallecchi editore, 1989); and Guido Santato, “Dai *Giornali* alla conversione letteraria,” in *Alfieri e Voltaire. Dall’imitazione alla contestazione* (Florence: Olschki, 1988), 61-67.

and “study” of himself.¹¹⁵ Like Lorena-Carignano, Alfieri (who began his journal in French before eventually switching to Italian) also directly addressed the stylistic flaws in his writing, and just as Lorena-Carignano describes her project as a useful occupation that will allow her to seriously examine herself and correct her flaws, the *Giornali* were likewise part of a formal attempt at moral self-improvement. In fact, in the first entry, Alfieri describes the “method” of journal writing as a means of perfecting oneself despite his initial skepticism:

Se rendre conte à soi-même des actions de chaque jour, n’est le plus souvent qu’un temps perdu, parce qu’on répète facilement le lendemain les mêmes deffauts dont on a rougi le soir d’avance. Plusieurs philosophes ont cependant regardé cette méthode comme très bonne, en ce que tôt ou tard un homme de sens doit se corriger, de ce qui doit nécessairement lui déplaire, en se regardant aussi souvent dans ce fidèle miroir, car personne ne nous connoît mieux que nous-mêmes, et l’on se fuit ordinairement, parce que chaque homme est malheureusement dans le cas de ne point trouver de plus mauvaise compagnie que soi-même; n’importe! je m’en vais voir si en m’analysant près je pourrois me tolérer [...] Que d’inutilités épargnées, si la mode prenoit!¹¹⁶

Elsewhere in the diary, he connects writing both to a desire to correct his flaws (“l’envie de me corriger”¹¹⁷) as well as to satisfy his *amour propre*. On the first page of the Italian portion of his journal, which he began in April of 1777, he attributes the two-year interruption of his diary to both linguistic obstacles and the difficulty of describing his flaws, but expresses the hope that continuing his journal will offer him a means of moral and stylistic improvement:

¹¹⁵ Cf. David, 62-63. David also refers to the passage in the *Vita* in which Alfieri mentions having kept a “kind of diary” (“una specie di diario”), again struggling to define the document with precision and instead using approximative phrases such as “a study of myself” (“studio di me stesso”).

¹¹⁶ Vittorio Alfieri, *Giornali*, in *Opere di Vittorio Alfieri ristampate nel primo centenario della sua morte*, 275. [Making an account for oneself of the events of each day is for the most part nothing but a waste of time, given that the following day one easily repeats the same mistakes that had made him blush the night before. Nonetheless, various philosophers have considered this method to be optimal, insofar as sooner or later any man with common sense must correct that which by necessity cannot but displease him, by observing himself often in this faithful mirror, since no one knows us better than ourselves and often we flee from ourselves, finding ourselves in the unfortunate position of finding no worse company than our own; and yet I want to find out if by analyzing myself closely I will be able to tolerate myself ... How many useless things I will spare myself if it works!].

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 281.

Questo salutare esame di me stesso interrotto da più di due anni, in parte perché la difficoltà d'esprimermi in toscano era somma, e la natural ripugnanza a spalar di sé non minore, mi si para di bel nuovo innanzi come efficace mezzo di correggermi un cotal poco, e di formarmi a un tempo stesso lo stile.¹¹⁸

Scholars like Michel David have proposed the *Giornali* as a singular and anticipatory example of self-writing in the Italian literary tradition. However, it would be more accurate to place both Alfieri's *Giornali* and Lorena-Carignano's earlier *Portrait* within a larger group of emergent forms of autobiographical writing focused not only on describing, but also improving and inventing oneself. Within this network, for example, one might also consider Giuseppe Pelli Bencivenni's eighty-volume diary, or *Efemeridi* (1759-1808). Like Alfieri and Lorena-Carignano, Pelli, who was the director of the Uffizi Gallery in Florence from 1775-1793, likewise intended for his diary to be kept private for personal use only.¹¹⁹ More importantly, the aim of his project was similarly to gain a better understanding of himself with the ultimate intention of self-improvement:

Spero di acquistare con ciò un'esatta cognizione di me medesimo e del mio carattere, e di farmi presenti tutte quelle massime le quali possono far sì che mi disfaccia di tanti mancamenti che ho.¹²⁰

Taken together, the examples of Pelli, Lorena-Carignano and Alfieri illustrate the fluidity between various forms of private self-writing aimed at disclosing one's "real" self through self-

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 282. [This healthy examination of myself interrupted for more than two years, partly because of the great difficulty of expressing myself in Italian, and no less because of my natural disdain for speaking poorly of myself, appears before me once again as an effective means of correcting myself a bit, and at the same time of improving my style].

¹¹⁹ "Scrivo per me, di me e fra me" (Giuseppe Pelli, *Efemeridi*, Is. XV, 11 agosto 1765, c. 17, cited in Silvia Capecchi, *Scrittura e coscienza autobiografica nel diario di Giuseppe Pelli* (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2006), 40. The full text of the *Efemeridi* can be consulted online at <http://pelli.bncf.firenze.sbn.it>.

¹²⁰ Pelli, *Efemeridi*, 29 agosto 1759, cited in Capecchi, 60. [I hope to acquire through this a precise understanding of myself and of my character, and to remind myself of all of those maxims which can help me to rid myself of my many shortcomings].

analysis and self-construction.¹²¹ Whereas diaries had often served as professional or historical records of one's daily or professional life, these documents show how elements of private writing in the late eighteenth century were later directly incorporated into public forms of autobiographical writing, especially in the case of Lorena-Carignano's fictional works and Alfieri's *Vita*.

Thus, although none of Giuseppina di Lorena-Carignano's works exactly correspond to the standard definitions of the autobiography, they play an important role in the history of autobiographical writing in Italy. In the specific case of the *Portrait*, one notes not only her similarities with contemporary Italian autobiographers like Alfieri, but also her distinctive position between French and Italian culture and between Enlightenment and new currents of sensibility. Her frequent juxtapositions of friendship and love demonstrate her active and precocious role in the debate over passions that characterized many European literary works of the subsequent decade, including Goethe's *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (which appeared in French translation in 1775), the Milanese Enlightenment thinker Pietro Verri's *Ricordi a mia figlia* (1777), a guide for his daughter in which he advises her "a meditare, a leggere, a suonare, a disegnare, a vivere delle ore soli e senza bisogno di amori o di cortigiani,"¹²² and Alessandro Verri's *Avventure di Saffo* (1782), a novel criticized by Pietro Verri as "beautiful and seductive"

¹²¹ This is in contrast to what has been proposed by Michel David, who defined Alfieri's *Giornali* as the "primo diario 'intimo' italiano e uno dei primi europei. Prima di lui vi sono ben pochi quaderni attenti alla sola intimità di un io reale, con analisi psicologica sistematica e con pretese di autoconstruzione. Alfieri è forse il primo a narrare con distacco e insieme con ansia formativa i propri insignificanti processi interiori, a renderne conto con spietatezza morale" (David, 84). Capecchi has emphasized, on the other hand, Pelli's much earlier understanding of the antithetical relationship between the private self-analysis of the diary and the public self-construction of the autobiography: "Pelli muove da una prima intuizione del cortocircuito fra introversione e intimismo diaristico, estroversione e vocazione propriamente autobiografica" (Capecchi, 72). For a brief comparison of Pelli and Alfieri's autobiographical projects, see Capecchi, 38.

¹²² Pietro Verri, *Ricordi a mia figlia*, vol. 1 of *Opere varie* (Florence: F. Le Monnier, 1947), 333. [To meditate, read, play music, draw, spend time alone and without the need for love or lovers].

rather than “a vehicle of useful truths.”¹²³ All of these works to some extent support the view that, as Sophia Rosenfeld has argued, the later period of the Enlightenment era “could just as well have been called the Age of Sentiment or the Age of Passion,” characterized by both “emotional sensibility” and “rational political argumentation.”¹²⁴ Lorena-Carignano’s simultaneous interest in and rejection of passionate love in her *Portrait* not only helps to capture this important moment of cultural transition from the unique perspective of a woman, but also shows how the sentimental, private lives of women were beginning to occupy more space in autobiographical narratives.

¹²³ In a letter written in 1782, Verri condemns his brother Alessandro’s novel, claiming to prefer works “non perché sieno belle e seducenti, ma perché servano di veicolo a qualche utile verità.” Cited in Fabio Tarzia, *Libri e rivoluzione. Figure e mentalità nella Roma di fine Ancien Régime: 1770-1800* (Milan: F. Angeli, 2000), 165. In addition to these works, Ricaldone mentions Helvétius, Condillac, Rousseau, Hume and Kant as some of the primary European participants in this debate and argues that Lorena-Carignano’s use of various philosophical texts as a basis for exploring this debate shows her familiarity with seventeenth- and eighteenth-century treatises on passions (*Scelta di inediti*, xviii and “Giuseppina di Lorena-Carignano, ancora,” 160). As Elena Brambilla has observed, Rousseau in particular had already anticipated, albeit with considerable ambiguity, the superiority of companionship to passionate love in the relationships between Julie and Wolmar in the *Nouvelle Héloïse* (1761) and Sophie and Émile in *Émile* (1762) and the unfinished *Émile et Sophie* (cf. *Sociabilità e relazioni femminili*, 127). Giuseppe Pelli, too, had associated passions with unhappiness, writing in his *Efemeridi*: “Povera filosofia, sei poco atta a consolare gli uomini, ed a fargli vivere felici! Quanto minori, e diseguali, sono le tue forze in confronto di quelle delle passioni! Come barbaramente fai soffrire coloro che, tuoi seguaci, non ostante si trovano dalle medesime assaliti, combattuti, straziati” (*Efemeridi*, 3 maggio 1766, cited in Capecechi, 178).

¹²⁴ Sophia Rosenfeld, “Thinking about Feeling, 1789-1799,” *French Historical Studies* 32, no. 4 (Fall 2009): 700. For an in-depth study of the move away from passions and towards a private cultivation of knowledge during this period, see Marco Cerruti, *Il piacer di pensare*.

III.3 Luisa Palma Mansi's *Mémoires ou Notices à l'usage*

The increasing appearance of contemporary political events, the influence of the French cultural and political presence in Italy, and the tension between passionate love and balanced, carefully regulated relationships are also central themes in the *Mémoires ou notices à l'usage* written by Luisa Palma Mansi (1760-1823), a noblewoman from Lucca. Scholars such as Roberto Bizzocchi, Isabella Pera and Maria Luisa Trebiliani have used her four-volume manuscript diary, which consists of approximately nine hundred pages written between 1791 and 1823, as the basis for exploring the social and marital practices and public and private lives of Italian aristocrats under the Ancien Régime.¹²⁵

Little is known about Mansi outside of the information she provides in her diary. When her father, Girolamo Palma, died in 1763, she was left as his sole heir and was raised by her mother, Maria Caterina Burlamacchi.¹²⁶ In 1783, at the age of twenty-three, she was married in the Palma family's private chapel to Lelio Mansi (1742-1807), a jurisconsult who held various political positions during the Jacobin period as a mediator between the old and new powers, first in 1798 as a member of the committee tasked with evaluating the abolishment of Lucca's

¹²⁵ See Maria Luisa Trebiliani, *Diario di un'aristocratica lucchese*, in *La presenza dimenticata. Il femminile nell'Italia moderna fra storia, letteratura, filosofia*, ed. Graziella Pagliano (Milan: Franco Angeli, 1996), 95-98; Isabella Pera, "Scritture femminili nei fondi d'archivio delle province di Lucca e Pistoia," in *Carte di donne: per un censimento della scrittura delle donne dal XVI al XX secolo. Atti della giornata di studio, Firenze, Archivio di Stato, 5 marzo 2001*, ed. Alessandra Contini and Anna Scattigno (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2005), 224; and Roberto Bizzocchi, "Vita sociale, vita privata in un diario femminile fra Sette e Ottocento," *Genesis. Rivista della società italiana delle storiche* 3 (2004): 129. The four volumes of the diary cover the years between 1791-1796, 1796-1800, 1801-1805 and 1805-1823, respectively (ASL, Archivio Arnolfini, Filza 191). There is currently no modern edition of the *Mémoires ou notices à l'usage de Louise Palma Mansi*, but the document stands out for the excellent condition in which it has been preserved, especially considering the relative rarity of firsthand historical and private accounts written by women during this period. With the exception of the last volume, it is written in an extremely legible hand with few cancellations, which has led some to hypothesize that it may be a copy. The present study is based on the excerpts published by these scholars and replicates the transcription criteria adopted by each. Bizzocchi's transcriptions contain "lievissimi interventi ammodernanti sulla lingua," though he does not provide more specific information about his criteria (125); Maria Luisa Trebiliani leaves intact "gli errori di Luisa, che sono significativi," but modernizes her capitalization and use of accents (98).

¹²⁶ See Remigio Coli and Maria Giovanni Tonelli, *Dame e cicisbei a Lucca nel tardo Settecento* (Lucca: Maria Pacini Fazzi, 2008), 50, and Bizzocchi, "Vita sociale, vita privata," 126.

aristocratic form of governance (and which, in 1799, suppressed the titles of all nobility, creating the class of *ex-nobili* to which Mansi then belonged), and later as one of the twelve individuals elected to write the new constitution.¹²⁷ Aside from her husband's reputation in the city and her visibility as a prominent aristocrat, Mansi was not a well-known cultural or literary figure; yet, as Trebiliani has commented, her diary is especially valuable for exactly this reason, as it provides insight into the daily life of aristocratic women in late eighteenth-century Italy.¹²⁸

Like Giuseppina di Lorena-Carignano's *Portrait* and Vittorio Alfieri's *Giornali*, Mansi's *Mémoires*, to which she refers as her journal, were written for personal use only and demonstrate considerable instability in terms of both form and genre.¹²⁹ She, too, chooses to write in French as the language *par excellence* of eighteenth-century European salons and *conversazioni*, and she struggles with an imperfect command of the language, with frequent Italianizations.¹³⁰ Regarding her adherence to a specific literary form, the *Mémoires* fall somewhere between a diary, a memoir and an autobiography. Already the title indicates a tension between past memories ("mémoires") and contemporary events ("notices"), while the use of the term *journal* within the narrative evokes the idea of a diary, despite the fact that she does not write on a daily basis.¹³¹

¹²⁷ See Isabella Pera, "Scrivere per sé. Luisa Palma Mansi (1760-1823) e la dimensione del diario," in *Donne di penna. Tre figure di donne nel rapporto con la scrittura* (Buggiano: Vannini, 2003), 40, and "Scritture femminili," 225.

¹²⁸ Trebiliani, 93.

¹²⁹ Luisa Palma Mansi refers to her *journal* in the fourth volume of her *Mémoires* (ASL, *Archivi gentilizi, Mémoires* 4:5). Given the likelihood that the manuscript is a copy, Bizzocchi presumes that she might have shared her entries with her husband or another unknown reader ("Vita sociale, vita privata," 146).

¹³⁰ On the quality of Mansi's writing in French, defined by Cesare Sardi as poor ("cattivo") but by Bizzocchi as "complessivamente accettabile," see Pera, 35; Bizzocchi, "Una nuova morale," 69, and "Vita sociale, vita privata," 129; and Cesare Sardi, *Vita lucchese nel Settecento* (Lucca: Maria Pacini Fazzi, 1968), 98.

¹³¹ As Trebiliani notes, Luisa Palma Mansi "non vuole scrivere un diario giorno per giorno, ma non vuole neanche stendere le sue memorie relative ad un passato più o meno lontano" (94).

In terms of the sources that may have influenced her, as Isabella Pera has noted, there is no evidence that Mansi had access to any seventeenth- or eighteenth-century memoirs written by women, which were in any case relatively rare and very different in scope from her own *Mémoires*.¹³² Some more likely sources are provided in the short lists of books that were lent to her by Vincenzo Lucchesini, which include Laurence Sterne's *A Sentimental Voyage Through France and Italy* (1768), which she borrowed in 1791 in French translation, and the three volumes of the *Vie privée du maréchal de Richelieu*, borrowed in 1793 in Italian translation.¹³³ Given the unusually erudite nature of many of the works she read, it is likely that Mansi had received a good education, though it remains unknown whether she was instructed at home or in a convent.¹³⁴ In any case, her cultural education seems to have continued well into her adulthood, as in an entry from April 25, 1792, she describes a visit with other women to observe physics experiments and lessons in Lucca.¹³⁵

Mansi records not only the events of her daily life, duties, financial expenses and pastimes as a noblewoman, including her participation in salons, theatrical performances, and parties, but also important political, religious and cultural occurrences in Lucca and in Europe. To some extent, then, the *Mémoires* are closely related to the historical genres of the *cronaca* and *libri di famiglia*, which had enjoyed considerable and continued success since the Middle Ages

¹³² Isabella Pera claims that few seventeenth- and eighteenth-century memoirs written by women were famous enough to have possibly served as models for Mansi, while Madame de Staël's memoirs and Madame de Sévigné's letters "sono di natura del tutto diversa dal testo in oggetto ed è quindi assai improbabile che possano aver influenzato l'autrice, che del resto poteva anche non conoscerle" ("Scrivere per sé," 37).

¹³³ Cf. Mansi, *Mémoires* 1:6;67. See also Trebiliani, 96 and Pera "Scrivere per sé," 39-40. While Trebiliani claims the books were borrowed from Vincenzo Lucchesini, Pera instead believes the lender was Cesare Lucchesini.

¹³⁴ Coli and Tonelli's hypothesis that Mansi was educated in a convent before the terms of her marriage to Lelio Mansi were finalized is based on the various references in the *Mémoires* to the Benedictine monastery of S. Giustina where several of Luisa's acquaintances became nuns (cf. Coli and Tonelli, 110).

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 59. While there was not yet a formal university in Lucca, the Istituto dei Pubblici Studi di San Frediano, which opened in 1788 in the former convent of the Canonici Lateranensi di San Frediano, offered lessons in theoretical and experimental physics and had a library and various rooms for meetings and experiments.

and which, as Giuseppe Nicoletti contends, were closely related to and often indistinguishable from the emergent genre of the autobiography during the eighteenth century.¹³⁶ Such chronicles of daily life were common among men, but rare among women, and Luisa Palma Mansi is the only known Lucchese aristocrat to have kept such a record.¹³⁷ Pera has thus argued that Luisa's *Mémoires* are unique because of her willingness to express the kinds of political judgments usually reserved for chronicles authored by men.¹³⁸

One of the functions of Mansi's diary, typical of *libri di famiglia*, is to keep track of her expenditures, including donations, gifts and the costs of attending theatrical, poetic or musical performances. She notes, for example, sending six pounds each of chocolate, coffee and sugar to a nun as compensation for having helped one of her aunts, and giving money, clothes and embroidered handkerchiefs to her servants during the Feast of the Holy Cross in 1798.¹³⁹ As is typical of a *cronaca*, she also records important news regarding the families of her friends, including births, betrothals, dowries, marriages, monachizations, illnesses, deaths and inheritances.¹⁴⁰ Her descriptions of these events, far from sentimental, reveal a particular interest in documenting their monetary value and financial implications, which is partially why scholars

¹³⁶ “Il rapporto di filiazione che lega l'autobiografia, come noi moderni comunemente intendiamo, e le memorie storiche o le cronache dettate da un unico testimone resta tuttora evidente e ancora nel Settecento, in più di un caso, riesce assai difficile poter distinguere un'opera che si situi sulla linea della nascente autobiografia da quella che invece più chiaramente ricalchi la struttura narrativa delle cronache o delle memorie” (Nicoletti, 25-26).

¹³⁷ Bizzocchi notes the singularity of the document among the private archives in Lucca, where nothing similar has been found (“Vita sociale, vita privata,” 141). For some references to diaries kept by men in eighteenth-century Tuscany, see Roberto Bizzocchi, *A Lady's Man: The Cicisbei, Private Morals and National Identity in Italy*, trans. Noor Giovanni Mazhar (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 57.

¹³⁸ Pera believes that Mansi is able to construct “ad arte un'immagine di sé per un potenziale interlocutore” and that she does not seem afraid to “entrare con la sua individualità ed i suoi giudizi in un ambito propriamente maschile come quello politico, non è una donna ai margini, gode di buoni spazi di libertà e non si sente particolarmente prigioniera di recinti sociali” (“Scritture femminili,” 226).

¹³⁹ Cf. Pera, “Scrivere per sé,” 68-71.

¹⁴⁰ Cf. Trebiliani, 97.

have characterized the *Mémoires* in terms of an apparent lack of compassion. Following the death of her mother-in-law in 1794, for example, Luisa limits her commentary to a description of her clothing during the period of mourning and her inheritance of one hundred *scudi* and a ring.¹⁴¹ Even the death of her husband is recorded with a single, emotionless annotation: “1807. Le jour 12 du mois d’Octobre mon Mari est expire.”¹⁴²

Among the other main topics Luisa addresses are her health, musical and theatrical performances, religious festivities, sojourns in the countryside, and social occasions. Here, again, her descriptions provide valuable documentation of Lucca’s aristocratic society at the turn of the century. Trebiliani, in fact, argues that the theater occupies such a central position in the *Mémoires* that Mansi’s manuscript would prove useful in a study of Lucca’s theatrical history. For example, she provides detailed descriptions of the opening of the Teatro Pubblico in Lucca and comments on various comedies, chamber performances, *opere buffe* and *opere serie* in other Tuscan cities, including Pisa and Livorno, and describes her frantic searches for box seats, visits to private musical academies and various occasions in which she danced and sang among friends.¹⁴³ Evenings at the theater were often preceded by gatherings in the salons of other prominent aristocratic families, where friends would eat and play cards together.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴¹ This passage in particular, found in the *Mémoires* 1:108-109, led Bizzocchi to characterize the diary in terms of its “secchezza” and “apparente disumanità” (“Vita sociale, vita privata,” 132). The death of her own mother on February 23, 1803 merited a slightly more sentimental but equally brief entry: “Il est arrive pour moi le plus triste de tous les événements. Ma mere est morte d’une terrible attaque à la poitrine” (*Mémoires* 3:95, cited in *ibid.*, 132).

¹⁴² *Mémoires* 4:8, cited in Bizzocchi, “Vita sociale, vita privata,” 152 and Pera, “Scrivere per sé,” 52-53. [1807. On the twelfth day of the month of October my husband expired]. In reality, her husband’s death must have had a much greater effect on Luisa than she indicates in her journal, as this entry is followed by a blank page and a five-year interruption in her diary between 1807-1812.

¹⁴³ Cf. Trebiliani, 97. Coli and Tonelli describe her continuous search for box seats (56-57); Mansi also describes occupying the box seats of her *cavalier servente* (*Mémoires* 1:158, cited in Bizzocchi, *A Lady’s Man*, 7) and singing with others at a private concert in 1798 (*Mémoires* 2:141, cited in Pera, “Scrivere per sé,” 75). Mansi lists numerous titles of operas, including “*Pantera*, le *Stanze*, *Castiglioncelli* e dal 1819 il *Giglio*, a cui [...] assiste e che vengono puntualmente segnalate. Già dal 1792, accanto al titolo e all’autore dell’opera troviamo di tanto in tanto commenti personali sullo spettacolo, sui personaggi, sui cantanti e sui compositori: Guglielmi, Anfossi, Salieri, Cimarosa,

Likewise, during vacations in the countryside or in the coastal city of Viareggio, where she would spend winters, Mansi and other members of the Lucchese aristocracy would similarly occupy themselves in *conversazioni*, organized and divided into morning “conversazioni di cioccolata,” the discussions of which were centered on the exchange of local gossip and daily news regarding politics and theater and parlor games, or afternoon and evening “conversazioni di caffè e latte,” “conversazioni di sorbetti,” and “conversazioni di gioco,” which often included dancing, gambling and card games.¹⁴⁵ Such aristocratic frivolity is reminiscent of satirical representations such as those found in Parini’s *Il Giorno*, particularly the long passages that Mansi dedicates to her dogs.¹⁴⁶

Finally, the other social obligations featured prominently in the *Mémoires* are centered around major religious holidays and festivals.¹⁴⁷ The Feast of the Holy Cross on September 14 assumes particular relevance since, beyond its religious significance, the festival included performances in theaters and salons and marked the return of the aristocrats to Lucca after their summers away and the beginning of the fall season.¹⁴⁸ The event also attracted foreign visitors from outside the city; Mansi describes hosting various noblemen, commanders, bishops, and

Paisiello, Mayr, Mercadante, ma soprattutto Rossini, che la spinge a considerazioni entusiastiche, in verità abbastanza rare nel diario” (Pera, “Scrivere per sé,” 78-79). Isabella Pera remarks that Mansi’s passion for music is so great as to evoke a more subjective, impassioned tone otherwise absent from the narrative: “La coinvolge a tal punto da farle abbandonare la narrazione puramente cronachistica ed elencativa del suo libro di ricordi per lasciare spazio, sia pure di tanto in tanto e nella consueta sinteticità, alla propria soggettività, alle impressioni, alle sensazioni, ai giudizi personali” (ibid., 80).

¹⁴⁴ Cf. Pera, “Scrivere per sé,” 74.

¹⁴⁵ Cf. Coli and Tonelli, 73-99.

¹⁴⁶ Various descriptions of her many dogs are interspersed in her accounts of the years between 1793 and 1819; she describes how she acquired them, the births and deaths of various puppies, and mating her dogs with the pets of other noblewomen and actresses (cf. Pera, “Scrivere per sé,” 66-67). Bizzocchi notes that of all the deaths recorded in the *Mémoires*, that of her dog, Nanette, receives the lengthiest and most heartfelt reflection (“Vita sociale, vita privata,” 132).

¹⁴⁷ Cf. Pera, “Scrivere per sé,” 83.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 86.

ministers from as far as Portugal and Lima to watch the large procession on the eve of the feast from the windows of her home, since members of the aristocracy did not intermingle with the rest of the population during the festivities.¹⁴⁹ Luisa describes other devotional activities, including specific prayers used during periods of political strife, preparations for the commemoration of saints, and her involvement with the Compagnia della S. Vergine del Frontale, an organization that she joined in 1796 and where many noblewomen participated in prayer and volunteer work.¹⁵⁰ At the same time, although she mentions hosting priests for lunch at her home, she only mentions her confessor twice in the entire *Mémoires*, once to annotate her Christmas gift to him (two capons and six flasks of wine) and then again upon his death.¹⁵¹ In general, it is likely that Luisa's involvement in religious activities were less related to her spiritual beliefs than to social obligations related to her class.¹⁵²

Yet, despite her meticulous accounts of these various local cultural and religious events and careful records of her personal expenses, Bizzocchi has maintained that Mansi's *Mémoires* actually have little in common with *libri di famiglia*, which he defines as typically “maschili e maschilisti.”¹⁵³ While the latter were usually begun by the male heads of the family just after marriage and were aimed at keeping track of finances, preserving family history, and providing an account of experiences that might prove useful to future generations, Mansi is instead primarily concerned with recording contemporary events while expressing no explicit interest in

¹⁴⁹ Coli and Tonelli, 64-66.

¹⁵⁰ Pera, “Scrivere per sé,” 85.

¹⁵¹ On December 26, 1802, she writes: “En occasion de la solemnité de la S.te Noel j'ai fait présent au père Pieretti de S. François, mon confesseur, de deux paires de Chapons et de 6 Fiaschi de vin” (*Mémoires* 3:92, cited in *ibid.*, 84).

¹⁵² Pera, “Scrivere per sé,” 85.

¹⁵³ See Bizzocchi, “Vita sociale, vita privata,” 128-129.

posterity.¹⁵⁴ In fact, as she explains in an entry in 1821, the function of her *Mémoires* was entirely personal: “J’écris ce livre uniquement pour aider ma mémoire à se souvenir de certaines époques qui me regardent.”¹⁵⁵

Aside from this brief annotation many years after beginning her diary, Mansi provides little indication of her motives for writing or the initial impetus for beginning her project. Her first entry, dated September 26, 1791, opens directly with a description of a trip to see the famous castrato, Luigi Marchesi, perform in an opera in Livorno with her mother and her *cavalier servente*, or *cicisbeo*, Costantino de Nobili.¹⁵⁶ Thus, although the *Mémoires* begin without any explanation, the incipit of her diary does introduce de Nobili’s central role in her narrative; her daily record of their intense and amorous relationship, which lasted from the time of his election as her *cicisbeo* when she was twenty-six years old through the late 1790s, is one of the only known non-literary, first-person accounts of *cicisbeismo* from a woman’s perspective.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 131. Bizzocchi notes that Luisa shows no interest in “una proiezione plurigenerazionale della memoria. Il suo diario [...] è dominato dall’attualità e totalmente invaso dalla centralità della sua persona” (129).

¹⁵⁵ *Mémoires* 4:72 (cited in Pera, “Scritture femminili,” 225 and “Scrivere per sé,” 38). The entry is dated September 25, 1821. [I am writing this book only to help my memory to recall certain periods that concern me].

¹⁵⁶ See also Coli and Tonelli, 56 and Bizzocchi, “Vita sociale, vita privata,” 130. Mansi describes leaving “en compagnie de ma Mere, mais j’ai fait le voyage en *Carrozzino* avec M.r de Nobili” (*Mémoires* 1:1, cited in Bizzocchi “Vita sociale, vita privata,” 130). The *cicisbeo* (a figure primarily associated with eighteenth-century Italian nobility) was elected to escort married women or widows to *conversazioni*, theatrical performances, religious services, and other social outings, and offer protection from possible dangers or insults. Despite the widespread diffusion of libertinage across Europe, and the similar figure of the *cortejo* in Spain, *cicisbeismo* was often the subject of harsh criticism in travel accounts from the Grand Tour and in fictional works, where it is presented as a threat to the “buon ordine” of the family. Yet, many private documents describe harmonious relationships between women, their husbands and their *serventi*. On the etymology, history, and institutionalization of *cicisbeismo* and its function of regulating and absorbing tensions surrounding marriage practices and supporting familial alliances see Bizzocchi, “Una nuova morale,” 73-78, “Vita sociale, vita privata,” 141-144, and *A Lady’s Man*, 24-33.

¹⁵⁷ Costantino de Nobili was her main *cavalier servente* until July 1799, meaning that their relationship lasted nearly a decade. Bizzocchi writes that the *Mémoires* “constitute an invaluable source for explicit and implicit information on the *cicisbeo* relationship [...] which was carefully documented on a daily basis, providing us with complete confirmation of the agenda proposed by Parini’s *Giorno*” (*A Lady’s Man*, 7). See also Coli and Tonelli, 53-55.

The relationship between Luisa, her husband and her *cicisbeo* reflects the typical practice of the time. First, Luisa's relationship with her husband, with whom she had no children, is represented as amicable and characterized by mutual respect and a certain degree of subordination on her part with regard to Lelio Mansi's substantial political role.¹⁵⁸ Secondly, de Nobili was three years younger than Luisa, and thus much closer to her in age than her husband, and it was he who – occasionally in the presence of Lelio Mansi, but frequently alone – most often accompanied Luisa on outings to the homes of other aristocrats or to see performances in other cities. Lelio Mansi's willingness to finance these outings underscores the triangular nature of the relationship between husbands, wives and *cicisbei*.¹⁵⁹ Moreover, it appears that Luisa was able to spend time with de Nobili privately as well as publicly, as she describes spending evenings alone with him during a period in which both her husband and her mother were traveling outside of Lucca in the fall of 1796.¹⁶⁰

Although most studies of the *Mémoires* emphasize Luisa Palma Mansi's disimpassioned tone, her strong emotional attachment to de Nobili is evident in the episode of his dismissal from her service. The problems in their relationship began to build between August of 1796, when Luisa returned to Lucca and learned from a mutual friend of his indecorous behavior (“conduite

¹⁵⁸ As Bizzocchi observes, “non si trova una sola parola che indichi da parte di Luisa un qualsiasi trasporto verso quest'uomo [...] Si trovano invece numerose attestazioni di buon accordo, di reciproca finezza, di scambi di regali anche personali [...] E si trovano [...] piccoli ma chiari segni di subordinazione di Luisa a Lelio in tutto quanto investiva la sfera politica” (“Vita sociale, vita privata,” 149-150). See also Coli and Tonelli, 51.

¹⁵⁹ Bizzocchi, *A Lady's Man*, 7-8. Although Bizzocchi suggests that Lelio Mansi was responsible for his wife's expenses, it is important to note Costantino de Nobili's high social status and the general expectation that a *cicisbeo* assume at least partial responsibility for the woman he served. In fact, it was often the *cavalier servente* and not the spouse who had financial responsibility for a woman in her husband's absence (cf. Coli and Tonelli, 79). In either case, it is clear from Luisa's diary that Costantino faced serious economic troubles, whether because of her expenses or his passion for gambling, which is documented in the *Mémoires* (cf. Bizzocchi, “Vita sociale, vita privata,” 134-135).

¹⁶⁰ *Mémoires* 2:35 (cited in *ibid.*, 8). Such examples, in Bizzocchi's view, reflect the “near-institutionalised normality” of *cicisbeismo* and suggest that “the most interesting aspect of *cicisbeismo* is not sexual freedom [...] but the official nature of the legitimisation of other men's access to married women” (*ibid.*, 9).

peu reguliere”) and threatened to dismiss him if a similar situation were to arise in the future.¹⁶¹ Then, in 1799, claiming to be preoccupied with his political duties, Costantino failed to visit her during a period of illness. In reality, he had established a relationship with a woman, identified in the diary as Signora Pieri, who, along with her husband, was a fervent supporter of the French democratic regime in Lucca.¹⁶² He returned from spending a month in the countryside with his mistress in July of 1799, just as the French were being forced out of Lucca by the Austrians, signaling the end of the six-month period of French domination.¹⁶³ De Nobili’s behavior prompted Mansi to end their relationship, an event which she describes in a passage in her *Mémoires* that Bizzocchi has deemed the most detailed and emotional description known to exist of a *cicisbeo* written by a woman:

A present, je ne le vois presque plus. C’est ainsi que est finie une amitié de 9 ou 10 ans pendant le quels, ni moi, ni ceux de ma maison, n’avons pas cessé de lui témoigner la plus sincère amitié, et d’avoir en tous sens les plus grands égards pour lui. Je ne puis pas dissimuler, que malgré tous les motifs qu’il m’a donné de ne point regretter sa perte, son ingratitude m’a pénétré jusqu’au fond de l’ame, et ce n’est qu’à l’aide de la sévérité des mes principes, et d’un sentiment de fierté qui m’est naturel, que j’espère de parvenir à me rendre moins sensible ce trait de l’ingratitude la plus noire.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶¹ *Mémoires* 2:16-17 (cited in Bizzocchi, “Vita sociale, vita privata,” 147). See also Coli and Tonelli, 83-84.

¹⁶² “Je sùs (et il eût l’impudence de me le confirmer lui même) qu’il avoit pris depuis quelque temps l’amitié de la Pieri femme coquette, debauchee [...] sa passion, jointe aux massimes pernicieuses que le commerce des Français commençoit à dilater dans ce País, et que cette Femme étoit bien capable de cultiver en lui, l’entraîneroient bientôt à sa ruine.” *Mémoires* 2:270-274, cited in Bizzocchi, “Vita sociale, vita privata,” 148.

¹⁶³ News of the Austrian victory came in late April, followed by the exodus in July of the French. In the brief interim between the first Austrian occupation and Napoleon’s return, members of the aristocracy had hoped that Lucca might regain its independence (cf. Trebiliani, 102 and Coli and Tonelli, 94-95). Even prior to the arrival of the French troops in Tuscany in December of 1796, Mansi had begun to express her fears of an Austrian-French conflict in Italy that would threaten Lucca’s independence (cf. Trebiliani, 99-102, and Pera, “Scrivere per sé,” 43). The French respected Lucca’s independence until January 7, 1798 when, as Mansi describes, the aristocrats were forced to host the approximately three hundred soldiers occupying the city in their homes and an increasing number of democratic clubs were formed in Lucca (cf. Coli and Tonelli, 88).

¹⁶⁴ *Mémoires* 2:270-274, cited in Bizzocchi, “Vita sociale, vita privata,” 148-149. [At present, I hardly see him anymore. Thus a friendship of nine or ten years, during which neither I nor those of my household have ceased to show him anything but the most sincere friendship and highest regards, has ended. I cannot hide that despite all the reasons he gave me not to regret losing him, his ingratitude penetrated me to the depths of my soul, and only the severity of my principles and an innate sense of pride give me hope that this mark of the blackest ingratitude might become less perceptible]. Cf. Bizzocchi, *A Lady’s Man*, 188 and Coli and Tonelli, 97-98.

The sections of Mansi's diary dedicated to her relationship to de Nobili reveal several interesting parallels with Alfieri's *Giornali*, in which the poet likewise reflects on his social engagements, relationships, and duties as a *cavalier servente*, many of which would later be included in his autobiography. Although Alfieri claims that his *Giornali* are meant as a vehicle for self-scrutiny and analysis, the actual content of the diary mainly consists of descriptions of the poet's daily activities from the moment he wakes until the time of writing in the evening. Evoking the topos of the mundane obligations of young noblemen epitomized by the *giovin signore* of Giuseppe Parini's *Il Giorno* (1763), Alfieri describes his routine, from waking and getting dressed to visiting his lover and accompanying her to social gatherings and on carriage rides.¹⁶⁵ As Bizzocchi has observed, although Alfieri was "far removed from the cultural and psychological profile" of the *giovin signore*, he did serve for nearly two years as *cavalier servente* to the marchioness Gabriella Falletti di Villafalletto. With respect to the usually parodic and licentious literary and theatrical representations of the *cicisbeo*, such as those found in Parini's poem and Carlo Goldoni's comedies, Alfieri's journal provides a valuable firsthand account of this historical phenomenon.¹⁶⁶

Alfieri's frustrations with his lover and the social settings in which their relationship develops are similar to those described by Mansi. In other respects, however, Mansi's *Mémoires*

¹⁶⁵ Cf. David, 72-73. David notes that Alfieri follows the model of the "topos descrittivo dell'attività diurna d'un giovin signore."

¹⁶⁶ In the first entry of the *Giornali*, dated November 25, 1774, Alfieri expresses dissatisfaction with his role as *cavalier servente* to Falletti, a relationship which he later describes in the *Vita* as his third significant love affair ("terza rete amorosa"): "La raison [...] me fait sentir aussitôt qu'il n'y a point de félicité dans cette espèce de plaisirs, qui ne laissent derrière eux qu'un vide immense. C'est la même folie qui me conduit chez l'actrice un moment après [...] je l'accompagne dans une tierce maison; il y a là petite compagnie, mi-partie de gens honnêtes que j'estime, et de gens en place que je n'estime pas; je veux plaire aux uns et ne pas déplaire aux autres [...] Je me sépare de la belle: une idée, que je ne sais pas encore si elle est juste ou fausse, m'empêche de la suivre: elle va dans la maison la plus peuplée de la ville; elle est coquette, elle a des griefs contre moi, vrais ou faux: ma vanité pour les deux tiers et demi, et l'amour pour l'autre demi-tiers, m'empêchent de voir tranquillement les effets qu'elle attend de ses démarches; ainsi je crois d'être prudent en n'y allant pas" (*Giornali*, 277). Alfieri would later satirize the role of the *cicisbeo* in his comedy, *Il Divorzio*, written between 1800-1801.

are very different from Alfieri's diary, in which one finds a "conscious manifestation of the distinct personality that later characterized the *Vita*," whereas Luisa, aside from the above-cited passages, "does not bare her soul."¹⁶⁷ In fact, Bizzocchi, Pera, and Trebiliani's studies of the *Mémoires* have all emphasized Mansi's rather impersonal, detached tone and her non-literary, systematic annotations of social encounters and public events that distinguish it from the kind of emotional, individualistic diaries characteristic of the later Romantic period.¹⁶⁸

Mansi's descriptions of her relationship with her *servente* also reflect the changing cultural and political climate in Lucca at the time. First, Luisa connects the debauched nature of de Nobili's lover to her support for the French, showing how politics had begun to occupy a much larger role in her diary starting in 1796 with Napoleon's nomination as the commander of the French army in Italy.¹⁶⁹ The French presence in Lucca influenced not only public and political life, but also introduced new models of family life, private morals, and relationships between men and women. The French exercised a strong moralizing influence in Italy, promoting family and marital life as a solid foundation for rebuilding society in the post-Revolutionary period. Various written documents attest to the changing social structure of the

¹⁶⁷ Bizzocchi, *A Lady's Man*, 7.

¹⁶⁸ See Bizzocchi, "Vita sociale, vita privata," 131; Pera, "Scrivere per sé," 37; and Trebiliani, 94.

¹⁶⁹ Cf. Bizzocchi, "Una nuova morale per la donna e la famiglia," 69-71. Trebiliani notes that Mansi's previously cold, detached tone disappears with the almost daily entries written during this period in which she describes the difficulties of their new living arrangements and the general threat posed by the "patriots" to the aristocrats (101-102.) Mansi describes the decree of January 15, 1799 as follows: "Le jour 15 on a donc assemblé le Senat et on a passé un décret par le quel [...] tous les Nobles rentres dans la Classe de tous le autres Citoyens" (*Mémoires* 2:122, cited in Pera, "Scrivere per sé," 45). Lucca's new government, which was publicly announced on December 30, 1801 and consisted of two councils and a directory, was met with great reservation by Mansi and the other ex-nobles, who viewed the document as implementing a French model that was not applicable to the needs and interests of Lucca. Mansi describes the new constitution as "modelée sur la française, manquant de plusieurs articles nécessaires, très peu applicable à notre Pays, et très peu propre enfin à opérer notre félicité" (*Mémoires* 3:48, cited in Trebiliani, 104 and Pera, "Scrivere per sé," 48-49). For more on the general history of Italian women during this period, see Annarita Buttafuoco, "La causa delle donne. Cittadinanza e genere nel Triennio 'giacobino' in Italia," in *Modi di essere. Studi, riflessioni, interventi sulla cultura e la politica delle donne in onore di Elvira Badaracco*, ed. Annarita Buttafuoco (Bologna: Editoriale Mongolfiera, 1991), 79-106 and Michael Broers, *The Napoleonic Empire in Italy, 1796-1814: Cultural Imperialism in a European Context* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

aristocracy and the new cultural and political context in which Italian women were subjected to a process of civic reform and urged to abandon the kind of erotic nonchalance once considered socially acceptable. For example, a 1799 issue of the Torinese women's newspaper, *La Vera Repubblicana*, discussed the need to reform the practice of "hateful *cicisbei* who infect society,"¹⁷⁰ and Jean Charles Léonard Simonde de Sismondi, in his sixteen-volume *Histoire des Républiques italiennes du moyen age* (1807-1818), condemned *cicisbeismo* as the primary cause of the corruption of the Italian family and the country's resulting public calamities.¹⁷¹

Within Lucca's new cultural and political backdrop, Luisa Palma Mansi's diary shows how the relationship with her three *cicisbei* reflect these societal changes. In addition to the breakdown of her relationship with de Nobili, the dismissal of her other two *serventi* – the brothers Lorenzo and Cesare Trenta, who left her service in 1797 and 1801, respectively – is a further indication of how various manners and customs of the Ancien Régime were falling out of fashion.¹⁷² The formal dismissal of Cesare Trenta on April 2, 1801, is particularly revealing of the changed cultural status of the *cicisbeo*:

¹⁷⁰ "Odiosi Cicisbei, che infettano la società." Elisa Strumia, "Un giornale per le donne nel Piemonte del 1799: *La Vera Repubblicana*," in *Studi Storici* 3 (1989): 928.

¹⁷¹ As Bizzocchi notes, the negative view of *cicisbeismo* had been anticipated by Pietro Verri, who had served as *cicisbeo* to Maddalena Beccaria (Cesare Beccaria's sister), for nearly a decade starting in 1766. In the early years of their relationship, Verri had claimed to be in love with her to the point of "violent" happiness. Eventually, however, he began to contemplate a new relationship model based on marital companionship and the family unit. In a letter to his brother, Alessandro, he affirms his desire to be a friend ("amico") to his future wife: "Non mi piace una dissipazione, ma anzi una vita di famiglia. Dopo pranzo insieme al passeggio, la sera insieme al teatro nel nostro palco fisso; io non voglio più avere galanterie: a Londra sono felici i matrimoni perché vivono così" (cited in Bizzocchi, "Una nuova morale," 78). Bizzocchi notes that Verri's attitude towards marriage is an exception to the rule, since the social function of the *cavalier servente* remained widely accepted and intact until the final years of the eighteenth century (cf. Bizzocchi, *A Lady's Man*, 5-10).

¹⁷² Cf. Trebiliani, 9. Cesare and Lorenzo Trenta were over a decade younger than Luisa and would often attend events with her, whether in the absence or presence of her husband or Costantino de Nobili, but she never felt the same degree of intimacy or emotional attachment to them as she did towards Costantino (cf. Bizzocchi, "Vita sociale, vita privata," 144). The first mention of Lorenzo is in 1797, when Mansi complains of his absence during a period in which her husband had fallen ill (cf. Trebiliani, 97). He was dismissed from her service that same year (*Mémoires* 2:54, cited in Pera, "Scrivere per sé," 64-65). Cesare was the last to be hired and his arrival was documented in a diary entry from September 11, 1795 (cf. Bizzocchi, "Vita sociale, vita privata," 135).

Ma Mere par ma commission pria M.r César Trenta à ne plus frequenter si assidùment ma maison, et à renoncer au titre ridicule de Cavalier Servente. Depuis plus de deux ans je ne cessais de le lui dire et de le lui faire connaître moi même, mais voyant qu'il faisoit le sourd, et qu'il s'opinatoit de plus en plus à me persécuter, j'ai du prendre la resolution de lui faire parler par ma mere.¹⁷³

Mansi's decision to dismiss Cesare Trenta and her characterization of the figure of the *cavalier servente* as "ridiculous" are in accordance with the general sentiments of the time as the practice of *serventismo* began to dissipate. In fact, while she opens her *Mémoires* by describing her relationship with her *cicisbeo*, she ends the project with her husband; when Lelio Mansi fell ill in 1805, she dedicated herself fully to taking care of him, claiming to no longer have time to write in her journal.¹⁷⁴ Following his death two years later, she gave up writing entirely for five years before eventually resuming her *Mémoires* in 1812. As a lady-in-waiting at the court of Elisa Bonaparte Baciocchi, she played a key role in Lucca's new social structure, though the primary focus of her entries returned to local events and she provides few reflections on the cultural and political changes that had taken place, giving the impression that she had withdrawn into herself and her immediate surroundings.¹⁷⁵ Mansi does, however, mention various social and

¹⁷³ *Mémoires* 3:19, cited in Trebiliani, 98. [My mother by my commission asked Cesare Trenta to no longer visit my home with such frequency and to renounce the ridiculous title of Cavalier Servente. For over two years I had been saying this and trying to make him understand it myself, but seeing as he had ignored me and increasingly persisted in bothering me, I resolved to have my mother speak to him on my behalf].

¹⁷⁴ "Ici le temps m'a manqué pour continuer avec exactitude ce Journal" (*Mémoires* 4:5, cited in Bizzocchi, "Vita sociale, vita privata," 151). In May of 1805, Napoleon was pronounced King of Italy and replaced Lucca's democratic regime, which had been established in 1802, with a principality governed by his sister, Elisa Bonaparte Baciocchi. Mansi assumed her new role as lady-in-waiting on July 14, participating in the procession in honor of Elisa Bonaparte Baciocchi's arrival in Lucca, but claimed to be too preoccupied with her husband's illness to continue to write in her journal (cf. Pera, "Scrivere per sé," 51-53). She filled only three pages of the diary in 1806 with news that the princess had given birth to a daughter, of the war between France, Austria and Prussia, and of the death of her husband on October 12, 1807. The French remained in control until 1814, with the exception of the two periods of Austrian domination between July 1799 and July 1800 and between September and October of 1800 (cf. Trebiliani, 107-108 and Bizzocchi, "Vita sociale, vita privata," 152-160).

¹⁷⁵ Cf. Trebiliani, 117.

political events, from local celebrations in honor of Napoleon's arrival in Moscow to news of his exile to Elba.¹⁷⁶

By the time of Luisa Palma Mansi's death on November 25, 1824, Lucca had undergone a dramatic series of transformations and had also become a new destination for many European travelers, such as Shelley and Byron, who visited in 1818 and 1822, respectively.¹⁷⁷ In what amounted to over three decades of diaristic writing, Mansi captured not only an important transitional phase in Italian culture, but also the changes in her own sentimental and social experiences as a married noblewoman. Her *Mémoires* remain a rare example of women's autobiographical writing in Italy and help to illustrate the shift from the objective, brief annotations typical of *libri di famiglia* towards the more sentimental, subjective forms of women's self-writing that emerge in the nineteenth century.

¹⁷⁶ Following his exile, revolution broke out in Lucca and the Baciocchi were forced out of the city. Mansi expressed a sense of relief and hope that Lucca might regain independence: "Ainsi a fini ce grande colosse qui a fait trembler et pleurer l'univers pendant dix ans" (*Mémoires* 4:61, cited in Pera, "Scrivere per sé," 57, and Trebiliani, 115).

¹⁷⁷ Cf. Gretchen L. Hachmeister, *Italy in the German Literary Imagination: Goethe's "Italian Journey" and its Reception by Eichendorff, Platen, and Heine* (Rochester: Camden House, 2002), 208.

Chapter 4

Early Nineteenth-Century Developments

IV.1 Teresa Landucci Bandettini's Autobiography

In her *Mémoires* from October 1794, Luisa Palma Mansi describes having been among the large audience gathered at the Istituto delle Scienze di San Frediano for a public performance by her compatriot and renowned poetic improviser, or *improvvisatrice*, Teresa Bandettini (1763-1837), known in Arcadia as Amarilli Etrusca.¹ Luisa Palma Mansi was only one of many contemporary figures who documented this particularly auspicious year in Bandettini's career, during which various Italian academies competed to "honor themselves through her name."² The resounding celebrity she achieved reveals the persistence of the view of female intellectuals as "cultural attractions" or spectacles that had dominated much of the early eighteenth century.³ It also helps to explain why Bandettini, who like Palma Mansi was a native of Lucca, managed to maintain a prominent role in its aristocratic and academic circles despite the rapid succession of political and social changes during the late eighteenth century. Unlike Mansi, however, Bandettini came from humble roots; her parents were of noble birth but low economic standing, which was further complicated – as in the case of many of the women's autobiographies examined in this study – by her father's death shortly after her birth, which left her mother to

¹ "Le jour 17 Thérèse Bandettini, notre patriote autrefois mauvaise danseuse, au présent célèbre Improvisatrice, chanta superieurement bien dans la salle de l'Institut de S. Frediano. L'audience tant de noblesse que de bourgeoise a été très nombreux." Luisa Palma Mansi, *Mémoires*, cited in Isabella Pera, "Scrivere per sé. Luisa Palma Mansi (1760-1823) e la dimensione del diario," in *Donne di penna. Tre figure di donne nel rapporto con la scrittura* (Buggiano: Vannini, 2003), 81.

² As Lorenzo Tomei, academician and philosophy professor in Lucca, would declare in his funerary oration for Bandettini on April 7, 1837: "Ogni colto paese d'Italia volea sentir la sua voce, ogni accademia voleva onorarsi del suo nome." Cited in Tatiana Crivelli, "Le memorie smarrite di Amarilli," *Versants* 46. *La littérature au féminin* (2003): 141. On these and other references to Bandettini by her contemporaries, see Crivelli's entry on Bandettini in her digital archive, "Donne in Arcadia (1690-1800)," <<http://www.arcadia.uzh.ch/donnedetails.php?id=24>> (2 March 2014).

³ Cf. Marta Cavazza, "Between Modesty and Spectacle: Women and Science in Eighteenth-Century Italy," in *Italy's Eighteenth Century: Gender and Culture in the Age of the Grand Tour*, ed. Paula Findlen, Wendy W. Roworth, and Catherine M. Sama (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 275-302. See also Elena Brambilla, "Il dibattito sulle 'conversazioni' e sull'educazione femminile da Antonio Vallisneri a Paolo Mattia Doria," in *Sociabilità e relazioni femminili nell'Europa moderna: Temi e saggi* (Milan: Franco Angeli, 2013), 193.

care for Teresa, her two sisters, and her brother on her own. Teresa and her older sister, Maddalena, became dancers in order to support the family. Both were hired – Teresa as *prima ballerina* – by the Teatro di Bastia in Corsica, where they lived for over a year. The experience improved the family’s economic situation and, more importantly, allowed Teresa to make important contacts in political and cultural circles, first in Corsica and later in theaters in Florence, Bologna, and Venice. Her lifestyle as a principal dancer, which required frequent travel and the cultivation of a captivating stage presence amid prominent intellectuals, artists, and writers set the stage for what would eventually become a flourishing career as a poetic improviser.⁴

Bandettini’s increasing fame as a poet eventually allowed her to abandon her dancing career and dedicate herself entirely, over a period of several years, to an intense schedule of public performances, or *accademie di improvvisazione*, in private homes, salons, and academies in many Italian cities, including Udine, Ferrara, Padua, Verona, and Mantua.⁵ She was welcomed in academies in Imola, Cesena, Florence, and Perugia, the Arcadia in Rome, the Accademia dei Fervidi in Bologna and the Accademia Virgiliana in Mantua.⁶ In her native Lucca, in addition to

⁴ Alessandra Di Ricco, the editor of the modern edition of Bandettini’s autobiography, notes the positive effect of Bandettini’s dancing career on her profession as an improviser: “la abituerà ad una vita errabonda, le fornirà occasione di molteplici contatti umani, e, soprattutto, sarà la palestra dove imparerà a sostenere il rapporto col pubblico e a muoversi disinvoltamente sulla scena.” Alessandra Di Ricco, *L’inutile e meraviglioso mestiere: Poeti improvvisatori di fine Settecento* (Milan: Franco Angeli, 1990), 95. On the history of extemporaneous poetry in Italy, see: Adele Vitagliano, *Storia della poesia estemporanea nella letteratura italiana: Dalle origini ai nostri giorni* (Rome: E. Loescher, 1905); Benedetto Croce, “Gl’improvvisatori,” in *La letteratura italiana del Settecento* (Bari: Laterza, 1949), 299-311; and Angela Esterhammer, *Romanticism and Improvisation, 1750-1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008). Literary accounts of improvisers are found in Giacomo Casanova’s memoirs, in which he describes attending a performance by Bandettini’s predecessor and the poet laureate, Maddalena Morelli, known as Corilla Olimpica, and in Madame de Staël’s *Corinne ou l’Italie* (1807), inspired at least in part by her exposure to improvisation during the period of her travels in Italy between 1804-1805.

⁵ Cf. Arianna Scolari Sellerio, “Bandettini Teresa,” in vol. 5 of *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* (1963), <[http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/teresa-bandettini_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)/>](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/teresa-bandettini_(Dizionario-Biografico)/>) (1 December 2015).

⁶ On Bandettini’s participation in literary academies, see: Anna Santi, “L’incoronazione della poetessa Teresa Bandettini in Perugia il 6 dicembre 1795,” in *Studi storici e letterari dei professori e studenti del Liceo-Ginnasio A. Mariotti di Perugia* (Perugia, Tip. Guerriero Guerra, 1901); Di Ricco, 104; Crivelli, “Le memorie smarrite,” 140-

her affiliation with the Accademia degli Oscuri and scientific institutions like the aforementioned Istituto delle Scienze di San Frediano, Bandettini even performed in convents, such as the monastery of S. Giustina, where several of Luisa Palma Mansi's friends resided as nuns.

For the modern scholar, the intrigue surrounding Bandettini's life and persona provides a unique opportunity to contrast the modes of representation and self-representation at work in the various firsthand and autobiographical accounts of the poet's personal and professional experiences. In addition to Bandettini's correspondence with contemporary writers and intellectuals, key details and observations about her life are found in both private and public accounts written by her fellow academicians, friends, and literary contacts. She also left behind two autograph manuscripts in which she relates the story of her life; the first of these documents, an unfinished autobiography, was written in 1825 when she was sixty-two years old and covers the period from her birth through her marriage in 1789.⁷

Bandettini's autobiography, the modern edition of which was published by Alessandra Di Ricco with the title *Autobiografia*, must be read in close connection with her profession as a dancer and *improvvisatrice* since, despite her renown and successful publication of several collections of poetry, her primary concern remained that of being able to support herself financially as an entertainer. She relied on her performances, first as a dancer and later as a poet, for her family's economic survival. Even forms of compensation that were more symbolic than substantial, such as the handmade gifts and chocolate she received from the nuns at S. Giustina

141; and Franca Caspani Menghini, "Amarilli e le accademie," in *L'estro di Amarilli e la tenacia di Artinio. Poesie estemporanee di Teresa Bandettini raccolte dal concittadino Tommaso Trenta (1794-1799)*, ed. Franca Caspani Menghini (Lucca: Accademia Lucchese di Scienze, Lettere e Arti, 2011), 466-472.

⁷ Bandettini's manuscript autobiography was written in Lucca and dated May 21, 1825 (BSL, ms. 638). All citations in the present study refer to the modern edition, or *Autobiografia*, published in the appendix of Di Ricco's *L'inutile e meraviglioso mestiere*.

in exchange for her performance in the monastery, were carefully documented.⁸ Moreover, her precarious economic status was compounded by the dubious view of both dancers and improvisers held by many of her contemporaries. In her autobiography, Bandettini recalls the poet Giovanni Pindemonte's association of dancers with "women who know only how to sell favors to the highest bidder,"⁹ and Jacopo Chelini, the chaplain of the monastery at S. Giustina, had similarly defined Bandettini's earlier profession as "diametrically opposed" to her literary pursuits.¹⁰ The poet and librettist Pietro Metastasio (1698-1782), one of Teresa's primary role models who had preceded her in finding success in the first half of the eighteenth century as an improviser and as a court poet in Vienna, had described improvisation in comparable terms. Metastasio eventually rejected the activity of the improviser as "useless," since it had physically exhausted him and distracted him from more serious scholarly endeavors:

Questo mestiere mi divenne grave e dannoso; grave, perché forzato dalle continue autorevoli richieste, mi conveniva correre quasi tutti i dì, e talora due volte nel giorno istesso, ora ad appagare il capriccio d'una dama; ora a soddisar la curiosità d'un illustre idiota; ora a servir di riempitura al vuoto di qualche sublime adunanza, perdendo così miseramente la maggior parte del tempo necessario agli studj miei; dannoso, perché la mia debole fin d'allora e incerta salute se ne risentiva visibilmente [...] riflettendo in età più matura al meccanismo di quell'inutile, e maraviglioso mestiere, io mi sono ad evidenza convinto, che la mente condannata a così temeraria operazione, dee per necessità contrarre un abito opposto per diametro alla ragione.¹¹

⁸ Cf. Di Ricco, 11. Di Ricco, who defines the improviser as a "poeta di mestiere" (17) provides a detailed list of the various forms of compensation Bandettini received for her poetic performances.

⁹ Teresa describes Pindemonte's criticism of her dancing career and recalls him asking her mother: "E come soffrite [...] che vostra figlia con tanto ingegno e una così facil vena d'improvvisare confusa vada con una sorte di donne ch'altro non sanno che vendere i loro favori al più offerente?" (*Autobiografia*, 239).

¹⁰ In the foreword to his edition of Bandettini's improvised poems, Chelini describes dancing as "diametralmente opposta agli studj perché dal divagamento circondata" (cited in Caspani, 439). From a purely practical point of view, this was in fact the case, since during the theatrical season, which coincided with the period of Carnival, Bandettini was forced to focus solely on dancing, while dedicating the off-season to her studies (cf. Di Ricco, 102).

¹¹ Letter to Francesco Algarotti from Vienna, dated August 1, in *Tutte le opere di Metastasio*, ed. Bruno Brunelli (Milan: Classici Mondadori, 1954), 492. [This profession became grievous and detrimental to me. It was grievous because, forced by continuous authoritative requests, I was running nearly every day – and sometimes twice in the same day – either to satisfy the whims of a lady, or gratify the curiosity of some illustrious idiot, or to fill an empty spot in some sublime gathering or another, and in this miserable way I lost the majority of the time needed for my

Given the frequent assessments of both improvising and dancing as frivolous or unsavory forms of employment, Bandettini's autobiography reveals her constant need to defend herself against accusations of immorality and a lack of true talent (Palma Mansi's description of Bandettini as "célèbre improvvisatrice" but "mauvaise danseuse" is only one example). She makes clear in the incipit of her autobiography, dated May 21, 1825 in Lucca, that she is dissatisfied with "biographers" who have misrepresented her dancing career:

E quì pure prendono abbaglio i Biografi, che scrissero di me dicendo, che non riusciva in tal arte. È vero ch'io mal volentieri l'esercitava perché mi toglieva a miei diletti studj, ma è vero altresì ch'io spronata sempre dal desiderio di primeggiare in tutto, non avrei sofferto rimanermi inconsiderata.¹²

She contrasts the "mania" of these biographers and the liberties they take in their representations of celebrated figures with the veracity of her own narration:

La mania che al dì d'oggi sembra aver preso piede ne gli estensori e collaboratori di varie Biografie, fa sì che a capriccio cotesti scittorelli, non contenti di fabbricarsi un istoria apocrifia di chiunque ha meritato per lo passato un qualche nome, e che smentir non è lor dato l'impostura perché son morti, sfacciatamente pur anco chimerizzano sulla vita su costumi e sull'opere di molti che tuttora vivono e che potrebbero a buona ragione convincer loro di falsità. Io però, giacché più e più volte, ho dovuto soffrire di leggere in non pochi fogli il mio nome ed ivi trovarmi non qual sono ma qual è piaciuto farmi essere a questo, o a quello scrittore della mia vita, ho risoluto scrivere queste memorie, e dare io stessa conto di me della mia nascita de' miei costumi degli studj miei con quella sincerità mia propria pregio il quale niuno non mai mi ha conteso di quanti ho sin qui conosciuto.¹³

studies. It was detrimental because my uncertain health, which was weak even then, was visibly compromised ... having reached a more mature age, reflecting on the workings of that useless and marvelous profession, I have become convinced with good reason that a mind condemned to such a reckless operation is forced to adapt a stance diametrically opposed to reason]. Metastasio describes having recited verses extemporaneously until his mentor, Gravina, prohibited him from further engaging in the practice. As Angela Esterhammer has noted in her recent study, the figure of the improviser became closely linked to the rise of celebrity culture in Europe: "Because improvisational performance requires presence and visibility, and foregrounds the interactive relationship with an immediate public, the figure of the improvvisatrice is one to which celebrity easily attaches, one that offers itself as a focus for issues of objectification and spectacle [...] For nineteenth-century audiences, and in nineteenth-century literary works – the improviser embodies inspiration, putting his operations on display by visibly suffering in the intensity of the creative moment, even risking illness or death in exchange for experiencing the mind's lightning." Angela Esterhammer, "The Spectacle of the Romantic Improviser: Corilla, *Corinne*, and British women poets of the 1820s," in *Romanticism and Improvisation*, 79.

¹² *Autobiografia*, 237-238.

Bandettini thus justifies her autobiographical project as a necessary response to false representations of her career and a means of defending her character, revealing her talent, and providing for her readers what she claims is a more “sincere” and objective portrayal. In doing so, she becomes one of the first professional women writers in the Italian tradition to narrate her life story of her own volition and with the clear and self-conscious aim of elucidating and asserting her literary successes. Thus, while Di Ricco is not incorrect in her evaluation of Bandettini’s autobiography as reproducing the cliché of “a precocious and insuppressible poetic vocation and its laborious affirmation,”¹⁴ it is important to recognize the extreme value of this text as one of the first documents in which a woman writer willfully reappropriates a narrative structure and autobiographical model previously used almost exclusively by men.

In fact, Bandettini’s opening paragraph lays out an autobiographical project that in many ways echoes the introduction to Vittorio Alfieri’s *Vita*, published posthumously in 1804, in which the dramatist similarly explains his motivations:

Avendo io oramai scritto molto, e troppo più forse che non avrei dovuto, è cosa assai naturale che alcuni di quei pochi a chi non saranno dispiaciute le mie opere (se non tra’ miei contemporanei, tra quelli almeno che vivran dopo) avranno qualche curiosità di sapere qual io mi fossi. Io ben posso ciò credere, senza neppur troppo lusingarmi, poiché di ogni altro autore anche minimo quanto al valore, ma voluminoso quanto all’opere, si vede ogni giorno e scrivere e leggere, o vendere almeno, la vita. Onde, quand’anche nessun’altra ragione vi fosse, è certo pur sempre che, morto io, un qualche libraio per cavare alcuni più soldi da una nuova edizione delle mie opere, ci farà premettere una qualunque mia vita. E quella, verrà verisimilmente scritta da uno che non mi aveva o

¹³ Ibid., 229. [The mania that at present seems to have taken hold of the compilers and collaborators of various Biographies makes it so that these scribblers, not content to fabricate an apocryphal story of whoever earned a certain name in the past, and who is unable to contradict such a deception because they are deceased, capriciously and shamelessly chimerize the lives, customs, and works even of many who are still living and who could with good reason expose their falsity. However, because time and again I have had to suffer in reading my name in no small number of pages and therein find myself not as I am but as pleased some biographer or another, I have resolved to write these memoirs, and to provide by myself an account of myself, my birth, my customs, and my studies, with that sincerity of mine that is a merit that no one I have yet to meet has doubted].

¹⁴ “Secondo un cliché sperimentato, è storia di una precoce e insopprimibile vocazione alla poesia e del suo faticoso affermarsi” (Di Ricco, 89-90).

niente o mal conosciuto, che avrà radunato le materie di essa da fonti o dubbi o parziali; onde codesta vita per certo verrà ad essere, se non altro, alquanto meno verace di quella che posso dare io stesso [...] mi impegno qui con me stesso, e con chi vorrà leggermi, di dispassionarmi per quanto all'uomo sia dato [...] Onde, se io non avrò forse il coraggio o l'indiscrezione di dir di me tutto il vero, non avrò certamente la viltà di dir cosa che vera non sia.¹⁵

Both Alfieri and Bandettini begin their autobiographical projects first and foremost by justifying their projects on the basis of the extreme popularity of the biographical genre, which they emphasize as a particularly contemporary phenomenon (“al di d’oggi”; “si vede ogni giorno”). Franco Fido has referred to such openings as part of an “introductory, or meta-autobiographical *topos*” consisting of the author’s justification of his autobiographical project to protect himself against accusations of vanity. As Fido observes:

Roughly outlined, the author’s reasoning unfolds as follows: If some day someone were to write my life (for a collection of biographies, for an edition of my works, etc.), would it not be preferable to have this life’s account written by myself? Such a beginning can be found, for instance, in Alfieri’s *Vita*, in Goldoni’s *Mémoires*, and in Gibbon’s autobiographical attempts.¹⁶

Bandettini’s autobiography provides evidence that Italian women autobiographers also participated in this *topos*. Yet, while Alfieri projects himself in the future, claiming to protect himself from those who might misrepresent his life after his death (“morto io”) and imagining

¹⁵ Vittorio Alfieri, *Vita scritta da esso*, ed. Luigi Fassò (Asti: Casa d’Alfieri, 1951), 6. [Even, at present, my literary productions are pretty voluminous. Hence it is not unnatural to suppose that a few individuals, either among my contemporaries or their descendants, to whom my productions may have afforded some degree of pleasure, will be anxious to know something of my character. This opinion cannot, I flatter myself, be deemed presumptuous, since I daily observe the lives of authors read with avidity, who are perhaps less known from the merit than the number of their works: besides, if no other reason existed, it is certain, as soon as I should be no more, some bookseller, in order to enhance his gains on a new edition of my works, would prefix to it a life of the author. This life would probably be written by some one who was completely ignorant of the events which compose it, and who drew the materials from doubtful or partial sources. In short, it would never be equally authentic as one from my own pen ... I, who was never known to forfeit my promise, here covenant with myself and my readers to free myself, as much as it is in the power of man to do, from the mist of passion and prejudice ... If I possess not the courage or the indiscretion to speak of myself as I deserve, I shall, at least, not have the baseness to gloss over my faults, by advancing an untruth]. English translation from the *Life of Vittorio Alfieri*, ed. William D. Howells (Boston: James R. Osgood and Co., 1877), 54-55.

¹⁶ Franco Fido, “At the Origins of Autobiography in the 18th and 19th Centuries: The Topoi of the Self.” *Annali d’Italianistica* 4 (1986): 171.

future readers (“quelli [...] che vivran dopo”) who might wish to know who he was (“qual io mi fossi”), Bandettini rests firmly in the present, promising to reveal who she is (“qual sono”). In contrast to Alfieri’s apparently more forgiving stance towards his would-be biographers, whose failings he attributes to dubious or partial sources (“fonti o dubbi o parziali”), Bandettini openly accuses her biographers of intentionally fabricating the lives of writers (“chimerizzano sulla vita”) who are still living (“tuttora vivono”). Yet, both poets claim that the chief motivation for their autobiographical project is that of providing a truthful account of their lives to readers, in direct response to the false information that has been or will be disseminated by others, and both express their resolve (“mi impegno”; “ho risoluto”) to provide truthful narrations (“verace,” “tutto il vero,” “vera,” “sincerità”) in opposition to the falsity of other accounts (“dubbi,” “apocrifa,” “falsità”). What is especially interesting about these passages is the abundance and redundancy of first-person pronouns (“mi impegno qui con me stesso”; “ho risoluto [...] dare io stessa conto di me”), which allow Alfieri and Bandettini to simultaneously assert their objectivity as narrators and their singularity and individuality as artists.

In Bandettini’s case, the repetition of first-person pronouns and the emphasis on her sincerity become particularly interesting considering that her manuscript autobiography is accompanied by a second autobiographical document, written the same year but in the third person. Whereas the first-person autobiography ends in 1789, the third-person document, of which no modern edition currently exists, narrates an additional thirty years of her life, through the year 1820.¹⁷ There is some discrepancy regarding the temporal collocation of the third-person

¹⁷ BSL, ms. 638, cc. 12r-14r. See Franca Caspani Menghini, “Amarilli e il suo tempo,” in *L’estro di Amarilli*, 434-435. Caspani uses various sources, in addition to Bandettini’s autobiographies, to reconstruct the major events of her life, including: Tommaso Trenta’s *Memorie*, in which he documents Bandettini’s public and private performances throughout Tuscany; information exchanged in Trenta’s private correspondence with the poet; Bandettini’s letters to Saverio Bettinelli and Diodata Saluzzo; Jacopo Chelini’s manuscript diary, the *Zibaldone Lucchese* (ASL, Archivio Sardini 158) and Tomei’s funerary oration.

narrative with respect to the first-person autobiography: Caspani refers to it as an appendix (“appendice all’autobiografia”), whereas Di Ricco refers to it as a sketch (“traccia”) of the longer, but incomplete, *Autobiografia*.¹⁸ Although neither Caspani nor Di Ricco examine the dynamic between the two autobiographies, Bandettini’s election of a third-person narration in the second document (the *Traccia* or *Appendice*), is likely not a merely stylistic choice and merits further discussion with respect to the larger autobiographical tradition in Italy. Though in vastly different historical and social contexts, there are several eighteenth-century examples of both female spiritual autobiographers, like Veronica Giuliani, and of intellectual autobiographers, such as Giambattista Vico and Lodovico Antonio Muratori, who utilized the third person in order to lend a sense of greater objectivity and authority to their texts.¹⁹ This may have also been the reason for Bandettini’s choice. Alternatively, she may have written the third-person text with the idea of publishing it as an appendix not to her autobiography, as Caspani assumes, but to a future edition of her poems, since she ends the document with a list of her published works, further noting that while numerous other poems had been published in various collections, many remained unpublished.²⁰ In either case, the use of the third person and the emphasis on her literary development and career allow us to draw parallels between Bandettini’s text and the widespread autobiographical model of the early eighteenth century which, as scholars such as

¹⁸ “Si tratta di una traccia che giunge fino a quella data, e di una più ampia autobiografia rimasta incompiuta” (Di Ricco, 89). Although both the first- and third-person autobiographies are part of ms. 638, all citations in the present study from this manuscript refer only to the third-person narrative, since no modern edition exists.

¹⁹ On Muratori’s multiple third-person autobiographies, see Rodolfo De Mattei, “L’autobiografia in terza persona,” in *La Musa autobiografica* (Florence: Casa Editrice Le Lettere, 1990), 60-67. See also Philippe Lejeune, “Autobiography in the Third Person,” *New Literary History* 9, no. 1, *Self-Confrontation and Social Vision* (Autumn 1977): 27-50.

²⁰ “Molte sono le poesie inedite della Bandettini e non poche l’edite sparse in varie raccolte sotto il nome di Amarilli Etrusca” (ms. 628, c. 14r).

Franco Fido, Andrea Battistini and Joseph Luzzi have described, consisted of *cursus studiorum* written in the third person.²¹

In both of her autobiographies, Bandettini's claims of objectivity must (as with all autobiographies) be viewed with scrutiny. A performer by profession, she is acutely aware of her ability to shape and manipulate her public image, and her autobiographies become a third locus of invention and spectacle, not unlike the dancer's stage or the poet's "accademia di improvvisazione." Bandettini opens both narratives with the common formula of providing what appear to be fairly standard details of her birthplace, date of birth, and the names and social standing of her parents:

Da Domenico Bandettini, e da Maria Alba Micheli, onesti e comodi cittadini, nacqui in Lucca nell'anno 1770.²²

Teresa, Figlia di Domenico Bandettini e di Maria Alba Micheli, di civil condizione nacque in Lucca nell'Anno 1770.²³

Yet, in keeping with another topos of the genre, she intentionally alters her age. Like Giambattista Vico, who was born in 1668 but in his autobiography cites his birth year as 1670,

²¹ Joseph Luzzi, "Autobiography," in vol. 1 of *Encyclopedia of Italian Literary Studies*, ed. Gaetana Marrone and Paolo Puppa (New York: Routledge, 2006), 107. Franco Fido separates the early eighteenth-century Italian autobiographies, which were most often intended as a model for younger scholars, into several categories: "storia della propria formazione intellettuale da lasciare ai figli, da premettere alle proprie opere o da includere in una raccolta 'ufficiale' di biografie; e le *memorie* come testimonianza di un osservatore privilegiato su eventi di indubitabile interesse storico." Franco Fido, "I *Mémoires* di Goldoni e la letteratura autobiografica del Settecento," *MLN* 96, no. 1 (1981): 45. Andrea Battistini further distinguishes between the "professional" autobiographies of the early Settecento and those of the late eighteenth century, when writers like Vittorio Alfieri, Casanova, Carlo Goldoni, Carlo Gozzi, and Lorenzo Da Ponte "si affidano piuttosto all'impianto dispersivo e proteiforme del romanzo." Andrea Battistini, *Lo specchio di Dedalo. Autobiografia e biografia* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1990), 84-85.

²² *Autobiografia*, 229. As Fido has observed, the place and status of one's birth "in a noble or well-to-do family [...] or from poor but honest parents constitutes another liminal *topos*, based on satisfaction" ("At the Origins of Autobiography," 172).

²³ Ms. 638, c. 12r. Added in margin next to the year of her birth is the date "il 12 di Agosto." One might compare these opening sentences, for example, with the incipit of Vico's autobiography: "Il signor Giambattista Vico egli è nato in Napoli l'anno 1670 da onesti parenti." *Vita di Giambattista Vico scritta da se medesimo*, in *Opere*, ed. Andrea Battistini (Milan: Mondadori, 1990), 5. Or with that of Alfieri: "Nella città d'Asti in Piemonte, il di 17 di gennaio dell'anno 1749, io nacqui di nobili, agiati, ed onesti parenti" (*Vita*, 9).

Bandettini falsely cites the year of her birth as 1770 rather than 1763.²⁴ While she may have wished to make herself seven years younger in order to present herself as something of a child prodigy with regard to her talent as a dancer and vocation as a poet, it is worth investigating the specific date she chooses.

Had Bandettini been born in 1770, she would have been thirty-five years old in 1805, a significant year in her life in which she began to focus her efforts away from improvised poetry and towards the publication of written or “pre-meditated” (*meditate*) compositions.²⁵ 1805 was also the year of publication of her epic poem, *La Teseide*, which had taken her a decade to complete and through which she believed she would secure her rightful place in the Italian literary tradition.²⁶ Finally, it was during this same period that Bandettini, accused of Jacobinism, was exiled from her native Lucca.²⁷ The confluence of these three elements – the publication of an epic poem, the condition of exile and the decision to make herself thirty-five years old at the time of these events – suggests that Bandettini is drawing a conscious parallel between herself and Dante, whose *Divine Comedy* was her “favorite work”²⁸ and the events of which are said to occur at the midway point of the poet’s life, in the year 1300, when he was thirty-five years old.

²⁴ On possible reasons for Vico’s alteration, see Donald P. Verene, “A Portrait of Vico,” in *Knowledge of Things Human and Divine: Vico’s New Science and Finnegans Wake* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 44.

²⁵ See Di Ricco, 49.

²⁶ Crivelli lists Bandettini’s numerous publications as a translator, journalist, and writer of tragedies, poems, melodramas, and opera librettos, but notes that it was above all through her two-volume epic that Teresa believed “di potersi garantire futura memoria nel canone della letteratura italiana” (“Le memorie smarrite,” 146-148).

²⁷ Bandettini had enjoyed a position of prestige during the French occupation of Lucca and had performed at events organized by General Miollis. However, following the French defeat in the Battle of Trebbia in July 1799, she was accused of Jacobinism on account of two celebratory poems she composed for the victors, and she was not able to return to Lucca until 1819 (cf. Caspani, 447-448, and Scolari Sellerio). As both Caspani and Scolari Sellerio have noted, Bandettini’s loyalty was dictated purely by personal concerns for her economic well-being and not any particular political views.

²⁸ Bandettini refers to the *Divine Comedy* as her “favorita lettura” (*Autobiografia*, 239) and, in a letter to the poet Diodata Saluzzo written the same year as her autobiography, affirms: “Più d’ogni altro però la ‘divina Commedia’ di Dante fu il mio particolare gradito studio.” In *Poesie postume di Diodata Saluzzo contessa Roero di Revello. Aggiunte alcune lettere d’illustri scrittori a lei dirette* (Torino, Tipografia Chirio e Mino, 1843), 556.

Thus, already in the opening of her autobiography, through the intentional alteration of her age, Bandettini belies her claim of providing a truthful narration while also subtly affirming her place in the canon as poet.

Bandettini's falsified birthdate also serves to make her a certain age at other key moments in her life. For example, in both of her autobiographies, she describes how her brother's death when she was seven years old coincided with the first signs of her poetic vocation:

Non contava Teresa che sette anni quando avvenne la morte di suo fratello, ed ancorchè sin da quel tempo e poscia in seguito dato avesse segno del suo genio per le belle lettere ed in special modo per la poesia scrivendo versi, e cantando all'improvviso.²⁹

La notte pur anco quando luceva la luna era da me spesa a leggere e quando no, a riandare in mente ciò che aveva letto. Così passarono questi miei primi anni sin che mio fratello che preso avea servizio nella truppa di Napoli distaccato a Pescara finì ivi i suoi giorni.³⁰

By connecting the discovery of her poetic talent with a tragic childhood event, Bandettini participates in the common autobiographical topos of the precocious appearance of one's vocation that, as Fido has argued, usually "stems from a blend of natural disposition and [...] unexpected events seen in hindsight as the marks of destiny."³¹ Her age at the time of her brother's death establishes another parallel with the autobiography of Vico, who likewise describes in his autobiography how a severe fall at the age of seven led to his development of a "melancholy and irritable temperament such as belongs to men of ingenuity and depth."³² Like

²⁹ Ms. 638, c.12r. [Teresa was but seven years old when the death of her brother occurred, and nonetheless from that moment on she gave signs of her talent for literature, and poetry in particular, writing and performing improvised verses].

³⁰ *Autobiografia*, 235. [When the moon was bright enough, I spent even my nights reading and, if not reading, going over what I had read in my mind. This is how my first years were spent after my brother died in Pescara, where he had enlisted in a branch of the army of Naples].

³¹ Fido, "At the Origins of Autobiography," 173. See also Di Ricco's observations on Bandettini's use of the "topos autobiografico della precocità" (93).

³² *The Autobiography of Giambattista Vico*, trans. Max Harold Fisch and Thomas Goddard Bergin, rev. ed. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), 111. "In età di sette anni, essendo col capo in giù piombato da alto fuori d'una scala

Vico, Bandettini surrounds the discovery of her vocation with a nexus of specific elements that includes not only a tragic accident (Vico's fall and the death of Teresa's brother, both of which occur when they are seven years old), an emphasis on autodidacticism, and the autobiographical topos of illnesses caused by an overzealous devotion to studying.

Just as Vico had emphasized that he had been his own teacher (“maestro di se medesimo”) and that even his tutors had referred to him an autodidact,³³ Bandettini uses almost identical terms to describe her “inextinguishable curiosity” for knowledge, which enabled her to learn to read on her own:

Chi il crederebbe? nell'età di cinque anni, e forse meno io leggeva speditamente senza avere appreso a congiunger le lettere con alcun metodo; ciò sembra a me pur anco impossibile, ma pur è vero ond'io giurar posso di non avere avuto altro maestro, che me stessa.³⁴

She recalls that before long her mother was unable to provide adequate answers to satisfy her inquisitiveness, suggesting an intrinsic literary vocation that, already in the early years of her life, allowed Teresa to surpass her family's modest origins.³⁵ As she would later emphasize in her letters to Tommaso Trenta and Diodata Saluzzo, it was the combination of her natural talent and tireless dedication to her studies, and not her teachers or mentors, that led to her literary fame. In her response to Trenta's request for a firsthand account of her “progressi nell'arte

nel piano, onde rimase ben cinque ore senza moto e privo di senso [...] indi in poi e' crescesse di una natura malinconica ed acre, qual dee essere degli uomini ingegnosi e profondi” (Vico, *Vita*, 5).

³³ “Egli cominciò a salire in grido di letterato, e tra gli altri il signor Gregorio Calopreso [...] il soleva chiamare l'*autodidascolo* o sia il maestro di se medesimo” (Vico, *Vita*, 22).

³⁴ *Autobiografia*, 231. [Who would believe it? At the age of five, or perhaps earlier, I read with ease without having had any method of learning to connect letters; it seems almost impossible even to me, and yet it is true, whereby I can swear to having had no teacher but myself].

³⁵ “Si sviluppava in me un vivo desiderio d'imparare e una curiosità inestinguibile; tal che frequentissime erano le inchieste mie sopra ogni obbietto, e talvolta tanto sottili che mia Madre, che da me sempre veniva consultata ben sovente si trovava costretta a non sapere, adagatamente rispondermi” (ibid., 230-31). Di Ricco describes this as the consequence of “una vocazione ingenita, che tende a superare i limiti della condizione culturale di partenza” (90), and Caspani similarly remarks that the modest conditions of Bandettini's family are part of a common “stereotipo dell'artista” used to “rafforzare ancora di più la forza del suo talento non sostenuto dall'esterno” (436).

poetica,” Bandettini writes:

Le notizie poi che ella mi ricerca intorno a’ miei progressi nell’arte poetica son così oscure che io stessa non saprei rinvenirle. La poesia è nata con me, crebbe con gli anni e con le cognizioni; il mio maestro, a cui tutto debbo, fu il mio genio, e un assiduo studio [...] Erra chiunque vuol darmi un precettore.³⁶

In addition to this letter, which Di Ricco posits as a precursor to Bandettini’s autobiographical project, the poet later expresses a similar sentiment in a letter to the poet Diodata Saluzzo:

Se qualche nome ho acquistato, non tanto lo devo a grand’uomini da me conosciuti, quanto a me stessa, per l’assiduità con che data mi sono allo studio, vegliando su libri fino a risentire non poco danno nella salute.³⁷

The letter to Saluzzo is important not only because it is addressed to another female poet and because it was written the same year as her autobiography, but also because Bandettini reflects on the consequences of her passion for literature on her physical health, a motif that also appears in her autobiography, in which she writes that her assiduous dedication to her studies as a child, while pleasurable, had led to drastic weight loss and severe headaches.³⁸ The theme of illnesses caused by too much studying is prevalent in many eighteenth-century autobiographies, including those of Vico, Carlo Gozzi and Pietro Giannone, as well as in medical and literary treatises.³⁹

³⁶ Letter to Tommaso Trenta, secretary of the Accademia degli Oscuri, dated January 2, 1795, in which Bandettini provides him with information about her life (cited in Di Ricco, 110 and Caspani, 437). [The information that you seek regarding my progress in the art of poetry is so obscure that even I would not know where to look for it. Poetry was born with me, it grew over the years and with my knowledge; my master, to whom I owe everything, was my own talent and habitual study ... Anyone who wishes to identify a teacher of mine is mistaken]. On Bandettini’s relationship with Trenta and his own fundamental role in securing her literary and financial success, see Caspani, 456-466.

³⁷ Letter to Diodata Saluzzo dated September 6, 1825 (cited in Caspani, 437).

³⁸ “Una così assidua applicazione in età così tenera, ch’io teneva per trastullo, non poteva far sì che non nuocesse sopra il mio fisico. Io dimagrava a vista d’occhio, un continuo mal di testa ch’io dissimulava per non tralasciare i miei studj, mi rendeva tal volta inabile a reggermi in piedi” (*Autobiografia*, 232).

³⁹ Vico describes, always at the age of seven, having often stayed up all night studying despite his mother’s concerns: “egli si poneva al tavolino la sera, e la buona madre, risvegliatasi dal primo sonno e per pietà comandandogli che andasse a dormire, più volte il ritruovò aver lui studiato infino al giorno” (Vico, *Vita*, 6). On the

Within her description of her “literary” illness, Bandettini conflates two other autobiographical motifs, or rather the sequestration of her books by her mother (though traditionally in eighteenth-century autobiographies it is often the father who discovers and confiscates forbidden reading material), and Teresa’s consequent recourse to theft:

Mia Madre sollecita della mia salute referendo tutto al mio troppo leggere e scrivere, un tal giorno non solo severamente mi riprese ma ciò che fu peggio mi tolse i libri chiudendoli in una vecchia cassa e il calamajo nascose non so dove. Toccava allora i miei sette anni ond’ella mia diceva, che tempo era d’applicarmi a lavori donneschi e lasciar da banda que’ *libracci*, poiché le donne devono consacrarsi a questi soltanto. Io amava mia Madre teneramente e il vederla per la prima volta meco sdegnata mi mortificò a segno, che piansi un intero giorno [...] posta a letto finsi subito dormire [...] andava divisando il modo di ritrovare, se non libri, almeno con che scrivere ciò che aveva imparato e comporre alcuna cosa di mia invenzione, ma niun mezzo mi si affacciava alla mente. Così passai quella notte parte vegliando e parte sognando, libri carta, e calamajo, tanto era affetta da tale idea.⁴⁰

In response to having her books confiscated, Teresa secretly acquires paper from a friend and uses money her mother had given her to buy sweets in order to purchase books, which she conceals under her mattress.⁴¹ She also hides a carafe filled with ink inside of a small altar to the

autobiographical topos of excessive studying and its consequences, see Stefania Buccini, “Lecture clandestine e ‘apprendisti Lettori’ nelle autobiografie del Sette-Ottocento,” *Yearbook of Italian Studies* 10 (1993): 34. On the medical basis of this topos, see Roger Chartier, “The Pathology of the Man of Letters,” in *Enlightenment Portraits*, ed. Michel Vovelle, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 176. Chartier describes the various causes attributed to the poor health of men of letters as outlined in medical dissertations, such as Giuseppe Antonio Pujati’s *Della preservazione della salute de’ letterati* (1762) and Samuel-Auguste Tissot’s *De la santé des gens de lettres* (1768). See also Anne C. Vila and Ronan Chalmin, “‘Tout malade de son génie’: raconter les pathologies des gens de lettres, de Tissot à Balzac,” *Dix-Huitième Siècle* 47 (2015): 55-71.

⁴⁰ *Autobiografia*, 232-233. [My Mother, concerned for my health, attributing everything to my excessive reading and writing, on one such occasion not only severely chastised me but, what’s worse, took away my books, locking them in an old chest and hiding my inkwell I don’t know where. I was then seven years old when she told me that it was time to apply myself to womanly duties and put aside those *nasty books*, since women must dedicate themselves solely to the former. I loved my mother dearly and seeing her angry with me for the first time I was so deeply ashamed that I cried for an entire day ... I went to bed and immediately pretended to sleep ... while I was plotting a way to retrieve if not my books at least something with which to write down what I had learned and compose something of my own invention, but no solutions came to mind and I thus spent that night half awake and half dreaming of books, paper, and my inkwell, so tormented was I by this thought]. Stefania Buccini describes a similar passage in Gozzi’s *Memorie inutili*, in which the young playwright’s overzealous studying causes a nosebleed that leads his family to hide his books, paper, and ink (Buccini, 34).

⁴¹ Describing how she enlisted her friend, Oliva, to help her acquire paper, Bandettini writes: “Ella il giorno dopo me ne portò cinque o sei fogli dicendomi: che quando avessi terminata quella me ne avrebbe data dell’altra stante

Virgin Mary in her room, transforms the chest in which her mother had locked her books into a makeshift desk, fashions an inkwell from eggshell, and uses a twig as a pen.⁴²

Teresa's struggle to pursue her literary vocation despite the obstacles created by her mother is itself characteristic of the autobiographical genre. Many women writers in fact incorporate (though reversing the gender of the implicated parent) the two main autobiographical topoi of "child-family relationships" described by Franco Fido, or rather the premature death of the mother and negative judgment from the father figure.⁴³ While Fido's analysis is limited to male autobiographers, in the case of autobiographies authored by women (including Queen Christina of Sweden in the late seventeenth century and Petronilla Paolini Massimi in the early eighteenth century), it is often the death of her father that drastically alters the destiny of the female autobiographer. Indeed, this is one of the primary catalysts for Bandettini's discovery of her vocation and also marks the start of a characteristically fraught mother-daughter relationship.⁴⁴

che suo fratello ne portava molta a casa la quale serviva loro ad accendere il fuoco. In effetto la carta era quasi straccia, ma che perciò! [...] aveva trovato il modo di leggere impiegando i pochi soldi che mi dava mia madre per comprarmi dei dolci, in quelle leggende in ottava rima, che al prezzo d'un soldo si vendono da libraj mentre che andava all'esame; Giosafat e il fior di virtù così con esse furono da me posti sotto il saccone in compagnia della carta che fin qui rimasta era inoperosa" (*Autobiografia*, 233-234).

⁴² "In questo mezzo, che io ad altro non pensava che al modo di potere scrivere mi venne fatto di trovare in un armarietto una guastadetta in cui pareva esservi dello inchiostro, che scoperta! ma ella era vòta. Con tutto ciò io me ne resi padrona, vi posi dell'acqua, e quindi la nascosi sotto l'altarino che eretto aveva nella mia camera raccomandandola, con puerile semplicità, alla SS: Vergine. La sera allorché tutte noi fummo ivi riunite a recitare il rosario, oh com'io tremava, che venisse scoperta l'ampolla ivi da me riposta! ma tutto andò a seconda de' miei desiderj, ond'io lo tenni a miracolo. Con quell'acqua imbevuta del sedimento dello inchiostro giunsi a scrivere servendomi a tal uopo di penna uno stecco, e di calamajo un guiscio [*sic*] d'ovo. Ciò faceva sempre che l'opportunità mi si presentava servendomi di scrittojo quella cassa stessa che conteneva i miei libri su cui ritta in piedi dettava versi con somma mia soddisfazione" (*ibid.*, 234).

⁴³ Fido, "At the Origins of Autobiography," 173.

⁴⁴ The death of the father also plays a central role the autobiographies of Maria Domitilla Galluzzi (1595-1671) and Camilla Faà Gonzaga (1599-1662), considered in the first chapter, whereas Veronica Giuliani (1660-1727) presents the more traditional topos of the mother's death accompanied by paternal opposition (see chapter 2), which is arguably as much a part of the tradition of women's spiritual autobiography (starting with the Life of Saint Teresa of Avila) as it is of the literary tradition considered by Fido.

As Bandettini notes in her autobiography, the death of her father shortly following her birth put the family's financial stability at risk and profoundly altered her upbringing:

Pochi giorni dopo il mio nascimento s'infermò mio padre di mortal malattia per cui dovette soccombere. Facil cosa è figurarsi la desolazione della mia povera madre rimasta vedova con una famiglia composta d'un maschio e di tre femmine!⁴⁵

Like Christina of Sweden and Petronilla Paolini Massimi, Bandettini describes the emotional and financial turmoil caused by her father's death, as she and her siblings were subjected to the whims of her uncles and other men appointed to govern the family's property until Teresa's brother reached adulthood. A significant portion of their land was sold in order to settle her father's debts and her uncles later attempted to profit from her brother's death as well.⁴⁶ Her father's death also has profound consequences on her relationship with her mother, which Bandettini characterizes in terms of a flux of affinities and dissimilarities that, as in Paolini Massimi's *Vita*, begin with her mother's temporary inability to breastfeed due to her extreme grief as a young widow.⁴⁷

Their physical and emotional distance is soon overcome as Teresa becomes the center of

⁴⁵ *Autobiografia*, 229. [Several days after my birth, my father became ill with a mortal sickness to which he succumbed. An easy thing it is to imagine the desolation of my poor mother who was left widowed with a son and three daughters!]. Bandettini similarly opens her third-person narrative by contrasting her birth with her father's death: "Teresa [...] nacque in Lucca nell'Anno 1770 otto giorni avanti la morte del suo genitore" (ms. 638, c.12r).

⁴⁶ "I tutori nominati da mio padre nella minorità di Giuseppe mio fratello e nostra, onde sodisfare un debito incontrato da mio padre, per una tal pagheria, vendettero alcuni pezzi di terra d'un valore molto superiore a quello, che si richiedeva per saldarlo [...] I fratelli di mio padre, e miei zij, vagheggiavano ciò che a noi rimaneva" (*Autobiografia*, 230). As in the autobiography of Petronilla Paolini Massimi, Bandettini goes on to describe the daily "molestie" and "barbarie" of one of her paternal uncles in particular, whose name but not whose behavior she spares: "uno fra gli altri de' cognati di mia Madre, di cui taccio il nome [...] si piaceva di venire fino in casa nostra ad insultarla e minacciar noi di strapparne dalle braccia materne e chiuderci in un ritiro" (ibid., 235). Her brother, Giuseppe, also accumulated significant debts and before his own death had abandoned the family to flee his creditors (Di Ricco, 90).

⁴⁷ "L'eccessivo dolore" of Bandettini's mother "fece sì ch'ella si trovasse costretta a darmi, acciò mi nudrisse ad una contadina fittuaria della nostra famiglia, giacché Ella perduto aveva il latte né poteva alimentarmi. Non molto tempo però mi sofferse da lei lontana; ultimo frutto del più tenero amor coniugale, tosto che mercè i rimedj indicati a tal uopo, e più cred'io per la religiosa sua rassegnazione, riacquistato ebbe il potere d'allattarmi, non tardò un istante a richiamarmi dalla villa e ripormi al seno" (*Autobiografia*, 229-230).

the family's attention as the youngest child and "only consolation" for her mother.⁴⁸ Moreover, it is Bandettini's mother, herself a lover of books and poetry, who initiates her poetic education. Teresa finds an early model of poetic performance that presages her own vocation and future career as an improviser in her mother's ability to recite stories and verse from memory and to improvise verses in *ottava rima*.⁴⁹ Her mother also loves to read:

Il genio però della madre mia portato alla lettura, e il vederla io in tutte l'ore che rubar poteva al lavoro leggere assiduamente svegliava in me la brama di saper leggere, e quindi l'esempj ch'ella mi raccontava di persone devote a Dio, le canzoni spirituali alle quali qualche volta cantando si piaceva alternare con altre storie in ottava rima, come quella di Paris e Vienna di S: Cristoforo e a queste altre simili, giacché ne sapeva a mente moltissime facevan sì che io estatica l'ascoltassi, e sovente pregando, o piangendo l'importunassi invitandola a raccontarmi alcuna delle tante storie, e novelle, ch'ella sapeva. Per ottener però tal grazia d'uopo mi era ripetere devote orazioni e non pochi passi del catechismo e della dottrina cristiana [...] Ella fu che m'insegnò a conoscer le lettere sulla Santa Croce, dicendomi: Ove tu giunga a compitare potrai da te stessa appagare la tua curiosità e leggere tutti i libri, che sono in quella scansia.⁵⁰

From a historical perspective, this passage provides unique insight into the kinds of reading material popular among women and children during this time.⁵¹ As Stefania Buccini has observed, the memorialization of one's childhood encounters with books is a pervasive

⁴⁸ "Er'io da lei allevata, con ogni cura, perché com'ella mi diceva più volte, er io l'unica sua consolazione. Le mie sorelle pur anco, di me molto d'età maggiore, non si saziavano di carezzarmi, così ch'io tosto incominciai a balbettare vedendomi tanto cara alla nostra famigliuola mi credeva esser qual cosa di grande" (ibid., 230).

⁴⁹ "Ella per mia fortuna sapeva pur anco improvvisare in ottava rima [...] Questo era il miglior dono, che potesse farmi, anteponeva ad ogni divertimento il piacere di improvvisare" (ibid.). Di Ricco, while affirming the influence of Bandettini's mother on her cultural initiation as a poet, also notes Bandettini's emphasis on her innate desire for knowledge and her lack of a formal method of study or education (90).

⁵⁰ *Autobiografia*, 231. [My mother's love for reading and watching her absorbed in books in every moment that she was able to steal away from her work incited my desire to know how to read, such that the examples she recounted of religious devotees, spiritual poems she would alternate with other stories in *ottava rima*, like those of Paris and Vienna, of Saint Christopher and others, since she knew many by heart, led me to listen to her in ecstasy, often begging and crying for her to tell me one of the many stories or tales she knew. In exchange, I was often forced to repeat prayers and no small number of passages from the catechism or Christian doctrine ... She was the one who taught me to recognize the letters of the alphabet, telling me: Once you can read you will be able to satisfy your own curiosity and read all the books that are on that shelf].

⁵¹ On the role of chivalric literature in the development of private reading practices in Italy, especially among women and children, see Marina Roggero, *Le carte piene di sogni. Testi e lettori in età moderna* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2006).

autobiographical topos.⁵² In this passage, Bandettini refers to the French chivalric romance, *Paris et Vienne* (translated into Italian verse by Angelo Albani Orvietano with the title *Innamoramento di due fedelissimi amanti, Paris e Vienna*), and she goes on to list specific titles on their shelf: a legendary of saints' lives, the works of Metastasio, some of Goldoni's comedies, the poetry of Dante, Petrarch and Tasso, and diverse volumes in Latin, from Cicero to Aesop's fables, which Bandettini laments not having been able to read at the time.⁵³ The young Teresa is so enamored of poetry that she often forgets to eat and fails to hear her mother calling her to the dinner table, and even then refuses to be separated from her books, preferring to read while she eats.⁵⁴

Bandettini teaches herself how to write, and she begins to compose her first sonnets, comedies, and improvised verses by imitating her favorite authors:

Mi posi a scrivere, non avendo altro esempio che quello de' libri stampati, stampatello. Chi sa quali saranno state le lettere da me usate? ma io le intendeva e ciò bastava, perché io, aveva ora ad'imitazione de' ritmi del Petrarca componessi [*sic*] canzoni ballate, e sonetti ed ora certe dette da me commedie in versi martelliani servendomi da guida il Goldoni, come pur anco cantate dietro la lettura del Metastasio. Di ciò non contenta sull'aria di questa, o di quella canzonetta, che udiva cantar per la strada, vi adattava all'improvviso versi di mia invenzione.⁵⁵

⁵² See Buccini, 34.

⁵³ "Proprietaria de libri di mio fratello trovai in esso scaffale e il leggendario de' santi, e l'opere di Metastasio e alcune commedie del Goldoni e un Dante e un Petrarca e un Tasso ed altri libercoli o superiori al mio intendimento, o non di mio genio. Fra questi però vi erano le favole d'Esopo. Come restai avvilita allorché credendo poter come gli altri legger pur anco queste, a non intenderne sillaba? corsi al solito da mia Madre, ella rindendo [*sic*], poi che inteso ebbe il motivo del mio cruccio, mi disse: come vuoi capire questo libretto se è scritto in Latino? Quel latino, e quel libretto mi facevano perdere molt'ore e mi ostinava interpretarne il senso, cosiché bramato avrei che alcuno m'insegnasse il latino ma niuna persona frequentava la nostra casa atta ad appagar le mie brame. Il povero Esopo adunque, e la regia Parnassi Cicerone e la grammatica del Poretti rimasero obbliate in un cantuccio perché io era in collera con quel latino che non poteva intendere quantunque mi ci fossi instillata più e più giorni il mio piccol cervello" (*Autobiografia*, 231).

⁵⁴ "La Poesia però mi piaceva sopra tutto e in modo da dimenticare persino la merenda, e spesse volte tant'era assorta in ciò che leggeva, che non udiva le replicate chiamate di mia madre e delle mie sorelle che m'invitavano al nostro parco desinare cosiché loro era forza condurmivi. Ma io non lasciava però il mio libro, che aperto al mio fianco fissava i miei sguardi, e leggendo a un tempo, e mangiando, non vedeva il momento di potere senza interruzione riprendere la mia lettura" (*ibid.*, 231-232). See also Buccini, 30.

Yet, starting with the confiscation of her books, Teresa's mother comes to represent not only the first impetus, but also the primary obstacle to her literary ambitions. Bandettini's guilt over hiding her studies from her mother happens to coincide with her first spiritual confession, during which she admits to having violated her mother's "commandment" to stop reading and writing, but her confession yields unexpected results:

Il risultamento però della mia confessione fu ben diverso da quello, che mi attendeva; io tornai in possesso di tutti i miei libri, che disposi in ordine nella loro scansia ed ebbi la permissione d'impiegare l'ore concesse al divertimento in quel modo che più mi gradisse. Venne alcuni giorni dopo quel buon padre a trovarne, e mi fece più carezze del solito. Volle vedere ciò che io scriveva ma non giungendo a capire le abbreviature, ch'io sola intendeva, m'interrogava sopra vari punti della storia sacra e della profana non meno che della mitologia. Trovandomi instruita più che la mia età nol comportava maravigliò e vòlto a mia madre: questa fanciulletta, disse accenna dover essere un'altra Corilla; era Corilla in que' tempi in gran fama benché non ancora coronata in Campidoglio. Da quel giorno in poi più non fui contrariata, e permesso mi fu, dopo il lavoro, far uso del tempo come più mi piaceva.⁵⁶

Thanks to this prophetic intervention on the part of her spiritual director, an Augustinian priest, Bandettini makes great progress in her education and finally begins her formal study of Latin with the aid of her dance instructor, who supplies her with numerous books, and, later, another priest who takes Teresa under his wing when she is approximately eleven years old.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Ibid., 232. [I started writing in block letters, not having any example but that of printed books. Who knows what letters I used? But I understood them and that was sufficient for me, imitating Petrarch's rhythms, to compose *canzoni*, ballads, and sonnets, and to write some comedies in Martellian verse, using Goldoni as a guide, and some musical comedies following my reading of Metastasio. As if that weren't enough, I would adapt songs I heard being sung on the street with verses of my own invention].

⁵⁶ Ibid., 234. [Yet, the results of my confession were quite different from what I expected: I came back into possession of all of my books, which I put back in order on their shelf, and I was given permission to spend my free time as I wished. The good priest came by several days later, and was more affectionate than usual. He wanted to see what I was writing, but did not understand my abbreviations, which only I could understand. He questioned me about various aspects of sacred and profane history, and also mythology. Amazed to find that I was unusually educated for my age, he turned to my mother: This girl, he gestured, promises to become another Corilla; Corilla at that time was very famous even if she had not yet been crowned poet laureate in Rome. From that day on, my mother was no longer opposed, and I was allowed after work to use my time as most pleased me]. On debates surrounding Corilla Olimpica's coronation in 1776 and her moral character, see Esterhammer, 80.

⁵⁷ "Con questa facilità di far versi, e con l'assidua lettura di quanti libri mi venivano alle mani, e più con l'ajuto d'un

At the same time, Bandettini's mother continues to urge her to devote herself to more practical occupations. From a young age, her mother taught her to make stockings and demanded that she complete a requisite number of stitches before being allowed to excuse herself from her work. Teresa contrasts her disinterest and difficulty in sewing with her natural aptitude for learning:

Mia Madre m'insegnava a far le calze, e mi prefiggeva il numero delle costure, che doveva compiere avanti di darmi *festa*. Però quant'io mostrava attitudine ad apprendere, e a concepire tutto ciò che appartiene alle belle lettere, sempre relativamente alla mia età, e alle cognizioni da me acquistate, tanto era goffa e disattenta nel lavoro, e senza il secreto aiuto della maggior mia sorella che vedendomi ingrugnata adempiva il compito a me assegnato, ben sovente avrei dovuto perdere tutto il giorno per giungere a terminare quelle poche costure.⁵⁸

As time goes on, and in light of her brother's death and the family's continued economic hardship, Bandettini's mother – encouraged by Teresa's dance teacher – also begins to urge her and her sister to consider a potential career as dancers:

La mia povera madre credette poter dare orecchio alle insinuazioni del nostro maestro di ballo, che le prometteva in poco tempo di far di me una brava ballerina particolarmente perché mostrava più attitudine al ballo di quello, che ne avesse mia sorella, essendo maggiore di me di dieci od undici anni, ed inconseguenza men atta a farsi distinguere in tal carriera. Con tutto ciò ella si diede a studiare tal professione indefessamente, ed io riflettendo che poteva migliorare la sorte di mia madre, e torla alla persecuzione de' suoi

vecchio, amico di casa, il quale era maestro di ballo, così detto da sala, che me ne procurava, io acquistava di giorno in giorno non poche cognizioni. La storia sacra che quel buon uomo mi fece avere, fu da me letta e riletta e posto in versi il sacrificio d'Isacco per cui più volte dovetti piangere. Ebbi per suo mezzo pur anco un dizionario delle favole, e un non so qual ristretto della storia Romana. Dotata com'era d'una memoria felicissima ciò ch'io leggeva mi rimaneva in essa scolpito. Non so poi dire chi m'inspirasse, se ascriver non si voglia a fortuna quel gusto, che mi portava a scegliere fra il buona l'ottimo, e farne serbo nella mente" (*Autobiografia*, 232). In her letter to Tommaso Trenta from January 2, 1795, she describes the rapid progress she made under the instruction of a "buon prete eletto ad istruire un fanciullo della riviera di Genova, ove io mi trovava nell'età mia di 11 o 12 anni [...] non sdegnò di partire le sue premure fra me e il suo alunno; vedendo che io facevo più rapidi progressi, s'affezionò a me e tanto mi insegnò quanto bastò ad istruirmi ed a scoprire in me il genio che mi trasportava alla poesia" (cited in Caspani, 436-437). See also Di Ricco, 94.

⁵⁸ *Autobiografia*, 233. [Meanwhile my mother taught me to make stockings, deciding in advance the number of seams that I had to complete before excusing myself. But the aptitude I showed for learning and understanding all that related to the arts, relative to my age and the knowledge I had acquired, was matched by my clumsiness and carelessness in my sewing, and without the secret aid of my older sister, who seeing me sulk would finish the work assigned to me, I would have often had to waste the entire day to finish those few stitches]. In Di Ricco's estimation, Teresa's resistance to her mother's wishes is a sign of her larger refusal to abide by the "chiusure di un costume, impersonato dalla madre, che considera la cultura un privilegio tutto maschile" (93).

cognati, ne seguiva l'esempio. Non è però, che abbandonassi la lettura, per la quale il solo mio genio mi fu guida a farmi apprezzare in singolar modo la divina commedia di Dante [...] Intanto di giorno in giorno crescevano i bisogni della nostra povera famigliuola [...] La provvidenza soltanto cangiar poteva la nostra situazione e questa non mancò di soccorrer noi e di procurarci uno scampo. Venni scritturata pel Teatro di Bastia in Corsica in qualità di prima ballerina, e mia sorella di terza.⁵⁹

As evidenced by her debut as a *prima ballerina*, Teresa possessed what seemed like a natural aptitude for dance, attributed by her dance teacher to her young age and thin, agile physique. (Teresa has fewer words of praise for her instructor than he has for her, since he defers to her mother's orders to no longer provide her with books).⁶⁰ She also clearly distinguishes her skills as a dancer from her poetic vocation. In the above passage, for example, the providential nature ("la provvidenza soltanto") of her theatrical career, which she undertakes in a conscious effort to support her family and only with the aid of fortuitous circumstances, is juxtaposed with her innate literary genius ("il solo mio genio mi fu guida"). Yet, despite the division that Bandettini attempts to create between poetry and dance, the two activities are inextricably tied, not only because of their inherent theatricality, but also, on a more practical level, because Teresa's arrival in Corsica allows her to establish important contacts with generals, officers, and other prominent intellectual and artistic figures. Through her friendships with the Florentine naturalist, Adamo Fabbroni, and the French military governor of Corsica, the Count de Marbeuf, Bandettini is received favorably not only in the theater but also in private salons, and is able to learn both French and Latin:

⁵⁹ Ibid., 235-236. [My poor mother believed she could trust the insinuations of our dance instructor, who promised her that in a short amount of time he could turn me into a good dancer, especially because I showed greater aptitude than my sister, who was older than me by ten or twelve years, and thus less likely to distinguish herself in such a career. Nonetheless, she dedicated herself tirelessly to studying this profession, and I followed her example, reflecting on the possibility of improving my mother's lot and saving her from the persecutions of my father's brothers. However, it is not that I abandoned my studies, in which my talent alone guided me towards a particular appreciation of Dante's Divine Comedy ... Meanwhile, with each day the needs of our poor little family were growing ... Only providence could change our situation and fate did not fail to come to our aid and find a way out. I signed on with the Teatro di Bastia in Corsica as the principal dancer, and my sister as the third principal dancer].

⁶⁰ Ibid., 233.

La mia gioventù, l'intelligenza, che poneva in tutto ciò, che doveva rappresentare, e quella lodevole ambizione, che sempre mi ha portato a farmi sopra l'altri distinguere [*sic*], mi conciliarono, non solo gli applausi degli spettatori, per lo più francesi, ma quelli del Generale Marboeuf e delle dame che lo circondavano, giacché egli teneva una specie di corte. Qui appresi al solito senz'altro maestro, il francese; non così il latino, che uopo mi fu imparare d'esso i primi rudimenti da un prete genovese [...] L'applausi che prodigati mi erano in teatro per l'intelligenza che poneva in tutto ciò che doveva rappresentare, e quelli, che riscuoteva nelle private conversazioni pel mio spirito, e la cultura che senza ostentazione manifestava, procurato mi avevano l'attenzione del generale e degli ufiziali del suo stato maggiore.⁶¹

Bandettini went on to receive similar acclaim as the principal dancer for theaters in Florence and Bologna, experiences which proved equally fruitful for her literary career.⁶² Her initiation as an improviser also began during this period, thanks to her friendship with Tarsizio Riviera, the physician in the Bolognese theater where she was employed:

Il medico del teatro era un giovine studiosissimo di carattere serio [...] Un lieve incomodo prodotto in me dall'aria acuta di Bologna me lo avvicinò onde curarmi. Egli maravigliò trovando in me una fanciulla dotata di molte cognizioni né cessò da quel punto di frequentarmi con assiduità. Per porsi egli al disopra della critica de' suoi conoscenti che disapporavano [*sic*], ch'egli corteggiasse una ballerina, m'introdusse nelle case di sua clientela, e qui cominciai a farmi conoscere per improvvisatrice cantando versi su gli argomenti che mi venivano proposti.⁶³

⁶¹ Ibid., 236-237. [My youth, my intelligence, which I exhibited in every role, and my praiseworthy ambition, which allowed me to distinguish myself above others, brought me not only the applause of the spectators, the majority of whom were French, but also that of General Marbeuf and the ladies who circulated in what was a kind of court that he kept. Here, as usual without any teacher, I learned French; not so with Latin, the basic elements of which I had to learn from a Genoese priest ... The lavish praise bestowed on me in the theater, for the thought that I put into all of my roles, and in private conversations, for my spirit and the culture that I demonstrated without ostentation, had attracted the attention of the general and his highest officers]. See also Caspani, 437.

⁶² Upon her return to Lucca, she is hired in Florence, Bologna and Venice: "Tornata a Lucca venni ricercata pel teatro di Firenze e qui pure per prima ballerina. Non fu dissimile la fortuna, che incontrai in Firenze da quella di Bastia. Si veniva al Teatro di via del Cocomero per applaudire alla prima Ballerina ed io animata dagli encomj e dal sapermi ben vista poneva ogni studio a meritarmi la grazia d'un pubblico tanto per me ben prevenuto [...] Da Firenze passai a Bologna sempre col grado di prima ballerina" (ibid., 237).

⁶³ Ibid., 238. [The doctor of the theater was a very studious young man of a serious nature ... A slight discomfort caused by Bologna's penetrating air had led me to seek treatment from him. He was amazed to find a young woman like me in possession of so much knowledge, and from that moment began to visit me frequently. To circumvent the criticism of his friends who did not approve of him courting a dancer, he introduced me in the homes of his clients, and here I began to make myself known as an improviser, singing verses on various topics that were proposed to me]. Bandettini claims that her relationship with the doctor remained one of "rispettosa amicizia."

By virtue of her relationship with Riviera, she met other intellectuals in Bologna and gained a knowledge of physics, botany, and natural history upon which she later drew in her improvised verses. Their companionship was interrupted by her departure for Venice, where she had been hired as a principal dancer at the theater of San Benedetto, and where she continued to devote her free time to her literary studies in order to fill the void of Riviera's absence and to counter the boredom of the long breaks between rehearsals.⁶⁴

In Venice, as in Bologna, Teresa Bandettini's unique status as a "ballerina letterata" drew attention from important literary figures, this time from the poet and important theatrical figure, Giovanni Pindemonte:

Nel tempo delle prove, che lunghissim'era in cui le prime parti rimangono in ozio e il più viene impegnato ad instruire il corpo del ballo, che così chiamati vengono i figuranti ed i ballerini di concerto, io usava per non annojarmi portar meco un libro e appartata dagli altri leggere sin tanto che a me non toccasse venire in iscena. Un giorno mentre ch'io era intenta alla mia favorita lettura di Dante una maschera dietro di me senza ch'io me ne accorgessi fissando gli occhi sul mio libro: cospetto, gridò: voi leggete Dante! l'intendete poi? mi voltai spaventata, e quindi offesa dalla villana dimanda che piccava il mio amor proprio, credo intenderlo, risposi, e per ciò lo leggo. Era questa maschera Giovanni Pindemonte noto non meno per le sue Tragedie che pel suo bizzarro umore. Egli mandò in burla scusandosi l'imprudenza, che aveva commessa dicendo: ch'era io la prima giovinetta e quel che più ballerina, che si diletta di tale *oscura Commedia* prese meco a far conversazione ed io m'industriai di mostrargli che digiuna non era di cognizioni né straniera nella provincia delle belle lettere così che ne rimase incantato. Egli mi accompagnò a casa e chiese la permissione di venire la sera a ritrovarmi.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ "I nostri giornalieri trattenimenti nulla avevano di frivolo. La lettura di Dante preferita era da lui ad ogni altra ed essendo egli peritissimo nella fisica mi spiegava varj fenomeni che giovarmi potevano quando proposti mi venissero per tema di canto estemporaneo. Così in compagnia ad esclusione d'ogni altro, di questo costumato e dotto giovane, passai con profitto il tempo della mia dimora in Bologna né mi accorsi d'aver per lui concepito un sentimento più caldo che quello dell'amicizia se non allor quando dovetti lasciarlo per portarmi a Venezia essendo *scritturata* pel teatro di san Benedetto per prima Ballerina. Pure il nostro congedo non ebbe nulla di tenero, la soggezione ch'io aveva di mia madre bastò a contener le mie lacrime, e il serio contegno del mio dottor fece sì ch'io ne imitassi l'esempio" (ibid.). San Benedetto was Venice's main theater until it burnt down in 1774; this well-known fact would have immediately signaled to contemporary readers that Bandettini could not possibly have been born in 1770 as she instead claims, which is another reason why the false date was likely intended by Bandettini as a literary allusion that she fully expected her audience to grasp.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 239. [During the extremely long rehearsals, during which the principal dancers idle about while the majority of time is spent instructing the corps de ballet, or rather the dancers with minor roles, so as not to grow bored I would bring a book with me and read, away from the others, until it was my turn to go onstage. One day as I was intently studying my favorite book, that of Dante, a mask behind me, his eyes fixed on my book without my

Like Bandettini's doctor in Bologna, Pindemonte serves as a vehicle for her introduction to Venetian society, where she begins to receive recognition as a poet rather than just as a dancer and is praised onstage as a "brava poetessa."⁶⁶ Yet, as this passage shows, Pindemonte also subscribes to the stereotype of dancers as uncultured and wanton.⁶⁷ From the moment of their first encounter, his praise of Teresa's poetic abilities remains closely tied to negative associations with her profession as a ballerina, and he continues to express disbelief at her capacity to reconcile these two contrasting occupations: "Chi l'avrebbe creduto? tanta cultura, tante cognizioni, e in una ballerina?"⁶⁸

Moreover, Teresa must constantly stress the platonic nature of her relationships with male poets and intellectuals and, just as her doctor in Bologna had needed to defend himself against skepticism of his friendship with a dancer, she describes Pindemonte first and foremost as a "competitor" with whom she contended in public performances of improvised verse.⁶⁹ She does, however, admit that their relationship was ultimately ruined by his feelings of desire and her realization of his ulterior motives. Following their exchange of improvised stanzas, during

realizing, shouted in front of me: You're reading Dante! But do you understand it? I turned around, frightened, and then offended by the boorish question that piqued my *amor proprio*, I responded: I believe I do understand it, which is why I'm reading it. This was the mask of Giovanni Pindemonte, known no less for his tragedies than his bizarre humor. He begged forgiveness for his carelessness, saying that I was the first young woman, and a dancer no less, to take pleasure in that *obscure Comedy*. He began conversing with me and I set out to show him that I did not lack for knowledge, nor was I a stranger to the realm of letters, such that he was enchanted. He accompanied me home and asked permission to come by in the evening to visit me]. On Pindemonte's importance in Italy's theatrical history, see Franco Fido, "L'abate Casti, Giovanni Pindemonte e la *grandeur des romains* in veste da camera," in *Lumi inquieti. Amicizie, passioni, viaggi di letterati nel Settecento. Omaggio a Marco Cerruti* (Turin: Accademia University Press, 2012), 203.

⁶⁶ Describing the consequences of her chance encounter with Pindemonte and their subsequent friendship, she writes: "Bastò la conoscenza di questo signore farmi cognita al pubblico più culto di Venezia. La prima volta che comparij sulle scene di San Benedetto fui salutata per poetessa, e sempre udiva ripetere 'brava la Poetessa' questo grido oh come giungeva a me caro!" (*Autobiografia*, 239-240).

⁶⁷ See, for example, Goldoni's representation of the ballerina, Lisaura, in his comedy, *La Bottega del Caffè* (1750).

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 239.

⁶⁹ "Pindemonte era sempre il mio competitore" (*ibid.*, 240).

which Pindemonte is so overcome by “enthusiasm” for her poetry that he embraces her, his increasingly impassioned declarations of love lead Bandettini to begin avoiding him at all costs, both privately and in public.⁷⁰

Bandettini’s other important contact during this period is with the abbot Alberto Fortis, the naturalist and writer she meets during one of her performances, who provides her with opportunities to translate and write reviews for a literary journal so that she can begin to support herself financially outside of the theater:

Contrassi conoscenza con l’Abate Fortis cognito alla repubblica letteraria per le sue opere di storia naturale. Non so se per caso, o appostamente venne ad occupare [...] un’appartamento nella casa stessa da me abitata. Egli a me si presentò con franchezza offerendomi la sua amicizia, e la sua assistenza onde coltivare il mio ingegno. Più accorto del Pindemonte, altro non mi manifestava, che zelo vivissimo di togliermi dal Teatro, e di procurarmi per mezzo delle mie letterarie fatiche un’onorevole sussistenza. Egli traduceva l’opere di Monsieur de Bouffon ed a me cominciò per commettere la versione dei pezzi ch’erano più a portata della mia intelligenza. Mi faceva pur anco far l’estratto de’ libri, che venivano pubblicati, e ch’egli riportava sopra il giornale di Vicenza. Ciò serviva a mia istruzione, e diretta da lui a formare quel gusto, che figlio di una sana critica di raro, o non mai s’inganna.⁷¹

⁷⁰ “Avendogli io detto che sapeva io pure far qualche verso all’improvviso, poiché egli di ciò si vantava, volle tosto farne la prova invitandomi con un’ottava a cui risposi in modo da lui non atteso, così che trasportato da quel suo entusiasmo s’alzò per abbracciarmi. Spiacque a me, e a mia madre tal atto [...] Ma la consuetudine di vedermi frequentemente, o il capriccio reso lo avevano di me appassionato, così che credetti bene prender seco una tal aria di sussiego onde avvertirlo che quanto io lo apprezzava pel suo ingegno altrettanto disapprovava la sua maniera libera di parlare, e molto meno il fine indiretto con cui ora con le lacrime, e più spesso prorompendo in minacce incessantemente mi assediava, ma il mio serio contegno anzi che disgustarlo vieppiù irritava il suo amor proprio. Lusingandosi, ch’altro non fosse che una astuzia il novo modo con cui riceveva le sue visite, onde profittare della sua debolezza, e migliorare la mia fortuna; venne ad offerirmi quanto avessi potuto chiedergli e ch’egli stato fosse in caso di prodigarmi. Questa bassa proposizione, che me poneva a livello di non poche Donne di teatro terminò per rendermelo odioso, e da quel giorno chiusa fu la mia porta ora con l’uno or con l’altro pretesto al Pindemonte” (ibid., 239-240).

⁷¹ Ibid., 240-241. [I made the acquaintance of the Abbot Fortis, known in the Republic of Letters for his works on natural history. I don’t know if on purpose or by chance, but he came to occupy ... an apartment in the same house where I was living. He introduced himself to me with frankness, offering his friendship and his assistance in cultivating my talents. More subtle than Pindemonte, he showed nothing but a zealous desire to remove me from the theater and acquire for me an honorable means of subsistence through my literary efforts. He translated the works of Buffon and began to commission me to translate pieces that were suited to my knowledge. He also had me write the summaries of books that were being published and which he reported to the journal of Vicenza. This was important for my education and, under his guidance, for developing that taste that, as the product of healthy criticism, is rarely

Like Riviera and Pindemonte before him, Fortis offers his assistance in an apparent gesture of friendship and genuine admiration for her abilities, but she once again intuits that his growing affection for her might prove “dangerous”:

La consuetudine mi rendeva di giorno in giorno più caro quest'uomo ch'esser poteva per me pericoloso [...] Egli si era espresso d'amarmi qual padre ma pur troppo d'un altro amore e ferventissimo mi amava, ed io senza accorgermi concepito aveva per lui un misto di rispetto e di tenerezza ch'io credeva effetto soltanto di gratitudine. Di ciò accortasi mia Madre ringraziava un giorno il Fortis delle cure ch'egli si era dato per me, e lo pregava a non volere più darsi l'incomodo di por piede nelle nostre stanze; mia sorella pur anco faceva ad esso la medesima intimazione, e più bruscamente. Allora si fu ch'io conobbi il carattere impetuoso di questo Fortis.⁷²

In reality, Bandettini did not immediately sever all ties with Fortis, since a collection of her poetry was being prepared for publication under his direction and she feared that without his support the book would not be printed.⁷³ She also continues to accept the books that Fortis sends to her from Padua through a mutual friend, until she discovers a letter hidden inside of a copy of Cesarotti's translation of Ossian, in which Fortis urged her to abandon both her family and her “dishonorable” profession as a dancer:

or never deceived].

⁷² Ibid., 241. [Through habit, this man, who could have been dangerous for me, had grown more dear to me with each day ... He had claimed to love me like a father, but unfortunately it was with another kind of love, and a most fervent one, that he loved me, and without realizing it I had generated towards him a mixture of respect and affection that I believed were only the effect of gratitude. Realizing this, my mother one day thanked Fortis for the care he had shown me and requested that he not burden himself any longer by further setting foot in our chambers; my sister made the same intimation, and more brusquely. It was thus that I came to know the impetuous character of this Fortis]. Fortis had a reputation for giving into passionate impulses and responding with violent outbursts when rebuked. On his well-documented affairs with the Venetian *salonnière* Elisabetta Mosconi Contarini and with the journalist Elisabetta Caminer, see: Luisa Ricaldone, “Un carteggio d'amore fra biografia e finzione letteraria,” in *Dodici studi. Margini del Settecento* (Alessandria: Edizioni dell'Orso, 2006), 75; *Lettere di Elisabetta Caminer (1751-1796): Organizzatrice culturale*, ed. Rita Unfer Lukoschik (Conselve: Think ADV, 2006); and *Al mio caro ed incomparabile amico: Lettere di Elisabetta Mosconi Contarini all'abate Aurelio de' Giorgi Bertola*, ed. Luisa Ricaldone and Marco Cerruti (Padua: Editoriale programma, 1995), 45.

⁷³ “La buona mia madre con dolcezza e la mia sorella aspramente mi facevano a gara riflettere sulla condotta artificiosa che meco tenuta aveva il Fortis onde sedurmi [...] ma internamente non ne era persuasa. Io mi trovava senza direzione ora che ne aveva più duopo perché raccolte aveva alcune mie poesie giovanili e per consiglio del Fortis incominciata n'era la stampa. Chi mi assisteva in tale impresa? chi mi correggeva i fogli impressi?” (*Autobiografia*, 242).

Questa conteneva e lagnanze sul poco conto che di lui mostrava fare ed invettive poco misurate contra la mia sorella e la madre mia concludeva alfine ch'egli voleva il mio bene togliendomi dal Teatro e procurarmi uno stato conveniente in cui brillar potesse il mio ingegno [...] Che riflettesi al disonore ch'io faceva a me stessa essendo accomunata con gente che pensano con le gambe onde non esitare un istante ad accettare la sua proposizione. Questa lettera mi pose in gran pensiero ma ancorché giovane pure mi parve in essa ravvisare il linguaggio della seduzione e cominciai a diffidare dell'onestà d'un uomo, che mi consigliava una fuga strappandomi dalle braccia materne [...] Confesso però che mi costò non poco il vincermi.⁷⁴

With time and determination, and most of all the benefit of another vital meeting in Bologna, this time with the poet Ludovico Savioli, Bandettini manages to extricate herself from Fortis without sacrificing her hope of leaving the theater. According to her autobiography, Savioli actively sought her acquaintance after seeing one of her sonnets posted in various locations throughout the city. He gave her access to his private library, introduced her to other prominent intellectuals and nobles and, most importantly, paid for the publication of her poem, *La morte di Adone* (Modena, 1790), the profits of which allowed her to remain in Bologna during the next theatrical season instead of returning to Modena as a dancer.⁷⁵ Over the next several years, Bandettini would profit from many similar relationships with poets, academics, politicians and aristocrats that enabled her to support herself and her family through her literary activities alone, as she continued to publish translations from French and contribute to literary journals, in addition to accepting invitations to various Italian academies.⁷⁶

⁷⁴ Ibid., 242-243. [It contained complaints about the poor regard I showed him and immoderate invectives against my sister and my mother. Finally, he concluded by saying that for my own good he wished to remove me from the theater and help me to reach a more advantageous position in which my talent could shine ... That I should reflect on the dishonor that I did to myself by my association with people who thought with their legs, and not hesitate an instant to accept his proposition. This letter gave me great pause, but even though I was young, yet I seemed to detect the language of seduction and I began to doubt the honesty of a man who advised me to run away from home and pull me from my mother's arms ... But I confess that I was able to overcome the impulse at no small cost].

⁷⁵ Cf. *ibid.*, 243-244. Scolari Sellerio perhaps gives more than due credit to Savioli in claiming that he also helped her to compose the poem.

⁷⁶ “Già da qualche tempo aggregata all’Arcadia, ed alla Colonia Vatrenea d’Imola ed a Filoponi di Cesena andava con giovanile esultanza fregiata del nome Amarilli Etrusca. Ma ciò benché per me fosse gran cosa, non sarebbe bastato a’ miei giornalieri bisogni. Qui pure la provvidenza non abbandonò né me, né la mia famiglia. Si faceva un

The other crucial event during this period in Bologna for Bandettini's personal and professional existence was her marriage. At the Teatro Formagliari in Bologna, Bandettini had met Pietro Landucci, a principal "grotesque" dancer who, like Teresa, was originally from Lucca:

In questa stagione al teatro Casali venne per primo grottesco il giovine Pietro Landucci Lucchese. Avendo egli con noi la patria comune, cominciò a frequentare la nostra casa. I suoi modi civili perché educato in Parma sotto la protezione del Marchese Buonvisi di Lucca, e l'onestà de' suoi costumi gli conciliarono l'affetto di tutta la nostra famiglia e più quello di mia Madre. Il giovane non ne abusava anzi mostrava rispettarla consigliandosi seco e valendosi de' suoi suggerimenti. La conversazione del Landucci era spiritosa e sparsa di quegli arguti sali che fanno ridere senza farne arrossire. Qual meraviglia che io usata a trattenermi con vecchi letterati in serj ed eruditi ragionamenti per cui di giorno in giorno acquistava mercè l'insegnamenti loro nuove cognizioni, givinetta [*sic*] non risentissi una certa tendenza ad amarlo?⁷⁷

Jealous of the attention Landucci bestows on her sister and offended by his apparent lack of appreciation for her beauty, youth and, most of all, status as a published poet, Bandettini initially feigns disinterest in the dancer, retiring to her room to read or write during his visits.⁷⁸ Her

giornale in Bologna, fui pur anco fra i redattori, ed in oltre tradussi e posi in versi molte opere francesi e non poche in prosa. Ciò mi portava un modico guadagno, che con l'economia di mia Madre valeva a mantener noi tutte in una onesta indipendenza" (ibid., 243). Di Ricco observes that although Bandettini had clearly been working towards the goal of supporting herself as a writer and not a dancer for some time, she consistently describes such opportunities as "eventi provvidenziali" (103-104). On the history of women and journalism in Italy, see Silvia Franchini and Simonetta Soldani, *Donne e giornalismo: Percorsi e presenze di una storia di genere* (Milan: Franco Angeli, 2004).

⁷⁷ Ibid., 244. [In this season at the Casali Theater the young Lucchese Pietro Landucci arrived as the principal *grottesco*. Given our common homeland, he began to frequent our home. His civil manners, owing to his education in Parma under the protection of the Marquis Buonvisi of Lucca, and his honest morals earned him the affection of our entire family, and most of all that of my mother. The young man did not take advantage of this, but on the contrary showed her respect, soliciting her advice and following her suggestions. Our conversations with him were lively and interspersed with the sharpness of wit that makes one laugh but not blush. Is it any wonder if a young woman like myself, accustomed to spending time with old men of letters in serious and erudite arguments through whose lessons day by day I acquired new knowledge, felt the effects of a certain inclination to love him?]. Bandettini here refers to one of Bologna's oldest theaters, the Formagliari, as the Casali because of its location near the Casali Palace. The theater was destroyed by a fire in September of 1802. On grotesque dancing in this period, see *The Grotesque Dancer on the Eighteenth-Century Stage: Gennaro Magri and His World*, ed. Rebecca Harris-Warrick and Bruce Alan Brown (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005), and in particular the chapter by Kathleen Kuzmick Hansell, "Eighteenth-Century Italian Theatrical Ballet: The Triumph of the *Grotteschi*," 15-32.

⁷⁸ "Egli ugualmente trattava me, che mia sorella ed alcuna volta pareva usarle più attenzioni. Questa sua indifferenza piccava il mio amor proprio; lo specchio mi diceva ch'io era più bella e più giovane di mia Sorella, oltre ciò ch'era poetessa, e che aveva stampato, in una testa come la mia in quell' tempo esaltata questo pregio ne superava ogni altro. Con quello orgoglio che desta in noi la propria conoscenza mi diedi a non curare il Landucci, ed allora che

dissimulation is sufficient to convince her mother to reject Landucci's marriage proposal on her behalf, explaining that Teresa is far too passionate about poetry to consider marriage.⁷⁹ However, once Teresa has admitted her true feelings, it is her mother who ultimately convinces her to accept the proposal, citing the financial stability that the marriage would provide:

Sentimi Teresa; la mia età e più i disgusti da me sofferti possono abbreviar la mia vita; tu sei giovine e con tutto lo studio che fatto hai su libri non conosci gli uomini. Tu hai d'uopo di chi ti protegga Landucci ti chiede a sposa non dico che questo partito sia buonissimo ma pure ha i suoi vantaggi. Il giovine è onesto eccellente nella sua professione ha una non dubbia speranza di potere un giorno dar le spalle al Teatro e vivere tranquillamente in oltre è dotato d'un cuore fatto per apprezzarti. Sentimi: io ti vedrei mal volentieri congiunta ad un uomo nobile di nascita perché temerei che un giorno pentito non facesse di te niun conto, onde tu non potendo conversare né co' tuoi uguali né con quelli di tuo marito, saresti costretta a piangere lungamente. Il giovine che ti richiede è tuo pari [...] lo stimo atto a renderti felice.⁸⁰

Passages such as this show that it was not only Bandettini's genuine attraction to Landucci's lively wit and honest manners, nor their common theatrical background that led to the marriage, but also economic convenience. She shows that she had in fact already reflected, albeit indirectly, on the possibility of marriage as a solution to her financial distress when she notes that her sister had escaped the family's difficulties by marrying into a wealthy family.⁸¹

veniva a visitarci io era sempre occupata a leggere o a scrivere. Con tutto ciò egli aveva preso loco nel mio cuore, né a lui fu dato di dissimulare più lungamente" (*Autobiografia*, 244-245).

⁷⁹ "Sapendo che mia Madre aveva per lui una decisa inclinazione osò richiederle la mia mano; si scusò ella dicendogli ch'io era tutta aliena dal matrimonio perché appassionatissima per la poesia. Insistette ciò nullameno il Landucci pregandola a volermi interrogare su questo proposito e per viepiù impegnare mia Madre a favorirlo le fece modestamente sentire ch'egli poteva mantenermi con l'abilità sua nel ballo, e con la speranza che il suo protettore Marchese Buonvisi data gli aveva, di lasciargli alla morte un comodo stato" (*ibid.*, 245).

⁸⁰ *Ibid.* [Listen to me, Teresa: my age and especially the misfortunes I have suffered could shorten my life; you are young and with all of your studies from books you know nothing of men. You need someone to protect you; Landucci wants you for his wife. I am not saying that this union is excellent but it has its advantages. This young man is honest, excels in his profession, and has no uncertain hopes of one day being able to turn his back on the theater and live comfortably. Moreover, he possesses a heart capable of appreciating you. Listen to me: I would be reluctant to see you married to a man of noble birth because I would fear that some day, regretting his choice, he would ignore you, and you, not being able to converse with your equals, nor with those of your spouse, would be forced to weep at length. The man who asks for your hand is your equal ... I believe him capable of making you happy].

Teresa's marriage to Pietro Landucci, which took place in Imola in 1789, has been consistently placed by scholars in direct opposition to her literary aspirations. Giulio Natali's description of how Bandettini "happened upon" Landucci while in Imola misleadingly emphasizes her passivity much in the same way that, more recently, Di Ricco has argued that Bandettini's personal desires played a minor role compared to her mother's insistence on the necessity of marriage and on Landucci as the soundest prospect.⁸² Di Ricco contrasts Bandettini with women such as Elisabetta Caminer who succeeded in using marriage as an instrument of social and professional advancement. To some extent, Teresa herself perpetuates the notion that her duties as a wife detracted from her career by placing the description of her marriage after her narration of the events surrounding the publication of her poem, *La morte di Adone*. By inverting the actual chronology of these events, which occurred in 1789 and 1790, respectively, Bandettini is able to end her *Autobiografia* with a description of her marriage and to suggest in the final paragraph that her poetic career was permanently curtailed by her new status as a wife and expectant mother:

Le nostre nozze furono fatte con la benedizione dell'ottima mia Madre così ché non mai dovetti pentirmene. Si fece tutta una famiglia il mio sposò non ismentì il suo carattere riconoscente. Amava me con trasporto, aveva per mia Madre il rispetto e la tenerezza d'un figlio, e per mia sorella l'affezione d'un fratello. Così passarono ben due mesi in seno alla domestica tranquillità, quand'io principiai a sentire l'incomodi della gravidanza

⁸¹ Describing her uncles' interference in the family finances after her brother's death, Bandettini writes: "Dir poi non so in qual modo né quai mezzi usarono, so che alfine lor fu fatto di procacciarsi la sua fede mortuaria, e da quell'istante ne intentarono una lite che ci ridusse in estremo bisogno. La mia maggior sorella Maddalena non si ritrovò però in queste ristrettezze: bella com'ell'era, sposato aveva un giovane non meno civile che di comodo stato, e felice dir si poteva perché amata dalla famiglia Giannini" (ibid., 235).

⁸² Natali writes that Bandettini "trovandosi a Imola nel 1789, e imbattutasi nel suo concittadino Landucci, che la sposò, cangiò per sempre stato." Giulio Natali, "Teresa Bandettini," in *Enciclopedia italiana* (Milan: Treccani, 1930), <[http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/teresa-bandettini_\(Enciclopedia-Italiana\)/>](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/teresa-bandettini_(Enciclopedia-Italiana)/>) (3 December 2015). Di Ricco, describing how Bandettini's "sogno di darsi completamente all'attività letteraria deve ben presto fare i conti con il ruolo di donna," argues that the poet is ultimately persuaded not by her own "tiepide inclinazioni" but by the "perorazioni della madre, che vede nel matrimonio con un suo *patri* la scelta più opportuna e meno rischiosa" (105).

[...] con tutto ciò io non poteva più sodisfare all'impegno preso di tradurre e di fare articoli sul giornale letterario.⁸³

Such a conclusion, as Di Ricco has contended, seems emblematic of what would appear to be the end of Bandettini's career.⁸⁴

In reality, Bandettini's true professional ascent begins rather than ends with her marriage. As her mother had predicted, she and her husband supported each other both emotionally and financially and their union was mutually beneficial: Teresa's contacts with the Modenese nobility led to her husband's promotion as an official and through her performances as an improviser she was able to support her family while also achieving international celebrity. Marriage had also improved her social status by enabling her to eschew the negative view of young female dancers and to protect herself from admirers, such as Pindemonte and Fortis in the early years of her career, whose offers of intellectual and financial support had been buttressed by ulterior motives.⁸⁵ Moreover, as she herself claims both in her letter to Trenta in 1795 and in her third-person autobiography, it was foremost her husband who encouraged her as an improviser: "Egli fu che la confortò a vincere la naturale sua timidità producendosi in pubbliche Accademie come improvvisatrice."⁸⁶ Thus, contrary to the dismal conclusion of Teresa's

⁸³ *Autobiografia*, 246. [Our wedding was celebrated with my mother's blessing, so that I never regretted it. We built a whole family. My husband never betrayed his respectful nature. He loved me fervently, he respected my mother and showed her the affection of a son, and showed my sister the affection of a brother. We thus spent two months in domestic tranquillity when I began to feel the discomforts of pregnancy ... given all of this I was no longer able to meet the demands of translating and writing articles for the literary journal].

⁸⁴ "Emblematicamente l'autobiografia si interrompe sul ricordo di un inizio di gravidanza che [...] non le consente più di 'sodisfare all'impegno preso di tradurre e di fare articoli sul giornale letterario.' Il matrimonio sembra aver chiuso una stagione di esaltanti aspettative" (Di Ricco, 106).

⁸⁵ Cf. Caspani, 441.

⁸⁶ Ms. 638, cc. 12r-v. [It was he who encouraged her to overcome her natural timidness and perform in public academies as an improviser]. She expresses a similar sentiment in her letter to Trenta: "Alfine le mie circostanze [...] vollero che io risolvessi a vincere ogni ripugnanza, mio marito mi fece forza; potevo io nulla negare ad un marito che fece e fa la mia felicità?" (cited in Di Ricco, 106). Di Ricco takes a more critical stance against Landucci's initial promises of being able to provide for Bandettini and questions his motives for encouraging her career, arguing

Autobiografia, the years following her marriage were extremely advantageous, as evidenced by her growing acclaim throughout the Italian peninsula and even abroad, the praise she amassed from prominent intellectuals like Giuseppe Parini, Ippolito Pindemonte, Vincenzo Monti, and Vittorio Alfieri, and her extensive and longevous epistolary exchanges with Saverio Bettinelli and Cesare Lucchesini.⁸⁷

In 1793, Bandettini began to attract the attention of other poets while performing as an improviser in various Italian cities in “the most superb homes” and before “the most illustrious personages.”⁸⁸ In Milan, Giuseppe Parini addressed Bandettini in his sonnet, *Poi che tu riedi a vagheggiar dell’etra*, and already the year before the poet Paolina Secco Suardo Grismondi, in a letter to her close friend and renowned improviser, Fortunata Sulgher Fantastici, had inquired about a “certain Bandettini” whose name had begun to circulate in Lombardy.⁸⁹ By 1794, Bandettini had become a sought-after public figure. She spent several months in Rome, where her performances for the Arcadia and in private homes were well attended by important literary

that it was Teresa “con la sua attività di improvvisatrice, e non il marito, con le sue infondate ‘speranze’ di ottenere un ‘comodo stato,’ a provvedere al sostentamento della famiglia” (ibid.).

⁸⁷ “Le città di Lombardia mi udirono, Mantova sopra tutte mi applaudì e incoraggiò [...] e a palmo a palmo misurai la Lombardia con una costante poetica fortuna” (letter to Tommaso Trenta, cited in Caspani, 441). Teresa exchanged over one hundred letters with Bettinelli (her letters are held in the Fondo Bettinelli at the Biblioteca Comunale of Mantua, while his responses are found in the Biblioteca Statale di Lucca, ms. 644); on her relationship with him, whom she saw as a father figure and *maestro*, see Crivelli, “Le memorie smarrite,” 141-142, and Di Ricco, 106-107. Crivelli also describes the twenty-two volumes of letters exchanged between Teresa and Lucchesini, housed in the Biblioteca Comunale di Lucca, as “estremamente interessanti per quanto riguarda lo studio della formazione culturale femminile del periodo” (143) and as deserving much more attention for their complexity and magnitude.

⁸⁸ Bandettini writes in her third-person autobiography of performing in the “case più cospique [*sic*]” of Milan and among the “più illustri personaggi di Roma” (ms. 638, c. 12v).

⁸⁹ Both Paolina Secco Suardo, known in Arcadia as Lesbia Cidonia, and Fortunata Sulgher Fantastici (1755-1824), hosted important salons in their homes. In her letter to Fantastici written on December 29, 1792, Secco Suardo writes: “Sento che ora si aggira per questa città della Lombardia una certa Bandettini, ch’io non conosco, e vienmi detto che sia Lucchese, la quale canta versi estemporaneamente con applauso. Voi ne avrete forse notizia. Ma certamente non potrà mai giungere all’altissima meta che voi siete pervenuta.” *Lettere di Lesbia Cedonia*, ed. Luigi Albero Ferrai and Vittorio Polacco (Padua: Gallina, 1896). For more on the relationship between Bandettini and contemporary women writers, see Caspani, 472-479.

figures, and then returned to her native Lucca in the fall, with performances in Pisa, Pistoia, Viareggio, Livorno, Modena, and Florence, where she performed alongside Fantastici.

Bandettini's performance in Fantastici's home solidified her place in the contemporary literary scene and was received with great enthusiasm by members of the audience, such as the Florentine academician, Luigi Piccioli, who became "fanatically enamored" with Teresa.⁹⁰ Bandettini's fame grew exponentially over the next two years: the Swiss painter Angelica Kauffman painted her portrait for the Arcadia in Rome, on the occasion of which Vincenzo Monti composed an ode;⁹¹ Lucca's Accademia degli Oscuri erected a bust of Bandettini and its secretary, Tommaso Trenta, initiated his ambitious project of collecting and transcribing poems from Bandettini's public and private performances;⁹² Saverio Bettinelli symbolically crowned

⁹⁰ Of Bandettini's performance, Piccioli wrote: "Io sono uscito in questo momento pazzo, fanatico, sorpreso al segno del delirio dal famoso improvviso [...] Questa è la più grande improvvisatrice, che io abbia sentita [...] io sono innamorato fanaticamente." The passage, from a letter addressed to Piccioli's friend, Giovanni Rosini, a writer and future professor at the University of Pisa, is cited in Alessandra Di Ricco, "'Un'accademia di improvvisazione di fine Settecento,'" *Rivista di letteratura italiana* 3 (1985): 424. See also Crivelli, "Le memorie smarrite," 143-144, and Di Ricco, *L'inutile e meraviglioso mestiere*, 14.

⁹¹ Describing the portrait and bust commissioned by the Arcadia and the Accademia degli Oscuri, respectively, she writes: "Gli arcadi [...] collocarono il suo ritratto nella sala del serbatoio con la prefazione di Don Baldassare Odescalchi duca di Ceri, stampata l'anno 1794. Altro ritratto esiste presso la poetessa dipinto dalla celebre Angelica Kauffam [*sic*] ch'ella si compiacque offerirla in segno di amicizia. Tornata in Patria l'accademici oscuri, con intendimento di onorare questa loro concittadina e lasciare a posteri memoria della comune approvazione decretavano che si tenesse solenne adunanza in sua lode e che innalzato venisse il suo busto scolpito in marmo nella sala della accademia" (ms. 638, c. 12v). See also Crivelli, "Le memorie smarrite," 142-143, and Wendy Wassing Roworth, "Angelica Kauffman's Place in Rome," in *Italy's Eighteenth Century: Gender and Culture in the Age of the Grand Tour*, 151-171.

⁹² An early manuscript version of Trenta's collection, *Il Soggiorno di Amarilli Etrusca in Lucca sua Patria e in altre città della Toscana nel 1794*, is held in the Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale in Rome (Fondo Vittorio Emanuele 676), while a revised and restructured version, *Amarilli Etrusca P.A. In Patria, e in Toscana*, is found in the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana (Vaticano Latino 10218-10219). Caspani's modern edition includes a rich commentary and analysis of the texts, the history of Tatiana Crivelli's rediscovery of the manuscripts, a complete and critical bibliography of Bandettini's life and works, and a systematic catalogue of the themes, historical events, mythological characters, and allusions to classical and Italian literature used by Bandettini. See also Tatiana Crivelli, "Archiviare in rete per non archiviare il caso: note sulle poetesse d'Arcadia," in *Dimensioni e problemi della ricerca storica* 43, no. 3 (2010): 21-29. On Bandettini's resistance to Trenta's project, which arose out of her concerns not only about the poor quality of the transcriptions but also the consequences of a shift from an oral to a written medium, see Crivelli, "Le memorie smarrite," 156-164, and Di Ricco, 34-47. Di Ricco refers to letters from January 16, 1795, in which Bandettini begs Trenta "a non volere che siano giammai, fin che io non creda opportuno, stampati i miei improvvisi," and from May 30, 1795, in which she laments the poor quality of the transcriptions, full of errors and devoid of their "originali bellezze" (47). In general, although in 1799 she did consent to the publication

her as an Olympian poet in the academy of Mantua;⁹³ and, as Teresa recalls in her third-person autobiography, Vittorio Alfieri praised her as the “woman whose poetry overpowers the soul”:

Chiamata di nuovo a Roma nel suo passaggio da Firenze fu acclamata accademica fiorentina nella gran sala della libreria Magliabecchiana [*sic*] aperta a tale effetto alla nobiltà e ad ogni ordine civile. Fra gli altri prosatori e poeti il gran Sofocle Italiano Vittorio Alfieri gradì encomiarla con un suo sonetto tanto più da valutarsi quant’Egli lontano era da piaggiare chichessia.⁹⁴

In short, as the academician and university professor Francesco Franceschi would later remark, Bandettini’s fame was already approaching such heights as to longer require praise and, as Bandettini herself boasted, “there was no royal home to which she was not invited, nor any writer who didn’t consider himself her friend and admirer.”⁹⁵

In January of 1795, Bandettini took up residence in Modena but continued to dedicate most of her time and efforts to touring other cities, including Parma, Mantua, and Lucca, as an improviser. As Caspani notes, although these numerous academic appearances were physically and mentally demanding, they served as an important platform for making new contacts and

of a limited number of poems in Pisa, Bandettini preferred to publish only her carefully “meditated” poems, which were often corrected by her friends, though unauthorized transcriptions of her extemporaneous poetry were widely circulated (cf. Crivelli, “Donne in Arcadia”).

⁹³ Bandettini writes in her third-person autobiography of the many academies that vied for her membership, including “quella di Mantova nella quale era stata per mano del suo Maestro l’Abate Bettinelli coronata d’alloro” (ms. 638, c. 13r).

⁹⁴ Ibid. [Called again to Rome, on her way through Florence she was acclaimed by the Florentine academy in the great hall of the Magliabechiana Library, which was opened for the occasion to noblemen and government officials. Among the other writers and poets, the great Italian Sophocles, Vittorio Alfieri, wished to praise her with a sonnet, the value of which is augmented by how ill-disposed he was to flatter anyone]. In the sonnet, *Ed io pure, ancorché dei fervidi anni*, Alfieri refers to Bandettini as the “donna, il cui carne gli animi soggioga.”

⁹⁵ “Il nome d’Amarilli Etrusca è oggimai troppo grande per tutta l’Italia onde non abbisogni d’encomj, e basta leggerlo di fronte d’un libro di Poesia, perché rimanga accertata la fortuna di questo.” Francesco Franceschi, *Saggio di prose diverse* (1806), cited in Caspani, 33. As Caspani notes, Franceschi wrote the preface to a collection of Bandettini’s poetry, *Rime estemporanee di Amarilli Etrusca conservate in varie città* (Lucca, 1807). Bandettini herself asserts in her third-person autobiography: “Non vi fu casa principesca in cui invitata non fosse né letterato che non se le dicesse amico ed ammiratore” (ms. 638, c. 12v).

having her verses published in academic proceedings.⁹⁶ They were also a financial necessity as Bandettini continued to search for better and more permanent means of economic sustenance since, as she would later lament in a letter to Saverio Bettinelli, she could not survive solely on praise and the “sterile” leaves of the poet laureate.⁹⁷ Bandettini hoped to eventually stop touring and find a permanent place to settle. For a short time, she was offered a fixed salary by the Duke of Ceri, Baldassare Odescalchi (1748-1810), in exchange for performing regularly out of his Roman salon, but her position was revoked with the advent of Napoleon’s First Italian Campaign and her dream shattered. She would later fail in her similar attempt to obtain a stable residence and salary in her native Lucca.⁹⁸ After spending a period of time in Modena, where her son, Francesco (the only child to survive past infancy) was born in 1797, she moved to Parma and eventually back to Lucca where, during the French occupation between January and July of 1799, she performed at a series of events organized and funded by General Miollis, whom she had met through Bettinelli and who also financed the publication of her *Rime estemporanee* (Verona, 1801).⁹⁹ However, following the retreat of the troops from Lucca in July, Bandettini was once again forced to leave, returning first to Modena and then resuming her travels. A new

⁹⁶ Cf. Caspani, 444-445.

⁹⁷ “Mi si profondono lodi e nulla più, quanto è sterile l’alloro!” (cited in *ibid.*, 445). Bettinelli, in a letter to Diodata Saluzzo written in 1806, would comment on Bandettini’s inability to extricate her poetic activity from her financial pressures, noting her constant state of being “soggetta al correre, al improvvisare, e più ancora al cercar sussidio dal verseggiare [...] la povera Bandettini deve trafficare la sua vena” (*Poesie postume*, 440-441).

⁹⁸ Bandettini recalls in her autobiography: “Ritornata a Roma i suoi amici ed i suoi ammiratori le assegnarono ond’ivi dimorasse un signorile mantenimento senz’altro carico che quello d’improvvisare alcuna volta nel palazzo del Duca di Ceri concorrendo a ciò molti Principi e prelati e non pochi Cardinali. Ma la venuta de’ Francesi in Italia troncando a mezzo quella fortuna che sembrava sorriderla la ricondussero a Modena che eletta si era a domicilio, ove nel 1797 divenne madre dell’unico figlio che le rimane” (ms. 638, c. 13r).

⁹⁹ Describing further political accusations during her sojourn in Modena, Bandettini writes: “Qui non le giovò vivere a sè ritirata non parteggiando per alcuna fazione poiché l’amicizia ch’ella contratta aveva con molte famiglie dette aristocratiche se le fece a delitto e per ciò consigliata di là a partire da quella Municipalità dovette cercare asilo presso il Duca di Parma che graziosamente l’accolse sino a tanto che la sfortunata campagna del 1799 fatale a’ francesi la diede adito Bandettini di tornare alla sua abitazione” (*ibid.*, cc. 13r-v).

tour of performances in 1800 brought her to Padua, Verona, Mantua, Parma and Venice, where she received praise from the poet Ippolito Pindemonte and prominent *salonnière*, Isabella Teotochi Albrizzi.

The French victory in the Battle of Marengo in June 1800, which reinstated French dominion over Tuscany and Piedmont, combined with her husband's poor health and her own weariness with her nomadic lifestyle, contributed to Bandettini's resolve to seek more favorable living and working conditions at the court of Vienna, where she arrived in October of 1801.¹⁰⁰ Here, Bandettini hoped, ultimately in vain, to find the same degree of success as Metastasio, one of her primary sources of poetic inspiration, had done before her. While very little is known of Bandettini's brief and seemingly unsuccessful sojourn in Vienna, the poet herself spoke highly of her reception at the Viennese court. For example, in a letter to Bettinelli written in 1802, she writes: "Io sono molto stimata in questa gran capitale [...] si parla di me con gran trasporto da tutti, le gazzette fanno di me onorata menzione, cosa veramente strana, giacché io sono persuasissima e per me stessa e per loro confessione che non m'intendono!"¹⁰¹

Bandettini claims in her third-person autobiography that her departure from Vienna and return to Modena in the fall of 1802, only a little more than a year after her arrival, was

¹⁰⁰ Bandettini writes in her third-person autobiography: "Quando la famosa giornata di Marengo [...] pose Modena e tutta l'Italia alla devozione dell'armi francesi, la costrinsero ad abbandonare non solo Modena ma l'Italia onde rintracciare quella tranquillità che parve sbandita da queste belle contrade. Né vana fu tal lusinga giacché [sic] l'Imperatrice Maria Teresa figlia del Re di Napoli degnò la poetessa del suo favore. Nulla adunque le restava a desiderare avendo afferrato un porto in santo naufragio" (ibid., c. 13v). See also Caspani, 449.

¹⁰¹ [I am highly esteemed in this great capital ... everyone speaks of me with great enthusiasm, I am mentioned favorably in newspapers, which is truly strange since I am myself certain, and they too confess, that they don't understand me!]. The letter, published by Alessandro Luzio in "Amarilli Etrusca," in vol. I of *Studi e bozzetti di storia letteraria e politica* (Milan: L.F. Cogliati, 1910), 133, is cited in Crivelli, "Le memorie smarrite," 140. Crivelli notes that Bandettini's Viennese period has not been adequately studied, but mentions the presence in Vienna's National Library of a manuscript copy of two of her works. See also Scolari Sellerio, who remarks that despite Bandettini's hopes of becoming "stipendiata dalla corte austriaca come lettrice dell'imperatrice e autrice di libretti d'opera [...] non ottenne alcun concreto risultato."

motivated by her declining health.¹⁰² Yet, she appeared undeterred by the setback and, just as motherhood, marriage, persistent financial difficulties and the vicissitudes of the French army had not succeeded in preventing her rise to “grandissima fama,”¹⁰³ so too her return to Italy was followed by more than three decades of continued literary success. She received an annual stipend from the Duke of Modena while she completed her epic poem, *La Teseide*, and published an Italian translation of Quintus Smyrnaeus’s *Paralipomena Homeri*.¹⁰⁴ Towards the end of 1819, shortly before her husband’s death, they reestablished residence in Lucca, where Bandettini was offered employment as a poet and improviser in the court of Marie Louise de Bourbon, Duchess of Lucca, a role that eventually helped to distract her from the “great desolation” and “melancholy” of having lost her spouse.¹⁰⁵ She dedicated the last fifteen years of her life almost exclusively to editing her work, though she did travel to Turin, where she was warmly welcomed by various academicians and intellectuals, and met the poet Diodata Saluzzo Roero, with whom she established a close and lasting friendship.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰² She writes in her autobiography that “la sua salute declinava pel clima di Vienna così che dopo aver sofferto due anni frequenti attacchi [*sic*] di nervi consigliata da medici a restituirsi a respirare l’aria d’Italia le fu forza lasciar la germania ed in effetto vivendo in villa nella vicinanza di Modena se non cessarono affatto i suoi incomodi più radi si resero” (ms. 638, c. 13v).

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, c. 12v.

¹⁰⁴ On the *Paralippomeni d’Omero di Quinto Calabro Smirneo trasportati in versi italiani da Teresa Bandettini Landucci* (Modena, Dalla Società Tipografica, 1815), see *ibid.*, c. 13v, Crivelli, 148 and Caspani, 451.

¹⁰⁵ “Rendutasi all’usato suo soggiorno di Modena più non lo abbandonò se non che nel 1819 allorchè [...] Luisa di Borbone Duchessa di Lucca la richiamò in patria col titolo di Poetessa ed improvvisatrice di Corte. La grazia di cui godette presso quell’ottima sovrana bastò a minorarle il rincrescimento sentito nell’allontanarsi che fece dall’antiche sue conoscenze. Ma la morte di suo marito [...] del 1820 la gettò nella massima desolazione, qui pur anco le pietose cure di Sua Maestà la duchessa, che si compiacque impiegare suo figlio onorevolmente e quindi la distrazione a lei data di dovere improvvisare quasi tutte le sere a corte o alla Reale sua villa di Marlia, giovarono a dissipare la malinconia di cui si era data in preda” (ms. 638, cc. 13r-v). See also Caspani, 453.

¹⁰⁶ Bandettini describes meeting Saluzzo in her third-person autobiography: “Intesa intanto a dar l’ultima linea nell’aria della campagna a varie sue produzioni non cessò da questa occupazione se non allora che l’1820 si portò a Torino onde conosceva personalmente [...] letterati che illustrano non meno l’accademia che quella celebre università. Onorata da essi con ogni segno di distinzione nelle pubbliche e private accademie strinse amicizie con l’esimia Diodata Saluzzo Roero amicizia che per l’uniformità degli studi e del genio non sarà per intepidirsi

The letters that Teresa exchanged with Diodata Saluzzo provide an important key to understanding the origin and development of her entire autobiographical project, which was beginning to take shape during this same period; in fact, Bandettini's third-person autobiography concludes with the events of 1820, the year of her travels to Turin and her first encounter with Saluzzo. In 1825, the year in which she wrote both of her autobiographies, Saluzzo also wrote to her to ask for an account of the poet's life that she hoped to publish in French translation.¹⁰⁷ Bandettini responds to Saluzzo on September 6, 1825, thanking her for having first shared the story of her own life and studies, which Bandettini considers a "precious" token of their friendship.¹⁰⁸ Then, likening herself to Pandora and her mentors to the gods whose infinite gifts enabled her to develop her poetic talent, Bandettini proceeds to comply with Saluzzo's request for an autobiographical account.¹⁰⁹ She lists in detail the texts and mentors that had proved most influential in her career: Ludovico Savioli and his son, Aurelio, Bettinelli, Pagnini, the abbot Bozzoli, Angiolo Mazza, the natural historian Spallanzani, the poet Lorenzo Rondinetti, and Melchiorre Cesarotti. Bandettini credits these men of letters with introducing her to classical and Italian works ranging from Homer, Virgil, Lucretius, Tibullus, and Lucan, to Ariosto, Tasso, and Marino, and to French dramatists such as Corneille and Racine, while also providing financial

giammai" (ms. 638, cc. 13v-14r). Bandettini describes devoting most of her time to editing her work in another letter to Saluzzo, written in 1832, in which the nearly seventy-year-old poet describes her daily routine and preparation of a collection of poems that she would go on to publish in 1835: "Dalle dieci ore della mattina fino alle due dopo mezzogiorno sono al tavolino, ora componendo, perché non mancano occasioni di far versi per altri, ed ora correggendo i miei giovanili, o rafforzando quelli di cui sono contenta" (cited in Caspani, 454).

¹⁰⁷ Cf. Paola Trivero, "Mia dolce amica: circostanze amicali (e letterarie) in alcune lettere indirizzate a Diodata Saluzzo," in *Lumi inquieti*, 249. Trivero's study is based on four letters Bandettini wrote to Saluzzo between 1825 and 1831.

¹⁰⁸ "Mi avete fatto un dono preziosissimo coll'avanzarmi ciò che riguarda la storia della vostra vita e degli studii vostri; Io terrò questo pegno della vostra amicizia fra le cose più care" (*Poesie postume*, 555).

¹⁰⁹ "Molti sono i letterati che si diedero ad erudirmi come si favoleggia, che Pandora dotata fu dagli Dei de' pregi che ciascun di loro arricchir la poteva, così questi mi prodigarono indefessamente le loro cure" (ibid., 557-558).

support and helping her to develop a critical approach to literature and refine her own poetic style.

The connection between Bandettini's letter and her autobiographies owes not only to their temporal and thematic proximity, but also their intended audience. The letter in fact occupies a unique position between private and public since, while addressed specifically to Saluzzo, Bandettini also refers to the requests of Saluzzo's "editor" and shapes her account in response to Saluzzo's plans to translate and publish the biography for a wider audience.¹¹⁰ Moreover, she explicitly acknowledges differences between her private and public narratives:

Vi ho scritto partitamente i progressi e i mezzi che a me servirono nella carriera della letteratura, ma non già per servire all'estensore, ma a voi sola. Usate di ciò che a voi ho confidato partecipando ad esso ciò che credete opportuno, e nulla più.¹¹¹

This exhortation, especially when considered alongside the incipit of her first-person autobiography, reveals Bandettini's careful attempt to craft her public image for a wide readership and present herself not only as a formidable poet, but as a woman who developed her natural talent independently of the guidance and support she received from men of letters. Her use of the autobiographical genre thus bridges two distinct traditions, on the one hand following the model of the autobiography as *curriculum studiorum*, while on the other hand using her life story as a locus of self-invention through which she does not merely describe, but rather enacts her literary vocation.

Although Teresa Bandettini achieved celebrity status during her lifetime and was commemorated by the Accademia Lucchese immediately following her death in 1837, many scholars have commented on her diminished prestige and popularity over the course of the

¹¹⁰ "Per rispondere a quanto [...] si richiede dal redattore" (ibid., 555-556).

¹¹¹ Ibid., 559. [I have written expressly to you of my progress and the means that were necessary in my literary career, but not for use by the compiler but you alone. Draw from that which I have confided in you, sharing that which you consider opportune and nothing more].

nineteenth century. Half a century after her death, Carlo Sforza claimed that Bandettini, once hailed by her contemporaries as a “modern Sappho,” had been all but forgotten, mostly because she had been too old and too afraid to abandon her “mythological clichés” for the “intellectual evolution” of Romanticism.¹¹² Sforza’s evaluation was echoed by twentieth-century scholars, such as Anna Scolari Sellerio, who likewise attributed Bandettini’s weakened fame to her “bitter” opposition to Romanticism and adherence to a literary style that had fallen out of fashion by the early nineteenth century.¹¹³ Yet, while Teresa Bandettini is certainly no longer a household name in the Italian literary canon, her public persona as a successful female entertainer had a powerful and lasting impression on the subsequent generation of Italian poets and European writers, such as Giacomo Leopardi and Germaine de Staël. In his youth, Leopardi twice praised Bandettini’s merits as a poet in poems in which he addressed his younger sister, Paolina, as a “new Bandettini.”¹¹⁴ Teresa later appeared in letters exchanged in 1829 between Leopardi and Luigi Stella regarding the latter’s proposal of an anthology of women poets.¹¹⁵ It is

¹¹² “Chi ricorda più ora la ‘divina’ Amarilli, la ‘Sappho moderne’ come la chiamava il buon generale Miollis? [...] la poetessa, da qualsiasi argomento le fosse dato, cadeva involontariamente anche, in quei suoi *clichés* mitologici, sempre uguali per la forma e per il pensiero, o, meglio, per l’assenza di esso [...] quando s’iniziò quell’evoluzione intellettuale che in politica prese il nome di *liberalismo*, in arte di *romanticismo*, Amarilli già vecchia, ma gelosa de’ suoi allori, restò atterrita.” Carlo Sforza, “Amarilli Etrusca e il Romanticismo,” *Giornale ligustico di archeologia, storia e letteratura* 19 (1892): 393-395.

¹¹³ Scolari Sellerio describes Bandettini as an “acerrima nemica del movimento romantico” and claims that the poet “apparteneva, già all’inizio dell’Ottocento, ad una corrente letteraria e a un particolare gusto oramai superati.” Arianna Scolari Sellerio, “Bandettini Teresa,” in vol. 5 of *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* (1963), <[http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/teresa-bandettini_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)/>](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/teresa-bandettini_(Dizionario-Biografico)/>) (1 December 2015).

¹¹⁴ “Mi permettono, che inchini / la mia nuova Bandettini?” Giacomo Leopardi, “Alla Signora Paolina Leopardi, II” (1810), cited in Tatiana Crivelli, “Le memorie smarrite di Amarilli,” *Versants* 46. *La littérature au féminin* (2003): 139.

¹¹⁵ Both poems, “Alla Signorina Paolina Leopardi, II” and “Alla Signora C.P.L., Madrigale, IV,” were published in “*Entro dipinta gabbia.*” *Tutti gli scritti inediti, rari e editi 1809-1810 di Giacomo Leopardi*, ed. Maria Corti (Milan: Bompiani, 1972), 452-453. The letters exchanged between Stella and Leopardi were published in Giacomo Leopardi, *Epistolario*, ed. Franco Brioschi and Patrizia Landi (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 1998). As Tatiana Crivelli has suggested, Leopardi’s references to Bandettini are a testament to the level of fame and success she had achieved, which made her a symbol of the successful woman writer: “Il paragone fra Paolina, in quell’anno alle prese con lo studio del latino, e la figura della poetessa toscana è una indiretta ma gustosa testimonianza della larga notorietà di

likely that for the young Leopardi, Bandettini represented not only a model of female erudition, but also of his own precocious poetic genius. As Franca Caspani Menghini has recently argued, Bandettini's reputation and self-representation as a "child prodigy" ("una bambina prodigio") and the health problems that she attributed to her excessive studies are traits that were reprised by a later generation of writers, and Leopardi in particular.¹¹⁶

Madame de Staël was also intrigued and inspired by Teresa Bandettini's poetic career. Much has been said of the supposed influence of famed improviser Maria Maddalena Morelli (1727-1800), best known by her Arcadian pseudonym Corilla Olimpica, on de Staël's novel, *Corinne ou L'Italie* (1807), set in Italy between 1794-1803. Scholars from the early nineteenth century to the present have often assumed that the character of Corinne was modeled on Corilla, whose 1776 coronation as a poet laureate on the Capitoline Hill in Rome represented a singular event in the history of Italian women writers.¹¹⁷ Aside from the obvious similarity between Corinne and Corilla's names, de Staël's heroine is also crowned as a poet laureate in Rome in the beginning of the novel. At the same time, many critics have considered the autobiographical elements of *Corinne*, the writing of which was undoubtedly influenced by de Staël's own travels in Italy between December 1804 and June 1805. John Isbell, describing the novel as a "conscious elaboration" of de Staël's "own star status," has noted that "strangers, friends, and de Staël

quest'ultima, la cui fama aveva raggiunto perfino i salotti della sonnolenta Recanati di inizio secolo. Se per il pubblico odierno il nome della 'dotta Bandettini' esige ormai una glossa esplicativa, nel primo Ottocento lo stesso nome poteva essere utilizzato, con la certezza di essere intesi, a indicare per antonomasia le vette raggiungibili in campo letterario da una donna" (Crivelli, 139). See also Crivelli's expanded version of this essay in her preface, "Teresa Bandettini, 'donna il cui carne gli animi soggioga,'" in *L'estro di Amarilli e la tenacia di Artinio. Poesie estemporanee di Teresa Bandettini raccolte dal concittadino Tommaso Trenta (1794-1799)*, ed. Franca Caspani Menghini (Lucca: Accademia Lucchese di Scienze, Lettere e Arti, 2011), 11-30.

¹¹⁶ "Il deperimento fisico connesso all'eccessiva dedizione allo studio [...] rappresenta un tratto della sua giovinezza che accomunerà il suo percorso formativo a quello leopardiano" (Caspani, 436).

¹¹⁷ Esterhammer, 83.

herself routinely called the author Corinne,”¹¹⁸ and scholars such as Renee Winegarten have similarly asserted that “Corinne *is* Mme de Staël.”¹¹⁹

Without disregarding the logical associations between Corinne, Corilla, and Madame de Staël, I would argue that scholars have not adequately considered Teresa Bandettini’s influence on the novel. Corinne’s coronation, which takes place in 1794, perfectly coincides with Bandettini’s sojourn in Rome, during which she was acclaimed as an improviser in a series of public and private performances. By the time of de Staël’s travels in Italy a decade later, Corilla Olimpica was no longer living, but de Staël did attend performances by other improvisers, and she communicated directly with Teresa Bandettini, who was in Modena at the time. In a letter written on April 17, 1805, from Rome, Madame de Staël described her “almost indiscreet desire” to meet Bandettini, whose “reputation” had inspired her.¹²⁰ Eventually, when such an encounter proved impossible, de Staël wrote a second letter expressing her regret that she would be unable to meet “the most talented woman in Italy” in person and explaining that she had asked Luigi Marescotti and Vincenzo Monti to help her obtain copies of Bandettini’s works.¹²¹ Thus, if one accepts *Corinne* as “one of the fateful books of early-nineteenth-century Europe,” as scholars like Bonnie Smith have urged, “in which an acclaimed woman recounts history as a self-

¹¹⁸ John Isbell, Introduction to Madame de Staël, *Corinne, or Italy*, trans. and ed. Sylvia Raphael (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), xv.

¹¹⁹ Renee Winegarten, *Germaine de Staël and Benjamin Constant* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 180. Winegarten argues that de Staël’s heroine is “indelibly associated” with and is essentially a “distorted imaginative projection” of the author herself.

¹²⁰ At the end of the letter, de Staël writes: “j’espère que vous me pardonneriez madame, un désir presque indiscret de vous entendre, c’est votre réputation qui me l’a inspiré.” Cited in Pierre Ronzy, “Deux Billets inédits de Madame de Staël à Teresa Bandettini,” *Revue de Littérature comparée* 2 (1922): 448.

¹²¹ In her second letter to Bandettini, dated May 22, 1805 from Bologna, she writes: “Je serai bien triste si je quitte l’italie sans avoir entendu la femme de plus de talent qu’elle possède” (cited in Ronzy, 449). See also De Ricco, 52 and Esterhammer, 83.

proclaimed genius,”¹²² then it would be wise to also bear in mind the continued influence of de Staël’s contemporaries, such as Teresa Bandettini, who provided her with a model of artistic self-invention and female intellect.

¹²² Bonnie G. Smith, “History and Genius: The Narcotic, Erotic, and Baroque Life of Germaine de Staël,” *French Historical Studies* 19, no. 4 (Autumn 1996): 1059-1061.

IV.2 Angela Veronese's *Notizie della sua vita*

The Venetian poet Angela Veronese (1778-1847), like her contemporary Teresa Bandettini, achieved celebrity status as a poet and improviser among the literary elite despite her humble roots. The daughter of a gardener, Veronese rose to fame in Venetian cultural circles after becoming something of the pet of various nobles, travelers, intellectuals and poets, such as Ugo Foscolo and Melchiorre Cesarotti, who frequented the villas where her father was employed. Thanks to these contacts, Veronese also became associated with a number of literary academies, such as the Accademia degli Agiati in Rovereto and the Accademia Tiberina in Rome, though it appears that she was never admitted to the Arcadia.¹²³ Under the pseudonym Aglaia Anassillide, she published various collections of poetry, two novellas, and an autobiography that appeared as an appendix to her *Versi di Aglaja Anassillide, aggiuntevi le notizie della sua vita scritte da lei medesima* (Padova, Dalla Tipografia Crescini, 1826).¹²⁴ With the publication of the first modern edition of the *Notizie* in 1973, Angela Veronese's place in the Italian literary tradition has become less obscure, but scholars have tended to appreciate only the historical value of her autobiography, while diminishing its literary merits. Mario Fubini, for example, suggested that although the *Notizie* are perhaps worth reading for their "levity" and

¹²³ She joined the Accademia degli Agiati in 1813, the same year in which the Accademia Tiberina was founded in Rome. However, it seems that Veronese was never officially admitted to the Arcadia. Cf. Pastore Stocchi, "Introduzione," in Angela Veronese Mantovani, *Notizie della sua vita scritte da lei medesima. Rime scelte*, ed. Manlio Pastore Stocchi (Florence: Le Monnier, 1973), 23.

¹²⁴ Veronese's collections of poetry include her *Varie poesie* (Venezia, 1804), *Rime pastorali* (Padova, 1807-1817), *Alcune poesie pastorali* (Venezia, 1819), *Fiori anacreontici sparsi sulla tomba di Canova* (Udine, 1822), and the *sestine* included in the *Serto femminile in morte di Diodata Saluzzo-Roero di Revello* (Torino, 1840). For a more complete and critical bibliography, see Oscar Greco, *Bibliografia femminile italiana del XIX secolo* (Venezia, Presso i principali librai d'Italia, 1875), 500-501, which includes works published in collections and anthologies, and "Nota biografica," in Angela Veronese, *Eurosia*, ed. Patrizia Zambon and Marta Poloni (Padua: Il Poligrafo, 2013). In the present study, all references to Veronese's autobiography (hereafter *Notizie*) come from Pastore Stocchi's edition. His transcription of the 1826 edition contains some modernizations: "È una stampa non molto accurata, che abbiamo trascritto con qualche piccola libertà in questioni puramente grafiche, riducendo a maggiore uniformità l'uso delle maiuscole e dei corsivi, mutando in *i* la *j* semiconsonante, curando una più minuta suddivisione in capoversi. Abbiamo riprodotto in carattere tondo fra linee le battute di dialogo, per lo più in corsivo nell'originale, e qua e là abbiamo lievemente modificato la punteggiatura, in genere per alleggerirla" ("Introduzione," in *Notizie*, 28-30).

“charm,” they lack both artistry and intellectual depth.¹²⁵ More recently, Ginetta Auzzas, in her history of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century autobiographical writing in the Veneto, dismissed Veronese as a “pathetic character” whose role as the “poor little monkey” of the Arcadia led to a distorted representation of her surroundings marked by “enchantment” rather than an objective portrayal of her life.¹²⁶ The scholar further laments that Veronese’s idolatrous view of her aristocratic benefactors prevented her from providing readers with an authentic portrait of her surroundings, which would have been of extreme historical value given her contact with some of Venice’s most eminent literary personages.¹²⁷

Veronese adopts an admittedly nostalgic and encomiastic tone when describing her initiation into these prestigious cultural circles, for example in her description of the *salonnière* Isabella Teotochi Albrizzi, who appears to the fourteen-year-old Angela as “adorned with spirit, culture and kindness.”¹²⁸ Acknowledging her gratitude to the Albrizzi family, Veronese expresses a desire that the fondness of her childhood memories might sweeten her entire narrative:

¹²⁵ “Non si distinguono per un forte segno d’arte e tanto meno per un qualsiasi accenno di pensiero, ma hanno una loro vaghezza e nella loro tenuità un loro interesse queste *Notizie* della poetessa Angela Veronese.” Mario Fubini, “Angela Veronese (Aglaia Anassillide). *Notizie della sua vita scritte da lei medesima*,” *Giornale Storico della Letteratura Italiana* 150 (1973): 626-628.

¹²⁶ Auzzas refers to Veronese as a “personaggio patetico” and “povera scimmietta ammaestrata delle nobili pastore d’Arcadia” whose autobiography is above all “la storia di un incantamento [...] viziata all’origine da una distorsione della realtà operata insieme dall’innocenza e dall’atteggiamento di soggezione sociale costantemente presente nella scrittrice che, solo in un misto di devozione e stupore, osa sollevare lo sguardo sugli esseri superiori che si degnano di trattarla con benevolenza.” Ginetta Auzzas, “Ricordi personali e memoria del Veneto,” in *Dall’età napoleonica alla prima guerra mondiale*, vol. 6 of *Storia della cultura veneta*, ed. Girolamo Arnaldi and Manlio Pastore Stocchi (Vicenza: Neri Pozzi, 1986), 289-291. Auzzas focuses briefly on three early nineteenth-century memoirs (Antonio Longo’s *Memorie*, Veronese’s *Notizie*, and Mario Pieri’s *Vita*) before turning to texts written between the Risorgimento and late nineteenth century.

¹²⁷ “In conseguenza di questa angolazione che la colloca in una posizione quasi idolatra, non possiamo aspettarci, pertanto, da lei un quadro veridico del mondo che osserva ruotare intorno a sé. Ed è un autentico peccato che alla Veronese difetti la capacità di vedere, di cogliere le situazioni [...] perché si può dire che non ci sia personaggio tra preromanticismo e neoclassicismo veneti che non si affacci nelle sue pagine schiette e garbate” (Auzzas, 290).

¹²⁸ “Bella Dama adorno di spirito, coltura, e gentilezza” (*Notizie*, 74).

Fui per ben due volte a Venezia ospite della eccellentissima famiglia Albrizzi, che mi amava perché mi avea veduta crescere ora in Santa Bona, ora in Venezia ed ora sul Terraglio, e di cui mio padre era stato per vari anni suo giardiniere. Non voglio far elogio al mio cuore che nutria e nutre per quella eccellentissima famiglia il più vivo sentimento di gratitudine e di rispettosa tenerezza. Dirò solamente che tutti quei rispettabili individui mi ricordano i giorni sereni della mia fanciullezza scorsi sotto i loro tetti e mangiando il loro pane. Cara e soave reminiscenza, tu spargerai le stille del tuo nettare su tutta la mia vita!¹²⁹

Such sentimental recollections of being welcomed and “loved” by prominent aristocratic figures are what have prompted scholars like Pastore Stocchi and Auzzas to conclude that Veronese’s view of her surroundings was distorted and that she failed to realize that the literary elite was less interested in Angela as a poet than the curious phenomenon of a “little gardener” whom they saw as a source of amusement rather than an equal.¹³⁰ Ironically, these scholars have themselves tended to promulgate a mythical image of Veronese; Pastore Stocchi, for example, refers to the poet not by her real name but by her pseudonym, Aglaia, and reiterates the view that her upbringing among huts, gardens, and mythological statues represented the “miracle” of bringing the Arcadian landscape and fables to life.¹³¹ Such evaluations do not adequately or accurately situate the poet within the context of the sincere friendships she cultivated and the substantial praise she received within the very same circles in which Pastore Stocchi and Auzzas depict her

¹²⁹ Ibid., 101-102. [In Venice, I was not once, but twice a guest of the most excellent Albrizzi family, who loved me because they had seen me grow up, first in Santa Bona, then in Venice and the Terraglio, where my father had been their gardener for several years. I don’t want to praise my heart, which harbors the most vital sentiment of gratitude and respectful tenderness for this family. I will only say that each of those respectable individuals reminds me of the serene days of my childhood spent under their roofs and eating their bread. Dear, sweet memory, you will scatter the drops of your nectar over all of my life!].

¹³⁰ Pastore Stocchi describes Angela as merely embodying “il fenomeno di moda, il gioco d’Arcadia giunto al suo limite nelle pastorellerie di una pastorella vera che si rispediva, finito il gioco, al suo posto in fondo al giardino” (“Introduzione,” in *Notizie*, 16-17). Auzzas has similarly commented that Angela mistakenly “stimò di aver salito la cima del Parnaso, non rendendosi conto che, in verità, era per lo più, unicamente oggetto di un gioco piuttosto crudele. Nell’atmosfera chiusa ed artificiosa delle splendide ville [...] Aglaia Anassillide, la Grazia del Piave, recita coscienziosamente e fino in fondo la sua parte di contadinella-poetessa in carne ed ossa per un’aristocrazia oziosa che si compiace di designarla con gli appellativi, fintamente affettuosi” (Auzzas, 289).

¹³¹ “Con il destino di quella adolescenza poteva compiersi, e non si compì, un piccolo miracolo: l’Arcadia, almeno in un caso, poteva farsi vera” (Pastore Stocchi, “Introduzione,” in *Notizie*, 12).

as a outsider.¹³² Whereas contemporary scholarship has continued to participate in the spectacularization of Angela Veronese's life, I would instead contend that Angela is actually an astute observer who uses her unique position on the periphery of the literary elite and her public image as a self-educated "nymph" to satirize the sensationalistic appeal of female artists who were often manipulated and exploited by the literary circles with which they were affiliated.

It is worthwhile to consider the dichotomy between truth and invention, and real and idealized modes of self-representation, in the *Notizie* with respect to the wider context of the Italian autobiographical tradition. The *Notizie* not only represent a skillful reappropriation of the narrative structure and themes adopted by earlier (predominantly male) autobiographers, but also reveal the contiguous nature of autobiographical texts written by eighteenth-century female poets and academicians, and provide a model for future "professional" autobiographers of both genders. Veronese's narrative in fact shares many features with that of Teresa Bandettini. Like the Tuscan improviser, Angela wrote her autobiography with the specific intention of publishing and distributing it among a wide audience of her readers. She also, like Bandettini, boasts of her humble roots, innate poetic genius, and autodidacticism, and her representation of her private life is similarly informed by and manipulated in the service of her public image. Finally, Veronese intentionally describes her character, upbringing, and education in function of her literary vocation and poetic career, incorporating various autobiographical topoi – including a tragicomic fall from a donkey, a series of childhood illnesses that lead to the discovery of her literary vocation, a hurried flight from her confessor during her traumatic first confession, and her theft of writing materials following the confiscation of her books – that demonstrate not only

¹³² Oscar Greco, for example, characterizes as "valide e generose" the praise she received from numerous illustrious figures, "dall'avvocato Luigi Basso, e dalla nobile sua consorte Mussato. E carissima Ella fu inoltre a molti illustri letterati, fra i quali il Cesarotti, il Barbieri, il Luccata, il Paravia, il Tommasèo, il Benassù, il Mantovani ed il Carrer" (501). See also Zambon and Poloni, "Nota biografica," 139.

Veronese's acute awareness of the genre, but also her ability to adeptly manipulate and ironize some of its most salient traits. In the incipit of the *Notizie*, for example, she directly acknowledges the growing popularity of the autobiographical genre and the increasing visibility of professional women in contemporary society:

Nel dar alla luce del pubblico le notizie sulla mia vita parmi già di vedere alcuni accigliati censori, ed udirli con le loro rispettabili bocche esclamare: oh! Ecco una nuova eroina, che viene a farsi vedere sulla grande scena dell'universo! Adagio, Signori miei; io non vengo a farmi vedere nel secolo dell'esagerazione e dell'impostura [...] Vengo solamente per farmi sentire qual *ineducata figlia del bosco*.¹³³

This tongue-in-cheek *captatio benevolentiae* ironizes the false humility characteristic of many autobiographies of the eighteenth century, which she defines as a “century of exaggeration and imposture.”

Veronese then initiates the narration of her life with almost formulaic adherence to the tenets of the genre by starting with her geographic and socio-economic origins:

Io nacqui sul finire del secolo XVIII in riva alla Piave, in una villetta chiamata Biadine, situata alla punta del Bosco Montello, verso il levante, poco distante da Treviso e pochissimo da Possagno, patria dell'immortale Canova. Mio padre di nome Pietro Rinaldo, mia madre Lucia erano povere ed oneste persone: queste due qualità vanno quasi sempre unite. L'uno era di professione giardiniere, l'altra figlia d'un fabbro. S'io fossi nata nel secolo del gentilesimo potrei dire che la mia discendenza ha del divino, poiché appartiene a Flora ed a Vulcano.¹³⁴

Just as in this passage Veronese uses the seemingly solemn portrayal of her descentance from gardeners and blacksmiths to assert the “divine” association of her birth with Flora and Vulcan,

¹³³ *Notizie*, 33. [In producing for the public eye the news of my life, it's as if I can already see the stern censors and hear them exclaiming from their respectable mouths: Oh! Behold another heroine coming to show herself on the great stage of the universe! Slow down, gentlemen: I'm not here to display myself in the century of exaggeration and imposture ... I'm here only to make myself heard as an *uneducated daughter of the woods*].

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 34. [I was born towards the end of the eighteenth century on the shores of the Piave, in a little village called Biadene located at the edge of the Montello woods, facing east, not far from Treviso and very close to Possagno, the birthplace of the immortal Canova. My father, named Pietro Rinaldo, and my mother, Lucia, were poor and honest people; these two qualities almost always accompany each other. The former was a gardener by profession, the latter the daughter of a blacksmith. If I had been born in pagan times, I might say that my origins contain something of the divine, descending from Flora and Vulcan]. The reference to Vulcan may derive merely from an association between her mother's last name, Favero, and the word for blacksmith (*fabbro*), rather than the actual profession of Veronese's grandfather. Cf. Augusto Serena, *Appunti letterari* (Rome: Forgnani, 1903), 97.

she also superimposes mythical elements on her description of the hut occupied by her father and pregnant mother at the Casa Grimani in Biadene, where she spent the first years of her life:

Questa cadente casupola, ombreggiata da piante fruttifere, quasi un abbandonato tempietto della Dea Pomona, apparteneva a certo signor Bassanini di Venezia, non so se venditore di stampe oppure stampatore egli stesso [...] Egli regalava la mia famiglia di libri e di stampe sacre e profane, ed ecco ond'ebbe principio la mania letteraria di tutti li miei parenti. Forse fu questa la cagione che vari miei cugini e cugine si appellavano eroicamente Rinaldi, Orlandi, Erminie, Griselde etc. Io cresceva [...] in mezzo ad una famiglia di Eroi.¹³⁵

Such a careful and conscientious peppering of her narrative with elements that presage her poetic career is reminiscent of earlier autobiographies in which similarly hyperbolic or contrived anecdotes from childhood serve to highlight specific aspects of the author's character, natural talents and literary destiny.¹³⁶

Following her apology to her readers and her description of her parents and birth, Veronese's autobiography follows a linear, chronological trajectory that carefully maps the various locations where her family moved to accommodate her father's employment. After spending the first three years of her life in Biadene at the Casa Grimani, her immediate family moved to Santa Bona, near Treviso, where her father was employed at Ca' Zenobio.¹³⁷ Likening her father to an "Italian Dedalus," and adopting various diminutive epithets for herself, such as

¹³⁵ *Notizie*, 34-35. [This decrepit hut, shaded by fruit-bearing trees like an abandoned temple of the goddess Pomona, belonged to a certain Bassanini from Venice, I am unsure whether a seller of prints, or himself a printer ... He gave my family sacred and profane books and prints, and here, then, is the origin of the literary mania of all my relatives. This was perhaps why various cousins of mine were heroically named Rinaldo, Orlando, Erminia, Griselda, etc. I grew up ... amidst a family of heroes].

¹³⁶ Franco Fido, for example, has written of the "dimensione leggendaria" and the "teatralità" of Goldoni's *Mémoires*, in which the playwright clearly blurred the division between life and art with affirmations such as "La mia vita medesima è una commedia," "Nella Commedia della mia vita si cambia scenario," and "Revenons à moi; car je suis le héros de la pièce" (Fido, "I *Mémoires* di Goldoni," 46-48).

¹³⁷ Veronese writes in her autobiography: "Io compiva i tre anni allorché mio padre si divise dalla vecchia sua famiglia per portarsi al servizio dell'eccellentissima casa Zenobio in Santa Bona, villetta graziosissima due miglia fuori di Treviso verso il settentrione" (*Notizie*, 36).

“little Ariadne,” “little Sibyl,” “second Sappho” and “new Erminia,”¹³⁸ Veronese goes on to describe how it was through the “statue mitologiche” in the gardens of Ca’ Zenobio that she was first introduced to the myths that would later populate her poems.¹³⁹

In Santa Bona, Angela befriends Bernardo and Domenico (“Menin”), sons of one of the custodians of the villa; while Menin becomes her dearest childhood friend, Bernardo, who worked in the gardens with her father, was a passionate reader of chivalric literature and would often read passages from Homer, Cicero, Ariosto and Tasso out loud during the family’s evenings at home:

Bernardo leggeva ciò che gli comandava mio padre, ora il Tasso, ora l’Ariosto, ora il *Cicerone* del Passeroni, ed ora l’Omero del Boaretti. Io cresceva in mezzo alle idee greche e romane, coi Ruggeri e i Tancredi nella mente, con le Clorinde e le Bradamanti nel cuore, e con Alcina ed Ismeno nella fantasia, i portenti magici dei quali mi faceano sognar la notte e tremar il giorno. Alcune ottave del Canto VII del Tasso imparate a memoria come i pappagalli, e da me recitate come una marionetta a quei villani, mi faceano passare per la picciola Sibilla del villaggio.¹⁴⁰

Various descriptions such as this offer a rare depiction of private reading practices among the lower classes and presage Angela’s literary vocation. Moreover, the most significant moments in her intellectual development are almost always accompanied by physical trauma: specifically,

¹³⁸ “Italico Dedalo” (63); “Picciola Arianna” (ibid.); “Picciola Sibilla” (40); “nuova Erminia” (43); “una novella Saffo” (77).

¹³⁹ Ibid., 37. Pastore Stocchi remarks that this “familiarità con il repertorio classico di nomi, di immagini, di miti, cui i finti Arcadi da salotto giungevano attraverso la letteratura, nacque così in Aglaia dall’esperienza di quello che fu, a lungo, tutto il suo mondo” (“Introduzione,” ibid., 14).

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 40. [Bernardo read whatever my father commanded, from Tasso, to Ariosto, to Passeroni’s *Cicero* and Boaretti’s Homer. I grew up amidst Greek and Roman ideas, with heroes like Ruggiero and Tancredi in my mind and heroines like Clorinda and Bradamante in my heart, with Alcina and Ismenus in my imagination, whose magical wonders I feared by day and of which I dreamt at night. Some stanzas from Tasso’s canto 7, which I had memorized like a parrot and recited like a marionette to those villagers, turned me into the little Sibyl of the village]. Pastore Stocchi notes that Francesco Boaretti’s 1788 Italian translation of the *Iliad*, to which Veronese seems to refer in this passage, would not yet have been published at the time. By describing how the village chaplain had taken it upon himself to teach the locals how to read in exchange for donations of wood, wine and other simple goods, Veronese seems to provide a historical justification for the curious, if not improbable, scenario of a village whose impoverished inhabitants were literate and avid consumers of poetry: “In quel paese i villani sapevano tutti leggere, non so se sapeano per inclinazione naturale oppure in grazia del Cappellano della villa, che senza veruna vista d’interesse insegnava questa scienza a que’ miserabili, contentandosi solamente del loro progresso e di alcune offerte caritatevoli che appartenevano alle quattro stagioni, cioè legna, vino, frumento e primizie” (ibid.).

she recounts two serious falls and two periods of grave illness.¹⁴¹ Her first accident, a fall from a donkey, leaves her with a permanent scar:

Mio padre fece il mediocre acquisto di un'asina. Io in età di appena sei anni era divenuta la nuova Erminia nel cavalcare trepidamente quella povera bestia, che si lasciava guidare pazientemente dal villanello Menin, allora divenuto mio scudiere. Mia madre sgridava continuamente con l'asina, con Menin e con mio padre per l'esercizio non adattato ad una figlia. Il mio genitore filosoficamente sorrideva dicendo che quella era la cavalcatura delle antiche Ebrei, di cui aveva fatto uso la stessa regina delle vergini. Il Cappellano dava ragione a mio padre, ed io continuai a cavalcare. Da lì a tre mesi precipitai dall'asina e mi ruppi la fronte virginal, della qual caduta porto ancora la cicatrice onorifica.¹⁴²

The anecdote, which belongs among the many noteworthy falls, childhood injuries, and illnesses in the autobiographical tradition, recalls, for example, the final “storietta puerile” in Alfieri’s *Vita*, in which the poet recounts how he was wounded after falling during a “duel” with his older brother when he was eight years old.¹⁴³ Angela’s first fall at the age of six also coincides, perhaps not coincidentally, with the beginning of her formal education. Despite her protests, her parents send her to school where, bored with the Latin prayers and useless lessons on how to

¹⁴¹ On the theme of childhood sickness and the topos of “the physical fall through space,” see Frank Paul Bowman, “Suffering, Madness, and Literary Creation in Seventeenth-Century Spiritual Autobiography,” *French Forum* 1, no. 1 (January 1976): 24-48.

¹⁴² *Notizie*, 44. [My father made the modest acquisition of a donkey. At the age of barely six years old, I had become the new Erminia as I timidly rode that poor beast, which allowed itself to be patiently guided by the young villager, Menin, who had become my squire. My mother continuously yelled at the donkey, at Menin and at my father for this exercise which was ill-suited for a girl. My father smiled philosophically, saying that it was the mode of travel of the ancient Israelites, practiced by even the Virgin Mary herself. The Chaplain agreed with him, and I continued to ride. Three months later, I fell off the donkey and cut my virginal brow, a fall from which I still bear the honorary scar].

¹⁴³ “In una voltata cado, e batto il capo [...] sopra l’occhio sinistro nel bel mezzo del sopraciglio. E fu la ferita così lunga e profonda, che tuttora ne porto, e porterò sino alla tomba, la cicatrice visibilissima [...] non mi faceva nessuna ripugnanza a mostrarla in pubblico: o fosse, perché l’idea di un pericolo corso mi lusingasse; o che, per un misto d’idee ancora informi nel mio capicino, io annettessi pure una qualche idea di gloria a quella ferita” (Alfieri, *Vita*, 22). Angela’s father is also present during her second fall, this time from a small boat in the pond of their garden: “Un giorno scherzando nella barchetta ch’era nel laghetto in fondo al giardino, ‘non scesi no, precipitai di barca’; lottai per non pochi minuti coi vortici prodotti dalla mia caduta, ed era già per annegarmi, come una novella Saffo; ma per causa diversa, poiché quella si annegò per amore ed io mi annegava per timore e balordaggine. Mio padre accorso al mio pericolo mi levò dall’acqua, e mi batté fieramente dicendo: – Un diavolo scaccia l’altro. – Da quel giorno io odio mortalmente i proverbi” (*Notizie*, 77). As Pastore Stocchi notes, Veronese compares herself to Erminia through an allusion to the verse “non scese no, precipitò di sella,” from canto 19 of Tasso’s *Gerusalemme Liberata*.

“make stockings” and “avoid men like snakes,” Angela is soon punished for teasing the headmistress’s nephew and flees from the schoolroom.¹⁴⁴

When she was seven years old, Veronese’s father was hired to replace his recently deceased brother as the gardener of Palazzo ai Carmini, the Zenobio family’s property in Venice.¹⁴⁵ Here again, this change in her life is demarcated by a severe illness that, in another scene reminiscent of Alfieri’s autobiography and which similarly shapes and presages her literary destiny, leads to an unfortunate haircut:

Questa crudel malattia mi assalì con tanta forza che fui tenuta per morta [...] Era nella più felice convalescenza allora quando si dovette troncarmi le chiome rese cadenti ed indocilissime dalla perniciosa malattia [...] Conobbi allora d’essere vera femmina, poiché l’ambizione cominciava a prendere possesso delle mie idee. Per compensarmi la perdita mi fecero un elegante vestito di lana rossa; un berettoncino di velluto copriva la mia testa spoglia delle sue belle chiome [...] Il mio berettoncino era sovente adornato dal mio genitore con foglie sempre verdi di mirto e di lauro, che cresceano in gran copia nel giardino. Così preveniva il mio genio.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁴ “Strillai, pregai, promise docilità, tutto invano. Alfine diedi un addio all’asina, ed obbedii; ma se tutte le mie ubbidienze fossero state così sincere avrei assai poco da lodarmi. La mia maestra, ossia direttrice, era una vecchia [...] brutta come la Gabrina dell’Ariosto, e per bontà non le era superiore gran fatto. Eravamo tre fanciulle, che per insolenza ed indocilità non la cedevamo ai più arditi collegiali. Ella ci insegnava una quantità d’orazioni in latino, la così detta Dottrina Cristiana in italiano, il far le calzette ed il fuggire dagli uomini come dagli aspidi [...] La vecchia avea un nipotino di sei in sette anni tanto brutto e balordo, che pareva un bamboccio; toccava or all’una or all’altra delle tre alunne far vezzi a questo scimiotto, acciò fosse buono; quando toccava a me non faceva che mettere tutto in opera per farlo arrabbiare; la vecchia se ne accorse, mi castigò, ed io fuggii dalla scuola e tornai fra le materne braccia” (ibid., 44-45).

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 45. See also Zambon and Polini, 135.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 48-50. [This cruel disease attacked me with such force that I was almost taken for dead ... I was happily recovering when it was necessary to cut my hair, which the pernicious illness had made unruly and which had begun to fall out ... I thus came recognize that I was truly a female, as ambition began to take hold of my thoughts. To compensate for my loss, they made me an elegant red wool dress; a velvet hat covered my head, deprived of its beautiful locks ... My little hat was often adorned by my father with evergreen myrtle and laurel leaves that grew abundantly in the garden. He thus foretold my genius]. The “cruel disease” is smallpox, which was rampant among children at the time and had also afflicted Carlo Goldoni when he was around the same age. Veronese’s emphasis on having to cut her hair is strongly reminiscent of a similar scene recounted in Alfieri’s *Vita*: “ricaddi nella stessa malattia già avuta due anni prima [...] non fu possibile ch’io salvassi i capelli dalle odiose forcici; e dopo un mese uscii di quella sconcia malattia tosato e imparruccato. Quest’accidente fu uno dei più dolorosi ch’io provassi in vita mia; sì per la privazione dei capelli, che pel funesto acquisto di quella parrucca” (*Vita*, 46). To avoid the embarrassment of having his wig pulled off by his classmates, Alfieri begins to remove it himself, waving it in the air and making fun of himself, which provides him with a lasting lesson: “Allora imparai, che bisognava sempre parere di dare spontaneamente, quello che non si potea impedire d’esserti tolto” (ibid., 47).

In Venice, where her family spent the next two years, from 1785-1787, Veronese continued her formal education for a short period of time in a school for girls near her family's home. Here, although her second headmistress was kinder than the first, Angela was once again branded as a "little devil" and expelled for distracting the other girls from their studies by recounting episodes from chivalric romances, fairytales, Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and the *Aeneid*.¹⁴⁷ Following her expulsion, Angela's grandmother was tasked with overseeing her education, but relinquished her duties after only two months, having been "driven mad" by her granddaughter's unruly nature.¹⁴⁸

As is typical in autobiographical accounts of childhood, including those of Alfieri and Teresa Bandettini, Angela further emphasizes her independent spirit through her account of her first confession at the age of nine:

Allora che avea già compiti li nove anni, mia madre si pensò cristianamente di condurmi alla Chiesa, onde farmi far la confessione così detta spirituale. Mostrai qualche ripugnanza, [...] mi sentii così oppressa dalla soggezione che non aveva gambe per accostarmi a quel santo tribunale. Pure mi feci coraggio, e già stava per inginocchiarmi, allorché mia madre mi venne all'orecchio dicendo: –Raccontagli tutto o andrai all'inferno. – Questo fiero precetto, che non ammetteva via di mezzo, mi sgomentò a grado. Che sul momento corsi a casa spaventata dall'inferno e dal dover dirgli tutto.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁷ "La direttrice era una buona vecchietta, che mi amava ad onta della mia vivacità che bene spesso le mandava sossopra tutta la scuola. Io raccontava alle mie compagne tutto ciò che aveva sentito leggere dei Paladini, delle Fate, delle *Metamorfosi*, e dell'*Eneide*. Non badavano più alle orazioni, né ai lavori; tutta la stanza risuonava di favole, d'istorie e di nomi estrani, barbari, fantastici, greci e latini. La direttrice pregava, minacciava, prometteva; tutto era inutile: ella si portò finalmente da mia madre dicendo che era costretta a congedarmi con dispiacere, poiché era un diavoletto indomabile" (*Notizie*, 51). Alfieri also uses the term *diavoletto* to describe himself at the age of nine in his account of his "ineducation" (*Vita*, 28).

¹⁴⁸ "Mia nonna si prese la cura di farmi da maestra tenendomi chiusa seco nella sua cameretta. Incominciò dall'insegnarmi di bel nuovo l'*abbicci* [...] In poco più di due mesi che durò la nuova mia educazione feci tanto diventar matta mia nonna, che s'ella avesse avuto pazienza mi sarebbe stata debitrice della gloria del Paradiso" (*Notizie*, 51-52). This episode provides valuable information regarding the influential texts in Veronese's early education, since she notes that her grandmother's library "consisteva in vari romanzi, alcuni libri di preghiere, le meraviglie dei Santi del Padre Rossignuoli; libri che raccontavano miracoli i più prodigiosi" (*ibid.*, 52).

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 56-57. [When I had already turned nine, my mother piously thought to bring me to church and have me make my first so-called spiritual confession. I showed some reluctance ... I felt so oppressed by the idea that I struggled to make my way to the confessional. I gathered my courage, and was about to kneel, when my mother whispered in my ear: "Tell him everything or you'll go to hell." This fierce obligation, which showed no room for compromise, alarmed me such that at that moment I ran home, frightened by hell and the idea of having to tell him everything].

Angela, like many other autobiographers, focuses on the centrality of her first spiritual confession in the development of her literary vocation. Though not all eighteenth-century autobiographers describe the actual moment of their first confession, many place great emphasis on other childhood events around the time when this event usually occurs, between the ages of seven and nine: Vico was seven at the time of his fall, while Alfieri was eight; Carlo Goldoni was also eight when his “comic genius” began to develop, the same age at which Rousseau describes being falsely accused of stealing a comb (an event he attributes to his initiation into the deceptive nature of society) and Casanova begins his autobiographical narration, claiming to have no earlier recollections. Veronese’s “ripugnanza” – the same term used in Alfieri’s account of his own first confession – is similarly indicative of her irreverent spirit and literary vocation.¹⁵⁰ Indeed, the episode of her failed confession is immediately followed by a second incident in which she is chastised by her father for replacing a framed engraving of Mary Magdalene with an image of Saint Cecilia, the patron saint of poets and musicians.¹⁵¹

In the spring of 1787, Angela’s family leaves Venice and returns to Santa Bona by boat. Her father’s new employer, the count Alvise Zenobio, has a significant impact on her literary education since he had spent several years in England and had returned to Italy with two English servants; one of them was a lover of “bottles” and the other a lover of “books” who introduced Angela to Shakespeare.¹⁵² Angela recounts one event in particular in which she stumbles upon

¹⁵⁰ Of his first confession at the age of seven or eight, Alfieri writes: “Andai: né so quel che me gli dicessi, tanta era la mia natural ripugnanza e il dolore di dover rivelare i miei segreti fatti e pensieri” (*Vita*, 20).

¹⁵¹ “V’erano in mia casa due stampe vecchie [...] l’una rappresentava Santa Cecilia, e l’altra Santa Maria Maddalena. Mi pensai di levar dalla cornice la seconda e di porvi la prima. Mio padre mi sgridò; io risposi con ingenuità puerile: – Caro papà, l’una piange, e l’altra suona; è meglio tener l’ultima che la prima” (*Notizie*, 56-57).

¹⁵² “Il conte Alvise Zenobio era stato varii anni in Inghilterra, innamorato nella singolarità di quella nazione. Nel suo ritorno alla patria condusse seco due camerieri inglesi, l’uno amante delle bottiglie, e l’altro dei libri; credo avesse più ragione il primo che il secondo, poiché le bottiglie allontanavano il suo umor tetro; al contrario l’altro se lo

the count during his target practice:

Un giorno che si faceva nel cortile questo strepitoso giuoco, il padrone mi vide immobile spettatrice, e ne stupì. –Vieni qui fanciulla, mi disse, spara questa pistola, ed io ti faccio un regalo.– Mio padre, li presente, m’incoraggi, ed io la presi e la sparai tra gli applausi e la meraviglia dei cavalieri.¹⁵³

Emblematic of her inclination towards heroic endeavors and desire to challenge gender roles by participating in a traditionally male sport, this event establishes a parallel with the autobiographies of Queen Christina of Sweden and Petronilla Paolini Massimi, who not only express a love of weaponry but, like Veronese, tend to look to their fathers as models while affirming their differences from their mothers. Veronese likewise associates herself with her father’s generous spirit, claiming such a close resemblance as to seem like “another one of him exactly,” while she condemns her mother’s avariciousness, a quality she associates with “the majority of women.”¹⁵⁴

In approximately 1790, when Angela is eleven years old, her father is transferred under the service of the count’s sister, Alba Zenobio, and moves the family to the Villa Albrizzi on the Terraglio, the road connecting Venice and Treviso. It was here, following the Treaty of Campoformio in October 1797, which ceded Venice to Austria and led to the closure of many

accresceva con le sue letture. Quest’ultimo spiegò a mio padre in cattivo italiano le tanto stimate opere di Sakespeare, mio padre le ripeteva all’amico cappellano, ed io, sempre presente, le apprendeva a memoria, meglio di lui. La mia picciola testa finì di empirsi di *re avvelenati*, di *regine sonnambole*, di *streghe* e di *pietosi assassini* (ibid., 58-59).

¹⁵³ Ibid., 58. [One day while they were at this noisy game in the courtyard, the master was surprised to see me there as an immobile spectator. “Come here, little girl,” he said to me, “Shoot this pistol and I’ll give you a gift.” My father, who was there, encouraged me, and I took it and shot it, to the applause and wonderment of the gentlemen]. While reprising the theme of experimenting with weaponry found in the autobiographies of Christina of Sweden and Petronilla Paolini Massimi, Angela differs from her predecessors in her “hatred” of firearms: “Rimasi però tanto sbalordita dallo strepito della palla, che mel ricordo come fosse adesso. Il che mi fece sempre odiare le terribili armi da fuoco” (ibid.).

¹⁵⁴ Of her resemblance to her father, she writes: “Rassomigliava tanto a mio padre che sembrava un altro lui stesso; una ragione di più per essergli cara” (ibid., 46-47). Her mother, on the other hand, is described as “alquanto avara, altra qualità della maggior parte delle femmine” (ibid., 53).

salons, that Isabella Teotochi Albrizzi reestablished residence, drawing to the villa illustrious literary figures such as Ippolito Pindemonte, Ugo Foscolo, Vincenzo Monti, Antonio Canova, and Lord Byron, who referred to her as a “Venetian Madame de Staël”.¹⁵⁵ For Angela, Villa Albrizzi thus represents the site where her cultural and literary education truly began.¹⁵⁶ Upon her arrival, Angela’s first teachers are a woodcutter, who dies after only several months, and the son of a farmer:

La curiosità ch’io aveva per saper tutto ciò che riguardava pitture e sculture mi risvegliò l’idea di voler imparar a leggere, poiché il voler imparar a scrivere era delitto di lesa maestà presso la mia famiglia. Mio padre, ch’era buono come un angelo, mi avrebbe contentata anche in questo, ma mia madre e la nonna gridavano, ed erano inesorabili su tal proposito. A forza di prieghi mi si permise che un povero vecchio falegname di casa, nelle brevi ore che avea di ozio, m’insegnasse il tanto per l’avanti detestato *abbicci*. Io aveva undici anni compiti, una memoria felice, ed una smania estrema di apprendere. Tutti i danari ch’io possedeva me li aveva fruttati il farmi guida pel laberinto; li consegnai al falegname, ch’era divenuto il mio Mentore, onde mi provvedesse i libri necessari. Mi procurò la vita di Giosafatte e il *Fior di virtù*, oltre la vita di Bertoldo e quella delle Vergini. Ecco la mia libreria, ed eccomi attentissima a divenire erudita tra gli applausi di mio padre e il brontolare di mia famiglia. Li miei studi furono brevi, poiché da lì a sei o sette mesi il maestro passò all’eterno riposo. Seguitai però ostinatamente, e da vera femmina, la intrapresa carriera, ora rileggendo sola quel poco che aveva imparato dal vecchio falegname, ed ora facendomi istruire da un fanciullo della mia età figlio del fattore, che abitava nello stesso luogo delizioso. In quelle ore che non era alla scuola s’interessava volentieri nell’insegnare agl’ignoranti, come diceva egli. Io lo pagava col raccontargli le novelle delle fate ch’io sapeva in gran copia a memoria, e ch’egli ascoltava con tutta attenzione. Ecco il mio secondo Mentore pagato a forza di fiato e di polmoni.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁵ Cf. Paolo Gaspari, *Terra Patrizia. Aristocrazie terriere e società rurale in Veneto e Friuli: Patrizi veneziani, nobili e borghesi nella formazione dell’etica civile delle élites terriere (1797-1920)* (Udine: Istituto Editoriale Veneto-Friulano, 1993), 161. On Teotochi Albrizzi’s life and the diverse locations of her salon throughout the years, see: Cinzia Giorgetti, *Ritratto di Isabella: Studi e documenti su Isabella Teotochi Albrizzi* (Florence: Le Lettere, 1992); Adriana Chemello, “La biografia come rispecchiamento,” in *Geografie e genealogie letterarie: erudite, biografie, croniste, narratrici, épistolières, utopiste tra Settecento e Ottocento*, ed. Adriana Chemello and Luisa Ricaldone (Padua: Il Poligrafo, 2000), 117; Adriano Favaro, *Isabella Teotochi Albrizzi: La sua vita, i suoi amori e i suoi viaggi* (Udine: P. Gaspari, 2003); and Ileana Baird, *Social Networks in the Long Eighteenth Century: Clubs, Literary Salons, Textual Coteries* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014), 177-178.

¹⁵⁶ Cf. Poloni and Zambon, “Nota biografica,” 137.

¹⁵⁷ *Notizie*, 63-65. [The curiosity I had to know everything regarding painting and sculpture awoke in me the idea of wanting to learn to read, since wanting to learn how to write was a crime of high treason in my family. My father, who was as kind as an angel, would have allowed it, but my mother and grandmother yelled and were relentless in their position. After my insistent pleas it was permitted that a poor old woodcutter, during his brief hours of repose,

Thus, Angela finances her education not only with the little money she has, but also by “selling” stories to her young mentor. She eventually manages to convince him to cede his copy of the works of Metastasio – the volume to which she owes her “entire poetic development” – by promising in exchange to recount the entire corpus of fables that she has memorized.¹⁵⁸

Angela’s description of secretly purchasing her reading material through this playful system of bartering evokes both Alfieri’s acquisition of the *Orlando Furioso* by trading his Sunday portion of chicken with a classmate, as well as Lorenzo Da Ponte’s procurement of books with leather skins stolen from his father’s warehouse.¹⁵⁹ Moreover, her illicit exchanges are accompanied by a series of other autobiographical topoi, including theft, nights spent studying while the rest of the family is asleep, and serious illnesses caused by such fervent intellectual pursuits. Angela, not satisfied with spending her days absorbed in reading, steals oil

would teach me just enough of the detested, aforementioned alphabet. I was eleven years old, had a good memory and an extreme longing to learn. I invested all the money I possessed in procuring a guide through the labyrinth; I gave it to the woodcutter, who had become my mentor, so that he could purchase the necessary books. I was able to acquire the life of Josaphat and the *Fiore di virtù*, in addition to the *Life of Bertoldo* and the lives of the virgins. Behold my library and me with the utmost determination to become erudite between my father’s applause and my family’s grumbling. My studies were brief, since after six or seven months my master passed away to eternal rest. I obstinately pursued my chosen career like a true woman, rereading the little that I had learned from the old woodcutter and asking a boy of my age, the son of the farmer who lived in the same beautiful place, to teach me. When he wasn’t at school, he happily offered to teach “the ignorant,” as he would say. I paid him by recounting the great number of fairy tales I knew by heart, and he listened with full attention. Behold my second mentor, purchased with my breath and lungs].

¹⁵⁸ “Pochi mesi dopo le lezioni fanciullesche, in cui io faceva gran progressi, per esser piena di memoria e curiosità, osservai fra i libri del picciol maestro un tomo dell’opere immortali del Metastasio; era adornato di rami allusivi, e questo bastò per innamorarmi del libro. Glielo dimandai con tanto calore, come se gli avessi domandato un manoscritto di Omero, esibindo al fanciullo tutti li miei libri, ed anche assumendomi l’obbligo di raccontargli tutte le novelle ch’io sapeva. Egli cedette a questa ultima tentazione, ed eccomi posseditrice d’un libro a cui deggio tutto il mio sviluppo poetico” (ibid., 65).

¹⁵⁹ These and other episodes are recalled in Stefania Buccini’s study of the autobiographical topos of clandestine reading, which she distinguishes from the broader theme of theft (prevalent in the autobiographical tradition from Saint Augustine to Rousseau, Casanova, Goldoni, Alfieri, and Chateaubriand, among others) as a conscious act of transgression (Buccini, 30). See also Bartolo Anglani, “Il ‘premier souvenir’: Nascita di uno scrittore,” in *L’Histoire de ma vie di Giacomo Casanova*, ed. Michele Mari (Milan: Cisalpino, 2008), 125-152.

for her lantern from her mother in order to read Metastasio at night.¹⁶⁰ The description of these sleepless nights is immediately followed by an account of her second illness, a severe intestinal infection which strikes when she is twelve years old and, like her earlier sickness, is linked to her literary vocation. As is typical in both spiritual and literary autobiographies, Angela's poor health has direct consequences on the discovery of her vocation and "ambition." She spends entire days alone in her room reading Metastasio's poetry, which inspires her to begin improvising her own verses:

In quella lunghissima convalescenza cominciarono in me a scintillare le prime faville di ardore apollineo. Passava le intere giornate sola nella mia cameretta con la cara compagnia del tomo di Metastasio, ch'io sapeva quasi a memoria. Stanca del continuo leggere passeggiava con aria distratta recitando senza regole declamatorie ciò che aveva già letto cento volte, ed annoiata di replicar sempre le stesse cose ne creava bizzarramente di nuove [...] Alcuni che avranno avuta la sofferenza di leggere fin qui queste memorie esclameranno: oh! non è possibile che una fanciulla di tredici anni e con sì pochi studi abbia avuta tanta abilità! Lo giuro con tutta l'ingenuità della mia innocenza d'allora.¹⁶¹

Angela remained ill for nearly a year, and describes how a "blessed" fever in the wake of her initial recovery allowed her to continue to devote all of her time to reading. She also notes having secretly acquired two books in particular, which her father eventually discovered and confiscated:

Passata appena la convalescenza fui assalita dalla febbre detta terzana, che mi tormentò un anno appunto. In grazia di codesta benedetta febbre mi si permise ogni sorta di sollievo; io non ne bramava che uno, ed era che mi lasciassero leggere il mio diletto Metastasio. Aveva fatto l'acquisto da un povero muratore, che dicea averli trovati in una soffitta, di due nuovi libri poetici, cioè d'un tomo dell'Ariosto, e d'un *Pastor fido* del

¹⁶⁰ "O divino Metastasio! Tu eri la mia delizia: io ti leggeva di giorno mercé la luce del Sole, io ti leggeva di notte mercé il lume della domestica lucerna, zeppa d'oglio rubato a mia madre" (*Notizie*, 65-66).

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 66-67. [During that lengthy convalescence the first sparks of Apollonian ardor began to scintillate in me. I spent entire days alone in my room in the dear company of my Metastasio, which I knew almost by heart. Tired of constantly reading, I started to stroll, absentmindedly reciting without declamatory rules that which I had already read a hundred times and, tired of always replicating the same things, I whimsically created new ones ... Some of you who have had the patience to read these memoirs up until now will exclaim: Oh, it is impossible that a girl of thirteen years with such little education could have such talent! I swear by all the ingenuousness of my innocence at the time].

Guarini. Alcuni canti del primo ed alcune scene del secondo mi rapivano. Mio padre me li trovò tra le mani, mi sgridò altamente, me li tolse, e mi diede in cambio il *Ricciardetto* del Fortiguerra ed una cattiva edizione del Petrarca. Tutto quel tempo ch'io non era tormentata dalla terzana lo era dalla smania poetica; improvvisava soletta li miei poveri versi con libero entusiasmo, non avendo altri spettatori che le statue e gli alberi del giardino.¹⁶²

It is worth noting that the succession of events and tropes in this portion of Veronese's narrative is almost identical to that described in Teresa Bandettini's autobiography, written one year earlier: Both women connect their ardent passion for studies with childhood illnesses, both devise various means of stealing or otherwise secretly acquiring books that are subsequently confiscated by one of their parents, and both assemble their first writing materials from scraps. This is not to suggest that Veronese was aware of Bandettini's autobiography (although they did meet in person on at least one occasion), but simply to demonstrate that by the end of the eighteenth century, women writers were actively and consciously experimenting with certain topoi that had become endemic to the autobiographical genre.¹⁶³

Just as Bandettini had enlisted her friend to steal paper for her and resorted to using a chest as a table and an eggshell for an inkwell, the fourteen-year-old Angela convinces her little "mentor" to steal pens, ink and paper from his father for her and she recycles one of her own father's old tobacco boxes to use as a desk, claiming that she taught herself how to write by

¹⁶² Ibid., 68-69. [When I had barely recovered, I was seized by the so-called tertian fever, which tormented me for a year. Thanks to this blessed fever, I was allowed every sort of relief; I desired but one, and it was that I be left alone to read my beloved Metastasio. I had acquired two new poetic works from a poor bricklayer who claimed to have found them in an attic: a volume of Ariosto and a copy of Guarini's *Pastor fido*. I was captivated by some cantos of the former and a few scenes from the latter. My father found me reading them, severely scolded me, took them away and gave me Fortiguerra's *Ricciardetto* and a poor edition of Petrarch in exchange. When I wasn't tormented by the tertian fever, I was tormented by my poetic mania; I improvised my humble verses with clear enthusiasm all by myself, having no other spectators than the statues and trees in the garden].

¹⁶³ As Franco Fido has argued, the "continuity" and "intertextual dialogue" between autobiographies is not always intentional but rather suggests the "presence of some *topoi*, which, though not necessarily derived from other texts, are somewhat inherent in the genre" (Fido, "At the Origins of Autobiography," 171).

tracing letters against a sunlit window pane.¹⁶⁴ Her reference to the tobacco box is perhaps not coincidental, since that same year her first sonnet, dedicated to the count Alessandro Pepoli, was almost accidentally smoked in a pipe before being miraculously saved.¹⁶⁵ The humorous episode also creates an intentional contrast between her father's encouragement of her literary pursuits with her mother's opposition, since while the sonnet she entrusts to her father is saved from fire, her mother habitually burns her poems.¹⁶⁶

The encounter with Pepoli also shows how, thanks to her sojourn at Villa Albrizzi, Angela is able to increasingly widen her circle of contacts and access to books. The birth of her sister during this period is described as a welcome event that deprives Angela of the attention of her parents, but in turn gives her the freedom to read and write as much as she pleases.¹⁶⁷ Among the volumes given to her by Isabella Teotochi Albrizzi are Ludovico Savioli's "bellissime

¹⁶⁴ "Verso li quattordici anni si destò in me la brama d'imparare assolutamente a scrivere. Una vecchia tabacchiera dismessa da mio padre fu il mio primo calamaio. Il fanciullo maestro mi regalò una penna, un po' d'inchiostro, delle soprascritte di lettere raccolte nella fattoria, che per allora mi servivano di libro. Dietro a ciò ch'io leggeva incominciai a segnare le prime lettere: io appoggiava la carta stampata d'una poesia fatta per messa nuova o per nozze ad una finestra, stendeva sopra di quella una pagina del mio libro, e scriveva arditamente aiutata dal lume del giorno ciò che aveva letto e riletto tante volte di notte. Il suddetto fanciullo mi recava di quando in quando nuovo inchiostro, nuove penne e nuove soprascritte; credo che questo fosse un innocente furto fatto a suo padre fattore, non so se per indole naturale, essendo suo figlio, oppure per la tentazione di udire da me le sorprendenti novelle delle Fate" (*Notizie*, 69).

¹⁶⁵ "Un giorno nell'Autunno dello stesso anno vidi passare pel Terraglio il conte Alessandro Pepoli. Egli guidava sulla bella biga due veloci cavalli: era giovine, bello e benfatto; mi parve di vedere un Apollo, e gli feci un sonetto, che incominciava: *Questi che vien sopra di cocchio aurato*. Lo scrissi con la pazienza di copiare ad una ad una tutte le lettere necessarie sparse sulle stampe, senza certe regole grammaticali, ed attendeva l'incontro di farglielo pervenire. Mio padre, a cui io aveva confidato i nuovi studi, sorrideva tacitamente nell'udire i miei poetici strambotti. Appena eseguito e scritto con caratteri non intelligibili che a me sola il nuovo parto poetico, corsi in fondo al giardino a farglielo sentire. Mi ascoltò, mi lodò, mi fece coraggio; anzi s'infervorò egli stesso per farlo passare nelle mani del Pepoli" (*ibid.*, 70-71). According to Veronese, the sonnet was first passed from her father to Giovanni Brescia, who forgot about the piece of paper and almost smoked it in his pipe by mistake, but was intercepted by Francesco Bragadin, who passed it to Pepoli, who in turn responded favorably to Veronese with another sonnet (*ibid.*, 71-72).

¹⁶⁶ "Mia madre [...] abbruciava tutto ciò che le veniva alle mani di poetico nella mia camera. Io scriveva continuamente versi, e ne riceveva scritti da altri continuamente, a cui formava risposta sul momento, poco badando alle insolenze fanciullesche di mia sorella ed al continuo brontolar di mia madre" (*ibid.*, 105).

¹⁶⁷ "Dopo alcuni anni ch'io mio trovava sul Terraglio mia madre arricchì la nostra famiglia d'una nuova fanciulla, ch'essendo rimasta in vita al contrario dei maschi mi rapì tutte le carezze materne e paterne. Io gliele cedetti volentieri, poiché così poteva, non osservata, leggere e scrivere versi impunemente" (*ibid.*, 77).

canzoni” and Italian translations of Virgil’s *Aeneid* and Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, works to which Veronese repeatedly returned and which greatly influenced her own poetic compositions.¹⁶⁸ In addition to receiving copies of poems by notable Arcadian poets, including Giambattista Felice Zappi, Carlo Frugoni, and Girolamo Ruscelli, she also acquires through one of the servants of the villa a copy of Goldoni’s comedies, which she reads out loud to her mother “without being scolded.”¹⁶⁹

It remains unclear exactly how many years Angela actually spent at Villa Albrizzi, but at a certain point her father was hired at the villa of Count Spineda in Breda di Piave, where the Countess Spineda took an active interest in Angela’s literary and cultural formation, inviting her to lunch and the theater and giving her books of poetry.¹⁷⁰ She also introduces her to writers and intellectuals, including the poet Ugo Foscolo:

Un giorno essa mandò a levarmi nel suo carrozzino, onde farmi personalmente conoscere il celebre Ugo Foscolo. Il suo vestito di panno grigio oscuro, senza alcun segno di moda, li suoi capegli rossi radicati come quelli d’uno schiavo [...] le sue labbra grosse come quelle d’un Etiope, la sua sonora e ululante voce, mel dipinsero a prima vista per tutt’altro che per elegante poeta.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁸ In particular, Veronese emphasizes her “replicata lettura” of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* (ibid., 74-75).

¹⁶⁹ Veronese describes the servant, Pasqualino, as a “gran lettore delle commedie del Goldoni. Io le ascoltava con molto piacere, ed egli nel partire per Venezia me ne regalò alcune, che io leggeva a mia madre senza essere sgridata” (ibid., 77). Francesco Bragadin, a friend of the Albrizzi family, not only gives her “le poesie dello Zappi, alcune del Frugoni, ed un *Rimario* del Ruscelli,” but also helps her to improve her own poetic style: “Mi ricordo che questo signore volle veder li miei scritti, ed osservando ch’erano privi di punti e di virgole prese un tocca-lapis e m’insegnò a fare il punto ammirativo e l’interrogativo, additandomi anche il sito ove doveano essere segnati” (ibid., 75).

¹⁷⁰ Veronese recounts how the count read aloud to her from Apuleius’s *Golden Ass* and describes the countess as follows: “Questa leggiadra signora mi amava, perché a suo dire trovava in me qualche cosa di singolare oltre la poesia. Mi conduceva seco in carrozza, m’invitava spesso a pranzo, mi faceva andar seco al teatro, e mi regalava continuamente libri di poesia. Avendo ella moltissime relazioni con persone colte ed erudite, parlava a tutti con gentilezza della sua Saffo-giardiniera, come solea chiamarmi, e mi presentava alla sua numerosa conversazione, ove tutti mi ammiravano non so se per far la corte alla mia poesia oppure alla bella mia protettrice” (ibid., 81-82).

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 82. [One day she sent for me to be taken in her carriage, whereby I met the famed Ugo Foscolo in person. His dark grey linen suit, without any sign of fashion, his red hair rooted like that of a slave ... his big lips like those of an Ethiopian, and his loud, ululant voice, painted a portrait of him that at first glance seemed like anything but

Veronese also offers a portrait of herself through Foscolo's eyes:

Egli appena mi vide s'alzò da sedere dicendo: – È questa la Saffo campestre? è molto ragazza; si vede dai suoi occhi ch'è vera poetessa. – Il suo complimento mi fece ridere. – Gran bei denti! esclamò egli; ditemi alcuni dei vostri versi. – Dietro a queste sue lodi non mi sembrò più tanto brutto; mi feci coraggio, e gli recitai un mio idillio pastorale, ch'egli applaudi avvicinandosi a me più che non permetteva la decenza della vita civile.¹⁷²

Starting with this humorously deprecatory description of the young Foscolo, Veronese offers a series of portraits of the noblemen, poets and intellectuals with whom she engaged firsthand: She describes her poetic exchanges with Quirico Viviani, Gaspare Ghirlanda and the abbot Angelo Dalmistro;¹⁷³ she makes important contacts with writers who help her publish her first collections of poetry, such as Paolo Bernardi, who taught at the Seminario di Treviso, and Cesarotti;¹⁷⁴ she meets notable women writers, aristocrats, and *salonnières*, including Teresa Bandettini, Clarina

that of an elegant poet]. Her attitude changes when Foscolo recites some of his poems: “I suoi versi mi resero estatica [...] Egli sembrava un genio celeste che rendesse omaggio alle divinità della terra” (ibid., 83-84).

¹⁷² Ibid., 82-83. [As soon as he saw me, he stood up, saying: “Is this the rural Saffo? She's so young; you can see in her eyes that she is a true poet.” His compliment made me laugh. “What nice teeth!” He exclaimed. “Recite some of your verses for me.” In the face of such praise, he no longer seemed quite so ugly. I gathered up the courage to recite one of my pastoral idylls, which he applauded, drawing closer to me than permitted by the etiquette of civil society].

¹⁷³ She meets Ghirlanda, a doctor whom she addresses in her poems as Lindoro, one year after her arrival in Breda di Piave (ibid., 80). Viviani, whom she addresses as Dafni in the series of amorous poems that they exchanged over a period of two years, is also credited with introducing her to Cesarotti (ibid., 91-92, 111, and Poloni and Zambon, “Nota biografica,” 137-140). Angelo Dalmistro is credited with giving Veronese a copy of Tasso's *Aminta* and introducing her to Francesconi and to the unnamed “giovane di Montebelluna” who dedicates poems to Veronese by addressing her as the “pastorella del Sile,” to which Veronese responds with verses addressed to “Elpino” (*Notizie*, 119). She praises Dalmistro as a writer, likening his prose to that of Gasparo Gozzi and his poetry to that of Horace. Not everyone viewed their friendship favorably: “Alcuni non lodarono molto la cura che si prendeva un pastore spirituale per la salute d'una sua pecorella. Egli rideva sonoramente di queste ciarle dicendo: – I cani abbaiano e la luna seguita a splendere” (ibid., 107-108).

¹⁷⁴ Bernardi helps her publish her first collection, the *Varie poesie di Angela Veronese trevigiana* (Venezia, Presso Francesco Andreola, 1804) which she later rejects by asserting that her *Rime pastorali* (1807), published with Cesarotti's help, was her first true publication. In her autobiography, however, she admits: “Non era questa la prima volta che i miei poetici scritti fossero affidati ai torchi; poiché l'Abate Bernardi aveva fatta una raccolta di ciò che troppo immaturamente mi era caduto dalla penna, oltre ad una Anacreontica stampata sul Munitore di Venezia” (ibid., 91). Of Cesarotti, she writes: “Mai più mi figurava tanta amabilità in un vecchio, né tanta indulgenza in un letterato [...] Con Cesarotti passai vari giorni che mi sembravano ore brevissime. La sua conversazione era lepida, colta e saporita. Con chi gli andava a genio parlava con molto piacere, e questo piacere brillava in tutta la sua fisionomia; ma se al contrario, diveniva malinconico, taciturno ed annoiato perfino di sé stesso” (ibid., 93-94). See also Poloni and Zambon, “Nota biografica,” 138.

Mosconi, Giustina Renier Michiel, the Princess of Bavaria Augusta Amalia, wife of the Italian viceroy, and the Countess Grimaldi-Prati.¹⁷⁵ Finally, throughout the course of her long literary career, she befriends many other literary and political figures, including: the poets Ippolito Pindemonte, Iacopo Vittorelli, Alessandro Pepoli, and Giuseppe Urbano Pagani-Cesa; the librarian and later university professor Daniele Francesconi; the architect Giuseppe Barbieri; the abbot Francesco Zacchiroli and Giovanni Zuccala, the respective authors of medical popularized works, the *Ricerche sulla sensibilità* (1781) and *Della solitudine secondo i principi di Petrarca e di Zimmermann* (1818); the Italian translator of Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Girolamo Silvio Martinengo; the senator and protector of Lorenzo da Ponte, Bernardo Memmo; and General Miollis, who Veronese claims had referred to her affectionately as the "gardener of Parnassus." Veronese thus depicts an entire generation of writers from the late eighteenth century and throughout the period of Napoleonic domination, as they grappled with competing social and cultural models and changes in the structure of academies and salons.¹⁷⁶

As discussed in the previous chapter, literary portraiture was a popular genre among French and Italian *salonnières* and Veronese may have found a model for her *Notizie* in Isabella Teotochi Albrizzi's *Ritratti*, which was already in its fourth edition by the time Veronese's autobiography was published in 1826.¹⁷⁷ Angela establishes an intertextual dialogue with the *Ritratti*, for example by consciously limiting her description of Cesarotti in light of Teotochi

¹⁷⁵ On her interaction with Giustina Renier who, along with Isabella Teotochi Albrizzi, was the host of one of Venice's most prominent salons, see *Notizie*, 103. Regarding the countess Grimaldi, Teresa Bandettini, the countess Clarina Mosconi, and the Princess of Bavaria, see *ibid.*, 122-131.

¹⁷⁶ Noting the "intreccio di personalità del *milieu* culturale veneto del tardo Settecento e poi dei primi decenni dell'Ottocento napoleonico e neoclassico, per non dire apertamente proromantico, che lei tratteggia nella rievocazione delle *Notizie*," Patrizia Zambon recalls that Angela Veronese was born during "l'estrema stagione d'Arcadia, e per la Serenissima ancora stagione di vita splendida in villa: sono i due estremi che in qualche modo segnano la vita letteraria di maggiore notorietà di Angela" (Zambon, "Angela Veronese, *Eurosia*, 1836," in *Eurosia*, 12-13).

¹⁷⁷ Susan Dalton, "Searching for Virtue: Physiognomy, Sociability, and Taste in Isabella Teotochi Albrizzi's *Ritratti*," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 40, no. 1 (2006): 85.

Albrizzi's earlier depiction:

Direi molto più parlando di quest'uomo insigne che io appellerò mio genio benefico, se non fossi stata prevenuta dall'illustre penna della contessa Isabella Teotochi Albrizzi, che con tanta leggiadria di stile ne descrisse le lodi e le virtù nei suoi *Ritratti morali*, coi quali si compiacque di onorare i suoi amici, la sua patria e sé stessa.¹⁷⁸

Scholars, such as Auzzas, who have dismissed Veronese's "little portraits"¹⁷⁹ as something of a poor man's version of the *Ritratti*, perhaps fail to adequately explore how Veronese's irreverent descriptions of significant individuals in her life are functional to the larger discourse of self-representation in her narrative.¹⁸⁰ In the above passage, for example, Angela recognizes the *Ritratti* as having enabled Teotochi Albrizzi not only to praise her contemporaries but also to "honor herself," and Veronese similarly uses her interactions with others to paint a series of self-portraits that depict her struggle to claim a place in the contemporary academy as a female writer.¹⁸¹ For example, she recalls being invited by the poet Domenico Carrari to recite some of her poems in Bovolenta despite the town magistrate's objection to the participation of women in academies; she also describes how her friend and mentor, Ferdinando Porro, had criticized a

¹⁷⁸ *Notizie*, 94. [I would say much more of this eminent man, to whom I will refer as my good genius, had I not been preceded by the illustrious pen of the countess Isabella Teotochi Albrizzi, who with such grace of style described his merits and virtues in her *Ritratti*, through which she had the pleasure of honoring her friends, her country and herself].

¹⁷⁹ Auzzas dismisses Veronese's "ritrattini" and refers to the poet as "una specie di Isabella Teotochi Albrizzi in formato minore. Priva, senza dubbio, dello spirito, della sicurezza dell'affascinante signora" (290). Pastore Stocchi, on the other hand, has recognized that Veronese's "lucidità satirica" and "sorridente irriverenza" distinguish her depictions from those of Teotochi Albrizzi ("Introduzione," in *Notizie*, 16-17).

¹⁸⁰ Many scholars have explored the connections between literary portraiture and autobiography. Adriana Chemello, for example, has analyzed the autobiographical elements in Teotochi Albrizzi's *Ritratti*, noting that the *salonnière's* portrait of Vittoria Colonna suggests a clear "sovraposizione (forse inconsapevole) della propria figura a quella della biografata ed il conseguente tentativo di legittimare attraverso un'altra donna illustre (e già ammessa nel canone) gli amori e le relazioni intellettuali ed affettive che la vedono discussa protagonista nella Venezia del suo tempo" (Chemello, 130). Within the larger context of women's literary portraiture, see also Greg Kucich, "Mary Shelley's *Lives* and the Reengineering of History," in *Mary Shelley in Her Times*, ed. Betty T. Bennett and Stuart Curran (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), 198-213.

¹⁸¹ Cf. Serena, 101-102 and Poloni and Zambon, "Nota biografica," 142.

poem she composed for the Princess of Bavaria on the grounds that it was too complex for a woman of Veronese's social standing.¹⁸²

Angela's literary portraits also serve to reconcile conflicting views of herself as a poet and a simple villager, or *giardiniera*. She maintains that throughout her literary career, and particularly during the period of time she spent under the tutelage of the Countess Spineda, she remained deeply connected to the local population and took an active interest in their own literary education. She describes reading and parsing passages from Goldoni's comedies and Alfieri's tragedies during gatherings of local farmers and villagers organized by her father:

Nelle lunghissime sere invernali mio padre si aveva formata una società di villici, che parlando di lepri, di beccaccie e di cani da caccia passavano le ore felicemente: tutte cose per le quali mio padre era trasportatissimo. Di quando in quando io era pregata dalla stessa madre mia (già annoiata di que' discorsi) a leggere qualche commedia del Goldoni, e, quello ch'è più da ridere, qualche tragedia d'Alfieri, di cui que' villani si mostravano appassionati. Oh, dirà taluno, come facevano ad intenderle? Io aveva la pazienza di spiegar loro tutto ciò che v'era di oscuro [...] e qualche volta si usavano le alte espressioni alfieriane. A proposito mi sovviene una circostanza graziosissima, che fece per molti anni ridere Cesarotti, a cui io l'aveva narrata. Due di quei villani stendevano il frumento nel cortile ch'era innanzi alla fattoria Spineda per dover poi ben secco consegnarlo al granaio. Stanchi di abbrustolirsi per molte ore al sole ardentissimo, e vedendo che il fattore non trovava mai secco abbastanza il frumento, uno dei due villani esclamò: – “Oh rabbia! e tacer deggio?”... – A cui rispose subito l'altro: – Sommeso parla: “Mura di reggia son”, testa di c.... – Non so se l'ombra del Sofocle d'Asti avrà uditi questi suoi partigiani sdegnosa o placata; so che ciò raccontando feci moltissimo ridere il Cesarotti. In conseguenza di queste tragiche cognizioni vari fanciulli di que' villani furono battezzati col nome di Oreste, di Carlo, di Virginia etc., con qualche ripugnanza del Parroco.¹⁸³

¹⁸² “In Bovolenta, ov'egli era domiciliato, eravi allora un picciolo collegio, che al chiudersi delle scuole dava una picciola accademia ove alcuni figli di Apollo, parte legittimi, parte bastardi, esponeano i loro parti poetici che terminavano tutti, applauditi o non applauditi, in lode del Rettore. Fui dal Carrari scelta anch'io, onde recitar alcuni versi allusivi alla circostanza; accettai il diploma contro il parere del Podestà di Bovolenta, che non volea persuadersi che le donne potessero aver sede in un'accademia” (*Notizie*, 129). Describing the poem, which she had sent to Porro after he had offered to help deliver it to the princess, she writes: “Gliela spedii tosto scritta di mio pugno; ma siccome era adornata di varie cognizioni mitologiche non troppo adattate alla semplicità d'un'autrice pastorella, l'avveduto cavaliere me la rimandò a vista per un messo apposito, scrivendomi che io ascendessi il Parnaso nuovamente, onde cogliere fiori un po' più semplici” (*Notizie*, 131-132).

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 84-85. [During the long winter evenings, my father had formed a group of villagers who whiled away the hours happily speaking of rabbits, woodcocks, and hunting dogs, all things that greatly interested my father. Every now and then I was asked by my own mother (already bored by those topics) to read one of Goldoni's comedies or, even more laughable, one of Alfieri's tragedies, which those villagers seemed to love. Oh, someone will say, how

Through these and other anecdotes, readers of the *Notizie* will ultimately find themselves in the position of the Venetian painter, Alberto Scaramella, who was commissioned to paint a portrait of Angela Veronese but failed to accurately depict her, perhaps – Angela muses – because he lacked talent or perhaps because of the “instability” of her physiognomy.¹⁸⁴ In other words, amid numerous shifting and contradictory perspectives, the most valuable portrait Veronese offers to her audience is that of herself.

After spending a number of years in Breda di Piave, Count Spineda’s concern with reducing expenditures in the villa leads Angela’s father to decide to return to his native Biadene, this time finding employment at the villa of Tommaso Brescia. Upon returning to her birthplace, Veronese enjoys a new status as an established poet while also immediately finding a sense of communion with the townspeople. She is deeply moved by the generosity of the “dear,” “courteous,” and “honest”¹⁸⁵ villagers and their humble offerings of fruit from the trees that her father had planted years before.¹⁸⁶ Veronese’s descriptions of daily life in the village, the local

were they able to understand them? I patiently explained everything they didn’t understand ... and sometimes they would use Alfieri’s lofty expressions. Speaking of which, I am reminded of a rather charming circumstance, which made Cesarotti laugh on end when I told him. Two of the villagers were hanging wheat in the yard in front of Spineda’s farm, which they were to deposit in the granary once it was well dried. Tired of spending many hours under the scorching sun, and finding that the farmer never deemed the wheat sufficiently dry, one of the two villagers exclaimed: “Oh rage! Must I be silent?” ... To which the other immediately replied: “Speak in whispers: ‘These are palace walls,’ prick.” I don’t know if the ghost of the Sophocles of Asti would have been pleased or offended to hear the words of these devotees of his, but I know that the story made Cesarotti laugh tremendously. As a result of their familiarity with these tragedies, various children of those villagers were baptized with the names of Oreste, Carlo, Virginia, etc., with some disdain on the part of the parish priest]. The villagers quote lines from Alfieri’s *Oreste*: “Oh rabbia! e tacer deggio?” (4.2); and “mura di reggia son; sommesso parla” (2.1).

¹⁸⁴ Veronese notes that her friend, the poet Gaspare Ghirlanda, had commissioned a portrait “da certo pittor di Venezia (Alberto Scaramella), che non poté mai riuscirvi, non so se per instabilità della mia fisionomia oppur del suo ingegno” (*Notizie*, 87).

¹⁸⁵ “Quel bosco così poetico, quelle colline così ridenti, quelle passeggiate così deliziose, quelle vedute così pittoresche, quei cugini così cari al mio cuore, quei contadini così cortesi” (*ibid.*, 118-119).

¹⁸⁶ Describing her return to Biadene, she writes: “Al mio arrivo colà fui incontrata da vari miei cugini e cugine tutti allegri e curiosi di rivedere la loro cugina poetessa, di cui, dicevano, il parroco stesso avea formata un’idea assai vantaggiosa. Corsi subito a salutare la mia nativa casupola, che ritrovai ancor più cadente di prima [...] alcuni villici

population, the young girls and the aspiring poet she mentors are reminiscent of earlier descriptions of herself and might be read as an indictment of the social hierarchy that precluded the lower classes from formal education and literature as a leisure activity:

Nel tempo che la mia famiglia si fermò in Biadine, io mi occupava ora [...] scrivendo, ora facendo scuola di lavori femminili a due fanciullette un po' mie parenti, nelle quali io scopriva una grande smania d'imparare e di sentire a leggere (solita epidemia di famiglia) [...] Li giorni di festa mi portava a far visite da que' rustici abitatori delle colline, che mi offrivano noci, poma e castagne, unici tesori di quei paesi. Mi pregavano di dirgli alcuni miei versi che applaudevano senza intenderli, cosa che mi faceva ridere di cuore. Mi sovviene che uno di questi villani, giovine di poco più di tre lustri, mi presentò un giorno pochi versi fatti da lui, in cui intendeva di spiegarmi l'effetto che faceva nel suo cuore il canto della mia Musa; tutte idee ch'egli aveva acquistate nell'udir i miei versi. Io gli regalai le poesie di Fulvio Testi per cui mostrava un gran trasporto. Egli sapea un poco scrivere, e qualora non era occupato nei lavori campestri non faceva che leggere e scrivere copiando ciò che gli era andato più a genio.¹⁸⁷

In 1810, after spending five years in Biadene, Veronese's family moved to Villa Foscarini-Erizzo in Pontelongo. By this time, she had already published two collections of poetry and enjoyed an unusual degree of freedom, frequently traveling to accept invitations from nobles

che l'abitavano, poiché non era più abitabile che dai villici, mi offrivano alcune frutta raccolte sugli alberi che aveva già piantati mio padre; le presi, e volendo avvicinarle alla mia bocca, non so perché, mi caddero le lagrime con sorpresa di quei villani, ed anche mia, che non ne sapea veder la cagione" (ibid., 107). The passage might be read as an allusion to the scene in Foscolo's *Ultime lettere di Jacopo Ortis* (1798, 1802, 1816) in which the protagonist transplants pine trees on the same "sterile" hill where his father had earlier attempted to plant cypress trees. Veronese's idealistic descriptions of the villagers recalls the joyful nature of Ortis's "villanelle" and seems to fulfill his dream of being able to one day enjoy the fruits of the trees planted by his father: "Frattanto io mi vagheggiava nel lontano avvenire un pari giorno di verno quando canuto mi trarrò passo passo sul mio bastoncello a confortarmi a' raggi del Sole [...] salutando, mentre usciranno dalla chiesa, i curvi villani già miei compagni ne' di che la gioventù rinvigoriva le nostre membra; e compiacendomi delle frutta che, benché tarde, avranno prodotti gli alberi piantati dal padre mio." Letter from November 12, 1797, in Ugo Foscolo, *Ultime lettere di Jacopo Ortis* (Parigi, Presso Dufour e Co. e Baufry, 1825), 13.

¹⁸⁷ *Notizie*, 112-113. [In the period of my family's stay in Biadene, I occupied myself by ... writing and teaching women's work to two young girls to whom I was distantly related and in whom I discovered a great desire to learn and to hear stories read (the usually epidemic of the family) ... On holidays I would visit the rustic inhabitants of the hills, who offered me walnuts, fruit from the trees and chestnuts, the only things of worth in those towns. They would beg me to recite some of my verses, which they would applaud without understanding, which made me laugh. I remember that one of those villagers, a young man of little more than fifteen, presented me one day with a few verses he had written, in which he meant to explain to me the effect that my poetic Muse had on his heart; all ideas that he had acquired by hearing my poems. I gave him the poems of Fulvio Testi, which he loved. He knew how to write a little, and when he wasn't working in the fields, he did nothing but read and write, copying down the things he liked best].

and friends, often against her mother's wishes but with the continued support of her father.¹⁸⁸

Yet, her most significant encounter during this period is certainly that with her future husband who, as in Teresa Bandettini's autobiography, is described as a suitor who, despite lacking both literary and financial prestige, was deemed compatible by her parents on the basis of his good manners, pleasing appearance, sincerity, and respect for Angela's profession as a poet:

Erano scorsi quattro anni, dacché io mi ritrovava a Pontelongo, allorquando ebbi a conoscere un giovine mantovano di bella figura, di aggradevole fisionomia, di animo sincero, di cuore affettuoso. Il rispetto ch'egli professava alla poesia, anche senza conoscerla, mel resero caro. La poesia, posta in aspetto ridicolo da chi non ha avuto principi di educazione, in lui invece destava una spezie di stima divota qual si deve alle cose divine, dolendosi, diceva egli, di non intenderla onde poterla applaudire. Mio padre, che amava molto la gioventù vivace, sentendolo parlare di Roma, di Napoli, Vienna (città che aveva vedute seguendo in qualità di corriere un ricchissimo viaggiatore), mio padre, dico, lo ascoltava con molto piacere, e spesse volte mi chiamava ad ascoltare le sue curiose relazioni. Osservai che alla mia presenza s'imbrogliava, cosa che secondo il mio solito mi faceva ridere di cuore, il che lo imbrogliava ancor più. Un giorno il mio genitore mel propose per marito dicendomi: – Lo credo degno di te, perché sembra buono come un angelo; diventando sua moglie tu potrai leggere e scrivere a tuo piacere. Ti bramo felice. Già il matrimonio non è che un lotto; chi vince e chi perde; il tutto sta in mano della fortuna. – Feci qualche riflesso sulle sue parole; pensai che il padre non vive sempre, e che la poesia in questi secoli non è premiata che di allori, di applausi e di ringraziamenti; tutte cose che riducono, senza un qualche appoggio, a finire sulla paglia [...] Mi risolsi e sposai il giovine mantovano.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁸ She describes, for example, one occasion during which various aristocrats and Venetian patricians traveled to Pontelongo to visit the gardens and asked her father if they could meet her: "I miei versi erano ad essi noti, e appena arrivati richiesero mio padre di potermi vedere. Non feci punto la preziosa, e mi presentai umilmente a quella nobile comitiva, che gentile coi miei versi lo fu egualmente con l'autrice dimandando a mio padre, come in dono, la poetica prole, onde condurla per un giorno ad un pranzo di compagnia che era già allestito alla Battaglia. Mio padre fu compiacente contro il parer della madre, che non voleva accordarmi il permesso, a cui il genitore soggiunse: – Se è vero che mia figlia abbia tanto talento, saprà portarsi bene –, e rivolto a me: – Va, e fatti onore coi versi e con l'umiltà, che nella tua situazione diventa una virtù necessaria. – Montai in carrozza con quelle Dame, ed arrivata alla Battaglia, ove si pranzò magnificamente, feci una infinità di brindisi [...] che mi applaudivano" (ibid., 134). See also Poloni and Zamboni, "Nota biografica," 140-141 (though the editors mistakenly identify Angela as being twenty-two years old at the time of her arrival in Pontelongo in 1801, when in reality she was already thirty-two).

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., 135-136. [Four years had passed since I had moved to Pontelongo when I met a young Mantuan who was well-mannered, handsome, sincere, and affectionate. The respect that he professed for poetry, even without understanding it, made him dear to me. Poetry, often viewed as ridiculous by those who lack knowledge of it, instead inspired in him a kind of devoted esteem similar to that towards divine things, and he regretted, he said, not understanding it enough to praise it. My father, who greatly admired his youthful vivaciousness, hearing him speak of Rome, Naples, and Vienna (which he had often visited as the messenger of a rich traveler), took great pleasure in listening to him and often called me to listen to his bizarre accounts. I noticed that he became nervous in my presence, which of course I found amusing, and which thus made him even more nervous. One day my father proposed him as a husband, telling me: "I believe him worthy of you, because he seems as good as an angel; by

Their marriage in 1813 and subsequent move to Padua is often equated with the end of Angela's poetic career, most famously in the biting observations found in the autobiography of Mario Pieri (1776-1852), a mathematician from Lucca:

Ella poscia (la poveretta!) si maritò ad un cocchiere, che facevale stampare e ristampare quel volumetto, sforzandola ad aggirarsi qua e là con esso per le case dei Signori ad accattar quattrini, a guise di colui che va vendendo storie e leggende per la città; e scriveva di quando in quando eziandio qualche sonetto o canzonetta in occasione di nozze o di laurea o di prima messa, per commissione, e per guadagnare uno scudo; né salse più alto, anzi scese ogni giorno più basso, oppressa dall'avversa fortuna.¹⁹⁰

Equally negative views of Veronese's marriage as shutting her "within domestic walls" and "brutally returning to her social sphere" have persisted even in recent scholarship.¹⁹¹ Pastore Stocchi, for example, described Veronese's marriage as leading to something "much worse" than a tragic end, or rather her confinement in the "grotesque banalities of the quotidian."¹⁹²

Whereas Pieri seems to imply that her husband forced her to reprint her poems for financial reasons, a very different picture emerges in Veronese's *Notizie*, in which she describes assuming the role of wife without abandoning that of poet, and notes that it was her friend, Ferdinando Porro, and not her husband who encouraged her to publish a new edition of her *Rime*

becoming his wife you will be able to read and write as you please. I want you to be happy. Already marriage is but a lottery, some win and some lose, everything is left to fortune." I reflected on his words; I thought about how one's father doesn't live forever and how today poetry is prized only with laurel wreaths, applause and speeches, all things that – without some other form of support – lead to poverty ... I made up my mind and married the young Mantuan].

¹⁹⁰ Mario Pieri, vol. I of *Della vita di Mario Pieri corcirese scritta da lui medesimo* (Firenze, 1850), 142. [She then (poor thing!) married a coachman, who made her print and reprint that little book, forcing her to travel back and forth with it among the houses of gentlemen and collect pennies like those who go around cities selling stories and legends; and she even wrote a few commissioned sonnets every now and then for weddings or ceremonies or church masses, to make a little money; but she never rose higher, and on the contrary fell lower each day, oppressed by her adverse fortune]. See also Pastore Stocchi, "Introduzione," in *Notizie*, 22 and Serena, 107.

¹⁹¹ Oscar Greco writes that Veronese "trascorse la nobile sua esistenza rinchiusa tra le pareti domestiche" (501).

¹⁹² Pastore Stocchi describes her as "tolta alla magia dei primi fervidi anni" and "restituita brutalmente alla sua dimensione sociale" after having resigned herself to marriage ("Introduzione," in *Notizie*, 20). He goes on to describe how Veronese "ha visto naufragare le promesse, non nella tragedia bensì – quel che è molto peggio – nella banalità grottesca del quotidiano" (21).

pastorali.¹⁹³ The same year in which she married Mantovani, she was also admitted to the Accademia degli Agiati and met the Udinese poet, Antonio di Brazzà, who would later help her to publish the 1817 edition of her poems.¹⁹⁴ In 1816, she also began what would become a lifelong friendship with the poet Luigi Carrer, who for over a decade met with Angela on a daily basis.¹⁹⁵ These contacts and publications, together with Angela's own reflections on her married life, suggest that her marriage in no way impeded her literary career.¹⁹⁶ On the contrary, in the poem she composes following her husband's death, entitled "In morte di suo marito Antonio Mantovani," she fondly recalls the many occasions during which he praised her poems and sat beside her as she wrote.¹⁹⁷

Although not much is known about the two decades of Veronese's life following the publication of her autobiography, it is likely that she never had children and that she spent most of her time in Padua, where she was frequently commissioned to write poetry for religious

¹⁹³ "Incominciasti a far la parte di moglie senza scordarmi quella di figlia di Apollo. Io lavorava, scriveva, mi annoiava, tornava a scrivere, tornava ad annoiarmi. Intanto fu di passaggio a Padova il cavalier Porro, che onorò di una sua visita la mia povera maritale abitazione, e trovandomi allora occupata a mettere in netto le tante mie composizioni poetiche mi consigliò di farne una nuova edizione" (*Notizie*, 137).

¹⁹⁴ On Brazzà's desire to meet her, Veronese writes: "Udine non è nel Giappone, ed egli aveva sentito varie volte parlar di me e dei miei versi, che a suo dire gli toccavano il cuore" (*ibid.*, 138). This encounter provided her with the means to print a new edition of her *Rime*: "Mi portai seco lui a far una visita di dovere all'egregio signor Girolamo Venanzio, da me conosciuto fino dal tempo in cui il cavalier Porro era Prefetto, essendo egli in allora uno dei suoi segretari; gli parlai del mio manoscritto, e del piacere ch'io avrei avuto nel poterlo un giorno pubblicare coi tipi Bettoniani [...] Da lì a non molto uscì la nuova edizione, ch'ebbe un incontro fortunato, e di cui il generoso editore mi regalò quattrocento esemplari" (*ibid.*, 140). See also Poloni and Zambon, "Nota biografica," 147.

¹⁹⁵ Following Veronese's death in 1847, Carrer wrote a eulogy in which he describes their friendship "da circa trent'anni, dieci de' quali avezzo a visitarla presso che ciascun giorno" (cited in Poloni, "Angela Veronese e la cultura veneta del primo Ottocento," in *Eurosia*, 32).

¹⁹⁶ Cf. Poloni and Zambon, who affirm that "il marito di Veronese non impedisce, dunque, alla moglie di coltivare la sua passione per la poesia e non le impone di interrompere le sue frequentazioni prestigiose" ("Nota biografica," 147).

¹⁹⁷ "Oh quante volte di vederlo parmi / assiso a me vicin mentre ch'io scrivo, / e cortese e gentil com'era vivo / plaudir i miei carmi!" (*Rime scelte*, in *Notizie*, 173-176).

holidays and other celebrations.¹⁹⁸ She also began to experiment with prose in her novel, *Eurosia* (1836), and her novella, *Adelaide* (1843).¹⁹⁹ Yet, of all her publications, it is above all the *Notizie* that signify a turning point in the history of Italian women's writing. Unlike the other women writers considered in this study, Veronese seems to begin her autobiographical project entirely of her own initiative and not at the request of someone else (whether a spiritual confessor, legal or religious authority, friend, editor or biographer). The *Notizie* also represent what may well be the first occasion in which an Italian woman writer composed an autobiography with the specific objective of publishing it in conjunction with one of her literary works, forcing her to constantly envision its reception by a large audience of contemporary and future readers.

In her conclusion, Veronese presents a characteristic appeal to the veracity of her narrative and claims, like many autobiographers before her, to have sacrificed her pride in the name of truth:

Non mi restano ulteriori notizie presentemente da offrire al pubblico coi miei poetici e viridici colori [...] Se vi fosse poi qualche spirito gentile che si desse il pensiero di volerle proseguire, allora che deposta per sempre la cetra sarò volata al trono dell'Eterno, lo prego sul mio esempio di essere possibilmente veritiero. O verità [...] ti sacrificai il mio stesso amor proprio; ascoltai la tua voce senza arrossire; intesi la tua forza senza fremere, ti ammirai in altrui e ti difesi in me stessa [...] apri il candidissimo Tuo velo, ed

¹⁹⁸ While Mario Pieri had criticized Veronese's occasional poetry as a sign of her professional demise and dire economic position, Poloni and Zambon instead view this activity as an indication that Angela's literary career was driven not only by finances but also the pleasure she derives from writing and to "allontanarsi da una noiosa vita domestica, che sta stretta alla sua intellettualità" ("Nota biografica," 143-144). Based on Carrer's eulogy and Veronese's poem in memory of her husband, it would appear that she had no children, since neither document makes any mention of Angela as a mother (cf. *ibid.*, 145).

¹⁹⁹ *Eurosia* is of particular interest as a semi-autobiographical novel set in the early nineteenth century, but loosely inspired by the life of the sixteenth-century poet, Gaspara Stampa. Veronese's pseudonym (Aglia Anassillide, which refers to the Latin name of the Piave River, Anaxus) is in fact reminiscent of Stampa's pseudonym, Anassilla (cf. *ibid.*, 138). Patrizia Zambon has argued that Veronese's combination of dialectal words and agricultural realism with mythological themes and literary allusions makes her an early participant in what would become the popular "rustic" and "domestic" literary genres (Zambon, "Angela Veronese, *Eurosia*, 1836," 17-24). See also Pastore Stocchi, "Introduzione," in *Notizie*, 23-25 and Poloni, "Angela Veronese e la cultura veneta del primo Ottocento," 44-48.

offri un sicuro asilo alle notizie sulla vita di Aglaia Anassilide.²⁰⁰

One notes how, from the poet's seemingly objective opening paragraph to this final plea to future biographers to be as faithful in their representation of her life as she herself has been, Veronese has managed to intersperse a series of creative, if not fictional, elements. Already her juxtaposition of the "poetic" with the "truthful" ("poetici e viridici") and her reference to the "life of Aglaia" rather than that of "Angela" evoke the division between her historical existence and her literary persona.

For scholars such as Franco Fido, for whom an explicit awareness of one's readership is a necessary marker of the autobiographical genre, Veronese's careful crafting of her public image marks a fundamental shift in the relationship between autobiographer and reader.²⁰¹ For this reason, in fact, Patrizia Zambon views her as inaugurating a new and "peculiarly female" tradition of self-writing that became especially characteristic of Italian women's writing in the twentieth century.²⁰² Furthermore, an attentive consideration of the *Notizie* reveals the author's vital position not only with respect to the subsequent generation of professional women writers, but also those who preceded her and, more broadly, the very making of women's autobiography in Italy, its origins, and the many sources, currents, tropes, and models from which Veronese

²⁰⁰ *Notizie*, 150-151. [At present, I have no further information to offer to the public with my poetic and truthful colors ... If ever a kind spirit should take it upon himself to add to this after my lyre has been eternally put to rest and I have flown to the eternal throne, I beg him to be as truthful as possible, following my example. Oh Truth ... I sacrificed my pride to you, listened to your voice without blushing, came to know your power without trembling, admired you in others and defended you in myself ... open that purest veil of yours and offer a sure asylum for the life of Aglaia Anassilide].

²⁰¹ "Non è seriamente concepibile un progetto autobiografico in cui non entri la considerazione dei destinatari e delle loro reazioni" (Fido, "I mémoires di Goldoni," 55).

²⁰² Zambon defines Veronese's *Notizie* as "uno dei primi testi di un genere di straordinario rilievo nella produzione più peculiarmente d'autrice della letteratura italiana d'Otto/Novecento qual è quello della scrittura autonarrativa ("Angela Veronese, *Eurosia*, 1836," 16). Among the many autobiographical works by women writers that Zambon sees Veronese as anticipating, the scholar includes Sibilla Aleramo's *Una donna* (1906), Ada Negri's *Stella mattutina* (1928), Zuccari's *Una giovinezza del secolo XIX* (1919), Grazia Deledda's *Cosima (quasi Grazia)* (1936) and Cantoni's *Storia di Angiolo e Laura* (1939).

herself drew inspiration.

Conclusion

As is clear from the title of this dissertation, I have attempted to situate the “making” of women’s autobiography in Italy within the eighteenth century. Scholarly studies of the genre in Italy, and in most of Western Europe, often begin with the second half of the eighteenth century, contemporary to the writing and publication of Rousseau’s *Confessions*, when autobiographical writing in the Italian peninsula reached its apex, so it seemed logical that any inquiry into the history of women’s participation in the genre should also begin with this period. Yet, during the early stages of this project, I found that the more I searched for women autobiographers, the more I encountered scholarship that suggested that Italian women’s autobiography emerged much later, in the nineteenth and even twentieth centuries. At first glance, even my own selection of primary texts might seem to validate this view, since the only late-eighteenth century narratives I have included appear to have little if nothing to do with the tradition of Italian autobiography: Not only were Giuseppina di Lorena-Carignano’s 1771 *Portrait* and Luisa Palma Mansi’s multi-volume private diary written in French and never intended for publication, their titles and the history of their composition suggest that they belong to genres (literary portraiture, memoir, diary) that are clearly distinct from the autobiography. And, indeed, reading these texts for the first time, I was disheartened and perplexed by what seemed to affirm the position of scholars who had confidently asserted that women’s autobiography in Italy does not really exist before the nineteenth century. When I posed this puzzling question – “Why is it that there are seemingly no Italian women autobiographers during the exact period when the genre seems to reach its peak?” – to a faculty member on my committee, she gave me one of the most valuable words of advice I received as a graduate student by telling me to “never embark on a research project with a negative question.” I took that suggestion to heart and began to ask instead *how*

women might have participated in the development of the genre and what could be done to more carefully consider their contributions.

This required me to look both backwards and also beyond the eighteenth century, and to take a more fluid approach to my own definitions of the genre and adoption of the term “autobiography.” Bearing in mind that other forms of private writing during this period have been considered an important part of the genre’s “prehistory,” and particularly Vittorio Alfieri’s diaries in French, I re-read the texts that I had previously dismissed as “not autobiography,” but instead of looking for characteristics that I had hoped or expected to find, I began to take note of those that I had not at all expected. Surprising elements emerged from small details. For example, a single line in the hundreds of pages of Luisa Palma Mansi’s diary revealed that her confessor in Lucca, Father Pieretti, was also the confessor of the mystic Maria Virginia Boccherini, who had claimed to receive the stigmata and was encouraged by Pieretti to write her life story in order to provide him with a document that he believed would help him to have the Church recognize her as a saint. Luisa Palma Mansi’s diary could not be further from the kind of spiritual autobiography that Maria Virginia wrote, and yet I was struck by the discovery that both women were writing about their private lives at the same time, in the same place, under the spiritual direction of the same man.

This kind of intertextuality played an important role in my selection of almost all of the primary texts included in this study, and also inspired me to open a critical dialogue between previous scholarship on religious and secular autobiographical traditions, with the aim of illustrating how women’s life-writing transitioned from a sacred to a literary context over a period of many years and thanks to a continued influence of religious texts and writing practices that had afforded women with a unique channel for describing their personal histories. For many

women, the tradition of sacred literature provided both a narrative structure and a means of justifying the otherwise ostentatious act of writing about oneself. It is for this reason that I found it both enlightening and necessary to begin my study with seventeenth-century narratives written under pressure from religious and legal authorities, the *Vita* of Capuchin nun Maria Domitilla Galluzzi and the autobiographical testimony produced by Cecilia Ferrazzi when she was tried by the Venetian Inquisition, which both illustrate Italy's long history of religious self-writing as well as the conscious molding of women's narratives on the basis of strong female models. The other autobiographical narratives considered in chapter 1, Camilla Faà Gonzaga's account of being forced out of her marriage and into a convent and Queen Christina of Sweden's autobiography, allowed me to explore how hagiography and "auto-hagiography" exerted a continued influence alongside the presence of new religious, philosophical, and cultural currents. Queen Christina's autobiography is particularly interesting because it reveals how the entrance of women in academic circles, especially following the transformation of her royal academy into the Academy of Arcadia, was paralleled by an increasing awareness of the autobiographical genre among women in literary academies, from Petronilla Paolini Massimi in the early eighteenth century to Teresa Bandettini and Angela Veronese in the early nineteenth. It is not my intention to claim that these narratives mark a complete departure from spiritual or intellectual subjugation or the achievement of a triumphant and modern notion of selfhood. On the contrary, the autobiographical narratives of the professional women poets explored in chapters 3 and 4 reveal the persistence of a strong spiritual vein, which is made evident by the many shared traits and emphasis on certain key life events that appear both in these documents and in various eighteenth-century spiritual autobiographies, like those of Saint Veronica Giuliani. Some of these shared traits include: the topos of "holy ignorance," which is used on one hand to assume a

stance of humility and, on the other, to assert the total independence of one's divine or innate gifts from external, authoritative figures; the goal of self-knowledge and a belief in the perfectibility of the self through the exploration of one's flaws in writing; premonitions, divine interventions, accidents, illnesses, and diseases that reveal the authors' natural inclinations and the transgressive behaviors, including theft and insomnia, that were necessary to fulfill their vocations (whether religious or artistic). These common elements provided a platform for comparing these very diverse narratives within the context of an emergent literary form.

In addition to opening a dialogue between diverse texts and contexts by means of their strong thematic ties, I also tried to focus on primary texts in which an explicit intertextual dialogue was present: Giuseppina di Lorena-Carignano, as I discuss in chapter 3, was inspired to write her self-portrait after reading the memoirs of the Grande Mademoiselle, in which the Queen of Sweden makes several appearances (just as the Queen of Sweden in turn describes the Grande Mademoiselle in her own autobiography). Christina also becomes a character in Petronilla Paolini Massimi's autobiography, in which the queen is described as the "book" that Petronilla is reading and which "contains all knowledge." Finally, a century later, we find mention of Teresa Bandettini in Luisa Palma Mansi's memoirs. The dialogue that emerges by placing these texts alongside one another is enlightening: it shows how women participated in, contributed to, and gained awareness of the autobiographical genre over time, exploring not only their private lives, but the intricate web of influences – sacred, literary, familial, and social – through which they frequently assert and even invent personal and public identities.

My particular selection of women writers has thus been motivated both by shared themes and life events as well as by explicit references to strong female models, but I have also tried to respect the unique circumstances in which each of these narratives was composed and to let these

women speak for themselves. Moreover, it is difficult, if not impossible, to speak of direct influences that these texts may or may not have exerted on women readers and writers, because many of these documents were never published or made widely available, and it is not always feasible to form an accurate idea of the number of individuals they actually reached. This includes Petronilla Paolini Massimi's autobiography, which has never been published, and Teresa Bandettini's autobiography, which was not published until the twentieth century. One exception is Angela Veronese's *Notizie*, as the only narrative considered in this study that was both conceived and published as an autobiography by the author herself. The influence of the *Notizie* on future women writers has been acknowledged by a range of scholars. Only a few years after its publication, the Italian writer Niccolò Tommaseo (1802-1874) provided a summary of Veronese's autobiography in his *Dizionario estetico*, citing his belief that readers might find the work to be both informative and enjoyable, as a fragment of literary history.¹ More recently, Antonia Arslan has argued that the *Notizie* "inaugurated" a wave of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century autobiographical texts by Italian women that culminated with Neera's *Una giovinezza del XIX secolo*, Sibilla Aleramo's *Una donna* (1906), and Ada Negri's *Stella mattutina* (1921). Arslan further claims that what is most noteworthy about the tradition initiated by Veronese is that it begins "from below" ("dal basso"), arising out of the commonplace experiences drawn from women's real, daily lives.²

¹ "Compendierò le notizie della sua vita, perché credo che i lettori possano trarre istruzione e diletto, quando vogliano considerarle come un frammento di storia letteraria." Niccolò Tommaseo, *Dizionario estetico*, vol. 3 of *Nuovi scritti* (Venezia, Co' tipi del gondoliere, 1840), 9.

² "Si inaugura così, *dal basso* – e questo è un segnale significativo – il tema dell'autobiografia femminile, che percorrerà tutto il secolo fino alle tre importanti riprese del primo Novecento (*Una donna* di Sibilla Aleramo, *Una giovinezza del XIX secolo* di Neera, *Stella mattutina* di Ada Negri): storie molto moderne di eventi che accadono a protagoniste che non si accampano giganteggiando sul proscenico, ma maturano attraverso la ricezione dei fatti della vita, in cui l'io romantico non preesiste al racconto, ma si costruisce nella storia, attraverso l'umile quotidianità del vissuto." Antonia Arslan, "Dame, salotti e scrittura nel Veneto del tardo Settecento." In *Gentildonne artiste*

Arslan is perhaps correct in estimating that Angela Veronese's *Notizie* represents one of the earliest known autobiographical narratives written by an Italian woman that conforms to the generally accepted tenets of the genre as a retrospective, first-person narrative written for publication and in which the author recounts the story of her life from birth through the time of writing. Yet, with the exception perhaps of Luisa Palma Mansi's *Mémoires*, none of the women examined in this study expected that their writing would remain private, and all of them wrote with at least one external reader in mind. And while Arslan's valorization of the *Notizie* is both timely and valuable for a more accurate contextualization of the origins of modern women's autobiographical writing, it is exactly this ambiguity between private and public, invisible and visible, humility and self-assertion, that characterizes many autobiographical narratives written by Italian women long before Veronese's appearance on what she refers to as the "great stage" of her female forebears. Although the motivation, structure, content, and intent of their narratives differ, all of these women engaged in forms of self-writing that, when considered together, help to illustrate the gradual development of the modern autobiography starting from a period in which women who lacked agency and education had turned to spiritual literary traditions for a structure, narrative model, and the authority of a higher power in order to create a legitimate channel of self-expression and self-representation.

I have attempted to show how these examples of women's life-writing (which, from a context of religious and legal suppression gradually drew closer to artistic and literary forms of self-expression) not only share features with major male autobiographers, but also display unique characteristics that merit further investigation, and it is my hope that the analysis I have offered will help to enable a reconsideration of Italy's autobiographical tradition and the fundamental

role that women writers played in the development of the genre from a religious to a literary context. The greatest challenge that I have faced, and which future scholars interested in this topic will continue to encounter, is not a lack of evidence in support of a female autobiographical tradition in Italy during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but rather a lack of access to works that have previously been excluded from the canon or have only recently been rediscovered. Providing readers with greater access to these narratives is a necessary first step towards creating a more inclusive historical and critical framework. An essential next phase of my own research will include producing a critical edition and English translation of Petronilla Paolini Massimi's *Vita*, and hopefully also an English translation of Christina of Sweden's *Vie*.

Future scholarship on the development of the modern autobiography in Italy will need to take into consideration the historical and literary value of these texts, as well as those written by the subsequent generation of women academicians. Petronilla Paolini Massimi's ties to convent life and her explicit acknowledgement of the influence of Saint Teresa's life, combined with her reflections on her childhood, education, family life, and affiliation with literary academies provide clear evidence of the existence of a female autobiographical tradition positioned between religious and secular literary environments. Late eighteenth-century poets like Teresa Bandettini and Angela Veronese similarly reflect on aspects that have traditionally been attributed to women writers of a much later generation, including the tensions caused by generational differences with their mothers and their own children, the financial and emotional stress faced by unmarried women and widows, the difficulties associated with having achieved celebrity status, and the challenge of reconciling artistic aspiration with familial obligation.

Finally, one of the clearest connections between the diverse life stories considered in this study is the desire of women writers to form strong bonds – whether in person or only on paper –

with formidable female models. In her final letter to Teresa Bandettini, written in May of 1805 from Bologna, Germaine de Staël lamented the “mille motifs” that had prevented the two women from crossing paths in person and looked forward to the “plaisir retardé” that a future meeting would afford.³ Their encounter, imagined but ultimately impossible, is in many ways representative of other failed dialogues between women’s lives, both historically and in contemporary scholarship. It is thus my hope that this study might offer, at least in part, the “delayed pleasure” of the meeting of female minds that de Staël had envisioned.

³ “Mai comme mille motifs me rappellent, je suis sûre que ce n’est qu’un plaisir retardé.” Cited in Pierre Ronzy, “Deux Billets inédits de Madame de Staël à Teresa Bandettini,” *Revue de Littérature comparée* 2 (1922): 448.

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Appendix: Biographical Profiles

Maria Domitilla Galluzzi (1595-1671)

Severetta (Maria Domitilla) Galluzzi was a Capuchin nun from Piedmont who spent most of her life in Pavia. She was known for her miraculous visions, spiritual gifts, and stigmata, but also her active role in the local community, typical of post-Tridentine nuns. She modeled her *Vita* (1624), a “forced” autobiography written for her confessor, on the lives of St. Catherine of Siena, St. Catherine of Alexandria, and St. Teresa of Avila, as well as on sixteenth-century “living saints” and holy women of her own generation. The nearly five hundred pages of the manuscript describe her birth, rejection of material interests, entrance in the convent, and mystical experiences. The events recounted in her *Vita*, which circulated widely during (unsuccessful) efforts to recognize her as a saint, all prefigure her religious vocation and establish parallels with the life of Christ. She emphasizes her ignorance, claiming that only divine inspiration compensated for her lack of a formal education, and yet she often spent nights awake dedicated to reading and studying, even to the detriment of her health. As an expression of herself and her will, she sometimes describes writing negatively as a manifestation of self-love (“amor proprio”) not unlike her occasional impulse to reject monastic life. Her autobiography shares a number of features with other spiritual autobiographies, but also with later literary autobiographies, revealing the tenuous balance between her obedience to Church superiors and her desire to assert herself, which she felt to be contrary to the objectives and expectations of her confessors.

Camilla Faà Gonzaga (1599-1662)

Camilla Faà Gonzaga was a noblewoman from the court of the Gonzaga in Mantua and a lady-in-waiting to the Duchess Margaret of Savoy. Her short *Historia* (1622), which has been considered the “first” autobiography by an Italian woman, documents events between her marriage at the age of sixteen and her subsequent forced entry into a monastery in Ferrara when her husband, Ferdinando Gonzaga, tried to annul their marriage in order to enter a more politically advantageous union. Camilla exposes the strict societal expectations and limited opportunities for women outside of marriage and monachization through the story of her two false marriages – first to her husband, and then to the church. The *Historia* was likely written at the request of Church superiors as evidence of her forced monachization and may also have served as a legal testimony of the validity of her marriage in order to have her son recognized as a legitimate heir after her husband’s second marriage with Caterina de’ Medici failed to produce children. Although it was written in a monastery, Camilla’s narrative differs from spiritual autobiographies. She does not claim to have a religious vocation or draw on saints’ lives as a model. On the contrary, she admits to having been forced to take her religious vows and asks to be forgiven for her lack of a spiritual vocation. She also refuses to remarry, insisting on the continued validity of her first marriage and implicitly critiquing her husband’s disregard for the sanctity of both marital and religious vows.

Cecilia Ferrazzi (1609-1684)

Cecilia Ferrazzi was a Venetian *pinzochera*, a laywoman who adhered to the values of monastic life without taking religious vows or living in a cloistered community. Such a role was highly controversial, since Pope Pius V had required the enclosure of all female religious communities starting in 1566. Ferrazzi was well known in her community for having founded a shelter modeled on the rules of the Carmelite order for young girls who were unable to live at home or in monasteries and were at risk for sexual exploitation. She was accused, tried, and convicted of false sainthood by the Venetian Inquisition. In her autobiographical court testimony, which she dictated in 1664 from prison, Ferrazzi describes having saved over 120 orphans, beggars, deformed children, and daughters of prostitutes, and she critiques the limited opportunities for women outside of marriage and monachization. Because it was transcribed as part of a court trial, Ferrazzi's narrative is best characterized as an "inquisitorial" autobiography, however, as in spiritual autobiographies, she follows a hagiographic model, explicitly comparing herself to St. Teresa of Avila and providing a chronological account of her life in which she describes her vocation as a protector of young girls and various visions, spiritual gifts, and predictions of the future. Yet, unlike spiritual autobiographies, which were almost always censored or edited by Church authorities, Ferrazzi's seventy-one-page narrative was faithfully transcribed at her own request and thus provides valuable information about the social, cultural, and intellectual status of women in late seventeenth-century Venice.

Queen Christina of Sweden (1626 Stockholm - 1689 Rome)

After abdicating the Swedish throne and converting to Catholicism, Queen Christina of Sweden moved to Rome, where she founded the royal academy that eventually became the Academy of Arcadia, the most important eighteenth-century Italian literary academy. Her unfinished autobiography, written in French and dedicated to God, was begun in 1666 in order to communicate information about Vatican politics to Louis XIV. Christina's autobiography marks an important moment in Italian cultural history, and is positioned between spiritual, courtly, and intellectual autobiographical traditions. Her narrative in many ways conforms to the genre of the spiritual autobiography, especially because of her division of events preceding and following her religious conversion. At the same time, Christina was also influenced by Quietism and the autobiographies of "great men." Her private library contained saints' lives, literary and political memoirs, and biographies of illustrious historical figures. The presence of these diverse literary models in Christina's autobiography helps to illustrate the continuance rather than the division of the genre in Italy as it transitioned from a religious to a secular context. She describes her family history, her father's death in 1632, her nomination as queen elect, her education, and important events of her childhood. Christina's careful consideration of the relationship between her natural inclinations and the surrounding social environment departs from typical depictions of childhood in religious autobiographies focused on the soul's journey from corruption to perfection. She instead anticipates eighteenth-century literary autobiographies by focusing on the individual's fall from a state of perfection to one of corruption.

Veronica Giuliani (1660-1727)

Orsola (Veronica) Giuliani was a Capuchin nun from Mercatello (Marche) who was denounced to the Holy Office and accused of demonic possession after claiming to have received the stigmata. She suffered years of abuse and imprisonment and was forced by church authorities to provide numerous written accounts of her life, which comprise over twenty thousand pages. In her five separate autobiographies, influenced by hagiographic models and particularly the lives of St. Catherine of Siena, St. Teresa of Avila, St. Rose of Lima, and Mary Magdalene de' Pazzi, she describes her childhood sins, imitation of saints, and fascination with martyrdom, her father's opposition to her religious vocation, her practice of self-injury, starvation, and self-induced vomiting, her marriage to Christ and her stigmatization. Moreover, Veronica uses divine will as a means of legitimizing her power over her narrative; her final autobiography is written in second person as a dictation from the Virgin Mary, a narrative device that allows Veronica to circumvent the authority of her superiors by reminding them that only God can truly judge her actions. Veronica Giuliani also played an active social role in the convent, serving as both the mistress of the novices and, later, the abbess. Her hundreds of private letters, addressed to members of her family and Church officials, describe her practical duties as Mother Superior and various plans for improving life in the monastery, including repairs, collecting funds for clothing, and installing a new water main. Veronica Giuliani was beatified in 1804 and sanctified in 1839.

Petronilla Paolini Massimi (1663-1726)

Petronilla Paolini Massimi was a noblewoman from Abruzzo who entered an arranged marriage with the vice-commander of the Roman prisons in Castel Sant'Angelo when she was still a child. She eventually fled her abusive marriage, leaving her three children behind in order to seek refuge in a Roman convent, where she dedicated herself to reading and writing poetry. She was admitted to several literary academies, including the Academy of Arcadia, and was considered even by her contemporaries as one of the most representative women poets of her time. While living in the monastery, she wrote a 220-page manuscript autobiography, the *Vita della Marchesa Petronilla Paolini Massimi da se medesima descritta* (1704), in which she recounts the events of her life from her birth through the time of writing. She describes her education, marriage, studies, life in the convent, and encounters with important intellectual and cultural figures. Her frequent references to prophecies, miraculous events, and divine interventions show the influence of saints' lives on her narrative and help to illustrate the transition from religious to secular autobiographical models. Petronilla displays an unusual degree of autobiographical self-awareness, noting her unique status as an autobiographer whose life was neither "holy" nor "royal." In this way, she self-consciously distinguishes her narrative from hagiographic and courtly autobiographical models. Petronilla Paolini Massimi remained in the monastery until her husband's death in 1707, and then spent the last two decades of her life in Rome, traveling, writing, frequenting literary salons, and hosting a salon in her home.

Giuseppina di Lorena-Carignano (1753-1797)

Giuseppina di Lorena, Princess of Carignano, became active in cultural circles in Turin after she married Vittorio Amedeo Luigi di Savoia-Carignano. An intellectual, translator, and prolific writer, she had important contacts with European intellectual figures, including Alfieri, Parini, Rousseau, and Voltaire. The unpublished manuscript of her literary self-portrait, or *Portrait* (1771), which she may have planned to distribute among a limited audience under a pseudonym, describes her social engagements and activities, including painting, dancing, music, horseback riding, and above all reading and writing. The *Portrait* belongs at least in part to the popular seventeenth- and eighteenth-century genre of literary portraiture. Yet, while the latter usually depicted illustrious figures as exempla, Giuseppina focuses on herself not as an example, but rather with the objectives of self-awareness and self-improvement. In exploring her flaws, she dwells in particular on the tension between rational friendship and passionate love. In her philosophical and fictional writings, she also explores this theme, which is characteristic of the transition from Enlightenment values to the Romantic debate over passions found in many works of the subsequent decade, such as Goethe's *The Sorrows of Young Werther*. Giuseppina's *Portrait* also shares many characteristics with her friend Vittorio Alfieri's journals, or *Giornali* (1774-77), which were intended to help the playwright conduct "a healthy examination" of himself and which are often considered as the foundation for his autobiography. The *Portrait* is a similarly valuable document that shows how certain forms of private writing clearly contributed to the development of the autobiographical genre in Italy.

Luisa Palma Mansi (1760-1825)

Luisa Palma Mansi was a noblewoman from Lucca who late in life served as a lady-in-waiting at the court of Elisa Bonaparte Baciocchi. She was not a well-known cultural or literary figure, and her approximately nine-hundred-page manuscript journal, the *Mémoires ou notices à l'usage* (1791-1823), were intended solely for her personal use, to record her financial expenditures and social engagements, such as attending salons, theater performances, and parties, and to document local news and political, religious, and cultural events. The result of more than three decades of diaristic activity, the narrative falls somewhere between a diary, memoir, and autobiography, and also shares features with the genres of the *cronaca* and *libro di famiglia*, illustrating the change from the objective, brief annotations typical of family chronicles towards more sentimental, subjective forms of women's self-writing. In addition to capturing an important transitional phase in Italian history, Luisa Palma Mansi offers a valuable firsthand account of women's public and private life under the Ancien Régime and of the changing cultural and political climate in Lucca following Napoleon's nomination as the commander of the French army in Italy in 1796. She shows how the French presence in Lucca influenced not only public and political life, but also introduced new models of family life, private morals and social relationships. In particular, she offers detailed descriptions of her amorous relationship with her *cavalier servente*, Costantino de Nobili, providing one of the only known non-literary, first-person accounts of cicisbeism from a woman's perspective.

Teresa Landucci Bandettini (1763-1837)

Teresa Bandettini was a renowned ballerina and poetic improviser from Lucca whose unique status as a “ballerina letterata” drew attention from poets, academics, politicians, and aristocrats. She frequently performed both publicly and in private homes, salons, academies, in the Viennese court and the court of the Duchess Marie Louise de Bourbon in Lucca. She was affiliated with several literary academies, including the Academy of Arcadia, where she was known as Amarilli Etrusca. In addition to her performances, she also published translations and reviews in literary journals. Teresa left behind two autograph manuscripts, both written in 1825, one of which exists in a modern edition with the title *Autobiografia*. She narrates the events of her life from her birth through the year 1820, describing her family, education, upbringing, financial concerns, marriage to Pietro Landucci, a fellow dancer from Lucca, and her career as a dancer and poet. Teresa was one of the first Italian women writers to pen a professional autobiography with the clear and self-conscious aim of asserting her literary success, drawing on the model of autobiography as *curriculum studiorum*. Although she claims that the purpose of her autobiography is to offer a truthful version of her life, she also carefully crafts and manipulates her public image and uses her narrative as a locus of self-invention. Her autobiography can thus be compared to those of late eighteenth-century figures such Giacomo Casanova, Carlo Goldoni, Carlo Gozzi, Lorenzo Da Ponte, and especially Vittorio Alfieri, who praised her poetry as “overpowering the soul.”

Angela Veronese (1778-1847)

Angela Veronese was a Venetian poet whose father was the gardener of the renowned *salonnière*, Isabella Teotochi Albrizzi, whose guests were charmed by the little “nymph” who seemed to embody the Arcadian landscape and fables. Angela’s contacts with writers and artists, including Ippolito Pindemonte, Ugo Foscolo, Vincenzo Monti, Antonio Canova, and Lord Byron, led to her admission to several literary academies and the publication of various verse and prose works. She also published an autobiography, *Le notizie della sua vita scritte da lei medesima* (1826), which marks a major turning point in the history of Italian women’s writing, representing what may be the first known case of a woman who wrote and published an autobiography entirely of her own initiative rather than at the request of a third party, such as a priest, legal or religious authority, friend, editor, or biographer. In the beginning of her narrative, Angela acknowledges the growing popularity of the autobiographical genre and visibility of women writers. She describes her family, upbringing, education, significant childhood events, accidents, and illnesses that presaged her literary vocation, travels, publications, invitations to academies, and marriage. Above all, Angela recalls her cultural initiation with fondness, humor, and gratitude to the aristocrats who welcomed and “loved” her. Her literary portraits of the writers, *salonnières*, and intellectuals with whom she engaged allow Angela to assert her own place in the canon and to use her public image as a self-educated “second Sappho” to ironize the spectacularization and celebritization of female poets and performers.