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# How to Succeed at Court: Annibal Guasco's Advice to his Daughter Lavinia and Renaissance Manuals of Conduct

Alexandra Coller

In the Renaissance, literature that dealt with education and, specifically, with instructions on how to succeed at court, generally spoke of men and was directed at a male audience.<sup>1</sup> One of the most famous such manuals, Baldassar Castiglione's *Libro del cortegiano* (*Book of the Courtier*), published in 1528, focuses on the ideal courtier. In three out of the four books that compose Castiglione's *Cortegiano*, the various (male) interlocutors aim to teach (*insegnar*) one how to acquire the talents and skills (*virtù*) necessary to succeed at court.<sup>2</sup> Although the third book of the dialogue is set up to prescribe ideals for the lady at court, a female counterpart for the courtier, the conversation eventually returns to the education of the male courtier. In fact, there is very little in the third book that reads like a manual of conduct: when dealing with the subject of women, the interlocutors, including the designated speaker of this part of the dialogue, il Magnifico Giuliano de' Medici (1479-1516), nicknamed "il protettor delle donne" (defender of women, II.69), are engaged in a battle of the sexes wherein women are virtually absent and, therefore, in need of "defense" rather than "learning."<sup>3</sup> The promise to "teach" the lady at court is limited to a cursory list of attributes she should possess (III.9). Given Castiglione's choice to stage the *querelle des femmes*, it is not surprising that his text offers little in the way of facilitating the court lady's discursive engagement.

As we survey the history of the genre to which the *Cortegiano* belongs, we find the first attempt to draft some rules for women's conduct at court appeared in France around the same

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<sup>1</sup> The model text for those that followed is *The Education of a Christian Prince* (1516) by Desiderius Erasmus. On the *fortuna* of Erasmus in Italy, see Seidel S. Menchi, *Erasmus in Italia. 1520-1580* (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 1987), 33 and *passim*. In addition, see Alessandro Piccolomini's *Della institutione di tutta la vita dell'uomo nato nobile, e in città libera* (Venice: Scotus, 1543). Piccolomini wrote the treatise for the Siense noblewoman Laodomia Forteguerris's son, Alessandro, for whom the author served as tutor. See also Giambattista Giraldis Cinzio's *Dialoghi della vita civile*, in *Gli Ecatommiti*, ed. Susanna Villari (Rome: Salerno, 2012), 2: 970-1250; and Giraldis's *Discorso intorno a quello che si conviene a giovane nobile e ben creato nel servire un gran principe* in *L'uomo di corte*, ed. Walter Moretti (Modena: Mucchi, 1989). As an exception to the dialogues and treatises dealing strictly with male education, see Aonio Paleario's *Dell'economia ovvero del governo della casa*, ed. Salvatore Caponato, *Biblioteca dell'Archivum Romanicum* ser. 1, vol. 172 (Florence: Olschki, 1933). *Dell'economia* was composed in the 1530s but was never published; it consists of a dialogue among four Siense noblewomen in which the interlocutors champion women's education, and, specifically, their training in history, rhetoric, and the reading of vernacular and ancient authors. For a discussion of this text among other protofeminist works authored by Siense *letterati*, see Alexandra Coller, "The Siense Accademia degli Intronati and Its Female Interlocutors," *Italianist*, 26, no. 2 (2006): 223-46.

<sup>2</sup> The term "insegnar" comes up for the first time in Book I, chapter 25 where the designated speaker, Count Ludovico da Canossa, sets the stage for the formation of the ideal courtier. One of the most important qualities of the perfect courtier is grace (*grazia*); and, although a certain natural disposition (*natural disposizione*) is necessary, this and other similar *virtù* can be "learned" from good instructors (*imparar i principi da ottimi maestri*; I.25). Annibal Guasco, whose discourse is the focus of this article, reasons in the same way, as I will show in the pages that follow. All references will come from the Ettore Bonora edition of the *Cortegiano* (Milan: Mursia, 1976) and from the Singleton translation, ed. Daniel Javitch (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2002). Citations refer to book (in Roman capitals) followed by chapter number (in Arabic numerals).

<sup>3</sup> Although all of Castiglione's interlocutors are historical figures, the conversation itself, set in Urbino at the court of the Gonzaga, is fictive and so are its characters.

period when Castiglione's text was circulating in Italy in manuscript form. I am referring to Anne de France's *Enseignements* (ca. 1505), a manual for proper court conduct, offered as a gift to her daughter, Susanne.<sup>4</sup> Although feminist scholars have appreciated Anne's text for its unique status in the absence of other such manuals, it is also apparent that the instructions themselves conform to and emphasize certain traditional feminine ideals, not unlike those promoted in the *Cortegiano*.<sup>5</sup> A few decades after Castiglione's bestseller, there appeared another Italian publication, which, at least judging by its title, seems to address the issue of women's presence at court head on: Lodovico Domenichi's *La donna di corte* (1564). As Peggy Osborn points out, Domenichi's text is in fact a translation of another author's work on the subject of the court.<sup>6</sup> Whether or not it is an act of plagiarism is less relevant for my purposes than to gauge the perspective Domenichi adopts on women's presence at court, given the time lapse between the publication of the Latin original (1528) and Domenichi's *volgarizzamento* around mid-century.<sup>7</sup> According to Osborn, *La donna di corte* presents us with "the traditional misogynistic view of woman as an imperfect and 'imbecile' creature" (11), a stance grounded in Aristotelian and scholastic doctrine and one rehearsed by the most outspoken misogynists among Castiglione's interlocutors, Gaspar

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<sup>4</sup> Anne de France (Anne de Bourbon), *Les enseignements d'Anne de France, duchesse de Bourbonnais et d'Auvergne, à sa fille Susanne de Bourbon* (composed ca. 1505, published between 1517 and 1521 in Lyon), ed. Tatiana Clavier and Éliane Viennot (Saint-Étienne, France: Publications de l'Université de Saint-Étienne, 2006). All references to the *Enseignements* will come from the 2006 edition and Sharon L. Jansen's translation (Rochester: D.S. Brewer, 2004). For both editions, I will refer to section followed by page number.

<sup>5</sup> In her recent essay Tracy Adams takes a different stance, arguing that Anne de France uses those feminine ideals (e.g. guilelessness, humility, courtesy, loyalty) "as a means to an end, to create a cover from behind which to operate." See Adams, ("Appearing Virtuous: Christine de Pizan's *Le livre des trois vertus* and Anne de France's *Les Enseignements d'Anne de France*," in *Virtue Ethics for Women 1250-1500*, ed. Karen Green and Constant J. Mews (New York: Springer, 2011), 115. On conduct manuals geared to discipline women according to these same ideals, and, specifically, in preparation for monastic life, see Gabriella Zarri, "Christian Good Manners: Spiritual and Monastic Rules in the Quattro- and Cinquecento," in *Women in Italian Renaissance Culture and Society*, ed. Letizia Panizza (Oxford: European Humanities Research Centre, 2000), 76-91; see also idem, *Donna, disciplina, creanza cristiana dal XV al XVII secolo: studi e testi a stampa* (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1996); and Gianna Pomata and G. Zarri, *I monasteri femminili come centri di cultura fra Rinascimento e Barocco* (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2005), on the culture available to women in monasteries in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. My discussion of the *Cortegiano* continues in the next section of this essay. Considerations of Anne de France's *Enseignements* will follow.

<sup>6</sup> Namely, Agostino Nifo's *De re aulica* of 1528. See Peggy Osborn, "The 'Discourse': Context and Historical Background," in Annibal Guasco, *Discourse to Lady Lavinia His Daughter Concerning the Manner in Which She Should Conduct Herself When Going to Court as Lady-in-Waiting to the Most Serene Infanta, Lady Caterina, Duchess of Savoy*, ed. and trans. Peggy Osborn (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 11.

<sup>7</sup> As an example of a less conservative near-contemporary text, see Lodovico Dolce's *Dialogo della institutione delle donne* (Venice: G. Giolito de' Ferrari, 1547), wherein the interlocutor (Flaminio) advocates women's literacy in the vernacular as well as in Latin. Both men were Venetian polygraphs, and like Dolce, Domenichi is a bit of a wild card. While Domenichi writes rather unflatteringly of women in the work under analysis here, he also published a text in praise of women though it too is largely plagiarized and based on the Italian translation of a Latin original authored by Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa (see *La nobiltà delle donne* [Venice: G. Giolito de' Ferrari, 1549]). Most importantly, though, Domenichi is the editor of a volume of women's poetry, the first anthology of its kind: *Rime diverse d'alcune nobilissime, et virtuosissime donne* (Lucca: Vincenzo Busdragò, 1559). On the latter text, see Deanna Shemek "The Collector's Cabinet: Lodovico Domenichi's Gallery of Women," 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), 239-62; and Diana Robin, *Publishing Women: Salons, the Presses, and the Counter-Reformation in Sixteenth-Century Italy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 50-51, 59-78, 238-42.

Pallavicino and Ottaviano Fregoso.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, Domenichi's contribution seems like a step backward for women, at some points surpassing the *Cortegiano* in its unflattering representation of women. Twenty more years followed Domenichi's *La donna di corte* before a far more enlightened, in some respects quite progressive, manual of conduct reached the Italian press: Annibal Guasco's *Ragionamento* (1586).<sup>9</sup>

Addressed and dedicated to his daughter Lavinia, Guasco's discourse proves to be a radical departure from its French and Italian precedents. In spite of Osborn's extremely valuable English translation, Guasco's *Ragionamento* remains a little known and, for this reason, neglected text within the fields of women's studies and early modern studies.<sup>10</sup> A brief look at the *Cortegiano*, by far the most important conduct manual of the period, will be followed by a detailed analysis of some of the most salient passages in Guasco's text, in light of Castiglione's precepts and in comparison to the discourses of Anne de France and Lodovico Domenichi.

### *The Book of the Courtier and a woman's most important qualities: Onestà and affabilità*

Far from being an exercise in the education of the lady at court, the third book of the *Cortegiano* is comprised of dozens of examples of "virtuous" women, ancient and modern, women famous for one virtue in particular: chastity.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, just as the conversation seems to veer toward "instruction," it gets stuck in the context of a woman's role as *wife*—her role as part of the family nucleus wherein her position is, by definition, subordinate to that of the husband, and where her most prized attribute is her *onestà* (chastity).<sup>12</sup> A telling though easily overlooked passage in Book I speaks of the most important quality for male and female members of the court; for men, it is prowess in arms, for women it is protection of their *onestà*:

I hold that the principal and true profession of the Courtier must be that of arms;  
[...] And, just as among women the name of purity, once stained, is never restored,  
so the reputation of a gentleman whose profession is arms, if ever in the least way

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<sup>8</sup> Gasparo's and Ottaviano's remarks on the "inferiority" of the female sex based on their "imperfect nature" appear in II.91-92; III.14-15. For more on this brand of misogyny, see Ian Maclean, *The Renaissance Notion of Woman* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980).

<sup>9</sup> Annibal Guasco, *Ragionamento a D. Lavinia sua figliuola, della maniera del governarsi ella in corte, andando per Dama alla Serenissima Infante D. Caterina, Duchessa di Savoia* (Turin: Bevilacqua Heir, 1586). All original Italian language citations will come from this edition. I have introduced modern spelling and punctuation wherever necessary in order to facilitate the text's reading.

<sup>10</sup> In an effort to redress this critical neglect, the present essay offers an in-depth analysis of Guasco's *Ragionamento* alongside Castiglione's *Book of the Courtier*; in addition, it explores further, elaborates on, and elucidates some key points in Osborn's introduction. Ultimately, the goal is to place Guasco's text squarely within the tradition of manuals of conduct. To my knowledge, Ruth Kelso is the only American critic who devotes a few pages to Guasco. See *Doctrine for the Lady of the Renaissance* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1956), 222-30). Kelso's discussion, however, contains several misinterpretations; among these is her translation of *virtù*, a key term reiterated throughout the manual (Osborn, "The 'Discourse,'" 37). Most recently, Floriana Calitti's edited anthology of Italian Renaissance manuals of conduct and dialogues excludes Guasco's discourse. See *L'arte della conversazione nelle corti del Rinascimento* (Rome: Istituto Poligrafico e Zecca dello Stato, 2003). Unless otherwise noted, I cite from the 2003 translation and provide the 1586 text in my notes.

<sup>11</sup> See III.22, 27, 28, 31, 34, 36.

<sup>12</sup> So too, il Magnifico insists, all of the court lady's investments in love must "end in marriage" (III.56-57).

he sullies himself through cowardice or other disgrace, always remains defiled before the world and covered with ignominy.<sup>13</sup>

Even when the wifely role is placed aside in order to make room for a different type of woman, the lady at court (*donna di palazzo*), the conversation soon gets bogged down in *exempla*, a strategy reminiscent of another type of literature altogether. Any “virtù” the court lady may possess is ultimately placed in the service of safeguarding her honor/chastity.<sup>14</sup> It seems that the interlocutors are having a hard time conceptualizing any kind of *active* presence a woman could potentially exercise at court. She therefore cannot possibly claim to be the courtier’s equal, a point which the male discussants, nevertheless, claim and reiterate throughout.<sup>15</sup>

In fact, by the time we get to the second half of Book IV, the lady at court has taken on a decidedly *passive* role: she must make every effort to make herself “loved” by the courtier (she is “as desirous of pleasing him as of being loved by him”).<sup>16</sup> As Pietro Bembo (1470-1547), the expert on neoplatonic love theory explains, for both the young and the old courtier, the lady at court represents an “intermediary” stage in the ascent of the (male) mind from earthly beauty (her own) to heavenly or divine beauty (God’s). The entire passage is worth citing as it sheds much light on the ultimate *role* of Castiglione’s lady at court:

[I]f he will make use of this love as a step by which to mount to a love far more sublime; which he will succeed in doing if he continually considers within himself how narrow a bond it is to be limited always to contemplating the beauty of one body only; and therefore, in order to go beyond such a close limit, he will bring into his thought so many adornments that, by putting together all beauties, he will form a universal concept and will reduce the multitude of these to the unity of that single beauty which sheds itself on human nature generally. And thus he will no longer contemplate the particular beauty of one woman, but that universal beauty which adorns all bodies.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Castiglione, *Book of the Courtier*, I.17: “estimo che la principale e vera profession del cortegiano debba esser quella dell’arme; [...] e come nelle donne la onestà, una volta macchiata, mai più non ritorna al primo stato, così la fama d’un gentilom che porti l’arme, se una volta in un minimo punto si denigra per coardia o altro rimproccio, sempre resta vituperosa al mondo e piena d’ignominia” (emphasis mine).

<sup>14</sup> The examples given are numerous; see for instance, chapters 43, 46, 47, 48. Finally, one of the principal female members of the dialogue, the duchess of Urbino, Elisabetta Gonzaga (1471-1526), is taken as a real-life model and ultimate example of *onestà vis-à-vis* her husband, Guidobaldo da Montefeltro (49).

<sup>15</sup> See, for instance, II.98 and 100; III.3 and 60. For another perspective on the relationship between courtier and lady, one which proposes an alternative power dynamic at court, see David Quint, “Courtier, Prince, Lady: The Design of the *Book of the Courtier*,” *Italian Quarterly* 37 (2000): 185-95.

<sup>16</sup> Castiglione, IV.62: “e così desiderosa di compiacergli, come d’esser da lui amata.”

<sup>17</sup> Castiglione, IV.67: “se egli vorrà *servirsi* di questo amore come d’un grado per ascendere ad un altro molto più sublime: il che gli succederà, se tra se anderà considerando come stretto legame sia il star sempre impedito nel contemplar la bellezza d’un corpo solo; e però, per uscire di questo così angusto termine, aggiungerà nel pensier suo a poco a poco tanti ornamenti, [...] e così non più la bellezza particular d’una donna, ma quella universal, che tutti i corpi adorna, *contemplerà*,” (emphasis mine).

The initial verb, “servirsi” (to make use of) points to the kind of use-function the lady necessarily embodies for the courtier; essentially, she is a means to an end (*his*). As current scholarship has pointed out, if women at court have a role to play, it is one that is limited to entertainment, and the Italian term which designates this activity, “intertenero,” comes up again and again throughout Book III and is taken up again in Book IV.<sup>18</sup> And, although one should not lose sight of the fact that Castiglione, unlike his predecessors, takes an unusual step forward in his inclusion of women in the gathering, it is nevertheless also true that women do not participate very much in the conversation, even when the discussion turns to them as subjects.<sup>19</sup> Those few moments when the lady at court is expected to speak seem to be fraught with danger. For if she does speak, she must do so with great caution as anything she says has the potential of earning her a bad reputation, which would in turn shed doubts on her honor/chastity. As Ann Rosalind Jones and other feminist critics have cogently argued, Castiglione’s lady at court is constantly walking a tightrope between what can be described as the problems of speech and the requirements of silence.<sup>20</sup> In short, whether at court or at home, women are forever at a disadvantage on account of their sex. Women’s speech, as a rule, must always be curtailed. Given this set of circumstances, then, the idea that women at court should possess the same skills as men (with the exception of arms) is ironic. Even their outspoken champion, il Magnifico, feels the need to explain that, though useful, all of these character qualities and virtues are not necessarily connected to the court lady’s principal task of “entertainment” (*intertenero*):

And although continence, magnanimity, temperance, fortitude of spirit, prudence, and the other virtues might appear to matter little in her association with others (though they can contribute something there too), I would have her adorned with all of these, not so much for the sake of that association as that she may be virtuous, and to the end that these virtues may make her worthy of being honored and that her every act may be informed by them.<sup>21</sup>

Even so, like her counterpart, the lady at court should be able to adapt to her environment and, most importantly, she must take care to consider who her interlocutor is, as well as the time, place,

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<sup>18</sup> On the term “intertenero” see III.5, 7, 9.

<sup>19</sup> See Virginia Cox, “Seen but not Heard: Women Speakers in *Cinquecento* Literary Dialogue,” in *Women in Italian Renaissance Culture and Society*, ed. Letizia Panizza (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 385-400. Pietro Bembo’s *Gli Asolani* (1505), wherein women figure as part of the dialogue but remain silent for the duration, is another case in point, as Cox notes (397 n. 5).

<sup>20</sup> See Marina Zancan, “La donna nel *Cortegiano* di B. Castiglione: Le funzioni del femminile nell’immagine di corte,” in *Nel cerchio della luna: Figure di donna in alcuni testi del XVI secolo*, ed. Marina Zancan (Venice: Marsilio, 1983), 13-56; Ann Rosalind Jones, “Nets and Bridles: Early Modern Conduct Books and Sixteenth-Century Women’s Lyrics,” in *The Ideology of Conduct: Essays on Literature and the History of Sexuality*, ed. Nancy Armstrong and Leonard Tennenhouse (New York: Methuen, 1987), 39-72; and Valeria Finucci, *The Lady Vanishes: Subjectivity and Representation in Castiglione and Ariosto* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992). The key passage which describes the difficult “balancing act” the lady at court has to perform is the following: “e però bisogna tener una certa mediocrità difficile e quasi composta di cose contrarie, e giunger a certi termini punto, ma non passargli” (III.5).

<sup>21</sup> Castiglione, III.9: “E benché la continenza, la magnanimità, la temperanza, la fortezza d’animo, la prudenzia e le altre virtù paia che non importino allo intertenere, io voglio che di tutte sia ornata, non tanto per lo intertenere, benché però ancor a questo possono servire, quanto per esser virtuosa ed accio che queste virtù le faccian tale che meriti esser onorata e che ogni sua operazion sia di quelle composta.”

and manner with which she should converse with him. This, of course, demands a certain amount of skill or *virtù* as well as a specific type of intelligence, a *vivacità d'ingegno*:

I say that, in my opinion, in a Lady who lives at court a certain pleasing affability is becoming above all else, whereby she will be able to entertain graciously every kind of man with agreeable and comely conversation suited to the time and place and to the station of the person with whom she speaks, joining to serene and modest manners, and to that comeliness that ought to inform all her actions, a quick vivacity of spirit whereby she will show herself a stranger to all boorishness; but with such a kind manner as to cause her to be thought no less chaste, prudent, and gentle than she is agreeable, witty, and discreet.<sup>22</sup>

Ultimately, a woman's most important quality is not her "ingegno" or intelligence, but rather a certain "affabilità," that is, a sweetness or agreeable manner needed in order to perform her key function at court: entertain. In sum, women's presence at court is merely ornamental: they add to the glory of *cortegiana* but are not in fact at any point in time at the center of attention. As Cesare Gonzaga eloquently puts it, no court can survive without the presence of women, though their presence is, more often than not, a quiet and passive one. Ultimately, the lady provides the means to a clearly defined end, that is, to ensure the successful outcome of the courtier's show of *virtuosity*:

"[...] because just as no court, however great, can have adornment or splendor or gaiety in it without ladies, neither can any Courtier be graceful or pleasing or brave, or do any gallant deed of chivalry, unless he is moved by the society and by the love and charm of ladies: even discussion about the Courtier is always imperfect unless ladies take part in it and add their part of that grace by which they make Courtiership perfect and adorned."<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Castiglione, III.5: "[...] dico che a quella che vive in corte parmi convenirsi sopra ogni altra cosa una certa affabilità piacevole, per la quale sappia gentilmente intertenere ogni sorte d'omo con ragionamenti grati ed onesti, ed accomodate al tempo e loco ed alla qualità di quella persona con cui parlerà, accompagnando coi costumi placidi e modesti e con quella onestà che sempre ha da componer tutte le sue azioni una pronta vivacità d'ingegno, donde si mostri aliena da ogni grosseria; ma con tal bontà, che si faccia estimar non men pudica, prudente ed umana, che piacevole, arguta e discreta."

<sup>23</sup> Castiglione, III.3: "[...] perché come corte alcuna, per grande che ella sia, non po aver ornamento o splendore in sé, né allegria senza donne, né cortegiano alcun essere aggraziato, piacevole o ardito, né far mai opera leggiadra di cavalleria, se non mosso dalla pratica e dall'amore e piacer di donne, così ancora il ragionar del cortegiano è sempre imperfettissimo, se le donne, interponendovisi, non danno lor parte di quella grazia, con la quale fanno perfetta ed adornano la cortegiana."

*Annibal Guasco's Ragionamento: A Manual for the Lady at Court*

Writing in the latter part of the sixteenth-century, Annibal Guasco seems to have had a very different perspective on the role of ladies at court, since he penned a *ragionamento* entirely dedicated to instructing his daughter, Lavinia, on what she must do in order to gain entry and succeed in that environment.<sup>24</sup>

Given what Virginia Cox has recently demonstrated, about the myths of Counter-Reformation misogyny, and the quite positive effect that period seems to have had on women's opportunities for learning and the publication of their own work, Guasco's manual—which advocates a woman's education as forcefully as it does—although unique in certain aspects, should not come as a surprise.<sup>25</sup> Aside from women's writing in the vernacular, the latter part of the century witnessed a number of profeminist publications.<sup>26</sup> Among them was a “defense of women” by Maria Gondola composed in 1585, just a year prior to the publication of Guasco's text.<sup>27</sup>

Clearly a landmark achievement in the history of women's education, Guasco's manual is “almost certainly unique in Italian Renaissance literature for its clear-cut underlying objectives, its directness of tone, and its detail.”<sup>28</sup> It goes without saying that its uniqueness also lies in the specificity of its (female) audience. Indeed the possible allegation that Guasco penned his manual solely as a rhetorical exercise must be attenuated based on the historical fact of his daughter Lavinia's actual placement at the court of the Savoy in Turin, where she then took it upon herself to publish her father's precious manuscript. It seems, therefore, that this was a joint venture shared between a loving and attentive father and his very precocious and exceptionally talented daughter.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> The Guasco family were members of the lower nobility. Annibale belonged to the Accademia degli Illustrati of Casale Monferrato and in 1596, he was elected president of the Accademia degli Immobili of Alessandria, his hometown. Among his works, he wrote an *ottava rima* version of *Decameron* IV, 1, *La Ghismonda* (Pavia: G. Bartoli, 1583), an odd choice given the father's pathologically cruel treatment of his daughter in that novella. In 1605, Guasco published a monumental book of madrigals dedicated to Margaret of Savoy. Lavinia was the eldest of Guasco's three surviving daughters. For further information on Guasco, see Girimonti G. Greco, *Dizionario biografico degli Italiani* (Rome: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 2003), 60: 445-48, and Osborn, “The ‘Discourse,’” 2-3.

<sup>25</sup> More precisely, Cox investigates the period between 1580 and 1630; as she notes, Italian women's writing and publication were particularly active in the 1580s and '90s. See the Introduction and esp. chapter 1 of Cox's *The Prodigious Muse: Women's Writing in Counter-Reformation Italy* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011), xi-xxiv and 1-50, respectively; see also idem, *Women's Writing in Italy 1400-1650* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), 131-65, esp. 133. For a study that takes women's education into account and includes learned women from within and outside the Italian peninsula, see Janet Smarr, *Joining the Conversation: Dialogues by Renaissance Women* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 2005), esp. 15-16, 101-04, 119-25. On the same period and women's publications, see also Robin, *Publishing Women*.

<sup>26</sup> Well known “defenses” of women are Moderata Fonte's *Il merito delle donne* and Lucrezia Marinella's *La nobiltà et l'eccellenza delle donne*, both of which reached the press in 1600.

<sup>27</sup> The edition is forthcoming with the Other Voice Series (Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, Toronto) by Francesca Gabrielli (cited in Cox, *The Prodigious Muse*, 272 n. 14, and in chapter 6 on female-authored polemical prose).

<sup>28</sup> Osborn, “The ‘Discourse,’” 2 and 16.

<sup>29</sup> Guasco's keen interest in his daughter's education, although exceptional, was not unprecedented. On the relationship between fathers and daughters with respect to their education, see Sarah Gwyneth Ross, “Her Father's Daughter: Cassandra Fedele, Woman Humanist of the Venetian Republic,” in *The Trouble with Ribs: Women, Men and Gender in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Anu Korhonen and Kate Lowe (Helsinki: Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies, 2007), 204-22 (cited in Cox, “Gender and Eloquence in Ercole de' Roberti's *Portia and Brutus*,” *Renaissance Quarterly*, 62, no. 1 (Spring 2009): 75 n. 33; and Sarah Gwyneth Ross, *The Birth of Feminism: Woman as Intellect in*



Although bestsellers of the period, such as Castiglione's *Cortegiano*, Giovanni della Casa's *Il Galateo* (1558), and Stefano Guazzo's *Civile Conversatione* (1574), figure as key reference texts available for Lavinia's use, these manuals were obviously not deemed sufficient, perhaps even lacking for the purpose at hand.<sup>30</sup> For had these texts been sufficient, Guasco may not have felt the need to draft his own guidelines.<sup>31</sup> Indeed, while many of the most prized talents, skills, or *virtù* taught to the courtier are revisited in Guasco's book, especially those found in Books I, II, and IV of the *Cortegiano*, they are now placed at the service of a well-defined *female* readership, and Lavinia's foreword specifically addresses and anticipates that audience. Guasco's text, then, delivers what the *Cortegiano* only hypothetically promises to do. As the foreword informs us, the manual served the young girl well in acquiring and holding on to a prized position as a lady-in-waiting at the court of the Savoy in Turin. At the same time, Lavinia hopes that by way of its publication, the manual will also serve as a reference guide for all other equally talented and aspiring young ladies: "There being an abundance of printing firms in this city, I have therefore taken the liberty of having it published, both out of respect for your wishes *and in order to share it with these ladies.*"<sup>32</sup>

The *Ragionamento* is prefaced by a dedicatory sonnet entitled "A D. Lavinia sua Figliuola" (*To Lady Lavinia, His Daughter*). What is most interesting about this verse composition is the gender reversals it effects. Guasco speaks to his daughter in the guise of a *mother* speaking to her *son*:

What tenderest of mothers ever gave to her most beloved only son,  
Dearest of all her delights,  
Kisses and reminders of her maternal affection

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*Renaissance Italy and England* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 19-52. I thank the anonymous reviewer of *CIS* for bringing Ross's 2009 volume to my attention. The Quattrocento female humanist, Laura Cereta (1469-1499), seems to have benefited from a similar kind of interest on the part of her father. See Amyrose McCue Gill, "Fraught Relations in the Letters of Laura Cereta: Marriage, Friendship, and Humanist Epistolarity," *Renaissance Quarterly* 62 (2009): 1101. So too was the case of the most prolific woman writer of Venice, Lucrezia Marinella (1571-1653). On Marinella, see Paola Malpezzi Price and Christine Ristaino, *Lucrezia Marinella and the Querelle des Femmes in Seventeenth-Century Italy* (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2008), 13-14 and 36. Finally, we have the case of Lavinia Fontana (1552-1614), considered the first woman artist whose father was her teacher: see Caroline Murphy, *Lavinia Fontana* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003). On the schooling of girls at home and in the convent, see Paul F. Grendler, *Schooling in Renaissance Italy: Literacy and Learning, 1300-1600* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 96-102. As a regressive counterexample to Guasco's overwhelmingly positive championing of women's education, see Silvio Antoniano's *Tre libri dell'educatione christiana dei figlioli*, published only two years prior to the *Ragionamento* in 1584 (text cited in Cox, *Women's Writing*, 137). Antoniano, a future cardinal writing at the request of Carlo Borromeo, suggests that the education of one's daughters would jeopardize both their chastity and their moral integrity (*ibid.*, 197-98).

<sup>30</sup> The *Cortegiano* had gone through fifty-seven Italian editions from its publication in 1528 to 1584 (Guasco, *Discourse to Lady Lavinia*, 85 n. 60). It had in fact been in circulation for about twenty years prior to its publication. Della Casa's manual focuses on civility, while Guazzo's Book III focuses on the domestic conversation between husband and wife, though it also deals with other levels of kinship.

<sup>31</sup> I agree with Osborn who detects an "urgency" in Guasco's tone. He may have indeed felt that the manual would make up for a lack of such pointed and useful advice.

<sup>32</sup> Guasco, Foreword, *Discourse to Lady Lavinia*, 45; *Ragionamento*, 2<sup>r</sup>: "Onde ho preso licenzia di farlo stampare, con la commodità delle stampe che sono in questa città [Turin], così per lo detto rispetto, come per farne parte a queste Dame."

With so much solicitude at a time of great peril,<sup>33</sup>

These are the opening lines of what is essentially a farewell address to Lavinia who is about to depart for Turin. Not only has Guasco taken on the role of a caring, preoccupied mother, but Lavinia herself is spoken of in terms of an “only” (*unico*) child/son. What can one make of this odd, perhaps unexpected gender reversal? Could this be an attempt—albeit an indirect one—at underscoring Lavinia’s “special status”? Though she is a woman, she has acquired her skills “virilmente” (17<sup>r</sup>, 77), literally, “with masculine courage/fortitude,” as Guasco notes in one of the most important sections of the discourse, one I will have more to say about below.<sup>34</sup> This may have been one of his reasons, though one can only form conjectures.

The discourse opens with an invocation to God and the special status he has bestowed upon Guasco’s daughter, a status she should cherish and for which she should be eternally grateful. Here and elsewhere, Guasco sees himself as God’s intermediary, as if he were following that which is willed from above. As her father, he has merely done his duty vis-à-vis an exceptionally gifted child. For aside from her own natural inclination and her extraordinarily precocious talents, a fact underscored at several points in the narrative, Lavinia’s success is owed to her father’s investment in “excellent tutors” (4<sup>v</sup>, 50) and his own extremely active engagement in her education.<sup>35</sup> Guasco is well aware, as he makes clear at the very beginning of his discourse, that, if not honed, no matter how amazing one’s talent is, it will neither last nor grow. Moreover, the child’s surroundings are of central importance. If Lavinia’s “facile ingegno” (4<sup>r</sup>, 50)<sup>36</sup> is to flourish, Guasco reasons, her talents must be systematically trained and so she must be brought up in the right place. “[I]f you had not been in a place where your talents could be given full scope,”<sup>37</sup> Guasco reasons, the enterprise may have failed. He therefore took measures to move from Alessandria, their

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<sup>33</sup> Guasco, *Discourse to Lady Lavinia*, 46; *Ragionamento*, 3<sup>r</sup>: “Qual più tenera madre à più diletto, / Care di lei delitie unico figlio, / Dié con tanta pietate in gran periglio / Baci, e ricordi di materno affetto?”

<sup>34</sup> Guasco’s adjective “virilmente” brings to mind Boccaccio’s anthology of female worthies, *De claris mulieribus* (1361-1362), denoting a certain type of woman who partakes of both male and female qualities. In a rather oblique way, the phrase also recalls the more recent *Discorso della virtù femminile e donnesca* (1582) in which Torquato Tasso makes a case for “heroic” women whose “virtù donnesca” prepares them for public roles of the highest order (see Cox, *Women’s Writing*, 169-70). As will become clear from what follows, Guasco’s Lavinia is clearly *not* limited to nor bound by what Tasso would refer to as “virtù femminile” (the far more common “feminine” virtue inherent in most women unqualified or unable to reach that rare category [category, or attribute?] of “virtù donnesca”). On women and “feminine” virtue, see Ross, *The Birth of Feminism*, esp. 4.

<sup>35</sup> Lavinia entered the Duchess of Savoy’s service at the age of eleven. It is apparent that her father’s “ammaestramenti” (teachings) had begun some years prior; hence, Lavinia’s precociousness, a part of her “unique” education, was a point Guasco felt was worth underscoring, as we shall see.

<sup>36</sup> “Ingegno” is a notoriously difficult term to render into English: it may mean intelligence, wit, or cunning, depending on the context. In this section, Osborn translates “facile ingegno” as “ready understanding” and “facilità d’ingegno” as “ease of comprehension.” Though viable in this particular context, these English renderings may not shed enough light on the term’s sophisticated meaning. Given Guasco’s frequent use of the term to refer to and emphasize Lavinia’s keen intelligence, one needs to be alert to its polyvalent nature.

<sup>37</sup> Guasco, *Discourse to Lady Lavinia*, 50; *Ragionamento*, 4<sup>v</sup>: “Se tu non fossi in luogo stata dove si fosse il tuo talento possuto essercitare.” It should be pointed out that in the original, the term “essercitare,” indicates ‘active involvement’ on Lavinia’s part. The English translation, “to give full scope,” does not quite capture the Italian’s meaning. I thank the anonymous reader of *CIS* for drawing my attention to the term Guasco uses here.

hometown, to Pavia, a more suitable learning environment for “educating children well and adorning them with all the attainments required in those of noble birth.”<sup>38</sup>

Also in the introductory part of the *Ragionamento* we find an intriguing distinction made between Lavinia and her male relatives, her brother and cousins, for whom the same education was available but whose “disposition” was clearly inferior to hers.<sup>39</sup> This made them unlikely candidates for the high honor and prestigious position for which Lavinia was being prepared. Thus, it was on her account alone that both parents labored.<sup>40</sup> Here and throughout, Guasco is very keen to point out the extent to which he has used all means necessary to ensure that Lavinia was endowed with every *virtù* imaginable. As her father, he spared no expense to train her in calligraphy, conversing, mathematics, musical instruments, sight-reading and scoring music, singing, dancing, card games, composing verse, etc.

Each of these skills or *operationi* is discussed in some detail in the introductory pages and then recapped in the fourth rubric dedicated to their preservation: “alla conservatione e accrescimento de’ virtuosi abiti tuoi.” Other important topics shed light on Guasco’s meticulous involvement in his daughter’s education in preparation for her life at court and are treated under separate rubrics: *all’anima tua* (concerning your soul); *all’onore tuo* (concerning your honor); *all’officio tuo verso tua padrona* (concerning your duties toward your mistress); *alla tua persona* (concerning your person); *alla roba tua* (concerning your possessions); *alla conversatione tua con gli altri* (concerning your social relations); *al trattamento di chi ti avrà a servire* (concerning the treatment of your domestic staff). In the pages that follow, I will highlight the most salient passages in this discourse, underscoring at the same time their unique status when compared to other books of conduct, most importantly the *Cortegiano*.

#### “Infinita meraviglia”: *A Precocious Student*

At the age of four Lavinia already knew how to read, an accomplishment met with “infinita meraviglia” (6<sup>r</sup>, 52) by those acquainted with her. At seven her training in writing and calligraphy began, and she would master that style of which even her father was ignorant.<sup>41</sup> For this task, Guasco chose the best model around, that of Giovanni Francesco Cresci, whose text *Il perfetto cancelleresco corsivo* had been published just a few years earlier in 1579.<sup>42</sup> The reasons for which Guasco took this “operatione” so seriously are given in a later part of the discourse. It is a passage worth quoting in full as the rhetoric of the original, the slight but deliberate degree of nonchalance, gives us a sense of Guasco’s hopes with regard to his daughter’s advancement at court. At the same time, it is evident from what we read that Guasco is relying on his daughter to *perfect* those

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<sup>38</sup> Guasco, *Discourse to Lady Lavinia*, 50; *Ragionamento*, 4<sup>v</sup>: “allevar bene i figliuoli, & arricchirgli di tutte le virtù a nobili richieste.”

<sup>39</sup> Guasco, *Discourse to Lady Lavinia*, 50; *Ragionamento*, 4<sup>v</sup>: “si sono così poco serviti dell’occasione che quanto a loro sono le spese e gli incomodi nostri indarno stati.”

<sup>40</sup> Guasco, *Discourse to Lady Lavinia*, 58; *Ragionamento*, 9<sup>v</sup>: “ti abbiamo di tutte le virtù, che è stato possibile ornata.”

<sup>41</sup> Guasco, *Discourse to Lady Lavinia*, 51; *Ragionamento*, 5<sup>v</sup>: “[...] insegnarti a scrivere, non i caratteri miei no, ma quelli ch’io non sapeva formare.”

<sup>42</sup> On this famous calligrapher, see Osborn, “*The ‘Discourse,’*” 18 n. 22; on page 19, see a facsimile of a page from this manual on writing.

skills she has received at home. He therefore trusts in her judgment (*giudicio*, 13<sup>r</sup>, 54 and *passim*)<sup>43</sup> and allows for a significant measure of independence in her day-to-day interactions with other members of the court milieu as well as, perhaps even more importantly, with regard to her continuing education:

As for your other attainments, you will be able to improve upon them, not just maintain them, all on your own, and who knows but that your mistress may not allocate you a teacher in whichever of your skills is most to her liking, with whom you will be able to make more progress in the future than you have up till now. It really grieves me that just as I was helping you make headway in composing a reasonably good letter and writing correctly, I shall not be able to continue my instruction. However, I shall provide you with some manuals relevant to this profession, which, if you read them and note what is said in them, will, together with the grounding I have given you, little by little enable you to master this expertise, which will be a very great adornment and a necessary accompaniment to the beauty of your handwriting. This last is something of which you must take the greatest care of all, both for the nobility of the art and because one day your mistress might desire to capitalize on it.<sup>44</sup>

Described as a tremendous asset (*grandissimo ornamento*), the art of letter writing could in fact lead to one of the highest positions at court, that of the “secretary,” a function that would give Lavinia exclusive access to her mistress’s most private matters.<sup>45</sup> Therefore, Guasco advises, such a position necessarily entails training not only her pen but also her tongue, as the utmost discretion is paramount.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> The term “giudicio” (judgment) is an important one and is used throughout the discourse to refer to Lavinia’s obligation to discern, according to the situation, how she should express herself and what she should do or say. As Guasco explains, he can only provide general rules for proper conduct; he cannot judge on her behalf: “non che io intenda dirti tutto quello, che ti occorrerà fare che ciò non potrei io insegnarti; peroché sono infiniti gli accidenti umani onde non si può a tutte le particolari nostre operationi certa regola assegnare” (10<sup>r</sup>).

<sup>44</sup> Guasco, *Discourse to Lady Lavinia*, 76; *Ragionamento*, 20<sup>v</sup>: “Gli altri abiti potrai da te sola accrescerli non che mantenerli; e chi sa? che tua padrona non ti deputi alcun maestro in quello che le farà delle virtù tue più a grado? col quale possi più progresso di qui innanzi fare che di qui indietro non hai fatto? Di tanto mi spiace che si come ti aveva io già incaminata a dettar mediocrementemente una lettera e a scrivere assai correttamente, non potrò più questo ufficio continuare. Tuttavia, ti provvederò d’alcuni libri a questa professione convenienti, i quali volendo tu leggere e osservare quello che in essi ritroverai a poco a poco, verrai, col principio da me avuto, questa cognitione da te acquistando la quale ti sarà di grandissimo ornamento, e necessaria alla bellezza del tuo scrivere del quale dovrai sopra tutto aver cura grandissima così per la nobiltà dell’arte come perché ne potrebbe un giorno far tua padrona a suo servizio capital.” See Guasco, *Discourse to Lady Lavinia*, 76 n. 45 on the popularity of manuals on letter writing in the late sixteenth century. For more details on the phenomenon, see Amedeo Quondam, *Le “carte messaggere”*: *retorica e modelli di comunicazione epistolare per un indice dei libri di lettere del Cinquecento* (Rome: Bulzoni, 1981).

<sup>45</sup> Writing and speaking skills are, of course, of paramount importance for the courtier; the subject is treated at length in the *Cortegiano* (see Castiglione, I.29-39). Chapter 44 takes up the issue of seemingly competing skills: letters vs. arms. The novelty of Guasco’s stance on the possibility of Lavinia’s (or, indeed, any woman’s) opportunity to become a “secretary” should be noted. On the importance of private secretaries, see Carolyn James, “Friendship and Dynastic Marriage in Renaissance Italy,” *Literature & History* 17, no.1 (2008), 13.

<sup>46</sup> Guasco, *Discourse to Lady Lavinia*, 76; *Ragionamento*, 20<sup>v</sup>: “[...] l’ufficio del servir con la penna i padroni massimamente gran Signori richiede che si sappia non solamente corregger la scrittura, ma la lingua ancora, onde

The passage in question, as well as others in the discourse, certainly the very inclusion of a section on preserving her skills, attests to the fact that Guasco envisioned Lavinia's education as a collaborative effort. While his duty as her father was to lay the foundations of her intellectual development, it was up to the young girl to carry on that burden and, ultimately, to put her learning into practice. Of the eight rubrics concerning Lavinia's training in preparation for court life, then, an entire section is devoted to her obligation not only to maintain but also to *improve* upon (*accrescer*) the skills she has acquired as a result of the intensive educational program she was subject to in Pavia. For the first time, these skills are referred to as part of an all-inclusive education in the "arti liberali" (16<sup>v</sup>, 71), the liberal arts or *studia humanitatis* which would have included her exposure to the *trivium* and the *quadrivium*, the standard core curriculum for *male* children and noble females: rhetoric, grammar, logic, music, etc.<sup>47</sup> It is probable that her training in the first three subjects would have been done in Latin.<sup>48</sup> The importance of this section is reflected in Guasco's inability to find the appropriate words with which to express his vehement desire that his daughter hold true to the investment and the sacrifices made on her behalf. Guasco's affection and fatherly concern are apparent here perhaps more than in any other part of the discourse.<sup>49</sup> At the same time, the seriousness of failing to follow through with her obligation to preserve the skills she has at such great cost acquired is evident when Guasco equates that failure with committing a deadly sin and, consequently, with incurring God's anger and punishment. In retrospect, though, Guasco chides himself for having been such a "tyrannical father," clearly aware of the exceedingly high demands and expectations he placed on such a young child. One imagines that this chiding is also, in part, a plea for forgiveness and understanding, given the ultimate scope of the ambitious program he insisted his daughter follow with unrelenting tenacity: "admonishing, shouting, threatening, and at times beating [her]."<sup>50</sup>

As Guasco explains toward the end of the introductory section, he has trained his daughter with a clear goal in mind: her eventual placement at court.<sup>51</sup> For this reason, we assume, her education in music is more precious than any other skill (7<sup>r</sup>, 53). The requirement parallels expectations of Castiglione's courtier. As Lodovico da Canossa exclaims in Book I of the *Cortegiano*, training in music was imperative for an education leading to a career at court.<sup>52</sup> Like the courtier, Lavinia is trained in playing various musical instruments, sight-reading, and even musical composition. The fact that Lavinia has excelled at these difficult tasks (*faticose operationi*) without difficulty (*senza fatica*), prompts the father to compare his daughter to other young girls

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sono cotali ufficiali secretari chiamati essendo il tacere ufficio loro." On the etymology of the term "secretary," see Guasco, *Discourse to Lady Lavinia*, 76 n. 46. One of the practical reasons behind Guasco's interest in placing Lavinia at court might have very well been to gain some kind of recognition (perhaps even sponsorship) vis-à-vis the royal household. In this case, Lavinia would function as an envoy or spokesperson for the entire family.

<sup>47</sup> In his second *Dialogo*, Giraldis discusses the teaching of the "arti liberali" to male children (see *Il secondo dialogo della vita civile*, 1103).

<sup>48</sup> Guasco, *Discourse to Lady Lavinia*, 50 n. 5. In his *Dialogo*, Dolce also supports women's instruction in Latin. On noblewomen's training in rhetoric and eloquence in the Quattrocento, see Cox, "Gender and Eloquence."

<sup>49</sup> Guasco, *Discourse to Lady Lavinia*, 70; *Ragionamento*, 16<sup>v</sup>: "Questa cosa, figliuola mia, mi preme in guisa il cuore che s'io avessi mille lingue non tel potrei isprimere: né so con che parole ascaldartene tanto il petto quanto vorrei."

<sup>50</sup> Guasco, *Discourse to Lady Lavinia*, 51; *Ragionamento*, 5<sup>r-v</sup>: "ammonendo, gridando, minacciando, e talhor percotendo."

<sup>51</sup> To say, as Osborn does, that Guasco does not mention his intent to place his daughter at court is simply not the case (54 n. 12). He does so explicitly on more than one occasion in the *Discourse*.

<sup>52</sup> Castiglione, I.47: "avete a sapere che'io non mi contento del cortegiano s'egli non è ancor musico e se, oltre allo intendere ed esser sicuro a libro, non sa di varii instrumenti." Also cited in Guasco, *Discourse to Lady Lavinia*, 54 n. 12.

of the same age, clearly taking pride in her virtuosity. What another girl would need several months to accomplish, Lavinia was able to achieve in a matter of days. At a later point in the same introductory section, Lavinia's amazing progress is once again highlighted with respect to her age and sex: "you finally reached such a degree of excellence that you could do honor and service to others with your pen. Indeed, it would probably be impossible to find another girl of your age with such a high standard of competence as yourself."<sup>53</sup> Having surpassed both sexes (her peers, brother, cousins), Lavinia's talents are indeed worthy of the epithet "infinita meraviglia."

### "Gloriosa al mondo": Showcasing One's Virtù at Court

Various parts of the discourse show a father who takes great pride in having a daughter like Lavinia. The phrase "gloriosa al mondo" (8<sup>r</sup>, 55) is used to refer to Lavinia's acquired fame in the eyes of those who have witnessed her accomplishments. Her progress is indeed deemed "miraculous": it is the one thing even fortune cannot take away. Thus, when Guasco advises his daughter to showcase her various *virtù* at court, it is worthy of note that he does not condone a self-effacing attitude. Rather, he encourages Lavinia to show pride in her accomplishments; he even tries to instill a competitive spirit in her rapport with other ladies-in-waiting.<sup>54</sup> Key phrases here are "lodevole emulazione" (20<sup>v</sup>, 87) and "virtuosa emulazione" (28<sup>r</sup>, 89); both may be rendered into English as "praiseworthy" or "virtuous" *competition*: the first term is found in the section on preserving her skills, the second is used in the section on conversing with others. As Guasco explains in great detail in the section devoted to Lavinia's relationship to her mistress, should the latter seem to show favor for one of her companions, she would be ill advised to show envy.<sup>55</sup> Rather, the politically savvy way to deal with this situation, the father advises, would be to show even greater affection/respect for her competitor, since this would induce the favored party to speak well of Lavinia to their mutual patron.<sup>56</sup> Moreover, she should respect her mistress's judgment in showing preference for someone of superior talent. The fact in itself should spur her to strive to do better, and not simply so as to equal her competitor but rather to *outdo* her.<sup>57</sup> The end goal is to surpass her competitor in order, eventually, to take her place in the eyes of her mistress. It is noteworthy that this competitive spirit is reiterated toward the end of this section:

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<sup>53</sup> Guasco, *Discourse to Lady Lavinia*, 52; *Ragionamento*, 5<sup>v</sup>: "sei finalmente a cotal segno arrivata, di poter con la penna te, & altrui onorare & servire; cosa, che nella età e nel sesso tuo, forse in altra che in te sì compiutamente non si troverebbe."

<sup>54</sup> As Janet Smarr points out, constructive competition was seen as a useful spur to education. In her study, she offers the example of Olympia Morata and Anna d'Este, daughter of Duke Ercole II, for whom the former served as companion and tutor; see "Olympia Morata: From Classicist to Reformer," in *Phaethon's Children: The Este Court and Its Culture in Early Modern Ferrara*, ed. Dennis Looney and Deanna Shemek (Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2005), 422 and n. 5.

<sup>55</sup> "Envy" and the need to avoid it at all costs, whether in oneself or triggering it in others, is an important topos of courtly conduct literature. Dante's Pier delle Vigne episode of *Inferno* XIII is a *locus classicus* on the subject. We find admonitions against "envy" in the *Cortegiano* at various moments in the conversation as we do in Guasco's discourse where he persistently advises his daughter to watch out for this malevolent and potentially destructive force. On the subject of "envy" at court, see also Horne (cited in Guasco, *Discourse to Lady Lavinia*, 68 n. 37).

<sup>56</sup> Guasco, *Discourse to Lady Lavinia*, 65; *Ragionamento*, 13<sup>v</sup>: "vedendosi da te onorare e amare, procurerà di favorirti preso la padrona a tutto suo potere."

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*: "Laonde ti affaticherai non pur di agguagliarla ma d'avanzarla se potrai meritando accioché conforme al merito ne riporti alla fine il premio."

“You must make sure that not only are you not one of the last to appear when attending to her [your mistress’s] needs but always one among the first and, if possible, the very first.”<sup>58</sup>

Conversely, should Lavinia be favored among her companions, she should make all efforts to show the utmost modesty, lest she should arouse the envy of her entourage. In fact, when in a position of favor, rather than showing excessive confidence in her skills, she should downplay her own merits and give credit, instead, to the generosity of her mistress. Although he does not exclude Lavinia’s interaction with male courtiers, what Guasco envisions for his daughter is her taking part in a coterie of women wherein she would be displaying her competitive skills among her peers. As we shall see in what follows, Guasco’s advice to Lavinia vis-à-vis her mistress parallels the training received by the courtier.<sup>59</sup>

“Qual nuovo Camaleonte” or, on Lavinia’s Interaction with her Mistress

In the lengthy section on the relationship Lavinia must maintain with her mistress, Guasco’s advice calls to mind, repeatedly, that given to the courtier in the *Cortegiano*:

[F]rom henceforth you will have to deny your own will and aspire only to what is pleasing to your mistress, in such a way that, like a chameleon, all your wishes take on the hues of her mind, not only in what you know for a certainty she requires of you but in all you will be able to conjecture. And this you must do not only in your exterior actions but also with inner devotion and love, for from this two benefits will ensue: one, that through loving your mistress you will transform yourself wholly into her and feel that the things you are doing for her you do for yourself, so deriving the greatest delight from them, in such a way that serving her will be sweeter to you than commanding others; and the other, that when she sees herself loved and served by you with affection, her love for you will increase day by day.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Guasco, *Discourse to Lady Lavinia*, 67; *Ragionamento*, 14<sup>v</sup>: “[...] e avrai a procurar di non esser dell’ultime ma sempre delle prime e la prima se sarà possibile a comparer al suo servitio.”

<sup>59</sup> This suggests the potential feminization of the courtier and the blurring of gender roles when both men and women are expected to serve a superior. I thank Janet Smarr for pointing out this parallel in her reading of an earlier draft of this essay. For more on the courtier’s “feminization” see Quint, “Courtier, Prince, Lady.”

<sup>60</sup> Guasco, *Discourse to Lady Lavinia*, 64; *Ragionamento*, 13<sup>r</sup>: “hor ti sarà mestiero negar la volontà tua, a niente altro aspirare se non a quello che a grado sia di tua padrona nel cui animo avrai qual nuovo camaleonte tutte le tue voglie a tignere: né solamente in quello che saprai certamente ch’ella da te ricerchi ma in tutto ciò che potrai congetturarlo, il che avrai non solamente con atti esteriori a fare; ma con interna divotione e amore, che di qui ne avverranno due beni: l’uno che amando tu tua padrona ti trasformerai tutta in lei; e le cose che per lei farai, ti parrà farle per te stessa e ne sentirai diletatione grandissima: onde ti sarà più dolce il servir tu lei che comandar ad altrui; l’altro che, vedendosi ella da te amata, e con affettione servita, ti verrà di giorno in giorno maggiormente amando.” Guasco’s chameleon metaphor brings to mind a passage in Leon Battista Alberti’s *Libri della famiglia* (ed. Ruggiero Romano and Alberto Tenenti [Turin: Einaudi, 1994], 417) where the interlocutors discuss the topic of friendship and the requirements of flexibility: “E come diceano sapea Alcibiade, così noi imiteremo el camaleonte, animale quale dicono a ogni colore sé varia ad assimigliarlo. Così noi co’ tristi saremo severi, co’ iocundi festivi, co’ liberali magnifici” (Book IV, p. 417).

Just as a chameleon is able to change its color, so too Lavinia must instinctively detect her mistress's wishes and moods and then adapt to them. Moreover, in loving her mistress, she will easily be able to assimilate all of her expectations such that, eventually, she will be able to satisfy her mistress's needs as if they were her own. In short, Guasco asks nothing less of his daughter than to become an expert reader of others' psychological cues and states of mind. No easy task, given the very young age of his pupil, but, one that promises to bring the greatest satisfaction (*dilettatione grandissima*), once accomplished. The passage in the *Cortegiano* to which this piece of advice alludes does a better job of explaining, more precisely, what skills are needed in order to succeed in such an endeavor. Moreover, the passage in question sheds light on important similarities between the two texts and what is expected of their respective pupils:

Therefore, in addition to making it evident at all times and to all persons that he is as worthy as we have said, I would have the Courtier devote all his thought and strength of spirit to loving and almost adoring the prince he serves above all else, devoting his every desire and habit and manner to pleasing him. [...] which will come about if he has the good judgement to perceive what his prince likes, and the wit and prudence to bend himself to this, and the considered resolve to like what by nature he may possibly dislike.<sup>61</sup>

Like the courtier, then, Lavinia needs to use her good judgement (*bon giudicio*), intelligence (*ingegno*) and prudence (*prudenzia*) in order to accomplish what is being asked of her here. Clearly, what Castiglione's interlocutor, Federico Fregoso, warns might be the case—that the courtier may not always agree with the prince in terms of his likes/dislikes—is a circumstance to which Guasco alludes but does not directly address. In such a case, the *Cortegiano* advises, one must use sheer willpower, *deliberata volontà*, to accustom oneself to like those things, which, by nature, one dislikes. Along the same lines, Guasco advises Lavinia to do her best to study her mistress's personal preferences (more generally, her *umore*) in order to identify those qualities she likes in other ladies and, crucially, so as to understand which qualities she prefers in *her*.<sup>62</sup> All of these efforts are aimed at pleasing her mistress.

That which both texts, Castiglione's *Cortegiano* and Guasco's *Ragionamento*, emphasize, an element of utmost importance for one's success at court, has to do with the disciplining of one's body, especially one's facial expressions. Self-possession is, therefore, of paramount importance. The logic is, as Guasco puts it, "perché non si conosce l'intrinseco del cuore senon dagli atti esteriori" (13<sup>r</sup>, 64); that is, because one's true disposition can only be known to others by means of exterior acts/gestures. To be in control of one's body language, then, means to be in a position

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<sup>61</sup> Castiglione, II.18: "Voglio adunque che 'l cortegiano, oltre lo aver fatto ed ogni di far conoscere ad ognuno sé esser di quel valore che già abbiamo detto, si volti con tutti i pensieri e forze dell'animo suo ad amare e quasi adorare il principe a chi serve sopra ogni altra cosa; e le voglie sue e i costumi e modi tutti indirizzi a compiacerlo. [...] il che intervorrà, se in costui sarà il bon giudicio per conoscere ciò che piace al principe, e lo ingegno e la prudenzia per saperse gli accomodare, e la deliberata volontà per farsi piacer quello che forse da natura gli despiacesse." The first part of this passage is cited in Guasco, *Discourse to Lady Lavinia*, 64 n. 32.

<sup>62</sup> Guasco, *Discourse to Lady Lavinia*, 65; *Ragionamento*, 13<sup>v</sup>: "Pertanto ti sarà molto giovevole l'andar intendendo l'umor della tua padrona e veder in che cosa soglia ella più nelle sue Dame, e particolarmente in te compiacerse; e in quella porre ogni studio per piacerle."



to manipulate others' first impressions. Here is what Guasco advises his daughter Lavinia, closely following the instructions given to the courtier in the *Cortegiano*:

And because our presence and modes of behavior are the first things that create an impression of us in the mind of an onlooker and possess the power at first sight to gain that person's goodwill toward us or to alienate him from us, you will have to use special diligence here and insure [sic] that your mode of behavior in your mistress's presence is always the most charming and attractive possible, overcoming your deficiencies by noting what the other ladies do, for this is an essential prerequisite to making oneself agreeable to others, being as I told you what first and most frequently speaks to the heart via the eyes. Bearing this in mind, you must endeavor to carry out all the duties that are required of you, either out of respect for your mistress or in her service, with such charm and grace that they seem to be part and parcel of a naturally charming disposition rather than due to effort and art.<sup>63</sup>

The initial lines in this passage form the basis for any manual that provides instructions for successful conduct at court. First impressions are paramount and must be, therefore, well orchestrated. By the same token, the impression one makes on one's master or mistress is equally, if not more important. Echoing the prescriptions given the courtier in the *Cortegiano*, in the above passage and at other intervals in the discourse, Guasco advises his daughter to carefully control her emotions, along with the facial expressions those emotions elicit, such that her exterior demeanor always demonstrates respectful love and affection toward her mistress.

Similar concerns regarding the control of one's body and mind also appear in Anne de France's *Enseignements*, written on behalf of her daughter Susanne. The mother's advice, however, comes across as impersonal, fleeting, and lacking an explicit agenda: "It is important to control your bearing, your expressions, your words, your sentiments, your thoughts, your desires, your wishes, and your passions."<sup>64</sup> Nevertheless, the value of Anne's manual is that it begins the conversation on women's presence at court by taking the matter seriously sometime before the *Cortegiano*'s publication and decades before the *Ragionamento*.

Parallels between the *Cortegiano* and the *Ragionamento* abound. As Federico Fregoso advises the ideal courtier on how to act when in the presence of his prince, "he will never be ill-humored or melancholy before his prince, nor taciturn," so too Guasco advises his daughter when

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<sup>63</sup> Guasco, *Discourse to Lady Lavinia*, 65; *Ragionamento*, 14<sup>r</sup>: "perché la presentia e i modi nostri sono i primi che per gli occhi all'animo di chi ci vede arrivano e hanno, a prima vista, poter di conciliarci la volontà altrui o di allontanarla da noi, in questo avrai a metter particolar diligentia e procurar di comparer sempre alla padrona con più leggiadri e più bei modi che sia possibile; osservando nell'altre Dame quello che tu non saprai, che molto importa questa conditione per farsi altrui grato; essendo, come ti dissi, quella che prima e più spesso per gli occhi si rappresenta al cuore e per questo rispetto t'ingegnerai di far tutte le attioni che, o per riverenza o per servitio della padrona, ti occorreanno a fare con tal leggiadria e gratia che paiano più tosto fatte da una natural gratiosa dispositione che stentamente e con arte."

<sup>64</sup> Anne de France, *Lessons for my Daughter*, XII, 39; *Enseignements à sa fille*, XI, 50. To date, there is no consensus on the exact date of Anne's composition of the *Enseignements*. As noted above, all references to the *Enseignements* of Anne de France will come from these two editions. Anne's daughter Susanne may have been either nine or closer to thirteen years old at the time, therefore not too far in age from Guasco's Lavinia.

in the presence of her mistress: “nor must you ever present yourself before her with a countenance that is perturbed or full of melancholy.”<sup>65</sup> Instead, Lavinia should make all efforts to use the most charming mannerisms possible.

Equally crucial is the way in which these mannerisms are carried out, and here Guasco touches on (and borrows) one of the most important concepts invented for the purposes of Castiglione’s manual: the notion of *sprezzatura*.<sup>66</sup> Without actually using the term, Guasco explains to Lavinia the meaning behind the concept: she should strive (*ingegnarti*) to do everything with charm (*leggiadria*) and grace (*gratia*) rather than as a result of effort or calculated thought.<sup>67</sup> Guasco’s suggestion that Lavinia should strive to abide by a middleway (*strada di mezzo*) is akin to Castiglione’s notion of *mediocrità*: the need to maintain moderation in all of one’s actions.<sup>68</sup>

By contrast, a show of dismay on the part of the servant could lead to the (dangerous) impression that one is unhappy to “serve,” an assumption that would entail the loss of favor and ultimate dismissal. As Guasco explains, any show of disappointment on Lavinia’s part, would have the adverse effect of causing her to fall from her mistress’s good will, a predicament from which she might never recover.

### *On foreign language acquisition: Becoming fluent in Castilian at the Court of the Savoy*

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<sup>65</sup> Castiglione, II.18: “inanzi al principe non starà mai di mala voglia né malinconico, né così taciturno.” Guasco, *Discourse to Lady Lavinia*, 64; Guasco, *Ragionamento*, 13<sup>r</sup>: “né mai presentarletì con viso turbato e pien di maninconia.”

<sup>66</sup> “Sprezzatura” is a term coined by Castiglione; it is defined in I.28 of the *Cortegiano*: “Questa virtù adunque contraria alla affettazione, la qual noi per ora chiamiamo *sprezzatura*, oltra che ella sia il vero fonte donde deriva la grazia, porta ancor seco un altro ornamento, il quale accompagnando qualsivoglia azione umana, per minima che ella sia, non solamente subito scopre il saper di chi la fa, ma spesso lo fa estimar molto maggior di quello che è in effetto; perché negli animi degli circostanti imprime opinione, che chi così facilmente fa bene sappia molto più di quello che fa, e se in quello che fa ponesse studio e fatica, potesse farlo molto meglio.” (Thus, this excellence [which is opposed to affectation, and which, at the moment, we are calling *nonchalance*], besides being the real source from which grace springs, brings with it another adornment which, when it accompanies any human action however small, not only reveals at once how much the person knows who does it, but often causes it to be judged much greater than it actually is, since it impresses upon the minds of the onlookers the opinion that he who performs well with so much facility must possess even greater skill than this, and that, if he were to devote care and effort to what he does, he could do it far better). In sum, “sprezzatura” is a certain nonchalance and may be understood as the opposite of “affectation” (*affettazione*), something to be avoided at all costs. Moreover, it is the true source of one’s grace (*gratia*).

<sup>67</sup> The notion of “sprezzatura” comes up also in the section on how Lavinia should manage her own appearance, more specifically, on headdress (*l’ornamento del capo*). While this is a task that demands much careful consideration (*molta avvertenza*), Guasco warns that it should not appear as if too much effort has been placed into styling one’s hair. Lavinia must, rather, find a middle road, one that would preserve that “grace” with which she must accompany every one of her actions. See Guasco, *Ragionamento*, 22<sup>v</sup>-23<sup>r</sup>: “[...] la cura non vorrebbe, secondo il mio avviso, essere in ciò tale che non si guastassero con l’arte i capelli, i quali, per la fragilità loro, possono agevolmente venir meno; né manco loderei che fosse la conciatura delle chiome tale che vi bisognasse gran tempo a farla [...] ma tener una strada di mezzo e parer più tosto di non aver posto studio ad acconciarti che di avervi una grande industria usata, che questo mostrar tant’arte toglie altrui la gratia, la quale suole per lo contrario un’artificiosa negligenza dare e questo istesso avvertimento ti ha in tutte le tue attioni a servire per fuggir l’affettazione, del tutto alla gratia contraria.” Guasco, *Discourse to Lady Lavinia*, 80-81.

<sup>68</sup> See Castiglione, I, 27; II.31, and *passim*.

A key element, reiterated close to the discourse's conclusion, is Lavinia's obligation to master the Spanish language, an achievement indispensable for making friends, creating intimacy within friendship, and, most importantly, learning how to persuade with words in order to acquire from others what one desires.<sup>69</sup> Guasco thus points out the advantages of acquiring fluency in Castilian:

And until you have mastered this said language, you will be under the disadvantage of not being able to form such close bonds of friendship with the aforementioned ladies-in-waiting as you would if you knew their language, since there is no more opportune means of binding our souls together than through verbal communication. Moreover, in addition to the pleasures of conversation that the knowledge of language brings, situations often arise when it is not sufficient just to be able to make oneself understood as best one can but when a really good command of a language is needed, as when, for instance, you are making a request or petitioning, persuading, or dissuading someone, excusing or defending yourself or another, reporting events or bearing messages, and employed in a hundred other similar necessities.<sup>70</sup>

The last part of the passage cites a list of "duties" Lavinia might have to carry out, bearing witness to the fact that she is by no means expected to remain on the sidelines; on the contrary, it is hoped that her successful involvement in court business will render her presence all the more apparent and, eventually, invaluable.

Lavinia's ultimate objective, to be of the utmost service to her mistress, is a point reiterated here and one, which is clearly indistinguishable from her mastery of linguistic skills, written and oral:

I will set on one side the possibility that if you master the Spanish language, it would perhaps come about that, in view of the excellence of your handwriting, your mistress, as I told you, might decide to employ you as her secretary, which would redound greatly to your honor and reputation.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> On women, language learning, and vernacular grammar in the early modern period, see Helena Sanson's valuable study, *Women, Language and Grammar in Italy, 1500-1900* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), esp. Part I, 21-115.

<sup>70</sup> Guasco, *Discourse to Lady Lavinia*, 102; *Ragionamento*, 37<sup>r</sup>: "[...] che fra tanto non ti strignerai con le predette Dame con così famigliar modo d'amicitia, come faresti la lor lingua possedendo: non avendo noi altro più opportuno modo da congiugner gli animi nostri insieme, che le parole; ma oltre al piacer della conversatione, che con la favella si prende, nascono bene spesso delle occasioni, nelle quali non basta a potersi il meglio che si sa fare intendere; ma fa mestiero saper molto bene adoperar la lingua; come sarebbe a richiedere, o a pregar con istanza, a persuadere o dissuadere altrui, ad iscusare o difender noi o gli altri, a recitar fatti, o a portar ambasciate; e in cento altri così fatti bisogni."

<sup>71</sup> Guasco, *Discourse to Lady Lavinia*, 102; *Ragionamento*, 37<sup>r</sup>: "Lasso che acquistando tu la lingua Spagnuola, potrebbe forse avvenire che per la buona qualità della tua mano a scrivere facesse (come già ti dissi) tua padrona disegno di adoperarti per sua secretaria, il che sarebbe con molta tua riputatione et onore." The passage, once again, bears witness to the fact that Guasco may have conceived of this whole enterprise as a very practical means of acquiring access and favor at court through his daughter and, as a result, on behalf of his family.

Fine speaking skills are equally important, and for this reason Guasco reminds his daughter that he has already furnished her with several Spanish books, including grammar manuals with which she can teach herself correct usage.<sup>72</sup> On her own, then, Lavinia is expected to become perfectly bilingual and reach superior reading, writing, and speaking skills. She shall, as a result, become master of a language other than her own (37<sup>v</sup>, 101). Communication is, therefore, a crucial component of Lavinia's presence at court.

*On Socializing, Maintaining a Good Reputation, and Making Friends: Guasco's Ragionamento among Other Renaissance Manuals of Conduct (Anne De France and Lodovico Domenichi)*

The control of one's outward appearance was a staple topic in conduct manuals of the period. As Mario Olivieri writes in his recent study, *Costumato, piacevole e di bella maniera*, the control of one's body was as important as controlling one's speech:

The control of the body and all of its parts, which clearly assume a semantic function and a visual extension of discourse, is embedded within the ideal of grace and manner, which, in turn, take on corporeal reality as a means of communication, exclusive, powerful, suggestive, and unequalled, a symbolic metamorphosis of corporeality.<sup>73</sup>

Although valuable in its approach, Olivieri's study is limited to the most famous manuals of the Italian Renaissance: those of Della Casa, Castiglione, and Guazzo. Regrettably, he does not take into consideration Guasco's less canonical, more non-traditional text, which, as we have already seen, also has something to say on the topic. Indeed, Guasco returns to reanalyze outward appearance, this time from a slightly different angle, in the longest section of the manual, devoted to Lavinia's conversation with others.

First, Guasco tackles the caveats of interacting with others. One can cause offense through various means: by way of words, actions, gestures, as well as facial expressions. The latter means is, of course, the most difficult to control but can, in fact, be the most offensive and dangerous given its more subtle manifestations and veiled intentions:

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<sup>72</sup> Guasco, *Discourse to Lady Lavinia*, 102; *Ragionamento*, 37<sup>v</sup>: "Ma vorrei, che nell'imparare essa lingua ti affaticassi di impararla Castigliana et bella al che ti gioverà il legger buoni libri Spagnuoli, massimamente quelli che io ti ho dati, ne' quali s'insegnano le regole e i modi del Castigliano favellare; da i quai libri caverai ancora questo utile, il quale non potresti udendo solamente ragionar gli altri cavare, cioè che imparerai insieme a scrivere in essa lingua, e correttamente come dal sentir gli altri questa utilità riporterai, che da i libri non riporteresti."

<sup>73</sup> Olivieri, *Costumato, piacevole e di bella maniera. Della Casa, Castiglione, Guazzo: la civiltà come conversazione* (Rome: Bulzoni, 2008), 23: "Il controllo del corpo e di tutte le sue parti, che assumono dichiaratamente una funzione semantica e quindi un prolungamento visibile del discorso, è ricondotto dentro l'ideale della grazia e della maniera che, appunto, assumono la realtà corporea come un esclusivo e potente, suggestivo e insuperabile, mezzo di comunicazione, una metamorfosi simbolica della corporeità" (my translation).

Next, I need to explain to you that an offense depends on the intention of the offender, whence it comes about that if someone feels even a single hair of his head being pulled on purpose to slight him, he will take offense and seek revenge, which is something he would not do for a heavy blow received in jest or accidentally. From this you must understand that one can do injury to a person not only by word of mouth but also through gestures and physical movements, since our intentions are made clear not just through words alone but with bodily signs.<sup>74</sup>

One's ill will (*mala volontà*), Guasco thus explains, can be communicated by means other than words, facial contortions such as "certain jeering and grinning expressions and a twisting up of one's mouth."<sup>75</sup> So too when on the receiving end of this sort of tacit criticism, Guasco warns Lavinia, it is extremely difficult to gauge the other's reasoning or intent. Clearly the best, if not the only, remedy is to strive to be on good terms with everyone and, above all, safeguard herself and her own reputation from any gossip. In this effort, silence is not always a virtue. Indeed, as Guasco continues to explain to his daughter, even silence can be injurious if misplaced. Every utterance, like every silence, must undergo careful consideration. Guasco's principal aim, therefore, is to teach Lavinia how to govern her tongue.

It is in this section that Guasco explicitly calls attention to those other well-known contemporary manuals of conduct: Castiglione's, Della Casa's, and Guazzo's. It is his hope that these books will "make up" for any related matters he may not have the space to address. Ironically, it is his own manual that compensates, as so far demonstrated, for the kind of detailed instructions the lady at court fails to receive, especially in the *Cortegiano*, the text most closely related to Guasco's *Ragionamento*.

The importance of the subject matter treated here is underscored when Guasco reveals that this section deals with nothing less weighty than civic life (*[la] vita civile*, 25<sup>v</sup>, 85),<sup>76</sup> a topic on which, he exclaims, he could easily write a whole book, given the endless subjects such a task would entail. Della Casa's *Galateo*, for instance, will serve Lavinia not only at court, but also in any situation involving social intercourse.<sup>77</sup>

While Guasco does not overlook Lavinia's very young age, he nevertheless places heavy demands on his daughter as he prepares her for what she should expect to find at court: situations, that is, quite *unlike* those she has been used to at home. Indeed, at court, Lavinia will have to be

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<sup>74</sup> Guasco, *Discourse to Lady Lavinia*, 94; *Ragionamento*, 31<sup>v</sup>: "Hor mi par di farti sapere che l'offesa nasce dalla intentione dell'offensore, onde avviene che chi si sente da alcuno torcer un minimo capello, con intentione di colui d'offender, si risente e cerca di vendicarsene, il che non fa d'una gran percossa o per giuoco o per accidente ricevuta; onde tu dovrai intendere che non solamente con parole ma etiandio con segni e atti esteriori si può altrui fare ingiuria."

<sup>75</sup> Guasco, *Discourse to Lady Lavinia*, 94; *Ragionamento*, 28<sup>v</sup>: "alcuni schernimenti e un sogghignare e torcer di bocca."

<sup>76</sup> Osborn's translation for Guasco's "vita civile" is "civilized living" (85), which I do not think quite captures the meaning here, as it does not necessarily carry over the "responsibilities" inherent in the term "civile" which, etymologically, comes from the Latin term *cives*, meaning "citizen." Under the entry "civile," the *Grande Dizionario della Lingua Italiana* (ed. Salvatore Battaglia, [Turin: Unione Tipografico-Editrice Torinese, 1964], 3: 210) reads: "dei cittadini; composto di cittadini (cioè organizzato politicamente); proprio del cittadino in quanto membro di una comunità politica, attinente allo Stato."

<sup>77</sup> Guasco, *Discourse to Lady Lavinia*, 85; *Ragionamento*, 25<sup>v</sup>-26<sup>r</sup>: "[...] libro fruttuosissimo non meno per l'eccellenza dello stile che per la diligenza del dar minutamente tutti quegli avvisi de i quali si possa altri non pur in corte ma in qualunque conversazione servire."

prepared to encounter people of different dispositions and different nationalities.<sup>78</sup> With time, Guasco promises, Lavinia will acquire more experience, enough to be able to speak more freely (26<sup>v</sup>, 86). Even so, she is advised to never speak haphazardly; much forethought is necessary before she can open her mouth.<sup>79</sup>

Contrary to the perspective one might formulate in reading Anne de France's discourse, Lavinia's feminine identity is not systematically undervalued nor called into question. I am referring to passages such as this one wherein Anne's pronouncements cast doubt on women's potential:

And because of their weak female nature [*féminines et douces conditions*], it is especially important for all women of rank who want to have a good reputation to be so shamefast and fearful of bad judgment that they move not a single limb of their body without need and that they be rightly ordered with a kindness always compassed by reason. [...] the most noble and pleasing treasure in this world is a woman of noble rank who is beautiful, young, chaste, and well-mannered [*une femme de grande façon belle, jeune, chaste et bien moriginée*].<sup>80</sup>

The gist of Anne's advice is that women are weak and, as a result, they have no choice but to depend on their husbands for rearing and advice. Above all, they should not take it upon themselves to act independently of their lord and master (i.e. their husband or God):

Now then, my daughter, since it is true that you are a feminine and weak creature [*puisqu'ainsi est, que vous, qui êtes féminine et faible créature*], you should take good care that, whatever good fortune you have, you conduct yourself graciously, in perfect humility [*en parfaite humilité*], especially to your lord and husband [*par espécial envers votre seigneur et mari*], to whom, after God, you owe perfect love and complete obedience [*auquel après Dieu vous devez parfaite amour et obéissance*]; you cannot be too humble or bear him too much honor, and you should serve him in all of his needs and should always be sweet, obedient, and amiable to

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<sup>78</sup> Guasco, *Discourse to Lady Lavinia*, 86; *Ragionamento*, 26<sup>v</sup>: "e non aver mai tu fuori di casa di tuo padre praticato, s'aggiunge che tu vai tra molte varietà d'umori, e diversità di natione, in luogo dove è di gran lunga differente il procedere da quello che in casa tua vedevi."

<sup>79</sup> Here Guasco offers a creative justification of the reasons for and the ways in which Mother Nature holds the tongue (*la lingua*), used to produce speech, in check. It is not arbitrary that the tongue is "closed off" by one's lips and teeth. So too our thoughts, which in turn produce language and speech, should be safeguarded and disclosed only with caution: "considerando che con gran misterio la chiude la natura dentro delle labbra e dei denti usasi sotto a due porte: con le quali si potessero chiuder i concetti nostri e ritenerli co' i denti quando già fossero all'estremità della lingua arrivati e con le labra, poi quando già avessero il confine de i denti passati." (Guasco, *Ragionamento*, 25<sup>r</sup>; *Discourse to Lady Lavinia*, 86).

<sup>80</sup> JaAnne de France, *Lessons for My Daughter*, XI, 38; *Enseignements*, X, 49. For an alternative reading of Anne's writing, see Adams, "Appearing Virtuous"; see also Jansen's interpretive essay accompanying her translated edition of the *Enseignements*, *Anne of France: Lessons for my Daughter*, as well as the Introduction to the *Enseignements* by Clavier and Viennot, 8-25.

him as well as to all his relatives and friends, each according to his or her degree, because there should be order in all things.<sup>81</sup>

Love, obedience, and humility are paramount traits for a wife and so too for a lady at court, according to Anne de France. There seems to be little distinction between the two roles.

By contrast, Guasco's confidence in his daughter's intelligence, independence of mind, and skills shines through at several intervals in the discourse: "Little by little you will begin to understand court affairs and the personalities of the people living there, and as you grow older, so will you gain in wisdom and acquire greater confidence in talking."<sup>82</sup>

Where Guasco advises training and caution, Anne de France, in view of her daughter's presence at court, locally or abroad, speaks of submissive humility, silence, and faithful subordination to others (husband, friends, God). Indeed, the rhetoric that underlies Anne's advice to Susanne is strongly reminiscent of what we find in conventional treatises outlining women's weaknesses and dictating their behavior. She repeatedly tells her daughter *not* to rely on her own judgment. "For this reason, my daughter, if God gives you friends who remonstrate with you, thank them with a good heart and take care to put into effect what they have taught you, *without relying on your own judgment*."<sup>83</sup> And although recent scholarship has advanced the hypothesis that Anne writes under the veil of dissimulation, in order to ward off criticism and allow for (covert) agency, the rhetoric remains undeniably unflattering for a female audience.<sup>84</sup>

Without overlooking the fact that Anne writes in France at the beginning of the sixteenth-century, a different time in the history of women's progress toward greater social visibility, we must nevertheless take into account that the tenor of her advice is far removed from Guasco's open and quite progressive agenda to place his daughter in the spotlight. Lavinia's obligation always to place thought before speech is emphasized, of course. Even so, at various points in the discourse, she is encouraged to use her own good judgment (*giudicio*) and to speak albeit with much caution and forethought: "for just as you can tell from the ring of a piece of metal when you strike it what its value is, so from what someone says you can value their worth and how to appraise them."<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Anne de France, *Lessons for My Daughter*, XVI, 44; *Enseignements*, XV, 57-58. Similarly, in section XIII Anne speaks of marriage as a "state of such beauty and so prized [*une ordre tant belle et si prisée*]" wherein Susanne "should not have any preferences, desires, or wishes of [her] own, nor do anything on [her] own or according to [her] own desires, but depend on the prudence, good grace, and judgement of [her] friends [*et ne doit-on avoir, en ce cas, aucun choix, désir ni souhait, ni user en rien de sa propre et seule volonté, mais s'en doit-on du tout attendre à la prudence, bonne grâce et ordonnance de ses amis*]," (*Lessons for My Daughter* XIII, 41; *Enseignements*, XII, 53).

<sup>82</sup> Guasco, *Discourse to Lady Lavinia*, 86; *Ragionamento*, 26<sup>v</sup>: "Fra tanto andrai intendendo i negotii della corte e le nature delle persone, e si verrà insieme a far con l'età il senno in te maggiore, e potrai poi meglio assicurarti a favellare, il che quando ti occorrerà fare, guardati mai non farlo a caso, ma con avervi prima pensato sopra." Guasco's insistence on Lavinia's independence is apparent at various points in the *Discourse*. References to this kind of encouragement to cultivate her independence abound, as for instance: "trasformar te stessa" (12<sup>v</sup>, 62); "poter far da te sola" (19<sup>r</sup>, 79); "facendolo tu da te stessa" (20<sup>r</sup>, 80); "che tu sola puoi conservarti" (21<sup>r</sup>, 81); "e alla pratica, che ne verrai in palazzo da te stessa [...] acquistando" (37<sup>v</sup>, 101).

<sup>83</sup> Anne de France, *Enseignements*, XXVIII, 90-91: "Par quoi, ma fille, si Dieu vous donne amis qui vous remontrent, de bon coeur les devez remercier, et prendre peine de mettre à effet ce qu'ils vous enseigneront, *sans vous fier en sens que vous ayez*" (emphasis mine). *Lessons for My Daughter*, XXVIII, 66.

<sup>84</sup> See, for instance, Jansen and Adams.

<sup>85</sup> Guasco, *Discourse to Lady Lavinia*, 86; *Ragionamento*, 26<sup>v</sup>: "si come al toccar di qualche metallo, si conosce al suono il suo valore e si sa per quanto apprezzarlo: così dall'altrui parlare si conosce la qualità sua e si sa che stima farne."

The most important precept of all is discussed next, a precept that informed Renaissance self-fashioning norms perhaps more than any other: the need to observe *decorum* in whatever one does or says. As part of those “universal rules” which shape the courtier’s conduct, when interacting with members of that milieu, the *Cortegiano* puts forth the following important considerations:

Next, let him consider well what he does or says, the place where he does it, in whose presence, its timeliness, the reason for doing it, his own age, his profession, the end at which he aims, and the means by which he can reach it; thus, keeping these points in mind, let him act accordingly in whatever he may choose to do or say. [...] So also, in the matter of arms, our Courtier will have regard for the profession of those with whom he speaks and conduct himself accordingly—speaking with men in one way, and with women in another.<sup>86</sup>

Guasco’s advice to Lavinia regarding issues of *decorum* is clearly inspired by these same guidelines, as evidenced in the following important passage:

When you are speaking with someone, it behoves you to consider their rank very carefully, in order to preserve the decorum due to them, for one converses in one way with a superior, in another with an equal, and in another again with an inferior, and in one way with men and in another with women; in one way with servants and in another with other people, adapting your topics to the condition of the aforementioned people and never speaking about matters that do not appertain to them and that you do not understand.<sup>87</sup>

As the rules of *decorum* dictate, one must constantly be mindful of the time, place, rank, and gender of the person to whom one is speaking. Everything one does or says must abide by the requirements of propriety. Guasco teaches Lavinia to discern carefully in her everyday interaction with the world at court. That which the *Cortegiano* explicitly instructs, Guasco tacitly implies: when engaging in

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<sup>86</sup> Castiglione, II.7-8: “Appresso consideri ben che cosa è quello che egli fa o dice e ’l loco dove la fa, in presenza di cui, a che tempo, la causa perché la fa, la età sua, la professione, il fine dove tende e i mezzi che a quello condur lo possono; e così con queste avvertenzie s’accomodi discretamente a tutto quello che fare o dir vole. [...] Così ancor, parlando pur d’arme, il nostro cortegiano avrà risguardo alla profession di coloro con chi parla, ed a questo accommodarassi, altramente ancor parlandone con omini, altramente con donne.”

<sup>87</sup> Guasco, *Discourse to Lady Lavinia*, 87; *Ragionamento*, 26<sup>v</sup>: “e quando ragionerai con alcuno ti converrà molto bene considerar la qualità sua per servar il decoro che alla persona con cui ti converrà favellare sarà richiesto; e altramente ragionar con superiori, altramente con uguali, e d’altra maniera con inferiori; in altra guisa con uomini, in altra con donne, e d’altra sorte con persone domestiche, e d’altra con gli altri, accomodando i tuoi concetti alla conditione delle predette persone e non ragionar mai di cose che loro non appartengano e che tu non intenda.” By comparison, Anne advises humility throughout, regardless of the other’s station or gender: “In addition, be humble to all, to the lowly as well as the great, be kind, courteous and amiable, and be truthful and temperate in all things.” (Anne de France, *Lessons for My Daughter*, IX, 34; *Enseignements*, VIII, 46; see also *Lessons*, XXV, 59 and *Enseignements*, XXIV, 79).



social interaction, one must be clear as to the “means” as well as to the “ends” at which one aspires to arrive.

Following Castiglione’s lead, Guasco then comes to a topic, which forms an integral part of social interaction: “[il] motteggiare,” that is, on joking matters. A topic treated at length in the *Cortegiano*, instructions to the courtier on how to use different types of jokes as part of social intercourse make up a good portion of Book II. As JoAnn Cavallo has convincingly argued, the section on joke telling in the *Cortegiano* underlies serious political arguments and can be interpreted to reveal tensions, in spite of its deceptively light façade.<sup>88</sup> As the *Cortegiano*’s speakers make apparent, then, jesting is no joking matter.

As far as Lodovico Domenichi is concerned, it is certainly not a matter in which women can get involved.<sup>89</sup> For, as he claims again and again in *La donna di corte*, women lack a main ingredient necessary for the production of wit: they lack *ingegno*. In order to be witty, Domenichi explains, one must possess “urbanità.” Derived from the Latin *urbanitas*, the term points to everything a poorly educated woman would necessarily lack, that is, refinement and sophistication. In this, Domenichi explains, pointing to the teachings of Xenocrates and Galen, women are like children only they are worse off since, unlike the male child (*fanciullo*), women never really grow up. Domenichi thus derives his ideas on the inferiority of the female sex from the ancient histories and customs, granting little to the passage of time or the need to revise traditional misconceptions:

Now then, that a woman is no different than a child, Xenocrates proves this in the book he wrote on young girls and women; therein he says that the difference between a woman and a (male) child is none other than this: he who is a child is not always going to be one since, with time, he will become a man; a woman, on the other hand, remains a child for the rest of her life. Aside from this, on the same topic, Galen says that a woman is undoubtedly a child.<sup>90</sup>

Given these disparaging remarks and the questions raised about women’s *onestà*, Domenichi’s text can hardly be said to make any forward strides for women. When compared with the *Cortegiano*’s Book III, then, *La donna di corte* seems to take a few steps backwards.

Juxtaposing Domenichi’s perspective with Guasco’s, on the other hand, can only serve to highlight the latter’s enlightened position on the capacity women have to equal and even outdo men. Guasco’s positive assessment of women’s intellect is evident throughout the *Ragionamento* but becomes most pronounced in the section on Lavinia’s obligation to engage in conversation with others, both men and women, of equal and higher rank. Lavinia is asked to follow the lead of the Spanish ladies whose “piacevole gravità e grave piacevolezza” (27<sup>f</sup>, 87) she must learn to imitate.

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<sup>88</sup> See JoAnn Cavallo, “Joking Matters: Politics and Dissimulation in Castiglione’s *Book of the Courtier*,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 53, no. 2 (2000): 402-24.

<sup>89</sup> Guasco, *Discourse to Lady Lavinia*, 88 n. 65.

<sup>90</sup> Domenichi, *La donna di corte* (Lucca: Per il Busdrago, 1564), 2: “Ora, che la Donna non sia punto differente dal fanciullo, Senocrate lo prova in quel libro ch’egli scrisse delle fanciulle e delle Donne, quando e’ dice tra la Donna e ‘l fanciullo non è altra differenza se non questa: che colui che è fanciullo non è sempre fanciullo ma con gli anni diviene uomo; ma la Donna per tutto ‘l tempo della sua vita è sempre fanciullo. Oltra di ciò, Galeno a questo proposito dice che la Donna è fanciullo confermato” (my translation).

The need to combine seemingly opposite elements, the grave or serious (*grave*) with the *piacevole* (lighthearted or pleasant), gives an idea of the difficulty involved in this task. The point is reiterated. Lavinia must use a certain “gravità e piacevolezza” not only in speaking but in all of her actions. Interestingly, the two terms Guasco uses were by then common currency among Petrarchists, and, specifically, had become Pietro Bembo’s stylistic ideal: a good poet must create a careful balance between *gravità*, a seriousness gendered masculine, and *piacevolezza*, a lightheartedness gendered feminine.<sup>91</sup>

In addition, Lavinia must “imitate” (*imitare*) the Spanish ladies’ “argutia e prontezza del motteggiare,” that is, the witticisms with which they are known to embellish their conversation. What is needed, Guasco explains, is a remarkable mind (*bello ingegno*) and an ability to come up with *new* rather than borrowed ideas. Admitting that few are in fact equipped with such talent, and given that art cannot make up for nature’s lack, Guasco then considers his daughter’s potential to succeed in this matter. Not only does he believe Lavinia capable of succeeding in this challenging endeavor, he assures her (and the reader) that she has managed to impress others to such an extent that they have marveled at her talent to produce “witty remarks.” As Castiglione’s interlocutors point out, one needs both *ingegno* and a “natural capacity” to succeed in this task. Lavinia, it seems, is well endowed with both.

As with everything else, much depends on being discreet and considering the time, place and person addressed: *decorum* is, especially here, of utmost importance. Both Guasco and Castiglione make evident the reason for which *decorum*, good judgement, and discretion are crucial elements in this area of civic discourse: a joke, poorly placed, can cause injury, which, in turn, can invite animosity. Such situations are to be avoided at all costs, for to be in good standing at court means making friends and warding off potential enemies.

As in the *Cortegiano*, Guasco is cautious then to distinguish among the different types of jokes (*burle, argutie, motti*) and to provide Lavinia with very detailed instructions. Guasco distinguishes, for instance, between polite quips (*motti civili*) and biting comments (*morsi canini*).<sup>92</sup> These quips should barely touch the surface of the addressee’s skin rather than in any way make an impression on the heart.<sup>93</sup> The example Guasco gives is both practical and personalized. Lavinia’s witty remarks should be similar to those innocent nips or *scherzi* (playful games) she sometimes receives from her own little dog, so mild that they could never do her any harm; on the contrary, they would amuse or entertain her. The next category is the “burla” or practical joke, defined in the *Cortegiano* as “un inganno amichevole di cose che non offendano, o almen poco” (II.85), that is, a friendly type of joke that does not offend or does so only very slightly. Guasco elaborates with the following words of advice:

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<sup>91</sup> For a discussion of “gravità” and “piacevolezza” in the Petrarchan context of Bembo’s stylistics, see William J. Kennedy, *Authorizing Petrarch* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), esp. 98.

<sup>92</sup> Guasco, *Discourse to Lady Lavinia*, 27<sup>v</sup> and 88.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, Guasco, *Ragionamento*, 27<sup>v</sup>: “mi soccorre qui un bello esempio molto a proposito ch’io vorrei, che i tuoi motti fossero simili a quegli scherzi che suole con esso teo la tua cagnuolina co’i denti fare, i quali tutto che ti applichi alle carni non pertanto non ti punge mai al vivo: anzi godi tu di sentirti da quel dolce animalino senza offesa coi denti strignere.” Giovanni Della Casa makes a similar distinction in his *Galateo* (ed. Emanuela Scarpa [Modena: F. C. Panini, 1990]) wherein he says he relies on the advice given by one of Boccaccio’s narrators in the *Decameron*: “E dèi oltre a ciò sapere che alcuni motti sono che mordono et alcuni che non mordono; de’ primi voglio che ti basti il savio ammaestramento che Lauretta diede, cioè che i motti come la pecora morde deono così mordere l’uditore, e non come il cane: perciò che, se come il cane mordesse, il motto non sarebbe motto ma villania” (203-04).

I would certainly advise you not to be too persistent in teasing the other girls, for it could perchance happen that one or two might take it amiss, and that instead of a joke, a quarrel could result. But your teasing should be done with that tact with which one should chaff a friend, which we call playfulness. For a while it arouses laughter in its victim, but if it persists too long, it gives rise to pain and grief, thus becoming no longer a jest but an offense.<sup>94</sup>

Lavinia must therefore be very careful in her choice of words when speaking in jest and in choosing her addressee. Joking, if poorly used, can lead to animosity and that is to be avoided at all cost in an environment where every opportunity must be used to make friends and allies. Key to knowing how to distinguish, Guasco explains, is “discretion” (30<sup>v</sup>, 99). According to Castiglione’s designated speaker for Book II, renowned diplomat and comic playwright Bernardo Dovizi da Bibbiena (1470-1520), the courtier must be both ingenious and moderate in his choices; like other types of banter, as both authors emphasize, this one too can lead to enmity if poorly placed. Accordingly, Guasco urges Lavinia to keep within the limits of the *burla* and alternate between being author and recipient of jokes: “[...] learn to give and to take a joke with good humor, for if you lose your temper at being teased, you will appear rude and inexperienced in such matters.”<sup>95</sup> Indeed, Guasco warns, not knowing how to gracefully receive the jokes of others would allow for a negative perception of Lavinia as “uncivil” and, in a sense, ignorant of social practices. Moreover, understanding one’s interlocutor is key to knowing what to say, when, and how to be tuned in to his or her sensibility. Knowing how to use humor well, then, necessarily entails understanding the nature of others and adapting yourself to them (28<sup>r</sup>, 90).

Just as Guasco offers a progressive view on the ability of his daughter—and by extension other women—to engage in humor, the same may be said for his enlightened perspective on women’s ability to engage in true friendship. The precepts he puts forth for Lavinia are meant to teach her “la legge del vero amore” (30<sup>v</sup>, 93), the law of true love, that is, that which we can refer to as true friendship. As such and in order to gain her female companions’ good will, Lavinia is to share in their adversity and good fortune as if they were her own.<sup>96</sup> Taking on a friend’s offense as if it were one’s own is advice reiterated in the discourse (32<sup>r</sup>, 96). Criticism of any kind is to be avoided as it invites hatred and ill will. Conversely, praise invites others’ love and good will and should therefore be practiced whenever possible.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Guasco, *Discourse to Lady Lavinia*, 92; *Ragionamento*, 30<sup>v</sup>: “Io consiglierei ben te a non esser molto importuna a burlar le altre perochè potrebbe per aventura essere che alcuna se l’avesse a male; e che invece di giuoco ne nascesse alteratione, ma dovrà il modo del tuo burlare esser fatto con quella discretione con che si deono far agli amici le gratticiuole, che noi il gattiglio chiamamo; il quale per un poco si può sopportare e eccita riso a chi è fatto, ma se dura in lungo genera pena e dolore in modo che non è più scherzo ma offesa.”

<sup>95</sup> Guasco, *Discourse to Lady Lavinia*, 92; *Ragionamento*, 30<sup>r-v</sup>: “[...] sappila dare e ricevere con piacevolezza che alterandoti tu d’esser burlata ti mostreresti incivile e poco pratica.”

<sup>96</sup> Guasco, *Discourse to Lady Lavinia*, 93; *Ragionamento*, 30<sup>v</sup>-31<sup>r</sup>: “Anzi dovrai sempre comparir con le compagne e amiche tue d’ogni avversità loro e delle prosperità godere; che questa è cagione potentissima di farci da altrui amare, richiedendo la legge del vero amore che noi ci mostriamo interessati ne i fatti degli amici come ne’ nostri stessi.”

<sup>97</sup> Guasco, *Discourse to Lady Lavinia*, 93; *Ragionamento*, 31<sup>r</sup>: “Di più dovrai avvertire di non biasmar mai ad alcuna persona qualsivoglia cosa nella quale ella si compiaccia e di che faccia ella professione né meno tassar alcun difetto il quale si ritrovi in lei che queste sono strade da farci non pur voler bene ma aver in odio; ma piuttosto dovrai lodar que’ beni i quali si ritroveranno nella persona con cui ti occorrerà ragionarne; che questo ha virtù di farci amare come quello di farci odiare. Più oltre ti ricorderai di mai non rimproverare altrui alcun suo errore, né meno beneficio da te a lui fatto, che ciò ha forza di gagliardamente offendere le persone con le quali conversiamo.”

As a general rule of conduct, Guasco advises, Lavinia should follow the age-old maxim of doing to others as she would like done to herself.<sup>98</sup> Furthermore, she should not discount anyone based on his or her station, for even a “most humble maiden”<sup>99</sup> could be of service to her at some point in the future. What Guasco teaches his daughter is that she should be wise but also shrewd in dealing with others. Only by this means can she ensure the love of all, indispensable protection against any harm which may befall her, especially given her distance from home. As Guasco reminds Lavinia, the bond of friendship can be, and often is, stronger than that of country or blood.<sup>100</sup> Maintaining a good reputation is reiterated at various points in this section as is the need to both acknowledge and safeguard her vulnerability in territory that will necessarily remain foreign for some time. In spite of the difficulty entailed in this as well as other similarly challenging tasks, the tenor of Guasco’s discourse conveys implicit trust in Lavinia’s ability to live up to the standards he sets for her.

By comparison, Anne de France’s advice to her daughter conveys less trust in her natural abilities and the opportunity to act independently. Even when Anne tackles the important issue of friendship, the advice is rather brief and schematic.<sup>101</sup> Overall, the advice offered in her *Enseignements* is not nearly as well ordered or as systematic as it is in Guasco’s *Ragionamento*. More significantly though, the subject seems to underlie almost exclusively a concern for survival rather than the achievement of a self-sustaining, independent mindframe with future advancement as a clear end goal.

As Guasco reminds his daughter, being of use to others, getting others to seek out your advice, is key to becoming indispensable in an environment fraught with fierce competition. First, we must endear others to us by seeking out their advice; we must then allow for trust and a sense of welcomed reciprocity to build. As a result, this exercise increases our value in the eyes of others.<sup>102</sup> At the same time, a show of humility, as a result of some dependence on others’ advice, will render the young girl less a target of envy—a predicament to be avoided at all costs, a warning which comes up at other points in the *Ragionamento*.<sup>103</sup> Everything depends on maintaining a good rapport with others.

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<sup>98</sup> Guasco, *Ragionamento*, 32<sup>v</sup>: “che in tutte le tue operationi facci verso gli altri quello che vorresti verso te fosse da lor fatto.” Cf. Guasco, *Discourse to Lady Lavinia*, 97.

<sup>99</sup> Guasco, *Discourse to Lady Lavinia*, 96; *Ragionamento*, 33<sup>r</sup>: “minima donnicciuola.”

<sup>100</sup> Guasco, *Discourse to Lady Lavinia*, 96; *Ragionamento*, 33<sup>r</sup>: “[...] come per acquistar buon nome presso tutte, e tanto maggiormente dovrai ciascuna secondo il grado suo accarezzare e onorare che non avrai tu compagnia di paesane tue e perciò ti bisognerà cercar di guadagnar l’amor di tutte per saper dove aver a tuoi bisogni ricorso con quella sicurezza con la quale a quelle della tua patria faresti e come possono esse tra lor fare; che chi ama e sa farsi amare in ogni parte si fa compatrioti e fratelli e sorelle tanto è possente la forza dell’amore; anzi, strigne bene spesso più un nodo d’amicitia che quello della patria e del sangue.”

<sup>101</sup> On the topic of friendship, see Anne de France, *Enseignements*, XXVIII, 88-89; *Lessons for My Daughter*, XXVIII, 65-66.

<sup>102</sup> Guasco, *Discourse to Lady Lavinia*, 100; *Ragionamento*, 36<sup>r</sup>: “[...] e perciò ricorrerai in ciò liberamente a chi saprà più di te; che oltre al beneficio che tu ne caverai, di governar bene le tue operationi, sarai stimata discreta e umile; nel che ti verrai a guadagnar anche per questo rispetto l’animo della persona alla quale tu dimanderai consiglio; conoscendo elle, che tu facci stima del suo valore e compiacendosi d’essere da te stimata atta a consigliarti, e così te l’obligherai in amore, che tutti abbiamo questo appetito in noi stessi d’essere e valer tanto, che altri dipenda da noi: e perciò si rende a noi grato l’esser da gli altri richiesti e giovar loro; parendoci che ciò nasca da eccellenza nostra [...] come d’esser tenuto di tanto consiglio e senno che non pur ne abbiamo per noi, ma per dar agli altri” (emphasis mine). The emphasis on the importance of cultivating self-esteem and allowing others to feel as if they can depend on one’s services is also remarkable and contrasts rather sharply with Anne’s advice to her daughter.

<sup>103</sup> Guasco, *Ragionamento*, 36<sup>r</sup>: “veleno dell’invidia.”

Thus, Guasco provides his readers with what may be the longest, most sustained argument championing female-female friendship for itself, and, as part of the “vita civile” to which he hopes his daughter will belong. The innovation is striking when we place his text alongside a manual such as Giambattista Giraldi Cinzio’s *Dialoghi della vita civile* (comp. 1540s) which envisions a strictly male readership, especially when tackling the important matter of friendship, the bedrock of civic life. Giraldi, like Alberti several decades before him, excludes women from participating in this ideal.<sup>104</sup> Tackling the same issue some forty years after Giraldi drafts his male-centered *Dialoghi*, Guasco’s inclusion of women within the political and social milieu of court life comes across as well ahead of its time.<sup>105</sup> As such, the *Ragionamento* makes serious forward strides in ensuring a woman’s visibility, on the one hand, and dispelling the traditional dictum of women’s silence and passive obedience, on the other. Making her skills and talents public is the aim, and in this Lavinia will have to take her cue from actors on stage, as practice and performance are essential to her success at court (19<sup>v</sup>-20<sup>r</sup>, 80-81). With age, her judgment (*giudicio*, 19<sup>v</sup>, 80) and her knowledge (*senno*, 20<sup>r</sup>, 81) will improve, Guasco reassures her. This will allow Lavinia to act as independently, as each of the sections devoted to her training for court life seems to indicate. Notwithstanding her very young age, Lavinia is a woman sent off on a real-life diplomatic mission to the court of Savoy in Turin. With its hands-on approach, Guasco’s advice stands in sharp contrast to the imaginary ideals crafted by Castiglione’s interlocutors.

Ultimately, this late sixteenth-century manual is about a (real) woman’s self-promotion and the careful creation of her public persona. Guasco’s meticulously arranged, systematic, astute, and often progressive discourse makes the *Ragionamento* an unicum of Renaissance literature and, in particular, an indispensable resource on the subject of women’s education as well as what might be viewed as an ideal rapport between fathers and daughters. While Guasco was successful in preparing and placing his own daughter squarely within the socio-political environment of a real-life world at court, Lavinia, in turn, succeeded in acquiring and preserving her well-deserved status as a lady-in-waiting for the Infanta, Duchess of Savoy. In essence, Lavinia turned her father’s theory into practice and did so with overwhelming success.

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<sup>104</sup> On the importance of friendship in Giraldi’s theoretical pronouncements on the subject of civic life, see *Il terzo dialogo della vita civile* (n. 1 above) where the author excludes women from participating in this ideal: “Perciò ritornerò a dirvi che l’amicizia è così eccellente cosa che ella solo può essere singolarmente fra due buoni e virtuosi uomini e simigliantissimi nella vita lodevole e ne’ buoni costumi” (1191, emphasis added). The absence of any engagement with women in the discussion on friendship may also be noted in Alberti, *Libri della famiglia*, see esp. 319-425, wherein an entire last book of the dialogue is devoted to the topic of “amicitia.”

<sup>105</sup> It should be noted, however, that in a different literary context, Giraldi does provide some room for the development of female-female friendship. On this topic and women’s virtue, see my forthcoming essay, “Fashioning a Genealogy: Female Friendship and Virtue in Italian Renaissance Tragedy.”

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