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Courtesans, Celebrity, and Print Culture  
in Renaissance Venice:  
Tullia d'Aragona, Gaspara Stampa,  
and Veronica Franco

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SIXTEENTH-CENTURY ITALY SAW A BOOM IN THE MANUFACTURE OF printed books. The florescence of the publishing industry, whose capital was Venice, can partly be attributed not only to the technological advances in printing made in this century and the increases in production and sales thereby possible but also to the new practice of publishing books in the vernacular rather than in Latin. There were nearly five hundred registered printers, editors, and booksellers in the city of Venice during this first century of commercial printing; and between seventeen and eighteen million books, it is estimated, were produced by Venetian printers alone.<sup>1</sup> Such publishers as Pietrasanta, Valvassori, Sessa, and the leviathan among the new Venetian presses, Giolito, regularly produced between five hundred and one thousand copies of each new title. A number of these publishers' first-time authors were women, some of them courtesans—or such was the word on the Rialto. This paper explores the literary self-presentations of three sixteenth-century Italian writers typecast as courtesans (*cortigiane*), in the context of the intersecting institutions of prostitution, the salon (*ridotto*), and the publishing industry in Renaissance Venice.

Modern historians have been careful to distinguish between the high-end, so-called courtesans and women soliciting on the streets. "Institutionalized prostitution," Margaret King has written, "flourished in the lush cities of Italy. A population of nearly 12,000 prostitutes made up a robust fraction of the 100,000 residents of Venice in 1500.<sup>2</sup> In the slums off the Rialto bridge lived the common whores. In splendid apartments lived the 'honored courtesans,' ele-

gantly dressed, skilled poets and musicians, who entertained gallant travelers and Venetian patricians.”<sup>3</sup> A pamphlet printed in 1570, *Catalogo di tutte le principali e piu honorate cortigiane di Venezia* (*Catalog of All the Principal and Most Honored Courtesans*),<sup>4</sup> advertised the names, prices, and street addresses of Venice’s most notorious courtesans as if they were tourist attractions. In his 1988 book, historian of medieval prostitution Jacques Rossi-aud embellished the myth of the glamorous Renaissance courtesan in a way that the sobering testimony of a sixteenth-century woman like Veronica Franco renders absurd:

The courtesan was richly attired and lived in a respectable street; . . . she received her admirers and paid “visits” to important personages. Accompanied by her serving women or, on occasion, followed by a matronly lady’s maid on her way to a sermon or a respectable inn, nothing in her bearing set her apart from a woman of estate. She was untouched by the violence of the young because she enjoyed effective protection. . . .<sup>5</sup>

In a recent article in *Renaissance Quarterly*, Cathy Santore detailed the lavish style in which one Venetian prostitute lived. Julia Lombardo’s apartment had three richly furnished bedrooms, a reception room, a study, kitchen, and storage rooms where, according to Lombardo’s own inventory, she stockpiled linen, rugs, clothing, shoes, gloves, stockings, purses, sleeves, and sixty-four fine white *camicie* (camisoles).<sup>6</sup> Other than her inventories, almost all we know about Julia Lombardo’s short life is that in May 1522, in what appears to have been an attempted rape/robbery, she was brutally attacked by some neighborhood toughs in the entranceway to her apartment,<sup>7</sup> and that by August 1542 she was dead.<sup>8</sup>

As Paula Findlen has pointed out, there was a direct connection between the new technology of printing in the sixteenth century and the emergence of a popular market and demand for pornographic books and prints.<sup>9</sup> Fifteenth-century humanists had circulated pornographic texts (mostly poems and jokes) in manuscript but the clientele for such goods was strictly elite and Latin-reading. In Findlen’s words, print technology “effectively publicized a previously extant erotic culture and commodified it.”<sup>10</sup> Between 1524 and 1534, an unknown writer named Pietro Aretino vaulted to celebrity when he published three pornographic best-sellers in Venice. His *Sonnetti lussuriosi* were published in 1534 with a set of

engravings by Marcantonio Raimondi illustrating sixteen positions for sexual intercourse under the title *I modi seidici*,<sup>11</sup> a title Veronica Franco would allude to provocatively in the opening poem to her first book; his second book was a work he called *La cortigiana*; and his third, entitled *Ragionamenti* (in dialogue form) features an experienced prostitute who imparts the tricks of the trade to her daughter. Aretino came from dirt poverty in Arezzo, had found employment at the court of Pope Leo X in Rome, and had fled to the free city of Venice after the sack of Rome in 1527. A key figure in the lives of two of the three women who are the subjects of this paper, Aretino had a house in the slums of the Rialto and entertained (it was said) both princes and street people.

Costume books of the period make it clear that in practice there was little if any distinction between the dress of noblewomen and prostitutes or courtesans,<sup>12</sup> and despite the Venetian Senate's repeated attempts to legislate difference through sumptuary laws that made it unlawful for courtesans to wear silk and jewels, these laws were for the most part ignored. The practice of supporting a mistress was common enough among the patrician rank in Venice that the men charged with the enforcement of the laws restricting the display of luxury wear were often their girlfriends' dealers. Marco Venier, for example, who supplied Veronica Franco with luxury goods, was appointed a *provedditor alla sanita* (an officer of the Health Department) in Venice in 1578. A woman interlocutor in Moderata Fonte's dialogue *The Worth of Women (Il merito delle donne*, ca. 1592) complained that many Venetian husbands brought their "concubines" home and expected their wives to provide for them.<sup>13</sup>

Between 1542 and 1582, the Venetian Senate passed a series of laws designed to shore up the institution of marriage against its perceived erosion from the practice of concubinage among the nobility. In a law passed in 1543, Venetian citizens were prohibited from interceding in a court of law on behalf of a prostitute or courtesan under the penalty of a heavy fine or two years' banishment. The law read as follows:

In view of the many advantages enjoyed by such persons of a low and abject order . . . none of our noblemen or anyone else of whatever order may personally or by proxy or at the behest of others plead or intercede on behalf of any infamous person (*persone infame*), and person having been brought to court by the aforementioned Office of Public Health,

under penalty of fine of one hundred ducats and two years banishment from our Supreme Council; if not a nobleman the same two years' banishment from Venice and from the district [will be enforced].<sup>14</sup>

Venetian law made no distinction between the courtesan (*cortigiana*) and the prostitute (*meretrice*). In statutes passed in 1571, 1582, and 1613, prostitutes and courtesans (the law read *cortesane over meretrice, meretrice over cortesane*) were forbidden by law to enter churches on feast days; and in 1561 prostitutes were forbidden to wear silk, jewels, gold, silver, or costume jewelry.

In 1542 the Venetian Senate passed the following law:

Prostitutes are to be considered those women who, while unmarried have commerce and intercourse (*commercio et practica*) with one or more men, Furthermore, prostitutes are to be considered those women who while married do not live under one roof with their husbands but live apart from them and have intercourse (*commercio et practica*) with one or more men.<sup>15</sup>

Thus any woman who had sex with a man outside marriage and who accepted gifts, support, or favors from that man was legally defined as a prostitute; the law made no distinction between the "high-class" madam with a house and servants, and the destitute prostitute living in the Castellato (the red-light district near the Rialto). Nor would this legal definition blurring all distinctions among single women who had male protectors vary for the rest of the century.<sup>16</sup> Still, as Patricia Labalme has pointed out, the laws against prostitutes and prostitution were mild in comparison to those meted out for male/male sodomy in early modern Italy, whose punishment mandated the amputation of cheeks, tongue, hands, or nose, branding, or galley service.<sup>17</sup> The important role played by the institutionalization of prostitution is clear in a society, in which, as Virginia Cox has noted, money was tied to landed estates and dowries were increasingly inflated with the result that a full 51 percent of males from patrician families in sixteenth-century Venice did not marry.<sup>18</sup>

Although the rules for acceptable behavior were clearly gendered, certainly the fame-driven male courtier/writer and the "infamous" courtesan poet shared the same goals and adopted similar means to attain those goals: self-improvement via education;

the application of convention as a means to an alternate culture; dependence on a system of protection and clientage; performative strategies that included the adaptation both of the dress and the linguistic affectations of men and women of wealth as a means of moving up and out of the lowest order of society. But between attributions of celebrity and notoriety, fame and infamy, there was always tension and slippage.

Ann Jones, Fiora Bassanese, and Tita Rosenthal all have emphasized the importance of the *ridotto* (salon) in sixteenth-century Italy as the cultural space where women writers and nonelite males could hear and be heard.<sup>19</sup> A “teatro della pubblica concorrenza” [a theater for public discourse], as Veronica Franco called the literary evenings she held in her home, the city salon was an intimate forum where writers, editors, publishers, and patrons with an interest in the arts could network; where editors from the great city presses scouted for new talent, some making women authors their particular quarry. It was a performance space for the auditioning of new work, and the writings that grew out of the salon were mimetic of its social games: the improvisational theater of the salon produced (and was in turn produced by) the two most popular forms of the Cinquecento: the dialogue and the sonnet. Salon writing seemed, as Erica Harth has said of the phenomenon in seventeenth-century France, to “glide imperceptibly into literary production.”<sup>20</sup> Whatever else it did, the salon facilitated group writing: nothing typifies the publishing boom of the 1540s through the 1560s more than the numerous anthologies of poetry that were successfully marketed in those years. Habermas and the French historians (Dena Goodman, Daniel Gordon, Keith Baker, and others) who followed him had defined the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century salons as urban spaces that straddled both public and private domains, and that produced centers of culture independent of, and potentially in opposition to, court and church.<sup>21</sup> The Italian *ridotti* of the sixteenth century were this and more. While the Renaissance salons were places where males and females could meet and converse, they were, as Claude Dulong has stressed in Duby and Perrot’s *A History of Women*, schools for both men and women.<sup>22</sup>

Let us now consider the lives and self-portrayals of three woman writers who participated actively in the sixteenth-century *ridotti*

and also the urban connections that helped get their work into print.

### TULLIA D'ARAGONA (1510–56)

Tullia d'Aragona was the daughter of a courtesan from Ferrara, Giulia Campana, who was living in Rome at the time of Tullia's birth in 1510. Nothing is known of her father except his name: Costanzo Palmieri d'Aragona. She grew up in the Sienese *ridotti* until she and her mother moved back to Rome. There they were members of a literary circle that included a number of well-known poets, scholars, and editors.

In 1531, four years after the sack of Rome, Tullia d'Aragona and her mother took a house in Adria, a small town near Ferrara. They spent 1535 in Venice, where the doyen of the new popular writers, Pietro Aretino, and his salon would soon dismiss Aragona's literary success as signaling the decadent mistaking of sensation for true talent in a celebrity-mad age. "Her shamelessness [itself]," Aretino commented dryly, "is to be envied by the most respectable and fortunate women."<sup>23</sup> When Aragona and her mother moved back to Ferrara, she had her first big break. She joined the literary coterie of Girolamo Muzio, a courtier whose patron was the duke of Ferrara. It was through Muzio, at first her lover and later her longtime friend and patron, that she met members of the Ferrarese-Florentine literary axis, the men who would later promote her rise to literary stardom.

Sperone Speroni, whom she had met in Venice, made an overnight celebrity of Aragona by featuring her as the spirited and clever courtesan in his *Dialogue on Love* (*Dialogo d'amore*). In 1543 she moved to Siena and married, undoubtedly in a move to rehabilitate her reputation. When the marriage failed, she found a new friend and protector in the prominent Florentine scholar, writer, and teacher Benedetto Varchi, who had been notoriously implicated in a series of scandals involving young boys; it was alleged that he was sexually molesting the boys he taught.<sup>24</sup> Varchi and Aragona jointly hosted a salon that they thought of as their "academy," which was successful until 1547, when Tullia was publicly denounced for not wearing the prostitutes' yellow veil. She moved to Florence, where the authorities again ordered her to wear the hated veil. Varchi interceded for her with the duke of Florence, Cosimo II de' Medici,

who ruled that she should not be required to wear the veil since she was a poet by profession.

On the heels of this scandal and certainly seizing on Aragona's notoriety, Gabriel Giolito, the most successful commercial publishing business in Venice and a press well known for its interest in women's writing, in 1547 offered her a contract for her first book of collected poems. That year Giolito published both her book of sonnets and her dialogue *On the Infinity of Love*, edited by her friend Muzio. Both books were instant successes: her collected poems were reprinted three times, in 1549, 1557, and 1560; the dialogue was reissued in four printings, in 1547, 1549, 1552, and 1560. It has been frequently noted that Aragona's motive for publishing her work was to clear her name and establish her reputation as a woman of letters. The timing and circumstances of the publication of both her lyric opus and her symposial dialogue and their enormous popularity make it clear, on the other hand, that Giolito's decision was a matter of good business: sensation sold books.

As Janet Smarr has recently shown, Aragona's self-fashioning in her *Dialogue* has to be read as a recuperation of her public image in response to Sperone Speroni's cartoonish portrait of her in his *Dialogue on Love* (published in Venice in 1542),<sup>25</sup> where Aragona is drawn as a smart courtesan whose main function is to facilitate male discourse.<sup>26</sup> Speroni casts Tullia and her lover Bernardo Tasso in stereotypical female and male roles: Tullia as woman espouses the view of love as a purely carnal force devoid of reason; Tasso, her male counterpart, insists on the divine, transcendent nature of love. As Smarr has argued, in Speroni's hands Tullia is a misfit among philosophers; her conversation is banal, and her literary references limited to Petrarch's love lyrics.<sup>27</sup> Aragona portrays herself very differently in her own dialogue. She nowhere presents herself as a courtesan, but instead projects herself as the leader and center of an intellectual salon held in her own house where she herself choreographs the discourse. Smarr has stressed the reciprocity of Tullia's exchange with her co-interlocutor, Benedetto Varchi. At times she leads him in a manner frankly mimetic of Plato's Diotima, Socrates' teacher in the *Symposium*; at other times she lets him lead. Aragona's dialogue is structured like a seduction in which each speaker attempts to break through the other's armor, their exchange resembling a game where simulations of pursuit and conquest, negotiation and surrender dictate the moves. In any case, a dialogue covering such topics as homosexual versus heterosexual

love, between an arraigned courtesan (especially one who goes to court to protest being called that name) and an alleged sodomist—between friends whose relationship was at least presumed to have a sexual component—would be especially open to double entendre.

Aragona's dialogue stands out as different in many ways from her male contemporaries' treatment of the genre. First, she seized upon what Virginia Cox has called the chief function of sixteenth-century dialogue: portraiture, either of an individual or a group.<sup>28</sup> Aragona's originality lies in her decision not to train her painterly eye on her characters as isolated figures but on *the relationship between characters and its evolving dynamic*. Absent in Aragona's work are the lengthy, set didactic speeches exemplified in the dialogues of Ficino, Castiglione, and Bembo. Instead her dialogue consists of a series of short exchanges, often one-liners. Humor, jibes, wordplay, sarcasm, and insults serve as the scaffolding for serious discourse. Capturing the mingling of anger, jealousy, and admiration that keep lovers from being able to understand one another even when their words are plain enough, her dialogue is filled with references to Plato, Aristotle, and the philosophical dialogues of her contemporaries. In Aragona's dialogue, the object of the gaze is not only the female body but also the mind in its interplay with other minds.<sup>29</sup>

Among her fifty-six sonnets, only two of them are addressed to men whom her biographers have believed were lovers, Piero Manelli and Girolamo Muzio.<sup>30</sup> But even in these poems, the love object is always linked with—in what Ann Jones has called “the erotics of fame”—the hope of celebrity. Jones has noted the striking interactivity and collective nature of Aragona's sonnets, which were originally set up in pairs so that each pair represented a statement and response between herself and a friend.<sup>31</sup> Her nineteenth-century editors removed this framework, lifting her male correspondents out of their paired contexts and placing them in a separate section of the book, leaving a strange collection of lyrics without addressees, without those social relations that were fundamental to all of her poetry which is as dialogic as her dialogue and as much a portrait of urban social relations.

In 1548, for reasons unknown to us, the thirty-eight-year-old Aragona walked away from her literary friends, patrons, and supporters in Florence, Venice, and Ferrara and returned to Rome, the city of her youth. There the Roman Inquisition and the new religious conservatism deprived her of the literary friendships and

sense of collegiality she had enjoyed in Florence. Isolated from her intellectual peers after her return to Rome, Aragona saw no further works of hers go to press while she lived. Nonetheless, before her death in that city in 1556, at the age of forty-six, she did write one last major poem, which was certainly the most ambitious of her works: her *Il Meschino detto il Guerrino*, a chivalric poem of thirty-six cantos in octaves.<sup>32</sup> The work was published posthumously in 1560, though not by Gabriel Giolito, the press with which she had been associated for a decade, but by his Venetian rival Sessa.

#### GASPARA STAMPA (1523–54)

Gaspara Stampa was born in Padua in 1523.<sup>33</sup> Her father Bartolomeo Stampa, a jeweler, died in 1530, leaving her mother Cecilia a widow with two young daughters and a son to support. In 1531, Cecilia and her three children moved back to Venice, where she had family. While the three children took music lessons and studied history and literature with their tutors, Cecilia made the family home a salon where artists, scholars, and musicians met and gave performances and readings of their works. The sisters Gaspara and Cassandra were celebrated for their musical talent and their education in the classics.<sup>34</sup> Their brother Baldassare, who was a student at the University of Padua and a promising poet, died prematurely in 1544.

Stampa entered the Venetian salons around 1545, at a time when the publisher Giolito and his agents, Lodovico Domenichi and Lodovico Dolce, were looking for new women writers for their lists. Thirteen years younger than Aragona, Stampa included among her friends Aragona's longtime associates Speroni and Varchi. Frequent guests at the Stampa salon included the organist of San Marco and poet Girolamo Parabosco, the acclaimed singer and composer Perissone Cambio,<sup>35</sup> the widely anthologized female poet Ippolita Mirtilla,<sup>36</sup> and Giovanni della Casa, the papal deputy charged with the implementation of the Roman Inquisition in Venice. A member of two exclusive literary academies in Venice, the *Accademia dei Dubbiosi* and the *Accademia Pellegrini*, Stampa regularly attended Domenico Venier's salon, the most exclusive and talked-about literary coterie in the city and the salon that Veronica Franco would later make the principal stage for her own performances.

It was in December 1548 that Stampa met the man to whom she would address virtually all her love poems, Collaltino di Collalto, a nobleman and a soldier from the Friuli. She was then at the height of her career as a singer and writer, and he was equally entrenched in the literary scene; among his close friends were Lodovico Domenichi, Girolamo Muzio, and Pietro Aretino. His secretary was Giuseppe Betucci, the already acclaimed author of the popular erotic dialogue *Il Raverta*. In the summer of 1549, Stampa sent him a hundred of her love poems (*Rime*) with a dedicatory letter accompanying the work. From these poems, it appears that after a short period of physical intimacy, Collaltino left Italy to join the entourage of King Henry II in France. Though he was known to have been a generous patron of poetry and the arts,<sup>37</sup> Collaltino appears not to have responded to Stampa's poetic offering either with a gift or letter of encouragement.<sup>38</sup>

Despite her upper-middle-class origins and the chaste praise bestowed on her by the august Girolamo Parabosco, Stampa's poems portray a hot, Catullan-style love affair that flared briefly and left her obsessed and distraught. Thus the critical tradition surrounding her work has been fraught with controversy. Reading her poetry practically as unmediated autobiography, Abdelkader Salza published a monograph in 1913 in which he argued that Stampa was not the innocent young girl she represented herself as being; she belonged, he wrote, to that "unique caste of Renaissance women: the courtesan."<sup>39</sup> In addition to her poetry, he cited as evidence for his "discovery": a letter sent to Stampa by a Milanese nun cautioning her to protect her virtue; a slur cast on her reputation by Sperone Speroni; and the indication in her poems that she had had more than one lover. With no further evidence than Salza's, Rita Casagrande di Villaviera, Pierre Larivaille, and Lynn Lawner assumed they should treat Stampa's poetry in the context of Renaissance "courtesanship."<sup>40</sup>

Recent critics like Fiora Bassanese have taken Salza and his followers to task for focusing on the poet's sexuality instead of her work and warned against reading her lyrics to adduce "facts" about her life.<sup>41</sup> While Bassanese has stressed the Petrarchan aspects of Stampa's work, Ann Jones has called attention to the even stronger impact of the Roman elegiac poets on her writing. Stampa fashions herself uniformly throughout her 311 poems as a female Catullus, Propertius, or Ovid. Their themes are hers, specifically: her dual identity as a lover and a poet in search of fame; her awareness of

the inextricable connection between the poet's *penna* (pen) and her *pena* (pain); her recognition, that is, that her inspiration as a writer springs from her suffering in love; the notion of love as a pathology that has, like an illness, its own historiography; her non-Petrarchan emphasis on the physical body and its circuitry of torments and pleasures; and lastly the self-reflexivity of the poet-lover who—Narcissus-like—obsessively seeks visual as well as literary refractions of her image. In poem 56, Stampa seeks an artist who will paint her portrait as a diptych: on the left side of the canvas she, like a ship in a storm, will be painted as lost and without her moorings; on the right side, she will stand at her lover's side, at least feigning triumph and confidence:

Ed avertite che sia 'l mio semblante  
da la parte sinistra afflitto e mesto,  
e da la destra allegro e trionfante:  
    il mio stato felice vuol dir questo,  
or che mi trovo il mio signor davante;  
quello, il timor che sara d'altra presto.

[And then observe that on the left-hand side / My countenance is always sad and woeful, / But on the right is joyful and triumphant. My happy side has only one meaning: / That I am standing close beside my lord; / the other shows this: the fear that he will soon be another's. 9–14]<sup>42</sup>

In her role as a pastoral poet, Stampa in some poems calls herself *Anaxilla*.<sup>43</sup> But that name is her city academy pseudonym for her participation in a pastoral mode already fully inscribed in city lyric from Theocritus to Sannazzaro. So it is a hyper-urbanized pastorality that Stampa presents, even when the scene she paints is a desolate hill or riverbank. In contrast to Aragona who, as Ann Jones has shown, portrays herself as always embedded in the urban coterie of Ferrara, Siena, and Florence, Stampa maintains more distance; her connection to the city scene is through her mastery of the urban lyric tradition—one that incorporates pastoral codes as well.<sup>44</sup>

By 1552, Stampa's long affair with Collaltino was over.<sup>45</sup> She may have come under the protection of the Venetian nobleman Bartolomeo Zen, but little is known about their association. In April 1554, Stampa fell ill, and on the twenty-third of that month she died.<sup>46</sup> She was thirty-one.

A year before her death, in 1553, three of her sonnets were pub-

lished in a prestigious anthology of new poets, printed by Giolito and edited by Lodovico Domenichi, *Il sesto libro delle rime di diversi eccellenti autori* (*The Sixth Book of Poems by Various Excellent Authors*).<sup>47</sup> When Stampa died the year after the new anthology came out, her sister Cassandra, acting as her editor and executor, offered the Venetian press Pietrasanta the exclusive rights to publish her complete poetic oeuvre. From Cassandra's point of view, Gaspara's premature death provided her with a unique opportunity to memorialize her sister's poetic genius and enshrine her fame for posterity. Acting on quite different principles, Pietrasanta was only too happy to publish the dead woman's work. In 1554, just months after Gaspara died, and surely prompted by morbid rumors hinting at a connection between her sudden death and her scandalous affair, Pietrasanta rushed to print an edition of all 311 of her *Rime*.<sup>48</sup> In the interlocking worlds of the Venetian *ridotti* and the new presses, as we noted before, celebrity and scandal were never far apart. In 1559, Domenichi again featured several of Stampa's poems in his groundbreaking anthology of fifty-three women poets, the first Italian collection of women writers only.<sup>49</sup>

#### VERONICA FRANCO (1546–91)

Veronica Franco was born into a family of the citizen rank in 1546, a year after the opening of the Council of Trent. She was two the year Aragona died and eight when Stampa was buried. Some evidence suggests that Franco's mother was also a prostitute,<sup>50</sup> though little else is known about her family or her early life. By 1564, when she wrote her first will, she had left her husband Paolo Panizza and was pregnant with her first child by another man; she subsequently gave birth to five children, three of whom died in infancy. Two catastrophic events in the city of Venice made the circumstances of Franco's life very different from those of Aragona and Stampa: the heresy trials of the 1560s and 1570s in Venice<sup>51</sup> and the plague of 1575–77.

Franco's career flourished from around 1565 to 1575 when she was a leading member of Domenico Venier's salon, the most important literary circle of its era.<sup>52</sup> Venier had played the role of patron and mentor not only to Tullia d'Aragona and Gaspara Stampa but to two patrician women whose conduct was above reproach, the

writer Moderata Fonte and the painter and poet Irene di Spilimbergo.<sup>53</sup> Franco's *Familiar Letters*, written and collected during the 1570s, advertised her style and intellectual credentials as well as her literary and social connections.<sup>54</sup> The work included a dedicatory epistle to Cardinal Luigi d'Este and other letters to such prominent figures of the period as King Henry III of France, Duke Guglielmo Gonzaga of Mantua, her mentor Domenico Venier and the men of his circle, and the artist Tintoretto, who had painted her portrait.<sup>55</sup> The state visit to Venice in July 1574 of the twenty-three-year-old Henry III of Valois en route from Poland to France, where he was to receive the French crown, occasioned ten days of pageantry in Venice, and the night he spent alone with Franco marked the apogee of her career. Her tryst with the king and the notoriety surrounding that event are represented in the two sonnets and dedicatory letter that she addressed to him in her *Familiar Letters*.

Franco's representations of herself in her letters and poems differ from those of Aragona and Stampa in their sheer variousness as well as in their articulation of themes not seen in any other woman's writing before her. The roles she casts herself in are characteristically active rather than stereotypically passive and female. She is not the abandoned woman who languishes at home, but rather the hunter of the man who has wronged her, whom she stalks through the city streets. At other times she is the seeker of violent revenge to be exacted with weapons and terror against him who has defamed her. Still elsewhere in her poetry, as Ann Rosalind Jones and Margaret Rosenthal have pointed out, she appropriates the voice not of the Roman elegiac poets who portray themselves as victims of love, but of the tough, controlling mistresses that these poets characterize as their tormenters.<sup>56</sup> Often she casts herself not as a victim of love but as an instructor in sexual technique. Finally, candidly foregrounding her own identity as a courtesan,<sup>57</sup> she expresses solidarity with the misery of other women in the profession.

The landscape Franco paints is, above all, urban. In *capitolo* 20 of her *Terza rime*, she portrays herself as an abandoned woman, love-crazed and Dido-like,<sup>58</sup> who tracks her lover along the stone walls and balconied houses of Venice at night. She seeks him in the streets of the city, finding consolation in touching with her hands the stone facade of his house as she eyes his bedroom windows from the darkened street (15–20):

Vengo, da l'alma Citerea difesa,  
 per veder e toccar almen le mura  
 del traviato lontan vostro albergo,  
 per disperazion fatta sicura.  
 Per strado errando, gli occhi ai balconi ergo  
 de la camera vostra . . .

[I come, protected by kind Cytherea, / to see and touch at least the walls / of your house, isolated and remote, /drawing confidence from my desperation. /Wandering the street, I lift my eyes to your bedroom balconies . . .].

Standing before the entrance to her lover's house and appropriating a motif standard in Roman elegy,<sup>59</sup> she appeals to the barred doors of the house themselves, begs them to let her enter, and kisses the threshold in supplication (28–39). But the weapons of this urban female hunter are verbal daggers; she will trap her quarry by publishing the story of his cruelty in her poems, so that all Venice will read about it:

Ben sapete, crudel, che'l mondo udrallo,  
 e con mia dolce ed amara vendetta  
 d'ogn'intorno la fama porterallo.

(244–46)

[Know well, cruel man, the world will hear of it, / and, along with my sweet and bitter revenge, / will carry the news of it to every place on earth.]

Combining themes from Ovid's *Amores* 1.5 and 1.9, the poet is an urban fighter in the battle of love in *capitolo* 13. Now that her lover has left her for another woman, she proposes that the city hotel and even the bed that was once the scene of their affair be the bloody war theater where the two of them may duel to the death, alone and "without seconds" (31–57; 79–81).

In regard to the sonnets addressed to Henry III in the *Familiar Letters* commemorating the evening he spent with her during his state visit to Venice,<sup>60</sup> Margaret Rosenthal has called attention to Franco's foregrounding of her literary side over her sexual persona. Sonnet 1 describes the Jupiter-like charge she experienced with Henry; his "ray of divine virtue" melted her "natural vigor" completely:

Benche si sconosciuto, anch'al mio core  
 Tal raggio impresse del divin suo merto,

Ch'in me s'estinse il natural vigore.

(*Familiar Letters* 1.9–11)

[Even so disguised, into my heart / he shone such a ray of his divine virtue / that my innate strength completely failed me.]<sup>61</sup>

Rosenthal points out that Franco, following Ovid's rather than Boccaccio's version of the tale of Jupiter's rape of Danae, is careful to avoid the explicitly sexual rendering of the act exemplified in Titian's painting *Danae and the Shower of Gold* (a work she clearly knew).<sup>62</sup> I agree that Franco is, as usual, working off an Ovidian model. But in Ovid the story of Danae is always used as a goad to the male lover to engage in violent sex or to commit rape (*Amores* 2.19; *Ars Amatoria* 3). So I think the key that needs to be pressed here is the variety of tonalities Franco appropriates to articulate her sexual knowledge. Like her familiar letters, her poems are songs of experience: she is the instructor, the analyst presumed to know, and in that knowledge resides her potency, even in her relation to Henry III. The sonnets she sends him, as she fashions herself, are literary, yes, but they are all the more sexual for their intellectual dressing.

Among the twenty-five poems (*capitoli*) in Franco's *Terza Rime*<sup>63</sup> is a dedicatory poem to Venier's nephew Marco Venier in which—unlike any other work of the period by a woman—Veronica fashions herself both as the cruel mistress of Roman elegy and as the professor of erotics (*praeceptra amoris*) of Ovid's *Ars Amatoria*, who gives explicit advice on the variety of sexual positions (*modi*) a woman should show her man (A. A. 3.787: *mille modi veneris*; 771–72: *modos a corpore certos sumite*; a theme Aretino had taken up in his *Ragionamenti*, as we noted before). Important in love is a good technique, Franco tells Marco:

Così dolce e gustevole divento,  
 quando mi trovi con persona in letto,  
 da cui amata e gradita mi sento,  
 che quel mio piacer vince ogni diletto,  
 sì che quel, che strettissimo pareo,  
 nodo de l'altrui amor divien più stretto.

Febo, che serve a l'amorosa dea,  
 e in dolce guiderdon da lei ottiene  
 quel che va più che l'esser dio il bea  
 a rivelar nel mio pensier ne viene

quei modi che con lui Venere adopra,  
mentre in soavi abbracciamenti il tiene . . .

(*Terza rime*, cap. 2.154–65)

[So sweet and delicious do I become, / when I am in bed with a man / who, I sense, loves and enjoys me, / that the pleasure I bring excels all delight, / so the knot of love, however tight / it seemed before, is tied tighter still. / Phoebus, who serves the goddess of love, and obtains from her as a sweet reward / what blesses him far more than being a god / comes from her to reveal to my mind / the positions (*quei modi*) that Venus assumes with him / when she holds him in sweet embraces . . .].<sup>64</sup>

In this and other poems Franco represents herself as the seasoned woman-for-hire who will set the terms for every sexual encounter. Yet, showing a rare side of her public persona in her *Lettere familiari*—one in which she expresses solidarity and empathy with other women of her class—she writes to a mother and her daughter of the degradation of her profession. Assuming the role of the experienced older prostitute (she must have been in her thirties) in this published letter, she disabuses her friends of any illusions of glamour they might have attached to the life:

This life always turns out to be a misery. It's a most wretched thing . . . to subject one's body and labor to a slavery terrifying even to think of. To make oneself prey to so many men, at the risk of being stripped, robbed, even killed, so that one man, one day, may snatch away from you everything you've acquired from many over such a long time . . . [To risk] so many other dangers of injury and dreadful contagious diseases; . . . to move according to another's will, obviously rushing toward the shipwreck of your mind and body—what greater misery? (*Familiar Letters*, 1580)<sup>65</sup>

The plague of 1575–77, in the course of which fifty-one thousand Venetians died (roughly a quarter of the population of the city) and shops, hotels, and businesses closed their doors, spelled the end of Franco's prosperity. Before the plague broke out, however, she managed in 1575 to publish semiprivately (no publisher is named in the edition) her *Terza rime*. The marketing bonanza for love lyrics (roughly 1548–60) had come and gone, and by the closing of the Tridentine Council in 1564, publishers were looking for literature of a more serious sort.

In October 1580, Franco was indicted for witchcraft and charged

with casting magical spells by the Inquisition. Though she was forced by law to act as her own attorney,<sup>66</sup> through the intercession of her patron Domenico Venier, the charges against her were eventually dropped.<sup>67</sup> Neither the Inquisition nor her trial for heresy were able to prevent Franco from publishing and distributing in November 1580<sup>68</sup> her *Lettere familiari*, again privately and without the imprimatur of a licensed press. Two years following the trial, in 1582, Venier died and after that year her fortunes declined. She moved from lodging to lodging, and tax records show that by 1583 she was living in the parish of San Samuele, where the most destitute of Venetian prostitutes lived.<sup>69</sup> By 1591 she was dead, at the age of forty-five.



While Aragona, Stampa, and Franco each sold, in one way or another, highly sexualized images of themselves in exchange for short-lived celebrity, the self-portraits they produced suggest that—in terms of their erotic attachments, friendship networks, and social status—their lives were quite different from each other. Tullia d'Aragona, the Neoplatonic thinker<sup>70</sup> and center of a Florentine literary salon, who only sometimes projects herself as the victim of desire, represents a female self thoroughly enmeshed in an urban circle of male intellectual peers who were predominantly writers, educators, and philosophers rather than nobles or men of great wealth.<sup>71</sup> A female writer even better connected to major urban literary networks in northern Italy, Gaspara Stampa, who participated regularly in two exclusive Venetian literary academies, appears not to have fit the legal definition of a courtesan.<sup>72</sup> Fashioning herself sometimes as an urban singer of Catullan elegy and at other times as an exile from the city, Stampa paints herself as languishing throughout some three hundred poems for the love of one man. Bearing little similarity to Aragona or Stampa, Veronica Franco crafts a literary mask for herself at times as extreme as Aretino's *cortigiana*: the shrewd instructor in sexual technique, the erotic entrepreneur who is demanding and dangerous; a prostitute-poet who sleeps with kings and men as rich as Croesus. Certainly sexual scandal was the engine that drove the publication of Aragona's works. In the case of Stampa, only three of whose sonnets had been published before she died, surely rumors about her sexual indiscretion compounded by the notoriety of her death at thirty-one played a role in the prominent publisher Pietrasanta's decision

to rush her complete works to press. For Franco, whose writing aimed to titillate and for whom an audience was guaranteed, the Tridentine Council and the heresy trials necessitated quasi-private publication and circulation of her works.

In considering Aragona, Stampa, and Franco's importance to the literary history of early modern Europe, one could argue that the ways in which they resemble one another overshadow their differences. For, in the case of these three poets and many other sixteenth-century women writers, the commodification of female bodies in print—in the apparatus of the mass-produced book—was the common spur to the entrance of women into the literary and cultural scene of early modern Venice. Moreover, the entrance of women into the social world of the *ridotto*, where a new species of urban sociability dependent on print culture was emerging, was the common denominator between published women writers and the celebrity they enjoyed. All three women in this study had mothers who introduced their daughters to salon sociability and who had themselves been active in the *ridotti* of their cities. And in the case of all three women, social, intellectual, and, perhaps less importantly, sexual connections with literary men, writers, editors, and publishers made it possible for them to network their way into the world of publishing. Previous scholars have stressed the inadmissibility of respectable women into social situations outside the familial home in early modern Venice; but indeed it was the introduction of intellectual women, both prostitutes and respected matrons, into the *ridotti* and drawing rooms where male literati gathered that brought women writers into the very social world of urban publishing.

## NOTES

1. Paul Grendler, *Critics of the Italian World, 1530–1560: Anton Francesco Doni, Nicolo Franco, and Ortensio Lando* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969), 4n.; John Martin, *Venice's Hidden Enemies: Italian Heretics in a Renaissance City* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 76–82. The date for the census of printers and booksellers is significant: 1563 before the closing of the Council of Trent, the Index, and the heresy trials in Venice.

2. The figure seems low. In 1560–74, prior to the outbreak of the plague in 1575, the population in Venice is usually estimated to have been around 168,000–180,000.

3. Margaret King, *Women of the Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 78–79.

4. Marilyn Migiel, "Veronica Franco (1546–1591)," in Rinaldina Russell, ed., *Italian Women Writers: A Bio-Bibliographical Sourcebook* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1994), 138, has characterized the *Catalogo* as "a clandestine and very possibly satirical document," suggesting that the pamphlet can hardly be relied on as an unimpeachable source.

5. Jacques Rossiaud, *Medieval Prostitution*, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (London: Basil Blackwell, 1988), 131–32.

6. Margaret King, *Women in the Renaissance* (p. 79) quotes from Cathy Santore, "Julia Lombardo, 'Somtuosa Meretrice': A Portrait by Property," *Renaissance Quarterly* 41.1 (1988): 44–87.

7. Marino Sanuto, *I Diarii*, ed. Rinaldo Fulin et al., 33 (Venice: Visentini, 1879–1902): 9 Maggio, 1522, as cited in Santore, "Julia Lombardo," 44. Note that in speaking of Lombardo, her contemporary Sanuto identifies her as a *meretrice* (prostitute), not a *cortigiana*, a distinction that then seems not to have existed.

8. Santore, "Julia Lombardo," 52. None of Santore's documents give a birth date for Lombardo; we can speculate that she is likely to have been in her forties when she died since, according to Sanuto, at the time of her death she had already been a prostitute for twenty years, and since Julia's disabled adult sister (with whom she lived) did not die until 1569 when she was probably still in her seventies.

9. Paula Findlen, "Humanism, Politics, and Pornography in Renaissance Italy," in Lynn Hunt, ed., *The Invention of Pornography: Obscenity and the Origins of Modernity, 1500–1800* (New York: Zone Books, 1993), 49–108.

10. *Ibid.*, 108.

11. Raimondi supposedly copied his drawings from graffiti originally drawn by Giulio Romano. The originals are no longer extant.

12. Cesare Vecellio, *Degli habiti antichi et moderni di diversi parti del mondo*, 2 vols. (Venice: D. Zenaro, 1590).

13. Moderata Fonte, *The Worth of Women*, trans. Virginia Cox (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 69; note that the women in this dialogue use the terms *meretrice* and *cortigiane* interchangeably.

14. "Per li molti favori che hanno simul operona di mala et pessima conditione . . . alcun nobile nostro over altri di che conditione esser si voglia non possi personalmente, ne per polizza ne per altri, pregar over interceder per alcuna persona infame, la qual querelada al predetto Officio della Sanita, sotto pena de ducati cento . . . et esser bandito per anni doi dal nostro Maggior Consiglio essendo nobile; et non essendo nobile, di Venetia e del Destretto per li ditti anni doi." Margaret Rosenthal, *The Honest Courtesan: Veronica Franco, Citizen, and Writer in Sixteenth-Century Venice* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 67; both text and translation are Rosenthal's.

15. Quelle veramente se intendino esser meretrice quale non essendo maritate haveranno comercio et practica con uno over piu homeni. Se intendano etiam meretrice quelle che havendo marito non habitano con sui mariti, ma stanno separate et habbino commercio con uno over piu homeni. *Ibid.*, 67.

16. Ann R. Jones and Margaret F. Rosenthal have commented on this blurring in the introduction to their translation and edition of Franco's works, *Veronica Franco, Poems and Selected Letters* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 3. Elizabeth Cohen has shown that no distinction between the terms "courtesan"

and "prostitute" existed in Renaissance Rome; see her "'Courtesans' and Whores: Words and Behavior in Roman Streets," *Women's Studies* 19.2 (1991): 201-8.

17. Patricia H. Labalme, "Sodomy and Venetian Justice in the Renaissance," *Legal History Review* 52 (1984): 217-54.

18. Virginia Cox, "The Single Self: Feminist Thought and the Marriage Market in Early Modern Venice," *Renaissance Quarterly* 48.3 (1995): 513-81; esp. 532-33.

19. Ann Rosalind Jones, *The Currency of Eros: Women's Love Lyric in Europe, 1540-1620* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990); Fiora Bassanese, *Gaspara Stampa* (Boston: Twayne, 1983); Rosenthal, *Honest Courtesan*.

20. Erica Harth, "The Salon Woman Goes Public . . . or Does She?" In *Going Public: Women and Publishing in Early Modern France*, ed. Dena Goodman and Elizabeth Goldsmith, (Cornell University Press, 1995); 179-93.

21. Juergen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry Into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1989); Joan Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988); Keith Baker, "Defining the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century France," in Craig Calhoun, ed., *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992); Dena Goodman, "Public Sphere and Private Life: Toward a Synthesis of Current Historiographical Approaches to the Old Regime," in *History and Theory* 31 (1992): 1-20; the Forum in *French Historical Studies* 17 (fall 1992), with essays by Daniel Gordon, David Bell, and Sarah Maza; Dena Goodman, *The Republic of Letters: A Cultural History of the French Enlightenment* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994); Goodman and Goldsmith, *Going Public*.

22. Claude Dulong, "From Conversation to Creation," in Natalie Zemon Davis and Arlette Farge, eds., *A History of Women in the West, III: Renaissance and Enlightenment Paradoxes* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 395-419.

23. Aretino writing to Sperone Speroni in a letter dated 6 June, 1537, quoted in Mario Pozzi, ed., *Trattistici del Cinquecento* (Milan and Naples), 511, as cited in Rinaldina Russell, "Tullia d'Aragona (c. 1510-1556)," in *Italian Women Writers: A Bio-Bibliographical Sourcebook* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1994), 27.

24. On Varchi's alleged pederasty see Umberto Pirotti, *Benedetto Varchi e la cultura del suo tempo* (Florence: Olschki, 1971), esp. 42-52.

25. Janet L. Smarr, "A Dialogue of Dialogues: Tullia d'Aragona and Sperone Speroni," *Modern Language Notes* 113 (1998): 204-12; Smarr finds Speroni's portrait of Tullia more denigrating than does Rinaldina Russell, "introduction," in Tullia d'Aragona, *Dialogue on the Infinity of Love*, trans. Rinaldina Russell and Bruce Merry (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), esp. 30-32. See also Deana Basile, "'Specchio delle rare e virtuose donne': The Role of the Female Interlocutor in Sixteenth-Century Dialogues on Love" (University of Toronto dissertation, 1999): Basile, who focuses more on the shift in Speroni's portrayal of Tullia's role from an active to a passive one, also notes that while Speroni's dialogue had been circulating in manuscript between 1528 and 1537, and had finally been published in Venice in 1542 by Daniele Barbaro, he had not met d'Aragona

in Venice until 1535; he may then have simply later attached Tullia's to his already fully formed female interlocutor. D'Aragona's dialogue was published by Giolito in Venice in 1547.

26. Cf. Basile, "Specchio delle rare e virtuose donne," and Smarr, "A Dialogue of Dialogues," 204–12; Basile disagrees with Smarr's assessment of Speroni's Tullia as a mere facilitator for male discourse (100–113). On the genre see Marsilio Ficino, *Commentary on Plato's Symposium on Love*, trans. Sears Jayne (Woodstock, Conn.: Spring Publications, 1985); Jayne notes that alone thirty-three "Dialogues on Love" followed the publication of Ficino's "Dialogus de amore" (1484) in sixteenth-century Italy.

27. Smarr, "A Dialogue of Dialogues," esp. 204–7; Russell, "introduction" (32) disagrees with this assessment of Speroni's Tullia and argues that she cleverly parodies Platonic myths in his dialogue.

28. Virginia Cox, *The Renaissance Dialogue: Literary Dialogue in Its Social and Political Contexts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

29. As Ann Jones has shown, Aragona's poetry, Petrarchan in its sonnet form, draws its emotional intensity and its rootedness in the body not from Petrarch but from the Roman elegiac poets. The maternal body—grieving, in pain, and torn by conflicting desires—is the subject of several of her sonnets. In sonnet 35, taking as her departure point Catullus's identification with his mistress's pet sparrow in *Carmen* 3, Tullia shares the grief of Lilla, her pet, over the death of the animal's son; she feels Lilla's sorrow—the "maternal pity that tears the heart" ("materna pietate afflige il core," 1)—because she too is now a lover deprived of her love (Jones, 114). In sonnet 29, she portrays herself as a Philomela, the sister of and double for the bereaved mother Procne in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, who suffered rape and mutilation at the hands of her lover, yet is caught, like the male victims in the erotic elegies of Ovid and Propertius, between her conflicting desires, for both freedom and bondage (cf. Jones, 114–15). Similarly, in sonnet 32, she compares herself not only to the familiar figure in the poems of Horace and Tibullus of the little sailor buffeted by love's stormy seas but to a grieving mother ("pietosa madre," 1) bereft of her only son. The storm-tossed sailor figure is of course also Petrarchan; but the combination of grieving mother and mariner is distinctively Aragona's own.

There is no way to "prove" that Tullia read the classics Greek and Latin in the original. What is certain is that sixteenth-century intellectual discourse in Italy was steeped in a familiarity with Plato (especially the *Symposium*, the *Phaedrus*, and the *Republic*) and the Roman poets. In order to function and win acceptance in the erudite salons of the Cinquecento, as Tullia did, she had to be fluent in the classical canon and its idioms. Ann Jones in her *The Currency of Eros* (1990) and Rinaldina Russell in the introduction to her edition and translation of d'Aragona's *Dialogue on the Infinity of Love* (1997) argue convincingly that Tullia knew the classical canon whether or not she read them in the original or in Italian translation. Translations of Plato (in Latin) were available from the end of the fifteenth century on; Italian translations of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* were widely available in the sixteenth century. The erotic poets Catullus, Horace, Tibullus, and Ovid's amatory verse (the *Amores*, the *Ars Amatoria*), however, were read in the original Latin not in translation by literary men and women.

30. Ann Jones, *The Currency of Eros*, 103 ff. notes that of the fifty-six sonnets

published in the 1547 edition of her *Rime* (Venice: Giolito), two-thirds of the poems are attributed to male authors, and only ten of her own sonnets can be called love poems.

31. Jones, *Ibid.*, 111, 32. Scholars have doubted the authenticity of *Il Meschino*, a chivalric romance in octaves; but Julia Hairston assures me that the consensus now believes that the work is d'Aragona's.

33. The standard but by now outdated bibliography is Fiora A. Bassanese, *Gaspara Stampa* (Boston: Twayne, 1982); see also Eugenio Donadoni, *Gaspara Stampa donna e poetessa* (Messina: Principato, 1919); Jones, *Currency of Eros*; and Maria Zancan, "L'intellettualita femminile nel primo Cinquecento: Maria Savorgnon e Gaspara Stampa," *Annali d'Italianistica* 7 (1989): 42-65; see also Bassanese, "Gaspara Stampa's Poetics of Negativity," *Italica* 61.4 (1984): 334-46; Bassanese, "Male Canon/Female Poet: The Petrarchism of Gaspara Stampa," In *Interpreting the Italian Renaissance: Literary Perspectives* (Stony Brook, N.Y.: Fililibrary, 1991) 43-54; Bassanese, "Gaspara Stampa," in R. Russell, *Italian Women Writers*, 404-13.

34. Stampa's biographers are unequivocal on the subject of her having had a humanist education (i.e. studies in Greek and Latin, philosophy, rhetoric, history, and poetry): see Fiora Bassanese, "Gaspara Stampa (1523?-1554)," in Russell, *Italian Women Writers*, 404; Bassanese, *Gaspara Stampa*, 8; Bassanese cites also the noted sixteenth-century Venetian writer, longtime editor for Giolito, and promoter of women writers, Lodovico Dolce's *Dialogo della institution delle donne* (Venice, 1545), which prescribed a curriculum for girls that included Cicero, Virgil, Horace, and the Roman historians, all of which were to be read in Latin, and readings in Plato in Latin translation. See also Rita Casagrande, *La cortegiane veneziane del Cinquecento* (Milan: Longanesi, 1968), 202: Casagrande emphasizes the learned friends, among them philosophers and poets, whom Gaspara's brother Baldassare, a student at the University of Padua, brought into the Stampa household; Laura Anna Stortoni, in the introduction to her edition and translation of Stampa's *Selected Poems* (N.Y.: Italica Press, 1994), p. x, similarly stresses Stampa's education in the classics.

35. Bassanese, *Gaspara Stampa*, p. 89, notes that Parabosco addressed sonnets to the "divine Stampa," that Cambio dedicated a volume of madrigals to her, and that she exchanged letters with the poets Luigi Alamanni, Girolamo Molin, and Trifone Gabriele, the "Socrates of Venice" (p. 9).

36. Lodovico Domenichi edited three popular poetry anthologies featuring Ippolita Mirtilla's works: one containing fifty-three female poets only, *Rime diverse d'alcune nobilissime e virtuosissime donne* (Lucca: Busdragho, 1559); the other two titles containing the poetry of both male and female writers, *Rime di diversi Autori* (Venice: Giolito, 1552); and *Il sesto libro di diversi eccellenti autori nuovamente raccolte et andate in luce* (Venice: Giolito, 1552-53); Mirtilla's works were also anthologized in Luisa Bergalli's now frequently cited early collection of Italian women poets principally of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, *Componimenti poetici delle piu illustri rimatrici d'ogni secolo* (Venice: Mora, 1726). On Bergalli's anthology see Stortoni, *Women Poets*, xxvi-xxvii; and Russell, *Italian Women Writers*, xxi.

37. Collaltino responded with pleasure when Giolito's leading pressman Lodovico Domenichi dedicated a volume of his poetry to him in 1544.

38. No letters from Collaltino to Stampa are known, nor is it believed that he supported her work with gifts or money. See Bassanese, *Gaspara Stampa*, esp. 17–25: the chief source on Gaspara Stampa's relationship with Collaltino, besides her own poetry, is Collaltino's heir Antonio Rambaldo who in 1738 commissioned Luisa Bergalli to edit and reissue Stampa's *Rime*; Rambaldo himself wrote the introduction to this volume edited by Bergalli and Apostolo Zeno, *Rime di Madonna Gaspara Stampa con alcune altre di Collaltino e di Vinciguerra conti di Collalto, e di Baldassare Stampa* (Venice: Piacentini, 1738), which included a vita of Stampa.

39. Bassanese, *Gaspara Stampa*, 27, summarizes the pro-courtesan "evidence" in Abdelkader Salza's monograph, "Madonna Gasparina Stampa secondo nuove indagini," *Giornale storico della letteratura italiana* 62 (1913): 1–101; see also his "Madonna Gasparina Stampa e la societa veneziana del suo tempo," *Giornale storico della letteratura italiana* 70 (1917): 1–60; 281–99.

40. Rita Casagrande di Villaviera, *La cortigiane veneziane del Cinquecento* (Milan: Lonanesi, 1968); Paul Larivaille, *La vie quotidienne des courtisanes en Italie au temps de la Renaissance: Rome et Venise, XVe et XVIe siècles* (Paris: Hachette, 1975); Lynne Lawner, *Lives of the Courtesans: Portraits of the Renaissance* (New York: Rizzoli, 1987).

41. In addition to Bassanese's biography cited above, see also her "Gaspara Stampa's Poetics of Negativity," *Italica* 61.4 (1984): 331–46; "What's in a Name? Self-Naming and Renaissance Women Poets," *Annali d'Italianistica* 7 (1989): 104–15; "Male Canon/Female Poet," 43–54.

42. Text and translation are from Laura Anna Stortoni, ed. and trans., and Mary Prentice Lillie, trans., *Gaspara Stampa. Selected Poems* (New York: Italica Press, 1994), 51. I have slightly edited Stortoni and Lillie's translation.

43. Cf. Ann Jones, *The Currency of Eros*, 118–41, on Stampa's use of the pastoral mode.

44. *Ibid.*

45. Bassanese, *Gaspara Stampa*, 19.

46. *Ibid.*: The medical examiner who certified her death wrote: "April 23, 1554. Madonna Gasparina Stampa in the house of messer Hieronymo Morosini, who was ill with fever and colic and matrix pains for fifteen days, died on this day."

47. The Newberry Library has a copy of this volume: NL Case Y7184.7452.

48. Pietrasanta employed her sister Cassandra Stampa and Giorgio Benzzone to edit the poems from her autograph manuscript, which is no longer extant.

49. Lodovico Domenichi, ed., *Rime diverse d'alcune nobilissime et virtuosissime donne raccolte per m. Lodovico Domenichi e intitolate al Signor Giannoto Castiglione gentil'huomo milanese* (Lucca: Vincenzo Busdragho, 1559). Interestingly, the collection contains works by the noblewomen Vittoria Colonna and Veronica Gambara but not any by the much published Tullia d'Aragona. This is odd since Aragona is included together with Colonna, Gambara, and Stampa in Domenichi's *Il sesto libro* anthology (Giolito, 1552–53). Was she under sole contract to Giolito?

50. Rosenthal, *Honest Courtesan*, 66: Veronica's name appears with her mother, Paola Fracassa's in the *Catalogo di tutti e piu honorate cortigiane di Venezia* (1565), a work whose authenticity is questioned by Marilyn Migiel, "Veronica Franco," in Russell, *Italian Women Writers*, 145–53.

51. Martin, *Venice's Hidden Enemies*.
  52. Rosenthal, *Honest Courtesan*, 7, 17.
  53. As Virginia Cox's introduction and new edition of Moderata Fonte's *The Worth of Women* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 5, 217, 218n, 223n, makes clear, Fonte idolized Venier and considered him a role model as a writer; Cox also suggests that Venier may have been a longtime friend of her family (217n). Rosenthal, *Honest Courtesan*, 89 and 300n, speaks of Domenico Venier's interest in and encouragement of both Moderata Fonte and "the Friulian poet Irene di Spilimbergo." Of Spilimbergo's renown as a *letterata* and a painter see Dionigi Atanagi's biography of her in his commemorative anthology honoring her on her death: *Rime di diversi nobilissimi et eccelentissimi autori in morte della signora Irene delle signore di Spilimbergo* (Venice: Domenico and Giovanni B. Guerra, 1561); on Atanagi's biography of Irene see also Anne Jacobson Schutte, "Irene di Spilimbergo: the Image of a Creative Woman in Late Renaissance Italy," *Renaissance Quarterly* 1 (1991): 42–61, esp. 51 n. 38.
  54. *Lettere familiari dall'unica edizione del MDLXXX con Proemio e nota iconografica* (Venice: n.p., 1580), edited by Benedetto Croce (Naples: Ricciardi, 1949).
  55. Rosenthal, *Honest Courtesan*, 347 n. 93, seems to suggest here that Franco may have commissioned the painting, but documentation on the work and its commissioning appears to be no longer extant.
  56. Ann Jones and Margaret Rosenthal, "Introduction: The Honored Courtesan," in Veronica Franco, *Poems and Selected Letters*, tr. and ed. A. R. Jones and M. F. Rosenthal (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 8.
  57. On the word *cortigiana* see Jones and Rosenthal, op. "Introduction: The Honest Courtesan" 2–3; and Elizabeth Cohen, "'Courtesans' and 'Whores': Words and Behavior in Roman Streets," *Women's Studies* 19, no. 2 (1999): 201–8. Jones and Rosenthal argue that *meretrice* was the most neutral word for "sex worker," that *puttana* (whore) was the most insulting; and that *cortigiana* had upwardly mobile associations (with the Greek *hetaira*, for example).
  58. The locus classicus which Renaissance readers would have instantly recognized here is Virgil's depiction of the Carthaginian queen in *Aeneid* 4.300–4.
  59. The barred-door theme, known as the *exclusus amator* or *paraklausithuron* motif (in Latin and Greek, respectively), is ubiquitous in classical love elegy; the relevant models for Franco would be Ovid's *Amores* 1.6 and Propertius 1.16.
  60. Rosenthal, *Honest Courtesan*, 106–11.
  61. Text and translation are from Jones and Rosenthal, "Introduction: The Honest Courtesan," 27.
  62. *Ibid.*, 109. Rona Goffen, *Titian's Women* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 215: Titian completed the first of his *Danae* paintings in 1546.
  63. *Terza Rime al Serenissimo Signor Duca di Mantova et di Monferrato* (Venice: n.p., n.d.: ca. 1575 or 1576); copies of this are extremely rare.
  64. Text and translation are from Jones and Rosenthal, "Introduction: The Honest Courtesan," 68–9.
  65. Franco, *Poems and Selected Letters*, tr. and ed., Jones and Rosenthal, Letter 22, p. 39.
- Franco's *Lettere familiari a diversi della S. Veronica Franco all'illustr. e reverendissimo Monsignor Luigi d'Este Cardinale* was like the *Terza rime* (1575) issued

in a small semiprivate edition published in Venice; the edition contains no publisher's name or date but Migiel ("Veronica Franco," 143) dates the volume to 1580; Jones and Rosenthal say 1590.

66. See above on Venetian law re: the right to counsel by prostitutes.

67. Three separate transcriptions of her inquisition trial have now been published: Alessandra Schiavon (1979); Alvise Zorzi (1986); and Marisi Milani (1985) as cited in Rosenthal, *Honest Courtesan*, 320 n.3.

68. Rosenthal, *Honest Courtesan*, 116: Michel Montaigne reported in his *Journal de voyage en Italie* that on 4 November, 1580 during his visit to Venice, Veronica Franco sent over to him in his lodgings a copy of her newly printed *Lettere familiari*.

69. Rosenthal, *Honest Courtesan*, 4.

70. By "Platonist" I do not mean the desexualized interpretations of Plato's theory of love exemplified by Ficino's commentary on the *Symposium*; I am referring instead to the playful eroticism in d'Aragona's and Varchi's typically sixteenth-century readings of the *Symposium* and other dialogues of Plato.

71. Her correspondents included the humanists Pietro Bembo, Benedetto Varchi, Girolamo Muzio; the churchmen Ippolito de' Medici and Ugolino Martelli; and dedicatory letters to Duke Cosimo de' Medici and the brothers of his wife Eleonora, Spanish noblemen Pedro and Luis of Toledo.

72. See Venetian law on prostitutes and/or courtesans, pp. 37-38.