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The Fiction of *The Rime*: Gaspara Stampa's "Poetic Misprision" of Giovanni Boccaccio's *The Elegy of Lady Fiammetta*

Ellan B. Otero
University of South Florida

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The Fiction of The *Rime*: Gaspara Stampa's "Poetic Misprision" of

Giovanni Boccaccio's *The Elegy of Lady Fiammetta*

by

Ellan B. Otero

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
Department of English
College of Arts and Sciences
University of South Florida

Major Professor: Silvia R. Fiore, Ph.D.
Giovanna Benadusi, Ph.D.
Sara M. Deats, Ph.D.
Patrizia La Trecchia, Ph.D.

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ABSTRACT

This study maintains that although Gaspara Stampa's *Rime* (1554) appears to straddle two popular literary genres—lyric poetry and autobiography—analysis of the *Rime* within its cultural context demonstrates that while Stampa (1523-1553) used Petrarchan conventions, she also both borrowed and swerved from Giovanni Boccaccio's *Elegy of Lady Fiammetta* (1334-1337) to imagine a non-Petrarchan narrative of an abandoned woman. In the Renaissance, lyric poetry and autobiography were distinguished not only by their style—prose vs. verse—but, more importantly, by the treatment of their distinctive subject matter. Lyric poetry focused on those emotions involving love, whereas Renaissance autobiography shunned emotions. A comparative analysis of the *Rime* with the *Elegy* concludes that the *Rime* is not a lyric version of Boccaccio's *Elegy*; however, a consideration of Harold Bloom's "anxiety of influence" demonstrates that although Stampa borrowed the Boccaccian idea of the woman as narrator to tell the story of love and abandonment, she creatively adapted—or, to use Bloom's term, swerved from—Boccaccio's presentation of the abandoned narrator's psychological pain. Instead,

Stampa depicts the frustrations and the pain of the narrator whose love is unrequited although her beloved remains nearby.

Introduction

This study maintains that although Gaspara Stampa's *Rime* (1554) appears to straddle two popular literary genres—lyric poetry and autobiography—analysis of the *Rime* within its cultural context demonstrates that while Stampa (1523-1553) used Petrarchan conventions, she also both borrowed and swerved from Giovanni Boccaccio's *Elegy of Lady Fiammetta* (1334-1337) to imagine a non-Petrarchan narrative of an abandoned woman. In the Renaissance, lyric poetry and autobiography were distinguished not only by their style—prose vs. verse—but, more importantly, by the treatment of their distinctive subject matter. Lyric poetry focused on those emotions involving love, whereas Renaissance autobiography shunned emotions. A comparative analysis of the *Rime* with the *Elegy* concludes that the *Rime* is not a lyric version of Boccaccio's *Elegy*; however, a consideration of Harold Bloom's "anxiety of influence" demonstrates that although Stampa borrowed the Boccaccian idea of the woman as narrator to tell the story of love and abandonment, she creatively adapted—or, to use Bloom's term, swerved from—Boccaccio's presentation of the abandoned narrator's psychological pain. Instead, Stampa depicts the frustrations and the pain of the narrator whose love is unrequited although her beloved remains nearby.

I argue that Giovanni Boccaccio's *Elegy of Lady Fiammetta* influenced Stampa's *Rime* and that it is a fiction, not autobiography, as traditionally presumed. To support my hypothesis, I review the genre of autobiography written contemporaneously with, or

slightly earlier than, the *Rime*. The differences I find demonstrate that Stampa did not model her *Rime* on Renaissance autobiography; instead, she wrote a fiction in the Petrarchan manner, as did the poets she respected. These poets constitute Stampa's literary context and were the authoritative source determining what and how she wrote. Earlier in the century Pietro Bembo (1470-1547) established the poetic *modus operandi* Stampa inherited. Just prior to her birth, he had convinced the literati of Venice and elsewhere that Francesco Petrarca's (1304-1374) *Rime sparse* (1374) should be the sole model for poets (McLaughlin 268) and with his own *Rime* (1530) popularized the style (Richardson, "Scribal" 684). Moreover, the story of the abandoned woman lover was not unique to Stampa; it had existed for centuries and was well known to her as an educated woman: Ovid's *Heroides* was still in circulation, as were the twelfth-century troubadour poems. Because Bembo had argued successfully that Boccaccio should be the prose model, *ridotti* (literary salons) members discussed the *Elegy* and his other works. The modern scholar Gordon Braden recognizes the likelihood of the *Elegy*'s influence on Stampa but does not pursue the idea: "If Stampa needed some literary paradigm for the story surrounding her poems, this one was readily [at] hand; we may describe her *Rime d'Amore* as a lyricization of Boccaccio's prose *Elegy* into a more affirmative mode" ("Gender" 133). His tantalizing comment does not pursue what he saw in the *Rime* that so strongly resembled the *Elegy*. His failure to do so, however, leaves me an opportunity to explore this matter of influence.

Before examining the *Elegy* as Stampa's muse, the long-standing opinion concerning the *Rime*'s autobiographical nature should be addressed. Even a cursory review of the literature on Stampa and her *Rime* reveals that a biographical assumption

pervades the historiography. During the late 1800s and early 1900s, for example, scholars debated Stampa's profession: whether she was a courtesan or not. Stampa was an unmarried woman earning her living as a musician and singer in the Venetian literary salons —*ridotti*—and other public venues in a society that sequestered its upper-class women ostensibly to protect their chaste reputations. Women who mixed freely with upper-class men at social events typically were courtesans.² Because few documents survive detailing Stampa's life, early scholars researched the *Rime* as a “historical document” to determine who (and what) Stampa was. Antonio Rambaldo di Collalto, heir to the family name of the *Rime*'s beloved, began the practice with his 1738 publication of the *Rime*. His preface includes a biography of Stampa (the original does not) relying on the *Rime* as his source. Rambaldo claims that Stampa was an innocent, young woman seduced and abandoned by her lover (Bassanese, *Stampa* 23-24, “Negativity” 344). Scholars have repeated much of Rambaldo's biography although he based it on unsubstantiated facts and assumptions. Not until 1913 did an Italian scholar, Abdelkader Salza, challenge the Romantic idea of Stampa as the innocent victim of love, claiming, instead, that she was a courtesan.

Determined to prove Stampa a courtesan, Salza scoured the Venetian archives for information on the poet. He unearthed previously unknown documents, such as dedications, poems, and letters, thus broadening our knowledge of the poet and her circles of acquaintances. However, in order to support his hypothesis, Salza rearranged the order of Stampa's *Rime* (See Appendix A for the changes). Specifically, he divided the *Rime* into the *Rime d'Amore* and the *Rime varie*, and he removed all poems not concerning Collaltino di Collalto (the *Rime*'s beloved) to the *Rime varie*. In addition, he

placed the religious poems at the end of the *Rime varie*, introducing them with a poem that he admits Stampa did not write³ (Jones, “Bad Press” 298-99; Salza, “Nota” 371-72). Salza effectively changes the story the *Rime* relates, an arrangement Ann Rosalind Jones labels “radical” (“Bad Press” 298). By rearranging the sequence and ending the *Rime d’Amore* with poems of contrition, Salza creates a story of repentance incompatible with the original in order to demonstrate that Stampa was a fallen woman who, at the end of her life, felt contrition and sought forgiveness (Jones, “Bad Press” 299). He published his version of the *Rime* with the *Rime* of Veronica Franco, a known courtesan, thus implying guilt by “spatial association” (Bassanese, “Male” 46). Stampa’s *Rime* as published in the *Rime de Veronica Franco e Gaspara Stampa* (1913) is the version used by subsequent scholars.⁴

Salza challenges the Romantic myth in two articles,⁵ beginning a somewhat contentious discourse on Stampa’s profession. Who she knew plays an important part in Salza’s arguments, and his conclusion about her profession relies in part on the reputations of Stampa’s acquaintances. Salza examines these men and women and finds them morally wanting, often quoting from letters and other documents to support his hypothesis.⁶ For example, Salza refers to a poem by Sperone Speroni, a “vulgar joking rhyme,” which asks who is the better “lay,” Gaspara or her sister Cassandra (Jaffe 240). In another case, he interprets a letter from the nun Suor Angelica Paola Antonia de’ Negri as implying that Stampa lead a sinful life because de’ Negri attempts to persuade Stampa to avoid worldly temptations and focus on God. For more “evidence” Salza analyzes the *Rime* itself as if it were Stampa’s autobiography of love affairs with Collaltino di Collalto and Bartolomeo Zen. Finally, Salza includes the libelous poem about Stampa published

posthumously (“Secondo” 73). Nonetheless, contemporary and modern scholars do not accept Salza’s conclusions. In *Gaspara Stampa: vita e opera* (1919), Eugenio Donadoni, a contemporary scholar, objects to Salza’s findings, pointing out a weakness in Salza’s argument; Salza, Donadoni claims, fails to consider Stampa’s cultural milieu, specifically the mores of the intellectuals and literati through whose circles Stampa moved. Stampa was, Donadoni believed, an “irregolare,” one of a group of individuals who ignored the accepted morals of Venetian society (Bassanese, “Self-Naming” 104).

While Stampa’s possible profession did not concern all early scholars, they did not ignore her gender (Bassanese, “Male” 46) in analyzing her poetry. Some analyze her *Rime* as a work of art, or in the case of Benedetto Croce, argue why it is not. For example, Croce, *Conversazione critiche* (1924), dismisses Stampa’s *Rime* as nothing more than a autobiography composed under the “banner” of Petrarchism, refusing to recognize Stampa’s imitation as valid because, as a woman, her emotions take priority over art (Bassanese, “Male” 47). In fact, by highlighting Stampa’s gender—“Fu donna”—Croce implies it was impossible for Stampa to write poetry at all (Phillippy, *Love’s* 92).

Maud F. Jerrold’s *Vittoria Colonna with Some Account of her Friends and her Times* (1906) provides a vivid example of how early twentieth-century scholars devalued Stampa’s poetry. In the chapter on Stampa, Jerrold denigrates her poetry: “we shall find nothing noble, nothing ideal, only an intensely passionate heart” (169). In addition, Jerrold asserts that the *Rime* is autobiographical: “Hers is the first literary autobiography; we do not need to go beyond her verses to know her whole history; ...it is a love record, in fact, of everything except nobleness” (184). Not surprisingly, Jerrold subscribes to the Romantic topos of Stampa as the victim of love: “Whether any happiness could

ultimately have come from this [new love for Bartolomeo Zen] is an unresolved question, for Gaspara had felt and suffered too much; she had literally worn herself out and died April 1554, when only thirty-one” (194). The “problem” with Stampa’s poems was that they were believed to express her unrestrained emotions suffered during an illicit love affair.

With the advent of the Women’s Liberation Movement in the 1960s and 70s, the attitude toward women writers, including poets, changed. Feminist scholars re/discovered the literary works (and histories) of women and undertook serious study of their art. The most influential scholar on Stampa and her *Rime*—and the most published on both—is Fiora A. Bassanese. In 1982 Bassanese published the only monograph ever written on Stampa, unfortunately now out of print. This monograph, *Gaspara Stampa*, is still considered the most comprehensive source on the poet: it includes a thorough discussion of the *Rime*’s critical history; an analysis of the *Rime varie*;⁷ a chapter comparing Petrarch’s and Stampa’s styles and substance; an explanation of Platonism, its history within the Renaissance, and Stampa’s Platonism found within her *Rime*; a chapter on the originality of the *Rime d’Amore*; comments on her poetry’s musical qualities; and a detailed review of Stampa’s life. Bassanese places Stampa within her cultural and literary milieu, but regrettably, she repeats the arguably questionable biography.

Although the *Rime* is now the subject of western scholarly study, most still consider it autobiography. A sampling of scholars who view the *Rime* as based on a love affair includes Stanley Benfell, “Translating Desire in Vittoria Colonna and Gaspara Stampa” (2005); Irma B. Jaffe, *Shining Eyes, Cruel Fortune: The Lives and Loves of Italian Renaissance Women Poets* (2002); Laura Anna Stortoni and Mary Prentice Lillie,

Selected Poems (1994); Frank Warnke, *Three Women Poets: Renaissance and Baroque* (1987). A few scholars avoid the question entirely, analyzing instead the *Rime*'s literary heritage: Gordon Braden, *Petrarchan Love and the Continental Renaissance* (1999); Patricia B. Phillippy, "Altera Dido: The Model of Ovid's *Heroides* in the Poems of Gaspara Stampa and Veronica Franco" (1992); and Robert J. Rodini, "Post-Petrarchan and Language(s) of Desire" (1996); others study Stampa's Venetian society: Martha Feldman, "The Academy of Domenico Venier, Music's Literary Muse in Mid-Cinquecento Venice" (1991), who analyzes Stampa's *ridotti* and their musical interests; and Janet L. Smarr, "Gaspara Stampa's Poetry for Performance" (1991), who reconstructs Stampa's contemporary literary audiences.

As indicated above, previous studies have focused either on Gaspara Stampa the woman or on her *Rime*—its literary heritage, its voice, and other poetic devices—but no one has challenged the biographical assumption. My study hopes to correct some misconceptions about the *Rime*; it will ask, What exactly is the *Rime*? Is it an autobiography detailing Stampa's passions during a love affair with the aristocrat Collaltino di Collalto? Is it autobiographical because Stampa took events from this love affair and, rearranging and enhancing them, wrote a *canzoniere* about love? Or, Is the *Rime* a fiction drawn from her imagination? This paper takes the last position contending that Gaspara Stampa drew inspiration from Giovanni Boccaccio's *Elegy of Lady Fiammetta* to compose a distinctive *canzoniere* that would attract critical acclaim and distinction in the crowded milieu of Petrarchan poetry.

If scholarship embraces this last position, *Rime* studies would be enriched with new findings and insights: not only could scholars continue to study the *Rime*'s syntax,

Classical and contemporary literary references, its rhyme schemes, its musical qualities, and the like, with Petrarch's *Rime sparse* hovering in the background as the benchmark. Scholars could also explore the *Rime*'s portrayal of the protagonist and antagonist, the protagonist's growth and change, plotting, tone, point of view, and other literary devices. As a result, scholars would no longer view the *Rime* as a projection of Stampa's personality, but as a product of a skilled and imaginative poet. We could then appreciate Stampa as a poet who envisions the emotional ups and downs of a tumultuous love affair—the most popular fiction of the Renaissance.

The thesis of this paper—Stampa wrote a *canzoniere* inspired by Giovanni Boccaccio's *Elegy of Lady Fiammetta*—requires a new understanding of Stampa's *Rime*. Chapter One disputes the belief that the *Rime* is autobiographical by pointing out that no archival documents exist to support the biographical assumption. Chapter Two expands on the existence of the biographical assumption by reviewing the historiography of women's poetry with a focus on the *Rime*. Examples of modern autobiographical theory are discussed and applied to the *Rime* to demonstrate how Stampa's *canzoniere* can easily fool the reader into believing he is reading about an actual love affair. Chapter Three turns to the early 1500s Venice to review Stampa's literary and musical contexts and to explain why Stampa wrote what she did. Part of Stampa's literary context is autobiography, so Chapter Four examines the parameters of Renaissance life writing and compares the *Rime* to the requirements of this genre. Analysis of Petrarch's influence on the *Rime* concludes the chapter, effectively removing the *Rime* from the genre of autobiography to that of Petrarchan poetry. Chapter Five summarizes Giovanni Boccaccio's *Elegy of Lady Fiammetta*, then, applying Harold Bloom's "anxiety of

influence,” compares the *Rime* to the *Elegy* to reveal how Stampa first borrowed ideas from the *Elegy* then swerved from it to make room for herself as a poet. The concluding chapter sums up the paper’s findings that 1.) Stampa did not write an autobiographical *Rime* 2.) but was influenced by the Venetian literary environment to compose poetry in the Petrarchan mode. 3.) Desiring a unique *canzoniere*, she turned to Boccaccio’s *Elegy*, appropriating the concept of the sexually fulfilled then abandoned woman; however, seeking to create poetic space for herself to avoid being labeled a “son” of her precursor, Boccaccio, she swerved from Boccaccio to create a new version of the psychological study of the abandoned female. The chapter concludes with a summary of the importance of these findings and suggests areas for further research.

Chapter One: Fact vs. Fiction in Gaspara Stampa's *Rime*

Gaspara Stampa's biography tells us that at some point during her twenties she composed an introductory letter for a collection of poems, what she referred to as her "poor booklet" (Stampa, *Selected* xxxiv). She addressed this letter—although not by name—to the landed aristocrat Collaltino di Collalto, her inattentive lover. The letter expresses hope that the poems will inform him of her suffering:

Here, Your Lordship will not see the whole sea of my passions, my tears and my torments, because it is a bottomless sea; but only a little stream of them; nor should Your Lordship think that I have done this to make you aware of your cruelty, because one cannot talk of cruelty when there is no obligation, nor to constrain you; but rather to make you aware of your own greatness and to make you rejoice (Stampa, *Selected* xxxiii).

During this period, the warrior Collaltino fought for King Henry II of France against England over Boulogne-Sur-Mer, a region on the continent both countries claimed (Stampa, *Selected* xxxiii). Collaltino's obligation lasted for six to seven months, his first of two deployments during their three-year relationship. As Stampa clearly states in the dedication and poems, he neglected to respond to her appeals:

Since my amorous pains, which for the love of Your Lordship, I have written about in several letters and rhymes, have not been able, one by

one, to make Your Lordship take pity on me, nor to even make you courteous enough to write me one word in return. (Stampa, *Selected xxxiii*)

Nonetheless, Stampa celebrates her unrequited love, claiming in both the letter and poetry that the pain she suffers inspires her; consequently, she does not express regret or anger for the suffering he caused her, but ironically, a joy in its presence, because it made her productive: “since even in tormenting me you are beneficial and produce fruit” (Stampa, *Selected xxxiii*). The relationship was for Stampa very fruitful: she wrote 311 poems in a variety of styles, 220 on the relationship itself.

The year following Stampa’s death in 1553, her sister Cassandra collected “quelle che si sono potute trovare” (“all those [poems] that could be found”; Jerrold 194) and published them along with epistles and elegiac poems by Stampa and others. The press Pietrasanta printed an exquisite edition with a title page, an engraved banner beginning each section, and historiated capitols beginning the sonnets eulogizing Stampa, Stampa’s dedicatory letter, and the first sonnet of the *canzoniere* itself.⁸ Giorgio Benzoni, a family friend and a poet, aided Cassandra in editing the *Rime* (Jones, *Currency* 126), which she dedicated to Giovanni Della Casa on “13 d’ottobre 1554” (*Stampa* 1554).⁹

This small sample of Gaspara Stampa’s biography provides an example of the problem with her historiography: the incorporation of assumptions as facts. Although there are no supporting archival documents, the biography above states: 1.) that Stampa wrote the letter dedication; 2.) that she sent the letter with a collection of her poems; and 3.) that she was having a love affair with Collaltino di Collalto and that these poems reflect her personal feelings. What follows is the complete biography found in literature

on Stampa, from dissertations to articles, to the most recent—although incomplete—English translation of the *Rime* by Laura Anna Stortoni and Mary Prentice Lillie. With the exception of a few changes, the biography has remained consistent for over two hundred years.

Stampa's Biography: The "Standardized" Version

Gaspara Stampa was born in Padua in 1523 to Bartolomeo, a goldsmith and a member of Padua's rich mercantile class, and Cecelia (maiden name unknown) (Jones, *Currency* 119). The surname is Milanese, and Bartolomeo Stampa may or may not have descended from a poor branch of a great aristocratic family (Bassanese, *Stampa* 1-2) although some scholars state matter-of-factly that the Stampas had aristocratic blood.¹⁰ Gaspara Stampa was the middle child with an older sister, Cassandra, and a younger brother, Baldassare, who she was very fond of (Bellonci 27).¹¹ While his children were still young, Bartolomeo began their aristocratic-level education that included mythology, Roman history, art, poetry, Latin, Greek, grammar, rhetoric, music, and literature (Bassanese, *Stampa* 3; Bellonci 29-30).

Shortly after Bartolomeo's death in 1531 Cecelia moved with her children to Venice, her home town (Bellonci 29; Robin 118), "in order to launch her daughters' careers as musical performers" (Jones, *Currency* 118). The family occupied a house owned by Messer Geronimo Morosini in the "parrocchia dei Santi Gervansio e Protasio (or San Trovaso)" where Stampa lived until her pre-mature death twenty-two years later. Cecelia continued the children's education under the grammarian Fortunio Spira's

guidance from whom they learned their Latin (Wend 74).¹² They also took voice and lute under the tutelage of Perissone Cambio (Bellonci 30).¹³

Stampa's parents may have educated their daughters in the music profession because musicians and soloists were in high demand. There existed the possibility that Stampa and Cassandra, with their good voices and musical skills, would end up living under the auspices of a wealthy benefactor or having a suitable marriage arranged by a "doting patron." Although both girls were admired for their "exceptional musical skills," Stampa received special attention for the beauty of her voice (Bassanese, *Stampa* 4).

Four years after moving to Venice, Cecilia opened her house as a literary salon—*ridotto*; it was attended by young patricians, poets, musicians, literati, independent ladies, prelates, soldiers, nobles, and foreigners (Bassanese, *Stampa* 7; Bellonci 31). Stampa was twelve and had received a number of years of humanist education and musical training. Music and singing were favored entertainment at the time, so Cecilia would have had her two daughters sing and play instruments for the guests. As word of the girls' singing and musical talents spread, they would have attracted "a variety of guests and admirers" (Bassanese, *Stampa* 7).

In her mother's *ridotto* and later in other *ridotti*, including that of the patrician Domenico Venier—a member of Venice's highest class—Stampa mingled with a select group of individuals who conversed about Petrarchan poetry and poetics (Bassanese, *Stampa* 12). Under such circumstances, Stampa's education, begun under Fortunio Spira, Perissone Cambio, and others, continued as she was exposed to discussions about "versification, meter, rhythm, cadence, imagery, form, and rhyme." In addition, as a singer she became intimately familiar with Petrarch's sonnets since "all of Petrarch's

sonnets were arranged dozens of times for flute, the guitar, and most often for the human voice” (Bassanese, *Stampa* 12).

Early in 1544 Stampa’s brother Baldassare, a promising poet, died at the age of 19 while at the university at Padua (Bassanese, *Stampa* 4). His death precipitated a religious crisis for Stampa, now 21. Suor Angelica Paola de’ Negri, in response to the death, sent Stampa a long letter to comfort her, and to urge her to abandon the world and retire to a convent (Bellonci 34-35; Jerrold 182).¹⁴ Instead of following Suor Angelica’s advice, Stampa reentered the social scene, mingling with old friends and acquaintances, and continuing her work as a singer and musician. The following year, a friend of her now deceased brother, Francesco Sansovino, dedicated his *Ragionamento d’amore*¹⁵ to her (Bassanese, *Stampa* 8, 87-88; Bellonci 34-35; Jerrold 177). Shortly thereafter Sansovino dedicated both the sixteenth edition of Boccaccio’s *Ameto* (1544) and the *Lettura di Benedetto Varchi sopra un sonetto dell “Gelosia” di Monsignor Della Casa* (1544) to Stampa¹⁶ (Bassanese, *Stampa* 44; Bellonci 34-35; Braden “Gender” 131-32). Once again, in 1547, Stampa was the dedicatee of a published work, this time by Perissone Cambio, her lute and voice instructor and himself a well-respected singer; the book was a collection of madrigals titled *Primo libro di madrigali a quarto voci* (Bassanese, *Stampa* 4, 8).

On Christmas Day 1548, in Domenico Venier’s *ridotto*, Stampa met Collaltino di Collalto,¹⁷ a landed aristocrat from Friuli, friend of many literati, a soldier, and himself a mediocre poet (Bellonci 36-37). This fortuitous meeting began a three-year tumultuous love affair during which Stampa composed her *canzoniere*. For the most part, Collaltino ignored her advances, but Stampa persisted in writing love sonnets for him, nonetheless;

then in May 1549, Stampa enclosed 100 sonnets with a letter¹⁸ and mailed it, with the poems, to Collaltino who was campaigning in France (Bassanese, *Stampa* 17; Robin 44).¹⁹ Initially, Cecilia and Cassandra hoped that Collaltino would marry Stampa, but his unresponsiveness during his six-month absence crushed their hopes (Bellonci 37).²⁰ After his return and a brief reunion with Stampa, he retreated to his estate in Friuli, leaving Stampa to doubt that he still loved her. In 1550 Collaltino took her to his estate, San Salvatore, but ignored her while there (Bellonci 38-39).

During the late 1540s, Stampa joined the *Accademia dei Dubbiosi* as Anassilla, a pseudonym based on the Latin name Anaxum of the river that ran through the Collalto estate in the Veneto (Bellonci 37-38). Giorgio Benzoni, the editor of her posthumous *Rime*, uses “Anassilla” in a poem, an indication that the name was public currency (Jones, *Currency* 126).²¹ It was during her involvement with the *Accademia* that the affair with Collaltino ended, and she met her new love, Bartolomeo Zen, a Venetian patrician (Bellonci 38-39), whose name appears in the acrostic poem in the *Rime*: “Ben si convien, signor, che l’aureo dardo.”²² Stampa remained with Zen until her death on the 23rd of April 1553, when she was thirty-one years old (Bassanese, *Stampa* 19; Bellonci 40-41; Robin 13).²³ Urged by Stampa’s admirers, Cassandra gathered “quelle che si sono potute trovare” (“all those [poems] that could be found”; Jerrold 194) and published them October 1554; she dedicated the *Rime* to Archbishop Giovanni Della Casa (Bassanese, *Stampa* 20; Bellonci 40-41; Jaffe 246), a friend of the Stampas (Jerrold 177).

Documented Facts

This biography is repeated in articles, essays, and dissertations, hence the term “standardized” used in the previous header; but how many of these “facts” can historical documents verify? The answer exists in the publications of the man who sought to prove Stampa a courtesan, the Italian scholar Abdelkader Salza.

Salza, dissatisfied with the Romantic view of Stampa as a young, innocent victim of Collaltino’s cruel heart, found new documents in the archives that he claims support his supposition. Although contemporary and present-day scholars disagree with Salza’s conclusions, his archival findings demonstrate how little we know about the poet. As Salza says:

But the following details of her biography we can know for sure: the family of the poetess was Padovan, and certainly not noble, because no corroboration has reached us; Gaspara was born in Padua, as she herself says in a sonnet to Speroni. We do not know in what year, but probably not before 1525. As for her kin, we know nothing about the father. One hint about the mother and sister, [Gaspara] places in another sonnet. Some other [sonnets] by Parabosco compliment [Gaspara’s sister] Cassandra who dedicated [Gaspara’s] *Rime* (1554) to Giovanni della Case. We have received a few other details and a little song of the brother of Stampa, Baldassare, whom she never mentions. Stampa died precisely on the 23rd April 1554 (“Secondo” 4-5; translation mine) 24

The sonnet addressed to the Venetian literati²⁵ Sperone Speroni, “Voi n’andaste, signor, senza me dove” (“Without me, lord, you went where”),²⁶ is a simple

communication expressing Stampa's regret that she could not accompany him to her hometown for the religious festivities (Bassanese, *Stampa* 37; Wend 177). Stampa does not mention the city's name, but refers to it by its fame: where "il gran Troian fermò le schiere errati" (1-2). Padua claims Antenor, the "gran Troian," as its founder; he established the city when he ceased his wanderings and settled there with his band of displaced Trojans. Stampa also refers to Padua's patron saint, St. Anthony,²⁷ as "un de li dèi più cari al vero Giove" ("the saint most loved of God"; 7-8) (Bellonci 246; Jaffe 241).

Other epistolary sonnets included in the *Rime* provide names from her coterie and wider circle of acquaintances, a group that includes musicians, literati, nobles, and patricians of Venice and beyond. Stampa addressed sonnets to Domenico Venier; to the poet Luigi Alamanni (Bassanese, "Negativity" 336; Robin, "Courtesans" 43); to a certain Zanni who may have been the Venetian Bembista Giacomo Zane (Bassanese, "Negativity" 336); to the brother of the beloved in her *Rime*, Vinciguerra di Collalto; to Girolamo Molin, a Petrarchist and friend of Pietro Bembo, who also had composed a Petrarchan *Canzoniere* (Wend 76-77); to a Michiel who could have been Domenico Michiel, the Venetian poet and philosopher who taught Stampa poetry (Wend 74). Other addressees were Leonardo Emo, Venetian poet, nobleman, and friend of Collaltino (Wend 173); a Balbi about whom nothing is known; the philosopher and Bembist Nicolò Tiepolo (Wend 176); a Soranzo, who if he were Mercantonio Soranzo was a Venetian nobleman (Wend 174); Elena Barozzi Centani, a Venetian "gentildonna" (Wend 176); Giovanna d' Aragona; Ortensio Lando, "an adventurous Milanese writer" and a member of the same literary circles (Wend 173n. 112); and Francesco Fortunio, a jurist and "founder of grammatical rules" published as *Regole Grammaticali* (Wend 174n. 119). In

addition, Stampa wrote 15 sonnets whose addressees are uncertain.²⁸ Finally, Cassandra frames Stampa's *Rime* with poems by men who knew Stampa: Benedetto Varchi, Giulio Stufa, Giorgio Benzoni, Torquato Bembo, and Leonardo Emo.

Stampa is often considered to have been a courtesan for three reasons: her acquaintances were primarily men; she appears to have been able to move freely around the Venetian social scene; and she composed unrestrained, even erotic, love poetry. Abdelkader Salza, for example, wrote upwards of 200 pages in two articles—and published Stampa's *Rime* with that of Veronica Franco's—in an attempt to persuade skeptical scholars that Stampa was indeed a courtesan; nonetheless, to date no evidence has surfaced that settles the issue definitively. We do know, however, that Stampa was a virtuosa who garnered praises for her voice and musical techniques. For example, Girolamo Parabosco extols the quality of Stampa's voice, along with her beauty and intelligence, in the dedication of his *Lettere amoroze* (1545) (Feldman, "Academia" 500). Typical hyperbolic praise aside, Stampa's singing was apparently excellent:

And what shall I say of that angelic voice, which, whenever it penetrates the air with its divine accents, makes such sweet harmony that it does not merely, like the Siren, make everyone who is worthy of hearing it thrall to the brother of death, but infuses spirit and life into the coldest stones, making them weep for sovran sweetness (*Lettere amoroze*, Lib. 1. p 32) (Jerrold 175).²⁹

The composer Perissone Cambio also admired Stampa, dedicating his *Primo libro de madrigali a quarto voci* to her. Placing her first among women who loved music, he mentions that her grasp of music theory was incomparable so that she "possesses" music.

Last, he speaks of the quality of her voice, referring to the epitaph “divine siren” given her by another (Feldman, “Academia” 502-03).

To the lovely and talented Signora Stampa:

Noble lady, well might I be reproved by the wise and learned composers of this sweet and admirable science—reproved in this science, yes, but no man in the world will ever be able to say that I have had little judgment in dedicating these notes of mine to your ladyship, however they may be.

Because it is well known by now—and not only in this fortunate city, but almost everywhere—that no woman in the world loves music as much as you do, nor possesses it to such a rare degree. And thousands upon thousands of fine and noble spirits attest to this who, having heard your sweet harmonies, have given you the name of divine siren, remaining over time your most devoted servants, among whom I am as devoted as any. I come with this my little token and gift to refresh the memory of the love that I bear for your talent, begging that you deign to find me worthy to be placed where you place the innumerable throngs of those who adore and love your rare talents and beauties. And to your graces I commend and offer myself. Most devoted servant Pieresson [sic] Cambio (Feldman, *City* 373).³⁰

Perissone Cambia’s dedication of his first book of madrigals to Stampa should not be dismissed as inconsequential. Authors typically dedicated their published works to individuals of high standing and wealth in hopes of receiving gifts, or better, acquiring a patron who would support the musician’s (or writer’s) future projects with monetary gifts

or a stipend. For Cambio to forgo such an opportunity speaks volumes about his admiration for Stampa's musical talents; he may have hoped to inflame the heart of a generous patron for Stampa's benefit. We do not know if he was successful, but by dedicating one of his books to her, he published her name as an exemplary virtuosa.

Stampa's standard biography presents an overview of her life from her birth to her death, with most details clustered around her 26th to 31st years. Information from these later years is derived from her *Rime*, which tells of a love affair with the landed aristocrat Collaltino di Collalto. However, archival research, especially by Abdelkader Salza, does not corroborate these facts. Actually, we know very little about Stampa's life other than her city of birth, and the date, location, and cause of death. We also know she was a talented singer and musician, and we have some names of people whom she knew. With this dearth of corroborating information, scholars erroneously mistake the "facts" of the *Rime*'s love story as Stampa's personal experiences.

Chapter Two: The Fiction of the *Rime*

Critics, scholars, editors, poets, and just about everyone else have mined Gaspara Stampa's *Rime* for biographical and psychological information beginning as early as 1738 when Antonio Rambaldo di Collalto wrote the first biography – or “romanticized legend” (Bassanese, *Stampa* 23). Using the *Rime* as a source results from the belief that Stampa wrote about a personal love affair. Yet, no scholar has analyzed the *Rime* in the Renaissance autobiographical context, a deficiency that this paper seeks to correct. This chapter begins the process by reviewing some scholars' opinions about Stampa's *Rime*, proceeds with a brief discussion of several modern autobiographical theories, and concludes with some thoughts on reasons why scholars and lay readers alike consider the *Rime* autobiography.

The autobiographical inclination stems from the nature of love poetry: in love poetry—and Petrarchan poetry in particular—the loose plot line of love and loss, the vivid descriptions of emotions, the first-person point of view, the inclusion of time markers, and Stampa's references to actual places and events create the narrative illusion of real experiences. Even some Renaissance readers assumed Petrarch's poetry was “a (f)actual love story that [supported] a psychological and autobiographical reading,” a tendency that Bassanese does not find unusual: “Any Petrarchan volume invites such interpretations, fostering the desire in readers, critics, and biographers alike to seek its narrative core and transform its lyric subjectivity into objective facts” (“Male” 45).

Giuseppe Mazzotta terms this assumption the “biographical fallacy” in his discussion of scholars’ approach to Petrarch’s *Rime sparse*; they assume, he says, “that the dissymmetries and vagaries of [Petrarch’s] conscience mechanically reflect and correspond to contingent vicissitudes of his restless life” (*Worlds* 6).

Critics’ View of Women’s Poetry and of Stampa’s Rime

Critics and readers confuse the fiction found in women’s poetry with autobiography, a phenomenon Lawrence Lipking deems a consequence of readers’ conviction that the woman poet can only write inevitably from the experiential loss of love. The poetry serves, Lipking suggests, to hide the resulting pain. In fact, the woman poet cannot write poetry without having been abandoned first. Without the lost lover, her poetry will not have a theme (171-72, 179). Critics rarely entertain the possibility that the poet drew from her imagination:³¹ “Women writers are thought to be talking about their real experiences and writing about what they really believe” (Benson and Kirkman 8); her material is autobiographical even if her character has nothing in common with the author. Relevant to the objections made in this paper, the author is “credited less with imagination than with sincerity” (Lipking 172). Thus, critics analyze an author’s poetry to elucidate her personality, not to appraise her poetic skill.

The conviction that women’s poetry is lyricized autobiography also occurs in criticism of Gaspara Stampa and her *Rime*. Maud Jerrold credits Stampa with the dubious honor of having written “the first literary autobiography,” and that “we do not need to go beyond [Stampa’s] verses to know her whole story” (184). For Jerrold, Stampa could write only what she had experienced: “Subjective to the last degree, she has no outlook,

she only writes true history.” Following this line of reasoning, Jerrold concludes: Stampa’s “literary output is the story of a three years’ passion, and strikes the varying notes of joy, transport, jealousy, and reproach, returning to the height of ecstasy only to sink down in desolation and despair; it is a love record” (183). Jerrold, in viewing the *Rime* as a direct reflection of Stampa’s morals, is unable to distinguish the poet from her work.

Echoing Jerrold, Frank Warnke asserts that the *Rime* is “a straight-forward account of the ecstasies and sufferings caused by her love for Collaltino di Collalto” (*Three* 20), and Eugenio Donadoni calls Stampa’s *Rime* her “inner diary” (qtd. in Lipking 171). Lipking sums up the general scholarly consensus about the *Rime*: “Stampa’s ‘miracles of love’ imply that another kind of inspiration may be available to the woman poet: not the Muse but the absent lover. *The poem fills the empty space the beloved leaves behind*; it represents the failure of nature and humankind. The *Rime* would not have been written had Collaltino proved faithful” (180; emphasis added). Even if the *Rime* does not record a love affair, critics still feel that Stampa must have experienced one before she could have written her poetry. Warnke, at least, credits Stampa with some poetic skill: “It is possible that Collaltino is the occasion for Stampa’s poetry, her feelings for him deliberately and cunningly heightened and manipulated in order to create an emotional state the will make the writing of poetry possible” (*Three* 20).

Bassanese, the leading critic of Stampa, has modified her opinion that the *Rime* is autobiographical little over the past 28 years. In her 1980 article, “The Feminine Voice: Gaspara Stampa,” Bassanese states that imitative poetry is a “valid outlet for self-expression,” and that Stampa, “always conscious of her condition as both a woman and a

female writer [,]... created a *canzoniere* which is extremely personal” (81). Using “the vocabulary afforded her,” Stampa perceived “her own experiences in the language of Petrarchism” (82); however, in imitation of Petrarch, her poetry focuses on her own emotions during the love affair: “The center of Stampa’s poetry is her love, her reactions, thoughts, needs, joy, and pains. In short, herself. And she presents an admirable, complete self-description, in which her femininity is of crucial importance. Just as Petrarch is the center of his poetry, so Stampa is the main personal of hers” (83-84). Bassanese clarifies her position on the *Rime*’s autobiographical nature in her 1982 monograph *Gaspara Stampa* when she states that it cannot be true autobiography because Stampa wrote it under the constraints of the Petrarchan model:

Stampa’s *Rime* has ceaselessly been read as an historical document, functioning as a source upon which critics have fashioned her life story. The poetry cannot reasonably be interpreted as factual text, however. If it is biographical, it deals with spiritual and psychological biography. Emotional states may be honestly rendered, but they have been adjusted to the constraints of a literary form, generally the sonnet. Such alterations and the very act of recreating factual moments to suit artistic demands require a shift in perspective. The points of view of the poet and of the person are necessarily different and often at variance. (40)

Nonetheless, Bassanese still views Stampa’s *Rime* as based on an actual love affair: “Gaspara Stampa needs to be studied not as a woman who wrote, but as a poet who described, presented, and quite possibly invented situations, *rendering life fiction* in order to elevate it to true art” (*Stampa* 41; emphasis added). Bassanese comments on the

Rime's autobiographical nature in her 1989 article, "What's in a Name?: Self-naming and Renaissance Women Poets," asserting that a love affair inspired Stampa's Petrarchism: "In the Petrarchan-Bembian vein, her principle love interest provides a name rich in poetic possibilities.... Stampa transforms her beloved's name into *colle*, which extends into Parnassus and Helicon" (105). Similarly, in her latest article, "Stampa's Petrarchan Commemorations: Validating a Female Discourse" (2004), Bassanese refines her argument that Stampa did not write an autobiography, but created a work of art based on her love for Collaltino, because, Bassanese maintains, Stampa recognized the Petrarchan sonnet as the perfect mode for describing her love affair: "Besides commemorating Petrarch as the master of prosody by imitating him stylistically, Stampa also celebrates the *Canzoniere* as an *ideal rendering of the love experience* (emphasis added), the perfect *fabula*" (159).³²

The idea that Stampa invented the *Rime*'s love story has rarely been suggested and only once pursued, however briefly.³³ Critical consensus holds that Stampa wrote about her own love affair; consequently, critics do not hesitate to extract details from the *Rime* and employ them as facts in Stampa's biography. This biography, standardized for all practical purposes now, contains many assumed "facts" as noted in the previous chapter.

Autobiography: Some Definitions

Clues derived from reading her *Rime*—probably only a sample of Stampa's total *oeuvre*³⁴—indicate that Stampa sought recognition as a poet as seen by the fact that she composes the obligatory Petrarchan poetry, uses a variety of poetic styles—sonnets,

songs, canzoni, sestine, ballate, capitoli, and madrigali, and admits in Sonnet One that she seeks “gloria” (7). Yet, as discussed previously, critics assume the *Rime* to be autobiographical.

What constitutes autobiographical writing? Unfortunately, the number of definitions nearly equals the number of scholars who write about it. Nonetheless, although no one can agree on what distinguishes a work as autobiographical, a working definition can be helpful. In fact, Sidonie Smith, *A Poetics of Women’s Autobiography: Marginality and the Fictions of Self-Representation* 1987, states that, “Complex and typologically diffuse, autobiography demands of its critics careful consideration of the working definition from which they proceed” (19). With this caution in mind, we now review a few relevant, modern definitions of autobiography, which, of course, is by no means a comprehensive or in-depth consideration of the genre. The purpose here is to consider some of the most widely accepted, modern critical ideas about autobiography, and then contrast them with what Stampa’s cultural context understood about this kind of writing

The *Oxford English Dictionary Online* defines autobiography succinctly as “the writing of one’s own history; the story of one’s life written by himself [sic].”³⁵ This pithy definition contrasts with that found in Roy Pascal’s *Design and Truth in Autobiography* (1960) which provides a thorough, refined, and specific discussion. Pascal analyzes the difference between multiple forms of first-person writings—the diary, memoir or reminiscence, and the philosophical reflection on the self—and autobiography to arrive at a working definition of autobiography. First, he distinguishes autobiography from the diary: the autobiography is “a review of life from a particular moment in time,” whereas

the diary “however reflective it may be, moves through a series of moments in time” (3). The difference is slight, as it is between autobiography and the memoir/reminiscence: “there is no autobiography that is not in some respect a memoir, and no memoir that is without autobiographical information; both are based on personal experience, chronological, and reflective” (5). However, here the difference is more distinct: “In autobiography proper, attention is focused on the self, in the memoir or reminiscence on others” (5). Philosophical reflections on the self, static analysis, and the self-portrait all “attempt, by means of introspection, at a static representation of the personality”;³⁶ whereas autobiography is “historical in its method, and at the same time the representation of the self in and through its relations with the outer world” (8). Pascal concludes that autobiography “involves the reconstruction of the movement of life, or part of a life, in the actual circumstances, in which it was lived. Its central interest is the self, not the outside world, though necessarily the outside world must appear so that, in give and take with it, the personality finds its particular shape” (9). Pascal adds:

autobiography is the shaping of the past. It imposes a pattern on a life, constructs out of it a coherent story. It establishes certain stages in the individual’s life, makes links between them, and defines, implicitly or explicitly, a certain consistency of relationship between the self and the outside world (or a consistency of misrelationship...). This coherence implies that the writer takes a particular standpoint, the standpoint of the moment at which he reviews his life, and interprets his life from it.” (9)

This standpoint may be the author’s social position, an achievement, or his philosophy, thus enabling the writer “to see his life as some thing of a unity” (10). This superimposes

a structure on the writer's life, and makes it appear that all events inevitably lead to the present moment and the situation in which the author now finds himself. The autobiography moves through a chronological sequence of events that culminate in the lesson learned from living life.

Pascal's comment that autobiography reconstructs a "movement of life," or part thereof, "in the actual circumstances in which it was lived" implies that the writer accesses fully formed memories. Alternatively, John Paul Eakin, *Fictions in Autobiography: Studies in the Art of Self-Invention* (1985), defines autobiography "as a ceaseless *process* of identity formation in which new versions of the past evolve to meet the constantly changing requirements of the self in each successive event" (36; emphasis added). The autobiographer re-envision the past to construct her- or himself to meet personal needs *at the time of writing*. Sidonie Smith approaches the issue of autobiography from a different angle in *A Poetics of Women's Autobiography: Marginality and the Fictions of Self-Representation* (1987). She argues that autobiography includes all written and verbal communications where the speaking "I" is also the narration's subject. In addition, a different "self" emerges when the same "I" exists in a different context: context shapes self-awareness, as Smith explains:

since I understand the 'self' of autobiography not to be a priori essence, a spontaneous and therefore 'true' presence, but rather a cultural and linguistic 'fiction' constituted through historical ideologies of selfhood and the processes of our storytelling, I also want to acknowledge the contextual influence of historical phenomena by accounting for communal

figures of selfhood, those intertexts that shape autobiographer's self-interpretation. (45)

James S. Amelang's definition of autobiography resembles that of the *OED Online*, and is, therefore, more inclusive than that of Pascal and Eakin, but perhaps not Smith. Amelang, *The Flight of Icarus: Artisan Autobiography in Early Modern Europe* (1998), defines autobiographical writing as "any literary work that expresses lived experience from a first-person point of view." He realizes that "this is a problematic approach, especially since 'autobiography' in this sense embraces so many forms that are, strictly speaking, not autobiographical. However, few acceptable alternatives come to mind" (47). Amelang understands that his definition is overly inclusive, but views his position as pragmatic; he explains early in his book that:

By holding less tenaciously to autobiography in the strict sense, and ranging more widely among personal documents, one can take some first steps toward capturing the broader history of how people from all walks of life, not just the usual suspects, wrote about themselves and their experience. What this approach loses in formal precision—and such a loss is not inevitable—it gains in breadth. It also affords a more realistic view of the meaning of writing, and especially writing about oneself, for all classes in early modern Europe, widening and strengthening the light that one can shed on the complex ways in which people understood the self and its surroundings in Western societies in the past. (16)

Amelang's "more realistic view of the meaning of writing" suggests the reason(s) why men and women write autobiography. The deep impulse underlying the need to tell

one's life story derives from the writer's "insistence of bearing witness on leaving to the self and others a convincing testimony of experience, and on regarding such testimony as a venue to a new, if not wholly assumed, identity, that of *author*" (Amelang 51). Those who wrote were aware that the written word would remain after the author's death, and with the autobiography's continued existence, the man (and rarely—woman) was granted immortality. Autobiography offers the autobiographer authorial fame during life and immortality after death.

Returning to the *Rime*, we can now ask, What aspects about Stampa's work induce readers to categorize it as autobiography? Does it in any way meet the definitions previously discussed? In general, the *Rime* meets many of the prerequisites for autobiography as defined by contemporary critics with the first-person perspective leading the list. Others include the *Rime*'s convincing portrayal of changing emotions, the detailed account of an "event" in the author's life, the implied desire to leave a record of herself as a lover, the references to the passage of time, and the references to familiar places, events, and people, all creating the illusion of a personal history. While the *OED Online* would warrant including the *Rime* under the first definition as "writing," it also requires that the "history" be "the story of one's life" and, as such, requires more than the *Rime*'s three years. As a result, the *Rime* does not meet the *OED Online*'s criterion, but does approximate the parameters established by Pascal, Eakin, Smith, and Amelang.

Pascal permits the retelling of a portion of Stampa's life: the love affair. Stampa creates a somewhat coherent story that traces a love affair's stages over a defined period with time markers. She provides a rationale for the emotions she describes and for the most part writes from the point of view of the constant lover, thus establishing her

identity from the beginning. The *Rime* also meets Eakin's criteria of "identity formation" by presenting an evolving self through the narrator's changing attitude toward her beloved and toward herself as the lover. The poems delineate the lover's growth from a woman who longs for the beloved's affection, to the disappointment and realization that the beloved will not provide the love she craves, to the final awareness that, in her soul, it is being *in love* that makes her a lover, not the reciprocal love from a man.

The *Rime* satisfies Smith's requirements as is written communication addressing the reader, a female audience, or Collaltino, sometimes switching from one to another in the same poem. The poet is the narrative's subject as she tells the story in first person of unrequited love and, in the process, constructs two overlapping identities: that of the constant lover and that of the poet. If viewed by Amelang's definition of autobiography, the *Rime* clearly portrays itself as "bearing witness," and as "leaving to the self and other a convincing testimony of [an] experience" (51), as seen in the first sonnet where the narrator hopes "well-born people" ("le ben nate genti") will read her verses and reward her with "gloria" (6-7).

The persuasiveness of the poems resides in the intensity and breadth of the dramatized emotions and with the seeming logic of the love's progression from its first stirrings, through its joys and disappointments, to its eventual death. Although the modern reader may see it as autobiography when judged by the criteria of several critics, would a cinquecento Venetian reader have considered it so?³⁷ Did Stampa perceive herself as writing poetry or autobiography?

Chapter Three: Venice, Music, Writing, and the *Ridotti*

To appreciate why Stampa as a successful musician-singer would write a Petrarchan *canzoniere* we must first understand her society both on the grand scale and on the personal level. What follows is a broad overview of Venetian life—a wide brush stroke to be sure, but an indication, nonetheless, of Stampa’s world and her place in it. The patricians of Venice—a population of five percent (Baldauf-Berdes 12)—were the ruling class, a privilege they assumed with the *Serrata del Maggior Consiglio* in 1296 (Baldauf-Berdes 12), leaving the other classes with limited or no voice in government. These same patricians elected the doge or prince, who, although he headed the Venetian state, was a figurehead. The real power lay with the procurators or administrators, the senators, and the Council of Ten, the positions occupied by the patricians themselves (Baldauf-Berdes 14). The *cittadini* or middle class were the strata under the patricians and comprised approximately 20 percent of the population. This class consisted of two categories: those who were descendants of settlers (the *cittadinanza origaria*) and those who were citizens by birth (the *cittadinanza nativa*) (Baldauf-Berdes 13). The *cittadini* were the Venetian professionals: merchants, lawyers, some artists and teachers, physicians, and others who did not do manual labor for pay (Baldauf-Berdes 13). The *cittadini* also elected their own doge who “held a position comparable to the headship of the civil service and represented his class in public functions, with some rights of precedence over nobles” (Baldauf-Berdes 14). Although Stampa’s father was a gold merchant—technically a middle-class

professional—Stampa would not have been a citizen of Venice because her father was Paduan, and she was born in Padua.³⁸ Indeed, the Venetian inflexible class system predetermined Stampa's place and role the day she was born.

Beneath the middle class was the *popolani* or commoners, the largest class, comprising about 75 percent of the population, who were the working class, those engaged in manual labor, such as fishermen, lady's maids, and gondoliers (Baldauf-Berdes 14). The final category was not a class since it was composed of members from all classes who were destitute and "without a visible source of income or membership in a *scoule* or *scole* (societies for the mutual support of members)" (Baldauf-Berdes 14). The large number of *popolani* made Venice a bustling working town; nonetheless, Venice also had vibrant intellectual and musical communities (Robin, "Courtesans" 35) making cinquecento Venice a stimulating and potentially lucrative place for both literati and musicians.

Music and Musicians in Venice

During Stampa's lifetime, Venice, with its passion for music, was awash with singers, musicians, and composers hired by the *ridotti*, individuals, churches, and the state, providing unlimited employment possibilities for the talented and skilled (Hay and Law 338). The main patrons were the state and the church, (Burke 111), and in Venice where a centralized court did not exist, the Venetian patricians and the nobles from the mainland.

The biggest employer was the church, which required numerous singers and musicians for the many masses performed throughout the liturgical year (Burke 111). The

state also hired many musicians for state functions, which were celebrated in the open air with trumpets, cornets, trombones, and recorders (Burke 111), instruments could be heard in large outdoor arenas, such as the Square of San Marco. Courts and *ridotti*, with their indoor parties, preferred strings, either solo or accompanied by a singer (Lowinsky 521), as did the merchant class who also employed singers and musicians for their events (Machlis and Forney 90). The demand for solo singers who could improvise their own or another's lyrics to music was great (Hay and Law 334-35). Improvisation as well as the quality of the singer's voice were popular topics of conversation among *ridotti* (Hale 251), resulting in the rising reputations of musicians and singers. In fact, during this period a group of musicians and singers reached celebrity status "by singing or playing the lute, lyre, viola da gamba, harp, cistern, horn, or trumpet." Moreover, any singer who had an exceptional voice for soloing, as Gaspara apparently had, was in high demand (Bassanese *Stampa* 4). Consequently, the virtuosa Gaspara would have had access to numerous Venetian *ridotti*.

Music's role was an "established and regular one" in Domenico Venier's *ridotto*, even if secondary to literary discussions (Feldman, "Academy" 493), and its members mixed socially with composers and musicians; several members of Venier's *ridotto* knew Perissone Cambio, Stampa's lute and voice teacher ("Academy" 493-94). The professional musician Girolamo Parabosco, an organist, composer, and notable polygraph, also attended Venier's *ridotto* often. Both Cambio and Parabosco were students of Adrian Willaert ("Academy" 493-94), choirmaster of San Marco and composer of polyphony ("Academy" 480). With her contacts, Stampa probably had met Willaert and had access to his compositions, also. Others of Venier's *ridotto* would have

been interested in Willaert's compositions, since men of the classes who attended Venetian *ridotti* were familiar with music theory (Hale 248). Most of the men had attended universities where the core curriculum included the study of music: in addition, most middle- and upper-class men and women had learned a musical instrument—most often the lute—since lessons were a customary part of their education (Hale 248).³⁹

Writing in Venice

Literary culture in Venice thrived alongside the musical one. Almost five hundred registered printers, editors, and booksellers in Venice produced and distributed between seventeen and eighteen million books (Robin, "Courtesans" 35); indeed, Venetian presses printed most of the poetry books published (Bassanese *Stampa* 56). The production boom was due in part to the introduction of the printing press,⁴⁰ but it was, to a greater degree, owing to the acceptance of the *vulgar*, or Tuscan Italian, as the literary language. This change opened up publication opportunities to writers not trained in Latin (Robin, "Courtesans" 35; Bassanese, "Selling" 8), so that, by *Stampa*'s lifetime, the "publication of literature [had] become an industry" (Burke 69). Pietro Bembo (1470-1547), a well-educated *literati* at ease writing Latin, advocated for a change from the scholarly Latin to the vernacular in prose and poetry. The vernacular Bembo chose was the Tuscan Francesco Petrarca (1304-1374) and Giovanni Boccaccio (1313-1375) used. He argued in his *Prose della vulgar lingua* (*Prose in the Vernacular Language*) (1524)⁴¹ for a single vernacular poetic model based on Petrarca's *Rime sparse* (Feldman, "Academy" 481). Bembo's own *Rime* (1530) popularized the Petrarchan poetic mode (Feldman, "Academy" 481; Richardson 684-85).

Owing to the concentration of printing presses in Venice, writers, editors, poets, and others flocked to the island republic where they found instead of ducal courts—the normal gathering places for writers, poets, and literati in other cities—casual literary salons. These salons or *ridotti* provided a place where new writers could be discovered since “editors from the great presses scouted [the Venetian *ridotti*] for new talent” (Robin, “Courtesan” 39). Members of a *ridotto* gathered in private homes, such as that of Cecilia Stampa and Domenico Venier. The informality⁴² of the *ridotti* allowed easy access to Venetians and foreigners alike. Consequently, without a formal structure, *ridotti* attracted a diversity of men and women with similar interests resulting in the constant introduction of ideas and people. At least two types of *ridotti* existed: those that focused on music and those that focused on vernacular literature, such as “poetry, letters, plays, editions, and treatises dealing with the popular themes of love and language” (Feldman, “Academy” 476-77). A fashionable subject of debate was “the stylistic requirements for the love lyric” (Rosenthal, *Honest* 209); these debates advanced the literary education for Stampa and others, both women and men. The *ridotto* thus provided a location where women could broaden their education in “practical politics and intellectual subjects,” could advance their education beyond what they could learn from tutors. As will be discussed below, women were not allowed to attend schools and universities. Consequently, the *ridotti* may have been more important to women than their formal education in “allowing them to gain intellectual influence” (Wiesner, *Gender* 164). Venetian *ridotti* also provided a haven for women to form alliances for furthering “their own interests and those of their families,” and presented them with opportunities to advance their literary profession by making connections with, and gaining the support of,

powerful men (Rosenthal, *Honest* 2; Wiesner, *Gender* 164). For example, anthologies of women's poetry were particularly popular (Robin, "Courtesan" 39), and a poet's presence in a *ridotto* increased her chances of being "discovered" by (male) editors, thus advancing her literary career. It should be noted, however, that it was only in merchant cities such as Venice with "a framework of political and class flexibility" that women were able to move about within and to rise in the literary circles (Rosenthal, *Honest* 2).

The host of the most prestigious Venetian *ridotto*, Domenico Venier (1517-1582),⁴³ was a member of one of the "most powerful clans of Venice" who, throughout the sixteenth century, "continually occupied important and intellectual positions." Venier established his *ridotto* at his home, Ca' Venier at S. Maria Formosa, after he resigned from the Senate due to his physical infirmity (Rosenthal, *Honest* 17). Initially, it began as a get-together of close patrician friends, some of whom knew each other from childhood and school, but by 1546, his academic gatherings had grown to include other writers (Feldman, "Academy" 477-78). Venier's *ridotto* was an open gathering with foreigners and educated women often in attendance. Typical discussions included poetry, poetics, and Petrarch and Petrarchan imitation in addition to a popular version of Platonism, "theories of love, mythology, ancient history, comparative governments, and quite naturally, current events and local gossip" (Bassanese, *Stampa* 12). His *ridotto*'s chief interest was Petrarch's poetry as analyzed and imitated by Pietro Bembo. Nonetheless, creativity was encouraged by having the members compete in the composition of sonnets and other verse. A member read his or her poem then a discussion followed wherein the attendees critiqued the poem, determining the poem's conformity with the standards of imitation (Bassanese, *Stampa* 10). When the members of Venier's group considered the

merits of each sonnet or *terza rime*, they looked to Pietro Bembo's *Prose dell' volgare lingua* (1525) for critical guidance (Feldman, "Academy" 481). The *Prose* was the "primary stylistic guide for vernacular writers, and especially so in the Venetian literary establishment that Venier came to represent" (Feldman, "Academy" 481). In 1539, after Bembo left for Rome and the duties of Cardinal, Venetian literati turned to Venier as the "sole worthy successor of Bembo" (Bassanese, *Stampa* 336).⁴⁴ Domenico exerted considerable influence and power over a group of Venetian poets that included Fortunio Spira, Girolamo Molino, Girolamo Parabosco, Girolamo Muzio, Bernardo and Torquato Tasso, among others (Rosenthal 178). Also attending Venier's *ridotto* were Pietro Aretino; Sperone Speroni; Bedoer, founder of the *Accademia Veneziana*; Alvise Zorzi; the vernacular poets Anton Jacopa and Corsom; Lorneco Contariono, philosopher and classicist, (Feldman, "Academy" 488). Numerous poets from other Italian cities sought advice from Venier with questions and concerns about their literary projects (Rosenthal, *Honest* 213). Although poets were expected to imitate Petrarch, theorists such as Lodovico Dolce, Sebastian Rizzo, Giovanni Battist Pigna, Girolamo Molino, Girolamo Ruscelli, Bernardo Tasso, and Girolamo Muzio "warned against slavish imitation of classical authors," but left the final decision to Venier (Rosenthal, *Honest* 213).

Venier's *ridotto* and his acquaintance were a means by which an aspiring writer could raise his or her public status, necessary if the writer sought to create a name within literary circles or obtain patronage. Ironically, although Venier was one of the most influential vernacular authors, he limited the circulation of his works to manuscripts, he being more interested in mentoring "aristocratic drop-outs," "patrician dilettantes," and fledgling writers, such as Gaspara Stampa (Feldman, "Academy" 486-87), Moderata

Fonte, Irene di Spilimbergo, Tullia d' Aragona, and Veronica Gambara (Rosenthal, *Honest* 89). Due to women's educational constraints, they looked to men like Venier who played an important role in helping them achieve a literary vocation. The man could be her father, as Gaspara's father would have been if he had lived, or the man could be a father figure. He provided moral and financial support for the woman's education as a writer (Rosenthal, *Honest* 83). The presence of an occasional sonnet (Sonnet 227: "Se voi non foste à maggior cose volto") addressed to Venier in her *Rime* indicates that Stampa sought to correspond with Venier on at least one occasion. The inclusion of another sonnet (Sonnet 26: "Arsi, piansi, cantai; piango, ardo e canto") imitating Venier's Sonnet 33 ("Non punse, arse o lego, stral, fiamma, o lacci") affirms that she read his poetry.

As a visitor to Venier's *ridotto* and friend of many of its members, Stampa was immersed in a society that was obsessed with poetic imitation. To make a lasting name for herself—as Petrarch, Dante, and Boccaccio had done—she had to write for writing alone could gain her admiration beyond the sound of her voice, and writing lasted beyond the lifetime of the author. Being a musical virtuosa was, no doubt, lucrative, and probably supported her and perhaps her sister and mother (if she were still living). However, the impression that her singing and instrumental virtuosity left with her audience was temporary since her reputation lasted no longer than their memory of her last performance did. Yet, to put poetry down on paper provided the possibility for lasting fame, as it had for the aristocrats Vittoria Colonna (1492-1549) and Veronica Gambara (1485-1550), and even for Stampa's contemporaries, Tullia d' Aragona (1510-1556), Laura Terracina (1519- 1577), Chiara Matraini (1515-1604), and Laura Battiferri (1523-1589).

As evidenced by this brief review of the Venetian literary and musical scenes, Stampa lived in Venice during an intellectually exciting time when the number and types of vernacular publications exploded, and an innovative and dynamic music field was attracting new talent. Nonetheless, the question arises, to what extent were Gaspara and women like her able to benefit from this exciting milieu?

Jacob Burckhardt, in his germinal book *The Civilization of Renaissance Italy* (1860), claims that Renaissance women stood “on a footing of perfect equality with men” (292), thus free to move among groups both spatially and intellectually.⁴⁵ Did Stampa and her Venetian sisters enjoy the same social and literary freedoms, and the same educational opportunities that her brother did? The answer is No, a consequence of societal fears that the presence of free-thinking, freely-acting women would disturb political and social stability.⁴⁶ The result was a confining definition of ‘Woman’ and of proper female behaviors.

The parameters of proper female behavior defined by popular conduct books were customized to suit the different cultures of the court with their aristocrats and the cities with their bourgeois households; they also differed depending on the class, nation, or religion of the woman’s society (Jones, *Currency* 3). Whether written for the lady or the merchant’s daughter, all conduct books have one axiom in common: women lack the ability to withstand the temptations found in public places. For example, those books intended for the male heads of households in the merchant and professional classes insisted that women should be restricted to the private sphere, while those concerning upper-class women who held honorable jobs, such as the lady-in-waiting, detail how a woman should act in the court’s public sphere (Jones, *Currency* 20).

The Book of the Courtier (1528) by Baldasar Castiglione is an example of a conduct book concerned with the proper decorum of the courtier and the court lady—the *donna*. For the majority of the book, Castiglione lays out, in dialogue and in exhausting detail, how a courtier should distinguish himself in manners, dress, dancing, speaking, advising his prince, and the treatment of women. In Book Three, when the topic turns to women, Castiglione distinguishes the two genders, allowing little overlap in physique or demeanor:

[For], although some qualities are common to both [the courtier and the *donna*] and are as necessary for a man as for a woman, there are yet others that befit a man and to which a woman ought to be a complete stranger. I say this of bodily exercise; but above all I think that in her ways, manners, words, gestures and bearing, a woman ought to be very unlike a man; for just as he must show a certain solid and sturdy manliness, so it is seemly for a woman to have a soft and delicate tenderness, with an air of womanly sweetness in her every movement, which, in her going and staying, and in whatever she says, shall always make her appear the woman without any resemblance to a man. (205-06)

Nothing the *donna* says or does should contain any suggestion of the masculine or in any way deviate from pure femininity. Moreover, Castiglione admonishes the *donna* to jealously guard her reputation, her most valuable possession, from blemish, a difficult requirement, to be sure, since the *donna* must somehow control what others say about her and has few recourses available if someone spreads malicious gossip. The *donna*

must be circumspect, and more careful not to give occasion for evil being said of her, and conduct herself so that she may not only escape being sullied by guilt but even by the suspicion of it, for a woman has not so many ways of defending herself against false calumnies as a man has.

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A woman's chastity was considered her most important treasure and, therefore, her most important concern. Juan Luis Vives (1492-1540), a Spanish Humanist and author of *Education of a Christian Woman* (1524), believed that a woman's education should focus on protecting her chastity; all she needs to know, in fact must know, is how to protect that 'treasure': "A woman's only care is chastity; therefore, when this has been thoroughly elucidated, she may be considered to have received sufficient instruction" (Vives 47). Society exempted no woman from the moral obligation of chastity. Stampa was no exception, as the anxiety expressed by others indicates: she received a letter ⁴⁷ dated 20 August 1544 from Suor Angelica Paola de' Negri. Suor Angelica expresses fear for Stampa's chastity, which is perceived to be at risk because Stampa mingled with the *litterati* (read: men) of the *ridotti*. Suor Angelica urges Stampa to avoid situations where she could be tempted into immoral acts or even give cause for others to suspect her virtue:

Do not be sorry to disappoint the world in what it expects of you, and do not believe in flatterers, those who love you according to the flesh. Do not deceive yourself, I pray you, but cut off all those intimacies and conversations which separate you from Christ and put you in peril, or which might bring a breath of suspicion upon that beautiful chastity which

shines forth in you, besides all your other virtues, on account of which I said that you must not wonder if I love you. I love you and will love you always, if you will love Him who loves you so much; and not only with letters, but with my blood, my life, my soul. I shall be content - and I will not go back on my word - I shall be content if I am able to help you in the virtuous course which He who has begun it in you gives you to make perfect. I pray you to familiarise yourself by constant thought with the pains and torments that have been suffered for you. Take some time from your other occupations to spend it at the feet of your Savior. Pray do this, so that you may be made worthy to receive true light and real knowledge of the will of God in you, so that you may be able to perform it, and pray with me. (Jerrold 182)

It would be far superior, certainly safer for her reputation, Suor Angelica states, if Stampa avoided conversations with men and spent her time in prayer instead. Francesco Sansovino, who had been a close friend of Stampa's now deceased brother, also verbalizes concern for Stampa's chastity in the dedication of his book, the *Ragionamento d'Amore* (1545):

I send you this little sketch which I have made as a relaxation from graver studies, to remind you that by its means you may learn to shun the deceptions which perverse men practice [*sic*] on the pure and innocent maidens, such as you are. And herewith I instruct and advise you to proceed with your glorious studies, shunning every occasion which might distract you from your undertaking. I know that I am too bold, but the

memory of your virtues, and the extreme affection that I bear to you and to Madonna Cassandra, your honoured sister, and the duty, to which I am bound, constrain me to this, and so I hope for your forgiveness.” (Jerrold 177)⁴⁸

Angelica Paolo Antonia de’ Negri’s and Francesco Sansovino’s concern for Stampa’s chastity was typical for the period. The early modern woman, and women writers in particular, were constantly reminded of their place in society and their proper code of conduct. Admonitions, both spoken and written, permeated the woman’s world, finding their way into “sermons, stage plays, popular ballads; advice and letters from parents; treatises in Latin intended for fathers, religious advisors, and magistrates; practical household handbooks and moralists’ pamphlets addressed to female audiences; best-selling satires pillorying rebellious women” (Jones, *Currency* 12). Moralists insisted that women were the “weaker vessel” requiring the guidance of a man (Hay and Law 39), whether father, brother, or husband. In this respect, Sansovino was acting in the place of Stampa’s deceased brother and father when he admonishes Stampa about her chastity.

Not only must a woman be conscientious about her actions, she must also be circumspect about her speech. Most conduct books concern themselves with women’s speech and, for their protection, demand their silence, whether the women were upper, middle, or lower class. Even the women of the *Courtier* are silent during discussion, speaking only to provide the topic for the men present to converse about. In fact, noblewomen, such the two women in the *Courtier*, were enjoined to be careful lest they say something others will denounce: “The noblewoman . . . was instructed to safeguard her social standing within the Venetian society by never incurring public rebuke” (Rosenthal

Honest 61). Even the highly respected aristocratic poets Vittoria Colonna and Veronica Gambara carefully crafted their public personas by keeping the focus of their poetry on their deceased husbands or on Christ (Cox, “Women Writers” 15; Smarr “Substituting” 3).

The exhortations to silence applied to both vocal and written speech. In ordinary circumstances the injunction to silence (and, therefore, to invisibility) could inhibit a woman writer if she were concerned about her reputation. “Women’s public speech was often linked with sexual dishonor in many people’s minds; a ‘loose’ tongue implied other sorts of loose behavior, and a woman who wanted her thoughts known by others was suspected of wanting to make her body available as well” (Wiesner, *Gender* 189). Stampa doubtless felt that putting her poems in print was too great a risk to her reputation, for if a woman printed her work, her action was translated as aggressive sexuality since Venetian society equated publishing to seeking men’s attention (Krontiris 18-19). The audience for a woman’s speech and for her writing was assumed to be male even where the author addresses a female readership (Krontiris 6). As a result, while the number of Italian women who wrote increased in this period, only a small percentage published in print (Rosenthal, *Honest* 87).

Another hurdle an aspiring woman writer had to negotiate was the prevailing attitude toward the genres. Romances, tragicomedies, and sonnets were considered the intellectual property of men, and, generally, the woman who wrote in these genres was viewed as a transgressor into man’s domain (Krontiris 18). For example, Gaspara Stampa was accused of not only plagiarizing, but of overstepping the gender boundaries with her poetry; specifically, she was alleged to have stolen “poetic language from the *sex* to which

it belonged by precedent and propriety" (Jones, *Currency* 7-8). (Italics added)

Alternatively, since literature was a male activity, society considered it unnatural for a woman to be creative (Krontiris 18), and, if she persisted, the woman was seen as breaking dozens of rules:

She was speaking rather than listening. She was not working in a private household for a family but in a public literary world, going for recognition for herself alone. If she had trained herself in the conventions of Neoplatonism or Petrarchism, she was exercising argument and eloquence for her own ends. Above all, she was entering into a public discourse, exposing the beauty of her language, akin to her body, to the masculine gaze. (Jones, *Currency* 28)

With so much emphasis on the link between public speech and sexuality, and the belief that words belonged to men, Stampa must have felt the conflict between society's demands and her own need to write. Yet, the existence of her poetry indicates that she not only had a strong will and a powerful motive, but she also must have had a supportive network of like-minded people in place. Stampa and other women who wanted to write, but felt uncomfortable challenging the system had several options: she could limit her audience to a circle of friends and family and circulate her works individually or collected into manuscript books; or she could write epistles. She could end up doing all three; for example, she could write her poem in a letter, which was circulated, then copied into a manuscript volume (Ezell 65). Although many manuscripts circulated widely, manuscript circulation protected the author's reputation because it was assumed she intended her work to be private. Nonetheless, manuscript circulation could create the

author's reputation as a poet or a philosopher (Ezell 70). Apparently, Stampa preferred to circulate her poems as manuscripts, restricted to her intimate and literary friends (Bassanese *Stampa* 19); but by circulating her manuscripts, she created a name for herself as poet, as the elegiac poems framing the post-mortem *Rime* testify. Unfortunately, none of Stampa's autographs has survived.

Manuscript miscellanies and published anthologies – the collected works of various authors compiled by booksellers and editors – include a number of women poets, some found nowhere else. As mentioned earlier, editors frequented *ridotti* in search of new talent; perhaps an editor discovered Stampa at one. For example, other than the three poems published with "a vast collection of poets" in *Il sesto libro delle rime di diversi eccellenti autori, nuovamente raccolte et mandate in luce* ("The Sixth Book of Rhymes of Various Excellent Authors, Newly Gathered and Brought to Light") (Venice 1553), Stampa never published her poems; her sister Cassandra published them as the *Rime* after her death (Bassanese *Stampa* 19). A year after the publication of the *Rime*, three of her poems were published in the anthology *Rime diverse di molti eccellentiss. Autori nuovamente raccolte* (1554) edited by Lodovico Domenichi for Giolito (Shemek, "Collector's" 240). Five years later, Domenichi included five of Stampa's poems in a collection limited to poetry by women, the first of its kind, titled *Rime diverse d'alcune nobilissime et virtuossissime donne* [Assorted rhymes by some most noble and virtuous women] (1559) (Shemek, "Collector's" 240, 255n. 4). It contains 237 pages, featuring 316 poems by 53 women, many of whom were aristocrats (Shemek, "Collector's" 244). Amateur anthologists also collected poetry by various authors, gathering them into what are called commonplace books (Ezell 71-72). Women created these books specifically to

“preserve . . . female writings” (Ezell 83). Sometimes, a printer published a pirated commonplace book, much to the anger of the authors (Ezell 71-72) many of whom sought to maintain control of their readership, as did Vittoria Colonna whose poems were first printed in 1538 without her involvement (Bassanese, *Sourcebook* 86-87; Stortoni, *Women* 51). Although authors ran a risk of having their material stolen and printed, manuscript circulation provided them with the intellectual stimulation and response they sought without stepping into the public sphere.

Another method women poets used to interact with the literary scene was through epistles that established correspondence networks on “intellectual or literary topics” (Ezell 73) offering women the opportunity to engage in intellectual conversation with both men and women like themselves and with well-known authors. A woman interested in a piece would write the author with "questions, compliments, or elegant criticism of his or her work" (Ezell 74). Sometimes the author would respond initiating an exchange of letters that gave women a chance to test the soundness of their ideas or material that would later be published (Ezell 76). It appears from several of her occasional poems addressed to friends and literati of Venice and beyond that Stampa was a member of correspondence networks. Her addressees include Vinciguerra Collalto (Collaltino's brother), Domenico Venier, Sperone Speroni, Luigi Alamanni, Leonardo Emo, Giovanna d'Aragona, and Ippolita Mirtilia. Correspondence networks were popular among the upper classes also as seen by the aristocrat Vittoria Colonna who was a diligent and avid letter writer, conversing with influential men and women, such as Michelangelo Buonarroti; the “scourge of princes, Pietro Aretino; Marguerite de Navarre, a French royal; and many others” (Bassanese, *Sourcebook* 91). Veronica Gambarà, another

aristocrat and contemporary of Colonna, was an energetic letter writer with 150 of her letters having survived (Stortoni, *Women* 25). Obviously, the reverse occurred also, men addressing letters to women either to initiate a literary conversation or to praise their talents. The older Bembo corresponded with Vittoria Colonna and Veronica Gambara frequently, exchanging poems, and encouraging and praising their work (Braden "Applied" 402). Another pertinent example is Sansovino's letter addressed to Stampa that he placed at the beginning of his 1545 re-publication of Boccaccio's *Ameto* (Salza, "Secondo" 12).

In addition to letters, the genres of elegies and epitaphs were considered appropriate since they were viewed as personal, intended for the family of the deceased, and not used as they were by men as an introduction into the literary world—a "ritual hymn of poetic consecration during the course of which a new poet presents himself as heir to tradition." In contrast, the private nature of women's elegiac writing permitted the genre to be viewed as "the spontaneous and feminine expression of personal grief rather than as a literary ambition." Yet, while elegiac writing was meant for private occasions and audiences, women often took the opportunity to display their learning (Kinney 60) and perhaps eventually even circulate them. Stampa's *Rime* contains several poems written "on the occasion of the death of a nun (possibly Suor Angelica Paola de' Negri)" (Stampa, *Selected* xxix); however, while she refrained from using this occasion to print her poems, she no doubt circulated them among her coterie.

The negative attitude toward women writers in general presented a dilemma concerning how to praise texts of upper-class women which critics and flatterers circumvented by focusing on admirable feminine traits. Consequently, aristocratic

women were praised not for their literary skills or for their classical learning, but for the morality of their poetry or for their unselfish praise of others. For example, Lodovico Ariosto (b. 1474) in *Orlando furioso* admires Vittoria Colonna for her selfless devotion to her deceased husband (Cox, “Women” 18-19):

If Alexander envied proud Achilles the glorious clarion of Homer, how much more, were he alive today, would he envy you, invincible Francesco of Pescara, that a wife so chaste, so dear to you, should sing the eternal honour due to you, and that she has brought such resonance to your name that you need crave no shriller trumpet. (443)⁴⁹

Colonna did not seek fame for herself, nor did her poetry flaunt her poetic talent, Ariosto implies, but to “trumpet” her beloved husband’s virtues and thus immortalize him. Ariosto does not comment on Colonna’s intellect nor on her poetic skill and talent, praising instead Colonna and Veronica Gambara for their poetic ability to immortalize their deceased husbands. Unlike aristocratic women who were expected to be well educated and could reflect their learning in their poetry, other women were not permitted any display of their advanced education. In their case, the belief of woman’s intellectual inferiority prevailed, and this created a predicament for the average female writer who, unlike her aristocratic sisters, had to defend herself as a legitimate writer, as someone whose text was worth reading. Yet, if she argued that her education gave her the “right” to speak, she was regarded as having an unnatural sexuality, another way of saying she was unchaste for “an eloquent woman is never chaste; the behavior of many learned women confirms [this] truth” (qtd. in Wiesner, “Women’s” 12). While the pressure on women to be silent was not as intense as that concerning chastity, silence was,

nonetheless, considered an important virtue since it implied the purity of the woman's sexuality (Krontiris 5). Stampa's poetry resulted in at least one obscene poem⁵⁰ about her sexuality written after her death by an anonymous poet.⁵¹ No other such poem exists, but Stampa's entry into the arena of the male-dominated world of poetic writing and her bid for attention (and probably a patron) must have angered more than one competitor who preferred that she remain silent and closeted.

Education of Men

The early modern period was a time of intellectual growth for middle- and upper-class males: interest in boys' education increased, and humanist teachers established schools with a focus on the classics in Italian cities and courts.⁵² Humanists felt that a classical education prepared the boys for careers that benefited the state "for it taught [boys] how to argue persuasively, base decisions on historical examples, write effectively and speak eloquently" (Wiesner, *Gender* 153). Humanists linked rational speech and logic to politics and professions; more importantly, they felt rational speech and logic improved society for the betterment of all:

"The Ciceronian ideal of the orator—the good man speaking well—combined in himself logic, rhetoric and moral concerns of civil science; his oratorical duties to teach, delight, and persuade were to be directed always toward social virtue. By his words, he conveyed truth, by his life, he gave authority to his words, and by their combination, he led others to a good life" (Gibson "Educating" 17).

Boys, usually at the age of seven or eight, began Latin grammar (Wiesner, *Gender* 145), and rhetoric, progressing to Roman history and political philosophy before tackling the Greek language, literature, and philosophy (Wiesner, *Gender* 152-53). As young teens they attended a university where they studied the seven liberal arts, which were divided into the more elementary grammar, logic, and rhetoric (the *trivium*), and the more advanced arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy (the *quadrivium*) before pursuing a higher degree in theology, law, or medicine (Burke 54), or a career as a university professor, or as a government or church official (Wiesner, *Gender* 145). Universities in Italy were plentiful; 13 universities in the early fifteenth century matriculated students in Bologna, Ferrar, Florence, Naples, Padua, Pavia, Perugia, Piacenza, Pisa, Rome, Salerno, Siena and Turin. Venetian teens, if they had any aspirations involving Venice, had to attend the state-supported university in Padua. Interested in the growth of its university, Venice “increased the salaries of the professors, forbade Venetians to go to other universities, and made a period of study at Padua a prerequisite for office” (Burke 54-55).

Although most boys from the classes below the patrician and cittadini classes could not pursue a humanist education, a good number did learn to read. In 1587, 30 percent of the male population “possessed at least a rudimentary literacy” while in some trades, such as printing and goldsmithing, nearly all the male workers could read (Wiesner, *Gender* 144). The literacy rate for women was a third of that for men—10 to 12 percent—a figure that includes “almost all the females of the nobility and the majority of wives and daughters of professional men and merchants” (King, *Women* 172-73).

Education of Women

The broad humanist education so typical of middle- and upper-class men never spread beyond this small percentage of women for two reasons: first, no formal institutions of learning were available or accessible for women; second, the humanist ideals at the foundation of much of Renaissance educational theory focused on the education of the public person and his contribution to society. Consequently, the goals of humanist education contradicted society's expectations for women. Another problem a woman faced was hostility to her advancing her knowledge beyond what was "needed" for a woman's homebound duties, especially if she sought to dialogue with male scholars. A woman who acquired a high level of education and made public use of it was often pressured to stop, accused of "deserting her public calling in the home" (Hay and Law 39).⁵³ Hence, a "cultivated woman was a clear exception" (Bassanese, "Selling" 70), which makes Stampa's education (discussed below) all the more remarkable.

Even in this hostile environment, some male humanists, such as the Spanish humanist Juan Luis Vives (b. 1492), argued for the education of women. He recommends in his influential book *Instruction of a Christian Woman* (1524) that a young woman receive a humanist education, although tailored to her "needs":

In this the wisest of men is not deceived, nor are others who are of the same opinion, for the study of literature has these effects: first, it occupies a person's whole attention; second, it lifts the mind to the contemplation of beautiful things and rids it of lowly thoughts; and if any such thoughts creep in, the mind, fortified by precepts and counsels of good living, either dispels them immediately or does not lend an ear to vile and base things,

since it has other pure, substantial, and noble pleasures to aspire after. . . .

Not only does the mind dedicated to wisdom shrink from lust, that is, something innocent and immaculate from filth and defilement, but likewise from those trivial and foolish pastimes that tempt the fickle minds of girls, like dancing, singing, and frivolous and insipid amusements of that sort. “Never,” says Plutarch, “will a woman dedicated to literature distract herself in dancing.” (70-71)

Vives valued education for women as a means of strengthening their resolve to resist “frivolous” and soul-threatening activities by providing women with moral strength and the intellect to avoid evil. Moreover, he maintains that if a woman did commit “any vile act,” her education would mitigate the degree of evil she would have otherwise perpetrated:

The woman who has learned to make these and similar reflections either through instinctive virtue, innate intelligence or through her reading will never bring herself to commit any vile act, for her mind will have been strengthened and imbued with holy councils. And if she were to be so inclined – in spite of the many precepts of moral rectitude that would have acted as a deterrent, and in spite of so many admonishments and exhortations – one can only imagine what she would be like if she had never heard anything about honorable conduct. (65)

The same man who argued that Petrarch and Boccaccio ought to be the models for vernacular Italian, also argued for a broad education for women. Pietro Bembo writes in

his *Gli Asolani*⁵⁴ of his belief not only in women's ability to be educated, but also in their capacity to contribute to the search for truth:

Things all may equally possess are held in equal scorn by all, and rarities command a far higher price. Yet though I believe many will blame me for asking women to take part in these inquiries, since it is more suitable for them to be occupied with womanish affairs than to rummage in such matters, I shall not accept the criticism. For unless it is denied that women as well as men have minds, I do not know why they any more than we should be refused the right to seek knowledge of what one ought to flee from or pursue; and these are among the most obscure questions, around which as on their axles all the sciences revolve, questions which are the targets of all our diligence and thoughts. (148)

Bembo's advocacy for woman's education is broader than Vives' since he not only felt that women had the mental capacity to meet the challenges of education, but, in addition, should be involved in its discourse. Even more unusual for the period was his argument that women should be included in the discourse on ethical behavior.

However, Bembo was an exception in his belief that women should be educated in all subjects. Other humanists remained more circumspect by limiting a young woman's education to only what would best train her to meet her feminine obligations. Vives, for example, did not intend for his educational program to cultivate the young woman's mind, but only to reinforce her obedience to household duties and Christian virtues. He believed that the young woman's education should be carefully monitored in order to produce a moral individual who would be conscientious in fulfilling her culturally

assigned duties as a woman, such as spinning, raising moral children, and managing the household:

At the age when the girl seems ready to learn letters and gain some practical knowledge, let her begin by learning things that contribute to the cultivation of the mind and the care and management of the home. . . .

Therefore, she will learn, together with reading, how to work with wool and flax, two arts passed on to posterity from the former age of innocence, of great usefulness in domestic affairs and contributing to frugality, which should be a matter of prime concern for women. (58)

Vives limits a woman's literary studies to those works that form "morals in the way of virtue, the study of wisdom, which [teach] the best and holiest way of life." Because a woman's virtue included silence, Vives deletes rhetoric from the curriculum: "I am not at all concerned with eloquence. A woman has no need of that; she needs rectitude and wisdom. It is not a shameful thing for women to be silent; it is disgraceful and abominable for her not to have wisdom and to lead a bad life" (71). Vives' position is that her education should focus on reinforcing her moral fiber and preserving her chastity.

As the upper classes and the aristocracy began to associate Humanist education in the classics, philosophy, and Italian letters with "feminine refinement" and as necessary "to prepare [their women] for their future roles of women of station, wealth, and leisure," the number of educated women increased (Bassanese, *Stampa* 2). The upper classes accepted Vives' view that education aided the woman in raising her children "honorably and wisely and to ward off the dangers of moral turpitude" (Rosenthal, *Honest* 84). Nonetheless, most young women still did not receive an education comparable with that

of their brothers, nor were the educational opportunities equal between the classes. The education a middle-class woman received was not as broad as that of her more privileged sisters; indeed, her education was normally limited to what was considered sufficient for the young woman to assume her role as wife and mother, or as a nun (Bassanese, *Stampa* 3), a position consistent with Vives. She was taught reading, but only to the elementary level; writing was limited to the vernacular; and arithmetic was not taught beyond the basic level. These subjects were viewed as part of a complete education that included embroidery, weaving, and other like handiwork (Rosenthal, *Honest* 84). The daughter of an artisan mother was doubly disadvantaged: first, her mother had to have, against the odds, learned how to read and add; then, the young girl had to learn all her mother could teach her in the few years she had before she was sent out to work herself (Rosenthal, *Honest* 85).

The education of the young woman's mind was not considered her primary concern. No matter how intelligent the young woman or how desirous she was to continue her education, she was expected to end her studies when she married (Burke 44), and if she wished to continue her studies, she had only two options, the convent or a life of seclusion (Wiesner, *Gender* 154).

The texts available to a literate girl or woman were also limited. As discussed earlier, the function of learning her letters was aimed toward the goal of advancing a woman's moral education, and the battle to save the young woman from herself began early. The best texts for this purpose are, of course, the holy texts, the Bible, the Christian Fathers, and moral philosophy, much of which she was expected to know by heart:

When she is taught to read, let her peruse books that impart instruction in morals, when she learns to write, do not have her imitate idle verses or vain and frivolous ditties, but rather some grave saying or a wise and holy sentiment from the holy Scriptures or the writings of philosophers, which should be copied out many times so that they will remain firmly fixed in her memory. (Vives 72)

Vives denounces secular poetry and romances, for example, while other humanists forbid pagan classics and satires, and comedies that contained immoral allusions (Wiesner, *Gender* 154). Vives prohibited Boccaccio's *Decameron* along with the works of other authors whom he considered "idle, unoccupied, and ignorance men, slaves of vice and filth" (Vives 75). Vives also maintains that the selection of any reading material should not be left to the discretion of the woman. Apparently, no matter how much moral material she ingested, the woman would never have the strength of mind to recognize healthful reading material from dangerous dribble. Consequently, she must always seek the advice of a man concerning her choice:

But in the case of certain books, the advice of learned and sensible men must be sought. A woman must not rashly follow her own judgment, lest with her slight initiation into learning and the study of letters she mistake false for true, harmful for salutary, foolish and senseless for serious and commendable. Her whole motivation for learning should be to live a more upright life, and she should be careful in her judgment. (Vives 78)

If a woman sought to read more than what was specified in the list, Vives emphatically admonishes that she should seek the opinion of a learned man since a woman should not

trust her own judgment in making such a critical decision as to what was appropriate to read because, as a woman, and descendent of Eve, she was incapable of recognizing falsehood.

In the sixteenth century, printers began to publish gender specific books although the number of male readers exceeded the number of female readers (Wiesner, *Gender* 151). Those books published specifically for women were “largely devotional and published in small format so that they would be relatively cheap.” Expensive illustrated Bibles were available at one end of the price scale, “small collections of psalms or devotional verses” located somewhere in the middle, and moderately priced, to “even less expensive pamphlets of religious controversy or saints’ lives” located at the end of the price scale. Nonetheless, book prices were generally too high for most artisan households to own more than a few, and any books owned by a testator were more likely to pass to the son than to the daughter. If the daughter did inherit a book, she generally received the small, less expensive format religious book (Wiesner, *Gender* 150). Many guides instructing women on how to be a good Christian wife and mother were also available. Interestingly, similar guides for male heads of households were more plentiful (Wiesner, *Gender* 151), and not surprisingly, men authored many of the books published specifically for women, including midwives’ guides and books on needlework. Men probably gave these books as gifts to their wives and daughters. As expected, the books stressed gender roles and class distinctions in addition to authoritatively prescribing women to be chaste, silent, and obedient (Wiesner, *Gender* 151).

Stampa's Education

Bartolomeo Stampa's views concerning his daughters' education appear to have been commensurate with those of Pietro Bembo. Beginning while they were still young, Bartolomeo had his daughters educated along side his son, Baldassare, providing them with an aristocratic-level education that included Latin, Greek, grammar, rhetoric, music, and literature (Bellonci 29; Jones, *Currency* 119). After his death, and after Cecilia moved the family to Venice, the children's education continued under the guidance of grammarian Fortunio Spira, from whom they learned their Latin (Wend 74). The girls also took voice and lute under the musician Perissone Cambio's tutelage (Bellonci 30). This education, as innovative as it was, served primarily to train the sisters as professional musician/singers for the wealthy and well placed; but it also provided the foundation on which Gaspara Stampa built her literary knowledge and poetic skill, culminating in a Petrarchan *canzoniere* and an assortment of other poems.

By the time Stampa circulated among the powerful, the wealthy, and the literati of Venice, anyone with aspirations of literary fame cultivated the ability to write Petrarchan poetry well. Attendees of the literary *ridotti* read and critiqued poems written by both members and guests, assessing whether the poems followed the principles and conventions of Petrarchan poetry as stipulated by Pietro Bembo. Privy to these discussions, Stampa was able to advance her knowledge of poetic theory, and, more importantly, learn from both erudite analyses and common gossip that if she were going to achieve lasting fame and gain a patron, she must appear humble and non-threatening to those poets who were potentially her competition for favor, while appearing skilled and knowledgeable to prospective patrons.

Chapter Four: Renaissance Autobiographical Writing and the *Rime*

Stampa was a professional musician and an aspiring poet seeking literary respect from the literati, aristocrats, and patricians among whom she circulated in the *ridotti*. The differences in tone, content, and rhetoric between Renaissance autobiography and Gaspara Stampa's *Rime*, together with the forceful presence of Petrarchan elements throughout her poetry, persuasively support the argument that her *Rime* was conceived as a work of art and derived from her imaginative reworking of traditional love conventions.

The Renaissance Autobiographical Writing

Tuscans wrote the greatest number of extant Renaissance diaries and journals, hundreds of which are from Florence alone (Burke 195). The historian Peter Burke states that the Florentine autobiography had a distinct form: "The local name for this kind of literature was *ricordanze*, which might be translated 'memoranda,' a suitably vague word for a genre which had something of an account book in it, and something of a city chronicle, and was focused on the family" (195). These diaries had certain characteristics, although no "'typical,' much less 'model,' . . . autobiography" existed (Amelang 3); nonetheless, Renaissance autobiographies had much in common; for example, they had similar themes: health ("and less frequently, mental health"), family, war, and public ritual (Amelang 117). These autobiographies and diaries fall into three categories: *cornice* and *ricordi* of family histories, daily recordings of financial transactions, and diaries of

current events. Financial diary entries tended to have “short, one sentence paragraphs, written in first-person singular, and ending with a notation of debt or credit.” In addition, their authors commonly begin an entry with “Ricordo, che . . . ,” or “Ricordo, come . . . ,” then the date (Elkins 8). The painter Giorgio Vasari’s autobiography records only dates, commissions, and payments:

Note, how [*Ricordo, come*] on the 22nd of November 1527 I agreed with Luca di Giovanni of Miano to make a St. Domino, painted in fresco in the church of Santo Domino di Maiano, for the price of 4 lire. (Elkins 8)

Unlike the brief entries found in financial diaries, *ricordi* and *cornice* (family histories) “tend to be discursive,” and solely interested in communicating information to future generations (Eakin 8): “In general, family histories were narratives with unified genealogical or historical purpose.” Elkins describes Giovanni Morelli’s *Ricordi*, begun 1393, as “expansive and generous on the subject of his homeland” (9). According to Stefano Ugo Baldassarri and Arielle Saibe, Morelli wrote a “vivid diary of personal and public events. . . . The memoirs are a notable example of the typically Florentine genre of *libri di famiglia*” (55). His memoirs are:

disjointed, mingling memories of family life (births and deaths, marriages, his affection for his sister Bartolomea, financial successes and failures) with the account of historical facts, such as the plague of 1348, the Ciompi revolt, and the war between Florence and Milan. As is characteristic of *libri di famiglia*, moreover, Morelli expresses his moral convictions and his teachings on various subjects, from the value of classical culture to the importance of not over disciplining children. (Baldassarri and Saibe 55)

Morelli's descriptions of his memoirs and homeland are vivid and lively, indicating that he sought to provide informative details for his readers, most of whom would not have seen the valley. In addition, Morelli wrote with pride about his family's history and with a deep appreciation for their homeland that had been so good to their business:

The origin of our family dates back a long time, some five hundred years or more. Our ancestors were first noted for their properties and possessions in the beautiful Mugello Valley, more precisely in the area of San Cresci, in the parish of San Martino a Valcava. Not only is this distinguished and pleasant region the place where our family originated, but it has passed down the virtues of our ancestors. It would be most ungrateful not to mention the numerous noble qualities of the region. In order not to begin something my humble intellect cannot finish, and in order to avoid verbosity, I shall focus merely on three main aspects of the Mugello: its beauty, its fertility, and the shape and extent of its land.

(Baldassarri and Saiber 56)

Similarly expansive, Luca Landucci's autobiography details the events that took place in Florence between the years 1450 and 1516. He does not analyze his psychological responses to any of the observations recorded, although he lived during the difficult years of the plague; the d'Medici's expulsion and return; the French invasion; Savonarola's preaching, excommunication, and execution; among other significant events; he merely observes his emotions as objectively as he did the incidents that caused them:

17th August. The *Pratica* (Court) met and sat in the *Palagio* from the morning till midnight. There were more than 180 men. And the five prisoners were condemned by word of mouth to be put to death and their property to be confiscated according to law. The five men condemned were Bernardo Del Nero, Niccolò Ridolfi, Giovanni Canbi, Gianozzo Pucci, and Lorenzo Tornabuoni, for whom all Florence was sorry. Everyone marveled that such a thing could be done; it was difficult to realise it. They were put to death the same night, and *I could not refrain from weeping* when I saw that young Lorenzo carried past the Canto d’Tornaquinci on a bier, shortly before dawn. (125-26; emphasis added)

27th February. (the Carnival). There was made on the *Piazza de’Signori* a pile of vain things, nude statues and playing-boards, heretical books, Morganti, mirrors, and many other vain things, of great value, estimated at thousands of florins. . . .

The *Frate* was held in such veneration by those who had faith in him, that this morning, although it was *Carnival*, Fra Girolamo said mass in *San Marco*, and gave the sacrament with his hands to all his friars, and afterwards to several thousand men and women. . . . There was a great crowd, who had come in the expectation of seeing signs; the lukewarm laughed and mocked, saying “He is excommunicated, and he gives the Communion to others.” *And certainly it seemed a mistake to me, although*

I had faith in him; but I never wished to endanger myself by going to hear him, since he was excommunicated. (130-31; emphasis added)

The autobiography of the Florentine artist Pontormo (Jacopo Carucci 1494-1556) exemplifies autobiography at the other end of the descriptive scale. The “eclectic” nature of Pontormo’s autobiography has baffled critics since its discovery because it does not resemble the *ricordi* and *cornice* of the period; nor does it resemble the “medical and astrological treatises. . . since Pontormo did not use his observations about health to draw conclusions, illustrate morals, inform astrological or bloodletting schemata, or even produce private rules of thumb. . . . He did not seek to understand and avoid his illnesses, only to record them” (Elkins 9). Elkins finds Pontormo’s autobiography “decisively unrelated to the personal, intimate autobiographies of later centuries, although it has often been explained in their terms” (9). An excerpt reads thus:

Friday-Saturday I worked [i.e., painted] as far as the legs; on Saturday I had dinner with Bronz[in]o.

On the 8th Monday I wrote some letters and I started to have diarrhea.

Tuesday I did a thigh . . . (Elkins 5).

As the preceding examples demonstrate, autobiographies lack the author’s analysis of their personal emotions (namely, their psychological states) since such did not belong in these works, even in private autobiographies such as Pontormo’s. Instead, Renaissance autobiographies have a “relentless focus on externalities” (Amelang 123), with first-person narratives displaying a “reticence surrounding the direct expression of sentiment” (Amelang 125) in vivid contrast to the personal, intimate autobiographies that arose much later with Rousseau (Elkins 9). Renaissance autobiographies “left behind

only the barest traces of the authorial self” (Amelang 123). Autobiography’s purpose was not the examination of personal emotions; those autobiographies intended for publication, even if only to one’s own decedents, such as *cornice* and *ricordi*, were meant to transmit information. Other autobiographies served to preserve financial or health-related data for future reference.

Taking Sidonie Smith’s advice that a critic of the genre of autobiography must have a definition from which to work, I propose the following: first, I agree that autobiography is any written history that takes the author’s life as its subject; however, the Renaissance autobiographer focuses on external events (similar to the modern memoir) and thus does not express personal emotions, or seek to analyze the psyche. In addition, the Renaissance autobiographer avoids artifice and literary effort, intentionally choosing plain language as a means of establishing the veracity of his or her observations. As a consequence, it can be difficult to determine what the autobiographer may have actually thought about events and the people in her or his life.

Autobiography and the Rime

The Petrarchan poet, i.e. Gaspara Stampa, however, permits the narrator to withhold nothing concerning her emotions. Poem after poem focuses on exposing her feelings. The narrator cares nothing for what happens about her unless her beloved is nearby, in which case she describes how his presence makes her feel, or, if he should be elsewhere, how his absence depresses her, and how tears flood her eyes. The narrator is determined that no emotion go undocumented. Since, she feels worse than any other lover due to her heightened state of unrequited love, she relies on rhetorical devices, such as exaggeration,

oxymoron, and antithesis, to translate the depth and intensity of her emotions. Her model is Petrarch's *Rime sparse*, which provides her words and phrases that she has only to appropriate for her ends. Nor does the poet have to explain or justify anything.

With Petrarch's rhetorical devices, the poet has access to ready-formed emotional responses in the reader. Finally, when the poet compiles her poems into a collection, she has Petrarch's *canzoniere* and other previously published *rime* as authoritative models.

Emotional Story-telling. Stampa's unabating expression of her lover-narrator's vivid and intense emotions marks her poems as distinct from the Renaissance autobiography. In contrast to the Renaissance autobiography with its "relentless focus on externalities" (Amelang 125), Stampa's love poems portray the emotions of the lover by embedding in many of her poems interjections such as *deh* and *lassa* that function as soul-felt sighs or moans of grief. Overall, the *Rime* employs 11 *deh*, 11 *O*, 48 *lassa*, and several expressions of *ahimé* and *oimé*. These numerous sighs steep her *canzoniere* with self-pity, as the following examples show:

fuor ch'un poco (oimè lassa!) empio in amore (7.8)

But, ah, in love not faithful to his word (7.8; Stampa, *Selected* 13)

Deh, perché così tardo gli occhi aspersi

Nel divin, non umano amato volto

.....

Non avrei, lassa, gli occhi indarno asperse

D'inutil pianto in questo viver stolto (12.1-2, 5-6)

Why did I wait so long to cast my eyes

Upon this godlike, superhuman face

.....

I would not then in vain have drowned my eyes

With useless weeping in my foolish life,

(12.1-2, 5-6; Stampa, *Selected* 19)

Di chi del suo tornar, lassa, mi manca (47.4)

Of him for whose return I mourn in vain, (47.4; Stampa, *Selected* 45)

Perché non batte omai, lassa, a le porte? (49.8)

Why do they never knock upon my door? (49.8; Stampa, *Selected* 47)

Lassa, chi turba la mia lunga pace? (88.1).

Who is this who disturbs my long-held peace?

(88.1; Stampa, *Selected* 65)

Deh discacciasse il vel di questa notte (95.13)

Alas, who can relieve me of this night (95.13; Stampa, *Selected* 71)

Other poems rely on descriptive nouns and verbs that establish an emotional tone; Stampa, always conscious of their meaning and sound, selects words that influence the reader, as, for instance, in the following two poems where she uses key words to express the diametrically opposed emotions of despair and joy. In the first poem, the narrator

grieves that both her beloved and Death ignore her pleas, while in the second, her spirit soars with the news that her beloved will soon return.

I have become so weary of my waiting,
defeated by grieving and desire
caused by the little faith and short remembrance
of him for whose return I mourn in vain
that I call her who makes the world turn pale⁵⁵
(47.1-5; Stampa, *Selected* 45)

O blissful, dearer, and sweetest of all news,
message of joy, in which you promise me
that soon I'll see again the dear and happy
lights, and that face so beautiful and gracious.⁵⁶
(100.1-4; Stampa, *Selected* 79)

Stampa begins Sonnet 47 (“Io son da l’aspettar omai sí stanca”) with melancholy words—*aspettar*, *stanca*, *vinta*, *dolor* (“waiting,” “weary,” “defeated,” “grieving”; 1-2; Stampa 45)—establishing a negative tone that continues until the last line where she comments on her beloved’s happiness. The second sonnet, “O beata e dolcissima novella,” expresses her joy with the news that her beloved will soon return through the use of uplifting adjectives: *beata*, *dolcissima*, *caro* (“blissful,” “dearer,” “sweetest”; 100.1; Stampa, *Selected* 79). In addition, Stampa begins phrases with “O”—exclamations of joy—seven times, indicating that the narrator cannot contain her excitement. The

sonnet's energy is so great that the reader can envision the narrator's radiant face as she anticipates being reunited with the beloved.

Even a cursory comparison of Stampa's poetry to Landucci's autobiography demonstrates the disparity between Stampa's approach and his. For example, Sonnet 129's narrator wallows in self-pity: "O mia sventura, o mio perverso fato, / O sentenza nemica del mio bene, / poi chi senza mia colpa mi conviene / portar la pena de l'altrui peccato" (1-4)("O my misfortune, O my perverse fate, / O judgment, enemy of all my good, / since I must suffer, through no fault of mine, / the penalty due to another's sin!"); 129.1-4; Stampa 101). Landucci presents his emotional state, for example, when he saw the body of "young Lorenzo," as dry facts (126): he saw, he wept. Landucci's personality remains separate from the narration; the result is a text that could be described anachronistically as a chronicle or memoir. What Landucci valued, and what he believed his readers wanted to know, were his annotations of historical events, not how he felt about them.

Emotional Words. The two previous sonnets (47 and 100) illustrate Stampa's use of few external details in her *Rime*. The vague and subjective adjectives found in Sonnet 100 used to describe the beloved's face and eyes—*care, liete, bella, graziosa*, ("dear," "happy," "beautiful," "gracious"; 100; Stampa, *Selected* 79)—fail to describe in detail his physical features. Stampa resists using physically descriptive adjectives throughout her *Rime*, and those she does use serve an important purpose: to emphasize emotions. She selects words because of their ability to imply a state of mind. In the following poems, Stampa addresses the lush and hilly landscape of the Collalto estate. Although she uses

vivid and lively details, Stampa does not celebrate the natural world or even the Collalto lands. The natural beauty of the landscape only serves as a foil for her narrator's misery.

Dear river, who from my name take your own
who bathe the foothills of that dear high hill
where that tall, famous beech began to grow,
tree from whose branches my burning love was born⁵⁷

(139.1-4; Stampa, *Selected* 111)

O happy country, sweet and smiling hills,
green meadows, lofty woods and grassy banks,
valley enclosed, where now he lives and lingers,
.....
caverns of cool and pleasant amorous shades
.....
beautiful birds, clear rivers, summer breezes,
seductive nymphs, Seleni, Pan and fauns. . . .⁵⁸

(145.1-3, 5, 7-8; Stampa, *Selected* 115)

Whereas, contemporary autobiography sought objectivity by avoiding emotional references, Stampa imbues her *Rime* with various emotions to convince the reader of the narrator's depth of suffering. It is unclear if Stampa read autobiographies, but they were popular and served as a valuable source of historical information, knowledge one needed for salon conversations. Stampa, as an educated woman, knew that autobiographers avoided including analysis of their emotions. Yet, emotions permeate Stampa's *Rime*, as

they did Petrarch's poetry and his imitators. The *Rime*'s focuses on the suffering and passion of the narrator to the exclusion of external details supports this paper's thesis that Stampa's *Rime* is a fictional construct influenced in part by Petrarch.

Literary Language. The *Rime* also diverges from Renaissance autobiography in its use of rhetoric, much of it influenced by Petrarchism. Both autobiographers and poets chose their words carefully, fully aware that their choices affected the way readers perceived their work. Because the autobiography functioned to inform and/or conserve facts, authors utilized plain text and avoided "artifice, decorations, adornments, and even literary effort itself" (Amelang 155), expecting that readers equated plain text with truthfulness, as Amelang explains:

Even in works less touched by such specific dictates, the absence of artifice is the norm. . . . So broad an imperative rested on the reader's accepting simplicity as the best guarantee of the author's sincerity. It also provided a stylistic register of the latter's belief—implicitly shared with the reader—that truth was a lean, spare thing, and that truthfulness was inseparable from disinterestedness. (157)

Renaissance autobiographers rarely wrote in the "high style"; instead they emphasize "with universal frequency"—and may have honestly felt—that their words were simple and sincere. Their "vows of simplicity and sincerity . . . constituted a rhetoric of un-rhetoric not often found in other genres" (Amelang 158). Landucci's autobiography reveals a simple, straightforward text in which he intends to inform, and perhaps to persuade, the reader. Persuasion was assumed to occur through the use of

unadorned language; the author's sincerity guaranteed the truthfulness of the historical facts presented: a "broad imperative rested on the reader's accepting simplicity as the best guarantee of the author's sincerity. It also provided a stylistic register of the latter's belief—implicitly shared with the reader—that truth was a lean, spare thing, and that truthfulness was inseparable from disinterestedness" (Amelang 157). Stampa's *Rime*, in contrast, is literary, written in the "high style" expected from a Petrarchan poet.

Petrarchan poets exploited rhetorical devices inherited from Petrarch to manipulate the reader's emotions and to impress the reader with the poet's artistry. Poets also employed recent poetic inventions such as Pietro Bembo's exaggerated compilation of the Petrarchan beloved's attributes⁵⁹ or Domenico Venier's parallel lists of verbs, adjectives, and nouns.⁶⁰ Both sonnets exemplify Petrarchism taken to an extreme. Stampa, likewise, sought to convince the reader of her narrator's emotions by utilizing a number of noticeable Petrarchan devices. "Indeed, it is only within the confines of imitation that the lyric poetry of the cinquecento, including Stampa's own works, can be fully understood and appreciated" (Bassanese, *Stampa* 51). Of the many rhetorical devices Stampa incorporated into her poetry, three were antithesis, rhetorical questions, and oxymoron. She found antithesis especially useful since it could represent "the conflictual nature of love," the overriding theme of the *Rime*. Bassanese states that "through antithesis the psychological reality of feeling could be expressed systematically in the language of contrasts" (*Stampa* 69), which the reader experiences as the same "emotional confusion" (*Stampa* 67) experienced by the narrator. Sonnet 111 uses antithesis to contrast ideas thus illustrating the narrator's mental and emotional bewilderment: "O dove per amor si ride e piange; / . . . / O dove tosto o tardi uom vive e

père” (“wherever people laugh and cry for love/ . . . /or where one lives and dies, too soon, too late”; 111.8, 11; Stampa, *Selected* 91). Likewise, Sonnets 27’s and 43’s antitheses express the narrator’s confusion: in the first sonnet, the narrator states that she cannot live without the pain that simultaneously kills her; the second describes the contradictory feelings the narrator suffers, focusing on the frustration of unrequited love and the resulting emotional confusion.

I’ll only grieve while I can live and love,
if I should lose the burdens that I bear:
the fire, the darts, the prison, and the chains.⁶¹
(27.12-14; Stampa, *Selected* 35)

I hate the one who loves, loves him who scorns me.
Against the humble ones, my heart rebels,
but I am humble toward the one who spurns me.⁶²
(43.5-7; Stampa, *Selected* 41)

Similarly, Stampa utilizes rhetorical questions to evoke the narrator’s confusion. In a sonnet early in the sequence, the frustrated narrator-as-poet asks rhetorically—or perhaps Fortune is the addressee—why her poetic skill cannot be as strong as her pain is intense:

Why cannot I, in an unusual way,
make pain and pen be equal in myself?⁶³ (8.7-8; Stampa, *Selected* 15)

At other times, the narrator addresses the reader, or Love, or the beloved, but whomever she addresses the effect is the same, the portrayal of her narrator as frustrated or befuddled by her situation:

Why did I wait so long to cast my eyes
upon this godlike, superhuman face
where I can see imprinted, like a sculpture,
a myriad of diverse and lofty wonders?⁶⁴ (12.1-4; Stampa, *Selected* 19)

Who will give wings of eagle or dove
to my low style, to let it fly from India
to Maurentania, from South Pole to North,
where never arrow or slingshot can reach?⁶⁵
(13.1-4; Stampa, *Selected* 21)

In the following sonnet, no. 111, Stampa weaves a more complex anaphora: she begins each line with one of three different words: *pommel*, *over*, *o dove*. The repetition creates an air of boredom signaling the narrator's annoyance with questions that challenge her love's strength. To silence these doubters, she lists all the possible places where one could live, and all the possible psychological states that one could experience, and concludes emphatically that no matter what her situation, she would continue to love as she now loves:

Place me where ocean breaks with angry roar,
or where the waters lie serene and calm,
place me wherever sun shoots sparks that scorch

.....
I shall live as I've lived, be what I've been,
as long as my two faithful stars still shine
and will not turn their light away from me.⁶⁶

(111.1-3, 12-14; Stampa, *Selected* 91)

Stampa also places words in opposition to emphasize the narrator's unhappiness. This opposition can be descriptions of the beloved compared with those of the narrator. Sonnet 41 contrasts narrator's emotional states with Collaltino's: heat to icy, captive to free, misery to happy.

But since I am all fire and you all ice,
you live in freedom, but I live in chains;
your breath flows easily, my own is labored;
you live contented, I destroy myself.⁶⁷ (41.5-8; Stampa, *Selected* 39)

Stampa was not only interested in the communicative value of words, but using her musical training she drew on sound patterns and rhythm, especially assonance, alliteration, consonance, internal rhyme, anaphora, repetition, and refrain (Bassanese, *Stampa* 67). She builds rhythm through the use of multiple adjectives, a technique found in much of Renaissance poetry;⁶⁸ she also triples and quadruples other parts of speech, stringing words together "for their pleasing harmonies" (Bassanese, *Stampa* 69). Sonnet 26—inspired by Venier's Sonnet 33—groups verbs with verbs, and nouns with nouns to create a rhythm: "Arsi, piansi, cantai; piango, ardo e canto; / piangerò, arderò, canterò sempre" (1-2) ("I burnt, I wept, I sang -- burn, weep and sing, / and I Shall weep, burn, sing forever more"; 1-2; Stampa, *Selected* 33). Stampa also employs alliteration to

establish an emotional effect, enhancing the poem's meaning. Sonnet 94 provides a vivid example in which the first four lines repeat the "K" sound (*che, conte, chi, contender, and con*) 12 times: "A che, conte, assalir chi non repugna? / a che gittar per terra chi si rende? / a che contender con chi con contende? / con chi avete mai sempre fra l'ugna?" (1-4). This constant repetition of the harsh "K" sound affects the sonnet's interpretation by providing an edge to her questions, changing them from simple queries to accusations that demand an answer.

Another Petrarchan device—punning on the beloved's name—provides opportunities to reference the beloved repeatedly, but indirectly, and, in addition, displays the poet's virtuosity. The beloved's name in the *Rime*—Collaltino di Collalto—parallels Petrarch's Laura with its potential for puns (*l'aura, lauro*). Stampa refers to the beloved with the words *colle* and *colle alto*, and just as the name Laura points toward Petrarch's real objective—the poet's *lauro*—Stampa's *colle* implies her goal—recognition as a poet, and, therefore, admission to Parnassus. Stampa employs *colle* more than a dozen times, most often in reference to the beloved⁶⁹ indicating that she relishes the Petrarchan parallel. It is convenient for Stampa's poetic goals that the beloved's name lends itself to Petrarchan puns (Bassanese, "Self-Naming" 105). The first 50 poems of the *Rime* offer examples of Stampa's puns on Collaltino's name:

il mio verde, pregiato ed alto colle? (3.8)

My green, fine, and high hill? (3.8; my translation)

Alto colle, gradito e grazioso,

novo Parnaso mio, novo Elicona,

.....
colle gentil, dignissimo d'impero. (10.1-2, 14)

High hill, pleasing and gracious
my new Parnassus, my new Helicon

.....
gentle hill, most worthy of empire. (10.1-2, 14; my translation)

Alto colle, almo fiume, ove soggiorno (46.1)

High hill, (beloved) river, where he sojourns (46.1; my translation)

In total, Stampa puns Collaltino—*colle*—18 times in 15 poems and combines it with *alto* five times.⁷⁰ *Colle* is the perfect analogy to the narrator's desires, and an indirect reference to the Stampa's own poetic aspirations. The name serves other functions as well, according to Bassanese:

Collaltino of Collalto, Count of Treviso, seems destined for literary stardom; his eloquent name is an ideal masculine counterpart to Petrarch's Laura. Stampa transforms her beloved's name into *colle*, which extends into Parnassus and Helicon. The allegory thus obtained designates the love relationship as established by the poet: the beloved is a height to conquer, a sacred resting place, her inspiration, the home of the Muses. *Colle* is used to symbolize the Collalto estate, a setting which represents both amorous fulfillment and painful separation. ("Self-Naming" 105)

Stampa's choice of words and rhetorical devices confirms her fascination with composing interesting verses, engaging in their meanings, and appealing in their tonal

qualities and emotional effects. Unlike contemporary autobiographers, Stampa does not avoid “artifice, decorations, adornments, even literary effort itself” (Amelang 155), but embraces them as part of her Petrarchan heritage. Her occasional verses testify that Stampa sought to refine her poetic skills as she endeavored to compose admirable Petrarchan poetry.

The poet's *Canzoniere* seemed to embody the artistic values of the renaissance: harmony, which consisted in the quantity, quality and position of sounds and words, a term closely allied to proportion and order, which implied formal structures; grace, which referred rather broadly to sweetness, elegance, and a pleasing *je ne sais quoi*; an aesthetic sense of opulence or richness, including variety, grandeur, abundance, and splendor, as well as magnificence, greatness, sumptuousness, and dignity. The five major concepts in literary criticism were decorum, grandeur, grace, variety, and similitude. (Bassanese, *Stampa* 53)

Stampa did not compose her *Rime* in the plain and simple language found in contemporary autobiographies. She consciously and persistently imitates Petrarch and contemporary poets' high style, embellishing her poetry's language as demanded by Petrarchism to tell a convincing and emotional fiction of failed love.

Petrarch's Influence. Pietro Bembo's *Prose della vulgar lingua* (“Writings on the vernacular”; 1525) established Petrarch as *the* poet to imitate. Bembo was “the most influential literary theorist” of the early sixteenth century, and Book 2 of his treatise quickly became the “standard manual for vernacular forms.” Consequently, Italian poets

felt pressure to follow his recommendations when “making aesthetic and linguistic choices in their works” (Rosenthal *Honest* 43). As a result, “[Petrarch’s] *canzoniere* was the epitome of a literary love story, the artistic summit to be conquered, and the perfect *iter* to be followed” (Bassanese, *Stampa* 57).

Many poets relished the challenge of making the Petrarchan model uniquely their own. Stampa, for example, eager to become a recognized poet, also told a love story “as it unfolds in a series of inner conflicts and with painful self-awareness against a backdrop of deceptive dreams and betrayed hopes” (Bassanese, *Stampa* 57-58). In addition, she begins her story as did so many other contemporary poets, with a restatement of Petrarch’s first sonnet.⁷¹ Many of her poems incorporate Petrarchan expressions, some verbatim, while other poems allude to Petrarch (Bassanese, *Stampa* 58). In Sonnet 182 Stampa parrots the first phrase of Petrarch’s Sonnet 272, and then hijacks the rest of the line, “La vita fuge et non s’arresta un’ora,/ et la Morte vien dietro a gran giornata” (“Life flees and does not stop an hour, / and Death comes after by great stages”; 272.1-2; Petrarch 450-51). Stampa’s version states, “La vita fugge, ed io pur sosprando / trapasso, lassa, il piú degli anni miei” (“Life flees and even as I sigh / I pass through most of my years, alas”; 182.1-2; Bassanese, *Stampa* 60). Stampa’s change is subtle; her narrator sees life slipping away as she waits for the beloved, whereas Petrarch’s sees Death bounding toward him unchecked. Likewise, Stampa’s Sonnet 86 borrows Petrarch’s first phrase from his Sonnet 92, “Weep, Ladies”; but for her Sonnet 151 Stampa utilizes the entire line, “Piangete, donne, e con voi pianga Amore” (92.1; Petrarch 194-95) (“Weep, Ladies, and let Love join in your grief”; 151.1; Stampa, *Selected* 122). Stampa borrowed often

from Petrarch's *Rime sparse*. Compare, for example, the following lines between Petrarch's original poems and Stampa's:

fuggo ove 'l gran desio mi sprona e 'nchina; (151.4; Petrarch 297)

I fly where my great desire spurs me on (96.3; Bassanese, *Stampa* 63)

com'io vorrei, tanto 'l disio mi sprona (96.3; Stampa)

as I would like, for desire spurs me on so. (96.3; Bassanese, *Stampa* 63)

devrian de la pietà romper un sasso (294.7; Petrarch 473)

out of pity, they should even break a stone. . . . (Bassanese, *Stampa* 63)

rompa per la pietate i duri sassi (96.14; Stampa)

out of pity, it breaks hard stones. . . . (96.14; Bassanese, *Stampa* 63)

Similarly, Petrarch's poem 145 inspired Stampa's Sonnet 111 where she works Petrarch's multiple and contrasting settings to make them her own. Because of the length of the poem and the amount of details included, I repeat most of Sonnet 111 here:

Place me where ocean breaks with angry roar,
or where the waters lie serene and calm,
place me wherever sun shoots sparks that scorch
or where the ice pierces with sharpest pain,
place me beside the frozen Don, by Ganges
where the sweet dew and manna are distilled,
or where the bitter air sparkles with poison,

wherever people laugh and cry for love.

Place me where cruel, heartless Scythians strike,

or where the people live in peace and quiet,

or where one lives and dies, too soon, too late.⁷²

(111.1-11; Stampa, *Selected* 91)

Stampa does not emulate Petrarch literally; for one thing, the reader familiar with Petrarch's original will find a surprisingly hopeful ending. This positive ending serves to remind the reader that, at this point in the story, the narrator enjoys the beloved's affections. An importance difference lies in Stampa's imaginative descriptions and vivid details:

Place me where the sun kills the flowers and the grass, or where the ice and the snow overcome him; place me where his chariot is temperate and light, or where those dwell who yield him to us or those who take him away;

Place me in lowly or proud fortune, in sweet clear air or dark and heavy; place me in the night, in day long or short, in ripe maturity or early youth;

Place me in Heaven or on earth or in the abyss, or on a high mountain, in a deep and swampy valley; make me a free spirit or one fixed in his members.⁷³ (Petrarch 145)

Sonnet 111 shows Stampa's ability to adopt and adapt Petrarch's poems. By borrowing ideas and phrases from Petrarch, and writing a new version, Stampa challenges herself to meet Bembo's requirements of imitation and originality; in addition, Petrarchan

references remind the reader that as a Petrarchist Stampa's work should be measured against Petrarch's and other Petrarchists'.

Not surprisingly, because Petrarchism permeated Renaissance life, even everyday words took their meanings from Petrarch's poetry; for example, *sole*, "sun," "[t]hrough poetic application it had come to signify the beloved, Christ, a heavenly guide, or the eyes of the loved one; it was used to describe spiritual leadership, guidance, and elevation. Allied to this term, there existed a whole series of associated solar images: ray, light, lamp, flame, fire, beam, and so forth" (Bassanese, *Stampa* 55, 64). Stampa, of course, uses *sole* to refer to the beloved:

But when at length my sun [*sole*] departs from me,

I see the sun of heaven when it darkens

.....

but that sun will return with light and life,

while my sun's brilliant dawning and return

to me is doubtful; certain is the parting.⁷⁴

(18.9-10, 11-14; *Stampa, Selected* 25)

The existence of several parallel facts provides the most persuasive argument that Stampa models her narrative on Petrarch's *Rime sparse* instead on her own life: the occasion of the first sightings, and the beloveds' appearances. First, Stampa chooses an important Christian holiday for the first sighting just as Petrarch had, for the same literary reason: both choose the holiday most appropriate to set the tone for the overall narrative. Petrarch chose Good Friday in order to establish a tragic tone: "Era il giorno ch'al sol si scoloraro / per la pietà del suo fattore i rai / quando i' fui preso, et non me ne guardai /

ché i be' vostr' occhi, Donna, me legaro" ("It was the day when the sun's rays turned pale with grief for his Maker when I was taken, and I did not defend myself against it, for your lovely eyes, Lady, bound me"; 3.1-4; Petrarch 38-39). Petrarch's narrator suffers for the whole of the *canzoniere*. First, Laura does not know of Petrarch's infatuation; when she finds out, she becomes modest, and avoids him, in order, according to Petrarch, to protect her chaste reputation. Later, Laura dies of the plague, leaving Petrarch behind to grieve his new loss—he is now bereft of her person. Stampa, however, caused her narrator to fall for the beloved around Christmas, a joyous occasion. As she mentions in the introductory letter, her *canzoniere* is a celebration of the narrator's love for the beloved:⁷⁵

It was about the day when the Creator,

 came down to show Himself in human form,
 issuing from the Holy Virgin's womb,
 when it occurred that my illustrious lord

 made his own nest and refuge in my heart.⁷⁶

(2.1, 2-5, 8; Stampa, *Selected* 5).

Despite their many similarities, Stampa's narrative differs from Petrarch's in other ways, one of which is the overall tone of her sequence. Many sonnets detail the happiness that love gives her narrator. Unlike Petrarch's persona, Stampa's narrator enjoys the reciprocal love of the beloved for a period. It is when he withdraws his love that the narrator suffers; however, her misery is alleviated by the realization that the

beloved's rejection has made the narrator a poet: "mi risponde egli in ultima sentenza: - / questo ti basti, e questo fa' che scriva" (132.13-14) ("Love answers me in his hard final sentence. / 'Let this suffice you, that it makes you write'"; 132.13-14; Stampa, *Selected* 103).

The two most important aspects of the beloved's physical features—hair color and skin tone—are the same; both Laura and Collaltino are fair and have blond hair. Petrarch mentions Laura's hair color twice, first in Sonnet 29: "Verdi panni sanguigni oscuri o persi / non vestì donna unquanco / né d'or capelli in bionda treccia attorse / sì bella . . ." ("Green garments, crimson, black, or purple, did never a lady wear, nor ever twisted her hair in a blond braid, as beautiful as this one . . ." (1-4; Petrarch 82-83), and again in Sonnet 30: "Giovene donna sotto un verde lauro / vidi più bianca et più fredda che neve / . . . / ch' Amor conduce a pie' de duro lauro / ch' à i rami di diamante et d'or le chiome. . . ." ("A youthful lady under a green laurel / I saw, whiter and colder than snow / . . . / that love leads to the foot of the harsh laurel / that as branches of diamond and golden locks. . . ."; 1-2, 23-24; Petrarch 86-89). Stampa refers to the beloved's hair color and skin tone only once: "di pelo biondo, e di vivo colore" (7.5) ("His hair is blond, and his complexion light. . . .":⁷⁷ 7.5; Stampa, *Selected* 13). Antonio Rambaldo di Collalto included an engraving allegedly of Collaltino di Collalto, which, if authentic, indicates that the count did indeed have light-colored hair. Like his name, the count's hair color was another Petrarchan convenience. declare

This short overview of Petrarchan influence demonstrates that Stampa's *Rime* is strikingly Petrarchan; however, Stampa's love story is unique to her. Although both plots deal with unobtainable love, an important difference sets the two apart: Petrarch's

narrator sighs over a love that can never mature due to the lady's chastity—a character trait that he admires even as it denies him his goal. Then, after 21 years of love at a distance, Fate removes his lady from earth, and from Petrarch's sight, but from not his imagination (Braden, *Petrarchan* 14). The second half of the *Rime sparse* details his continuing love for Laura, and his growing realization that he has misplaced his love. Stampa's narrator, on the other hand, sighs over a love that she cannot retain because of the beloved's fickle nature and the difference in their social stations, he a landed aristocrat, she a middle-class musician.

Stampa's *Rime* focuses on the psychological changes of the narrator during a limited period—three years—and on a specific event—a love affair. She employs language modeled on Petrarch's *Rime sparse* and utilizes a number of literary devices, such as repetition, oxymoron, exaggeration, and rhetorical questions. In addition, Stampa incorporates mythological places and beings, with the god Love most often mentioned; she puns on the beloved's name; and she appropriates numerous words, phrases, and concepts from Petrarch. Stampa strives to write commendable Petrarchan poetry, as the number of Petrarchan references testify. In contrast, autobiography, as determined from extant works, can be defined as any written history that takes the author's life as subject, with a focus, however, on external events. Autobiographies shun any expression of personal emotions and analysis of the psyche, and the language remains simple, with a determined avoidance of artifice and literary effort, the sole goal being to present the author's observations as objective facts. These details support my argument that Stampa did not write about an historical event. We turn now to a possible source of inspiration for Stampa: the *Elegy of Lady Fiammetta*.

Chapter Five: Stampa's "Poetic Misprision"
of Giovanni Boccaccio's *Elegy of Lady Fiammetta*

The idea that the *Elegy* influenced the *Rime* is not new. Gordon Braden briefly comments about the possibility, but does not expand on his comment: "If Stampa needed some literary paradigm for the story surrounding her poems, this one was readily [at] hand. We may describe her *Rime d'Amore* as the lyricization of Boccaccio's *Elegia* into a more affirmative mode" ("Gender" 133). I want to pursue Braden's idea to its logical conclusion: Does Stampa's *Rime* reveal the influence of Boccaccio's *Elegy*, and if so, how? A close comparative study of these two works argues for an affirmative answer to this question. This conclusion is further supported by the application of Harold Bloom's critical principle of the "anxiety of influence" to demonstrate how Stampa may have borrowed aspects of the *Elegy*, and then "swerved" from her precursor Boccaccio to write a poetic narrative that was her own invention. Although Boccaccio died 200 years before Stampa's birth, his works were still read during her lifetime, because, as discussed earlier, Pietro Bembo established Boccaccio as the prose model at the same time he selected Petrarch as the poetic model.

The *Elegy of Lady Fiammetta* ⁷⁸

The *Elegy* presents a sympathetic portrayal of a broken-hearted woman told in the first person consisting of a long lament about the loss of a lover. Because the focus of the

Elegy is the woman's emotional turmoil, it has been called a "psychological romance."⁷⁹

The plot is the narrator's struggle to accept her abandonment, and her refusal to do so.

Lady Fiammetta—a married, aristocratic woman's pseudonym—relates her tale of how she had been loved and abandoned, beginning with the event in which her heart was captured by a young man 16 months earlier, up to the present moment. The structure consists of monologues and dialogues set within a framework of explanatory and, at times, foreshadowing, comments.

Fiammetta begins by explaining her reason(s) for 'publishing' her tragic tale—to warn women of the deceits of men—then recalls the omens that herald her downfall: the nightmare and the incident sent by the gods that failed to penetrate her self-absorption as she prepared for church. While at the church ceremony, she sees and falls passionately in love with Panfilo—also a pseudonym. As she struggles with her conscience in the privacy of her bedroom, the goddess of love appears, encouraging Fiammetta to pursue her inclinations, which she readily does. After nine months of shared passion—summarized by Fiammetta—Panfilo departs to care for his ill father; he promises the distressed Fiammetta that he will return in four months. Fiammetta waits impatiently for his return, which, of course, does not occur. Following the deadline, Fiammetta's emotions swing wildly between fear, jealousy, and anger, passions exasperated by rumors concerning Panfilo. The first rumor states that Panfilo had married; the informant had seen a young bride entering his home. The second rumor corrects the first, claiming that it was Panfilo's father who had married and that Panfilo would be returning. The next rumor alleges that Panfilo had fallen in love with a beautiful woman from his own country and would not return. The last rumor contends that Panfilo is on the next ship

from his country. However, the rumor that Panfilo loves another woman distresses Fiammetta enough to drive her to attempt suicide.

The tale of the *Elegy* takes place over a 2-year period; and as Fiammetta ends her narrative, she implies that her saga will continue. She is resolved to travel to Panfilo's land to find him. However, her husband persuades her to wait for a time when he can accompany her. During this waiting period Fiammetta writes her "little booklet" to prevent her love Panfilo from waning.

Therefore since I am more eager to complain than any other woman, to make certain that the cause of my grief will not grow weaker through habit but stronger, I wish to recount my story to you, noble ladies, and if possible to awaken pity in you, in whose hearts love perhaps dwells more happily than in mine. (Boccaccio, *Lady 1*)

The *Elegy* details one woman's misery as she suffers the days and years following her abandonment. Fiammetta could not, nor did she want to, forget Panfilo and move on to another lover. She refuses to believe that her Panfilo had abandoned her for another woman; yet, she mentions the possibility when addressing her "little booklet": "But if by chance, you are passed from one hand to another within the loving throngs of lovely ladies, you should fall into the hands of my woman foe, the usurper of our riches, immediately run away as if from an evil place" (157). Fiammetta does not hesitate to attribute her misery to another woman.

The Rime

Stampa's *Rime* is not a literal lyricization of the *Elegy* since her plot swerves from Boccaccio's at a crucial point; however, many parallels exist between the two. Before I discuss these parallels and the swerve, I will give a brief overview of Stampa's plot. The *Rime*, in contrast to the *Elegy*'s prose narrative, is a collection of poems—a *canzoniere* similar to Petrarch's *Rime sparse*—many allegedly written during a love affair with Count Collaltino di Collalto.

The first poems (Sonnets 1-21) serve as an introduction to the *Rime*, wherein the narrator establishes her motives for the tale. Foreshadowing the *Rime*'s plot, the narrator also describes the beloved's charms and flaws. Stampa's narrator, like Fiammetta's, expects an audience of sympathetic women who are her social equals or betters: "ove fia chi valor apprezzì e stime, / gloria, non che perdon, de' miei lamenti / spero trovar fra le ben nate genti, / poi che la lor cagione è sí sublime" (1.4-8) ("I hope to find among some well-born people, / wherever they may be, those who prize honor, / not only pardon for my tears, but glory / because the reason for them is so lofty"; 1.4-8; Stampa, *Selected* 3). Sonnets 22 to 205 (207 Salza) detail the narrator's joys and frustrations experienced during the love affair with the Count who is emotionally and often physically distant. Yet, even during her darkest hours, the narrator refuses to cease loving; in Sonnet 27, the narrator lists the pains she suffers, but, ironically, claims she would suffer more if her passion cooled: "Mi dorrá sol, se mi trarrá d'impaccio, / fin che potrò e viver ed amare, / lo stral e 'l foco e la prigione e 'l laccio" (27.12-14) ("I'll only grieve while I can live and love, / if I should lose the burdens that I bear: / the fire, the darts, the prison, and the chains"; 27.12-14; Stampa *Selected* 35).

Both the *Elegy* and the *Rime* describe a young woman's realization that her lover has abandoned her, but each woman, in spite of crushing disappointments, remains constant in her love. However, the narrator of the *Rime* realizes that she does not have to love a specific man; rather she only needs to be in love. This knowledge allows the narrator to move on to a new, and she hopes, more receptive lover.⁸⁰

Parallels and "Swerves"

In the *Prose della vulgar lingua* Pietro Bembo argues that writers and poets should model their works on the "linguistic usage of the prose works of Boccaccio and the poetry of Petrarch" (Braden, *Petrarchan* 86-87). Nonetheless, writers and poets should exercise "stylistic moderation and restraint" in their works by a "means of avoiding an unrelieved, extreme, and hence indecorous, emphasis on any one style or affect" (Feldman, "Academy" 481). Bembo did not advocate blind imitation was the proper way to write; however, by publishing his *Rime*, a *canzoniere* that imitated Petrarch's subjects in addition to language, Bembo established the poetic template for future poets.

T. S. Eliot wrote about imitation in his essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent" 457 years later. Like Bembo and the Petrarchan theorists, Eliot believed that tradition was not the "handing down" consisting of "following the ways of the immediate generation before us in a blind or timid adherence to its successes" (37), but "a matter of much wider significance." As Bembo argues, that effort is required to write Petrarchan poetry well, so does Eliot: "Tradition . . . cannot be inherited, and if you want it you must obtain it by great labour" (37). Both men state that to be a great poet, the poet must understand the work of those who came before: this "historical sense compels a man [sic]

to write not merely with his own generation in his bones, but with a feeling that the whole of the literature of Europe from Homer and within it the whole of the literature of his own country has simultaneous order” (Eliot 37). Therefore, when looking at Stampa’s poetic oeuvre, we cannot “value [her] alone”; we “must set [her], for contrast and comparison, among the dead” writers (Eliot 37).

By locating Stampa among dead writers, it is evident that when she composed her poetry, she looked to them for inspiration and her own self-definition. Yet, looking to the past greats does not come without complications. According to Harold Bloom, *Anxiety of Influence* (1997), a specific order of events precipitates an author’s or poet’s “anxiety of influence”: first, there is a “strong misreading” by the later poet who engages in a “profound act of reading that is a kind of falling in love with the literary work”; the reading is not straight forward, however. The author interprets the work (what Bloom calls “poetic misprision”) resulting in an “idiosyncratic” and “ambivalent” reading (xxiii). Having read her precursor with admiration, our poet now suffers anxiety, and her work reflects this anxiety: “Poetic history . . . is held to be indistinguishable from poetic influence, since strong poets make that history by misreading one another, so as to clear imaginative space for themselves. . . . But nothing is got for nothing, and self-appropriation involves the immense anxieties of indebtedness, for what strong maker desires the realization that [she] failed to create [herself]?” (Bloom 5).

Bloom’s use of the masculine does not betray when *Anxiety of Influence* publication date; instead, it reveals the source of Bloom’s theory, and, perhaps, its weakness when applied to women writers. Bloom employed Sigmund Freud’s “family romance” with its “Oedipal struggle” to build the foundation for his argument, i.e., the

belated (male) poet must destroy his precursor, his “Poetic Father,” in order to create himself as a poet (Gilbert and Gubar 46-47). Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, authors of *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (2000), explain that Bloom’s “‘strong poet’ must engage in heroic warfare with his ‘precursor,’ for, involved as he is in a literary Oedipal struggle, a man can only become a poet by somehow invalidating his poetic father” (47). Bloom’s theory, by the nature of its source, excludes women from the vocation of ‘poet.’

Yet, there were women poets during Stampa’s era just as there had been before and after, and until recently, they had only male poets as models. Women had to imitate these male predecessors if they wanted recognition as a poet. So, the question must be asked, Can a poet, such as Stampa, engage in an “Oedipal struggle” with her male precursor in the manner that Bloom maintains? No, according to Gilbert and Gubar, because the belated woman poet suffers from more than “anxieties of indebtedness”:

Certainly if we acquiesce in the patriarchal Bloomian model, we can be sure that the female poet does not experience the “anxiety of influence” in the same way that her male counterpart would, for the simple reason that she must confront precursors who are almost exclusively male, and therefore significantly different from her. Not only do these precursors incarnate patriarchal authority . . . , they attempt to enclose her in definitions of her person and her potential which, by reducing her to extreme stereotypes (angel, monster) drastically conflict with her own sense of her self—that is, of her subjectivity, her autonomy, her creativity.

(48)⁸¹

Stampa did not, however, allow herself or her artistic potential to be defined by her male precursors nor by her misogynistic culture; in this way her poetry distinguishes itself from that of other women Petrarchists. Stampa would not be confined to the realm of silent, chaste, and obedient women (nor was her narrator) so admired by (male) poets and humanists. She stepped out of the shadow of the silent (and silenced) Laura to write a *canzoniere* that challenged that stereotype. Nonetheless, Gilbert and Gubar are right when they argue that a woman writer confronts not just a precursor, but a male precursor with whom she cannot identify:

On the one hand, therefore, the woman writer's male precursors symbolize authority; on the other hand, despite their authority, they fail to define the ways in which she experiences her own identity as a writer. More, the masculine authority with which they construct their literary personae, as well as the fierce power struggles in which they engage in their efforts of self-creation, seem to the woman writer directly to contradict the terms of her own gender definition. (48)

In Stampa's case, her models were Petrarch and male poets who imitated Petrarch. These Petrarchan poets speak about or to silent women who, for the most part, are more imagined than real flesh and blood. The (male) poet retained the masculine characteristics of acting (writing poetry) and vocalizing (voicing his complaints); the object of his desire does neither, but remains silent, chaste, and beautiful. Consequently, the woman as writer with something to say cannot relate to either her male precursor or his description of her as a woman, and thus she suffers from something more basic than "anxiety of influence":

Thus the ‘anxiety of influence’ that a male poet experiences is felt by a female poet as an even more primary “anxiety of authorship”—a radical fear that she cannot create, that because she can never become a precursor the act of writing will isolate or destroy her. (Gilbert and Gubar 48-49)

One of Stampa’s themes is that she does not have the talent or skill that allows her to describe the wonders of the beloved. The narrator claims that she struggles to discover the right words; yet, she is never satisfied that she has succeeded in praising the beloved as he deserves. She laments that her words fail her:

I go on always, hour by hour, describing
your beauty, your rare talent and your valor,
.....
nor, much as I may toil at all my writing,
do I ever strike the least point of my target,
.....
that all I find to say is still too little.
(45.1-2, 5-6, 11; Stampa *Selected* 43)⁸²

This anxiety of authorship did not preclude Stampa from also suffering “anxiety of influence.” Bloom’s theory does present a challenge because Stampa’s gender does not fall within his critical parameters (“male poet,” “son”), but Stampa is not necessarily excluded. If we interpret the “son” of Bloom’s theory as a metaphor for “latecomer,” Stampa becomes the “son” of her precursor, Boccaccio. She can occupy no other position, for all writers were expected to imitate either Petrarch’s poetry or Boccaccio’s

prose, and all writers, male and female alike, would have suffered “anxiety of influence” to some degree.

Bembo had established dual requirements of imitation and originality for poetry. As an aspiring poet who worked within the confines of Petrarchism, Stampa’s first sonnet, “Voi, ch’ascoltate in queste meste rime” (Oh you who listen to these mournful verses) (1.1; Stampa, *Selected* 3), borrows from Petrarch’s first sonnet and establishes the expectations that she will emulate Petrarch. Yet, the shift in focus within the sonnet announces that her *canzoniere* will be innovative. The indebtedness acknowledged in the first line of sonnet one is a “lie” because, in reality, she could not “stand to be smothered by [her] own awe” for Petrarch. The sonnet, thus, constitutes “an irony not in anything like the New Critical sense of verbal or paradoxical wit... that is, a rhetorical irony occurs when we as readers see that the poet is lying to get started, sa[y]ing other than what [she] means in order to appropriate some space from the precursor for [her] own vision...” (Fite 80). Consciously or unconsciously, Stampa subverts the readers’ expectations, appearing at first to tell a love story like Petrarch’s, when, in fact, she intends no such thing. True, she does borrow Petrarch’s style, words, and phrases, but the plot she imitates is the *Elegy*’s. It is Boccaccio’s narrative and characters that inspire Stampa to depart from Petrarch’s plot of unrequited love.

Similarities between the Elegy and the Rime

Stampa does not reproduce Boccaccio’s *Elegy* in verse, however. Instead, she borrows what would advance her story, but no more. An example is a comparison of the narrators’ reactions upon the impending return of their beloveds. The *Elegy* includes two episodes

during which Fiammetta waits for her Panfilo's return; both times, her language betrays her uncontrollable excitement. The first occurs toward the end of the four-month wait:

Alas, how often I said:

When he comes back, I will embrace him a million times, and my kisses will multiply so many times that they will not allow one entire word to come out of his mouth, and I will give him back twice as many kisses, without receiving any in return, as he gave my face while I lay unconscious. (52)

Fiammetta suffers another period of agitation when her nurse brings news that Panfilo will be arriving on the next ship from his country (his country, and hers, are never named). The rumor seems plausible enough since the nurse received the information from a young man from Panfilo's country claiming to be his friend. Once again, Fiammetta's emotions swing to joy and hope, and her repetition of "O God" are so much like effusive declarations that it creates an air of unrestrained exhilaration:

O God, who sees all things, will I be able to control my urge to embrace him in front of everyone when I first see him? I scarcely believe so, to be sure. O God, when holding him tightly in my arms, will I give him back the kisses he gave my unconscious face without receiving any in return? Certainly the omen which came from my not having been able to bid him farewell has come true, and by it the gods showed me correctly that he would eventually return. O God, when will I be able to tell him of my tears and anguish and listen to the reasons for his long absence? Will I live that long? I scarcely believe it. Oh may that day come soon, because

Death, whom formerly I not only invoked but eagerly sought, now
frightens me; if it is possible that a prayer may reach Death's ears, I beg
her to keep away from me and let me spend my youth happily with my
Panfilo. (137)

Throughout the *Elegy* Fiammetta appears as an emotional and gullible young woman believing every rumor that she hears. However, Fiammetta cannot test the validity of each rumor without exposing her interest in the young man. This inability to discern the truth, in addition to her desperate hope that Panfilo would return, cause her passions run higher than they might normally. Stampa's female narrator is, in many ways, similar to Fiammetta in temperament. With her beloved absent and incommunicable—he does not answer her letters—the narrator's joy, as expressed in Sonnet 100, is palpable, but hardly matches the intensity caused by Fiammetta's repetitive exclamations of "O God."

O blissful, dearer, and sweetest of all news,
.....

O my good fortune, my propitious star,
.....

O faith, O hope, you who have been to me
.....

O life of mine, changed in a single moment . . .

(100.1, 5, 7, 9; Stampa, *Selected* 79)⁸³

Both women begin many comments with “O,” an exclamation of joy. The energy in Fiammetta’s monologue also emerges from her fear that she will be unable to control herself upon seeing Panfilo: “In my own mind, I doubted more than once that I could restrain the burning desire to embrace him in front of others when I could first see him” (52), and “O God, who sees all things, will I be able to control my urge to embrace him in front of everyone when I first see him? I scarcely believe so, to be sure” (137). The *Rime*’s narrator likewise doubts that she can remain a decorous composure upon seeing her beloved for the first time; she declares in Sonnet 101 that she cannot imagine how she will act:

With what sufficient greetings or what words
shall I receive my dearly cherished lover
.....
What color – rosy-red or violet-pale—
will mine be, as my heart is brave or fearful
when I am lead before his noble form
which makes me bold and timid all at one?⁸⁴
(101.1-2, 5-8; Stampa, *Selected* 81)

The scenario of the lover speaking about the beloved returning to his or her arms is an event not found in Petrarch’s *Rime sparse* or, perhaps more importantly, neither in the poetry of Vittoria Colonna nor Veronica Gambara. Nor do these poets speak of their transition (or attempted transition) out of depression. With the news of the impending return, both Stampa’s narrator and Fiammetta attempt to dismiss the dark emotions that

haunt them in their loneliness. Fiammetta, addressing her heart, urges it to put aside all negative memories and emotions and to restore itself to the old self Panfilo knew:

My loving heart, weakened for so long by suffering, free yourself at last from bothersome worries, since our darling lover is remembering us and is on his way, as he had promised. May the pain, fear, and the deep shame that abounds in affliction take flight; don't let it cross your mind how fortune has guided you in the past, but chase away all the clouds of cruel fate, and may all images of miserable moments leave you; turn your happy face towards the present good, and may the old Fiammetta, with a soul renewed, divest herself of everything. (134)

The *Rime*'s narrator also suffers her beloved's absence for a long time⁸⁵—six months—almost as long as Fiammetta's Panfilo had been gone. Like Fiammetta, Stampa's narrator admonishes herself to forget the pains of the past and look forward to a happy future with her lover.

Away from me, you shadows and dark mists
which have been constantly before my eyes
.....
now it is time to be serene again,
.....
May everything in me be filled with laughter
now that my sun returns to stay with me,
.....

Now may my soul be wrapt in countless pleasures,
a thousand sweets, and all my life serene,
rejoicing in itself with sheer contentment.⁸⁶

(102.1-2, 5, 9-10, 12-14; Stampa, *Selected* 83)

The structure of the two monologues is parallel; both women begin by addressing a part of themselves as if it were a separate entity. Fiammetta addresses her heart, urging it to release negative thoughts—“shadows and dark mist”—dismissing them from her presence. Having commented on the need to change to positive thinking, each woman then addresses herself as in a short soliloquy.

Another event that occurs in both narratives is the rumor that the beloved plans to or has taken a wife. Fiammetta is visiting some nuns when a merchant brings news of Panfilo’s marriage; the merchant had seen a young bride enter Panfilo’s house. One of the nuns, a good-looking young woman, struggles to maintain her composure when she hears the news. For Fiammetta also, the news is devastating, resulting in “sorrowful rage” that causes her to be “as furious as a Lybian lion that discovers hunters on its tracks, now flushed and now pale. . . .” (60). She feels alternatively betrayed, helpless, and angry.

On hearing this, I was first seized by extremely deep grief, and then, as I watched the scene, I was suddenly seized by another pain just as sharp, and I could hardly restrain myself from reproaching her very rudely for her display of emotion, for I was jealous of the open signs of love she was showing towards Panfilo, suspecting that, like me, she might have a legitimate reason to grieve at the words she had just heard. Nonetheless, with an effort that was painful and, I believe, unequalled by any other, I

tried to hid the turmoil in my heart under an unchanged face, more willing to weep than to listen further. (59-60)

Once I could behave as I wished, I walked into my room and began weeping bitterly, and when after a long time the abundant tears had relieved some of the deep sorrow and I felt more free to speak, I began in a very weak voice:

Now my unhappy Fiammetta, you know why your Panfilo is not coming back; now you have what you were trying to find. What more do you want, you miserable one? What more do you ask? This should suffice: Panfilo is no longer yours, let go of your desire to have him back, free yourself of your misplaced hope, forget this passion and abandon your insane thoughts, trust at last the omens and your intuitive soul, and start learning about the deceptions of young men. You have reached the point usually reached by women who trust too much. (60)

And with these words my anger flared again; I wept harder and I began to speak words much too daring. (60)

Now you are celebrating the sacred rites of Hymen, and I, who am self-deceived and deceived by you and by your words, waste away weeping, and with my tears I make way for my own death, whose painful approach will rightly be attributable to your cruelty, and my life span, which I so desired to lengthen, will be shorter because of you. (61)

Due to the constraints of the sonnet form with its meter and rhyme scheme, Stampa cannot display the same intense tone of anger that Boccaccio can with prose.

Nonetheless, Stampa's narrator, handling the news differently than Fiammetta, does not go into a rage, but sinks into depression. She is also quick to accuse the beloved of being false while praising her own solid constancy.

A knot, a faith, which are not fixed and constant,
will break, or be dissolved, for little cause;

but my own faith, my knot, will steal the honors
both from the Gordian knot, and adamant.

(179.4-8; Stampa, *Selected* 147)⁸⁷

It is amusing and ironic that both women would be genuinely upset that their lovers should deign to take wives. Fiammetta is a married woman whose husband, although boring and absent, treats her well. The *Rime*'s narrator is a middle-class woman, well below her aristocratic beloved in class rank. In addition, neither woman cannot realistically expect to have a long-term relationship with her lover. Panfilo is from a different country, whereas Collalto is a mercenary for the King of France.

Fiammetta addresses her lament to women readers, her "Dear Ladies": "Therefore since I am more eager to complain than any other woman, to make certain that the cause of my grief will not grow weaker through habit but stronger, I wish to recount my story to you, noble ladies, and if possible to awaken pity in you, in whose hearts love perhaps dwells more happily than in mine" (Boccaccio, *Lady* 1). She continues to address her female readership throughout the story: "compassionate ladies" (Boccaccio, *Lady* 23); "if my imagination is not mistaken, my ladies," (Boccaccio, *Lady* 24); "just as you ladies do" (Boccaccio, *Lady* 25); "Compassionate ladies" (Boccaccio, *Lady* 47); "And so,

compassionate ladies, as you have heard” (Boccaccio, *Lady* 53); “Compassionate ladies, up to this moment my tears were slight” (Boccaccio, *Lady* 58); “It would be difficult for me to show you, ladies, how vehement an anger, how many tears, and what a heartache would accompany these thoughts and arguments” (Boccaccio, *Lady* 66); “Why will I conceal from you, ladies” (Boccaccio, *Lady* 79); and so on. She assumes that women would be sympathetic since some had suffered abandonment, and others would have pity for her nonetheless. Whereas men, Fiammetta believes, would laugh at her tears.

Consequently, Fiammetta expects pity from these ladies:

it is fitting that you [my little booklet] go where I am sending you
discomposed, with your hair uncombed, stained and full of gloom, to
awaken by my misfortunes blessed pity in the minds of those women who
will read you. (Boccaccio, *Lady* 156)

In contrast, Lady Fiammetta, angry with Panfilo and distrustful of all men, instructs her book to “Flee the eyes of men, and even if you should be seen by them, tell them this: ‘You ungrateful sex, denigrator of innocent women, it is not suitable for you to perceive godly things’” (158). Stampa’s narrator, not so exclusive in her readership, begins her *canzoniere* with an address to all “who listen to these mournful verses,” implying that both genders are invited to hear the story. However, she limits “some well-born people” to those from whom she hopes to receive “honor” and “glory,” and expresses hope that another woman will envy her (1.1, 5-7; Stampa, *Selected* 3)

O you who listen to these mournful verses,
.....
I hope to find among some well-born people,

wherever they may be, those who prize honor,
not only pardon for my tears, but glory

.....

I dare to hope some woman will exclaim:

“Happy is she, she who has undergone
for such a noble cause, sorrow so noble!

Why were not such high fortune, such great love,
granted to me, and such a splendid lord,
so I could walk as equal to that lady?”⁸⁸

(1.1, 5-7, 9-14; Stampa, *Selected* 3)

The narrator continues to acknowledge her female audience throughout the *Rime*: “Chi vuol conoscer, donne, il mio signore” (7.1) (“If, ladies, you desire to know my lord”; 7.1; Stampa, *Selected* 13); “Voi che novellamente, donne, entrate” (“You women who have newly entered in”; 64.1; Stampa, *Selected* 53); “Piangete, donne, e con voi pianga Amore” (151.1) (“Weep, Ladies, and let Love join in your grief”; 151.1; Stampa, *Selected* 123); “Donne, voi che fin qui libere e sciolte”(286.1) (“Young ladies, you who still enjoy your freedom”; 241.1; Stampa, *Selected* 193). Nowhere does the narrator address a male audience other than the beloved. The reason could be similar to Fiammetta’s anger, lack of trust, and fear of ridicule from the wider circle of men.

While these textual parallels exist in the two works, they do not prove, in themselves, the *Elegy*’s influence on the *Rime*; however, one common plot detail does: both narrators admit that they consummated their love. Fiammetta makes it clear that she and Panfilo spent many nights in lovemaking:

I say then, that after such an event [of Panfilo's first time coming to her bed], which in the past I had imagined but had never experienced, and under these circumstances, fate and our wits helped us to solace ourselves at length and with immense pleasure not once but many times, although it seems to me now that the time then flew faster than any wind. . . . Oh how many tender kisses and amorous embraces, and how many nights were spent talking more than if it were daytime, and how many pleasures, dear to each lover, we had there during those joyful hours!

(Boccaccio, *Lady* 26)

Fiammetta even admits that she and Panfilo schemed ways to spend more time together, and she recalls these times with a dreamy tone. Likewise, the *Rime*'s narrator relishes her memories of her nights with Collaltino. Sonnet 104, which is probably her best known, and certainly her most jubilant poem, recalls the joyful time spent with her beloved:

Oh night, more glorious and more blest to me
than are the brightest and most blissful days!
Night, worthy to be praised by the most brilliant
of human minds, not only by my words.⁸⁹

(104.1-4; Stampa, *Selected* 85)

I believe that Lady Fiammetta's admission to making love with Panfilo "not once, but many times" (Boccaccio, *Lady* 26) impressed Stampa. This plot point is the most striking evidence of Boccaccio's influence on Stampa, for in both works, the narrators shamelessly refer to their lovemaking during a time when women poets were circumspect about their chastity (unless they were courtesans, which Stampa was not; nor was Lady

Fiammetta). For example, the “foremothers” of Petrarchan poetry, Vittoria Colonna and Veronica Gambara, keep their sexual passions for their deceased husbands out of their poetry. Society frowned upon even a married woman admitting passion for her husband, living or dead: “for a woman, too full of desire even for her own husband was considered dangerously wanton” (Smarr, “Substituting” 3). The lack of authorial intervention denouncing Fiammetta’s actions—even though she is a married woman—must have been refreshing to Stampa living as she did in a culture fixated on women’s chastity. The *Elegy* also suggests a radical new direction for Stampa to take the Petrarchan *canzoniere*: the narrative about physical love and the following emotional abandonment as told by a woman.

Stampa’s Swerve from Boccaccio

In the *Elegy*, Boccaccio explores what a self-centered young woman would experience emotionally if her lover left her, and she was powerless to either find out what happened to him or go herself to find him. What Boccaccio finds is that Fiammetta spends a great deal of time rehashing bittersweet memories, feeling self-pity, and making accusations. In contrast, Stampa explores the emotions of a woman deeply in love with a man who changes his mind about his love for her and grows cold and distant. This plot change provides Stampa with new material to examine of a lover’s reaction upon being emotionally abandoned. Like Fiammetta’s, the narrator’s responses to the beloved’s chilliness vacillate between denial of the new relationship to jealousy, anger, self-pity, and even suicidal thoughts. A number of poems examine these emotions; for example, Sonnets 129, 136, 142, 150, and 174 investigate anger, and Sonnets 125, 126, 132, 155,

171, 179 jealousy. Sonnets 125 and 132 speak directly on jealousy. The narrator challenges Love to relieve her pain. First, she asks Love to remove his sisters Jealousy and Fear from her life. Failing to move him to pity, she asks in Sonnet 132, How can she feel pain if she has no heart:

I wish you could tell me, Love, a little
what I should do with Fear and Jealousy,
your cruel sisters. . . ?⁹⁰ (125.1-3; Stampa, *Selected* 97)

Although the narrator pleads with Love to relieve her suffering, she receives no respite because, as Love implies, her beloved is unmatched in the world: “but not a one of those / has such a noble cause for fearing them” (125.8-9; Stampa, , *Selected* 97). In Sonnet 126, the narrator claims to have resigned herself to her jealousy, but the reader, and indeed the lover herself, remains unconvinced as seen in the poem following this one:

So I must calm myself, content with fearing
and living on in bitter jealousy
as long as my beloved light consents,
.....
And I, who am immersed in so much grief,
when his bright rays appear in front of me
am glad to change from what I used to be.⁹¹
(126.1-3, 12-14; Stampa, *Selected* 99)

Having failed to fool herself, the narrator turns to Love again in Sonnet 132, this time asking how, if she is without a heart, she still suffers?

"How can it be, since I gave heart and soul
to him, the day I took them both from me,
if everything enclosed within his breast
is only joy and laughter, never sorrow,
how can I feel cold jealousy and fear
and be deprived of all my joyfulness. . . .⁹²

(132.5-10; Stampa, *Selected* 103)

However, jealousy can rarely be alleviated, especially when the beloved has become cold. What follows, then, is anger alternating with self-pity and depression, of which the *Rime* has numerous examples. One fine example of the “woman scorned” is Sonnet 174 where the narrator accuses the beloved of being callous about her pain. Because of her rage, the narrator compares herself to two terrible anomalies of nature, the fearsome Chimera and the violent Charybdis:

A new unheard-of cruelty! . . .
.....
seeing me suffer without any pity,
and thinking always how to give me pain,
laughing about my death—while I am dying—
his wishes ever cold as ice.

.....
All this has made me turn to a Chimera,
confused abyss, a sea forever raging. . . .⁹³

(174.1, 5-8, 12-13; Stampa, *Selected* 143)

When anger cannot be expressed, depression may ensue. Although the narrator is capable of expressing her anger and thus “letting off steam,” as we see in Sonnet 174 above, she, nonetheless, suffers depression and is not above wallowing in self-pity. In Sonnet 129 the angry narrator seems on the verge of depression as she asks, Why me?

O my misfortune, O my perverse fate,
O judgment, enemy of all my good,
since I must suffer, through no fault of mine,
the penalty due to another's sin!

(174.1-4; Stampa, *Selected* 101)⁹⁴

By Sonnet 133, the narrator has slid into the depths of depression, unable to change her fate because she has resigned herself to both her situation and her dark moods. She is alive; yet, she does not live; she cannot enjoy life's pleasures because her pain-filled state. The narrator expresses a desire to end her life and her pain, but, cleverly, because she is not alive, she cannot act:

And if I wish to finish my own life,
and with my life my pain, I'm not allowed,
for without life one had no power to act.

(133.9-11; Stampa, *Selected* 105)⁹⁵

Finally, foreseeing her death, the narrator composes her own eulogy—the ultimate act of self-pity. The poem is, of course, a *topoi*, but by repeating the first line of Petrarch's Sonnet 92, a lament on the death of the great poet Cino da Pistoia (1270-1336) (Petrarch 91), Stampa's narrator (and Stampa by association) appropriates the fame Petrarch allots to Pistoia.

Weep, Ladies, and let Love join in your grief,

.....

When, dead and cold, I in my grave shall lie,

write down the reasons for my early death:

"Loving too much, loved little in return,

she lived and died unhappy, who now lies

here, the most loyal lover of all times.

Pray for her soul's repose, good passer-by,

and learn from her, who was so badly used,

never to love one cruel and untrue."⁹⁶

(151.1, 7-14; Stampa, *Selected* 123)

Most poems are not so focused; rather, they combine two feelings, the shift in emotions occurring between the first and second quatrains or between the second quatrain and the sextet. In Sonnet 142, for example, verses one through eight reflect anger, shifting to desperation beginning with line nine; and in Sonnet 166, the anger directed at Love and the beloved in verses one through four is redirected to the narrator in verses 5 to 14.

O cruel tyrant, give me back my heart

which you so wrongfully are torturing

and tearing all to pieces, like a lion

or tiger, preying on antelope.

.....

I, a young woman, with small strength of mind,

now left without my heart, which dwells in you,
without you to defend me from myself—
you who were wont to be by strength and vigor?
(142.1-4, 11-14; Stampa, *Selected* 113)⁹⁷

I accuse Love, and equally accuse
him whom I love: Love who bound me so fast,
and him who can give life to me, or death,
who steals from me to win another's love.
But now, wiser at last, both I excuse,
accuse myself alone for my hard fate,
and since my wishes were too ill-advised,
I see I was the minister of my grief.⁹⁸
(166.1-8; Stampa, *Selected* 135)

Fiammetta's narration includes instances where she displays anger, depression, suicidal thoughts, and jealousy, often scolding Panfilo for his cruelty; nonetheless, she dialogues with herself with no expectation that Panfilo will read her words. This is probably the only time that Fiammetta has a clear understanding of reality. The *Rime*'s narrator, however, does address the beloved believing he will read her poems. The letter to the beloved beginning the *Rime* indicates both that she has sent previous poems and letters to him and that he has read them. For example, Sonnet 117 is a response to a poem sent by her beloved in which she argues that she is unworthy of praise, and that he is the one to be praised:

Why do you waste, my lord, paper and ink
in praising me, since I have nothing worthy
of such high honor as you pay to me. . . .⁹⁹

(117.1-3; Stampa, *Selected* 95)

Many sonnets, like the one above, directly address the beloved. Fiammetta, on the other hand, is unable to communicate with Panfilo. He does not, it appears, have a problem getting letters to her initially. She received letters from him soon after his departure: “I . . . took out the numerous letters he had sent me. . . .” (Boccaccio, *Lady* 47). She knew he had reached his country from a letter: “not only did I think that he had reached his country, but I was reassured about his by a letter from him. . . .” (Boccaccio, *Lady* 44). Later, during a fit of rage, she burns all the letters (Boccaccio, *Lady* 67). After the deadline has passed, Fiammetta receives no more letters, which would explain her ignorance of any new return date, or any reasons why he failed to return. Fiammetta considers writing Panfilo, being desperate for some communication from him. She muses about sending him a letter but hesitates, concerned for her reputation:

I often sought the advice of my discreet nurse on this matter, wishing to find a way to get my lover back. Sometimes we planned to write letters full of lamination, informing him of my sorrowful circumstances; other times we thought it would be better to send a wise messenger who by word of mouth would tell him of my suffering, and although my nurse was old and the journey was long and arduous, she was ready to go for me. But after weighing everything, we concluded that letters, no matter how pitiful, would not be effective in light of his new and present love affairs,

so we judged them useless; in spite of all this, *I wrote some, with the results we had foreseen*. I clearly perceived that if I sent my nurse, she would not live to reach him, and I did not believe that anyone else could be trusted; therefore, *the first attempts were futile*.

(Boccaccio, *Lady* 128; emphasis added)

Boccaccio's version of the abandoned woman examines the psyche of a woman who is self-centered and who will not accept the reality of the situation. She cannot believe that her lover would leave her although he fails to return as promised and stops sending letters—or any communication whatsoever—after the date passed. Fiammetta stubbornly will not quit loving Panfilo. What Boccaccio discovers in this particular woman is a self-destructive tendency. Even before she suspects that Panfilo has abandoned her, she lets her looks, and we can presume her health, decline, and she even attempts suicide. She obsesses over memories, refusing to let go of the past, and she never accepts the possibility that her possessiveness may be to blame for his departure. She is not, in spite of the commendable trait of constancy, an admirable figure. She has taken fidelity to the extreme for no other reason than pride, which is underlying reason why she wrote her book. Consequently, she is not someone, Boccaccio implies, other women should emulate.

Stampa's narrator is somewhat like Fiammetta, but is not pathologically fixated on one lover. The *Rime* is an investigation of a woman's reactions after her lover has emotionally abandoned her, that is, returned from war without his love for her. She cannot stop writing love poems to him and about him, claiming that she is singing his praises; yet, in reality, like Petrarch, she sings about her own emotions experienced when

thinking of him. The narrator tells her love story in real time, except at the beginning where she establishes the setting. Like Fiammetta, the *Rime*'s narrator is frustrated by the beloved's lack of communication. However, while Fiammetta cannot communicate with her beloved for various reasons, this narrator can; consequently, the lack of replies to letters and poems are clear indications that he is ignoring her. The narrator persists, trying to woo her beloved to reciprocate her love. Nonetheless, more realistic than Fiammetta, the narrator is not shocked that the beloved has decided not to love her or that she will have his love unconditionally. Moreover, unlike Fiammetta, the narrator does not blame a false goddess, or fortune, or the beloved for her pain. More stable than Fiammetta, the failure at love does not drive her to attempt suicide, although she does play with the topic of her beloved's coldness killing her. Finally, after a period of failure in attracting him, she realizes that the beloved will not have a change of heart, and so, allows for the possibility of a new lover. Stampa would have her woman reader realize that, although she is deeply in love with one man, his rejection of her love will not kill her; in fact, like the *Rime*'s narrator who realized that she could love again and that she benefited from the experience because she honed her poetry skills, the abandoned woman will not only survive the pain, but come out of the experience stronger and wiser.

Chapter Six: Stampa's Bid for Fame

Petrarchan poetry fascinated the Venetian literati and upper classes. No other literary endeavor was so highly valued. According to Bassanese, “[Petrarch’s] *canzoniere* was the epitome of a literary love story, the artistic summit to be conquered, and the perfect *iter* to be followed” (*Stampa* 57). So much of that style was written that surviving examples run the gamut from brilliant, original pieces to simple recombinations of Petrarch’s own verses.

Stampa, an admired singer and musician and, more importantly, friends with some important Venetian composers, performed at Venier’s *ridotto*. Exposed to a culture whose discussions focused on poetry, caught up in the quest for poetic fame, and she writes her version of the Petrarchan *canzoniere*, telling the story of unrequited love from the abandoned woman’s point of view. With her *Rime*’s first-person point of view, convincing portrayals of emotions, references to real people and places, and use of time markers, it did not require much imagination for later readers, beginning with Antonio Rambaldo di Collalto, to read Stampa’s *Rime* as her autobiography of a love affair. Yet, interpreting the *Rime* in this manner cannot be justified. Very little contemporary documentation exists on Stampa as the Italian scholar Abdelkader Salza discovered when he searched the Venetian archives in the early 1900s. We know from dedications and eulogies that her contemporaries admired her singing and musical talents. For example, Girolamo Parabosco waxes lyrical in a dedication about her singing: “And what shall I

say of that angelic voice, which, whenever it penetrates the air with its divine accents, makes such sweet harmony that it does not merely, like the Siren, make everyone who is worthy of hearing it thrall to the brother of death, but infuses spirit and life into the coldest stones, making them weep for sovran sweetness. . . .” (Jerrold 175). We also know from a coroner’s report that she died on 23 April 1554 after 15 days of matrix pain and fever (Bellonci 40-41; Robins 45).¹⁰⁰ As for her social, cultural, and musical milieux, more is being discovered each year; nevertheless, much more information needs to be uncovered about the Venetian middle-class, and especially about women of that class (and of the classes below). There is a lack of scholarly research about the professional, possibly freelance, women singers and musicians in Venice. It might be that the requirement for a chaste reputation for women in the workforce may not have been as rigid as those espoused by moralists and humanists such as Vives.

The assumption that women can compose autobiographical poetry is all that has pervaded literary analysis in the past, and still rears its head in many recent analyses as, for example, in Fiora A. Bassanese’s articles and Laura Anna Stortoni and Mary Prentice Lillie’s book of *Rime* translations. The mistake of assuming that Stampa’s *Rime* is autobiography, and the resulting anachronistic categorization of her work, results from not considering her poetry in its literary and cultural contexts. Modern readers interpret the *Rime* anachronistically, viewing the work through the lens of a modern understanding of what constitutes autobiography. Not surprisingly, the *Rime* does meet the parameters set by several modern definitions for autobiography; however, when compared to Renaissance autobiography, significant differences found between the two do not support the placement of her *oeuvre* within the genre of autobiography. In sum, Stampa’s *Rime* is

the portrayal of a three-year love affair written in the Petrarchan mode; that is, the *Rime* focuses on the suffering lover. Stampa uses rhetorical devices, word games, and puns in her poems, and her word choices heighten the emotional effect on the reader. In contrast, contemporary autobiographers wrote in simple style, avoided the use of rhetoric, focused on externalities—not on the individual—and avoided the presentation of emotions. They wrote to preserve the history of a community, or keep a personal health or expense log, or transmit family history to future generations. Simple words were important in suggesting the veracity of the text since readers equated plain, unadorned language with truth. Stampa's *Rime* and contemporary autobiography stood poles apart on the emotional, rhetorical, and articulative scales.

Stampa did not write her *canzoniere* to record her love story; she composed poetry because the society she aspired to did. Stampa's preference for Petrarchan poetry was affected by her social climate, by what her contemporaries were reading and writing, and what they admired in literature. Her basic knowledge of Petrarchan poetry was sound, based as it was up her aristocratic education and her professional repertoire. As a singer/musician, she frequented the *ridotti* and homes of the wealthy, earning her living through entertainment. Much of what she sang were Petrarchan sonnets, either composed by Petrarch and put to music by contemporary composers, or sonnets by poets and lyricists from the past or present. By observing poets at the *ridotti* she frequented, she learned that a good Petrarchist could earn fame among his compatriots—perhaps a patron, and more importantly, she believed that she could do the same.

Over her lifetime, Stampa composed nearly 250 songs, sonnets, madrigali, and capitoli about a love affair with an aristocrat from the Venetian mainland. She labored on

these poems and arranged them during the late 1540s into a *canzoniere* that told the story of the abandoned lover (Jones, “Bad Press” 295). The layout of the *Rime*, the number of poems written, and her comments in her occasional verses indicate that she endeavored to perfect her art. Composing a *canzoniere* with such skill and emotional intensity was no small accomplishment. It narrates the story of a passionate woman’s love for an unavailable, perhaps unwilling, beloved, and focuses on the female narrator’s emotional states from falling in love to the bitter realization that the beloved would not reciprocate her love.

The plot of the abandoned woman lover had been around for centuries, and some of those ancient texts were still in production, as was, for example, Ovid’s *Heroides*, a collection of letters written by abandoned mythological women to their unfaithful lovers. Another such old—albeit not ancient—text was Giovanni Boccaccio’s *Elegy of Lady Fiammetta* (1343-45). Pietro Bembo, the influential author of *Prose della vulgare lingua* [Writings on the vernacular] (1525) arguing for a single model for poetry and for prose, had chosen Boccaccio as the prose writer to imitate. Consequently, Boccaccio’s works—and there were quite a few, the *Decameron* being the most famous—were still in print during Stampa’s lifetime. Juan Luis Vives, in his *Education for a Christian Woman* (1524), specifically names the *Decameron* as one of the books that a young woman should not read. Perhaps the *Elegy* was permitted. However, I believe that Stampa did read it and that the *Elegy*’s forthright and sympathetic portrayal of the abandoned woman intrigued Stampa. Here was a plot that unlike the plots of other *canzoniere* with which her *Rime* would be competing for recognition and patronage, but one that she could exploit for a Petrarchan *canzoniere*. Perhaps Stampa did not want to fall under

Boccaccio's shadow, so she swerved from Boccaccio to reinvent his storyline. Stampa found that the story of an emotionally abandoned woman who continued to see her beloved at social events and to hear about him in conversations offered a creative plot change from that found in Petrarch and Boccaccio. Whereas the lover of the *Elegy* physically abandons Fiammetta, the male beloved of Stampa's *Rime* returns to the narrator's city with a cold heart. This change allowed Stampa to represent the emotional turmoil suffered by the lover over the loss of her beloved. The story arc of Stampa's *Rime* consists of the narrator falling in love and hopeful of reciprocation, her suffering while he is away, his return and her initial joy, and then her growing awareness that the beloved has abandoned her for good. The story ends with her budding feelings for a new lover, and her decision to risk her heart yet again.

The goal of this paper has been to show that Gaspara Stampa as an educated, trained, and engaged in the intense cultural environment of Venetian society, did not depend on an affair with Collaltino di Collalto—or anyone else, for that matter—in order to compose a skillful, emotionally realistic *canzoniere* about what an abandoned female lover experiences. This paper takes the position that Stampa, as a fledging Petrarchan poet, succeeded in placing herself in the shoes of an abandoned lover to write convincingly about the emotions experienced by that woman in the diverse situations that could occur during the blooming and death of a love affair. In addition, while this paper demonstrates that Boccaccio's *Elegy of Lady Fiammetta* influenced Stampa, it does not claim that this work (or Petrarch's *Rime sparse*) was the sole influence. Stampa lived and worked in a remarkably rich literary culture where numerous poets were available to influence and inspire her, both male and female, i.e., Vittoria Colonna, Veronica

Gambara, Pietro Bembo, and Giovanni Della Casa just to name four of the many poets whose verse circulated among the literati of Venice and Northern Italy. An important contribution to any study of influences on Stampa's *Rime* would need to include that of her coterie to whom Stampa would have sent her poems for their critique. A prime influence would have been Stampa's close friend Ippolita Mirtilia about whom very little information has been written. Moreover, a comparative analysis of Stampa's oeuvre with that of Giovanni Della Casa and Domenico Venier, both of whom she knew and respected, has yet to be done, although these men were two of the most influential poets in Venice during Stampa's lifetime. Finally, no scholar has compared Stampa's poetry to Pietro Bembo's, an important assessment because of the contributions Bembo made to the creative evolution of Petrarchism with the publication of his own *Rime*. Although scholars have devoted a great deal of research and thought to Gaspara Stampa as a woman and to her *Rime*, there are still many questions to be answered and mysteries to be resolved about this courageous and brilliant artist.

Notes

1. “Lyric: a verse or poem that is, or supposedly is, susceptible of being sung to the accompaniment of a musical instrument (in ancient times, usually a lyre) or that expresses intense personal emotion in a manner suggestive of a song. Lyric poetry expresses the thoughts and feelings of the poet and is sometimes contrasted with narrative poetry and verse drama, which relate events in the form of a story. Elegies, odes, and sonnets are all important kinds of lyric poetry” (“Lyric”).

2. This view of women’s limited place in Renaissance Venice is slowly undergoing expansion as scholars discover more about the lives of middle class women and men. (See, e.g.: *Women in the Streets: Essays on Sex and Power in Renaissance Italy* by Samuel K. Cohn, Jr., *Working Women in Early Modern Venice* by Monica Chojnacka, and *Women Musicians of Venice: Musical Foundations, 1525- 1855* by Jane I. Baldauf-Berdes). Eventually, we may determine that the chaste middle-class working woman was ordinary.

3. “Nell’edizione 1738, oltre il sonetto al Bonetti, fu ristampato per la prima volta un capitolo (a p. 173 sgg.), che aveva visto la luce soltanto nel 1573, in una raccolta genovese messa insieme da Cristoforo Zabata: *Nuova / Scelta di Rime / di diversi begli / ingegni;/ fra le quali ne son molte del Tansillo / non piú per l’adietro impresse, / e pur ora date in luce ecc. // In Genova, / appresso Christofforo Bellone F. A. / MDLXXIII. Quivi il capitolo “Della signora Gaspara Stampa” è a pp. 194-8; e, poiché colei che lo scrive,*

dirigendosi ad una giovane fattasi monaca, risulta essere una donna maritata, m'è sorto qualche dubbio sull'autenticità della poesia; ma non ho creduto sufficiente questo argomento per escluderla dal canzoniere della Stampa, che poté scriverla a nome d'altra persona" (Nota, 371-72). ("The chapter 'The lady Gaspara Stampa' is pages 194-8, and because the one who writes, directed at a young nun, is a married woman, there arose in me some doubt as to the authenticity of the poetry, but I have not thought this sufficient argument to exclude it from the songs of the Stampa because she could write on behalf of another person"; my translation).

4. Interestingly, many scholars are aware that Salza rearranged Stampa's *Rime*; yet, they continue to use its numbering system. I have never seen a scholarly rationale for preferring Salza's version to an earlier edition or to the original. The University of Houston Library owns one of the few surviving originals.

5. "Madonna Gaspara Stampa Secondo Nuove Indagini" (1913) ("New Research on Gaspara Stampa") and "Madonna Gaspara Stampa e la Società Veneziana del Suo Tempo, Nuove Discussioni" (1917) ("Madonna Gaspara Stampa and the Venetian Society of Her Time: New Discussions").

6. Jaffe states that "some of [Gaspara's male friends], according to Salza, were womanizers, and frequented women of 'easy virtue'" (240). Specifically, Salza says of Parabosco "Il Parabosco, da quel donnaiolo di buon gusto che era" ("Secondo" 16).

7. Fiora A. Bassanese uses Salza's edition and partition designations (*Rime d'Amore* and *Rime varie*) in all her works on Stampa.

8. The copy of the *Rime* owned by the University of Houston's M. D. Anderson Library is described as follows: "Binding: light brown leather, gilt and blind double fillets

border. Gilt vegetal element on the center of both covers. Spine with five false raised bands, gilt compartments with central asterisk element. On second compartment in gilt is the title: '1RIME 2DI 3STAMPA 4STAMPA'. On third compartment the date: '1VENETIA 21554'. Gilt edges, marbled pastedowns . . . woodcut historiated capitals at the opening of each section.”

9. For Cassandra’s dedication, see Appendix B. This *Rime* was the first printing of Stampa’s poems as a collection; prior to that, only three of Stampa’s poems had been published in a 1553 anthology, *Il sesto libro delle rime di diversi eccellenti autori* (“The Sixth Book of Poems by Various Excellent Authors”; Robin 45), edited by Lodovico Domenichi and printed by Giolito. The poems are “Vieni Amor’ a vedere la Gloria mia” (51), “O’ hora, ò stella dispietata e cruda” (70), and “Fa ch’io ravegga amor’ anzi ch’io moia” (75) (Jaffe 246). These sonnets have the same numbering in both the 1554 edition and in Salza’s 1913 edition.

10. Although she doesn’t explain herself, Jerrold comments that Bartolomeo Stampa was of aristocratic lineage: “[But the name] is said to have belonged to a noble Milanese family – a fact bourne out by the existence of a letter written to [Stampa] by Paola Antonia de’ Negri, the daughter of Lazzaro Negri, public professor of letters at Milan. . . .” (169-70).

11. It is often hard to determine whether critics use the modern calendar or the Venetian calendar. The difference is slight and does not affect any conclusions presented here. The first day of the Venetian year was March 1st (Benedetti vii).

12. “A poet who was in contact with famous literati. He knew Latin, Greek, and Hebrew and taught languages to Stampa (cfr: G.A. Cesareo. *Stampa, donna e poetessa*. Napoli, Perrella (1920) 15)” (Wend 74).

13. “A singer and teacher of music who published two volumes of madrigals in Venice, in 1547 and 1550, the first being dedicated to Stampa. He taught music to Stampa (cfr: G.A. Cesareo. *Stampa, donna e poetessa*. Napoli, Perrella (1920) 16)” (Wend 74).

14. See Appendix D.

15. *Lettera di prefazione al Ragionamento di M. Francesco Sansovino, nel quale brevemente s'ingsegna a' giovani uomani la bell'Arte d' Amore*. Venice, January 3, 1545 (i.e. 1546). (Jerrold 177).

16. “It is . . . significant that Francesco Sansovino would dedicate a rather theoretical work to her, the publication of *Benedetto Varchi's lesson on a sonnet by Della Casa*, adding that ‘your worth and your purified judgment far exceed any common praise’” (Bassanese, *Stampa* 44).

17. The details of the love story as told by Salza’s *Rime d’Amore*. I return to Salza’s version because, as you no doubt recall, this is the edition mined for details concerning Stampa’s love for Collaltino.

18. This letter is the same that begins the *Rime* (1554) (Bassanese, *Stampa* 17).

19. “We can presume that the letter and early canzoniere were sent during the summer of 1549” (Bassanese, *Stampa* 17).

20. Bellonci is the only scholar I know to make this statement.

21. By Giorgio Benzone:

Ben'è d'alta uaghezzà il mondo scarco
poi che spendo Anasilla ha Morte rea,
che sol col canto, e con le luci fea
a' giri eterni, a' lor lu mi incarco.
Spegni Amor la lua face, e rompì l'arco,
perche, chiusi quegli occhi, one s'ardea;
sparita una sì stretto varco.
Poi dir, che sei rimaso solo, e inorme,
sole e inerme le suore al puro argento,
di Castalia hor, ch'è suelto ill or bel germe.
Chi vedrà più bellezza, ò vdrà contento
dolce, ò d'alma? Ahi terrene cose ìferme,
non sì, qual voi, sugace é l'aura, e'l vento.

22. Ben si convien, signor, che l'aureo dardo
Amor v'abbia aventato in mezzo il petto,
rotto quel duro e quel gelato affetto,
tanto a le fiamme sue ritroso e tardo,
avendo a me col vostro dolce sguardo,
onde piove disir, gioia e diletto,
l'alma impiagata e 'l cor legato e stretto
oltre misura, onde mi struggo ed ardo.
Men dunque acerbo de' parer a vui

esser nel laccio aviluppato e preso,
ov'io sì stretta ancor legata fui.
Zelo d'ardente caritate acceso
esser conviene eguale omai fra nui
nel nostro dolce ed amoroso peso. (216; 219 Salza)

23. “Il registro dei morti nell’*Archivio parrocchiale dei SS. Gervasio e Protasio* a Venezia riporta: ‘Adí 23 april 1554. M^a Gasparina Stampa in le case de messer Hieronymo Morosini la qual è stà malà da febre et mal colico, et mal de mare zorni 15, è morta in questo zorno.’” (Bellonci 40). (“April 23, 1554. Madonna Gasparina Stampa in the home of messer Hieronymo Morosini, who was ill with fever and colic and matrix pains for fifteen days, died this day”; Robins “Courtesans” 45).

24. “Ma noi possiamo tener per sicuri soltanto i seguenti particolari della sua biografia: la famiglia della poetessa era padovana, e certamente non nobile, perchè di questa nobiltà nessuna attestazione ci è giunta; Gaspara era nata a Padova, com’ella stessa ci dice in un sonetto allo Speroni: non sappiamo in quale anno, probabilmente non prima del 1525. Quanto alla sua parentela, nulla sappiamo del padre: un accenno alla madre e alla sorella fa ella stessa in un altro sonetto: alcune altre cose ci son note intorno alla sorella di Gaspara, Cassandra, complimentata dal Parabosco, la quale dedicò a Giovanni Della Casa le *Rime* della nostra poetessa (1554): più altri ragguagli e un piccolo canzoniere ci son pervenuti, del fratello di Gaspara, Baldassare, da lei non mai nominato. Gaspara morì precisamente il 23 aprile 1554” (“Secondo” 4-5).

25. Sperone Speroni authored the *Diologo d’Amore* (“Dialogue on Love”) (1542) (Finotti “Women Writers” 129, 141n. 30).

26. Sonnet 225:

Voi n'andaste, signor, senza me dove
il gran troian fermò le schiere erranti,
ov'io nacqui, ove luce vidi innanti
dolce sí, che lo star mi spiace altrove.

.....

tanti, che ad onorar vengono, e tanti,
un de li dèi piú cari al vero Giove.

Without me, lord, you went where the great Trojan
stopped with his wandering hordes, where I was born,
where the first light of heaven struck my eyes,
so sweet a place, non other is its equal.

.....

and many pilgrims honoring that god,
dearest of all the gods to the true Zeus.

(250.1-4, 7-8; Stampa, *Selected* 197)

27. “Padua honors the feast day of Saint Anthony, the patron of the city” (Jaffe 241).

28. Salza, in his 1913 edition of the *Rime*, introduces Stampa’s poems with a comment about the poem’s addressee; the number of uncertain addressees comes from him. Bassanese, in her discussion of Veronica Franco’s letters that do not have addressees takes a different approach, believing the letters may have been exercises:

“Lack of specificity suggests the possibility that these letters may be inventions, literary exercises composed for the purpose of persuading the reading public of Franco’s worthiness, both as writer and as a woman. . . . Equally suggestive is Franco’s identification of a mere handful of addressees, namely: a cardinal, a king, a great artist, and a patrician family. The individuals named are highly connotative, as is the rhetorical communication with which they are addressed. Symbols of achievement and power, they cannot be diminished but illuminate the writer, who shines through her words” (“Selling” 74).

29. “Che dirò io di quella angelica voce, che qualhora percuota l’aria de’ suoi divini accenti, fa tale sì dolce harmonia, che non pura a guisa di Sirena fa d’ognuno, che degno d’ascoltarla. . . ma infonde spirto e vita nelle più fredde pietre, facendole per soverchia dolcezza lacrimare?” (Feldman, “Academia” 500-01n. 64).

30. Alla bella e virtuosa Signora Gasparina Stampa

Valorosa signora, io potrò ben esser ripreso apresso ai saggi, & dotti compositori di questa dolce et mirabile scienza: in essa scienza ma no mi potra già huomo del mondo dire giamai ch’io habbia havuto poco giuditio nel dedicare queste mie note, quale elle siano, alla S. V. perche si sa bene homai. & non pure in questa felice citta: ma quasi in ogni parte, niuna donna al mondo amar piu la Musica di quello che fate voi, ne altra piu raramente possederla, & di questo ne fanno fede i mille, & mille spirti gentili, & nobili: i quali udito havendo i dolci concetti vostri, v’hanno dato nome di divino sirena, restandovi per tempo devotissimi servi, fra i quali, io devoto quanto altro, vengo con questo mio picciolo segno & presente, a rinfrescarle nella memoria, lo amore ch’io porto alle sue virtu, pregandola che si degni, ch’io sia degno di esser posto dove ella

pone la innumerabil turba di quei ch'adorano & amano le sue rare virtu, & bellezze. & alla sua bona gratia mi raccomando & offero. Devotissimo servo Pieresson Cambio.

(Feldman, *City* 373)

32. See Jaffe 249-50.

33. In Stampa's dedication, "the poet pretends that she has written only the history of her 'pene amoros' in 'diverse lettere e rime'" (Natalicchi 140).

34. Cassandra's statement in the dedication, that she gathered those poems that she could find, indicates that she suspected others existed.

35. For contrast, the *OED Online* defines diary as: "diary, n.: 1. A daily record of events or transactions, a journal; specifically, a daily record of matters affecting the writer personally, or which come under his personal observation."

36. Examples given by Pascal include the works of Marcus Aurelius, Boethius, and Nietzsche's *Ecce Homo* (8).

37. Autobiography did not emerge as an "explicit, distinct literary genre" until about the 18th century (Dale 39).

38. Salza, "Secondo" 4-5.

39. "Domestic keyboard instruments were less common, but most large churches and many great houses possessed an organ." However, training in wind instruments was rare in the upper-classes. According to Castiglione, servants usually played wind instruments and so such instruments carried a servile stigma (Hale 248).

40. "The brothers Johann and Wendelin von Speyer (sometimes called da Spira and sometimes of Spire) opened the first press in Venice in 1469" ("typography").

41. Although the *Prose* was not published until 1524, it had circulated in manuscript form years before (Feldman, “Academy” 481).

42. The *ridotti* of the 1500s did not have bylaws, statutes, membership lists, minutes, or “systematic records”; these would develop later (Feldman, “Academy” 476).

43. Rosenthal, *Honest* 17.

44. Venier was also considered “one of the foremost Venetian poets of the period” and was admired for his imitation and originality of Petrarchan poetry. Although a Petrarchist, he took the form beyond anything Petrarch wrote, experimenting “with complex poetic forms verging on the baroque” (Rosenthal, “Veronica” 240).

45. Burckhardt’s pronouncements remained unchallenged until 1977 when Joan Kelly-Gadol argued persuasively to the contrary in her germinal article “Did Women Have a Renaissance?” The purpose of this section is not to rehash previous scholarship, to provide the reader with a general idea of the cultural atmosphere in which Stampa lived.

46. Rosenthal mentions the fear of social upset by women who did not remain in their proper place, such as courtesans. However, the same can be applied to women who wrote, for women were supposed to be silent. “Upper-class married women’s activities were carefully regulated by their husband, and government officials, who feared political and social disturbances, repeatedly monitored courtesans’ dress, expenditures, and public appearances, apparently not always with success. Indeed, sixteenth-century women’s lives were hardly immune to, or protected from, social and personal oppression” (Rosenthal, *Honest* 15).

47. See Appendix D.

48. “. . . vi mando la presente bozza da me fatta, per ricreamento delle più gravi lettere; acciocchè col mezzo di questa possiate imparare a fuggir gl’inganni, che usano i perversi uomini alle candide e pure donzelle, come voi siete. E con questa vi ammaestro e vi consiglio a procedere ne’ vostri studi, fuggendo ogni occasione, che disturbar vi potesse dalla impresa vostra. Io so ch’io son troppo ardito; ma i meriti delle virtù vostre, e l’affezione estrema portata a voi e a madonna Cassandra, vostra onorata sorella, e il debito a che io son tenuto, mi costringono a questo: là onde spero trovare appo voi perdono” (qtd. in Salza, “Secondo” 9).

49. “S'al fiero Achille invidia de la chiara meonia tromba il Macedonico ebbe, quanto, invitto Francesco di Pescara, maggior a te, se vivesse or, l'avrebbe! che sì casta moglie e a te sì cara canti l'eterno onor che ti si debbe, e che per lei sì 'l nome tuo rimbombe, che da bramar non hai più chiare trombe” (Canto Trentasettesimo, par. 20; Ariosto, *Gutenberg*).

50. Jaffe recognizes the “bitterness” in the poem (240). “Gaspara Stampa insisted throughout her canzoniere on her fidelity to a distant and indifferent man; yet, an obscene epitaph published immediately after her death attacked her as equally promiscuous in body and texts. The anonymous author characterized her as a common whore, sleeping with any man, plagiarizing everything she wrote from an early cohort in sin, and inviting a phallic salute from men passing by her grave” (Jones, *Currency* 29). “Maria Bellonci in her introduction to Stampa's *Rime* (Milan: Rizzoli, 1976) suggests Aretino as the author of this and other scurrilous poems about Stampa (20)” (Jones *Currency* 206).

51. The author of the poem configured it to enhance its meaning.

Férmati, viator, se saper vuoi
l'essito de la mia vita meschina:
Gaspara Stampa fui, donna e reina
di quante unqua p.... [sic] fur tra voi.
M'ebbe vergine il Gritti, e ho da poi
fatto di mille e più c.... ruina;
vissi sempre di furto e di rapina,
m'uccise un c.... con gli émpiti suoi.
Vergai carte d'amor con l'altrui stile,
ché per quell fatto i versi mi facea
il Fortunio, compare mio gentile.
Va' in pace, e, per temprar mia pena ria
inestiami col m.... tuo virle,
ché sol quell, mentre, vissi mi piacea.
il fin dei XXI So:
Sopra Mad. Gas-
para Stam
pa.

(Salza, "Secondo" 73)

Stop, passerby, if you wish to know
the end of my wretched life;

I was Gaspara Stampa, woman and queen
of how many whores among you.
Gritti had me first, as a virgin, and since then
I have ruined thousands of cocks;
I lived by cheating and robbing
I was killed by violent fucking.
I ruled paper that I filled with love letters
that I copied from others
and verses written for me
by Fortunio appeared to be my own.
Go in peace, and to soothe my terrible pain,
screw me with your strong pecker
which was the only thing in my life that pleased me. (Jaffe 240)

52. “Humanism is an intellectual movement which admired the works of the ancient Greeks and Romans for both their content and their style, and so advanced the study of classical literature as the best type of learning” (Wiesner 152).

53. Two secular scholars, Isotta Nogarola and Laura Cereta “found their writing curtailed by vicious criticism and supported only to the extent that they suppressed their femininity or could be praised as exceptions to their sex” (Jones, *Currency* 29).

54. Bembo may have been inspired by his introduction to a Fiammetta during his visit to the court of his kinswoman, Caterina Cornaro, once Queen of Cyprus, now Lady of Asolo, in 1509 (Bembo, *Lyric* viii). In addition, Bembo was involved in three love

affairs, the first unknown, the second, Maria Savorgnan, the third with Lucrezia Borgia, all of whom influenced his ideas in the *Gli Asolani* (Bembo, *Lyric* x-xi).

55. Io son da l'aspettar omai sí stanca,
sí vinta dal dolor e dal disio,
per la s poca fede e molto oblio
di chi del suo tornar, lassa, mi manca. . . . (47.1-4)
56. O beata e dolcissima novella
o caro annunzio, che mi promettete
che tosto rivedrò le care e liete
luci e la faccia graziosa e bella. . . . (100.1-4)
57. Fiume, che dal mio nome nome prendi,
e bagni i piedi a l'alto colle e vago,
ove nacque il famoso ed alto fago,
de le cui fronde alto disio m'accendi. . . . (139.1-4)
58. Liete campagne, dolci colli ameni,
verdi prati, alte selve, erbose rive,
serrata valle, ov'or soggiorna e vive
.....
Antri d'ombre amorose e fresche pieni,
.....
vaghi augei, chiari fiumi ed aure estive,
vezzose ninfe, Pan, fauni and sileni. . . . (145.1-3, 5, 7-8)

59. “Hair of curled gold and of polished and pure amber which waves and flies in the wind over the snow; lovely eyes even brighter than the sun for making dark night into clear day; a smile which quiets all bitter and harsh pain; rubies and pearls from which issue words so sweet that the soul wants nothing else; a hand of ivory which imprisons and steals hearts; singing which seems of divine harmony; mature judgment in the greenest years; charm never yet seen among us; the highest chastity joined to the highest beauty; these were tinder to my flame, and are in you graces which generous heaven destines for few women” (Braden, *Petrarchan* 91).

60. Venier:

Non punse, arse o lego, stral, fiamma, o laccio

D'Amor lasso piu saldo, e freddo, e sciolto

Cor, mai del mio ferito, acceso, e 'nvolto,

Gia tanti di ne l'amoroso impaccio.

Perc'haver me'l sentia di marmo e ghiaccio,

Libero in tutto i' non temeva stolto

Piaga, incendio, o ritegno, e pur m'ha colto

L'arco, il foco, e la rete, in ch'io mi giaccio.

E trafitto, infiammato, avinto in modo

Son, ch'altro cor non apre, avampa, o cinge

Dardo, face, o catena hoggi piu forte.

Ne fia credo chi'l colpo, il caldo, e'l nodo,

Che'l cor mi passa, mi consuma, e stringe,

Sani, spenga, o disciolga altri, che morte. (Feldman, “Academy” 489)

The arrow, flame, or snare of Love never
stung, burned, or bound, alas, a heart more
steady, cold and loosed than mine, wounded, kindled, and tied
Already so many days in an amorous tangle.
Because I felt marble and ice within me,
free in everything, I foolishly did not fear
wound, fire, or restraint, and yet
the bow, the fire, and the net in which I lie have caught me.
And pierced, and inflamed, and captured in such a way
am I that no dart, torch, or chain opens, blazes, or clasps
any other heart today more strongly.
Nor, I believe, may it be that the blow, and the heat, and the knot
that enter, break, and squeeze my heart
could be healed, extinguished, or unloosed by any other but death.
(Feldman, "Academy" 489)

Venier's sonnet influenced Stampa, so she tried her hand at her own version, as
can be seen in Sonnet 26:

Arsi, piansi, cantai; piango, ardo e canto;
piangerò, arderò, canterò sempre
(fin che Morte o Fortuna o tempo stempre
a l'ingegno, occhi e cor, stil, foco e pianto)
la bellezza, il valor e 'l senno a canto,
che 'n vaghe, sagge ed onorate tempore

Amor, natura e studio par che tempore
nel volto, petto e cor del lume santo:
che, quando viene, e quando parte il sole,
la notte e 'l giorno ognor, la state e 'l verno,
tenebre e luce darmi e tôrmi suole,
tanto con l'occhio fuor, con l'occhio interno,
agli atti suoi, ai modi, a le parole,
splendor, dolcezza e grazia ivi discerno.

I burnt, I wept, I sang -- burn, weep and sing,
and I Shall weep, burn, sing forever more
(until Death, Time, or Fortune wash away
my talent, eyes, heart, style, my fire and tears)
the beauty, courage and deep intellect,
which in a lovely wise and honored manner,
love, nature and the highest art have painted
within the face, breast, heart of my true light
who--when the sun itself rises or sets,
by night or day, in summer or in winter --
gives me or takes away darkness or light.
thus, with my outer or inner eye,

I see in all his acts, manners and words
his splendor, and his sweetness and his grace.

(26; Stampa, *Selected* 33)

Because Stampa's circles knew Venier's poem, she can entice the reader to guess the next sequence of words. Her version, I imagine, delighted the reader/listener with her original imitation on the model.

61. Mi dorrá sol, se mi trarrá d'impaccio,
fin che potrò e viver ed amare,
lo stral e 'l foco e la prigione e 'l laccio. (27.12-14)
62. Odio chi m'ama, ed amo chi mi sprezza:
verso chi m'è umíle il mio cor rugge,
E son umíl con chi mia speme adugge. . . . (43.5-7)
63. perché non può non con usato gioco
far la pena e la penna in me simíle? (8.7-8)
64. Deh, perché cosí tardo gli occhi apersi
nel divin, non umano amato volto,
ond'io scorgo, mirando, impresso e scolto
un mar d'alti miracoli e diversi? (12.1-4)
65. Chi dará penne d'aquila o colomba
al mio stil basso, si ch'ei prenda il volo
da l'Indo al Mauro e d'uno in altro polo,
ove arrivar non può saetta o fromba? (13.1-4)

66. Pommi ove 'l mar irato geme e frange,
ov'ha l'acqua piú queta e piú tranquilla;
pommi ove 'l sol piú arde e piú sfavilla,
.....
vivrò qual vissi, e sarò qual son stata,
pur che le fide mie due stelle vere
non rivolgan da me la luce usata. (111.1-3, 12-14)

67. ma perch'io son di foco e voi di ghiaccio
voi sète in libertade ed io 'n catena,
i' son di stanca e voi di franca lena,
voi vivete contento ed io mi sfaccio. (41.5-8)

68. To my knowledge, no one has analyzed the influence of Venier's poetry on Stampa's beyond that of the obvious impression Venier's sonnet, "Non punse, arse o lego, stral, fiamma, o laccio," made upon Gaspara.

69. A number of other uses of *colle* occur in the following verses:

E tutti i miei disiri e i miei pensieri
mirano a quel bel colle, ove ora stanza
il mio signor e i suoi due lumi alteri. (134.9-11)

Dopo il vostro da noi allontanare
quanta compassion a me propria aggio,
tanto ho invidia al bel colle, al pino, al faggio,
che gli fanno ombra, al fiume, che bagnare. . . . (135.3-6)

After you moved so far away from me,
I feel as much compassion for myself
as I feel envy toward that lovely hill,
the pines, the beeches that provide your shade

(135.3-6; Stampa, *Selected* 107)

Sacro fiume beato, a le cui sponde
scorgi l'antico, vago ed alto colle. . . . (138.1-2)

Fiume, che dal mio nome nome prendi,
e bagni i piedi a l'alto colle e vago (139.1-4)
Dear river, who from my name take your own
who bathe the foothills of that dear high hill. . . .

(139.1-4; Stampa, *Selected* 111)

Egli fa giorno al suo colle natio,
come a chi nulla o poco incresce e duole
o 'l morir nostro o 'l pianto o le parole (146.5-7)

He brings the daylight to his native hill,
like one who has no sorrows or regrets,
unmindful of my death, or tears, or words.

(146.5-7; Stampa, *Selected* 117)

Voi far fiorir potete esternamente
il colle ch'amo; voi farlo, lodando. . . . (240.9-10)

Tu, ch'agli antichi spirti vai di paro,
e con le dotte ed onorate rime
rischiari l'acque e fai fiorir le cime
del colle, ove si sale oggi sí raro,
movi il canto, Molin, canoro e chiaro,
se mai movesti; e 'l mio colle sublime
fa' fiorir fra le cose al mondo prime,
poi ch'a me il ciel di farlo è stato avaro. (241.1-8)

Signor, che per sí rara cortesia
con rime degne di futura etate
sí dolcemente cantate e lodate
l'alto mio colle, l'alta fiamma mia. (273.1-4)

70. Stampa never uses the beloved's name (Collaltino di Collalto) in the sonnet sequence.

71. Stampa:

Voi, ch'ascoltate in queste meste rime,
in questi mesti, in questi oscuri accenti
il suon degli amorosi miei lamenti. . . . (1.1-3)
O you who listen to these mournful verses,

in these unhappy, in these somber accents,
to the sound of laments inspired by Love,

(1.1-3; Stampa, *Selected* 3)

Francesco Petrarch:

Voi ch'ascolte in rime sparse il suono
di quei sospiri ond'io nudriva 'l core
in sul mio primo giovenile errore,

(1.1-3; Petrarch 37)

You who hear in scattered rhymes the sound of those
sighs with which I nourished my heart during my first
youthful error. . . . (1.1-3; Petrarch 36)

72. Ponmi ove 'l mar irato geme e frange,
ov'ha l'acqua piú queta e piú tranquilla;
ponmi ove 'l sol piú arde e piú sfavilla,
.....
vivrò qual vissi, e sarò qual son stata,
pur che le fide mie due stelle vere
non rivolgan da me la luce usata. (111.1-3,12-14)

73. Ponmi ove 'l sole occide i fiori et l'erba,
o dove vince lui il ghiaccio et la neve;
ponmi ov' è il carro suo temprato et leve,
et ov' è chi cel rende o chi cel serba;

.....

Ponmi con fama oscura o con illustre:

sarò qual fui, vivrò com' io son visso,

continuando il mio sospir trillustre. (145.1-4, 12-14; Petrarch 291)

74. Quando poi parte il mio sol finalmente,

parmi l'altro veder, che scolorita

lasci la terra andando in occidente.

Ma l'altro torna, e rende luce e vita;

e del mio chiaro e lucido oriente

è 'l tornar dubbio e certa la partita. (18.9-14)

75. By choosing this date, Petrarch sets the tone for the sonnet sequence. Because he never can have his beloved, the tone of the sequence, like the day he saw her, is somber, if not depressing. However, although Stampa's sonnet sequence details her narrator's misery, the overall tone of the *Rime* is triumphant. She loved, is rebuked, but discovers that she can love long and true.

76. Era vicino il dí che 'l Creatore,

.....

in forma umana venne a dimostrarsi,

dal ventre virginal uscendo fore,

quando degnò l'illustre mio signore,

.....

farsi nido e ricetto del mio core. (2.1, 3-5, 8)

77. Collaltino di Collalto was indeed blond (or at least had fair hair) (Jaffe 248).

78. The *Elegy* was not Boccaccio's only fictional work; others included *La caccia di Diana* (1334-37), *Teseida* (1339-40), *Comedia Ninfa* (1341-42), *Amorosa visione* (1342-43), *Ninfale fiesolano* (1344-45), the *Decameron* (1349-51), and the *Corbaccio* (1365) ("Boccaccio's").

79. "...nevertheless the book has—and its style perhaps enhances—a quality of tragic grandeur which makes it unique among psychological romances, of which it was the first example" (Boccaccio, *Amorous* xxxiii-xxxiv).

80. Amor m'ha fatto tal ch'io vivo in foco,
qual nova salamandra al mondo, e quale
l'altro di lei non men stranio animale,
che vive e spira nel medesimo loco.

.....

A pena era anche estinto il primo ardore,
che accese l'altro Amore, a quel ch'io sento
fin qui per prova, piú vivo e maggiore.
Ed io d'arder amando non mi pento,
pur che chi m'ha di novo tolto il core
resti de l'arder mio pago e contento.

(206.1-4, 9-14; 208.1-4, 9-14 Salza)

Love has made me live in ceaseless fire
like a strange salamander come to earth
or like that bird of fable, no less strange,
that lives and breathes in this same element.

.....

Barely had I put out my heart's first flame
than Love kindled a second, which I feel
as sharper, livelier than the first had been.

This ardency of love I don't repent,
so long as he who lit my heart anew
remains at peace, contented in my love.

(208.1-4, 9-14; Stampa, *Selected* 161)

81. It does not appear that Boccaccio limited Fiammetta to these two extreme poles. Thus, he is able to broaden Fiammetta's personality to include subtle but human characteristics: personal needs and concern for her husband, the two of whom conflict. Because Fiammetta, a married woman, has sinned (against patriarchy) by taking a lover, she is quickly removed from the angel category, a designation that expects the woman to be inhumanly perfect (that is, selfless). To prevent Fiammetta from falling into the monster category, Boccaccio is careful to give her sympathetic characteristics also, such as her concern for her husband's feelings—she expresses regret that he must suffer cuckolding—and concern for his own reputation—she struggles to be sure that no one knows of her love affair. She always presents her husband as loving and caring. We must not forget that woman's chaste reputation reflects on her husband's ability to control and satisfy her.

82. Io vo pur descrivendo d'ora in ora
la beltá vostra e 'l vostro raro ingegno,

.....

né, perch'io m'affatichi, giungo ancora
di tanti pregi vostri al minor segno,

.....

Così, s'io prendo a scriver, il mio foco

è tanto e tal, da ch'egli da voi nasce

che s'io ne dico assai, ne dico poco. (45.1-2, 5-6, 10)

83. O beata e dolcissima novella,

.....

o mia ventura, o mia propizia stella,

.....

o fede, o speme, ch'a me sempre sète

.....

o cangiato in un punto viver mio. . . . (100.1, 5, 7, 9)

84. Con quai degne accoglienze o quai parole

raccorrò io il mio gradito amante,

.....

Qual color or di rose, or di viole

fia 'l mio? qual cor or saldo ed or tremante,

condotta innanzi a quel divin sembiante,

ch'ardir e téma insieme dar mi suole? (101.1-2, 5-8)

85. Ironically, it was on French soil that Petrarch first saw, and lost his heart to, Laura, but for the *Rime*'s narrator, the French soil steals the beloved from her, taking her heart with him. In addition, when he returns, he is no longer in love with her.

86. Via da me le tenebre e la nebbia,
che mi son sempre state agli occhi intorno
.....
È ben ragion ch'asserenarmi io debbia,
.....
Sia ogni cosa in me di riso piena,
.....
Sia la mia vita in mille dolci, eletti
piaceri involta, e tutta alma e serena,
e se stessa gioendo ognor diletta. (102.1-2, 5, 9, 12-14)

87. Nodo e fé, che non è stretto e costante,
per picciola cagion si rompe e scioglie:
la mia fede e 'l mio nodo il vanto toglie
al nodo gordiano ed al diamante. (179.5-8)

88. Voi, ch'ascoltate in queste meste rime,
.....
ove fia chi valor apprezzì e stime,
gloria, non che perdon, de' miei lamenti
spero trovar fra le ben nate genti,
.....

E spero ancor che debba dir qualcuna:

- Felicissima lei, da che sostenne

per sí chiara cagion danno sí chiaro!

Deh, perché tant'amor, tanta fortuna

per sí nobil signor a me non venne,

ch'anch'io n'andrei con tanta donna a paro? (1.1, 5-7, 9-14)

89. O notte, a me piú chiara e piú beata

che i piú beati giorni ed i piú chiari,

notte degna da' primi e da' piú rari

ingegni esser, non pur da me, lodata. . . . (104.1-4)

90. - Vorrei che mi dicessi un poco, Amore,

c'ho da far io con queste tue sorelle

Temenza e Gelosia? ed ond'è ch'elle. . . . (125.1-3)

91. Cosí m'acqueto di temer contenta,

e di viver d'amara gelosia,

pur che l'amato lume lo consenta,

.....

Ed io. che sono in tante pene immersa,

quando avanti il suo raggio almo mi viene,

resto da quel ch'esser solea diversa. (126.1-3, 12-14)

92. - Come esser può, s'io diedi l'alma e 'l core

al mio signor dal di ch'a me l'ho tolta,

e se ogni cosa dentro a lui raccolta

è riso e gioia, è scema di dolore,
ch'io senta gelosia fredda e temenza,
e d'allegrezza e gioia resti priva. . . . (132.5-10)

93. Una inaudita e nova crudeltate,
.....
un vedermi penar senza pietate,
un aver sempre a' miei danni il pensiero,
un rider di mia morte quando però,
.....
m'han fatto divenir una Chimera,
uno abisso confuso, un mar, ch'avanza. . . . (174.1, 5-7, 12-13)

94. O mia sventura, o mio perverso fato,
o sentenza nemica del mio bene,
poi che senza mia colpa mi conviene
portar la pena de l'altrui peccato. (129.1-4)

95. E s'io voglio per me stessa finire
con la vita i tormenti, non m'è dato,
ché senza vita un uom non può colpire. (133.9-11)

96. Piangete, donne, e con voi pianga Amore,
.....
dapoi ch'io saró morta e sepelita,
scrivete la cagion del mio dolore:
"Per amar molto ed esser poco amata

visse e morí infelice, ed or qui giace
la piú fidel amante che sia stata.
Pregale, viator, riposo e pace,
ed impara da lei, sí mal trattata,
a non seguir un cor crudo e fugace." (151.1, 7-14)

97. Rimandatemi il cor, empio tiranno,
ch'a sí gran torto avete ed istraziate,
e di lui e di me quel proprio fate,
che le tigri e i leon di cerva fanno.
.....
giovane e donna e fuor d'ogni ragione,
massime essendo qui senza 'l mio core
e senza voi a mia difensione,
onde mi suol venir forza e vigore? (142.1-4, 11-14)

98. Io accuso talora Amor e lui
ch'io amo; Amor, che mi legò sí forte;
lui, che mi può dar vita e dammi morte,
cercando tôrsi a me per darsi altrui;
ma, meglio avista, poi scuso ambedui,
ed accuso me sol de la mia sorte,
e le mie voglie al voler poco accorte,
ch'io de le pene mie ministra fui. (166.1-8)

99. A che vergar, signor, carte ed inchiostro
in lodar me, se non ho cosa degna,
onde tant'alto onor mi si convegna;
e, se ho pur niente, è tutto vostro?
Entro i begli occhi, entro l'avorio e l'ostro,
ove Amor tien sua gloriosa insegna,
ove per me trionfa e per voi regna,
quanto scrivo e ragiono mi fu mostro.
Perché ciò che s'onora e 'n me si prezza,
anzi s'io vivo e spiro, è vostro il vanto,
a voi convien, non a la mia bassezza.
Ma voi cercate con sí dolce canto,
lassa, oltre quel che fa vostra bellezza,
d'accrescermi piú foco e maggior pianto. (117)

100. “Il registro dei morti nell’*Archivio parrocchiale dei SS. Gervasio e Protasio* a Venezia riporta: ‘Adí 23 april 1554. M^a Gasparina Stampa in le case de messer Hieronymo Morosini la qual è stà malà da febre et mal colico, et mal de mare zorni 15, è morta in questo zorno.’” (Bellonci 40). (“April 23, 1554. Madonna Gasparina Stampa, in the home of messer Hieronymo Morosini, who was ill with fever and colic and matrix pains for fifteen days, died this day”; Robins “Courtesans” 45).

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Appendix A: Chart of the Original 1554 Edition's Numbering with Comparison to
Abdelkader Salza's 1913 Edition's Renumbering

Appendix A

S'io non avessi al cor già fatto un callo	63r/101	193	283/162	283/204 "Forse allo stesso (Guiscardo o Viscardo)"
Se quel grave martir, che'l cor m'afflige	63v/102	194	193/105	-----
Chi dará lena a la tua stanca vita	63v/102	195	194/105	-----
Voi vi partite, conte, Ed io, qual soglio	64r/103	196	195/106	-----
Ecco, Amor, io morirò, perché la vita	64r/103	197	196/106	-----
Chi 'l crederia? Felice era il mio stato	64v/104	198	197/107	197/152
Se soffrir il dolore, è l'esser forte	64v/104	199	198/107	-----
Signor ite felice, ove'l disio	65r/105	200	199/108	199/154
Al partir vostro, s'è con voi partita	65r/105	201	200/198	-----
- È questa quella viva e salda fede	65v/106	202	201/109	-----
Poi che per mio destin volgeste in parte	65v/106	203	202/109	202/156
Ardente mio disir, a che, pur vago	66r/107	204	203/110	----
Poi che m'hai resa, Amor, la libertade	66r/107	205	207/112	207/158
Amor m'ha fatto tal ch'io vivo in foco	66v/108	206	208/112	208/160

Appendix A (Continued)

Qual darai fine Amor, a le mie pene	66v/108	207	215/116	-----
D'esser sempre éscia al tuo concente foco	67r/109	208	216/116	216/172
A che bramar, signor, che venga manco	67r/109	209	217/117	-----
Dove volete voi ed in qual parte	67v/110	210	228/117	-----
Io non veggio giamai giunger quel giorno	67v/110	211	209/113	209/162
Veggio Amor tender l'arco, e novo strale	68r/111	212	210/113	210/164
Che farai, alma? ove volgerai il piede?	68r/111	213	212/114	-----
Un veder tôrsi a poco a poco il core	68v/112	214	213/115	213/168
La piaga, ch'io credea che fosse salda	68v/112	215	214/115	214/170
Ben si convien, signor, che l'aureo dardo	69r/113	216	219/118	-----
Signor, poi che m'avete il collo avinto	69r/113	217	220/118	-----
Qual sagittario, che sia sempre a vezzo	69v/114	218	211/114	211/166
A mezzo il mare, ch'io varcai tre anni	69v/114	219	221/119	221/174
- Di chi ti lagni, o mio diletto e fido	70r/115	220	-----	-----
“	70v/116	“	-----	-----
		“Diologo tra Amor e un innamorato”		

Appendix A (Continued)

Sacro re, che gil antichi e novi regi	71r/117	221	246/143	-----
		King of France		
Alma reina, eterno e vivo sole	71v/118	222	247/144	-----
		Queen of France		
Tu, che traesti dal natio paese	72r/119	223	248/144	-----
		Alamanni		
Alma fenice, che con l'auree piume	72r/119	224	249/145	-----
Voi n'andaste, signor, fenze me, dove	72v/120	225	250/145	250/196
Mentre chiaro Signor per voi s'attende	72v/120	226	251/146	-----
		"A personaggio illustre per doti eccelse"		
Se voi non foste a maggior cose vòlto	73r/121	227	252/146	-----
		Venier		
Speron, ch'à l'opre chiare, et honorate	73r/121	228	253/147	-----
		Speroni		
Alma celeste e pura	73v/122	229	299/176	-----
		"In morte d'una monaca"		
"	74r/123	"	299/177	-----
"	74v/124	"	----	-----
Alma onorata e saggia, che tornando	74v/124	230	300/178	-----
		"Sullo stesso argomento"		
Casta, cara e di Dio diletta ancella	75r/125	231	301/178	-----
		"Sullo stesso argomento"		
Quelle lagrime spesse e sospir molti	75r/125	232	302/179	-----
		"Sullo stesso argomento"		
Quando quell'alma, i cui disiri ardenti	75v/126	233	303/179	-----
		"Sullo stesso argomento"		

Appendix A (Continued)

Qual è fresc'aura, a l'estiv'ora ardente	75v/126	234	286/163	-----	"ad un Priuli"
Zanni, quel chiaro e quel felice ingegno	76r/127	235	254/147	-----	"Adun Zanni (Zane?)"
Conte, quel vivo e honorato raggio	76r/127	236	255/148	-----	"Ad incerto poeta"
O inaudita e rara cortesia	76v/128	237	257/149	-----	"A Vinciguerra II da Collalto"
Quel lume, che'l mar d'Adria empie ed avampa	76v/128	238	256/148	-----	"Forse allo stesso [incerto poeta]"
Se quanta acqua ha Castalia e Elicona	77r/129	239	259/150	-----	"Ad un incerto"
Io vorrei ben, Molin, ma non ho l'ale	77r/129	240	260/150	-----	"A Girolamo Molin"
Tu, ch'àgli antichi spiriti vai di paro	77v/130	241	261/151	-----	"Allo stesso"
Voi, che fate sonar da Battro a Tile	77v/130	242	262/151	-----	"Ricambio di lodi ad un ammiratore"
S'Amor Natura al nobil'intelletto	78r/131	243	-----	-----	
È sí gradito e sí dolce l'obietto	78r/131	244	264/152	-----	"Riposta ad un incerto encomiatore"
Il gran terror de le nimiche squadre	78v/132	245	265/153	-----	"Per un guerriero, ucciso ad un festa"
Se dà vostr'occhi da l'avorio e ostro	78v/132	246	266/153	-----	"Lodi ad un incerto"
Grazie, che fate il ciel fresco e sereno	79r/133	247	267/154	-----	"Augurale, ai poeti di Venezia"

Appendix A (Continued)

Voi, ch'a le muse e al signor di Delo	79r/133	248	271/156	-----
		"Ad un Michiel"		
Deh, perché non poss'io qual debbo e quale	79v/134	249	269/155	-----
		"Ad una coppia illustre di sposi"		
Perché Fortuna, avversa a' miei disiri	79v/134	250	273/157	-----
		"Ad un Balbi"		
A voi sian Febo e le sorelle amiche	80r/135	251	268/155	-----
		"ai poeti amici"		
Anima, che sicura sei passata	80r/135	252	274/157	-----
		"In morte d'uomo illustre, forse Trifone Gabriele"		
Qual a pieno porrá mai prosa o rima	80v/136	253	275/158	-----
		"A Leonardo Emo"		
Ben posso gir de l'altre donne in cima	80v/136	254	276/158	276/202
		"Allo stesso"		
Ninfe, che d'Adria i piú riposti guadi	81r/137	255	278/159	-----
		"Encomiastico, ad Elena Barozzi Centani"		
Felice cavalier e fortunato	81r/137	256	279/160	-----
		"Ad una coppia gentile di sposi"		
Porgi man, Febo, a l'erbe, e con quell'arte	81v/138	257	277/159	-----
		"Per la guarigione dell'Emo e di un Tiepolo"		
Le virtù vostre e quel cortese affetto	81v/138	258	280/160	-----
		"A G.A. Guiscardo, o Viscardo"		
Quel, che con tanta e sí larga misura	82r/139	259	281/161	-----
		"Allo stesso"		
Signor, da poi che l'acqua del mio pianto	82r/139	260	258/149	258/198
		[A Vinciguerra II da Collalto]		

Appendix A (Continued)

- Pastor, che d'Adria il fortunate seno	82v/140	261	284/162	-----
		"Ad un poeta incerto"		
Mentre al cielo il pastor d'alma beltate	82v/140	262	285/163	-----
		"Forse allo stesso"		
Amica dolce e onorata schiera	83r/141	263	269/155	-----
		"Ad una schiera d'amici"		
Rivolgete la lingua e le parole	83r/141	264	270/155	270/200
		"Algi stessi"		
Chiunque a fama gloriosa intende	83v/142	265	287/164	-----
		[Ad un Priuli]		
Cercando novi versi e nove rime	83v/142	266	288/164	-----
		"Ad un reverendo degnissimo"		
Soranzo, de l'immenso valor vostro	84r/143	267	289/165	-----
		"Ad un Soranzo"		
Questo felice e glorioso tempio	84r/143	268	290/165	-----
		"In lode di Giovanna d'Aragona"		
Signor, s'a quei lodati e chiari segni	84v/144	269	291/166	-----
		"Ad un incerto"		
Voi, che di vari campi e prati vari	84v/144	270	292/166	-----
		"A Ortensio Lando"		
S'una sola eccellenza suol far chiaro	85r/145	271	293/167	-----
		"Ad un personaggio politico"		
Mille fiate a voi volgo la mente	85r/145	272	294/167	-----
		"A Gianfrancesco Fortunio"		
Signor, che per sí rara cortesia	85v/146	273	295/168	-----
		"Ad un lodatore di Collaltino di Collalto"		
Quel gentil seme di virtute ardente	85v/146	274	282/161	-----
		[A G.A. Guiscardo o Viscardo]		

Appendix A (Continued)

Di queste tenebrose e fiere voglie	86r/147	275	304/180	-----
			“Invocazione a Dio”	
Quelle piaghe profonde e l’acqua, e’l sangue	86r/147	276	305/180	-----
			“Sullo stesso argomento”	
Signor, che doni il paradiso e tolli	86v/148	277	306/181	-----
			“Sullo stesso argomento”	
Mesta e pentita de’ miei gravi errori	86v/148	278	311/183	311/218
- Volgi a me, peccatrice empia la vista -	87r/149	279	307/181	307/214
			“Spera nel soccorso divino”	
Purga, Signor, omai l’interno affetto	87r/149	280	308/182	308/216
			“Vuol amar solo Dio”	
Volgi, Padre, del cielo a miglior calle	87v/150	281	309/182	-----
			“Dio l’aiuti a pentirsi”	
Dunque io potrò, fattura empia, e ingrata	87v/150	282	310/183	-----
			“Rimorsi e pentimento religioso”	
Virtuti eccelse e doti illustri e chiare	88r/151	283	204/110	-----
Quel desir, che fu già caldo et ardente	88r/151	284	205/111	-----
Canta tu, musa mio, non piú quell volto	88v/152	285	206/111	-----
Capitoli				
Donne, voi che fin qui libere, e sciolte	89r/153	286	241/131	241/192
“	89v/154		/132	/194
“	90r/155		-----	-----

Appendix A (Continued)

Da piú lati fra noi, conte, risuona	90r/155	287	242/133	-----
“	90v/156		/134	
“	91r/157		/135	
“	91v/158			
Dettata dal dolor cieco e insano	91v/158	288	243/136	-----
“	92r/159		/137	
“	92v/160		/138	
“	93r/161			
De le ricche, beate e chiare rive	93r/161	289	244/139	-----
“	93v/162		/140	
“	94r/163			
Musa mia, che sí pronta, e sí cortese	94r/164	290	245/141	-----
“	94v/164		/142	
“	95r/165			
Non aspettò giamai focoso amante	95r/165	291	296/169	-----
“			“A Mirtilla, amica diletta”	
“	95v/166			
“	96r/167			
Felice in questa e piú ne l’altre vita	----	----	298/173	298/206
“	----	----	/174	
“	----	----	/175	
Madrigali				
- Dimmi per la tua face	96v/168	292	222/121	-----
Cosí m’imprese al core	96v/168	293	223/121	-----
L’empio tuo strale, Amore	97r/169	294	224/122	224/176
Io veggio spesso Amore	97r/169	295	225/122	-----
Sapete voi perché ognun non accende	97r/169	296	226/122	-----
Se tu credi piacere al mio ignore	97v/170	297	227/123	-----

Appendix A (Continued)

Il cor verrebbe teco	97v/170	298	228/123	-----
Qual fosse il mio martíre	98r/171	299	229/124	229/178
Le pene de l'inferno insieme insieme	98r/171	300	231/125	231/182
Se'l cibo, onde i suoi servi nutre Amore	98r/171	301	232/125	232/184
Beato insogno e caro	98v/172	302	233/126	233/186
Signor, per cortesia	98v/172	303	230/124	230/180
Deh, farà mai ritorno agli occhi miei	99r/173	304	234/126	-----
Conte dov'è andata	99r/173	305	235/127	235/188
Spesso ch' Amor con le sue Tempre usate	99r/173	306	236/127	-----
S'io credessi por fine al mio martíre	99v/174	307	237/128	-----
Con quai segni, signor, volete ch'io	99v/174	308	238/128	238/190
Dal mio vivace foco	100r/175	309	239/129	-----
Deh, perché soffri, Amor, che disiando	100r/175	310	240/129	-----
Di M. Leonardo Emo a Mad Gaspara Stampa	101r	311	-----	-----

Appendix B: Cassandra Stampa's Dedication of the *Rime* to Giovanni Della Casa

Appendix B

ALL'ILLUSTRISSIMO
ET REVERENDISSIMO MONSIGNOR
MESSER GIOVANNI DELLA CASA,
ARCIVESCOVO DI BENEVENTO
SUO SIGNORE
CASSANDRA STAMPA

Poi che a Dio nostro Signore è piaciuto di chiamar a sé, sul fiore si può dire degli anni suoi, la mia da me molto cara e molto amata sorella; ed ella partendo ha portato con esso lei tutte le mie speranze, tutte le consolazioni, e la vita istessa; io ho cercato di levarmi davanti gli occhi tutte le sue cose, acciò che il vederle ed il trattarle non rinovasse l'acerbissima memoria di lei nell'animo mio, e per conseguente non rinfrescasse la piaga de' molti dolori, avendo perduto una così savia e così valorosa sorella. E, volendo e devendo far il medesimo di queste sue rime, tessute da lei, parte per esercizio dello ingegno suo, felice quanto a donna, se non m'inganna l'affezione fraterna, parte per esprimere alcun suo amoroso concetto, molti gentiliuomini di chiaro spirito, che l'amarono, mentre visse, ed hanno potere sopra di me, m'hanno tolta, mal mio grado, do questo proponimento e costretta a raccogliere insieme quelle che si sono potute trovare; mostrandomi che io non devesse né potea, per non turbar la mia pace, turbar la gloria della sorella, celando le sue fatiche onorate. Questa adunque è stata la cagione ch'io le ho fatto pubblicare. Perché poi io le abbia dedicate più a Vostra Signoria reverendissima che ad

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altro signore, è per questo. Tre, se io non erro, sono le sorti de' signori, che si trovano al mondo: di natura, di fortuna e di virtù; i due primi sono signori di nome, l'ultimo di fatto, perché quelli sono fatti da altri, e questo si fa da se stesso; però a lui dirittamente si conviene il nonne e la riverenza di signore. Girando per tanto gli occhi per tutta Italia, per trovare a chi più meritevolmente il nome di vero signore si convenisse, il vivo raggio di Vostra Signoria reverendissima splendé agli occhi miei da quella sua riposta solitudine, ove il più delle volte dar opera ai suoi gravi ed alti studi, e pascer di preziosissimo cibo il suo divino intelletto, si ritiene, sí fattamente che, come ferro da calamita, sono stata tirata a viva forza a consacrarle a lei, perché (oltre che è signore di natura, nato nobilissimo in nobilissima città d'Italia; di fortuna, per le ricchezze amplissime che ella ha; di virtù, possedendo tutte le più nobili e più segnalate scienze che si trovino, ed alla quale, come a chiarissima stella e ferma, si deono indirizzare tutte le opere di quei che nel mare di qualsivoglia fatica onorata navigano), io sona sicura che in questo compiacerò anche alla benedetta anima della amata sorella mia, se di là s'ha alcun senso o memoria delle cose di questo mondo. La quale, vivendo, ebbe sempre per mira Vostra Signoria reverendissima, come uno de' più belli lumi d'Italia, ed a lei destinate le sue fatiche; inchinando e riverendo sempre il nome e l'alto giudizio di lei qualunque volta se ne ragionava, che era assai spesso, e portando a cielo i suoi dottissimi, leggiadrissimi e gravissimi componimenti al pari di tutti gli antichi e moderni, che si leggono. Non isdegni adunque Vostra Signoria reverendissima di ricever con quella molta bontá d'animo, che Dio le ha dato, questi

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pochi frutti dell'ingegno della desideratissima sorella mia, dalla quale fu, mentre visse, osservata e tanto reverita; contentandosi che sotto l'ombra del suo celebratissimo nome si riposi anco la penna, la studio, l'arte e gli amorosi e ferventi disidèri di una donna con tante altre divinissime fatche dei piú alti ed escquisiti spiriti dell'età nostra. E con queto, baciandole le dotte e sacre mani, faccio fine.

Da Venezia a' 13 d'ottobre 1554 (Salza *Rime* 368-69)

Cassandra's dedication to della Casa, Archbishop of Benevento 1554.

Since it has pleased our Lord God to call to Himself, as one may say in the flower of her age, my very dear and much-loved sister, and she, departing, has taken with her all my hopes and consolations and life itself, i have tried to put all her things away out of sight, so that seeing them and dealing with them should not renew the bitter memory of her in my mind, or reopen the grievous wound made by the loss of so excellent a sister. And while I was wishing and intending to act in the same manner with these poems of hers, composed by her, partly to exercise her talent, great as ever woman had, if my sisterly affection does not deceive me; partly to express some of her amorous ideas; many talented gentlemen who loved her while she was alive, have dissuaded me, against my

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will, from this resolve, and have constrained me to collect all those that could be found, showing me that, for the sake of my own piece, I neither could nor ought to hinder the glory of my sister my concealing her honourable laborours. This then is why I have preferred to dedicate them to your most reverend Lordship rather than to anyone else in this I am sure that in this i shall also please the blessed soul of my beloved sister, if yonder she has any sense or memory of the things of this world, for, while ;she was alive, he always looked up to your most reverend Lordship as to one of the most shining lights of Italy, and had destined her labours for you, always reverencing your name, and bowing to your critical insight, whenever she discoursed about it, which was very often, and praising to the skies your most learned, graceful, and weighty writings, to the level of all the ancients and moderns that were read. Let not your most reverend Lordship then disdain to receive, with that great kindness of hear which God has given you, these few fruits of the talent of my most lamented sister, by whom, while she lived, you were so much honoured and revered; being glad that under the shadow of your most celebrated name should repose also the pen, the study, the art, and the amorous and fervent desires of a woman, with so many other most divine works of the highest and most exquisite spirits of our age; and with this, kissing your learned and holy hands, I make an end.

(Jerrold 194-196)

Appendix C: Gaspara Stampa's Dedication Letter to Collaltino di Collalto

Appendix C

To My Illustrious Lord

Since my amorous pains, which for the love of Your Lordship I have written about in several letters and rhymes, have not been able, one by one, to make Your Lordship take pity on me, nor even to make your courteous enough to write me one word in return, I have resolved to collect them all in this book, to see if all together they will be able to do it. Here Your Lordship will not see the whole sea of my passions, my tears and my torments, because it is a bottomless sea; but only a little steam of them; nor should Your Lordship think that I have done this to make you aware of your cruelty where there is not obligation, nor to constrain you; but rather to make you aware of your own greatness and to make you rejoice. Because, seeing that these fruits of love have issued from your harshness towards me, you can conjecture which ones will be produced by your pity, if it should ever happen that the heavens make you compassionate toward me: O noble object, O bright object, O divine object, since even in tormenting me you hare beneficial and produce fruit. Read then, Your Lordship, when you have a rest from your dearest and greatest concerns, the notes of the grave and amorous cares of your most faithful and wretched Anaxilla; and from this reflection may you recon how deeply she must feel in her soul; because certainly, if ever it will happen that my poor sad house be made worthy to receive Your Lordship, I am sure all the beds, the rooms, the halls and everything will tell of the laments, sobs, sighs and tears, which night and day I have shed, calling on Your Lordship's name, and nevertheless always blessing, in the midst of my greatest

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torments, the heavens and my good fortune for their cause; since it is far better to die for you, Count, than to rejoice for anyone else. But what am I doing? Since I am boring Your Lordship needlessly for too long, also insulting my poems, as if they could not express their motives, and as if they needed someone help? Trusting in them, then, I shall end, begging Your Lordship that, as last reward of my most faithful service, in receiving this poor booklet, you may give me the courtesy of even one sigh, which from afar may refresh the memory of his forgotten and abandoned Anaxilla. And you, little booklet of mine, trustee of my tears, present yourself in the most humble possible manner in front of my Lord, in the company of my candid faith; and if, when he receives you, you will see those fatal and eternal lights of mine (Collaltino's eyes) become even more serene, may all of our labors be blessed and all of our hopes be happy; and so may you eternally remain with him in peace.

—Gaspara Stampa (*Stampa Selected* xxxiii-xxxiv)

Allo Illustrre mio Signore.

Poi che le mie pene amorse, che per amor di V. S. porto scritte in diverse lettere, e rime, non han possuto una per una, non pur far pietoso V. S. verso di me, ma farla né anco cortese di scrivermi una parola: io mi son rissoluta di ragunarle tutte in questo libro, per

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vedere, se tutte insieme lo potranno fare. Qui dunque V. S. vedrà, non il pelago delle passioni, delle lagrime, e de' tormenti miei; perché è mar senza fondo; ma un piccolo ruscello solo di esse; né pensi V. S. ch' io abbia ciò fatto, per farla conoscente della sua crudeltà; perché crudeltà non si può dire, dove non è obbligo, né per contristarnela: ma per farla più tosto conoscente della sua grandezza ed allegrarla. Perché vedendo esser usciti dalla durezza vostra, verso di me questi frutti congeturerà, quali saranno quelli, che usciranno dalla sua pietà, se averrà mai che i cieli me la faccino pietosa: o obietto nobile, o obietto chiaro, o obietto divino, poi che tormentando ancora giovì e fai frutto. Legga V. S. dunque, quando averà triegua delle sue maggiori, e più care cure, le note delle cure amoroze, e gravi della sua fidissima ed infelicissima Anassilla; e da questa ombra prenda argomento quali ella le debba provare e sentir nell' animo; ché certo, se accaderà giamai che la mia povera e mesta casa sia fatta degna del ricevere il suo grande oste, che è V. S. io son sicura, che i letti, le camere, le sale, e tutto racconteranno i lamenti, i singulti, i sospiri e le lagrime, che giorno, e notte ho sparse, chiamando il nome di V. S. benedicendo però sempre nel mezzo de' miei maggior tormenti, i cieli e la mia buona sorte della cagion d' essi: perciocché, assai meglio è per voi, conte, morire, che gioir per qualunque. Ma che fo io? Perché senza bisogno tengo V. S. troppo lungamente a noia, ingiuriando anco le mie rime, quasi che esse non sappian dir le lor ragioni, ed abbian bisogno dell' altrui aita? Rimettendomi dunque ad esse, farò fine, pregando V. S. per ultimo guiderdone della mia fedelissima servitù, che nel ricever questo povero libretto, mi sia cortese sol di un sospiro, il quale refreschi così lontano la memoria della sua

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dimenticata ed abbandonata Anassilla. E tu, libretto mio, depositario delle mie lagrime, appreséntati nella più umil forma, che saprai, dinanzi al signor nostro, in compagnia della mia candida fede. E, se in recevendoti, vedrai rasserenar pur un poco quei miei fatali ed eterni lumi, beate tutte le nostre fatiche e felicissime tutte le nostre speranze; e ti resta seco eternamente in pace. (Bellonci 79-80).

Appendix D: Letters and Dedications to Gaspara Stampa

Appendix D

Dedication from Francesco Sansovino in the *Ragionamento d'Amore*

Many times, gracious damosel, while Messor Baldassare was alive, whom I cannot remember without grief (your brother and a part of my soul), I heard him, in telling over to me the blessings given him by the supreme grace of God, mention you as the chief, and the one which he esteemed most highly. Many times did he describe to me the excellence of your intellect and the steadfastness of your mind. . . . And because, being somewhat the elder, I remember that, as though he had made me his father, I rebuked, admonished, and counseled that most gentle nature of his which begged me for advice, instruction, and restraint; proceeding with you in the same manner, because I am bound to do so, you being his very self, I send you this little sketch which I have made as a relaxation from graver studies, to remind you that by its means you may learn to shun the deceptions which perverse men practise on the pure and innocent maidens, such as you are. And herewith I instruct and advise you to proceed with your glorious studies, shunning every occasion which might distract you from your undertaking. I know that I am too bold, but the memory of your virtues, and the extreme affection that I bear to you and to Madonna Cassandra, your honoured sister, and the duty to which I am bound, constrain me to this, and so I hope for your forgiveness . . . (*Lettera di prefazione al Ragionamento di M. Francesco Sansovino, nel quale brevemente s'insegna a' giovani uomini al bell' Arte d' Amore*. Venice, January 3, 1545 (i.e. 1546) (Jerrold 176-77).

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Letter from Angelica Paola Antonia de' Negri

Why should you wonder, O soul most sweet to me, and most dear to the most pure Blood of Jesus Christ, that I should love you in Him who has loved you so much that, through excess of love, He gave Himself to so bitter and painful a death? If the Creator loves you so much, why should not I, a miserable creature, love you? If He took such pleasure in you as to adorn you with His abundant graces in order that He might better be able to take delight in you, why should not I also take delight in the wonderful works that He has wrought in you? Ah! if it might please His goodness to make me worthy to see the beautiful work which He has begun in you brought to perfection; and this I am sure He will do, you being willing, as I trust you will be. For, if you are possessed of that noble spirit that is announced to me by many, I cannot believe that you would wish to imitate the folly of those who, arrogating to themselves the gifts and graces bestowed on them, are so charmed with themselves and become so proud that, making an idol of such graces, they desire for themselves the praises that belong to God. They want to be worshipped and praised, and they make it their whole study to please the world and men, and to gratify themselves, their own senses and sensual impulses, and other abominable desires. They only use the favours which God has bestowed on them to offend and revile Him, and, if they could, they would choose that there should be neither God nor soul, so that they might serve their unbridled desires, ambitions, and vices more unrestrictedly. I

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pray earnestly that this may never happen in your sweet soul, but I know that you are grateful for the graces that you have received, so that you may become worthy of greater ones. Remember, most sweet sister, that the graces you have were given to you in order that you might make yourself all spirit, and an angel in the flesh. Now what an evil it would be if, with so many gifts and graces, you were to turn away from God who created you and re-created you in the most precious Blood of His Son, to give yourself to the world, to its frivolities, ambitions, vanity, and luxury? Recognise, recognise, the beauty, and the dignity, and the excellence of your spirit, and strive to increase its worth by making it all divine with holy virtues. Remember that all these gifts pass away with the wind, and, after death, nothing remains of them but sorrow and torment, if we have not made good use of them. Those virtues which the world honours give nothing to the soul but that small and momentary content which springs from the praises of flatterers; and, when these eyes are closed in their last sleep, those also will be dead; but true virtues, holy virtues, Christian virtues, divine virtues, adorn the soul, illuminate it, enrich it, ornament it, glorify it both in the present life and in that which is to come. What is the worth of the virtue which, when we die, dies with us? How much more useful and more desirable is that virtue which always accompanies the soul, and never leaves it, but brings it always new crowns, new palms, new triumphs? O God, shall I believe that my sweet Madonna Gasparina will have so little insight that she will not know how to choose? Will

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she refuse heavenly good for earthly? O but, someone will say to me, I wish to have both. And I answer (nay, not I, but the Lord): One can only serve two masters badly. Paul answers: 'The unmarried woman and the virgin thinketh on the things of the Lord that she may be holy both in body and in spirit. but she that is married thinketh on the things of the world how she may please her husband.' Ah! dear soul, make it your study to be truly pure, humble, patient, and full of all other holy virtues, so that you may indeed be pleasing to your celestial Spouse, whose chaste embraces give more joy to the soul than all the pleasures that can be had apart from Him. And you, to whom He has given such favours, can you not, with the help of His grace, prepare yourself to enjoy Him for ever? Would you then refuse such a great good? Ah! no, for the love of God, no, no, blessed soul, redeemed at so great a price; nay, leaving all others, embrace Him alone. Do not be sorry to disappoint the world in what it expects of you, and do not believe in flatterers, those who love you according to the flesh. Do not deceive yourself, I pray you, but cut off all those intimacies and conversations which separate you from Christ and put you in peril, or which might bring a breath of suspicion upon that beautiful chastity which shines forth in you, besides all your other virtues, on account of which I said that you must not wonder if I love you. I love you and will love you always, if you will love Him who loves you so much; and not only with letters, but with my blood, my life, my soul. I shall be content - and I will not go back on my word - I shall be content if I am able to help you in the virtuous course which He who has begun it in you gives you to make perfect. I pray

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you to familiarise yourself by constant thought with the pains and torments that have been suffered for you. Take some time from your other occupations to spend it at the feet of your Savior. Pray do this, so that you may be made worthy to receive true light and real knowledge of the will of God in you, so that you may be able to perform it, and pray with me. Salute your mother and sister whom I consider mine; our Lady Abbess salutes you. Farewell, spirit created in Paradise in order that there might be your conversation and hereafter your eternal habitation.

From the holy place of St. Paul the Apostle in Milan, August 20, 1544.

Yours wholly in Jesus Christ

"A. P. A" (*Lettere spirituali dell devota religiosa Angelica Paola*

Antonio de'Negri, pp. 619-623) (Jerrold 179 -82)

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Letter from Girolamo Parabosco

O Lady loved above measure and favoured by the stars, this is that fire which shall never burn in me less fiercely, owing to your great virtues. Who ever saw elsewhere such beauty? Or such graces, or such sweet ways? And who ever heard such sweet and gentle words, or listened to such high ideas? And what shall I say of that angelic voice, which, whenever it penetrates the air with its divine accents, makes such sweet harmony that it does not merely, like the Siren, make everyone who is worthy of hearing it thrall to the brother of death, but infuses spirit and life into the coldest stones, making them weep for sovran sweetness. You may then rest assured, most beautiful and most gracious Lady Gasparina, that every man who sees you is bound to remain your servant for ever. Of which number, albeit I may be the most unworthy in virtues, yet I shall not be so in love, and from henceforth, in everything that I know will please you, I shall show it to you by most evident tokens. (*Lettere amoroze*, Lib. 1. p 32) (Jerrold 175)

About the Author

Ellan B. Otero has her undergraduate degree from the University of North Florida, Jacksonville, in Banking and Finance; a J.D. from Stetson University College of Law, St. Petersburg; a Masters of Liberal Arts and a Graduate Certificate in Comparative Literary Studies from the University of South Florida, Tampa. She has been an editorial assistant with *JAC* under Lynn Worsham, Ph.D., Editor. Otero has taught Composition, Humanities, and World Literature at the University of South Florida, Tampa.

Otero has traveled extensively in Spain and Italy. Her research interests are Italian Renaissance women writers, Renaissance Venice, and the unique challenges women writers face. Otero's conference presentations include, "John Donne and Lady Mary Wroth: Songs in Dialogue," "The Influence of Trobairitz Poetry on Gaspara Stampa," and "Feminine Presence in the Rime d'Amore of Gaspara Stampa."