

Francesco Patrizi

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FRANCISCI PATRICII
NAVIGIA.
VNIERSAE LVCIS TRACTATIO
OVA, ET ACVTISSIMA.
AD ILISSIMVM, ET REVERENDISSIMVM
LVM CAMILLVM. S. R. E. Card. Amplifs.
ET CTISSIMI GREGORII XIII.
MAY. NEPOTEM.

Patrizi and His Women

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Abstract We have very little information about Patrizi's emotional life. In our paper, we shed more light on his relationship towards women in example of his attitudes towards four women: Irene di Spilimbergo, Tarquinia Molza, Lucrezia d'Este, and the unknown *Madama*, presumably Dianora Pugliese. It is known that in Ferrara he had met the famous singer and poet Tarquinia Molza, a granddaughter of poet Francesco Maria Molza and wife of Paolo Porriño to which he dedicated the third volume of his *Discussiones peripateticæ*. She also played a role in his text *L'amorosa filosofia*. Patrizi wrote two sonnets dedicated to the Venetian female painter Irene di Spilimbergo, who died at the tender age of 21. Moreover, Patrizi dedicated the *Deca istoriale* of his *Deila poetica* to the noblewoman Lucrezia d'Este in which one can see his attitude towards a woman of a socially higher rank. Finally, there are traces of his business relationship with a woman of whose identity we cannot be sure (presumably Dianora Pugliese) and about which he writes in his personal correspondence. By analysing Patrizi's above-mentioned works we will show what kind of relationship he had with Molza and di Spilimbergo in particular and what motivated him to write about and to them. We intend to bring a little more light into Patrizi's emotional life as well as to discuss his general attitude towards women.

Keywords Patrizi, poetics, Tarquinia Molza, Irene di Spilimbergo, Dianora Pugliese, Lucrezia d'Este.

"*Quel che destina il ciel non può fallire.*" (Irene di Spilimbergo)¹

¹ "That which is destined by heaven cannot fail." According to her biographer Dionigi Atanagi (Dionigi Atanagi, "Vita della Signora Irene," in *Rime di diversi nobilissimi, et eccellentissimi autori, in morte della Signora Irene delle Signore di Spilimbergo* ed. Dionigi Atanagi (Venetia: Domenico et Giorgio Battista Guerra, 1563), n. pag.), this motto was written by Irene on the door of her painting studio.

Introduction

We know little about Francesco Patrizi's personal life and our ignorance is particularly deep in respect to his emotional ventures, dilemmas, and ups and downs. This fact stands out as especially surprising if we remember that the places where he lived and the time when he lived were populated by people who have remained famous – among other things – for their turbulent emotional escapades and adventures. One just has to think of the unbridledly jealous composer-murderer Gesualdo da Venosa whose second wife was Leonora d'Este, the niece of Duke Alfonso II, one of the most important of Patrizi's patrons; or Patrizi's friend and competitor, poet Torquato Tasso who suffered from so many emotional ("melancholic") episodes that he ended up in a mental institution; or even cardinal Luigi d'Este, the younger and recalcitrant brother of the Duke, whose spirit was far more libertine and vivacious to be suited for the scarlet hiretta. Surrounded with such an atmosphere in which an exaggerated public display of emotions was more a rule than an exception, it is rather unexpected and unusual to have nothing of it from someone as prominent as Patrizi.

Intellectual relationships between Francesco Patrizi and some of his contemporary male colleagues, like Torquato Tasso, Teodoro Angelucci, Francesco Muti, and Jacopo Mazzoni, have been relatively extensively discussed in secondary literature.² However, his relationships to some contemporary women have not been sufficiently explored.³ Despite the

² See for example Micaela Rinaldi, *Torquato Tasso e Francesco Patrizi. Tra polemiche letterarie e incontri intellettuali* (Ravenna: Longo Angelo, Ravenna, 2001); Frederick Purnell, "Francesco Patrizi and the critics of Hermes Trismegistus," in *Das Ende des Hermetismus: historische Kritik und neue naturphilosophie in der Spätrenaissance*, ed. Martin Muslow (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), 105–126; Micaela Girardi-Karšulin, "Polemika između Frane Petrića i Teodora Angeluccija," *Prilozi za istraživanje hrvatske filozofske baštine* 59–60 (2004): 103–117; Maria Muccillo, "Un dibattito sui libri metafisici di Aristotele fra platonici, aristotelici e telesiani (con qualche complicazione ermetica): Patrizi, Angelucci e Muti sul 'soggetto' della Metafisica," *Medioevo: Rivista di Storia della Filosofia medioevale* 24 (2009): 221–304; Luka Boršić, *Reneasansne rasprave s Aristotelom – Nizolli, Petrić, Mazzoni* (Zagreb: KruZak, 2013).

³ Among more recent scholarship works, there are some that mention these women in connection to Patrizi. A selection of these works include: Cesare Vasoli, "Francesco Patrizi e la

above-mentioned scarcity of the sources it is nevertheless still possible to extract some knowledge about these relationships from the extant text. We will be particularly interested in Patrizi's attitude towards four women: Lucrezia d'Este (1535–1598), Irene di Spilimbergo (1538–1559), Tarquinia Molza (1542–1617), and Dianora Pugliese. Our interest is focused on how Patrizi saw them and what kind of information about their relationship we can collect from his writings. Of course, at the outset it should be stressed that the communication was one-way: we have no information about the women's attitude (if there was any) towards Patrizi.

Irene di Spilimbergo and Francesco Patrizi – two sonnets for a student of Titian

Irene di Spilimbergo was born in the castle town of Spilimbergo near Udine into a wealthy and intellectually oriented family.⁴ Her father, Adriano di Spilimbergo, died a few years after Irene's birth and she was first raised

cultura filosofica ferrarese del suo tempo," in *La corte di Ferrara & il suo mecenatismo del suo tempo/The Court of Ferrara & its Patronage*, ed. by Marianne Pade, Lene Waage Petersen, Daniela Quarta (Copenhagen, Ferrara: Renaissancestudier, Edizioni Panini, 1987), 247–266; Cesare Vasoli, *Francesco Patrizi da Cherso* (Roma: Bulzoni, 1989), 181–204; Joanne M. Riley, "Tarquinia Molza (1542–1617): A Case Study of Women, Music and Society in the Renaissance," in *The Musical Woman*, ed. Judith Zaimont et al. (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988), 470–493; Antonio Corsaro, "Dionigi Atanagi e la silloge per Irene di Spilimbergo. (Intorno alla formazione del giovane Tasso)," *Italica* 75/1 (1998), 41–61; Tonko Maroević, "Tko je Irene di Spilimbergo?," *Dubrovnik X/1–2* (1999): 293–296; Germaine Greer, *The Obstacle Race: The Fortunes of Women Painters and Their Work* (New York: Tauris Parke Paperbacks, 2001), 70–72; Maria G. Cavallari, "L'insegnamento del Patrizi in alcuni madrigali di Tarquinia Molza," in *Francesco Patrizi filosofo platonico nel crepuscolo del Rinascimento*, ed. by Patrizia Castelli (Firenze: Leo S. Olschki, 2002), 129–138; Christopher Ulffers, "A Study of the Musical Influence of Tarquinia Molza on Patrizi's *L'amorosa filosofia*," in *Francesco Patrizi filosofo platonico nel crepuscolo del Rinascimento*, ed. by Patrizia Castelli (Firenze: Leo S. Olschki, 2002), 139–164. These texts, however valuable they may be, do not really explore the relationship of Patrizi to women in general and to those women in particular – except from the point of view of music.

⁴ About Irene di Spilimbergo's biography we rely on Anne Jacobson Schutte, "Irene di Spilimbergo: The Image of a Creative Woman in Late Renaissance Italy," *Renaissance Quarterly* 44/1 (1991): 42–61. In older literature the year of Irene di Spilimbergo's birth is given as 1540. In general not much information about Irene di Spilimbergo is known: the main source remains Dionigi Atanagi, "Vita della Signora Irene", in *Rime di diversi nobilissimi, et eccellentissimi autori*,

and educated by her mother Giulia, born da Ponte, a member of a rich and influential Venetian family. Since the age of fifteen or sixteen she lived with her maternal grandparents in Venice to whom she moved after her mother remarried and started a new family in which she gave birth to ten more children. Irene must have displayed a variety of talents from her early age since her family took care to hire the best teachers available to train Irene: in music it was the composer Bartolomeo Tromboncino, and the lutenist Bartolomeo Gazza. In letters she is reported to have read the works of Plutarchus, *Della istituzione morale* by A. Piccolomini, *Il cortigliano* by B. Castiglione, the works of Petrarca, etc. "not for a simple pastime or casually, but with a judicious and particular attention to the content [...], making notes"⁵; and, most importantly, in painting she was tutored by "the Sun amidst small stars", Titian.⁶ It is not really clear why Titian, who was not young anymore (he was well over sixty when Irene must have approached him), and who was with age becoming ever more withdrawn and unwilling to accept pupils, accepted Irene in pupilage. Was it because of Irene's unusual talent or as a favor to her mother, to whom Titian might have had certain family connections (according to some sources)?⁷ Irene studied with Titian for two years and she was exceptionally diligent so that, according to Atanagi, it took her only six weeks to master color, shadows (chiaroscuro), anatomy and the handling

in morte della Signora Irene delle Signore di Spilimbergo, ed. D. Atanagi (Venetia: Domenico et Giorgio Battista Guerra, 1561), n. pag.

⁵ Atanagi, "Vita della Signora Irene", n. pag.: "[...] i quali [libri] ella leggeva non come il più delle donne et anco de gli huomini fanno, per semplice passatempo, o come a caso; ma con giudizioso et particolare avvertimento delle materie, che trattano de concetti et delle elucutioni: osservando tuttavia et facendo estratti delle cose più belle [...]."

⁶ This famous epithet of Titian originates in nearly contemporary Giovanni P. Lomazzi, *Idea del tempio della pittura* (Milano, Paolo Gottardo Pontio, 1590), 50: "Ma fra tutti risplende come Sole fra piccole Stelle Tiziano, non solo fra gl' Italiani, ma fra tutti i pittori del mondo [...]."

⁷ Cf. Benedetto Croce, "Scrittori del pieno e tardo rinascimento. XVIII. Il Bonfadio – XIX. Irene di Spilimbergo," *La critica* 41 (1943): 124 and 129. Croce here recalls the words of Vasari, according to whom "una bellissima giovane chiamata la signora Giulia da Ponte" was a "comare" of Titian.

of drapery.⁸ She did copies of her master's paintings; a fine Titianesque painting of Saint Sebastian (in the church of St. Mauro and Donato in Izola, Slovenia) was first attributed to her but today the attribution is highly disputed; in the nineteenth century Count Maniago claimed to possess three small paintings ("quadretti") by Irene (Noah and the Ark, the Flood, the Flight into Egypt); and allegedly there existed a Bacchanal.⁹

Irene died in 1559 at the tender age of only twenty-one after three weeks of illness. Her death was seen as a cruel necessity that came as a consequence of her workaholic life and an utter despoliation of the things of this world. On the occasion of her death, the Venetian nobleman Giorgio di Andrea di Taddeo Gradenigo (1522–1600), sixteen years Irene's senior, urged Dionigi Atanagi (1504–1573), quite a renowned polymath who happened to have arrived from Rome to Venice just in the year of Irene's death, to publish a honorary volume dedicated to Irene.¹⁰ The consequence of this urging is a volume entitled *Rime di diversi nobilissimi et eccellentissimi autori, in morte della Signora Irene delle Signore di Spilimbergo*,

⁸ Atanagi, "Vita della Signora Irene," n. pag.

⁹ Fabio di Maniago, *Storia delle belle arti friulane* (Udine: Fratelli Mattiuzzi, 1823), 127: "[...] io ne conservo in tre quadretti, che rappresentano la fuga in Egitto, Noè ch'entra nell'arca, e l'universale diluvio: composizioni ricche di figure, e condotte con franchezza di pennello, con intelligenza di disegno, con gusto e forza di colorito, e che uscir sembrano dalle mani di provetto artista, e non di giovin donzella che toccava da pochi mesi la tavolozza." Jacobson Schutte, "Irene di Spilimbergo," 53 n. 45 writes about these paintings: "[They are] seen early in this century in the palazzo of the Counts d'Atimis-Maniago in Maniago, province of Gorizia; the present count did not respond to my letter of inquiry about the paintings."

¹⁰ Anna Franchi, "Donne artiste," *Emporium* LXIX (1919): 323: "[...] dalla scuola del Tiziano uscì quella Irene di Spilimbergo che dicesi fosse maestra di colore. Ma il grande maestro della scuola veneta non riuscì a infonderle la forza del disegno. Fino a poco tempo fa in Alboodo [sic] certi signori Claudi conservarono di lei un baccanale, ove sembra fosse realmente trasfusa quella forza di colore che fa della pittura veneta una festa degli occhi."

¹¹ It is unclear what the nature of Giorgio Gradenigo's relationship to Irene di Spilimbergo was. In lack of a better knowledge we can certainly embrace the inspired description given by Croce: "[Gradenigo era] un uomo che era forse in quel delicato e dolce stato d'animo tra di amico e di innamorato, tenero più che l'amicizia non comporti, reverente più che non comporti l'amore, rivolto ora in devozione e adorazione verso la donna che ci appartene e non ci appartene, e che sta a noi vicina ma insieme ci supera e distanzia." (Croce, "Scrittori," 124.)

published in Venice in 1561. The book contains a seventeen-page long biography of Irene di Spilimbergo written by Atanagi and a collection of 279 Italian and 102 Latin poems written by 143 contributors.¹² This memorial volume has been analyzed often enough in scholarly literature and there is no need to enter into any further discussion about it. Let it suffice to say that – generally – the poems in the volume have not received a special reception and are mostly criticized for their antiquarianism, i.e. a strong adherence to the Petrarchan tradition which was already considered a matter of some past times at the time when the book was composed. Contrary to that, the introductory *vita* by Atanagi is generally praised as a fine and out-of-the-box essay.¹³

In this memorial volume Atanagi took care to gather the crème de la crème of the Italian (not only Venetian) intellectual and literary circles and it seems it was a matter of prestige to contribute in this volume.¹⁴ In the year of Spilimbergo's death, Patrizi wandered through Italy; after the publication of his work on history, *Della historia diece dialoghi*, in Venice in 1560 he might have been trying to settle down academically. In the year when the book *Rime di diversi nobilissimi et eccellentissimi autori* was published, Patrizi stayed in Venice. At the time his fame must have been already spread throughout Italy and he was invited to contribute to the memorial volume. For that occasion he composed two sonnets¹⁵:

La diva IRENE, che di ciel discese
In compagnia, di mille grate eterne
D'Angel mille, e mille sempiterno
Idee, ch'ella con propria man si prese,

The divine IRENE, who descended from heaven
In company of thousand eternal Graces,
Of thousand Angels, and thousand sempiternal
Ideas, that she brought with her own hand,

¹² Some of the poems are anonymous, but it is generally supposed that they were written either by some of the 143 contributors or by Giorgio Gradenigo, who is not listed among the authors.

¹³ It is unlikely that Atanagi ever met Irene – it is believed that he based his biography on stories of other people, most notably Giorgio Gradenigo, his employer in the project.

¹⁴ The openness and good taste of Atanagi as editor can be seen on the fact that he recognized the talent of Torquato Tasso and invited him to contribute to the volume along with well established poets and *letterati* – at the moment of the publication of the book Torquato Tasso was only seventeen years old and the sonnets in the volume were his first published poems.

¹⁵ Atanagi, *Rime*, 39–40.

Venne questo mortal' empio paese
 A paradiso far: e le sue interne
 Parte aiutar¹⁶, et adornar l'etere:
 E l' potea¹⁷ far: the sola tutto intese.
 Privo 'l ciel di sue prime immortal doti
 Restò di pace privo; e i be' suoi giri
 In contrario senza ordine rivolse.
 Ond' ella per tornar ne divin moti
 Il più bello mondo, a lui racca si volse:
 E lasciò questo a morte, et a martiri.

Mentre con le sue man la diva IRENE,
 Pon in tela mortal l'eterna idea
 De la beltà, ch' n' mente, e 'n volto havea
 Per pareggiar con Dio l'opre terrene,
 E con ombre, e colori, e lumi piene
 Fa tutte parti; quella viva Dea
 Suo spirto lor spirò, che vita ardea
 Vera spirar la adombrate vene.
 Ma l'opra fral, che vera havea sembianza
 De l'eterna beltà, non prese vita:
 E l' spirto sciolto a dio levossi a volo.
 O mirabil, e acerba rimembranza:
 Vita altrui dar e far da se partita:
 Fosse almen l'una a consolar il duolo.

Here is an original poetical rendering of Patrizi's poems offered by the American poet Shawn Sturgeon (b. 1965).¹⁸

Diva Irene, descended from heaven,
 with her thousands of eternal graces,
 with her thousands of angels, her thousands
 of everlasting ideas, dispensed from her
 own hand—came here, to this mortal and empty
 place, to make a paradise, to save what was
 inside, to ornament all with forever:

¹⁶ Corr. *ex auxiliare*

¹⁷ Corr. *ex poteo*

¹⁸ These English versions of the sonnets have never been published before and are composed for the occasion of this text. The authors are deeply grateful to dr. Shawn Sturgeon for generously giving his poetical work to be published here.

Came to this mortal and empty region
 To make it a paradise, and to save its internal
 Parts, and to adorn it with the eternal
 It was her only intention to make it this way.
 Heaven, deprived of her primary immortal virtues,
 Remained restless; and its beautiful circles
 Revolve in contrary, without order.
 Thus to restore its divine movements
 Captured by it she returned to the more beautiful world
 And left this one to death and to martyrs.

When the divine (IRENE with her own hands,
 Putz onto a mortal canvas the immortal idea
 Of beauty, that she holds in her mind and her appearance
 To equate the terrestrial things with God,
 And with shadows, and colors, and full lights
 She makes all parts: this alive Goddess
 Inhales her spirit into them, because she ardently desires
 To breathe in the true life into pale veins.
 But this fragile work, that has a true resemblance
 To the eternal beauty, did not catch life:
 And the unraveled spirit rose up flying to god.
 O what a marvelous and bitterly memorable fate!
 To give life to others and let make one's own part:
 If it were at least one left to console the grief.

When the Diva Irene, with her very own
 hands gives her everlasting beauty to
 mortal flesh, when what is in her mind, when
 what we see of her, makes a heaven
 out of earth, out of shadows, out of colors,
 out of bright lights, Irene, a goddess,
 an aliveness, tongue kissing, putting life

what she did was everything she wanted.
 But Heaven, no longer with her virtue,
 was restless, turning two ways at once,
 unordered and out of whack. To save it,
 to save heaven, Irene returned to that
 world and was trapped, leaving us, leaving this
 world without her—to death and to martyrs.

into pale veins.... But, this breakable work,
 this everlasting flesh, did not come to life,
 so that her spirit, shaken, rose to God:
 how bitter the memory, bitter the thought
 of what will never be our fate! O, to give
 life to others, to do one's part. If only
 there were someone here now to console me.

From the available textual sources it is impossible to conclude whether Patrizi ever met Irene di Spilimbergo or not, whether he was familiar with her paintings or not. It is probable that just like the majority of the contributors to the volume, Patrizi did not know her in person: this is also noticeable in the style of these two sonnets. In them we cannot find warmth or affection: they are more pensive than personal. It seems that Patrizi used the Petrarchan form to express a sort of Neoplatonic poetry. Besides some common Neoplatonic *topoi* (likeness to God, intellect possessing the ideas, immortal vs. mortal, order vs. chaos, beauty of the immaterial world vs. ugliness of the material world etc.), Irene di Spilimbergo becomes a metaphor for a paradox of the artist: she gives life to dead things, but cannot save herself from death, as though she literally gives life to things and leaving behind her own.

Patrizi's sonnets are harmonious and they try to interpret the essence of Irene di Spilimbergo's life in terms of Neoplatonic philosophy. That was of course expected, since Patrizi had already showed an interest in poetry, and his *Lettura sopra il sonetto del Petrarca: La gola, e'l sonno* was published in Venice in 1553. Moreover, since at the time of the composition of these poems he was not yet a fully-established philosopher, he might have used this opportunity to take part in the common volume with some of the most prominent intellectuals of his time to make a sort of a philosophical declaration: to make known in public that it is a Platonism that he is going to pursue. However, though the poems he wrote are neither emotional nor personal, nevertheless there is some tenderness, respect, and *l'esprit de finesse* in his approach.

Tarquinia Molza and Francesco Patrizi – good old friends

If the relationship between Patrizi and Irene di Spilimbergo is a story of a distant respect, the relationship between Patrizi and Tarquinia Molza is the opposite. We possess three different sources for reconstructing this relationship: first it is *L'amorosa filosofia* (Love philosophy), an unfinished text which Patrizi composed in 1577 and never published during his lifetime,¹⁹ then there are four remaining letters addressed to Tarquinia Molza written by Patrizi between 1577 and 1578,²⁰ and finally we have Patrizi's dedication at the beginning of the third volume of his *Discussiones peripateticæ* under the title "Ad Tarquiniam Molziam, divam mulierem" ("To Tarquinia Molza, the divine woman"), published in 1581.

The life and relatively few remaining poems by Tarquinia Molza were the object of much scholarly research and there is no need enter into a detailed description of her life and work. Let us just point out some most relevant moments. Tarquinia Molza was, similarly to Irene di Spilimbergo, born into a noble and intellectual family from Modena. From her early age she was tutored by an excellent teacher, Giovanni Bertari "il Poliziano". After his death in 1558 Tarquinia continued education with different and outstanding teachers: Giovanni Maria Barbieri and Lazzaro Labadini instructed her in Latin and Greek, Antonio Guarini was her instructor in mathematics and astronomy; she also studied Hebrew, and several (at least six) different musicians and composers taught her music.

She was highly appreciated mostly as a poetess and a singer although besides poetry and madrigals she also wrote a series of epigrams, several religious texts, letters, and there also circulated her translations

¹⁹ This is also the main source on Tarquinia Molza's life. The modern (and to our knowledge only) edition of the text is done by John Charles Nelson in 1963.

²⁰ Published by D. Aguzzi Barbagli in his *Francesco Patrizi da Cherso – Lettere ed opuscoli inediti* in 1975.

of Plato's dialogues *Charmides* and *Crito* (incomplete).²¹ Already during her lifetime she was made a protagonist of Torquato Tasso's dialogues *Il Ghirinzone overo l'epitafio* and *La Molza overo de l'amore* and Patrizi's *L'amorosa filosofia*; many outstanding composers put her verses into music²²; and she was inserted among "illustrious women and men" in several "encyclopedias" of her time.²³ In 1600 she was also given the honorary citizenship of Rome, which was the first occasion that this privilege was extended to a woman. This event was also the occasion when she acquired her nickname "Unica".

Tarquinia Molza and Francesco Patrizi knew each other personally quite well. According to his own testimony, Patrizi knew Molza since she was a child.²⁴ In 1575 Patrizi returned from Spain; his initial plan was to

²¹ For her works see: Pierantonio Serassi, editor, *Delle poesie volgari e latine di Francesco Maria Molza* (Bergamo: Pietro Lancellotti, 1750 and 1754) and Domenico Vandelli, *Opuscoli inediti di Tarquinia Molza* (Bergamo: Pietro Lancellotti, 1750).

²² P. Vinci, M. A. Pordenon, P. Ismardi, G. L. Primavera, R. Vecoli, P. Cavatoni, A. Trombetti, and G. P. da Palestrina

²³ Cf. Camillo Camilli, *Imprese illustri di diversi* (Venetia: Francesco Ziletti, 1586), III 48–51; Julius Caesar Capaci, *Illustrium mulierum et illustrium litteris virorum eologia* (Neapolis: Io. Iacobus Carlinus & Constantinus Vitalis, 1608), 211–212; Pietro Paolo Ribera Valentiano, *Le glorie immortali de' trionfi, et heroiche imprese d'ottocento quarantacinque donne illustri, antiche, e moderne, dotate di conditioni, e scienze segnalate* (Venetia: Evangelista Deuchino, 1609), 324–329.

²⁴ In her article "L'insegnamento del Patrizi in alcuni madrigali di Tarquinia Molza" Maria Giovanna Cavallari claims that Patrizi met Molza in 1569. On the other hand Joanne M. Riley in her text "Tarquinia Molza (1542–1617): A Case Study of Women, Music and Society in the Renaissance" and Christopher Uffers in his article "A Study of the Musical Influence of Tarquinia Molza on Patrizi's *L'amorosa filosofia*" maintain that Patrizi knew her since she was a child. In this matter we agree with Riley and Uffers for several reasons: first, as we can find out from his biography, in year 1569 Patrizi did not visit Modena where Tarquinia Molza lived, and second in *L'amorosa filosofia* Patrizi claims to loves her as a little daughter and that he knows her for a long time, since she was "a little girl" (cf. Francesco Patrizi, *L'amorosa filosofia* (Firenze: Le Monnier, 1963), 59: "Quindi è che ella mentre fu fanciulletta mostrò sì grande vivacità di ingegno in apparare senza una minima fatica tutto ciò che in leggere et in grammatica le fu dal suo maestro insegnato." Also on p. 12: "Poi che la mia buona fortuna mi ha fatto il primo a dire in lode della signora Tarquinia Molza, la quale io già molti anni, pieno di stupore, amo come figliuola, riverisco come padrona, e adoro come terrena dea, io potrei tante verissime cose dire di lei che per avventura poco campo lascerei a quelli che dopo me da dire hanno." Also in the

go to Milan, but because of the plague he changed his plans and went to Modena, the hometown of the Molzas, where he spent several months.²⁵ During that period, he must have enjoyed the hospitality and company of Tarquinia and her husband, the rich nobleman Paolo Porrina. Around that time, Duke Alfonso II d'Este (1533–1597) visited Modena. The Duke's secretary Antonio Montecatino persuaded him to offer Patrizi a teaching post in Ferrara, which he accepted. The text of *L'amorosa filosofia* is a product of Patrizi's sojourn in Modena. During his stay in Modena, Patrizi also tutored Tarquinia Molza in Greek, philosophy and probably some basic Spanish. After Patrizi left Modena, he continued "teaching" Tarquinia in his letters, of which four are preserved.

Later Molza and Patrizi also lived in Ferrara at the same time.²⁶ She arrived to the court of the Duke Alfonso II d'Este in 1583 where she was a part of *concerto della donna*,²⁷ founded by the Duke himself in 1580. It is not clear what the exact role of Tarquinia within this group of professional women musicians was. In the company of other prominent women (such as Laura Peverara, Anna Guarini, and Livia D'Arco) Tarquinia might have been a singer, a composer, an instructor or any combination thereof. But we know that in 1589 she was expelled from the group (as well as from Ferrara) when her sexual affair with the famous and outstanding

same work he gives us lot of information about her childhood and her parents which definitely lives an impression of the first-hand evidence about her youth.

²⁵ His autobiographical letter to Baccio Valori, Patrizi (in the 3rd person) finishes with the following words (Patrizi, *Lettere*, 51): "Ma trovò la peste a Milano e in Lombardia, onde si fermò a Modena alcuni mesi; fino che, andato il Signor Duca in visita dello stato, per lo mezzo del segretario Montecatino, che l'aveva conosciuto in Ferrara del 1556, fu chiamato a questo servizio l'anno 1577, ove da quel tempo si riposa, studia, e scrive."

²⁶ About Patrizi and his time in Ferrara see the article of Cesare Vasoli, "Francesco Patrizi e la cultura filosofica ferrarese del suo tempo," in *La corte di Ferrara & il suo mecenatismo del suo tempo/The Court of Ferrara & its Patronage*, ed. Marianne Pade et al. (Copenhagen, Ferrara: Renaissancestudier, Edizione Panini, 1987), 247–266.

²⁷ For a detailed analysis of Tarquinia Molza's musical education and significance, see Joanne M. Riley, "Tarquinia Molza (1542–1617): A Case Study of Women, Music and Society in the Renaissance," in *The Musical Woman*, ed. Judith Zaimont et al. (New York: Greenwood Press), 470–493.

Flemish composer working in Mantua and Ferrara, Giaches de Wert, had been made public.

In 1577 Patrizi started teaching Platonic philosophy at the University of Ferrara (the "Studium") where he stayed until the beginning of 1592. It was a good period for him: he was "resting, studying and writing"²⁸, and, moreover, enjoying lively conversations and disputes with the poet Torquato Tasso (1544–1595), philosopher and erudite Jacopo Mazzoni (1548–1598) and philosopher Teodoro Angelucci (1540–1600). During that period he finished all four volumes of his *Discussione peripateticae* (printed in Basle in 1581), and also his most important "positive" philosophical work, *Nova de universis philosophia*, printed in Ferrara in 1591. So, Patrizi and Molza, who was not only a lady-in-waiting at the Este court, but also a most famous female musician and poet in Italy of her times, had a lot of chances to spend time together, especially since they belonged to the same circles.

We learn about Tarquinia Molza's life and her relation to Patrizi from his *L'amorosa filosofia* which is also the main source of information about her. This treatise was written at Modena in 1577. There are seventeen participants in this dialogue, which at first sight resembles a Platonic dialogue.²⁹ The unfinished text is divided into four days, the first of which occupies about a half of the whole text. The setting of the first day is the following: Antonio Querenghi refers to nine speeches that were held in the house of Patrizio Patrizi, a distant relative of Francesco, in Rome. All of the speeches are descriptions and praises of Tarquinia Molza.

At the beginning of the first dialogue Patrizi gives us some information about Molza's life: she started as an autodidact in Greek, she could write beautiful letters and sonnets, and from the time she was a young

²⁸ See fn. 25 above.

²⁹ Besides Tarquinia Molza and Francesco Patrizi, other interlocutors listed in the beginning are: Antonio Querenghi, Lodovico Fullina, Vincenzo Cantoni, Bernardino Telesio, Benedetto Manzuoli, Fabrizio Dentici, Ortensio Grillenzoni, Marco Felini, Giulio Carrato, Patrizio Patrizi, Sperone Speroni, Carlo Sigonio, Gasparo Silingardi, Maffeo Venter, and Giovanni Falloppia. Tarquinia's husband joins in the later parts of the dialogue.

girl, before she even knew the alphabet, she showed interest in books and reading.³⁰ She "[...] learned by heart the whole Vergil and the whole *Canzoniere* by Petrarca and in all ways she tenaciously keeps this stored in her memory."³¹ Besides her classical education, Patrizi gives testimony about her exquisite musical abilities. In the section entitled "Melpomene", Patrizi described the visit of Duke Alfonso II to Modena in 1568 and his fascination with Molza's singing (besides her virtuosity in playing the viola da mano, lute and clavier).³² On an occasion Molza was singing various things for Duke and his wife Duchess Barbara, and, among other things, her favorite Petrarch's sonnet "Hor ch'il ciel et la terra e 'l vento tace".³³ This performance must have impressed the ducal couple so much that, several years later, it opened the door of their palace to Molza, who had found herself involved in many unpleasant events after her husband's death had happened in 1579. Patrizi also provides us with information about Molza's husband, Paolo Porrino, and her feelings toward him.³⁴ According to Patrizi she was deeply in love with her husband, and he supported Molza's intellectual endeavors. Such a mutual devotion of spouses must have impressed Patrizi who himself was never married.

³⁰ Patrizi, *L'amorosa filosofia*, 18–19. "Il quale ella andò fuggendo sempre che potè, perciò che avanti che conoscesse lo A. B. era sì vaga di tenere un libricciuolo in mano e di mirarvi su e di leggervi quando la madre non era presente, che tratto fuori un libro che di continuo portava di nascosto e posto gl'ò l'aco, si dava a leggere, tutto che fanciullina per ancora non conoscesse lo A. B. Nel quale nobilissimo furto fu più volte colta e dalla madre, che dispiacere ne sentiva, e dal padre, che infinito piacere ne prendeva. Il quale fu tanto dalla Tarquinia pregato che a lei facesse insegnare ciò che don Giovanni insegnava a' fratelli, che co' suoi vezzi gratiosissimi fu sforzato a compiacerle."

³¹ Patrizi, *L'amorosa filosofia*, 60.

³² Patrizi, *L'amorosa filosofia*, 38–42.

³³ Laurie Stras, "Recording Tarquinia: Imitation, Parody and Reportage in Ingegneri's *Hor che 'l ciel et la terra e 'l vento tace*," *Early Music* 27/3 (1999): 358: "[r]emarkably the story of the performance is recorded in two quite different sources – a polyphonic madrigal by Marc'Antonio Ingegneri and a philosophical treatise by Francesco Patrizi."

³⁴ Patrizi, *L'amorosa filosofia*, 51. "[...] et ha tutti i suoi pensamenti tenuto volti alla sua pudicitia, et allo amore del cavaliere Paolo suo marito; la qual dopo xvii anni che ella è seco, dopo tante battaglie e dopo tanta conversazione et dopo tanta libertà di vita, ella ha conservato intatta e santa e da ogni anco minimo sospetto immacolata."

Moreover, there are several pages dedicated to the description of her physical appearance.³⁵ Since the whole first day of the dialogue is dedicated to laudatory description of Tarquinia Molza [more than 70 pages in Nelson's edition of *L'amorosa filosofia*] it would be tedious to list all of her virtues here.

All in all, Tarquinia Molza is represented as a sort of a superior being in all aspects: a "harmony of praiseworthy and rare perfections"³⁶. Perhaps for this reason she is also described with dominant androgynous qualities: her beauty is a sort of mixture between male and female qualities, which are so mixed together that one cannot really distinguish her masculinity from her femininity,³⁷ her face is covered with "an ineffable and incomprehensible beauty, between male and female",³⁸ her musical talents are equal to a talent of a man of an excellent intellect³⁹ etc. This sexual ambiguity culminates in the last (and unfinished) part of the text in which the character of Tarquinia Molza defends a hold, anti-Platonic and anti-Augustinian thesis according to which the root of all love – even the love of God – is *philautia*, the love of oneself.

An interesting contrast to this picture of Tarquinia Molza is to be found in Patrizi's letters which he sent to her after having left Modena for Ferrara.⁴⁰ In the four preserved letters he obviously wanted to continue his lectures: all four letters are mostly concentrated around astrological/

³⁵ Patrizi, *L'amorosa filosofia*, 25–32.

³⁶ This phrase belongs to Camilli (Camilli, *Imprese*, 50: "[...] armonia di perfettioni lodevoli et rare.") who must have had access to the manuscript of Patrizi's *L'amorosa filosofia*.

³⁷ Patrizi, *L'amorosa filosofia*, 6: "Dicono essi la bellezza della signora Tarquinia essere un soavissimo temperamento di donnesco e di maschile, il quale è sì in se stesso confuso o misto, che non se ne può discernere parte alcuna sincera o dell'uno o dell'altro, et apparere però l'uno e l'altro in ogni parte in maniera ineffabile et incomprendibile."

³⁸ Patrizi, *L'amorosa filosofia*, 31: "[...] viso [...] comperso di una incomprendibile tra maschile e donnesca bellezza et ineffabile."

³⁹ Patrizi, *L'amorosa filosofia*, 38: "Et appresso cantò le parole in meno di due altri mesi, cosa che non havrebbe potuto fare, secondo il giudicio mio, verun huomo per d'eccellente ingegno che fusse potuto essere [...]."

⁴⁰ Patrizi, *Lettere*, 13–22.

astronomical observations, "la cosa de' cieli".⁴¹ After some introductory remarks, which deal with everyday events, Patrizi continues explaining the elementary structure of the universe and some astrological basics. What is striking about these letters is that they look so *introductory*, as though they were written for a tyro, and not for a person who incorporates a *summum* of intellectual and corporeal virtues, as Tarquinia Molza was described in *L'amorosa filosofia*. This leaves one to think that *L'amorosa filosofia* has more of a symbolic or generic approach, whereas the letters present their relationship in flesh and blood as it really was: a relationship between a teacher and a pupil, a teacher who also has a sort of an avuncular role. E. g. the letter of 17 October 1578 opens with very concerned remarks about Tarquinia Molza's fever – this opening has a strong overtone of someone who is as close as a parent or a relative. Moreover, the letters are accompanied with chit-chat observations which leave an impression of a close friendship between the two, like a continuation of a dialogue that started a long time ago.

In an indirect way this impression is also supported by the latest of Patrizi's mentioning Tarquinia Molza. It is Patrizi's dedication in the third volume of his *Discussiones peripateticæ*. There, in the prefatory poem he wrote, paraphrasing Catullus:

Cui dono sapidum, novum libellum
Docto Græcorum pumice expolitum?
Tarquinia tibi. Namque tu solebas
Sophorum nimium amare chartas.⁴²

To whom do I give this wise new booklet,
smoothed with a learned pumice of the Greeks?
To you, Tarquinia. For you were accustomed
to excessively cherish books of wise men.⁴³

The rest of the two-page dedication continues along a similar vein: Tarquinia Molza was well educated woman. Calling her "most learned

⁴¹ Patrizi, *Lettere*, 21.

⁴² Franciscus Patricius/Frane Petrić, *Discussionum peripateticarum tomus tertius/Peripatetičke rasprave svesak treći*, ed. Mihaela Girardi-Karšulin et al. (Zagreb: Institut za filozofiju, 2009), 6.

⁴³ There is a pun on words in the first two lines that can also be understood as "To whom learned among the Greeks should I give [...]?"

of all past, present, and future women".⁴⁴ Patrizi praises her excellent knowledge of the Greek, Latin and Italian languages, logic, moral philosophy, catholic theology and of course music. In his opinion she also did improve her knowledge of physiology. Patrizi claims that she learnt Greek when he had been teaching about Plato for just three months.⁴⁵ According to Patrizi she could read not only Plato in original Greek⁴⁶, but also Pindar – and all classical scholars know about infamous difficulties of Pindar's language and style. Besides the previously mentioned virtues she was also eloquent, witty, humorous, pleasant in conversation, humane and well-mannered.⁴⁷ Patrizi emphasized her noble origin, exceptional character, modesty – and outstanding beauty.⁴⁸ Indeed, if we look at her portrait as a young girl, as well as the later portrait of her as a young woman, we can be astonished by the beauty of her face – big eyes, full lips, intelligent look, long curly hair. She was not only admired by the citizens of Modena, but also by the Duke Alfonso II d'Este and his sisters Lucrezia and Leonora.⁴⁹

In his dedication Patrizi has briefly presented Molza's life, virtues, education, physical features, ancestry, tendencies and talents. The overall tone of the dedication is completely friendly and somewhat paternal: Patrizi puts himself in the position of someone who is entitled and fully justified to praise Tarquinia because, as her tutor and friend, he had a full insight into her virtues.

⁴⁴ Patricius, *Discussiones*, 6: "[...] viragulum omnium, quot sunt, quot fuerunt, quotque alios erunt in annos, doctissimæ."

⁴⁵ Patricius, *Discussiones*, 6: "Hanc tu, quod omnium hominum admirationem vincat, in Platone tribus mensibus me praelegente edidicisti."

⁴⁶ E. g. the *Phaedrus* (Patrizi, *L'amorosa filosofia*, 13).

⁴⁷ Patricius, *Discussiones*, 8: "Sed dii boni, quae eloquentia? Quae argutiae? Qui sales? Quae laetudines in conversando? Quae humanitas? Quae urbanitas?"

⁴⁸ Patricius, *Discussiones*, 8: "His tot tantisque ingenii ornamentis comites sese addiderunt nobilitas generis, pulchritudo eximia, mores animi insignes [...]."

⁴⁹ Patricius, *Discussiones*, 8: "Quanti te serenissimus Alphonsus Atestinus II. princeps noster? Quanti te Principes mulieres Lucretia atque Leonora, sorores eius, faciunt?"

Due to this fact we can conclude the nature of their relationship. They were truly good friends, Patrizi is full of admiration and respect for Tarquinia Molza. It is again interesting to note that although they were both passionate people (Patrizi in his work and debates, and Molza in music and private relationship) there is not trace of any erotic tension or commitment.

As a *curiosum* one may notice that Molza also inspired Torquato to write two treatises on love. During his stay in Ferrara Patrizi had quite polemical conversations and disputes with Torquato Tasso. They didn't share similar attitudes in poetics, but they shared the same fascination with Molza, and eventually they shared the same tomb in the church of Sant'Onofrio in Rome.

Another *curiosum* is that Tarquinia Molza is one of those rare women whose fame survived even the darkest periods of antifeminisms, such as the 19th century. In Samuel Mossman's *Gems of Womanhood*, Tarquinia Molza is listed among only three "Contributors to Literature and Art" and is the only non-English woman included in this list (the other two being Letitia Elizabeth Landon and Anne Damer).⁵⁰ An interesting detail is that in his description of Tarquinia Molza he mentions Patrizi as her teacher of the art of poetry (calling him "Francis Patricio", and "the learned Professor Patroni" who allegedly taught her philosophy and the classics.⁵¹

A mysterious Madama – Dianora Pugliese?

In his letter to Giovanbattista Strozzi the Younger (1551–1634), the famous madrigalist, intellectual, patron of arts and an important public figure in Florence, one of the founders of the "Accademia degli Alterati" whose

⁵⁰ Samuel Mossman, *Gems of Womanhood; or: Sketches of Distinguished Women, in Various Ages and Nations* (Edinburgh: Gal and Inglis, 1870), 134–143.

⁵¹ Mossman, *Gems*, 135: "In the art of poetry, she was initiated by a famous poet [sic] and philosopher named Francis Patricio; and in logic, including the philosophy of the ancients and a perfect knowledge of the Greek language, she was taught by the learned Professor Patroni."

death was also the end of the Accademia, Patrizi mentions a *Madama*.⁵² There are certain intrigues, problems with investments and payments in connection with the publication of the book *Le imprese illustri con espositioni et discorsi* by Girolamo Ruscelli whose editor was our Patrizi.⁵³ The book was published in two volumes, and Patrizi referred to the publication of the first volume in 1572 which was obviously financially supported by Strozzi.⁵⁴

Girolamo Tiraboschi, in his monumental 16-volume *Storia della letteratura italiana*, offers a conjecture about the identity of this mysterious, anonymous *Madama*.⁵⁵ He claims to have found an authentic document written in Venice on 25 May 1570 in Venice about a litigation between Patrizi and otherwise unknown Dianora Pugliese, "colla quale pare ch' egli avesse stretta società per fare a comuni loro spese stampare le imprese e l'Indice degli Uomini Illustri del Ruscelli."⁵⁶

It seems plausible to suppose that Dianora Pugliese and Patrizi stroke a financial deal to publish Ruscelli's *Imprese* and that for some reason she denied Patrizi his share of the money meant for publication of the book. If we take into account Patrizi's letter to Giovanbattista Strozzi, it seems that Dianora Pugliese was collecting money from others and was supposed to share it with Patrizi who must also have invested into the book. Since the sharing had not taken place, Patrizi raised a lawsuit against her. Unfortunately we could not find any new or more comprehensive data either about the lawsuit or about Dianora Pugliese – this *Madama*

⁵² Patrizi, *Lettere*, 28–29.

⁵³ Girolamo Ruscelli, *Le imprese illustri con espositioni et discorsi. Con la giunta di altre imprese tutto rordinato et corretto da Francesco Patricio*, ed. Francesco Patrizi (Venezia: Comin da Trino di Monferrato, 1572).

⁵⁴ Patrizi, *Lettere*, 29: "[...] quanto capitale pose Vostra Signoria et quanto essa [Madama], et come dovea essere partito il guadagno tra ambidue, et che cosa segul poi dalla parte di Madama, che mi pare di intendere non so che intrichi e non so con chi."

⁵⁵ We have consulted the following edition: Girolamo Tiraboschi, *Storia della letteratura italiana*, vol. VII 2 (Firenze: Molini, Landi etc., 1824).

⁵⁶ Tiraboschi, *Storia* VII 2, 422.

remains a mysterious – albeit intriguing – figure. If these suppositions are correct, she must have been one of the earliest female book entrepreneurs (or publishers?) in the history of books.

Lucrezia d'Este – the recalcitrant sister of the patron

At the end we should mention Patrizi's dedication of the *Della Poetica la Deca Istoriale*.⁵⁷ Eight small octavo pages present an introductory dedication to Lucrezia d'Este ("Lucrezia da Este Duchessa d'Urbino") published in Ferrara in 1586. Tiraboschi praises this short text as the most magnificent eulogy offered to the dukes Este in the 16th century, whereas the fact that it is explicitly addressed to Lucrezia he interprets as a symbolic act.⁵⁸ And indeed: the structure of these pages suggest its symbolic meaning: Patrizi begins by praising Lucrezia's family and its merits in promoting arts and sciences, he mentions the foundation of *lo Studio* in 1392 by Albert V, the great teachers who taught at this university (Guarino Veronese, Teodoro Gaza who introduced the studies of Greek language and culture, then also Bessarion and Gemistos Pletho, who introduced Platonic philosophy), he also mentions the studies of mathematics, medicine, music, and poetry with all the accompanying names of eminent teachers who were brought to Ferrara thanks to the Estes. In the second part of the dedication Patrizi expectedly praises Ferrara as a place of flourishing sciences and arts in general – again listing all the famous people who contributed to it so that so far the text looks like a "who-is-who?" of the intellectual history of Ferrara. Patrizi probably wanted to justify his position at the University of Ferrara: he presents himself as perfectly fitting into this intellectual tradition typical of Ferrara under the patronage of the Este family, and his work presents a

⁵⁷ Francesco Patrizi, *Della Poetica la Deca Istoriale* (Ferrara: Vittorio Baldini, 1586), n. pag.

⁵⁸ Girolamo Tiraboschi, *Storia della letteratura italiana*, vol. VII 1 (Firenze: Molini, Landi etc., 1824), 79: "Fra tutti però gli elogi in questo secol renduti a' principi Estensi, il più magnifico è quello di Francesco Patrizi sanese [sic!] poc' anzi citato, e professore allora in Ferrara, nell'atto di offrire a Lucrezia d' Este figlia di Ercole II la sua Deca Istoriale della Poetica."

continuation of the scholarly endeavors that the ancestors of the present Estes so magnificently and farsightedly supported.

In the last two pages Patrizi turns to Lucrezia more specifically. He praises her promptness to support "tutti gli huomini di spirito, e letterati", her fondness of performing music, and her inclinations to poetry. However elegantly and with good measure he balanced between a genuine admiration for this educated lady and an adulation that was expected from him as a public servant, it is nevertheless rather obvious that Patrizi is far less enthusiastic in approaching Lucrezia d'Este than he was when he wrote about Tarquinia Molza. Unfortunately we possess no further evidence about his relationship to this powerful and intriguing woman.

Conclusion

Once again we have to emphasize the difficulty of reconstructing the relationship between two people. Nevertheless we thought that this part of Patrizi's life is unfairly neglected and it was our desire to bring a little more light into this segment of his life. What kind of person was Patrizi in his personal life and relationships? He was passionate in his work and debates, it is sufficient to remember his commitment in writing his *Discussiones peripateticæ* and later *Nova de universis philosophia* or all the passionate outbursts he had in discussions with Torquato Tasso or Teodoro Angelucci. He had little sense for business, one just has to remember his efforts to sell cotton and rare books which both failed miserably. But he was a good friend, as it comes out from his relationship with Tarquinia Molza; he showed compassion in the occasion of the premature death of Irene di Spillimbergo (whom he probably did not know in person); and he showed a sense of a well-balanced mixture of sincerity and diplomacy among the powerful but not always reliable Estes. In this context, these women had a different symbolic significance for Patrizi: Irene di Spillimbergo is a sort of Petrarchan muse, Tarquinia Molza is both a perfect student (in the *Letters* and in the first day of

⁵⁹ Tiraboschi, *Storia* VII 1, n. pag. [6].

L'amorosa filosofia) and a perfect teacher (in the remaining three days of *L'amorosa filosofia*), Lucrezia d'Este presents an ideal female aristocrat. On the other hand it is also noticeable that there is no trace of any erotic inclinations toward any of the women about whose relationships we possess some textual evidence. It is impossible to say whether he was sexually interested in them or not or if he just wanted to keep his privacy to himself. A further – and maybe the most important thing – is that there is no trace of any kind of misogyny in his approach; he treated women as perfectly equal to men.

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