An example of ambivalent seventeenth-century Dante reception:

Arcangela Tarabotti's uses of the *Commedia* in her *Semplicità ingannata*.

In the field of Dante scholarship, there are only a handful of studies that consider the reception of the *Commedia* in the seventeenth century, the most recent and comprehensive being Marco Arnaudo's *Dante barocco*.¹ This paper will examine the reception of the *Commedia* by the Venetian writer Arcangela Tarabotti (1604-1652) in the *Semplicità ingannata*, the first of her three works on convent life.² My intertextual analysis of Tarabotti's work will reveal her positive deployment of the spiritual authority of the *Commedia*, alongside her criticism of the work, seen in techniques of citation which implicate the *Commedia*, and Dante as a male author, in her critique of the practise of placing women in convents against their will. In order to explain the presence of both positive and critical uses of the *Commedia*, I will situate Tarabotti's ambivalent reception of the work in the context of contemporary Dante criticism, early modern practices of citation of literary authorities, and two earlier pro-woman works of Venetian writers Moderata Fonte (Modesta Pozzo de' Zorzi, 1555-1592) and Lucrezia Marinella (1571-1653).

Dante's *Commedia* was the primary intertext in Tarabotti's trilogy, the *Semplicità ingannata*, *L'Inferno monacale*, and *Il Paradiso monacale*.³ Though diverse in approach, the three polemical prose works shared the common aim of denouncing the practice of placing young women in convents with no regard for their choice or vocation to the religious life, which was Tarabotti's own experience.⁴ The *Semplicità Ingannata* was published posthumously under the pseudonym of Galerana Baratotti, but had a manuscript circulation during Tarabotti's lifetime under the title *Tirannia*

paterna.⁵ It was censured and placed on the Index of Prohibited Books in 1661.⁶ Tarabotti referenced the *Commedia* in different ways in the three works, through quotation and literary allusion, to authorise her arguments and form her authorial personae.⁷

Tarabotti's authorship was strongly identified with Dante in her lifetime, seen in a prefacing encomia to her *Lettere Familiari e di Complimento*: "L'ingegno di questa gran donna può senza iperbole chiamarsi divino, perchè fin qui ha fabricato in tre volumi il *Paradiso*, l'*Inferno*, e il *Purgatorio*...".⁸ Arnaudo's recent reconsideration of Dante reception in the *Seicento* touches briefly on Tarabotti's citation of the *Commedia* in the *Paradiso* and *Inferno Monacale*,⁹ and several studies considering intertextuality in Tarabotti's works have noted the importance of the *Commedia*. In her edition of the *Inferno monacale* Francesca Medioli concludes that Tarabotti had a good knowledge of the *Commedia*, probably read in an edition with commentary.¹⁰ Nancy Canepa identified a "politics of citation" in Tarabotti's partial and altered citations of male canonical writers in the *Inferno monacale* "that appropriates and transforms, by "revision" or textual positioning".¹¹ Letizia Panizza's essay on Tarabotti's intertextual strategies in the *Semplicità ingannata* defines Dante as the author's "personal philosopher and theologian of liberty for all."¹²

My textual analysis of Tarabotti's positive and critical allusions to the *Commedia* in the *Semplicità ingannata* in this paper challenges Panizza's understanding of Tarabotti's positive reception of the *Commedia*, and affirms the "politics of citation" which Canepa read in the *Inferno monacale*. Importantly, for an author who has at times been regarded as exceptional or eccentric, this study reveals Tarabotti's bending of the *Commedia* to her own ends in the *Semplicità ingannata* as characteristic of an approach Arnaudo identified in other authors:

...a volte, a interrogare la selezione dei passi citati e i modi del loro reimpiego, si arriva addirittura a scorgere un progetto, un'idea specifica della *Divina commedia* espressa per vie intertestuali attraverso la nuova opera.¹³

Throughout this study I employ the term intertextuality broadly. While the term is relatively recent, its attendant theories of intertextuality do not provide the tools to analyse the relationship between the *Semplicità ingannata* and the *Commedia* because they are insufficiently historicised to take into consideration early modern discourses of the relationships between texts which Tarabotti, and other authors, consciously applied in her writing.¹⁴ Both the “imitation of authoritative models”, and a writer’s “need to establish authority as a precondition for writing” were central discourses in medieval and early modern poetics.¹⁵ In this study I apply earlier and persisting critical methodologies of imitation and quotation to analyse Tarabotti’s intertextual uses of the *Commedia*.¹⁶

A detailed understanding of Tarabotti’s deployment of the *Commedia* in her project to denounce forced claustration can be discovered through placing her engagement with that text within contemporary writing practices, in the particular context of the Venetian pro/anti-woman debate which was joined in the first part of the seventeenth century by Moderata Fonte and Lucrezia Marinella.

Dependence on the *Commedia*, and five techniques of ambivalent citation

The *Semplicità ingannata* has the greatest number of quotations from the *Commedia* of Tarabotti’s three cloistral works, with nine direct quotations, four from the *Paradiso*, one from the *Purgatorio* and four from the *Inferno*, in addition to a number of significant allusions.¹⁷ The quotations and allusions from the *Commedia* form the greatest intertextual presence from a single text and author in the *Semplicità*, after

biblical quotations and references.¹⁸ Tarabotti's dependence on the *Commedia* as the explicit authority for the *Semplicità* can be demonstrated by a schematic condensing of eight of the nine quotations and two significant allusions to the work, which results in a summary of her key arguments:

God granted the gift of free choice of will equally to men and women (*Par.* 5.19-22), women also equally value liberty (*Purg.* 1.70-72), and the freedom to express the individual temperament they received from God (*Par.* 8.139-141).¹⁹ Men keep women out of the social and political sphere based on a double standard: women being the cause of desire (*Par.* 28.10-12) which would disrupt all order if they were in the public sphere; which also leads to them being denied access to education, their right and natural inclination (*Purg.* 29.22-30).²⁰ The Convent is a living Hell for women enclosed against their will (*Inf.* 3.9): the imprecations of the unjustly imprisoned women call for divine retribution (*Inf.* 3.103-105).²¹ Fathers cannot be absolved of their guilt both because they are unrepentant (*Inf.* 27.118), and because no restitution can be made for what they have stolen – the free choice of their daughters. They will suffer Divine retribution for their sins (*Par.* 22.16, *Inf.* 26).²²

However, alongside her dependence on the *Commedia* as a theological and philosophical authority, a significant proportion of Tarabotti's allusive references in the *Semplicità* appear to display her mastery of, as much as her deference to, the work of the *auctor*. In the following examples, I will show the variety of techniques Tarabotti uses to produce her ambivalent and critical readings of the *Commedia*: she reclothes Dante quotations to lend authority to her argument while effacing the originating context; she positions allusions and quotations within her argument in such a way that the meaning of Dante's words is ironically questioned or strongly

criticised; and she paraphrases the work to make a negative judgement of the truth-value and moral efficacy of poetic as opposed to historical writing.

The first example occurs in Tarabotti's authorisation of the idea of forced claustration as a violation of women's *libero arbitrio*, here understood as 'free choice of will.' This idea was the central tenet of Tarabotti's case against the practice and her only philosophical bulwark against the ubiquitous injunctions to obedience as a woman's proper response to authority.

Tarabotti's initial reference to "libero arbitrio da S.D.M. concesso tanto a'i maschi, quanto alle femine" is on the first page of the book, and on page four we see her foundational authorising quotation, that free choice was:

tanto stimato da Dante nel suo Paradiso, che va dicendo:

Lo maggior don che Dio per sua larghezza

fesse creando, e a la sua bontate

più conformato, e quel ch'e' più apprezza,

fu de la volontà la libertate;

Leggesi, che solo sette hore goderono le delitie, nelle quali erano stati creati, con certezza, che non più la femina, che l'huomo concorresse alla trasgressione del divin precetto.²³

Tarabotti's comment on her quotation (*Par.* 5. 19-22) alludes to Adam's speech, in which Adam and Eve only enjoyed seven hours in the Garden of Eden (*Par.* 26.139-142), to resituate Dante's definition of *libero arbitrio* as a description of Adam and Eve's pre-lapsarian state.²⁴ The quotation is positioned as the opening of Tarabotti's

feminist re-reading of the first two books of Genesis, in order to claim *libero arbitrio* as a gift of creation, and therefore a right, rather than a complex theological idea.²⁵

Tarabotti's quotation from Paradiso 5 disregards its originating context: it is not a synecdoche, but an example of quotation as "cultural re-embodiment".²⁶ Re-situated in Tarabotti's text the quotation ceases to be part of Beatrice's comments about the souls in the sphere of Mercury. These souls had achieved free choice through their co-operation with the action of grace on the will and intellect, through an arduous spiritual journey.²⁷ This was also the journey of the pilgrim in Dante's *Commedia*, who was "crowned and mitred" ruler of his own free will by Virgil in *Purgatorio* 27.²⁸ The quotation is also divorced from the context of Dante's questioning about the sanctity and status of broken vows, or those taken under duress – which certainly could have had resonance in the *Semplicità*. Tarabotti re-presents the quotation in her text as Dante's gloss on Genesis to introduce and authorise her discussion of the 'privileges' of Eve's creation, and their significance for women's spiritual equality.²⁹

Tarabotti's use of quotation here is similar to that identified by Adriana Chemello in an analysis of Marinella's *La nobiltà*. Considering Marinella as *lettrice-autrice*, Chemello writes:

In qualità di *lettrice* assimila i testi altrui, non si limita a nominarli, a citarli allusivamente, bensì li trascrive, li incorpora nella propria pagina, rendendoli visibili. Ma il risultato non è il semplice *collage* di citazioni. ...[I]nterviene per spiegare e commentare, di volta in volta piega il *déjà dit*, viene risemantizzata, piegata alle finalità elogiative del discorso.³⁰

Tarabotti also uses quotation and allusion to formulate a negative reading of the *Commedia*, through textual positioning within her own argument, an example of the “politics of citation” identified by Canepa in the *Inferno monacale*.³¹

The second example combines a literary allusion with a quotation from the *Commedia* to make the connection between forced claustration, the sexual double standard and the denial of education to women in such a way that the *Commedia*, or Dante’s ‘word’, and Dante himself as both man and poet are subjected to severe criticism. Tarabotti first positions a weak allusion to Dante’s characterisation of Eve in *Purgatorio* 29, in a passage which ends her discussion of the denial of education to women. She immediately follows this with a quotation of Dante’s confession of his former physical love for Beatrice, which opens her denunciation of the sexual double standard – the attribution of desire, and culpability for its consequences, entirely to women.³²

Tarabotti’s arguments for the education of women include a discussion of the nature of Eve’s part in the Fall, a common topic in the tradition of defences of women.³³

Tarabotti’s conclusion is similar to the one put by Moderata Fonte’s *Corinna*, that Eve had only eaten the apple out of her blameless desire for knowledge.³⁴ Tarabotti argued that the desire for knowledge, and knowledge itself, is a key quality of women, and Eve is the best example of this: she ate the apple because she had been promised knowledge by the serpent. Tarabotti argues that men’s denial of the means for women to acquire knowledge is a continual spur for their desire to obtain it, which can be proven by Eve’s actions:

Ne diede saggio, anzi autentico prova la nostra antica madre, che
valendosi dell’arbitrio, che le lasciò libero il suo creatore, subito formata,

fù la di lei prima operatione il correr col guardo à quell'albero, che prometteva di fruttar la scienza.³⁵

This portrait of Eve, “subito formata”, could be read as an imitation of Dante’s similar image in the *Purgatorio*:

E una melodia dolce correva
per l'aere luminoso; onde buon zelo
mi fé riprender l'ardimento d'Eva,
che là dove ubidia la terra e 'l cielo,
femmina, sola e *pur testé formata*,
non sofferse di star sotto alcun velo;
sotto 'l qual se divota fosse stata,
avrei quelle ineffabili delizie
sentite prima e più lunga fiata.³⁶

The received interpretations of the word “velo” in this passage included both obedience and ignorance.³⁷

Tarabotti’s positioning of this allusion to *Purgatorio* 29 between the discussion of the denial of women’s education and the discussion of the sexual double standard shifts the implicit interpretation of this passage from Dante’s nostalgia for Paradise lost, to the contemporary reality of the continuing political and social nexus between women’s obedience and their ignorance. Through the production of this text Tarabotti could count herself a woman who would not suffer “di star sotto alcun velo.”

In the passage which follows this allusion, my third example, Tarabotti quotes a verse from the *Paradiso* to illustrate the mechanism men use to cast women out of the paradise of knowledge which they desire. Women are not permitted to attend public instruction of “Grammatica, Rhetorica, Logica, Filosofia, Teologica, e d’altre scienze” because they might fall into sin, and be a temptation to “even the most wise”:

de’ quali Dante cantò nel *Paradiso*.

così la mia memoria si ricorda

ch’io feci rimirando ne’ belli occhi

onde a pigliarmi fece Amor la corda.

...essendo in vero gli occhi de bella donna, à parer di tutti i bei spiriti, condottieri d’Amore, che in essi spiega le insegne della sua monarchia, e d’onde minaccia al mondo ruine, incendii, e disturtioni.³⁸

Tarabotti uses this passage, in which Dante confesses the weakness to which he was once subject, to introduce twenty pages in which she accuses men of pusillanimity for not being able to resist the temptation they see in women’s beauty, of hypocrisy and lies for blaming and punishing women and exonerating men for adultery, and for the production of love poetry, the aim of which is to seduce women, and the consequences of which are used to justify locking women away, as if they were the principal cause of desire.³⁹ With the implication that Dante was one of the “bei spiriti” to promulgate these ideas, Tarabotti can here be seen to master her principal authority, Dante, and to reduce him to the level of ‘just another man’.

Tarabotti’s engagement with literary-critical debates

In addition to her own creative reading of the *Commedia*, Tarabotti also draws on contemporary, counter-reformation, literary critical debates about the use and nature of imaginative texts to support her arguments. Tarabotti makes several claims of greater truth for her work than that possessed by Dante's *Commedia*. Her arguments against love poetry are used to level criticism at Dante the Poet, and draw attention to the lack of verisimilitude, and hence the question poetic and moral value, of the *Commedia*.

In a section addressed to fathers in which Tarabotti elaborates the idea of the impartiality of God's judgment after death, and the futility of worldly power in the face of such judgment, Tarabotti attacks poets whose words have been used by men to seduce women. These poets will be of no assistance, Tarabotti writes, in defending fathers from the accusations of their own consciences. The fate of the fathers and the poets is linked, and Tarabotti condemns the poets by associating them with the fraudulent counsellors of *Inferno* 26: "Se come dice Dante nell'inferno, tutti i bugiardi Poeti staranno a refinar la lor lingua mendace nell'infocata fuccina di Vulcano, nè già in quella, di cui essi favoleggiano; ma ben sì nella vera fuccina dell' eterno fuoco".⁴⁰

The ambiguous structure of the sentence appears to include Dante with the poets in the act of *favoleggiando*, while Tarabotti here implies, and elsewhere states, that she writes "non favole ma veraci, e sacre historie".⁴¹ The debate which is implicit in this intertextual challenge to Dante's authority is that which sought to define the best model for literary imitation, involving disputed roles and definitions of truth and verisimilitude in interpretations of Aristotle's *Poetics*.⁴²

A clearer claim for the superiority of her 'real' Hell over Dante's is found in the final paragraph of the work, which looks forward to Tarabotti's next book, the *Inferno*

monacale. The paragraph opens with: “Se non ho concetti scelti, li hò almeno reali, e sinceri”, and she will demonstrate in another of her books that all the pains of hell reign in the “luoghi fabricate dall interessata [sic] tua fraude”, only the torments are “tanto più penosi quanto che non sono favole immaginate, ma verità.”⁴³ Through her appeal to the ‘real’, Tarabotti sought to locate her writing within historical as opposed to poetic genres. Undoubtedly she would have been aware of the politics of the ‘real’ through her contact with *Incogniti* authors, for whom Tacitus was a model and source for historical writings and opera libretti, deployed to comment on current political events.⁴⁴

Fonte and Marinella in the *Semplicità ingannata*

Alongside her engagement with contemporary literary-critical debates, Tarabotti’s ambivalent reception of the *Commedia* in the *Semplicità ingannata* must also be read in the light of the criticism of misogynist social practices and claims in male authored texts begun by Moderata Fonte and Lucrezia Marinella.⁴⁵ The similarities in theme and content between the *Semplicità ingannata* and the feminist works of Marinella and Moderata Fonte have been noted.⁴⁶ I propose that Tarabotti saw her *Semplicità ingannata* as expanding and continuing the arguments of the earlier writers, and both her allusive practices and her critique of *Commedia* can be placed within the pro-woman/anti-male tradition in which she was writing.

The new textual evidence for an intentional relationship between the *Semplicità* and the earlier texts is a passage that could be read as an encomium for the two writers, indicating Tarabotti’s debt to them as a source of knowledge, and as earlier witnesses to the inequality of women’s social condition. The encomium appears in a passage contrasting the violence done to women forced to enter convents against

their will, and the grace and physical healing freely chosen by and granted to the women who Christ encountered during his ministry. Tarabotti uses the parable of the Samaritan woman at the well, describing Christ waiting for her desire for grace and knowledge in order that he might:

...darle à beber di quel *fonte perenne*, di quel *pozzo profondo*, anzi di quell *vasto mare*, le cui acque levano per sempre la sete à che ne gusta.⁴⁷

This passage evokes the literary trope of the source, while echoing Modesta da Pozzo/Moderata Fonte's real and pen names, and reversing the diminutive of Lucrezia Marinella's surname (little sea/vast sea). Tarabotti goes on to describe how the faithful witness of the Samaritan woman brought many Samaritans to faith.⁴⁸

If we consider Tarabotti's passage on the Samaritan woman in the light of Dante's use of the same parable, another of Tarabotti's key themes, the avarice of fathers and their future punishment in Hell, is combined with the theme of the desire for knowledge. Dante uses the parable to present both his desire for knowledge and for just vengeance for the sins of avarice being purged in cantos 20-21 of the *Purgatorio*:

La sete natural che mai non sazia
se non con l'acqua onde la femminetta
samaritana domandò la grazia,
mi travagliava, e pungeami la fretta
per la 'mpacciata via dietro al mio duca,
e condoleami a la giusta vendetta. 49

The commentary to the 1629 edition of the *Commedia* associates the "water of life" with knowledge as well as grace: "Per la sete natural, s'intende il desiderio di sapere:

la qual sete non si può satiare, se non da perfetta scienza; e nessuna scienza è perfetta, se non Dio; la onde per satiar cotal sete, a noi convien sapere, e intendere lui.”⁵⁰ Avarice was the root sin identified by Tarabotti as the cause of forced claustration in the *Semplicità ingannata*, as fathers who placed their daughters in convents saved the cost of a secular dowry.⁵¹

While Tarabotti may have considered the writing of Fonte and Marinella her own spring of “living water”, and shared (or borrowed) many examples and points from their works, it was their silence that gave Tarabotti the opportunity to contribute her *Semplicità* to the debate over women. In neither of the earlier works was there any mention of contemporary women religious, or women in convents with or without vocations. This is a conspicuous omission, considering that the number of women, and the proportion of the total population of patrician women, in Venetian convents rose from the mid-sixteenth century to peak in the 1640’s.⁵² Jutta Sperling has estimated that, by the seventeenth century, patrician women were more likely to enter a convent than marry within their class.⁵³

When she chose to challenge the authority of families to place women in convents against their will in her *Semplicità ingannata*, Tarabotti thus presented an aspect of social criticism conspicuously passed over by two of her closest contemporary female writers. In this way she expanded and extended the social critique offered in the earlier works, adding criticisms of Dante’s *Commedia*, a canonical text that had not been on Marinella’s ‘list’ of offending misogynist texts.⁵⁴

A parallel to Tarabotti’s use of allusive references to the *Commedia* to subvert Dante as man and poet is be seen in Marinella’s personal and gendered introduction of her intention to challenge the arguments and authority of ‘The Philosopher’, Aristotle:

“ma credo ben io, che ò sdegno, ò odio, ò invidia movesse Aristotile in diversi libri a dir male, e a vituperare il sesso Donnesco”.⁵⁵ Both Fonte and Marinella were known for their religious works, and the particularly moralistic stance Tarabotti assumes toward love-poetry may indicate Tarabotti’s engagement with counter-reformation discourse on the ideal ‘ends’ of poetry, which were to uphold and promulgate Christian moral teaching.⁵⁶

In her campaign to publish the *Tirannia paterna*, Tarabotti defended the work’s religious orthodoxy in a letter to the Medici Grand Duchess, Vittoria Della Rovere, and in another letter characterised it as a critique of secular politics not of the Church, as “scabrosa per essere contraria se non al catolico, al politico vivere.”⁵⁷

Tarabotti’s commitment to the work’s publication, which can be followed in her published *Lettere familiari e di complimento*, may have arisen from a belief that it ought to enjoy the same success as Marinella’s work, which ran to three editions over twenty years.⁵⁸

From the work’s subsequent censure and listing on the Index it would appear that either Tarabotti’s claims were disingenuous, or she simply misread the political and religious climate.⁵⁹ At any rate, the *Semplicità ingannata* was in good company, as the *Commedia* had been placed on the Index of Prohibited Books in 1614, with the expurgation ordered of three passages critical of the papacy.⁶⁰

Conclusions

In this analysis of Tarabotti’s ambivalent intertextual uses of the *Commedia*, the author’s theological dependence on the poem has been illustrated schematically, and her critical citations presented in examples from the text. Attending to both the originating text, and the positioning of the quotations and allusions to the *Commedia*

in the *Semplicità Ingannata*, has revealed a numbers of ways in which Dante's authoritative text was manipulated by the author to support her arguments, and implicated in her critique of the contemporary social practices of forced claustration, and the exclusion of women from the levels of education available to men of equal social status. A model for a similar approach by a female author to a male literary authority is found in Lucrezia Marinella's *Le nobiltà et l'eccellenze delle donne*. As well as drawing on contemporary authors from the Venetian literary context, Tarabotti's engagement with the *Commedia* also points towards literary critical debates over genre, and counter-reformation attitudes to the love lyric. Thanks to Marco Arnaudo's recent study, Tarabotti's ambivalent reception of the poem can be seen to be consonant with other authors who drew on their readers' knowledge of the *Commedia* to use the poem to their own ends, another expression of "l'enorme varietà di significati che la Commedia poteva sprigionare nelle mani dei suoi lettori più acuti".⁶¹ Demonstrating Tarabotti's engagement with the *Commedia* in the *Semplicità ingannata* as representative of both the time and place of its authorship does not diminish the radical nature of the pro-woman and anti-Venetian ideas she presents, rather it prevents the categorisation of this work as an eccentric, and therefore less significant, cultural intervention by a female author.

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¹ Marco Arnaudo, *Dante barocco : L'influenza della Divina Commedia su letteratura e cultura del Seicento italiano*, (Ravenna: Longo Editore, 2013); Giuseppe Tavani, *Dante nel Seicento: Saggi su A. Guarini, N. Villani, L. Magalotti* (Florence: Olschki, 1976); Bernard Weinberg, *A History of Literary Criticism in the Italian Renaissance*, 2 vols., vol. 2 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), 819-911.

² Tarabotti was an author of feminist social criticism and religious works and an enclosed Benedictine nun. Four of her six surviving works were published through the patronage of Gianfrancesco Loredan, the founder of the libertine *Accademia degli Incogniti* (1630-1660). For bio/bibliographic details and earlier monographs see: "Introduzione", *Arcangela Tarabotti, Lettere familiari e di complimento*, eds. Meredith Kennedy Ray and Lynn Westwater (Turin: Rosenberg and Sellier, 2005), 25-30.

³ Galerana Baratotti: Arcangela Tarabotti, *Semplicità ingannata* (Leiden: Gio. Sambix [but Elzevier], 1654); Arcangela Tarabotti, *Inferno monacale*, ed. Francesca

Medioli (Turin: Rosenberg and Sellier, 1990), Arcangela Tarabotti, *Paradiso monacale. Con un soliloquio a Dio* (Venice: Guglielmo Oddoni, 1643).

⁴Jutta Sperling notes that the rate of coerced monachizations was at its highest in Venice during Tarabotti's lifetime, with around 80 percent of the population of patrician women located in the city's thirty convents. Jutta Sperling, *Convents and the Body Politic in Late Renaissance Venice*, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2000), 27, 28, 289.

⁵The path to publication has been traced through a recently discovered autograph correspondence, see Lynn Westwater, "A Rediscovered Friendship in the Republic of Letters: The Unpublished Correspondence of Arcangela Tarabotti and Ismaël Boulliau." *Renaissance Quarterly* 65 (2012): 67-134.

⁶Natalia Costa Zalesow, "Tarabotti's *La Semplicità Ingannata* and Its Twentieth-Century Interpreters, with Unpublished Documents Regarding Its Condemnation to the Index," *Italica*, 78 (2001), 319-23. Modern editions include: Arcangela Tarabotti, *Paternal Tyranny*, trans. and ed. Letizia Panizza (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2004), *La Semplicità ingannata*, ed. Simona Bartot (Padua: Il Poligrafo, 2007).

⁷A common strategy for female authors: Pamela Joseph Benson and Victoria Kirkham eds., "Introduction," *Strong Voices, Weak History : Early Women Writers & Canons in England, France, & Italy*, eds. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005), 8

⁸Giovanni Dandolo, in Tarabotti, *Lettere*, eds. Ray and Westwater, 45; first published as *Lettere familiari e di complimento*, (Venice: Guerigli, 1650)

⁹Arnaudo, *Dante barocco*, 41, 100-1.

¹⁰See Medioli's notes to Tarabotti, *Inferno Monacale*, 56-58, 81-84, 127-135;

Medioli, "Chiavi di lettura," 143, 146.

¹¹Canepa, Nancy "The Writing behind the Wall: Arcangela Tarabotti's *Inferno Monacale* and Cloistral Autobiography in the Seventeenth Century." *Forum Italicum*, Stony Brook, NY 30.1 (1996): 10-11.

¹²Letizia Panizza, "Reader Over Arcangela's Shoulder: Tarabotti at Work with Her Sources," in *Arcangela Tarabotti, A Literary Nun in Baroque Venice*, ed. Elissa Weaver (Ravenna: Longo Editore, 2007), 124-128.

¹³Arnaudo, *Dante barocco*, 9

¹⁴"Intertextualité" was coined by Julie Kristeva in the late 1960's. Mary Orr, *Intertextuality : Debates and Contexts* (Cambridge-Oxford: Polity Press, Blackwell Pub., 2003), 1, 3, 14-15.

¹⁵Kevin Brownlee and Walter Stephens, "Introduction," in *Discourses of Authority in Medieval and Renaissance Literature*, ed. Kevin Brownlee and Walter Stephens (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1989), 2-3.

¹⁶Mary Orr argues that for "critics interested precisely in the contexts of cultural production and the making of meaning ... theories of influence, imitation and quotation offer more sophisticated tools and methodologies, as well as more precise vocabularies" than theories of Intertextuality. Orr, *Intertextuality*, 174.

¹⁷Panizza, "Reader Over Arcangela's Shoulder", 124-128.

¹⁸Other cited texts include the poetry of Ariosto and Tasso, and an Italian translation of Cornelius Agrippa's *Nobility and preeminence of the female sex*. Panizza, "Reader Over Arcangela's Shoulder", 110. There are also around ten references to the misogynous libel by Giuseppe Passi, *I donneschi diffetti nuovamente formati e posti in luce da Giuseppe Passi Ravenate nell' Accademia de' Signori Informi di*

Ravenna L' Ardito. (Venetia: Iacobo Antonio Somascho, 1599), including rebuttals of Passi's arguments and the reworking into a pro-woman form of citations found in his book from authors such as Ariosto and Petrarch. See Tarabotti, *Paternal Tyranny*, 55n. 31, 56n. 34, 62n. 41, 63n. 42, 66n. 47, 102n. 36, 10n. 53, 14n. 57, 40n. 41, 46-47. Passi's work was the focus of Marinella's *Nobiltà*.

¹⁹Galerana Baratotti [Arcangela Tarabotti], *Semplicità ingannata* (Leiden: Gio. Sambix [but Elzevier], 1654) 4, 128, 46. All subsequent quotations are from the 1654 edition of the *Semplicità*, unless indicated.

²⁰*Ibid.*, 173, 72.

²¹*Ibid.*, 60, 129.

²²*Ibid.*, 119, 90. Apart from the rhetorical uses of the *Commedia* considered here, throughout the *Semplicità* Dante's *Inferno* is also the source of the imagery to describe and define the experience of women who are enclosed against their wills through Tarabotti's frequent references to the convent as Hell. This is also a central theme in her *Inferno Monacale*, see Robarts, "Dante's *Commedia* in a Venetian Convent : Arcangela Tarabotti's *Inferno monacale*." *Italica*, 90 (2013), 378-97.

²³Tarabotti, *Semplicità*, 4-5.

²⁴This allusion was identified by Panizza, Tarabotti, *Paternal Tyranny*, 44n. 17

²⁵Panizza states this elegantly from another perspective: "She elides liberty and free will and then regards free choice as a gift from birth, in the modern sense of an inalienable right". Panizza, "Reader Over Arcangela's Shoulder," 126.

²⁶Orr, *Intertextuality*, 136, 37. Orr writes "Quotation forms the sinews or tendons of cultural re-embodiment", it is "not the honed artefact between the speech marks but the effects of its refashioning."

²⁷Bernard McGinn, "Introduction," trans. Daniel O'Donovan, *Bernard of Clairvaux* -

On Grace and Free Choice, vol. 7 (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1977), 8, 18-24.

²⁸ *Purg* 27. 139-42. For a general discussion of the theology of grace in the *Commedia* see John A Scott, *Understanding Dante* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2004), 187-90.

²⁹ The questions of freedom, grace and the sanctity of vows are found especially in cantos 3-5 of the *Paradiso*. For another statement of Tarabotti's concept of free choice see Tarabotti, *Semplicità*, 141., On the 'privileges' of Eve's creation and their place in pro-feminine discourse see Alcuin Blamires, *The Case for Women in Medieval Culture* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 96-98, 107-08.

³⁰ Adriana Chemello, "Il 'genere femminile' tesse la sua tela. Moderata Fonte e Lucrezia Marinelli," *Miscellanea di studi in occasione dell'intitolazione dell' istituto*, ed. R Ponziano and A Cibir, (Venice: Multigraf, 1993), 95.

³¹ Canepa, "The Writing behind the Wall", 10-11.

³² Tarabotti's discussions of education in this work are extensive: *Semplicità*, 144-47, 53-56, 60-62, 64-67, 70-73, 252.

³³ For a discussion of the defences of Eve in the debate on women, which included the desire for knowledge, see Blamires, *The Case for Women*, 112-19.

³⁴ Corinna defends Eve : "...ella a buon fine desiderosa d' intendere la scienza del ben e del male si lasciò trasportar a gustar del vietato frutto." Fonte, *Il merito delle donne*, ed. Chemello, 56; Fonte, *The worth of women*, 94. This opinion is not presented in Marinella, or Agrippa.

³⁵ Tarabotti, *Semplicità*, 171-2.

³⁶ *Purg.* 29. 22-30, emphasis added. The term *testé* appears in the index “*di tutti i vocaboli più importanti usati dal poeta*” in the 1629 edition with the definition of “*adesso*”. Alighieri, *La Diuina comedia di Dante, con gli argomenti, & allegorie per ogni canto. : E due indici, vno di tutti i vocaboli più importanti vsati dal poeta, con la esposizione loro, e l'altro delle cose più notabili.* (Venetia: N. Misserini, 1629), * 6.

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³⁷ Robert Hollander, "Commentary to the Divina Commedia of Dante Alighieri," (Dartmouth Dante Project, 2000-2007), *Purgatorio* 29. 22-30
<<http://dante.dartmouth.edu/>>, accessed June 2008; Dante Alighieri, *La Commedia secondo l'antica vulgata : Rimario / testo critico stabilito da Giorgio Petrocchi per l'edizione nazionale della Società dantesca italiana* (Torino: Einaudi, 1975)
Purgatorio 29. 22-30. All subsequent references are to this edition of the *Commedia*, and will be cited by cantica, canto and line (ie. *Inferno* 1.1-3.).

³⁸ Tarabotti replaced “*riguardando*” with “*rimirando*” in line 11. Tarabotti, *Semplicità*, 172-4. She quotes *Par.* 28. 10-12.

³⁹ Tarabotti, *Semplicità*, 174, 176-9, 188-9.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 90-1.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 252.

⁴² Towards the end of the 16th century on “[t]he complicated matter of the interrelationship of truth, verisimilitude and necessity ... [m]ost critics believe that the object must be a true one if credibility is to result, that verisimilitude is a kind of second-best truth.” Bernard Weinberg, *A History of Literary Criticism in the Italian Renaissance*, vol. 1, 2 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), 633.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 303, 307.

⁴⁴ Tarabotti cites the *Annals*: Tarabotti, *Inferno monacale*, 90. Wendy Heller writes on

the use of the *Annals*: "Tacitus view of history as an examination of hidden motives provided a model for numerous C17th historians."... "Tacitus came to be associated with all that was political, and in particular with the controversial politics of *ragione di stato* (reason of state) whereby any action is deemed justifiable as long as it furthers the preservation or expansion of the state." Wendy Heller, "Tacitus incognitus : opera as history in L'incoronazione di Poppea," *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 52 (1999), 39-96, 51-52, 53.

⁴⁵For details on Fonte's dialogue and Marinella's treatise see Letizia Panizza, "Introduction," *Lucrezia Marinella: The nobility and excellence of women, and the defects and vices of men*. 1-34.; Adriana Chemello, "Introduzione: Gioco e dissimulazione in Moderata Fonte," in *Il merito delle donne*, IX-LXII; Kolsky writes that despite the differences between the works they "intersect at several points: both are fuelled by the superiority topos, treat men negatively, and display a broad range of knowledge of both classical thought and contemporary developments." Stephen Kolsky, "Moderata Fonte, Lucrezia Marinella, Giuseppe Passi: An early seventeenth-century feminist controversy," *Modern Language Review* 96 (2001), 981.

⁴⁶ Laura Benedetti, "Arcangela Tarabotti E Lucrezia Marinella: Appunti Per Un Dialogo Mancato." *MLN*, no. 3 (2014): S90. Virginia Cox, "The Single Self: Feminist Thought and the Marriage Market in Early Modern Venice," *Renaissance Quarterly* 48 (1995), 514, 535-41; Ginevra Conti Odorisio, *Donna e società nel Seicento : Lucrezia Marinelli e Arcangela Tarabotti* (Roma: Bulzoni, 1979) 57, 69, 85, 100; Patricia Labalme, "Venetian Women on Women: Three Early Modern Feminists," *Archivio Veneto* 112 (1980), 102-03, Nancy L. Canepa, "The Writing behind the Wall", 11.

⁴⁷Tarabotti, *Semplicità*, 249, (Emphasis added); John 4:10-11.

⁴⁸John 4: 39. Tarabotti, *Semplicità*, 250-1.

⁴⁹ (*Purg.* 21. 1-6), Also *Purg.* 20. 94-96 "O Segnor mio, quando sarò io lieto/ a veder
la vendetta che, nascosa,/ fa dolce l' ira tua nel tuo secreto?"

⁵⁰ Dante Alighieri, *La Diuina comedia di Dante*, 280.

⁵¹"Questi sono pregiuditii scandalosi nati nella Chiesa Romana, non da altro fonte
scaturienti, che dall'avaritia, e superbia de gl' uomini, come ho già dimostrato, che
vogliono avvantaggiar i maschi col negar la dovuta dote alle femine." Tarabotti,
Semplicità, 106. Cox notes the awareness that daughters were being illegally
deprived of their share of the patrimony in Fonte and Marinella: Cox, "The Single
Self," 526n., 26, 58-59.

⁵²Cox notes this silence in a passage in which one of the interlocutors of the
dialogue is discussing the fate of women left in the care of their brothers: Fonte, *The
worth of women*, n.29, 63.

⁵³Sperling, *Convents and the Body Politic*, 26-28.

⁵⁴Marinella wrote in the prefacing letter to the 1601 edition of the *La nobiltà et
l'eccellenza delle donne co' diffetti et mancamenti de gli huomini*: "... non solo si
distrugge l'opinione del Boccaccio, d'amendue i Tassi, dello Sperone, de Monasig.
di Namur e del Passi, ma Aristotele il grande anchora." Cited in Kolsky, "Moderata
Fonte, Lucrezia Marinella, Giuseppe Passi," 978. See also Panizza, "Introduction",
The nobility and excellence of women, 25, See the text, 132-45.

⁵⁵Marinella, *La nobiltà et l'eccellenza delle donne*, 1.

⁵⁶On the ends of Christian poetry see Weinberg, *A History of Literary Criticism Vol.*

2, 1109.

⁵⁷Tarabotti, Arcangela. *Lettere familiari e di complimento*. Venice: Guerigli, 1650.

Tarabotti, *Lettere*, 152, 297, 97n.3. Ray and Westwater note that a very similar phrase is also found in an autograph letter to Aprosio, published in Flavia De Rubeis and Francesca Medioli, "La scrittura forzata. Le lettere autografe di Arcangela Tarabotti," *Rivista di Storia e Letteratura Religiosa* 32 (1996), 147).

⁵⁸Around 30 of Tarabotti's 256 letters are on this theme. See also Letizia Panizza, "Volume Editor's Introduction," *Paternal Tyranny*, 13-15. Emilio Zanette, *Suor Arcangela monaca del Seicento Veneziano* (Venezia: Istituto per la collaborazione culturale, 1960), 424-32.; Lynn Westwater, "The Disquieting Voice: Women's Writing and Anti-feminism in Seventeenth-Century Venice," Doctoral Dissertation, University of Chicago, 2003, 269 n.4. See also note 5.

⁵⁹The official censure of the work concluded "this blasphemous work offends the writers of the Church, contains ideas erroneous to faith, is rash, scandalous, and unsuited for pious ears. It could induce girls to shun convents, called hell by the author, who promises to write another book, titled *L'Inferno monacale*", Costa Zalesow, "Tarabotti's *La Semplicità Ingannata*," 319-23. The same conclusion is in Natalia Costa Zalesow, "La condanna all' Indice della Semplicità Ingannata di Arcangela Tarabotti alla luce di manoscritti inediti," *Nouvelles de la Républiques des Lettres* 1 (2002), 100.

⁶⁰*Inf* 19. 48-117: Simonists, Nicholas III and Boniface; *Purg* 19. 106-118: the purgation of avarice and prodigality, Pope Adrian V; *Par* 9. 136-end: Folco's denunciation of the Popes and Cardinals. Michael Caesar, ed., *Dante, The Critical Heritage, 1314(?) - 1870* (London: Routledge, 1989) 31.

⁶¹ Arnaudo, *Dante barocco*, 11.

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