

Nuns against the Tridentine enclosure: Italian Solidarity networks of religious resistance¹

Isabel Harvey

PhD Candidate, McGill University

In 1563, during the final session of the Council of Trent, the decree *De Regularibus e Monialibus* re-established the strict enclosure of convents. This first step in the project of disciplining the regular orders by a Church faced with mass desertion opened a period of reform that stretched far beyond the seventeenth century. Thus, the Council of Trent, with its prescription for impenetrable and enclosed convents, imagined an environment that was constant, isolated, and reclusive. Far from being understood and applied homogenously, Tridentine reform aroused passions and crisis, in which a frequent response was solidarity through writing and publication. How did cloistered women resist the Tridentine enclosure, and how did they create solidarity networks, at once real and fictive, in order to combat what they perceived as a political, social, and spiritual crisis?

I have chosen to work with literary forms of resistance because these sources are the most likely to reveal the mobilization strategies of raising solidarity that were used for a common cause of a convent or a individual nun. These texts do not permit us to reconstruct *real* solidarity, but rather the *strategies* that women used to seek out support. They were edited and reworked before distribution in order to be effective in the immediate context and to give « force and authority » to their author². This article aims to reconstruct the literary strategies and the political manoeuvres of these nuns through the study of two in particular: the Bolognese Dominican Diodata Malvasia (1533-after 1617) and the Venetian Benedictine Arcangela Tarabotti (1604-1652).

Convents in Crisis: Trent, its consequences and its opponents

These two nuns were each affected by the reinstatement – or rather the forced application – of the enclosure of convents by the Council of Trent. This unprecedented event opened a profound crisis in the female monastic world. Before Trent, families chose to send one or more daughters to the convent – whether or not they had the vocation – in order to avoid the dispersion of their inheritance and to favour the advancement of the bloodline. The convent was thus considered like an extension of the family home. The same family usually attached itself to a single religious community and placed their daughters there for several generations, transforming the convent's parlour into a salon, and the cells into private apartments. Laxity in the rules was frequent, such as avoiding common life and having special friendships, maintaining direct contact with the world, decorating splendidly the cells, and living luxuriously³. The Council of Trent disrupted the convent-compromise for these “supernumerary” daughters, cutting down the comforts of the monastic refuge in favour of the rigors of the rules. With the ideal of virginity in mind, the fathers of Trent opted for a strict enclosure and enforcement of the rules, cutting the nuns off from their relations with the outside world. This was the crisis: nuns became painfully aware of their condition as prisoners. Thus, many sent letters of lamentations to their bishop, some made too much noise and found themselves prosecuted by the Inquisition, while others resisted by adhering to new Reformed religious movements, searching for an alternative road within the Church, or they threw themselves into literary production⁴. The reactions varied from one order to another: for example, the Dominicans seemed more inclined to adapt, while the aristocratic Benedictine congregation resisted forcefully⁵.

The Tridentine decrees concerning convents did not really begin to be applied until the pontificate of Gregory XIII, in 1572. It was at the beginning of his reign that Gregory XIII

created, at Bologna, the crisis that shook the Dominicans of S. Mattia and their sisters in S. Luca. The Dominicans were the official guardians of an icon of Mary, which was said to have been painted by Luke the Evangelist and brought from Constantinople by a Hermit. In 1160, the icon was officially placed in the care of the ancestor of the Sisters of S. Mattia, Angela⁶, who kept it on a nearby hill in Bologna, the *Monte della Guardia*. In the sixteenth century, the nuns of S. Mattia were sending nine of them there to care for the icon and to welcome pilgrims. Each year, during Holy Week, the icon was brought down into the city for a procession. The enforcement of enclosure thus signified the end of all these activities linked to the icon, and even the patronage of the Dominicans over it⁷. The news was received with horror, and resistance quickly organized. It was Diodata Malvasia, then sub-prioress, who organized the literary counter-attack. Born of an aristocratic family that was well represented in the Bolognese senate, Malvasia used all possible political strategies in order to rally solidarity around S. Mattia and to stand up against Rome⁸.

More than a half-century after the re-implementation of the enclosure, while the situation was less urgent and the reaction less violent, there were still angry nuns who made themselves heard. This was the case with Arcangela Tarabotti, Benedictine of the convent of *Sant'Anna del Castello* in Venice, who also fought with the pen against the crisis of the Tridentine enclosure. Venice saw, in the beginning of the seventeenth century, an considerable increase in marriage dowries. The engaged woman – and her dowry – was a gift offered to the family of her prospective husband, creating a situation of credit in which the family who received the dowry found themselves obliged to the family who offered up their daughter. This situation of economic competition between families favoured the social mobility of urban merchants who were capable of sustaining these increasing costs and making their way into the patrician aristocracy. Such mobility could only be accomplished through a concentration of inheritance in a single marriage,

eliminating other candidates and pushing them into the cloisters⁹. This inflation brought about a crisis of forced monachizations, of which Tarabotti considered herself a victim, aggravated by the Tridentine enclosure and the pastoral visits monitoring its enforcement¹⁰. Tarabotti identified the *raison d'État* as the cause of these family strategies and ultimately the responsible for her monachization. She used her literary talent in order to rally women to her cause and to incite men to solidarity. Over a span of more than a half-century, *De Regularibus e Monialibus* provoked crises in the monastic environment, to which our two protagonists responded with writings aimed at the creation of a broad solidarity in resistance.

The solution : writing and solidarity

Writing and publishing were the channels of communication by which Diodata Malvasia and Arcangela Tarabotti attempted to reach the largest possible circle of people. Malvasia's primary writing was *Breve discorso di quanto avviene alle reverendissime suore di San Mattia et San Luca*¹¹. Written in the form of a chronicle, it is in fact a judicious transcription of letters, wrapped in a compelling narrative, which evoked the battle that the nuns of S. Mattia were engaged in to conserve their patronage over the icon of S. Luca¹². The struggle stretched over time, because Malvasia took up the pen again forty years later to compose *La venuta, et i progressi miracolosi della S.ma Madonna dipinta da S. Luca*¹³, a devotional work which contains a discourse calling for the solidarity of all Bologna in support of the nuns. In a similar way, Tarabotti's publication¹⁴ aims to win the solidarity of a double audience, private and public. Her correspondence, the *Lettere familiari e di complimento* published in 1650, informs us of her relations and friendships. The letters, also reworked and transformed by Tarabotti in order to support her editorial goals¹⁵, among other things demonstrate her attempts to clandestinely distribute her *Tirannia Paterna*, censured by the Index in Venice. The treatise, which seeks to

demonstrate the quality of women and the respect that they merit in the exercise of their liberty, was finally printed two years after her death under the title *La Semplicita Ingannata*.

The two nuns firstly sought an immediate solidarity: their sisters, family, and friends. Malvasia turned towards her community, as evidenced by the reminder of the secular privileges possessed by the Dominicans of S. Mattia. Their ancestor Angela stood alone on the *Monte della Guardia* when the icon was entrusted to her. It was only in fear of the passage of armies in the thirteenth century that the image and the nuns were moved within the walls of the city, protected in the Church of S. Mattia, « with an agreement among themselves and with the consent of the Superiors, that every two years a few of them are elected to the charge of custody and preservation of the Very Holy Image on the site of S. Luca.¹⁶ » Malvasia presented this patronage as their divine right. They had also won this privilege over the course of centuries, serving the icon and attracting the grace of the Virgin, which particularly helped the nuns of the community¹⁷. Malvasia's sisters were joined in solidarity, in spite of themselves, through activities surrounding the icon.

For Tarabotti, the support of her sisters seemed nonexistent. Many generations after the re-establishment of enclosure, the nuns of *Sant'Anna del Castello* were living under the new norms and did not see the need to resist. Tarabotti turned towards epistolary solidarity. She wrote numerous letters asking her friends to intervene in favour of the liberty of women by writings, or directly through their social influence¹⁸. For example, in letter 41, she calls on the lawyer Enrico Cornaro in order to free a girl of the cloister: « Lady N. [...] knowing herself innocently imprisoned, was hoping that by gracious permission of Your most Excellent Lordship, in these holidays of Christmas, to leave this hated prison¹⁹. » Tarabotti also sought public approbation of her works by powerful people, such as the of doge Francesco Erizzo²⁰. Bound in friendship with

the French ambassador to Venice, Nicolo Bretel de Gémonville, the Benedictine allowed herself to reproach him: « I am sorry that your daughters would have to experience the Paternal Tyranny.²¹» Tarabotti pushed her resources to their maximum when she sent her *Tirannia Paterna* to be printed in France, but her manuscript disappeared in the hands of the secretary of Signora Renata di Claramonte, the Marquis of Galeranda, named Colisson. She turned then towards the successor of Bretel de Grémonville, Luigi di Matharel, whom she hoped would be capable to « give in hand the joint letter to the librarian of the Most Eminent Lord Cardinal Mazarin.²² » The following letter is addressed to the librarian Naudé, asking him to intervene personally and to plead the case of the Venetian before Mazarin. She evidently hoped that she could publish the *Tirannia*, but « if the request is too heavy, you can moderate it by at least returning my book safely to me²³ ». Next came a letter to Mazarin, whom she asked to intervene because « the city of Paris, which is called the paradise of women, for me has become a hell where there is lost forever a work that I gave to be printed to one that is deceptively denying it to me.²⁴ » We do not know if Mazarin actually received the letter or if he assented to her request. The fact remains that the Benedictine of *Sant'Anna* had full confidence in her pen and patronage to seek solidarity from one of the most powerful men in France.

Malvasia also turned herself towards powerful local nobles and the ecclesiastical personalities: it is this that her *Breve discorso* recounts. One of the first letters is addressed to Filippo Guastavillani, the Gonfalonier of Justice of Bologna, and others follow, addressed to the Senate of Bologna and finally directly to the Pope, Gregory XIII²⁵. She explained to him the problematic situation created by an order of the Father-Visitor, demanding that they wall up a door to respect the enclosure. But that door had been used for 500 years, to « receive the Most Sacred Image of S. Luca, because we have to dress it and decorate it for the Rogation Days²⁶ ».

This change is greeted as a veritable drama by the nuns: « We are convinced that if your Holiness could see the desperations of those old Mothers, the crying, the conflict, our tears, you would be inclined to piety; here we do not sleep, we do not eat, we live only in continual affliction and anxiety²⁷ ». This letter to the Pope is inserted in *La venuta*, the work that aimed to mobilize the city to defend the cause of the Sisters of S. Mattia. Bologna must show solidarity in the struggle, because, from the arrival of the icon, the city has enjoyed a mystical alliance with the Virgin, who has given the Bolognese advantages over their neighbours. The icon had chosen Bologna thanks to its virtues: « Blessed Fatherland, whereas before you were inferior to none, now, enriched by such Treasure, you will be superior to all others; for no reason should you yield place to any other, as you have the most beautiful location, in the heart of Italy; you are a City that, among all others in the world, was one of the first to accept the faith.²⁸ » The blessings received from the Virgin are innumerable: Bologna's crops were saved from climatic disasters, its houses protected from earthquakes, its wealth from pillaging armies, its population from plagues²⁹, not to mention all of the sick and injured Bolognese who had been miraculously healed³⁰.

This communal solidarity that Malvasia sought to encourage with *La venuta* is the ultimate hope also of Tarabotti, who refined her demands in many treatises aimed at mobilizing the solidarities that she imagined possible outside of the cloister. She clandestinely circulated the *Inferno Monacale*, a manuscript describing the horror of religious life for those who were forced into the cloister, and in which she openly insulted the *Paterfamilias*, as well as the political and ecclesiastical powers of Venice. The distribution of her works remained marginal, and considering the impossibility of publishing her *Tirannia Paterna* in Venice, she chose to use all possible strategies to bring to the press a text which, while seemingly a simple devotional work,

is in reality a political treatise defending the liberty of women. It is the *Paradiso Monacale*, the nun's most complex work, that presents demands in favour of the liberty of women, in a form that allowed her to foil the censors of the Index. The treatise is constructed as a mirror of the *Inferno Monacale*: while in the *Inferno*, the nuns are forced to turn into demons, in the *Paradiso*, the voluntary, unconstrained nuns, inspired by a genuine divine vocation, transform themselves into Angels³¹. This strategy permits the works of the Benedictine nun to reach hands of many people, men of letters who would write about it as well as statesmen who would speak about it.

Persuaded to solidarity: gaining acceptability

Diversifying their audience and universalizing their cause was a prudent strategy for the two nuns rebelling against the Tridentine decrees, but again it was necessary to argue for solidarity. Thus strategies of gaining acceptability come into play: their demands were inserted into a discourse designed to evade hostile readers, but which could be decrypted by potentially supportive readers. The first step was justifying the writing by humility. Even though they were far from being the only female writers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries³², to take up the pen in the Italy of the Counter-Reformation was still a very marginal act for a woman. Accused of lacking humility, they both began their works with apologies for their female condition. At the end of her address to the reader, Malvasia points out that she is only a woman: « now then, if reading you find some imperfections, excuse the female sex, my particular situation ³³ ». In the introduction to *Paradiso Monacale*, Tarabotti says the same thing: « me, ignorant woman, deprived of the knowledge of letters, divided and far away from all practices and conversations, and with a mind that is not illuminated by the rays of wisdom³⁴ ».

The second step in gaining acceptability was to assure the orthodoxy of the discourse with regard to Tridentine decrees. For Malvasia as for Tarabotti, it is the orthodoxy of the body

that justifies them, by an appeal to the irreproachable chastity of the nuns. Malvasia explains how the priest's incitement to chastity during the taking of the habit of the Dominicans, is taken seriously: « These words that I heard remained engraved in my heart, and have served me as a shield and good defense in the tribulations which we have often suffered from the persecution of some who have inspected this holy house (where we are [...] for most of the time kneeling on the ground, through reverence due to the site and for the common benefit of our city) [...]; nor was it with a light motive that they tried to take from us that jurisdiction, that devotion.³⁵ » The Dominicans of S. Mattia respect their vow and assume their spiritual responsibilities with regard to their city: there is thus no reason to take the icon of Mary from them. Tarabotti uses, once again, the same device: the voluntary nuns respect the Tridentine emphasis on chastity, while those who are forced to enter the cloister seek out opportunities to taste of the flesh. In the *Paradiso*, the voluntaries will « use their strength to win out against carnal urges...we embrace solitude, we keep ourselves far from windows and parlours, and rarely leave the Paradise of the cell, as though retreat were the mother of every goods and virtues³⁶. »

A third step is the association with the Virgin Mary, the mother of Christ, who is at the same time a woman of flesh, an earthly example and a divine power. The Dominican of Bologna constructed a Mary remarkably similar to her sisters of the convent, whom for example, had the same comportment as that expected of consecrated women: « her habit was to speak little, to obey quickly, to have polite conversation, without boldness, without laughing, without disruption.³⁷ » Such behaviour was traditionally attributed to Mary, who was often cited as a model for women. Mirroring the nuns, Mary not only elevates the Dominicans of S. Mattia close to her, but her life equally testifies in favour of their sex, contradicting the argument of women's weakness, as « Mary should be crowned because [...] for all of us she broke the head of the

ancient snake.³⁸ ». The same discourse on the superiority of Mary fills the *Semplicita Ingannata* of Tarabotti: : « a woman who, by revenge and for the universal glory of the whole sex, will crush the snake's head. ³⁹ » The heroic actions of Mary were possible only through the use of her liberty. In the *Paradiso*, the Venetian Benedictine transforms the combative Mary into an exemplary woman, the model for voluntary nuns. Mary, was a perfect post-Tridentine nun; « she had no sensuality to suppress and mortify, no illegal or rebellious movement of her will, and led a very austere life, which became a model penitence for sinners.⁴⁰ »

Finally, in rendering their own persons acceptable, in showing the orthodoxy and obedience of the inhabitants of cloisters who did not need enclosure to conduct themselves appropriately, in placing themselves under the protection of Mary, the strong and pious woman who is at once the model to follow and the argument in favour of their demands, did Malvasia and Tarabotti convince the vast publics to whom they addressed themselves?

The results are mixed and ultimately return to the immediate context in which the two nuns put their literary strategies into action. Diodata Malvasia, in Bologna, found herself in the Papal States, and struggled against a Pope who was himself Bolognese. She was also a part of the generation of nuns who lived through the implementation of the enclosure, and thus saw the change imposed on their mode of life. The crisis was in their own time, and her texts reflect the heated reaction of a community that was shocked, which fought for a specific privilege, and did not attack the entirety of a structure that, in the long term, confined nuns within the cloister's walls. Arcangela Tarabotti lived in *Sant'Anna del Castello* in the heart of Venice, an independent Republic which presented itself as an example of liberty and, more specifically, of resistance to the papacy since the Interdict that fell on the lagoon in 1606. The intellectual and cultural

effervescence of Venice, as well as freedom in the circulation of ideas, created a fertile ground in which rethinking the convent was possible. Also, Tarabotti wrote later, probably during the 1630s, or sixty years after Malvasia; her fellow sisters thus never knew a world where women in religious orders were not cloistered. Tarabotti reacted coolly, *a posteriori*, which allowed her to envision the question of enclosure from a structural, economic, and social perspective. What she demanded, in the end, was nothing less than recognition of the autonomy, the intelligence, and the liberty of women, whom she considered as a group, thereby ignoring differences of social status. Her struggles was also a solitary one, as she was isolated in her community, and force to seek support and solidarity outside.

Despite their differences, Malvasia and Tarabotti both mobilized solidarity thanks to writing, a makeshift weapon that they appropriated. In this process, they demonstrated their capacity for action and their agency, through speaking up and making noise. In the end, events vindicated Diodata Malvasia and the Dominicans of S. Mattia. The enclosure was implemented, but with accommodations which permitted the nuns to maintain their patronage over the icon of the Virgin of San Luca⁴¹. Things ended less well for Tarabotti. She died in the convent in 1652, at age 48, of a respiratory disease, as if suffocated by her enclosure.

- ¹ I am grateful to Justin Irwin, PhD Candidate, Department of History and Classical Studies, McGill University; without his help in the translation process, this article would have been impossible.
- ² Christian Jouhaud, Dinah Ribard, and Nicolas Schapira, 2009. *Histoire, littérature, témoignage: écrire les malheurs du temps*, Paris, Gallimard, p. 134, 148.
- ³ Giovanna Paolin, 1996. *Lo spazio del silenzio: monacazioni forzate, clausura e proposte di vita religiosa femminile nell'età moderna*. Centro studi storici Menocchio, Monreale Valcellina, pp. 13-47.
- ⁴ Paolin, *Lo spazio di silenzio...*; Nuns and Inquisition: pp. 55-77; Nuns and Reform: pp. 77-109; Nuns and Counter-Reformation life: pp. 109-125.
- ⁵ Jutta Gisela Sperling, 2000. *Convents and the body politic*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, p. 116.
- ⁶ Diodata Malvasia, 1617. *La venuta, et i progressi miracolosi della S.ma Madonna dipinta da S. Luca posta sul monte della Guardia dall'anno che ci venne 1160 sin'all'anno 1617*, Bologna, heredi di Gio. Rossi, p. 27.
- ⁷ Danielle Callegari and Shannon McHugh, March 2011. « « Se fossimo tante meretrici » : The Rhetoric of Resistance in Diodata Malvasia's Convent Narrative », in *Italian Studies*, Vol. 66, No. 1, p. 27.
- ⁸ Callegari and McHugh, « Se fossimo tante meretrici »..., p. 23.
- ⁹ Sperling, *Convents and the body politic...*, p. 6, 11.
- ¹⁰ Mary Laven, 2002. *Virgins of Venice : enclosed lives and broken vows*, London, Penguin, pp. 2, 44, 86.
- ¹¹ Diodata Malvasia, *Breve discorso di quanto avviene alle reverendissime suore di San Mattia et San Luca, monasterij uniti dell'anno 1573*, manuscript conserved at the Archiginnasio Library, Bologna, Italy.
- ¹² Callegari and McHugh, « Se fossimo tante meretrici »..., p. 22, 23.
- ¹³ Malvasia, *La venuta...*
- ¹⁴ Tarabotti wrote six books, but for this article I used only the three political treatises (*Paradisio Monacale*, Venice, Oddoni, 1643; *La semplicità Ingannata*, (published as Galerana Baratotti) Leida, G. Sambix, 1654; *Inferno monacale*, never published, Giustiniani collection), and the epistolary collection (*Lettere familiari e di complimento*, Venice, Guerigli, 1650). I left aside her two polemical treatises (*Antisatira*, Venice, Valvasense, 1644; *Che le donne siano della spezie degli uomini. Difesa delle donne*, (published as Galerana Barcitotti) Nurimberg, 1651).
- ¹⁵ Meredith Kennedy Ray, 2004. « Letters from the Cloister: Defending the Literary Self in Arcangela Tarabotti's Lettere familiari e di complimento », in *Italica : bulletin of the American Association of Teachers of Italian*, vol 81, p. 24-43; Emilio Zanette, 1960. *Suor Arcangela, monaca del seicento veneziano*, Venice, Istituto per la collaborazione culturale, p. 375.
- ¹⁶ Malvasia, *La venuta...*, p. 28. « con conventioni tra loro convenute di consenso de' Superiori, che ogni due anni vaddino alcune elette, alla custodia, e conservazione di quella Santissima Immagine al loco di S. Lucca ». Every translation from Italian to English is a team work : Cecilia Foglia, PhD Candidate in Translation Studies in Université de Montréal, Emily Paskevics, Independent Scholar, and myself.

¹⁷ Malvasia, *La venuta...*, p. 94-101. Malvasia lists the received graces, carefully naming the one that has been saved, in such way that they find themselves directly involved in the struggle for the conservation of the icon.

¹⁸ Arcangela Tarabotti, 2005 [1650]. *Lettere familiari e di complimento*, critic edition by Meredith Ray and Lara Lynn Westwater, Turin, Rosenberg et Sellier, letter 7, addressed to Giovanni Dandolo: “ Now that the incomparable kindness of your Illustrious Lordship is applying itself to worthy task of publishing to the world the singular prerogatives and the glorious praise of my sex. I beg you to not defer any longer its execution.” (« Già che l’incomparabile gentilezza di Vostra Signoria Illustrissima s’applica ad impresa tanto degna di publicar al mondo le singolari prerogative e i gloriosi encomi del mio sesso, La supplico non differirne più l’esecuzione. »)

¹⁹ Tarabotti, *Lettere familiari...*, letter 41. « La signora N., [...] sapendo ella d’esser imprigionata innocente, sperava pure per grazia di Vostra Signoria Clarissima in queste feste del santo Natale uscir da questa odiata carcere ».

²⁰ Tarabotti, *Lettere familiari...*, letter 55.

²¹ Tarabotti, *Lettere familiari...*, letter 88. « mi spiace che le figliuole vadino ad isperimentar la T[irannia] P[aterna] ». See also letters 34, 35, 42, 46, 99, 129, 139, 161, 165, 244, 249.

²² Tarabotti, *Lettere familiari...*, letter 134. « inviar l’alligata in propria mano al bibliotecario dell’eminentissimo signor cardinal Mazzarino ».

²³ Tarabotti, *Lettere familiari...*, letter 135. « se la dimanda è troppo grande, la moderi Ella col rimandarmi almeno il libro sicuro ».

²⁴ Tarabotti, *Lettere familiari...*, letter 136. « la città di Parigi, che viene chiamata paradiso delle donne, per me sia divenuta un inferno dove perda per sempre un’opera ch’ho data da stampare a chi ingannevolmente me la niega ».

²⁵ Callegari and McHugh, « Se fossimo tante meretrici »..., p. 24, 25, 29.

²⁶ Malvasia, *La venuta...*, p. 79. « ricevere la Sacratissima Immagine di S. Lucca, dovendo noi vestirla, e adobarla, per le Rogationi ».

²⁷ Malvasia, *La venuta...*, p. 80. « Siamo sicurissimi, se Vostra Santità vedesse le disperationi di queste Madri vecchie, i pianti, le querele, i singiulti nostri, si moverebbe à pietà, qui non si dorme, non si magna, non si stà se non in continua afflittione, e affanno ».

²⁸ Malvasia, *La venuta...*, p. 11. « Felicissima Patria, che ove già à niun'altra fosti inferiore, hora arricchita di Tesoro tale, sarà tutte l'altre superiore; Per niuna ragione à niun'altra cedi situata nel più bello, nel cuore dell'Italia, Città che trà l'altre di tutto il mondo fosti delle prime ad accettar la fede ».

²⁹ Malvasia, *La venuta...* Malvasia explains that the icon of Mary on the *Monte della Guardia* would have intervened in 1433 to stop the torrential rains (p. 56-57), brought about the end of the Eastern wars (p. 58), later would have protected the city from the armies of Francis I and Charles V in the sixteenth century (p. 88-91), and finally would have saved the city from the 1576 plague (pp. 139-140).

³⁰ Malvasia, *La venuta...*, p. 105-191. Malvasia lists again a series of graces received by the city’s inhabitants, naming the saved person and his family, thereby reminding them of the debt that they owed with the Virgin icon, and by extension, their debt to the Dominican nuns of S. Mattia.

³¹ For a detailed analysis of the mirror relation between the *Inferno* and the *Paradiso*, see my article: 2014. « Miroirs déformants et reflets trompeurs. Petite leçon de création de l'acceptabilité à partir de revendications clandestines par Suor Arcangela Tarabotti, religieuse *malmonacata*. », dans Sofi Abdela, Simon Dagenais, Julien Perrier-Chartrand et Marie-Florence Sguaitanatti (dir.), *La sociabilité du solitaire : pratiques et discours de l'intimité, de l'exclusion et du secret à l'époque moderne*, Paris, Hermann.

³² About women writers in Italy in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, see: Virginia Cox, 2011. *The Prodigious Muse: women's writing in counter-reformation Italy* Baltimore; Claire Lesage, 2001. « Femmes de lettres à Venise aux XVI^e et XVII^e siècles : Moderata Fonte, Lucrezia Marinella, Arcangela Tarabotti », *Clio Histoire, Femmes et Sociétés*, no 13 ; Meredith Ray, 2009; *Writing gender in women's letter collections of the Italian Renaissance*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto; Lynn Lara Westwater, December 2003. *The disquieting voice : women's writing and antifeminism in seventeenth-century Venice*, Thesis (Ph.D.), University of Chicago, Department of Romance Languages and Literatures.

³³ Malvasia, *La venuta...*, « Al divoto lettore ». « resta hora, che leggendo, e ritrovando qualch'imperfettione, iscusi il sesso femminile nel mio particolare ».

³⁴ Tarabotti, *Paradiso...*, p. 38. « io donna ignorante, priva d'ogni cognition di lettere, divisa, e lontana da tutte le pratiche, e conversazioni, e con mente non illustrata da altri raggi di sapienza ».

³⁵ Malvasia, *La venuta...*, pp. 77-78. « Quali parole udite restoronmi al cuore in maniera incise, che m'han servito per scudo, e buon difesa nelle tribolations ch'habbiam sovvente patito per le persecutions d'alcuni, che cercorno questa Santa habitatione (dove noi stiamo [...] la maggior parte del tempo con le ginocchia in terra, e per riverenza dovuta al luoco, e per beneficio commune della nostra Città) [...]; Ne fù legghier il motivo con quale provorno toglierci questa giurisdittione, questa divotione ».

³⁶ Tarabotti, *Paradiso...*, pp. 115-116. « impiegar ogni forza per ottener vittoria contro i pruriti carnali, [...] abbracciamo la solitudine, allontanandoci delle finestre, e da parlatorij, di rado uscendo fuori del Cielo della Cella, come che la retirezza sia madre d'ogni bene, e virtu.»

³⁷ Malvasia, *La venuta...*, p. 32. « il suo costume era parlar poco, di pronta ubidienza di conversatione monda, senza audacia, senza riso, senza perturbazione ».

³⁸ Malvasia, *La venuta...*, p. 192. « deve esser coronata Maria poiche [...] per tutti noi hà rotto il capo all'anticho serpente ».

³⁹ Tarabotti, *La semplicità Ingannata...*, p. 29. « una donna, che per vendetta e gloria universale del sesso tutto, schiaccerà il capo al serpente ».

⁴⁰ Tarabotti, *Paradiso...*, p. 185. « non havea sensualità da tener ripressa, e mortificata, non moto di volontà illecita, e ribellante, e pur menava un'austerissima vita, fattasi norma di penitenze ai peccatori. »

⁴¹ Callegari and McHugh, « Se fossimo tante meretrici »..., p. 30.