Topic: Confrontations

Workshop title: “Gender and Intellectual Boundaries in 16th Century English and Continental Literature”

Short description:

Our proposed workshop considers how Renaissance female authors contested the male dominance of authorial traditions that center on male authorship, friendship, and patronage through collaborative stances. Focusing on Tullia d’Aragona and Aemilia Lanyer as test cases for our exploration, we ask: how do women “collaborate” with male writers, and with their audience and patrons to carve a space in philosophical and theological prose and poetry?

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Description

Our workshop is interested in collaborations as confrontations and contestations. We focus on female writers’ strategies to contest philosophical, theological, and generic traditions that center on male authorship, friendship, and patronage. We ask: How do women’s awareness and conceptualization of their audience affect their understanding and presentation of collaboration? How do women “collaborate” with male writers by responding to philosophical and theological traditions? How does attending to female author’s national and religious background change our perception of their engagement with literary and philosophical traditions? As early modern literature scholars we are interested in exploring the role of women in the Italian and English Renaissance. We consider Tullia d’Aragona and Aemilia Lanyer as test cases for this exploration.

Tullia d’Aragona’s *Della infinità d’amore dialogo* (1547) comments upon and challenges works that center and debate male love, Plato’s *Symposium*, and its influence on Ficino’s, Bembo’s, and Castiglione’s writings. The early 16th century saw the production of a number of treatises on love that built on Marsilio Ficino’s Latin commentary on Plato’s *Symposium* (1474). Tullia d’Aragona’s rhetorical strategies confront Ficino’s focus on sight and spiritual beauty in his rendering of the
Symposium. In order to do this, Tullia’s literary self in the dialogue repeatedly challenges her male interlocutors, Benedetto Carchi and Lattanzio Benucci, to prevent them from “trapping” her or “tying her” in logical knots. In these moments in the dialogue, she formally takes the place of Socrates of the Platonic dialogues, and, significantly in the male-centric Symposium, claims for herself a particular expertise in love.

Born in England half a century after Tullia, Aemilia Lanyer was of Italian and Jewish descent, though she lived her life in England and was connected to Queen Elizabeth’s court. Lanyer’s primarily known for her long, lyrically-digressive religious poem Salve Deus Rex Iudaorum, whose subject is Christ’s passion. What makes Lanyer interesting for our purposes is that her work is explicitly written for women readers, and the heroic subjects of her poem are female. This workshop will focus on the first dedicatory poem accompanying Lanyer’s print edition of Salve Deus, her dedication to Queen Anne of Denmark, patron of the arts and queen to James I. As scholars have continued to work in the early modern archives, Aemilia Lanyer emerges as participant and auctoritas in a community of women writers and readers. “To the Queenes most Excellent Majestie,” her dedicatory poem to Queen Anne, is significant for the ways it not only challenges the (greatly overlapping) English patriarchy and Jacobean court, but rewrites male readers, male deities and male sovereigns with figures of powerful women. Lanyer’s conception of her ideal, participatory (and female) reader, and her figuration of her poem as “paschal feast,” rewrites how we think about texts, specifically in new terms of collaboration and community.

Central questions and concerns for the participants:

The readings selected for the workshop include dedicatory letters to patrons by both Tullia d’Aragona and Aemilia Lanyer; a selection from Tullia’s dialogo; and a selection of Lanyer’s poetry. The heterogeneous nature of these materials leads us to consider the centrality of genre in our account of confrontations and contestations of a male authorial traditions.

As a counterpoint to Tullia’s and Lanyer’s work as well as a theoretical foundation for discussing their engagement with the dominant tradition, we will consider Sir Philip Sidney’s Defence of Poesie. Sidney’s Defence counters Plato’s banishment of poets from the ideal commonwealth, inviting us, with his quotations from Ovid, to bring back into focus “exiled” authors; confronting and re-imagining Sidney’s vision for the art of “representing, counterfeiting, or figuring forth,” we extend his Defence to Tullia d’Aragona and Aemilia Lanyer.

At the beginning of the workshop, we will devote 10-15 minutes to introducing Tullia’s and Lanyer’s works and authorial practices. We will then use Sidney’s Defense as starting point for a shared, but contestable, theoretical language—thus providing a common vocabulary for discussion.

For the rest of the workshop, we want to consider the following questions:

- What rhetorical strategies do Tullia d’Aragona and Aemilia Lanyer employ to enter philosophical and theological conversations? How do these strategies differ in the Italian versus the English context? In the early versus the late 16th century? In poetry versus prose?
• Tullia’s patrons were male—including Cosimo de’ Medici; Aemilia Lanyer’s main patron was Margaret Clifford, Countess of Cumberland. Is the patron-artist relationship reconfigured in their works? How is it used to carve out a specific space for female authorship? Does a specific genre presume—or fashion—a gendered audience?

• How do muses and patrons function as generative audiences for Lanyer and Tullia d’Aragona? How do muses and patrons translate to productivity in women’s writing? To begin addressing these questions, we consider Lanyer’s use of Ovid’s Philomel/the mourning bird as muse, and Tullia’s claim that Cosimo de Medici’s own “deep joy” in literary composition encouraged her to publish her work.

Readings


To the Most Illustrious Lord
Cosimo de' Medici,
Duke of Florence
—her deeply revered master—
from Tullia d’Aragona

I have for a long while been undecided, most gracious and noble Lord, as to whether I should dedicate to your esteemed Highness a certain discussion, which took place in my home some months ago, on the infinity of love and on some other related questions which were no less attractive, if my judgment is not faulty, than they were difficult to solve. From one point of view, I was intimidated both by the elevated status of Your Lordship and my own lowly condition. I could hardly be certain that I was not distracting You from the multitude of matters of state that beset Your Lordship daily in ensuring the safety and serenity of Your prosperous domain and also in governing and dispensing justice to Your fortunate subjects. On the other hand, I was comforted and even encouraged in my enterprise by the certainty that Your Highness takes deep joy in all literary compositions, especially those which are written in the vernacular tongue so favorably viewed and promoted by Your Illustrious Self, and which deal with subjects either useful or entertaining. I was also driven by a keen desire of my own to show a small token of the affection and devotion I have always felt for Your illustrious and blessed house and to give You special thanks for the favors I have received. Hence, when at last I felt certain that Your Excellency was more likely to turn the infinite courtesy and generosity of his attention to the altitude of the subject in these humble literary labors of mine rather than to the scantness of my gift, I decided to accept the more likely risk of being considered presumptuous by many other people rather than ungrateful by Your Lordship alone. Consequently, and in all humility, I kiss Your sovereign hands and pray God that He may grant You long health and felicity.

DIALOGUE ON
THE INFINITY OF LOVE

Speakers: Tullia, Benedetto Varchi, and Signor Lattanzio Benucci

TULLIA: No one could have dropped by at a better moment, my dear and excellent Signor Benedetto, nor could we have wished to see anyone so congenial and so eagerly anticipated!

VARCHI: I am indeed pleased to hear that, my dear and most esteemed Signora Tullia. All the more because I was afraid that maybe I had, if not totally ruined, at least disturbed your conversation, which—I am certain—can only have been delightful and must have concerned elevated matters, worthy of the people here and of this place, where the subjects under discussion are always no less useful and important than they are lively and entertaining. So I was already sorry I had turned up, and I said to myself: Woe is me, love takes me whither I wouldst not go, for I was afraid not so much of being presumptuous as of annoying the very person I most desired to please. But if I have not caused you any annoyance, I am happy indeed, as well as grateful for your graciousness and for the good will of these kind sirs and gentlemen in your company, with whose permission I’ll take a seat. On one condition, however: that you carry on the discussions on which you had embarked, unless, perhaps, they are such that you deem me unworthy to join in.

TULLIA: On the contrary, that was one of the many reasons why we wanted you here with us. Yet I rather wonder whether you may not end up feeling a little uncomfortable and perhaps regretting the fact that you came over, particularly because it was my turn to speak, and for the reasons that you will shortly hear: not only am I a woman—and you have some complex philosophical reasons for considering women less meritorious and intrinsically less

3. The subject of the previous conversation will be stated by Benucci at the end of the debate on the infinity of love, p. 104.
perfect than men—but what is more, I do not possess either sufficient learning or verbal ornaments, as you are well aware. 4

VARCHI: I can hardly believe, my dear Signora Tullia, that you can consider me uncouth as Cimone.5 I am not a fellow so inept in worldly matters and the facts of nature as not to know, at least in part, how great the power of women over men is, was, and always shall be, thanks to their spiritual qualities and, even more, to the beauty of their bodies. I would know as much had I not seen or heard any other woman but you! But we'll have plenty of time to discuss this matter on another occasion. Let me now say that you are doing a grievous wrong to the great affection that I feel for you and to my powers of judgment. (Indeed, it may well be that my judgment is below average in all other matters, but on the question of assessing your qualities, and revering and cultivating them, it is simply supreme.) You are also doing a disservice to your in-born nobility and goodness if you let yourself imagine that when I am in your company, gazing on your appearance or listening to your words, I experience any other sensation than deep pleasure, ineffable sweetness, and unqualified contentment. Would I then be so ignorant, so mean and ungrateful that I could ignore or pass by without praising that beauty, virtue, and refinement of yours, which is bound to be honored, admired, and adored by anyone who has either seen it for himself or heard tell of it from others? I don't want to set myself up in any way as the equal of our very learned, refined and gracious Signor Sperone, nor hold myself on a par with the exalted accomplishments of our dear Signor Muzio.6 Far from it: I wish to offer them the deference which is their due, and which in every way I owe them, unless it be in the matter of appreciating your own worth, my dear Tullia, the praises of which I have perhaps not been able to sing to their exalted tune. Sperone, in his prose, and Muzio, both in his ornate prose and in different poetic meters, have written so much, and in such style, about you, that their texts "will last as long as the universe is in motion."7 In fact, I believe I surpass them in this one respect as much as they rise above me in wit and eloquence. Finally, let me say that if I might be permitted a single complaint about one to whom I owe unreserved praise, I could venture to prove how unjust was your accusation of a moment ago.

TULLIA: It will never be my intention to slight those whose merits accord them the greatest honors, and among them your good self. Now if, my dear learned Varchi, I mentioned that I wondered whether you might feel uncomfortable, it was not because of any belief on my part that you were lukewarm in affection toward me. For I know only too well that your love is on a greater scale than I can deserve. Furthermore, I understand how your natural disposition is to give precedence to the wishes of others over your own inclinations. You make a practice of never denying things to other people and prefer to cultivate what pleases them rather than what suits yourself. Also, you constantly engage in attractive and praiseworthy lines of study while staying abreast of a thousand domestic cares and attending to the countless vexations brought about partly by those who know your virtues and love them and partly by those who know them well but love them not. This endurance of yours is certainly great.8 However, it is not a point I want to dwell on, as I don't wish to give the impression that I'm paying back the rich and copious praise which you addressed to me. I will not say that you showed lack of discernment in so praising me, but rather too much zeal in your love for me (since flattery would be quite alien to you), and each item of praise was as unsuited to me as it was fitting for yourself, whose goodness and virtue... Yet we must not use up time on marginal matters, especially in your presence and you being always the one who makes light of himself and ennobles the reputation of others. So I'm pleading with you to be so kind as to solve the question which a short while back was proposed for discussion. At a certain point we diverged from that topic, after we had agreed to await your arrival and ask you to set the terms of the question for us. After that we got into other diversions. And take good care not to turn down this request, or else we might not think you the fellow you pretend to be and the person we know that you really are.

VARCHI: I can hardly tell who or what I want to be taken for, except that I wish to make sure to be known as your good friend and devoted servant. If I

4. Varchi had expressed his views on women in his lectures "Dichiarazione sopra il venticinquesimo canzone del Pergolario di Dante" and "Lezione nella quale si ragiona della natura," delivered in the Florentine Academy in 1543 and 1547 respectively (Opera, 2:289a, 655, 657b–658a).
5. Cimone, a youth bred in the forest by wild animals, is the protagonist of Boccaccio's Decameron 5.1.
6. For Sperone, Muzio Giustinianopolitano, and their writings in praise of Aragona, see the Introduction, pp. 23–24, 36.
7. This is a translation of Dante's line: "Che durara quanto 'l moto lontano" (Inferno 1.60).
8. The preeminent position quickly acquired by Varchi in the Florentine literary world made him the object of disparaging gossip both regarding his learning and his private morality. What purportedly were slanderous accusations of rape of a minor brought about his arrest in 1545. His release was obtained by the duke after he pleaded guilty. His amorous pursuits of young male pupils caused him considerable embarrassment before and after his friendship with Aragona. Varchi attributed such misadventures to the jealousy and envy of his competitors and complained about it in "Lesson on Envy" (Opera, 2:582–850). What might have also caused the resentment of many against him was his tendency to get embroiled with other literati over linguistic minutiae and to offend those humanists who maintained the superiority of Latin over the vernacular (cf. "Vita di Benedetto Varchi," in Lezioni sul volante e prope varie [Florence, 1841]. I:xiv, xiii, Umberto Pirovani, Benedetto Varchi e la cultura del suo tempo [Florence: Olschki, 1971], pp. 14–15, 28–29). Cf. footnote 81.
really thought I could satisfy you even to a trifling extent, though I merely dropped by here today to listen and learn, rather than to speak, I would not mind at all, rather I would be very pleased.

TULLIA: Please do not enter into a set of excuses that are much too banal for a man of your distinction. Why not preserve your modesty for another occasion and for people who do not know you? Otherwise I shall conclude that you think you've been given too little praise and are waiting for some more.

VARCHI: I can easily forgive your last remark, as well as the charmingly untruthful things you said about me, when I reflect that it was all a display of your eloquence and an unnecessary display at that. Yet I must forgive you for it, as I said, since I am unable and unwilling to disobey you in whatever matter where I may be of avail to you. So you shall be obliged to make penance for your misdeed. For when these gentlemen in our company hear me speak, they will form the view that you have shown scant judgment and excessive flattery.

TULLIA: Don't you worry about that. Leave me with the problem and come back to a clarification of the question we proposed just now.

VARCHI: What question are you talking about? First tell me and then I can try to satisfy you, if I am able to. On one condition, though: that afterwards you fill me in on the discussions which you said you had commenced a little while before I arrived here. Because I noticed that you were all full of concentration and greatly enjoying yourselves.

TULLIA: I'm overjoyed, for if I'm not accustomed to denying something legitimate to most people, to you I can scarcely make or devise a refusal. The question proposed for discussion is as follows: "Is it possible to love within limits?" Can't you give an answer to this?

VARCHI: I wish I hadn't promised in the first place.

TULLIA: Why so?

VARCHI: I don't understand the terms of the proposition, so how can I possibly solve the question?

TULLIA: I know the tricks you are up to. Please do me a favor, if you have the slightest affection for me, and leave your excuses and witticisms to one side. If I can scarcely see the light, that's no reason for you to bandage my eyes completely.

VARCHI: What a splendid way women have! They reinterpret everything after their own fashion. Whoever they deal with, at whatever place or time, the uppermost thing in their minds is to come out the victors. However, since the one with the power around here wants it to be this way, let's make a virtue out of necessity, considering that it is and so will have to be the case. Moreover, I am more than delighted by it, since your entreaty was so framed as to raise all my spirits to a new vigor.
TULLIA: What then, must I prove it to you?
VARCHI: Certainly I want you to prove it for me.
TULLIA: Even if I were unable or unfit to prove it, I still would not accept that "love" and "to love" are identical, because I have heard and been convinced countless times that it is impossible to prove things that are clear and obvious in themselves. 9
VARCHI: That is very true, you have heard and been convinced of the right thing. However, ours is not one of those cases.
TULLIA: Then why don’t you prove the opposite of my assertion?
VARCHI: You’d be in trouble if this were a judicial hearing, because our esteemed jurists would not allow it. 10 So are you sure you don’t want to come up with a couple of differences between them?
TULLIA: I could find a thousand.
VARCHI: Name one, then.
TULLIA: What shall I say? What about this: "love" is a noun and "to love" is a verb.
VARCHI: You couldn’t have answered better. Indeed, that is the sole difference that exists between them.
TULLIA: That’s all I need in order to prove that they are not the same, because if a thousand points of similarity are not sufficient to make one thing identical to another, a single dissimilarity suffices to make it different.
VARCHI: Very well said! But what difference do you believe there is between a noun and a verb?
TULLIA: That’s something you’d have to ask a schoolmaster, because I have no particular competence in grammar.
VARCHI: It would be a fine thing for students if their teachers were so knowledgeable. It’s not one of their duties to know this, in fact. What is more, I’m not putting the question to you as a grammarian, so don’t make such a fuss out of giving me the answer to it.
TULLIA: What if I say that verbs imply time, whereas nouns connote meaning without time?
VARCHI: Now I can tell you that you are learned in every way and pretend to know nothing just to force me to do the talking. But if the only difference between "love" and "to love" is the one you mentioned, what the philosophers

10. That is, in judicial cases, a contention cannot be sustained by disproving the opposite. For Varchi’s judicial training, see Prouti, Varchi, pp. 5, 7–9.
call an "accident," rather than a "substance," why won't you concede right away that "love" and "to love" stand for the same thing?

TULLIA: Because it seemed very odd to me that such a limited notion as a noun should have the same status as the extended reference of a verb.

VARCHI: I refuse to rebut every point, because I know that you're provoking me. Do you really think I don't know that you are as aware as I am that nouns have priority in a clause and therefore enjoy greater status than verbs?

TULLIA: Where on earth could I have learned such a thing? From which author? From the writer who likes to compose grammatical polemics?

VARCHI: Where indeed? From which authority could you have learned the opposite?

TULLIA: From no one. And I'll admit to you that until now I never thought about which of the two is to be considered more or less perfect than the other. Right now I'm convinced that neither enjoys greater status than the other.

VARCHI: And where did you pick up that notion?

TULLIA: From you, Sir. I can't deny it and I wouldn't want to.

VARCHI: You couldn't have got it from me.

TULLIA: Why not?

VARCHI: Because nouns are the more noble of the two.

TULLIA: See how quickly you fall into self-contradiction!

VARCHI: In which respect?

TULLIA: If nouns are nobler than verbs, then it follows that they can't be the same thing, as you stated a moment ago was the case with "love" and "to love." See how your logic doesn't always work out!

VARCHI: You're being too hasty in correcting me and blaming logic, which deserves to be venerated by one who is dedicated to inquiring after the truth, as I am certain that you are.

TULLIA: Please find the truth in this paradox, and instruct me as to how two things can be one and the same when they differ in degree of merit from each other, and then I will venerate the logical method.

VARCHI: You certainly should bring yourself to do so, because even though something, considered in itself, simply, and in one respect, cannot differ from itself, or be more or less noble than it already is, when it is viewed in relation to something else and from different viewpoints, it may well be the way I said it is. 11 There is no question about it.

11. Here Varchi distinguishes between the Aristotelian concepts of essence and accident. The first pertains to the quality essential to the nature of a thing and is not predicated of anything else, the second refers to the qualities that may or may not be possessed by a thing and can be asserted or denied of it (Metaphysics. 4. 90. 1025a30–32).

TULLIA: I believe what you are saying, but I don't quite understand it.

VARCHI: We must trust reason, not authority. What I'm saying is that if you consider the same thing from different angles and relate it to a whole range of other objects, it can turn out to be more or less worthy than itself and, consequently, other than itself.

TULLIA: I'd like to see an example of this.

VARCHI: Is it not the case that God loves Himself?

TULLIA: Yes, that is so.

VARCHI: Therefore He is both the lover and the beloved.

TULLIA: He is.

VARCHI: And which of the two do you consider the noble, the lover or the beloved? 12

TULLIA: Without doubt, it is the one who is loved.

VARCHI: Why?

TULLIA: Because the loved one constitutes not just the efficient and formal cause of an act, but also the final one. And the final cause is the most noble of all causes. It leaves the role of material cause to the lover, and this is the least worthy form of causation.

VARCHI: That's an excellent and very erudite response. Hence it follows that God, if considered as the recipient of love, is more noble than Himself when considered as the agent of love.

TULLIA: Yes.

VARCHI: So it turns out that one single thing can be different from itself if considered in the light of different actualizations?

TULLIA: Yes, but what is that supposed to prove?

VARCHI: Only that what seemed totally impossible and totally false a moment ago now turns out to be true and easy to grasp, as the example I just gave you shows.

TULLIA: Yes, but I'll tell you something that's very true: when one is speaking of our mortal world, it's really not acceptable to introduce elements of the divine, because the latter is so perfect that we shall never be able to comprehend it, and each individual is entitled to pronounce his own opinion about it.
VARCHI: You're right to view the gulf between mortal and immortal world as too great to leap across, for there is no comparison, no scale of proportions to link them. We shall never be capable of comprehending more about God than that His perfection puts Him beyond our very comprehension. Not one of us is sufficient to worship God in a way befitting our own debt to Him, let alone His goodness to us. Perhaps the real point is that in discussing love we were already touching on matters divine, despite what you seem to believe.

TULLIA: I realize that. I didn't imply the contrary. You know perfectly well what I mean. Give me some examples that are easy to follow.

VARCHI: All right, then: which do you think is the worthier thing, to be a father or to be a son?

TULLIA: To be a father. But I beseech you in God's name, let's not get into the subject of the Trinity.

VARCHI: Don't worry about that! Now if you took someone who had both father and sons—and there are plenty such—would he be more deserving than his own self as a father, or as a son?

TULLIA: Clearly as a father, that's incontrovertible. However I can't see that these considerations, true as they may be, help to resolve our doubt.

VARCHI: You will see it soon enough. I'm saying that verbs and nouns considered merely for what they are, in their essence, as the philosophers say, are in effect one and the same thing. Hence the former are no more noble than the latter, and vice versa. But if we look at verbs in a time perspective, as you did yourself a moment ago, and consider them in respect to whether they refer to activity or passivity, which cannot be without that substance—or assistance—that is provided by the nouns, then I maintain that verbs are less perfect. Now have you grasped my point?

TULLIA: I think I can understand, but that doesn't mean I've been convinced. On the contrary, a while back I felt quite certain after the examples that you gave about God and about a person who had father and sons at the same time. But now your last step leaves me quite perplexed, because at the moment when I seem to grasp it, I know it has eluded me. So please furnish further examples, if you want me to get a grip on the argument. And let this justify me, if I have been irritating or importunate in our exchanges.

13. The Neoplatonic notion that God cannot be understood by the human mind (Enn. III) is the basic principle of Christian negative theology, as well as a theme of medieval speculative Kabbalah. Aragona may again be paraphrasing Leone Ebreo: "Being infinite and in all respects perfect, [God] cannot be comprehended by the human mind, which is imperfect and limited" (Dialoghi, p. 34). In a lecture on Purgatorio 17, delivered in the Florentine Academy in August of 1564, Varchi said: "God is pure being, whose infinite perfection cannot be understood by any human intellect" (Opera, 2:324a). All translations from Leone Ebreo's work and from other Italian texts are mine.

14. For the concept of matter and form, see Metaphysics 7.1013a, Physics 2.199a9—b21. Varchi expands on the same concepts in Delle amoore, Lezione una on Purgatorio 17 (1564), now in Opere, 2:324b—325a.

15. In his lecture of December 1543 on the creation of the rational soul, Varchi stated, drawing from Aristotle's De anima I, that form alone is true being. Matter is so imperfect as to add nothing to form, while form has the same perfection as the whole, but in a more perfect way (Opere, 2:318a—318b).
into account what I might or might not know. To tell you the truth, I don't seem to know anything, except that I know nothing.

VARCHI: That itself would be no mean feat. You could compare yourself to Socrates, who was the wisest and most virtuous man in the whole of Greece.

TULLIA: I didn't mean that mine was the Socratic ignorance. You are putting excessively subtle interpretations on what I say. However, if Socrates was so wise and virtuous, why don't you make a practice of imitating him? For as you know, he discussed everything with his friend Diotima and learned all manner of wonderful things from her, especially concerning the mysteries of love.

VARCHI: And what do you think I'm doing?

TULLIA: Quite the opposite of everything that Socrates did. Since he adopted a learning stance, whereas you're imparting lessons.

VARCHI: No, you've got it wrong. Where do you think I derive my modest utterances, if not...

TULLIA: Come, come. Tone things down. Go back to the main subject and prove to us in a simpler fashion, if that is possible, that "to love" and "love" are the same thing.

VARCHI: Surely "to love" is an effect of "love"?

TULLIA: Previously I believed that this was so.

VARCHI: Why don't you believe it any more?

TULLIA: Because of love for you.

VARCHI: What? For love of me?

TULLIA: Just that, out of consideration for you.

VARCHI: Oh that would be a fine thing, if consideration for me could cause you to forget the truth.

TULLIA: That's not exactly my point. What I meant is that I can't believe in it anymore because a moment ago you asserted that it was not the case.

VARCHI: But I never said that. Please don't take me for a Calandrino. 16

TULLIA: Instead, you should admit "I can't remember saying so" or "I didn't mean to say so," since in point of fact you did say it.

VARCHI: Well, I'm just lucky, for there are witnesses who will confirm what I did or did not say.

TULLIA: I don't really want any witness or adjudicator other than yourself.

VARCHI: Rest assured that I wouldn't refuse to admit that I made any statement to you, provided I could remember it. But this time I'm certain I didn't state it.

TULLIA: And if I can show that you did say it, will you then believe me?

16. Protagonist of two celebrated stories by Boccaccio, Calandrino is a gullible Florentine painter on whom his fellow artists enjoy playing tricks (Decameron 8.3 and 9.3).

17. The loci for the concepts of cause and effect are Metaphysics 1.983a and Physics 1.184a10, 2.195a.
VARCHI: That's not what I'm driving at. Something that is not the case cannot be taken as such, nor must it be believed to be so.

TULLIA: So, was I in the right?

VARCHI: No, Madam, you were not.

TULLIA: Come now, how can that be?

VARCHI: I'll draw the proof from your own mouth, since you don't seem prepared to believe it when it comes from me.

TULLIA: Using what, the powers of logic?

VARCHI: You do like your jokes, and you enjoy poking fun at logic. "But she is in a blessed state and hears naught of it." Indeed, you offend logic by your attitude. But logic itself will pay you back good for ill, first by letting you see, and then by forcing you to utter the truth at all costs.

TULLIA: Logic has not led me to any admission that cause and effect can be the same thing, nor will it do so, unless I first go mad.

VARCHI: What a fine tribute you pay to it! Logic alone is the reason that causes you to withhold that admission. Logic was invented for the discovery of truth and the disposal of falsehood, and anyone who uses logic for other purposes may be doing what he wants to, but is not doing what he ought to. This kind of charlatan deserves the same punishment as a doctor who uses his science and skills not to heal the sick but to kill the healthy. Indeed, his punishment should be even harsher, because the soul deserves greater reverence than the body.

TULLIA: I'll tell you what I think: right now, you seem to be beating round the bush, as they say. Maybe it's because you're not too confident of being able to prove to my satisfaction what is impossible, or of making me say what I'm not prepared to admit.

VARCHI: Something that is quite impossible is clearly false and therefore cannot be shown to be true, nor would I try to prove its truth to you. Far less would I seek to make you say something you didn't want to, as this would be grossly discourteous and presumptuous. I'll try my utmost to prove to you, and induce you to affirm yourself, that what I said was quite true. So now, pray, what do you think "love" is?

TULLIA: Do you think you can just fire off a question like that and so suddenly to a woman, especially to a woman such as myself? 

18. Translation of "Ma ella s'e beata, e cibi non ode" (Dante Inferno 7.94).
19. That is to say, logic is a method, not a system. Varchi explained this at length in Del metodo (Opera, 1:797 and b especially).
20. Aragona is making an amused allusion to herself as an honest courtesan. The modern view that Aragona was hiding her profession is a misinterpretation of her actions and of sixteenth-century society. See p. 27 of the Introduction. See also what Tullia say of her experience in love on p. 75.

VARCHI: You are trying to get me to say that many women are of greater worth than a host of men. Perhaps you want me to touch on your own great merits, for you have always put more emphasis on deckling out the soul with exceptional virtues than on embellishing the body with pretty or majestic ornaments. Yours is an attitude rare indeed at all times and worthy of the greatest acclaim. Actually, I didn't ask you what love was, but what you thought love was. For I am well aware that normally women's attitude for love is feeble.

TULLIA: You're wrong there. Perhaps you were judging women's love from your own.

VARCHI: Imagine what you would have said if I had added (as I was on the point of doing) that women also love rarely and had quoted some lines from Petrarch:

"Whence I know full well that the state of love
Lasts but a short time in a woman's heart."21

TULLIA: Oh what a trickster you are! Do you think I can't see what you are up to? Just think what would have happened if Madonna Laura had gotten around to writing as much about Petrarch as he wrote about her: you'd have seen things turn out quite differently then! Anyway, why aren't you keeping your promise to me?

VARCHI: It's up to you, at this stage. You haven't yet told me what you think "love" is.

TULLIA: "Love," according to what I have frequently heard from other authorities, as well as by my own understanding of it, is nothing other than a desire to enjoy with union what is truly beautiful or seems beautiful to the lover.

VARCHI: That is most learned. Now how do you define "to love"?

TULLIA: It follows that "to love" is to desire to enjoy, and to be united with, either what is truly beautiful or what seems beautiful to the lover.

VARCHI: Now can you recognize the difference that exists or, rather, that does not exist between "love" and "to love"?

TULLIA: I can recognize it. And I can see all the clearer that if logic teaches us such things, it must indeed be a holy pursuit! Nonetheless, I still fail to understand how the cause and the effect can be one and the same.

21. "Quod'so ben ch'un amoroso stato / in cor di donna picciol tempo dura" (Canzoniere, 183, 13-14).
22. Here Aragona gives a preliminary definition of love. It is a conflation of two separate statements by Leone Ebreo: "Love can correctly be defined as a desire to enjoy with union what is perceived to be good" and "Love is... desire of union... and union is the same as pleasure, for pleasure is nothing but the union with what is pleasurable, and the pleasurable is either what is good only, or beautiful as well, or seems beautiful to the lover" (Dialoghi, pp. 45, 364).
VARCHI: Be thankful to logic for saving you from falsehood! Anyway, from the definition of both "love" and "to love," you ought to have realized that, since both of them constitute an identical effect, they are bound to have an identical cause.

TULLIA: What, then, is their cause? And from what do they spring?

VARCHI: Don't you feel like hazarding a guess about that?

TULLIA: To be sure, I don't! Poets and philosophers have attributed so many different names to love, and excogitated so many mothers and fathers for it (although at times they deny love has any father), and they write about love under so many allegories, in so many fables and different guises, that I'd never be capable of guessing the truth of the matter or, indeed, what you take the truth to be. 23

VARCHI: Just say what you yourself believe to be the truth, not what other people say.

TULLIA: Well then, for my part I believe that beauty is the mother of all forms of love.

VARCHI: Who, then, would be its father?

TULLIA: The knowledge of that beauty.

VARCHI: And how can I possibly refrain from praising you, Signora Tullia! Even so, you would have come even closer if you had stated that beauty is the father and knowledge is the mother, as we shall propose some other time. This derives from our conviction that the loved one is doubtless the agent, and consequently more noble, while the lover is the passive recipient, and therefore less noble, despite the contrary view which the divine Plato appears to hold on this distinction. 24

TULLIA: Perhaps I erred in my spoken expression while my mind stayed on the right track. For I too consider, as I said a little earlier, that love is born from the knowledge and desire of beauty, both in the soul and in the intellect of the person who apprehends and desires it. But this seems a little far away from the doubt which sparked off our debate.

VARCHI: The subject of love is so vast, and its mysteries run so deep, that countless doubts are apt to beset each word we encounter, which may call for infinite treatment and learning. I realize that solely in order to define our question, we shall probably run out of time. So I'll go back to the beginning again and repeat that "limit" and "end" are the same thing and that whatever lacks a "limit" also lacks an "end." Conversely, whatever has no "end" can have no "limit." We also saw that "love" and "to love" are essentially, that is, in their essence, one and the same thing, despite the fact that they may seem to be different when the former is viewed as a noun, which signifies without time reference, and the latter as a verb, which gives a time qualification, but they are the same as far as their essence goes. In this sense, therefore, it may be asserted that "love" causes people "to love." Hence "loving" becomes the effect of "love." In the same way, we say that sight is the cause of seeing, hence seeing is called the "effect of sight," although "to see" and "sight" are in essence and in effect the same thing. So now it seems to me that the question that you initially proposed, as to whether it is impossible to love with a limit, has been resolved. Therefore I want you to maintain your promise and carry out your obligation, unless you are already exhausted, as I can imagine you might be.

TULLIA: You're the one who should be exhausted, indeed, and I almost said that you must be forgetful as well. You won't forget the promise . . .

VARCHI: What promise?

TULLIA: How can you ask that? You say that you have answered my question, when in fact the toughest and most rewarding part of the task lies ahead of us. I'm prepared to concede all that you have said up to this point, but it won't do you any good until such time as you can prove that love is without end. And that is something you are going to find very hard to do.

VARCHI: I spoke like that because of my wish to hear some of these gentlemen here do the talking, as well as the fact that I found very simple what you thought hard and obscure, maybe because you would like it to be so. Anyway, what reasons can you adduce to prove that love has an end?

TULLIA: No particular reason; but it is as I say.

VARCHI: So you want me to bow to authority!

TULLIA: No, Sir. I want you to bow to experience, which I trust by itself far more than all the reasons produced by the whole class of philosophers. 25

VARCHI: So do I. But what experience would that be?

23. This is an allusion to Diodorus' story in Symposium. In his commentary to Plato's work, Cicero introduces Plotinus' allegorization of the myth (Enneads, 2.5.2-10 and 5.8.13), whereby Poros is a reflection of God and Penia is darkness or absence of divine light (Jayne, Commentary on Plato's Symposium, pp. 115-116). The epistemological and metaphysical meaning of the myth is discussed by Leone in Dialoghi d'amore, pp. 308-315. As to the poets' allegories, one need look no further than Sporone Speroni's Dialogo d'amore and the amusingly parodic story that the Tullia character attributes to the poet Molza. Since reason, divine gift to men, was corrupted by their base nature, Molza maintained, the gods have punished them by denying them a complete experience of love. In heaven the gods enjoy the amorous pleasures to the full, while only a reflection of love descends on earth, which nonetheless in human beings creates such thoughts as would raise them to heaven, if reason, with its practical considerations, did not turn them back to earth (Trattati del Cinquefonte, 1.525-528).

24. Varchi's statement is in general agreement with Leone Ebreo's conclusion that the beloved is love's father, while the lover's mind, which becomes impregnated with the semen of what is beautiful, is love's mother (Dialogue, p. 318). While running counter to Plato's view in the Symposium, this interpretation is consistent with Diodorus' view that the beloved is the principle of love (180, 204c).

25. The idea that judgments ought to be based on experience goes back at least to Plato's Republic 9.382. Aristotle elaborates on it in several of his works, most extensively in Metaphysics 1.980 pas-sim. Aragona, however, seems to be echoing Socrates' reply to Filolaos: "Your reasoning is no less plau-
TULLIA: Surely you know far better than I do that innumerable men, both in ancient and modern times, have fallen in love. Then, because of anger or some other feeling, whatever the reason might have been, they have stopped loving and jilted the women they had loved.

VARCHI: I wouldn't claim to know this better than you. However, yes, it is true that countless men, and countless women, both in antiquity and the present era, have been in love, and that then, whatever the reason may have been, they fell out of love, and many times their love turned into hatred, which is much worse. So what do you wish to infer from this: that love has an end, and so one can love within a limit? I think you'd be deceiving yourself. However, since I know how intelligent you are and I can see you smiling away there, I'm sure you are trying to catch me out. I'll be satisfied if you acknowledge that I wasn't totally wrong, and also that I wasn't trying to be funny when I said at the outset that I didn't understand the terms of the debate. In fact, I never meant that kind of "end," and I don't believe that you had that "limit" in mind when you first laid the issue before me.

TULLIA: I will admit that much. Otherwise what I put up for discussion would not have been a debatable question but foolishness on my part, since it is obvious that people fall in and out of love at their own volition.

VARCHI: I would not like you to pass as foolish when in fact you are so clever, unless you're really trying to catch me out on this topic too. Actually, it is not quite as obvious as you suppose it to be.

TULLIA: Lord save us, you even want to argue the point on this one! I would certainly say . . .

VARCHI: What would you say?

TULLIA: . . . that you are quite the opposite of what I often told about you. Rumor has it that you decline to argue a single point with anyone, so people deduce that you are not very learned.

VARCHI: There are countless other signs and proofs that this is so,

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26. The consideration that sensual pleasure may produce disgust will lead to the distinction between "vulgar" and "honest" love. Here the drift of the discussion parallels Dialogh, pp. 44–53. Cf. note 55.

27. This is a reference to the history of Florence that Duke Cosimo commissioned Varchi to write in 1545–46.

28. Teodoro Gaza was a Greek humanist who moved to Italy in 1442 and became famous for his Latin translations of Aristotle. Longolio is the Italianized form of Christoph Longueil, a Flemish humanist scholar who lived in Rome at the time of Leo X.
is neither so true nor so obvious, as I imagine, that one cannot love with a limit, taking the word "limit" in the other, and wider, sense.

VARCHI: Now we are moving too far away from the desired track. Yet I'm happy to follow it through for your sake. So tell me: suppose I ask you if one can live without eating, what answer would you give?

TULLIA: What a fine question! How do you think I would answer? I would say "Certainly not!" Provided the common run of men and women were not like that Scotsman in Rome in the time of Pope Clement, or that girl who is still alive in Germany and manages to survive without eating. So please don't think you can trap me with a half-swallowed mouthful!

VARCHI: Trust me. I'm doing some serious reasoning here. Not only do I find sophist tricks distasteful, I actually have a mortal hatred for them. You gave a splendid answer, in fact. However, just let's suppose that somebody cited an instance, or lodged an objection, to show your opinion was wrong, and quoted the fact that the dead do not eat, how would you answer him?

TULLIA: Well, I'll leave you to be the judge of that!

VARCHI: Go ahead and say something.

TULLIA: Somebody is pulling my leg.

VARCHI: No, the jokes are coming from you. I've told you more than once, I'm taking each point seriously. I must insist that you give me a clear answer, or we will go on talking about something else, for I have a greater wish to hear these gentlemen speak and more need to learn from them than I have of doing the talking myself.

TULLIA: But I do not see what good it is for you to ask me why the dead do not eat. Everyone knows they no longer need to eat and they can't. In brief: they are defunct, no longer alive!

VARCHI: You see, you have said by yourself what you didn't believe when you heard it from me. What you ought to answer now is exactly this: just as the living cannot live without eating, so those who are in love cannot love with a set limit. If anyone adduced classical or contemporary examples, telling you that these and those characters, after falling in love, stopped loving and fell out of love, so to speak, you would have to confute them by saying: these people and those people were once alive and ate; now they are dead and no longer eat.

TULLIA: Ah, I see your point. What you mean is that while one loves, one does not love within limits. But when one no longer loves, the issue simply doesn't arise. This logic is truly manna from heaven! Now tell me: don't you believe there are some individuals who love, in order to achieve their own end, and then, when they have fulfilled that desire, love no more?

VARCHI: No, Madam.
Salve Deus Rex Iudæorum.

Æmilia Lanyer.

Note: this Renascence Editions text was transcribed by R.S. Bear of the University of Oregon, December 2001, from the British Museum copy of the 1611 edition, STC number 15227, and checked against the Rowse edition of 1979. This is an incomplete copy; for several of the dedicatory poems and the prose section "To the vertuous Reader" as found in the Huntington copy see McBride http://www.u.arizona.edu/ic/mcbride/lanyer/lanyer.htm, Rowse or Woods (1993). Thanks to Kari McBride for the link to her excellent site. Any errors that have crept into the transcription are the fault of the present publisher. The text is in the public domain. Content unique to this presentation is copyright © 2001 The University of Oregon. For nonprofit and educational uses only. Send comments and corrections to the Publisher.

SA L V E   D E V S
REX IVDÆORVM.

Containing,

1 The passion of Christ.
2 Eues Apologie in defence of Women.
3 The Teares of the Daughters of Ierusalem.
4 The Salutation and Sorrow of the Virgine Marie.
   With diuers other things not vnfit to be read.

Written by Mistris Æmilia Lanyer, Wife to
Captaine Alfonso Lanyer, Seruant to the
To the Queenes most
Excellent Majestie.

Renowned Empresse, and great Britaines Queene,
Most gratious Mother of succeeding Kings;
Vouchsafe to view that which is seldom seen,
A Woman's writing of duiinet things:
Read it faire Queene, though it defectiue be,
Your Excellence can grace both It and Mee.

For you haue rifled Nature of her store,
And all the Goddesses haue disposset
Of those rich gifts which they enjoy'd before,
But now great Queene, in you they all doe rest.
If now they striued for the golden Ball,
Paris would giue it you before them all.

From Iuno you haue State and Dignities,
From warlike Pallas, Wisdome, Fortitude;
And from faire Venus all her excellencies,
With their best parts your Highnesse is indu'd:
How much are we to honor those that springs
From such rare beauty, in the blood of Kings?

The Muses doe attend vpon your Throne,
With all the Artists at your becke and call;
The Syluane Gods, and Satyres every one,
Before your faire triumphant Chariot fall:
And shining Cynthia with her nymphs attend
To honour you, whose Honour hath no end.

From your bright spheare of greatnes where you sit,
Reflecting light to all those glorious stars
That wait vpon your Throane; To virtue yet
Vouchsafe that splendor which my meannes bars:
   Be like faire Phoebe, who doth loue to grace
   The darkest night with her most beauteous face.

Apollo's beames doe comfort euery creature,
And shines vpon the meanest things that be;
Since in Estate and Virtue none is greater,
I humbly wish that yours may light on me:
   That so these rude vnpollisht lines of mine,
   Graced by you, may seeme the more diuine.

Looke in this Mirrour of a worthy Mind,
Where some of your faire Virtues will appeare:
Though all it is impossible to find,
Vnlesse my Glasse were chrystall, or more cleare:
   Which is dym steele, yet full of spotlesse truth,
   And for one looke from your faire eyes it su'th.

Here may your sacred Maistie behold
That mightie Monarch both of heau'n and earth,
He that all Nations of the world controld,
Yet tooke our flesh in base and meanest berth:
   Whose daies were spent in pouerty and sorrow,
   And yet all Kings their wealth of him do borrow.

For he is Crowne and Crowner of all Kings,
The hopeful hauen of the meaner sort,
It is he that all our ioyfull tidings brings
Of happie raigne within his royall Court:
   It is he that in extremity can giue
   Comfort to them that haue no time to liue.

And since my wealth within his Region stands,
And that his Crosse my chieffest comfort is,
Yea in his kingdome onely rests my lands,
Of honour there I hope I shall not misse:
   Though I on earth doe liue vnfortunate,
   Yet there I may attaine a better state.
In the meane time, accept most gratious Queene
This holy worke, Virtue presents to you,
In poore apparell, shaming to be seene,
Or once t'appeare in your iudiciall view:
   But that faire Virtue, though in meane attire,
   All Princes of the world doe most desire.

And sith all royall virtues are in you,
The Naturall, the Morall, and Diuine,
I hope how plaine soeuer, beeing true,
You will accept euen of the meanest line
   Faire Virtue yeelds; by whose rare gifts you are
   So highly grac'd, t'exceed the fairest faire.

Behold, great Queene, faire Eues Apologie,
Which I haue writ in honour of your sexe,
And doe referre vnto your Maiestie,
To iudge if it agree not with the Text:
   And if it doe, why are poore Women blam'd,
   Or by more faultie Men so much defam'd?

And this great Lady I haue here attired,
In all her richest ornaments of Honour,
That you faire Queene, of all the world admired,
May take the more delight to looke vpon her:
   For she must entertaine you to this Feast,
   To which your Highnesse is the welcom'st guest.

For here I haue prepar'd my Paschal Lambe,
The figure of that liiving Sacrifice;
Who dying, all th'Infernall powres oercame,
That we with him t'Eternitie might rise:
   This pretious Passeouer feed vpon, O Queene,
   Let your faire Virtues in my Glasse be seene.

And she that is the patterne of all Beautie,
The very modell of your Maiestie,
Whose rarest parts enforceth Loue and Duty,
The perfect patterne of all Pietie:
   O let my Booke by her faire eies be blest,
   In whose pure thoughts all Innocency rests.

Then shall I think my Glasse a glorious Skie,
When two such glittring Suns at once appeare;

The Lady
ELIZABETHS
Grace.
Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum,
Both shining brighter than the clearest clare:
And both reflecting comfort to my spirits,
To find their grace so much above my merits

Whose untun'd voice the dolefull notes doth sing
Of sad Affliction in an humble straine;
Much like unto a Bird that wants a wing,
And cannot fly, but warbles forth her paine:
Or he that barred from the Sun's bright light,
Wanting daies comfort, doth commend the night.

So I that live clos'd vp in Sorrowes Cell,
Since great Elizaes favour blest my youth;
And in the confines of all cares doe dwell,
Whose grieued eyes no pleasure euer view'd:
But in Christ's sufferings, such sweet taste they haue,
As makes me praise pale Sorrow and the Graue.

And this great Ladie whom I love and honour,
And from my very tender yeeres haue knowne,
This holy habite still to take upon her,
Still to remaine the same, and still her owne:
And what our fortunes doe enforce vs to,
She of Deuotion and meere Zeale doth do.

Which makes me think our heavy burden light,
When such a one as she will help to beare it:
Treading the paths that make our way go right,
What garment is so faire but she may weare it;
Especially for her that entertaines
A Glorious Queene, in whome all worth remains.

Whose powre may raise my sad dejected Muse,
From this lowe Mansion of a troubled mind;
Whose princely favour may such grace infuse,
That I may spread Her Virtues in like kind:
But in the triall of my slender skill,
I wanted knowledge to performe my will.

For euen as they that doe behold the Starres,
Not with the eye of Learning, but of Sight,
To find their motions, want of knowledge barres
Although they see them in their brightest light:
So, though I see the glory of her State,
Its she that must instruct and eleuate.

My weake distempred braine and feeble spirits,
Which all vnleaned haue aduentur'd, this
To write of Christ, and of his sacred merits,
Desiring that this Booke Her hands may kisse:
   And though I be vnworthy of that grace,
   Yet let her blessed thoghts this book imbrace.

And pardon me (faire Queene) though I presume,
To doe that which so many better can;
Not that I Learning to my selfe assume,
Or that I would compare with any man:
   But as they are Scholers, and by Art do write,
   So Nature yeelds my Soule a sad delight.

And since all Arts at first from Nature came,
That goodly Creature, Mother of Perfection,
Whom Ioues almighty hand at first did frame,
Taking both her and hers in his protection:
   Why should not She now grace my barren Muse,
   And in a Woman all defects excuse.

So peerelesse Princesse humbly I desire,
That your great wisedome would vouchsafe t'omit
All faults; and pardon if my spirits retire,
Leauing to ayme at what they cannot hit:
   To write your worth, which no pen can expresse,
   Were but t'ecclipse your Fame, and make it lesse.

To the Lady E L I Z A B E T H S
Grace.

M ost gratious Ladie, faire E L I Z A B E T H ,
   Whose Name and Virtues puts vs still in mind,
Of her, of whom we are depriu'd by death;
The Phœnix of her age, whose worth did bind
All worthy minds so long as they haue breath,
   In linkes of Admiration, loue and zeale,
A DEFENCE OF POETRY

WHEN THE right virtuous Edward Wotton and I were at the Emperor's court together, we gave ourselves to learn horsemanship of John Pietro Pugliano, one that with great commendation had the place of an esquire in his stable. And he, according to the fertileness of the Italian wit, did not only afford us the demonstration of his practice, but sought to enrich our minds with the contemplations therein, which he thought most precious. But with none I remember mine ears were at that time more laden, than when (either angered with slow payment, or moved with our learner-like admiration) he exercised his speech in the praise of his faculty. He said soldiers were the noblest estate of mankind, and horsemen the noblest of soldiers. He said they were the masters of war and ornaments of peace, speedy goers and strong abiders, triumphers both in camps and courts. Nay, to so unbelieved a point he proceeded as that no earthly thing bred such wonder to a prince as to be a good horseman—skill of government was but a pedanteria in comparison. Then would he add certain praises, by telling what a peerless beast the horse was, the only serviceable courtier without flattery, the beast of most beauty, faithfulness, courage, and such more, that if I had not been a piece of a logician before I came to him, I think he would have persuaded me to have wished myself a horse. But thus much at least with his no few words he drave into me, that self-love is better than any gilding to make that seem gorgeous wherein ourselves be parties. Wherein, if Pugliano's strong affection and weak arguments will not satisfy you, I will give you a nearer example of myself, who (I know not by what mischance) in these my not...
be found in excellency fruitful, yea, even as Horace saith, melius Chrysippo et Crantore.

But truly I imagine it falleth out with these poet-whippers, as with some good women, who often are sick, but in faith they cannot tell where; so the name of poetry is odious to them, but neither his cause nor effects, neither the sum that contains him, nor the particularities descending from him, give any fast handle to their carping dispraise.

Since then poetry is of all human learning the most ancient and of most fatherly antiquity, as from whence other learnings have taken their beginnings; since it is so universal that no learned nation doth despise it, nor barbarous nation is without it; since both Roman and Greek gave such divine names unto it, the one of prophesying, the other of making, and that indeed that name of making is fit for him, considering that where all other arts retain themselves within their subject, and receive, as it were, their being from it, the poet only bringeth his own stuff, and doth not learn a conceit out of a matter, but maketh matter for a conceit; since neither his description nor end containing any evil, the thing described cannot be evil; since his effects be so good as to teach goodness and to delight the learners; since therein (namely in moral doctrine, the chief of all knowledges) he doth not only far pass the historian, but, for instructing, is well nigh comparable to the philosopher, for moving leaves him behind him; since the Holy Scripture (wherein there is no uncleanness) hath whole parts in it poetical, and that even our Saviour Christ vouchsafed to use the flowers of it; since all his kinds are not only in their united forms but in their severed dissections fully commendable; I think (and think I think rightly) the laurel crown appointed for triumphant captains doth worthily (of all other learnings) honour the poet's triumph.

But because we have ears as well as tongues, and that the lightest reasons that may be will seem to weigh greatly, if
nothing be put in the counterbalance, let us hear, and, as well
as we can, ponder what objections be made against this art,
which may be worthy either of yielding or answering.

First, truly I note not only in these μισόμουσι, poet-haters,

but in all that kind of people who seek a praise by disparaising
others, that they do prodigally spend a great many wandering
words in quips and scoffs, carping and taunting at each thing
which, by stirring the spleen, may stay the brain from a
through-beholding the worthiness of the subject. Those kind
of objections, as they are full of a very idle easiness, since there

is nothing of so sacred a majesty but that an itching tongue may
rub itself upon it, so deserve they no other answer, but, instead
of laughing at the jest, to laugh at the jester. We know a playing
wit can praise the discretion of an ass, the comfortableness of
being in debt, and the jolly commodities of being sick of the
plague. So of the contrary side, if we will turn Ovid's verse
Ut lateat virtus proximitate mali,

that good lie hid in nearness of the evil, Agrippa will be as
merry in showing the vanity of science as Erasmus was in the
commending of folly. Neither shall any man or matter escape
some touch of these smiling railers. But for Erasmus and
Agrippa, they had another foundation than the superficial part
would promise. Marry, these other pleasant faultfinders, who
will correct the verb before they understand the noun, and
confute others' knowledge before they confirm their own—I
would have them only remember that scoffing cometh not of
wisdom. So as the best title in true English they get with their
merriments is to be called good fools; for so have our grave
forefathers ever termed that humorous kind of jesters.

But that which giveth greatest scope to their scorning

humour is rhyming and versing. It is already said (and, as I
think, truly said), it is not rhyming and versing that maketh
poesy. One may be a poet without versing, and a versifier
without poetry. But yet, presuppose it were inseparable (as

[verse]
indeed it seemeth Scaliger judgeth), truly it were an inseparable commendation. For it oratio next to ratio, speech next to reason, be the greatest gift bestowed upon mortality, that cannot be praiseless which doth most polish that blessing of speech; which considers each word, not only (as a man may say) by his most forcible quality, but by his best measured quantity, carrying even in themselves a harmony—without, perchance, number, measure, order, proportion be in our time grown odious. But lay aside the just praise it hath, by being the only fit speech for music (music, I say, the most divine striker of the senses), thus much is undoubtedly true, that if reading be foolish without remembering, memory being the only treasure of knowledge, those words which are fittest for memory are likewise most convenient for knowledge. Now, that verse far exceedeth prose in the knitting up of memory, the reason is manifest: the words (besides their delight, which hath a great affinity to memory) being so set as one cannot be lost but the whole work fails; which accusing itself, calleth the remembrance back to itself, and so most strongly confirmeth it. Besides, one word so, as it were, begetting another, as, be it in rhyme or measured verse, by the former a man shall have a near guess to the follower. Lastly, even they that have taught the art of memory have showed nothing so apt for it as a certain room divided into many places well and thoroughly known. Now, that hath the verse in effect perfectly, every word having his natural seat, which seat must needs make the word remembered. But what needeth more in a thing so known to all men? Who is it that ever was a scholar that doth not carry away some verses of Virgil, Horace, or Cato, which in his youth he learned, and even to his old age serve him for hourly lessons? But the fitness it hath for memory is notably proved by all delivery of arts: wherein for the most part, from grammar to logic, mathematics, physic, and the rest, the rules chiefly necessary to be borne away are compiled in verses. So that, verse being in itself sweet and orderly, and being best for memory, the only handle of knowledge, it must be in jest that any man can speak against it.

Now then go we to the most important imputations laid to
the poor poets. For aught I can yet learn, they are these. First, that there being many other more fruitful knowledges, a man might better spend his time in them than in this. Secondly, that it is the mother of lies. Thirdly, that it is the nurse of abuse, infecting us with many pestilential desires; with a siren's sweetness drawing the mind to the serpent's tail of sinful fancies (and herein, especially, comedies give the largest field to ear, as Chaucer saith); how, both in other nations and in ours, before poets did soften us, we were full of courage, given to martial exercises, the pillars of manlike liberty, and not lulled asleep in shady idleness with poets' pastimes. And lastly, and chiefly, they cry out with open mouth as if they had overshot Robin Hood, that Plato banished them out of his commonwealth. Truly, this is much, if there be much truth in it.

First, to the first. That a man might better spend his time, is a reason indeed; but it doth (as they say) but petere principium. For if it be as I affirm, that no learning is so good as that which teacheth and moveth to virtue; and that none can both teach and move thereto so much as poetry: then is the conclusion manifest that ink and paper cannot be to a more profitable purpose employed. And certainly, though a man should grant their first assumption, it should follow (methinks) very unwillingly, that good is not good, because better is better. But I still and utterly deny that there is sprung out of earth a more fruitful knowledge.

To the second, therefore, that they should be the principal liars, I will answer paradoxically, but truly, I think truly, that of all writers under the sun the poet is the least liar, and, though he would, as a poet can scarcely be a liar. The astronomer, with his cousin the geometrician, can hardly escape, when they take upon them to measure the height of the stars. How often, think you, do the physicians lie, when they aver things good for sicknesses, which afterwards send Charon a great number of souls drowned in a potion before they come
to his ferry? And no less of the rest, which take upon them to
affirm. Now, for the poet, he nothing affirms, and therefore
never lieth. For, as I take it, to lie is to affirm that to be true
which is false. So as the other artists, and especially the his-
torian, affirming many things, can, in the cloudy knowledge of
mankind, hardly escape from many lies. But the poet (as I said
before) never affirmeth. The poet never maketh any circles
about your imagination, to conjure you to believe for true what
he writes. He citeth not authorities of other histories, but even
for his entry calleth the sweet Muses to inspire into him a good
invention; in truth, not labouring to tell you what is or is not,
but what should or should not be. And therefore, though he
recount things not true, yet because he telleth them not for
true, he lieth not—without we will say that Nathan lied in his
speech before-alleged to David; which as a wicked man durst
scarce say, so think I none so simple would say that Aesop lied
in the tales of his beasts; for who thinks that Aesop wrote it for
actually true were well worthy to have his name chronicled
among the beasts he writeth of. What child is there, that,
coming to a play, and seeing Thebes written in great letters
upon an old door, doth believe that it is Thebes? If then a man
can arrive to that child's age to know that the poets' persons
and doings are but pictures what should be, and not stories
what have been, they will never give the lie to things not
affirmatively but allegorically and figuratively written. And
therefore, as in history, looking for truth, they may go away
full fraught with falsehood, so in poesy, looking but for fiction,
they shall use the narration but as an imaginative ground-plot
of a profitable invention. But hereto is replied, that the poets
give names to men they write of, which argueth a conceit of an
actual truth, and so, not being true, proves a falsehood. And
doth the lawyer lie then, when under the names of John-a-stiles
and John-a-nokes he puts his case? But that is easily answered.
Their naming of men is but to make their picture the more
lively, and not to build any history: painting men, they cannot
leave men nameless. We see we cannot play at chess but that
we must give names to our chessmen; and yet, methinks, he
were a very partial champion of truth that would say we lied
for giving a piece of wood the reverend title of a bishop. The
poet nameth Cyrus or Aeneas no other way than to show what men of their fames, fortunes, and estates should do.

Their third is, how much it abuseth men's wit, training it to wanton sinfulness and lustful love: for indeed that is the principal, if not only, abuse I can hear alleged. They say, the comedies rather teach than reprehend amorous conceits. They say the lyric is larded with passionate sonnets; the elegiac weeps the want of his mistress; and that even to the heroical, Cupid hath ambitiously climbed. Alas, Love, I would thou couldst as well defend thyself as thou canst offend others.

I would those on whom thou dost attend could either put thee away, or yield good reason why they keep thee. But grant love of beauty to be a beastly fault (although it be very hard, since only man, and no beast, hath that gift to discern beauty); grant that lovely name of Love to deserve all hateful reproaches (although even some of my masters the philosophers spent a good deal of their lamp-oil in setting forth the excellency of it); grant, I say, whatsoever they will have granted, that not only love, but lust, but vanity, but (if they list) scurrility, possesseth many leaves of the poets' books; yet think I, when this is granted, they will find their sentence may with good manners put the last words foremost, and not say that poetry abuseth man's wit, but that man's wit abuseth poetry.

For I will not deny but that man's wit may make poesy, which should be εἰκαστική (which some learned have defined: figuring forth good things), to be Φανταστική (which doth, contrariwise, infect the fancy with unworthy objects), as the painter, that should give to the eye either some excellent perspective, or some fine picture, fit for building or fortification, or containing in it some notable example (as Abraham sacrificing his son Isaac, Judith killing Holofernes, David fighting with Goliath), may leave those, and please an ill-pleased eye with wanton shows of better hidden matters. But what, shall the abuse of a thing make the right use odious? Nay truly, though I yield that poesy may not only be abused, but that being abused, by the reason of his sweet charming force,
it can do more hurt than any other army of words: yet shall it
be so far from concluding that the abuse should give reproach
to the abused, that, contrariwise, it is a good reason that what-
soever, being abused, doth most harm, being rightly used (and
upon the right use each thing conceiveth his title), doth most
good. Do we not see the skill of physic, the best rampire to our
often-assaulted bodies, being abused, teach poison, the most
violent destroyer? Doth not knowledge of law, whose end is to
even and right all things, being abused, grow the crooked
fosterer of horrible injuries? Doth not (to go to the highest)
God's word abused breed heresy, and His name abused

become blasphemy? Truly, a needle cannot do much hurt,
and as truly (with leave of ladies be it spoken) it cannot do
much good: with a sword thou mayst kill thy father, and with
a sword thou mayst defend thy prince and country. So that, as
in their calling poets fathers of lies they said nothing, so in this
their argument of abuse they prove the commendation.

They allege herewith, that before poets began to be in price
our nation had set their hearts' delight upon action, and not
imagination: rather doing things worthy to be written, than
writing things fit to be done. What that before-time was, I
think scarcely Sphinx can tell, since no memory is so ancient
that hath not the precedent of poetry. And certain it is that, in
our plainest homeliness, yet never was the Albion nation with-
out poetry. Marry, this argument, though it be levelled against
poetry, yet is it indeed a chainshot against all learning, or
bookishness as they commonly term it. Of such mind were
certain Goths, of whom it is written that, having in the spoil
of a famous city taken a fair library, one hangman (belike fit to
execute the fruits of their wits) who had murdered a great
number of bodies, would have set fire in it: no, said another
very gravely, take heed what you do, for while they are busy
about these toys, we shall with more leisure conquer their
countries. This indeed is the ordinary doctrine of ignorance,
and many words sometimes I have heard spent in it. But
because this reason is generally against all learning as well as
poetry, or rather, all learning but poetry; because it were too
large a digression to handle it, or at least too superfluous (since
it is manifest that all government of action is to be gotten by knowledge, and knowledge best by gathering many knowledges, which is reading), I only, with Horace, to him that is of that opinion jubeo stultum esse libenter;

for as for poetry itself, it is the freest from this objection.

For poetry is the companion of camps. I dare undertake, Orlando Furioso, or honest King Arthur, will never displease a soldier; but the quiddity of ens and prima materia will hardly agree with a corset; and therefore, as I said in the beginning, even Turks and Tartars are delighted with poets. Homer, a Greek, flourished before Greece flourished. And if to a slight conjecture a conjecture may be opposed, truly it may seem, that as by him their learned men took almost their first light of knowledge, so their active men received their first motions of courage. Only Alexander's example may serve, who by Plutarch is accounted of such virtue, that Fortune was not his guide but his footstool; who se acts speak for him, though Plutarch did not: indeed the phoenix of warlike princes. This Alexander left his schoolmaster, living Aristotle, behind him, but took dead Homer with him. He put the philosopher Callisthenes to death for his seeming philosophical, indeed mutinous, stubbornness, but the chief thing he was ever heard to wish for was that Homer had been alive. He well found he received more bravery of mind by the pattern of Achilles than by hearing the definition of fortitude. And therefore, if Cato misliked Fulvius for carrying Ennius with him to the field, it may be answered that, if Cato misliked it, the noble Fulvius liked it, or else he had not done it; for it was not the excellent Cato Uticensis (whose authority I would much more have revered), but it was the former, in truth a bitter punisher of faults (but else a man that had never well sacrificed to the Graces: he misliked and cried out against all Greek learning, and yet, being eighty years old, began to learn it, belike fearing that Pluto understood not Latin). Indeed, the Roman laws allowed no person to be carried to the wars but he that was in the soldiers' roll; and therefore, though Cato misliked his
unmustered person, he misliked not his work. And if he had, Scipio Nasica, judged by common consent the best Roman, loved him. Both the other Scipio brothers, who had by their virtues no less surnames than of Asia and Afric, so loved him that they caused his body to be buried in their sepulture. So as Cato's authority, being but against his person, and that answered with so far greater than himself, is herein of no validity.

But now indeed my burden is great; now Plato's name is laid upon me, whom, I must confess, of all philosophers I have ever esteemed most worthy of reverence, and with good reason: since of all philosophers he is the most poetical. Yet if he will defile the fountain out of which his flowing streams have proceeded, let us boldly examine with what reasons he did it. First, truly, a man might maliciously object that Plato, being a philosopher, was a natural enemy of poets. For indeed, after the philosophers had picked out of the sweet mysteries of poetry the right discerning true points of knowledge, they forthwith putting it in method, and making a school-art of that which the poets did only teach by a divine delightfulness, beginning to spurn at their guides, like ungrateful prentices, were not content to set up shops for themselves, but sought by all means to discredit their masters; which by the force of delight being barred them, the less they could overthrow them, the more they hated them. For indeed, they found for Homer seven cities strave who should have him for their citizen; where many cities banished philosophers as not fit members to live among them. For only repeating certain of Euripides' verses, many Athenians had their lives saved of the Syracusans, where the Athenians themselves thought many philosophers unworthy to live. Certain poets, as Simonides and Pindar, had so prevailed with Hiero the First, that of a tyrant they made him a just king; where Plato could do so little with Dionysius, that he himself of a philosopher was made a slave. But who should do thus, I confess, should requite the objections made against poets with like cavillations against philosophers; as likewise one should do that should bid one read Phaedrus or Symposium in Plato, or the discourse of love in
Plutarch, and see whether any poet do authorize abominable filthiness, as they do. Again, a man might ask out of what commonwealth Plato did banish them: in sooth, thence where he himself alloweth community of women—so as belike this banishment grew not for effeminate wantonness, since little should poetical sonnets be hurtful when a man might have what woman he listed. But I honour philosophical instructions, and bless the wits which bred them: so as they be not abused, which is likewise stretched to poetry.

Acts: 17  St. Paul himself (who yet, for the credit of poets, To Titus: 1 twice citeth poets, and one of them by the name of 'their prophet') setteth a watchword upon philosophy—indeed upon the abuse. So doth Plato upon the abuse, not upon poetry. Plato found fault that the poets of his time filled the world with wrong opinions of the gods, making light tales of that unspotted essence, and therefore would not have the youth depraved with such opinions. Herein may much be said. Let this suffice: the poets did not induce such opinions, but did imitate those opinions already induced. For all the Greek stories can well testify that the very religion of that time stood upon many and many-fashioned gods, not taught so by the poets, but followed according to their nature of imitation. Who list may read in Plutarch the discourses of Isis and Osiris, of the cause why oracles ceased, of the divine providence, and see whether the theology of that nation stood not upon such dreams which the poets indeed superstitiously observed—and truly (since they had not the light of Christ) did much better in it than the philosophers, who, shaking off superstition, brought in atheism. Plato therefore (whose authority I had much rather justly construe than unjustly resist) meant not in general of poets, in those words of which Julius Scaliger saith Qua authoritate barbari quidam atque hispidi abuti velint ad poetas e republica exigendos; but only meant to drive out those wrong opinions of the Deity (whereof now, without further law, Christianity hath taken away all the hurtful belief) per-chance (as he thought) nourished by the then esteemed poets. And a man need go no further than to Plato himself to know his meaning: who, in his dialogue called Ion, giveth high and
rightly divine commendation unto poetry. So as Plato, banishing the abuse, not the thing, not banishing it, but giving due honour unto it, shall be our patron, and not our adversary. For indeed I had much rather (since truly I may do it) show their mistaking of Plato (under whose lion's skin they would make an ass-like braying against poesy) than go about to overthrow his authority; whom, the wiser a man is, the more just cause he shall find to have in admiration; especially since he attributeth unto poesy more than myself do, namely, to be a very inspiring of a divine force, far above man's wit, as in the forenamed dialogue is apparent.

Of the other side, who would show the honours have been by the best sort of judgements granted them, a whole sea of examples would present themselves: Alexanders, Caesars, Scipios, all favourers of poets; Laelius, called the Roman Socrates, himself a poet, so as part of Heautontimorumenos in Terence was supposed to be made by him; and even the Greek Socrates, whom Apollo confirmed to be the only wise man, is said to have spent part of his old time in putting Aesop’s fables into verses. And therefore, full evil should it become his scholar Plato to put such words in his master's mouth against poets. But what need more? Aristotle writes the Art of Poesy; and why, if it should not be written? Plutarch teacheth the use to be gathered of them; and how, if they should not be read? And who reads Plutarch's either history or philosophy, shall find he trimmeth both their garments with guards of poesy. But I list not to defend poesy with the help of his underling historiography. Let it suffice to have showed it is a fit soil for praise to dwell upon; and what dispraise may be set upon it, is either easily overcome, or transformed into just commendation.

So that, since the excellencies of it may be so easily and so justly confirmed, and the low-creeping objections so soon trodden down: it not being an art of lies, but of true doctrine; not of effeminateness, but of notable stirring of courage; not of abusing man's wit, but of strengthening man's wit;
not banished, but honoured by Plato: let us rather plant
more laurels for to engarland the poets' heads (which honour
of being laureate, whereas besides them only triumphant
captains were, is a sufficient authority to show the price they
ought to be held in) than suffer the ill-favoured breath of

such wrong-speakers once to blow upon the clear springs
of poesy.

But since I have run so long a career in this matter, me-

thinks,

before I give my pen a full stop, it shall be but a little
more lost time to inquire why England, the mother of excellent
minds, should be grown so hard a stepmother to poets, who
certainly in wit ought to pass all other, since all only proceedeth
from their wit, being indeed makers of themselves, not takers
of others. How can I but exclaim

Musa, mihi causas memora, quo numine laeso?

Sweet poesy, that hath anciently had kings, emperors, senators,
great captains, such as, besides a thousand others, David,
Adrian, Sophocles, Germanicus, not only to favour poets, but
to be poets; and of our nearer times can present for her patrons
a Robert, king of Sicily, the great King Francis of France,
King James of Scotland; such cardinals as Bembus and Bib-
biena; such famous preachers and teachers as Beza and
Melanchthon; so learned philosophers as Fracastorius and
Scaliger; so great orators as Pontanus and Muretus; so pierc-
ing wits as George Buchanan; so grave counsellors as, beside
many, but before all, that Hospital of France, than whom (I
think) that realm never brought forth a more accomplished
judgement, more firmly builded upon virtue: I say these, with
numbers of others, not only to read others' poesies, but to
poetize for others' reading—that poesy, thus embraced in all
other places, should only find in our time a hard welcome in
England, I think the very earth lamenteth it, and therefore
decketh our soil with fewer laurels than it was accustomed.
For heretofore poets have in England also flourished, and,
which is to be noted, even in those times when the trumpet of