

Valeria Miani and the Tragic Genre

The Other Voice

The dramatist and poet Valeria Miani (c. 1563–post 1620) is the author of the only tragedy penned by a woman writer in Italian before the eighteenth century, *Celinda*, published in 1611.¹ Other women writers may have written tragedies in the early modern period, but they were not sent to press and no manuscript has yet surfaced. Miani is also the author of a pastoral play, *Amorosa speranza* (Loving Hope), printed in 1604, which makes her chronologically the third early modern published female author in Italy to tackle the new, and soon extremely popular, genre of the pastoral.² In addition to the two works above, Miani published some poems here and there: two songs and a sonnet in a collection of 1609 entitled *Polinnia*;³ two epigrams in a collection of the same year by Ercole Manzoni entitled *Amorosi spirti*;⁴ and a “moral” madrigal in a collection of 1611 by the Accademici Orditi, entitled *Gareggiamento poetico*.⁵ She also wrote a religious

1. Valeria Miani, *Celinda, tragedia di Valeria Miani dedicata alla Serenissima Madamma Eleonora Medici Gonzaga, duchessa di Mantova, et di Monferrato* (Vicenza: Appresso Francesco Bolzetta libraro in Padova, 1611; and Vicenza: Appresso Domenico Amadio, 1611).

2. Valeria Miani, *Amorosa speranza, favola pastorale della molto mag[nifi]ca signora Valeria Miani* (Venice: Per Francesco Bolzetta, 1604).

3. *Polinnia, per l' Illustrissimo Signor Tommaso Contarini Cavaliere Conte del Zaffo, e Podestà di Padova*, ed. Martino Sandelli [?] (Padua: Bolzetta, 1609). Pages are unnumbered; works are in Italian and Latin. The editor's name does not appear in the text but Marco Callegari thinks that the idea of the collection came from Francesco Bolzetta, a well-known bookseller in Padua, who asked the priest Martino Sandelli to collect poems to honor Podestà Contarini. See *Dal torchio del tipografo al banco del libraio: Stampatori, editori e librai a Padova dal XV al XVIII secolo* (Padua: Il Prato, 2002), 49.

4. Ercole Manzoni, *Amorosi spirti. Seconda parte de madrigali di Ercole Manzoni, estense, filosofo, medico e cavaliere veneto* (Padua: Pasquati, 1609). Pages are unnumbered. Manzoni was connected with the world of theater and with both male and female musicians and singers.

5. Confuso Accademico Ordito, *Il Gareggiamento Poetico del Confuso Accademico Ordito. Madrigali amorosi, gravi e piacevoli ne' quali si vede il bello, il leggiadro, e il vivace dei più illustri poeti d'Italia*, 3 vols. (Venice: Barezzi, 1611). Still, even in the very book in which her poetry was published, Miani is referred to nonchalantly and imprecisely as “Valeria Maria.”

madrigal, now in a collection of 1613 by Leonardo Sanudo, and works that have been lost, including at least two comedies mentioned by a contemporary city historian, an oration for which she became first known at age eighteen, and a book of poetry that the poet and critic Giovan Maria Crescimbeni, a founder of the Accademia dell' Arcadia in 1690, attributes to her.⁶ Miani's publishing career thus lasted a few years, but her intellectual pursuits, which place her consistently in Padua, predated her first publication by more than two decades.

Miani is the product of an extraordinary period of creativity by a number of women writers who were lucky enough to be born in Venice and the territories under the Serenissima's rule (Padua, Vicenza, Rovigo) and work in the second half of the sixteenth century and the beginning of the seventeenth. As the most recent scholarship reveals, these women were able to compose in all the different genres that defined the Italian Renaissance: poetry, philosophical prose, novella, romance, chivalric romance, epic, comedy, tragedy, pastoral, and musical composition. They even wrote pharmacopoeial treatises and engaged in scientific disquisitions, thus demonstrating once and for all that women who set their minds to producing intellectual work could in fact do so.

But all too typically most women writers could not single-mindedly pursue their careers, for unlike what we see in most well-chronicled male professions, women's literary productivity has often

Giovan Maria Crescimbeni corrects this: "Valeria Miani Padovana, wrongly called Valeria Maria in the *Gareggiamento Poetico*." See his *L'Istoria della volgar poesia scritta da Giovan Maria Crescimbeni* (1698; Rome: Stamperia Antonio de' Rossi, 1714), 438. Unless otherwise noted, translations from Italian, here and throughout, are my own. Similarly, the Paduan Giulia Bigolina, who authored a prose romance and some novellas in an earlier generation, was referred to simply as "Giulia Padovana" in Pietro Paolo Ribera, *Le glorie immortali de' Trionfi, et heroiche imprese d'ottocento quarantacinque Donne illustri antiche, e moderne, dotate di conditioni, e scienze segnalate: cioè in sacra scrittura, teologia, profetia, filosofia, retorica, gramatica, medicina, astrologia, leggi civili, pittura, musica, armi, et in altre virtù principali* (Venice: Evangelista Deuchino, 1609), 287.

6. Leonardo Sanudo, ed., *Vita, attioni, miracoli, morte, resurrettione, et ascensione di Dio humano, raccolti ... in versi lirici da ' più famosi Autori de questo secolo* (Venice: Santo Grillo e fratelli, 1613). I thank Virginia Cox for this reference. Crescimbeni, *L'Istoria della volgar poesia*, 438–39: "By her [Miani] we have a volume of poetry, a pastoral play entitled *L'Amorosa speranza*, and a tragedy entitled *La Celinda*."

been interrupted by biological destiny and social circumstances. Of course, there are the dramatic cases of early modern women writers who died in the Veneto during that most feminine job of childbirth, such as Moderata Fonte and Isabella Andreini, but I am thinking of more prosaic circumstances that forced women to put down their pens: the eventuality of marriage chiefly (Lucrezia Marinella, for example, stopped writing at least ten years during her marriage) or a sudden widowhood. In the case of Valeria Miani, following the death of her husband one or two years after the publication of *Celinda* she was left with five children to raise and a small property to live on and run. As mentioned above, she published no more.

Most of these early modern women writers came from the upper middle class or the lower nobility, for writing required some humanist learning, whether acquired through a private tutor or through a connection to a university or academic environment by way of relatives. Lower class women with a sharp mind willing to sell entertainment and sex to the Venetian male nobility and clergy, such as the talented “honest” courtesans (“cortigiane oneste”), could toil to gain a refined taste and thereby enhance their chances for a better life. The list of Veneto women writers of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries is surprisingly long and growing by the day as more are discovered: Giulia Bigolina (c. 1518–1569) wrote novellas and prose romances; Gaspara Stampa (c. 1523–1554), Veronica Franco (1546–1591), Sara Copio Sullam (c. 1590–1640), and Veneranda Bragadin (c. 1566–post 1619) wrote poetry; Isabella Andreini (1562–1604), Maddalena Campiglia (1553–1595), and Miani herself wrote pastoral comedies; Moderata Fonte (1555–1592) and Lucrezia Marinella (1571–1653) wrote chivalric romances, polemical treatises on the worth or excellence of women, religious plays, and pastoral romances.⁷ And then there are less-known cases, such as that of Isicratea Monte (c. 1562–1584), a poet who died way too young, or the scientist Camilla Herculiana, who worked in Padua at the Pharmacy of the Three Stars, or the alchemist and cosmetician Isabella Cortese,

7. Many of these writers have appeared or are going to appear in The Other Voice series. Further information on individual authors can be found in the text or notes below. For a study of their writings, see Virginia Cox, *Women's Writing in Italy, 1400–1650* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008).

who saw her book on obstetrics and “women’s secrets” become an often reprinted bestseller.⁸ Many of these women knew each other and drew inspiration from the others’ work, for the success of one motivated another to strive for the same. Miani perhaps would not have written her *Amorosa speranza* were it not for the earlier examples of Andreini and Campiglia, whose pastorals, respectively *La Mirtilla* and *Flori*, came out in 1588. Likewise, she perhaps would not have chosen Duchess Eleonora de’ Medici Gonzaga as the dedicatee of her *Celinda* if Marinella, who was living in Padua in those very years, had not recently dedicated her *Arcadia felice* to the duchess.⁹

All these women writers also had the opportunity to congregate with talented men, whether members of their own family, affiliates of local academies, or simply fellow patrons of bookshops, for in the absence of cafés or even public libraries, bookshops were the *de facto* meeting places of educated locals as well as foreigners. Venice had chosen Padua as the site for the Republic’s flagship university and had heavily invested in the enterprise by appointing well-known professors, thus providing the city with a vigorous intellectual community. Galileo Galilei and Girolamo Fabrici d’Acquapendente, for example, were on the faculty at the time of Miani’s writing. As a result, Padua hosted an international community of university students coming from abroad, mostly from Germany, but French students came, too, escaping the aftermath of the St. Bartholomew’s slaughter, as well

8. On Issicratea Monte, see Marisa Milani, “Quattro donne fra i pavani,” *Museum Patavinum* 1 (1983): 387–412, and below. The apothecary Camilla Herculiana published *Lettere di philosophia naturale* (Cracow: Stamperia di Lazaro, 1584), dedicated to the queen of Poland. There she complained that much of her written work had been stolen by a male colleague and published under another name. As with Cortese, we do not know her dates of birth and death. Cortese’s book, *I secreti della signora Isabella Cortese* (Venice: Bariletto, 1561), is dedicated to the archdeacon of Ragusa in Dalmatia. Some interesting scientific digressions are also present in Book 2 of Moderata Fonte’s *The Worth of Women*, ed. and trans. by Virginia Cox, *The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe* (1600; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997). It is also worth mentioning two female Veneto painters in this list, such as the Paduan Chiara Varotari (1584–c.1663), sister of the well-known painter Padovanino, who specialized in portraits, and the Venetian Marietta Robusti, Jacopo Tintoretto’s natural daughter (c. 1560–1590).

9. Susan Haskins has recently established that Marinella moved from Venice to Padua for a while upon her marriage in 1607. See her “Vexatious Litigant, or the Case of Lucrezia Marinella? (Part 2),” *Nouvelles de la République des Lettres* 1–2 (2007): 203–30.

as English and Polish students. And then there were intellectual tourists, like Philip Sidney and Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford, who came down from Venice regularly to bask in Padua's scholarly vitality. Visiting the city in 1608 Thomas Coryate made his first item of business a stop in a bookshop.¹⁰ The most important publisher and bookseller in Padua at the turn of the sixteenth century was Miani's editor and friend, Francesco Bolzetta, who promoted both scientific and literary authors, especially those connected to the university.¹¹ As for the academies, it was difficult for women to belong officially to one in Italy, but the university environment of a place like Padua may have fostered informal participation.¹² For example, in the public gatherings of the Accademia de' Ricovrati, founded in 1599 and which had among its members Galilei, women were invited, music was played

10. Coryate recounts that he met in this bookshop a young Italian so learned that he could even converse in Hebrew. See Michael Strachan, *The Life and Adventures of Thomas Coryate* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), 37. For a reconstruction of the life and culture of Padua at the time, see Valeria Finucci, "Intellectual Tourism in Late Sixteenth-Century Italy: Costume and Manners in Venice and Padua," in *Mores Italiae: Costumi e scene di vita nel Rinascimento // Mores Italiae: Costume and Life in the Renaissance*, ed. Maurizio Rippa Bonati and Valeria Finucci (Cittadella: Biblos, 2007), 37–77.

11. Bolzetta had two centrally located bookshops in Padua but did not have his own print shop. Instead, he relied on printers in Padua (Pasquati), Vicenza (Amadio), and Venice (Francesco de' Franceschi). He published the medical works of Girolamo Fabrici, Prospero Alpini, and Fortunio Liceti. He also published Torquato Tasso's epic *Il Goffredo* (1616). For the editorial activity of Bolzetta in Padua, see Callegari, *Dal torchio del tipografo al banco del libraio*, 45–55. Miani's cooperation with Bolzetta echoes that of Lucrezia Marinella in Venice in those very years with the editor Ciotti, the publisher of Venetian academicians. See Stephen Kolsky, "Moderata Fonte, Lucrezia Marinella, Giuseppe Passi: An Early Seventeenth Century Feminist Controversy," *Modern Language Review* 96 (2001): 973–89, at 977.

12. On the almost nonexistent formal presence of women in literary academies, see Conor Fahy, "Women and Italian Cinquecento Literary Academies," in *Women in Italian Renaissance Culture and Society*, ed. Letizia Panizza (Oxford: European Humanities Research Centre, 2000), 438–52. But Tarquinia Molza became a member of the academy in Modena, Isabella Andreini was made a member of the Accademia degli Intenti in Pavia in 1601 and was given an honorary degree, Laura Battiferra had a formal link with the Accademia degli Intronati in Siena, and Laura Terracina with the Incogniti in Naples. Veronica Gambarà was associated informally with the Accademia Corregiana. See Michele Maylander, *Storia delle Accademie d'Italia*, 5 vols. (Bologna: Capelli, 1926–30), 3:296 and 320. Veronica Franco and Gaspara Stampa seem to have also been informally associated with the Accademia della Fama, led by Domenico Venier in Venice. See Maylander, *Storia*, 5:446.

between discussions, and refreshments and dances for the academicians and their guests often followed.¹³

Many of the academic discussions at the time of Miani's writing were related to theater, for literary theorists were passionately arguing the merits of the "ancients" versus the "moderns." Some of the hottest debates were notoriously taking place between the defenders and the accusers of Padua's native son, Sperone Speroni, regarding his choices of plot and verse in his controversial play *Canace*, composed on the model of Seneca's ancient Roman tragedy.¹⁴ Also at the core of the controversy between "ancient" and "modern" literary forms was the new genre of the pastoral, namely, Giambattista Guarini's *Il pastor fido*, as well as the issues of contamination, decorum, and ethics surrounding the reception of this hybrid theatrical piece.¹⁵ Consider-

13. See Attilio Maggiolo, *I soci dell'accademia patavina dalla sua fondazione (1599)* (Padua: Accademia Patavina di Lettere, Scienze ed Arti, 1983), 10. On the Ricovrati, see *Dall'Accademia dei Ricovrati all'Accademia Galileiana*, ed. Ezio Riondato (Padua: Accademia Galileiana di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti, 2001). A list of Ricovrati members shows that Miani may have known quite a few of them, from Tommaso Contarini, to whom is dedicated the collection *Polinnia* in which her poetry is printed, to Francesco Contarini, the author of *La finta Fiammetta*, of whom more later, and finally to Ottonello Descalzi, a founding member of the academy and husband of the woman to whom she dedicated her *Amorosa speranza*. The Ricovrati admitted some women in the seventeenth century, such as Madeleine de Scudery and the Venetian Elena Cornaro Piscopia, the first woman ever to graduate from a European university.

14. Sperone Speroni's *Canace* (1546) was reprinted in Venice by Giovanni Alberti in 1587 in a much talked about revised version, *Canace tragedia del sig. Sperone Speroni alla quale sono aggiunte alcune altre sue compositioni e una apologia e alcune altre lettioni*, sporting a finished prologue, a new division into acts and scenes, a partial chorus, and also for the first time Speroni's own *Apologia contra il Giudicio fatto sopra la Canace*. This is a short and incomplete defense against the detractors of his tragedy in which Speroni defended his selections. Faustino Summo, an Aristotelian professor of logic in Padua and a member of the Accademia de' Ricovrati, undertook the defense of Speroni, although he also objected to a number of Speroni's assertions as not sufficiently Aristotelian, in *Due discorsi l'uno intorno al contrasto tra il signor Speron Speroni et il giudicio stampato contra la sua tragedia di Canace e di Macareo et l'altro della nobilta dell'eccellente signor Faustino Summo padovano* (Padua: Meietti, 1590).

15. Giambattista Guarini, *Il pastor fido* (Venice: Ciotti, 1602). The author read his play in the house of the nobleman Zabarella in Padua around 1590. Summo wrote against the new genres of tragicomedy and pastoral in *Due discorsi di Faustino Summo padovano, l'uno contra le tragicomédie et moderne pastorali, l'altro particolarmente contra il Pastor Fido dell'ill.re sig.*

ing that the majority of plays at the time were written and published in the area of Venice, Padua, and Vicenza (there were 450 printers, publishers, booksellers, and print-dealers in the Veneto area alone in the sixteenth century), intellectuals in this area, within and outside the university and the academies, were keen to debate the formal aesthetics of plays and how they should be staged.¹⁶ It is quite likely that a woman dramatist like Miani would not have had the same chance elsewhere to think critically, compose, and publish for the stage.

Biography

According to the few historians who mention her, Valeria Miani was born, probably in Padua, around the year 1563. She is first mentioned for an oration she gave in 1581 at age eighteen for the festive pageantry that accompanied the visit to Padua of Dowager Empress Maria, widow of Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian II von Habsburg and daughter of Charles V, who was passing through the city on her way to Portugal, where her son, Rudolf II, was to take the crown.¹⁷ It was not unusual for women of an educated family background to be chosen by local authorities to deliver orations in honor of noble figures,

Cavaliere Battista Guarini (Padua/Vicenza: Bolzetta, 1601). For the controversies in Padua, see Giancarlo Cavazzini, "Padova e Guarini: la *Poetica* di Aristotele nella teoria drammaturgica prebarocca," in *Il diletto della scena e dell'armonia: Teatro e musica nelle Venezie dal Cinquecento al Settecento*, ed. Ivano Cavallini (Rovigo: Minelliana, 1990), 137–88. See also Lisa Sampson, *Pastoral Drama in Early Modern Italy: The Making of a New Genre* (London: Modern Humanities Research Association, 2006), 134–40; and more generally, Daniel Javitch, "The Emergence of Poetic Genre Theory in the Cinquecento," *Modern Language Quarterly* 59 (1998): 139–69.

16. On the array of Veneto presses and editors, see Ester Pastorello, *Tipografi, editori, librai a Venezia nel secolo XVI* (Florence: Olschki, 1924). For the specific case of Padua, see Marco Callegari, *Dal torchio del tipografo al banco del libraio*.

17. See Ribera, *Le glorie immortali de' Trionfi*, 335: "In the year 1581, as Empress Maria (who was the wife of Maximilian II and the mother of Rudolf, current Emperor) passed through Italy as she was called to Spain by King Philip to govern Portugal, she came to the Paduan region and a young woman of eighteen with a most noble talent, Valeria, daughter of Achille Miniani [sic], a lawyer, recited in her honor an oration which received plenty of applause from the listeners, considering also her sex and her age." I have found no printed record of Miani's speech. For more on this event, see Anton Bonaventura Sberty, *Degli spettacoli e delle feste che si facevano in Padova* (Padua: Cesare, 1818), 134. Sberty does not mention Miani.

*Situating Miani's Work: A Survey of Early Modern Drama
Penned by Women*

It would be an understatement to say that the panorama of the Italian stage toward the end of the sixteenth century was complicated, for not only was there an unprecedented flourishing of hybrid genres, but there was also confusion about how to name them and what the difference in naming really meant. Canonical tragedies and comedies in five acts were often supplanted by an array of new forms, some of which soon disappeared. Tragicomedies (that is, tragedies with a happy ending), rustic plays, eclogues, tragic and heroic operas, satyric drama, musical comedies, pastoral drama, mythological and maritime fables, sacred representations, and moral plays constitute just some of the ephemeral terms referring to this crowd of performances.³⁷ Some cross-mixtures offered music, ballets, and intermezzi; others presented only discursive texts. In this panorama, two genres proved particularly difficult for women writers to produce, comedy and tragedy, while the pastoral was much less problematic for them to craft.

In comedy, the public's preference for marriage plots meant that playwrights had to present some sort of sentimental, and later sexual, liaison for their young female characters, and some transgression of paternal authority that could eventually be redressed and accommodated through a marriage. This proved challenging for women writers, for their output, whatever the content, was inevitably read autobiographically. Moreover, the preference at the time for staging in the open air, often in well traveled piazzas, spelled problems for

formance, 1594–1998, ed. S. P. Cerasano and Marion Wynne-Davies (London: Routledge, 1998), 60–68. Sampson also cites performances by noble ladies in *Pastoral Drama in Early Modern Italy*, 105–06.

37. On the mixing of genres, see Bernard Weinberg, *A History of Literary Criticism in the Italian Renaissance*, 2 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), 2:679–84. The librettist and poet Ottavio Rinuccini called his *La Dafne* (Florence: Marescotti, 1600) a pastoral fable, and his *Euridice* (Florence: Giunti, 1600) a tragedy. Now we call them both operas and wonder whether there is a real difference in genre between the two. I use “genres” in a fluid sense, as having the property of “stackability, switchability, scalability, ... for they too can be layered on one another, flipped back and forth, maximized or minimized, with chance associations.” See Wai Chee Dimock, “Introduction: Genres as Fields of Knowledge,” *PMLA* 122.5 (2007), 1377–88, at 1379.

authors planning on showcasing women, because there were few plausible reasons for marriageable women to be caught, hopefully alone, outside their own homes. This often translated into plots involving women's (and men's) cross-dressing, or plots that gave a larger emphasis to older women and bawdy female servants.³⁸ It comes as no surprise then that when actresses began to appear on stage (sometime in the 1560s) and women writers started to publish plays (in the late 1580s), suddenly a new prop became all the rage: the window, because this allowed "innocent" innamoratas, and thus young and realistically playable women, to renegotiate their place in society and further their causes directly on stage. It also allowed professional actresses of the newly fashionable Commedia dell'Arte companies to play them.³⁹ The earliest known actresses, such as Vincenza Armani and Flaminia Romana, were celebrated for their stagecraft whether dressed as women or cross-dressed as men. Half the city of Mantua, we are told, showed up in 1567 to see Flaminia playing the role of Marganorre's daughter-in-law from Ariosto's chivalric romance, *Orlando furioso*.⁴⁰ For her

38. To limit myself to two cases, Ludovico Ariosto's *La Lena* (Venice: Sessa, 1533) is titled after the old go-between Lena; in Nicolò Machiavelli's *Clizia* (Florence: Giunta, 1548), the young woman Clizia never even appears on stage.

39. For the role of windows in developing parts for women, see Jane Tylus, "Women at the Windows: *Commedia dell'Arte* and Theatrical Practice in Early Modern Italy," *Theatre Journal* 49.3 (1997): 323–42. On the social difficulties accompanying women's desire to perform, see Bernadette Majorana, "Finzioni, imitazioni, azioni: donne e teatro," in *Donna, disciplina, creanza cristiana dal XV al XVII secolo: Studi e testi a stampa*, ed. Gabriella Zarri (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1996), 121–39. More generally on Commedia dell'Arte and early modern actresses on stage, see Robert Henke, *Performance and Literature in the Commedia dell'Arte* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 85–105; Richard Andrews, "Isabella Andreini and Others: Women on Stage in the Late Cinquecento," in *Women in Italian Renaissance Culture and Society*, ed. Panizza, 316–33; Richard Andrews, *Scripts and Scenarios: The Performance of Comedy in Renaissance Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); and Pamela Brown, "The Counterfeit *Innamorata* or the Diva Vanishes," *Shakespeare Yearbook* 10 (1999): 402–26.

40. Letter of Luigi Rogna, court secretary in the Gonzaga court, of July 6, 1567, in Eric Nicholson, "Romance as Role Model: Early Female Performances of *Orlando furioso* and *Gerusalemme liberata*," in *Renaissance Transactions: Ariosto and Tasso*, ed. Valeria Finucci (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), 246–69, at 246–47. The Marganorre episode is in Ludovico Ariosto, *Orlando furioso*, trans. Guido Waldman (1532; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), canto 36.

part, Armani, the first ever diva of the Italian stage, sent male spectators into delirium whether she was singing or looking like an armed Mars, a furious Zeus, or a talkative Hermes.⁴¹

Numberless pamphlets soon started to deplore the threat that unbridled femininity produced on the comic stage. Reflecting Counter-Reformation angst, Cesare Franciotti argued that actresses' gesticulation, "whorish adornments," and songs were sufficient "to infect the world" and inflame all men in the audience—and his treatise was published the same year as Miani's *Celinda*.⁴² A bit later and along the same lines, Giovanni Domenico Ottonelli denounced all sorts of actresses, for in his judgment they constituted a public enemy for every township.⁴³ But the actor-writer Nicolò Barbieri, an acute apologist of mimetic theater, dismissed the notion that actresses in loving or adulterous plots inflamed men in the audience, because fornication does not lead to rape in real life, he argued, nor adultery to incest.⁴⁴ Actresses of various Commedia dell'Arte troupes, a mostly

41. I am paraphrasing from the poem: "vince delle Muse il canto, // se si mostra tall'hor in viril manto / cinta la spada, sembra Marte armato, / se s'adira tall'hor par Giove irato, / e parlando a Mercurio toglie il vanto." In Adriano Valerini, *Oratione...in morte della Divina Signora Vincenza Armani* (1570), in *La Commedia dell'Arte e la società barocca: La professione del teatro*, ed. Ferruccio Marotti and Giovanna Romei (Rome: Bulzoni, 1991), 31–41. This may go a long way toward explaining Armani's tragic premature death by poison in 1568.

42. Franciotti's treatise is in *La commedia dell'arte e la società barocca: La fascinazione del teatro*, ed. Ferdinando Taviani (Rome: Bulzoni, 1969), 177–78. Domenico Gori argued likewise in *Trattato contro alle commedie lascive* (1604), now in *La commedia dell'arte e la società barocca: La fascinazione del teatro*, ed. Taviani, 136–44.

43. Giovan Domenico Ottonelli, *Della Christiana Moderazione del Theatro. Libro I detto La Qualità delle Commedie* (1646), in *Il segreto della Commedia dell'Arte: La memoria delle compagnie italiane del XVI, XVII e XVIII secolo*, ed. Ferdinando Taviani and Mirella Schino (Florence: Usher, 1982), 169. There was also no masculinity on the Italian stage, the intellectual tourist Thomas Nashe opined, for "the players beyond the sea [are] a sort of squirting baudie Comedians, that have Whores and common Curtizens to playe womens partes, and forbear no immodest speech, or unchast action that may procure laughter." See Thomas Nashe, "Pierce Penilesse his supplication to the Divell," in *The Works of Thomas Nashe*, ed. Ronald McKerrow (1592; Oxford: Blackwell, 1966), 215.

44. See *La supplica. Discorso Famigliare* (1636), in *La Commedia dell'Arte e la società barocca: La professione del teatro*, ed. Marotti and Romei, 610.

Veneto phenomenon, were by then the rage, not only in Italy but also in France.

Discounting the comedic-religious theatrical production of the convent, which was in any case never meant to be performed outside pious institutions (a good example by Sister Beatrice del Sera was published a few years ago),⁴⁵ and aside from the production of parish dramas and sacred representations, such as those of Antonia Pulci⁴⁶ and of Moderata Fonte,⁴⁷ the first example of a female authored comedy could be considered *L'interesse* by the actress Vittoria Piissimi of the Compagnia dei Gelosi. Piissimi was famous on stage as Isabella Andreini's counterpart, and she was so admired that the French Henry de Valois, journeying through Venice in 1574 on his way to be crowned King Henry III, asked specifically for her performance during his celebrated sojourn there. But this comedy has not surfaced.⁴⁸ Officially, the first published comedy by an Italian woman writer is *Li buffoni* by Margherita Costa, a Roman actress, singer, and poet, and also, tellingly, a courtesan, who flaunted even in print all rules of feminine decorum. Thanks to the protection of Grand Duke Ferdinando II de' Medici, she published her play in 1641.⁴⁹ A few years later, she

45. Beatrice del Sera (1515–1585), *Amor di virtù*, ed. Elissa Weaver (Ravenna: Longo, 1990); and more generally on conventual production, Elissa Weaver, *Convent Theater in Early Modern Italy: Spiritual Fun and Learning for Women* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

46. Antonia Pulci (1452–1501), *Florentine Drama for Convent and Festival*, ed. James Wyatt Cook and Barbara Collier Cook, trans. James Wyatt Cook, *The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

47. Moderata Fonte, *La passione di Cristo descritta in ottava rima* (Venice: Guerra, 1582).

48. She also wrote a now lost pastoral, *Fillide*. See Jolanda De Blasi, *Le scrittrici italiane dalle origini al 1800* (Florence: Nemi, 1930), 105–13.

49. Margherita Costa, *Li Buffoni: Commedia ridicola* (Florence: Massi e Landi, 1641). A modern edition of this play is in *Commedie dell'Arte*, ed. Siro Ferrone, 2 vols. (Milan: Mursia, 1996), 235–359. There are, however, still doubts about the real author of this play. See Ferrone's bibliographical note to the play in *Commedie dell'Arte*, 2:236–37. For an eloquent assessment of Costa's poetic output, see Cox, *Women's Writing in Italy*, 212–15; on her innovative approach, see Marcella Salvi, "Il solito è sempre quello, l'insolito è più nuovo: *Li Buffoni* e le prostitute di Margherita Costa tra tradizione e innovazione," *Forum Italicum* 38.2 (2004): 376–99.

published a mythological play, *Gli amori della luna*.⁵⁰ A Venetian comedy by Orsetta Pellegrini, *Il serraglio aperto ovvero le malattie politiche del Gran Sultano*, was also published in 1687.⁵¹

If comedy was less welcoming as a genre to women writers than we might have expected, tragedy was even less accessible, for it required a grandiose cast, expensive outfits, and a plot of sensational carnage at a time when women were not even allowed to perform tragic roles.⁵² It does not surprise, then, that Valeria Miani is the first—and unless new documentation becomes available also the

50. Margherita Costa, *Gli amori della luna* (Venice: Giuliani, 1654).

51. Orsetta Pellegrini, *Il serraglio aperto, ovvero le malattie politiche del gran Sultano* (Venice: Nicolini, 1687). Orsetta is mentioned in Nicola Mangini, "La tragedia e la commedia," in *Storia della cultura veneta: Dalla Controriforma alla fine della Repubblica. Il Seicento*, ed. Girolamo Arnaldi and Manlio Pastore Stocchi, 6 vols. (Vicenza: Neri Pozza, 1983), 4/1: 297–326, at 317. An author named Angelita Scaramuccia, who published the comedies *La stratonica* (1616), *Gli amori concordi* (1618), *La schiava di Cipro* (1624), and *La Rosalba* (1638), is actually not a woman but a man with a Spanish-style first name. He continues to be mistaken for a woman by a number of critics who rename her "Angelica." For a convincing rebuttal, see Antonella Calzavara, "'Istoria' e 'Comedia' nell'opera di un autore marchigiano del XVII secolo: Angelita Scaramuccia," *Giornale storico della letteratura italiana* 171 (1994): 534–52. Leopoldo Ferri included in his collection a set of later works by the countess Maria Isabella Dosi-Grati, who wrote seven comical works in Bolognese dialect under the pseudonym of Dorigista, such as *Le fortune non conosciute del dottore. Commedia* (Bologna: Sarti, 1688); *Il padre accorto della figlia prudente. Commedia* (Bologna: Sarti, 1690); and *La Fortunata* (Bologna: Longhi, 1706). See *Biblioteca femminile italiana raccolta, posseduta e descritta dal Conte Pietro Leopoldo Ferri, Padovano* (Padua: Crescini, 1842), 148–49.

52. There were exceptions, of course. Vincenza Armani, for example, acted the role of Tragedy herself in Mantua in 1567, to great applause, as her biographer Valerini lovingly recalled: "At the end of the play she would come out wearing a lugubrious black dress which represented Tragedy itself and sing some stanzas summarizing the poem's subject ... and once her singing stopped, one would hear a loud roar, a manifest applause rising to the sky, and the people in the audience, astonished and motionless, would not know which way to turn." In Valerini, *Oratione ... in morte*, in *La Commedia dell'Arte e la società barocca: La professione del teatro*, ed. Marotti and Romei, 36. We also know that a nun, the noblewoman Donna Giulia Camilla Castigliona, played a tragic role in Luigi Grotto's *Adriana* in 1584. See Mangini, "La tragedia e la commedia," in *Storia della cultura veneta*, ed. Arnaldi and Pastore Stocchi, 323 n117. Traveling in Italy in 1728, Charles de Montesquieu noticed that male students dressed as women performed on the Roman stage, but that tragedies in Jesuit theaters used women rather than men to play female parts—not for the sake of verisimilitude, as we might infer, but as a response to moralistic concerns. See *Viaggio in Italia*, ed. Giovanni Macchia and Massimo Colesanti (Bari: Laterza, 1995), 166.

only—Italian woman author of a tragedy until the eighteenth century when the Venetian Luisa Bergalli published *Teba, Tragedia* (1728).⁵³ Maria Fortuna, a writer from Pisa, then published *Zaffira* (1771) and *Saffo* (1776).⁵⁴

Unlike comedy and tragedy whose female-authored history I have traced above, the pastoral play offered fertile ground for the talent of women writers, of actresses, and also of female singers, for once the realism central to court comedy ceased to preoccupy the stage—and women became nymphs and men melancholic shepherds—sex could be taken out of the picture and female patrons could both sponsor pastoral performances and play in them.⁵⁵ The playwright Angelo Ingegneri even argued that the pastoral was in fact the only genre in which young women could appear on stage:

With their rustic apparatus and scenery, and with costumes more elegant than pretentious, pastorals are most pleasing to the eye; and with their soft verse and delicate sentiments, most beautiful to the ears and the

53. Luisa Bergalli, *Teba, tragedia* (Venice: Cristoforo Zane, 1728). Curiously this piece is dedicated to “his excellence Marco Miani.” The plot, which has a happy ending à la Giraldi Cinzio, tells the story of Teba, whose husband, Alessandro, the tyrant of Fere, condemns to death in order to marry another woman, Ismene. For a reading of this tragedy, which was staged in Venice and well received, but soon forgotten, see Pamela Stewart, “Eroine della dissimulazione: Il teatro di Luisa Bergalli,” *Quaderni veneti* 19 (1994), 73–92, at 82–83. Bergalli also published musical dramas, such as *Agide, re di Sparta. Dramma per musica* (Venice: Rossetti, 1725), while the Milanese Francesca Manzoni Giusti wrote a religious tragedy, *L'Ester* (Verona: Tumermani, 1733). Interest in tragedies was lively then and some women writers translated French tragedies, such as Bergalli and Manzoni Giusti as well as Elisabetta Caminer Turra, who directed on Venetian stages the plays she translated.

54. Maria Fortuna, *Zaffira. Tragedia* (Siena: Rossi, 1771); Maria Fortuna, *Saffo. Tragedia* (Livorno: Falorni, 1776). The information was compiled following the list of Ferri in *Biblioteca femminile italiana*, and it is by no means complete for the eighteenth century.

55. That was the case for Tasso's *Aminta*, for example, staged in 1580 at the Medici court, as related in a letter by Caterina Guidiccioni, mother of the poet and writer of (lost) pastorals, Laura Guidiccioni: “This carnival the princesses and the ladies of the court themselves will play young Tasso's [“Tassino”] pastoral and would like some madrigals to be set to music.” In Warren Kirkendale, “L'opera in musica prima del Peri: le pastorali perdute di Laura Guidiccioni ed Emilio de' Cavalieri,” in *Firenze e la Toscana dei Medici nell'Europa del Cinquecento*, ed. Giancarlo Garfagnini et al., 3 vols. (Florence: Olschki, 1982–83), 2:370.

intellect. In permitting onstage young maidens and honest women who are forbidden from comedy, they give a voice to the noblest of affections, not to be disdained by tragedy itself.⁵⁶

Female dramatists gave a voice to the genre right away: Isabella Andreini, as mentioned above, published *La Mirtilla* in 1588;⁵⁷ and Maddalena Campiglia joined her the same year with *Flori, favola boschereccia*.⁵⁸ Miani herself, with the publication of *Amorosa speranza* in 1604, is the third woman writer in this genealogy *au féminin* to publish a pastoral with musical intermezzi. A later writer is Isabella Coreglia, perhaps a singer native of Lucca, who produced *La Dori, favola pescatoria* (1634), and *Erindo il fido, favola pastorale* (1650).⁵⁹ She may have belonged to the same circle as Eleonora Bernardi Bellati (1559–post 1627), also from Lucca, who may have written *Clorindo*, now lost.⁶⁰ Recently the manuscript of a pastoral play by Barbara Torelli Benedetti, an author from Parma, who wrote *Parthenia* by 1587, has

56. Angelo Ingegneri, *Della poesia rappresentativa e del modo di rappresentare le favole sceniche*, ed. Maria Luisa Doglio (Modena: Panini, 1989), 7.

57. Isabella Andreini's play is now available in both Italian and English translation as *La Mirtilla*, ed. Maria Luisa Doglio (Lucca: Pacini Fazzi, 1995); and *La Mirtilla: A Pastoral*, ed. Julie D. Campbell (Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2002). On Andreini, see also Anne MacNeil, "The Divine Madness of Isabella Andreini," *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 120 (1995): 193–215; and Sampson, *Pastoral Drama in Early Modern Italy*, 98–128.

58. For a modern edition, see *Flori: A Pastoral Drama*, ed. Virginia Cox and Lisa Sampson, trans. Virginia Cox, *The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

59. Isabella Coreglia, *La Dori, favola pescatoria* (Naples: Montanaro, 1634); and *Erindo il fido, favola pastorale* (Pistoia: Fortunati, 1650). See Virginia Cox, "Fiction," in *A History of Women's Writing in Italy*, ed. Letizia Panizza and Sharon Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 52–64, at 55. See also *Bibliografia universale del teatro drammatico italiano con particolare riguardo alla storia della musica italiana*, ed. Giovanni Salvioli and Carlo Salvioli (Venice: Ferrari, 1903).

60. For a useful list of all performed and printed pastorals, see Marzia Pieri, "La breve stagione della drammaturgia," in *La scena boschereccia nel Rinascimento italiano* (Padua: Liviana, 1983), 151–80.

surfaced, an edition and translation of which is forthcoming.⁶¹ Still unclear is the author of an untitled pastoral play (referred to simply as “tragicommedia pastorale”) composed possibly in the late 1580s by a noblewoman from Lucca (“Gentildonna lucchese”), now housed in the Biblioteca Marciana in Venice.⁶²

The Pastoral Play Amorosa Speranza

Amorosa speranza, Miani's elegant verse play of 1604, tells the story of the nymph Venelia (perhaps a stand-in for the author Valeria) abandoned soon after her wedding by her husband, Damone, and pursued by two shepherds, Issandro and Alliseo, whom she refuses. Issandro eventually saves the nymph Tirenica from a sadistic satyr and falls in love with her, while Alliseo, who dejectedly tries to commit suicide, is convinced to marry a friend of Venelia, Fulgentia.⁶³ The Arcadian plot of *Amorosa speranza* is similar to Torquato Tasso's *Aminta*, first performed in Ferrara in 1573 but published only in 1580, and it is especially comparable to Isabella Andreini's *La Mirtilla*, a “feminist” version, so to speak, of the more famous *Aminta*.⁶⁴ As with Andreini's

61. The manuscript of *Partenia, favola boschereccia della Signora Barbara Torelli Benedetti* is located in the Biblioteca Statale di Cremona, Deposito Libreria Civica, Ms. AA. 1.33. Giuseppe Zonta first mentioned it in “*La Partenia di Barbara Torelli Benedetti*,” *RBLI* 14 (1906): 206–10. On Torelli (1546–post 1603), see Lisa Sampson, “Dramatica secreta: Barbara Torelli's *Partenia* (c. 1587) and Women in Late-Sixteenth-Century Theatre,” in *Theatre, Opera, and Performance in Italy from the Fifteenth Century to the Present*, ed. Brian Richardson et al. (Leeds: Society for Italian Studies, 2004), 99–115. Sampson thinks that Torelli may have had her *Partenia* recited in front of members of the Accademia degli Innominati in Parma.

62. Biblioteca Marciana MS, Class IX, CCXXXIX (6999). Internal reference to the marriage of Ferdinando I de' Medici and Christine de Lorraine, which took place in Florence in 1589, would justify such a date. Virginia Cox has called attention to this Venetian manuscript in “Fiction,” 55.

63. Critical interest in *Amorosa speranza* is just beginning, with two recent good articles: Katie Rees, “Female-Authoring Drama in Early Modern Padua: Valeria Miani Negri,” *Italian Studies* 63:1 (2008), 41–61; and Françoise Decroisette, “Satyres au féminin dans la pastorale italienne de la fin du XVIe siècle,” in *La campagna in città: Letteratura e ideologia nel Rinascimento. Scritti in onore di Michel Plaisance*, ed. Giuditta Isotti Rosowsky et al. (Florence: Cesari Editore, 2002), 149–82.

64. Torquato Tasso, *Aminta*, ed. Luigi Fasso, 3rd ed. (Florence: Sansoni, 1954).

Lettera Dedicatoria

ALLA SERENISSIMA PRINCIPESSA,
SIGNORA E PATRONA COL[ENDISSIMA],
MADAMA ELEONORA GONZAGA,
DUCHESSA DI MANTOVA E DI MONFERRATO

Fu parere di tutti i più savi dell'antichità, approvato dall'uso, che dove fosse altezza di stirpe reale ed eminenza d'eroico splendore, ivi di necessità si ritrovasse ancora ingenerata l'indole d'un'anima valorosa. V[ostra] A[ltezza], favorita da Dio, ornata dalla natura e arricchita dalla fortuna di più sovrani doni e di maggior prerogative che altra principessa de' nostri tempi o de' secoli trascorsi, viene giustamente ammirata dal mondo e riverita come sacro tabernacolo delle virtù e venerando tempio delle grazie di Venere celeste e del divino amore. In questa comune opinione rapita anch'io a viva forza dal soave influsso di rare e innumerabili virtù, non so se illuminato il cielo dell'anima vostra, o pure illuminate da quella come da prima intelligenza, umile e oscura mi rappresento al cospetto di V[ostra] Altezza per mostrarle parte di quella riverenza e debita soggezione ch'ognun le dee ed in particolare il nostro sesso, illustrato a meraviglia dal chiarissimo sole della serenissima sua luce. Ho creduto non esser disdicevole in questo mio primo incontro con l'offerirle me stessa consecrarle insieme questa mia qual si sia poetica fatica, parto di sterile ingegno, a madre fecondissima non meno di virtù che di stirpe reale e gloriosa. Né doverà dal mondo esser stimato presunzione o temeraria impresa la mia perch'abbi osato d'inviarle questo basso dono risplendendo con esso magnanimi e valorosi eroi, non forse indegni d'esser ricevuti dall'animo eroico ed eccelso di lei; nell'ombre de i lagrimosi ed infelici avvenimenti de' quali spero a costume di pittore far maggiormente spiccare il rilievo delle felicità e grandezze di V[ostra] A[ltezza] e così co'l paragone delle tenebre far conoscere il pregio della luce.

Dedicatory Letter

TO THE MOST SERENE PRINCESS, LADY,
AND MOST HONORABLE PATRONESS
MADAME ELEONORA MEDICI GONZAGA, DUCHESS
OF MANTUA AND OF MONFERRATO

It was the opinion of all the wisest men of antiquity, an opinion approved by custom, that wherever one found the loftiness of royal lineage and the eminence of heroic splendor, there by necessity was also found the inborn disposition of a valorous spirit. Your Highness, favored by God, adorned by Nature, and enriched by Fortune with more exalted endowments and greater prerogatives than any other princess of our time or of the past centuries, is justly admired by the world and revered as a holy tabernacle of virtues and a venerable temple of the graces of the celestial Venus and the divine Love.

In this same opinion I too have been swept up with overwhelming force by the sweet influence of your rare and innumerable virtues; I don't know whether Heaven is illuminated by your soul, or those virtues are illuminated by your soul, as if by a prime intelligence. Humble and obscure, I present myself in the presence of Your Highness, in order to show you part of that reverence and dutiful subjection which everyone owes you, and particularly our sex which is marvelously glorified by the very bright sun of your most serene light. I believed it not unseemly, in this my first encounter, to offer you myself and at the same time to consecrate to you this poetic effort of mine, such as it is, the offspring of a sterile intellect, to a mother most prolific no less of virtues than of a royal and glorious lineage. Nor must the world deem my endeavor presumptuous or reckless, because I have dared to send you this lowly gift, since shining with it are magnanimous and valorous heroes, perhaps not unworthy to be received by your heroic and outstanding intellect. By means of the shadows of tearful and unhappy events I hope, as is the custom with painters, to make stand out more clearly in contrast the joys and grandeurs of Your Highness, and so with the comparison of the shadows to make better known the worth of the light.

Della qual molto vaga la mia CELINDA, nell'uscire dall'oscuro silenzio dove finora è stata involta, ingegnosa farfalla, volando s'indirizza a lei, oggetto più d'ogn'altro luminoso, e quivi con sorte felice accendendosi al chiaro lume della sua grazia, arderà, s'incenderà e nel celeste rogo di quel divin splendore non morte o sepoltura, ma spera chiara e gloriosa vita riportarne. Resta che l'Altezza Vostra non sdegni questo tragico parto, avendo più riguardo all'animo di me, umilissima donatrice, che alla bassezza dello stesso dono, in cui non riconosco altro merito che quella sincerità e quell'affetto co 'l quale glielo consacro, supplicando l'Altezza Vostra che resti servita di ricevermi nel grado delle sue più infime servitrici, recandomi a specie di somma felicità l'esser annoverata in quelle per poter ad ogn' ora con l'occhio della mente rimirare e riverire co 'l core la bella idea di V[ostra] A[ltezza], mia sovrana Signora, mio solo oggetto, mia benigna stella e mio benefico sole. E augurandole dal cielo il colmo d'ogni felicità, umilmente me le inchino.

Di Padova il ____ dì Luglio 1611

Di V[ostra] A[ltezza] S[erenissima] devotiss[ima] e umiliss[ima]
servitrice

Valeria Miani Negri

Of this light my Celinda is very desirous as she emerges from the shadowy silence where up till now she has been enveloped; like an ingenious moth she directs her flight to you as to the object more luminous than any other. There she meets a happy fate: set aflame in the bright light of your grace, she will burn; she will catch fire; and in the celestial pyre of that divine splendor, not death or burial, but a bright and glorious life she hopes to carry away.

It remains for Your Highness not to disdain this tragic offspring of mine, having greater regard for the spirit of the humble giver than for the lowliness of the gift itself. I recognize no other merit in my gift than that sincerity and affection with which I consecrate it to you, supplicating Your Highness that you consent to receive me into the ranks of your lowliest servants. It would bring me to a sort of supreme happiness to be numbered among them, so that I may at any time with my mind's eye gaze at, and revere with my heart, the beautiful Ideal of Your Highness, my sovereign Lady, my only objective, my benign star, and my beneficent sun. And wishing for you from Heaven the height of every joy, humbly I bow to you.

From Padua, the ___ day of July, 1611.

Your Highness's most devoted and most humble servant,

Valeria Miani Negri

Poesie Celebrative

ALLA MOLTO ILLUSTRE SIGNORA

VALERIA MIANI

PER LA SUA CELINDA

TETRASTICI

DEL SIGNOR CONTE GRATIADIO CONSERVI

Con quai fregi o quai pompe oggi risuona
Tra funesta d'amor fiera procella
La sonora tua cetra, o vaga e bella
Cittadina di Pindo e d'Elicona?

Del sacrato Elicona, che fastoso
Gl'animati cristalli e i vivi argenti
Mesce ne' dolci tuoi canori accenti,
E sol oggi per te sorge pomposo.

Sorge pomposo ed a ragion t'onora,
Che dal lugubre tuo bel canto impara
Viver vita Celinda assai più chiara
De la luce del ciel, che 'l mondo indora.

Di quella luce onde, portando il giorno
L'eterno auriga co' destrier volanti,
Te sola addita e de' suoi propri vanti
Fregia il tuo nome di virtute adorno.

Quindi egli avien che la verace diva,
Celeste musa, nel cantar ti lodi,
Perché oprar sai con pelegri modi
Che la fama de' regi eterna viva.

A la bellezza sei madre d'Amore
E nel girar del guardo onesto e santo

Celebratory Poems

TO THE VERY ILLUSTRIOUS LADY VALERIA MIANI
FOR HER CELINDA

TETRASTICHES
BY COUNT GRATIADIO CONSERVI¹

With what decorations or what splendors today resounds
amid love's baleful fierce storm
your sonorous lyre, O you charming and beautiful
citizen of Pindus and of Helicon?²

Of sacred Helicon which sumptuously
mixes, in your sweet melodious accents,
animated crystals and vivid argents,
and today through you alone does it rise up in splendor.

It rises up in splendor, and rightfully honors you,
for from your beautiful lugubrious song Celinda
learns to live a life far brighter
than the light of Heaven which gilds the world;

than that light with which, in bringing the day,
the eternal charioteer with his flying destriers
points out you alone, and with his own merits
he decorates your name which is adorned with virtue.³

Then it happens that the truthful divine
celestial Muse in her singing praises you,
because you know how to work in elegant ways
so that the fame of kings eternally may live.

Judging from your beauty you are the mother of Love,
and when you turn roundabout your honest and holy gaze,

Stupido ognun t'ammira e dice intanto:
"Venere al volto sei, Pallade al core."

A te dunque, VALERIA, ognun s'inchina
C'hai ne la mente e nel leggiadro volto
Ogni sapere, ogni bel pregio accolto
Onde sei, fra mortali, opra divina.

*ALLA MOLTO ILLUSTRE SIGNORA
VALERIA MIANI
PER LA SUA CELINDA, TRAGEDIA*

[DE] IL CAVALIER VANNI

Mentre tragiche nozze e mesti amori
Co 'l canto di Melpomene tu canti
E vestendo di duol volto e sembianti
Con grido eterno oggi il coturno onori,

Per le selve d'Eliso e per gl'orrori
Le Fedre e le Medee, nud'ombre erranti,
Vaghe di rimirar gl'antichi pianti,
Braman su i colli Euganei infausti ardori,

Però che quivi a te sol dato in sorte
Fu con le note tue d'affetto piene
Far dolenti i teatri a l'altrui morte,

E de la gloria per le vie serene
Lieta portar fra l'auree trecce attorte
Il primo allor de le funeste scene.

everyone, stunned, admires you, and says meanwhile:
“You are Venus in your visage, but Pallas at heart.”⁴

To you therefore, VALERIA, everyone bows,
for you have in your mind and in your lovely visage
all knowledge and every fine merit gathered;
hence you are among mortals a work divine.

*TO THE VERY ILLUSTRIOUS LADY
VALERIA MIANI
FOR HER TRAGEDY, CELINDA*

*FROM CAVALIER VANNI*⁵

While tragic nuptials and sad loves
with Melpomene’s song you sing,
and dressing with grief your visage and expression,
with eternal fame today the buskin you honor,⁶

through the woods of Elysium and through horrors
the Phaedras and the Medeas, errant naked shades
desirous of staring at the ancient plaints,
crave on the Euganean Hills doomed passions.⁷

But here to you alone as your fate
was it given, by means of your verses with emotion filled,
to make theaters grieve at others’ deaths,

and through glory’s serene paths
to wear joyfully among your golden twining tresses
the first laurel of the mournful scenes.⁸

*PER LA TRAGEDIA DELL'ILLUSTRISIMA SIGNORA
VALERIA MIANI
[DEL CAVALIER VANNI?]*

Questa, d'alti coturni
Sovrana dicitrice,
Quì ne mostra con stil raro e felice
Di Celinda il mortal ultimo giorno,
Ma co 'l bel guardo d'onestate adorno
(Ove il cor di mirar non è mai sazio)
In dispietata sorte
Crudel ne mena a morte.
Così di doppio strazio
Questa bella omicida
Con la penna e con gli occhi a morte sfida.

*PER LA MEDESIMA
DEL SIG. ARRIGO FALCONIO*

Oh, come chiara splendi
Nel tuo sovrano stile,
Alma saggia e gentile!
Oh, come dolci rendi
Questi tragici accenti
Di cui non udio Tebe i più dolenti!
Tu splendi sì ma chiara anco ne i rai
De gl'occhi tuoi, che 'l sol vincon d'assai.

*PER LA TRAGEDIA DELL'ILLUSTRE SIGNORA VALERIA MIANI
DEL SIG. ERCOLE MANZONI ESTENSE*

Altri pur le vittorie e i duci egregi,
E le guerre e gl'incendi e' canti e scriva,
Come chi di Laerte e de la diva
La prole ornò di mille fregi eterni.

FOR THE TRAGEDY BY THE ILLUSTRIOUS LADY

VALERIA MIANI

[BY CAVALIER VANNI?]

Of lofty buskins
this supreme narrator
here shows us, with a style rare and felicitous,
Celinda's fatal last day;
but with her beautiful gaze with chastity adorned
(where the heart is never sated with looking),
to a pitiless fate
cruelly she leads us to death.
Thus with double torment
this beautiful murderess
with her pen and with her eyes challenges us to death.

FOR THE SAME

BY SIGNOR ARRIGO FALCONIO⁹

Oh, how brightly you shine
in your supreme style,
O soul wise and noble!
Oh, how sweet you render
these tragic accents—
Thebes heard none more sorrowful.
You shine, yes; but brightly also in the rays
of your eyes, which overcome the sun by far.¹⁰

FOR THE TRAGEDY OF THE ILLUSTRIOUS LADY VALERIA MIANI

BY SIGNOR ERCOLE MANZONI, ESTENSE¹¹

By all means, of victories and outstanding generals,
wars and fires, let others sing and write,
like those who adorned with a thousand eternal ornaments
the offspring of Laertes and of the goddess;¹²

Persone che parlano

Prologo	<i>Ombra d'Eusina, figliastra del re di Persia, amante già del principe Autilio</i>
Lucinia	<i>Cioè Autilio, principe di Persia, amante della principessa Celinda</i>
Cubo	<i>Re di Lidia</i>
Consigliero	
Celinda	<i>Principessa di Lidia</i>
Nutrice	
Armillia	<i>Matrona di corte</i>
Attamante	<i>Cavaliere spartano della corte di Lidia, amante della principessa Celinda</i>
Araldo	<i>Fanciullo</i>
Alcandro	<i>Capitano de' soldati di Lidia</i>
Corimbo	<i>Cameriero</i>
Arminio	<i>Principe di Selandia, condotto prigioniero</i>
Itaco	<i>Duce dell'esercito de' Medi, condotto prigioniero del campo di Lidiani</i>
Messo	<i>che porta la testa, il cor e le mani del re Cubo</i>
Messo	<i>Re di Persia</i>
Fulco	
Coro	<i>de' soldati di Lidia</i>
Coro	<i>de' soldati di Persia</i>
Coro	<i>stabile di donne di Lidia</i>

La scena è in Efeso, città di Lidia.

Cast

Prologue	<i>the ghost of Eusina, stepdaughter of the King of Persia, formerly in love with Prince Autilio</i>
Lucinia	<i>the disguised Prince Autilio of Persia, lover of Princess Celinda</i>
Cubo	<i>King of Lydia</i>
Counselor	
Celinda	<i>Princess of Lydia</i>
Nurse	
Armillia	<i>matron of the court</i>
Attamante	<i>Spartan knight at the court of Lydia, suitor of Princess Celinda</i>
Herald	<i>a young boy</i>
Alcandro	<i>captain of the soldiers of Lydia</i>
Corimbo	<i>manservant</i>
Arminio	<i>prince of Zeeland, a prisoner</i>
Itaco	<i>general of the army of the Medes, a prisoner</i>
Messenger	<i>from the Lydian army</i>
Messenger	<i>who brings the head, heart, and hands of King Cubo</i>
Fulco	<i>King of Persia</i>
Chorus	<i>of Lydian Soldiers</i>
Chorus	<i>of Persian Soldiers</i>
stable	<i>Chorus of Lydian Ladies</i>

The setting is the Lydian city of Ephesus.

*Prologo**Ombra d'Eusina*

Da quegli oscuri e spaventevol regni
 Ov'han lor seggio il duol, i gridi e 'l pianto,
 Da quei profondi e tenebrosi abissi
 Ove i tre fiumi con sulfurei rivi
 Bagnano i campi de' tormenti eterni, 5
 Ov'il trifauce difensor d'Averno,
 Orribilmente fiero,
 A l'entrata è custode
 E co' latrati i miseri spaventa,
 Di tenebre vestita alma dolente 10
 D'infelice donzella,
 Di mal nata regina,
 Di ver'amante miserabil ombra,
 Oggi risorgo a riveder il giorno,
 E torno a rimirar fra gente viva 15
 La diurna del ciel splendida face.
 Che dico a rimirar? Ahi, lassa, vengo
 A ministrar veneno
 A le tre suore c'han vipereo 'l crine!
 Così a me fu concesso 20
 Dal crudo regnator de l'ombre eterne
 Per vendicar i miei sofferti oltraggi
 Contra Autilio crudel, ch'in molle gonna,
 E con mentito crin, mentito nome,
 Com'ebbe il cor mentito, in Lidia venne, 25
 Tratto da le bellezze
 De la figlia del re. Fortuna arrise
 A' suoi desir lascivi, ond'egli poi
 De l'amato suo ben fu fatto dono.
 Quivi 'l crudel senza memoria vive 30
 De l'amor mio, in mezzo a gl'agi, a i lussi;
 E quanto ebbe me in odio
 Altrettanto Celinda ama ed apprezza.

Prologue

Ghost of Eusina

From those dark and frightful realms
where dwell grief, screams, and weeping;
from those deep and shadowy abysses
where the three rivers with sulfurous banks
bathe the fields of eternal torments, 5
where the three-headed defender of Avernus
(horribly fierce)
at the entrance is the guard,
and with his barking affrights the wretched ones;²²
dressed in shadows, the suffering spirit 10
of an unhappy maiden,
of an unfortunate queen,
a true lover's miserable ghost,
today I rise up to see again the daylight.
I return to behold, among living people, 15
the firmament's splendid diurnal torch.
What am I saying, to behold? Alas, I come
to administer poison
to the three sisters with the snaky hair.²³
To me this was granted 20
by the cruel ruler of the eternal shades,
to take revenge, for the outrages I suffered,
upon cruel Autilio, who in a woman's skirt
and with lying hair and a lying name,
just like his lying heart, to Lydia came,²⁴ 25
drawn by the beauties
of the king's daughter. Fortune smiled
on his lascivious desires, so that he later
of his beloved darling received the gift.
Here the cruel man lives, forgetful 30
of my love, amid comforts and luxuries;
and as much as he hated me,
that much he loves Celinda, and esteems her.

Ama la sua beltà, pregia la stirpe
 De gli avi suoi regali, adora e cole 35
 La corrotta onestà ch'in me cotanto
 Diceva odiar, non violata ancora.
 Barbaro dispietato e cor ferino,
 A me negò l'amore,
 Spregiò 'l mio regio sangue, 40
 E ricusò il crudel, per non bear mi
 Con li bramati suoi dolci imenei,
 Di Tracia la corona;
 Né di tanto satollo,
 Sotto 'l velo coperto 45
 De l'inimica notte,
 Fuggì dal regno suo a l'ora quando
 Chiedevo 'l guiderdon de' miei tormenti,
 E venne dov'Amor cieco 'l condusse
 Perch'io, che da suoi lumi 50
 Il mio lume traeva, vivesse cieca.
 E se nel suo partire
 Non mi privò di vita
 Non fu già per pietà (ch'in cor sì fiero
 D'entrar pietate aborre), 55
 Ma sol per eternare il mio tormento
 Ché, fuggendo la speme
 E crescendomi 'l duolo,
 S'accrebbe sì che gli fu vaso angusto 60
 Il mio ferito core,
 E me stessa sforzò di porre il ferro
 Nel proprio seno ignudo,
 Pensando ch'una morte
 Sciogliendo il cor da l'alma,
 Sciogliesse ancora i lacci 65
 Di disperarato amore.
 Ma lassa, i' m'ingannai! Si nutre Amore
 Ne' più profondi abissi,
 E meco vive ove la speme è morta.

He loves her beauty; he prizes the bloodline
of her regal ancestors; he adores and worships 35
her corrupted chastity—though to the same extent
he said he hated mine, unviolated still.
Pitiless barbarian and beastly heart!
To me he denied his love.
He disdained my royal blood. 40
And the cruel man, in order not to bless me
with his sweet, desired nuptials,
refused Thrace's crown,²⁵
nor with this was he satisfied.
Under inimical Night's 45
veil, hidden,
he fled from his kingdom at the moment when
I was asking for the reward for my torments,
and he came where blind Love led him,²⁶
so that I, who from his lights 50
drew my own light, would live blind.
And if with his departure
he did not deprive me of life,
it was certainly not for pity's sake (for into a heart so fierce
Pity finds entry abhorrent), 55
but only to render eternal my torment;
for with the flight of hope
and the increase of my grief,
it grew so great that my wounded heart
was too strait a vessel for it, 60
and it forced me to place the blade
in my own naked breast.
I thought that death,
in releasing my heart from my soul,
would release as well the bonds 65
of hopeless love.
But wretched me! I was mistaken. Love
is nourished in the deepest abysses,
and lives with me where hope is dead.

Vive, ma disperato, e lascia campo 70
 Al mio desio da procurar la morte,
 Lo strazio e le ruine
 Di lui, che tanto amai, ed oggi appunto
 Spero vederne memorandi esempi.
 Né mai dal carcer sciolto 75
 Il feroce Aquilon verso 'l ciel spinse
 De l'ingordo ocean l'instabil flutto
 Con rabbia tal qual io da giusto sdegno,
 Da brama di vendetta
 Mossa ed accesa, spingerò le furie 80
 A l'esterminio altrui.
 Ecco s'io non vaneggio
 D'Efeso antica le superbe mura.
 Questi son pur che torreggiate al cielo
 Sergon, questa è la reggia 85
 Per loggie spaziose,
 Per bianchi marmi e per gentil lavoro
 D'artefice preclaro al mondo illustre,
 De' tiranni di Lidia infame nido.
 In queste regie stanze 90
 Torpe in ozio amoroso
 Il principe de' Persi,
 Ed io tra tanti affanni,
 Tra mille schiere d'indicibil pene
 Ancor qui perdo 'l tempo? 95
 E invendicata ancor sta la mia morte?
 Ah, non così sia sempre! Ombra dolente,
 Turberò i sonni suoi; questa ferita
 Che rosseggiante ancor mi mostra 'l petto
 Di sanguinose stille 100
 Li porrò avanti gli occhi, ed in maniera
 Fermi stabilirò gli affetti suoi,
 Che sforzate verranno ruine e morti,
 Che d'altro sangue gocciolar in breve 105
 Faranno questi tetti
 Ed ogni gioia volgeranno in pianto.

It lives, but hopeless, and it cedes the field 70
to my desire to obtain the death,
the suffering, and the ruin
of him whom I loved so much, and this very day
I hope to see memorable instances of it.
Never, once from imprisonment released, 75
did ferocious Aquilone²⁷ up toward the sky impel
the swollen ocean's unstable wave
with such rage as I, who by just wrath,
by the desire for vengeance,
am moved and inflamed, shall impel the Furies 80
to the extermination of others.²⁸
Behold, if I am not hallucinating,
ancient Ephesus's proud city walls.²⁹
Indeed they are; towering toward the sky
they rise. This is the royal palace; 85
for its spacious loggias,
for its white marble, and for the noble work
of an outstanding craftsman, throughout the world it is illustrious.
Of the tyrants of Lydia it is the infamous nest.
In these regal rooms 90
the prince of the Persians
lazes in amorous idleness.
And I among so many sorrows,
among a thousand ranks of unspeakable pains,
still here I waste my time? 95
And my death remains still unavenged?
Ah, it will not be so forever. As a grieving shade
I will disturb his slumbers. This wound,
which still reddens my breast
with bloody droplets, 100
I shall place before his eyes; and in such a way
I shall make him firmly believe
that inevitably shall come ruin and deaths
which will make these roofs
drip with other blood before long, 105
and will turn every joy into weeping.

La regina de' Persi,
Per la mia morte afflitta,
Viva congiuri con la morta figlia;
E congiuri l'Inferno 110
A' danni de l'iniquo,
Ond'egli mora, e seco
Ruini e pera con l'amata il regno.
Stan padre e figlio aspri nemici, e l'uno
Versi de l'altro il sangue 115
Co 'l spirto indegno, ed ambo
Paghin la vita mia con la lor morte.

May the queen of the Persians,
by my death afflicted,
while yet living conspire with her dead daughter,
and may Hell conspire 110
to the detriment of the wicked one,
so that he may die, and with him
may fall to ruin and perish, together with his beloved, this kingdom.
May father and son be bitter enemies, and the one
spill the other's blood 115
along with his unworthy spirit, and may they both
pay for my life with their deaths.