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Tasso among the Muses:  
Reading and Writing Women in Early Modern Italy

by

Kathleen P. Driscoll

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Italian Studies

and the Designated Emphasis

in

Renaissance and Early Modern Studies

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor Albert Russell Ascoli, Co-chair

Professor Jane Tylus, Co-chair

Professor Timothy Hampton

Professor Diego Pirillo

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Reading and Writing Women in Early Modern Italy

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Abstract

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“Tasso among the Muses: Reading and Writing Women in Early Modern Italy” is the first study to address the dynamics of reciprocity and collaboration between Torquato Tasso (1544–1595) and women writers, performers, and patrons. This dissertation situates Tasso’s literary and cultural activities with women within social and historical contexts, especially those informed by the disputes regarding women’s status of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, commonly known as the *querelle des femmes*. Among the lines of inquiry I pursue in this study is how the fiction of “Tasso, the errant madman” is a broadly popular literary-artistic construct, a product of the Romantic imagination that lionized the poet’s documented history of disquieting paranoia. While localized episodes from Tasso’s biography—including his seven years of detention in Ferrara for his public displays of defiance against the Este court—lend some credibility to this sorely isolating depiction of the poet, the story I tell attends to other considerations.

By studying Tasso through the lens of early modern sociability, this research raises awareness of the poet’s activities coordinating literary-intellectual networks. Emphasized herein is how Tasso’s socialized literary production—his nearly 4,000 letters and lyric poems sent to friends and potential patrons, dialogues with contemporary interlocutors, and epic poems about mobility and community building—reflects the cultural communities in which he participated. Essential collaborators in these settings are contemporary women writers, performers, and patrons, socially marginalized figures who shared in Tasso’s need to secure sponsorship from institutional authorities. In careful analysis of Tasso’s writings and women’s active reception of them, I demonstrate how the male poet’s sympathetic representation of fictional female characters yielded positive responses among historical female readers: professional singers and actresses designed performance programs based on the *Gerusalemme liberata*’s women, while female poets disseminated Tasso’s thematic and conceptual principles. The thesis this dissertation advances is that Tasso’s multifaceted connections with women shaped the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century expansion of cultural networks—literary, musical,

theatrical, and scientific—in which opportunities for women and men to collaborate as intellectual protagonists increased due to developments in the notion of collective identity.

More broadly, this study underscores the collaborative networks within which early modern poets circulated, and situates questions of group identity at the forefront of the study of literary history. My findings reveal that the literary-intellectual exchanges between Tasso and women model multi-authored transmission, more than they indicate a linear process of reception. Tasso learned from women as much as women learned from Tasso. In different, though interconnected ways, each chapter challenges the dominant discourses of reception as a narrow form of imitation by shifting the critical focus from constructions of canonicity to modes of reciprocity. This attention complicates the conservative approaches to literary history that assert the dominant influence of one canonical (typically male) author. In this respect, the comparative work conducted herein avoids conveying any sense of hierarchy between Tasso's constructed "canonical" voice and women's marginalized "other" voices. This study further indicates how early modern women's integration in poetic production—as makers and muses—complements the history of women's one-sided efforts to "transcend their sex." By offering new perspectives onto the relationship between literary and performance histories, this research brings into relief their interrelation as part of a broader, sociopolitical cultural history. Such emphases expand opportunities for critical investigation into ideas of collective authorship and audience, in both early modern and contemporary contexts.

For my parents,  
the most devoted reader and the greatest story teller I know.

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## INTRODUCTION

### Tasso among the Muses: A Story of Reciprocity and Collaboration

Il lodar la virtù de la donna in quel modo che richiede  
la sua dignità è cosa da uomo savio e dotto.  
- Torquato Tasso

Signor Tasso ha dato ad altrui tal essemplio di vita che chi  
vorrà lungamente vivere bisognerà che lungamente  
muoia, nella nobil lettura de' suoi dottissimi scritti.  
- Isabella Andreini<sup>1</sup>

At the end of the sixteenth century, the leading Italian poet Torquato Tasso (1544–1595) participated in the hotly debated *querelle des femmes* by defending women in print, and rewriting the poetry of Antonio de' Pazzi, a male contemporary and ruthless critic of women. In an explicit line-by-line “correction” of Pazzi’s *Fuggite, O Muse dall’aspetto nostro*—a series of octaves banishing women from the site of poetry—Tasso composed counter-verses celebrating women for their admirable contributions as cultural protagonists, who, as “De[e] mortal[i],” bring “salute in terra” and “un soave ristoro al nostro male.”<sup>2</sup> Tasso’s revised version, *Venite, O Muse, nel cospetto nostro*, rejoices in the company of women, especially as the subjects and ideal readers of his poetry:

Pazzi, *Fuggite, O Muse dall’aspetto nostro*

Fuggite, O Muse, dall’aspetto nostro  
nelle stanze più interne e più secrete:  
non voglio al mio cantar l’aiuto vostro  
posciachè voi ancor femmine sete:  
le femmine ritrar con questo inchiostro  
voglio, e pagarle delle lor monete:  
Dunque, per meglio illuminar il foglio,  
prima ’l soggetto mio diffinir voglio.

Tasso, *Venite, O Muse, nel cospetto nostro*

Venite, O Muse, nel cospetto nostro  
dalle stanze più ombrose e più secrete,  
ch’io chieggi al mio cantare il favor vostro,  
posciachè Dive e Donne insieme sete:  
Le Donne io vo’ scolpir con puro inchiostro  
come medaglie d’oro, od in monete:  
e perchè sia lucente e splenda il foglio,  
da lor beltà calor e lume io voglio.

While Pazzi labels woman as a shape-shifting monster from hell (“mostro terribil dell’inferno”)—“un aspido mortale [e] un insanabil male,” with a “faccia di basilisco” and “ombra d’iena”—Tasso’s verses more calmly recall the Neoplatonic tradition whereby women “innalzano al ciel nostro intelletto,” and participate as interlocutors in the very act of writing. The play on “donna” as “danno” in Pazzi’s verses

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<sup>1</sup> Torquato Tasso, *Lettera sul matrimonio: Consolatoria all’Albizzi*, ed. Valentina Salmaso (Rome: Antenore, 2007), 5. Isabella Andreini, *Lettere* (Venice: Marc’Antonio Zaltieri, 1607), 119.

<sup>2</sup> These lines appear in Tasso’s octave “Che cosa è donna? Donna è Dea mortale,” in *Stanze inedite di Antonio de’ Pazzi in biasimo delle donne ed altre per risposta di Torquato Tasso in lode delle medesime* (Venice: Picotti, 1810). When this debate was published at the beginning of the nineteenth century, editors categorized it among Tasso’s “rime stravaganti.” Critical editions of Tasso’s poetry during the following century rarely mention this exchange and its cultural context. When these octaves received critical attention, literary scholar Liano Petroni defined them as “rime burlesche [...] di ben scarso valore,” in “Le Rime del Tasso,” *Annali della Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa: Lettere, Storia e Filosofia* 18, no. 1 (1949): 49–81, 75.

wholly evaporates in Tasso, who suggests—as the vernacular lyric tradition beginning with Petrarch and Dante had before him—that women serve as vehicles of conversion and the apparatus through which men’s isolated misery is transformed into spiritual redemption.

In this debate with Pazzi and elsewhere,<sup>3</sup> Tasso speaks as an advocate of women during a time when secular and sacred authorities—in addition to poets—questioned women’s social, economic, political, and sexual status.<sup>4</sup> Referring to Tasso’s “heroic” pro-woman affirmations in this cultural climate, literary historian Angelo Solerti has suggested: “egli [i.e. Tasso] si può considerare come uno degli eroi della reazione contro la corrente letteraria misogina che, particolarmente nei tempi a lui precedenti, aveva avuto tanti campioni.”<sup>5</sup> As Virginia Cox has recently shown, literary discourse grounded in the *querelle*’s central issues had, throughout the sixteenth century, revisited and reshaped gendered hierarchies of exemplarity and excellence: from Baldassare Castiglione’s “donna di palazzo” in his *Il libro del cortegiano* (1528), to the representations in chivalric epics of the chaste woman warrior by both male and female poets.<sup>6</sup> In a similar respect, Gabriella Zarri has indicated the different ways in which the Counter-Reformation’s moralist agenda articulated an exalted vision of women as venerable role models of piety, obedience, and social conduct.<sup>7</sup> These alterations to how women were seen historically and represented textually influenced contemporary male writers, like Tasso, who sought, among other motivations, to adhere to the Church’s ethical dictates.

Across his literary production, Tasso widely embraced this new model of female exemplarity, as witnessed, in particular, in his construction of the redeemed cast of female characters of *Gerusalemme liberata* (1581), as well as in the representations of historical women in the poet’s largely overlooked dialogues and encomiastic lyric poetry. The historical examples of Tasso’s correspondence, interactions, and collaborations with actual women reveal one reason for which his lyric poetry largely rejects the Petrarchan literary model that often depicts women as “donne crudeli”—soulless, unfeeling creatures lacking in all compassion for those who admire them.<sup>8</sup> In the decades leading up to Tasso’s

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<sup>3</sup> Tasso’s defensive position on women in this debate is comparable to the epistolary exchange on marriage he entered into with his cousin, Ercole Tasso, in 1585. In response to Ercole’s published anti-marriage and anti-woman treatise, Torquato reacted by praising the benefits inherent in all male-female relationships. See *Dello ammogliarsi piacevole contesa fra i due moderni Tassi, cioè, Hercole e Torquato, gentilhuomini bergamaschi* (Bergamo: Comin Ventura, 1594). For more context surrounding this debate, see Angelo Solerti, *La vita di Torquato Tasso*, 3 vols. (Turin-Rome: Loescher, 1895), 2:402.

<sup>4</sup> For general appraisals of ideas concerning women in late medieval and early modern literature and culture, see Ruth Kelso, *Doctrine for the Lady of the Renaissance* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1956); Joan Kelly, “Did Women Have a Renaissance?” in *Women, History, and Theory: The Essays of Joan Kelly* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984); Ian Maclean, *The Renaissance Notion of Woman* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980); 19–50; Constance Jordan, *Renaissance Feminism: Literary Texts and Political Models* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990); Mary E. Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

<sup>5</sup> Solerti, *Vita di Tasso*, 2:402.

<sup>6</sup> Virginia Cox, *The Prodigious Muse: Women’s Writing in Counter-Reformation Italy* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011). For Cox’s longer history of Renaissance women’s writing and its sociopolitical contexts, see her *Women’s Writing in Italy, 1400–1650* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008).

<sup>7</sup> Gabriella Zarri, “Donna, disciplina, creanza cristiana: un percorso di ricerca,” 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), 5–19.

<sup>8</sup> On the Petrarchan model and women, broadly considered, see Nancy J. Vickers, “Diana Described: Scattered Woman and Scattered Rhyme,” *Critical Inquiry* 8, no. 12 (1981): 265–79; Gordon Braden, *Petrarchan Love and the Continental Renaissance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999). For other critiques of early modern women represented in literature, see Ann Rosalind Jones, *The Currency of Eros: Women’s Love Lyric in Europe, 1540–1620* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990); Pamela Benson, *The Invention of the Renaissance Woman: The Challenge of Female Independence in the Literature and Thought of Italy and England* (University Park: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992); Margaret Rosenthal, *The Honest Courtesan: Veronica Franco, Citizen and Writer in Sixteenth-Century Venice* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); Deanna Shemek, *Ladies Errant: Wayward Women and Social Order in Early Modern Italy* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998); Patrizia Bettella, *The Ugly Woman: Transgressive Aesthetic Models in Italian Poetry from the Middle Ages to the Baroque* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005); Julie Campbell, *Literary Circles and Gender in Early Modern Europe: A Cross-Cultural Approach* (Burlington:

literary activities, women poets of the early-sixteenth century, such as Gaspara Stampa (1523–1554) and Veronica Franco (1546–1591), had already transformed this figure—the cold-hearted descendent of Petrarch’s Laura—into the passionate, erotically charged speaker, or reconstructed her from an unresponsive female beloved to a male figure hardened by the same frozen rigidity.<sup>9</sup> With such revisions to the poetically represented woman continuing to appear in lyric collections throughout the second half of the sixteenth century, Tasso’s works that seek to include women in profoundly philosophical, aesthetic, and intellectual discussions may be seen to operate within larger discursive contexts available to, and shaped by, women writers. Women’s eloquence, proper education, and positions with respect to their male counterparts faced constant scrutiny during Tasso’s lifetime, precisely as women’s literary, artistic, musical, and dramatic activities flourished. The poet’s response to these historical changes and challenges, which bring into relief the shifting landscapes of early modern ideas concerning authorship, audience, and forms of collectivity, constitutes the core of this dissertation. The following pages offer a radically new reading of a poet too often misconstrued as isolated and resistant to communities.

### CIRCULATING FICTIONS: “TASSO, THE ERRANT MADMAN” REVISITED

The premise for this study is a question that all literary historians must confront: who, or what, tells a story? In the 1582 edition of his *Essais*, Michel de Montaigne (1533–1592) paints a by now familiar portrait of the figure who would become Europe’s beloved madman in later centuries: an individual tormented by genius and mania, cast off by negligent patrons, and left wandering the Italian peninsula in search of hospitality and community. This image of Tasso, the “Renaissance martyr,”<sup>10</sup> has circulated internationally in visual works by Delacroix (Figures 1 and 2), dramatic representations by Goldoni and Goethe, an opera by Donizetti and Ferretti, and musical-poetic “laments” by Byron and Liszt.<sup>11</sup> Although Tasso’s literary works that feature female protagonists—historical and fictional—indicate the poet’s interests beyond traditional, and by 1580 tired, Petrarchan love lyric, the

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Ashgate, 2006); Virginia Cox and Chiara Ferrari, eds., *Verso una storia di genere della letteratura italiana: Percorsi critici e gender studies* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2012); Courtney Quaintance, *Textual Masculinity and the Exchange of Women in Renaissance Venice* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015); Aileen Feng, *Writing Beloveds: Humanist Petrarchism and the Politics of Gender* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017).

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Stefano Bianchi, *La scrittura poetica femminile nel Cinquecento veneto: Gaspara Stampa e Veronica Franco* (Manziana: Vecchiarelli, 2013); Maria Chiara Tarsi, *Studio sulla poesia femminile del Cinquecento* (Bologna: I libri di Emil, 2018). See also the detailed introductions to the modern bilingual editions of Stampa’s and Franco’s poetry: Gaspara Stampa, *The Complete Poems: The 1554 Edition of the Rime, A Bilingual Edition*, ed. Troy Tower and Jane Tylus, introduction and trans. by Jane Tylus (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010); Veronica Franco, *Poems and Selected Letters*, ed. and trans. Ann Rosalind Jones and Margaret F. Rosenthal (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

<sup>10</sup> Rebecca M. Pauly, “Baudelaire and Delacroix on Tasso in Prison: Romantic Reflections on a Renaissance Martyr,” *College literature* 30, no. 2 (2003): 120–35.

<sup>11</sup> Carlo Goldoni, *Torquato Tasso*, ed. Elsa de’ Giorgi (Ferrara: Liberty House, 1989), originally published in Id., *Nuovo teatro comico* (Venice: Pitteri, 1757); Johann Wolfgang Goethe, *Torquato Tasso* (Leipzig: G. J. Goschen, 1790); Lord Byron, *The Lament of Tasso* (London: J. Murray, 1823); Jacopo Ferretti, *Torquato Tasso: melodramma in tre atti* (Milan: Lucca, 1833). For a recent example of Tasso’s life dramatized in fiction, see Alvaro Torchio, *Luce e tenebra: Vita di Torquato Tasso. Romanzo* (San Cesario di Lecce: Pietro Manni, 2016). For critical reviews of this myth and its influence on the Romantic imagination, see Umberto Bosco, “Il Tasso come tema letterario nell’Ottocento italiano,” *Giornale storico della letteratura italiana* 91 (1928): 1–66; Mario Fubini, “Il Tasso e i romantici,” *Studi tassiani* 1 (1951): 27–36; Giovanni Macchia, “Il volto del Tasso,” in *Torquato Tasso tra letteratura, musica, teatro e arti figurative*, ed. Andrea Buzzoni (Bologna: Nuova Alfa Editoriale, 1985), 3–32; Frederick Burwick, *Poetic Madness and the Romantic Imagination* (University Park: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996); Alessandra Coppo, *All’ombra di malinconia: Il Tasso lungo la sua fama* (Florence: Le Lettere, 1997); Donelle R. Ruwe, “The Canon-Maker: Felicia Hemans and Torquato Tasso’s Sister,” in *Comparative Romanticisms: Power, Gender, Subjectivity*, eds. Larry H. Peer and Diane Long Hoeveler. (Rochester: Camden House Press, 1998), 133–57; Giorgio Pullini, “Tasso nel teatro romantico



Fig. 1. Eugène Delacroix, *Le Tasse en prison*, 1837.



Fig. 2. Eugène Delacroix, *Le Tasse dans la maison de fous*, 1824.

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italiano,” *Lettere italiane* 54, no. 1 (2002): 64–89; Rosa Mucignat, “Tasso and the Quest for Modern Epic: Goethe’s *Torquato Tasso* and Leopardi’s *Operette morali*,” *Publications of the English Goethe Society* 85, no. 1 (2016): 28–39; Jason Lawrence, *Tasso’s Art and Afterlives: The Gerusalemme liberata in England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017).

myth of Tasso as the afflicted hero of Romantic sensibilities has long perpetuated his image as a “new Ovid,” suggesting a parallel between the Roman poet’s and, ostensibly, Tasso’s affection for women of elite, unattainable stature, such as Leonora d’Este (1537–1581), the sister of Duke Alfonso II (1533–1597).<sup>12</sup> Despite this biographical fiction’s substantial traction in visual and textual re-imaginings of Tasso, there has been little effort to revisit the cracks in this picture and suggest an alternative means by which to contextualize, and seek to understand comprehensively, Tasso’s interactions with women. The phenomenon whereby readers’ general knowledge of and “compassion for” Tasso’s “amorosa leggenda” precede his literary works, which Angelo Mori witnessed already at the end of the nineteenth century, continues in some currents today, and deserves careful reconsideration so as not to prolong a “Neo-Romantic” vision of Tasso that depreciates his dynamic involvement in the literary-intellectual landscape of early modern Europe.<sup>13</sup>

This dissertation is the first study to address the dynamics of reciprocity and collaboration between Tasso and women writers, performers, and patrons. The work situates Tasso’s literary and cultural activity with women within social and historical contexts, especially those informed by the disputes regarding women’s status of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Among the lines of inquiry I pursue in this dissertation is how the fiction of “Tasso, the errant madman” is a broadly popular literary-artistic construct, a product of the Romantic imagination that lionized the poet’s documented history of disquieting paranoia. While localized episodes from Tasso’s biography—including his seven years of detention in Ferrara for his public displays of defiance against the Este court—lend some credibility to this isolating depiction of the poet, the story I seek to tell attends to other considerations.

By studying Tasso through the lens of early modern sociability, this research raises awareness of the poet’s activities coordinating literary-intellectual networks. Emphasized herein is how Tasso’s socialized literary production—his nearly 4,000 letters and lyric poems sent to friends and potential patrons, dialogues with contemporary interlocutors, and epic poems about mobility and community—reflects the cultural communities in which he participated. Essential collaborators in these settings are contemporary women writers, performers, and patrons, socially marginalized figures who shared in Tasso’s need to secure sponsorship from institutional authorities. In careful analysis of Tasso’s writings and women’s active reception of them, I demonstrate how the male poet’s sympathetic representation of fictional female characters yielded positive responses among historical female readers. Professional singers and actresses designed performance programs based on the *Liberata*’s women, while female poets disseminated Tasso’s thematic and conceptual principles. The thesis this dissertation advances is that Tasso’s multifaceted connections with women shaped the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century expansion of cultural networks—literary, musical, theatrical, and scientific—in which opportunities for women and men to collaborate as intellectual protagonists increased due to developments in the notion of collective identity and authorship.

More broadly, this study underscores the synergic networks within which early modern poets circulated, and situates questions of group identity at the forefront of the study of literary history. The findings of my research indicate that the intellectual collaborations between Tasso and women, which took place mainly through lyric, epistolary, and dialogue exchanges, model multi-authored transmission, more than they indicate a linear process of reception. In different, though

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<sup>12</sup> The identification of Tasso as a “novello Ovidio” appears in the earliest biographies of the poet: Giovanni Pietro D’Alessandro, *Vita del Signor Torquato Tasso* (Naples: Costantino Vitale, 1604); Giovan Battista Manso, *Vita di Torquato Tasso* (Naples: Deuchino, 1621). Cf. Carlo Gardenio Granata, “Memorie dei *Tristia* ovidiani nel quaderno autografo di rime del 1578,” in *Il merito e la cortesia: Torquato Tasso e la Corte dei Della Rovere. Atti del convegno, Urbino-Pesaro, 18–20 settembre 1996*, eds. G. Arbizzoni et. al. (Ancona: Il Lavoro editoriale, 1999), 185–215.

<sup>13</sup> Angelo Mori, *Le sventure del Tasso nel teatro italiano* (Bologna: Zanichelli, 1895), 1–2.

interconnected ways, each chapter challenges the dominant discourses of reception as a narrow form of imitation by shifting the critical focus from constructions of canonicity to modes of reciprocity. This attention complicates the somewhat conservative approaches to literary history that assert the dominant influence of one canonical (typically male) author. In this respect, the comparative work conducted herein avoids conveying any sense of hierarchy between Tasso's constructed "canonical" voice and women's marginalized "othered" voices.<sup>14</sup> This is due, in part, because Tasso's own story attests to the shifting boundaries between authorial centers and their peripheries. This research moves beyond questions of an author's sex by reassessing the validity and usefulness of the separatist construct of literary history that has divided "women's writing" from the somewhat unspoken category of "writing in general (unstated: *men's writing*).<sup>15</sup> In agreement with Diana Robin, this study similarly "insists that women's works be read alongside those of their male contemporaries."<sup>15</sup>

The examples of collective authorship described in this dissertation, which I understand to be the reciprocal process of generating literary production in which authors and readers are equally active participants, attend to early modern women's integration as makers and muses of production.<sup>16</sup> Such analysis complements some critical approaches that have valorized women's intellectual activity, perhaps unintentionally, solely because it allows women a means of "transcending" their sex or gender. While women are, indeed, vital to the contours of this dissertation, the reason for their inclusion does not fall squarely on the fact that they are women. My emphasis on modes of collectivity, reception, and reciprocity between readers and writers of both sexes suggests that symbiotic relationships surface in literary activity that does not uniquely concern itself with mechanisms of "negotiating" or "performing" gender.<sup>17</sup>

To be sure, the landmark studies of gender by Ann Rosalind Jones and Judith Butler are fundamental for analyses in which questions of gender occupy the center of one's critical investigation. This dissertation, however, is not such a study. For example, although Isabella Canali Andreini (1562–1604), who wrote widely about the state of womanhood at the turn of the seventeenth century, takes center stage in the final chapter, my analysis of her literary exchanges and interactions with Tasso does not track a determinately gender-inflected reading, though scholars such as Daria Perocco, Meredith Ray, and Carlo Mafio have done so quite admirably.<sup>18</sup> Rather, my interests across this study take root

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<sup>14</sup> Though my methodology is slightly different, my study of early modern women's literary and intellectual activities is greatly indebted to the editions and translations of women writers that have appeared in the *Other Voice in Early Modern Europe* series, which began with the University of Chicago Press and, in 2010, moved to the Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies at the University of Toronto. One particular measure with the *Other Voice* series that I have found especially effective in narrowing the gap between "women's writing" and "men's writing" is the volume *In Dialogue with the Other Voice in Sixteenth-Century Italy: Literary and Social Contexts for Women's Writing*, eds. Julie D. Campbell and Maria Galli Stampino (Toronto: Iter, 2011).

<sup>15</sup> Diana Robin, *Publishing Women: Salons, the Presses, and the Counter-Reformation in Sixteenth-Century Italy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), xix.

<sup>16</sup> My understanding of the term "collective authorship" as a historicized model of composition concerned with readers' accessibility to texts is owed, in more general ways, to Albert R. Ascoli's erudite investigation of the intricate relationship between authority and "institutions" in *Dante and the Making of a Modern Author* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008). In other respects, my arguments have been informed by some of the theoretical insights, regarding early printing and its "cultural authority" in England, put forth in Margaret J. M. Ezell, *Social Authorship and the Advent of Print* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999). On the broader question of textual authority and circulation, see Pollie Bromilow, "Introduction," in *Authority in European Book Culture 1400–1600*, ed. Pollie Bromilow (Burlington: Ashgate, 2013), 1–14.

<sup>17</sup> On "negotiating" gender, see Jones, *The Currency of Eros*. On "performing" gender, see Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1980).

<sup>18</sup> Daria Perocco, "Donna/uomo, attrice/scrittrice, Isabella/Francesco: metamorfosi della scrittura di Isabella Andreini," in *Instabilità e metamorfosi nella letteratura barocca*, ed. Simona Morando (Venice: Marsilio, 2007), 87–111; Meredith Ray, *Writing Gender in Women's Letter Collections of the Italian Renaissance* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 156–83; Carlo Mafio, ed., *Isabella Andreini: una letterata in scena* (Padua: Il Poligrafo, 2014).

in what Peter Herman has called “the new inclusivity” in early modern studies, which encourages the pursuit of broadly diverse, though profoundly interconnected, interdisciplinary fields.<sup>19</sup> To model such inclusivity, one purpose of this dissertation rests in the gender-neutral, or even postgender, application of the term “muse,” whereby the very title “Tasso among the Muses” specifies the reciprocity through which women influenced Tasso, and Tasso influenced women. To return to the question that all literary historians confront, this dissertation confirms that the “who” narrating a story is just as important as the “what.”

## LITERARY PARTNERSHIPS AND PRECURSORS IN PRINT

Central to the overlapping literary, historical, and cultural contexts this study considers is women’s expanded public presence as patrons, poets, and artists in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Italy. As Brian Richardson, Diana Robin, and Virginia Cox have shown, women’s involvement in cultures of print, performance, and dialogue indicates their participation in the major philosophical and historical discussions of their time.<sup>20</sup> Developments in ideas concerning the “sociology of texts,” as articulated by Donald McKenzie, have generated considerable scholarship on early modern textual production, transmission, and consumption.<sup>21</sup> Women’s immersion in intellectual and textual communities shaped the way in which the literary production of the period began to favor direct engagement with, or representations of, noble and professional women—graced with both first and last names—over largely allegorical, Neoplatonic abstractions. The growing trend among poets was to send verses to female interlocutors who could, and often did, respond with compositions of their own. Drawing upon Pietro Bembo’s (1470–1547) model for how to communicate literary socialization in print—when he included lyric exchanges with female poets in the appendix of his 1535 *Rime*—Veronica Gambara (1485–1550) composed occasional sonnets addressed to such figures as Vittoria Colonna (1492–1547), Pietro Aretino (1492–1556), and Charles V (1500–1558), which narrate political events through the form of the vernacular sonnet, redirecting lyric poetry’s prevailing focus on interiority to interpreting the “external” world around her.<sup>22</sup> Gambara’s socialized poetry may be compared to Tullia d’Aragona’s (c.1501–1556) lyric collection of 1547, which Julia Hairston has rightfully termed a “choral anthology,” due to its juxtaposition of verses composed by the female poet and her male interlocutors.<sup>23</sup> Continuing in this same vein, Laura Battiferra’s (1523–1589) *Il primo libro delle opere toscane* (1560) pairs over one hundred lyric compositions by Battiferra with forty-one poems

<sup>19</sup> Peter Herman, “Introduction: Opening the Borders,” in *Opening the Borders: Inclusivity in Early Modern Studies. Essays in Honor of James V. Mirollo*, ed. Peter C. Herman (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1999), 15–26.

<sup>20</sup> Brian Richardson, *Women and the Circulation of Texts in Renaissance Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020); Robin, *Publishing Women*; Cox, *Women’s Writing*. For broader contexts of early modern print and reading cultures, see Brian Richardson, *Printing, Writers and Readers in Renaissance Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); the chapters by Anthony Grafton, Jean-François Gilmont, Dominique Julia, and Roger Chartier in Guglielmo Cavallo and Roger Chartier, eds., *A History of Reading in the West*, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999).

<sup>21</sup> Donald F. McKenzie, *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999). My understanding of the “social” use of poetry in the early modern context is owed to conversations with Franco Tomasi, and to his studies *Studi sulla lirica rinascimentale (1540–1570)* (Rome: Antenore, 2012), and “Osservazioni sul libro di poesia nel secondo Cinquecento,” in *Canzonieri in transito: Lasciti petrarcheschi e nuovi archetipi letterari tra Cinque e Seicento*, eds. Alessandro Metlica and Franco Tomasi (Milan: Mimesis edizioni, 2015), 11–36.

<sup>22</sup> Molly Martin, “Introduction,” in Veronica Gambara, *The Complete Poems: A Bilingual Edition*, ed. and trans. Molly M. Martin and Paola Ugolini (Toronto: Iter, 2014), 1–34.

<sup>23</sup> Julia L. Hairston, “Introduction,” in Tullia d’Aragona, *The Poems and Letters of Tullia d’Aragona and Others: A Bilingual Edition*, ed. and trans. Julia L. Hairston (Toronto: Iter, 2014), 1–54.

penned by male friends and correspondents.<sup>24</sup> While many more examples could be cited, the cases of Tullia and Battiferra, in particular, demonstrate how lyric anthologies, as Amedeo Quondam has shown, serve as “institutions” that create and codify social relations and poetic standards.<sup>25</sup> It is under a single woman’s name that the diverse figures—male and female—of each collection appear. These examples, and others like them, complicate the critical history of mixed-sex literary anthologies that, at times, has sought to turn the editor figure into a “possessor,” who securely “contains” other poets, even as s/he draws recognition from them.<sup>26</sup> What also comes to light in these collections is the degree to which, despite the factors that cautioned against and censored women’s publishing activities, male-female collaborations yielded textual substance through the very act of collective enterprise. As Lynn Westwater and Meredith Ray have shown, in some cases male-female collaborations established vital systems of mutual support that led to polemical women authors, such as Arcangela Tarabotti (1604–1652), to emerge in print.<sup>27</sup> Beyond the confines of lyric, chivalric epic poems by Ludovico Ariosto (1474–1533) and Bernardo Tasso (1493–1569) illustrate other forms of collectivity in the adjacent catalogues of illustrious women and men that appear, respectively, in the homecoming scenes of *Orlando furioso* (1532) and *Amadigi* (1560).<sup>28</sup>

These models of literary partnerships, and others like them studied by Sarah Ross and George McClure, may be considered to be early variants on the “republic of letters,” gestures towards communities that bind writers to their readers.<sup>29</sup> In revealing ways, this form of writing, which takes shape around, and because of, literary portraits of socialized addressees, interlocutors, and collaborators, anticipates Hans-Georg Gadamer’s and Paul Ricœur’s principles concerning hermeneutics as an art of “listening,” whereby texts confer meaning in the very moment of interaction (“interpenetration”) between authors and their audience.<sup>30</sup> In a broader sense, reading and reception as “context-activated” practices, to recall Ika Willis’s definition, appropriately convey the circularity that enfolds all relationships among texts, authors, and readers.<sup>31</sup> Agreeing with Willis’s insistence on reception as a mode of active engagement, this study proposes that reception is a vehicle through which early modern women’s voices and agency transcend the limits of “authority” expressed only in print, and raise serious questions about the practices inherent in textual production, mediation,

<sup>24</sup> On Battiferra’s poetry, see the richly documented “Introduction” to Laura Battiferra degli Ammannati, *Laura Battiferra and Her Literary Circle*, ed. and trans. Victoria Kirkham (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 1–54.

<sup>25</sup> Amedeo Quondam, *Petrarchismo mediato: Per una critica della forma “antologia”* (Rome: Bulzoni, 1974). On other early modern institutional bodies that establish authority and the protocols for “rules” and artistic production, see Marco Ruffini, *Art Without an Author: Vasari’s Lives and Michelangelo’s Death* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2011).

<sup>26</sup> Deanna Shemek, “The Collector’s Cabinet: Lodovico Domenichi’s Gallery of Women,” in *Strong Voices, Weak History: Early Modern Women Writers and Canons in England, France, and Italy*, eds. Pamela Joseph Benson and Victoria Kirkham (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005), 239–62. On the “exchange” of women in lyric anthologies and Venetian social settings, see Courtney Quaintance, *Textual Masculinity and the Exchange of Women in Renaissance Venice* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015), especially 57–82.

<sup>27</sup> Lynn Lara Westwater, “A Rediscovered Friendship in the Republic of Letters: The Unpublished Correspondence of Arcangela Tarabotti and Ismaël Boulliau,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 65, no. 1 (2012): 67–134; Meredith Ray, “The Pen for the Sword: Arcangela Tarabotti’s *Lettere familiari e di complimento*,” in *Writing Gender*, 184–213. Cf. Elissa Weaver, ed., *Arcangela Tarabotti: A Literary Nun in Baroque Venice* (Ravenna: Longo, 2006).

<sup>28</sup> See canto 42.83–93 in Ludovico Ariosto, *Orlando furioso*, ed. Cristina Zampese (Milan: BUR, 2016), and canto 100.23–33 in Bernardo Tasso, *Amadigi* (Venice: Giolito, 1560).

<sup>29</sup> Sarah Gwyneth Ross, *The Birth of Feminism: Woman as Intellect in Renaissance Italy and England* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009); George McClure, *Parlour Games and the Public Life of Women in Renaissance Italy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013).

<sup>30</sup> Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (London: Bloomsbury Academic Press, 2014); Paul Ricœur, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences: Essays on Language, Action and Interpretation*, trans. John B. Thompson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

<sup>31</sup> Ika Willis, *Reception* (New York: Routledge, 2018), 5.

consumption, and circulation. In this regard, Brian Richardson has signaled two important occasions on which influential aristocratic women intervened “behind-the-scenes” to assist Tasso in publishing his revised edition of his father’s *Amadigi*, and the 1581 complete editions of the *Liberata*.<sup>32</sup>

Constance Furey has brought to light key precursors to the kinds of “imagined communities” studied by Benedict Anderson: the sixteenth-century “virtual” communities shaped by shared intellectual and spiritual interests.<sup>33</sup> Similarly mixed-sex groups engaged in literary activity, as analyzed by Abigail Brundin, signal a subtle shift in the art of “self-fashioning,” whereby the structures of selfhood cohere with the defining elements of a group identity.<sup>34</sup> Indeed, the question of group identity, thanks to Hannah Chapelle Wojciehowski, has recently emerged at the center of global early modern studies, through its adjustment of Burckhardt’s “Italo-centric” lens that saw the Renaissance individual as the icon of literary-artistic production.<sup>35</sup> As Wojciehowski has demonstrated, Christian Europe’s contacts with “bodies of otherness” in the age of exploration shaped the shifting dynamics of socially organizing principles, mainly the “gruppo.” How groups defined themselves as a collective body reliant upon interaction—physical and textual—influenced the ways in which early modern literary, musical, theatrical, and intellectual communities were formed. Rebecca D’Monté and Nicole Pohl have described how sixteenth-century individuals may have understood the term “community”: from its use in geopolitics to define borders, nations, and districts, to social conduct and activities (professional, political, social, etc.) not limited by spatial restraints, and to “intentional” communities made up of “persons engaging in common activities [and] sharing common interests.”<sup>36</sup> Given that this dissertation concerns itself specifically with sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Italy, the third notion of an “intentional” community is that which speaks most effectively to the collaborations between Tasso and women. My understanding of the collective identity—manifested through “acts and artefacts”<sup>37</sup>—of early modern cultural protagonists borrows from Karen Spierling and Michael Halvorson’s definition of “community” as “a group of people who perceived themselves as having common interests and, thus, a common identity or self-understanding.”<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Richardson, *Women and the Circulation*, 34–35.

<sup>33</sup> Constance Furey, *Erasmus, Contarini, and the Religious Republic of Letters* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983).

<sup>34</sup> Abigail Brundin, *Vittoria Colonna and the Spiritual Poetics of the Italian Reformation* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2008); Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980).

<sup>35</sup> Hannah Chapelle Wojciehowski, *Group Identity in the Renaissance World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011). For a different assessment of the Renaissance individual, and its implications specifically for men, see Douglas Biow, *On the Importance of Being an Individual in Renaissance Italy: Men, Their Professions, and their Beards* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015).

<sup>36</sup> Rebecca D’Monté and Nicole Pohl, eds., *Female Communities, 1600–1800: Literary Visions and Cultural Realities* (New York: St. Martin’s Press in association with the Institute of English Studies, School of Advanced Study, University of London, 2000), 5. On other forms of female communities, see Gabriella Zarri and Nieves Baranda Leturio, eds., *Memoria e comunità femminili: Spagna e Italia, secc. XV–XVII* (Florence: Firenze University Press, 2011); Julie D. Campbell and Anne R. Larsen, eds., *Early Modern Women and Transnational Communities of Letters* (New York: Routledge, 2016).

<sup>37</sup> I draw upon Phil Withington and Alexandra Shepard’s notion that “collective identity” manifests itself in “communicative or material” forms. See Phil Withington and Alexandra Shepard, “Introduction: Communities in Early Modern England,” in *Communities in Early Modern England: Networks, Place, Rhetoric*, eds. Alexandra Shepard and Phil Withington (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 1–15, 12.

<sup>38</sup> Karen Spierling and Michael Halvorson, “Introduction: Definitions of Community in Early Modern Europe,” in *Defining Community in Early Modern Europe*, eds. Michael Halvorson and Karen Spierling (Burlington: Ashgate, 2008), 1–23, 2. Though this dissertation is less concerned with the question of friendship *per se*, I found have particularly helpful Amyrose McCue Gill and Sarah Rolfe Prodan’s study of the “geometric nature” of premodern friendship, shaped by “shared social network[s], a joint political end, or the divine,” in Amyrose McCue Gill and Sarah Rolfe Prodan, eds., *Friendship and Sociability in Premodern Europe: Context, Concepts, and Expressions* (Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2014), 17.

As for more formal characteristics, recalling Paul Ricœur's and Roger Chartier's assertions that literary form plays a vital role in accounting for questions of audience, it would be pertinent to state that the literary genres that receive significant attention in this study are those that evoke or represent a direct connection with specific interlocutors: the encomiastic poem, the letter, and the dialogue.<sup>39</sup> In terms of quantity, there is less, though still careful, consideration of the treatise and the epic poem, the genres which have produced the most scholarship to date on Tasso. The interweaving discourses of early modern sociability, readerly communities,<sup>40</sup> and cultural transmission allow this dissertation to rewrite what has been a marginalized, and generally misleading, narrative of Tasso's literary and cultural activities involving women, largely because the genres under central consideration—often treated as “secondary” or “minor”—expand the possibilities for critical understanding of the poet's socialized self and his literary production.

## TASSO AND WOMEN: THE CONTOURS OF ACTIVE RECEPTION

The critical scholarship to date concerning Tasso and women and gender more broadly considered has been conducted through revealing literary, as well as biographical, lenses. Notable for their influence on Tasso studies in Italy and abroad are Sergio Zatti's analyses of *Gerusalemme liberata* that bridge close reading and the study of historical circumstance.<sup>41</sup> Zatti's reading of the poem's divided sympathy for its pagan and Christian characters offers a compelling model of sameness and difference—insofar as it informs the poem's structure and ideologies—that maps onto the political and theological contestations of the Counter-Reformation. David Quint and Walter Stephens have offered keen interpretations of the poem along similar lines, while accounting for the important religious, political, and ideological shifts of the late-sixteenth century.<sup>42</sup> Further considerations regarding gender and genre in the poem appear in Jo Ann Cavallo's fine reading of Armida as a hybrid symbol of epic closure and the future of romance.<sup>43</sup> In Andrea Moudarres's recent investigation of the poem's “geography of the enemy,” Armida and other female characters surface as emblems of Tasso's critique of the instability of imperial projects, as well as his “fundamental longing” for the nonviolent

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<sup>39</sup> Paul Ricœur, “Le temps raconté,” in *Temps et récit*, 3 vols. (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1985), 3:228–63; Roger Chartier, *Forms and Meanings: Texts, Performances, and Audiences from Codex to Computer* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995).

<sup>40</sup> My use of this term comes from its introduction to scholarly discourse in Roger Chartier, *Culture écrite et société: l'ordre des livres (XIV<sup>e</sup>-XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle)* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1996). My study of women's inclusion in, or rejection from, early modern readerly communities has been informed by Xenia von Tippelskirch, *Sotto controllo: Letture femminili in Italia nella prima età moderna* (Rome: I libri di Viella, 2011).

<sup>41</sup> Sergio Zatti, *L'uniforme Cristiano e il multiforme pagano: Saggio sulla Gerusalemme liberata* (Milan: Il Saggiatore, 1983); Id., *L'ombra del Tasso: epica e romanzo nel Cinquecento* (Milan: Mondadori, 1996); Id., “Dalla parte di Satana: sull'imperialismo cristiano nella *Gerusalemme liberata*,” in *La Rappresentazione dell'altro nei testi del rinascimento*, ed. Sergio Zatti (Lucca: Maria Pacini Fazzi, 1998), 146–82.

<sup>42</sup> David Quint, “Political Allegory in the *Gerusalemme liberata*,” in *Epic and Empire: Politics and Generic Form from Virgil to Milton* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 211–65; Walter Stephens, “Saint Paul among the Amazons: Gender and Authority in *Gerusalemme liberata*,” in *Discourses of Authority in Medieval and Renaissance Literature*, eds. Kevin Brownlee and Walter Stephens (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1989), 169–200.

<sup>43</sup> Jo Ann Cavallo, “Tasso's Armida and the Victory of Romance,” in *Renaissance Transactions: Ariosto and Tasso*, ed. Valeria Finucci (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), 77–111. Included in the same volume, Eric Nicholson's chapter unfolds how early Italian actresses modelled their theatrical activities on female characters from chivalric fiction, in “Romance as Role Model: Early Female Performances of *Orlando furioso* and *Gerusalemme liberata*,” 246–69. My study of Tasso's influence on female performers in the third and fourth chapters of this dissertation has benefitted greatly from our discussions.

coexistence among diverse populations.<sup>44</sup> In other scholarship on the poem, significant attention has focused on the unique responsibilities and privileges with which Tasso grants his boundary-defying female characters: Marilyn Migiel has articulately considered the role of the female author surrogate in the figures of Erminia and Armida;<sup>45</sup> Jane Tylus has unveiled the complex interplay between poetics and imagination in the figure of Erminia;<sup>46</sup> and Walter Stephens has accounted for Erminia's "unmistakable authorial powers," which inform her calculated conduct in the *Liberata*, especially towards its final cantos, as a cultural mediator.<sup>47</sup> Tasso's willingness to share the authorial orchestration of his poem with female characters has led a number of critics to identify autobiographical overtones that resonate in his fictional constructions, most observably in Erminia, who suffers a "vita errante e peregrina" (12.33) much like the narrating "peregrino errante" (1.4).<sup>48</sup>

Psychoanalytic interpretations of Tasso's epic began in Sigmund Freud's essay on repetition compulsion, "Beyond the Pleasure Principle," which briefly interprets the "most moving poetic picture" from cantos twelve and thirteen: Tancredi's accidental killing of his beloved Clorinda and its subsequent series of haunting playbacks.<sup>49</sup> As for psychoanalytic readings explicitly concerned with questions of gender, Juliana Schiesari, Lynn Enterline, and Marion Wells have addressed the overlap between the theme of melancholy and Tasso's construction of afflicted characters, male and female.<sup>50</sup> Schiesari, in particular, has treated melancholic loss as fundamental to the construction of gendered ideology in four of Tasso's texts: *Gerusalemme Liberata*, two long lyric poems (*O figlie di Renata* and *O magnanimo figlio*), and the *Canzone al Metauro*. The latter unfinished poem has been used widely in analyses of discursive retellings of Tasso's childhood experience of exile: upon being forcibly sent out of Sorrento, the poet's "padre errante" Bernardo took young Torquato with him on a trip to secure new patronage in northern Italy, causing the nine-year-old boy to abandon his mother Porzia and sister Cornelia.<sup>51</sup> In her study of Renaissance defenses of poetry, Margaret Ferguson traces how

<sup>44</sup> Andrea Moudarres, *The Enemy in Italian Renaissance Epic: Images of Hostility from Dante to Tasso* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2019), 141. On the transformation of Armida and other female characters from the *Liberata* to the *Conquistata*, see Giuliana Picco, "Or s'indora ed or verdeggia": *Il ritratto femminile dalla Liberata alla Conquistata* (Florence: Le Lettere, 1996); Matteo Residori, *L'idea del poema: Studio sulla Gerusalemme conquistata di Torquato Tasso* (Pisa: Scuola normale superiore, 2004), 367–421.

<sup>45</sup> Marilyn Migiel, "Tasso's Erminia: Telling an Alternate Story," *Italica* 64, no. 1 (1987): 62–75; Id., "Secrets of a Sorceress: Tasso's Armida," *Quaderni d'Italianistica* 8 (1987–88): 149–66. On other characteristics of Tasso's female figures, studied carefully in Migiel's scholarship, see her *Gender and Genealogy in Tasso's Gerusalemme liberata* (Lewiston: Mellen Press, 1993).

<sup>46</sup> Jane Tylus, "Imagining Narrative in Tasso: Revisiting Erminia," *MLN* 127, no. 1 (2012): 45–64.

<sup>47</sup> Walter Stephens, "Trickster, Textor, Architect, Thief: Craft and Comedy in *Gerusalemme Liberata*" in *Renaissance Transactions*, 146–77. On Erminia's cultural mediation and the question of diplomacy, more generally, in the poem, see Timothy Hampton, *Fictions of Embassy: Literature and Diplomacy in Early Modern Europe* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009), 73–96; Diego Pirillo, *The Refugee-Diplomat: Venice, England, and the Reformation* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2018), 98–117.

<sup>48</sup> All citations of the poem are listed by canto and stanza number, and are from Torquato Tasso, *Gerusalemme liberata*, ed. Franco Tomasi (Milan: BUR, 2009).

<sup>49</sup> Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle: Group Psychology and other works (1920–1922)*, ed. James Strachey (London: Vintage, 2001). See also the conclusion, "The Emergence of Tasso's psychobiography," in Lawrence, *Tasso's Art and Afterlives*, 210–20.

<sup>50</sup> Juliana Schiesari, "The victim's discourse: Torquato Tasso's *Canzone al Metauro*," *Stanford Italian Review* 5 (1985): 189–203; Id., *The Gendering of Melancholia: Feminism, Psychoanalysis, and the Symbolics of Loss* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992); Lynn Enterline, "Armida's Lap, Erminia's Tears: In the Wake of Paternity and Figuration in the *Gerusalemme liberata*," in *Tears of Narcissus: Melancholia and Masculinity in Early Modern Writing* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), 84–145; Marion A. Wells, "'Il primo error': Love-Melancholy and Romance in the *Gerusalemme liberata*," in *The Secret Wound: Love-Melancholy and Early Modern Romance* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 137–78.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. Sergio Zatti, "La nascita di un'autobiografia poetica: la canzone *Al Metauro* di Torquato Tasso," in *La renaissance des genres: pratique et théories des genres littéraires entre Italie et Espagne (XVe–XVIIe siècles)*, eds. Paloma Bravo, Cécile Iglesias-Slicaru, and Giuseppe Sangirardi (Dijon: Éditions universitaires de Dijon, 2012), 209–21.

Torquato's conflicted feelings toward Bernardo, expressed through the *Canzone's* "fugace peregrino" figure, inform his defense of his father's unpopular chivalric romance.<sup>52</sup> Ferguson's reading draws upon Freud's "theory of defense" and his short essay "Family Romances," in examining Tasso's frustrated relationships to his biological and literary forefathers, a topic that has become central to scholarship on the so-called "Tasso versus Ariosto" debates on genre, poetics, and the classical tradition.<sup>53</sup> Not always taken so seriously, these debates manifest in a decidedly comical vein in Giulio Cesare Becelli's *L'Ariostista ed il Tassista* (1748), in which advocates for each poet debate and duel in front of a literarily conversant infernal court, which determines, at the end of the work, that the "Ariostista" and the "Tassista" may return to the surface of the world, as long as they agree to bicker no more over poetry.<sup>54</sup>

In other ways, psychoanalysis has historically gravitated to representations of Tasso's personality, manifesting, for example, in Giampiero Giampieri's so-called "psicobiografia" of the poet.<sup>55</sup> Though I do not engage with psychoanalysis in formulating the conclusions of this study, nor is psychoanalysis particularly pertinent to its purposes, it is worth recalling the degree to which such biographical "reconstructions" have emphasized, exceedingly I would say, the question of Tasso's sexuality and his intimate relationships with Luca Scalabrino and Orazio Ariosto (1555–1593), a relative of Ludovico.<sup>56</sup> Laura Benedetti has correctly cautioned against readers adopting blind faith in these "azzardat[e]" interpretations, which favor "semplificazione e essenzialismo" over rigorous scrutiny.<sup>57</sup> As she has demonstrated, twentieth-century literary historians examined the figure of Romantic Tasso with a "new concern" for his presumed homosexuality, articulated most notably and, I would add, problematically in Fabio Pittorru's and Ferruccio Ulivi's discursive blurring of biography and fiction in their accounts of Tasso, "the man."<sup>58</sup>

Although studies that consider representations of the poet's life in his literary works, when handled carefully, can offer fruitful insights, few scholars have engaged with the poet's biography in terms other than those subtended by the Romantic imagination. Important exceptions, however, have emerged in scholarship on early modern women's imitation and use of Tasso as a model either to follow or to reject. Julie Campbell has produced comparative readings of the contrasting *querelle*

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<sup>52</sup> Margaret Ferguson, "Torquato Tasso: The Trial of Conscience," in *The Trials of Desire: Renaissance Defenses of Poetry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), 54–136. Although unconcerned with psychoanalysis, Jane Tylus's *Writing and Vulnerability in the Late Renaissance* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993) is a highly useful lens through which to contextualize Tasso's difficult relationships with other men, specifically his male patrons in Ferrara. On this note, see also Richard A. McCabe, *'Ungainefull Arte': Poetry, Patronage and Printing in the Early Modern Era* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 136–47.

<sup>53</sup> On these debates, see "The Quarrel over Ariosto and Tasso" in Bernard Weinberg, *A History of Literary Criticism in the Italian Renaissance*, 2 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), 954–1073; Daniel Javitch, *Proclaiming a Classic: The Canonization of Orlando Furioso* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991). See also Zatti, "Tasso contro Ariosto?," in *L'ombra del Tasso*, 1–27, for the application of Harold Bloom's "anxiety of influence" to describe the "natura ambivalente" with which Tasso regards his predecessor.

<sup>54</sup> Giulio Cesare Becelli, *L'Ariostista ed il Tassista* (Roveredo: Francescantonio Marchesani Libraio, 1748).

<sup>55</sup> Giampiero Giampieri, *Tasso: una psicobiografia* (Florence: Le Lettore, 1995).

<sup>56</sup> In addition to letters that seemingly disclose feelings of affection, concerns regarding the *Liberata's* revisions populate in Tasso's epistolary exchanges with Scalabrino from the 1570s. Twelve of these letters are published in Tasso, *Le lettere a Luca Scalabrino*, ed. Bartolommeo Gamba (Venice: Alvisopoli, 1833).

<sup>57</sup> Laura Benedetti, "L'amante di Orazio impazzì per Eleonora: avventure e sventure del personaggio Tasso," *Italica* 75, no. 2 (1998): 178–91, 188. The bibliography at the end of this article provides other important references on the reception of Tasso's sexuality.

<sup>58</sup> Fabio Pittorru, *Torquato Tasso: L'uomo, il poeta, il cortigiano* (Milan: Bompiani, 1982); Ferruccio Ulivi, *Torquato Tasso: L'anima e l'avventura* (Casale Monferrato: Piemme, 1995). For other hypotheses about Tasso's amorous relationships in Ferrara, see Richard Henry Wilde, *Conjectures and Researches Concerning the Love, Madness and Imprisonment of Torquato Tasso*, 2 vols. (New York: Blake, 1841).

rhetoric represented in Tasso's *Aminta* (1581) and Isabella Andreini's *Mirtilla* (1588).<sup>59</sup> Similarly, the recent dual-language translation of Maddalena Campiglia's (1553–1595) *Flori* (1588), edited by Virginia Cox and Lisa Sampson, explores literary resonances between *Aminta* and Campiglia's pastoral play, as well as the rare occasions on which the two poets read one another's works.<sup>60</sup> In her recent study of Margherita Sarrocchi's (1560–1617) epistolary exchanges with Galileo Galilei (1564–1642), Meredith Ray has illustrated women's embrace of Tasso as a model worth following in their literary works.<sup>61</sup> Outside of strictly literary studies, musicologists Anthony Newcomb, Laurie Stras, Anna Martellotti, and Elio Durante, and theater historian Ferdinando Taviani have set the groundwork for studying Tasso's lively interactions with female musicians, singers, composers, and actresses.<sup>62</sup>

Tasso's multifaceted exchanges and collaborations with women across the arts, sciences, and various areas of intellectual study merit analysis with a strongly interdisciplinary methodology.<sup>63</sup> This dissertation combines discourses from literary analysis and theory, women's studies, musicology, and performance and culture history in order to provide a comprehensive picture of Tasso's exchanges with women writers, patrons, and performers. The chapter overviews that follow provide some initial context for the arguments advanced in this study.

### TASSO AMONG THE MUSES: A STORY OF RECIPROCITY AND COLLABORATION

As a preface to these chapter summaries, the reader ought to be made aware that it is not my intention to suggest that Tasso's literary and intellectual collaborations with women developed along

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<sup>59</sup> Campbell, *Literary Circles*, 51–72.

<sup>60</sup> Maddalena Campiglia, *Flori, a pastoral drama*, eds. Virginia Cox and Lisa Sampson, trans. Virginia Cox (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004). For the original publication, see Maddalena Campiglia, *Flori, favola boscareccia* (Vicenza: Heirs of Perin Libraro and Tommaso Brunello, 1588). For related criticism, see Lisa Sampson, *Pastoral Drama in Early Modern Italy: The Making of a New Genre* (London: Legenda, 2006), 98–128; and the two chapters “Women Writers and the Canon: Satyr Scenes in Female-Authored Pastoral Drama” and “Isabella Coreglia's *Dori* (1634): Writing Pastoral Drama Against the Backdrop of the Male Canon and an Incipient Female-Authored Tradition,” in Alexandra Collier, *Women, Rhetoric, and Drama in Early Modern Italy* (New York: Routledge, 2017), 133–73, 174–215.

<sup>61</sup> Margherita Sarrocchi, *Margherita Sarrocchi's Letters to Galileo: Astronomy, Astrology, and Poetics in Seventeenth-Century Italy*, ed. and trans. Meredith Ray (New York: Palgrave, 2016). On women writers and the epic tradition, see Valeria Finucci, “La scrittura epico-cavalleresca al femminile: Moderata Fonte e *Tredici canti del Floridoro*,” *Annali d'Italianistica* 12 (1994): 203–31; Virginia Cox, “Women as Readers and Writers of Chivalric Poetry in Early Modern Italy,” in *Sguardi sull'Italia: Miscellanea dedicata a Francesco Villari*, eds. Gino Bedani, Zygmunt Barański, Anna Laura Lepschy, and Brian Richardson (Leeds: Society for Italian Studies, 1997), 134–45; Laura Lazzari, *Poesia epica e scrittura femminile nel Seicento: L'Enrico di Lucrezia Marinella* (Leonforte: Insula, 2010); Cox, *The Prodigious Muse*, 164–212; Ray, *Daughters of Alchemy: Women and Scientific Culture in Early Modern Italy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015), 73–155; Francesca Behr, *Arms and the Woman: Classical Tradition and Women Writers in the Venetian Renaissance* (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2018).

<sup>62</sup> Anthony Newcomb, *The Madrigal at Ferrara (1579–1597)*, 2 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980); Ferdinando Taviani, “Bella d'Asia: Torquato Tasso, gli attori e l'immortalità,” *Paragone* 35 (1984): 3–76; Elio Durante and Anna Martellotti, *Giovinetta peregrina: La vera storia di Laura Peperara e Torquato Tasso* (Florence: Olschki, 2010); Laurie Stras, *Women and Music in Sixteenth-Century Ferrara* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

<sup>63</sup> Among the critical models I have followed in my coordination of these interrelated discourses are Shemek, *Ladies Errant*; Anne MacNeil, *Music and Women of the Commedia dell'Arte in the Late Sixteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Bonnie Gordon, *Monteverdi's Unruly Women: The Power of Song in Early Modern Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Suzanne Cusick, *Francesca Caccini at the Medici Court: Music and the Circulation of Power* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009); Durante and Martellotti, *Giovinetta peregrina*; Siro Ferrone, *La commedia dell'arte: Attrici e attori italiani in Europa (XVI–XVII secolo)* (Turin: Einaudi, 2014); Rosalind Kerr, *The Rise of the Diva on the Sixteenth-Century Commedia dell'Arte Stage* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015).

clearly chronological lines. My understanding is that much of Tasso's encomiastic lyric verse, many of his dialogues, and hundreds of his letters were written simultaneously throughout the 1580s and the first five years of the 1590s, with some sketches of individual works drafted in the 1570s. What is clear from the documentation available is that Tasso seldom wrote one piece of writing at a time. For example, the poet's revisions of the *Liberata* took place synchronously with his epistolary exchanges and the circulation of his lyric verse. Thus, while it is appropriate to note that his authorized collections of lyric poetry did not appear until quite late into his lifetime, it would be inaccurate to confuse their publication dates with the dates of composition of individual poems. The same principle applies equally to Tasso's letters and dialogues. The case studies analyzed in these chapters, drawn from selected works by Tasso, do not attempt to replicate the methodologies that inform the editorial biographies, discussed below, by Manso, Solerti, and others. That said, the two major turning points in Tasso's biography that anchor this study's historically informed arguments are the start and end dates of his detainment in Ferrara's Ospedale di Sant'Anna, 1579 and 1586. It was between and after this time that Tasso composed the majority of the writings this dissertation analyzes, which negotiate and disseminate nuanced forms of textual mobility that problematize the image of a resolutely immobile poet. I read Tasso's time at Sant'Anna in a relatively untraditional light: rather than see it a site of lonely seclusion, the poet's confined space generated flourishing social dynamism through highly prolific literary and historical interactions.<sup>64</sup>

Chapter One, "Strategizing the Suppliant's Voice: Tasso's Plea for Female Patronage in *Alle Signore Principesse di Ferrara*," studies how Tasso represents the authority of his male and female Este patrons in the gift manuscript lyric collection *Alle Signore Principesse di Ferrara*.<sup>65</sup> This chapter opens with the collection's complicated history: from its manuscript form composed around 1579, to its later, though drastically changed, appearance in print. By reconstructing the textual record and historical importance of this volume, I reclaim Lucrezia (1535–1598) and Leonora d'Este, the sisters of Duke Alfonso II and cardinal Luigi d'Este (1538–1586), as the collection's ideal and intended readers.<sup>66</sup> To trace how *Alle Signore Principesse* has been included (or not) in the complicated publication history of Tasso's *rime*, I discuss the evolution of his lyric poetry in print: from the unauthorized editions that frequently surfaced in Venice and Ferrara in the final decades of the sixteenth century,<sup>67</sup> to the modern volumes edited by Angelo Solerti and Bruno Basile.<sup>68</sup> Every edition of Tasso's complete lyric poetry, early modern and modern alike, dismantles *Alle Signore Principesse* from its original form as a unified collection. Motivated by the desire to construct a chronological, though artificial, "amorous biography"<sup>69</sup> of the poet, which prolonged the Romantic image of Tasso as a figure tormented by imprudent love, editors reordered Tasso's poetry in ways that betrayed his authorial design to divide

<sup>64</sup> For a reading different from my own on Tasso's poetry composed at Sant'Anna, see Stefano Jossa, "Il luogo della poesia: la prigione del Tasso a Sant'Anna," in *Spazi, geografie, testi*, ed. Siriana Sgavichchia (Rome: Bulzoni, 2003), 45–57.

<sup>65</sup> The original manuscript is located in the Biblioteca Ariostea in Ferrara: Ms. Cl. II 473. For the modern critical edition, see Torquato Tasso, *Alle signore principesse di Ferrara: Ripasso del quaderno autografo*, ed. Luciano Capra (Ferrara: Gabriele Corbo Editore, 1995).

<sup>66</sup> On the Este princesses' interactions with Tasso, see Alfonso Lazzari, *Le ultime tre duchesse di Ferrara e la corte estense ai tempi di Torquato Tasso* (Rovigo: Società Tipografica Editrice Rodigina, 1952).

<sup>67</sup> For the history of unauthorized publications of Tasso's poetry, including Aldo Manuzio the younger's print (Venice, 1581), the Baldini print (Ferrara, 1582), and the six-part Vasalini print (Venice, 1583–1587), see Lanfranco Caretti, *Studi sulle Rime del Tasso: Per una nuova edizione delle Rime di Torquato Tasso* (Rome: Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 1950), 21–46.

<sup>68</sup> Torquato Tasso, *Le Rime, edizione critica su i manoscritti e le antiche stampe*, ed. Angelo Solerti, 4 vols. (Bologna: Romagnoli-Dall'Acqua, 1898–1902); Id., *Le Rime*, ed. Bruno Basile (Rome: Salerno Editrice, 1995).

<sup>69</sup> Cf. Marziano Guglielminetti, "Quando appare la persona del poeta: Saggio sulle rime autobiografiche del Tasso (1557–1579)," *Revue des études italiennes* 42 (1997): 55–84.

his lyric verse into four unique parts.<sup>70</sup> Thus, for the modern reader, *Alle Signore Principesse*'s individual poems appear interspersed among those written for different occasions and for different patrons. This dismemberment of text and audience has long obscured a forgotten readership of Este women for whom Tasso had specifically authorized this collection.

By emphasizing the textual fabrication of the myth concerning Tasso's surreptitious love for Leonora, which circulated widely as historical "fact" in early-seventeenth century biographies of the poet, I reconsider Tasso's poetic tribute to his Ferrarese female patrons, and account for the political anthropology of the Este court at a time when its dynastic future was seen as especially precarious.<sup>71</sup> Detained in Sant'Anna at the time of the manuscript's composition, Tasso adopts the voice of the suffering-narrating "io" as he describes his fictional progression towards salvific hospitality and imagined re-integration at court, administered by the benevolent intervention of his female patrons. My reading indicates how Tasso's positive representation of the Este women counteracts the collection's configuration of the cold, inflexible, male patron, who, as the lyrics suggest, struggles to live up to and preserve his family's prestigious name. The distinction ultimately reached in this analysis between Tasso's doubt-driven rhetoric used to address Alfonso and Luigi and the hopeful language with which he speaks to the Este princesses indicates how the poet imagined the potential responsiveness of these two audiences.

The chapter concludes with reflections on how *Alle Signore Principesse* stands in dialogue with Tasso's representation of women's authority in his treatise on women's sovereignty, the *Discorso della virtù femminile e donnesca* (1582), whose final pages recall such figures as Catherine de' Medici, Queen Elizabeth I, Renée of France and her daughters Lucrezia and Leonora d'Este.<sup>72</sup> As various types of sovereigns, these "donne eroiche" are responsible for leading, not following, all the while retaining their femininity and escaping common masculine identifications that refigure powerful women as either virile, or sex-transcending miracles. Written in the same year as *Alle Signore Principesse*, though published two years later, the *Discorso* balances a neo-Aristotelian position regarding women's domestic importance with an updated image of the "heroic woman," who excels in intelligence, prudence, politics, and education, and serves as the poet's patient "ascoltatric[e]."

Chapter Two, "Collective Encomia of Women and their Male Advocates in Tasso's *Seconda parte delle Rime*," analyzes the single volume of strictly encomiastic poetry realized in print during the poet's lifetime. The *Seconda parte* represents a rare case of Tasso's authorial intent, which appears, in part, through the "argomenti" that introduce many of the poems, and in the auto-commentary ("esposizione de l'autore") that follows each individual poem.<sup>73</sup> Similar to the fate of *Alle Signore Principesse di Ferrara*, however, modern editions of Tasso's complete poetry have failed to represent the Marchetti edition as a unified collection, authorized by the poet according to a specific order and

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<sup>70</sup> The volumes of lyric poetry Tasso sought to publish are the *parte prima* of *rime d'amore* (printed by Osanna in 1591), the *parte seconda* of *rime d'encomio* (printed by Marchetti in 1593), the *parte terza* of *rime morali* and encomiastic verse for prelates (printed posthumously in 1597), and the *parte quarta*, which was never realized in print, but projected as a volume of *rime spirituali*.

<sup>71</sup> For broader analysis of the Este court before and after Tasso's employment there, see Angelo Solerti, *Ferrara e la corte estense del secolo decimosesto* (Città del Castello: S. Lapi, 1891); Lazzari, *Le ultime tre duchesse*; Gianni Venturi, ed., *Torquato Tasso e la cultura estense*, 3 vols. (Florence: Olschki, 1999); Guido Guerzoni, *Le corti estensi e la devoluzione di Ferrara del 1598* (Modena: Archivio storico, Comune di Modena, Assessorato alla cultura e beni culturali, 2000); Dennis Looney and Deanna Shemek, eds., *Phaethon's Children: the Este Court and its Culture in Early Modern Ferrara* (Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2005).

<sup>72</sup> Torquato Tasso, *Discorso della virtù femminile e donnesca* (Venice: Giunti, 1582).

<sup>73</sup> The volumes of poetry that Tasso authorized have recently been published in the series *Edizione nazionale delle opere di Torquato Tasso*, based in Alessandria. There is currently work underway to publish the *Seconda parte* in this series. I am grateful for my conversations on Tasso's *rime* with Emilio Russo and Francesco Ferretti.

written for a specific audience.<sup>74</sup> In terms of content, the *Seconda parte*, issued in Bergamo in 1593 by Pietro Maria Marchetti, is Tasso's most substantial collection of encomiastic poetry written for female patrons and poets from the Gonzaga, Farnese, Della Rovere, and Avalos families, among others, as well as for the Grand Duchess of Tuscany, Bianca Cappello (1548–1587), and the Duchess of Mantua, Eleonora d'Austria Gonzaga (1534–1594).<sup>75</sup> The presence, albeit rare, of male dedicatees in the collection, who receive praise for *their* celebration of women, reflects the important changes Tasso made to the “famous women” catalog tradition. With its dual focus on worthy representatives of both sexes, the collection seems to say as much about women as it does about men. By considering the fundamental role men play in shaping and circulating women's reputations, the *Seconda parte* revisits the poet's early neo-Aristotelian ideas on women's virtues, in order to reread the merits of women alongside, rather than in opposition to, those of men. At the heart of Tasso's encomiastic project is a poetic-philosophical “catena” that lists women's individual virtues. In so doing, Tasso recalls elements of the *Discorso della virtù femminile e donnesca*, though not without making suggestive revisions to it. Namely, the categorical distinctions between “female” and “womanly” virtues dissolve, as does the division between women's and men's virtues.

The *Seconda parte* closes with a series of compositions written in celebration of noble marriages, which express a desire for equality between wedded men and women. In Tasso's reconstruction of these relationships, the virtues of each sex combine to create a “hermaphroditic” figure that recalls contemporary reconsiderations of matrimony as a form of companionship, as well as an institution fundamental for the betterment of the family, the city, and the State. The chapter concludes with an analysis of how these three modes of collective praise— between male admirers and their female dedicatees, men who praise one another for their celebration of women, and wives and husbands— reappear in the *Tempio in lode di Flavia Orsina*, whose orchestration Tasso oversaw in the years just before the *Seconda parte* emerged in print.<sup>76</sup> This work of encomiastic verse dedicated to a woman, brought to life through poetic collaborations, reveals the extent to which Tasso's lyrics in this period are profoundly social in nature, concerned throughout with the communal championing of women and its larger implications for the contemporary “woman question.”

While scholarship on Tasso's participation in the *querelle des femmes* has focused on the poet's explicitly proto-feminist works (e.g., the *Discorso della virtù femminile*), Chapter Three, “*Amore armonizzato: Tasso and Musical Women, Embodied and Envoiced*,” takes a different approach. Historical context is key when evaluating the year 1579 in Ferrara: just as Tasso began his seven-year sentence at Sant'Anna, new musical activity thrived at the Este court with the arrival of Alfonso II's third wife Margherita Gonzaga (1564–1618). Thanks to the Duke and Duchess's sponsorship, the court founded the internationally celebrated group of professional female singers, the *concerto delle dame principalissime*.<sup>77</sup> The *concerto*'s leading participants, Laura Peperara (c.1550–1601) and Tarquinia Molza (1542–1617), received extensive lyric and philosophical dedications by Tasso, indicating that the breadth of his encomiastic subjects extended from women of elite to professional backgrounds. Tasso's contributions to the *concerto*'s musical-poetic repertoire, his lyric compositions written for individual singers, and dialogues featuring musical women as interlocutors reflect the textual means that allowed him to interact with the artistic life of Ferrara, despite his physical separation from court.

<sup>74</sup> The Solerti and Basile editions of Tasso's poetry misprint and misname some of the dedicatees to whom Tasso wrote encomiastic verse. For a detailed summary of these mistakes, see Luisella Giachino, “La mitologia degli dei terreni: *Le rime della stampa Marchetti del Tasso*,” *Studi tassiani* 49–50 (2002): 47–65.

<sup>75</sup> Torquato Tasso, *Delle Rime del Signor Torquato Tasso: parte seconda* (Brescia: Pietro Maria Marchetti, 1593).

<sup>76</sup> *Tempio fabricato da diversi coltissimi et nobilissimi ingegni in lode [di] Donna Flavia Peretta Orsina, Duchessa di Bracciano* (Rome: Martinello, 1591).

<sup>77</sup> Cf. Newcomb, *The Madrigal at Ferrara*; Elio Durante and Anna Martellotti, *Cronistoria del concerto delle dame principalissime di Margherita Gonzaga d'Este* (Florence: S.P.E.S., 1989); Stras, *Women and Music*.

Building upon recent scholarship that has traced Tasso's activities involving the *concerto delle dame*, the third chapter addresses Tasso's affirmations of women's vocal expression as embodied in historical and fictional female figures. In particular, I consider Tasso's developing ideas regarding women's experience of love, articulated first in his *Conclusioni amorose* (recited in 1570, printed in 1581), which rely heavily on principles from classical philosophy that argue for female lovers' inferiority to their male counterparts.<sup>78</sup> Responding to Ferrarese women's criticism of the *Conclusioni*, most notably from the poet and musician Orsina Cavalletta (d.1592), Tasso revised his early presumptions about women in love in favor of a more inclusive vision, wherein women and men appear as equals in their experience. The dialogues *La Cavalletta, overo della poesia toscana* (1581) and *La Molza, overo de l'amore* (1585) stage among their protagonists female musicians and performers—Orsina herself appearing in the former—in conversation with the “Forestiero Napoletano.”<sup>79</sup> The critical reading conducted here suggests that the presence of music and female musicians, especially in *La Molza*, generates the poet's “new” definition of love—ostensibly requested by his female audience—as “quiete,” a state of harmonious tranquility in which philosophies of love merge with contemporary music theory in imagining a tormented soul healed by women's company, their intellectual discussions, and music making. At the center of this emerging idea, I argue, is that women's experience of love occurs alongside their production of music, which Tasso valorizes as essential to their freedom of self-expression.

Similar support for women's autonomous eloquence may be seen in Tasso's construction of the *Liberata*'s Armida. Beginning with a comparative reading of the *Furioso*'s surprisingly speechless Alcina and the *Liberata*'s loquaciously alluring Armida, the final sections of this chapter looks to the broader challenges women's eloquence faced in a climate that fostered, at least in part, the belief that “alle donne si addice il silenzio.” These words provoked significant debate across history and fiction, wherein women's public eloquence often aligned with wayward behavior, and their silence with chastity. Applying Adriana Cavarero's insights on women's voices to my readings of chivalric epics, I emphasize Tasso's restoration of female eloquence to his “incantatrice” in the context of the poet's affirmation of women's vocality, as lovers and musicians, in *La Molza*.<sup>80</sup> Tasso's revisions to the literary history of the enchantress and his immersion in contemporary discussions concerning musicians' effects on audiences informed the seventeenth-century development of these popular female personalities on stage. In this regard, I study some Seicento musical-theatrical afterlives of the figure of the enchantress in order to locate moments in which librettists and composers modelled Alcina's new vocality on the example of Tasso's Armida, suggesting that when singing actresses personified the enchantress on the seventeenth-century stage, librettists took their cue from Tasso in adopting new approaches to the complex coordination of agency and limitation into which women—fictional and historical—were traditionally embedded.

The fourth and final chapter, “The Stranger and the Star: Variety as Versatility in Tasso and Isabella Andreini,” turns to Tasso's influence on and encouragement of women's literary and theatrical activities. In addition to composing dramatic pieces for courtly performance, Tasso played an fundamental role in defending theater as a respectable art form, and expressed his support of actresses as reputable practitioners of it. This chapter addresses how Tasso's praise of Isabella Andreini, one of the first *dive* of the Italian stage, stems from the poet's affinity for discursive mask-making, which

<sup>78</sup> Torquato Tasso, *Conclusioni amorose* (Venice: Manuzio, 1581).

<sup>79</sup> Torquato Tasso, *La Molza overo de l'amore* (Milan: Pietro Tini, 1586); Id., *Dialoghi*, ed. Giovanni Baffetti, 2 vols. (Milan: Rizzoli, 1998). On female speakers in Renaissance dialogues, see Virginia Cox, “Seen but Not Heard: The Role of Women Speakers in Cinquecento Literary Dialogue,” in *Women in Italian Renaissance Culture and Society*, ed. Letizia Panizza (London: Routledge, 2000), 385–400; Janet L. Smarr, *Joining the Conversation: Dialogues by Renaissance Women* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005).

<sup>80</sup> Adriana Cavarero, *A più voci: filosofia dell'espressione vocale* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 2005).

manifests itself in the diverse range of literary personae Tasso creates. I emphasize the creative agency that subtends Tasso's manipulation of his poetic "proxies" to suggest that he pursued a truly theatrical form of self-fashioning capable of influencing historical protagonists of theater, such as Andreini. I argue that Isabella saw something of an actor in Tasso, who sought out at once immediate recognition and mysterious estrangement from his audiences. A careful reader of Tasso's "persona-fashioning"—as the "peregrino errante" of the *Liberata* and the "Forestiero Napoletano" of the *Dialoghi*—Andreini mobilizes the poet's polyphonic authorial masks in her re-writing of his works, and unique contributions to the poet's legacy as a literary-historical character. Through her *Rime*'s calculated imitation of Tasso's "peregrino stile"—via her so-called "vario stile"—Andreini transports Tasso's protean poetics to the seventeenth-century lyric stage, where the familiar tensions found in the male poet's *rime*, between readerly expectations and the ability to arouse wonder, now operate within broader aesthetic tastes for the "marvelous."<sup>81</sup> For both poets, the versatility in, and variability of, rotating authorial voices demonstrate a negotiation between theory and practice, between representing oneself as an instantly identifiable figure whose reputation precedes him/her and premiering as a *peregrino*, a figure who conveys unfamiliarity through the application of masks and novel mouthpieces.

The second half of the chapter studies Isabella's posthumously published *Lettere* (1607), a peculiar example of the epistolary genre in which fiction dominates over history.<sup>82</sup> While the *Lettere* have received critical attention for their interplay between Isabella's career as an actress and her literary production, these pages are primarily interested in tracing the meta-literary orientation of the letters towards the relationship between the reader and the writer. Specifically, I examine the ways in which Isabella's pervasive application of Tasso's authority throughout her collection reflects certain reader-writer dynamics for which the male poet advocated.

Expanding out from the relationships and interactions discussed thus far, it is worth final consideration of how Tasso's literary representations of and historical collaborations with women in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries experienced afterlives of their own. In the Venetian polygraph Andrea Rubbi's (1738–c.1817) edited anthology *Parnaso italiano [...] Costanzo, Torquato, Bernardo Tasso e Poetesse del Secolo XVI* (1787), the Tasso family's male poets appear alongside contemporary women writers as a collective ensemble drawn from literary history.<sup>83</sup> The women whom Rubbi selects for inclusion in this volume are not accidental: among the female poets are Laura Battiferra, Vittoria Colonna, and Tullia d'Aragona, all of whom Bernardo Tasso exchanged epistolary correspondence with, wrote lyric dedications for, or personally knew. Tarquinia Molza and Isabella Andreini are among Torquato's female interlocutors also included in the collection. The anthology's longest canzone by Torquato has a title that rings appropriately for this volume: *Lascia, Imeneo, Parnaso, e qui discendi* is a poem in celebration of male-female community, which Tasso depicts as a kind of earthly Parnassus where women's hospitality extends outwards and embraces men. Seated "fra le Grazie e fra le Muse"—figured in the *canzone* as female friends, singers, and interlocutors—Tasso rejoices in this company, gladly promising that he will "[alzare] il canto" and spread his gratitude for its inclusive conviviality. In what emerges as a double vision of a textual Parnassus, inhabited by men and women alike, Rubbi's reconstruction of Tasso "among the muses" is one indication of the lasting influence—even at the close of the eighteenth century—of the climate of collectivity that brought Tasso and women to collaborate, reciprocate, and innovate together.

<sup>81</sup> Isabella Andreini, *Rime* (Milan: Girolamo Bordone and Pietromartire Locarni, 1601).

<sup>82</sup> Isabella Andreini, *Lettere* (Venice: Marc'Antonio Zaltieri, 1607).

<sup>83</sup> Andrea Rubbi, ed. *Parnaso italiano. Ovvero raccolta de' poeti classici italiani d'ogni genere d'ogni età d'ogni metro e del piu' scelto tra gli ottimi, diligentemente riveduti sugli originali piu' accreditati, e adornati di figure in rame. Costanzo, Torquato, Bernardo Tasso e Poetesse del Secolo XVI* (Venice: Antonio Zatti and sons, 1787).

## CHAPTER ONE

### Strategizing the Supplicant's Voice: Tasso's Plea for Female Patronage in *Alle Signore Principesse di Ferrara*

The Torquato Tasso of Karl Ferdinand Sohn's 1839 painting *Tasso and the Two Leonores* (Figure 3) is a familiar face. Sunken into solitude's gloomy corner, Sohn's Tasso tells the tale of the isolated individual tormented by genius and madness. In the painting, Tasso appears at the bottom left-hand corner as a misunderstood outcast, exiled from the towering Este court of Ferrara looming above and far away from him in the background. The painting's two female figures, or "Leonores," are Ferrarese noblewomen and the famous supposed—though never confirmed—love interests of the poet. Pictured on the right is Leonora Sanvitale (c.1558–1582), the praised singer of Ferrara's *il concerto delle dame*, while, on the left, is Leonora d'Este, one of the sisters of Tasso's male patrons, cardinal Luigi d'Este and Duke Alfonso II. Sohn depicts the women's curiosity about the poet's place and his activity through subtleties in their body language and the direction of their gazes. Drawn to Tasso's site of seclusion and poetic production, the two "Leonores" peer down from above through gazes that extend from one woman's eyes to the other's, connecting through Tasso's gaze, so as to land on the book he holds out in front of him. Sohn's painting makes possible the interpretation that the Ferrarese women's interests lie in sharing company with Tasso, albeit cautiously, and reading his poetry.



Fig. 3. Karl Ferdinand Sohn, *Tasso and the Two Leonores*, 1839.

One reason why Tasso's literary production welcomed a female readership—both real and, in Sohn's painting and elsewhere, imagined—is noted by the late nineteenth-century literary historian Angelo Solerti, who categorizes Tasso as “uno degli eroi della reazione contro la corrente letteraria misogina che, particolarmente nei tempi a lui precedenti, aveva avuto tanti campioni.”<sup>1</sup> Essential to Solerti's interpretation of Tasso as an advocate for women, who supports them in the challenges they face from contemporary misogyny, is that much of his lyric verse rejects the long Petrarchan literary model that sought to represent women, and women readers especially, as unresponsive beloveds, or “donne crudeli,” soulless.<sup>2</sup> Following the model set into motion by such women poets as Gaspara Stampa and Veronica Franco, who, with their lyric collections, invented new possibilities for representing the impassioned female beloved and the frigid male beloved, Tasso, along with contemporary male poets, such as Battista Guarini (1538–1612), Gherardo Borgogni (1526–c.1608), and Angelo Grillo (c.1557–1629), committed their poetry to this revised version of a poeticized woman actively capable of and confident in matters of love. Notably, the majority of women featured in Tasso's lyric verse are *not* poetic idealizations subject to amorous desire, but rather historical women from the poet's contemporary contexts. Indeed, Tasso dedicated encomiastic poetry to these women with highly practical purposes in mind, striving to mirror and preserve his participation at court in his verse compositions.<sup>3</sup>

Tasso's complicated history of securing adequate, stable patronage in Ferrara—first as a secretary for Luigi d'Este, and then as the court's historiographer under Duke Alfonso—often positioned him in vulnerable situations. As is well known, Tasso shared a particularly complex relationship with Alfonso II, which reached its breaking point in 1579 when the Duke imposed solitary confinement upon Tasso for having publicly displayed defiance against the court. Vital to Tasso's literary production during his detainment at the Ospedale di Sant'Anna was the careful strategizing with potential patrons and benefactors in order to negotiate the release from his sentence and the reinstatement of his service at court. Two important benefactors whom Tasso imagined could assuage Alfonso's attitudes toward him were Lucrezia and Leonora d'Este, the Duke's own sisters, the latter of which Sohn depicts visually in his painting. Across multiple letters, Tasso recognizes Lucrezia's role, in particular, as his most patient and productive patron. In a letter dated March 15, 1585—roughly one year before he would be released from Sant'Anna—Tasso expresses his gratefulness to Lucrezia for having showered him with benevolence and seemingly special treatment upon his arrival in Ferrara:

La mia lunga infermità, la qual m'ha tolta la memoria di molte cose che m'erano care da sapere, m'ha lasciato nondimeno quella de' favori e de le grazie fattemi da Vostra Altezza, per la quale solamente non mi dispiacciono tutti i tempi passati, e non dispero di tutti i futuri. [...] E cominciando la mia narrazione da quel tempo nel quale io serviva l'illustrissimo signor cardinale suo fratello, la sua grazia si fece incontro alla mia servitù

<sup>1</sup> Angelo Solerti, *Vita di Tasso*, 3 vols. (Turin-Rome: Loescher, 1895), 2:402.

<sup>2</sup> For early modern women's critique of this Petrarchan stereotype, see Ann Rosalind Jones, *The Currency of Eros: Women's Love Lyric in Europe, 1540–1620* (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1990); Margaret Rosenthal, *The Honest Courtesan: Veronica Franco, Citizen and Writer in Sixteenth-Century Venice* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); Virginia Cox, “Sixteenth-Century Women Petrarchists and the Legacy of Laura,” *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 35, no. 3 (2005): 583–606; Julie Campbell, *Literary Circles and Gender in Early Modern Europe: A Cross-Cultural Approach* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2006); Virginia Cox, *Women's Writing in Italy (1400–1650)* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008); Id., *The Prodigious Muse: Women's Writing in Counter-Reformation Italy* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011); Aileen Feng, *Writing Beloveds: Humanist Petrarchism and the Politics of Gender* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017); Maria Chiara Tarsi, *Studio sulla poesia femminile del Cinquecento* (Bologna: I libri di Emil, 2018).

<sup>3</sup> On Tasso's use of encomiastic verse to express himself as “non [un] osservatore esterno ma membro a pieno titolo della corte di cui esalta lo splendore,” see Matteo Residori, *Tasso* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2009), 43.

e mi diede quell'ardire che io non avrei preso da me stesso, ed accarezzandomi più di tutti i nuovi, e non meno d'alcun altro antico servidore.

The letter goes on to suggest that Lucrezia executed a key role in arranging Tasso's first formal interaction with the Duke, an occasion on which the poet seems to have made, or at least reconstructs the memory that he *did* make, a positive first impression:

fui per suo mezzo conosciuto dal serenissimo signor duca suo fratello, e rimirato con buon occhio, ed onorato sopra modo dei principali signori di questa corte, [...] [e] mi fece avere la tavola del signor cardinale suo fratello.<sup>4</sup>

That Tasso should describe himself as “rimirato con buon occhio, ed onorato” by Alfonso and other elite men at court should surprise readers familiar with the poet's language of neglect often used to describe how other men treat him. This letter offers a rare example of Tasso's rather optimistic representation of his relationship with the Duke, managed effectively by a female patron. Elsewhere in his letters and lyric verse, Tasso appears less confident in his subordinate position to Alfonso, often begging him for help or soliciting from him attention and financial sponsorship.

One strategy Tasso implements in his lyric production to invoke intermediators who might improve his relationship with Alfonso is to call upon the Duke's sisters to intervene as his protectors. Tasso dedicates the gift manuscript collection *Alle Signore Principesse di Ferrara* to Lucrezia and Leonora for such a purpose. Written between 1579 and 1580, this anthology contains sixty-one poems that construct a hybridization of autobiographical narration and encomiastic praise in celebration of the Este princesses and their noble house. The timing of when this collection was written—in the year Tasso began his confinement in Sant'Anna—informs readers' interpretations of the text. 1579 marks a critical year for understanding the circumstances under which Tasso carefully designed this unique gift for his Este female patrons. Tasso's years at Sant'Anna certainly limited—though in no way fully denied—the poet opportunities for immediate interaction with members of the Este court. More than a space of “phantasmal fiction,”<sup>5</sup> Sant'Anna was, for Tasso, a restrictive condition; escaping from it required practical strategies and, especially for imprisoned poets, rhetorical tactics. Contextualizing this collection in order to account for its potentially applicable function (i.e., as a plea for release from his confinement), its very title “alle signore principesse” announces for whom Tasso specifically composed this poetry, an audience that appears neither accidental, nor insignificant.

In the pages ahead, I show how Tasso's *Alle Signore Principesse* stages the Este women as the benevolent agents of the poet's liberation and reinstatement. Elaborating on the collection's hybridity that combines Tasso's autobiographical reflection upon his time at court and his encomiastic praise of women that directs attention toward the Este readers, my interpretation is that the relationship Tasso builds between his poetic “io” as narrator and the protection-offering princesses is not one that readers should take for granted. Tasso's dramatization of compassionate female Este patronage as reaction, rescue, and reintegration is essential to this collection: it reflects a strategy that goes beyond the individual poems themselves—that is, beyond the traditional expectation that poetic courtiers naturally offer encomiastic gifts to their sponsors—but signals a much more pressing, immediate need for intervention and assistance. As a kind of social transaction, Tasso's use of the dedication is, to

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<sup>4</sup> Torquato Tasso, *Lettere disposte per ordine in tempo*, ed. Cesare Guasti, 5 vols. (Florence: Le Monnier, 1853–58), 2:354, n. 351. All further citations of Tasso's letters are from this edition.

<sup>5</sup> For a reading of Sant'Anna as such a site, see Stefano Jossa “Il luogo della poesia: La prigioniera del Tasso a Sant'Anna,” in *Spazi, geografie, testi*, ed. Siriana Sgavichia (Rome: Bulzoni, 2003), 45–57, 57.

borrow Jason Scott-Warren's definition, "performative: their words, like the words of a promise or a bet, are deeds."<sup>6</sup>

Tasso's depiction of the Este princesses as a responsive and willing audience stands in direct contrast to his representation of their brothers, Duke Alfonso and Cardinal Luigi, who appear in this collection as unyielding, unsympathetic figures who deny the poet their attention and assistance. While demonstrating how Tasso represents the Este women's role as mediators between him and his princes, I analyze the poet's illustration of his male patron's authority as qualified and severely threatened. Alfonso and Luigi d'Este surface in *Alle Signore Principesse* as inferior figures when compared to other individuals associated with the court in Ferrara: former male members and rulers of the Este house, illustrious leaders from classical antiquity, the princesses Lucrezia and Leonora, and even the poet himself.<sup>7</sup> Central to this chapter's analysis of Tasso's representation of women in *Alle Signore Principesse* is the degree to which his poetry abandons the Petrarchan tradition of representing women as cold and cruel. Among other considerations, I argue that Tasso paid homage to his female patrons by representing them as, instead, benign and active.<sup>8</sup> I explore how Tasso's poems addressed to Duke Alfonso characterize him as the unresponsive "beloved" figure, who refuses the narrator's pleas for help, not because of his unyielding "sdegno"—the expected sentiment any Petrarchan woman would harbor—but because of his Achillean "ira." The gender reversal Tasso imposes onto the Duke is mirrored in the poet's own "persona-fashioning" in the text, whereby, by the end of *Alle Signore Principesse*, he adopts the literary persona of Polyxena, the innocent Trojan virgin, who, in Tasso's rendition, is spared from Achilles/Alfonso's vengeance precisely because of the well-timed intervention of other members of the Este house, whom Tasso grants considerable authority.

Before turning to my literary analysis of the collection, it is first necessary to retrace its reception and print history, which profoundly influenced and broadly limited modern critics' appreciation for this unique poetic authorization. Since this collection is one of only four volumes of poetry written, crafted, edited, ordered, and willed by the poet himself, without any interference from eager (often erring) editors, it represents a rare case of Tasso's authorial intent.<sup>9</sup> Accordingly, it ought not to be overlooked nor undervalued that the poetry's ideal readers are, indeed, women, in ways that go beyond the collection's address "*alle signore principesse*."<sup>10</sup> However, the early twentieth-century edition of Tasso's *Rime* (1898–1902) by Angelo Solerti—reprinted with poems newly edited by Bruno Basile in 1994—dismantles *Alle Signore Principesse*'s original form as a unified gift manuscript. For the modern reader, the collection's individual poems appear interspersed in Solerti's and Basile's editions among those written for different occasions and for different patrons. This dismemberment of text and audience obscures the forgotten readership of Este women for whom Tasso had specifically

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<sup>6</sup> Jason Scott-Warren, *Sir John Harrington and the Book as Gift* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 2.

<sup>7</sup> On Tasso's complicated relationship with Alfonso, see Richard A. McCabe, *'Ungainfull Arte': Poetry, Patronage and Printing in the Early Modern Era* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 136–47. Cf. Giovanna Scianatico, *L'idea del perfetto principe: utopia e storia nella scrittura del Tasso* (Naples: Edizioni scientifiche italiane, 1998).

<sup>8</sup> In his early narrative poetry, there is evidence of Tasso's engagement with traditional Petrarchan idioms to describe Lucrezia d'Este. See, in particular, canto 8 of his *Rinaldo*, ed. Matteo Navone (Alessandria: Edizioni dell'Orso, 2012).

<sup>9</sup> The earliest poetry Tasso authorized for publication appears in the poetic anthology published by members of the Accademia degli Etere in 1567. This poetry is available in a modern critical edition: Tasso, *Rime 'eternee*, ed. Lanfranco Caretti (Parma: Zara, 1990). The three other authorized editions of his poetry include: the manuscript copy of 156 *rime d'amore* written between 1583 and 1585, known as the Codice Chigiano L, VII, 302, housed today in the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, and made partially available at [digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS\\_Chig.L.VIII.302](http://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Chig.L.VIII.302); the 1591 *Prima parte delle rime* printed in Mantua by Francesco Osanna; and the 1593 *Seconda parte delle rime* printed in Brescia by Pietro Maria Marchetti.

<sup>10</sup> For a similar, albeit brief, claim to the Este women as the collection's intended readers, see Piero Antonio Serassi, *La vita di Torquato Tasso*, ed. Cesare Guasti, 3 vols. (Florence: Barbera and Co., 1858), 2:368. On the "architettura sapientia" of *Alle Signore Principesse*, see Franco Tomasi, "La canzone *Quel generoso mio guerriero interno* di Torquato Tasso," in *L'Ellisse: Studi storici di letteratura italiana, Le Rime del Tasso. Esegesi e tradizioni* 1 (2006): 99–120, 102.

authorized the collection. These pages reclaim Tasso's female readers and show how Solerti's editorial decision to make the poet's lyric itinerary coincide with biographical events relies heavily upon and prolongs the Romantic myth of Tasso's supposed unrequited love for Leonora d'Este, a sentiment left out—perhaps because it might never have existed—from *Alle Signore Principesse*.<sup>11</sup>

## HISTORY IN PRINT: POETRY AS AUTOBIOGRAPHY?

In his *Studi sulle Rime del Tasso: Per una nuova edizione delle Rime di Torquato Tasso* (1950), Lanfranco Caretti proposes significant revisions to Angelo Solerti's edition of the *Rime* (1898–1902), among which two concerns are salient: first, the editor's arrangement of Tasso's poetry is deeply influenced by the overriding “*storia sentimentale del poeta*,” which creates, according to Caretti, a Solertian-designed amorous biography of Tasso that builds towards his “tragic destiny”; and, second, pertinent to the lyric collection *Alle Signore Principesse*, Solerti did not prioritize the authorized versions of Tasso's poetry over those unauthorized.<sup>12</sup> Thus, Caretti proposes a “new edition,” one that will, as best it can, reproduce the poet's authorial design for his lyric publications.<sup>13</sup> For how this would impact a collection such as *Alle Signore Principesse*, however, I would argue that Caretti's proposal over-prioritizes authorized editions intended for *printed* publication,<sup>14</sup> thereby excluding *Alle Signore Principesse* from critical consideration, given that this collection “non [ha] assolutamente nulla a che vedere con i ‘tre volumi’” of Tasso's poetry that he intended to publish.<sup>15</sup>

Although *Alle Signore Principesse* is preserved today as a bound collection of manuscript pages in the Biblioteca Comunale Ariostea in Ferrara, it is doubly lost—in terms of its unified materiality—in Solerti's early-twentieth century edition of Tasso's *Rime* and in Caretti's mid-twentieth century call for a revised edition of Tasso's poetry. To summarize: in Solerti's edition, the poems from *Alle Signore Principesse* are still present across four edited volumes; however, they are taken out of order and re-distributed according to the editor's attempt to construct a tragic love story, or *canzoniere tassiano* based on the model of Petrarch.<sup>16</sup> In regard to Caretti's proposal for a revised edition of Tasso's poetry,

<sup>11</sup> For Solerti's defense of his decision to order Tasso's poetry according to his subjective plans as an editor, see Torquato Tasso, *Le Rime, edizione critica su i manoscritti e le antiche stampe*, ed. Angelo Solerti, 4 vols. (Bologna: Romagnoli-Dall'Acqua, 1898–1902), 1:518. For Solerti's decision not to prioritize the authorized versions of Tasso's poetry, see *Ibid.*, 1:v–xiii.

<sup>12</sup> Lanfranco Caretti, *Studi sulle Rime del Tasso: Per una nuova edizione delle Rime di Torquato Tasso* (Rome: Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 1950), 101.

<sup>13</sup> For the history of unauthorized publications of Tasso's poetry, including Aldo Manuzio the younger's print (Venice, 1581), the Baldini print (Ferrara, 1582), and the six-part Vasalini print (Venice, 1583–87), described in Caretti, *Studi*, 21–46. For a complementary reading to Caretti's, see Valeria De Maldé, “La tradizione delle *Rime* tassiane tra storia e leggenda,” *Filologia e critica* 9 (1984): 230–53.

<sup>14</sup> It ought to be noted that Caretti does, in fact, include the Chigiano manuscript among the authorized editions that would constitute his proposed “new edition.” This is likely because Tasso had intended to publish this manuscript, but abandoned work on these poems in 1586, perhaps because of his release from Sant'Anna. On the Chigiano manuscript and Tasso's unrealized plans to publish it, see Francesco Ferretti, “Torquato Tasso,” in *Lirici europei del Cinquecento: Ripensando la poesia del Petrarca*, eds. Gian Mario Anselmi, et. al. (Milan: BUR, 2004), 757–65; Franco Tomasi, “Osservazioni sul libro di poesia nel secondo Cinquecento,” in *Canzonieri in transito: Lasciti petrarcheschi e nuovi archetipi letterari tra Cinque e Seicento*, eds. Alessandro Metlica and Franco Tomasi (Milan-Udine: Mimesis edizioni, 2015), 11–36.

<sup>15</sup> Caretti, *Studi*, 52, n. 138. The “tre volumi” Caretti refers to are the three books of poetry according to which Tasso sought to divide his lyric verse. In print, this arrangement includes: the *parte prima* of *rime d'amore* (printed by Osanna in 1591), the *parte seconda* of *rime d'encomio* (printed the Marchetti in 1593), and the *parte terza*, printed posthumously in 1597, which included *rime d'encomio* for prelates and some *rime morali*. The *parte quarta* was never realized in print, but Tasso made provisional plans for it to be a volume made up entirely of *rime spirituali*. Tasso expresses these wishes in a letter written on November 1, 1589, in Tasso, *Lettere*, 4:255, n. 1183.

<sup>16</sup> See the table in the introduction to the modern edition of *Alle Signore Principesse*, which indicates the ordering that Solerti (and, later, Maier and Basile) assigned to the collection's individual poems, which appear scattered throughout their editions

while many poems from *Alle Signore Principesse* were later printed in authorized publications that Tasso approved, and would thus appear in Caretti's newly designed collection of the poet's authorized works, the gift manuscript itself is wrongly written out of the history of the poet's authorized lyric production simply because it was not intended for print. Thus, neither Solerti's nor Caretti's editorial decisions account for *Alle Signore Principesse*'s preferred female audience and its historical practical motivations, due to the pursuit of ambiguous preferences for narrative appeal (Solerti), and equally ambiguous preferences for poetry in print (Caretti). Following Paul Ricœur and Roger Chartier, who suggest that the meaning of any given text depends on its form and on its audience, it is essential to reclaim Tasso's Este female patrons as *Alle Signore Principesse*'s ideal readers, so as to properly recognize the encounter between "the world of the text" and "the world of the reader."<sup>17</sup>

In turning to the seventeenth-century construction of Tasso as the "novello Ovidio," I call attention once more to Solerti's decision to make the poet's lyric itinerary coincide with biographical events. One can understand Solerti's slightly misguided motivations for rooting the chronology of Tasso's poetry in the chronology of historical circumstance, for they design convenient parallels between the poet's life and his literary works. Nearly two and a half centuries prior to the publication of Solerti's edition, Giovanni Battista Manso (1567–1645), Tasso's friend and one of his last patrons, had invented the narrative origin of Tasso's apparent love for Leonora d'Este in the first full biography of the poet, *Vita di Torquato Tasso* (1621).<sup>18</sup> In many ways, Manso established the textual precedent for Solerti's edition of the *Rime*, as well as for his own *Vita di Tasso* (1895). At the risk of embellishment and philological falsification, Manso was the first to suggest that Tasso veiled his amorous desire for Leonora in his poetry, leading readers to believe that it was because of the poet's presumptuous passion for the Duke's unmarried sister that he was turned away from the court and sentenced to solitary confinement. The following section looks briefly at two moments from Manso's *Vita* that have popularized and, until now, canonized the romantic myth of Tasso and the Este princess.

#### MISREADING VERSE: MANSO'S TASSO AS THE "NOVELLO OVIDIO"

From as early as 1594—one year before the poet's death—the elaborate myth of Tasso as an individual tormented and abused by his patrons has coincided with the poet's image as a desperate lover anguishing over unrequited feelings.<sup>19</sup> Much of the responsibility for this identification of Tasso as an enamored, afflicted poet resides with Manso's *Vita di Tasso*.<sup>20</sup> In section thirty-five of the *Vita*, titled "Torquato segreto ne' suoi amori," the autobiographer rhapsodizes on the poet's secret passions, which, the biographer claims, he concealed with "silence and dissimulation." Hinting at the

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from nos. 19 to 1700, in Torquato Tasso, *Alle Signore Principesse di Ferrara: Ripasso del quaderno autografo*, ed. Luciano Capra (Ferrara: Gabriele Corbo Editore, 1995), 7–8. For a thorough philological study of this collection, see Claudia Ranzani, "Due testimoni delle rime nella raccolta *Alle Signore Principesse di Ferrara*," in *Sul Tasso: Studi di filologia e letteratura italiana offerti a Luigi Poma*, ed. Franco Gavazzoni (Rome: Editrice antenore, 2003), 569–88.

<sup>17</sup> Paul Ricœur, "Le temps raconté," in *Temps et récit*, 3 vols. (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1985), 3:228–63; Roger Chartier, *Culture écrite et société: l'ordre des livres (XIV<sup>e</sup>-XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle)* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1996).

<sup>18</sup> The first biography of Tasso appeared in 1604, but covered only selected episodes from his life. See Giovanni Pietro D'Alessandro, *Vita del Signor Torquato Tasso* (Naples: Costantino Vitale, 1604).

<sup>19</sup> I refer to the anonymous, sadly lost, English play *Tasso's Melancholy*, performed by the Admiral's Men at the Rose playhouse on September 3, 1594, which received a number of revivals in subsequent years. Mention of this performance appears in the theatrical manager Philip Henslowe's *Diary*, which covers Elizabethan theatrical activities between 1592 and 1603. I have consulted the modern edition of this text prepared by R. A. Foakes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

<sup>20</sup> For a brief account of the Ovid-Tasso parallel, see D'Alessandro, *Vita del Signor Torquato Tasso*, 13.

repercussions of such naughty love, Manso suggests: “da questa amorosa e ardentissima sua passione, e del voler egli oltremodo nasconderla e seppellirla nel segreto del suo petto, quasi *novello Ovidio* nacquero que’ primi inconvenienti” (emphasis added).<sup>21</sup> Manso proposes that the Roman poet’s propensity for scandalous affection for Augustus’s daughter Julia—a woman of elite, unattainable stature—was mirrored in Tasso’s incognito longing for princess Leonora, Alfonso’s sister.<sup>22</sup>

In what has become a well-known editorial betrayal of Tasso’s authorized *Lettere familiari* (1588), the biographer took liberty to invent new meaning in a letter written by Tasso that had already been circulating in print for over thirty years. Composed during his detainment and addressed to his childhood friend, the Duke of Urbino Francesco Maria della Rovere, the letter reflects on the supposed reasons for Tasso’s incarceration.<sup>23</sup> In the authorized version of the letter printed in 1588, the text reads: “Supplifico Vostra Altezza serenissima [...] ch’io possa uscir da questa prigione di Sant’Anna, senza ricever noia de le cose che per frenesia ho detto e fatte in materia...”<sup>24</sup> While the editor of the 1588 *Lettere*, Giovan Battista Licino, includes the ellipses after the words “fatte in materia” before beginning the next sentence, when Manso cites this letter in his biography of Tasso, he replaces the ellipses with the phrase “d’amore,” so that the final part of the sentence reads: “acciò ch’io possa uscire da questa prigione di Sant’Anna senza ricever noia delle cose che per frenesia ho detto e fatte in materia *d’amore*” (emphasis added).<sup>25</sup> Manso inserts unauthorized material into Tasso’s letter so as to transform the poet’s own words into a compelling love story, thus inventing an impossible star-crossed romantic affair between a noble princess and a confined poet.

This epistolary edit is not the only occasion on which Manso proves himself to be an unreliable reader of and commenter on Tasso’s texts. Similar to Solerti, Manso reads Tasso’s poetry as a biographical trajectory from a joyous adolescence to a jealous maturity. In his *Vita*, among Manso’s glosses on Tasso’s poetry are those written on poems from *Alle Signore Principesse*, some of which signal a glaring oversight. Even as he closely reads the subtleties of these verses and praises their poetic appeal, Manso fails to account for the fact that Leonora d’Este is never specifically named in the collection, unlike her sister Lucrezia.<sup>26</sup> This omission allows Manso to presume that the poet veiled his affection for the princess in poems addressed to *other* “Leonore” at court, such as Leonora Sanvitale, the second Leonora who appears in Sohn’s painting.

In his description of Leonora d’Este as a women who refused to marry, “non avendo giammai voluto chinare l’altezza dell’animo a sottoporsi ad alcuno,”<sup>27</sup> Manso precariously collapses her onto the model of the Petrarchan “donna crudele,” a figure Tasso had nearly abandoned after composing

<sup>21</sup> Giovan Battista Manso, *Vita di Torquato Tasso* (Naples: Deuchino, 1621), 49. A modern edition of this text has been edited and made available by Bruno Basile (Rome: Salerno Editrice, 1995). On the authors’ friendship and Manso’s role, in particular, in developing “il culto di Tasso” in southern Italy, see Pietro Giulio Riga, *Giovan Battista Manso e la cultura letteraria a Napoli nel primo Seicento: Tasso, Marino, gli Oziosi* (Bologna: I libri di Emil, 2015), especially 67–120.

<sup>22</sup> For critical considerations of Manso’s Ovid-Tasso parallel, see Carlo Gardenio Granata, “Memorie dei *Trisitia* ovidiani nel quaderno autografo di rime del 1578,” in *Il merito e la cortesia: Torquato Tasso e la corte dei Della Rovere. Atti del convegno. Urbino-Pesaro, 18–20 settembre 1996*. eds. Guido Arbizzoni et. al. (Ancona: Il Lavoro editoriale, 1999), 185–215; Matteo Residori, “Teoria e prassi dell’encomio nel Tasso lirico,” in *Forme e occasioni dell’encomio tra Cinque e Seicento*, eds. Danielle Boillet and Liliana Grassi (Lucca: Pacini Pazzi, 2011), 19–49.

<sup>23</sup> In the dialogue *Il padre di famiglia*, Tasso identifies Alfonso’s “sdegno” as the reason for his detention. Similarly, in a letter to Angelo Grillo, dated March 23, 1585, Tasso names “l’illustrissimo signor don Alfonso d’Este” as “la principal cagione che impedisce la [sua] libertà,” in Tasso, *Lettere*, 2:359, n. 354.

<sup>24</sup> Torquato Tasso, *Delle lettere familiari*, ed. Giovan Battista Licino, 2 vols. (Bergamo: Comin Ventura 1588), 2:35.

<sup>25</sup> Manso, *Vita*, ed. Basile, 90.

<sup>26</sup> Leonora d’Este is, however, evoked in the plural address “alle signore principesse,” which appears in the dedication, as well as in individual poems: sonnet 12 (*O due figlie d’Alcide, onde s’oscura*), sonnet 17 (*Figlie d’Alcide, ad immatura morte*), *canzone* 21 (*O figlie di Renata*), sonnet 56 (*Suore del grand’Alfonso, il terzo giro*), and *canzone* 61 (*Già il lieto anno novello*).

<sup>27</sup> Manso, *Vita*, ed. Basile, 42–3.

books of love poetry for such women as Lucrezia Bendidio and Laura Peperara in the 1560s and 1570s. Visual depictions of Leonora as an unwilling recipient of Tasso's poetry were popular in nineteenth-century reconstructions of their relationship. In Felice Schiavoni's *Torquato Tasso e Leonora d'Este* (1839) (Figure 4), for example, the poet pleads for Leonora's attention: his hand extends towards her, while he gazes fondly upon her face. In contrast, her hesitant gestures and turned head convey a lack of interest in Tasso's lyrics, though her slight smile may indicate some pleasure at hearing them sing her praises. The tension of this interaction occurs under the sign of Duke Alfonso II, pictured in the portrait sitting directly above the Este princess. What is captured in Schiavoni's image is the sense that Tasso lacked a hospitable, willing audience while at the court in Ferrara, a theme that has continued to dominate in contemporary re-workings of the poet's biography.<sup>28</sup>



Fig. 4. Felice Schiavoni, *Torquato Tasso e Leonora d'Este*, 1839.

<sup>28</sup> For a recent rendition of Tasso's "romance," see Alvaro Torchio, *Luce e tenebra: Vita di Torquato Tasso. Romanzo* (San Cesario di Lecce: Pietro Manni, 2016).

In the text of *Alle Signore Principesse*, the image of the cold-shouldered Petrarchan woman is all but absent. In her place, Tasso engages with, and shows full dependence on, the benevolent foil of the traditionally unresponsive beloved figure: the kindhearted, generous benefactress, who represents a model of *non*-amorous response. Concerning the manuscript's extra-literary strategies—articulated by narrative fantasies of poetic liberation as enacted through female hospitality—*Alle Signore Principesse* confirms that it was in the poet's best interest to represent Lucrezia and Leonora as compassionate audience, and to dramatize their influence on Duke Alfonso as poetic fiction, which could transform into a means of procuring actual liberation.<sup>29</sup> In order to contextualize Tasso's representation of the Este women's persuasiveness over their brother, it is necessary to trace the prophetic voice with which Tasso speaks to Duke Alfonso, which challenges his ducal authority and potential longevity in poetic memory. Importantly, this narrating voice wavers in its willingness to praise the man responsible—in Tasso's eyes—for the poet's neglected state. Such hesitation and careful conditioning appear only in Tasso's verses directed towards male patrons, and never towards his female patrons.

“FRA LE DUE SUORE ASSISO”:  
DUKE ALFONSO IN *ALLE SIGNORE PRINCIPESSA*

While Carlo Granata has suggested that Tasso's Alfonso in *Alle Signore Principesse* is a “potente e minacciosa figura di divinità terribile,” my reading considers how the poet qualifies the Duke's authority by contextualizing it always *in relation to* his sisters' mediation.<sup>30</sup> Tasso's Duke only appears powerful because of his family's lending hand. Such an interpretation yields further reflection on Tasso's approach to gendered authority, discussed in more detail below. The language surrounding Tasso's representation of Alfonso's influence hinges on hypothetical uncertainties regarding his ability to rule effectively, and to offer compassionate care for those most dependent upon his good grace. For example, at the end of the *canzone* *O magnanimo figlio*—written during the same time as, though not included in, *Alle Signore Principesse*—the poet constructs his male patron almost as if he were an immobilized statue, concluding his account of Alfonso with the words: “Trova, canzon, il grande invitto duce/ fra le due suore *assiso*” (emphasis added). The poet's hesitancy grows stronger in the next line with the appearance of the word “forse,” whereby Tasso struggles to imagine the Duke capable of showing him benevolent response. Timed accordingly, the language of doubt used to describe Alfonso's actions surfaces at the same moment when “il grande invitto duce” is represented as seated next to, that is, stagnant and below, his two sisters.

Although this image of Alfonso framed by his sisters' presence does not appear directly in the lyric anthology, its visual-architectural design of gendered authority resonates throughout. It is important that *Alle Signore Principesse* positions the Duke in relation to his relatives along either a vertical plane (i.e., father-son, grandfather-grandson), or a horizontal one (i.e., brother-sister, widower-widow). This suggests that the poet is aware of, and potentially eager to exploit, his privileged perspective as the collection's puppeteer, designing with purpose the specific characteristics, behaviors, and positions of his Este patrons. The collection exposes the vulnerability and the potential flexibility to which patrons are subject in poet's representation of their authority. In poems dedicated to Alfonso's male Este ancestors, Tasso reflects fondly upon the former exemplary models of

<sup>29</sup> On the “social use” of poetry, insofar as it measures “precise strategie cortigiane,” which shape Tasso's encomiastic verse as “una possibile via di fuga dalla reclusione,” see Franco Tomasi, “Note sulle *Rime* nelle lettere del Tasso,” in *Ricerche sulle lettere di Torquato Tasso*, eds. Clizia Carminati and Emilio Russo (Sarnico: Edizioni di Archilet, 2016), 46.

<sup>30</sup> Granata, “Memorie dei *Trisitia* ovidiani,” 198.

successful poet-prince relations, which serve to remind the Duke of his family's long history as kind patrons of the arts, and thus his expected obligation to follow suit.<sup>31</sup>

The collection's unique combination of the encomiastic mode with autobiographical narration is further evidenced by the identification of Tasso's lyric "io" with afflicted figures from Greek and Roman mythology, including Ixion, Phaethon, Odysseus, and, perhaps unexpectedly, the innocent virgin martyr Polyxena.<sup>32</sup> In the sonnet *L'ombra superba del crudel Pelide* (n. 19), Tasso masks Alfonso as "crudel Pelide" and the Duke's father, Ercole d'Este, as "pietoso Alcide." Witnessing his son's inability to provide proper protection over his subjects, Ercole intervenes as the poet's instrument of salvation. Tasso's self-identification with innocent Polyxena implies his supposed incorruptibility, as it contrasts with the actions of his "cruel" patron. The poet calculates the sonnet's sequence of events carefully: Ercole-Alcide appears at the heightened dramatic moment just when the "prigionier" (Tasso-Polyxena) is nearly bereft of life ("privo/ quasi è di vita"), thus restoring the prisoner-victor Tasso "back" to life ("in libertade e vivo/ per gratia torni"). Meanwhile, only through his father's "kind heart" and intercession, Alfonso-Pelide is allowed to participate in the apotheosis, and join Ercole in the heavenly kingdom. This occurs because of no merit or act on Alfonso's own part. The final episode in this narrative describes how the victim-turned-survivor then witnesses the divinizing effects his near sacrifice generated. Tasso's sonnet stages the coincidental deification of his patrons and the "realized" fantasy of his own salvation. Ercole's role as Tasso's defender and liberator confirms that protection via mediation is possible within the Este house, a principle that the examples of Lucrezia and Leonora will also model.

Insofar as Tasso's representation of Alfonso is quite compromising across this poetry, it is useful here to recall a fundamental reading of the poet's *Gerusalemme liberata*, in which Sergio Zatti argues that Tasso uses poetry as a site of redemption and recuperation: "la scrittura è così investita di un altissimo potere di risarcimento [...] il mezzo di legittimazione dell'identità minacciata dalla legge tirannica del principe-padre."<sup>33</sup> In this way, poetry becomes a "stable" site of reliability in which Tasso may rewrite exclusivity as inclusivity. Extending Zatti's thesis and applying it to the ideal female audience of *Alle Signore Principesse*, I suggest that the collection's poetry is not a site of recuperation for fractured ideologies of faith, unity, and obedience—critical concerns for the austere Counter-Reformation authorities for whom Tasso revised his *Liberata*—but a space in which the poet calculates a fantasy of liberation played out by *other* members of the Este house. While Zatti's reading of the *Liberata*'s dedication to Alfonso articulates questions of hierarchy, insofar as Tasso's status as a "peregrino errante" lends power to the ideal image of the Duke, Alfonso's authority in *Alle Signore Principesse* is not similarly mirrored in the poet's psychological state and physical exile. Rather, Tasso replaces Alfonso with a more responsive audience that challenges the Duke's "permanent" sentence of exile. This underlines how Alfonso's verdict is subject to poetic representations of inverted compassion and intercession, which, in turn, results in the fictional reversal of the Duke's sentence and the poet's imagined happy ending. It ought to be stressed that Tasso's Alfonso re-appears in *Alle Signore Principesse* just as he is represented in the poet's letters: distant, unyielding, and unaffected by

<sup>31</sup> Tasso compares the historical relationships between the Este house and its court poets to those between classical rulers and poets from antiquity, such as Alexander the Great and Homer (sonnet 33, *De le barbare spoglie e de le tante*), and Augustus and Virgil (sonnet 32, *Tolse a le fiamme il glorioso Augusto*, and sonnet 36, *Qui giace Alfonso, e piantò il sacro alloro*).

<sup>32</sup> The comparisons with Phaethon appear in sonnets 4 (*Signor, ch'aperto in riva a questo mare*), 15 (*Aspirava, Signor, novo Fetonte*), and 16 (*Se 'l mio Marte non ha Ciprigina alcuna*); with Ixion in sonnet 25 (*Me novello Ission rapido aggira*); and with Odysseus in sonnet 54 (*Giacena esposto il peregrino Ulisse*). For Tasso's theoretical discussion of the love between Achilles and Polyxena, see his *Discorso del poema eroico* (1594), book two. Although Tasso cites Euripides as his source for Polyxena's story, he may also have been influenced by Boccaccio's treatment of her story in his *Filostrato* (c.1335) and *De mulieribus claris* (c.1361).

<sup>33</sup> Sergio Zatti, *L'uniforme cristiano e multiforme pagano: Saggio sulla Gerusalemme liberata* (Milan: Il Saggiatore, 1993), 113.

his pleas. Rather than take to Alfonso as an admiring subject, Tasso takes him as his behavioral role model: the poet distances himself from his male patron, making room for narratives that describe the support and effectiveness of other figures.<sup>34</sup>

As a further form of textual compromise, the lyric collection articulates Alfonso's authority as subject to the poet's wavering willingness to secure his lord's immortal fame in poetic verse. By dismantling the Alfonso/savior–Tasso/exile hierarchy, and recognizing his own poetry's powers of “diva eloquenza,” Tasso nimbly manipulates the Duke's image. As he defends his poetic craft, Tasso asserts his own authority over Alfonso's legacy. The poet wields the possible promise of granting Alfonso poetic immortality as a prophetic threat, wherein he expresses an acute awareness that only *if* his patron protects him, he will return the favor by praising Alfonso's name.<sup>35</sup> The poet describes this mutually beneficial transaction in the sonnet *Al Signor Duca di Ferrara* (n. 24):

Io pure al nome tuo dolce rischiaro  
la lingua, e 'n dir come sei saggio e forte  
par che sovra le nubi aura mi porte:  
ma tosto caggio in suon basso et amaro,  
e s'alta tua pietà mio fato avaro  
non vince, Alfonso invitto, e l'empia sorte,  
gela mia lingua anzi il rigor di morte,  
c'homai mi verna, e sol pianger m'è caro.  
Piango il morir, né piango il morir solo,  
ma il modo, e la mia fé che mal rimbomba,  
che co 'l nome veder sepolta parmi.  
Né piramidi o mete o di Mausolo  
mi saria di conforto haver la tomba,  
ch'altre moli inalzar credea co' carmi.<sup>36</sup>

The poet's negotiating terms indicate that he will continue to write poetry for Alfonso only if the “unconquered” Duke can live up to his title and “overcome” the poet's bitter fate. Like the suppliant bard Phemios in the *Odyssey*, Tasso pleads with Alfonso in terms that recognize the mutually beneficial rewards and responsibilities that affect both princes and their poets.<sup>37</sup> Keenly aware that any leader requires a talented poet to commemorate their legacy in material form, Tasso reminds the Duke that, without poetry, his legacy is forever vulnerable to fading memory.

In a similar vein, Tasso defends his poetic craft in the sonnet dedicated to Alfonso, *Quando nel ciel, tra mille aurate sedi* (n. 31), which visualizes the moment when the Duke will join his Este ancestors in the afterlife. Here, the poet adopts a subtly threatening prophetic voice that instructs his lord on what he ought to appreciate while alive (i.e. poetry), since “eternal” cities and magnificent palaces are destined to crumble and fall to dust. The sonnet's final line stresses to “invitto” Alfonso that his

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<sup>34</sup> On Tasso's complex relationship to Alfonso as prince-padre, see Margaret Ferguson, *Trials of Desire: Renaissance Defenses of Poetry* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1983), 54–136; Jane Tylus, *Writing and Vulnerability in the Late Renaissance* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993).

<sup>35</sup> These insinuating messages have often gone overlooked, or dismissed, by scholars. Liano Petroni, for example, has argued that Tasso's encomiastic poetry is all blanket—nearly blind—formulaic praise in, “Le Rime del Tasso,” *Annali della Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa: Lettere, Storia e Filosofia* 18, no. 1 (1949): 49–81, 74.

<sup>36</sup> The emphasis here, and in other citations of Tasso's poetry below, is my own.

<sup>37</sup> Phemios's plea appears in chapter 22 in Homer, *The Odyssey*, trans. Emily Wilson (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2018).

immortal legacy may survive only in poetry, albeit wholly at the poet's discretion. This shrewd suggestion challenges, and possibly reverses—at least fictionally—the conventional hierarchy of authority inherent in prince-poet relations. In the second and third line of the sonnet *Al Signor Duca di Ferrara* quoted above, Tasso suggests that his own poetry, not Alfonso's "wisdom," nor his "power," will transport the poet, not the duke, to lofty heights: "n dir come sei saggio e forte/ par che sovra le nubi *aura mi porte*" (emphasis added). Here, the Petrarchan echo of "aura" as a substitute for poetry offers a self-aware reflection of the fictional fortune poets invent for themselves, independent of their patrons' will or wishes. While uncontrollable elements, such as Alfonso's "ira" and cruelty, lead to unfavorable outcomes for the poet, Tasso's artistic craft may still recuperate his misfortune. In other words, Tasso proves how he can manipulate poetry so that it molds according to an imagined, deeply self-aware construct. While Alfonso's invariable hostility may detain Tasso physically, his poetry remains free to design and deploy a destiny redeemed.

For what concerns Alfonso as a "cruel" figure in Tasso's lyrics, unlike Petrarch's Laura, the Duke's malice toward the poet does not stem from unyielding "sdegno," but from his Achillean "ira." In his descriptions of Alfonso, Tasso repurposes a linguistic repertory typically reserved for female love objects, including disdain, anger, aversion and indifference. Representing the Duke as a descendent—in some ways, of Gaspara Stampa's beloved Count Collaltino<sup>38</sup> and, in others, of Dante's *donna petrosa*—brings into relief the empathy of his female audience.<sup>39</sup> By appropriating Petrarchan language to transpose female cruelty into the key of male malignity, Tasso represents his Este protectors such that the unsympathetic male figure appears as the antithesis to his compassionate female counterparts. In turning to the next section on the poetry dedicated to the Este women, whom, I propose, are the ideal readers of all the poems of *Alle Signore Principesse*, including those dedicated to Alfonso and other male members of the Este house, it is necessary to keep this distinction in mind: Tasso's poetry does not rehearse his liberation as enabled by Alfonso, his sentencer. Rather, the intercession of his female patrons move their brother from "ira" to "pietà," guiding the poet's passage from former "offese" to future "perdono." Notably, in the poems to Lucrezia and Leonora, Tasso rejects the hypothetical language with which he speaks to his male patron in favor of a new vocabulary of hope and confidence. It is with this language that Tasso expresses his desire and expectation for his female patrons' immediate response to his prayers.

#### "FUI NOBIL SERVO ED COMPAGNO": TASSO'S FAITH IN ESTE WOMEN

Lisa Regan's study on Isabella d'Este's patronage of Ludovico Ariosto provides a methodological key for understanding Tasso's representation of Lucrezia and Leonora d'Este in *Alle Signore Principesse*. Regan's reading and definition of the term "threshold patron" unveils the complex crossroads of vulnerability and mutual benefit shared by benefactors and beneficiaries.<sup>40</sup> Such a construction of the patron-poet relationship may be usefully applied to the Este princesses and their patronage of Tasso. In instances where the poet seeks direct contact with his female audience, he emphasizes the direct address he makes to them. In the *canzone O figlie di Renata* (n. 21), Tasso begins

<sup>38</sup> Gaspara Stampa's unwavering loyalty to her distant and often unreliable lover appears in the sonnet *Novo e raro miracol di natura*, in Gaspara Stampa, *The Complete Poems: The 1554 edition of the Rime*, eds. Jane Tylus and Troy Tower, trans. Jane Tylus (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010).

<sup>39</sup> For echoes of Dante's *rime petrose*, see sonnet 27, *Quel Greco che canto gli errori e l'armi*.

<sup>40</sup> Lisa Regan, "Ariosto's Threshold Patron: Isabella d'Este in the *Orlando Furioso*," *MLN* 120, no. 1 (2005): 50–69, 51. In a different way, Richard McCabe uses the term "threshold patron" to describe Luigi d'Este in his chapter on Tasso in *'Ungainefull Arte'*, 138.

multiple stanzas with the words “A voi parlo,” drawing repeated attention to the Este women as the collection’s imagined readers, who may delight in his encomiastic praise of them. Hinting at his motivations for speaking to the “daughters of Renata,” Tasso writes:

A voi parlo in cui fanno  
 sì concorde armonia  
 honestà, senno, honor, bellezza e gloria;  
 A voi spiego il mio affanno  
 e de la pena mia  
 narro (e ’n parte piangendo) acerba historia;  
 Et in voi la memoria  
 di voi, di me rinovo,  
 vostri effetti cortesi  
 gli anni miei tra voi spesi,  
 Qual son, qual fui, che chiedo, ove mi trovo,  
 chi mi guidò, chi chiuse:  
 Lasso, chi m’affidò, chi mi deluse.

Throughout the *canzone*, the poet oscillates between his current tormented state removed from the Este women’s company—his “acerba historia”—and the nostalgic memory of “gli anni [suoi] tra voi spesi.” On this nostalgic note, Tasso remembers happier times at court when he participated in “studi, diporti et agi, / mense, logge, palagi, / ov’hor [fu] nobil servo et hor compagno.” Hinging on the self-identification as a “compagno” of the Este women, Tasso suggests that Alfonso’s pardon is actually a point of negotiation administered by those closest to him.

Toward the end of the *canzone*, among the evidence Tasso lists of Alfonso’s proud legacy are “glories,” “victories,” “trophies,” and “decorations.” The poet then adds one characteristic crucial for those dependent upon the Duke’s favor: “perdono a chi l’offese et hor l’adora.” Indeed, the poet’s request that the Este women “move their brother to compassion” appears only after his confession and his doleful claim that they are his sole audience:

Merto le pene, errai,  
 errai, confesso. E pure  
 rea fu la lingua: il cor si scusa e nega.  
 Chiedo pietade homai,  
 e s’a le mie sventure  
 non vi piegate voi, chi lor si piega?  
 Lasso, chi per me prega  
 ne le fortune averse  
 se voi mi sete sorde?

Here, the profound sense of Tasso’s dependency on his female patrons resonates with the description of a blissful collective past, full of tender memories shared with the Este princesses, and expressed earlier in the phrase: “gli anni miei tra voi spesi.”

Resonant with the poet’s expectation that the Este princesses provide him with aid is Tasso’s letter to Lucrezia d’Este from 1585, cited above, in which the poet recognizes her for having arranged private settings for his professional interactions at the Este court. The end of this letter, which Tasso composed while still in Sant’Anna, reveals how he imagined Lucrezia’s influence would benefit him now:

Ed ora [...] la supplico che m'aiuti ad uscir di queste stanze, e mi ponga in una camerata di gentiluomini scolari, dove potrò forse risanar di questa infermità noiosissima [...] E credo che il signor duca gliela concederà senza contrasto; perchè mi fece già dire che si contentava, pur ch'io non partissi del suo stato. [...] ora la dimando umilissimamente, parendomi di chiederle insieme la vita e la sanità. Vinca dunque la sua pietà gli errori miei e la mia fortuna.<sup>41</sup>

Unrestrained by the hypothetical language that haunts the image of Tasso's Alfonso, the poet's perception of Lucrezia suggests a confident recognition of and appreciation for her ability to persuade.<sup>42</sup> Tasso expresses his belief that the Duke will abide by Lucrezia's request, and thus renounce his sentence and agree to return Tasso to court. In the attempt to create an illusion of impossible equality, Tasso imagines a social dynamic whereby aristocratic women and men exert the same unqualified influence over court employees. Tasso intervenes in this dynamic by seemingly suggesting that, through Lucrezia's administration, his will shall reflect in the Duke's course of action. As a variation of Zatti's model, which argues that Alfonso's authority is mirrored in the sentence of exile passed on the poet, the Este women's authority is mirrored in their ability to overturn the Duke's verdict. If this had been historically possible on more than just the poetic page, Tasso's female audience would have been considered the most important readers of the poet's "acerba storia," and his guarantors of a much-improved fortune.

Returning to Tasso's direct appeal to Lucrezia and Leonora, emphasized by the repetitions of "a voi parlo" in *O figlie di Renata*, my interpretation is that this repetition establishes the Este women as the collection's preferred audience, especially as no such direct address is made to Alfonso in the poems dedicated to him. Conversely, Matteo Residori has proposed that the collection speaks solely to the Duke, arguing that the Este women execute only a distracting and "delaying" role in the text, insofar as they postpone Alfonso's appearance. For Residori, the Duke is firmly regarded as the "destinatario ultimo delle preghiere del poeta e padrone corrucciato del suo destino."<sup>43</sup> Such an interpretation seems to exclude the possibility that the figure of Tasso's Alfonso is deeply qualified by influential intercessors. While it is unquestionably true that the Duke wielded the most immediate political power over the poet during his time at court, Tasso's decision to dedicate the volume to the Duke's sisters speaks directly to his plea for *their* "protezione" over him, as expressed in the dedicatory letter. Towards the end of this letter, Tasso utters his hope that, contrary to the "most recent years of unhappiness," the poems gifted to the Este women will endure throughout the ages because of the women's "grandezza," and the poet's "immortal" devotion to them.<sup>44</sup> This rhetorical strategy that oscillates between pleasant reflections upon former inclusion in courtly life—largely due to the agency of the Este women—and his present state of exclusion, both physical and metaphysical, plays a vital part in Tasso's representation of the Este women as reliably available and willing to improve the poet's condition. The dramatization of fictional fantasies, wherein Lucrezia and Leonora recognize their former "compagno" in the pleading poet, grant Tasso the hospitality he has long sought from Alfonso.

The sonnet which most vividly stages the salvific agency of Tasso's female patrons, and imagines the poet's renewed inclusion at court, is *Giaceva esposto il peregrino Ulisse* (n. 54). This is a particularly unique sonnet in the collection as it is the only example of direct speech between Tasso

<sup>41</sup> Tasso, *Lettere*, 2:354, n. 351.

<sup>42</sup> On Tasso's reliance upon Lucrezia's patronage expressed in poetry, see Raffaele Manica, "Sul mal d'occhio della duchessa d'Urbino e altre rime per Lucrezia d'Este," in *Il merito e la cortesia*, 131–44.

<sup>43</sup> Residori, "Teoria," 28.

<sup>44</sup> Tasso, *Alle Signore Principesse*, ed. Capra, 17.

and his female patron Lucrezia. Here, the poet adopts the familiar identity of the “erring” stranger, and invites his female readers and primary protagonist, Lucrezia, onto the epic stage by drawing similarities between her and the Phaeacian princess Nausicaa, who, in book six of the *Odyssey*, hurries to the aid of shipwrecked Odysseus to offer him welcome into her father’s kingdom. Nausicaa’s hospitality, as Homer narrates, is pivotal for it provides Odysseus with the means to return to Ithaca, and reunite with his wife and son. When, in the sonnet, Lucrezia-Nausicaa arrives to save Tasso-Ulisse, he remembers the turmoil he has just survived and searches for the words with which to thank her:

Giaceva esposto il peregrino Ulisse  
 mesto et ignudo sovra i lidi asciutti,  
 ch’agitato poc’anzi era dai flutti  
 in cui lungo digiun sostenne e visse,  
 Quando, com’alta sorte a lui prescrisse,  
 donna real fin pose a’ suoi gran lutti.  
 – Vattene agli horti ove perpetui frutti  
 Ha il mio buon padre: ivi godrai – gli disse.  
 Misero!, a me, dopo naufragi indegni  
 famelico gittato in fredda riva,  
 chi fia che mostri i regi tetti e gli horti,  
 se tu non sei, cui tanto preghi ho porti,  
 o (qual chiamar ti debbo?) o donna, o diva?  
 Dea, dea sei certo, i ti conosco a’ segni.

While there is critical debate regarding the identity of the speaker of the third stanza, Tasso-Ulisse may be seen as a unified figure throughout the sonnet, who, beginning in line 9, reflects on the turmoil which he has just overcome, and, in line 12, recognizes the generous mediation of Lucrezia-Nausicaa, the sonnet’s other unified figure.<sup>45</sup> In directly quoting Ulisse’s words from the *Odyssey*—“Mistress, please, are you divine or mortal”—the stranded poet responds with gratitude to the woman’s prophetic promise regarding her father’s palace: “ivi godrai.” Resounding in Lucrezia-Nausicaa’s words is the letter quoted above, dated May 15, 1585, in which Tasso identifies Lucrezia as his most accommodating facilitator in securing opportunities for him to enjoy “perpetui frutti” at the Este court.

Importantly, however, Lucrezia does not always act on her own throughout the manuscript collection in enabling the poet’s good fortune. In the sonnet *O due figlie d’Alcide, onde s’oscura* (n. 12), similar echoes of the classic *topos* of the poet-pilgrim lost in a “sea of error” occur as the two princesses act together as beneficent mediators. The women’s combined intervening agencies are dramatized in terms that transcend emotive reaction, and call upon their presumed persuasion over their brother Alfonso.<sup>46</sup> After beginning the sonnet by praising the Este’s women’s “beltà, di spinto e di natura angeliche e divine,” the poet introduces a narrative echo from his epic poetry, which interrupts the encomiastic verse of the first two stanzas, shifting the focus from the celestial subjects to the sinking narrator:

<sup>45</sup> For a different reading from my own, see Granata, “Memorie dei *Tristia*,” 209, who argues that lines 9–14 are spoken by an embittered Tasso after he has been coldly ignored by Lucrezia. Granata reads this sonnet as a counter-story to the hospitable relationship between Odysseus and Nausicaa. For a similar reading to this, see Walter Moretti, “Dalla raccolta di rime per le principesse d’Este alla *Canzone al Metauro*,” in *Il merito e la cortesia*, 185–92.

<sup>46</sup> For intertextual echoes in this sonnet, see the lyrics by Petrarch, *La vita fugge et non s’arresta un’ora* and *Ite, rime dolenti, al duro sasso*, in Francesco Petrarca, *Canzoniere*, ed. Paola Vecchi Galli (Milan: BUR, 2016).

O due figlie d'Alcide, onde s'oscura  
 de le figlie di Leda ogni memoria,  
 che dier soggetto a vergognosa historia  
 et hebber pregio di bellezza impura.  
 Voi di beltà, di spirto e di natura  
 angeliche e divine, alta vittoria  
 havete contra i sensi, e vostra gloria  
 più del ciel chiara e più sole è pura.  
 Io, fra cotanti turbini e procelle,  
 fra mostri e scogli, a voi mi volgo e grido  
 ed aspetto da voi soccorso e luce.  
 Guidate voi la mia barchetta al lido  
 e scoprite a me, benigne stelle,  
 Castore vostro e 'l vostro alto Polluce.

Tasso calls upon his female readers in this dramatic moment to assist in navigating his emergency by providing three forms of aid: shining light and illumination, guiding the poet to shore, and unveiling Castor and Pollux, the constellation Gemini and patron of sailors, who represent the princesses' brothers ("vostro") Luigi and Alfonso d'Este. The immediate presence of the Este women, the poet's "benigne stelle," contrasts with the remoteness of Luigi-Castor and Alfonso-Pollux. Tasso's male patrons have hidden themselves from the poet-navigator, a familiar Tassian figure resembling the poet-pilgrim in the dedication to Alfonso in *Gerusalemme Liberata*. Indeed, lines 9 through 12 of *O due figlie d'Alcide, onde s'oscura* draw an intertextual connection to Tasso's plea for help from Alfonso, on the stage of a "quasi" life or death situation, in the first canto of his epic poem:

Tu magnanimo Alfonso, il qual ritogli  
 al furor di fortuna e *guidi in porto*  
*me peregrino errante, e fra gli scogli*  
*e fra l'onde agitato e quasi absorto,*  
 queste mie carte in lieta fronte accogli,  
 che *quasi* in voto a te sacrate i' porto.  
 Forse un dì fia che la presaga penna  
 osi scriver di te quel ch'or n'accenna.<sup>47</sup>

Similar to the hypothetical approach with which Tasso constructs the Duke's authority in poems from *Alle Signore Principesse*, the final two lines here call attention to the poet's indecisive disposition to grant Alfonso immortal fame, a topos expected of the epic genre, but charged with particular weight here by a poet who considers himself mistreated by his patron.<sup>48</sup>

The poet's implicit abdication of blame in this sonnet resounds with further intertextual connections to a dialogue written six years after his release from Sant'Anna, *Il Manso ovvero de l'amicizia* (1592, published in 1596). In this text, Tasso offers a more concrete definition of the metaphorical "mostri e scogli" that surround him, not among the turbulent seas of his own "errore," but as a

<sup>47</sup> The emphasis is my own. Tasso, *Gerusalemme liberata*, ed. Franco Tomasi (Milan: BUR, 2009). Tasso makes a similar request of Francesco Maria Della Rovere for his benevolent "accoglienza" in the so-called "Canzone al Metauro."

<sup>48</sup> Tasso employs similarly calculated language to describe a hypothetical prophecy in the dedication of his *Gerusalemme* to Guidobaldo II Delle Rovere, Duke of Urbino.

member of Alfonso's court. Masked as the "Forestiero Napoletano," Tasso compares friendship with the idea of the port as a form of safe harbor:

L'amicizia è quasi il porto, o sia quel de la filosofia, o de la vostra grazia o altro  
simigliante: la corte è simile al mare, in cui fa d'uopo esperto nocchiero; i cortigiani  
simili a gli scogli coperti da l'onde, che sogliono occultamente sommerge l'altrui  
fortune; i venti contrari sono l'avversità di questo mondo; i mostri i vizi de gli infelici  
cortigiani, la cui virtù consiste ne lo schivargli.<sup>49</sup>

This passage indicates how Tasso conceptualizes a disillusioned, spatial distance that separates "l'amicizia" from "la corte," suggesting, as Ariosto had in *Orlando furioso*, that true friendship lies beyond the conspiring walls of the princely court.<sup>50</sup> While the dramatic opening from the *Liberata* reappears in *Alle Signore Principesse*, the sonnet cited above confirms Tasso's replacement of Alfonso with a female audience as his ideal readers. Tracing the language of the poet's self-identification from his epic poetry to this verse composition, Tasso sheds his status as an "erring stranger" when speaking to this new female audience, from whom he—perhaps for the first time—may expect steadfast support.<sup>51</sup>

#### GENDERED AUTHORITY IN TASSO'S DISCORSO DELLA VIRTÙ FEMINILE E DONNESCA

The distinction I ultimately wish to emphasize between Tasso's doubt-driven rhetoric used to address Alfonso and the hopeful language with which he speaks to the Este princesses indicates how the poet imagined the potential responsiveness of these two audiences. As seen in the sonnet quoted immediately above, Tasso's carefully chosen phrase "aspetto da voi" when speaking to the Este princesses sharply contrasts with the vocabulary of uncertain "forse" and "quasi" that appears in the poet's addresses to Alfonso. Despite the debilitating physical conditions in which the poet finds himself, in the poems directed to the Este princesses Tasso reaffirms his "fede," which may be considered both loyalty to and trust in his female patrons. Similarly, his reliance on them is expressed in the dedicatory letter to Lucrezia and Leonora that opens *Alle Signore Principesse*, in which Tasso imagines that his poetry may "live on happily" ("vivano felici"), as long as they remain under the

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<sup>49</sup> Tasso, *Il Manso ovvero de l'amicizia*, in *Dialoghi*, ed. Ezio Raimondi, 3 vols. (Florence: Sansoni, 1958), 2:843–44. On other features in this dialogue, see Emilio Russo, "Amore e elezione nel *Manso* di Torquato Tasso," *Esperienze letterarie* 23 (1998): 55–80. On the question of philosophy as a "porto" and refuge for the poet, see Stefano Prandi, "Dal mare della fortuna al porto della provvidenza: appunti su un'ossessione tassiana," in *Torquato Tasso e l'Università: Atti del convegno di Ferrara 14–16 dicembre 1995*, eds. Walter Moretti and Luigi Pepe (Florence: Olschki, 1998), 433–50. Tasso's bitter portrait of courtly life is certainly not unique to *Manso*, but may be compared to similar moments in the author's dialogue on the education of the courtier in *Il Malpiglio ovvero de la corte*, the episode of Erminia among the shepherds in canto 7 of *Gerusalemme liberata*, and the so-called "Mopso episode" in Act 1 of *Aminta*. On the latter episode, see David R. Shore, "The Shepherd and the Court: Pastoral Poetics in Spenser's *Colin Clout* and Tasso's *Aminta*," *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature* 7, no. 4 (1980): 394–410; Jane Tylus, "Courting Innocence: Tasso's Resistant Poetics," in *Writing and Vulnerability*, 80–112. On early modern anti-court positions, more broadly considered, see Paola Ugolini, *Court and its Critics: Anti-Court Sentiments in Early Modern Italy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2020).

<sup>50</sup> See Ariosto's exordium to friendship in the first octaves of canto 44 in Ludovico Ariosto, *Orlando furioso*, ed. Cristina Zampese (Milan: BUR, 2016).

<sup>51</sup> In the first canto of Tasso's revised version of the *Liberata*, *Gerusalemme conquistata* (1593), the poet replaces Alfonso altogether with his last patron, Cardinal Cinzio Aldobrandini. See Torquato Tasso, *Gerusalemme conquistata*, ed. Claudio Gigante (Alessandria: Edizioni dell'Orso, 2010).

women's protection. The imagined receptiveness of Tasso's gendered audiences—as articulated in *Alle Signore Principesse's* construction of his male and female patrons—reflects in Tasso's approach to gendered authority expressed elsewhere

As historical record would indicate, the poetic fantasy that the Este women could heroically rescue Tasso from solitary confinement only ever remained a fiction within the pages of *Alle Signore Principesse*. In his 1582 *Discorso della virtù femminile e donnesca*, Tasso returns to Lucrezia and Leonora d'Este in his construction of the “*donna eroica*,” who excels in intelligence, prudence, politics, and education.<sup>52</sup> Dedicated to Eleonora d'Austria Gonzaga, the *Discorso* teases out overlapping concerns regarding women, politics, and women *in* politics. Written in the same year as *Alle Signore Principesse*—although published two years later—the treatise balances a neo-Aristotelian position regarding women's domestic responsibilities with a new image of the “heroic woman.” As Tasso suggests, “*virtù donnesca*” may be found in women from some of Europe's most powerful dynastic families: including Catherine de' Medici of France, Queen Elizabeth I of England, Renée of France and her daughters Lucrezia, and Leonora d'Este. Like sovereigns, these “*donne eroiche*” are responsible for leading, not following, all the while retaining their femininity and escaping common masculine identifications that refigure powerful women as either virile, or sex-transcending miracles.

Tasso's inclusion of Este princesses among sovereigns and foreign queens reads particularly striking when considering the historical context of the *Discorso's* publication, for the question of dynastic continuity in 1582 was especially pressing in a city like Ferrara, whose future depended on Duke Alfonso producing a legitimate male heir. As historical record confirms, such a phenomenon never occurred and the Este house fell to papal forces after Alfonso's death in 1597. While it is not my intention to suggest that Tasso imagined that the Este princesses could, or even should, take over as reigning Duchesses of the Este court, the passage in which Tasso references Lucrezia and Leonora reveals his support of women's involvement and “*intelligenza delle cose di Stato e nel giudizio delle lettere*.” As interlocutors and readers of Tasso's literary works (“*componimenti*”), the Este women are importantly not compared to the poets Sappho and Corinna, nor to the philosopher Diotima, nor to the educated courtesan Aspasia, but to Cornelia Africana, the mother of the Gracchi brothers, Tiberius and Gaius, from the second century BC, who, as a virtuous Roman stateswoman, advised and counseled her mature sons in their political careers.<sup>53</sup> By mirroring the Este women in the politically and educationally adept Cornelia, and by referring to them as his “*ascoltatrici*,” Tasso underlines the inherent reciprocity of their exchanges. It is precisely this social nature of exchange and dialogue that Tasso pursued actively with female patrons, like Lucrezia and Leonora d'Este, and later in his career with women writers and performers.

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<sup>52</sup> Cf. D. J. Dutschke, “De la virtù femminile e donnesca,” *Studi tassiani* 32 (1984): 5–24.

<sup>53</sup> In the epistolary exchange on marriage between Torquato and Ercole Tasso, the former defends the sociopolitical benefits inherent in male-female relationships: from those that affect the smallest political unit (i.e., the family) to the most ambitious political enterprise (i.e., empire): “*la famiglia e la cittadinanza non è composta d'uomini solamente, ma d'uomini e di donne, anzi si ritrovarono de le città e de' regni fatti di donne solamente, come fu quello de le Ammazzone, ma imperio d'uomini senza donne non si ritrovò giamai. Però si può argomentare che le donne sian più bastevoli a sé medesime e men bisognose dell'altrui perfezione. E l'istesso filosofo afferma che l'amicizia de l'uomo e de la donna è antichissima oltre tutte le altre*,” in Tasso, *La lettera sul matrimonio: Consolatoria all'Albizi*, ed. Valentina Salmaso (Rome: Antenore, 2007), 18. For further considerations of the *Discorso* and Tasso's principles concerning friendship between men and women in marriage, see chapter two of this study.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Collective Encomia of Women and their Male Advocates in Tasso's *Seconda parte delle Rime*

Tasso's first substantial lyric publication appeared in the anthology by members of the Accademia degli Etereï in 1567, shortly after the publication of the poet's first major long work *Rinaldo* (1562).<sup>1</sup> Tasso's contributions to the Etereï volume reflect that, from its earliest stage, the poet situated his lyric career within visibly social contexts.<sup>2</sup> Over the course of the thirty-year period during which Tasso wrote, revised, and published the authorized editions of his poetry, the highly social nature of his lyric verse remained consistent. In many ways, this dimension points to an expanded awareness of what poets from the first half of the Cinquecento had already taken note; namely, that the literary societies to which poets belonged—or to which they *sought* to belong—manifested in lyric verse.<sup>3</sup> In Tasso's case, his lyric production—especially in its encomiastic vein—bespeaks a certain strategy to exert control over the social contexts that informed his writing. Unlike the “peregrino errante” tossed among the waves of unfavorable courts and unkind patrons, Tasso as the poet of social encomia re-maps a geography—both real and imagined—of mutually beneficial and diverse readers: men, women, aristocrats, artists, and poets.

Among the important revisions Tasso made to poetic practices from the earlier part of the sixteenth century was his poetry's conscious capacity to transcend common Petrarchan idioms in two ways: first, Tasso composed poetry—primarily amorous, encomiastic, and sacred in matter—for more than one dedicatee; second, Tasso's wish to categorize his verse based on specific subject matter deviated from earlier Cinquecento models that had imitated the structure of a Petrarchan canzoniere, which combines amorous and sacred verse in a single, semi-autobiographical construction narrated by the lover-poet.<sup>4</sup> These developments, under which the social context of lyric production is brought to the forefront, privilege the group portraits of poets and their communities over the sentimental, potentially paradigmatic, romance of a personal love story. The contextualization of encomiastic verse takes shape from its many dedications, historical events (i.e., weddings, deaths, births, military triumphs, religious ceremonies, etc.), and even widely debated social-historical questions, especially those pertaining to women.

With social circumstances, then, chiefly guiding the production of Tasso's lyrics, his poetry serves as an especially fertile ground for addressing crucial questions of women's roles and their

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<sup>1</sup> In the anthology by the Etereï, to which Tasso belonged as “il Pentito,” the poet's compositions appear physically and symbolically enjoined to other male poets, forming a collective gift to the volume's dedicatee, the Duchess of Savoy Margherita di Valois. For this collection, Tasso contributed 37 sonnets, 2 *canzoni*, and 2 madrigals. See Tasso, *Rime 'eteree'*, ed. Lanfranco Caretti (Parma: Zara, 1990).

<sup>2</sup> In the dedicatory letter to the 1562 edition of *Rinaldo*, Tasso includes a self-portrait and a *group* portrait, detailing the socialization under which the poet's composition came to light. As Tasso writes, his inspiration stemmed from contemporary male authors and friends, such as Danese Cataneo, Cesare Pavesi, members of the Accademia Veneziana, Tommaso Lomellino, Girolamo Molino, Domenico Venier, Giovan Battista Pigna, Carlo Sigonio, and Sperone Speroni. For a survey of the social context surrounding poets, including Tasso, and their compositions, see Giancarlo Alfano, Claudio Gigante, and Emilio Russo, eds., *Il Rinascimento* (Rome: Salerno Editrice, 2016).

<sup>3</sup> On lyric compositions as a form of “riconoscimento sociale,” see *Il Rinascimento*, 131.

<sup>4</sup> The various labels into which editors from the nineteenth century on categorized Tasso's amorous verse include: *Rime per Lucrezia Bendidio*, *Rime per Laura Peperara*, *Rime amorose extravagante*, and *Rime amorose composte ad istanza d'altri*. For other considerations of the Petrarchan model, concerned less, however, with its amorous thematic content, see William J. Kennedy, *Petrarchism at Work: Contextual Economies in the Age of Shakespeare* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2016).

virtues—questions that had been prominent in European debates for at least two centuries.<sup>5</sup> To the degree that Tasso carefully designed his lyric poetry to participate publicly on the pro-woman side of the *querelle des femmes*, the 1593 publication of his authorized verse most thoroughly confronts the question of women's worth: this is the *Seconda parte delle rime*, printed by Pietro Maria Marchetti in Brescia.<sup>6</sup> Containing 105 poetic compositions, the *Seconda parte* celebrates contemporary women as unequivocal exemplars of virtue, all the while avoiding traditional hierarchies among women based on their hyperbolic female or male qualities. Under this design, for example, Tasso positions a dedication to a female dwarf at court among nearby addresses to grand duchesses and influential patrons. In addition to its structure that reflects social parameters determined by women's activities and strong presence at court, the *Seconda parte* appears to be aware of its extra-textual significance, in that it speaks highly of women during a time when many of their actions—both public and private—were subject to scrutiny, particularly by men. In this regard, the *Seconda parte*'s poems manifest a clear consciousness of the extent to which specifically men's public affirmation of women's virtues—in encomiastic poetry, painting, or histories of famous women—is itself a worthy cause. More importantly, men's artistic activity celebrating women is a vital player, in its own regard, in the “woman question” of the period, which often said as much about women as it did about men. In other words, what shapes Tasso's encomia of women in this authorized collection is a paired praise both of female dedicatees—historical and fictional—and the male artists who champion them in their works.

This approach takes into equal account the actions of men and women, thus situating the *Seconda parte* in dialogue with a number of Tasso's earlier short compositions—many of them in close succession to one another—that compare the merits of women to those of their male counterparts: the dialogue *Il padre di famiglia* (1580), the *Discorso della virtù femminile e donnesca* (written in 1580, published in 1582), the dialogues *Il Romeo overo del giuoco* (1581) and its revised version *Il Gonzaga secondo overo del giuoco* (1582), and the epistolary exchange with the poet's cousin Ercole Tasso *Dello ammogliarsi* (written in 1585, published in 1593), against whose denunciations of women Torquato firmly stood.<sup>7</sup> Because the *Seconda parte* was published over a decade after the first three texts in this list, and appeared just one year before the publication of *Dello ammogliarsi*, the resurfacing concerns about women and their social-cultural contributions may be seen to have developed quite visibly, consistently, and rapidly over this period. Thus, readers may trace how Tasso's ideas about women became more articulate the more he combined philosophical thought with encomiastic practice. In rethinking the relationship between men and women beyond the neo-Aristotelian principles that argued for women's inferiority to men, Tasso revisited a philosophy to which he had subscribed earlier on in his career. By accounting for Tasso's development across these texts and timeframe, it is possible to identify the poet's

<sup>5</sup> For overviews of the *querelle des femmes* in the early modern period, see the Introduction to this study, n. 4.

<sup>6</sup> Torquato Tasso, *Delle Rime del Signor Torquato Tasso: Parte seconda. Di novo dal medesimo in questa nuova impressione ordinate, corrette, accresciute, et date in luce con l'espositione dello stesso Autore* (Brescia: Pietro Maria Marchetti, 1593).

<sup>7</sup> When Giovan Battista Licino edited Tasso's letters, Torquato's response to Ercole was included in the second book of the *Lettere familiari* (Bergamo: Ventura, 1588). The letter was then reprinted in Bergamo four times, alongside Ercole's epistolary treatise (in 1593, 1594, 1595, and 1606), appearing under the title: *Dello ammogliarsi piacevole contesa fra i due moderni Tassi, cioè, Ercole e Torquato, gentilhuomini bergamaschi*. In Comin Ventura's dedicatory letter to Antonio Bignami, dated March 12, 1594, he writes that Tasso's contribution to this debate represents a “mirabile Encomio del Matrimonio,” in Torquato Tasso, *Dello ammogliarsi [...]* (Bergamo: Comin Ventura, 1594). This description is perhaps why, in 1586, the work appeared under a new name: *Discorso in lode del matrimonio et un dialogo d'amore* (Milan: Tini, 1586). The letter was also translated into English and published in London, with the title *Of Mariage and Wiving: An Excellent, Pleasant, and Philosophicall Controversie, Between the Two Famous Tassi Now Living, the one Hercules the Philosopher, the Other, Torquato, the Poet*, trans. Robert Tofte (London: Thomas Creede, 1599). For context on this exchange in Italy, see Angelo Solerti, *Vita di Torquato Tasso*, 3 vols. (Turin-Rome: Loescher, 1895), 2:402.

increasingly sympathetic position towards women, adopted so as to integrate female figures into cultural activity alongside men, rather than to isolate them.

As the dates of publication of these five texts suggest, Tasso actively revised his ideas about women across his prose and poetry from the 1580s through the early 1590s, and nearly until his death in 1595. This process thus informed the production of the *Seconda parte*, in which Tasso reordered and rewrote poems first penned decades before. The organization of an authorized volume of encomiastic poetry afforded Tasso the occasion to reconsider the dynamics between men and women from an encomiastic, rather than amorous, perspective. This carried significant weight for the changes Tasso made to the categories of womanhood he once prescribed: his encomiastic practice abandons the divisions between women's "virtù femminile" and "virtù donnesca." In its replacement, Tasso creates a two-fold plane through which to consider women as, at once, the praised subjects celebrated by men and as men's potential equals in matters of friendship, marriage, family, and the state. Expressed otherwise, the intertextual dialogue between the *Seconda parte* and the poet's previously written discourses that concern women yields a mature articulation of women's worth, inviting them into a community of male artists who praise them, as well as into the sociopolitical contexts in which, as Tasso writes, their roles are essential. Tasso's juxtaposition of praise for both men and women in the same encomiastic volume marks a departure from the Cinquecento tradition of crafting books of encomiastic poetry written solely for and about women. These collections, as Deanna Shemek has argued, often sought to isolate women unto anti-social, uncontextualized quarters, in order to represent them as encased objects, placed on display and left waiting for male valorization.<sup>8</sup> By contrast, Tasso's strategy prioritizes an amiable community for praised individuals of both sexes over sexual subjugation, a decision that realizes in print the very philosophical points to which Tasso oriented this and other texts written towards the end of his career.

Following Franco Tomasi's considerations of how the late sixteenth-century lyric collection constructs a *liber* with a particular "uso sociale" that reflected "nuove dinamiche sociali e culturali all'interno delle quali il discorso lirico sembra trovare un luogo privilegiato per essere fruito," I propose that the *Seconda parte's* textual community of women and their male supporters constitutes Tasso's most elaborate reflection on the question of women as a collective, the status of encomiastic poetry, and the potential for equality between the sexes.<sup>9</sup> By reading the *Seconda parte* in the context of the famous women anthologies, these pages bring to light the important ways in which Tasso's contribution to the encomiastic genre reconsiders the integration of contemporary women in social contexts that involved collaboration with men. I analyze Tasso's praise of men who celebrate women in their works intended for public reader-viewership, and investigate the reasons for Tasso's identification with this community of male champions of women. The subsequent section closely reads the philosophical core of the *Seconda parte*: its "catena" and accompanying *esposizione de l'autore*, which outlines women's virtues, while making intertextual reference to the poet's earlier works on the merits of women. Lastly, the chapter concludes with reflections on a second work of collected encomia

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<sup>8</sup> Deanna Shemek, "The Collector's Cabinet: Lodovico Domenichi's Gallery of Women," in *Strong Voices, Weak History: Early Women Writers and Canons in England, France, and Italy*, eds. Pamela Benson and Victoria Kirkham, eds. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005), 239–62.

<sup>9</sup> Franco Tomasi, "Osservazioni sul libro di poesia nel secondo Cinquecento," in *Canzonieri in transito: Lasciti petrarcheschi e nuovi archetipi letterari tra Cinque e Seicento*, eds. Alessandro Metlica and Franco Tomasi (Milan: Mimesis edizioni, 2015), 11–36, 35–36. On the "social use" that motivates Tasso's encomiastic verse, Tomasi notes: "[la] diffusione dei testi [è] spesso orientata al breve giro dell'uso sociale, soprattutto per le liriche encomiastiche giocate in funzione di precise strategie cortigiane; Tasso del resto, specie negli anni di Sant'Anna, sembra spesso utilizzare lettere e rime per ottenere favori e, soprattutto, per guadagnarsi una possibile via di fuga dalla reclusione," in Franco Tomasi, "Note sulle *Rime* nelle lettere del Tasso," in *Ricerche sulle lettere di Torquato Tasso*, eds. Clizia Carminati and Emilio Russo (Sarnico: Edizioni di Archilet, 2016), 45–60, 46.

in which Tasso was involved: the *Tempio in lode di Flavia Peretta Orsina* (1591), a volume that invites the participation of women poets in the collective initiative to celebrate a female patron.

#### PREPARING THE *SECONDA PARTE*: TASSO'S LONG ENCOMIASTIC PRODUCTION FOR WOMEN

As mentioned above, a defining feature of Tasso's late lyric production is its conscious transcendence of the rejected Petrarchan lover's song that bemoans unrequited love and women's stone-cold cruelty. During the poet's detainment at Ferrara's Ospedale di Sant'Anna from 1579 to 1586, Tasso's lyric voice embraced an alternative mode of expression: the encomiastic register, which painted a decisively more positive image of no-longer-abstract female subjects, patrons, and poets.<sup>10</sup> This conversion towards historical, rather than conceptual, women occurred, in part, because of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century women's established multifaceted presence: as generous patrons of the arts, such as Lucrezia Borgia (1480–1519), Isabella d'Este (1474–1539) and Marfisa d'Este (c.1554–1608); as esteemed poets, like Vittoria Colonna, Gaspara Stampa, Veronica Gambara, Laura Terracina (1519–c.1577), among others; and as political rulers, such as England's Elizabeth I (1533–1603) and France's Catherine de' Medici (1519–1589).<sup>11</sup> Although it could be argued that Tasso's turn to the encomiastic mode during his confinement was primarily motivated by the need to secure patronage outside of the Este walls, it should be considered, too, that after the poet's release Tasso devoted even *more* attention to encomiastic verse while preparing the authorized volumes of his poetry.<sup>12</sup> Thus, for Tasso, the reasons for writing encomiastic poetry seemingly went beyond the practical means of securing sponsorship so that “transgressive” court poets, like him, could overcome compromising situations. Instead, it would appear that Tasso engaged with the encomiastic mode in order to reassess the relationship between poets and their subjects, and, in the case of the *Seconda parte*, rethink the dynamics among poets, female dedicatees, and the art of encomia itself.

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<sup>10</sup> During the seven years Tasso spent at Sant'Anna, he composed 648 encomiastic poems, amounting to nearly forty percent of his overall lyric production. Cf. *Il Rinascimento*, 133.

<sup>11</sup> On Lucrezia Borgia's combination of entrepreneurship and patronage in Ferrara, see Diane Yvonne Ghirardo, “Lucrezia Borgia as Entrepreneur,” in *Renaissance Quarterly* 61, no. 1 (2008): 53–91. On Lucrezia Borgia's and Isabella d'Este's musical patronage, see William F. Prizer, “Isabella d'Este and Lucrezia Borgia as Patrons of Music: The Frottola at Mantua and Ferrara,” in *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 38, no. 1 (1985): 1–33. On Marfisa d'Este's patronage in Ferrara, see Gian Lodovico Masetti Zannini, *Marfisa da Este Cybo: gentil fu da che nacque* (Ferrara: Este, 2008). On Vittoria Colonna's life and times, see Abigail Brundin, Tatiana Crivelli Spetiale, and Maria Serena Sapegno, eds., *A Companion to Vittoria Colonna* (Leiden: Brill, 2016). On Veronica Gambara, see Antonia Chimenti, *Veronica Gambara: gentildonna del rinascimento. Un intreccio di poesia e storia* (Reggio Emilia: Magis Books, 1995). On the canonization of Vittoria Colonna as “the supreme female cultural luminary of her age,” and Gambara's “exceptional social position” that came with a “notable degree of freedom,” see Virginia Cox, “Women Writers and the Canon in Sixteenth-Century Italy: the Case of Vittoria Colonna,” in *Strong Voices, Weak History*, 14–31. On the influence of Elizabeth I at home and abroad, see Susan Doran, *Elizabeth I and Her Circle* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015). On Catherine de' Medici, see J. E. Neale, *The Age of Catherine de' Medici* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1943); Rachel Judith Weil, *The Crown Has Fallen to the Distaff: Gender and Politics in the Age of Catherine de' Medici* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985).

<sup>12</sup> Through detailed philological work and extensive study of Tasso's letters, Isabella Bagliani has recently dated the poet's “rielaborazione, riordinamento e ricopiatura” of his lyric poetry to the years 1587–90. See her essay, “Per l'edizione critica della seconda parte delle rime di Torquato Tasso,” in *Sul Tasso: Studi di Filologia e letteratura italiana offerti a Luigi Poma*, ed. Franco Gavazzoni (Rome: Antenore, 2003), 85–106, 86. While detained in Ferrara, various volumes of Tasso's lyrics, which included both amorous and encomiastic verse, appeared across northern Italy without the poet's consent. For a detailed history of the volumes of unauthorized poetry that appeared during this period, see Lanfranco Caretti, *Studi sulle rime del Tasso* (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1950); Valeria De Maldé, “La tradizione delle Rime tassiane tra storie e leggenda,” in *Filologia e critica* 9 (1984): 230–53.

For Tasso, his heightened lyric activity resulted in the composition of more than 1,700 individual poems, a quantity that reflects what Franco Tomasi has characterized as “una pluralità di esperienze.”<sup>13</sup> It seems important to note that of these 1,700 compositions, roughly 1,534 are encomiastic in nature, many of them dedicated to women.<sup>14</sup> Tasso’s female dedicatees appear more often as encomiastic subjects, rather than amorous obsessions, which bespeaks a further departure from poetic convention and may be seen to characterize the poet’s lyric relationship to female readers. Generally speaking, Tasso is a friend and composer of women’s virtues, not a lover afflicted by them. From the start of the poet’s career in the early 1560s to its end in the mid-1590s, poems written in praise of non-beloved female dedicatees surface throughout, and culminate in the 1593 authorized *Seconda parte*.<sup>15</sup> Considering the multiplicity of female dedicatees for whom Tasso authorized encomiastic verse over the course of his career, it is pertinent to recall Maria Luisa Doglio’s reflections on Tasso’s participation in “la complessa, poliedrica varietà degli aspetti e dei modelli femminili [che] compaiono nuovi tipi di donna dal fascino inquietante che anticipano, preparano, precostituiscono quella morfologia globale della donna in tutti i possibili aspetti della sua realtà.”<sup>16</sup> Importantly, Tasso’s many female dedicatees, as Doglio suggests, offer an alternative to “l’unica, continua, figura della Laura del Petrarca,”<sup>17</sup> and thus represent a further means by which Tasso’s highly socialized poetry rejects the tradition that sought to isolate single female beloveds as primary objects of praise. Confirming Doglio’s point, Tasso’s encomiastic lyrics dedicated to women serve as a multi-optic lens through which the poet praises virtues in different women from cities across Italy, of both high and low birth, from lay women to those who serve the Church.

Tasso’s long practice of encomia of women from diverse professional or noble backgrounds reflects a certain awareness of his verse’s extra-poetic significance in the ongoing debates surrounding the merits of women. These debates arguably shaped the forms that late-Cinquecento lyric poetry began to take.<sup>18</sup> Similar to the volume of lyric poetry dedicated to the Este princesses discussed in the

<sup>13</sup> Franco Tomasi, *Studi sulla lirica rinascimentale (1540–1570)* (Rome: Editrice-Antenore, 2012), vii.

<sup>14</sup> *Il Rinascimento*, 133.

<sup>15</sup> Tasso’s first printed encomiastic lyric verses appeared in Dionigio Atanagi’s anthology *Rime di diversi nobili poeti toscani* (Venice: Domenico and Giovanni Battista Guerra, 1561) upon the early death of the noblewoman and painter, Irene di Spilimbergo (1540–1559).

<sup>16</sup> Maria Luisa Doglio, “Il Tasso e le donne,” in Torquato Tasso, *Il Discorso della virtù femminile e donnesca*, ed. Maria Luisa Doglio (Palermo: Sellerio editore, 1997), 30. Although there are certainly still more women to consider, among Tasso’s female dedicatees Doglio lists are: Lucrezia Bendidio (1547–after 1584), Laura Peperara, Lucrezia d’Este, Leonora d’Este, Marfisa d’Este, and Tarquinia Molza.

<sup>17</sup> Even Tasso’s amorous verse readjusts the Petrarchan tradition of composing love *canzonieri* for a single female beloved: his love poems written for Lucrezia Bendidio are included in the manuscript copy of 156 *rime d’amore* known as the codice Chigiano L, VII, 302, now housed at the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana. The poems to Laura Peperara also appear in the authorized 1591 Osanna edition of the *Prima parte delle rime*, as well as in the two musical-poetic books discussed in the third chapter of this study, *Lauro secco* (Ferrara: Vittorio Baldini, 1582) and *Lauro verde* (Ferrara, Vittorio Baldini, 1583). For Tasso’s revisions to the Petrarchan tradition in the *Seconda parte*, see the sonnet, dedicated to an unnamed “gentildonna,” in defense of seeking reciprocal love over disappointing unrequited love, *Deh perche amar chi voi con pari affetto*, whose printed argument is “Persuade una Gentildonna à non amare d’altro, che di vicendevole amore.”

<sup>18</sup> As Virginia Cox has noted, earlier in the sixteenth century, Pietro Bembo’s *Rime* (1535), which includes poetic exchanges with Vittoria Colonna and Veronica Gambara in the volume’s appendix, “play a central role in defining and glamorizing the figure of the literary woman,” in Virginia Cox, *Women Writers in Italy 1400–1650* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), 60. On Bembo’s relationship to other female interlocutors and poets, see the chapter “Politicizing Gender: Bembo’s Private and Public Petrarchism” in Aileen Feng, *Writing Beloveds: Humanist Petrarchism and the Politics of Gender* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017), 163–208; Veronica Andreani, “Sul petrarchismo di Gaspara Stampa: il modello di Pietro Bembo,” in *L’Italianistica oggi: ricerca e didattica. Atti del XIX Congresso dell’ADI (Roma, 9–12 settembre 2015)*, eds. B. Alfonzetti, T. Cancro, V. Di Iasio, E. Pietrobbon (Rome: Adi editore, 2017), 1–10. I am grateful for my conversations with Veronica Andreani on Bembo’s “intellectual partnership” with Gambara, and for attending her presentation

previous chapter, *Alle Signore Principesse di Ferrara*, the *Seconda parte* belongs to the group of authorized lyric production whose arrangement Tasso oversaw. Similar to the fate of *Alle Signore Principesse*, however, the *Seconda parte* was subject to editorial dismemberment and did not appear as a unified volume in either Solerti's nor Basile's modern editions of Tasso's *Rime*.<sup>19</sup> So as to respect its original form, it is necessary to re-examine the text according to its structure as a unified whole, which represents the final authorized collection of lyrics the poet saw published in his lifetime.<sup>20</sup>

After Tasso's authorized *Prima parte* of amorous lyric verse—originally published by the ducal printer Francesco Osanna in Mantua in 1591—the *Seconda parte* was printed by Pietro Maria Marchetti, the Brescian printer who, in 1592, reprinted the Osanna edition of the *Prima parte*.<sup>21</sup> In an oft-cited letter to the Venetian editor Giovanni Giolito, dated May 6, 1591, Tasso articulates the authorial design under which he intended to see his authorized *rime* published: “Nel primo volume de le poesie vorrei che si pubblicassero gli Amori, nel secondo le Laudi e gli Encomi de' principi e de le donne illustri, nel terzo le cose sacre, o almeno in laude de prelati.”<sup>22</sup> While the first volume of “Amori” and second

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“Negotiating Intellectual Power in Veronica Gambara's Letters” at the Society for Italian Studies Biennial Conference in Edinburgh in June 2019.

<sup>19</sup> Angelo Solerti defends his decision to re-order Tasso's poetry according to a subjective idea of “i periodi principali della vita di Torquato” in the following words: “il [...] gruppo delle rime d'occasione e d'encomio, tra le quali raccolgo anche quelle in lode di ecclesiastici *contro il parere dell'autore* [è] suddiviso [...] in quattro sezioni, perché quattro sono i periodi principali della vita di Torquato. Il primo è quello della giovinezza che si estende fino all'ottobre 1565, quando Torquato si recò a Ferrara ed entrò nella corte; il secondo è il periodo ferrarese fino al dì 11 marzo 1579, quando Torquato fu rinchiuso in Sant'Anna; il terzo quello della prigionia fino alla liberazione che avvenne il 12 luglio del 1586; il quarto comprende gli ultimi anni fino alla morte” (emphasis added), in Tasso, *Le Rime, edizione critica su i manoscritti e le antiche stampe*, ed. Angelo Solerti, 4 vols. (Bologna: Romagnoli-Dall'Acqua, 1898–1902), 1:518. Of the decision to betray the authorized versions of Tasso's poetry, Solerti writes: “Di queste due la prima è l'edizione di Mantova 1591, ripetuta e compiuta con la seconda parte in Brescia l'anno seguente [...] Tale scelta tuttavia *benché fatta dall'autore* non poteva servire a quell'editore che volesse raccogliere *tutte* le fronde disperse dell'alloro di Torquato; il riordinamento e la correzione non furono ispirati ad un esatto ordine cronologico o da un più fino senso d'arte, bensì da scrupoli religiosi o cortigiani o da opportunità di novelle amicizie; e però *male mi sarei affidato se avessi seguito ciecamente quelle edizioni*” (emphasis added), in Tasso, *Le rime*, 1:v-xiii.

<sup>20</sup> The only authorized editions of Tasso's poetry include: the gift manuscript *Alle Signore Principesse di Ferrara*; the manuscript copy of 156 *rime d'amore* known as the codice Chigiano L, VII, 302; the 1591 edition of the *Prima parte delle rime* printed in Mantua by Osanna (reprinted in 1592 in Brescia by Marchetti); and the 1593 *Seconda parte delle rime* printed in Brescia by Marchetti. Concerning the authorization of the 1593 Marchetti volume, Isabella Bagliani argues that “l'edizione bresciana può essere iscritta a pieno titolo nella storia della tradizione delle rime tassiane come edizione d'autore,” in “Per l'edizione critica,” 88. Lanfranco Caretti, too, emphasizes the authorial design of the *Prima* and *Seconda* volumes of Tasso's *rime*: “Infine è di massima importanza ripetere, al termine di questa rassegna delle varie edizioni tassiane pubblicate durante la vita del poeta [...] che con la *Prima parte* di Mantova e la *Seconda parte* di Brescia [...] noi vediamo attuata l'unica stampa delle rime che corrisponda ad un piano, se pur discutibilissimo secondo la legge poetica, dichiaratamente e consapevolmente voluto. [...] la *Prima* parte mantovana e la *Seconda* di Brescia costituiscono insieme la vera *editio princeps* dell'unico canzoniere tassiano,” in Lanfranco Caretti, *Studi sulle rime*, 92–93, 109.

<sup>21</sup> On Tasso's relationship with Francesco Osanna, see Alessandro Magnagutti, “Il tipografo del Tasso: Messer Francesco Osanna,” in *Atti e Memorie della Reale Accademia Virgiliana di Mantova* 25 (1939): 157–68; Carla Molinari, “Tasso, i Gonzaga e Francesco Osanna,” in *Studi sul Tasso* (Florence: Società Editrice Fiorentina, 2007), 137–64.

<sup>22</sup> Torquato Tasso, *Lettere*, ed. Cesare Guasti, 5 vols. (Florence: Le Monnier, 1895), 2:52, n. 1335. In an earlier letter to Antonio Costantini, dated November 1, 1589, Tasso articulates a similar poetic design: “Vorrei che le rime le prose fossero stampate separatamente in bellissima stampa, in foglio, o almeno in quarto; e che l'une e l'altre fossero distinte in tre volumi: quelle, d'amori e di lodi e di composizioni sacre o spirituali [...] queste, di lettere, di dialogi e di discorsi,” in Tasso, *Lettere*, 4:255, n. 1183. Tasso's decision to divide his lyric poetry into separate categories and corresponding volumes marks a significant change in traditional Cinquecento *canzoniere* practice, the finest examples of which are perhaps Jacopo Sannazaro and Pietro Bembo, who freely ordered *rime amorose* next to spiritual, correspondence, and encomiastic verses. Franco Tomasi argues for the importance of Bembo and Sannazaro's lyric collections as Cinquecento models *par excellence* in the following terms: “Negli anni immediatamente successive alle *principes* delle *Rime* di Bembo e di Sannazaro, due occasioni editoriali considerate tradizionalmente dei punti di svolta nella storia letteraria del Cinquecento, si apre una lunga

volume of “le Laudi e gli Encomi de’ principi e de le donne illustri” were printed during Tasso’s lifetime, the third volume of “le cose sacre” appeared in print in Bergamo only posthumously in 1597, partially based, as Luigi Poma has suggested, on a manuscript housed in the Vatican archives (ms. Vaticano latino 10980).<sup>23</sup>

Although Tasso had indicated that the second volume of his lyric verse would be dedicated to “le Laudi e gli Encomi,” the volume in print includes no subtitle signaling its auto-inscription into these traditions. It is possible that, given Tasso’s extensive attention paid to defining *ars poetica*, he had closely read and was thus influenced by Antonio Minturno’s (1500–1574) *Dell’arte poetica* (1563), which proposes that the very end of poetry is to praise objects worthy of imitation: “l’ufficio del Melico [è] in laudare et in pregare.”<sup>24</sup> That Tasso explicitly designed a volume of lyric verse dedicated to “le laudi delle donne illustri” resonates with a second principle regarding poets’ encomiastic responsibilities cited in Tasso’s so-called *Lettera sul matrimonio*, the epistolary debate on women and marriage between Torquato and his cousin Ercole. In Torquato’s letter, he cites Euripides’s *Medea*: “Il lodar la virtù de la donna in quel modo che richiede la sua dignità è cosa da uomo savio e dotto.”<sup>25</sup> A “wise and learned man,” for Tasso then, is a figure responsible for dedicating himself to praising women. Tasso assumed this duty in the composition and publication of the Marchetti volume.

This said, however, some of the scholarship concerning the poet’s relationship to the encomia of noble subjects—particularly of male members of the Este court, like Duke Alfonso II, with whom Tasso had a particularly difficult rapport—accentuates the “ambiguous” nature of Tasso’s encomiastic art.<sup>26</sup> To be clear, there are clear instances in which Tasso’s disenchanted attitudes toward courtly

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stagione di grande fioritura di prove liriche, in virtù del definitivo affermarsi di una lingua poetica pienamente codificata,” in *Studi sulla lirica rinascimentale (1540–1570)*, vii. For a similar reading, see Amelia Juri, “Due modelli per il petrarchismo metrico rinascimentale: Sannazaro e Bembo,” in *Lirica in Italia 1494–1530: Esperienze ecdotiche e profile storiografici. Atti del Convegno (Friburgo, 8–9 giugno 2016)*, eds. Uberto Motta and Giacomo Vagni (Bologna: Emil di Odoia, 2017), 173–98.

<sup>23</sup> After Tasso’s death in 1595, the poet’s friend Antonio Costantini assumed the responsibility to collect and edit the *terza parte*, as described in Luigi Poma, “La Parte terza delle Rime tassiane,” *Studi tassiani* 27 (1979): 5–47.

<sup>24</sup> In response to Vespasiano Gonzaga’s question “che cosa è la poesia?” Minturno responds: “Imitatione di varie maniere di persone, in diversi modi, ò con parole, ò con harmonia, ò con tempi; separatamente, ò con tutte queste cose insieme, ò con parte di loro [...] Tre cose in ogni imitatione considerarci conviene. Prima quel, che ad imitar prendiamo; o con che imitiamo; al fine in qual modo. Le cose, che ad imitar prendiamo, sono i costumi, gli affetti, [e] i atti delle persone; le quali sono di tre qualità. La prima è de’ migliori, che gli huomini dell’età nostra. La seconda è de simili à questi. La terza è de’ piggiori. Migliori intendiamo gl’Iddii, gli Heroi, ò Semidei, che dir vogliamo. Piggiori i Satyri, i Sileni, i Cyclopi, [e] tutti quei, che ci muovono à ridere. Migliori anchora inte[n]der possiamo i Principi, e tutti gli huomini illustri, et eccelle[n]ti, ò per valore, ò per dignità maggiori de gli altri, così in questa, come in ogni altra età.” Minturno goes on to explain that objects worthy of praise are not only “gli huomini e gl’Iddii; ma commenda le cose anchora, i luoghi, le ville, i vini, i fonti, le virtù, la liberalità, l’innocentia, la modestia, la parsimonia, l’otio, la poesia,” in “Della poetica toscana [...] Il primo ragionamento,” in Antonio Minturno, *L’arte poetica* (Venice: Giovanni Andrea Valvassori, 1563), 2. Tasso echoes Minturno’s definition of poetry in the first discourse of his *Discorsi dell’arte poetica*: “La poesia non è in sua natura altro che imitatione (e questo non si può richiamare in dubbio); e l’imitatione non può essere discompagnata dal verisimile, peroché tanto significa imitare, quanto far simile; non può dunque parte alcuna di poesia esser separata dal verisimile; e in somma il verisimile non è una di quelle condizioni richieste nella poesia a maggior sua bellezza e ornamento, ma è propria e intrinseca dell’essenza sua, e in ogni sua parte sovra ogn’altra cosa necessaria,” in Tasso, *Discorsi dell’arte poetica e del poema eroico*, ed. Luigi Poma (Bari: Laterza, 1964), 6. For a broader consideration of the poetic practice of praise from antiquity through the early modern period, which includes careful analysis of Tasso’s poetry and poetic theory, see Osborne Bennett Hardison, *The Enduring Monument: A Study of the Idea of Praise in Renaissance Literary Theory and Practice* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1962).

<sup>25</sup> Torquato Tasso, *Lettera sul matrimonio: Consolatoria all’Albizzi*, ed. Valentina Salmaso (Rome: Antenore, 2007), 5. The letter is also printed in Tasso, *Le lettere*, 2:414.

<sup>26</sup> For a different reading from my own on this question, which emphasizes Tasso’s unfaltering “diffidenza” toward encomiastic practice (“una scrittura [...] priva di autonomia, in quanto non ha in se stesso i propri fondamenti e le proprie leggi, ma dipende dall’incerto ‘favore’ del pubblico e dalla ‘grazia’ effimera dei principi”), see Matteo Residori, “Teoria e prassi dell’encomio nel Tasso lirico,” in *Forme e occasioni dell’encomio tra cinque e seicento: Formes et occasion de la louange entre*

politics and their restrictions imposed upon more creative types emerge, which the poet himself makes explicit across many of his texts: the *Aminta*, *Lettere*, *Liberata* and *Conquistata*, and dialogues, especially *Il Cataneo overo degli idoli* (1585).<sup>27</sup> It cannot, however, be concluded that Tasso unequivocally resented the art and practice of encomia, nor that “*tutta l’ultima fase*” of the poet’s career—without specifying to what genres this principle applies—was colored with stinging resentment toward the court, its noble members, and, by extension, the encomiastic mode, especially when it was precisely during the final period of the poet’s life that the authorization of a volume of encomiastic lyric verse came to light.<sup>28</sup> By arranging a collection of encomia according to a dual aim that ennobles both poetic subjects and a poetic art form, Tasso appears to use the 1593 publication as a space through which to exert control over his social contexts. If Tasso’s encomia for noble lords, upon whom he was financially, domestically, and professionally dependent, sometimes feigns praise or veils it with feelings of regret, the encomia orchestrated in the *Seconda parte* is unique in that it freely mixes patrons and subjects, obscuring the possibility for any single dedicatee to yield decisive “power” over the poet. Insofar as the majority of the dedicatees are women, they may be seen as collaborative agents in Tasso’s effort to redefine the encomiastic art form as a valuable alternative to the tired refrains poets lift from the Petrarchan love tradition. Indeed, in Tasso’s *La Cavalletta overo de la poesia toscana* (1587), published before the Marchetti volume, the poet had advocated for more serious engagement with and imitation of Petrarch’s verses, urging readers to look beyond “*le materie amorose*” in order to model new kinds of poetry on works like *L’Italia mia*; *Spirto gentil, che quelle membra reggi*; and *O aspettata in ciel beata e bella* for purposes more widely beneficial to a larger “pubblico.”<sup>29</sup> As Maria Luisa Ardizzone has suggested regarding the role of encomia in early vernacular poetry to elevate subjects alongside language, Tasso appears similarly concerned with how the encomiastic mode takes seriously its subject, author, purpose, and form.<sup>30</sup> More than a bothersome task demanded of all courtiers, encomiastic poetry, for Tasso, celebrates the value of others in order to evaluate and validate itself.

When considering the *Seconda parte*’s dominantly female audience, a question worth considering arises: how is Tasso’s encomiastic poetry written for women different from his encomiastic poetry written for men? To begin to answer this question, a number of factors need first to be taken into account. The encomiastic poetry to women, as it appears in the *Seconda parte*, omits the familiar

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XVIe et XVIIe siècle, eds. Danielle Boillet and Liliana Grassi (Lucca: Maria Pacini Fazzi editore, 2011), 19–49, 20. For other studies of Tasso’s representation of patrons and problematics at court, see Margaret Ferguson, *The Trials of Desire: Renaissance Defenses of Poetry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983); Jane Tylus, *Writing and Vulnerability in the Late Renaissance* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993); Richard Anthony McCabe, *‘Ungainefull arte’: Poetry, Patronage and Print in the Early Modern Era* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

<sup>27</sup> The section on encomia in *Il Cataneo overo degli idoli*, which imagines a conversation at the Roman villa of cardinal Ippolito d’Este in 1571 on the topic of the hyperbolic poetic verse that followed the success of Battle of Lepanto, is spoken through the mouthpiece of the Forestiero Napoletano and reads: “L’armonia che fanno i corpi celesti, movendosi, non riempie i sensi altramente di quel ch’abbia fatto quella di tanti versi e di tante prose in tante lingue, con tanti stili e con tanta felicità de’ lodati e de’ lodatori, con tanta gloria de’ celebrati e de’ celebratori [...] niuna stabilità hanno le scritture che non siano fondate su la scienza di coloro che scrivono; e l’altre se ne vanno come piume a l’aure del favor popolare e a la grazie de’ principi, che passa come fior di primavera,” in Torquato Tasso, *Dialoghi*, ed. Giovanni Baffetti (Milan: Rizzoli, 1998), 749–50.

<sup>28</sup> Residori, “Teoria,” 20.

<sup>29</sup> I am indebted to Jane Tylus for kindly pointing out to me Tasso’s important reassessment of Petrarchan imitation in *La Cavalletta*. Although *La Cavalletta* makes no specific mention of Petrarch’s encomiastic poems in the *canzoniere*, it is possible that he imagined such sonnets as *Gloriosa Colonna, in cui s’appoggia* (X) among the more “serious” examples to follow. For broader considerations of Tasso’s reception of Petrarch and the *canzoniere*, see C. P. Brand, “Petrarch and Petrarchism in Torquato Tasso’s Lyric Poetry,” *The Modern Language Review* 62, no. 2 (1967): 256–66; Francesca D’Alessandro, “Torquato Tasso e alcuni commenti cinquecenteschi al Petrarca,” *Aevum* 76, no. 3 (2002): 737–59.

<sup>30</sup> See the discussion of the “stile de la loda,” in Maria Luisa Ardizzone, *Dante, il paradigma intellettuale: un’invenzione degli anni fiorentini* (Florence: Olschki, 2011).

“biografia tormentata” of the poet, the tragic narrative that surfaces in much of Tasso’s encomiastic poetry written to men, which laments their unyielding cruelty and willful ignorance of the poet’s plight.<sup>31</sup> For what concerns the *Seconda parte*, the minimal emphasis on the poet-narrator’s tormented life allows for a fresh approach to the encomiastic mode to emerge—one that diminishes the importance of the “favor” and “grace” of princes in order to highlight the mode’s broader and, arguably, more significant ability to participate in historically informed cultural debates. As Luisella Giachino has noted, it seems that, due to the poet’s self-described “diligentissima scelta” in choosing which poems to include in the *Seconda parte*, “la storia di un’anima molto spesso passionata e bersagliata dalla Fortuna” is not by accident missing from the collection.<sup>32</sup> Unlike the encomiastic poetry Tasso dedicates to Duke Alfonso II, which juxtaposes encomiastic praise and autobiographical lament—an act that confronts the patron’s lacking generosity and failure to protect his subjects—the emphasis of the *Seconda parte* makes an about face to its subjects, dedicatees, and larger cultural project; Tasso as a character no longer takes center stage. Finally unclouded by personal laments or feelings of resentment toward the poetic practice at play, the *Seconda parte* may be seen not to take for granted the poet’s social existence among, and creative relations with, male and female friends, artists, interlocutors, and noble dedicatees. Conclusions that the *Seconda parte*’s contents consist solely of “rime dedicate esclusivamente a donne (come quelle d’amore della prima parte)” must be revisited in order to account for the presence and vital purpose of the male dedicatees in the volume.<sup>33</sup>

If we consider the reasons for which professional male artists and writers—some of whom also played religious roles—appear in a volume primarily dedicated to the encomia of women, there is room to expand upon Francesco Ferretti’s interpretation that “i testi raccolti in questa silloge rappresentano un genere di poesia inteso come suprema comunicazione aristocratica, specchio dove la società di corte potesse ammirare se stessa, le proprie cerimonie e le proprie occasioni.”<sup>34</sup> With a similar interpretation to Ferretti’s, Residori has suggested that the *Seconda parte* is a book of female “emblemi decorativi del prestigio aristocratico.”<sup>35</sup> While it is true that there is a decidedly aristocratic framework to the *Seconda parte*, the male artists and poets who appear alongside noble female subjects reveal how Tasso’s encomiastic project investigates its own creative process. Tasso’s male subjects receive praise just as his female dedicatees do; only their esteem derives from what they write or represent about women. The poet’s compositions thus reflect and self-reflect, both on encomiastic subjects and on encomiastic works. Similar to the multi-layered theoretical and practical reflections on the composition of epic poetry, while writing and revising his *Liberata* and *Conquistata*, the *Seconda parte* represents Tasso’s self-conscious awareness of encomiastic poetry’s value during the very process of its composition.

Although the Marchetti volume appeared in print without an explicit label that the text celebrates “women”—nor is there any direct reference in its title to the encomiastic nature of the book—the collection’s organization, with its substantial number of female dedicatees and poems written in praise of men’s celebration of women, may be considered to be a fairly unique contribution

<sup>31</sup> Residori draws a parallel between Tasso’s laments about his deprived condition at court and his required lyric devotion to his male patrons in the following terms: “la storia letteraria non può fare a meno di vedere in questa produzione sterminata il sintomo di una crisi al tempo stesso individuale e collettiva: crisi di un individuo dalla biografia tormentata e insieme di una figura professionale, il letterato-cortigiano, che reagisce alla perdita di riconoscimento del suo ruolo col mercimonio sistematico del proprio talento,” in “Teoria,” 21.

<sup>32</sup> Luisella Giachino, “La mitologia degli dei terreni: Le rime encomiastiche di Torquato Tasso,” *Studi tassiani* 49–50 (2002): 47–65, 50. On Tasso’s “diligentissima scelta,” see his letter from September 1580 to Scipione Gonzaga, in *Lettere* 2:95, n. 136.

<sup>33</sup> Residori, “Teoria,” 38.

<sup>34</sup> Francesco Ferretti, “Torquato Tasso,” in *Lirici europei del Cinquecento: Ripensando la poesia del Petrarca*, eds. G.M. Anselmi, J. Elam, G. Forni, and D. Monda (Milan: BUR, 2004), 743–824, 785.

<sup>35</sup> Residori, “Teoria,” 40.

to the many Cinquecento publications that address women and their talents.<sup>36</sup> The first indication that the *Seconda parte* is both a volume of encomiastic poetry and one that champions women for a broader purpose is the dedicatory letter to Eleonora d'Austria Gonzaga, the Duchess of Mantua and mother of Vincenzo Gonzaga (1562–1612), Tasso's liberator from Sant'Anna. Just as Tasso sent the *Prima parte* of his *rime* to Mantua, as a dedication to Vincenzo Gonzaga, so too did he Tasso design the *Seconda parte* as a dedication to the city's reigning duchess.<sup>37</sup> That the dedicatees and publishers of Tasso's authorized volumes of poetry resided outside of Ferrara ought not to be overlooked.<sup>38</sup> Tasso's decision to place his poetry under the protection of the family that rescued him from Este-imposed confinement may have informed the notably limited presence of Este family members in the *Seconda parte*.<sup>39</sup> Searching for a wider readership, the Marchetti volume speaks to women and men beyond the walls of Ferrara, perhaps because the poet had already dedicated significant lyric verses to his Este female protectors with the volume *Alle Signore Principesse di Ferrara*.<sup>40</sup> This turn away of Tasso's

<sup>36</sup> Tasso's *Seconda parte* shares much in common with lyric publications that explicitly express their celebration of women in their titles, including, for example, Muzio Manfredi's edited anthologies *Per le donne romane* (Bologna: Benacci, 1575); *Cento donne cantate in cento sonetti* (Parma: Viotti, 1580); *Cento madrigali* (Mantua: Osanna, 1587) dedicated to Princess Vittoria Doria Gonzaga of Molfetta, to which Tasso contributed two madrigals; *Cento sonetti in lode di cento donne di Pavia* (Pavia: the heirs of Girolamo Bartoli, 1601); and *Cento sonetti in lode delle donne di Ravenna* (Ravenna: the heirs of P. Giovannelli, 1602). For further discussion of Manfredi's works, see Antonio Bertolotti, *Muzio Manfredi e Passi Giuseppe letterati in relazione col duca di Mantova* (Rome: Tipografia delle scienze matematiche e fisiche, 1888).

<sup>37</sup> With the dedication of the *Prima parte* and the *Seconda parte* both to Gonzaga rulers, readers of the Marchetti 1592 and 1593 volumes are reminded of Tasso's service to the Gonzaga family, expressed most explicitly in his 1591 *Genealogia della Serenissima casa Gonzaga*, written in *ottava rime*, whose stanza 116 praises the union of Vincenzo and Eleonora de' Medici, daughter of the Francesco I, Grand Duke of Tuscany: "A Vincenzo Leonora unisce e lega/ il gran duce de' Toschi, eletta figlia,/ in cui natura ogni suo don dispiega, / e 'l ciel ogni sua dote e meraviglia./ E che terrena sia la terra or niega, / cotanto a' puri spirti ella somiglia,/ nova, divina e gloriosa Alceste,/ né morte può contra valor celeste." The first edition of Tasso's *Genealogia* was printed by Marc'Antonio Foppa in *Delle opere non più stampate del signor Torquato Tasso* (Rome: Giacomo Dragonelli, 1666) with the title *La Genealogia della serenissima casa Gonzaga, del signor Torquato Tasso al serenissimo signor don Vincenzo Gonzaga duca di Mantova e di Monferrato*. A modern, critical edition is available: Tasso, *Casa Gonzaga: La genealogia della serenissima Casa Gonzaga*, ed. Marzio Pieri (Parma: Zara, 1988).

<sup>38</sup> Lanfranco Caretti has noted that Ferrara is nearly left out of the picture of Tasso's "definitive printing" of *rime*: "A partire [...] dal giugno 1590 Mantova e Bergamo diventavano, si può dire, i due principali centri attorno a cui ruotava, con alterne vicende, la questione della stampa definitiva delle rime," in *Studi sulle rime*, 64. Elisabetta Selmi, in her Introduction to Battista Guarini's *Pastor Fido*, suggests that Tasso felt especially inclined to create distance between his poetry and the Este court, not only because of his confinement at Sant'Anna, but because after the death of Giovan Battista Pigna (1529–1575), Guarini rose in the Este court as "l'incontrastato poeta ufficiale delle corti estense," in Battista Guarini, *Pastor Fido*, ed. Elisabetta Selmi (Venice: Marsilio editore, 2001), 27. In epistolary correspondence with Giovanni Giolito, dated May 6, 1591, Tasso expresses his wish to see his works reprinted in specific cities: "Vengiamo al proposito. Desidero che tutte l'opere mie siano ristampate, e più volentieri in cotesta che in alcun'altra città [...] Spero di pubblicare alcuna parte de l'opere mie o in Mantova o in Bergamo: ma non posso con tutto ciò soddisfarmi né degi altri né di me stesso. Voi, signor mio, potete compiacermi; e, come io credo, senza vostro danno; facendo ristampare tutte le composizioni particolarmente, che usciranno da le mie mani in tre volumi separati, com'io aveva disegnato" (emphasis mine), in *Lettere*, 5:52, n. 1335. Similarly, in a letter to Ercole Tasso dated September 18, 1591, Tasso mentions his involvement in deciding where his authorized poetry would be printed: "Mandai al reverendo Licino la seconda parte, pregandolo che la facesse stampare in Bergamo, finché la prima si stampava in Mantova [...] Mi ha promesso di farlo: ho poi inteso che ne sono stampati alcuni fogli, ma da lui non ho risposta né avviso," in *Lettere*, 5:63, n. 1349. Although the *Seconda parte* was published in Brescia instead of in Bergamo, both the *Prima* and *Seconda* volumes are largely unconcerned with the Este house as an institution and, for the most part, its patrons, thus revealing the poet's broader aspirations to converse with, and appear in the service of, other Italian nobles.

<sup>39</sup> The only Este family members to appear in the *Seconda parte* are Lucrezia d'Este, Marfisa d'Este and Cesare d'Este. The latter appeals only in the epithalamium for his marriage to Virginia de' Medici.

<sup>40</sup> Along similar lines, Luisella Giachino has noted: "È chiaro, qui come altrove, che l'ultimo Tasso ha cercato di cancellare, di rimuovere o dissimulare alcuni dei protagonisti della propria biografia, espunti dal novero dei destinatari o rinominati, per quanto sia difficile immaginare di attribuire alla Marchetti una sorta di carattere privato, di repertorio di persone di cui il poeta aveva serbato sincera memoria affettuosa," in "La mitologia," 55.

authorized poetry from the Este house is significant, especially as it appears to have been done in response to Ferrara's attempts to claim the Este duchy and the ducal printer, Vittorio Baldini (d.1618), as the unqualified site of Tasso's lyric production.<sup>41</sup> In this way, the *Seconda parte* reclaims both the unauthorized verses of lyric poetry that were published during Tasso's detainment and the unauthorized cities that had sought to claim the poet as their own.<sup>42</sup>

By directing the *Seconda parte* beyond Ferrara's reading audiences, Tasso replaces his former pleas for approval and rescue with more objective distance, which allows him to praise dedicatees without expecting from them direct aid or interference. It is important to note that, unlike the poet's early poetic compositions, the poems of the *Seconda parte*, when studied as a whole, were not written to celebrate a single patron or family, nor were they produced as part of Tasso's participation in an academy, nor while he was employed in service to a single court. Rather, the volume emerges from the perspective of a newly liberated poet who freely resided primarily in Rome at the time of the volume's publication. While the poet's *Terza parte delle rime* is replete with poetic homage to male members of the Este house, the *Seconda parte* makes a conscious attempt to celebrate figures from *outside* Ferrara's ruling family.<sup>43</sup> Tasso expresses this intention in the collection's dedicatory letter to

<sup>41</sup> In a letter to Curzio Ardizio from Ferrara, Tasso considers himself "badly treated" by printers, just as he had been poorly treated by princes: "Ebbero il piego che Vostra Signoria mandò al signor Giulio Mosti con la canzona scritta a la granduchessa di Toscana; ma non co' l'frutto che io sperava ch'ella dovesse produrre: forse perchè la mia cattiva fortuna non consente che quella signora serenissima possa dimostrar la sua cortesia; ma in parte ne potrebbero essere state cagione le molte scorrezioni che si leggono ne la canzona: la quale è stampata men male; come ch'in tutte l'altre composizioni, o ne la maggior parte, io sia stato così mal trattato da gli stampatori come da' principi," in Tasso, *Lettere*, 2:196, n. 205. Along similar lines, in a letter to Giovan Battista Licino from Ferrara, Tasso writes: "De le rime e de le lettere ancora me ne rimetterei, se voleste consolarmene: ma non mi piacciono queste mescolanze c'hanno fatto l'altre volte li stampatori; se non fosse per consolazione di qualche vostro amico, al quale io vorrei compiacere, anche co' l'mio dispiacere, se non potessi in altro modo; tanto son tenero del suo onore," in *Lettere*, 2:451, n. 471. Again, in another letter, Tasso expresses similar frustration to Licino from Ferrara: "Vorrei dunque che venisse a vedermi, e che non facesse stampar più cosa alcuna senza mostrarlami; altrimenti io sarò costretto di supplicare Nostro Signore, che faccia provvisione sovra gli stampatori che lacerano e stropicciano le mie composizioni, e me che ne sono l'autore," in *Lettere*, 2:534, n. 503. Even after Tasso's liberation and move to Mantua, the poet continued to lament his mistreatment at the hands of erring printers. In a letter to Antonio Costantini, dated August 26, 1586, Tasso writes: "Io son pure il buon Tasso, il caro Tasso, l'amorevol Tasso, e sono anche l'assassinato Tasso; massimamente da' librari e da gli stampatori, i quali non hanno discrezione: ma son risoluto che la cosa per l'avenire vada in un altro modo," in *Lettere*, 3:29, n. 633. A few days later, Tasso repeats his lament to Costantini: "Io m'impaccio tanto malvolentieri co' librari e stampatori, per li torti che m'hanno fatto in ogni tempo, per non dire assassinati," *Lettere*, 3:34, n. 640. In addition to volumes solely composed of Tasso's poetry, the Baldini press also printed Cesare Caporali's collected volume, *Rime piacevoli di Cesare Caporali, del Mauro e d'altri auttori: Accresciute in questa quinta impressione di molte rime gravi, et burlesche del sig. Torquato Tasso, di diversi ingegni* (Ferrara: Vittorio Baldini, 1586).

<sup>42</sup> In 1582 the collection *Scelta delle Rime del s[ignor] T[orquato] Tasso* was printed in Ferrara by Baldini, and was dedicated to Lucrezia d'Este. Claudio Gigante has suggested that this collection of *rime* may be considered as a "tentativo da parte del duca di riaffermare la 'proprietà' intellettuale e morale degli scritti concepiti dal proprio (ex) poeta di corte," in Claudio Gigante, *Tasso* (Rome: Salerno Editrice, 2007), 314. Cf. Caretti, *Studi sulle Rime* 262–65. The unauthorized collections of Tasso's *rime* published in Ferrara by Baldini included: *Delle rime et prose [...] Prima parte [-terza]* (1585); *Il rimanente delle rime nuove* (1587); *Rime [...] e d'altri auttori, nelle felicissime nozze de [...] il sig. d. Cesare d'Este et la sig. donna Virginia Medici* (1586); *Rime et prose [...] Parte prima [-quarta]* (1589); *Rime et prose [...] Parte prima [-terza]* (1582); *Il segretario* (1582). The unauthorized collections of Tasso's *rime* published in Ferrara, but not by Baldini include: *Aggiunta alle rime et prose* (Simon Vasalini, 1585); *Delle rime et prose [...] Parte prima [-terza]* (Giulio Cesare Cagnacini and brothers, 1585); *Delle rime et prose [...] Parte prima [-terza]* (Simon Vasalini, 1585); *Rime nove [...] composte nell'alma città di Roma* (Giulio Vasalini, 1589); *Scelta delle rime [...] Prima e seconda parte* (Domenico Mammarelli and Giulio Cesare, 1582); *Scelta delle rime [...] Prima e seconda parte* (Francesco di Rossi, 1582).

<sup>43</sup> For the poems in the *Terza parte* dedicated either to Alfonso II, or to other members of the Este house, see n. 9 (*Alfonso invitto, ove le rime adorno*), n. 13 (*Tu che gli avi d'Alfonso e le diverse*), n. 14 (*Tu che i rostri navali e i fatti egregi*), n. 15 (*La colonna d'Alcide, in sua memoria*), n. 16 (*Tra il primo Alfonso, e l'suo gran padre Alcide*), n. 17 (*Questa antica colonna alzar propose*), n. 18 (*Tra Giove in Cielo e l'mio Signor in terra*), n. 19 (*Questa d'Herói stirpe seconda e d'opre*), n. 22 (*O testimoni del valore illustri*), n. 28 (*Alme,*

Eleonora Gonzaga, dated from Rome on January 1, 1593, in which the poet names the recipients of his encomia, including Eleonora, as well as “quelle di molte altre a lei congiunte da parentado o da amicitia,” among them women from the Gonzaga, Farnese, Doria, Grillo, Della Rovere, Avalos, and Lorena families, as well as the Grand Duchess of Tuscany, Bianca Cappello.<sup>44</sup> Importantly, Tasso’s attention paid to celebrating contemporary women constitutes an important revision of the catalog of “famous women” tradition, initiated by Giovanni Boccaccio’s (1313–1375) *De mulieribus claris* (c.1361). Rather than imitate the fourteenth-century writer’s ambivalent discursive strategy, whereby women of less admirable fame are employed as emblematic figures of what *not* to become for women reading the text, Tasso’s community of contemporary women in the *Seconda parte*, who are fashioned as worthy heiresses to “donne antiche,” are all positive exemplars from which contemporary readers—both male and female—may learn and benefit.

While the gallery of illustrious women tradition has raised critical concerns among literary scholars about the genre’s attempt to “collect” and “contain” women under a male poet’s name and his literary reputation, it would be difficult to view the female dedicatees of Tasso’s *Seconda parte* as figures on shimmering display, positioned in order to promote the poet’s own self-praising image. This is because Tasso weaves the women of the *Seconda parte* into the discursive fabric of a mixed-sex community, who feature in Tasso’s project to highlight the collective, rather than the individual, championing of women. As Tasso’s cast of male and female dedicatees shows, this process requires more than one author, and more than one artistic medium. Tasso’s project is not to enclose female subjects under his poetic dominion, nor to turn a “gender into a genre,” as Deanna Shemek has suggested in her careful analysis of Lodovico Domenichi’s (1515–1564) *Rime diverse di molti eccellentissimi Autori* (1545), but rather to extend outwardly to women in order to create a communal picture of their collective virtues.<sup>45</sup> In so doing, the *Seconda parte* makes clear the collective process that generates literary and artistic production, and how such creation necessarily involves active female participants. In this regard, my interpretation aligns with that of Elena Lombardi, who perceptively understands female readers of lyric verse as “agents, rather than passive elements of poetry: as addressees, interlocutors, readers, and commissioners.”<sup>46</sup> For what concerns the *Seconda parte*’s female readers, the

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*che già peregrinaste in terra*), n. 29 (*Allhor ch’in Ciel tra mille aurate sedi*), n. 56 (*O nepote d’Alfonso, Alfonso invitto*), n. 57 (*La verde terra ch’il gran Nilo inonda*), n. 58 (*Signor, questa feconda e nobil terra*), n. 60 (*Ecco il secondo Alfonso, e se tra queste*), n. 62 (*Signor, se mentre i’ più desio lodarte*), n. 65 (*Famoso Re de’ fiumi*), n. 66 (*Hor tutti i ponti al mio Signore inchina*), n. 67 (*Prencipe invitto un largo campo elesse*), n. 70 (*Signor, ben può l’ardore e ’l gelo interno*), n. 131 (*Hor ch’i Re da l’ocaso over da l’orto*), n. 137 (*Fermati, o tu che passi è qui sotterra*), n. 138 (*Qui giace Alfonso e piantò il sacro alloro*), n. 190 (*Prima che ’l grande e fortunato Impero*), and n. 195 (*Quando l’antica Roma onde trahesti*).

<sup>44</sup> With regard to this final female dedicatee, and to the Gonzaga family’s ties to the Medici house through the marriage of Vincenzo Gonzaga to Eleonora de’ Medici in 1584, traces of Tasso’s attempt to establish patronage ties with the Grand Duchy resound in the *Seconda parte*. For Tasso’s dependence on Bianca Capello as a mediator in his relationship to Cesare d’Este, Tasso’s letter dated February 9, 1585 reads: “S’appressa il tempo, nel quale V. A. Serenissima avrà buona occasione di giovarmi: però la supplico, che si degni parlare al Signor Don Cesare d’Este così caldamente per mio beneficio, ch’io senta molto giovamento de le sue raccomandazioni. E perchè la sua grande autorità potrà superare ogni impedimento, che per l’avvenire possa ritardar le mie lettere, o le composizioni, mi basterà che V. A. sappia che il mese passato le mandai un dialogo ed una canzone, nè dubito, che degnandosi di chiederla, non debba essere trovata, perchè le poesie, ne le quali è scritto il nome di Vostra Altezza, non sogliono perire, e questo è privilegio de la sua grandezza, e de la felicità, e de la sua liberalità particolarmente, per la quale sono le sue laudi cantate e lette volentieri da ciascuno. E le bacio umilissimamente le mani, supplicandola, che oltre le sue raccomandazioni, mi dimostri ancora qualche effetto de la sua cortesia,” cited in Solerti, *Vita di Tasso*, 2:30. For other representations of Tasso’s reliance on the Granduchess, see the volume Torquato Tasso, *Cinquanta madrigali inediti del signor Torquato Tasso alla Granduchessa Bianca Cappello nei Medici*, ed. G. T. Gargani (Florence: Ricci, 1871).

<sup>45</sup> Tasso avoids rhetoric that might enhance the notion of the poet-collector’s all-female “cabinet[s] of curiosities.” Cf. Shemek, “The Collector’s Cabinet,” 242, 251.

<sup>46</sup> Elena Lombardi, *Imagining the Female Reader in the Age of Dante* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 5. Although it is my interpretation that the *Seconda parte* represents women as active, not static, agents of male literary production, for

sections that follow demonstrate how Tasso's poetry extends a welcoming gesture to his contemporary interlocutors, inviting them into the history of encomiastic verse as active players, rather than isolating or exalting them as wonder-prodigies of their sex.

### THE "FAMOUS WOMEN" TRADITION ACCORDING TO THE *SECONDA PARTE*

To situate Tasso's *Seconda parte* within the tradition of famous women catalogs, a genre that arguably emerged with Boccaccio's *De mulieribus claris*, a number of considerations concerning the text and its extra-textual purpose must first be explained.<sup>47</sup> First, Tasso's praise of individual women does not adopt Boccaccio's biographical model, whereby prose descriptions of women's virtues and vices shape their legacies. Rather, the sixteenth-century poet's project seeks to enhance women's reputation by focusing exclusively on their positive attributes, and avoiding any mention of their faults.<sup>48</sup> Second, whereas Boccaccio concludes his *De mulieribus claris* by stating that his praise of contemporary women must be interrupted because of women's excessively nefarious behaviors, and thus the production of discursive praise of women must therefore come to a halt, Tasso's poetry does not design the same authorial terminus.<sup>49</sup> Given its shape as a collection of characteristics about contemporary women, it would be appropriate to suggest that Tasso's *Seconda parte* follows in the "famous women" tradition, but makes revealing changes to the method whereby poets generate and circulate women's praise.

In this respect, what Tasso appears to be principally interested in is how women initiate art, either by being the makers themselves, as in the case of the poet Livia Spinola, or by their participation in relationships with poets, and their representation in encomiastic art both visually and verbally. The

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readings that consider Tasso's women as artistic objects (as "medaglie," or "busti"), see, respectively, Residori "Teoria," 40, and Giachino, "La mitologia," 51. Though perhaps not intentionally, such interpretations immobilize the collection's women and recast them in criticism as flattened objects.

<sup>47</sup> As Stephen Kolsky has acutely studied, Boccaccio's model experienced rapidly evolving afterlives in later centuries, when many authors took up key issues of the *querelle des femmes* in printed discourse. See his excellent analyses of this reception in Stephen Kolsky, *The Genealogy of Women: Studies in Boccaccio's De mulieribus claris* (New York: Peter Lang, 2003); and *The Ghost of Boccaccio: Writings on Famous Women in Renaissance Italy* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005). For the production history of collections of lives of famous women, from Boccaccio through the seventeenth century, see Beatrice Collina, "L'esemplarità delle donne illustri fra umanesimo e controriforma," in *Donna, disciplina, creanza cristiana dal XV al XVII secolo*, ed. Gabriella Zarri (Rome: Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 1996), 103–19. For the lasting influence that Boccaccio's text had on the visual arts, and portrait books especially, see Susan Gaylard, "De mulieribus claris and the Disappearance of Women from Illustrated Print Biographies," in *I Tatti Studies in the Italian Renaissance* 18, no. 2 (2015): 287–318. On the long catalogue tradition, more broadly considered, see Glenda McLeod, *Virtue and Venom: Catalogs of Women from Antiquity to the Renaissance* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1991).

<sup>48</sup> Tasso avoids any critique of women because the "masculinist notion of decorum and male superiority" that gives shape to Boccaccio's text and his readership, as suggested by Kolsky, does not apply to the *Seconda parte*. See *The Ghost of Boccaccio*, 3.

<sup>49</sup> The contemporary examples of women with which Boccaccio closes the *De mulieribus claris* include: Gualdrada, a Florentine Maiden; Constance, Empress of Rome and Queen of Sicily; Camiola, a Sienese Widow; and Joanna, Queen of Jerusalem and Sicily. Boccaccio articulates the self-interruption of his ability to praise contemporary women in the following terms: "I have now come to the women of our own time. But so small is the number of those who are outstanding that I think it more honorable to end here rather than continue with the women of today—all the more so since this work, which began with Eve, mother of the human race, concludes with so illustrious a queen," in Giovanni Boccaccio, *Famous Women*, ed. and trans. Virginia Brown (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 232. The only citation of Boccaccio in Tasso's *Seconda parte* appears in the sonnet *O degna, per cui s'armi un novo Alcide*, which compares Hippolita Turca to Hippolita, queen of the Amazons, and makes explicit reference to Boccaccio's *Teseida* in the *esposizione de l'autore*. Though not cited explicitly in this sonnet, nor in the accompanying commentary, *De mulieribus claris* echoes as a second Boccaccian intertext, for the Amazonian Hippolita appears in that text as well.

reflections on the act of encomiastic production in the *Seconda parte* impose substantial distance between the poet-narrator and the dedicatee. As mentioned above, what is missing in the *Seconda parte*, and thus what keeps it from becoming a traditional sonnet cycle, is an intimate relationship between the women celebrated and the poet narrating. The narrator does not rhapsodize about the key moment when he first meets his female addressee; indeed, there is rarely mention of the poet's direct encounter with the women at all. Apart from a few examples, all the female dedicatees were alive at the time of the volume's publication, and thus there is no one woman's death, as there was in Petrarch, on which the lyric verses focuses.<sup>50</sup> These particularities yield stronger implications for the very history of famous women collections, than they do for the impact—either real or imagined—the female subjects had on the poet-narrator.

By the time Tasso published the *Seconda parte* in 1593, literary interest in cataloging the lives of famous women in the “post-classical west” continued with notable fervor as part of the *querelle des femmes*.<sup>51</sup> However, it is perhaps the case that, more so than this particular literary tradition, Tasso's rereading and rewriting of his own texts motivated the decision to arrange a book of poetry about—and mostly dedicated to—women. It is important not to overlook the fact that by 1593, Tasso had articulated in print various versions of his ideas about women's virtues in other publications, including the *Discorso della virtù femminile e donnesca*, the epistolary exchange *Dello ammogliarsi*, and the dialogues *Il padre di famiglia* and *Il Gonzaga secondo overo del giuoco*. While fragments of Tasso's early ideas about women resonate across these texts and reappear in the *Seconda parte*, it is only in the encomiastic volume that Tasso unites both his theory and practice of encomiastic poetry, prescribing a methodology that foregrounds the poet's self-reading through the accompanying *esposizione[i] de l'autore*. This combination of theory and practice concerned with a single genre and represented in print is unique when considering Tasso's career-long obsession with theorizing the art of epic poetry. The poet did not willfully publish any sixteenth-century version of the *Liberata* that included either the *Discorsi dell'arte poetica* or the *Discorsi del poema eroica*.<sup>52</sup>

This fusion of theory and practice, philosophy and history, occurs in the *esposizione[i] de l'autore* that appear after roughly half of the poems in the *Seconda parte*.<sup>53</sup> Following the models of vernacular

<sup>50</sup> As Luisella Giachino notes, the only lyric verse Tasso wrote to a deceased woman and later included in the *Seconda parte* is that to Barbara d'Austria, in “La mitologia,” 54. It is important to recall that many of the poems that appear in the *Seconda parte* were written at an earlier stage in the poet's career. For example, although Bianca Cappello was alive at the time of Tasso's original poetic dedications to her, by the time the *Seconda parte* appeared in print, Cappello was no longer alive.

<sup>51</sup> Tasso's catalog of illustrious women calls to mind the immediate examples of poetic addresses to noble female audiences at the end of epic-long voyages. See Bernardo Tasso's *Amadigi* 11.16–31 for praise of painted women, 44.47–80 for praise of future women, and 100.23–33 for praise of contemporary women, in Bernardo Tasso, *Amadigi* (Venice: Giolito, 1560). In the case of Ariosto's *Furioso*, see 13.59–73 for praise of future Este women, 37.1–24 and 42.83–93 for simulacrum of beautiful women, in Ludovico Ariosto, *Orlando furioso*, ed. Cristina Zampese (Milan: BUR, 2016). For Torquato Tasso's references to contemporary aristocracy in his epics, see the dedication to Guidobaldo II Della Rovere in canto 1.2–5 of *Il Gierusalemme*, the dedication to Duke Alfonso II d'Este in canto I. 4–5 of the *Liberata*, the dedication to Cinzio Aldobrandini in canto 1.4–7 of the *Conquistata*, and the list of aristocratic historical figures in canto 20.100–42 of the *Conquistata*. For these editions, I have consulted: Torquato Tasso, *Il Gierusalemme*, ed. Guido Baldassarri (Rome: Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 2013); Id., *Gerusalemme liberata*, ed. Franco Tomasi (Milan: BUR, 2009); Id., *Gerusalemme conquistata*, ed. Claudio Gigante (Alessandria: Edizioni dell'Orso, 2010). Maria Luisa Doglio has also suggested that Giraldo Cinzio's *Gli Ecatommisti* (1565), which celebrates, over nearly two hundred verses, various “donne elette,” including queens, princesses, noblewomen, and women writers may well have been a source to which Tasso looked in composing his *Discorso della virtù femminile e donnesca*, in “Il Tasso e le donne,” 25.

<sup>52</sup> The 1582 Naples edition of the *Liberata*, did appear, however, with the poet's *Allegoria del poema*. See Torquato Tasso, *La Gierusalemme liberata [...] con l'allegoria dell'istesso autore, et con gli argomenti del sig. Oratio Ariosti* (Naples: G. B. Cappelli, 1582). This, however, is not an authorized edition of the poem.

<sup>53</sup> The *Seconda parte* is not a unique occasion upon which Tasso composed poetic commentary. To recall earlier examples, Tasso composed a “Lezione” on the sonnet *Questa vita mortal* by Giovanni Della Casa (1503–1556), and “Considerazioni”

poetic auto-commentary—among whom figures such as Dante (1265–1321),<sup>54</sup> Lorenzo de’ Medici (1449–1492), and Gabriele Fiamma (1533–1585) stand out<sup>55</sup>—Tasso supplements his poetry in the Marchetti edition, as he had in the 1591 Osanna *rime d’amore*, with *esposizione[i] de l’autore* that shape the way readers experience the encounter between their interpretation of the text and the intellectual discourses with which Tasso claims to engage.<sup>56</sup> The *esposizioni* serve as the site where Tasso expounds upon the social circumstances concerning both his historical figures and dedicatees. On the subject of auto-commentary’s frequent appearance in lyric collections more generally, Franco Tomasi has suggested that this widespread phenomenon, which blossomed in lyric collections during the 1540s and 1550s, experienced “una vera e propria esplosione” from the 1570s through the end of the century. Regarding the combination of theory and practice in lyric’s auto-commentary, Tomasi notes:

Per dare voce a esperienze liriche profondamente consapevoli della loro autonoma fisionomia una delle forme privilegiate sarà l’edizione di rime corredate da commento, autocommento e, in senso più generale, esegesi, il cui principale scopo è ricercare sofisticate integrazioni tra teoria e prassi [...] Il commento, in tutte le sue manifestazioni paratestuali, deve infatti divenire sede di incontro tra teoria e prassi, luogo nel quale si

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on three “canzoni sorelle” by Giovan Battista Pigna. Similarly, the *Prima parte delle rime* (Osanna: Mantua, 1591) features auto-commentary after each composition. On the commentary in this volume, see Vercingetorige Martignone, “Il commento tassiano alle *Rime amorose* (1591),” in *Schifanoia* 15/16 (1995): 133–40. Along similar lines to my reading articulated here, Valeria De Maldé has suggested that: “Le *Esposizioni* [...] non possono essere lette come un *unicum*, ma discendono dall’assidua frequentazione tassiana dei commenti medievali e umanistici, la cui lezione è messa a frutto dall’autore a partire dalla sua pratica quotidiana di raffinato lettore e chiosatore, più interessato ai *loci* paralleli, ai richiami ad altre fonti, all’*emendatio* e a questioni grammaticali e filologiche che alla vera e propria esplicazione del testo,” in Valeria De Maldé, “Torquato Tasso: Auto-commento alle *Rime* (1591),” in *Filologia e storia letteraria: Studi per Roberto Tisconi*, eds. Carlo Caruso, William Spaggiari, and Roberto Tisconi (Rome: Storia e Letteratura, 2008), 239–50, 250.

<sup>54</sup> As an important model for Cinquecento poets, Dante’s *Vita Nova* comments on the seemingly “superfluous” nature of its accompanying poetic self-commentary, whereby readers who have experienced love are well equipped to be able to understand the poetry, and those who have not will not find the commentary of any particular use. After the *libello’s Con l’altre donne*, Dante writes: “Vero è che tra le parole dove si manifesta la cagione di questo sonetto si scrivono dubbiose parole [...] E questo dubbio è impossibile a solver a chi non fosse in simile grado fedele d’Amore; ed a coloro che vi sono è manifesto ciò che solverebbe le dubitose parole: e però non è bene a me di dichiarare cotale dubitazione, acciò che lo mio parlare dichiarando sarebbe indarno, o vero di soperchio,” in Dante Alighieri, *Vita Nuova*, ed. Guglielmo Gorni (Turin: Einaudi, 1996), 13–14. By contrast, Tasso does not reflect on the relative use to the reader of his poetic self-commentary in the *Seconda parte*.

<sup>55</sup> See Dante’s *Vita Nuova* and *Convivio*, Lorenzo de’ Medici’s *Comento a’ miei sonetti*, and Gabriele Fiamma’s *Rime spirituali*. Among other examples, cited by Vercingetorige Martignone are: Rinaldo Corso’s commentary on Vittoria Colonna’s poetry (Venice: Giovan Battista and Melchior Sessa, 1558), and Bernardino Daniello’s commentary on Petrarch’s *sonetti, canzoni* and *trionfi* (Venice: Nicolini da Sabio, 1549), in Vercingetorige Martignone, “Esemplarità e distacco: l’auto-esegesi tassiana alle rime d’amore,” in *Il poeta e il suo pubblico: Lettura e commento dei testi lirici nel Cinquecento. Atti del convegno di Ginevra (15–17 maggio 2008)*, eds. Massimo Danzi and Roberto Leporatti (Geneva: Droz, 2012), 399–406, 404–05. Franco Tomasi, in his list of precursors to Tasso’s volume, includes: Alessandro Piccolomini’s *Cento sonetti* (Rome: Valgrisi, 1549); the volume of *Cento sonetti* by Anton Francesco Raineri (Milan, 1554), with a “brevissima esposizione” by Raineri’s brother Girolamo, in Franco Tomasi, *Studi sulla lirica rinascimentale*, 11. For the history of poetic self-commentary in early modern Italy, see Sherry Roush, *Hermes’ Lyre: Italian Poetic Self-Commentary from Dante to Tommaso Campanella* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002).

<sup>56</sup> On the “ricco e articolato” auto-commentary of the 1591 Osanna edition, see Tomasi, *Studi sulla lirica rinascimentale*, 17. For its emphasis on classical antiquity, Bruno Basile has identified a “strategia sottile ed ambigua” in Tasso’s auto-commentary that results in “una tardiva dichiarazione di poetica, la costruzione di un monumento classico” designed as an “antologia per eccellenza,” in Bruno Basile, *Poēta melancholicus: Tradizione classica e follia nell’ultimo Tasso* (Pisa: Pacini, 1984), 104, 106. This classical model, as Erminia Ardisino has suggested, stands in opposition to the “modello petrarchesco” and “in sostanza [è] un nuovo canzoniere,” in Erminia Ardisino, “Commento ed autocommento in Tasso: la lirica,” in *Il Canone e la Biblioteca: Costruzioni e decostruzioni della tradizione letteraria italiana*, ed. Amedeo Quondam (Rome: Bulzoni, 2002), 231–44, 232.

dimostrano al lettore, sul piano concreto degli esiti poetici, le ragioni ideali delle scelte linguistiche, stilistiche e retoriche.<sup>57</sup>

Tasso's paratextual apparatus participates in the tradition of poetic self-commentaries, as explored by Sherry Roush, in that it "is the result of a poet's elaboration of an earlier work in single-genre form to create an entirely new poetic vision."<sup>58</sup> With the dominant orientation of the *Seconda parte* towards philosophical descriptions and poetic celebrations of the female sex, the auto-commentary not only addresses a wide range of topics—including Neoplatonic love, categories of virtue, and contemporary sociohistorical issues concerning women—but frames the poetry through moral, philosophical, and contemplative parameters, thus aiding both the poet and, in most cases, the female reader in contextualizing their interpretations.<sup>59</sup>

The Marchetti edition may be considered to be a lyric stage upon which Tasso created and conversed with primarily female communities. It is thus worthwhile to recall Matteo Residori's recent account of Tasso's social attitude that "manifests" itself in the poet's lyric verse: "per Tasso [...] la scrittura di rime è innanzitutto la manifestazione più ovvia della sua identità sociale di letterato."<sup>60</sup> In the *Seconda parte*, the poet addresses roughly sixty women and ten men, signaling that Tasso's "identità sociale," constructed in this particular volume, appears more influenced by women than by men.<sup>61</sup> Participating in what Virginia Cox has called the "socialized nature of sixteenth-century verse," Tasso's volume designs its social nature so as to emphasize the presence of women and their participation in the production of encomiastic art.<sup>62</sup> Since the Marchetti edition does not follow a single thematic thread that builds upon a *canzoniere*-like love story, Luisella Giachino has suggested that the volume may thus be seen as "una galleria di busti o di ritratti, tutti di uguale dignità, esemplari, memorabili."<sup>63</sup> Giachino's interpretation, however, could be widened in order to consider how and why Tasso's women of printed praise come from diverse backgrounds. The lack of categorical distinctions between women of different socioeconomic opportunities is manifested most clearly in the volume's arrangement and order of lyrics. For example, Tasso's praise of a female dwarf at court in the *canzone* *O d'alta donna pargoletta ancella* appears just after his praise of a "gratiosa giovane donzella" of a "nobilissima Signora" (*O con le Gratie eletta, e con gli Amori*). Surrounding these two compositions are sonnets to the noblewomen Aurelia Honorati (*De l'honor simulacro, è'l nome vostro*) and Clelia Farnese (1556–1613) (*Rivolse Clelia sospirando al Cielo*). Thus, as it emerges in the text, Tasso's "identità sociale"

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<sup>57</sup> Tomasi, *Studi sulla lirica rinascimentale*, 6.

<sup>58</sup> Roush, *Hermes' lyre*, 5.

<sup>59</sup> For an earlier history of representations of the female reader, especially of late medieval texts, insofar as she is a "user of texts, oral visual, and written alike [and] first and foremost an interlocutor, at times constructed as an actual reader, a glossator, an interpreter, an editor, and possibly a teacher," see Lombardi, *Imagining the Woman Reader*, 3.

<sup>60</sup> Residori, *Tasso*, 37.

<sup>61</sup> Out of the 105 poems included in the *Seconda parte*, only a handful are, in some cases directly and in other cases indirectly, dedicated to men, among whom are: Filippo Paladini; Bernardo Castello; Flaminio Delfino; Annibale Scoto; Giovan Paolo Olivia; the singer Montano; Francesco Maria della Rovere; an un-named male friend; and an un-named male member of a court. Other men appear in the volume through reference to their marriage to illustrious women, including: Cesare d'Este, Francesco Maria della Rovere, Giulia Cesare Gonzaga, Alessandro Gonzaga, Ercole Tasso, Matteo di Capua, Vincenzo Gonzaga, and Ferdinando I de' Medici.

<sup>62</sup> Virginia Cox, *Lyric Poetry by Women of the Italian Renaissance* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013), 34. Giulio Ferroni has similarly referred to lyric poetry of the period as the primary "mezzo di trasmissione sociale," in Giulio Ferroni, "La teoria della lirica: difficoltà e tendenze," in *La locuzione artificiosa: Teorie ed esperienza della lirica a Napoli nell'età del Manierismo*, eds. Giulio Ferroni and Amadeo Quondam (Rome: Bulzoni, 1973), 11–33, 14. For earlier historical models and on the social nature of medieval verse, see Claudio Giunta, *Versi a un destinatario: Saggio sulla poesia italiana del Medioevo* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2002).

<sup>63</sup> Giachino, "La mitologia," 51.

appears not to limit itself to praising women of equal rank, a factor potentially exploited by the poet in designing sequences of poems that call attention to his wide female audience.

Tasso's inviting gesture to the volume's collective female "body" may be seen in the dedicatory letter to Eleonora Gonzaga, in which the poet asks her to:

raccogliere [le rime] nella sua protettione accioche la sua lode, e quella di molte altre à lei congiunte di parentado, ò d'amicitia, siano lette con laude, ò almeno senza biasimo de l'autore, al quale se fosse mancato più tosto l'artificio, che 'l soggetto, per questa medesima cagione, è meritevole del suo favore.

Offering his poems up for protection and judgement, Tasso expresses that it is only by following the example *she* has already set that he is able to compose the poems contained within: "Ma vostra Altezza è collocata da la sua fortuna, e da la propria virtù tanto sovra quel segno dove possono arrivare i versi de poeti, che non è maraviglia che ne lo scrivere di lei, l'arte, e l'ingegno sia stato similmente superato." Here, Tasso makes explicit that contemporary women are not dependent on lyric praise in order to act admirably; rather, the creative lyric process seemingly depends on women's actions, proceeding, as Tasso explains, "da la copia e quasi da l'abbondanza" of women's merits. In the context of the "famous women" tradition, Tasso's statement reverses what Boccaccio had written at the end of his *De mulieribus claris*; namely, that women's actions inhibit, rather than encourage, writers' encomia. Thus, for Tasso, there emerges a fundamental relationship between female readership and encomiastic production that necessitates women exerting active roles as productive agents.

While, as Deanna Shemek has suggested, Boccaccio wrote biographies about women in order to gain acceptance into circles populated dominantly by male readers, Tasso's address to a female readership conveys a certain vulnerability that yields to their judgment of his verses about individual and collective women.<sup>64</sup> In this regard, the *Seconda parte* challenges the critical assumption, as Elena Lombardi has acutely noticed among late-medieval texts, that female readers are mere "veneer[s]" between the poet and his 'real' audience; friends, musicians, messengers, and fellow poets in the first instance, and the court or city in the second.<sup>65</sup> Given their encomiastic essence and the absence of amorous longing on the part of the poet-narrator, Tasso's female readers enjoy a notable degree of freedom from the kind of male homosocial desire that Eve Sedgwick has eloquently studied.<sup>66</sup> The presence of male artists in Tasso's collection, who are included precisely for their being creative protagonists who praise and admire women, suggests further implications for Tasso's female readers and the responsibilities of their judgement: not only are they asked to evaluate poems written to and about women, but they are encouraged to scrutinize men's philosophical ideas about women. Since Tasso's female audience does not require poetic praise in order to act virtuously, they appear to supersede independently the reputations of women from classical history, outperforming those figure

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<sup>64</sup> Shemek posits that Boccaccio's text was motivated primarily by two factors: "On the one hand, Boccaccio's project to compose a catalog of heroic women—to inscribe them into history as agents and examples—is inspired by the humanist drive to recover the classical past. On the other hand, he also hopes to publish his research and to reach out—in Latin—to a resolutely male, homosocial intellectual community into which he wants to be accepted," in "Doing and Undoing: Boccaccio's Feminism (*De Mulieribus Claris*)," in *Boccaccio: A Critical Guide to the Complete Works*, eds. Victoria Kirkham, Michael Sherberg, and Janet Smarr (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014), 195–204, 204. For a comparative account of "Boccaccio's feminism" across many of his texts, with particular attention paid to the *Decameron*, see Marilyn Migiel, "The Untidy Business of Gender Studies: Or, Why It's Almost Useless to Ask if the *Decameron* is Feminist," in *Boccaccio and Feminist Criticism*, eds. Thomas C. Stillinger and Regina Psaki (Chapel Hill: Annali d'Italianistica, 2006), 217–33. On Boccaccio and women more broadly, Margaret Franklin, *Boccaccio's Heroines: Power and Virtue in Renaissance Society* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2006).

<sup>65</sup> Lombardi, *Imagining the Female Reader*, 5.

<sup>66</sup> Eve Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985).

who traditionally constitute literary histories of “famous women,” such as Helen, Penelope, and Dido. However, rather than act as mirrors through which Tasso’s contemporary women may see and judge themselves, references to women from classical antiquity in the *Seconda parte*, such as Dido, Lucretia, and Hippolyta, allow contemporary women to measure their superior excellence.<sup>67</sup>

The rare instances in which the *Seconda parte*’s illustrious women are represented as having direct influence on the poet-narrator occur in poems that foreground themes of women’s hospitality and patronage. In the sonnet to Portia Mari (*In questo mar che sparge un puro argento*), Tasso describes how the serenity of the female poetic body replaces the turbulent waters most immediately associated with epic, thus recalling the poet-narrator’s self-representation as a “peregrino errante” in his *Gerusalemme liberata*. Playing with the image of Portia as a “porto,” or safe harbor, Tasso paints a portrait of the noblewoman’s hospitality by way of negation: he lists all that is absent, and certainly not missed, from the site of her company:

In questo mar, che sparge un puro argento  
senza onda amara, e senza amara stilla,  
dove né Mote acceso arde, e sfavilla,  
né Gigante v’afflige aspro tormento;  
dove falso pastor feroce armento  
non pasce, ove non latra horrida Scilla;  
non absorde Cariddi, e non tranquilla,  
e non pertuba l’acque instabil vento;  
E dove non fallaci empie sirene,  
ma cantano Angelette in dolci versi  
su lungo ombrosa, fiorita, e verde sponda.  
È Portia il porto, in cui da spirti aversi  
le sue notti il buon Paulo havra serene,  
e quivi casto amor di gioia abonda.

With the “port” of lyric now shaped in double imitation of Ariosto’s return home among welcoming female company at the end of *Orlando furioso*, and the secure shores Dante reaches at the beginning of *Purgatorio*, Tasso situates his poetry and poetic presence within the safeguard of female protection, “in questo mar.”<sup>68</sup> By docking his imagined “navicella” at the port of Portia Mari, Tasso avoids the fate of Odysseus’s sailors, and even that of the Ithacan king himself: the poet steers entirely clear of the treacherous waters of epic—with their sirens and narrow straits—as he guides his ship and poem toward a personified female harbor.

While the opening words (“in questo mar”) position Tasso’s poetic voice within a dramatic setting, the first occasion where the poetic “io” appears in the collection is in the lyric dedication to Vittoria Doria Gonzaga (1569–1618), princess of Molfetta, *Di pregar lasso, e di cantar già stanco*. The *esposizione de l’autore* of this *canzone* marks the first instance where the history of the poetic subject coincides with the history of the poeticizing narrator. Tasso’s gloss of the verse “per la dolce memoria/ di vostra cortesia” suggests that it refers to “gli offici fatti da questa Signora co’l Signor Don Ferrante suo marito in favor del Poeta, al quale il già detto signore alcune volte s’è mostrato liberalissimo,

<sup>67</sup> For Tasso’s comparison to Lucretia, see the *esposizione de l’autore* that follows the sonnet to Lucrezia Scota, *Quel vago raggio, che lampeggia, e splende*. For the comparison to Dido (Elisa), see the sonnet to Isabella Farnese, *Quanto già l’altra Elisa, al duro amante*. For the comparison between Hippolyta, queen of the Amazons, and Hippolyta Turca, see *O Degna, per cui s’armi un novo Alcide*.

<sup>68</sup> Tasso’s *canzone O Felice honorato almo terreno* expresses similar allegorical comparisons between the sea and Portia Mari.

donandogli, raccogliendolo, e sollevandolo da molte necessità, con animo veramente degno di gran Principe, e nuovo Mecenate de Letterati.” Through intertextual echoes of verses by Petrarch, Dante, an unnamed “Poeta Francese,” and a “Poeta Spagnuolo,” Tasso embellishes the images of Ferrante and Vittoria Gonzaga as generous literary patrons.

Tasso’s poetic presence as “io” among the *Seconda parte*’s female community appears again in one of the collection’s longest *canzoni*, dedicated to Geronima Grilla Spinola, a relative of Tasso’s longstanding friend and spiritual mentor Angelo Grillo. At the beginning of the *canzone*, readers encounter the collaboration between the noblewoman’s “fama” and the poet’s “pensiero” as it relates to the very composition of lyric verse:

Donna, la vostra fama, e’l mio pensiero  
in monti vi dipinge, e’n fresche rive,  
E mentre l’una parla, e l’altro scrive  
io stimo questa, e quella un’ombra al vero,  
che non esprime il vostro merto intero:  
Mà come vive fiamme, e vaghi lumi  
vidi in torbidi fiumi;  
O come voce si disperde in aura,  
che nulla poi ristaura:  
Così vostra beltà, ch’è senza vanto,  
ne la mia mente perde, e più nel canto.

The difficulty of translating Geronima’s fame and beauty into words reappears immediately after these lines. A meta-poetic dimension to the *canzone* emerges when the poet expresses how the very act of composing encomiastic verse, despite the imagined failure it faces in not being able to reproduce the “merto interno” of the poet’s praised subject, plays an essential role in recording the woman’s honor: “Ma pur io canterò, perche le rime/ serbino almeno in parte i vostri honori.” The dependent relationship between women’s reputations and their needs for poetic praise recalls Lisa Regan’s notion of the “threshold patron,” which resonates with the complex crossroads of vulnerability and mutual benefit described here.<sup>69</sup>

There is one known woman writer included as a dedicatee in Tasso’s collection: the Genoese poet Livia Spinola, who initiated a lyric correspondence with Tasso by sending a sonnet of hers (*Mentre d’egri pensier la mia mente oppressa*) directly “al signor Torquato Tasso.”<sup>70</sup> The full text of Livia Spinola’s sonnet to Tasso, though not reprinted in the *Seconda parte*, reads:

Mentre d’egri pensier la mente oppressa

<sup>69</sup> Lisa Regan, “Ariosto’s Threshold Patron: Isabella d’Este in the *Orlando Furioso*,” in *MLN* 120, no. 1 (Jan. 2005): 50–69, 51. See also Richard McCabe’s use of the term “threshold patron” to describe Luigi d’Este in his chapter on Tasso in *‘Ungainefull Arte’*, 138.

<sup>70</sup> Livia Spinola also exchanged correspondence verse with Angelo Grillo, who sent her his sonnet *Apollo, e Palla à voi la penna, e l’ago*, to which Spinola responded *Troppo, Angelo, m’alzate; e penna, ed ago*. This exchange was printed in Angelo Grillo’s *Parte prima delle Rime* (Bergamo: Comin Ventura, 1589). Some of Spinola’s sonnets, though not this exchange with Tasso, were printed in the anthology *Scelta di rime di diversi moderni autori non più stampate, parte prima-seconda* (Genoa: heirs of Girolamo Bartoli, 1591), alongside poems by other women writers, including Leonora Bernardi (1559–1616) and Maria de’ Ferrari. Spinola’s sonnets in the Bartoli collection include *Forme d’aure spiranti alte, e stupende; Chì del barbaro fin l’acerba sorte; Qual vite che dell’orno e’ sciolta unquanco*; and *Qual di pianta novella in herba il fiore*. Among Tasso’s poems included in the *prima parte* of the Bartoli edition are *Ciò che morte rallenta, amor restringi* and *O vera imago del tuo padre eterno*. Tasso’s contributions to the *seconda parte* of the same edition include *Dubitare ch’io v’ami, ancor dubiosa* and *Donna qual fede havete, o’ qual amore*. The Bartoli printing house in Genoa was involved, a few years prior, in 1587, in the publication of Tasso’s *Il Re Torrismondo*.

languendo, ah! giaci in tenebrosa parte,  
splende, Tasso, il tuo nome e in mille carte  
vive l'altrui ne la tua fama impressa.  
Ogni scrittor t'inchina e mostra espressa,  
ne l'arte sua la tua mirabil arte,  
ch'a tante da te gemme in terra sparte  
è spazio angusto la tua gloria istessa.  
Chi scrivendo s'acquista eterno onore  
da l'eloquenza tua prende alto esempio  
e nel tuo carme il proprio carme avviva.  
E se toglì all'oblio vorace ed empio  
la gloria e 'l nome, il vanto a te s'ascriva  
perché ha la luce sol dal tuo splendore.<sup>71</sup>

From lines 5 through 11, Spinola emphasizes the influence Tasso and his “eloquenza” have on other writers, indeed all writers. The questions of fame, reputation, and literary style that connect Tasso to “ogni scrittor” and to the act of writing itself stand in contrast to the “tenebrosa parte” mentioned in line 2. The symbiotic exchange described in Spinola’s verses, whereby Tasso’s lyrics create a “reviving” effect on the verses of others, reflects in the poets’ actual textual exchange, whereby Tasso responds using Spinola’s rhyme scheme. By printing his response to Spinola’s verses in the *Seconda parte*, Tasso publically attests to not only reading Spinola’s sonnet, but to respecting her lead and following it in equal measure.

Tasso’s sonnet to Spinola *Se 'l mio nome riluce e forse appressa*, whom he names “intendentissima de le cose di Poesia” at a later point in the *Seconda parte*, appears in the Marchetti edition with the preface: “Rispondendo alla Signora Livia Spinola, assomiglia l’oscura sua fama à l’ombra, [e] à le tenebre, e quella di detta Signora à la luce medesima.”<sup>72</sup> In the sonnet, Tasso pays homage to Spinola’s poetry by picking up where she had left off: the word “luce” from the last line of her sonnet becomes “riluce” in the first line of his—a semiotic reflection of her poetic light:

Se 'l mio nome riluce, e forse appressa,  
dove il ciel tante gratie à voi comparte:  
Pur gli rimiro intorno ombre cosparte,  
e la tempesta, e 'l verno ancor non cessa.  
Ma 'l vostro è un raggio, anzi è la luce stessa,  
che nulla turba, e se da voi si parte,  
nel volo più s'illustra, e Giove, e Marte,  
hanno gloria minore à lor concessa.

<sup>71</sup> Tasso sent Spinola his lyric response in January 1586 from Ferrara. The letter Tasso addressed to Spinola, in which he judges her sonnet to be “leggiadrissimo” reads: “S’alcuno fu giamai, il qual dovesse vivere in modo, che fosse nascoso; io devrei essere quello, per coprire molte mie imperfezioni, o più tosto de la mia fortuna e de la natura, la quale a me fu così avara de’ suoi doni, come liberale a Vostra Signoria illustrissima; e particolarmente di quelli che si veggono e piacciono, e possono esercitare una graziosa tirannide. Ma perché fra tanti difetti celerei anche la sincerità de l’animo, e la buona volontà c’ho di servirla e d’onorarla; mi contenterei che mi conoscesse a pieno, pur che la cognizione non diminuisse la benevolenza con la stima; perché non meritando d’essere stimato, almeno vorrei essere amato. Fra tanto Vostra Signoria mi conosca ne la semplicità de le parole, e ne la rozza risposta ch’io mando al suo leggiadrissimo sonetto. E la prego che parlando de la sua umiltà, non mi faccia vergognare de la mia alterezza; la quale è mia pena, ma colpa altrui: anzi, ne prenda tanta parte, ch’io possa rallegrarmi con l’esempio di sì lodata donna,” in *Lettere*, 2:487–48, n. 463. Cf. Solerti, *Vita di Tasso*, 1:470 n.

<sup>72</sup> In the *exposition de l’auteur* to the sonnet written to Bernardo Castello, Tasso writes “la Signora Livia studiava la sfera, e contemplava le stelle, nondimeno lo studio de l’Astrologia cedeva a quel de la poesia.”

Voi dunque disgombrate il ciecoorrore,  
 sì come sole in tenebroso tempio  
 fuor de le nubi uscendo, o'n verde riva.  
 E voi mi ritogliete al fero scempio,  
 acciò che riposato almeno io viva,  
 in nobil parte, in cui virtù s'honore.

By incorporating Spinola's rhyme scheme into the fabric of his own verse, Tasso redistributes the woman poet's praise of his "eloquenza," a vocabulary and style that now mobilizes Spinola's poetry. In this way, Tasso enacts Spinola's verse "e nel tuo carne il proprio carne avvisa," for that is precisely what he causes to happen by making his poetry resonate with Spinola's rhymes, bringing them to life anew by his own hand. This lyric dialogue further shapes how Tasso designed his social identity in his lyric poetry. Like other poets of the early Cinquecento—such as Laura Battiferra, Pietro Bembo, Veronica Gambara, Tullia d'Aragona, Michelangelo (1475–1564) and Aretino, whose lyric collections give considerable weight to their social dynamics—Tasso hand selected the names with which he sought to be associated in his lyric verse. While Spinola's inclusion in the Marchetti volume could arguably have been a result of her lyric praise of Tasso, it seems more likely, considering the absence of Spinola's sonnet from the collection, that the poet sought to identify himself as an interlocutor with women writers. Tasso does not intermix others' praise of him in the *Seconda parte*, nor are any prefatory sonnets in praise of the volume included. The focus throughout is exclusively on praising *others*.

Livia Spinola's engagement with Tasso's poetry predates her sonnet exchange with the poet. In her sonnet *Qual vite che dell'orno è sciolta unquanco*—a tragic lament over the loss of her husband—Spinola praises the artist and engraver Bernardo Castello (1557–1629), who had painted a portrait of her spouse, and also designed the frontispiece and illustrations for the 1590 Genoese edition of the *Gerusalemme liberata*.<sup>73</sup> Castello also appears in the Marchetti volume as a rare male dedicatee. Like all the compositions in the volume, the sonnet Tasso composed for Castello (*Fiumi, e mari, e montagne, e piagge apriche*) follows a preface: "Scrive à M. Bernardo Castello Pittor Genovese, lodando il suo eccellente artificio, co'l quale facea le figure per historiare il Poema de l'Autore, e molto più le bellezze de la Signora Livia Spinola, che si degnava di rimirarle." While the response sonnet to Livia in the Marchetti volume attests to Tasso's reading of and reaction to her poetry, the "argomento" before the sonnet for Castello speaks to Spinola's worthiness as an admirer of the painter's work designing the *Liberata*, suggesting that Tasso recognized Spinola as an active reader of his poem. Indeed, in the sonnet Livia composed when her husband died and Castello painted a portrait of him, the poet proves herself to be an acute reader of Tasso's *Liberata*. As Virginia Cox has carefully noted, Spinola's *Qual vite che dell'orno è sciolta unquanco* looks to the *Liberata* 20.99 for the "tragic version" of the topos of the union between the elm tree and the vine, as well as for the juxtaposed rhyme "esangue"/"sanguè" in 8.61.<sup>74</sup> In the *Seconda parte*, Tasso's collective homage to Spinola and Castello imagines a collective audience that engages with his literary achievements, and thus merits lyric praise in return. In this way, Tasso assumes a proactive role in constructing and prescribing his own readership—a method of organized composition the poet had been denied when publications of his work appeared without his consent. Rather than build a community of readers for the purpose of self-promotion, Tasso immerses his works and social identity within a respectable network of readers, artists, and collaborators. This

<sup>73</sup> Torquato Tasso, *La Gerusalemme liberata [...] con le figure di Bernardo Castello; e le annotationi di Scipio Gentili, e di Giulio Guastavini* (Genoa: Girolamo Bartoli, 1590). On this edition, and the legacy of Columbus in Tasso's poem, see Jane Tylus, "Reasoning Away Colonialism: Tasso and the Production of the *Gerusalemme Liberata*," in *South Central Review* 10, no. 2 (1993): 100–14; Massimiliano Rossi, "Fortuna figurativa dell'epica tassiana a Firenze e Venezia fra Cinque e Seicento," in *Dal Rinaldo alla Gerusalemme: il testo, la favola*, ed. Dante Della Terza (Sorrento: Città di Sorrento, 1997), 299–339.

<sup>74</sup> Cox, *Lyric Poetry*, 151.

image of a socially integrated poet challenges the Romantic fiction of the tortured, isolated Tasso, who suffers from misinterpretation and exile as a “disturbed, mad genius.” When accounting for the social portrait Tasso paints in the *Seconda parte*, his figure appears embedded within stable, hospitable networks of careful readers and creative agents.

Maintaining the focus on correspondence verse, there are three examples of lyric exchanges with men in Tasso’s *Prima parte* of amorous poetry. These exchanges reflect fairly common practices among male poets of the period, who circulated among one another amorous lyrics that often turned the female beloved, as Courtney Quaintance has shown, into a communal, exchangeable (at times eroticized) figure.<sup>75</sup> In this respect, if Tasso’s *Prima parte* partially conditions the poet’s social self-representation through correspondence verse with men, in the *Seconda parte* Tasso prolongs this social activity, inviting now a contemporary woman author into its practice. Looking ahead to the poet’s posthumously printed *Terza parte*, nested among the poet’s lyric praise of male members of the Este, Gonzaga, and Medici houses, Tasso includes correspondence verse with Margherita Sarrocchi, the contemporary Neapolitan woman writer who engaged in epistolary and poetic correspondence with Tasso, and imitated his *Gerusalemme liberata* in her epic *La Scanderbeide* (1606, 1626).<sup>76</sup> A potential reason

<sup>75</sup> The first example of correspondence verse in the *Prima parte* is the sonnet *Amor col raggio di beltà s’accende*, whose argument reads: “Risponde ad un suo amico de la natura d’Amore.” The second is the sonnet *Per ch’io laura pur segua, e nel mio pianto*, whose argument is: “Risponde con le medesime rime ad un Sonnetto del S. G. Malpiglio, nel quale da l’Amico era stato chiamato Apolline.” Gianlorenzo Malpiglio was a young courtier from Lucca whom Tasso advised on the art of being a courtier in the dialogue *Il Malpiglio overo de la corte*, written between 1584 and 1585, and published in 1587. The third example is the sonnet *L’aura soave, al cui spirar respire*, with the preface: “Risponde al Signor Annibal Pocaterra.” One other example of interaction with male poets in the *Prima parte* that is worth mentioning, but is not an example of correspondence verse, is *Ch’il pelago d’Amor à solcar viene*, in which the poet “scrive ad un Cavalliero suo amico, lodando un suo libro d’Amore.” The important distinction to make here is that Tasso does not name the author of the book of love poetry, but makes reference all the same to men’s artistic and literary production. On the exchange of poetry and women among men, see Courtney Quaintance, *Textual Masculinity and the Exchange of Women in Renaissance Venice* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015).

<sup>76</sup> In the *Terza parte*, the *argomento* that precedes Tasso’s sonnet response to Sarrocchi (*Luce d’honor ch’abbaglia e par ch’offenda*) reads: “ad un sonetto de la Signora Margherita Sarrocchi, il qual comincia *Mentre averà che bruna notte stenda*.” Tasso’s response to Sarrocchi is not, however, the only example of poetic exchange in the *Terza parte*. Examples in that volume include: the preface to sonnet n. 121 (*La mia instabil fortuna in verdi sponde*), “Risponde ad un sonetto del Signor Giovanni Adamo, il qual comincia *Tu che del Mincio in su l’antiche sponde*”; the argument to sonnet n. 130 (*Non sempre l’arte e la natura a prova*), “Rispondendo al sonetto di Don Angelo Grillo il qual comincia *Questo è campo di guerra, e quindi a prova*, dice che fra l’arte e la natura e la poesia e la verità può essere qualche concordia, et accoppiarsi insieme qual che diletta e quel che giova.” Resonances with Tasso’s praise of Sarrocchi’s superior intellect and astrological contemplation are found in the poems dedicated to Conte di Paleno (nos. 101–05), also in the *Terza parte*. The other poems in the *Terza parte* dedicated to women, who stand out because of their inclusion in a volume primarily dedicated to men are: n. 86, *Fama, ch’i nomi gloriosi intorno*, argument: “Parlando con la Fama, loda la Signora Duchessa di Mantova e dimostra ch’ella per le sue virtù degnissima di gloria”; n. 97, *Nel più bel fior de gli anni alta fortuna*, argument: “Ne l’infermità del Signor Duca di Monte Leone paragona la Signora Duchessa sua moglie con Alceste, mostrando ch’ella sarebbe stata pronta a morir per lo marito, ma co’ prieghi e con la fede e pietà gli havea impetrata la vita”; n. 134, *Se ’l nobil corpo, ove ’n soavi tempre*, argument: “Nell’infermità della Serenissima Signora Duchessa d’Urbino”; n. 135, *I ministri di Morte erano intenti*, argument: “Nella convalescenza della Serenissima Signora Duchessa d’Urbino”; n. 135bis, *Le vittorie de gli avi e le corone*, argument: “In morte de la Principessa di Parma”; n. 141, *Tu che passando il guardo a i marmi giri*, argument: “Sepolcro de la Signora Beatrice Tassona”; n. 144, *Cantar non posso, e d’operar pavento*, argument: “Dopo la morte di Barbara d’Austria, con ordine obliquo e poetico fa mentione de le sue nozze, et introduce la Virtù a lodarla et a predir la sua morte”; n. 145, *Fu di vera honestate illustre essemplio*, argument: “Loda la fede e l’amor maritale de la Signora Ambasciatrice di Fiorenza, e loda il dolore che mostra ne la morte del marito”; n. 154, *Minetta, in guisa di sacro altare*, argument: “Dice che la vecchiezza, la quale come si legge in Stobeeo è guisa d’altare dove si rifugge, non fu sicuro rifugio de la Signora Minetta, laonde, essendole turbato questo ancora da morte, volò al cielo come a sicurissimo tempio”; n. 156, *Minetta, non fu questo uscir di vita*, argument: “Argomenta che la Signora Minetta non sia morta, essendosi l’anima avvicinata al principio de la vita, e conchiude che nel Cielo sia coronata di fiori bianchi, come l’opere sue meritavano secondo la dottrina di San Cipriano”; n. 157, *Alma gentil per calle pio ritorni*, argument: “Ne la morte de la Signora Maddalena Calepia, dice ch’è tornata al Cielo per la Via Lattea, la quale, come afferma San Tomaso, significa il

why Tasso did not include his correspondence verse with Sarrocchi in the *Seconda parte* could have been because of the “cose sacre” about which he and Sarrocchi conversed, and thus its proper placement, as per Tasso’s authorial design, in the third volume of *rime*. This decision makes the correspondence verse with Livia Spinola the single example of poetic correspondence with a woman writer in Tasso’s encomiastic poetry.<sup>77</sup>

Returning to the double presence of Livia Spinola in the Marchetti volume—first in the correspondence verse and then again in Tasso’s praise of Bernardo Castello, who potentially facilitated Spinola’s reading of the *Liberata*—this reveals Tasso’s unique methodology throughout the text whereby some reflections on women’s merits appear alongside the poetic labor of, and artistic creations by, men. This becomes a vital consideration in Tasso’s nuanced ideas about encomiastic production—poetic and otherwise—specifically for women.<sup>78</sup>

## MALE COMPANY AND THE COLLECTIVE CHAMPIONING OF WOMEN

To echo the words of Stephen Kolsky, “female *exempla* imply a relationship with men.”<sup>79</sup> Tasso’s dialogues with both male and female dedicatees in a project of encomiastic verse indicate the volume’s broadly imagined audience. By breaking down the encomiastic tradition in order to recognize both its subjects and authors, Tasso assumes a unique approach to the art of praising women by contextualizing the work of poets who observe and take note of their talents, thus uniting the sociohistorical questions about women’s cultural contributions with those about men. Similar to what Lyndan Warner has suggested regarding the dual lens through which men and women—as well as sex and gender—were studied together during the sixteenth century, especially in debates regarding one another’s virtues, Tasso’s text juxtaposes men’s and women’s talents, though without constructing gender-based hierarchies.<sup>80</sup> In this regard, the contemporary women of Tasso’s volume receive praise equally, unranked either superior to one another, or as superior to men; the same is true of the male dedicatees in the collection. Tasso does not repeat Boccaccio’s frequent references to women’s worthiness of praise simply *because* they are members of the “weaker” sex, and thus are forced to assume male characteristic in acts of valor.<sup>81</sup> In Tasso, general distinctions between the sexes seemingly fade so that individual merits and works of art may receive more coherent attention.

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candore de la giustitia e de l’innocenza”; n. 158, *Ogn’hor condotta è nova pompa a Morte*, argument: “Nella morte dell’Illustrissima Signora Isotta Brembata Grumella”; n. 209, *Tranquillo mar, ch’a la feconda terra*, argument: “Nel nascimento d’una bambina del Marchese di Pescara”; n. 215 (*Per adornarne un’alma il Re del Cielo*) with the same argument as n. 209; n. 210, *Donna, al pudico tuo grembo fecondo*, argument: “A la madre ne la sua gravidanza,” and n. 211 (*Visiti il tempio a passi tardi e lenti*), and n. 212 (*Già bella e lieta sposa, hor lieta e bella*) with the same argument.

<sup>77</sup> Tasso, *Lettere*, 2:52, n. 1335.

<sup>78</sup> In the manuscript that Luigi Poma believed to represent the authorial version of the *Terza parte*, composed while the poet was still alive, the first composition is the sonnet *Questa è vita di Cosmo anzi del mondo*, which reflects on the art of encomiastic production. The sonnet’s preface reads “Scrivo al Manuccio scrittore de la Vita del Gran Duca Cosimo, lodando l’opera, l’autore et il Principe,” thus reflecting similar meta-poetic concerns that surface in the *Seconda parte*.

<sup>79</sup> Kolsky, *The Ghost of Boccaccio*, 13. For Kolsky’s fine readings of men’s representations of women in other early modern texts, see his “Men Framing Women: Sabadino degli Arienti’s Gynevra de le clare donne Reexamined,” in *Visions and Revisions: Women in Italian Culture*, eds. Mirna Cicioni and Nicole Prunster (Providence and Oxford: Berg, 1993), 27–40; Id., “Women Through Men’s Eyes: The Third Book of *Il Cortegiano*,” in *The Shared Horizon: Melbourne Essays in Italian Language and Literature in Memory of Colin McCormick*, eds. Tom O’Neill (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1990), 41–91.

<sup>80</sup> “The central issues of the *querelle des femmes* often overlapped with discussion of the potential of man to articulate and circulate “the dignities of woman,” in Lyndan Warner, *The Ideas of Man and Woman in Renaissance France: Print, Rhetoric, and Law* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 83

<sup>81</sup> Boccaccio expresses this notion most explicitly in his preface to the *De mulieribus claris*: “If we grant that men deserve praise whenever they perform great deeds with the strength bestowed upon them, how much more should women be

The male company included in the *Seconda parte* shares in Tasso's creative process to champion women. Without isolating groups of women from one another, or from the company of men, Tasso's volume represents the collective community in which both male and female participants execute equally important roles: one part, the women, acting as agents of exemplary behavior, and a second part, the men, who translate women's achievements and merits into encomiastic art. It is significant, then, that Tasso not only creates this sense of equality among his male and female dedicatees, but pays homage to the long tradition of encomiastic practice by citing, among others, writers such as Pindar, Horace, Virgil, Petrarch, Bembo, Castiglione, Della Casa, and his father Bernardo.<sup>82</sup> Such recognition of the collective, intertextual tradition of former male poets who praised women resounds in Tasso's poetic dedications to contemporary men who follow suit. In this regard, Tasso's sonnet *Perch' Apollo m'è scarso, e più non spira*, which appears with the preface "invita il Montano Eccellente Poeta a' lodare la Signora Donna Lavinia de la Rovere, hora Marchesana di Pescara," invites other male poets to participate in the encomiastic tradition with him. The sonnet that introduces Tasso's reference to the encomiastic practice and its forerunners is addressed to Laura Pigna, the daughter of the Ferrarese poet and ducal secretary Giovan Battista, whom Tasso refers to in the sonnet as the "sublime poeta." Tasso claims that his verses faithfully follow those of Giovan Battista's "pregiate rime" in his praise of Laura, which enjoins the exemplary nature of a female subject with the laboring work of a poet:

Laura, che fra le Muse, e ne l'eletto  
loro albergo nasceste, in cui sublime  
poeta già dettò pregiate rime,  
pien di filosofia di lingua, e 'l petto:  
L'or de le vostre chiome e crespo, e schietto  
io non posso polir con le mie lime,  
né fia, che per mio studio egli si stime  
quanto per l'arte, ond'è da voi negletto.  
Ne de gli occhi lucenti oscuro fabro  
chiara imago farei, ne de le gote,  
e di questo, e di quel vermiglio labro.  
Ei che vi fè, potea ritrarvi ancora  
la vè l'idea ti forma, o'n quelle note,  
in cui l'idolo suo finge, e adora.

By compromising the mastery of the speaking voice, Tasso's narrator discloses his ineptitude to represent Laura's image in light of her overwhelming presence. The poetic "io" who confesses his inadequacy constitutes, what Catherine Bates has termed, the early modern lyric's obsession with "recuperative narratives," in which "perverse positions of failure or defeat are routinely turned around and re-interpreted as elements within a larger articulation of power."<sup>83</sup> Given the poet's egalitarian approach to representing the virtues of male and female subjects, it is worth considering how Tasso's "recuperative narrative" contextualizes the act and art of encomia, wherein, rather than articulate a

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extolled—almost all of whom are endowed by nature with soft, frail bodies and sluggish minds—when they take on a manly spirit, show remarkable intelligence and bravery, and dare to execute deeds that would be extremely difficult even for men?" The translation is by Virginia Brown in the edition cited.

<sup>82</sup> Along similar lines, Residori has aptly referred to the *exposition[i] de l'auteur* as "una frammentaria genealogia del genere encomiastico," in "Teoria," 47.

<sup>83</sup> Catherine Bates, *Masculinity, Gender and Identity in the English Renaissance Lyric* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 6.

dominant masculine “power” over a female subject, the voice of the narrator yields to the daunting impossibility of fully representing, or replacing, a particular image in poetic verse. In the case of *Laura, che fra le Muse, e ne l’eletto*, it seems as if, in order to confront inadequacies, there is a double-edged sword the narrator must face: on the one hand, the speaker fails to produce verses worthy of reflecting Laura’s beauty; and, on the other, he falls short of imitating the “sublime poeta,” who had previously sung of his daughter’s excellence. The narrator thus seems to fail both the poetic subject and the poetic tradition. The concluding image of Pigna’s triumph in having composed honorable verses emphasizes the underlying operation at work when Tasso draws attention to other male poets; namely, that paying homage to the literary tradition, in which only some male poets succeed in celebrating women, displaces the “inadequate” voice of the narrator, pushing out of focus his personal failure in order to recognize, and finally participate, in collective poetic achievement. Tasso embeds Pigna’s success into his sonnet so as to overcome his deficiency and participate in a community.

After this contemplation of men’s varying skills in praising and preserving the merits of women, the group of sonnets that immediately follow are concerned with a new patron-painter pair: Marfisa d’Este and Filippo Paladini (1544–1614). The first of these sonnets begins with the preface: “Loda il Pittore, che ritrasse la Signora Donna Marfisa d’Este, mostrando, che l’arte superata da la sua bellezza sia più felice, che superando gli altri ne l’artificio del dipingere.”<sup>84</sup> The unnamed painter-recipient of Tasso’s sonnets is Paladini, who had painted a portrait of Marfisa, one of the only Este family members—male or female—to appear in the *Seconda parte*, likely due to close relationship with the poet as a patron and an interlocutor.<sup>85</sup> Importantly, Marfisa enters the *Seconda parte* only through the mediation between Tasso’s poetry and his praise of a male artist. It is worth emphasizing that both of Tasso’s sonnets about Marfisa directly address the male artist who depicted her, not the Este noblewoman herself, and thus may be seen to represent the necessary role that male artists play in circulating praise and representations about women. The first of the two sonnets reads:

Saggio Pittore, hai colorita in parte,  
la beltà, che non hà loco, ò misura:  
miracolo del Cielo, e di Natura,  
ch’aduna in lei ciò che fra mille ei parte.  
E perde la tua mano ardita, e l’arte,  
da così vaga angelica figura:  
Mà quel, ch’ella n’adombra, e quasi oscura,  
avanza il bel de le più dotte carte.  
E maggior pregio il tuo felice stile  
hà qui perdendo, che vincendo altrove,

<sup>84</sup> Tasso’s encomiastic poetry for portraits made of women appear in the poet’s earliest printed encomiastic verse. The sonnets *Come esser può, che da sembiante finto* and *Onde vien luce tale? onde sì Chiara* are included in the collection *Rime di diversi nobili poeti toscani* (Venice: Domenico and Giovanni Battista Guerra, 1561). Tasso’s considerations of the relationship between the visual and poetic arts in the *Seconda parte* are consistent with similar claims made in his *Discorsi dell’arte poetica*. In the discourse on style, Tasso emphasizes “concetti,” what he calls “l’image delle cose che nell’animo nostro ci formiamo variamente, secondo che varia è l’imaginatione degli uomini.” For Tasso, what creates poetry is the poet’s imagination, the “luogo ambiguo e mobile nel quale il concetto e la parola coabitano.” The poet goes on to describe the matter that constructs lyric poetry: “Né è vero che quelle che costituisce la spezie della poesia lirica sia la dolcezza del numero, la scelttezza delle parole, la vaghezza e lo splendor dell’elocuzione, la pittura de’ traslati e dell’altre figure; ma è la soavità, la venustà e per così dire la amenità dei concetti,” in Tasso, *Scritti sull’arte poetica*, ed. E. Mazzali, 2 vols. (Milan-Naples-Turin: Ricciardi-Einaudi, 1997), 1:59.

<sup>85</sup> On the occasion of Marfisa’s hospitality shown to Tasso during his brief stay at the Este Villa Madalena, Tasso dedicated to her his dialogue *La Molza overo de l’amore*, written in 1583 and published in 1586. For consideration of this dialogue, see chapter three of this study.

perche il seren de le stellanti ciglia,  
 e del bel volto sol l'aria gentile  
 tutte l'opere avanza antiche, e nove,  
 e 'l tuo difetto è gratia, e meraviglia.<sup>86</sup>

In the first two lines, the narrator stresses Marfisa's "measureless" nature that nearly escapes artistic representation, indirectly assigning merit to the "loco" and "misura" that both Paladini and Tasso create in their respective visual and poetic representations of the Este woman. Line 5 ("e perde la tua mano ardita, e l'arte") returns to the theme of art's incapacity to depict certain subjects. However, the second half of the sonnet suggests that, because Marfisa's near-perfect image makes it almost impossible for any painter to capture her beauty, Paladini's work abounds with "gratia" and "maraviglia" for its graceful "defeat" to Marfisa's magnificence. As the final six lines of the sonnet reveal, it is only through recognizing the inadequacy of artistic representation that art itself may be generated—both visually and poetically. The "seren de le stellanti ciglia" and "bel volto" of Marfisa is what brings forward "tutte l'opere [...] antiche, e nove," conferring marvel upon art, even while it "fails."<sup>87</sup> As Thomas Greene has suggested, regarding the lover-narrator in Petrarch's verses, who progresses from "unstable, narcissistic, sterile, and repetitious territory" to reclaimed tranquility and spiritual transcendence, there is a similar turn to redemption in Tasso's verses to Paladini, whereby failure is converted into gratitude as Marfisa inspires and improves male artist-author figures.<sup>88</sup> Although she occupies a marginal presence in Tasso's sonnets to Paladini, for the poet addresses them to the "saggio pittore" and not to her, the Este woman plays a fundamental role in the production and perfection of encomiastic art—a practice that improves upon itself through multimedia collaboration.

In the following sonnet that praises Paladini's portrait of Marfisa, *Dipinto havevi l'or de biondi crini*,<sup>89</sup> the first paragraph of Tasso's *esposizione de l'Autore* draws a parallel between Paladini's portrait of the Este noblewoman and the portrait of Laura that Petrarch attributes to Simone Martini in his *canzoniere*:

*Dipinto havevi l'or* dimostra, ch'il Pittore haveva in qualche parte fatte simili l'altre bellezze, mà venendo à gli occhi, era necessario ch'egli per dar loro il lume, volasse al cielo, il concetto è ad imitatione del Petrarca, quando egli disse "Ma certo il mio Simon fù in Paradiso/ Onde questa gentil Donna si parte./ Lui la vide, e la ritrasse in carte./ Per far fede qua giù del suo bel viso."<sup>90</sup>

<sup>86</sup> Filippo Paladini responded to Tasso's praise with the sonnets *Le grazie, che benigno il ciel comparte* and *Non ha il tempo valor sopra quei crini*. To commemorate Tasso's poetry on Marfisa's portrait, these sonnets were printed as a unique volume in 1583. See Torquato Tasso, *Sonetti [...] sopra un ritratto dell'Illustrissima [...] Marfisa d'Este Cibo Marchesa di Massa* (Florence: Marescotti, 1583).

<sup>87</sup> In a later version of this sonnet, Tasso replaces the final tercet with the words: "e del bel volto sol l'aria gentile/ tutte l'opere può, tutte le prove/ e supercar ogni altra meraviglia," thus erasing the issue of the painter's "defects."

<sup>88</sup> Thomas M. Greene, *The Light in Troy: Imitation and Discovery in Renaissance Poetry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 110–25, 125. Catherine Bates comments on Greene's reading of Petrarch in *Masculinity, Gender and Identity*, 9.

<sup>89</sup> The full text of Tasso's sonnet reads: "Dipinto havevi l'or de biondi crini,/ e de le guancie le vermiglie rose,/ e quella bocca, in cui Natura pose,/ quasi caro tesoro, perle e rubini./ E'l bianco petto, e i suoi dolci confini,/ e mille vaghe altere, e nove cose,/ in prima non vedute, hor non ascose,/ e volevi ritrar gli occhi divini;/ mà dicesti fra te; la terra e'l mare/ non hà color, ch'esprima il puro lume,/ ne'l tempraria, se rinascesse, Apelle./ Pur, chi formar gli vuol, poggia à le stelle./ Che santo Amor gli prestar à le piume,/ e furi al Ciel fiamme più belle, e chiare."

<sup>90</sup> For Petrarch's praise of Simone Martini, see sonnets 77 (*Per mirar Policleto a prova fiso*) and 78 (*Quando giunse a Simon l'alto concetto*) in Francesco Petrarca, *Canzoniere*, ed. Paola Vecchi Galli (Milan: BUR, 2016). For the reader's convenience, the full text of the latter sonnet is reprinted here: "Quando giunse a Simon l'alto concetto/ ch'a mio nome gli pose in man lo stile,/ s'avesse dato a l'opera gentile/ colla figura voce ed intellecto,/ di sospir molti mi sgombrava il petto,/ che ciò ch'altri ha più caro, a me fan vile:/ però che 'n vasta ella si mostra umile/ promettendomi pace ne l'aspetto. Ma poi ch'i' vengo a

Tasso's reading seems to suggest that Marfisa's image by Paladini is, in some ways, a direct descendent of Petrarch's Laura represented by Simone Martini. However, immediately after the citation of Petrarch, Tasso states that, although Paladini follows in the footsteps of Martini's "divine flight," the poet chooses to "adorn" Petrarch's *concetto* "con la similitudine del fuoco involato da Prometeo." The comparison of Paladini's "fiamme più belle e chiare" to Prometheus's fire, which was stolen from Zeus in order to be given to man, despite negative consequences, is an intriguing one. Described in Hesiod's *Theogony*, the myth reveals that, as punishment for Prometheus's theft, Zeus bestowed onto man the first woman, Pandora, who was endowed with supreme beauty and divine gifts, but also a deceptive mind and lying mouth. Tasso's intricate arrangement of the sequence of poems in the *Seconda parte*, whereby *Dipinto havevi l'or de biondi crini* appears just before Tasso's sonnet to Marfisa d'Este (*Questa leggiadra e gloriosa donna*), suggests a telling revision he makes to the Greek myth. Rather than plague Paladini/Prometheus with a woman like Pandora, Tasso/Zeus arranges for the "arrival" of Marfisa, the "leggiadra e gloriosa donna." It is especially pertinent in this moment to recall once more the need to prioritize Tasso's authorized volumes of lyric poetry, for the redemptive narrative of both Paladini/Prometheus and Marfisa/Pandora appears only in the *exposition de l'auteur*, the paratextual apparatus that is not included in nineteenth- and twentieth-century editions of the poet's *rime*. Unlike Petrarch's sonnet, which makes a direct comparison between Martini and "Pigmalion," Tasso's association of Paladini with Prometheus, which transforms lying Pandora into "leggiadra" Marfisa, may only be witnessed in the auto-commentary. Tasso transitions from the auto-commentary of *Dipinto havevi l'or de biondi crini* to the sonnet in praise of Marfisa by pivoting on the latter's opening line: "Questa leggiadra e gloriosa donna"—by making explicit that "questa" donna, who was first praised through the mediation of male poetic and artistic practice, is a reborn, redeemed Pandora.

Realizing, once again, the difficulty in representing his female dedicatee's excellence, Tasso's sonnet poses serious questions regarding the abilities of both himself and, without mentioning Paladini directly, male artists who seek to depict Marfisa:

Questa leggiadra, e gloriosa Donna,  
di nome altero, e di pensier non crudo,  
non ha per arme già lancia, ne scudo,  
ma trionfa, e combatte in trecchie, e'n gonna:  
E imperiosa d'ogni cor s'indonna  
con la man bella, e co'l sembiante ignudo,  
del caro velo, onde fra me conchiudo,  
ch'ella fia di valor salda colonna.  
Pur inerme non è, ma'l casto petto,  
lo qual si prende il vano amore à scherno,  
copre d'un lucidissimo diamante.  
Hor chi ritrar lo puote à l'occhio interno?  
Qual fabro humano à divin opra eletto,<sup>91</sup>  
fia ch'assomigli il vero, ò che se'n vante.

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ragionar collei,/ benignamente assai par che m'ascolte,/ se risponder sapesse a' detti miei./ Pigmalion, quanto lodar ti dêi/  
de l'immagine tua, se mille volte/ n'avesti quel ch'è sol una vorrei."

<sup>91</sup> At a later point in the *Seconda parte*, Tasso will return to the question of the divine or human hand that creates art, in the sonnet in praise of the statue of Barbara d'Austria, *Questa, ch'è'n sottil velo, e'n lanea vesta*.

Marfisa d'Este's martial appearance and demeanor in lines 3 and 4, as well as the first indication in the *esposizione de l'autore* that line 2 ("di nome altero") refers to the "guerriera celebrata da' poeti moderni, [e] formata alterissima," recall Marfisa's presence in literary fiction as the valiant woman warrior from Boiardo's *Orlando innamorato*, who reappeared with even more combative zest in Ariosto's *Orlando furioso*. In Tasso's sonnet, however, Marfisa appears without her fictional counterpart's "lance and shield," wielding, instead, her "casto petto." Marfisa's chastity is taken up again in the *esposizione de l'autore*, in which Tasso twice repeats that his lyrics reflect the woman's equal "bellezza" and "castità," and that the armor of her "lucidissimo diamante" demonstrates "ch'ella sia castissima." Though the auto-commentary on this sonnet does not mention directly the work of the "fabro umano" who represents Marfisa's beauty in art, the final tercet speaks almost as if it were a call to artistic action, rallying an admirer of Marfisa's—perhaps even Paladini—to attempt the "divin opra." Reading these three sonnets on Marfisa and the work of Paladini as a coherent unit—*Laura, che fra le Muse, e ne l'eletto loro albergo; Saggio Pittore, hai colorita in parte; and Dipinto havevi l'or de biondi crini*—Tasso outlines an organizational strategy wherein he juxtaposes creative works of male artists and poets—together with the traditions they follow—with the praise of women. Communicating more than the divine-like perfection of Laura Pigna and Marfisa d'Este, these three poems stress the collective efforts—by Pigna, Paladini, and Tasso himself—to celebrate female subjects.<sup>92</sup> This emphasis on collectivity between literary and visual artists suggests how Tasso imagined a way of overcoming the traditional "paragone" rivalry between poets and painters. Through collaboration, what is seemingly impossible—or discursively described as such—is still worthy of trial and error.

To expand upon this list of men who praise women in Tasso's volume, the sonnet *Mai più bella virtù non furo accolte*, dedicated to Tomaso Garzoni (1549–1589), a contemporary male writer whose labor celebrating women closely aligned with Tasso's, praises "un nuovo libro de l'antiche Donne Illustri, dedicato alla Signora Duchessa, e molto più l'eccellentissima virtù di questa Serenissima Signora."<sup>93</sup> Although not named explicitly, Tasso refers here to Garzoni's *Le vite delle donne illustri della scrittura sacra con l'aggiunta delle vite delle donne oscure e laide dell'uno e l'altro Testamento e un Discorso in fine sopra la nobiltà delle donne* (1586), which was dedicated to Margherita Gonzaga d'Este, the third wife of Duke Alfonso II.<sup>94</sup> One potential reason as to why Tasso cites Garzoni's volume in the *Seconda parte* may have been because Garzoni had paid homage to Tasso in his *Vite* by including a prefatory sonnet

<sup>92</sup> To compare, in the *Seconda parte* Tasso praises the antiquarian Giovan Paolo Oliva, who had collected medals of ancient women in 1586. The preface to Tasso's sonnet to Oliva (*Divi augusti ed eroi, paesi e regni*) reads: "Loda il Signor Olivo antiquario, il qual particolarmente havea raccolte medaglie delle Donne antiche." I have not given Oliva's dedication particular emphasis in this section because his representations of "famous women" do not include contemporary examples, and thus do not speak as directly to the social portrait of historical women and men with whom Tasso sought to be associated.

<sup>93</sup> The full text of Tasso's sonnet to Garzoni reads: "Mai più belle virtù non furo accolte/ per fama eternal d'immortal vittoria/ di queste antiche, ond'a la nova istoria/ le dotte prose or sono adorne, e colte./ Tutte morte parean, tutte sepolte/ pur dianzi, et adombrarsi ogni memoria:/ or son tratte di tomba in viva gloria,/ e d'ombra oscura in cui giaceano involte./ Qui s'arma contra il tempo, e qui s'accampa/ in contra morte, e 'n contra gli anni e i lustri,/ questi sono trofei, queste son palme./ E Margarita con le nobili alme/ trionfa lieta, e fra le donne illustri,/ quasi Fenice, al vero sole avampa."

<sup>94</sup> Tomaso Garzoni, *Le vite delle donne illustri della scrittura sacra con l'aggiunta delle vite delle donne oscure e laide dell'uno e l'altro Testamento e un Discorso in fine sopra la nobiltà delle donne* (Venice: Domenico Imberti, 1586). The citations from Garzoni's volume in this chapter are taken from the edition by Beatrice Collina (Ravenna: Longo, 1994). It ought to be noted that Tasso's *Mai più bella virtù non furo accolte* was first dedicated in the Garzoni volume to Margherita Gonzaga d'Este. Although readers of Garzoni's text read that his volume is dedicated to Margherita, it appears somewhat ambiguous—or at least odd, given the historical specificity of other poems in Tasso's collection—that Tasso possibly sought to change the dedicatee of this sonnet from Margherita to Eleonora Gonzaga. This ambiguity emerges from the sonnet's *argomento* that does not specifically name Margherita, but refers vaguely to the "Signora Duchessa," which could be Eleonora, the primary dedicatee of the *Seconda parte*, as per the dedicatory letter. If the re-dedication was intentional, this decision would fall somewhat into line with Tasso's strained relationship with Margherita at court.

written by the poet in praise of the volume's female dedicatee, through which contemporary readers would have entered both a history of sacred women and a discourse on the nobility of women. In the *Seconda parte*, Tasso returns the favor through mutual support for Garzoni and his publication on women's virtues that includes, yes, Tasso's own poetry.<sup>95</sup> Again, however, it would seem that Tasso includes the reference to Garzoni in order to construct a community of artists and writers to which he sought to belong, discursively and socially.

Similar to the sonnets in praise of Paladini's portrait of Marfisa d'Este, *Mai più bella virtù non furo accolte* celebrates at once the patron Duchess and the writer Garzoni, revealing further ways in which Tasso's collection reflects on the historical circumstances under which poets and artists proved themselves to be especially useful in supporting women against their detractors. Looking to Garzoni's *Vite*, the author appears somewhat concerned about the potential backlash from male readers prone to assuming the worst of authors who write positively about women. Garzoni's fear is expressed in the following terms in the dedicatory letter to Margherita Gonzaga in the *Discorso in fine sopra la nobiltà delle donne*:

Io so ch'a molti spiacerà l'impresa ch'io piglio, di lodar sì apertamente il vostro sesso, e forse dalle mordaci lingue, con temerari motti, sarò beffato, parendo loro ch'io m'opponga dirittamente al giudizio stimato di molti uomini saputi che v'hanno co' scritti loro acerbamente perseguitato, e che non sia opra molto conveniente al decoro ecclesiastico ch'io discorra sopra le donne, quasi che da queste lodi esteriori l'animo si manifesti e dichiari per donnesco e femminile.<sup>96</sup>

Garzoni's concern regarding the opinion of male writers who aspire to speak poorly of women may be calmed, however, by Tasso's endorsement of his treatise on women's nobility and his collection of sacred female biographies, assuring Garzoni that Tasso—in both the former's *Le vite delle donne illustri* and the latter's *Seconda parte delle rime*—supports his literary projects. Indeed, Tasso, who valued women's "virtù Cristiana" beyond all else, may have been especially attracted to Garzoni's revision of a Boccaccian-style list of famous women, for his catalog is comprised solely of women from scripture.<sup>97</sup>

To further contextualize the mutually beneficial relationship between Garzoni and Tasso, it is worth comparing the former's *Discorso in fine sopra la nobiltà delle donne* to the latter's *Discorso della virtù femminile e donnesca*, revisited and partially revised in the *Seconda parte*.<sup>98</sup> It is striking that, in both Garzoni's

<sup>95</sup> Elsewhere in his *rime*, Tasso praises Garzoni's work. See the sonnet *A Tommaso Garzoni per il suo libro La piazza universale*, which was printed as a prefatory sonnet to Garzoni's *La piazza universale di tutte le professioni del mondo* (Venice: Roberto Meglietti, 1605).

<sup>96</sup> Tomaso Garzoni, *Le vite*, 232. As Beatrice Collina has noted, there are strong resonances—even signs of plagiarism through translation—between Garzoni's concerns articulated here and Cornelius Agrippa's *De praecellentia et nobilitate foeminei sexus*. See her "Introduction" to Garzoni, *Le vite*, 7–71. Garzoni's final line, which references the difference between "womanly" and "female" qualities in women, creates a further intertextual resonance with Tasso's *Discorso della virtù femminile e donnesca*.

<sup>97</sup> On Garzoni's relationship to Boccaccio's *De mulieribus claris*, Beatrice Collina notes: "Nel genere delle biografie femminili in volgare Tomasi Garzoni è il primo autore che effettui una selezione univoca, attingendo le sue *Vite* di donne illustri esclusivamente dall'Antico e dal Nuovo Testamento. Scelta opposta a quella del più noto dei suoi predecessori, Giovanni Boccaccio che nel *De mulieribus claris* aveva presentato un florilegio di donne tratte dal mito e dalla storia (a partire dal mondo classico fino all'età a lui contemporanea), tralasciando volontariamente, con poche eccezioni, le figure bibliche, per non mischiare inopportunitamente sacro e profano. Se l'intento di Boccaccio era di mostrare come anche le donne del mondo pre-cristiano potessero fornire esempi di altissime virtù, quello implicito in Garzoni è, più che opposto, complementare," in Collina, "Introduzione," 23.

<sup>98</sup> As an alternative reading, Collina argues for the lack of similarities between these texts: "a parte lo stretto legame di parentela che accomuna le destinatarie e la brevità di ambedue gli scritti, nessun'altra affinità si può individuare fra essi,"

*Discorso* and Tasso's *Seconda parte*, a shared interest emerges in the genealogy of male writers who dedicate their works both to the legacies of famous women and to the literary tradition that immortalizes their virtues. Perhaps given his self-conscious concerns about circulating the *Vite* among unsympathetic male readers, Garzoni explicitly puts this phenomenon into words in his *Discorso della nobiltà delle donne*: “Negli abiti virtuosi d’ogni sorte si ritrovan pieni *gli auttori delle lodi delle donne*, perché amore, fede, religione, pietà, pudicizia, magnanimità, sapienza han fatto onorevole e santo albergo sì nelle donne antiche, come anco nelle moderne” (emphasis added).<sup>99</sup> Garzoni and Tasso, albeit the latter in less explicit terms, recognize how praising women may yield the praise of men. This attempt to account for men’s role in celebrating women brings Tasso to reconsider how equality between men and women may exist, if not perfectly in the relationship between an admired female subject and a devoted author, then in marriage between a husband and a wife.<sup>100</sup>

It is through reflecting on this particular relationship—between wives and husbands—that Tasso suggests not only the possibility of equality between men and women, but that the union—both metaphorical and metaphysical—of men’s virtues and women’s virtues motivate a wider civilizing effect, improving not only the marriage, but also the home, the court, the city, and, in its broadest sense, the state. This may be contextualized in the aftermath of the Council of Trent’s attempt to label marriage ecclesiastical in the “*de reformatio matrimonii*,” and to sanction the Church as its exclusive regulator.<sup>101</sup> If, as Beatrice Collina has suggested, Tasso’s *Discorso della virtù femminile e donnesca* seeks to

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in “Introduzione,” 69. Widening our analytical lens to account for other texts on women written by these poets, however, there are important resonances worth making note of: first, Garzoni echoes Tasso’s *Lettera sul matrimonio* regarding women’s superiority over men for their ability to procreate; second, Garzoni’s encouragement of his reader (“discorri nelle scienze, che tanto troverai donne dottissime quanto uomini parimente”) resonates with Tasso’s citation of Plutarch, also found in the *Lettera sul matrimonio*; and third, Garzoni appears to have closely read Tasso’s discourse on womanly and female virtues, for he similarly cites among his examples of learned women Cornelia, Aphasia, and Vittoria Colonna, women who appear at the end of Tasso’s *Discorso*. Among other women cited by Garzoni, whom Tasso does not mention, are Cassandra Fedele (1465–1558), Isotta Nogarolla (1418–1466), Ginevra Veronese, Costanza Sforza, Battista Malatesta, Laura Terracina, Laura Battiferra, Tarquinia Molza.

<sup>99</sup> Garzoni, *Le vite*, 245.

<sup>100</sup> Similar to how Tasso revisited his early ideas about women from the *Discorso della virtù femminile e donnesca* through the *rime* and *Lettera sul matrimonio*, Garzoni’s *Discorso* revisits a number of anti-woman claims he had made in *La piazza universale*, published over twenty years before, which perpetuate women’s categorical inferiority to men. Cited by Beatrice Collina, the passage that Garzoni revisits in his *Piazza* reads: “Quanto a quella [economia] di marito, e moglie è da notare, che la donna fu data all’uomo per uno aiuto simile a lui, come è scritto nel *Genesi* al primo, e fu fatta compagna dell’uomo; in modo che le fu comandato che, lasciato il padre, s’aderisse a lui quindi per la sua buona compagnia (benché ella sia animale molto imperfetto, e ch’è bisogna d’una stretta disciplina, perché se tu la percuoti, subito salta se tu la stringi, come una anguilla ti scappa; se tu la premi, ti punge; se tu le sei indulgente, acquista imperio sopra di te) l’uomo, inducendola alla sapienza più che possibile sia, mantiene e conserva la casa quietamente, copiosamente e prudentemente [...] Ora le leggi dell’uomo nel governare la donna sua son queste. Prima, che si ricordi ch’ella gli è stata data per compagna da Iddio, né l’avvilisca come una ancilla, né la tenga in magnificenza come sua signora, essendo ella composta dal fianco dell’uomo, come secretaria del suo cuore, e non dal capo, né dai piedi d’esso, non dovendo esser padrona di quello, né serva vile. La seconda, che l’uno e l’altro servi la fede coniugale. La terza, che l’uomo sia uno esempio e uno specchio di ben vivere a essa. La quarta che sia indulgente a quella negli errori di piccolo momento, e non la minacci iracondamente, mettendole paura, e terrore, come fanno alcuni, perché simile timore manifesta l’uomo più presto per tiranno che per marito. La quinta, che l’uomo facci e dica alla presenza della moglie, cose che l’avvertiscano in sua assenza, quanto più utile e comoda le sia la presenza del marito, che la lontananza sua. La sesta, che il marito sempre nasconda alla moglie tre cose: prima il suo tesoro; secondo l’importanza sua al contentarla ne’ desiderii di carne; terzo i consigli suoi fuor delle cose di casa,” in Garzoni, *Le vite*, 68. The passage from *La piazza universale* appears on pages 223–24.

<sup>101</sup> For thorough studies of the changes to the idea of marriage in early modern Italy, see Angelo Turchini, “Dalla disciplina alla ‘creanza’ del matrimonio all’indomani del concilio di Trento,” in *Donna, disciplina, creanza cristiana*, 205–14; Trevor Dean and K. J. P. Lowe, eds., *Marriage in Italy, 1300–1650* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Amyrose McCue Gill, *Vera amicizia: Conjugal Friendship in the Italian Renaissance*, Ph.D. dissertation (Berkeley: University of California, Berkeley,

understand how “le abilità e le prerogative di ciascun sesso non sono innate, ma si sviluppano con l’esercizio di un ruolo e di un potere,” it is precisely a public role that Tasso imagines some wives can execute, in part because of their marriage to virtuous men, which, as Tasso clarifies, should not detract from, but rather enhance women’s virtues.<sup>102</sup>

## REREADING VIRTUE: THE POTENTIAL FOR EQUALITY BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN

In recent years, it has been studied how Tasso’s *Discorso della virtù femminile e donnesca* was not always favorably received among contemporary readers, especially women like Lucrezia Marinella (1571–1653), who critiqued Tasso’s text for its categorical distinctions between “feminine virtue” and “womanly virtue.”<sup>103</sup> With the revisions Tasso made in the *Seconda parte* to his early ideas concerning women’s virtues, it appears as if he may have anticipated Marinella’s critique: he abandons the distinctions between women’s virtues in favor of creating more equal ground upon which his female subjects may equally stand. Before examining how Tasso rearticulates his ideas about women in the *Seconda parte*, however, it will first be useful to trace the origins of Tasso’s sustained ideas about women in his dialogues *Il padre di famiglia* and *Il Romeo overo del giuoco*, written just before the composition of the *Discorso della virtù femminile e donnesca*.<sup>104</sup> A striking Aristotelian influence that renders female virtue inferior to men’s virtue resonates across these two texts.<sup>105</sup> Constructed through common *topoi* of women’s “natural” inferiority and weakness, Tasso articulates gender bias in *Il padre di famiglia* by listing the unique virtues that men and women have: men cultivate prudence, strength, and liberality, while

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2008); Abigail Brundin, Deborah Howard, and Mary Laven, eds., *The Sacred Home in Renaissance Italy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

<sup>102</sup> Collina, “Introduzione,” 69.

<sup>103</sup> On Lucrezia Marinella’s reading of Tasso—and Boccaccio, Sperone Speroni, Giuseppe Passi, and Aristotle for that matter—see her *La nobiltà et eccellenze delle donne, et i difetti, e mancamenti de gli huomini* (Venice: Giovanni Battista Ciotti, 1600). For criticism on Marinella’s interpretation, see Laura Benedetti, “Virtù femminile o virtù donnesca? Torquato Tasso, Lucrezia Marinella e una polemica rinascimentale,” in *Torquato Tasso e la cultura estense*, ed. G. Venturi, 2 vols. (Florence: Olschki, 1999), 2:449–56; Paola Malpezzi Price and Christine Ristaino, *Lucrezia Marinella and the ‘Querelle des femmes’ in Seventeenth-Century Italy* (Cranbury: Associated University Press, 2008); Lynn Lara Westwater, “Le false obiezioni de’ nostri calunniatori”: Lucrezia Marinella Responds to the Misogynist Tradition,” in *Bruniana & Campanelliana* 12, no. 1 (2006): 95–109. Although I thoroughly disagree with the author’s claim that Tasso’s *Discorso* is simply “misogynistic,” for a counter-reading, see Lori J. Ultsch, “Torquato Tasso: Discourse on Feminine and Womanly Virtue,” in *In Dialogue with the Other Voice in Sixteenth-Century Italy: Literary and Social Contexts for Women’s Writing*, eds. Julie Campbell and Maria Galli Stampino (Toronto: Iter, 2011), 115–42. For Tasso’s *Discorso* and the misogynist literary current at the time of its publication, see Fabio Boni, “La riflessione di Torquato Tasso sulla donna nel *Discorso della virtù femminile e donnesca*,” in *Annales Universitatis Paedagogicae Cracoviensis Studia de Cultura* 9, no. 1 (2017): 215–23. For Tasso’s *Discorso* and its relationship to the women of the *Liberata*, see Francesco Ferretti, “Pudicizia e virtù donnesca nella *Gerusalemme liberata*,” in *Griselda online* 13 (2013), available from <http://www.griseldaonline.it/temi/pudore/pudicizia-virtu-gerusalemme-liberata-ferretti.html>, accessed on 20 October 2018.

<sup>104</sup> On elements of *Il padre di famiglia* that return and are expanded upon in the *Discorso della virtù femminile e donnesca*, see Christina Schaefer, “Silence and Dissent: Tasso’s Challenge to the Discourse of *Oikonomia* in *Il padre di famiglia* (1580),” *I Tatti Studies in the Italian Renaissance* 21, no. 1 (2018): 185–208. See also Giovanna Scianatico, “Torquato Tasso e il *Discorso della virtù femminile e donnesca*,” in *In assenza del Re: Le reggenti dal XIV al XVII secolo (Piemonte ed Europa)*, ed. Franca Varallo (Florence: Olschki, 2009), 199–207.

<sup>105</sup> There is a certain degree of similarity between Tasso’s *Il padre di famiglia* and the *Lettera sul matrimonio* in a second respect: in the latter text, Tasso writes, “si conviene a la saggia madre di famiglia conserver al coperto quelle cose che fuori dal marito sono acquistate,” which resonates with *Il Padre di famiglia*: “La cura delle facoltà [...] s’impiega nella conservazione e nell’accrescimento ed è divisa tra ’l padre e la madre di famiglia, perciocché par così proprio del padre di famiglia l’accrescere come della madre conservare,” in Tasso, *Dialoghi*, 1:371.

women are virtuous for their modesty, chastity, and obedience to men (“virtù dunque della donna è il sapere ubbedire all’uomo”). While Tasso’s *Seconda parte* does not disavow that chastity is a principal virtue in women, the Aristotelian notion that they are “inherently” inferior to men—or, rather, that they are badly made men—does not reappear with notable consistency throughout Tasso’s texts that concern women’s merits written during the 1580s and 1590s.<sup>106</sup>

Indeed, the tendency to look to Aristotle as an authoritative model for philosophical reflections on women is particular limited in both the *Seconda parte* and the *Lettera sul matrimonio*, and is replaced by more sustained attention given to the authorities of Plutarch and Plato, and their ideas concerning women’s active service to the state.<sup>107</sup> Before Tasso finalized the arrangement of the *Seconda parte*, his dialogue *Il Romeo overo del giuoco* (1581) had already levelled substantial critique against there being anything “natural” about women’s presumed subordination. Through the mouthpiece of Margherita Bentivoglio, daughter of Duke Alfonso d’Este’s military commander Cornelio Bentivoglio, the dialogue addresses what losing to women reveals about social politeness and courteous behavior. As George McClure has studied, Margherita’s primary interest toward the beginning of the dialogue is to state that women’s secondary position to men is not caused by fortune nor circumstance, but is a result of men’s brute force and their savage imposition. In response to her fellow interlocutor Annibale Pocaterra’s claim that women are by and large second-rate to men in every aspect, save perhaps only love, Margherita responds:<sup>108</sup>

Ma forse questo nome di fortuna è un nome vano, a cui niuna cosa corrisponde; onde, se noi cediamo di fortuna, questo avviene perché cediamo di forze, tutto che d’ingegno siamo eguali: e la violenza de gli uomini è fabricatrice di questa fortuna, che, se pur alcuna cosa è (ch’io ne dubito), altro non è ch’effetto della lor tirannide.

Margherita’s defense that women’s “ingegno” is equal to that of men’s is perhaps the earliest instance in Tasso’s *opere* where the poet articulates the possibility for equality between men and women. It is of particular importance that he expresses this claim through the voice of a female speaker, conveying an awareness of women’s frustration with and ability to challenge gendered stereotypes.

Once revised from *Il Romeo* into *Il Gonzaga*, Margherita delivers her defense of women’s skill and their ability to compete with men with even more “bravura,” as she cites contemporary women who exhibit virtuous “ingegno,” including Claudia Rangone, Barbara Sanseverino, Fulvia da Correggio, Felice della Rovere, and Margherita Gonzaga.<sup>109</sup> The years between 1580 and 1582, which saw the composition of *Il padre di famiglia*, the *Discorso della virtù femminile e donnesca*, *Il Romeo overo del giuoco* and its revised version *Il Gonzaga secondo overo del giuoco*, constitute Tasso’s most extensive sequence of revisions to his ideas concerning women. Such corrections appear to have influenced Tasso’s decision to design the *Seconda parte* as a dedication largely to women’s merits, and have it accompanied by philosophical reflections about their status. Situating the *Seconda parte* in a literary current that, on the

<sup>106</sup> To cite one example, see Tasso’s third sonnet in praise of Barbara Sanseverina (*Tolse Barbara gente il pregio à Roma*), whose *exposition de l’auteur* glosses the line “e di più bianchi Marmi un vivo tempio” as “il cuore, tempio di castità, di fede, e di religione.” Similarly, in the *Lettera sul matrimonio*, Tasso explains that “la castità [...] è lodevolissima oltre tutte le altre virtù ne la donna” (22).

<sup>107</sup> Tasso cites Aristotle, however, as an authority in the *exposition* to the *canzone Tal volta sopra Pelia, Olimpo, e Ossa*: “La nobiltà è un di quei luoghi da quali si vacano le lodi come insegna Aristotele ne la Rhetorica.”

<sup>108</sup> In the dialogue, Pocaterra posits that perhaps only in love are men and women equal: “In tutti gli altri uffici della vita nascono all’uomo inferiori: solo amor è forse quel ch’agguagliando le lor disuguaglianze, rende le donne eguali a gli uomini.”

<sup>109</sup> George McClure, “Women and the Politics of Play in Sixteenth-Century Italy: Torquato Tasso’s Theory of Games,” in *Renaissance Quarterly* 61, no. 3 (2008): 750–91.

one hand, had enjoyed a long tradition of championing women, and, on the other, was on the cusp of facing what Virginia Cox has termed a “backlash” against women that prompted a “rebirth of misogyny” in seventeenth-century Italy,<sup>110</sup> the presence of sophisticated philosophical reflections on women’s virtue in the auto-commentaries of sixteenth-century lyric poetry was somewhat rare.

The poet’s most sustained philosophical engagement with the “woman question” in the *Seconda parte* appears in the *esposizione de l’autore* to the “catena” dedicated to Margherita Gonzaga d’Este. In a mannerist style that blends the virtues of the poetic subject with the talents of the poetic master, the “catena” both celebrates the Duchess’s virtues, and mirrors them through poetic and linguistic excellence. In this regard, Tasso suggests that the “ornamenti d’un animo reale” may be materialized by the poet’s lyric constructions, for the lines that open the *esposizione* read:

Come fra gli ornamenti del corpo, i monili, le catene, e le corone<sup>111</sup> sono per l’oro, e le pietre pretiose oltre tutti gli altri riguardevoli, così le virtù, e i gentili costumi fra quelli de l’animo; la onde non altrimenti che ne le pompe e ne le solennità, i grandissimi Rè sogliono esser rimirati con maraviglia così la contemplatione de le bellezze interio si suole parer maravigliosa à chi la considera. Orna dunque il Poeta la Signora Duchessa de gli ornamenti d’un animo reale, ò più tosto dimostra, com’ella sia veramente ornata di virtù regia, e chiama la sua compositione Catena perché le virtù sono congiunte l’una con l’altra, come gli anelli ne la catena, la onde non possono esser separate e forma questa catena di splendori visibili, [e] invisibili, cioè de le virtù intellettuali e de le bellezze, ò de costumi che possono vedersi.<sup>112</sup>

<sup>110</sup> Among the most influential models of Cinquecento treatises on women’s virtue and nobility, it is worth recalling: Ludovico Domenichi’s *Della nobiltà delle donne* (Venice: Gabriele Giolito, 1551); Lodovico Dolce’s *Dialogo della institutione delle donne* (Venice: Gabriele Giolito, 1545); and Id., *La nobiltà delle donne* (Venice: Gabriele Giolito, 1549), among others. As Virginia Cox has noted, some European authors at the end of the sixteenth and the first half of the seventeenth century continued to publish treatises on women’s virtues, despite the “backlash” women and their supporters faced. Among the examples recalled by Cox are: Cornelio Lanci, *Gli essempli delle virtù delle donne [...] ne’ quali si vede la bellezza, prudenza, castità, e fortezza delle Vergini, Maritate e Vedove* (Florence: Francesco Tosi, 1590); Luigi Contarini, *Il vago e dilettevole giardino ove si leggono [...] i varij e mirabili essempli di virtù e vitij de gli huomini [...] l’origine e l’impresa delle Amazzone, i meravigliosi essempli delle donne* (Vicenza: Perin Libraro and Giorgio Greco compagni, 1586, 1597); Francesco Caruso, *Dialogo della nobiltà delle donne* (Naples: Giuseppe Cacchi, 1592); Silvano Razzi, *Delle vite delle donne illustri per santità*, 6 vols. (Florence: Heirs of Iacopo Giunti, 1595–1606); Pietro Andrea Canoniero, *Della eccellenza delle donne* (Florence: Simon Grenier and Iacopo Fabeni, 1606); Julio Cesare Capaccio, *Illustrium mulierum et illustrium litteris virorum elogia* (Naples: R. J. Carlium, 1608); Pierpaolo Ribera, *Le glorie immortali [...] di 845 donne illustri antiche e moderne* (Venice: Euangelista Deuchino, 1609); Francesco Agostino Della Chiesa, *Theatro delle donne letterate con un breve discorso della preminenza e perfettione del sesso donnesco* (Mondovi: Giovanni Gislandi and Giovanni Tommaso Rossi, 1620); Lucrezio Bursati, *La vittoria delle donne* (Venice: Evangelista Deuchino, 1621); Cristoforo Bronzini, *Della dignità e nobiltà delle donne* (Florence: Zanobi, 1624); Marie de Gournay, *L’Egalité des hommes et des femmes* (1622); Francesco Pona, *La galleria delle donne celebri* (Bologna: Cavalieri, 1633); Hilarion de Coste, *Les eloges et les vies des reynes, des princesses, et des dames illustres en pieté, en courage, et en doctrine, qui ont fleury de nostre temps, et du temps de nos pères*, 2 vols. (Paris: Sebastien Cramoisy, 1647).

<sup>111</sup> Although the authorized edition of the *Seconda parte* does not include the 12-sonnet “corona” mentioned here, the “catena” and “monile” do appear in the volume. In the first strophe of the “monile,” Tasso makes explicit his devotion to encomiastic practice: “Nel mar de vostri honori/ come sian margarite,/ queste lodi ho raccolte, e’nsieme unite./ Lega il lor filo i cori;/ brevi, ma belle sono,/ picciolo è sì, ma pretioso dono./ Dunque Donna reale,/ de gradirlo vi piaccia,/ perch’io mai non mi stanchi, e mai non taccia.”

<sup>112</sup> Tasso elaborates upon his meditations on exterior versus interior virtues in the *Discorso della virtù femminile e donnesca*. In the dedicatory letter to Eleonora Gonzaga, Tasso writes: “Ho pensato, dunque, che s’io offerirò a Vostra Altezza un breve discorso della virtù umana femminile, o delle varie opinioni ch’intorno ad essa hanno avuti gli uomini eccellenti, gli offerirò quasi specchio o ritratto in cui alcuna parte della sua interior bellezza potrà rimirare.”

The formal means by which Tasso connects Margherita's virtues in order to form the "catena" are as follows: in the twelve stanzas of the "catena," each consisting of nine verses and all composed according to the rhyme scheme AbCABcDEE, with a congedo ABB, the seventh verse of each stanza and the first of the following have at least two words in common. Appearing in the first line of stanzas two through twelve are resonances with the final line of the preceding stanza. Thus, the link between the stanzas is doubly resonant across lines 7 and 9 of one stanza, and the first line of the following stanza.<sup>113</sup> When Tasso writes that the Duchess is "veramente ornata di virtù regia" and that her virtues are "congiunte l'una con l'altra come gli anelli ne la catena, là onde non possono essere separate," he makes subtle reference to the mirroring effect between her image and his rhymes. The *espositioni de l'autore* that appear after every two stanzas may be considered as additional material that binds the "catena" together, architecturally and philosophically. Throughout the auto-commentary Tasso calls attention to his imitation of Homer, in modeling his "catena" after Jove's golden chain described in Book Eight of the *Iliad*: "il Poeta nel nome di catena, non segue Dionigi che la chiamò fune, ma Homero che descrisse la catena di Giove, con la quale suole catenare tutte le cose." Such a comparison of Tasso's poetic composition to Jove's golden chain that held all the world together emphasizes the significance, then, of the women's virtues ("tutte le cose") that are bound together by the chain of the poet's verses.

Returning to the limited authority granted to Aristotle in the philosophical *esposition de l'autore* in the "catena,"<sup>114</sup> it is worth noting that one of the only mentions of Aristotle occurs within a list of classical philosophers who, Tasso states, were *not* among the first to name "la bella accoglienza e la cortesia"<sup>115</sup> as primary virtues in women:

Fra le virtù morali [...] alcune fanno perfetti gli affetti interiori, altre gli atti esteriori, mà il Poeta comincia da queste, come da le più note, e nomina due virtù, che si paran dinanzi ne la prima vista, la bella accoglienza [...] e la cortesia, non prima nominate ne da Protagora, ne da Platone, ne da Aristotile, ne da Crisippo, che ne pose quasi infinite, ma da nostri Poeti Toscani, Dante dico, e 'l Petrarca.

For their recognition of women's virtues, especially since they received expression in the vernacular, Dante and Petrarch represent Tasso's prioritized poetic models. Tasso attributes significant influence to the vernacular tradition of praising women's virtues, similar to how Tomaso Garzoni recognized the Tuscan genealogy of writers who praised women in his *Le vite*.<sup>116</sup> Petrarch's influence, in particular, as seen above in the sonnet to Filippo Paladini (*Dipinto havevi l'or de biondi crini*), is given particular attention in the *esposition* to the "catena." Tasso maps Laura's virtues listed in Petrarch's *Trionfi*

<sup>113</sup> To provide an example, here are the first and second stanzas of the "catena" with the resonances italicized: "Illustre Donna, e più del ciel serena/ da chiari occulti lumi/ mille versate ogn'hor gioie, e dolcezze/ E fanno pretiosa aurea catena/ gli angelici costumi, e le vostre celesti alme bellezze;/ e'n sì leggiadri modi,/ per far più sempre un bel desio contento,/ non si congiunse mai l'oro e l'argento./ / L'oro, e l'argento in sì leggiadri modi/ mai non s'avolse, ò prese,/ come voi ne sembrate adorna, e vaga/ e tutte fiamme son l'humane lodi;/ e vive stelle accese/ son le divine, onde'l pensier s'appaga./ Ne fra ventosi campo,/ se di candide nubi il Cielo è carco,/ tanto suol variar col suo bell'arco."

<sup>114</sup> The only other occasion in which Tasso relies on Aristotle's authority in the *esposition* to the "catena" is in claiming to follow the classical philosopher's belief that "l'honore, e l'honestà" are noteworthy virtues, even if they are not limited to women.

<sup>115</sup> Beginning in the fifth stanza, Tasso lists women's virtues, "the most commendable" of which are "la bella accoglienza e la cortesia," virtues that women exhibit most prominently at court. Courtly women's *accoglienza* of Tasso is addressed in more explicit detail in chapter one of this study.

<sup>116</sup> Garzoni's *Discorso in fine sopra la nobiltà delle donne* cites male poets who praise women in their works: Quintilian (Cornelia, "madre de' Gracchi"), Plato (Aphasia), Virgil, Petrarch (Laura), Dante (Beatrice), Cino da Pistoia, and Angelo Poliziano (Cassandra Fedele).

(“Armata eran con lei tutte le sue/ rare virtùdi, o gloriosa schiera, e tentuansi per mano a due, a due/ honestate, e vergogna a la fronte era”)<sup>117</sup> onto Margherita, drawing a parallel that speaks simultaneously to poetic subjects and to poetic imitation. Tasso expresses his sense of indebtedness to Petrarch when he includes “humiltà” among the woman’s virtues, a quality that was “similmente pres[a] dal canzoniere del Petrarca, perch’il Tasso nel celebrar le virtù e bellezze di questa signora non ha voluto dilungarsi da le vestigia de l’eccellentissimo Poeta.”

While Petrarch serves as an important model after which Tasso names women’s virtues, the philosophical matter of the “catena,” and of the *Seconda parte* more broadly speaking, borrows from a combination of intertextual dialogues with classical thinkers, as well as with the revisions Tasso made to a number of his earlier works. It seems not accidental that, in a text that demonstrates limited reliance upon Aristotle, the first classical authority Tasso cites is Plato, who influenced the design of Tasso’s “catena” according to women’s “splendori visibili, e invisibili, cioè de le virtù intellettuali e de le bellezze, ò de costumi che possono vedersi,” which, the poet claims, follow “ad imitatione di Platone nel decimo de la Republica.”<sup>118</sup> Since Tasso had categorized “female” virtues as distinct from “womanly” virtues, the priority of place given to Plato in the *Seconda parte* stands in direct contrast to how Tasso engages with Plato in the *Discorso della virtù femminile e donnesca*, wherein the philosopher’s ideas concerning women are compared to, and considered less viable than, Aristotle’s:

E avendo la natura prodotto l’uomo e la donna di molto differente temperatura e complessione, si può credere che non siano atti ne’ medesimi uffici: ma l’uomo, come più robusto, ad alcuni è disposto, e la donna, come più delicata, ad alcuni altri, onde nel principio della *Politica*, contra Platone conchiude Aristotele che la virtù dell’uomo e della femina non sian le medesima; perciò che la virtù dell’uomo sarà la fortezza e la liberalità, e la virtù della donna la pudicizia.

Adhering to a strict Aristotelian tradition in the *Discorso*, Tasso then immediately claims: “e come piacque a Gorgia, così il silenzio è virtù della donna, come l’eloquenza dell’uomo,” and subsequently enters the heated debate on women’s speech regarding the dictum “alle donne si addice il silenzio.” Given the references to the poetic exchange Tasso had with Livia Spinola, and the former’s appreciation of the woman writer’s poetic voice, elements of this claim from the *Discorso* dissolve as they are revisited and reversed in the Marchetti volume.

It is possible to consider Tasso’s catalog of contemporary “donne eroiche,” which appears at the end of the *Discorso*, to be a starting point from which he began to reread and reconsider Plato. It seems that Tasso’s rereading of the *Republic*, and of the considerable encouragement expressed therein for women to participate in activities of the State, prompted a new way of thinking about contemporary women’s role in the public sphere, especially if a woman is married and a member of an influential noble family.<sup>119</sup> Indeed, it appears as if the institution of marriage becomes, for Tasso, a

<sup>117</sup> Here, Tasso cites Petrarch’s *Triumphus pudicitie* vv. 76–79. See Francesco Petrarca, *Trionfi*, ed. Guido Bezzola (Milan: Rizzoli, 1957).

<sup>118</sup> Tasso expands his citation of Plato later in the *esposizione*: “l’arco celeste è quasi un mezzo cerchio, ma l’animo di questa signora è un cerchio intero, cioè ritorna perfettamente in se medesimo con la contemplatione, perche se deviato da gli oggetti de le cose estiori non tornasse in se medesimo non sarebbe perfetto.” Tasso then continues to assert his adherence to Platonic philosophy: “e chiama l’animo cerchio non solamente ad imitatione di Dante [...] ma di Platone nel Timeo, e di tutti i Platonici, i quali pongono quattro cerchi intorno a Dio come intorno a suo centro.”

<sup>119</sup> In the *Discorso della virtù femminile e donnesca*, Tasso cites Plato’s belief that women and men both can and should participate in a republic’s civic life: “Crede Platone che l’istessa virtù sia quella della donna e quella dell’uomo, e che s’alcuna differenza è in loro, sia introdotta dall’uso e non dalla natura; e ne’ libri civili vuol che le donne sian partecipi della republica e degli uffici militari, non meno che gli uomini; e dice che sì come la natura produce ambe le mani atte a tutte le operazioni, e l’usanza introduce poi in loro questa differenza di destro e di sinistro [...] così parimente produce l’uomo e la donna atti a

frame of reference through which to propose potential equality between men and women, which, until the *Seconda parte*, had never received substantial attention in his works. The very progression of the Marchetti volume allows for readers to see the important ways through which Tasso moves from celebrating the virtues of women to the virtues of women *who are married*. In this regard, the work of Tom Digby is worth recalling for his concise summary of what occurs when traditional hierarchies, especially between the sexes, are modified and restructured: “Any diminution of the oppositionality of the gender binary undermines dominance, and any loosening of the binary undercuts gender oppositionality—either way the dominance of men as a group over women as a group is weakened.”<sup>120</sup> Thus, even if Tasso’s mature ideas about women seemingly do more for married women than they do for single women, following Digby, it is a progressive step forward that Tasso’s ideas about women developed beyond strictly neo-Aristotelian adherence to the complex negotiation with classical philosophy and a careful re-reading of his own works.

As mentioned above, Plato and Plutarch are among the important models Tasso follows in articulating new ideas about women in the *Seconda parte*.<sup>121</sup> Elsewhere in his works, Tasso had engaged with Plutarch’s philosophical principles about women; for example, in the *Lettera sul matrimonio*, Tasso agrees with Plutarch about how men and women are equally capable, equally virtuous, and equally talented as painters, artists, poets, and others:

E se l’arte de la poesia è tanto ne l’uomo quanto ne la donna, come si conobbe da’ versi di Safo in comparazione di quelli d’Anacreonte, o di quelli di Bacide, o da le risposte de la Sibilla; e se la pittura e la musica è l’istessa ne l’uno e ne l’altro sesso, e tutte l’arti fioriscono in ambedue con simile eccellenza, non è sconvenevole che le virtù paragonate insieme in quel modo che si paragonano le statue di Fidia o di Prassitele e l’altre opere artificiose abbiano la medesima forma e quasi l’istesso carattere.<sup>122</sup>

The sections of Plato’s and Plutarch’s texts dedicated to women’s active roles in political society are those which influence Tasso’s praise of contemporary female rulers. In the *Lettera sul matrimonio*, Tasso draws particular emphasis on the need for continuity among dynastic families, and thus the political stability of courts and their territories. Motivated, perhaps, by the pressures facing the Este house at the end of the sixteenth century, when its legitimacy fell to Alfonso’s inability to produce a male heir, Tasso wrote widely about the need for marriages to produce children. This is expressed in the *Lettera* in the words:

le nozze erano principio de la famiglia, onde ciascuno che ne priva l’uomo distrugge la casa e la città e tutta l’umana specie, la quale non può durare senza generazione, sì come la giusta e legitima generazione non si mantiene senza le nozze: perciòché la famiglia e la cittadinanza non è composta d’uomini solamente, ma d’uomini e di donne,

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tutti gli uffici civili e militari.” Tasso’s final reflection on Plato in the *Discorso* is: “così perfetta è quella repubblica, che non meno delle donna che gli uomini può valersi.”

<sup>120</sup> Tom Digby, *Men Doing Feminism* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 2.

<sup>121</sup> Plutarch’s ideas on women, from the “Mulierum Virtutes” in his *Moralia*, were translated into Latin in the late-fifteenth century as *De virtutibus mulierum* by Alamanno Rinuccini. When reprinted in Venice, Plutarch’s work appeared with the title *De claris mulieribus*, thus recalling its Boccaccian influence. In later Cinquecento *volgarizzamenti* of the work, a new title was adopted: *Delle donne illustri*. On the history of Plutarch’s reception in early modern Italy, see Maria Luisa Doglio’s introduction to her edition of Tasso’s *Discorso della virtù femminile e donnesca*. For a detailed survey of philosophical reflections on women from antiquity through the early Renaissance, which influenced writers like Tasso and Galeazzo Flavio Capra, see Maria Luisa Doglio, “Introduction” to Galeazzo Flavio Capra, *Della eccellenza e dignità delle donne*, ed. Maria Luisa Doglio (Rome: Bulzoni Editore, 1988), 5–53.

<sup>122</sup> Tasso, *Lettera sul matrimonio*, 26–7.

anzi si ritrovarono de le città e de' regni fatti di donne solamente, come fu quello de le Ammazzone, ma imperio d'uomini senza donne non si ritrovò giamai.<sup>123</sup>

In Tasso's considerations, men are written out of the political necessity to procreate: "si può argomentare che le donne sian più bastevoli a sé medesime e men bisognose dell'altrui perfezione."<sup>124</sup> This does not suggest, however, that women are wholly superior to men within the household. I will return to this point in the pages ahead.

In more micro-settings throughout the *Lettera*, Tasso reflects on questions of friendship between men and women: "l'amicizia de l'uomo e de la donna è antichissima oltre tutte le altre." The congenial bond between men and women, which Tasso specifies as existing in its most admirable form between a husband and wife, is fundamental to the idea of marriage as companionship: "Ancora, se la solitudine è misera cosa e noiosa, piacevole e felice è la compagnia: ma fra tutte le compagnie niuna è più cara di quella ch'è fra 'l marito e la moglie."<sup>125</sup> The essential substance of friendship, marriage, and companionship leads Tasso to the following definition:

Se l'abbandonar gli amori lascivi e le femine del mondo è cosa onesta, onesto è il matrimonio, che n'è cagione; s'è utile lasciar le soverchie pompe e le sese vane, utile è questo legittimo congiungimento; e se 'l por fine a le nimicizie e a le contese civili reca salute a le città e a i regni, niuna è di lui più salutifera e giusta, perché non è alcuna ingiustizia maggiore che 'l guerreggiar per la moglie.<sup>126</sup>

Expressed in these terms, men and women in marriage are endowed with a serious responsibility that goes beyond domestic affairs, affecting the "happiness" of nearly every man: "per tutte queste ragioni, adunque, è buono il matrimonio: né si deve in alcun modo lasciare né la vita attiva de gli uomini, e, come voi [i.e., Ercole Tasso] diceste, non gli reca impedimento, ma felicità."<sup>127</sup> Tasso's description of marriage as the site of friendship and happiness for all citizens resonates, as Meredith Ray has suggested, with both the reformist emphasis on spiritual companionship and "the Catholic Church's promotion of marriage as an institution for procreation."<sup>128</sup>

This minor excursus on Tasso's developing ideas concerning the potential equal status between men and women, especially in marriage, supports this chapter's broader study of how the *Seconda parte* converses, albeit in implicit terms, with the "hermaphroditic" figure that emerges from the union between the married woman and man in the *Lettera sul matrimonio*. As we have seen, the poet's rigid agreement with Aristotle fades in the *Seconda parte*'s philosophical considerations of neo-Platonic thought, which imagines active roles for women in stately affairs. The philosophical reflections on women's virtues in the *esposizione de l'autore* of the "catena" act as a preface to the series of encomiastic poems in praise of marriage that close the *Seconda parte*. This turn away from women's

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<sup>123</sup> Ibid., 17–18.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid., 18. Such considerations of women's necessary place in the world recall Tasso's debate in verse with Antonio de' Pazzi, analyzed in the Introduction to this study. Concerning the timing of this debate, there are currently two proposals: the first, by Angelo Solerti, suggest that the verses were composed between 1581 and 1582, just after the composition of Tasso's *Discorso della virtù femminile e donnesca*; the second, by Maria Luisa Doglio, is that they were composed as an accompaniment to the sonnet Tasso composed for Garzoni's *Le Vite delle donne illustri*.

<sup>125</sup> Tasso, *Lettera sul matrimonio*, 22.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>128</sup> Meredith Ray, *Writing Gender in Women's Letter Collections of the Italian Renaissance* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 178. For developing ideas concerning marriage and companionship in the early modern period, see Leon Battista Alberti's *I libri della famiglia* (especially book III), Erasmus's *Encomium matrimonii* and *Institutio christiani matrimonii*, Juan Luis Vives's *De institutione feminae Christianae*, and Sperone Speroni's *Dialogo della cura familiare*.

unique virtues to marriage and “l’amor maritale” creates space for noblemen to enter the *Seconda parte* as equals, not overbearing lords.<sup>129</sup> Similar to how Tasso avoids creating hierarchies between women of different backgrounds, the men and women whom Tasso praises at the end of the volume—along with the institution that unites them—appear as equal halves of one whole, which is itself necessary for the betterment of the family, the state, and, as Tasso describes, the future of history and poetry.<sup>130</sup>

While Tasso’s *Discorso della virtù femminile e donnesca* shapes the virtues of women in relation to those of men, repeatedly citing Aristotle as an authority,<sup>131</sup> the *Lettera sul matrimonio* dissolves these differences by turning to Aristophanes and the myth of the hermaphrodite described in Plato’s *Symposium*. When recalled in Tasso’s letter, the hermaphroditic figure only comes about through the union between men and women in marriage:

Conosciamo che non sia in tutto vana quella antica favola di Aristofane, perciocché il marito vive con due anime, e con quella de la moglie e con la sua, e ragiona con due lingue, e vede con quattro occhi, e ascolta con quattro orecchi, e opera con quattro mani: sì che tutte le operazioni sono agevoli, tutte care e tutte virtuose, né quella del marito è sua in guisa che non ci abbia parte la moglie, né quella de la moglie è così propria che il marito non ne partecipi: avegna che essi non siano consorti del letto solamente, ma compagni de le operazioni e de’ pensieri.<sup>132</sup>

Individuals in marriage, according to Tasso, engage in intellectual labor: they collaborate and share in “le operazioni” and “[i] pensieri.” The emphasis on marriage as companionship brings Tasso to consider women’s equal relationship to men, who are now “compagni” in both the physical and metaphysical sense.<sup>133</sup> As the *Lettera* describes, just as the floral perfumes in a garden become indistinguishable one from the other, “così la prudenza del marito e la fortezza e la magnanimità e la liberalità e la magnificenza si mescola, come odor propio, con quel de la temperanza femminile, de la modestia e de la mansuetudine e de la vergogna, in maniera che non si conosce qual sia de l’uno e qual de l’altro.” The author’s point here seems to suggest that the process of “mixing” is bidirectional: husbands lend characteristics to their wives, just as wives impart their attributes onto their husbands. Since this process requires a definition deconstruction of gendered binaries between men and women’s traits, to borrow the words of Stephen Kolsky, “confusion between gender roles is the unspoken enemy whereby gendered functions might be ‘mis-taken’, resulting in social chaos.”<sup>134</sup> Tasso appears

<sup>129</sup> When Tasso praises women’s love in the *Seconda parte*, he refers to it as “l’Amor virtuoso, intendendo de l’amor d’Iddio, ò de l’amor maritale.” See the *exposition de l’auteur* of the third sonnet dedicated to Barbara Sanseverino, *Barbara meraviglia à tempi nostri*. In the *exposition* to the “catena,” Tasso further claims that “l’amor virtuoso del matrimonio non hà le passioni ch’ecedano il mezzo de la virtù.”

<sup>130</sup> In the *Lettera sul matrimonio*, Tasso states: “Né solamente le gloriose [donne] furono molte, ma quelle ancora de le quali non c’è menzione ne le istorie; le quali si nascosero a la fama istessa.”

<sup>131</sup> One such example is when Tasso claims: “Fermaremo, dunque, questa conclusione: che l’uomo per la viltà, e la donna per l’impudicizia sia disonorata, perché quella è proprio vizio dell’uomo, e questa della donna. Non niego nondimeno che la fortezza non sia virtù femminile ancora, ma non l’assoluta fortezza, ma la fortezza ch’ubidisce, come dice Aristotele.”

<sup>132</sup> Tasso, *Lettera sul matrimonio*, 23–4. For Aristophanes’s account of the myth, see Plato, *Symposium*, ed. Kenneth James Dover (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

<sup>133</sup> While women’s intelligence is not directly taken into consideration in the *Seconda parte*, the conclusion of the *Discorso della virtù femminile e donnesca* reflects on women’s virtues of the mind: “chi vorrà nelle donne eroiche non sol la virtù dell’azione, ma quella della contemplazione, si rammenti di Renata di Ferrara e di Margherita di Savoia, dell’una e dell’altra delle quali mio padre mi soleva le meraviglie raccontare.” By mentioning Bernardo Tasso, albeit briefly, Tasso pays homage to the genealogy of men who praise women. In the *Discorso*, Tasso also names Anna, Lucrezia and Leonora d’Este among women who exhibit “intelligenze delle cose di Stato e nel giudizio delle lettere.”

<sup>134</sup> Stephen Kolsky, “Bending the Rules: Marriage in Renaissance Collections of Biographies of Famous Women,” in *Marriage in Italy*, 227–48.

to welcome the potential chaos this fusion might cause, as he combines virtues of both sexes in order to call upon the description of the “man-woman” figure.<sup>135</sup> If Tasso imagines that married men and women have a profound impact on the political life outside of a marriage, the means by which they influence others may very well be initially “chaotic,” but once the effort to distinguish men from women proves to be a futile endeavor, the combined virtues of both sexes may be appreciated for its beneficial “operazioni [...] agevoli, care e [...] virtuose.”

In the *Discorso della virtù femminile e donnesca*, although the hermaphroditic figure does not play a part, Tasso arrives at the potential for equality between men and women through the latter’s capacity for “virtù eroica”:

alla virtù donnesca ritornando, dico ch’ella nelle donne eroiche è virtù eroica che con la virtù eroica dell’uomo contende, e delle donne dotate di questa virtù non più la pudicizia che la fortezza o che la prudenza è propria. Né alcuna distinzione d’opere e d’uffici fra loro e gli uomini eroici si rittrova, se non forse solamente quelli che alla generazione e alla perpetuità della spezie appartengono, i quali ancora dalle donne eroiche sono in parte negletti e tralasciati.

In this text, Tasso employs a fairly slim yardstick upon which to measure women’s “heroic virtue.” The women whom Tasso considers capable of “virtù eroica” are only those who have acquired, not feminine virtue, but “womanly” virtue: “né più si usi il nome di femina, ma quel di donnesco, il qual tanto vale quanto signorile.” The configuration reads that men endowed with “virtù eroica” and women capable in both “virtù eroica” and “virtù donnesca” may be seen as potential equals:

come fra gli uomini sono alcuni ch’eccedendo l’umana condizione sono stimati eroi, così fra le donne molto ci nascono d’animo e di virtù eroica, e molte ancora, nate di sangue regio, se ben perfettamente non si possono chiamar donne eroiche, molto nondimeno alle donne eroiche s’assomigliano.

Tasso further states that between heroic men and heroic women there is no “distinzione d’opere e d’uffici.” The single difference between these privileged members of the male and female sex is women’s capabilities in “generazione” and “perpetuità della specia” that, he notes, often goes neglected.

Tasso imagines that the ideal political state relies on friendship, happiness, and equality between men and women in marriage. The poet takes this view of male-female equality one step further by negotiating scripture, as Marsilio Ficino had, in order to draw conclusions about what the critique of women implies for men:

Non può dunque alcuno biasimare la donna che non vituperi l’uomo per conseguente, né lodar l’uno che non lodi l’altra similmente: in tal modo sono congiunti non solo gli uffici e l’operazioni, ma le virtù, le quali se furono mai distinte, la distinzione fu discreta anzi che necessaria. Né l’opinione di san Paulo medesimo è da questa diversa; perch’egli scrisse a’ Corinti che la femina è gloria de l’uomo, e ne la medesima epistola dimostra la equalità dicendo che la donna non ha podestà del suo corpo, ma l’uomo;

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<sup>135</sup> For the ambiguities of this figure in early modern literature, see Carla Freccero, “The Other and the Same: The Image of the Hermaphrodite in Rabelais,” in *Rewriting the Renaissance: The Discourses of Sexual Difference in Early Modern Europe*, eds. Margaret W. Ferguson, Maureen Quilligan, and Nancy J. Vickers (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 145–58; Kathleen Long, *Hermaphrodites in Renaissance Europe* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2006).

e l'uomo similmente non ha la podestà del suo, ma la donna. E altrove significa la dipendenza de la femina, affermando che da l'uomo e per lui fu creata; perché ne la creazione Eva fu cavata da la costa d'Adamo.<sup>136</sup>

Once the virtues that previously distinguished men from women—and which reflected the Aristotelian notion of sexual difference and women's subordination to men—disintegrate, and a single figure that represents the potential for equality emerges, it becomes impossible to blame or praise one sex without making some judgement about the other. Such a process is enacted by the parallel praise of men and women found in the *Seconda parte delle rime*, constructing an interdependent relationship between the sexes that is equally applicable to married couples and non-amorous poet-dedicatee relationships. In other words, when a virtuous woman receives praise by a virtuous man, each play equal parts in the encomiastic project.

Returning to the similarities among Tasso's *Discorso della virtù femminile e donnesca*, the *Lettera sul matrimonio*, and the *Seconda parte delle rime*, each text concludes by citing examples of contemporary illustrious women; however, the *Seconda parte* is unique in its praise of women who appear alongside their husbands.<sup>137</sup> This is perhaps because, as it is symbolized in the encomiastic volume, marriage serves as the means through which families enjoy legitimate continuity, which results in an “appropriate” sense of past that resonates with Tasso's ode directed to “santissimo matrimonio” in the *Lettera sul matrimonio*:

E poichè siamo passati a gl'immortali secoli, il nostro nome non muore con la parte di noi ch'è sottoposta a la corruzione, ma vive un'altra vita a similitudine de la celeste: e se si numerano i figliuoli e i nepoti si rinnova la gloria de l'antichità, e ringiovenisce la vecchia fama, e quasi viviamo insieme co'trapassati. Tu dunque, o santissimo matrimonio, ci fai nobili in terra, tu valorosi, tu giusti, tu felici, tu somiglianti a le creature immortali; dunque sono tuoi frutti la dolcezza de' figliuoli, la virtù, l'onore, la gloria, la beatitudine, e l'immortalità de la fama, e la perpetuità de la memoria immortale.<sup>138</sup>

This reflection on marriage and its influence on history has much in common with the focus on childbearing and dynastic families in the poems that conclude the *Seconda parte*. In terms of the design of the encomiastic volume, it seems important that all the occasional poetry on aristocratic marriages appear immediately after the “catena” and its philosophical defenses of women's virtues.

The final poems' collective emphasis on women's chastity, which, as Tasso writes in the *exposition* to the “catena,” becomes nearly synonymous with marital love (“l'amore matrimoniale può esser congiunto con la castità”), enabling the poet to transition from describing women's unique

<sup>136</sup> Tasso, *Lettera sul matrimonio*, 34–5.

<sup>137</sup> The examples of illustrious contemporary women in the *Lettera sul matrimonio* include: Battista da Saluzzo and Eleonora d'Aragona as “specch[i] di pudicizia ne la corte di Ferrara, e in quella d'Urbino Isabella e Leonora Gonzaga” (31). The examples of illustrious wives and husbands that conclude the *Seconda parte* are, in order: Francesco Maria della Rovere and Lucrezia d'Este in *Lascia Imeneo e qui discendi*; Cesare d'Este and Virginia de' Medici in *Alma città dove inalzar sovente; A la figlia di Cosimo accogli, ed orna; Ciò che morte rallenta, Amor restringi; L'anno son'io, che fò sì cari balli; and Io fui già Flora, ab non sia detto in vano*; Giulio Cesare Gonzaga and Flamminia Colonna in *Hespero già risplende, Hespero in cielo*; Alessandro Gonzaga and Francesca Guerriera in *Spiega l'ombroso velo*; Hercole Tasso and Lelia Agosta in *Terra gentil, ch'inonda il chiaro Serio*; Vincenzo Gonzaga and Eleonora de' Medici in *Italia mia, che l'Apennin digiunge and Tessano aurea catena amore, e lite*; Matteo de Capua and Giovanna di Tunica in *Eran già le virtù divise, e sparte and S'era fermo Himeneo tra l'erto mo[n]te*; and the Grand Duke of Tuscany Francesco I de' Medici and Bianca Cappello in *Onde sonar d'Italia intorno i monti*.

<sup>138</sup> Tasso, *Lettera sul matrimonio*, 41.

virtues to detailing the possibility for joint virtues to exist among married couples. Since chastity was, throughout the early modern period, traditionally seen as a virtue pertaining to women, it is perhaps appropriate that the first *canzone* in the series of poems celebrating marriages, *Lascia Imeneo e qui discendi* and dedicated to Francesco Maria della Rovere and Lucrezia d'Este, recounts not only the pastoral haven within which humans and animals rejoice in the couple's wedding, but Lucrezia's virtues, in particular, that resonate with Petrarch's description of Laura's triumph over Love in his *Triumphus cupidinis*: "Questa bella Guerriera/ ch'ò contra Amor s'accinga,/ o per lui cinga l'armi, è vincitrice." Although Lucrezia and her marriage to Francesco are cited directly in this sonnet, Tasso does not poetically figure the Duke of Urbino. Similarly, in the set of six sonnets that follow, which praise Cesare d'Este's (1562–1628) marriage to Virginia de' Medici (1568–1615) in 1586, the second of the series (*A la figlia di Cosmo accogli, ed orna*) uniquely celebrates Virginia, while Cesare receives mention only in the "argomento" to the sonnet series. One reason why neither Francesco Maria della Rovere nor Cesare d'Este are explicitly named in these sonnets may refer us to Tasso's considerations of the shared praise among wives and their husbands described above in his *Lettera sul matrimonio*. In the *canzone Gio' che morte rallenta, Amor restringi*, Tasso recalls the image of the semi-divine union of two souls ("e mentre due bell'alme annodi, e cingi, così rendi sembante al ciel la terra"). This union, Tasso elaborates, may be witnessed in newlywed Medici-Este couple:

E'n questa parte, ov'è sì bello il mondo,  
e sì conforme al Ciel, perche riluce  
tutto de suoi celesti, e chiari lumi,  
del suo primo splendor, splendor secondo,  
e di sua luce accendi un'altra luce,  
da l'Arno ritornando al Rè de' fiumi.

The supernatural effect that earthly marriage has on "il Mondo" and "il Ciel" reappears in a later *canzone* (*Italia mia, che l'Apennin digiunge*), dedicated to Vincenzo Gonzaga and Eleonora de' Medici, wherein Tasso nearly transcribes into verse what he had articulated in the *Lettera sul matrimonio*, particular its sections on the potential for equality between wives and husbands:

Duo soli di valore, e di bellezza,  
ambo ne l'oriente  
rotano i raggi incontra, ò stanno à paro.  
L'un per l'altro fiammeggia, e per vaghezza  
de l'altrui foco ardente  
e l'un per l'altro è più sereno, e chiaro:  
ne mai destino avaro  
ce gli asconde, ò sommerge, e'n giro alterno  
non fanno state, ò verno,  
e sempre son eguali i raggi, e i passi,  
perch'un mai l'altro non oscuri, ò lassi.

Imagined as two equal suns, whose union does not result in one obscuring the other, Vincenzo and his wife Eleonora are figured as lyric examples of the hermaphroditic figure described in the *Lettera sul matrimonio*.

Similarly, in the *canzone* celebrating Matteo di Capua's marriage to Giovanna di Tunica, (*Eran già le virtù divise, e sparte*), Tasso recalls, now with more explicit emphasis, how the virtues of men and women—previously distinct from one another—are, through marriage, combined:

Eran già le virtù divise, e sparte,  
 quando due nobili alme Amor distrinse,  
 e di lor fè catena, onde l'avinse,  
 e giunse in voi con sì mirabil arte.  
 E partir non le può, chi tutto parte  
 e l'alma eterna dal mortal discinse,  
 perche il suo fabro qui se stesso hor vinse  
 e lei pur lega alla divina parte.  
 Ne sol le gemme, e l'or trovò sotterra  
 e l'Italia, e la Spagna aggiunse insieme  
 mà per tanta opra ei se'n volò più lunge.  
 E del mondo cercò le spere estreme  
 E coi meriti vostri homai congiunge  
 l'alto regno del Cielo, e l'humil terra.

Lines 4 and 5 call attention to the “catena” and its “mirabil arte” included in the *Seconda parte*, insofar as the “chain” that connects “l'alto regno del Cielo e l'humil terra” in Matteo and Giovanna’s marriage appears in imitation of Jove’s golden chain that Tasso references in his *esposizione* to the “catena” dedicated to Margherita Gonzaga d’Este.

The *canzone* on marriage that appears to be most directly in conversation with Tasso’s *Lettera sul matrimonio*, however, is dedicated to Ercole Tasso, the cousin to whom Tasso responded with his *Lettera*, which constitutes the opposing side to their epistolary debate on marriage in 1585. Tasso’s *Terra gentil, ch’inonda il chiaro Serio* was written on the occasion of Ercole’s marriage to Lelia Agosta. Although transformed into “un Hercol novello,/ hor di concordi voglie,” who takes as his wife “una bella, una pudica Augusta,” Ercole appears in Tasso’s *canzone*, however, still quite uncertain about his decision to marry, and thus relies on Torquato’s persuasion to calm his fears:

E’n quel sì casto seno  
 tù puoi bramato sposo  
 deporre i tuoi desiri.  
 Perche dunque sospiri?  
 Qual altro piacer brami, ò qual riposo  
 di sì dolce fatica  
 ne l’ombre oscure de la notte amica?  
 È tua sposo felice  
 duro custode il passo,  
 legge, ò vergona, e l’uscio à te non erra.  
 Ire, e tornar ti lice,  
 ne trovi al piè già lasso  
 più caro albergo, ò più sicuro in terra,  
 sia pace, ò crudel guerra,  
 il ciel sereno, ò fosco,  
 e crollin ferì spirti  
 in mar le navi, e i mirti,  
 e i pini, e i faggi ne l’ombroso bosco,  
 godila dunque in tanto  
 e loda tu la notte, il giorno io canto.

This last line allows the poet to reference his own “song” that will ornament Ercole and Lelia’s marriage with “beauty,” “kindness,” and “honesty,” as well as provide remedy for Ercole’s potentially wavering second thoughts either about marriage or women, or both:

Io canto il di, ch’aggiunge  
bellezza, e cortesia,  
honestade, e valor con dolci modi.  
E fò sonar più lunge  
l’alma tua stirpe, e mia,  
a cui tu cresci belle, e chiare lodi.  
E mentre leggi, e odi  
il merto di tuo padre,  
e le virtù, e i pregi,  
de cavalieri egregi,  
e l’opre lor si conte, e sì leggiadre,  
ne rinovi l’esempio,  
e rende gratie il tuo fratello al tempio.  
Nascan figli, e Nepoti al nostro Alcide,  
E fra le schiere, e l’armi  
cantino i nostri carmi.

The final tercet echoes the concluding considerations on marriage and the family legacies that children perpetuate for their ancestors in the *Lettera sul matrimonio*. Similarly, in the *canzone* that celebrates the Grand Duke Francesco I de’ Medici’s (1541–1587) marriage to Bianca Cappello in 1578 (*Onde sonar d’Italia intorno i monti*), the final image is that of Francesco and Bianca’s future children: “Vivan felici adonque,/ e dian figli e nepoti al Tosco impero,/ e premio alla virtù, e luce al vero.”

After the series of compositions dedicated to noble marriages, the final two canzoni in the *Seconda parte* (*Caro à gli egri mortali il lucido auro* and *Come nel fare il Cielo il fabbro eterno*) are dedicated to the Duchess of Mantua, Eleonora Gonzaga, to whom Tasso expresses profound gratitude for her protection and “pietà” that “shielded and covered” him. In many ways, these two dedications summarize the *Seconda parte*’s leading messages concerning the relationship between women’s virtues, male poetic and artistic production, and the potential equality between wives and husbands. In this final respect, the *Seconda parte*’s last words speak to how the reciprocal glories of Eleonora’s husband and house will reflect honor back onto her:

’l Signor vostro in fu’l fiorir de gli anni  
ne l’oriente del suo di sereno,  
non sol vi porta in seno,  
mà nel cor vi tien viva, e’n mezzo à l’alma.  
E cresce il vostro amor senza veneno,  
senz’ire, senza liti, ò senza affanni,  
batte fra tanto i vanni  
la vostra fama gloriosa, [e] alma,  
voi d’honestate, ei di valor la palma  
hà frà mill’altri, ei legge, ò canta, ò srive  
leggiadri versi, ò d’honorata polve  
sparso, gli alti destrieri ei frena, e volve,

da mover guerra à l'Africane rive:  
 e mentre in pace hor vive  
 d'armi coperto il porteria su'l dorso  
 vincendo i venti al corso,  
 tal ch'insieme può far l'impres illustri,  
 et historia di se per mille lustri.  
 Così ei diviene eterno, e voi nel figlio  
 perpetuo il fate, e la real sembianza  
 vi da gloria, e speranza,  
 che sia stirpe immortal de figli vostri,  
 e dovunque volgete intorno il ciglio,  
 vedete come giunto in un s'avanza  
 il senno, e la possanza,  
 e si loda il valor con puri inchiostri

As this final set of verses suggests, just as marriage unites and reflects the virtues of husbands and their wives, so too do children mirror the virtues of their parents. It is through this continuity—from individual man and individual woman, to the “hermaphroditic” figure born out of marriage, to the birth of a child—that the equality between men and women may permeate generations of family legacies, and thus spread throughout “historia.”

#### COLLECTIVITY CONTINUED IN THE *TEMPIO* FOR FLAVIA ORSINA

To summon matters together, the Platonic key that dominates much of the *Seconda parte*'s reflections on women appears as the same final lens through which both the *Discorso della virtù femminile e donnesca* and the *esposizione* of the “catena” conclude in their considerations of women's “virtù cristiana.” After having counted prudence, honesty, liberality, chastity, hospitality, kindness, dignity, majesty, modesty, and temperance among women's finest virtues, the *Discorso* and the “catena” close by calling attention to Christian virtue: “sopra tutte le virtù morali, e intellettuali sono come piace à Platone la fede, e la religione, e la pietà: ma il Poeta nomina solamente la religione e la pietà, quasi la fede sia compresa ne la religione.” The *esposizione*'s final reconciliation of Neoplatonism with Christian virtue appears to be in line with the developing tendency during the Counter-Reformation to see women as exemplars of Christian piety, especially for men.<sup>139</sup>

In the *Seconda parte*, Tasso represents women as the models of Christian piety by depicting chastity—ostensibly sought in all woman, not only those capable of “heroic” or “womanly” virtue—as a kind of temple, which preserves women's faith, promises, and purity.<sup>140</sup> Indeed, a woman's “tempio” is, for Tasso, a recurring theme in his late poetry and an important metaphor whereby to celebrate individual women's virtues. The *Tempio fabricato da diversi coltissimi et nobilissimi ingegni in lode [di] Donna Flavia Peretta Orsina, Duchessa di Bracciano* (1591) is a volume of encomiastic poetry to which

<sup>139</sup> Cf. Virginia Cox, *The Prodigious Muse: Women's Writing in Counter-Reformation Italy* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011). A contemporary influence on Tasso's ideas about Christian women may have been Agostino Valier's (1530–1606) *Istituzione d'ogni stato lodevole delle donne cristiane* (1575).

<sup>140</sup> For this formulation, see the *esposizione de l'autore* to the sonnet *Tolse Barbara gente il pregio à Roma*.

multiple authors—now of both sexes—contributed encomiastic verse, and for which Tasso served as a primary architect.<sup>141</sup>

While Tasso was preparing the *Seconda parte* for publication, the poet was simultaneously involved in this large encomiastic project in praise of Flavia Peretta Orsina, wife of Virginio Orsino (1572–1615), and the Duchess of Bracciano. Similar to the Marchetti volume, the *Tempio* to Flavia imagines an active reading audience: the Duchess, who may enjoy the poetic compositions penned by Italy's finest poets. The 1591 anthology includes, as was typical at the time, the work of both well-known and lesser Roman poets, as well as a series of anonymous poems. Importantly, however, the *Tempio* includes among its authors a female poet, Antonia Doni, whose composition for Flavia is a sonnet titled *Vieni, vieni Himeneo*.<sup>142</sup> Unlike the case of Livia Spinola in the *Seconda parte*, there is no direct reference to a poetic exchange between Antonia Doni and Tasso. Tasso's presumed encouragement of Doni's lyric participation in the collective *Tempio* opens encomiastic activity to the contributions by women writers. As the organizer of this volume, Tasso's inclusion of women's verses in the celebration of a female patron recalls earlier examples of collective *Tempi*, to which female poets such as Gaspara Stampa and Laura Terracina had contributed.<sup>143</sup> That Tasso's own encomiastic verses appear in a volume of Roman poets speaks to his end-of-career attachment to the city, its years of regeneration and splendor, and the generous papal patron, Cinzio Aldobrandini (1551–1610), who welcomed Tasso into intimate literary circles with other artists, poets, and intellectuals.<sup>144</sup>

Tasso's participation in the 360-page collection—in which he adopts the pseudonym “Uranio fenice”<sup>145</sup>—may have been motivated by Flavia's relationship to Pope Sixtus V Peretti (1521–1590), the noblewoman's uncle.<sup>146</sup> The dedicatory letter to Flavia, signed by “Uranio Fenice” recalls his service to the Peretti and Aldobrandini families:

<sup>141</sup> *Tempio fabricato da diversi coltissimi et nobilissimi ingegni in lode [di] Donna Flavia Peretta Orsina, Duchessa di Bracciano* (Rome: Martinello, 1591). Among the precedents to Orsina's *Tempio* printed earlier in the sixteenth century, including *Il Tempio della divina Signora Giovanna d'Aragona* (Venice: Girolamo Ruscelli, 1555), which includes poetic texts in four languages, and *Il tempio della divina donna Geronima Colonna d'Aragona* (Padua: Lorenzo Pasquati, 1568). Not long after the *Tempio* to Flavia Orsina appeared in 1591, Giovanni Giovenale Ancina's *Tempio armonico della beatissima Vergina N[ostra] S[ignora]* appeared in Rome in 1599 by Niccolò Muzi, indicating that the *Tempio* genre was not limited to secular subjects.

<sup>142</sup> Doni had also contributed verses to the 1589 *Raccolta d'orationi e di rime di diversi...nella morte dell'illustrissimo e reverendissimo Cardinal Farnese* (Rome: Francesco Coattini, 1589).

<sup>143</sup> Stampa and Terracina were among the authors who composed verses for the 1555 *Tempio* for Giovanna d'Aragona. On Stampa's involvement in this *Tempio*, see William J. Kennedy, “Writing as a Pro: Gaspara Stampa and the Men in her *Rime*,” in *Rethinking Gaspara Stampa in the Canon of Renaissance Poetry*, eds. Unn Falkeid and Aileen A. Feng (New York: Routledge, 2015), 137–56.

<sup>144</sup> The *Tempio* to Orsina was not the only occasion on which Tasso was involved in the production of a *Tempio*. The poet's lyric dedications to Cinzio Aldobrandini, his final patron in Rome at the end of his life, appear in the *Tempio all'illustrissimo et reverendissimo Signor Cinthio Aldobrandini Cardinale S. Giorgio. Nipote del sommo pontefice Clemente Ottavo* (Bologna: the heirs of Giovanni Rossi, 1600). It is not clear, however, that Tasso played any part in the design of this anthology, for he died five years prior to its realization in print. To compare, see also the *Nuovo tempio di verità e via di vita, fabricato dal sig. Torquato Tasso, [e] da più altri eccellenti autori* (Rimini: Giovanni Simbeni, 1592). More research is required to assess whether Tasso had a role in overseeing this volume.

<sup>145</sup> The identification of “Uranio fenice” with Tasso emerges in the volume's *tavola* of names and incipits, which lists that Tasso/Uranio fenice contributed six sonnets and a *canzone*. Maria Pia Mussini Sacchi has suggested that “con ogni probabilità sono suoi anche il distico posto sotto il ritratto di Donna Flavia che è sul principio del volume [...] e l'ottava che segue alla dedicatoria firmata da Uranio: ‘Da questo altero, e glorioso tempio,/ per opra alzato di sublimi ingegni,/ al nome di Colei, che senza esempio/ di terrene bellezze avanza i segni,/ ogni basso pensier, profano ed empio/ sia lungi sempre, e sol v'alberghi e regni,/ con bellissimo Amor, somma honestate,/ valore e cortesia, gratia e beltate,’” in “Tasso e il *Tempio* in lode di Flavia Orsina: Prima ricognizione,” in *Sul Tasso*, 511–31. Cf. Solerti, *Vita di Tasso*, 1:692–93.

<sup>146</sup> For the presence of Pope Sixtus V in the *Tempio*, see Sacchi, “Tasso e il *Tempio*,” 516 n. 15. On other social-historical factors that informed the production of this collection, see Yven Losukoff, “Genèse et symbolique du *Tempio* réuni par Torquato Tasso pour Flavia Peretti, Duchesse de Bracciano (1591),” in *Studi tassiani* (2008): 123–32.

Le Bellezze, e il valore di V. Eccellenza, che risplende d'altissima parte, quasi in un Teatro d'Italia ha' mossi i migliori ingegni di questa età a' contemplare le sue virtù [...] L'hanno dunque lodata in molti modi, in varii componimenti, [e] con diverso artificio di poetare; ma' col fine istesso di consacrare il suo nome a' l'eternità [...] Et, io, come più ardito de gli altri, [e] come devotissimo, [e] affettionatissimo Servitore dell'Illustrissima sua Casa, presento queste rime a' Vostra Eccellenza.

Of Tasso's poetry included in the anthology that address Flavia, readers find a series of madrigals based on the metaphor of the temple, and an epithalamium dedicated to the Orsini couple, whose family crests appear enjoined at the top of the volume's frontispiece. In a similar way to how Tasso's *Seconda parte* recognizes and celebrates the work of male artists like Giovan Paolo Oliva, Filippo Paladini, and Tomaso Garzoni, other poets in the *Tempio* admire Tasso as the excellent poet of works like the *Liberata*, as well as for his venerable praise of women. In this respect, two sonnets in the *Tempio* attributed to Matteo Chieli—*Tasso, qual generosa aquila toglie* and *Tasso, pregio maggior del vago monte*—praise in immediate succession the “sublime” poet, his praise of Flavia, and the noblewomen's virtues.<sup>147</sup> Tasso as the “Saggio Scrittore” appears throughout the anthology, sometimes with explicit references to the opening lines of his *Liberata* and *Conquistata*,<sup>148</sup> as well as to his dedications to Flavia in the volume itself:

Saggio Scrittore, che 'l Cavalier pietoso  
cantasti e l'opre vincitrici e belle  
che trassero di mano al fier Babelle  
quel tempio a Dio sì caro e sì famoso,  
canta ora tu di Flavia l'amoroso  
viso, il leggiadro portamento, e quelle  
chiare luci d'amor, lucenti stelle,  
che danno a l'alme, ai cor, vita e riposo.  
Giunge al valor primier quest'altro merto;  
ragione è ben che lo tuo stil s'adopri  
in cosa ancho d'Amor sì altera e nova.  
Hai del bel Monte ogni sentiero aperto,  
le sacre dive amiche. Hor tu discopri  
tua forza qui, in qui l'ardir rinnova.

Chieli's verses pay homage to the poet of the *Liberata* and its representation of the “tempio di Dio,” who may now “giunge al valor primier” this new *Tempio* of encomiastic verse. The *Tempio*'s

<sup>147</sup> Chieli's first sonnet reads in full: “Tasso, qual generosa aquila toglie/ dal nido e col suo volo al caro lume/ del sole i pigli porta, che di piume/ non ammantano ancor le nude spoglie,/ tal già per te sormonta, e là s'accoglie/ Flavia tenera ancor, dove s'allume/ d'un bel raggio di gloria, ond'ogni lume/ n'abbagli, ch'a mirarla unque s'invoglie./ Ella è ben degna sol, dove s'impieghi/ di te sì glorioso al secol nostro/ l'aurea lingua, il suon colto e i dolci carmi./ E ben degno sei tu, cui non si neghi/ oprare a gloria sua l'arte e l'inchostro,/ sì ch'eterna sia più che 'n bronzi e in marmi.” The poet's second sonnet in praise of Tasso reads: “Tasso, pregio maggior del vago monte,/ ov'han le Muse albergo, e sacro cigno/ sublime, a cui sol diede il Ciel benigno/ di poesia inestinguibil fonte,/ mentre berzaglio al fero sdegno, a l'onte/ son di sventura, e 'l Cielo atro e sanguigno/ mi si mostra, e 'l latrar d'empio e maligno/ chinare mi fa la dolorosa fronte,/ m'invita altri ch'io canti e spieghi in carte/ la celeste beltà di lei, ch'al Tebro/ splendi, di Flavia, honor de' sette colli./ Ma che posso far io languido ed ebro/ di doglia? ah, perché al ciel tu non l'estolli,/ altero mostro di natura ed arte?”

<sup>148</sup> The first line of the sonnet, “Saggio Scrittore, che 'l Cavalier pietoso,” recalls images from the first line of the *Liberata* (“Canto l'arme pietose e 'l capitano”) and the first line of the *Conquistata* (“Io canto l'arme e 'l cavalier sovrano”).

multifaceted purpose is to praise the Orsina noblewoman, celebrate the finest poet who dedicates his verses to her, and recognize the community of artists he has gathered together in her honor.

Given that Tasso organized both the *Tempio* for Flavia Orsina and the *Seconda parte* around the same year,<sup>149</sup> similarities resound across these texts in their representations of collective praise, represented in the *Tempio* by the multiple authors who praise both Flavia and Tasso's praise of her, and in the *Seconda parte* by the references to other male artists and poets who praise women. It would appear that Tasso's organization of one volume shaped that of the other, insofar as both collections are crafted with an eye towards encomiastic production both from within and above. This metapoetic vision, from the individual's perspective to that of the group, reflects in the poet's awareness of the collective influence of artistic voices. By recognizing the group efforts and collaborative projects needed to preserve and champion women's reputations, Tasso's encomiastic volumes of collective authorship communicate not only significant revisions to the poet's earlier works, but the extra-textual motivations at play that concern women and the circulation of their praise, as well as the men who contribute to it in art and verse.

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<sup>149</sup> Solerti dates Tasso's work on the *Tempio* to just before Flavia and Virginio Orsini's marriage in 1589, in *Vita di Tasso*, 1:634.

## CHAPTER THREE

### *Amore armonizzato:*

#### Tasso and Musical Women, Embodied and Envoiced

For the 1583 marriage between Laura Peperara, the celebrated singer and harpist of Ferrara's *concerto delle dame*, and Annibale Turco, poets and composers of northern Italy collaborated in designing a two-part musical-poetic wedding gift: a book of madrigals titled *Lauro secco* (1582), and its sequel the following year, *Lauro verde* (1583).<sup>1</sup> As one of the orchestrators of this project, Tasso partially oversaw the construction and narrative arrangement of the volumes' poetic texts, whereby a Petrarchan narrator recounts his experience of unrequited love in *Lauro secco*, and then converts to a more objective happiness for his beloved's choice of another partner in *Lauro verde*. The concluding image of the beloved in the *Lauro* anthologies poetically figures Peperara as the triumphantly inspiring "laura verde" herself. This narrative, which allows lovers and beloveds alike to overcome the limits of Petrarchan lyric imprisonment, reflects in Tasso's commitment to composing poetry that, as illustrated in the two previous chapters, replaces abstract representations of heartless women and the heartbroken men they leave behind with a less emotionally charged evaluation of women as historical subjects. The women of Tasso's poetic interests from the 1580s on contribute positively—through poetry, patronage or, in Peperara's case, performance—to contemporary society. Concerning Tasso's praise of musical women, the figure of Laura Peperara herself represents the embodiment of this transformation of style and content.<sup>2</sup> Two decades before the publication of her wedding gift, Peperara had been the recipient of a love *canzoniere* by Tasso—a complete and organized collection of poems addressed solely to her—wherein the poet-narrator adopts the traditional gender-based "ideologies," to use Ann Rosalind Jones's term, that give shape to Petrarchan imagery.<sup>3</sup> Accordingly, Laura Peperara emerges in that volume as a clearly Petrarchan Laura. This cold-blooded figure rejects the narrator's amorous advances, and anticipates her re-appearance in similarly unforgiving representational light in the madrigal anthology *Lauro secco*. The sequel *Lauro verde*, however, restores the figure of the Laura

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<sup>1</sup> This chapter is dedicated to the memory of Anthony Newcomb (1941–2018), without whose caring mentorship on Tasso and the musical women of Ferrara would have left these pages unwritten. Newcomb's illuminating work on the *concerto delle dame* is the guiding light for much of the material discussed herein. Among his many scholarly contributions to the subject, see especially: "The Three Anthologies for Laura Peperara, 1580–1583," *Rivista Italiana di Musicologia* 10 (1975): 329–45; *The Madrigal at Ferrara 1579–1597*, 2 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980); "Courtesans, Muses, or Musicians? Professional Women Musicians in Sixteenth-Century Italy," in *Women Making Music: The Western Art Tradition, 1150–1950*, eds. Jane Bowers and Judith Tick (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 90–115.

<sup>2</sup> For detailed studies of Peperara and the other members of the *concerto* in Ferrara, see Charles Castleman, "Three Musical *Virtuose* di Ferrara: Lucrezia Bendidio, Laura Peperara and Tarquinia Molza," *Anuario Musicale* 23 (1968): 1–8; Elio Durante and Anna Martellotti, "Tasso, Luzzaschi e il Principe di Venosa," in *Tasso, la musica, i musicisti*, eds. Maria Balsano and Thomas Walker (Florence: Olschki, 1988), 17–44; Id., *Cronistoria del Concerto delle Dame principalissime di Margherita Gonzaga d'Este* (Florence: S.P.E.S., 1989); Id., "Il cavalier Guarini e il Concerto delle Dame," in *Guarini, la musica, i musicisti*, ed. Angelo Pompilio (Lucca: Libreria Musicale Italiana Editrice, 1997), 91–132; Id., *Madrigali segreti per le dame di Ferrara: il manoscritto musicale F. 1358 della Biblioteca Estense di Modena* (Florence: S.P.E.S., 2000); Irma B. Jaffe, *Shining Eyes, Cruel Fortune: The Lives and Loves of Italian Renaissance Women Poets* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002); Durante and Martellotti, *Giovinetta peregrina: La vera storia di Laura Peperara e Torquato Tasso* (Florence: Olschki, 2010); Laurie Stras, *Women and Music in Sixteenth-Century Ferrara* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

<sup>3</sup> Ann Rosalind Jones, *The Currency of Eros: Women's Love Lyric in Europe, 1540–1620* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990). For other critical overviews of the Petrarchan love lyric tradition, see chapter one, n. 8.

beloved from a frontrunner in the “*donna crudele*” tradition to a benevolent muse who sits atop a pastoral triumphal chariot, a figure herself of Tasso’s restored poetry.<sup>4</sup>

Such a thematic and conceptual transformation—from embittered love to humbled acceptance—exemplifies in verse the ideas expressed in Tasso’s dialogue on love, *La Molza overo de l’amore*, written in 1583 and published in 1586.<sup>5</sup> Like the figure of Peperara in *Lauro verde*, the female protagonist of Tasso’s love dialogue, Tarquinia Molza, along with the ensemble of female musicians who accompany her, are represented as *non-beloveds*.<sup>6</sup> As “*nemiche d’amore*,” in a philosophical sense, *La Molza*’s women do not appear as such because they exhibit real or imagined “*sdegno*” towards men, but because they require convincing, having grown tired of male poets’ labors in painting women as insensitive creatures. *La Molza* demands that Tasso write a “*nuova diffinizione di quel che sia l’amore*” that accounts for women’s equal experience of love. By casting Tarquinia in the dialogue’s title role, as the emblem of “new” love, *La Molza* acknowledges that women not only contribute to courtly conversations, as they had since Bembo and Castiglione, but now “command” them with eloquent authority.<sup>7</sup> In the dialogue and elsewhere, Tasso engages with Molza’s reputation as a highly cultured woman, so that he may revise elements of the love treatise tradition and modify the tendency in male-authored lyric poetry to represent voiceless, nearly non-existent women.<sup>8</sup>

#### “ECCO TARQUINIA VIENE, AMOR S’APPRESSA”: TARQUINIA MOLZA AS LOVE’S MUSICAL MUSE

Respected for her musical talents and erudition, Tarquinia Molza enjoyed a prolific career as a multilingual poet and *virtuosa* who, from 1583 to 1589, participated in Ferrara’s *concerto delle dame*.<sup>9</sup> As Newcomb has indicated, there is no definitive evidence that Molza was a performer *per se* with the *concerto*, but she was an instructor for its three most famous singers, Laura Peperara, Livia d’Arco

<sup>4</sup> I thank Henrike Christiane Lange for her thoughtful interaction with me on the *Lauro* anthologies and the vision of Laura Peperara as a triumphal subject therein.

<sup>5</sup> Tasso, *La Molza overo de l’amore* (Milan: Pietro Tini, 1586). On Tasso’s “art of dialogue,” see Guido Baldassarri, “L’arte del dialogo in Torquato Tasso,” *Studi tassiani* 20 (1970): 5–46; Sergio Bozzola, *Purità e ornamento di parole: Tecnica e stile dei Dialoghi del Tasso* (Florence: Accademia della Crusca, 1999); Stefano Prandi, *Scritture al crocevia: Il dialogo letterario nei secc. XV e XVI* (Vercelli: Mercurio, 1999). See also the poet’s own treatise *Dell’arte del dialogo* (1586) in Torquato Tasso, *Dell’arte del dialogo*, ed. Guido Baldassarri (Naples: Liguori, 1998).

<sup>6</sup> I agree with Solerti’s suggestion that there is no reason to believe that Tasso regarded Tarquinia Molza with amorous affection: “Non credo [...] che il Tasso, nelle condizioni d’animo in cui si trovava, pensasse minimamente a innamorarsi della Molza e ne manca qualsiasi prova,” in Solerti, *Vita di Torquato Tasso*, 3 vols. (Rome-Turin: Loescher, 1895), 1:253. For different readings that insist upon a sentimental relationship between the two, see Carlo Malmusi, *Delle relazioni di amicizia e di affetto tra Tarquinia Molza e Torquato Tasso: Nota accademica letta 20 febbraio 1862* (Modena, 1862); Jaffe, *Shining Eyes*. On Molza’s life and career, see J. M. Riley, “Tarquinia Molza (1542–1617): A Case Study of Women, Music, and Society in the Renaissance,” in *The Musical Women: an International Perspective*, ed. Jane Gottlieb Zaimont (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), 470–92; Id., *The Influence of Women on Secular Vocal Music in Sixteenth-Century Italy: the Life and Career of Tarquinia Molza (1542–1617)*, M.A. Thesis (Middletown: Wesleyan University, 1980).

<sup>7</sup> Bembo’s *Gli Asolani* (1505) is the first published dialogue to represent female interlocutors. For a history and keen analysis of female speakers in this genre, see Virginia Cox, “The Female Voice in Italian Renaissance Dialogue,” *MLN* 128, no. 1 (2013): 53–78. For the larger contexts of the early modern dialogue tradition, see Peter Burke, *The Art of Conversation* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993); Cox, *The Renaissance Dialogue: Literary Dialogue in its Social and Political Contexts*, Castiglione to Galileo (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Dorothea Heitsch and Jean François Vallée, eds., *Printed Voices: The Renaissance Culture of Dialogue* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004).

<sup>8</sup> There is a documented record of Tarquinia’s performance of Petrarch’s poetry. See Laurie Stras, “Recording Tarquinia: Imitation, Parody and Reportage in Ingegneri’s *Hor che ’l ciel e la terra e ’l vento tace*,” *Early Music* 27, no. 3 (1999): 358–77.

<sup>9</sup> Newcomb, “Courtesans, Muses, or Musicians?”

(c.1565–1611), and Anna Guarini (1563–1598), the daughter of Giovanni Battista. Having received the majority of her education from her tutor Francesco Patrizi (1529–1597), Molza knew and composed poetry in Italian, Latin, and Greek.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, much of what is currently known about Molza's life draws from Patrizi's encomia of her in the four dialogues on love in *L'amorosa filosofia*, which cast Tarquinia as an interlocutor.<sup>11</sup> In the first dialogue, which constitutes roughly half of the manuscript, Patrizi offers a pseudo-biography of "divina" and "unica Molza," anticipating the title she would receive upon becoming an honorary citizen of Rome decades later. Patrizi's representation of Tarquinia and the thematic weight given to her articulation of philosophies about love constitute the most immediate point of reference and comparison for what Tasso would respond to in his *La Molza*, written six years after *L'amorosa filosofia*. As a way of emphasizing Tarquinia's independently acquired education, Tasso composed the sonnet *L'alto vostro sapere in dotte carte*, which celebrates her "divine" intellect that transcends that of her male supervisors, potentially referencing Patrizi as the sonnet's "uom lodato e saggio."<sup>12</sup>

Patrizi's dialogue, written while Molza was still married and residing in Modena, does not sustain equal and unqualified praise of its female protagonist. Its representation of Tarquinia is rather ambiguous, for it vacillates between admiration of her intellectual talents and reproach for her apparent philosophical fallibilities. While Molza's fully positive representation as a speaker in Annibale Romei's (c.1523–1590) *Discorso* on beauty (1582) celebrates her "raro e pellegrino ingegno," Patrizi's dialogue adopts a considerably less lucid approach.<sup>13</sup> The beginning of *L'amorosa filosofia* abounds with glowing encomium of Tarquinia's hybrid corporality that bridges the natural and the supernatural, labelling her Orphic-like music making in the following terms:

ella con la soavità della sua voce angelica, mossa da tante, si può dire, deità che sono nello spirito, nella gola, nella lingua e nelle labra sue, onde piove negli animi nostra virtù, onde si crieno sempre pensieri, atti e parole, che in noi fanno una vaga e dolce primavera.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Molza translated Plato's *Charmides* and *Crito* from Greek. For multilingualism in her poetry, see her *Felsina clara virum ingenii, et clarior almae*, written in both Latin and Greek, which appears in the 1601 lyric anthology, edited by Giulio Segni, *Componimenti poetici volgari, latini, e greci di diversi sopra la s[anta] imagine della beata Vergine* (Bologna: Vittorio Benacci, 1601). The poem is reprinted in Virginia Cox, *Lyric Poetry by Women of the Italian Renaissance* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013), 249. See also her encomiastic poems written for Marcus Condaratus for the 1593 publication in Padua of his *De bono universi liber*, as well as her poem *Te celebrat, Cynthi, virtute insignis, et Ostro* in praise of Cinzio Aldobrandini, included in the *Tempio* dedicated to him (Bologna: the heirs of Giovanni Rossi, 1600). These poems are reprinted in chapters 27 through 30 of the volume *Lirici europei del Cinquecento: Ripensando la poesia del Petrarca*, eds. Gian Mario Anselmi, Keir Elam, Giorgio Forni, and Davide Monda (Milan: BUR, 2004). On Molza's education by Patrizi, see Maria Giovanna Cavallari, "L'insegnamento del Patrizi in alcuni madrigali di Tarquinia Molza," in *Francesco Patrizi: Filosofo platonico nel crepuscolo del Rinascimento*, ed. Patrizia Castelli (Florence: Olschki, 2002), 129–38. On women's education in Latin more broadly, see Marilyn Bailey Ogilvie, *Women in Science: Antiquity through the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1986); Jane Stevenson, *Women Latin Poets: Language, Gender, and Authority, from Antiquity to the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

<sup>11</sup> Patrizi's *L'amorosa filosofia* first appeared in print in 1963, after the discovery of the 1577 manuscript (ms. cod. Pal. 418 in the Biblioteca Palatina di Parma). See Francesco Patrizi, *L'amorosa filosofia*, ed. John Charles Nelson (Florence: Le Monnier, 1963).

<sup>12</sup> Tasso's madrigal *Mostra la verde terra* dedicated to Tarquinia makes explicit reference to her "colte rime," suggesting that he knew and read her poetry. For an encomiastic poem dedicated to Tarquinia, but concentrated on her physical appearance, rather than on her education, see Tasso's *Nova Fortuna a la crinita fronte*. On other factors pertinent to Tasso and Patrizi's intellectual relationship, see Micaela Rinaldi, *Torquato Tasso e Francesco Patrizi tra polemiche letterarie e incontri intellettuali* (Ravenna: Longo, 2001).

<sup>13</sup> Annibale Romei, *Discorsi* (Venice: Francesco Ziletti, 1585).

<sup>14</sup> Patrizi, *L'amorosa filosofia*, 36. For critical consideration of Patrizi's representation of Molza's music making, see Christopher Uffers, "A Study of the Musical Influence of Tarquinia Molza on Patrizi's *L'amorosa filosofia*," in *Francesco*

The representation of Tarquinia's harmonious, "angelic" voice does not last very long in Patrizi's text, nor does its ability to persuade effectively.

At the end of the last dialogue, Paolo Porrino, Tarquinia's husband, hears his wife's philosophy on self-love, which he interrupts through bursts of laughter and violent disapproval.<sup>15</sup> Criticizing his wife's "silly trifles," Paolo begins to convince Patrizi of principles that stand in direct opposition to those Tarquinia had suggested just moments before. The men's disapproval of Tarquinia's "nonsensical" ideas reshapes her from a figure of authority to one of ridicule. These closing pages of *L'amorosa filosofia* leave Tarquinia feeling chagrined that her philosophies have been misinterpreted as a joke. If Patrizi's text on one page praises Tarquinia for her talents as a "musica singularissima," the dialogue puts into question the soundness of the singer's intellect. While elsewhere in his writings Patrizi maintains that Tarquinia deserves canonical poetic status alongside figures like Ariosto, Tasso, and Guarini, the way in which her opinion falls short of men's approval in *L'amorosa filosofia* forges a contradictory distinction between Tarquinia's artistic talent and the capabilities of her mind.<sup>16</sup> These ambiguities and methods of marking Tarquinia as an abstract muse, rather than an intellectual collaborator, will prove to be essential for Tasso's fully positive representation of his female protagonist in the "new" definition of love he authors in *La Molza*, ostensibly upon Tarquinia's "own" request.

While male authors squabbled over Tarquinia's authority on love in their works, there is not enough evidence to conclude that she ever wrote extensively on the subject. There remain samples of her lyric poetry, but not a published *canzoniere*, much less a philosophical treatise. In comparison with earlier Cinquecento models of "exemplary" wifely devotion, such as Vittoria Colonna,<sup>17</sup> the choice of Tarquinia as the speaking emblem of love, especially after her husband's death in 1579, is a revealing one.<sup>18</sup> Unlike Colonna, Molza did not dedicate her artistic career to mourning the loss of her husband. By distancing herself from the tradition practiced by poetically talented widows, in which devotion to the husband's memory manifests itself publicly in print, Tarquinia does not mirror Colonna in her exemplarity as a firmly chaste and deeply religious woman.<sup>19</sup> On the contrary, upon arriving in Ferrara,

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Patrizi, 139–64; Jacomien Prins, *Echoes of an Invisible World: Marsilio Ficino and Francesco Patrizi on Cosmic Order and Music Theory* (London: Brill, 2015), 384. On Patrizi's revisions to neo-Platonic ideas about love, see Cesare Vasoli, "L'amorosa filosofia di Francesco Patrizi e la dissoluzione del mito platonico dell'amore," *Rivista di Storia della Filosofia* 43, no. 3 (1988): 419–41.

<sup>15</sup> Earlier in the sixteenth century, Mario Equicola (c.1470–1525) had expressed the opinion that all kinds of love are but aspects of self-love, in his *Libro di natura d'amore* (Venice: Alessandro Bindoni and Maffeo Pasini, 1531).

<sup>16</sup> In his *Della poetica*, Patrizi writes: "Qui similmente se non rinacque fu al rinascere vicina la lirica Latina per Ercole e Tito Strozzi, e la toscana per l'Ariosto, ed ora con tanta felicità vi fiorisce nel Cavaliere Battista Guarino e in Torquato Tasso e in Tarquinia Molza e in tanta altra gioventù, che di sé ben tosto spargerà il grido." See Francesco Patrizi, *Della Poetica*, ed. Danilo Aguzzi Barbagli, 3 vols. (Florence: Istituto Nazionale di Studi sul Rinascimento, 1969–1971), 1:4.

<sup>17</sup> On Colonna as an exemplary model, see Virginia Cox, "The Exemplary Vittoria Colonna," in *A Companion to Vittoria Colonna*, eds. Abigail Brundin, Tatiana Crivelli Spetiale and Maria Serena Sapegno (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 467–502. Like Colonna's "divine" status, conferred onto her by contemporary admirers such as Bembo, Ariosto, and Michelangelo, *L'amorosa filosofia* labels Tarquinia as "divina Tarquinia." For Ariosto's eulogy of Colonna as not only the finest woman poet of her time, but the model of chaste widowhood, whose poetic purpose was to immortalize her husband, see canto 37.16–20 in the third edition of *Orlando Furioso*. As Cox has shown, Ariosto's now-famous encomium was added in gratitude for the large pension that Alfonso d'Avalos, the nephew of Colonna's husband, gave to the poet in 1531. See Cox, *Women's Writing*, 67.

<sup>18</sup> For Tarquinia's poetry on Paolo's death, see the sonnet *Dopo l'aspra partita, in gran dolore* and the madrigal *Qual vite al campo sola* in Tarquinia Molza, *Opusculi inediti* (Bergamo: Pietro Lancellotti, 1750).

<sup>19</sup> In Colonna's case, her earliest poetry from 1512 makes reference to her husband's absence, thus marking the beginning of her poetic self-fashioning as a woman longing for her husband's return. Similar themes appear in the first print publication of her *Rime* (Venice: Giovanni Marco Salvioni, 1539). On Colonna's poetic self-portrayal and her relationship to her husband, see Virginia Cox, "Women Writers and the Canon in Sixteenth-Century Italy: the Case of Vittoria Colonna," in *Strong Voices, Weak History: Women Writers and Canons in Early Modern Europe*, eds. Pamela Benson and Victoria Kirkham (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005), 14–31; Abigail Brundin, *Vittoria Colonna and the Spiritual Poetics*

Tarquinia quickly took to new love with Giaches de Wert (1535–1596), the Franco-Flemish composer and *maestro di cappella* in Mantua. Fearing that public scandal, however, would arise from a widowed employee involved in a second relationship, Alfonso II d'Este, who was instrumental in first bringing Tarquinia to Ferrara, demanded that Molza end her affair and leave the city permanently in 1589.<sup>20</sup>

Although her forced departure from the Este court would result favorably eleven years later in Tarquinia receiving honorary citizenship in Rome and the title of “Unica”—the only woman known to have received such an honor—her immediate Ferrarese context as an independent woman known for her reinvigorated amorous flame is that which informed Tasso’s representation of her as an expert theorist on, and seasoned practitioner of, love.<sup>21</sup> Tasso’s dialogue *La Molza overo de l’amore* exhibits a certain sensitivity to women’s active reception of men’s ideas about love.<sup>22</sup> In this regard, *La Molza* interacts with the *Dialogo de l’infinità de l’amore* (1547) by Tullia d’Aragona, who shared intimate relations with Tasso’s father Bernardo.<sup>23</sup> Although Bernardo does not appear as an interlocutor in Tullia’s dialogue, he is represented as a speaker alongside her—indeed with much to say about women—in

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of the Italian Reformation (New York: Routledge, 2008); Kenneth Gouwens, “Female Virtue and the Embodiment of Beauty: Vittoria Colonna in Paolo Giovio’s *Notable Men and Women*,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 68, no. 1 (2015): 33–97; Abigail Brundin, Tatiana Crivelli Spetiale, and Maria Serena Sapegno, eds., *A Companion to Vittoria Colonna* (Leiden: Brill, 2016); Ramie Targoff, *Renaissance Woman: The Life of Vittoria Colonna* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2018). On the public “performance” of Colonna’s chastity and the degree to which her private mourning rituals were celebrated in printed encomium, see Diana Robin, “The Breasts of Vittoria Colonna,” *California Italian Studies* 3, no. 1 (2012), available from <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/13f38850>, accessed on 19 February 2018.

<sup>20</sup> For Molza and Wert’s relationship, see the chapter “Tasso e Marfisa, Wert e Tarquinia: Simboli di amore non consumato o funesto,” in Sergio Cioldi, *Giaches de Wert (Wert-Anversa ca. 1535–Mantova 1596) nelle corti dei Gonzaga di Mantova* (Reggio Emilia: Deputazione di storia patria per le antiche provincie modenesi, 2004). Tasso’s sonnet for Tarquinia *Donna ben degna che per voi si cinga* recalls the occasion on which, for a jousting match, Duke Alfonso dressed in the Molza family colors, in order to honor her arrival at court. Among the first sonnets in the series of encomiastic lyric poetry included in the first publication of Molza’s literary works, these verses appear under the argument “Sopra una giostra mantenuta dal Duca di Ferrara per la Signora Tarquinia Molza,” along with Tasso’s *Nuova fortuna alla crinita fronte* and *Forse è cagion l’aurora*. See Molza, *Opusculi inediti*. The other poets included in this publication, who wrote lyric encomia for Molza, are Giuliano Goselini (1525–1587) and Livio Celiano (Angelo Grillo). In order to represent favorably her time in Ferrara, Tasso’s lyric encomia were later reprinted in Eugenio Camerini’s biography of Molza, in the anthology *Donne illustri* (Milan: Stabilimento F. Garbini, 1870).

<sup>21</sup> On the participation of early modern women in Italian academies, see Elisabetta Graziosi, “Arcadia femminile presenza e modelli,” *Filologia e critica* 17 (1992): 321–58; Conor Fahy, “Women and Italian Cinquecento Literary Academies,” in *Women in Italian Renaissance Culture and Society*, ed. Letizia Panizza (London: Routledge, 2000), 438–52; Alexandra Collier, “The Sienese Accademia degli Intronati and its Female Contributors,” *The Italianist* 26 (2006): 223–46; Konrad Eisenbichler, *The Sword and the Pen: Women, Politics and Poetry in Sixteenth-Century Siena* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2012); Jane Everson and Lisa Sampson, “L’Unica and the Others,” *The Times Literary Supplement* (April 2013): 14–15; Lisa Sampson, “Amateurs Meet Professionals: Theatrical Activities in Late Sixteenth-Century Italian Academies,” in *The Reinvention of Theatre in Sixteenth-Century Europe: Traditions, Texts and Performance*, eds. T. F. Earle and C. Fouto (New York: Routledge, 2015), 187–218; Virginia Cox, “Members, Muses, and Mascots: Women and the Italian Academies,” in *The Italian Academies, 1525–1700: Networks of Culture, Innovation, and Dissent*, eds. Jane Everson, Denis V. Reidy and Lisa Sampson (Cambridge and Abingdon: MHRA and Routledge, 2016), 132–67; Patrizia Bettella, “Women and the Academies in Seventeenth-Century Italy: Elena Lucrezia Cornaro Piscopia’s Role in Literary Academies,” *Italian Culture* 36, no. 2 (2018): 110–19. For broader contextualization of academies and their systems of communication across Italy, see Simone Testa, *Italian Academies and their Networks 1525–1700* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019).

<sup>22</sup> In Giambattista Manso’s *I paradossi overo de l’amore* (Milan: Girolamo Bordonì, 1608), the figure of Tasso appears as an expert on love, who recites key claims from his own 1586 dialogue.

<sup>23</sup> Tullia d’Aragona, “Dialogo della infinità di amore,” in *Trattati d’amore del cinquecento*, ed. Giuseppe Zonta (Bari: Laterza, 1912), 185–248. For more context on and thorough discussion of this dialogue, see Rinaldina Russell, “Introduction,” in Tullia d’Aragona, *Dialogue on the Infinity of Love*, ed. and trans. Rinaldina Russell and Bruce Merry (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 21–48. On the life, career, and other writings of Tullia, including her relationship to Speroni and Bernardo Tasso, see Julia L. Hairston, “Introduction” in Tullia d’Aragona, *The Poems and Letters of Tullia d’Aragona and Others*, ed. and trans. Julia L. Hairston (Toronto: Iter, 2014).

Sperone Speroni's (1500–1588) *Dialogo d'amore* (1540).<sup>24</sup> While these dialogues rehearse many of the long-debated questions posed in love treatises from the late Quattrocento and early Cinquecento, by such authors as Marsilio Ficino (1433–1499), Pietro Bembo, and Leone Ebreo (1464–1530),<sup>25</sup> they speak specifically to one another, for the former proposes significant revisions to the disapproving representations of women and love suggested by the latter.<sup>26</sup>

Speroni's *Dialogo* sets the literary historical precedent whereby a member of the Molza family is recognized as an authority on love. Tarquinia's grandfather, the libertine poet Francesco Maria Molza (1489–1544), is the figure upon whom Tullia relies in expressing her ideas about the incompatibility between love and reason in Speroni's text. As Reinier Leushuis has suggested, Francesco serves as the dialogue's "divine interlocutor" and "intermediary between the celestial and earthly realms."<sup>27</sup> It is worth noting, however, that in Tasso's case, his female protagonist from the Molza family does not echo the same passion-driven discourse articulated in the embedded conversation between Tullia and Francesco in Speroni's text. Similarly to how Tullia responded to Speroni's representation of women in love by drafting a dialogue of her own, Torquato Tasso uses his dialogue to make serious revisions both to his former considerations about women's experience of love, and to those articulated by the figure of his father in Speroni's text. Thus, the apologetic approach Torquato had assumed towards Bernardo's legacy, and especially in his defense of his poetry, ultimately fades so that he may update his considerations about women in love, and prepare them for an active female reading audience.<sup>28</sup>

Thirteen years before composing *La Molza*, however, and over the course of three days in Ferrara,<sup>29</sup> Tasso recited fifty "amorous conclusions" at the Este court, which relay familiar ideas regarding women's cruelty in love, and the insufferable pains women inflict upon their devoted male admirers. When prepared for publication in 1581, Tasso dedicated these "conclusions" to Ginevra Malatesta. The dedicatory letter makes reference to Bernardo Tasso's dependence upon Ginevra's good favor toward him:

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<sup>24</sup> For a full list of Renaissance dialogues that feature women as speakers, see Virginia Cox, "Note: Italian Dialogues Incorporating Female Speakers," *MLN* 128, no. 1 (2013): 79–83.

<sup>25</sup> These *trattati d'amore*, as Mario Pozzi has shown, often sought to diagnose the effects of love on both the individual and society, demonstrating the larger implications—social, religious, political, economic, sexual, and otherwise—that motivate the discussions within these works. See Mario Pozzi, *Lingua, cultura, società: Saggi sulla letteratura italiana del Cinquecento* (Alessandria: Edizioni dell'Orso, 1989), 69–73.

<sup>26</sup> On Speroni's representation of Tullia in his dialogue, and on Tullia's printed response to it, see Janet L. Smarr, "A Dialogue of Dialogues: Tullia d'Aragona and Sperone Speroni," *MLN* 113, no. 1 (1998): 204–12; Robert Buranello, "Figura meretricis: Tullia d'Aragona in Sperone Speroni's *Dialogo d'amore*," in *The Prostitute in Italian Society, Art and Literature*, ed. Raffaele Lampugnani (Bundoora: Spunti e Ricerche, 2000), 53–68; Lisa Curtis-Wendlandt, "Conversing on Love: Text and Subtext in Tullia d'Aragona's *Dialogo della Infinità d'Amore*," *Hypatia* 19, no. 4 (2004): 77–98; Julie Campbell, *Literary Circles and Gender in Early Modern Europe: A Cross-Cultural Approach* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2006), 21–50; Janet L. Smarr, "Dialogue and Social Conversation," in *Joining the Conversation: Dialogues by Renaissance Women* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005), 98–129.

<sup>27</sup> Reinier Leushuis, *Speaking of Love: The Love Dialogue in Italian and French Renaissance Literature* (London: Brill, 2017), 84. For Leushuis's detailed account of the figures of Molza and Tullia, see especially 81–89.

<sup>28</sup> On Torquato's defense of Bernardo's capabilities as a poet and courtier, see Margaret Ferguson, *Trials of Desire: Renaissance Defenses of Poetry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), 54–136.

<sup>29</sup> The debate between Tasso and Cavalletta took place in Ferrara on January 18, February 1, and February 6, 1570. Aldo Manetti has suggested that the occasion for Tasso to speak publicly about love coincided with the marriage between Lucrezia d'Este and Francesco Maria della Rovere, resulting in a public display of "il sentimento di devozione e riconoscenza che [Tasso] nutriva verso i due illustri sposi (ricordiamo che, ragazzo tredicenne, era stato compagno di studi del principe, allora di otto anni alla corte di Urbino), lo obbligava a prender parte ai festeggiamenti con un impegno più personale," in "Le conclusioni amorose," *Studi tassiani* 24 (1974): 33–45, 35.

Mando fuori [...] queste mie *Conclusioni*, non solo per darle qualche segno della riverenza, che, ricevuta hereditaria da mio padre, porto all'infinito suo valore; ma anche, accioche, s'elle non saranno per avventura ben diffuse dalle mie ragioni, siano almeno dalla sua autorità sostenute, onde insieme co'l mio poco ingegno nel disputarle, si conosca il molto giudizio nel dedicarle.<sup>30</sup>

The reference to Bernardo's hereditary influence on Tasso's writings in a collection of philosophical conclusions about love recognizes the thematic core of the former poet's literary corpus: many of Bernardo's works are concerned with love, most notably his collections of lyric poetry, *I Tre libri de gli amori* (1555).<sup>31</sup> There are striking resonances between claims made regarding women and love in Torquato's volume of "conclusions" and those articulated by the figure of Bernardo Tasso in Speroni's dialogue. For example, in the *Dialogo de l'amore*, the figure of Bernardo insists upon women's complete inactivity in love when he commands Tullia, "Signora mia, vostro officio non è amare, ma essere amata." For women to be passive, silent objects available for men's attention and attraction is his most problematic thesis. Such exclusion from reciprocity with their male partners immobilizes women's agency, and seeks to restrict their physical and vocal expressions of it. The example of Tullia, however, wittily and craftily proves Bernardo wrong. In Torquato's "conclusions," nos. 44, 46, and 47 indicate that a lover's jealousy represents the truest sign of passionate devotion. This resonates with what Speroni's figure of Bernardo claims in his debate with Tullia, as does the "conclusion" n. 21, which states that "l'huomo in sua natura [ama] più intensamente e stabilmente che la donna."<sup>32</sup>

This conclusion, and others like them, which depend upon and perpetuate stereotypical differences in how men and women experience love, faced particular objection by members of the "teatro di donne e de cavalieri" in front of whom Tasso recited his theses. Among those who contradicted Tasso were Paolo Sammiato, a courtier from Lucca,<sup>33</sup> and the poet and composer Orsina Cavalletta (1531–1592),<sup>34</sup> the protagonist of Tasso's second dialogue that takes a woman's name for

<sup>30</sup> These "amorous conclusions" were printed for the first time in Venice on April 13, 1581 by Aldo Manuzio, the younger in a volume of Tasso's works that included *Aminta*, the dialogue *Romeo overo del giuoco*, the *Paragone tra l'Italia e la Francia*, a letter to the Duke of Urbino, and a text titled "Del amor vincendevole tra 'l Padre e il Figliuolo." They would later be printed by Domenico Civiasseti in Lucca in 1700 with a new title, along with newly added verse accompaniments, *Le Cinquanta conclusioni amorose del Tasso spiegato in altrettanti Sonetti*.

<sup>31</sup> Bernardo Tasso, *I tre libri de gli Amori* (Venice: Giolito, 1555). On Bernardo's poetry, its resonances with Ariosto, and comparisons with Torquato, see Roberto Battaglia, "Dalla lingua dell'*Amadigi* a quella della *Gerusalemme*," *Cultura neolatina* 1 (1941): 94–115; Giorgio Cerboni Baiardi, *La lirica di Bernardo Tasso* (Urbino: Argalia, 1966); Rossano Pestarino, "Tra *Amadigi*, *Floridante* e *Liberata*: storia di un verso tassiano (e tracce di una dipendenza?)," *Strumenti critici* 18 (2003): 123–45; Rosanna Morace, "'Son diverso ancor dall'Ariosto': Bernardo Tasso tra Ariosto e Torquato," *Italianistica* 37 (2008): 119–30; Id., *Dall'Amadigi al Rinaldo: Bernardo Tasso e Torquato Tasso tra epico ed eroico* (Alessandria: Edizioni dell'Orso, 2012); Giovanni Ferroni, "L'esercizio della lirica fra Bernardo e Torquato Tasso," *L'Ellisse: Studi storici di letteratura italiana* 8, no. 2 (2013): 9–24.

<sup>32</sup> The other conclusions by Torquato that address sexual difference are n. 20 ("Amore giunger perfettione alla Donna, nè però negarsi ch'ella per se stessa non sia cosa perfettissima"), and n. 23 ("La Donna Amata, non sempre riamar colui che l'ama, [e] con tutto ciò affermarsi senza contraddittione, che l'amata sempre ami l'Amante").

<sup>33</sup> Paolo Sammiato would later reappear as an interlocutor, alongside Danese Cataneo and the "Forestiero Napoletano," in the dialogue *Il Cataneo overo de le conclusioni amorose*, which recalls the poet's 1570 recitations and makes light of their anti-woman rhetoric, comparing them to a playful joke, or rhetorical exercise: "Ma queste conclusioni furono proposte da scherzo, anzi che no, e quasi per un essercizio d'amore, il quale è (come dicono) eccitatore de gli addormentati ingegni."

<sup>34</sup> For lyric anthologies that include sonnets and madrigals by Orsina Cavalletta, see Giovan Battista Licino, ed., *Rime di diversi celebri poeti* (Bergamo: Comin Ventura, 1587); Gherardo Borgogni, ed., *Nuova scielta di diversi illustri poeti* (Bergamo: Comin Ventura, 1592); the Accademia dei Confusi's *Il Gareggiamento poetico del Confuso Accademico Ordito, Madrigali amorosi [...] de' i più illustri rimatrici d'ogni secolo* (Venice: Barezzo Barezzi, 1611). As Piero Antonio Serassi has noted, Cavalletta's poetry often appears alongside poetry by Tasso, or by her husband Ercole, the third interlocutor in *La Cavalletta*. See Piero Antonio Serassi, *Vita di Torquato Tasso* (1785), 3 vols. (Florence: Barbera and Co., 1858) 2:144–45. Like Tasso and other

its title, *La Cavalletta overo della poesia toscana* (c.1585).<sup>35</sup> In Cavalletta's oral response to Tasso, which she delivered in front of the Accademia Ferrarese, she turns the gendered tables of her male counterpart's "conclusions" on their head, in order to suggest that women are not those who are inconstant in love, but rather men are. The root of Cavalletta's arguments asserts that women love no less sincerely than men do, and ought to be considered as equals in the intensity of their affection. Her critical response and demand for equality appears to have had a measurable effect on the representation of women and love in Tasso's *La Molza*.

By pursuing a gender-neutral approach to love that is equally applicable to women and men, Tasso's dialogue diverges in significant ways from the literary tradition in which this text ostensibly follows. Indeed, gendered differences between men's experience of love and women's experience of love constitute the core of many of the philosophical reflections found in classical and early modern discourse on love by both male and female authors: from as early as Plato's *Symposium* and the *stilnovisti* of the thirteenth century, to the direct engagements with the *querelle des femmes* in works by sixteenth- and seventeenth-century writers. This move towards objectivity on Tasso's part reflects in his choice of interlocutors: women whom he represents as precisely *not* lovers, but intellectual agents unconcerned with their personal amorous disposition.<sup>36</sup> Composed while the poet was detained at the Ospedale di Sant'Anna, *La Molza* recalls an outing Tasso enjoyed at Villa Medelana, the Este vacation house outside Ferrara in 1583.<sup>37</sup> Among its interlocutors, *La Molza* includes its dedicatee, Marfisa d'Este, an important patron and protector whom Tasso credits for having arranged his brief release from detainment, described in the dialogue as "la illustrissima ed eccellentissima signora [...] di lodevoli maniere e d'alto intendimento e di molta bellezza e di molta onestà";<sup>38</sup> Ginevra Marcia, a dancer and musician at the Este court; Tarquinia Molza; and the "Forestiero Napoletano," or, rather, Tasso in

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court poets in Ferrara, Cavalletta composed encomiastic verse for female performers in the *concerto delle dame*, such as the madrigal *Come rapisce il Cielo*, written in praise of Anna Guarini. On Cavalletta's life and times, see G. Baruffaldi, *Dissertatio de poetis Ferrariensibus* (Ferrara, 1698), 48–49. On early modern women composers more broadly, see Jane Bowers, "The Emergence of Women Composers in Italy, 1566–1700," in *Women Making Music*, 116–67; Suzanne G. Cusick, *Francesca Caccini at the Medici Court: Music and the Circulation of Power* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009).

<sup>35</sup> In this dialogue, Orsina is a guiding voice in the discussion of how to set vernacular poetry to music. For the broader history of this issue, see Dean T. Mace, "Pietro Bembo and the Literary Origins of the Italian Madrigal," *The Musical Quarterly* 55, no. 1 (1969): 65–86; Gary Tomlinson, *Monteverdi and the End of the Renaissance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987); Margaret Bent, "Songs without Music in Dante's *De vulgari eloquentia*: Cantio and related terms," in *Et facciam dolci canti: studi in onore di Agostino Zino*, eds. Bianca Maria Antolini, Teresa Maria Gialdroni and Annunziato Pugliese, 2 vols. (Lucca: LIM, 2003), 1:161–82; Elisa Tonani, ed., *Storia della lingua italiana e storia della musica: Italiano e musica nel melodramma e nella canzone* (Florence: Franco Cesati Editore, 2005); Francesco Ciabattini, *Dante's Journey to Polyphony* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010); Lauren McGuire Jennings, *Senza Vestimenta: The Literary Tradition of Trecento Song* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2014).

<sup>36</sup> Such a preference for objectivity establishes yet another difference between Tasso's *La Molza* and Speroni's *Dialogo de l'amore*. See Jon R. Snyder, *Writing the Scene of Speaking Theories of Dialogue in the Late Italian Renaissance* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989), 104.

<sup>37</sup> Solerti recounts a separate meeting that took place between Tasso and Molza, along with other women, when the poet's presence was requested in Modena in 1576, in *Vita di Tasso*, 2:253. On other interactions between Tasso and Molza, see Giovanna Jana Molza, *Alfonso II d'Este di Ferrara e Torquato Tasso nella vita di Tarquinia Molza* (Modena: S.T.E.M. Mucchi, 1971).

<sup>38</sup> On the life and legacy of Marfisa d'Este as a patron of Tasso and an important figure around the time of Ferrara's fall to the papacy, see Bonner Mitchell, *1598: A Year of Pageantry in Late-Renaissance Ferrara* (Binghamton: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1990); Guido Guerzoni, *Le corti estensi e la devoluzione di Ferrara del 1598* (Modena: Archivio storico, Comune di Modena, Assessorato alla cultura e beni culturali, 2000); Gian Lodovico Masetti Zannini, *Marfisa da Este Cybo: gentil fu da che nacque* (Ferrara: Este, 2008). On Marfisa's collaboration with the musical-theatrical life in Ferrara, and especially with Margherita Gonzaga d'Este's *balletto delle dame*, see Nina Treadwell, "Simil combattimento fatto da dame": the musico-theatrical entertainments of Margherita Gonzaga's *balletto delle donne* and the female warrior in Ferrarese cultural history," in *Gender, Sexuality, and Early Music*, ed. Todd M. Borgerding (New York: Routledge, 2002), 27–40.

disguise. Out of Tasso's twenty-six dialogues, *La Molza* is unique for its all-female cast of interlocutors in conversation with the "Forestiero," which suggests why love surfaces in the text as a phenomenon that evolves principally through women's lived experiences of it.<sup>39</sup> To make a comparison with an immediate Cinquecento precedent, Tasso's representation of dialoguing with women calms the fears articulated in Stefano Guazzo's (1530–1593) *La civil conversazione* (1574), whose figure of Guglielmo Guazzo, Stefano's brother, blurts out the assumption that talking to women is equivalent to having sex with them.<sup>40</sup> In the case of *La Molza*, Tasso not only stages a perfectly safe and chaste conversation with women, but affirms the many benefits to be gained and lessons to be learned by entering into dialogue with them.

Stretching back further in the Italian literary tradition, as a collective group Tasso's women of *La Molza* recall, though revise, Dante's interaction with Florentine ladies in chapter XVIII of *La vita nova*, who similarly seek from a male poet something "new" about love and love poetry.<sup>41</sup> Dante's experience among women ostensibly convinced the poet to stop composing lyric poetry whose center fixated on the poet-narrator's suffering—a shift that may be seen, at least in part, in Tasso's exclusion of personal love stories, even beloveds, from his dialogue. There appear no lovers *per se* in Tasso's mixed-sex gathering, but rather "women who have knowledge of love," not because they are "donne e donzelle amorose," as Dante's *canzone* would have it, but because they have been trained in philosophy and music. In an explicit citation of a sonnet from the *Vita Nova*, *Amore e 'l cor gentil sono una cosa*, the final line of which defines love's effects as equally experienced in both women and men ("e simile face in donna omo valente"), readers witness the open invitation for women to participate directly in love as it resounds across Dante and Tasso's poetry and prose.<sup>42</sup>

In Tasso's case, love as an historical phenomenon is constructed as an especially *female* experience. The single example of "real," though friendly, love among the members of *La Molza*'s group is that of the respectful comradery between two women, Tarquinia and Marfisa. Described as "benevolezza" born from "concordia," the love that Tarquinia expresses for Marfisa manifests, as Tasso suggests, what Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274) philosophized regarding love as a divinely infused virtue in the *Summa theologiae*.<sup>43</sup> Insofar as Tarquinia affirms love to be a representation of good will towards another, in this case a female friend, Tasso appears to correct the beliefs uttered by Patrizi's

<sup>39</sup> The only other dialogues by Tasso that feature women as interlocutors are *La Cavalletta overo della poesia toscana*, *Il Gonzaga secondo overo del giuoco* and *Il Romeo overo del giuoco*. On these latter two dialogues and the ideas about women expressed therein, see chapter two of this study.

<sup>40</sup> Stefano Guazzo, *La civil conversazione* (Brescia: Bozzola, 1574). Pertinent here is Bonnie Gordon's informative study on how parts of the female anatomy, including the mouth, were considered "dangerous" in the early modern period for their "leaky" sexuality, in *Monteverdi's Unruly Women: The Power of Song in Early Modern Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004). On early modern ideas of the differences between male and female bodies, more generally, see Ian Maclean, *The Renaissance Notion of Woman: A Study in the Fortunes of Scholasticism and Medical Science in European Intellectual Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980); Margaret W. Ferguson, Maureen Quilligan, and Nancy J. Vickers, eds., *Rewriting the Renaissance: The Discourses of Sexual Difference in Early Modern Europe* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986); Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990); Valerie Traub, *Thinking Sex with the Early Moderns* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016).

<sup>41</sup> See Elena Lombardi's illuminating study on Dante's female readership, *Imagining the Woman Reader in the Age of Dante* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018). On the female audience of *La vita nova*, Lombardi suggests: "the women of the prose [i.e., section of chapter XVIII] are, and are not, the women of the song's opening line: on the one hand, the association between the women of the prose and those 'who have intellect of love' in the song is almost automatic (and, indeed, they are often taken as such); on the other hand, Dante seems to make a distinction between the phase of these women's criticism (at the end of chapter XVIII) and his subsequent intention to write to women (at the beginning of chapter XIX)" (70).

<sup>42</sup> Dante Alighieri, *Vita nova*, ed. Guglielmo Gorni (Turin: Einaudi, 1996).

<sup>43</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae: questions on God*, eds. Brian Leftow and Brian Davies (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

figure of Tarquinia, whose philosophy of love as self-love in *L'amorosa filosofia* faced biting criticism by both her husband and the philosopher himself. Enthusiastically siding with Aquinas and with the idea of love as good will towards others, Tasso's Tarquinia exclaims the following:

Quando io penso a l'amor ch'io porto a la signora donna Marfisa, non posso conchiudere altro, né credo ch'altro conchiuderebbe la signora Ginevra. Ed ella rispose: Tutto quello ch'è in me di buono, se pur ce n'è alcuna parte, deriva da l'amor a questa mia signora o da quello che ella porta a me, che le son umilissima serva. La benevolenza ch'è fra la signora Tarquinia e me nasce ancora da questa concordia: laonde mi pare molto vero quello che disse questo vostro filosofo.

The example of love as friendship between women modifies the classical and early Renaissance idea—argued for so adamantly by Cicero (106–43 BC) and, much later, Leon Battista Alberti (1404–1472)—that friendship exists strictly within male homosocial territory.<sup>44</sup> In the context of sixteenth-century love treatises, this variation that newly allows for women to experience intimacy reverberates with Marco Equicola's *Libro di natura d'amore* (1526), which contends that women are as worthy of love and loving as men are because they, too, are rational beings.<sup>45</sup> Tasso's extension of Equicola's philosophical hospitality that invites women's participation may, in some ways, be considered to be a precedent for Moderata Fonte's (1555–1592) *Il merito delle donne* (1600), which discusses the superiority of friendship between women by describing its larger influence on the social and natural orders of the universe.<sup>46</sup> While male philosophers and authors, such as Aquinas, Ficino, Dante, and others, are the sources whom Tasso recalls in summarizing the genealogy of definitions of love, *La Molza* represents women's experience at the center of love's manifestation in the world. This, however, is as far as Tasso's dialogue will go in suggesting gendered distinctions between men and women in love, which, let us recall, shaped a number of the poet's earlier compositions written on the same subject, including the *Conclusioni amorose* and the *Discorso della virtù femminile e donnesca*.

*La Molza*'s general lack of discrimination between men and women in love resonates strongly with the text that accompanied it in its first publication in 1586: the epistolary debate on marriage with Ercole Tasso.<sup>47</sup> As chapter two of this study has illustrated, Tasso's letters to Ercole abandon the

<sup>44</sup> Cicero, *De senectute, De amicitia, De divinatione*, ed. William Armistead Falconer (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979); Leon Battista Alberti, *I libri della famiglia*, eds. Ruggiero Romano and Alberto Tenenti (Turin: Einaudi, 1969). On Alberti's invitation to women to participate in friendship, albeit in conjugal relationships with their husbands, see Amyrose McCue Gill, "Rereading *I libri della famiglia*: Leon Battista Alberti on Marriage, *Amicitia* and Conjugal Friendship," *California Italian Studies* 2, no. 2 (2011), available from <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/9t3049v8>, accessed on 30 January 2018. For other examples and contexts of friendship in the early modern period, see Amyrose McCue Gill and Sarah Rolfe Prodan, eds., *Friendship and Sociability in Premodern Europe: Contexts, Concepts and Expressions* (Toronto: Centre for Renaissance and Reformation Studies, 2014).

<sup>45</sup> For early modern philosophies of women in love that are less open to women's collaborative participation, see Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, *Commento sopra una canzone d'amore*, ed. Paolo De Angelis (Palermo: Novecento, 1994); Giordano Bruno, *Gli eroici furori*, ed. Nicoletta Tirinnanzi (Milan: BUR, 2016).

<sup>46</sup> Moderata Fonte, *Il merito delle donne ove chiaramente si scuopre quanto siano elle degne e più perfette de gli uomini* (Venice: Domenico Imberti, 1600). For more context on this dialogue, see the introductions to the modern editions and translations by Virginia Cox, *The Worth of Women Wherein is Clearly Revealed their Nobility and their Superiority to Men* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997); Id., *The Merits of Women wherein is revealed their nobility and their superiority to men*, with an introduction by Dacia Maraini (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018). On the larger points that Fonte's dialogue raises regarding female friendships more generally, see Paola Malpezzi Price, *Moderata Fonte: Women and Life in Sixteenth-Century Venice* (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2003); Daria Martelli and Federica Ambrosini, *Polifonie: le donne a Venezia nell'età di Moderata Fonte (seconda metà del secolo XVI)* (Padua: CLEUP, 2011).

<sup>47</sup> On the publication history and the problem of editorial ordering of the *Dialoghi*, see Stefano Prandi, "L'officina di un editore seicentesco: Marcantonio Foppa e i *Dialoghi* del Tasso," *Lettere italiane* 45, no. 1 (1993): 18–46; Carlo Ossola and

poet's former Aristotelian beliefs that categorized the female sex as fundamentally inferior to men, in order to show how love between men and women is most noble when it exists equally for both parties. As is the case in *Fonte*, the significance of Tasso's all-female company, and their ability to lead the conversation autonomously, is a theme around which much of the dialogue is generated. The representation of Tarquinia appears to be that of a human metronome, whose swift tempo urgently keeps the poet on pace in disclosing his "nuova diffinizione di quel che sia l'amore," for, as Tarquinia suggests, his female readers have long waited to hear him give it: "noi l'abbiamo tanto aspettata." While Tarquinia, then, is *not* the figure through whom philosophies of love are articulated in the text, it seems not to be the author's intention to represent her as capable of doing so, because, by her own example, contemporary readers would have already assumed her to be fit for the task. The physical arrangement that Tasso constructs of his speakers, whereby the women stand and tower over shrunken, seated Tasso, together with the quickened pace of discussion upon which Tarquinia is unforgivably insistent, paints a picture of straightforward hierarchy: Tasso, the Forestiero Napoletano, is under examination.

In the female-dominated space of Marfisa's villa, women motivate Tasso's authorship. After revealing that he is skittishly unprepared to discuss matters of philosophy and love in front of a woman who, as the Forestiero claims, has "already read everything and knows everything," Tasso pleads with Molza directly, begging her to explain why she "wants to hear that which she knows about more than him." The deference Tasso shows to Tarquinia's expertise reverses the humiliating representation of her from Patrizi's dialogue. This power dynamic alters the traditional gendered politics of Renaissance dialogues, wherein female speakers are often expected to behave quietly and interact only when spoken to, only when their male interlocutor-teachers invite women to probe them with endless questions.<sup>48</sup> If Tasso's Tarquinia already knows all that the Forestiero has to say, her need, then, is not to receive instruction, but to evaluate the poet. Thus, after hearing him recite the traditional authorities on love, Tarquinia demands of Tasso: "ma dove è la vostra nuova diffinizione? Mettetela al paragone di queste altre vecchie." Women's insistence upon Tasso to authorize new ideas about love is met with respectful obedience, for the Forestiero admits to having started philosophizing out of "respect" for his female adjudicators: "mi fu portato da sedere a l'incontro e mi fu imposto ch'io accettassi quel favore: perché io vergognosamente il faceva per rispetto d'alcune damigelle le quali erano in piedi e dappoi ch'io sedei, come volle chi poteva comandare."

It is this eager female audience, who impatiently awaits Tasso's novel contribution both to love philosophy and to love poetry, that factors primarily in the poet's figuration of his "diffinizione" as a "giovenetta donna." "mentre vo ricercando alcuna nuova diffinizione d'amore, addurrò prima quelle che sono state da gli altri ritrovate, le quali paragonerò a la mia, quasi giovenetta donna con l'attentate." Situating his "young" philosophy among the ranks of long-sustained arguments, Tasso is asked which definition of love is his favorite. In his response to Ginevra's question, Tasso yields authority to Tarquinia's judgment: "Ne farò giudice la signora Tarquinia, ch'è fornita di sottile avvedimento e ornata di molte lettere e di molta dottrina, e voi medesima, quantunque vi reputi anzi nemiche d'amore ch'amiche." The representation of these women as "enemies of love" reveals important changes that took place over the course of the Cinquecento regarding women's response to literary tradition. What Tasso appears to suggest is that women are not hostile toward love because they are *themselves* cold, unresponsive rocks—as the ideologies that generate many of the gendered idioms expressed in Petrarchan lyric might have it—rather, much like Christine de Pisan's (1364–c.1430) fourteenth-century response, the *means* through which women have been represented as either

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Stefano Prandi, "Per un'edizione storica dei *Dialoghi* del Tasso," in *Torquato Tasso: Cultura e poesia*, ed. Mariarosa Masoero (Turin: Scriptorium, 1997), 243–56.

<sup>48</sup> See Cox, "The Female Voice."

in or out of love is that which has made them hostile.<sup>49</sup> As careful readers of lyric poetry, the women of *La Molza* are represented as enemies, not of love itself, insofar as it exists as an experience or condition, but of love *poetry* and its tired image of the unfeeling woman. Tasso's depiction of women as keenly prepared to hear a male poet suggest something new about love indicates how he understands them as sensitive, responsive readers—forging a prototype, in symbolic terms at least, of the concept of “anti-Petrarchism.”

Despite his initial reserve and self-identification as a “poco felice poeta,” who can only think or write “con molta difficoltà,” Tasso's new definition of love rewrites his previously articulated ideas about the subject, paying new attention to what women (seemingly) want. Such a gesture toward women readers' sensibilities demonstrates how Tasso acknowledges women among his most perceptive audience, lending evidence to how he imagined himself capable of providing women with a modern, agreeable definition of love, which he summarizes in one word: “quiete.”<sup>50</sup> As a harmonious state of emotional security, tranquil love stands in contrast to divisive love, a notion with which contemporary readers of lyric poetry, male and female alike, had grown familiar. By adjusting love's focus from isolating torment to communal serenity, Tasso offers his readers a means of expressing and experiencing love in suggestively anti-Petrarchan terms. If Tasso's new definition steps outside of philosophical and poetic traditions, it may be seen as an alternative in which lovers' destinies are not to become miserable, but to avoid, or transcend, the “stato di guerra” in which Petrarchan lovers hopelessly find themselves.<sup>51</sup> While similar echoes of love as peaceful stillness may be found in the poetry of mourning composed by both male and female poets, in which literary expression refigures the pains of love as a guiding divine “light” of the lost beloved and hope for eternal salvation, Tasso's formulation of how individuals reach amorous “quiete” is not prompted by the death of any figure, nor does it require repentance for earthly love, nor does it conflate beloveds with Christ-like, or even Marian-like, figures.<sup>52</sup> Rather, love as “quiete” embraces elements of hospitality, and, in so doing, shapes the experience of love as one that brings recuperative, rather than damaging, results. Insofar as Thomas Aquinas's philosophy of love as good will towards another serves as the primary authority upon which Tasso bases his definition, *La Molza*'s formulation replaces Petrarchan singularity and its dependence upon a “solo e pensoso” narrator in favor of an inclusive collectivity in which women too may participate.

As active members in the experience and articulation of love, the happily pleased ensemble of women—Tarquinia, Ginevra, and Marfisa—still wish to see the poet's abstract thoughts put into poetic practice. The Este woman thus invites Tasso to compose poetry that communicates his new ideas in the company of a musical instrument:

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<sup>49</sup> For Christine de Pisan's objection to the portrayal of women in the *Roman de la rose* by Guillaume de Lorris (c.1236), and continued by Jean de Meung (c.1276), see her *L'Épître au Dieu d'amours* and other texts related to this debate in Christine de Pisan, *Debate of the Romance of the Rose*, trans. and eds. Jean de Montreuil and David F. Hult (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010).

<sup>50</sup> “Il vero amore è vera quiete.”

<sup>51</sup> These words appear in Petrarch's sonnet 164, *Hor ch' il ciel et la terra tace*. See n. 8 in this chapter for the record of Molza's performance of this sonnet. Veronica Franco similarly employs the “love as war” trope in her capitolo, *Non più parole: ai fatti in campo, a l'armi*. See Veronica Franco, *Poems and Selected Letters*, ed. and trans. Ann Rosalind Jones and Margaret F. Rosenthal (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998). For women writers who experiment with the tradition of using the love sonnet to narrate a near-death experience, see Chiara Matraini's (1515–1604) *Smarrissi il cor, ghiacciassi il sangue quando* and *Fera son io di quest'ombroso loco*, Gaspara Stampa's *Il cor verrebbe teco*, and Francesca Turina's (1553–1641) *Morte, se ben fatto hai l'ultima possà*, in Virginia Cox, *Lyric Poetry*, 107, 108, 109, 152.

<sup>52</sup> For examples of women writers' poetry of mourning, see, among others, Vittoria Colonna's *Vorrei che l' vero Sol, cui sempre invoco* and Isabella Morra's (c.1520–c.1545) *Signor, che insino a qui (tua gran mercede)*, in Cox, *Lyric Poetry*, 197, 205.

Allora la signora donna Marfisa, levandosi, fu cagione ch'io sorgessi per onorarla; e dapoi di nuovo tornò a sedere e, fattomi dare una sedia appresso un instrumento di musica, mi disse ch'io scrivessi alcuna cosa d'amore. E io, prendendo la penna, feci alcuni versi.

In contrast to the figure of Bernardo Tasso in Speroni's *Dialogo de l'amore*, who suggests that "le poesie" be left behind when speaking about love, in Torquato, love, poetry, philosophy, and women's company all go inseparably hand in hand. While women's experiences shape Tasso's conceptualization of love, the reference to music's accompaniment of its expression in poetic verse conditions love as an aural phenomenon. In this regard, it seems that precisely the musical qualities of Tasso's female interlocutors have a particularly strong influence on Tasso's new considerations of love as a form of tranquility, a conclusion that contemporary music theory was also beginning to suggest, insofar as it concerns the effects of music on the souls of listeners.<sup>53</sup>

### LOVE AND MUSIC'S TRANQUILITY: LA MOLZA BETWEEN CARDANO AND MONTEVERDI

The presence of music and musical instruments among Tasso's articulation of new love ought not to go overlooked, for it contributes to the poet's complex, and truly multimedia, approach to philosophy and poetry. The emphasis on love as "quiete," as a state of emotional and spiritual tranquility, would have resonated strongly with the musical women's education in contemporary music theory, which, at the time, was beginning to articulate the calming effects of music on the mind and soul of the listener. Tasso may have been familiar with some of these ideas, given the privileged position that music and composers had at the Este court.<sup>54</sup> Beyond Ferrara and in the decades leading up to *La Molza*, from the 1540s and the 1570s, the physician and mathematician Girolamo Cardano (1501–1576) wrote in detail about how listening to music performed by virtuous musicians brings the

<sup>53</sup> It is worth comparing Tasso's conceptualization of how to reach tranquility described in *La Molza* to his considerations regarding the restorative effects of reading and academic study articulated in *Il Malpiglio secondo overo del fuggir la moltitudine* (1585). On this dialogue, see Giovanni Baffetti, "Una biblioteca enciclopedica: I *Dialoghi* del Tasso tra letteratura e autobiografia," in *Dialogo e conversazione: I luoghi di una socialità ideale dal Rinascimento all'Illuminismo*, eds. Michael Høxbro Andersen and Anders Toftgaard (Florence: Olschki, 2012), 51–60.

<sup>54</sup> For the musical activity that encouraged participation by both men and women in northern and central Italy, see Lewis Lockwood, *Music in Renaissance Ferrara, 1400–1505: The Creation of a Musical Center in the Fifteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984); William Prizer, "Isabella d'Este and Lucrezia Borgia as Patrons of Music: The Frottola at Mantua and Ferrara," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 38, no. 1 (1985): 1–33; Howard Brown, "Women Singers and Women's Songs in Fifteenth-Century Italy," in *Women Making Music*, 62–89; William Prizer, "Renaissance Women as Patrons of Music: The North-Italian Courts," in *Rediscovering the Muses: Women's Musical Traditions*, ed. Kimberly Marshall (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1993), 186–205; Robert L. Kendrick, *Celestial Sirens: Nuns and Their Music in Early Modern Milan* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996); William Prizer, "Music in Ferrara and Mantua at the Time of Dosso Dossi: Interrelations and Influences," in *Dosso's Fate: Painting and Court Culture in Renaissance Italy*, eds. Luisa Ciammitti, Steven Ostrow, and Salvatore Settis (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute for the History of Art and the Humanities, 1998), 290–308; Stefano Lorenzetti, *Musica e identità nobiliare nell'Italia del rinascimento* (Florence: Olschki, 2003); Kelly Harness, *Echoes of Women's Voices: Music, Art, and Female Patronage in Early Modern Florence* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006); Tim Shephard, *Echoing Helicon: Music, Art and Identity in the Este Studioli, 1440–1530* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); Tim Shephard, "Noblewomen and Music in Italy, c.1430–1520: Looking Past Isabella," in *Gender, Age and Musical Creativity*, eds. Lisa Colton and Catherine Haworth (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015), 27–40; Melanie L. Marshall, "Imitating the Rustic and Revealing the Noble: Masculine Power and Music at the Court of Ferrara," in *Eroticism in Early Modern Music*, 83–114; Stras, *Women and Music*. For music at the court of Isabella d'Este, see the richly innovative and collaborative *IDEA Project*, directed by Deanna Shemek, Anne MacNeil and Daniela Ferrari, and its section devoted entirely to music, at <http://ideamusic.web.unc.edu/isabella-deste-music/>.

mind to a state of calm fulfillment.<sup>55</sup> According to Cardano, music helps to moderate the passions, discourages the appetite for sin, cleanses the spirit of undesirable desires, and frees the mind from haunting perturbations.<sup>56</sup> In her work on Cardano's contributions to the philosophical and material interrelations among music, the soul, and happiness, Jacomien Prins has illustrated how the polymath "was convinced that by using vocal and instrumental music (*musica instrumentalis*) humans are capable of mediating between the perfect harmonies of the heavenly spheres and the potential chaos and disorder of the lower worlds."<sup>57</sup> Similarly to how love was considered to be a binding force between terrestrial humankind and eternal divinity, seen as early as in Boethius's (c.477–524) treatise *De institutione musica*, music was believed to constitute the architectural matter that structures the cosmos, descending along a hierarchy from cosmic harmony (*musica mundana*), to the human body's internal music that enables aural comprehension (*musica humana*), to human-made music (*music instrumentalis*).<sup>58</sup> In her study of how Renaissance philosophies of love resonated with contemporary ideas about music, Claire Bardelmann has carefully demonstrated how these fields overlap in their speculation on the relations between "microcosm and macrocosm."<sup>59</sup> If, for medieval and early modern thinkers, love unites the universe through spiritual and material means, so too does music. This principle clarifies why Tasso's dialogue gestures toward music making as a fundamental part of communicating love in lyric poetry.<sup>60</sup>

Although it would be difficult to confirm with absolute certainty whether Tasso read Cardano's manuscripts, which were in circulation during the same decades as *La Molza*, it is likely the case that the poet was, at the very least, familiar with the concept of music as tranquility and with

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<sup>55</sup> For Cardano's life and career, see Henry Morley, *Jerome Cardan: The life of Girolamo Cardano of Milan, physician*, 2 vols. (London: Chapman and Hall, 1854); Markus Fierz, *Girolamo Cardano, 1501–1576: Physician, Natural Philosopher, Mathematician, Astrologer and Interpreter of Dreams* (Boston: Birkhäuser, 1983); Anthony Grafton, *Cardano's Cosmos: The Worlds and Works of a Renaissance Astrologer* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999); Guido Giglioni, "Girolamo Cardano," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (online), available from <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/cardano/>, accessed on 10 March 2019; Id., "Girolamo Cardano on the Passions and their Treatment," *Bruniana & Campanelliana* 12, no. 1 (2006): 25–40.

<sup>56</sup> See Girolamo Cardano, *Writings on Music*, trans. Clement Albin Miller (Middleton: American Institute of Musicology, 1973). For broader considerations of the relationship between consolation and literature, and on ideas surrounding the concept of misfortune in the Italian Renaissance, in which Cardano was widely interested, see George W. McClure, *Sorrow and Consolation in Renaissance Italy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991).

<sup>57</sup> Jacomien Prins, "Girolamo Cardano on Music as a Remedy 'For the Troubles that Result from the Misery of Human Misfortune,'" in *The Routledge Companion to Music, Mind and Well-being*, eds. Penelope Gouk, James Kennaway, Jacomien Prins and Wiebke Thormählen (New York: Taylor and Francis, 2019), 47–60.

<sup>58</sup> On conceptualizations of the harmony of the spheres from antiquity through the Renaissance, see Leo Spitzer, *Classical and Christian Ideas of World Harmony: Prolegomena to an interpretation of the word 'Stimmung'* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1963); Henry Chadwick, *Boethius: The Consolations of Music, Logic, Theology and Philosophy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981); Thomas J. Mathiesen, *Apollo's Lyre: Greek Music and Music Theory in Antiquity and the Middle Ages* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999); Matthew Balensuela and David Russell Williams, *Music Theory from Boethius to Zarlino: A Bibliography and Guide* (Hillsdale: Pendragon Press, 2007); Andrew Hicks, *Composing the World: Harmony in the Medieval Platonic Cosmos* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

<sup>59</sup> Ioan P. Couliano, *Eros and Magic in the Renaissance*, trans. Margaret Cook, with a foreword by Mircea Eliade (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 6. Cited in Claire Bardelmann, *Eros and Music in Early Modern Culture and Literature* (New York and London: Routledge, 2018), 1. See also Gary Tomlinson, *Metaphysical Song: An Essay on Opera* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999); Id., *Music in Renaissance Magic: Toward a Historiography of Others* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993). For a richly comparative and broadly historical study on the relationship between music and love from antiquity through Romanticism, and later through such figures as Richard Strauss, Richard Wagner, and Gustav Mahler, see Constantin Floros, *Humanism, Love and Music*, trans. Ernest Bernhardt-Kabisch (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2012).

<sup>60</sup> In the early modern European artistic tradition, among the many examples of visual iconography depicting Venus and music intimately linked to one another are: Jan Van Hemessen *An Allegory of Love and Music* (1525); Titian, *Venus and Musician* (1550); Parrasio Micheli, *The Lute-playing Venus with Cupid* (after 1550); Jan Brueghel and Pieter-Paul Rubens, *Allegory of Hearing* (c.1617); and Giovanni Lanfranco, *Venere che suona l'arpa* (c.1630), among others.

Boethius's three-part classification of music's presence in the universe.<sup>61</sup> Indeed, Boethius appears to offer a particularly compelling counterpart to Tasso at this stage of his career, a period in which, as Massimo Rossi has suggested, the poet gained a certain "intonazione moralista," which gave shape to "un autoritratto come un poeta-filosofo."<sup>62</sup> Insofar as she came to embody the new vision of "Lady Philosophy," Tarquinia may be understood, in both Dantean and Boethian terms, as Tasso's agent of female consolation, who brings with her the additional restorative effects of song.<sup>63</sup> Like the figure of imprisoned Boethius from *De consolazione philosophiae*, Tasso, who was still in enforced isolation at the time of *La Molza's* composition, found consolation in three interrelated bodies—love, music, and women—in the search for how to cultivate a tranquil soul. In this respect, Tasso appears most in tune with Cardano's treatise *De tranquillitate*, whose guiding question throughout challenges readers to contemplate what one can experience in life that will lead the soul toward peacefulness. The answer, reached by Cardano and, it would appear, Tasso too, is that music is capable of overturning the misery of human misfortune, and of replacing its "illness" of discontent with serene fulfillment. In Tasso's case, his interactions with contemporary female musicians, and demonstrated respect for their knowledge and experience of love, would lead him, in his epic poetry, to revise a poetic tradition that often sought to silence the figure of the eloquent woman—through voicelessness, murder, or suicide. Tasso's revisions challenge the assumptions about women that concern their supposedly antagonistic behaviors in love, and their willful passivity to men's unquestionable authority.

Tasso responded favorably to new ideas about the healing effects of love and music, conferred onto audiences by such virtuous musicians as Tarquinia Molza.<sup>64</sup> In the final encomiastic madrigal Tasso composed for the Modenese woman, written just after she had visited Tasso in Sant'Anna, Tarquinia embodies the poet's "new definition" of love expressed in the dialogue named for her:

Forse è cagion l'aurora  
di questo bel concento  
che fan le fronde e i rami e l'acque e 'l vento?  
O con sì dolce modo  
il ciel Tarquinia ollora,  
e per lei de la terra s'innamora?  
L'odo, o parmi, l'odo

<sup>61</sup> Per Tasso's letter addressed to Angelo Grillo on December 24, 1594, the poet's interests in music theory brought him to own copies of Gioseffo Zarlino's (1517–1590) *Le istituzioni harmoniche* and *Dimostrazioni harmoniche*. See Tasso, *Le lettere di Torquato Tasso disposte per ordine di tempo*, ed. Cesare Guasti, 5 vols. (Florence: Le Monnier, 1853–1858), 2:232, n. 313. On Tasso, Zarlino, and music philosophy, see "Misura celeste": Moti dell'animo e armonia delle sfere," in Erminia Ardissino, *Tasso, Plotino, Ficino: In margine a un postillato* (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e letteratura, 2003), 131–48. Zarlino and Bernardo Tasso collaborated as participating members of Venice's Accademia della Fama. On the poet's interaction with this group, see Edward Williamson, *Bernardo Tasso* (Rome: Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 1951), 26 and passim.

<sup>62</sup> Massimo Rossi, *Io come filosofo era stato dubbio: la retorica dei Dialoghi di Tasso* (Bologna: Mulino, 2007), 20.

<sup>63</sup> See Dante's personification of "filosofia" as a woman in his *Convivio*, ed. Johannes Bartuschat and Andrea Aldo Robiglio (Ravenna: Longo editore: 2015). Cf. Lombardi, *Imagining the Woman Reader*.

<sup>64</sup> Other scholars of Tasso's *Dialoghi*, whose interpretations differ from my own, have stressed these works' interests in the metaphysical over the historical. Nella Bettelli was one of the first to suggest that "vediamo [nei *Dialoghi*] un'anima che alza grida di dolore, cercando di liberarsi da tutto ciò che la tiene legata alla terra, ora tutta rivolta a contemplare le bellezze della natura e ad innalzare ad esse un inno con fantasia di poeta, ora oppressa dalle miserie della vita, cercar sollievo in qualche cosa di alto, di puro, di spirituale, svanente in una idealità indefinita." This citation comes from the preface to Bettelli's edition of Tasso's *I dialoghi amorosi* (Lanciano: Carabba, 1914), 6. In a similar vein, Stefano Jossa's essay on Tasso's compositions written during his time in Sant'Anna categorizes all writing from this period as occurring within the space of "phantasmal fiction," in "Il luogo della poesia: La prigionia del Tasso a Sant'Anna," in *Spazi, geografie, testi*, ed. Siriana Sgavichia (Rome: Bulzoni, 2003), 45–57. In these readings, the historical circumstances that gave shape to Tasso's dialogues, beyond the fact that he was detained while writing them, do not receive adequate attention.

la voce: ella è pur dessa:  
ecco Tarquinia viene, Amor s'appressa!<sup>65</sup>

Depicted as the figure who unites through love the heavens and the earth (“O con sì dolce modo/ il ciel Tarquinia ollora,/ e per lei de la terra s’innamora?”), Tarquinia’s presence first manifests itself to the poet-narrator through vocal emission: “l’odo, o parmi, l’odo/ la voce.” At the moment when the voice is confirmed to be that of Tarquinia’s (“ella è pur dessa”), both the woman and Love are embodied in the same figure: “ecco Tarquinia viene, Amor s’appressa!” Tarquinia’s song brings with her the very body that *La Molza* equates with “quiete.” In doing so, Tasso’s representation of a hybrid identity that enjoins women, love, and music reflects the recuperative effects of song that, according to the music theories at the time, make tranquility possible via precisely auditory experiences.

Tasso’s figuration of Tarquinia as an agent who conveys tranquility to those who listen to her may be seen as an early model of Claudio Monteverdi (1567–1643) and Alessandro Striggio’s (1573–1630) female-embodied figure Musica from their opera *Orfeo*, which premiered in 1607 and whose libretto was published in 1609.<sup>66</sup> As the inaugural voice of early opera, *Orfeo*’s Musica sings as an expert on love and the restorative effects of song:

Dal mio Permesso amato a voi ne vegno,  
incliti eroi, sangue gentil di regi,  
di cui narra la fama eccelsi pregi,  
né giugne al ver perch’è troppo alto il segno.  
Io la Musica son, ch’a i dolci accenti  
so far tranquillo ogni turbato core,  
ed or di nobil ira, ed or d’amore  
posso infiammar le più gelate menti.  
Io su cetera d’or cantando soglio  
mortal orecchio lusingar talora,  
e in guisa tal de l’armonia sonora  
de le rote del ciel più l’alme invoglio.

What is of particular interest concerning the correlation between music and healing is the series of references to knowledge, the body, and affect in lines 5 through 8. The second verse of this set (“so far tranquillo ogni turbato core”) indicates Musica’s ability to inspire emotions physically and intellectually, through the pair of verbs *sapere* and *fare*. This affirmation of music’s influence that moves listeners to feel, to think, and to act prefigures Orpheus’s own “powers” of music, which, in the opera, give new, albeit temporary, life to Eurydice.

Historically contextualized, Musica’s command of love and lovers echoes the very faculties that, in the decades leading up to *Orfeo*’s premier, were frequently re-gendered to describe female poets

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<sup>65</sup> For musical settings of Tasso’s encomiastic lyric poetry dedicated to Tarquinia, see Pietro Vinci’s fourth book of madrigals for five voices (1573), and the setting therein of *Tarquinia, se rimiri*, restructured as “Mentre mia stella miri.” For other “portraits” of *concerto* women, see Laurie Stras, “Musical Portraits of Female Musicians at the Northern Italian Courts in the 1570s,” in *Art and Music in the Early Modern Period: Essays in honor of Franca Trinchieri Camiz*, ed. Katherine A. McIver (New York: Routledge, 2016), 145–72.

<sup>66</sup> Alessandro Striggio, *L’Orfeo favola in musica* (Venice: Ricciardo Amadino, 1609). In *La Molza*, Tasso lists Orpheus first among the classical authorities who defined love: “dirò ch’amor sia un gran dio, come già disse Orfeo.”

and singing ladies.<sup>67</sup> Since poets had often used the figure of the mythical half-human siren to celebrate the semi-divine quality of women's harmonies or to warn contemporary audiences of their "dangerous" mouths, the figure of Orpheus offers a counter-example—as both male and anthropoid—whereby to re-humanize female performers, and potentially improve their reputations from lethal vocal artists to embodiments of salvific morality. Insofar as Orphic powers could be seen as personified in female performance, there is another comparison to make between Ferrara's *concerto delle dame* and the libretto to *Orfeo*. Like Musica, Tarquinia and the other singing ladies are described in contemporary encomiastic poetry as especially adept in the art of calming restless hearts. In an anonymous madrigal dedicated to the *concerto* participants Anna Guarini, Laura Peperara, Livia d'Arco, and Tarquinia Molza, the author skillfully employs the latter's last name to depict the Orphic effects of women's song and its ties with Love:

Se GU'A RINAscer LAURA e prenda L'ARCO  
 amor soave e dolce  
 ch'ogni cor duro MOLCE  
 e son nel mio dir parco,  
 ma non havrà però di valor tanto  
 quanto il celeste canto  
 di queste, che coi vaghi e lieti accenti  
 far gir' i monti e fan fermare i venti.

The historical female counterparts to mythical Orpheus—Anna, Laura, Livia, and Tarquinia—reverberate in early opera's first leading lady Musica, a female embodiment who similarly sings forth her expertise in the tonal language of love, and self-described capacity to "far tranquillo ogni turbato core," a symbolic synonym to Tarquinia Molza's capacity to "soften" ("ogni cor duro MOLCE") listeners' hearts. Tarquinia and Musica thus sketch together the musical score that would later be elaborated upon by various "maghe d'amore," as they were sometimes called, professional vocal artists of the seventeenth century, such as Adriana Basile (1580–1640), Barbara Strozzi (1619–1677), and Anna Renzi (c.1620–after 1661).

Not all audiences, however—even in Ferrara—appeared eager to compare women to Orpheus, nor to sing the praises of their song.<sup>68</sup> As Bonnie Gordon has shown regarding women's "unruly" musicality, much ink was spilled by writers (often male) in arguing that music produced by women imposed moral crises, even fatal destruction, onto listeners.<sup>69</sup> This debate often borrowed from both historical and fictional examples in order to support claims against women's production of music and their eloquence. Without confronting it directly, Tasso's affirmation of women's music making, through the historical examples of Tarquinia, Marfisa, and Ginevra in *La Molza*, stood in the face of harsh criticism that bemoaned the sonic effects produced by female bodies.<sup>70</sup> This support of

<sup>67</sup> See Girolamo Parabosco's (1524–1577) comparison of Gaspara Stampa to Orpheus in the "Introduction," written by Jane Tylus, to Gaspara Stampa, *The Complete Poems: The 1554 Edition of the Rime, a bilingual edition*, eds. Troy Tower and Jane Tylus, trans. Jane Tylus (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 6.

<sup>68</sup> For the account of Guglielmo Gonzaga's hateful outburst against female performance, claiming that he would "rather be an ass than a lady," which forced the concert to end abruptly, see Newcomb, "Courtesans, Muses, or Musicians?," 92. On male performers at the Este court, see Richard Wistreich's *Warrior, Courtier, Singer: Giulio Cesare Brancaccio and the Performance of Identity in the Late Renaissance* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2007).

<sup>69</sup> Gordon, *Monteverdi's Unruly Women*. Cf. Gordon, "The Courtesan's Singing Body as Cultural Capital in Seventeenth-Century Italy," in *The Courtesan's Arts: Cross-Cultural Perspectives*, eds. Martha Feldman and Bonnie Gordon (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 182–98. For broader considerations of this topic, see Blackburn and Stras, eds., *Eroticism in Early Modern Music*.

<sup>70</sup> Cf. the representation of women's song as a piercing "periglio" in Tasso's sonnet *Su l'ampia fronte il crespo oro lucente*.

women's song on Tasso's part reappears in the poet's fictional literary production and the representation therein of female performance. In the *Gerusalemme liberata*, in particular, Armida is cast as the *diva* figure who, in borrowing from and transforming characteristics from earlier literary witch-enchantresses, may be seen as a positive example of embodied female vocality, represented by Tasso as ultimately employed for good, rather than for evil.

Tasso's representation of historical women deeply invested in questions of love, language, music, and mimesis constitutes the core of *La Molza* and of its criticism of the expectation, set by earlier love dialogues and the Petrarchan lyric tradition, for silent, nearly non-existent women. The poet's dedication to historical women's experience of love, as it occurs alongside musical production, reflects the vibrant vocality of his Armida, the amorous "musician" of *Gerusalemme liberata*, whose voice Tarquinia Molza historically embodied in madrigal performances. Just as Tasso sought to rewrite the historical figure of Tarquinia from an "ignorant" pseudo-philosopher to a respected authority, so too did he rewrite a genealogy of women's vocal expression, particularly in the case of epic fiction's most "problematic" female character, the siren-enchantress. In the figure of Armida, Tasso reshapes traditional characteristics of this figure, whose inclusion among casts of epic characters dates back to Homer, and whose dominant mission is to destroy men and their political unity. Although there is considerable scholarship on Tasso's Armida available, there is significantly more to say about how she represents Tasso's concern for the harmful act of men's silencing of women, historical and fictional.<sup>71</sup>

The Este court's *concerto delle dame* coincided with the rise to fame of the professional actress in *commedia dell'arte* companies: this heightened presence of vocally active women maps onto Armida's stardom, both within and beyond the pages of chivalric epic. In seventeenth-century musical theater, Tasso's legacy as an author attuned to women's vulnerability to voicelessness informed the reception of both his female characters and those from Ariosto's *Furioso*. The sonic dynamism of the *Liberata*'s performer-enchantress Armida had an especially persuasive effect on Seicento soundscapes, which embraced her ravishing song as a means of expressing not only amorous desire, but independent agency and vocal mastery.

### "ALLE DONNE SI ADDICE IL SILENZIO"?

In early modern Europe, women's speech was often seen and heard as a potential—possibly even fatal—liability. From sea-cast sirens to staged divas, many early modern women—literary, musical, and theatrical—posed grim threats to the "natural" order of things, whereby men's robust rhetoric was both practiced and valued, and women earned praise for their prudent silence. According to Francesco Barbaro's (1390–1454) principle that "a woman's speech is no less dangerous than the nakedness of her limbs," the correlation between female eloquence and wayward sexual behavior conveyed potential, even perilous, attacks on men's senses.<sup>72</sup> As Bonnie Gordon and Wendy Heller have shown, anxieties concerning the visual-aural threats that speaking women embody lasted well into the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and spoke volumes to the increasing fear that women could usurp the cherished masculine virtue of eloquence.<sup>73</sup> Throughout the second half of the

<sup>71</sup> For a comparative reading of this figure's series of transformations, from Tasso and Ariosto to Spenser, see the classic essay by Robert M. Durling, "The Bower of Bliss and Armida's Palace," *Comparative Literature* 6, no. 4 (1954): 335–47. Further readings of Armida will be cited in the notes from the following sections of this chapter.

<sup>72</sup> "Nec enim minus huiusmodi foemina vox quam membrorum nudatio verendaest," in Francesco Barbaro, *De re uxoria, libri duo* (Strasbourg: Carol, 1612), E1r (II, 3). Cited in Virginia Cox, "Leonardo Bruni on Women and Rhetoric: *De studiis et litteris* Revisited," *Rhetorica* 27, no. 1 (2009): 47–75, n. 9.

<sup>73</sup> Gordon, *Monteverdi's Unruly Women*; Wendy Heller, *Emblems of Eloquence: Opera and Women's Voices in Seventeenth-Century Venice* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).

sixteenth century, however, although fiery sentiment regarding women's "treacherous" mouths circulated, the question of female eloquence demanded serious re-visitation and re-articulation. This was due, in part, because women's growing presence as professional players in contemporary performance culture became increasingly difficult to deny. The rise of the professional female musician in the courts of northern and central Italy coincided with the professionalization of the itinerant actress in *commedia dell'arte* troupes.<sup>74</sup> The visible figure of the eloquent woman brought the issue of female vocality to the center stage—figuratively and literally—of contemporary debates regarding women and their social decorum.

The ambiguities and paradoxes that surface in these debates rehearse the early modern struggle to define and delimit female vocal expression. In the literary repertoire of early modern Italy, this challenge articulated itself in poets' attempts to represent women, from the silent muses of lyric poetry to the enchanting sorceresses of chivalric epic. Modelled on classical archetypes of the fatally sonic siren, the Italian epic enchantress's priority is to destroy Christian male lives—individual and collective, physical and abstract.<sup>75</sup> Insofar as she establishes an imbalance between mortal men and magical women, the enchantress poses the most immediate threat to knights responsible for marrying the "proper" partners with whom they are destined to begin powerful dynasties. In the case of the sixteenth century's most popular chivalric epics, Ariosto's *Orlando furioso* and Tasso's *Gerusalemme liberata*, the enchantress figures Alcina and Armida extend a line of deviant literary women, only to rewrite its genealogy through poetic invention and, in the case of the latter, political and religious redemption.<sup>76</sup> The following pages demonstrate how the contrasting representations of vocal capacity in Alcina and Armida resonate with contemporary debates over the female voice that took place on literary pages and musical-theatrical stages. While I do not read the constructions of Alcina and Armida to represent the poets' definitive stances on women's agency, more broadly considered, the interest lies here in the gendered politics of voice and voicelessness specifically as they concern the figure of the enchantress, the epic personality that most often bridges the musical and poetic spheres.

The analysis that follows evolves according to two aims. First, I understand Tasso's representation of Armida as a vocally redeemed, gender-bending enchantress to be an acute response to Ariosto's silencing of Alcina, an act which renders mute the literary figure of the siren herself, whose voice traditionally communicates the hazards that tempt promise-bound knights.<sup>77</sup> I propose that the motivations for Tasso's revisions stem, in part, from the poet's historical—and textually reimagined—interactions, as explored earlier in this chapter, with the Este court's *concerto delle dame*, singers who were among the first to embody Tasso's fiction in performances. Second, I suggest that when singing actresses personified the enchantress figure on the seventeenth-century stage, librettists took their cue from Tasso, and adopted new approaches to the complex coordination of agency and

<sup>74</sup> See Newcomb, *The Madrigal at Ferrara*; Anne MacNeil, *Music and Women of the Commedia dell'Arte in the Late-Sixteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); Siro Ferrone, *La Commedia dell'Arte: attrici e attori italiani in Europa (XVI–XVIII secolo)* (Turin: Einaudi, 2014); Rosalind Kerr, *The Rise of the Diva on the Sixteenth-Century Commedia dell'Arte Stage* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015); Stras, *Women and Music*.

<sup>75</sup> On classical sirens and their influence, see Meri Lao, *Sirens: Symbols of Seduction* (Rochester: Park Street Press, 1998); Nina Treadwell, *Restaging the Siren: Musical Women in the Performance of Sixteenth-Century Italian Theater*, Ph.D. Dissertation (Los Angeles: University of Southern California, 2000); Linda Phyllis Austern and Inna Naroditskaya, eds., *Music of the Sirens* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 2006).

<sup>76</sup> For the sake of convenience, I use 'chivalric epic' to describe both poems. On specific questions of genre, see Sergio Zatti, *L'ombra del Tasso: Epica e romanzo nel Cinquecento* (Milan: Mondadori, 1996); Jo Ann Cavallo, "Tasso's Armida and the Victory of Romance," in *Renaissance Transactions: Ariosto and Tasso*, ed. Valeria Finucci (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), 77–111.

<sup>77</sup> On Ariosto's influence on Tasso in other contexts, see Bernard Weinberg, *A History of Literary Criticism in the Italian Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961) 954–1073; Margaret Ferguson, *Trials of Desire*; Daniel Javitch, *Proclaiming a Classic: The Canonization of Orlando Furioso* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991).

limitation into which women—fictional and historical—were embedded. Seventeenth-century librettists reconstructed Ariosto's Alcina from a silent seductress to a verbose *virtuosa* by turning to the example of Tasso's *prima donna*. Together, these personalities became role models for how to overcome expectations for silent, passive women.

Towards the end of this chapter, my emphasis on intertextuality and multimedia reception across poetry and performance traces the complexity behind assembled layers of textual threads, sources, and pastiches, as well as the cultural memory of literary figures. Among the theoretical investigations I pursue are those that resonate with Ika Willis's diagnosis of reception as a "context-activated" practice, which brings into focus how the different actors of reception *activate* "the production, transmission, distribution and circulation of messages."<sup>78</sup> I incorporate insights by Adriana Cavarero and Amanda Weidman, which regard voice as an embodied physical and metaphorical practice. The questions I pose herein regarding literary acts of silencing, which later become occasions for staged envoicing, widen the focus for studying the *querelle des femmes*, recognizing the multifaceted affirmations of voice across different art forms, and exploring women's participation in audible performance practices.

## TEMPTING WOMEN'S VOICES FROM ARIOSTO TO TASSO

Over the course of the *Furioso's* nearly 40,000 lines, the sorceress Alcina, unlike her character doubles in Ariosto's *Cinque canti* and Boiardo's *Orlando innamorato*, is surprisingly speechless.<sup>79</sup> Despite the "citare, arpe, e lire/ e diversi altri dilettevol suoni" (7.19)<sup>80</sup> that orchestrate the "sweet harmony" of her pleasure palace, Alcina speaks not one syllable of autonomously produced discourse in the poem.<sup>81</sup> Rather, her voice is held captive, notwithstanding its potential representation of a siren's voice, which traditionally serves poetry through its ability to captivate others. While hints of Alcina's faint murmurs occasionally appear in the poem, only once is her unique voice communicated, albeit via a surrogate mouthpiece: the man-turned-tree Astolfo, who, together with the narrator, construct Alcina as a mirage of idealized female beauty and the eroticized alternative to Bradamante, the dynastic foremother of the Este house, whose very name bears her role as Ruggiero's proper "amante."<sup>82</sup>

Despite Alcina's curse that had transformed him into a newly verdant and supposedly silenced form, Astolfo's voice remains impressively flexible. As he explains to Ruggiero in the nostalgic account of his amorous dalliance with the sorceress, after Alcina grows tired of her lovers, she changes them

<sup>78</sup> Ika Willis, *Reception* (New York: Routledge, 2018), 5.

<sup>79</sup> For Alcina's voice in Boiardo's poem, see 2.13.55–66, in Matteo Maria Boiardo, *Orlando innamorato: l'innamoramento de Orlando*, ed. Andrea Canova (Milan: BUR, 2011); in the *Cinque canti*, see 1.12–17 in Ludovico Ariosto, *Orlando furioso e Cinque canti*, eds. Remo Ceserani and Sergio Zatti, 2 vols. (Turin: UTET, 2006).

<sup>80</sup> All citations, listed by canto and stanza number, are from Ludovico Ariosto, *Orlando furioso*, ed. Cristina Zampese (Milan: BUR, 2016). All translations are by the author.

<sup>81</sup> On the poem's acoustics, more generally, see Daniel Rolfs, "Sound and Silence in Ariosto's Narrative," *Renaissance and Reformation/Renaissance et Réforme* 2, no. 2 (1978): 151–69; James Mirollo, "On the Significant Acoustics of Ariosto's Noisy Poem," *MLN* 103, no. 1 (1988): 87–112.

<sup>82</sup> On the *Furioso's* gender politics, see Deanna Shemek, *Ladies Errant: Wayward Women and Social Order in Early Modern Italy* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998); Ita Mac Carthy, *Women and the Making of Poetry in Ariosto's Orlando furioso* (Leicester: Troubador, 2007); Albert R. Ascoli, "Like a Virgin: Male Fantasies of the Body in *Orlando furioso*," in *The Body in Early Modern Italy*, eds. Julia Hairston and Walter Stephens (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), 142–57; Id., "Erichonius's Secret: Body Politics and History in *Orlando furioso*," in *A Local Habitation and a Name: Imagining Histories in the Italian Renaissance* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2011), 243–81; Eleonora Stoppino, *Genealogies of Fiction: Women Warriors and the Dynastic Imagination in the Orlando furioso* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012).

into fresh landscaping in the form of rocks, trees, rivers, and beasts, imposing silence upon them so that they will keep from “di lei narrando la vita lasciva” (6.51). However, that Astolfo retains his “voce e razionale anima” (6.30), even while cursed by ligneous chastity, reconstitutes the island’s sexual politics of vocal expression: while conquered men are temporarily muted, yet capable of breaking Alcina’s enchantment, the sorceress remains voiceless—her unique vocality usurped by the island’s male materiality.

The Dantean law of *contrappasso* that Alcina enforces upon her former lovers mirrors the process by which men’s lustful expectations, including those of the narrator, deconstruct her into fragments of carnal fantasy. While seemingly aiming to dissuade knights from yielding to Alcina’s temptations, this same process inversely encourages them to advance toward her palace gates. Such counterintuitive results may be explained by the mechanism of triangular desire, following René Girard, that propels many *Furioso* figures’ motives, which, from the squabble over Angelica between Ferraù and Rinaldo in canto 1, to Orlando’s savage unravelling when confronted with Medoro’s winning of Angelica’s affection, determines that desire for desire is stronger than desire for a specific, potentially tarnishable object.<sup>83</sup> The contradiction that allows Astolfo to break free from his curse of voicelessness, so that Ruggiero may hear the mere ten lines “Alcina” utters in the poem (6.39–40), serves to excite the latter’s erotic curiosities about the foreign land and its female governor. Though referred to as a “maga” and a “fata,” Alcina is never named an “incantatrice” in the *Furioso*, a term which would recognize her ability to “cantare.”<sup>84</sup> With no siren song of her own, no “canto” through which to cast “incanti,” Alcina’s male property functions as the body of temptation through which verbal seduction attracts prey. Through a domino effect of successive violations—first, when the hippogriff kicks and pulls at Astolfo’s branches (6.26) and, second, when Astolfo breaches Alcina’s policy of silence—the English Duke’s “espedita e chiarissima favola” (6.28) stimulates Ruggiero’s desires by simultaneously warning him of and enticing him to pursue the “dangerous” pleasures that await him.

In further intertextual terms, Astolfo’s cautioning against Alcina’s erotic traps resonates with Circe’s warning in the *Odyssey*, spoken to make Odysseus aware of the menacing sirens that lurk in nearby waters. Astolfo’s usurpation of female voice, specifically that of the enchantress, may thus be seen as a double appropriation. Unlike Circe, however, during Astolfo’s tantalizing story-telling, he rarely refers to the quality of Alcina’s voice, describing instead the “infinite” delights her body bestows upon guests. Inversely, when female characters appropriate male voices on the island, in the case of Melissa’s masquerading as Atlante in order to rebuke Ruggiero for his moral erring (7.56–64), the sexual politics of vocal expression suggest that sorceresses, in particular, persuade most effectively when they adopt the guise and register of their male counterparts.

If hints of Alcina’s words and songs are present in the poem, they remain inaudible to anyone other than the narrator.<sup>85</sup> In visual representations of the whisper game from canto 7 (21–22), Rutilio Manetti’s 1624 *Ruggiero alla corte della maga Alcina* is a pictorial study in contrasts: just as the light moves like a wave across the canvas, accentuating some features while keeping others hidden, so too do pairs

<sup>83</sup> René Girard, *Mensonge romantique et vérité romanesque* (Paris: Grasset, 1961). On desire in Ariosto’s poem, see Eugenio Donati, “Per selve e boscherecci labirinti: Desire and Narrative Structure in Ariosto’s *Orlando furioso*,” in *Literary Theory/Renaissance Texts*, eds. Patricia Parker and David Quint (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), 33–62; Shemek, *Ladies Errant*, 43–76; Ascoli, “Like a Virgin.” On desire as an ethical question in Boiardo’s poem, see Jo Ann Cavallo, *Boiardo’s Orlando innamorato: An Ethics of Desire* (Cranbury: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1993).

<sup>84</sup> Direct references to Alcina’s “incanti,” however, include the ability to bring fish to the water’s surface (6.38), Ruggiero’s effeminization (7.55), and, by way of extension, the chains of her “magica violenza” (7.67). I have not included the reference to “incanto” in 7.70 because of the ambiguity in the text as to the source of this enchantment. In contrast, for Melissa as an “incantatrice,” see 3.23, 60; 7.39, 49; 43.27; 46.22. For Atlante as an “incantatore,” see 4.16, 24, 29, 38; 7.52; 10.94; 12.34; 13.50, 51, 79; 23.9, 13; 24.54. For Merlin as “il savio incantator britanno,” see 26.39.

<sup>85</sup> Cf. 7.13.5, 16.1–2, 21.

of lovers alternate around the circle, transmitting Alcina's silence as it clashes with men's speech. Mute Alcina is not alone, however, in her voiceless representation: the other three women in Manetti's painting similarly behave as passive listeners, while four male figures spin tales that appear to please them. Denied vocal agency in these two examples, Alcina remains suspended in men's dominantly visual figuration, even as she is revealed not to be a beautiful woman, but a "puttana vecchia."<sup>86</sup> Insofar as she may be considered to belong thematically to the literary genealogy of decadent sorceresses, for whom notoriety often depends upon their ability to attract audibly, no woman's silence is louder than Alcina's. Voiceless, Alcina appears to be a less threatening figure compared to her literary "sisters," since emblematic metaphor replaces her capacity to speak. Fascination with Alcina emerges precisely from her failure to vocalize. Ariosto's silent sorceress stimulates men's desires because they know that, unlike the siren, she has no lethal lullabies with which to harm them. Consequently, to figures eager for her bed, such as Astolfo and Ruggiero, Alcina appears stunning, but not deadly.

If silenced, then, what damage can this sorceress cause? If knights submit to self-delusion in their willful choice to ignore admonitions, of what injury is Alcina capable? For what is she to blame? Adriana Cavarero's notion of vocally embodied uniqueness ("l'unicità incarnata") offers a useful lens through which to further contextualize Alcina's physically present, though sonically absent, existence in the poem.<sup>87</sup> With her voice dependent upon articulation through a male body, Alcina lacks what Cavarero calls "la fenomenologia vocalica dell'unicità," which locates the incarnate singularity of one's unique voice. For Cavarero, voice conveys ontology. Deprived of this, Alcina embodies *par excellence* the proverb of patriarchal politics: "women should be seen, but not heard"—made available to the hungry male gaze, but kept quiet so as to not disturb its appetite.<sup>88</sup> In a similar vein, seventeenth-century treatises on women's speech, such as *La donna di poche parole commendata* (1661) by Paolo Botti, sometimes suggest that a woman appears more attractive when she is taciturn—a principle partially at play in the *Furioso's* construction of Alcina.<sup>89</sup> Cavarero's impression of the "embodied relational uniqueness" that shapes social politics through speech cannot apply to Alcina, whose vocal expression is consumed not by a single figure, but by layers of disembodied male voices: first Astolfo's and then the narrator's. In this way, Alcina becomes a site of friction around which bodies and voices exist in dependent relationships, not in their "proper" persons, but through one character's ability to speak for another.

More generally, cantos 6 through 10 of the *Furioso* appear especially attuned to the question of acoustics, and frame a series of oppositions between those figures who can speak and those who cannot.<sup>90</sup> Adjacent to Alcina's temptation to vocalize is a sequence of interlaced laments by four other

<sup>86</sup> On Alcina's transformation and its intertextual echoes with Dante's siren in *Purgatorio* 19, see Mac Carthy, *Women and the Making*, 19–25. For allegorical readings of Alcina's reveal, see Albert R. Ascoli, *Ariosto's Bitter Harmony: Crisis and Evasion in the Italian Renaissance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 121–257; Elizabeth Bellamy, "Alcina's Revenge: Reassessing Irony and Allegory in the *Orlando furioso*," *Annali d'Italianistica* 12 (1994): 61–74. Dante's siren and Alcina may be contrasted with Gabrina, the next "donna vecchia" to appear, whose introduction immediately conveys her eagerness to speak (12.92).

<sup>87</sup> Adriana Cavarero, *A più voci: filosofia dell'espressione vocale* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 2003).

<sup>88</sup> On silence as a form of female exemplarity, see Helena Sanson, *Donne, precettistica e lingua nell'Italia del Cinquecento: un contributo alla storia del pensiero linguistico* (Florence: Accademia della Crusca, 2007).

<sup>89</sup> Paolo Botti, *La donna di poche parole commendata* (Padua: Pasquati, 1661). I suggest "partially" because the mirage of Alcina's beauty ultimately fades, not because of her speech, but through the counter-magic of the ring that Melissa gives to Ruggiero in 7.72–73.

<sup>90</sup> See the references to soundlessness in the iterations of "cheto" and "tacito" in 7.26, 30, 79, and 8.20, as well as the proem to canto 7, which represents the faculty of sight as superior to hearing. Ruggiero's refusal to believe Astolfo's words (7.16) and his subsequent need for visual confirmation enacts this principle.

figures: Angelica (8.40–44), Charlemagne (8.70), Orlando (8.73–78), and Olimpia (10.27–33).<sup>91</sup> The comparison between Alcina and Olimpia, in particular, which occurs through the act of *entrelacement*, emerges through the women's shared double abandonment—first by their male beloveds and then by the narrator, whose role as storyteller the Dutch princess briefly commandeers when speaking to Orlando. Like Ruggiero and Bireno, the narrator takes leave of his female characters (10.35, 57), and suspends them and their love stories in isolated grief. While Olimpia expresses her reaction to her desertion vocally, carrying with it classical echoes from Ariadne's doleful song, Alcina is only close to vocal expression, tempted to speak and thus join in verbal company the category of the abandoned woman.<sup>92</sup> Unable to fit Lawrence Lipking's definition of this figure as “a potential threat to a well-ordered society,” Alcina cannot belong anywhere—stranded, as she is, to the pages of the poem “ne la sua pena” (10.57).<sup>93</sup> When Alcina's agony at Ruggiero's departure receives narrative attention (10.55–56), the text's comparison with Dido illuminates how the *Furioso's* island queen appears—or, rather, sounds—less like her Virgilian counterpart. The poet's implication is that Alcina cannot be like Dido because, as a fairy, she cannot die; nor can Alcina emulate Dido's cries of outrage, for she cannot speak. To extend these lines of comparison further, Alcina's vocal limitations stand in contrast to the poem's multifaceted, highly audible narrator. By associating his poetics of variety with virtuosic music making, the story-spinning “buono sonator” celebrates his ability to “muta corda e varia suono/ricercando ora il grave, ora l'acuto” (8.29).<sup>94</sup> The calculated timing of this reference comes at the symbolic center of the cantos that concern Alcina, the narrator's own song-less construction, which reveals an additional reason for her sonic nonexistence in Ariosto's poem: Alcina's silence generates more male speech, in both Astolfo and in the narrator-*virtuoso*.

The *Furioso's* representation of the chivalric epic narrator as “sonator” will determine, in part, how and why the enchantress figure reclaims her voice five decades later in Tasso's *Liberata*. To be clear, the sexual politics of vocal dependency that operate on Alcina's island do not constitute the central thematic nor conceptual framework of Tasso's Armida. In contrast to, and perhaps because of, Alcina's silence, Tasso restores voice to his siren-enchantress, so much so that she becomes the most rhetorically and musically adept figure in the poem. From the naturally emitted melodies of her bucolic island, to the strong words she wields as instruments of lament, rage, and reconciliation, loquacious Armida is characterized by the sonic and vocal utterances that surround her. This is not to suggest, however, that Armida is the only female personality granted substantial eloquence in Tasso's poem. On the contrary, rather than stand in opposition to other women's vocality, Armida's voice projects due in part to the poem's hospitality toward audible expression in all its female characters: from Sofronia's public rhetoric of willful sacrifice, to Clorinda's diplomatic negotiations and Erminia's role as a narrator surrogate.<sup>95</sup> As in Alcina's case, Armida does not uniquely determine the guiding

<sup>91</sup> For thematic resonances across these laments, see 8.44 and 8.78, as well as the references to “infelice” Orlando (8.78, 82) and “infelice” Olimpia (10.26).

<sup>92</sup> I am grateful for my discussions with Eugenio Refini on the classical echoes of Ariadne's song in the figures of Alcina and Armida.

<sup>93</sup> Lawrence Lipking, *Abandoned Women and the Poetic Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), xvii. For earlier examples of this type, see Suzanne C. Hagedorn, *Abandoned Women: Rewriting the Classics in Dante, Boccaccio and Chaucer* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004); Fabrizio Frasnèdi, “Figure dell'abbandono: Permanenza e variazioni di un paradigma antropologico e del suo lessico,” in *Storia della lingua italiana e storia della musica*, 49–74.

<sup>94</sup> For the *Furioso's* art of narrative variation, see Patricia Parker, *Inescapable Romance: Studies in the Poetics of a Mode* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), 16–53; Daniel Javitch, “*Cantus Interruptus* in the *Orlando Furioso*,” *MLN* 95 (1980): 66–80; Ascoli, *Ariosto's Bitter Harmony*, 376–94.

<sup>95</sup> For women's voices in Tasso, see Marilyn Migiel, “Tasso's Erminia: Telling an Alternate Story,” *Italica* 64, no. 1 (1987): 62–75; Walter Stephens, “Saint Paul among the Amazons: Gender and Authority in *Gerusalemme liberata*,” in *Discourses of Authority in Medieval and Renaissance Literature*, eds. Kevin Brownlee and Walter Stephens (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1989), 169–200; David Quint, *Epic and Empire: Politics and Generic Form from Virgil to Milton* (Princeton: Princeton

sexual politics of vocal expression that shape the representation of every female voice in the poem, but she informs them as a response to the literary silencing of the specific archetype to which she belongs. Unlike her most immediate predecessor, Armida surpasses solely visual figuration, developing beyond her initial appearance as a “cometa o stella” (4.28) in wielding her voice and becoming a leading lady. Armida’s vocal independence is granted largely because no other figure substitutes her voice in a similar way to how Astolfo appropriates Alcina’s, or to how Erminia impersonates Clorinda’s military dress and identical “voce femminil.”<sup>96</sup> The heightened sonic presence of the siren-enchanted mirrors her increased importance for the poem’s plot, whereby this figure’s traditionally episodic function to delay, distract, and ultimately disappear yields to an incorporated role that implicitly unites Rinaldo’s dynastic future with hers.<sup>97</sup>

These developments occur at various points throughout the *Liberata*, and begin with Armida’s emergence onto the poem’s stage as a skilled rhetorician (4.39–64), the embodiment of the humanist educational agenda that, as Marilyn Migiel has shown, prioritizes eloquence for the purposes of persuasion.<sup>98</sup> That Armida’s oratorical strategies—not the sound of her voice, nor her visual appeal—are effective in luring Christian knights away from their religious-political commitments suggests how Tasso might have read Alcina as a vocally emptied, and thus undeveloped version of the siren figure.<sup>99</sup> This reading emerges most explicitly in canto 16 when, after having enjoyed the carnal fruits of Armida’s company, Rinaldo is suddenly called back to military service. While pleading for him to remain, Armida sings her first autonomous notes of seduction directed solely toward Rinaldo’s ears. This distinction in her audience is revealing: Armida’s speech in canto 4 is not delivered uniquely to Rinaldo, but to the Christian camp at large. Since, earlier in the poem, a siren had lulled the knight to sleep and an aviary chorus had greeted him with pleasing melodies, Armida fully embodies the voice of temptation only while seeking to convince Rinaldo to stay. Echoes of the *Furioso*’s “buono sonator” reverberate in Tasso’s description of Armida as a self-conscious musician:

Qual musico gentil, prima che chiara  
altamente la voce al canto snodi,  
a l’armonia gli animi altrui prepara  
con dolci ricercate in bassi modi,  
così costei, che ne la doglia amara  
già tutte non oblia l’arti e le frodi,  
fa di sospir breve concento in prima  
per dispor l’anima in cui le voci imprima.  
(16.43)

Although the feminine form “musica” was employed in Tasso’s time to refer to female singers, the poet casts Armida in a masculine role (“musicò”), which stresses the resemblance between her and the

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University Press, 1993), 211–65; Marilyn Migiel, *Gender and Genealogy in Tasso’s Gerusalemme liberata* (Lewiston: Mellen Press, 1993). For Tasso’s use of Erminia’s narrating voice to create intertextual echoes with Ariostean poetics, see Jonathan Combs-Schilling, “Weaving the Crusades: Bodies of Interlace in Tasso’s *Gerusalemme liberata*,” *MLN* 127, no. 1 (2012): 1–22.

<sup>96</sup> See the repetitions of “Io son Clorinda” in 2.46 and, later by Erminia, in 6.95. All citations of the poem are from Torquato Tasso, *Gerusalemme liberata*, ed. Franco Tomasi (Milan: BUR, 2009).

<sup>97</sup> This will no longer be the case in *Gerusalemme conquistata*. See Matteo Residori, *L’idea del poema: Studio sulla Gerusalemme conquistata di Torquato Tasso* (Pisa: Scuola normale superiore, 2004), 367–421.

<sup>98</sup> Migiel, “Secrets of a Sorceress: Tasso’s Armida,” *Quaderni d’Italianistica* 8, no. 2 (1987): 149–66.

<sup>99</sup> For Tasso’s critique of the Alcina-Ruggiero episode in his *Discorsi del poema eroico*, see Melinda Gough, “Tasso’s Enchantress, Tasso’s Captive Woman,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 54, no. 2 (2001): 523–52.

“sonator”-performer of Ariosto’s *Furioso*.<sup>100</sup> In the *Liberata*, however, the singer’s affect turns from self-promotion to self-humiliation, as Armida prepares to express her apparent vulnerability. As stated above, Ariosto’s narrator touts his theatrics of sonic variability at the symbolic center of the cantos that concern Alcina. Thus, this figure’s return in the *Liberata* as a gender-bending enchantress further reveals Tasso’s strategy for rewriting Alcina’s silence as Armida’s vocality. Moreover, while the *Furioso* makes ironic comparison between Alcina and Dido, Tasso makes the latter’s curse from the *Aeneid* become a pervasive presence throughout Armida’s impassioned discourse. From her invective against Rinaldo’s retreat to her attempted suicide, “misera Armida” looks to the language and pathos of “infelix Dido” as the model for how to perform as a tragic heroine.

Armida’s lament overcomes the personal and becomes political, as she begs that Rinaldo take her as a willing captive back to the Christian camp, which would thus liberate her from the episodic function to which her literary archetype is typically bound:

Me fra l’altre tue spoglie il campo veda  
ed a l’altre tue lodi aggiunga questa,  
che la tua schernitrice abbia schernito  
mostrando me sprezzata ancella a dito.  
(16.48)

Armida’s urgent desire to be reunited with Rinaldo bespeaks the theme of incorporation—physical and spiritual—that enhances her purpose in the poem.<sup>101</sup> The pertinent question here is not so much Armida’s sincerity as is her vociferous means of expression. In her moment of abandonment, rather than heave sighs to the empty waves, like Ariosto’s Olimpia, Armida sings precisely because she knows she is being heard. The image of Rinaldo’s tear-swollen eyes, together with his verbal response, confirm the auditory effects of Armida’s powerful speech.

### SPEAK, SORCERESS: ARMIDA AS ROLE MODEL IN EARLY OPERA

In seventeenth-century musical theater, Tasso’s attention to women’s vulnerability to voicelessness informed the reception of his female characters and of those from Ariosto’s *Furioso*. Staging a singing songstress from chivalric poetry, however, increases her enchantment of—and thus her imagined threat to—audiences. According to early modern anti-theatrical critics, such as the Jesuit professor Pietro Gambacorta, these voracious predators subjected male listeners to scandalous “moral ruin.”<sup>102</sup> Like those of their siren sisters, the irresistible chants of sex-mad sorceresses, when alive and fully embodied on stage, were believed to bewitch mortal men and detach them from reason. Therefore, the sixteenth century’s most spectacular literary sorceresses, Ariosto’s Alcina and Tasso’s Armida, were ideal fits for the seventeenth-century stage that often sought to affirm women’s song regardless, or perhaps *because* of, the moral cacophony it was capable of causing. On and off stage, these spellbinding women of magic and mischief were sometimes deemed anti-role models. In its description of women’s spiritual song, Ercole Bottrigari’s (1531–1612) dialogue *Il Desiderio* (1594) fears that not even nuns could parry the influence of Alcina’s “diabolical” sway:

<sup>100</sup> Armida’s masculine characteristics are described elsewhere in the poem, in 4.24, 4.51, and 14.66.

<sup>101</sup> Armida’s willingness in canto 16 to serve as Rinaldo’s “sprezzata ancella” foreshadows her self-identification in canto 20 as his “ancilla” (20.136). On Armida’s series of conversions, see Cavallo, “Tasso’s Armida.”

<sup>102</sup> Ferdinando Taviani, *La commedia dell’arte e la società barocca: La fascinazione del teatro* (Rome: Bulzoni, 1991), xci.

Come vi struggereste voi vedendolo primieramente componere, e concertare insieme [...] onde vi parerebbe certo ò di sognarvi, ò di veder qualche uno di quegli immaginati incanti della maga Alcina.<sup>103</sup>

In Bottrigari's imagination, the illusory overtones of Ariosto's man-destroying temptress could transform the image of holy sisters into that of sinister harlots. In comparative terms, Armida was no less effective in shaping singers' reputations, although re-imaginings of her were perhaps more ambiguous. In his praise of the theatrical diva Adriana Basile, Angelo Grillo infuses the singer's fame with hints of magical allure by comparing her first to "una sirena allettatrice e lusinghiera," and then to "un'Armida napoletana."<sup>104</sup> The valences such fictional personalities imparted onto historical performers crystallized within broader socio-political coordinates concerning the *querelle des femmes* and the expanded reflections on the status of women in works by Moderata Fonte, Lucrezia Marinella, and Arcangela Tarabotti.<sup>105</sup>

References to Alcina and Armida reappear across seventeenth-century literature due, in part, to the enduring afterlives these figures had in musical-theatrical productions.<sup>106</sup> Vocal limitations yielded to expressive liberation when librettists prepared Alcina for her staged debut, following Tasso's lead in rewriting the enchantress figure from silent to sonic. In this respect, Baroque musical artists may be seen to have anticipated Suzanne Cusick's notion that "access to voice [is always] access to power," especially as it applies to women's subjectivities as performers.<sup>107</sup> Along similar lines, cultural anthropologist Amanda Weidman has labeled voice as "a category invoked in discourse about personal agency, cultural authenticity, and political power."<sup>108</sup> When transmitted on stage—a site often recognized for its ability to represent challenges to power and personal agency—women's song contributed to the ambiguity of early opera's status, whereby female singers' performances transcended scrutiny by conservative audiences, who would have preferred to keep the mesmerizing women of chivalric epic safely enclosed within the printed page. As enchantresses emerged as fully embodied figures, musical artists expanded their voices and vocabulary in order to convey opera's

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<sup>103</sup> Hercole Bottrigari, *Il Desiderio* (Venice: Amadino, 1594), 48. On sirens represented in other sacred contexts, see Kendrick, *Celestial Sirens*.

<sup>104</sup> See the citation in Alessandro Ademollo, *La Bell'Adriana a Milano (1611)* (Milan: N.p., 1888).

<sup>105</sup> See Paola Malpezzi Price and Christine Ristaino, *Lucrezia Marinella and the 'Querelle des Femmes' in Seventeenth-Century Italy* (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2008); Elisa Modolo, "The Insider's Voice, or *l'abito non fa la monaca*: Arcangela Tarabotti's Revised Representation of the Nun," in *Representations of Female Identity in Italy: From Neoclassicism to the 21st Century*, eds. Silvia Giovanardi Byer and Fabiana Cecchini (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017), 51–75.

<sup>106</sup> On the *Furioso* and the *Liberata* adapted in musical theater, see M.A. Balsano, ed., *L'Ariosto, la musica i musicisti: quattro studi e sette madrigali ariosteschi* (Florence: Olschki, 1981); Andrea Buzzoni, ed., *Torquato Tasso tra letteratura, musica, teatro, e arti figurative* (Bologna: Nuova Alfa, 1985); Giovanni Careri, ed., *La Jérusalem délivrée du Tasse: poésie, peinture, musique, ballet* (Paris: Klincksieck-Musée du Louvre, 1999); Edward Anderson, *Ariosto, Opera, and the Seventeenth Century: Evolution in the Poetics of Delight*, ed. Nicola Badolato in collaboration with Amyrose McCue Gill (Florence: Olschki, 2017); Tancredi Artico and Enrico Zucchi, eds., *La fortuna del Tasso eroico tra Sei e Settecento: modelli interpretativi e pratiche di riscrittura* (Alessandria: Edizioni dell'Orso, 2017); Eugenio Refini, "La voix des sirènes: réécritures du roman chevaleresque dans le théâtre musical du XVIIe siècle," in *Dramaturgies vagabondes, migrations romanesques: Croisements entre théâtre et roman (XVIe-XVIIe siècles)*, ed. Magda Campanini (Paris: Éditions Champion, 2018), 95–106.

<sup>107</sup> Suzanne Cusick, "A Soprano Subjectivity: Vocality, Power, and the Compositional Voice of Francesca Caccini," in *Crossing Boundaries: Attending to Early Modern Women*, ed. Jane Donawerth and Adele Seeff (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2000), 80–98.

<sup>108</sup> Amanda Weidman, "Anthropology and Voice," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 43 (2014): 37–51, 38. I thank Emily Wilbourne for this reference.

charm, which, as Jean Starobinski has shown, operates at the crossroads of “mystery” and “intimacy.”<sup>109</sup>

Indeed, Alcina is a character type tailor-fit for the stage: she entertains lovesick paladins, communicates her art through action, not by speech, changes her partners into victims, men into monsters, and lovers into landscapes. To say the least, Alcina *is* theatrical. Thus, with the help of intertextual nuances from Tasso’s Armida, Alcina dominates musical-theatrical repertoire whose titles paradoxically exclude her, such as Ridolfo Campeggi (1565–1624) and Girolamo Giacobbi’s (1567–1629) *Il Ruggero liberato* (1620), in which the sorceress’s previously unimagined eloquence now outshines the near muteness of the eponymous hero.<sup>110</sup> In contrast to Ruggero’s almost silence in this work, Alcina’s autonomous ability to seduce restores the vocal faculties she once had in Boiardo’s poem, and grants her the embodied vocality she is denied in the *Furioso*. The vocabulary of her song sets into action descriptions of Armida’s proxies from the *Liberata*, in particular, the siren from canto 14, who arises “dal palco di notturna scena,” and incites her audience to bask in carnal bliss:

Solo chi segue ciò che piace è saggio  
[...]  
Folli, perché gettate il caro dono,  
che breve è sì, di vostra età novella?  
[...]  
Goda il corpo sicuro, e in lieti oggetti  
l’anima tranquilla appaghi i sensi frali.  
(14.62–64)

In *Ruggero liberato*, Alcina adopts the mouthpiece of Tasso’s siren when she provokes sexual opportunity in the words:

Godiamo, o del cor mio,  
i nostri cari, e saporiti Amori.  
La fresca età sen fugge,  
il tempo avaro adugge  
la giovinezza lieta.<sup>111</sup>

In further intertextual terms, Campeggi’s enchantress speaks as the delegate of golden age freedom, which strikes a second Tassian overtone with the poet’s *Aminta*, whose memorable adage “s’ei piace, ei lice” advocates for the similar pursuit of erotic fulfillment.<sup>112</sup>

Tracing the voices of Armida’s idyllic libertinism in other operas based on the *Furioso*, the *Liberata*’s *carpe diem* slogan “Cogliam la rosa in su ’l mattino adorno,” led by the enchantress’s parrot-pet in canto 16, returns in a similarly aviary-inspired episode in Pietro Paolo Bissari’s (1595–1663) *La Bradamante* (1650), in which Alcina and Ruggiero’s voices harmonize with a chorus of parrots who encourage their love:

L’età novella  
non torna più

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<sup>109</sup> Jean Starobinski, *Les Enchanteresses* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2005).

<sup>110</sup> Anderson, *Ariosto*, 67.

<sup>111</sup> Ridolfo Campeggi, *Ruggero liberato* (Bologna: Cochi, 1620), 18.

<sup>112</sup> Tasso, *Aminta*, ed. Marco Corradini (Milan: BUR, 2015).

[...]  
 Svanise ogn'hor,  
 se non si coglie  
 frutto d'Amor.<sup>113</sup>

Bissari's medley of Tassian and Ariostean source materials may have served as a temporary cure for the difficulty he expresses in the opera's dedicatory letter: the issue of entertaining poetically well-versed audiences with "cose non vedute o il farle così ben comparire che con pompa ed apparenza maggiore non siano per avanti compare."<sup>114</sup> Even if the parrot maestro of the *Liberata* was familiar among Venice's theater-going public, the animal's surprise entrance in a story drawn from Ariosto worked, in part, to combat the "nauseated" audience experience Bissari associated with hyper-repetitive repertoire.

In addition to Armida's pastoral and maritime influences on Alcina's new dramatic ability to self-express, her song of howling outrage at being abandoned resounds in Alcina's analogous experience in Fulvio Testi's (1593–1646) *L'isola d'Alcina* (1626), with music set two decades later by Francesco Saccati (1605–1650). Testi's libretto offers a sympathetic recuperation of "infelice" Alcina, as it explores the softer side of this double victim of knightly errancy and lover's betrayal. Ruggiero's status in this work as a compromised protagonist appears all the more poignant in its opposition to Alcina's, not as menacing man-slayer, but as a lover scorned by "un amante infido." Employing creative agency over the sorceress's romance origins, Testi inverts the *Furioso's* narratives of liberation and damnation, whereby, through an educational and moral correction, Ruggiero returns to virtuousness and Alcina is exposed for her heinous trickery. In *L'isola d'Alcina* the empathetic tables turn as Ruggiero is blamed for his lacking "qualità eroiche" and Alcina performs the role of the tragic heroine.<sup>115</sup>

With new sensibilities oriented toward Alcina's trial of rejection, Testi's libretto improves the enchantress's plaintive vocabulary, and borrows from Armida in order to do so. At the end of Act IV, when Alcina confronts her lover's departure she releases her distress in over one hundred lines of pathetic outburst, stirring up the same infernal demons Armida conjures upon Rinaldo's leave-taking in the *Liberata*. As she progresses from disbelief to despair, Alcina identifies as a "forsennata," thus adopting the textual semblance of Tasso's enchantress that had reverberated so widely in late-sixteenth century madrigals.<sup>116</sup> Casting herself in the role of Armida, Testi's Alcina descends into a spiraling series of questions, curses, and shrieks—"Folle, ma che vaneggio? Forsennata, che chieggio?"—clamoring for her listener's attention even as she sings only to herself.<sup>117</sup> Seemingly aware of her poetic counterpart's silence in Ariosto's text, Testi's version of Alcina questions how she could ever remain speechless in the face of such harrowing loss: "Partir vedrò il mio bene, e starò muta/ in così gran

<sup>113</sup> Pietro Paolo Bissari, *La Bradamante* (Venice: Valvasense, 1650), 47–8.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>115</sup> Testi makes this reversal apparent by veiling Ruggiero's "cor di drago" with an "angelico sembiante," thus describing the Christian knight's dishonesty with the same words Ariosto uses to characterize Alcina (7.15). Fulvio Testi, *L'isola d'Alcina* (Bologna: Dozza, 1648), 53. On Ruggiero's lacking "heroic qualities," see the dedicatory letter to Francesco Falconieri.

<sup>116</sup> Among the composers who set "Forsennata gridava" (16.40) to music are Giaches de Wert, *L'ottavo libro de madrigali a cinque voci* (Venice: Gardano, 1586); Sigismondo D'India, *Musiche* (Milan: Tini and Lomazzo, 1609); P. A. Giramo, *Arie a più voci* (Naples: Beltramo, 1630). For other madrigal settings of Tasso's poetry, see the *Tasso in Music Project* at tassomusic.org. See the director of the *Tasso in Music Project's* fine studies of musical settings of Tasso's poetry: Emiliano Ricciardi, "Torquato Tasso and Lighter Musical Genres: Canzonetta Settings of the *Rime*," *The Journal of Musicology* 29, no. 4 (2012): 385–421; Id., *The Musical Reception of Torquato Tasso's Rime. 1571–1620*, Ph.D. Dissertation (Stanford: Stanford University, 2013).

<sup>117</sup> Testi, *L'isola d'Alcina*, 49.

martire?”<sup>118</sup> The tragedy and its heroine thus re-examine the gendered playing field of vocal politics, wherein the default is no longer to blame the wayward woman, but to account for the shortcomings of her male partner through the careful use of intertextuality.

Tasso’s influence on the development of staged Alcina is evident in musical-theatrical entertainment composed by women. In Francesca Caccini’s (1587–after 1641) *La liberazione di Ruggiero dall’isola d’Alcina* (1625), with a libretto by Ferdinando Saracinelli (1583–1640), once Ruggiero re-awakens his moral senses and prepares to leave, Alcina models her language of indignation on Armida, and reprimands Ruggiero as a “uomo spietato,” the same accusation with which Armida charges Rinaldo in the *Liberata*.<sup>119</sup> However, Alcina molds a mindful spin on Armida’s lament: rather than command Ruggiero to quicken the steps of his departure in the likeness of Armida’s demand “Vattene pur, crudel” (16.59), Alcina mandates physical and aural attention from her fleeing lover: “senti le strida/ senti le mie giustissime querele/ ferma, ferma crudele.” When Ruggiero’s retreat deploys the use of Alcina’s vocal chords, the sense of liberation duplicates in this work. Just as the Christian knight is freed from island captivity, so too does Alcina release her cries against his betrayal. In an ending that recalls the disappearing act of Armida’s palace—when she sets off to enact revenge on the crusading army (16.69–70)—Alcina and her citadel burn up in flames, even while the enchantress refuses to stop singing. With words that speak louder than actions, Alcina’s delayed exit contrasts with her virtuosic four-fold repetition of “fuggirò”: though her body is forced to flee, Alcina’s voice seeks to remain, a principle that recalls Bonnie Gordon’s impression that “the means of delivering a message [may] exceed the message itself.”<sup>120</sup> The bitter farewell address Alcina delivers in *La liberazione* is a scorching rejection of disloyal men and submission to suicide, which allows her—as it does for Armida—to circumvent the fate often expected of exotic foreign queens, whose typically intervallic function in epic follows the fatal trajectory, termed by Catherine Clément, of the “défaite” of operatic heroines.<sup>121</sup>

In representations of Tasso’s enchantress, Armida retains her “sweet and precious notes” (4.85) in Benedetto Ferrari’s (c.1603–1681) *L’Armida* (1639), which premiered two years after the 1637 carnival season, in which Ferrari, his friend and fellow composer Francesco Manelli (c.1595–1667), and an acting troupe of itinerant musicians introduced Venice and its citizens to commercial opera.<sup>122</sup> Drawing on the enchantress’s complete story, from her debut in canto 4 to her Marian transformation sixteen cantos later, Ferrari’s work accounts for Armida and Rinaldo’s larger importance concerning the Christian enterprise both in Jerusalem and, perhaps unexpectedly in a poem about the First Crusade, in the Serenissima republic. The lovers’ union, which is made possible only through Armida’s conversion, conveys the moral mission and religious message of Tasso’s poem, acting as a kind of “musical synecdoche,” as Alessandra Munari has suggested, of the success of the whole crusade.<sup>123</sup> Rinaldo and Armida’s passion motivates divine intervention, which, rather than ensure military success

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., 44.

<sup>119</sup> Ferdinando Saracinelli, *La liberazione di Ruggiero dall’isola d’Alcina* (Florence: Cecconcelli, 1625). On other Tassian overtones in this work, see Harness, *Echoes of Women’s Voices*; Cusick, *Francesca Caccini*, 191–246.

<sup>120</sup> Gordon, *Monteverdi’s Unruly Women*, 3.

<sup>121</sup> Catherine Clément, *L’Opéra, ou la Défaite des femmes* (Paris: Grasset, 1979). Cf. Susan McClary, *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender and Sexuality* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991).

<sup>122</sup> Benedetto Ferrari, *L’Armida* (Venice: Bartletti, 1639). For the birth of opera in Venice and its roots in *commedia dell’arte* practices, see Ellen Rosand, *Opera in Seventeenth-Century Venice* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991); Emily Wilbourne, *Seventeenth-Century Opera and the Sound of the Commedia dell’arte* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016). On Ferrari’s libretti, see Maria Grazia Accorsi, *Amore e melodramma: Studi sui libretti per musica* (Modena: Mucchi, 2001); Nicola Badolato, “Introduzione,” in *I drammi musicali veneziani di Benedetto Ferrari*, eds. Nicola Badolato and Vincenzo Martorana (Florence: Olschki, 2013), pp. vii–xxxiv.

<sup>123</sup> Alessandra Munari, “Lo ‘strano nodo’ di Armida: dall’epica di Tasso al libretto di Benedetto Ferrari,” in *La fortuna*, 39–50, 50.

for the Christian armies, as was its primary purpose in Tasso, procures a happy ending for the romantic couple and for the city in which their story unfolds. At Jove's command to convert "armi ai baci," Cupid attacks Armida upon first seeing Rinaldo, converting her into a victim—an ambiguous hybrid of sexual danger and sensual vulnerability. This ambivalence plays to Ferrari's characterization of the sorceress as a constantly developing, ultimately redeemed figure, mirroring her evolution in Tasso's poem.

Such transformations contribute to Ferrari's efforts to recast Armida from a foreign villain who willingly cooperates with demons into an admirable role model for contemporary Venetian audiences. At the end of *L'Armida*, Venezia personified raises the pair onto her throne with the words: "venite, e fia mia cura di ritornarvi al regno." Armida's home of Damascus is replaced with the Serenissima republic, a kind of new Jerusalem that symbolizes the reclaimed site of the lovers' union and the imagined domain over which these "illustrious heroes" will now rule. As the curtain falls, the final chorus welcomes into Venice's lagoon Italy's most famous recent literary couple, celebrating the prosperity they bring with the words: "viva Venezia viva." Ferrari's direct address to his Venetian audience operates within broader cultural-artistic tendencies that situate dramaturgical and literary production locally: from Giulio Strozzi's (1583–1652) epic poem *Venetia edificata* (1624), which glorifies the city's triumphant origins, to the "*venezianità*," the "shared sense of being citizens of a unique state," that, as Ellen Rosand has shown, characterizes mid-seventeenth century musical drama.<sup>124</sup> Such a sense of local pride may be later traced in the theories and practices of figures associated with the Accademia degli Incogniti, the institution, with which Strozzi was associated, whose political, literary, and aesthetic tastes shaped the development of opera in the years immediately following *L'Armida*.<sup>125</sup>

Although the first decades of the seventeenth century witnessed the emergence of a variety of Alcinas, Armidas, and hybrid figures of the two embodied on the musical-theatrical stage, these personalities are peculiarly rare in mid-century dramatic productions. The fading of Ariostean and Tassian archetypes from Italian operatic repertoire was partially caused by the growing taste for artistic convergence between the chronicles of human history and divine myth, which resulted in scores of adaptations drawn from Ovidian tales—likely inspired by the success of Giambattista Marino's (1569–1625) poetry—and episodes from Rome's imperial past.<sup>126</sup> While the Venetian entertainment scene after Ferrari saw a decline in the number of operatic Armidas, resonances of Tasso's heroine resurface, through intertextual layering, in operas based on classical epic, such as Francesco Cavalli (1602–1676) and Giovanni Francesco Busenello's (1598–1659) *Didone* (1641). Two years after Ferrari's Armida had captivated local audiences, the eponymous heroine of *Didone* sang in the shadows of the Damascan queen at the Teatro S. Cassiano. Scorned by Enea's divinely ordered departure, Didone cries out to her "dispietato" lover "Vanne, vattene pur" in imitation of Armida's curse upon Rinaldo, "Vattene

<sup>124</sup> Rosand, *Opera*, 125–53. Cf. Edward Muir, *The Culture Wars of the Late Renaissance: Skeptics, Libertines, and Opera* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 109–50. On the earlier history of Venetian musical activities and their attention to local culture, see Martha Feldman, *City, Culture and the Madrigal at Venice* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

<sup>125</sup> On the economic expansion of opera in Venice and throughout Italy, see Lorenzo Bianconi and Thomas Walker, "Production, Consumption and Political Function of Seventeenth-Century Opera," *Early Music History* 4 (1984): 209–96; Beth Glixon and Jonathan Glixon, *Inventing the Business of Opera: The Impresario and his World in Seventeenth-Century Venice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), especially 66–105.

<sup>126</sup> For the list of mid-seventeenth century musical dramatic productions based on Ariosto, see Anderson, *Ariosto*, 223–24. On the choice of plot in early opera, see Nino Pirrotta, *Li due Orfei: da Poliziano a Monteverdi* (Turin: ERI, 1969); Bianconi and Walker, "Production," 249–59; Rosand, *Opera*, 59–65; Paolo Fabbri, *Il secolo cantante: per una storia del libretto d'opera in Italia nel Seicento* (Rome: Bulzoni, 2003), 184–218; Jon Solomon, "The Influence of Ovid in Opera," in *A Handbook to the Reception of Ovid*, eds. John Miller and Carole Newlands (Hoboken: Wiley, 2014), 371–85.

pur, cruel.”<sup>127</sup> Unlike her trajectory in Virgil’s poem, however, Didone’s tragic tale denies death at the burning pyre when an intertextual moment with Tasso interrupts her attempted suicide. In Act III, Iarba, King of the Getuli, stops Didone from harming herself, and thus becomes her “preservator [della] vita,/ re, vero amante, e fido amico.” Echoes of Rinaldo’s salvific disruption of Armida’s effort to take her life in *Gerusalemme liberata* (20.147) surface in Busenello’s alterations to Dido’s story. By way of circular influence, just as Virgil’s heroine shaped the construction of Tasso’s Armida, the archetype of the saved seductress in the *Liberata* served as a model for musical-theatrical adaptations of the classical figure upon whom that archetype was partially based. Expressed otherwise, the textual reuse of Tasso in Busenello’s libretto stands, to borrow Graham Allen’s term, as an “intertext,” which reaches back to its classical source only to rewrite and redeem its characters.<sup>128</sup>

If intertextuality offers one key through which to trace the development of fictional characters on stage, international forms of extratextuality further attest to their transformations in performance cultures across Europe. While local attention to Armida and her rhetorical agility might have faded in seventeenth-century Italy, where, as Edward Muir has argued, increasingly migrating circuits of performers caused “Venetian opera [to become] less Venetian,”<sup>129</sup> the enchantress’s international appeal transcended linguistic boundaries when it reached the stages in France, most successfully in Jean-Baptiste Lully (1632–1687) and Philippe Quinault’s (1635–1688) “tragédie en musique” *Armide* (1686).<sup>130</sup> As a lyric testament to the salvific powers of female eloquence, inspired by the classical French tradition of spoken tragedy, the opera’s heroine demonstrates her expertise at alternating between song and silence, thus embodying, according to Paolo Botti’s treatise, women’s most admired quality. In Act II, the natural incantatory song of Armide’s island lulls Renaud to sleep, after which she arrives eager to fulfill her desire for revenge, and proudly sings “Enfin il est en ma puissance.” In Tasso’s *Liberata*, it is precisely in this moment when the enchantress experiences an unexpected change of heart, converting from a “nemica” to an “amante” through visual means, while staring at sleeping Rinaldo’s “occhi nascosi” (14.67). By way of sensory contrast in the opera, this conversion occurs through Armide’s eloquence and self-conscious listening to her own song. The more Armide sings, the more she suspends herself between action and speech, between regal vengeance in the voice of *nous* and emotional transformation in the voice of *je*:

Enfin, il est en ma puissance,  
Ce fatal ennemi, ce superbe vainqueur.  
Le charme du sommeil le livre à ma vengeance.  
Je vais percer son invincible cœur.  
Par lui, tous mes captifs sont sortis d’esclavage.  
Qu’il éprouve toute ma rage.  
Quel trouble me saisit? Qui me fait hésiter?  
Qu’est-ce qu’en sa faveur la pitié veut me dire?  
Frappons...ciel! Qui peut m’arrêter?  
Achevons... Je frémis! Vengeons-nous... Je soupire!  
Est-ce ainsi que je dois me venger aujourd’hui!  
Ma colère s’éteint quand j’approche de lui.

<sup>127</sup> The libretto was not published at the time of the opera’s premiere. Giovanni Francesco Busenello, *La Didone* (Venice: Giuliani, 1656). Cf. Heller, *Emblems*, 82–135.

<sup>128</sup> Graham Allen, *Intertextuality* (New York: Routledge, 2000).

<sup>129</sup> Muir, *The Culture Wars*, 134.

<sup>130</sup> Jean Philippe Quinault, *Armide* (Paris: Ballard, 1686). For the French transformation of Armida, see Lorenzo Bianconi, *Il Seicento* (Turin: EDT, 1982), 234–47; Mario Armellini, *Le due Armide: metamorfosi estetiche e drammaturgiche da Lully a Gluck* (Florence: Passigli, 1991).

Plus je le vois, plus ma vengeance est vaine,  
Mon bras tremblant se refuse à la haine.

With Tasso's comparison between Armida and Narcissus (14.66) absent from Quinault's libretto, speech wins over sight as the sorceress lowers her dagger and wrath dissolves into affection. Through self-interruption and the dawning of hesitation—marked by the three sets of ellipses in the French libretto and repetitions of rests in the musical score—the enchantress's threatening urges give way to her autonomous, now vocalized, willingness to love. The salvific effects of Armide's sung psychological self-portrait invert the threats of male violence, about which she had dreamt in Act I, in which she imagines herself falling in love with Renaud just at the moment when he is about to kill her. Here in Act II, Armide's voice reverses the roles of male victor and female victim, as she towers over her beloved no longer ruthless, but now enamored. The physical effects of her dramatic soliloquy further extend to Renaud, for her lyric performance is precisely what saves him. At the end of the opera, although Renaud's departure will reignite Armide's rage and abstinence from love, her conferral of salvific vocality earlier in the opera lends evidence to how, even a century after her premiere in Tasso's poem, the enchantress's voice thrives as an ever-evolving, ever-surprising instrument.

As a possible source of inspiration for Lully and Quinault, Anthony van Dyck's *Rinaldo and Armida* (1629) similarly depicts the prominence of song in the sorceress's conversion. As Jason Lawrence has carefully studied, the painting harmonizes nine stanzas of Tasso's poem (14.60–69) into a single frame, representing Armida as she hovers in doubt above Rinaldo, while a nearby siren sings from a piece of sheet music.<sup>131</sup> Van Dyck's painting captures the striking interdependence between the siren's voice and its salvific effects on both male and female audiences. Although Armida is not described as present for the siren song in Tasso's poem, the Flemish artist shares in Lully and Quinault's intimation that sung female eloquence yields truly transformative experiences. In a broader sense, Armida's attraction among seventeenth-century visual and musical artists may be seen as a parallel to the theatrical afterlives of the figure of Tasso himself. In the prologue to Giovanni Villifranchi's *Gli amori di Armida* (1600), "l'ombra del Tasso" is the first to speak, and expresses his desire to live on through the voices of his characters:

mi chiama ad ascoltar quell'armonia,  
che vien formata da' miei propri accenti;  
musica ho l'alma ancor musica ho voglia,  
e vivo eterno in musica armonia,  
che più perfetta fan musici spirti.<sup>132</sup>

Summoned to appear on the "theaters of the world" by his own embodied fiction, the poet survives in the performances of Armida, her "amori," and their Orphic-like resurrecting powers. In more ways than one, this prophetic gesture toward Tasso's legacy sustained by female singers ("vivo eterno in musica armonia") proved to be accurate, thanks to the local and international appeal of *Liberata* characters across music, theater, opera, ballet, and art. Tracing the enchantress's allure to the present day, Judith Weir's (b.1954) two-act opera *Armida*, which re-imagines Tasso's protagonist as a career-

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<sup>131</sup> Jason Lawrence, *Tasso's Art and Afterlives: The Gerusalemme liberata in England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017), 107–19. On other visualizations of Armida, see Mary Sheriff, *Enchanted Islands: Picturing the Allure of Conquest in Eighteenth-Century France* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018), 137–80.

<sup>132</sup> Giovanni Villifranchi, *Gli amori d'Armida* (Venice: Ciotti, 1600), 4.

hungry news journalist responsible for reporting on conflicts in the Middle East, premiered on television in the United Kingdom in 2005, 424 years after the complete *Liberata*'s first publication.<sup>133</sup>

The discursive counterpoint these pages have traced, from Laura Peperara and the musical-philosophical portraits of Tarquinia Molza, as well as those of fictional heroines like Armida, has clarified several late-sixteenth and early-seventeenth century responses to the challenges faced by vocally and musically active women. The public affirmation of women's song expressed on the behalf of poets, theorists, librettists, and composers appears self-conscious in its attempt not only to praise, but to validate women for the very faculty by which others seemingly felt threatened, namely, the siren sounds of their "dangerous" mouths. Ariosto's Alcina and Tasso's Armida developed beyond the frames of their poems when musical-theatrical stages embraced these figures and transformed them from controversial characters into protagonists of public spectacle and passionate expression.

The performance practices observed in this chapter synthesize layers of intertextuality and novel forms of reception. Such interweaving of textual materials, or, to use the Ariostean term *entrelacement*, in the construction of opera's early musical poetics shines light on the complex relationship between literary sources and their place in dramatic spectacles. In more ways than one, the multifaceted process whereby Italian epic poetry intermixes classical, medieval, and contemporary sources reflects in the compositional layering that gave shape to early opera, wherein textual re-assembly provides a key for mapping how librettists and composers embraced certain cultural and aesthetic forms. The blending in opera of different literary elements, which, as Edward Anderson has suggested, bespeaks the mid-seventeenth century taste for "*farraginosità*," brings into relief the stylistic nuances that bridge the page and the stage.<sup>134</sup> Ariosto's and Tasso's story-telling techniques, from the shadings of *entrelacement* to revision via imitation, may be considered to be models for the interweaving modes of composition found in Handel-Rossi's *Rinaldo* (1711), which borrows arias from earlier works, and Vivaldi-Palazzo's *Armida al campo d'Egitto* (1718), a kind of "*Liberata*-in-miniature" whose poetic license divorces characters' speech both from original contexts and original mouthpieces.<sup>135</sup> Such practices of assembly and reuse may have also served as pioneers for later eighteenth-century forms of pastiche in works by Metastasio, Goldoni, and others. Just as the fictional representations and historical examples of eloquent women challenge the existence of a single candid relationship between a message and its meaning, so too do the entanglement of sources and web of intertextual echoes across literary genres and the operatic stage shape a form of hybrid polyphony, through which new possibilities for production, adaptation, and invention can emerge and inspire.

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<sup>133</sup> Judith Weir, *Armida* (London: Chester Music, 2005). The opera received its stage debut in February 2019 at the Martin Harris Centre in Manchester.

<sup>134</sup> Anderson, *Ariosto*, 129.

<sup>135</sup> Giacomo Rossi, *Rinaldo, opera* (London: T. Howlatt, 1711); Giovanni Palazzo, *Armida al campo d'Egitto, drama per musica* (Venice: Marino Rossetti, 1718).

## CHAPTER FOUR

### The Stranger and the Star: Variety as Versatility in Tasso and Isabella Andreini

The comparison between poetry and a carefully structured “little world” (“picciolo mondo”) in book two of Tasso’s *Discorsi dell’arte poetica* (c.1560–62) casts the poet in the role of a creator—an architect of words who assigns ideas to images in order to form narrative coherence:<sup>1</sup>

Un poema formar si possa, nel quale, quasi in un picciolo mondo, qui si leggano ordinanze d’esserciti, qui battaglie terrestri e navali, qui espugnazioni di città, scaramucce e duelli, qui giostre, qui descrizioni di fame e di sete, qui tempeste, qui incedii, qui prodigii: là si trovino concilii celesti ed infernali, là si veggiano sedizioni, là discordie, là errori, là venture, là incanti, là opere di crudeltà, di audacia, di cortesia di generosità, là avvenimenti d’amore, or felici, or infelici, or lieti, or compassionevoli; ma che nondimeno uno sia il poema cha tanta varietà di materie contegna.<sup>2</sup>

Immediately following this proposal, Tasso explains how such variety in poetry—from warfare on land and sea to fires, famine, and love—is required only in its service to the plot’s binding unity. While this particular aspect of Tasso’s Aristotelian poetics has shaped considerable criticism on the poet’s *Gerusalemme liberata* (c.1581), the parallel that links the reader to the spectator is worthy of similarly careful analysis. Addressing poetry from the point of view of a god-like figure, or, of a theater set designer, Tasso arranges the thematic and topological matter of his poem so that it may be both read and *seen*: “qui si leggano [...] là si veggiano.” The poem as spectacle and the reader as spectator condition the experience of poetry as a theatrical venture. Like the apparatus of a dramatic stage, the pages of Tasso’s poem bring heroes and battles to life, emotions to boil over with credible verisimilitude, and the extremes of human kindness and cruelty to mirror contemporary histories. For Tasso, poetry surges to life in a space that is, by his own definition, spectacular. The poet’s lasting concern with verisimilitude’s potential and its role in epic poetry generates the lens through which he considers the dramatic possibilities of poetic verse.

Throughout the *Liberata* Tasso situates landscapes, duels, songs, processions, and other narrative sequences within precisely theatrical coordinates.<sup>3</sup> The most famous of these episodes occurs

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<sup>1</sup> On the representation of the “architecture of opposites” in Tasso’s *Liberata*, see Roy Eriksen, *The Building in the Text: Alberti to Shakespeare and Milton* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001), 111–46.

<sup>2</sup> Torquato Tasso, *Discorsi dell’arte poetica e del poema eroico*, ed. Luigi Poma (Bari: Laterza, 1964), 35–6. On Tasso’s construction of the poem as a “picciolo mondo,” see Guido Baldassarri, “Introduzione ai *Discorsi dell’arte poetica*,” *Studi tassiani* 26 (1977): 5–38; Id., ed., *Quasi un picciolo mondo: Tentativi di codificazione del genere epico nel Cinquecento* (Milan: Edizioni Unicopli, 1982); Georges Guntert, *L’epos dell’ideologia regnante e il romanzo delle passioni: Saggio sulla Gerusalemme liberata* (Pisa: Pacini, 1989); Maggie Günsberg, *The Epic Rhetoric of Tasso: Theory and Practice* (London: Legenda, 1998).

<sup>3</sup> For example, Armida’s enchanted castle, where Tancredi duels with Rambaldo, is described as illuminated “come in teatro adorno/ suol fra notturne pompe altera scena” (8.36). Similar comparisons between structures in the *Liberata*’s landscape and theaters appear in canto 12.54 and again in canto 13.38. Throughout the poem, Tancredi is the character most prone to wandering into theatrical spaces—the precise reasons for which deserve further attention than can be afforded here. Tasso’s use of a theater to describe the site of war appears not only in canto 12, during Tancredi’s nocturnal battle with Clorinda, but in canto 19.8, when Tancredi fights against Argante, and again in 20.73, when Solimano looks out over war-ridden Jerusalem and witnesses “l’aspra tragedia de lo stato umano.” All citations from the *Liberata* are from the edition edited by Franco Tomasi (Milan: BUR, 2009). In comparative terms, Tasso’s use of theaters in episodes of love and war is distinctly more pervasive in the *Liberata* than in its most immediate and successful predecessor, Ariosto’s *Orlando*

in canto 12 during the tragic nocturnal battle between disguised Clorinda and enamored Tancredi, a scene that, as Tasso describes, is “worthy of a theater” and of a full gathering of spectators (“degne d’un chiaro sol, degne d’un pieno/ teatro”).<sup>4</sup> By designing a poetic space in the likeness of a theater, Tasso assigns to his characters decidedly dramatic roles that impart vital—if not entirely embodied—agency as players to the development of the plot. The emphasis on the performativity of the episode, as a way of introducing it to the reader, asks Tasso’s audience not only to read the story of Clorinda’s untimely death, but to imagine it enacted on stage, with all of its harsh sounds, visual surprises, and dramatic effects fully resonant. Throughout the poem the *Liberata*’s theatricality, indeed, relies on its cast of female characters: Canto four spotlights Armida’s affected “atti,” rhetorical prowess, and command of public viewership; Erminia’s detour from the stage of epic conflict, and costume change into Clorinda’s military uniform in canto six, introduces new scenery, subplots, and flashbacks among shepherds and pastoral characters; and, as part of canto two’s “spettacolo grande,” Sofronia’s eloquent demonstration of willful sacrifice occurs in front of a speechless “popolo.”<sup>5</sup>

These examples of Tasso’s inclusion of theatrical contexts in the *Liberata*, and his correlation between poetry and a *theatrum mundi* in the *Discorsi*,<sup>6</sup> reflect the poet’s dynamic interest in and

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*furioso*, in which “teatro” appears only six times, in 19.64, 20.71, 20.82, 20.88, 27.47, and 40.2. I have consulted the edition of the poem by Cristina Zampese (Milan: BUR, 2016). It is worth noting that Tasso’s use of “teatro” is considerably more frequent in his revised poem *Gerusalemme conquistata* (1593). For uses of the term therein, see cantos 1.72, 7.25, 8.29, 12.40, 15.68, 16.42, 18.142, 20.6, 20.80, and 22.11 in the edition by Claudio Gigante, based on ms. Vind. Lat. 72 at the Biblioteca Nazionale di Napoli (Alessandria: Edizioni dell’Orso, 2010). The related term “spettacolo” appears fourteen times in the *Liberata*, in 1.51, 2.31, 5.32, 6.49, 8.21, 8.68, 10.25, 11.12, 13.47, 15.61, 18.97, 19.29, 20.39, and 20.115. In the *Conquistata*, however, “spettacolo” does not appear once. Similar to Tasso’s use of “teatro” as a space in which military action unfolds, “spettacolo” most often appears in the *Liberata* in reference to the “spectacle” of human decline caused by violent warfare. This aspect, too, of Tasso’s sensibilities toward theater and the representations of war deserves further analysis than may be conducted here.

<sup>4</sup> In the *Conquistata*, Tasso emphasizes even more the grandeur of this military stage: “Notte, che nel profondo ed alto seno/ chiudesti e ne l’oblio fatto sì grande,/ degno d’un gran teatro adorno e pieno,/ e d’un lucido sol che i raggi spande” (15.68, emphasis mine). Tancredi’s return to a theatrical space (“un largo spazio in forma [...] d’anfiteatro,” 13.38) within the enchanted woods of Sharon in the canto immediately following may be read as an extended metaphor of the theater upon which he and Clorinda battled in canto 12. For its dramatic representation in Tasso, this episode enjoyed a dynamic musical-theatrical afterlife: included in his eighth book of madrigals, Claudio Monteverdi’s *Il Combattimento di Tancredi e Clorinda* (produced in 1624, published in 1638) is an operatic *scena* for three voices based on the *Liberata*’s canto 12.52–62, 64–68. On Monteverdi’s theatricalization of Tasso’s poetry, see Agostino Magro, Françoise Siguret, and Stefano La Via, “Le combat retrouvé: Les ‘passions contraires’ du ‘divin Tasse’ dans la représentation musicale de Monteverdi,” in *La Jérusalem délivrée du Tasse: Poésie, peinture, musique et ballet*, ed. Giovanni Careri (Paris: Musée du Louvre, 1999), 109–58; Tim Carter, “The Composer as Theorist? Genus and Genre in Monteverdi’s *Combattimento di Tancredi e Clorinda*,” in *Music in the Mirror: Reflections on the History of Music Theory and Literature for the 21st Century*, eds. Andreas Giger and Thomas J. Mathiesen (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002), 77–116; Paolo Russo, “Modelli performativi intorno al *Combattimento di Monteverdi*,” in *L’arte dei comici: Omaggio a Isabella Andreini nel quarto centenario della morte (1604–2004)*, ed. Gerardo Guccini (Bologna: Edizioni Carattere, 2003), 37–48; Suzanne G. Cusick, “‘Indarno chiedi’: Clorinda and the Interpretation of Monteverdi’s *Madrigali amorosi e guerrieri*,” in *Word, Image and Song: Essays in Honor of Ellen Rosand*, eds. Rebecca Cypess, Beth L. Glixon, and Nathan Link, 2 vols. (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2013), 1:117–44; Antonio Cascelli, “Place, Performance and Identity in Monteverdi’s *Combattimento di Tancredi e Clorinda*,” *Cambridge Opera Journal* 29, no. 2 (2018): 152–88. On the broader influence the *Liberata* had on seventeenth-century dramaturgy, see Thomas Stein, *Nel nome del gran Torquato: Gerusalemme liberata e drammaturgia seicentesca* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2012).

<sup>5</sup> On the *Liberata*’s female characters and their inspiration for dramatic performances by early Italian actresses, see 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.

<sup>6</sup> For an insightful analysis of this metaphor and its implications for systems of knowledge in the early modern world, see William N. West, “Knowledge and Performance in the Early Modern *Theatrum Mundi*,” in *Dimensionen der Theatrum-Metapher in der Frühen Neuzeit: Ordnung und Repräsentation von Wissen/ Dimensions of the Early Modern Theatrum-Metaphor: Order and Representation of Knowledge* (Hanover: Wehrhahn, 2008), 1–20. On the negotiations between early modern spatial and

contributions to the late-Cinquecento theater scene. As other critics have noted, Tasso's pastoral play *Aminta* (printed in 1581) enjoyed extensive success during and after its premiere at the Este summer home in Belvedere in 1573.<sup>7</sup> Similar elements of *Aminta* appeared across the "ben mille pastorali"<sup>8</sup> printed by other poets, many among them are women: Barbara Torelli (*Partenia*, c.1587), Isabella Andreini (*Mirtilla*, 1588),<sup>9</sup> Maddalena Campiglia (*Flori*, 1588), Leonora Bernardi Belatti ("Clorili," c.1590),<sup>10</sup> Valeria Miani (*Amorosa speranza*, 1604), and Isabetta Coreglia (*La Dori*, 1634 and *Erindo il fido*,

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philosophical conceptualizations of the world as a theater, see William Egginton, *How the World Became a Stage: Presence, Theatricality, and the Question of Modernity* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003).

<sup>7</sup> On *Aminta*, its premiere, and immediate political-historical context, see Angelo Solerti, *Ferrara e la corte estense nella seconda metà del secolo decimosesto e i Discorsi di Annibale Romei* (Città di Castello: S. Lapi, 1891); Claudio Varese, *Torquato Tasso: Epos, parola, scena* (Florence: Messina, 1976); Alain Godard, "La première représentation de *l'Aminta*: La Cour de Ferrare et son double," in *Ville et campagne dans la littérature Italienne de la Renaissance*, ed. André Rochon (Paris: Sorbonne, 1977) 187–301; Giulio Ferroni, *Il testo e la scena: saggi sul teatro del Cinquecento* (Rome: Bulzoni, 1980); Giovanni Da Pozzo, *L'ambigua armonia: Studio sull'Aminta del Tasso* (Florence: Olschki, 1983); Daniela Quarta, "Spazio scenico, spazio cortigiano, spazio cortese: *L'Aminta* e il *Torrismondo*," in *La corte di Ferrara e il suo mecenatismo (1441–1598)*, eds. M. Pade et. al. (Copenhagen: Forum for Renaissancestudier; Ferrara: L'istituto di Studi Rinascimentali, 1990), 301–27; Jane Tylus, *Writing and Vulnerability in the Late Renaissance* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993); Maria Galli Stampino, "Performance, Text, and Canon: The Case of *Aminta*," *Romance Languages Annual* 9 (1998): 351–58; Franco Piperno, "Nuovi documenti sulla prima rappresentazione dell'*Aminta*," *Il castello di Elsinore* 13 (2000): 29–40. For more general criticism on pastoral drama at the end of the sixteenth century, and Tasso's role in its success and dissemination throughout and beyond Italy, see, among other studies: Bernard Weinberg, *History of Literary Criticism in the Italian Renaissance*, 2 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), 2:1074–1105; Nicolas Perella, *The Critical Fortunes of Battista Guarini's Il Pastor Fido* (Florence: Olschki, 1973); Marzia Pieri, *La scena boschereccia nel rinascimento italiano* (Padua: Liviana, 1983); Jane Tylus, "Purloined Passages: Giraldi, Tasso and the Pastoral Debates," *Modern Language Notes* 99 (1984): 101–24; Louise George Clubb, *Italian Drama in Shakespeare's Time* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989); Jane Tylus, "Veiling the Stage: The Politics of Innocence in Renaissance Drama," *Theatre Journal* 41, no. 1 (1989): 16–29; Giovanna Romei, "La commedia dell'arte e la favola pastorale," in *Sviluppi della drammaturgia pastorale nell'Europa del Cinque-Seicento*, eds. Maria Luisa Chiabò and Federico Doglio (Viterbo: Centro di studi sul teatro medioevale e rinascimentale, 1992), 181–99; Robert Henke, *Pastoral Transformations: Italian Tragicomedy and Shakespeare's Late Plays* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1997); Jane Tylus, "Women at the Windows: *Commedia dell'arte* and Theatrical Practice in Early Modern Italy," *Theatre Journal* 49, no. 3 (1997): 323–42; Maria Galli Stampino, *Staging the Pastoral: Torquato Tasso's Aminta and the Emergence of Modern Western Theater* (Tempe: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 2005); Lisa Sampson, *Pastoral Drama in Early Modern Italy: The Making of a New Genre* (London: Modern Humanities Research Association and Maney Publishing, 2006); Federico Schneider, *Pastoral Drama and Healing in Early Modern Italy* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2010), 117–62; Matteo Navone, ed., *Aminta princeps 1580* (Alessandria: Edizioni dell'Orso, 2015); Nicla Rivero, "La *Mirtilla* versus *Flori*: Same Purposes, Different Strategies and Precepts in Female-Authoring Pastoral Drama," in *Genealogías. Re-Writing the Canon: Women Writing in XVI–XVII Century Italy*, ed. Stefano Santosuosso (Seville: ArCibEl Editores, 2018), 153–74.

<sup>8</sup> Ingegneri's comment on the popularity of composing pastoral plays reads: "Et finalmente, per raccorre in poche infiniti pregi di *ben mille Pastorali*, che si leggono, così scritte à mano, come alla Stampa, nè piu, ne meno incontrerà dell'*Aminta* del Signor Torquato Tasso, del Pastor Fido del Sig. Cavaliere Battista Guarino, della *Partenia* della Sig. Barbara Torelli, della non men bella di qual si voglia Alcida, Tragicomedia del Sig. Paolo Brufantini, [e] ultimamente dell'*Enone* del Sig. Don Ferrando Gonzaga" (emphasis mine), in Angelo Ingegneri, *Della poesia rappresentativa e del modo di rappresentare le favole sceniche* (Ferrara: Baldini, 1598), 61. On Ingegneri and poetic-theatrical culture, more generally, see Laura Riccò, *Ben mille pastorali: L'itinerario dell'Ingegneri da Tasso a Guarini e oltre* (Rome: Bulzoni, 2004).

<sup>9</sup> Considerable scholarship has been carried out on Andreini's "imitation" and "reversals" of Tasso's *Aminta*. See, for example: Julie D. Campbell, *Literary Circles and Gender in Early Modern Europe: A Cross-Cultural Approach* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2007), 51–72; Lisa Sampson, *Pastoral Drama*; Maria Galli Stampino, "Pastoral Constraints, Textual and Dramatic Strategies: Isabella Andreini's *Mirtilla* and Torquato Tasso's *Aminta*," *Italian Culture* 22, no. 1 (2004): 1–19; Alexandra Collier, *Women, Rhetoric, and Drama in Early Modern Italy* (New York: Routledge, 2017).

<sup>10</sup> As Lisa Sampson's careful archival work has demonstrated, the manuscript title of Bernardi's work is *Tragicomedia pastorale della Signora Xqcbefm Hqxmllm Gentildonna Lucchese*. Named for the play's female protagonist, "Clorilli," as an alternative title, circulates among scholars today, thanks to the detailed literary analysis and preparation for staged production at New York University's Villa La Pietra in May 2018 by Lisa Sampson, Anna Wainwright, Virginia Cox, Eric Nicholson, Cameron Anderson, and Emily Wilbourne. On Bernardi as a writer, see Virginia Cox, *The Prodigious Muse: Women's Writing in Counter-Reformation Italy* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011), 113–15.

1650).<sup>11</sup> Beyond the Italian peninsula, women writers in France quickly imitated and translated Tasso's pastoral.<sup>12</sup> Women joined not only Tasso in experimenting with the pastoral genre, but also Battista Guarini (*Il pastor fido*, 1589), Francesco Bracciolini (*Amoroso sdegno*, written 1590, published 1597), Muzio Manfredi (*Il contrasto amoroso*, 1602), and Francesco Contarini (*La finta Fiammetta*, 1611).<sup>13</sup> While some women writers may have sought to revise *Aminta*'s "compromising" representations of female agency in their pastoral plays—as Françoise Decroisette, Julie Campbell, and Lisa Sampson have demonstrated—there is little evidence to suggest that women read and responded to Tasso's tragedy, *Il Re Torrismondo*, with a similar revisionist agenda.<sup>14</sup> However, even if women writers did not widely imitate *Torrismondo* in their compositions for the theater, as they had done with Tasso's *Aminta*, elements of its representation of a strong female protagonist keen on preserving her freedom do appear in women's non-dramatic compositions, a subject to which I will return later.<sup>15</sup>

Published soon after Tasso's release from Sant'Anna in 1587, *Il Re Torrismondo* reflects the period's revived interest in classical tragedy, as well as the peninsula's literary search for its "tragedia volgare."<sup>16</sup> As Vercingetorige Martignone has suggested, Tasso subjects *Torrismondo* to the same

<sup>11</sup> Barbara Torelli, *Partenia*, ms. (Parma, c.1586); Isabella Andreini, *Mirtilla* (Verona: Girolamo Discepolo, 1588); Maddalena Campiglia, *Flori, favola boscareccia* (Vicenza: heirs of Perin Libraro and Tommaso Brunello, 1588); Leonora Bernardi, *Tragicomedia pastorale della Signora Xqcbefm Hqxmllm Gentildonna Lucchese* ("Clorilli"), ms. (Florence?, c.1590); Valeria Miani, *Amorosa speranza, favola pastorale* (Venice: Francesco Bolzetta, 1604); Isabetta Coreglia, *La Dori, favola pastorale* (Naples: Giovanni Domenico Montanaro, 1634); and Id., *Erindo il fido, favola pastorale* (Pistoia: Fortunati, 1650). For critical editions of some of these texts, see Barbara Torelli, *Partenia, a pastoral play*, ed. and trans. Lisa Sampson and Barbara Burgess-Van Aken (Toronto: Iter, 2013); Isabella Andreini, *La Mirtilla, a pastoral*, trans. Julie D. Campbell (Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2002); Id., *Mirtilla*, ed. Maria Luisa Doglio (Lucca: Pacini Fazzi, 1995); Id., *Mirtilla, a pastoral*, ed. and trans. Valeria Finucci and Julia Kisacky (Toronto: Iter, 2018); Maddalena Campiglia, *Flori, a pastoral drama*, ed. and trans. Virginia Cox and Lisa Sampson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004); Leonora Bernardi, *Clorilli*, ed. and trans. Virginia Cox, Lisa Sampson, and Anna Wainwright (Toronto: Iter, forthcoming); Valeria Miani, *Amorosa speranza, a pastoral*, ed. and trans. Alexandra Collier, forthcoming.

<sup>12</sup> Catherin Le Doux produced a complete prose translation of Tasso's play, titled *Aminte* (Marbourg, 1618). On Le Doux and her loyalty to Tasso's text, see M. Maniscalco, "Una traduzione sconosciuta dell'*Aminta*: l'*Aminte* di Catherin Le Doux," *Studi tassiani* 35 (1988): 115–29. For the broader fortune of Tasso and his poetry in France, see Chandler B. Beall, *La fortune du Tasse en France* (Eugene: University of Oregon Press, 1942); Joyce G. Simpson, *Le Tasse et la littérature et l'art baroque en France* (Paris: Nizet, 1962); Jules Marsan, *La pastorale dramatique en France à la fin du XVI<sup>e</sup> et au commencement du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1969); Isida Cremona, *L'influence de l'Aminta sur la pastorale dramatique française* (Paris: Vrin, 1977); Daniela Mauri, "L'*Aminta* 'habillé à la française': les traductions françaises de l'*Aminta* au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle," in *L'Arioste et le Tasse en France au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris: Presses de l'Ecole normale supérieure, 2003), 217–32.

<sup>13</sup> Battista Guarini, *Il pastor fido, tragicomedia pastorale* (Ferrara: Vittorio Baldini, 1590); Francesco Bracciolini, *Amoroso sdegno* (Venice: G. Battista and G. Bernardo Sessa, 1597), Muzio Manfredi, *Il contrasto amoroso* (Venice: G. A. Somascho, 1602), and Francesco Contarini, *La finta Fiammetta* (Venice: Ambrosio, 1611).

<sup>14</sup> Françoise Decroisette, "Satyres au féminin dans la pastorale italienne de la fin du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle," in *La campagna e la città: Letteratura e ideologia nel Rinascimento. Scritti in onore di Michel Plaisance*, ed. Giuditta Isotti Rosowsky (Florence: Cesati, 2002), 149–82; Julie Campbell, *Literary Circles*; and Lisa Sampson, *Pastoral Drama*, 98–128. For other comparative readings, see Meredith Ray, "La castità conquistata: The Function of the Satyr in Pastoral Drama," *Romance Languages Annual* 9 (1998): 312–21; Virginia Cox, *The Prodigious Muse*, 92–118; Katie Rees, "Satyr Scenes in Early Modern Padua: Valeria Miani's *Amorosa speranza* and Francesco Contarini's *Fida Ninfa*," *The Italianist* 34, no. 1 (2014): 23–52.

<sup>15</sup> A rare example of a tragedy authored by an early modern woman is Valeria Miani's *Celinda* (Vicenza: Francesco Bolzetta, 1611). A modern edition and translation of this text has been made available by Valeria Finucci and Julia Kisacky (Toronto: Iter, 2010).

<sup>16</sup> The term "tragedia volgare" is used by Vercingetorige Martignone in his introduction to the modern critical edition of the text: Torquato Tasso, *Il Re Torrismondo*, edited by Vercingetorige Martignone (Parma: Ugo Guanda Editore, 1993), xii. The tragedy was first conceived of as *Galealto Re di Norvegia*, and appeared in a draft form (1,197 lines out of 3,340) for the first time in 1582, with the subtitle "Tragedia non finita." This version was published in the second volume of Tasso's unauthorized lyric poetry: Torquato Tasso, *Delle rime del signor Torquato Tasso: Parte prima [-seconda] insieme con altri componimenti del medesimo* (Venice: Aldo Manuzio the younger, 1582). Following this edition, there were many publications of Tasso's revised text, many of them during its first year in print: Bergamo: Comin Ventura, 1587; Bologna: Gio. Rossi, 1587;

“ambiguità conflittuale tra onore e passione” scattered throughout the pages of *Aminta*, the *Liberata*, and a number of his *Rime d'amore*.<sup>17</sup> Although the poet referred to *Torrismondo* as his “perfettissimo poema,”<sup>18</sup> some literary critics have been swift in labelling the play as “inadequate,” “dead,” and “extremely limited [in] artistic merit.”<sup>19</sup> However, a potentially redeeming quality of *Torrismondo* that has, until recently, gone largely overlooked is its cast of expressive and fiercely independent heroines, who, as some have argued, succeed in captivating the audience’s sympathies.<sup>20</sup> By forging extra-textual connections with the immediate social-historical reality, through women’s expanded public presence on stage as professional actresses, *Torrismondo*’s female characters open the contents of the plot up to contemporary debates concerning women’s roles in the management of the state, their service to men as mothers and wives, and their ability (or lack thereof) to conduct life as domesticated property or as religious devotees. As Matteo Bosio has argued, the four female characters of Tasso’s “gravissimo

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Cremona: Christoforo Draconi, 1587; Genoa: Girolamo Bartoli, 1587; Ferrara: Vittorio Baldini, 1587; Ferrara: Giulio Cesare Cagnacini, 1587; Ferrara: Giulio Vassalini, 1587; Mantua: Francesco Osanna, 1587; Venice: Girolamo Polo, 1587; Verona: Girolamo Discepolo, 1587; Ferrara: Giulio Cesare Cagnacini, 1588; Turin: Gio. Michele and Gio. Vincenzo Cavallerii, 1588; Venice: Fabio and Agostin Zoppini, 1588. On the complicated print history of the play, see B. T. Sozzi, “Per l’edizione critica del *Torrismondo*,” in *Studi sul Tasso* (Pisa: Nistri-Lisci, 1954). While it is a confirmed fact that Tasso authorized this tragedy, scholars continue to debate the authorship of the comedy *Gli intrichi d'amore*, a play which seventeenth-century editors attributed to Tasso without hesitation. On the authorship of this comedy, see Pasquale Stoppelli, “Gli *Intrichi d'amore* da Torquato Tasso a Cristoforo Castelletti,” *Belfagor* 33, no. 3 (1978): 267–78; Simona Morando, “Ancora su Giovan Battista Andreini e Torquato Tasso,” in *La fortuna del Tasso eroico tra Sei e Settecento. Modelli interpretativi e pratiche di riscrittura*, eds. Tancredi Artico and Enrico Zucchi (Alessandria: Edizioni dell’Orso, 2017), 23–38. For the seventeenth-century edition of this text, which names Tasso as its author, see *Intrichi d'amore: Comedia del sign[ore] Torquato Tasso* (Venice: Gio. Battista Ciotti, 1613). Earlier in Paris, there also appeared a tragedy falsely attributed to Tasso: *La Gismonda, tragedia del signor Torquato Tasso nuovamente composta e messa in luce* (Paris: Chavillot, 1587). As Serassi writes in his biography of the poet: “Bernardino Lombardi, di profession commediante, trovandosi a Parigi pubblicò questa tragedia sotto il nome del Tasso, o perchè la credesse veramente di lui, o com’è più verisimile, per trarne maggior guadagno,” in *La vita di Torquato Tasso*, ed. Cesare Guasti, 3 vols. (Florence: Barbera and Co., 1858), 2:493.

<sup>17</sup> Vercingetorige Martignone, “Introduzione,” to Tasso, *Il Re Torrismondo*, xiv. Although Tasso did not theorize the dramatic arts at length, his *Discorsi dell’arte poetica* echo late-Cinquecento neo-Aristotelian dramatic theory: “gl’istrumenti sono il parlare, l’armonia e ’l ritmo,” while pity and terror arise in the spectator (“le azioni tragiche movono l’orrore e la compassione; ed ove lor manchi questo orribile e questo compassionevole, tragiche più non sono”), in Torquato Tasso, *Prose*, ed. Ettore Mazzali (Milan-Naples: Ricciardi, 1959), 359–60.

<sup>18</sup> In the play’s dedicatory letter to Vincenzo Gonzaga, sent from Bergamo and dated September 18, 1587, Tasso writes: “A V. Altezza dunque, ch’è perfettissimo principe, dedico e consacro questo perfettissimo poema.” More humbly, Tasso continues: “estimando che ’l dono, quantunque minore del suo merito, non sia disdicevole a la sua grandezza, né a la mia affezione, che tanto cresce in me quanto il saper in lei si va accrescendo.” Towards the end of the letter, Tasso makes explicit his hope that his skill as a playwright will provide “fama perpetua” both for this work and for his literary legacy: “se le poesie ancora hanno la rea e la buona sorte, come alcuno ha creduto, questa essendo di mia divenuta sua, può sperare lieta e felice mutazione, e fama perpetua, ed onore, e riputazione fra gli altri componimenti,” in Torquato Tasso, *Le lettere Le lettere di Torquato Tasso disposte per ordine di tempo*, ed. Cesare Guasti, 5 vols. (Florence: Le Monnier, 1853–58), 3:246–48, n. 884. All further citations of Tasso’s letters are from this edition.

<sup>19</sup> C. P. Brand, *Torquato Tasso: A Study of the Poet and his Contribution to English Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), 167–68. For more positive appraisals of the work, which address its fortune in later theatrical repertoires both within and beyond Italy, see Giovanna Scianatico, “Il Re Torrismondo: Una tragedia politica,” in *Torquato Tasso e la cultura estense*, ed. Gianni Venturi (Florence: Olschki, 1999), 1068–83; Stefano Verdino, *Il Re Torrismondo e altro* (Alessandria: Edizioni dell’Orso, 2007); Elisabetta Selmi, *Torquato Tasso: il ‘filosofo cortigiano’ e il poeta senza confini* (Alessandria: Edizioni dell’Orso, 2017), 189–224.

<sup>20</sup> On this note, Brand suggests: “our sympathies are with Alvida, another sign of Tasso’s greater success with female, rather than male, characters,” in *Torquato Tasso*, 175. Martignone, too, posits that Alvida is *Torrismondo*’s “figura [...] più riuscita.” In his close reading of Alvida’s partially veiled agency, Martignone argues for her importance as a “merce di scambio,” in the position to wield a certain degree of power and influence: “Quella che è la mancata problematicità del personaggio, nella totale adesione alla propria passione e nell’opposizione alla violenta ‘ragion di stato’ che la rende ‘merce’ di scambio, è in fondo la sua forza, l’elemento di rottura del sistema, della ‘recita’ altrui, e al tempo stesso la ragione del suo inevitabile annullamento, della sconfitta,” in “Introduzione,” xvii–xviii.

componimento”<sup>21</sup>—the Norwegian<sup>22</sup> princess Alvida, her nurse, the Camilla-inspired Rosmonda, and Queen Rusilla—ought be recognized as “coprotagonists” who work with their politically motivated male counterparts in determining the play’s actions. As a community of actors, the play’s women and their “peculiarità strutturale e compositiva,” Bosisio argues, are the “vera novità del *Torrismondo*.”<sup>23</sup>

Dramatizing the issue of women’s happiness early on in Act II, Rosmonda enters the play by cataloguing the domestic-economic circumstances that *should* make any woman in her privileged position feel content, but, instead, have aroused in her an escapist desire to abandon luxury for the pursuit of, and withdrawal into, humility:

Io, che d’alta fortuna aura seconda  
portando alzò ne la sublime altezza,  
e mi ripose nel più degno albergo,  
de’ regi invitti e gloriosi in grembo,  
e son detta di re figlia e sorella,  
dal piacer, da l’onore e da le pompe,  
e da questa real superba vita  
fuggirei, come augel libero e sciolto,  
a l’umil povertà di verde chiostro.  
(vv. 1033–1041)<sup>24</sup>

Here Rosmonda expresses longing escaping her circumstances—a cornerstone of the poet’s representation of afflicted female characters, most notably Erminia, from the *Liberata*. Rosmonda’s insistent rejection of the comforts associated with regal life, together with her damnation of female beauty as a “dannoso dono” and description of marriage as an “infelice servaggio ed aspro giogo,”<sup>25</sup> contradict the Queen’s strict orthodoxy and her unwavering observance of traditional gendered stereotypes that expect women to perform submissive roles. In her attempt to explain the benefits of

<sup>21</sup> Tasso defines his tragedy in these terms in the dedicatory letter to Vincenzo Gonzaga. See n. 18.

<sup>22</sup> In his analysis of why Tasso chose the Scandinavian setting, Brand suggests that the choice “is probably a result of Tasso’s reading of Olaus Magnus’ *Historia de gentibus septentrionalibus*, published in Rome in 1553,” in *Torquato Tasso*, 176. In his *Discorsi del poema eroico*, Tasso provides more details as to why poets are especially attracted to “unknown” geographical locations: “Dee dunque il poeta schivar gli argomenti finti, massimamente se finge esser avvenuta alcuna cosa in un paese vicino e conosciuto, e fra nazione amica, perché fra’ popoli lontani e ne’ paesi incogniti possiamo finger molte cose di leggieri senza toglier autorità alla favola. Però di Gotia e di Norveggia e di Suevia e d’Islanda o dell’Indie Orientali o di paesi di nuovo ritrovati nel vastissimo Oceano oltre le Colonne d’Ercole si dee prender la materia de’ sì fatti poemi,” in Tasso, *Prose*, 85. On Tasso’s representation of Scandinavia and his interaction with Magnus’s text, see the chapter “‘Che dirò delle cose di Settentrione?’: Tasso e Olao Magno,” in Elisabetta Selmi, *Torquato Tasso*, 165–88.

<sup>23</sup> Matteo Bosisio, “‘Quante promesse e giuramenti a l’aura/ tu spargi, Amor’: Tecniche intertestuali e personaggi femminili del *Re Torrismondo*,” *ACME* 65 (2012): 77–103, 78. For a more elaborate evaluation of *Torrismondo*’s female protagonists, see Id., *Verità, amore, responsabilità. Le figure femminili ne Il Re Torrismondo* (Leonforte: Euno Edizioni, 2017).

<sup>24</sup> In *Torrismondo*’s first appearance in print—the *Tragedia non finita* edited by Aldo Manuzio, the younger—Rosmonda’s lament occupies the entirety of Act II, scene i, and reads slightly differently from the version quoted above: “Io, che da la Fortuna alzata fui/ a quella altezza che più il mondo ammira,/ e son detta di re figlia e sorella,/ quanto ho intorno, ohimè, di quel che macchia/ ed impedisce un’alma! Oh, come lieta/ da gli agi miei, dal lusso e da’ diporti,/ da questo regal fasto e da le pompe/ de’ sublimi palagi io fuggirei/ a l’umil povertà di casta cella!” which appears in the “Appendix” to Tasso, *Il Re Torrismondo*, 277.

<sup>25</sup> Rather than willfully submit to “imprisonment” as a wife, which would allow her to obtain regal prestige, Rosmonda desires: “Di viver vita solitaria e sciolta,/ in casta libertade; e l’caro pregio/ di mia virginità serbarmi integro/ più stimo ch’acquistar corone e scettri” (vv. 1136–39). She further clarifies her intentions in words that recall the *Liberata*’s Sofronia from canto 2.36: “Ed io non l’fuggo e sprezzo solo per ischivar gli affanni umani; ma più nobil desio, più casto zelo me de la vita virginal invoglia” (vv. 1283–86).

female beauty to her “rebellious” daughter, the Queen claims: “Questa bellezza/ proprio ben, propria dote, e proprio dono/ è de le donne, o figlia, e propria laude,/ come è proprio de l’uom valore e forza” (vv. 1079–1082). These words spark a heated debate over women’s “proper,” or nuptial, position, which offers a kind of genealogy-in-miniature of the various opinions—articulated by both male and female figures at the end of the sixteenth century—concerning womanhood, sexual politics, and the theoretical potential for equality between men and women.

Rosmonda and the Queen, however, are not alone in their attention to the *querelle des femmes*: all of *Torrismondo*’s female characters address—albeit with different degrees of affirmation and hesitation—issues of wifely devotion and maternal care. Although it has been suggested that the debate on marriage between Rosmonda and her regal mother is “artificial,” delivered by “interrupting puppets” who succeed in nothing but slowing down the tragedy’s pace to an “anachronistic” halt, it is useful to consider the historically motivated reasons for which Tasso includes such a debate in the script.<sup>26</sup> If the critical assumptions about Tasso’s languid quarrelling among women are valid, why should the poet, then, have gone to such lengths to ensure that the authorized edition of the text would include this scene? What larger implications are at play in Rosmonda’s ninety lines of tenacious lament that bemoan women’s forbidden autonomy?<sup>27</sup> If we consider Tasso’s critical emphasis on marriage as a mutually beneficial relationship for both men and women, expressed in his epistolary exchange with Ercole Tasso and other writings, readers and spectators alike ought not to be surprised that a similar discourse would emerge in *Il Re Torrismondo*.<sup>28</sup> For his pro-woman positions regarding their happiness in marriage, Tasso may be seen as a forerunner to how, in the seventeenth century, debates on marriage and women took on even more importance, as women writers confronted these issues in publications of their own.<sup>29</sup> One difference worth recognizing is that, insofar as Tasso

<sup>26</sup> Brand, *Torquato Tasso*, 169. Brand considers the women’s dialogue in the following terms: “Rosmonda’s discussion with the Queen of the merits and demerits of marriage is a most inapt piece of padding from the Renaissance dialogue, and reduces the speakers to anachronistic puppets” (173). Brand makes no claim, however, of the reasons *why* Tasso, as a poet who cared deeply about coloring within generic lines, should intermix the dialogue with the tragedy. Brand’s insistence upon the “artificiality” of the women’s debate appears to deny Tasso’s pervasive interest in such issues across many of his letters, dialogues, and discourses.

<sup>27</sup> Rosmonda’s longest speech appears in Act II and lasts from vv. 1216–1303. If one were to add to this count the number of lines in the play that question women’s satisfaction with their being considered objects of exchange in marriage (vv. 1025–1332), the adjusted calculation would reach 307 lines, just under ten percent of all the lines in the play.

<sup>28</sup> Torquato’s letter-response to Ercole’s anti-women/anti-marriage claims was first published in Milan by Tini in 1586. When Giovan Battista Licino edited Tasso’s letters, his response was included in the second book of the *Lettere familiari* (Bergamo: Ventura, 1588). The letter was then reprinted in Bergamo four times, alongside Ercole’s discourse (in 1593, 1594, 1595, and 1606), under the new title, *Dello ammogliarsi piacevole contesa fra i due moderni Tassi, cioè Hercole e Torquato, gentiluomini bergamaschi*. In the 1594 Bergamo edition, Comin Ventura’s dedicatory letter to Antonio Bignami, dated March 12, 1594, proposes that Tasso’s contribution to this debate is a “mirabile Encomio del Matrimonio.” The letter circulated widely, and was translated into English Robert Tofte when it was published in London as *Of Mariage and Wiving: An Excellent, Pleasant, and Philosophicall Controversie, Between the Two Famous Tassi Now Living, the one Hercules the Philosopher, the Other, Torquato, the Poet* (London: Thomas Creede, 1599). There is also a recent critical edition available: Torquato Tasso, *Lettera sul matrimonio: Consolatoria all’Albizzi*, ed. Valentina Salmaso (Rome- Padua: Antenore, 2007).

<sup>29</sup> In this respect, see, among other examples: Moderata Fonte, *Il merito delle donne over chiaramente si scuopre quanto siano elle degne e più perfette de gli uomini* (Venice: Imberti, 1600), and Arcangela Tarabotti, *Tirannia paterna*, published as *La semplicità ingannata* (Leida: Sambix, 1654). Critical editions of these texts are available: Moderata Fonte, *Il merito delle donne (1600), ove chiaramente si scuopre quanto siano elle degne e più perfette de gli uomini*, ed. Adriana Chemello (Venice: Eidos, 1988); and Arcangela Tarabotti, *La semplicità ingannata*, ed. Simona Bortot (Padua: Il poligrafo, 2007). Critical editions with English translations are also available: Moderata Fonte, *The Worth of Women: wherein is clearly revealed their nobility and superiority to men*, ed. and trans. Virginia Cox (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997); Id., *The Merits of Women: wherein is revealed their nobility and their superiority to men*, ed. and trans. Virginia Cox, with an introduction by Dacia Maraini (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018); Arcangela Tarabotti, *Paternal Tyranny*, ed. and trans. Letizia Panizza (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007). On these women as writers and social critics, see Emilio Zanette, *Suor Arcangela: monaca del Seicento veneziano* (Venice: Istituto per la collaborazione culturale, 1961); Ginevra Conti Odorisio, *Donna e società nel Seicento: Lucrezia Marinella e Arcangela*

constructed his drama for public performance, the tragedy's small-scale *querelle des femmes* was, indeed, performed *in front of* a partially female theater-going audience, and *by* a partially female cast of actors. Rosmonda's tragic account of the "grave" lives women must conduct is an expression of empathy spoken not only as part of the dialogue occurring on stage, but as an invitation to those beyond the curtain to contemplate the lines' potential reality *off-stage*.<sup>30</sup>

Envoiced by a professional actress, who would have performed as Rosmonda in the play's premiere in 1618, the words "la vita femminile è grave" shine light on the conditions that affect both fictional characters and historical women.<sup>31</sup> To place *Torrismondo* in further historical context, for nearly three decades Italian actresses had been performing publicly both male and female roles across comic and tragic theatrical repertoires.<sup>32</sup> It is thus possible to imagine how Tasso might have shaped his female characters based on the persuasive models of contemporary women active in the performing arts. Indeed, Tasso's dramatic representations of women concerned about their roles as mothers, daughters, wives, and widows finds company in the literary-theatrical works of Italy's first international *diva*, Isabella Canali Andreini (1562–1604).<sup>33</sup> Like Tasso in his *Torrismondo*, Isabella immerses her literary-dramatic *oeuvre* in critiques of women's subservient position to patriarchal structures, institutions, and protocols. The witty banter between lovers in her *Contrasti amorosi* (1617) and the long laments about the female condition found in her *Lettere* (1607), which many critics suggest were composed precisely for dramatic performance, carry the many challenges women face from mere abstractions on the written page to envoked and embodied representations on the theatrical stage. Beyond their shared concern for women's independent articulation, a further similarity between the two poets is their common use of authorial masking and personae-fashioning in their texts.<sup>34</sup> Both

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Tarabotti (Rome: Bulzoni, 1979); Maria Fubini Leuzzi, *Isotta Nogarola e Arcangela Tarabotti: alcune considerazioni in margine ad una recente pubblicazione di testi* (Florence: Olschki, 2005); Elissa Weaver, ed., *Arcangela Tarabotti: A Literary Nun in Baroque Venice* (Ravenna: Longo, 2006); Daria Martelli and Federica Ambrosini, *Polifonie: le donne a Venezia nell'età di Moderata Fonte (seconda metà del secolo XVI)* (Padua: CLEUP, 2011).

<sup>30</sup> The "grave" condition of women's lives, as Rosmonda metaphorically explains, is physically reflected in men and women's contrasting experiences of having children: "La gravidanza ancora è grave pondo,/ e lungo pondo, e doloroso, il parto:/ sì ch' il figliuol, ch'è de le nozze il frutto,/ è frutto al padre, ed a la madre è peso" (vv. 1240–44).

<sup>31</sup> *Il Re Torrismondo* premiered at the Teatro Olimpico in Vicenza in 1618. It received a second performance soon after at the Teatro di San Luca in Venice by the acting troupe led by Luigi Riccoboni at the request of Scipione Maffei. For more on these productions, see Martignone, "Introduzione," xlv; Selmi, *Torquato Tasso*, 190.

<sup>32</sup> On the history of early actresses in Italy, see Ferdinando Taviani, "Un vivo contrasto: Seminario su attori e attrici della Commedia dell'Arte," *Teatro e Storia* 1, no. 1 (1986): 25–76; Kathleen McGill, "Women and Performance: The Development of Improvisation by the Sixteenth-Century Commedia dell'Arte," *Theatre Journal* 43, no. 1 (1991): 59–69; Rosalind Kerr, "The Italian Actress and the Foundations of Early Modern European Theatre: Performing Female Sexual Identities on the Commedia dell'Arte Stage," *Early Theatre* 11, no. 2 (2008): 181–97; Domenica Radulescu, *Women's Comedic Art as Social Revolution: Five Performers and the Lessons of their Subversive Humor* (Jefferson: McFarland, 2012); Rosalind Kerr, *The Rise of the Diva on the Sixteenth-Century Commedia dell'Arte Stage* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015). On actresses performing specifically in tragedies, it is important to recall Marino's encomiastic sonnet (*Spettator del mio mal, son hoggi intent*), written in praise of Isabella Andreini's performance. The sonnet is reproduced in Isabella Andreini, *Selected Poems of Isabella Andreini*, ed. Anne MacNeil and trans. James Wyatt Cook (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2005), 170.

<sup>33</sup> On the life and works of Isabella Andreini, see Esther Talento, *Isabella Andreini (1562–1604)* (Bari: Edizione S.T.E.B., 1920); Francesca Romana De' Angelis, *La divina Isabella: vita straordinaria di una donna del Cinquecento* (Florence: Sansoni, 1992); Anne MacNeil, *Music and Women of the Commedia dell'Arte in the Late Sixteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Stefano Mazzoni, "La vita di Isabella," *Culture Teatrali* 10 (2004): 87–92. On Isabella and other theatrical women in early modern Italy, see Richard Andrews, "Isabella Andreini and Others: Women on Stage in the Late Cinquecento," in *Women in Italian Renaissance Culture and Society*, ed. Letizia Panizza (London: Routledge, 2000), 316–33; Margaret Rose, "The First Italian Actresses, Isabella Andreini and *Commedia dell'Arte*," in *The Palgrave Handbook of the History of Women on Stage*, eds. Jan Sewell and Clare Smout (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 107–26.

<sup>34</sup> I use the term "persona-fashioning" to offer a slight variation on the term "self-fashioning," in Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980). My emphasis throughout

Tasso and Andreini were deeply invested in questions of public image-making: Tasso, in part, out of the concern for censorship by courtly and religious authorities, and Andreini,<sup>35</sup> in part, out of the desire to preserve a positive reputation within a somewhat anti-theatrical cultural climate.

Central to both poets' careful constructions of their authorial images is their mutual attraction to the mask of the "peregrino": the figure capable of estranging the author from the reader. Critics of Tasso's *Liberata* have long studied the complexities behind the "peregrino errante" persona, often linking them to the ambiguous representation of the poet-prince relationship between Tasso and Duke Alfonso II.<sup>36</sup> The most thorough account to date of Tasso's use of "peregrino" appears in the study by Charles Klopp, for whom all representations of wandering in the *Liberata* "[are] both potentially 'peregrin[i]' and potentially 'errant[i]'.<sup>37</sup> What is missing from current scholarship, however, is an attempt to bring the "peregrino errante" into conversation with Tasso's other authorial personae, so as to offer a comprehensive account of the strategies that inform the poet's manipulation of his narrating voice(s). In turn, I argue that Andreini mobilizes Tasso's legacy as a creative agent over his rotating authorial personae, a position brought to light most explicitly in Alessandro Guarini's (1565–c.1636) dialogue *Il Farnetico savio, ovvero il Tasso* (1610), from which Andreini likely drew inspiration.<sup>38</sup> Such responses to the figure of Tasso, across literary discourse and historical reconstructions of his discursive "self," complicate the singular image of Tasso as a constant victim, more subject to harmful historical circumstance than to literary invention.

In Joseph Roach's *It*, the author raises the issue of the "secular magic" that emerges through public figures' "apparently effortless embodiment of contradictory qualities: strength *and* vulnerability, innocence *and* experience, and singularity *and* typicality."<sup>39</sup> The "public intimacy" with which Roach describes seventeenth-century political leaders and silver screen movie stars may be applied to Tasso and Andreini, poets who generated large-scale fame—either willingly or not—through their vulnerably "performing"<sup>40</sup> in front of both reading and theater-going audiences. With the extent of these poets' "fan clubs" or circles of admirers in mind, Roach's description of public intimacy's effects maps onto

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on "persona"-fashioning, rather than on "self"-fashioning, calls attention to the multiplicity and flexibility of the various personae that poets and artists create for themselves.

<sup>35</sup> Andreini's success in positive persona-fashioning is reflected by the portraits of her that appear in printed publications of her literary works, as well as by the bronze medal cast that commemorated her fame and beauty shortly after her death in 1604. See the discussion of Andreini's iconography later in this chapter. The medal is reproduced in Simone Albonico, ed., *Sul Tesin piantaro i tuoi laureti: Poesia e vita letteraria nella Lombardia spagnola (1535–1706). Exhibit catalog. Pavia 19 aprile–2 giugno 2001* (Pavia: Cardano, 2002), 517. On anti-theatrical currents in late-Cinquecento and Seicento Italy, see Ferdinando Taviani, "La città Cristiana e lo spettacolo" and Id., "Negotium Diaboli," in *La commedia dell'arte e la società barocca: La fascinazione del teatro*, (Rome: Bulzoni, 1991), 3–92, 93–312. Cf. Marzia Pieri, "Corpi in scena: la fascinazione dell'attrice," in *Miti della modernità: Scritti per Francesca Balestra*, eds. Giovanna Mochi and Roberto Venuti (Rome: Artemide, 2015), 209–18.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Sergio Zatti, *L'uniforme cristiano e multiforme pagano: Saggio sulla Gerusalemme liberata* (Milan: Il Saggiatore, 1993).

<sup>37</sup> Charles Klopp, "'Peregrino' and 'Errante' in the *Gerusalemme liberata*," *MNL* 94, no. 11 (1979): 61–76, 76. I agree partially with Klopp's interpretation that "as used in Tasso's prose works, 'peregrino' is remarkably bereft of any specifically religious connotations whatsoever" (62). Unlike Dante in the *Commedia*, Tasso's use of "peregrino" does not explicitly lead to spiritual transcendence and transformation. It would be worth considering the degree to which Tasso could have had in mind an alternative name for the Crusaders, "pellegrini armati." Such an investigation that addresses this point would complement Klopp's claim to Tasso's "remarkably detached" use of "peregrino" from the history of religion. On the question of terminology and crusading history, see Edmond René Labande, "Pellegrini o crociati? Mentalità e comportamenti a Gerusalemme nel secolo XII," *Aevum* 52, no. 2 (1980): 217–30.

<sup>38</sup> Alessandro Guarini, *Il Farnetico savio, ovvero il Tasso* (Ferrara: Baldini, 1610).

<sup>39</sup> Joseph Roach, *It* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2011), 8.

<sup>40</sup> My use of "performance" here and throughout is informed by David Posner's analysis of the early modern courtly self as a "public performer," in David Posner, *The Performance of Nobility in Early Modern Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

Tasso and Andreini's respective legacies: "Their images circulate widely in the absence of their persons—a necessary condition of modern celebrity—but the very tension between their widespread visibility and their actual remoteness creates an unfulfilled need in the hearts of the public."<sup>41</sup> Even though Tasso achieved international recognition as the "sublime" poet of his age, his letters and lyric poetry disclose sentiments of near universal rejection from his reading audiences. For Andreini, although she appeared publicly available across genres and genders,<sup>42</sup> the period's intolerance for moral indecency—especially as it concerned women, the theater, and, most of all, women *of* the theater—determined to what extent her "intimacy" could be public. The "It-Effects" of Tasso and Andreini thus balance a variety of factors at once: vulnerable exposure, estranging engagement, tensions between presence and absence, and reading-viewing audiences eager to capitalize on their fame. With these elements at play, both poets entered the European public imaginary in similar ways—through "mythologies" based on their "supreme" talents as, at once, "touchable and transcendent" figures. In examining how the myths surrounding certain early modern poets developed over time, it is useful to recall Roland Barthes's critical notion that myth begins at the point when the complexities of historical context are abolished in the service of simplicity and "naturalization."<sup>43</sup> The pages that follow call for a re-evaluation of the self-conscious paradoxes of presentation and representation in the protean "persona"-fashioning of Tasso and Andreini, suggesting that the "natural" process through which their public imaginaries evolved has its roots in the art of making oneself simultaneously recognizable among and foreign unto an audience.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Roach, *It*, 17.

<sup>42</sup> In *Pianto d'Apollo: Rime funebri in morte d'Isabella Andreini* (Milan: Girolamo Bordonì and Pietromartire Locarni, 1606), Giovan Battista Andreini praises his mother as a performing transvestite, thus contributing to the circulation of Isabella's sexed figure as a hybrid one. In her own lifetime, Isabella exchanged letters with the Milanese scholar Erius Puteanus (1574–1646), in which he argued that she was, in fact, a man due to her exceptional intellect. In the letter dated November 9, 1601, Puteanus writes: "Nae tu mihi animo defectum Naturae supple, Andreina, virilis gloriae non capax tantum sed consors: imo tu sexum tuum linquens, ipso virtutis nisu in virum te transformas. Quod si a viro virtus dicenda, felicius tu viro, quae mulier fructum virtutis procreas: si vero a virtute vir, tibi praemium melioris nominis debetur, quae munia melioris nominis, viri inquam, obis. Vir igitur es" ["Truly in my opinion you supply a defect of Nature, Andreina, who are not only capable of male glory but in fact an equal partner in it. Nay more, abandoning your own sex, you transform yourself by the labour of virtue into a man. Now if the word virtue derives from the word man, then you are more fruitful than a man, you who, though a woman, bring forth the fruit of virtue. But if the word man derives from the word virtue, then the reward of the better name, I mean the name of man, is due to you who perform the offices belonging to the better name. Therefore you are a man."] This transcription and translation appears in Anne MacNeil, "The Divine Madness of Isabella Andreini," *Journal of Royal Musical Association* 120, no. 2 (1995): 195–215, 207–08. As MacNeil explains, Puteanus's letters to Andreini first appeared in print in *Eryci Puteani epistolarum fercula secunda. Ad clariss. V. Ludovicum Septalium, patricium [e] medicum mediolanensi. Adiuncta eloquentiae auspicia secunda* (Hanover, 1603). For a transcription of the series of letters sent between Andreini and Puteanus, see Charles Ruelens, *Erycius Puteanus et Isabelle Andreini: Lecture faite à l'Académie d'Archéologie le 3 Février 1889* (Antwerp: Van Merlen, 1889). On the "hermaphroditic voice" in Isabella's *Lettere*, see Meredith Ray, *Writing Gender in Women's Letter Collections of the Italian Renaissance* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 156–83. For a more general study of transvestitism on the early modern European stage, see Stephen Orgel, *Impersonations: The Performance of Gender in Shakespeare's England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

<sup>43</sup> Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (1957), trans. Richard Howard and Annette Lavers (New York: Hill and Wang, 2012). Roach draws a compelling connection to Barthes's essay "Garbo's Face," articulating how "Greta Garbo famously wanted to be alone, but that pathetic wish succeeded only in summoning millions more to genuflect at her shrine" (19). Adequate space is not available in these pages to examine the ways in which a similar point could be made about Tasso.

<sup>44</sup> Maria Luisa Doglio summarizes Tasso's "progressiva dissoluzione del personaggio storico, trasfigurato e sublimato" as a series of transformations into an "eroe tragico vittima di un principe tiranno, chiuso in una prigione fredda e buia, in preda a furori e affanni, soliloqui e allucinazioni, con lo spettro della follia e della malinconia delirante, tormentato da un amore trasgressivo, impossibile per Eleonora d'Este, perseguitato, forsennato, costretto a errare senza requie, solo, povero e malato," in *Origini e icone del mito di Torquato Tasso* (Rome, Bolzoni Editore, 2002), 9. For other criticisms of the myth of Tasso and its influence on the Romantic imagination, see Umberto Bosco, "Il Tasso come tema letterario nell'Ottocento italiano," *Giornale storico della letteratura italiana* 91 (1928): 1–66; Mario Fubini, "Il Tasso e i romantici," *Studi tassiani* 1 (1951):

PEREGRINI ERRANTI  
BETWEEN TASSO AND ANDREINI

In their respective studies on Tasso's persona-fashioning, Lanfranco Caretti and Maria Luisa Doglio name Tasso as the first "artefice" and "responsabile" of the myth that would go on, in later centuries, to solidify his legacy as that of the heroic genius, the excluded wanderer of Italy.<sup>45</sup> As Caretti and Doglio explain, Tasso wielded a strong hand in this creative process. The poet's desire to participate in fictional persona-fashioning emerges in the dialogue *Il Gianluca ovvero de le maschere*, which imagines the possibility of Tasso taking his cue from actors in their development of roles beyond themselves, abilities to speak in different languages, and interactions with diverse casts of interlocutors. To a certain degree Tasso succeeded in realizing this wish by crafting the authorial mask of the "Forestiero Napoletano," the mouthpiece through which he may converse with specifically named historical figures without specifically naming himself, remaining the shadowy figure who is recognizable only through his unrecognizability. Tasso's play in the *Dialoghi* with his "Forestiero other" recalls elements of Georg Simmel's definition of the "stranger" as "a member of the group [...] whose membership involves being outside it and confronting it," a paradox that arises in the formal structuring of this personality.<sup>46</sup> Julia Kristeva's words "always elsewhere, the foreigner belongs nowhere" may deftly summarize Tasso's play at belonging.<sup>47</sup> Such politics of exclusion and inclusion appear towards the beginning of *Gianluca*, where the Forestiero exchanges ideas on Ferrarese theater with Alberto Parma, whose first line ("Tutta Ferrara è piena di maschere, e voi solo ancora sete rinchiuso?") seeks to establish a division between the city's spectacles of entertainment and the poet's solitary barring from them. This prompts Tasso to imagine how he might escape lonely spectatorship and join in the interactive collaboration with "gli altri," who exercise creative agency over their appearances in public:

Quando prima vidi Ferrara mi parche che tutta la città fosse una maravigliosa e non più veduta scena dipinta, e luminosa e piena di mille forme e di mille apparenze, e l'azioni di quel tempo simili a quelle che son rappresentate ne' teatri con varie lingue e con vari interlocutori; e non bastandomi l'esser divenuto spettatore, volli divenire un di quelli ch'eran parte de la comedia, e mescolarmi con gli altri.<sup>48</sup>

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27–36; Giovanni Macchia, "Il volto del Tasso," in *Torquato Tasso tra letteratura, musica, teatro e arti figurative*, ed. Andrea Buzzoni (Bologna: Nuova Alfa Editoriale, 1985), 3–32; Frederick Burwick, *Poetic Madness and the Romantic Imagination* (University Park: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996); Alessandra Coppo, *All'ombra di malinconia: Il Tasso lungo la sua fama* (Florence: Le Lettere, 1997); Donelle R. Ruwe, "The Canon-Maker: Felicia Hemans and Torquato Tasso's Sister," in *Comparative Romanticisms: Power, Gender, Subjectivity*, eds. Larry H. Peer and Diane Long Hoeveler. (Rochester: Camden House Press, 1998), 133–57; Giorgio Pullini, "Tasso nel teatro romantico italiano," *Lettere italiane* 54, no. 1 (2002): 64–89; Rosa Mucignat, "Tasso and the Quest for Modern Epic: Goethe's *Torquato Tasso* and Leopardi's *Operette morali*," *Publications of the English Goethe Society* 85, no. 1 (2016): 28–39; Jason Lawrence, *Tasso's Art and Afterlives: The Gerusalemme liberata in England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017).

<sup>45</sup> Lanfranco Caretti, *Ariosto e Tasso* (Turin: Einaudi, 1961); Maria Luisa Doglio, *Origini e icone*. On Tasso's "self-conscious" self-fashioning in his *Lettere*, see Giovanni Getto, *Interpretazione del Tasso* (Naples: Edizioni scientifiche italiane, 1967); Id., *Malinconia di Torquato Tasso* (Naples: Liguori, 1986).

<sup>46</sup> Georg Simmel, "The Stranger," trans. Robert Park and Ernest Burgess, in *On Individuality and Social Forms: Selected Writings*, ed. Donald N. Levine (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), 143–49, 144.

<sup>47</sup> Julia Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 10. For the original French, see Julia Kristeva, *Étrangers à nous-mêmes* (Paris: Fayard, 1988).

<sup>48</sup> Torquato Tasso, "Il Gianluca ovvero de le maschere," in *Opere*, ed. Bruno Maier. 5 vols. (Milan: Rizzoli, 1965), 5:153.

Tasso's nostalgic recollection of colorful, vivacious Ferrara turns on the dual perspective of a "spettatore" who dreams of becoming an "attore." Similar scenes of exclusion pervade Tasso's dialogues and letters, granting the poet a space to re-construct narratives of marginalization as narratives of inclusion. The very doubling that appears in the passage from *Gianluca*, whereby the Forestiero figure laments his isolation within Tasso's own fiction of community, brings into relief how persona-fashioning evolves through the use of mirrors, masks, and counterparts, which unsettle the potential fixed stability of any one self-construction.

Elsewhere in his writings, Tasso's authorial figures appears "mixed with others," sometimes with characters he has created. In blurring the boundaries between history and fiction, Tasso authorizes his presence in the figure of *Aminta's* Tirsi, the "fugace peregrino" of the *Canzone al Metauro*,<sup>49</sup> and the "peregrino errante" of *Gerusalemme liberata*. In other ways, Tasso's appearance in Sorrento to announce the death of "Torquato Tasso" to his sister Cornelia, while dressed "in abito di pastore," may be counted among the poet's historical rehearsals of his fictional alter egos.<sup>50</sup> As Doglio has suggested, these voices circulate Tasso's principles on poetry, history, and philosophy, thus authorizing and expanding the dissemination of the poet's ideas from the *Discorsi*.<sup>51</sup> In a different respect, Tasso invents theatrical versions of his authorial persona so that he may achieve, at least discursively, what he claims to aspire to in *Il Gianluca*: interaction with casts of interlocutors. In some ways, Tasso's masking as a "Forestiero" among friends may be seen to anticipate Kristeva's notion that "the foreigner lives within us: he is the hidden face of our identity."<sup>52</sup> For Tasso, though, such a multiplicity of personae does not "[wreck] our abode," nor cause "understanding and affinity [to] founder," but is, rather, a creatively productive tool: these figures generate and narrate a corpus of texts under a single, albeit masked, name, even as they indicate the fragmented nature of that identity. In other words, the many "Tasso's" through which the poet speaks are born from a collected literary *oeuvre*, and they maintain a linked yet also independent relationship with these texts. Much like Tasso's theoretical principle of unity in variety—exemplified in the "picciolo mondo" metaphor—these disparate voices harmonize under one authorial figure in order to create an assembly of multiple mouthpieces.

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<sup>49</sup> Cf. Juliana Schiesari, "The victim's discourse: Torquato Tasso's *Canzone al Metauro*," *Stanford Italian Review* 5 (1985): 189–203; Id., *The Gendering of Melancholia: Feminism, Psychoanalysis, and the Symbolics of Loss* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992); Sergio Zatti, "Erranza, infermità e conquista: le figure del conflitto nella *Liberata*," *Lettere italiane: Rivista trimestrale* 33, no. 2 (1981): 175–215; and Id., "La nascita di un'autobiografia poetica: la canzone *Al Metauro* di Torquato Tasso," in *La renaissance des genres: pratique et théories des genres littéraires entre Italie et Espagne (XVe–XVIIe siècles)*, eds. Paloma Bravo, Cécile Iglesias-Slicaru, and Giuseppe Sangirardi (Dijon: Éditions universitaires de Dijon, 2012), 209–21.

<sup>50</sup> This episode from the poet's biography enjoyed a particularly creative fortune in visualizations by Jules Naudin and Henri Valentin (*Torquato Tasso arriva a Sorrento*, 1852), Giacomo Trécourt, (*Torquato Tasso visita la sorella*, 1850), Alessandro Focosi (*Il Tasso si presenta alla sorella a Sorrento*, 1864), and Alfred de Curzon (*Torquato Tasso e Cornelia*, date unknown). The nineteenth-century poet Teresa Gnoli based her drama *Torquato Tasso a Sorrento* on this episode from Tasso's biography, *Torquato Tasso a Sorrento dramma lirico e Poesie varie* (Florence: Le Monnier, 1858). On Gnoli's choice of Tasso as a dramatic subject, see Maria Luisa Doglio, "Tasso tra i poeti della 'scuola romana': Il dramma lirico *Torquato Tasso a Sorrento* di Teresa Gnoli," *Italianistica: Rivista di letteratura italiana* 29, no. 2 (2000): 226–40. In a more figural sense, one might also add to this list the figure of the "Straniero" from Tasso's first version of *Il Re Torrismondo*, *Galeotto*. This figure occupies a place of diplomatic importance in the text, leading to one reason why in the revised edition of the play, this figure is no longer a "straniero," but a "messaggero." See the Appendix to Tasso, *Il Re Torrismondo*, ed. Vercingetorige Martignone (Parma: Ugo Guanda Editore, 1993).

<sup>51</sup> I agree with Doglio's suggestion that "il Forestiero Napoletano non è soltanto il Tasso che si adoppia in un archetipo letterario come aveva già fatto con il Tirsi dell'*Aminta*, ma è anche, sempre, il portavoce 'autorizzato' di dichiarazioni di poetica, di 'stile,' di 'dottrina,' di 'idee,' e, forse, una delle icone non solo della sua biografia intellettuale ma della 'testura' del proprio mito," in *Origini e icone*, 22.

<sup>52</sup> Kristeva, *Strangers*, 1.

The recurring presence among this ensemble of the “peregrino” and the “forestiero” reflects the paradoxical sense that “foreignness” conveys familiarity. The “peregrino” voice is a transformative instrument—the emblem of ambiguity that represents Tasso’s state of self and his poetic principles. In his theoretical writings on language and style—often composed in response to attacks levelled against the poet by the Florentine Accademia della Crusca—Tasso makes explicit how the “peregrino” mode mediates the relationship between the poet and the reader.<sup>53</sup> In his *Discorsi del poema eroico*, Tasso defends his use of foreign sounds and “strange” words in his poetry, claiming that they have a particularly didactic effect upon readers:

[Il] parlare ne’ poeti [è] più sublime che ne gli oratori, ma non già proprio: perché i poeti, come dice Marco Tullio, parlarono quasi con lingua aliena [...] le parole proprie fanno l’orazione piana, ma non ornata, e gli altri nomi, i quali più convengono al poeta, le accrescono ornamento, e particolarmente le parole disusate la fanno più venerabile, perché sono come forestieri tra’ cittadini: laonde paiono peregrine e producono meraviglia: ma la meraviglia sempre apporta seco diletto, perchè il dilettevole è meraviglioso.”<sup>54</sup>

Unusual words transform into traveling strangers, who stir marvel in the readers with whom they come into contact. Tasso’s identification with the “forestiero”—employed, as we have seen, as an authorial mouthpiece throughout the *Dialoghi*—together with his apologetic claim that “strange” words excite wonder, amplify the representation of foreignness as an attractive quality in *Gerusalemme liberata*. In Aristotelian terms, Tasso appears to lean on his readers’ experience of wonder that will ignite their desire to know, and thus stimulate their pursuit of knowledge. The poet’s “parole peregrine” initiate the process whereby readers and writers may begin to speak the same, albeit “strange,” language. Scholars of the *Liberata* have long sought to uncover the reasons—stylistic, aesthetic, and historical—behind Tasso’s contradictory representations of “otherness.”<sup>55</sup> It is not my intention here to review their interpretations; rather, my analysis takes root in how Tasso uses the “peregrino” to inspire a conscious relationship with the reader, since this figure requires contextualization and an audience in order to be considered foreign, in a similar way to how the “Forestiero Napoletano” is only ever a stranger when he is accompanied by others.

For Tasso, foreignness draws upon the reader’s expectations through verisimilitude. In his explanation of which “parole straniere” poets ought to use, Tasso clarifies that these words “devono essere tratte da quelle lingue che similitudine hanno con la nostra, come la provenzale, la Francesca e la spagnola.”<sup>56</sup> The echoes of foreignness that resound in Tasso’s language exist in a dialectic

<sup>53</sup> My reading and understanding of Tasso’s interest in “parole peregrine” is owed to conversations with Jane Tylus, as well as to her analysis in “Imagining Narrative in Tasso: Revisiting Erminia,” *MLN* 127, no. 1 (2012): 45–64.

<sup>54</sup> Tasso, *Prose*, 636–37. Tasso’s *Apologia della Gerusalemme liberata* (1585) makes a similar claim about the effects of “parole peregrine”: “Gli uomini non sono mossi altrimenti da le parole che da’ peregrini perchè quel solo è venerando e degno di riverenza: e peregrino dev’ esser il parlar, se dee mover meraviglia,” in *Prose*, 465.. For a more specific analysis of Tasso’s use of the “meraviglioso” in epic poetry, see Guido Baldassarri, *Inferno e cielo: tipologia e funzione del meraviglioso nella Liberata* (Rome: Bulzoni, 1977).

<sup>55</sup> On Tasso’s sympathy with representations of “otherness,” see David Quint, *Epic and Empire: Politics and Generic Form from Virgil to Milton* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993); Sergio Zatti, *L’uniforme cristiano e multiforme pagano: Saggio sulla Gerusalemme liberata* (Milan: Il Saggiatore, 1993); Andrea Moudarres, *The Enemy in Italian Renaissance Epic: Images of Hostility from Dante to Tasso* (Cranbury: University of Delaware Press, 2019).

<sup>56</sup> This point receives further elaboration in his *Discorsi*: “Peregrini chiama Aristotele la varietà de le lingue, l’accorciamento e l’allungamento, e ciascuno altro nome che non sia proprio [...] I nomi dunque stranieri e i traslati e gli ornati e l’altre forme potranno fare il parlare non umile, ma sublime,” in *Discorsi*, 181.

relationship with what readers and “la opinion [sic] della moltitudine” consider to be familiar.<sup>57</sup> Such dependency on the reader, as Christopher Geekie has carefully noted, sets “the expectations for preference and taste” among “a neutral majority of people within a given culture.”<sup>58</sup> Returning to the “forestiero” among the “cittadini,” Tasso’s “marvelous” is that which is both familiar and foreign to the reader, resembling how the “peregrino errante” communicates estrangement from and intimacy with the reader-spectator. There exists a slight overlap between the “peregrino” and the “meraviglioso” in Tasso’s analysis of how the marvelous is born through the encounter with foreign words, and his assertion that “nasce il sublime *e’l peregrino* ne l’elocuzione da le parole straniere” (emphasis mine).<sup>59</sup> If the “peregrino” and “meraviglioso” are two sides of the same coin in Tasso, then the former may be seen to have the potential to yield the effects of the latter. The readers’ very pursuit of knowledge thus has an original root in the world of the unfamiliar.<sup>60</sup>

Extending this analysis to the reception of Tasso’s “peregrino” among his readers, Hans-Georg Gadamer’s notion of the “listening text” offers a valuable perspective through which to trace how Isabella Andreini activates the “peregrino” figure as a creative agent in her lyric poetry and public literary persona. For Gadamer, a text becomes alive in the act of interpretation. As listening material, the text is a step along the way in generating understanding—an intermediary between content written and analysis constructed. As Pan Derong and Zhang Lin have shown in their study of Gadamer’s *Wahrheit und Methode*, “the text is a stage during the process of understanding events, rather than an object that is given [...] it is constructed during the act of being comprehended and is comprehended by being constructed.”<sup>61</sup> In the early modern context, Montaigne’s proposal that the reader is a tennis-playing listener (“celuy qui l’escoute”), ready for interaction that will lead to new knowledge, may have arrived early at Gadamer’s concept of the “fusion of horizons” between readers and writers.<sup>62</sup>

For Montaigne, whose reception of Tasso inspired a series of intermedia and transhistorical responses, his reading of the Italian poet’s “affliction” as an imprisoned victim glosses the “peregrino errante” by way of association. Like the narrating “io” of the *Liberata*, Montaigne’s Tasso agonizes over his alienation “in so piteous a state, surviving himself, not recognizing himself or his works.”<sup>63</sup>

<sup>57</sup> Elsewhere in the *Discorsi*, Tasso stresses that the essence of “truth,” and its reception among a reading public, lies in the “opinione della moltitudine”: “basta al poeta in questo, com’in molte altre cose, la opinion della moltitudine, alla quale molte volte, lassando l’esatta verità delle cose, e suole e deve attenersi” (Ibid., 8).

<sup>58</sup> Christopher Geekie, *The Trumpet and the Lyre: Torquato Tasso and the Problem of Vernacular Epic in Sixteenth-Century Italy*, Ph.D. Dissertation (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 2017), 232. Geekie’s excellent work elaborates upon Tasso’s fraught position navigating “the tension between inalterable artistic principles derived from classical thought and the reality of historical contingency” (228), which both allowed for and encouraged the use of new linguistic possibilities.

<sup>59</sup> Tasso, *Discorsi*, 44.

<sup>60</sup> For a detailed, focused account of the reader-author relationship, from Dante and Ariosto, to Tasso and Cervantes, see Albert R. Ascoli, “Worthy of Faith? Authors and Readers in Early Modernity,” in *The Renaissance World*, ed. John Jeffries Martin (New York: Routledge, 2007), 435–51.

<sup>61</sup> Pan Derong and Zhang Lin, “Reader and Text in the Horizon of Understanding Methodology: Gadamer and Methodological Hermeneutics,” *Frontiers of Philosophy in China* 4, no. 3 (2009): 417–36, 425–26.

<sup>62</sup> In “On Experience” Montaigne writes: “La parole est moitié à celuy qui parle; moitié à celuy qui l’escoute. Cettuy-cy se doit preparer à la recevoir selon le branle qu’elle prend. Comme entre ceux qui jouent à la paume, celuy qui soustient se desmarche et s’apreste selon qu’il voit remuer celuy qui luy jette le coup et selon la forme du coup,” in Michel de Montaigne, *Oeuvres Complètes*, eds. Albert Thibaudet and Maurice Rat (Paris: Gallimard, 1962), 1066. Cited in Cathleen M. Bauschatz, “Montaigne’s Conception of Reading in the Context of Renaissance Poetics and Modern Criticism,” in *The Reader in the Text: Essays on Audience and Interpretation*, ed. Susan R. Suleiman and Inge Crosman (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 264–91. The evolution of the role of the active reader in later centuries leads to her/him becoming, in Barthes’s considerations, “un producteur du texte,” in Roland Barthes, *S/Z: Essais* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1970), 10.

<sup>63</sup> Montaigne, Michel de. *The Complete Essays of Michel de Montaigne*, ed. and trans. Donald Frame (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1958), 363.

The moral-geographic erring of the “peregrino errante” reflects in Montaigne’s construction of Tasso as “a lost man.” Moreover, Montaigne stresses the degree of the poet’s isolation such that it nearly disassociates Tasso from his historical context. The Tasso in Montaigne’s work is a figure frozen in time, immobilized by the “failure” to win and maintain favor within the court, and, by way of extension, existence—either real or imagined—beyond the confines of Sant’Anna. As Ayesha Ramachandran has demonstrated, Montaigne’s Tasso plays the role of a “national figure” used to represent all of contemporary Italy, and “a tragic emblem of civilizational decline, of madness, and intellectual corruption.”<sup>64</sup> Although it is unlikely that the meeting between Tasso and Montaigne ever took place, French visual artists of the nineteenth century often depicted it in particularly dramatic terms. Such is the case in François Fleury-Richard’s *Le Tasse en prison visité par Montaigne* (1822) (Figure 5), in which the French author has descended down a narrow set of stairs only to find a disheveled



Fig. 5. François Fleury-Richard, *Le Tasse en prison visité par Montaigne*, 1822.

<sup>64</sup> Ayesha Ramachandran, “Montaigne’s Tasso: Madness, Melancholy and the Enigma of Italy,” *Forum Italicum* 47, no. 2 (2013): 246–62, 248.

Tasso—illuminated by the spotlight effect cast from above—agonizing over his writings in neglected isolation.<sup>65</sup>

In contrast, Andreini's reading and reception of Tasso's "peregrino" voice is, in many ways, unlike those that perpetuate the image of the supposedly "errant" poet's "strange" legacy. The difference in reception between Montaigne and Andreini worth noting is that, although they were contemporaries, Andreini mobilizes in new ways the very figure that Montaigne represents as stagnant. Rather than measure Tasso as a character bound by his "regretful" fate, Andreini engages with this figure as a construction, utilizing it as a productive tool to generate and contextualize her literary output. Isabella's interpretation of the "peregrino," as it appears in Tasso, anticipates the Gadamerian insight of "interpenetration," which brings rhetoric and hermeneutics into close proximity in order to understand acts of writing within a larger spectrum that accounts for acts of reading.

Indeed, as the historical record would show, Andreini and Tasso often coexisted as writers and readers within shared artistic-intellectual circles: from their likely early collaboration for the premiere of *Aminta* in 1573, to their friendly poetry contest in Cinzio Aldobrandini's circle of poet-philosophers.<sup>66</sup> Andreini's reception of Tasso thus differs both in content and form from that of Montaigne, since the social communities in which Tasso and Andreini collaborated rarely cast the male poet in the role of the neglected, self-forgotten man. It is worth remembering that it was Aldobrandini's Roman circle that most enthusiastically campaigned for Tasso to be crowned Petrarch's successor as the new "poet laureate" of Italy. Even while Tasso may have claimed that he was "scacciato da la cittadinanza [...] e dal mondo tutto," his active participation and eager welcome among intellectual circles up and down the Italian peninsula challenges such an idea. Within these communities, Andreini would have known Tasso to be a sociable figure, an interlocutor with whom to debate, and a teacher from whom she sought to learn.<sup>67</sup> The literary portrait of Tasso that surfaces in "[la] scrittura della solitudine"—the dominant style of composition that, as Doglio suggests, defines

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<sup>65</sup> Among other visualizations of this "meeting," see: François Marius Granet's *Montaigne visitant le Tasso en prison* (1820), Eugène Delacroix, *Le Tasse en prison visité par Montaigne* (1821), and Louis Gallait, *Le Tasse dans sa prison visité par Montaigne* (1836). Although there is not adequate space in this study, it would be worth comparing Montaigne's account of "tragic" Tasso to the first biographies of the poet, which appeared shortly after the *Essais*: Giovan Pietro D'Alessandro, *Vita del Signor Torquato Tasso* (Naples: Costantino Vitale, 1604); Giambattista Manso, *Vita di Torquato Tasso* (Naples: Deuchino, 1621); and Guido Casoni, *Vita di Torquato Tasso* (Venice: Sarzina, 1625).

<sup>66</sup> On Isabella's performance alongside Vittoria Pisimi in the premiere of *Aminta*, see Solerti, *Ferrara e la corte estense*, 78–9; Robert L. Erenstein, "Isabella Andreini: A Lady of Virtue and High Renown," in *Essays on Drama and Theatre: Liber amicorum Benjamin Hunnigher* (Amsterdam: Baarn, 1973), 37–49; Ferdinando Taviani, "Bella d'Asia: Torquato Tasso, gli attori e l'immortalità," *Paragone* 35 (1984): 3–76; MacNeil, "The Divine Madness." On the poetry contest in Rome, see Eric Nicholson, "Waxing Poetic: a Literary 'Contest' and the Quest for Fame in Late Cinquecento Rome," in *Early Modern Rome (1341-1667)*, ed. Portia Prebys (Rome: AACUPI, 2010), 378–88. For a seventeenth-century account of this contest, see Isabella's son, Giovan Battista Andreini, in *La Ferza: Ragionamento secondo contro l'accuse date alla commedia* (Paris: Nicolao Callemont, 1625). A modern edition of this text is available in Laura Falavolti, ed., *Attore: alle origine di un mestiere* (Rome: Lavoro editoriale, 1988), 65–115. On the broader cultural legacy of *commedia dell'arte* performers and their interactions with figures such as Tasso, Marino, Chiabrera and the other members of the Andreini family, see chapter two, "Persone," in Mirella Schino and Ferdinando Taviani, *Il segreto della Commedia dell'arte: La memoria delle compagnie italiane del XVI, XVII, XVIII secolo* (1982), 4th edition (Florence: VoLo publisher, 2007), 87–138.

<sup>67</sup> Andreini's name appeared in print alongside Tasso's throughout the end of the sixteenth century. They each contributed poetry for the *Tempio* in honor of their mutual patron, Cardinal Cinzio Aldobrandini (Bologna: the heirs of Giovanni Rossi, 1600). Giovan Battista Licino's edited anthology, *Rime di diversi celebri poeti dell'età nostra* (Bergamo: Comino Ventura, 1587), includes lyric poetry by Tasso and Andreini, alongside that of other figures mentioned throughout this dissertation: Angelo Grillo, Orsina Cavaletta, Hercole Cavaletto, Gherardo Borgogni, Hercole Tasso, and others. Additionally, Tasso's sonnet in praise of Isabella, *Quando v'ordina il pretioso velo*, appears among the prefatory materials included in Andreini's *Lettere and Frammenti*.

Tasso's epistolary voice<sup>68</sup>—would have likely resonated as a partial, incomplete construction among the poet's friends, the “interpretive community,” to recall Stanley Fish's concept, to which Andreini belonged.<sup>69</sup> Insofar as they conducted similar lives in socio-economic terms, as poets and artists who shared in the need to secure patronage from institutional authorities, Andreini and those around her who celebrated and collaborated with Tasso may have read past his deliberate language of desperation in order to witness the calculated strategies that lie behind the poet's pleas for assistance. For a sixteenth-century *diva*, these strategies might have seemed theatrical, just as the figure behind the “peregrino errante” might have appeared “marvelous” in his ability to confront readers with improvisational foreignness.

In Isabella's 1601 *Rime*, the presence of the “peregrino” as an authorial persona and as a working definition of her poetics more generally frames the collection as a literary legacy of Tasso's theoretical principles on the relationship between “strangeness” and the “marvelous.”<sup>70</sup> The “peregrino stile”<sup>71</sup> of Tasso's lyric poetry resurfaces in Isabella's *rime* as her “vario stile,” the manner through which she demonstrates the versatility of her authorship and its sensibility about readers' expectations.<sup>72</sup> As Tasso expresses in his *Discorsi*, the “peregrino” communicates the language of “varietà,” and yields “il parlare non umile, ma sublime.”<sup>73</sup> Insofar as her lyric collection appeared in print between the publication of Tasso's principles concerning unity in variety and the emergence of Giambattista Marino (1569–1625) onto the lyric stage in 1602,<sup>74</sup> Andreini's *rime* experiment with the

<sup>68</sup> Doglio's longer definition of this style of writing reads: “una della ‘malinconia,’ della ‘perturbazione,’ degli stati morbosi o allucinati, della prigionia in ospedale, del resistere e durare tra ‘ostinata fortuna,’ ‘ingratitude del mondo’ e orgogliosa consapevolezza dei propri scritti,” in *Origini e icone*, 15.

<sup>69</sup> Stanley Fish, “Interpreting the Variorum,” *Critical Inquiry* 2, no. 3 (1976): 465–85. Another important figure to recall among this particular “interpretive community” is Gherardo Borgogni, who edited the fourth part of Tasso's *Rime et prose* (Milan: Tini, 1586), which includes poetry by both Borgogni and Andreini. In Tasso's *Discorso in lode del matrimonio et un dialogo d'amore* (Milan: Tini, 1586), Borgogni, who also edited this volume, includes his sonnets in praise of Isabella. Like Andreini, Borgogni was an active member of the Accademia degli Intenti in Pavia. Kathryn Bosi has likened the lyric and epistolary exchanges between Borgogni and Andreini, which took place over the span of two decades, to a “literary love affair” in her essay, “Accolades for an Actress: On Some Literary and Musical Tributes for Isabella Andreini,” *Ricercare: Rivista per lo studio e la pratica della musica antica* 15 (2003): 73–118, 73. Active in encouraging a similar friendship between Isabella and Torquato, Borgogni wrote to Tasso in 1587 “invitandolo a scrivere in laude della Signora Isabella Andreini, comica Gelosa, intesa per Filli.” This letter has led some critics to date Tasso's sonnet in praise of the actress *Quando v'ordiva il pretioso velo* to 1587–88. On this issue, see Taviani, “Bella d'Asia,” 24–5, 48; Kerr, “The Imprint of Genius: Tasso's Sonnet to Isabella Andreini,” *Quaderni d'italianistica* 22, no. 2 (2001): 81–96.

<sup>70</sup> On the intersections between theater and poetics, more specifically, in Isabella's *Rime*, see Luisella Giachino, “Dall'effimero teatrale alla quête dell'immortalità: Le *Rime* di Isabella Andreini,” *Giornale storico della letteratura italiana* 179 (2001): 530–52; Daria Perocco, “Isabella Andreini, ossia: il teatro non è *ianua diaboli*,” in *Donne e teatro: Atti del convegno, 6 ottobre 2003*, ed. Daria Perocco (Venice: Università Ca' Foscari, 2004), 21–40; Chiara Cedrati, “Isabella Andreini: la vicenda editoriale delle *Rime*,” *Acme: Annali della Facoltà di Lettere e filosofia dell'Università degli studi di Milano* 60 (2007): 115–42; Irene Palladini, “Il palcoscenico della poesia di Isabella Andreini,” in *L'Italianistica oggi: ricerca e didattica. Atti del XIX Congresso dell'ADI (Roma, 2015)*, eds. B. Alfonzetti, T. Cancro, V. Di Iasio, and E. Pietrobon (Rome: Adi editore, 2017), 1–6.

<sup>71</sup> The term “il peregrino stile” appears in Tasso's sonnet *Perché a le piaggie ove 'l Sebeto inonda*.

<sup>72</sup> In terms of metric variety, Andreini's 1601 *Rime* comprises of 368 poetic components: 196 sonnets, 125 madrigals, 6 canzoni, 10 *canzonette morali*, 2 *sestine*, 2 *epithalamia*, 2 *centoni*, 3 *capitoli*, 9 *scherzi*, 4 *versi funerali*, and 9 *egloghe boscherecce*. For how metric variation shapes Isabella's collection, see Katia Tiziana Radaelli, *Themes, Structures and Language in Isabella Andreini's 1601 Collection of Lyric Poetry*, Ph.D. dissertation. (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2012).

<sup>73</sup> Tasso, *Discorsi*, 181.

<sup>74</sup> On Tasso, Marino, and early-seventeenth century poetics more generally, see James Mirollo, *The Poet of the Marvelous: Giambattista Marino* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963); Maria Rika Maniates, *Mannerism in Italian Music and Culture, 1530–1630* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1979); Gary Tomlinson, *Monteverdi and the End of the Renaissance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987); Francesco Guardiani, *La meravigliosa retorica dell'Adone di G. B. Marino* (Florence: Olschki, 1989); Beatrice Rima, *Lo specchio e il suo enigma: Vita di un tema intorno a Tasso e Marino* (Roma: Antenore, 1991); Emilio Russo, *Studi su Tasso e Marino* (Rome: Antenore, 2005); Marie-France Tristan, *Sileno barocco: Il*

conjunction of the “meraviglioso” and the “peregrino” on the cusp of the former becoming the period’s steering aesthetic taste.<sup>75</sup> Andreini’s application of Tassian protean poetics in particulars occurred within, as Ezio Raimondi has noted, a widespread appreciation for and extension of Tasso’s use of “oscurità” among Baroque poets.<sup>76</sup>

In her performances as an actress, contemporary spectators recorded Isabella’s ability to arouse wonder in her audience precisely because of her ability to speak in “lingue straniere.”<sup>77</sup> For the 1589 wedding celebrations of Grand Duke Ferdinando de’ Medici and his French bride, Christine of Lorraine, Isabella staged a production of *La pazzia*, known today as *La pazzia di Isabella*. For its detailed descriptions of Isabella’s “marvelous foreignness,” it is worth recalling Giuseppe Pavone’s witness account in full:

L’Isabella [...] come pazza se n’andava scorrendo per la Cittade, fermando hor questo, [e] hora quello, e parlando hora in Spagnuolo, hora in Greco, hora in Italiano, [e] molti altri linguaggi ma tutti fuor di proposito: e tra le altre cose si mise a parlar Francese, [e] a cantar certe canzonette pure alla Francese, che diedero tanto diletto alla Sereniss[ima] Sposa, che maggiore non si potria esprimere [...] Si mise poi ad imitare li linguaggi di tutti li suoi Comici, come del Pantalone, del Gratiano, del Zanni, del Pedrolino, del Francatrippa, del Burattino, del Capitan Cardone, [e] della Franceschina tanto naturalmente, [e] con tanti dispropositi, che non è possibile il poter con lingua narrare il valore, [e] la virtù di questa Donna. Finalmente per fintione d’arte Magica, con certe acque, che le furono date a bere, ritornò nel suo primo essere, [e] quivi con elegante, [e] dotto stile esplicando le passioni d’amore, [e] i travagli, che provano quelli, che si ritrovano in simil panie involti, si fece fine alla Comedia; mostrando nel recitar questa Pazzia il suo sano, e dotto intelletto; lasciando l’Isabella tal marmorio, [e] meraviglia ne gli ascoltatori, che mentre durerà il mondo, sempre sarà lodata la sua bella eloquenza, [e] valore.<sup>78</sup>

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‘cavalier Marino’ fra sacro e profano (Lavis: La finestra, 2008); Clizia Carminati, *Tradizione, imitazione, modernità: Tasso e Marino visti dal Seicento* (Pisa: Edizioni ETS, 2020).

<sup>75</sup> For the friendship and mutual esteem between Andreini and Marino, see Stefano Santosuosso, “Le *Egloghe boscherecce* di Isabella Andreini nelle opere di Giovan Battista Marino,” *Studi secenteschi* 54 (2013): 49–58. Among the poetic dedications Marino composed for Isabella, cited by Santosuosso, are the sonnets *Tacea la notte, e chiara a par del giorno*; *Spettator del mio mal son oggi intento*; *Virtù sublimi, a cui di fiamma d’alì*; and *Ben di lassù da la più bella schiera* in the 1602 *Rime* (Venice: Ciotti). Marino also includes the madrigal portrait of Andreini, *Ben la fronte serena*, in his *La galleria* (Venice: Ciotti, 1620). As an act of reciprocity, Isabella’s husband Francesco includes Marino’s funerary sonnet for Isabella (*Piangete, orbi teatri; invan s’attende*) in the first edition of her posthumously published *Lettere* (Venice: Zaltieri, 1607). This sonnet later re-appeared in Marino’s *La lira* (Venice: Ciotti, 1614). On echoes of Andreini’s *Mirtilla* in Marino’s later works, and on the possibility of these two poets meeting in Naples in 1593, see Santosuosso, “*La Mirtilla* di Isabella Andreini e Giovan Battista Marino,” *Testo* 37, no. 2 (2016): 143–53.

<sup>76</sup> Ezio Raimondi, *Il colore eloquente: Letteratura e arte barocca* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1995).

<sup>77</sup> On Isabella’s education in foreign languages, see Franco Vazzoler, “La saggezza di Isabella,” in *L’arte dei comici: Omaggio a Isabella Andreini nel centenario della morte*, ed. Gerardo Guccini (Bologna: Edizioni Carattere, 2003), 107–32. See also Daria Perocco on the use of direct citation in different languages in Isabella’s lyric poetry, in which “citare è dimostrare di conoscere, è far sapere che [...] l’attrice è anche una donna di cultura, di letture approfondite,” in “Donna/uomo, attrice/scrittrice, Isabella/Francesco: metamorfosi della scrittura di Isabella Andreini,” in *Instabilità e metamorfosi nella letteratura barocca*, ed. Simona Morando (Venice: Marsilio, 2007), 87–111, 99.

<sup>78</sup> Giuseppe Pavoni, *Diario descritto da Giuseppe Pavoni: Delle feste celebrate nelle solennissime nozze delli serenissimi sposi, il sig. Don Ferdinando Medici, [e] la sig. Donna Christina di Loreno gran duchi di Toscana. Nel quale con brevità si esplica il torneo, la battaglia navale, la comedia con gli intermedii, [e] altre feste occorse di giorno in giorno per tutto il dì 15 di Maggio MDLXXXIX* (Bologna: Giovanni Rossi, 1589), 29–30, 43–46. For a contemporary poetic account of Isabella’s performance, see Gabriello Chiabrera’s sonnet *Nel giorno, che sublime in bassi manti*, included in Isabella Andreini, *Rime d’Isabella Andreini comica gelosa, academica intenta detta l’Accesa* (Milan: Girolamo Bordone and Pietromartire Locarni, 1601), 200. For critical readings of Isabella’s “pazzia,” see

Pavone's reconstruction of Isabella's performance underlines the marvelous effects of her linguistic versatility, implicitly turning Andreini into an emblem incarnate of Tasso's theoretical principle. Isabella's performance, shifting from the poignant story of madness into the full-on theatrical comedy of polyglot mimicry, is an embodied demonstration of poetic "varietà."

The legacy of Isabella's famous mad woman scene possibly influenced Alessandro Guarini's *Il Farnetico savio, ovvero il Tasso*. In this work, the figure of Tasso emerges as a dexterous simulator of mental and intellectual undoing—much like Isabella—whose feigned performances of psychological instability for members of the "Mondo traditore" serve to prove that he is, indeed, of a sound mind. Just as Isabella had dramatized the sequence from insanity to tranquility, enabled by the "certe acque" she drinks that allow her to return to her "primo essere," Guarini's Tasso, whom the author regrets not representing "in forma tragica, quasi in iscena," navigates the porous boundaries between lunacy and stability "con ogni studio, e ogni arte possibile." Untangling the reality that, as Tasso suggests, "oggimai son fatto soggetto ridicolo," Guarini's figure unveils the dramatic potential of self-presentation, a reading of Tasso that would have resonated with Andreini.<sup>79</sup>

In her lyric poetry, Andreini represents her poetic voice as thoroughly trained in Tassian theories and practices. Such conscious attention to the literary trends of her time is significant because it confirms that Isabella sought to be considered an educated artist. While she was the recipient of exuberant praise from figures such as Tomaso Garzoni for her theatrical talents and reputation as "la graziosa Isabella decoro delle scene,"<sup>80</sup> the printed lyric stage offered a second public outlet through which to demonstrate her agility as an intellectual. The first sonnet in her collection, *S'alcun fia mai, che i versi miei negletti*, creates resonant parallels with Tasso's first sonnet, *Vere fur queste gioie e questi ardori*.<sup>81</sup> The "vario carne" in Tasso reflect in Isabella's "vario stile," even as she enacts variety upon Tasso's own verses by way of suggested inversion and contradiction:

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Louise George Clubb, *Italian Drama*, 263–66; MacNeil, "The Divine Madness"; Cesare Molinari, "L'altra faccia del 1589: Isabella Andreini e la sua 'pazzi,'" in *Firenze e la Toscana dei Medici nell'Europa del '500*, ed. Gian Carlo Garfagnini, 3 vols. (Florence: Olschki, 1983), 2:565–73; James M. Saslow, *The Medici Wedding of 1589: Florentine Festival as Theatrum Mundi* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989); Richard Andrews, *Scripts and Scenarios: The Performance of Comedy in Renaissance Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 192; Eric Nicholson, "Ophelia sings like a *Prima Donna Innamorata*: Ophelia's Mad Scene and the Italian Female Performer," in *Transnational Exchange in Early Modern Theater*, eds. Robert Henke and Eric Nicholson (Burlington: Ashgate, 2008), 81–98. On this "mad scene" and its contribution to the birth of opera, see Paolo Fabbri, "On the Origins of an Operatic *Topos*: The Mad-Scene," in *Con che soavità: Studies in Italian Opera, Song, and Dance 1580–1740*, eds. Iain Fenlon and Tim Carter (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 157–95.

<sup>79</sup> On the confrontation that Guarini's Tasso engages in with his fictional "crazed" counterpart, and its anticipation of similar devices found three centuries later in Pirandello's *Enrico IV* (1922), see Alain Godard, "Le 'sage délirant': la 'folie' du Tasse selon ses premiers biographes," in *Visages de la folie (domaine hispano-italien)*, ed. Augustin Redondo and André Rochon (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1981), 13–22.

<sup>80</sup> In the section on "De comici," in his *La piazza universale*, Garzoni goes on to praise Andreini as the "ornamento de' Theatri, spettacolo superbo non meno di virtù, che di bellezza [...] mentre il mondo durerà, mentre staranno i secoli, mentre havran vita gli ordini, e i tempi, ogni voce, ogni lingua, ogni grido risuonerà il celebre nome d'Isabella," in Tomaso Garzoni, *La piazza universale di tutte le professioni del mondo, e nobili et ignobili* (Venice: Giovanni Batista Somasco, 1585), 753–54.

<sup>81</sup> While the question of which specific edition of Tasso's lyric poetry Andreini would have consulted is thorny territory, it is likely that she read Tasso's *Prima parte delle rime* (Mantua: Osanna, 1591) because, in this edition, the first sonnet listed is *Vere fur queste gioie e questi ardori*. Osanna's edition circulated widely as Tasso's "authorized collection"—the means of recuperating the dozens of unauthorized editions of his poetry that appeared throughout Italy in the 1580s. The edition was reprinted in 1592 in Brescia by Pietro Maria Marchetti, while the editor was preparing Tasso's authorized *Seconda parte delle rime* (1593).

Tasso:

Vere fur queste gioie e *questi ardori*  
ond'io piansi e cantai con *vario carme*,  
che poteva agguagliar il suon de l'arme  
e de gli eroi le glorie e i casti amori;  
e se non fu de' più ostinati cori  
ne' vani affetti il mio, di ciò lagnarme  
già non devrei, ché più laudato parme  
il ripentirsi, ove onestà s'onori.  
Or con l'esempio mio gli accorti amanti,  
leggendo *i miei diletti* e'l van desire,  
ritolgano ad Amor de l'alme il freno.  
Pur ch'altri asciughi tosto i caldi pianti  
ed a ragion talvolta il cor s'ardire,  
dolce è portar voglia amorosa in seno.

Andreini:

S'alcun fia mai, che i versi miei negletti  
legga, non creda a *questi finti ardori*;  
che ne le Scene imaginati amori  
usa a trattar con non leali affetti:  
Con bugiardi non men con *finti detti*  
de le Muse spiegai gli alti furori:  
Talor piangendo *i falsi miei dolori*,  
Talor cantando *i falsi miei diletti*;  
E come ne' Teatri or Donna ed ora  
uom<sup>82</sup> fei rappresentando in *vario stile*  
quanto volle insegnar Natura ed Arte.  
Così la stella mia seguendo ancora  
di fuggitiva età nel verde Aprile  
vergai con *vario stil* ben mille carte.

The emphasis on truth-telling and the transparent communication of emotions in Tasso ("Vere fur queste gioie e questi ardori") transforms, as Irene Palladini has noted, into a deceptive confession of "self"-representation in Andreini.<sup>83</sup> Isabella's "vario stile," which appears twice and at different points in the lines above, balances what is considered to be "vero" in Tasso's sonnet with what is seemingly "falso" in her own.<sup>84</sup> While the contents of these two sonnets speak, in some ways, as counterparts to one another, their shared emphasis on "varietà" echoes the Petrarchan model, wherein, as early as *Voi ch'ascoltate in rime sparse il suono*, the "vario stile" appears as a productive device in lyric "self"-construction.<sup>85</sup>

In further intertextual terms, Andreini's "vario stile" may also represent a nuanced lyric re-interpretation of Ariosto's poetics of variety. While this effect allows the *Furioso's* shape-shifting narrator to weave diverse strands of narrative content together through the use of *entrelacement*,<sup>86</sup> in

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<sup>82</sup> In "Bella d'Asia," Taviani emphasizes how Isabella's artistic identity as both male and female reflects the poetic *topos* of the *bella guerriera* from Ariosto and Tasso. In a similar study on Isabella's hermaphroditic self-presentation, Maria Ines Aliverti has argued that Veronese's potential portrait of the actress is "informed the androgynous image of the Innamorata," in "An Icon for a New Woman," 170. On Isabella's playful performance of androgyny in a broader context, see MacNeil, *Music and Women*, 95–126. For the voice of the hermaphrodite in Isabella's *Lettere*, see Ray, *Writing Gender*.

<sup>83</sup> "Marcando un consapevole scarto rispetto al modello tassiano del 'poeta che sente,' la Andreini conferisce valenza estetica al paradigma dell' 'attore che finge,' sancendo una distanza e, al contempo, conquistando un margine di autonomia rispetto alla lirica cinquecentesca, in particolare a quella virata al femminile, concepita come *confessio* autobiografica, diario intimo," in Palladini, "Il palcoscenico della poesia," 1.

<sup>84</sup> As mentioned in n. 70, Andreini demonstrates versatility at the level of metrical structure across her *canzoniere*. For an account of Isabella's "vario stile" that addresses less its resonances with Tassian poetics, and more its engagement with the "rhetoric of imagination," see the second chapter, "Rhétorique d'imagination et de *sprezzatura* chez Louise Labé et Isabella Andreini," in Erika Paoletti, *Rhétorique de l'imagination chez Louise Labé et Isabella Andreini*, Ph.D. dissertation (Boston: Boston College, 2013), 73–131.

<sup>85</sup> Cf. Guido Capovilla, "Sì vario stile": *Studi sul Canzoniere del Petrarca* (Modena: Mucchi, 1998).

<sup>86</sup> On Ariosto's poetics of variety and the more general use of *entrelacement* in romance, see C.P. Brand, "L'entrelacement nell'*Orlando furioso*," *Giornale storico della letteratura italiana* 154 (1977): 509–32; Elissa B. Weaver, "Lettura dell'intreccio dell'*Orlando furioso*: Il caso delle tre pazzie d'amore," *Strumenti critici* 34 (1977): 384–406; Patricia Parker, *Inescapable Romance: Studies in the Poetics of a Mode* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979); Albert R. Ascoli, *Ariosto's Bitter Harmony: Crisis and Evasion in the Italian Renaissance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987); Id., "Ariosto and the 'Fier Pastor': Form and History in *Orlando furioso*," *Renaissance Quarterly* 54, no. 2 (2001): 487–522; Daniel Javitch, "Cantus Interruptus in the *Orlando furioso*," *MLN* 95 (1980): 66–80; Id., "Narrative Discontinuity in the *Orlando furioso* and its Sixteenth-Century

Andreini, her “varied style” unites a variety of genres and meters, and contributes to the construction of the “hermaphroditic” mouthpiece through which the poet speaks in both male and female voices. Although Tasso does not explicitly include a female narrating voice in his lyric collection, like Andreini, his very compositions name the variety of *stili* that give shape to his poetry, listing among them: “il leggiadro,” “l’amoroso,” “il dotto,” “il duro,” “l’ardito” and “il peregrino.”<sup>87</sup> Of all these styles, Tasso’s “peregrino stile” may have been the most hospitable to women’s imitation and novel experimentation. In the *Liberata*, Tasso employs the word “peregrina” to describe each of his female characters, who represent, in different ways, the fusion between exotic foreignness and marvelous wonder, which, Tasso claims, is the goal to which “sublime” poetry aspires.<sup>88</sup> The overlap between the poetry-making “wandering stranger” and the “foreign” dynamism of the poem’s female characters creates a space for Isabella Andreini to imagine herself in the role of the “peregrina errante,” who embodies Tasso’s theoretical principles and poetic practices in her dual career as a performer and an author. Since sixteenth-century actors, much like Torquato and Bernardo Tasso, often lived peripatetic lifestyles, swiftly moving among courts and cities in order to gain reputations and secure future forms of patronage, Isabella’s mobility as a traveling actress and theater director casts her as an historical counterpart to Tasso’s poetic and actual persona.

Indeed, Tasso appears to have played a particularly important role in creating and circulating the association between Andreini and figures of foreign wonder. In his sonnet *Quando v’ordiva il pretioso velo* (c.1587), which appears in modern editions of Tasso’s poetry with the sub-title “Loda la signora Bella d’Asia,”<sup>89</sup> Tasso represents Isabella as an exotic combination of dazzling gems, imported perfumes, and immortal beauty:

Quando v’ordiva il pretioso velo  
 l’alma Natura e le mortali spoglie,  
 il bel cogliea, sì come il fior si coglie,  
 togliendo gemme in terra e lumi in Cielo:  
 E spargea fresche rose in vivo gelo  
 che l’Aura e’l Sol mai non disperde o scioglie;  
 E quanti odori l’Oriente accoglie;  
 e, perché non v’asconda invidia o zelo,  
 ella, che fece il bel sembiante in prima,  
 poscia il nome formò, che i vostri onori  
 porti e rimbombi e sol bellezza esprima.  
 Felice l’alme e fortunati i cori  
 ove con lettere d’oro Amor l’imprima  
 nell’immagine vostra e’n cui s’adori.

The sole theatrical reference in line 9 to Andreini’s “bel sembiante *in prima*” recalls her performances as Italy’s finest *prima donna innamorata* on the *commedia dell’arte* stage. The neighboring language of her

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Critics,” *MLN* 103, no. 1 (1988): 50–74; John Whitman, “Romance and History: Designing the Times,” in *Romance and History*, ed. John Whitman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 3–20.

<sup>87</sup> For the “leggiadro stile,” see *Era de l’età mia nel lieto aprile* and *Io non cedo in amar, donna gentile*; for the “amoroso stile,” see *Messaggera de l’alba*; for the “dotto stile,” see *Or che colui che messaggier fedele*; for the “duro stile,” see *Appare in dura pietra*; for the “ardito stile,” see *Sovente, Ardiżio, L’arco e la faretra*; and for the “peregrino stile,” *Perché a le piaggie ove l’Sebeto inonda*.

<sup>88</sup> On the *Liberata* women as “peregrine,” see Tylus, “Imagining Narrative.”

<sup>89</sup> Taviani’s “Bella d’Asia” provides a thoroughly documented reading on why this sonnet ought to be recognized as having been composed specifically for Isabella Andreini.

exotic appeal turns Andreini into a kind of foreigner, a figure subject to estrangement from her contemporary context and recognizability as a *commedia* star admired for her performances of Asiatic and Middle Eastern “turca” characters.<sup>90</sup> This particular method of poetically depicting Isabella as a “peregrina” surfaces more explicitly in the lyric exchanges between her and male members of the academic circles in which she participated.

In a lyric exchange with Filippo Massini, for example, Andreini calls herself “intenta” as she narrates the trajectory of her acceptance into the Accademia degli Intenti, to which Massini also belonged.<sup>91</sup> Adopting the voice of an epic narrator, Andreini enters into a nostalgic discourse by way of echoing the language of Dante, Lorenzo de’ Medici, and, importantly, Tasso:

Carca di bei pensier<sup>92</sup> mia nave ardita,<sup>93</sup>  
 spinta da gran desir le vele intende,  
 dove di virtù rara il foco splende,  
 ch’alletta i cor, ch’al vero ben gl’invita.  
 In van timor l’oscura notte addita,  
 e sirti e scogli in van fiero contende  
 a la brama d’honor, che sì m’accende:  
 chi muor, gloria acquistando, ha doppia vita.  
 Porti Nettunno irato al Cielo il legno,  
 ogni estrema sua forza in me consume,  
 non fia, ch’illustre ardir vil tema senta,  
 che può de le procelle homai lo sdegno?  
 Non m’assicura il fiammeggiante lume  
 di gir in porto à le degne opre INTENTA.

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<sup>90</sup> I thank Eric Nicholson for sharing this detail with me.

<sup>91</sup> Upon Andreini’s admission to the academy, she was known by the name “l’Accesa,” which would later appear alongside her given name in print across her publications. Of note, Andreini was also in regular contact with members of the Accademia degli Olimpici in Vicenza and the Accademia dei Filarmonici in Verona. The number of early modern women elected as member of Italian academies is decidedly select: Veronica Gambara (Sonnacchiosi of Bologna, 1543), Laura Terracina (Incogniti of Naples, 1550), Laura Battiferri (Intronati of Siena, 1560), and Virginia Salvi (Travagliati of Siena, 1560). On women’s participation in academies and contacts with academicians, see Connor Fahy, “Women and Italian Cinquecento Literary Academies,” in *Women in Italian Renaissance Culture and Society*, ed. Letizia Panizza (London: Routledge, 2000), 438–52; Alexandra Coller, “The Sienese Accademia degli Intronati and Its Female Contributors,” *The Italianist* 26 (2006): 223–46; Virginia Cox, “Members, Muses, Mascots: Women and Italian Academies,” in *The Italian Academies 1525–1700: Networks of Culture, Innovation and Dissent*, eds. Jane Everson, Denis V. Reidy, and Lisa Sampson (Cambridge: Routledge, 2016), 132–67; Patrizia Bettella, “Women and the Academies in Seventeenth-Century Italy: Elena Lucrezia Cornaro Piscopia,” *Italian Culture* 36, no. 2 (2018): 110–19. On actors’ involvement with academies specifically, see Lisa Sampson, “Amateurs Meet Professionals: Theatrical Activities in Late Sixteenth-Century Italian Academies,” in *The Reinvention of Theatre in Sixteenth-Century Europe: Traditions, Texts and Performance*, eds. T. F. Earle and C. Fouto (New York: Routledge, 2015), 187–218. On the networks of Italian academies more broadly, see Simone Testa, *Italian Academies and their Networks 1525–1700* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019).

<sup>92</sup> See the intertextual references Isabella draws here to *Purgatorio* 19.41 (“come colui che l’ha di pensier carca”), in Dante Alighieri, *Purgatorio*, ed. and trans. Robert M. Durling and Ronald L. Martinez (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003). Lorenzo de’ Medici’s lyrics read “la debil, piccioletta e fral mia barca/[...] tanto è di pensier carca,” in Lorenzo de’ Medici, *Canzoniere*, ed. Tiziano Zanato, 2 vols. (Florence: Olschki, 1991).

<sup>93</sup> On the metaphor of navigation used by poets, see Clotilde Barbarulli, Ubaldo Ceccoli, and Luciana Brandi, “Sulla ‘nave’ della metafora: Analisi di alcuni processi metaforici nell’italiano delle origini,” *Quaderni del Dipartimento di Linguistica, Università di Firenze* 12 (2002): 1–25.

Isabella's struggle to complete this narration recalls Tasso's challenge to stay afloat at the beginning of *Gerusalemme liberata*, whose dedication to Alfonso II d'Este dramatizes the poet's near-death experience just as he consecrates the poem's pages to his patron:

Tu, magnanimo Alfonso, il qual ritogli  
al furor di fortuna e guidi in porto  
me peregrino errante, e fra gli scogli  
e fra l'onde agitato e quasi absorto,  
queste mie carte in lieta fronte accogli,  
che quasi in voto a te sacrate i' porto  
(1.4)

Rather than imitate the representation, as it occurs in *Orlando furioso*, of the poet peacefully returning to port among friends at the end of his long journey, Isabella reproduces Tasso's tempest, thus casting herself in similarly wandering shoes as the poet who navigates unruly tides, as she both writes these verses and sends them out into her reader's hands.<sup>94</sup>

Isabella as a "peregrina" is the identification with which Massini begins his sonnet response, taking the association between Andreini lyric "io" and Tasso's "peregrino errante"<sup>95</sup> one step further by naming his addressee the "saggia peregrina ardita" in the sonnet's first line.<sup>96</sup> Massini may have been inspired by the Tassian overtones in Andreini's *Carca di bei pensier mia nave ardita*, along with the various identifications Isabella makes between her narrating "io" in the *canzoniere* and frequent use of the "peregrino" as a figure who seeks out knowledge and guidance.<sup>97</sup> By the time Isabella revised the first edition of her *Rime*, Marino began to widely circulate the identification between Tasso and the very word "peregrino" in his lyric poetry. For example, in his "Epitaffio nella sepoltura del Signor Torquato Tasso," Marino refers to the poet as "il Tasso, o peregrin, quel Tasso/ che 'l pio Duce cantò."<sup>98</sup> Thus, readers of Isabella's poetry could have made connections between the presence of

<sup>94</sup> For a different take on the *topos* of the poet-navigator, see Andreini's sonnet *Qual travagliata Nave io mi raggio*.

<sup>95</sup> In Massini's *canzoniere*, he includes a sonnet exchange with Tasso (*Stringemi al suon de tuoi chiari lamenti*), in which the latter is identifiable for his "pellegrina gloria." According to Solerti, this exchange first appeared in print in the unauthorized Vasalini publications of Tasso's lyrics: *Delle rime e prose del signor Torquato Tasso: Parte quarta*. (Venice: Giulio Vasalini, 1586), and *Gioie di rime e prose del signor Torquato Tasso [...] Quinta e sesta parte* (Venice: Giulio Vasalini, 1587). See Torquato Tasso, *Le rime di Torquato Tasso, edizione critica su i manoscritti e le antiche stampe*, ed. Angelo Solerti, 4 vols. (Bologna: Romagnoli-Dall'Acqua, 1898), 1:217–19. For a more detailed editorial history of the publication of these exchanges, see Lorenzo Sacchini, "Corrispondenti nelle *Rime* di Filippo Massini (1609): Girolamo Preti, Tommaso Stigliani, Isabella Andreini e Torquato Tasso," *Filologia & Critica* 38 (2013): 161–93. Upon Tasso's death, Massini composed the sonnet *Morto è 'l gran Tasso, e ben d'haverlo indegno*, which is included in his *Rime* (Pavia: Viani, 1609). Domenico Chiodo refers to Massini as "[uno] tra gli interlocutori poetici più graditi al Tasso," in *L'onorato sasso: Un secolo di versi in morte di Torquato Tasso* (Alessandria: Edizioni dell'Orso, 2003), 86.

<sup>96</sup> The full text of Massini's response to Andreini reads: "Poggia pur, saggia peregrina ardita,/ là, vè tua vela aura seconda intende,/ e, là, vè premio di virtute splende,/ mie' cari figli à nobil gloria invita./ D'honore il tempio à la mia schiera addita,/ che per lei giostra, e non invan contende,/ e si tuo chiaro essemplio homai l'accende,/ c'ha per tè gloriosa eterna vita./ Ricca merce, ond'è grave il tuo bel legno,/ non fia, ch'unqua si perda, ò si consume,/ o che 'ngiuria di tempo, ò d'oblio senta./ De l'oceano il procelloso sdegno/ già vinto, hor l'uno, hor l'altro opposto lume/ in te mi scorge à nobil opre INTENTA." The exchange is printed in Massini, *Rime*, 264.

<sup>97</sup> See Isabella's sonnet *Qual Ruscello veggiam d'acque sovente*.

<sup>98</sup> The full text by Marino reads: "Qui giace il Tasso, o peregrin, quel Tasso/ che 'l pio Duce cantò; dal Tago al Gange/ ogni lingua, ogni stil l'onora e piange:/ ferma al nome divin lo sguardo e 'l passo/ Ben ha più duro il cor di questo sasso/ chi di sua morte non s'affligge et ange,/ di questo sasso che si spetra e frange/ per dargli albergo, umil quantunque, e basso./ Ma che? viv'egli in terra, e vive in questi marmi, e viv'anco in Ciel tra pure forme/ traslato, e muse angeliche celesti./ Tu, ch'a le sculte note or volgi l'orme,/ leggile pur, ma pian, sì che nol desti, ch'egli estinto non è, ma posa, e dorme," in Marino, *La lira* (1614), ed. Maurizio Slawinski, 2 vols. (Turin: Edizioni RES, 2007), 1:190. Also in *La lira* (1:191), Marino includes

“peregrino” and the echoes of Tasso in her works and the word’s role in shaping Tasso’s poetic afterlives constructed by others.

Later in her collection, Isabella’s sonnet *Io vissi un tempo (ond’hor meco mi sdegno)* offers an example of the “new life” her lyrics grant to the hybrid figure of Tasso, the “wandering stranger”:

Io vissi un tempo (ond’hor meco mi sdegno)  
 Tiranneggiata da mortal desiro,  
 e sofferesi infelice il giogo indegno  
 di strano, e di gravissimo martiro;  
 E sì fui priva de l’usato ingegno,  
 che’l proprio *error* non vidi; aperto hor miro  
 d’amor tiranno il micidial disegno,  
 e di Fortuna il sempre instabil giro.  
 Hor che (la Dio mercè) pur veggio fuori  
 quest’alma de l’antico, e cieco *errore*<sup>99</sup>  
 veggio anco il fosco de’ gran falli suoi.  
 Tal nulla vede *il Peregrin* qualhora  
 di nebbia è cinto; e’l tutto scorge poi,  
 ch’ei lascià dietro il tenebroso horrore.

The repetition of “error” in lines 6 and 10 prepares Isabella’s readers for the arrival of the *Liberata*-inspired “Peregrin” in line 12. It is possible to track this figure across Isabella’s *Rime*, and its development—as it occurs in Tasso, too—from a literary figure into a particular kind of poetic style. In her sonnet exchange with Arcangelo Zuccaro, Isabella borrows from Tasso in defending, as he had, her very use of the “pellegrino stile.” Praised by Zuccaro for her “egregio stile,”<sup>100</sup> Isabella humbly replies:

Stemprata è la mia penna, e lo Scarpello  
 de l’ingegno destrutto, ond’hor ben face  
 preda infelice il crudo Tempo edace  
 d’ogni mio studio nel fiorir più bello:  
 Ma sia che può, s’ei non renova quello  
 in me, che à Filomena il fiero Trace  
 spietato fece, il suo poter fallace  
 vedrassi, e vinto l’empio orgoglio, e fello.  
 Con brevi note *il pellegrino stile*<sup>101</sup>  
 loderò suo malgrado, e l’humil tetto  
 dal cor sia nido al chiaro nome vostro.

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the sonnet he sent to Giovan Battista Manso, after paying homage to Tasso’s tomb at Sant’Onofrio in Rome, *Venni ai colli Latini, e il marmo scersi*. In the “Proposte e risposte” section of *La lira*, Marino includes a sonnet exchange with Tasso (1:253–54).

<sup>99</sup> This line may be making reference to Petrarch’s “lungo error in cieco laberinto,” from *S’una fede amorosa* (RVF 224), in *Canzoniere*, ed. Paola Vecchi Galli (Milan: BUR, 2016).

<sup>100</sup> In her sonnet exchange with Agostin Gioioso da Sanseverino, Isabella claims to write in a “raro stile.” See her sonnet *Se’l raro stil, se la mirabil arte*.

<sup>101</sup> Stefano Santosuosso has carefully traced Isabella’s variety in linguistic choices in his Ph.D. dissertation, *Isabella Andreini spirituale, morale e boschereccia nelle Rime del 1601: a (dis)close(d) reading* (Reading: University of Reading 2017). Further study on whether Isabella’s selection of uncommon words are similar to those found in Tasso would be highly useful.

Al nome, per cui già l'alma gentile  
veggio farsi, e cantar che al Mondo eletto  
foste, per far eterno il secol nostro.

Although the roaring criticisms from the so-called “Ariosto versus Tasso” debates at the end of the sixteenth century had largely subsided by the time of Isabella’s 1601 publication—especially those from the disapproving Accademia della Crusca—there are defensive and violent echoes in Andreini’s desire to “lodare” the “foreign style.” Unless Andreini should suffer the same fate as Philomena, who lost her tongue and thus the ability to self-express, she will persevere in publicly praising (“con brevi note”) the style for which Tasso had been most widely criticized.

In her implicit homage to Tasso’s commitment to link foreignness with versatility, Isabella demonstrates a similar attention to the “marvelous” effects that such a connection generates. Much as Tasso’s mask as a “peregrino” allows him to be at once unfamiliar and yet still recognizable, Isabella’s use of the “stranger” both in her poetry and prose plays on the boundaries between history and fiction, exposing their potential for total dissolution. As will be explained in the following section, Isabella’s *Lettere* adopt a varied cast of authorial voices in order to complicate the presupposition that epistolary writing is unquestionably autobiographical and “feminine” in nature.<sup>102</sup> As in her *Rime*, Isabella’s letters turn on productive engagement with foreignness: her epistolary collection demonstrates in new ways how evocations of Tasso, his literary production, and poetic legacy inscribe Isabella as a figure thoroughly in contact with, and measurably influenced by, the “peregrino” in both the construction of her poetics and performance.

#### TASSO IN ANDREINI’S *LETTERE*: AN UNSEALED POTENTIAL

In her study of Renaissance epistolary writing, Kathy Eden traces the ways in which intimacy exists as a style that reflects reading and writing practices. To engage readers “intimately,” Eden suggests, letter writers practiced an intimate style, recovered in the early modern period through humanist pedagogy and generic developments.<sup>103</sup> As Meredith Ray and Deanna Shemek have shown, letter writing was often theorized as a feminine activity due to its supposed “naturalness” and documented investment in “the personal.”<sup>104</sup> The *Lettere* of Isabella Andreini, however, frustrate each of these classifications: they are neither intimate, nor are they categorically feminine. While many early modern letters provide relatively quick answers to the whats, whens, wheres, whys and hows of epistolary composition, Isabella’s letters withhold this information off-stage and out of sight from her readers. With rare exception, Isabella’s letters do not disclose addressees, dates, or places, nor do they name exact circumstances, such as weddings, wars, coronations, or religious ceremonies, nor any other historically determined details that might otherwise situate individual letters within a particular time and place. The very quality of their unspecified “universality” makes Andreini’s letters seem ostensibly written for everyone and for no one.

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<sup>102</sup> Cf. Palladini, “Il palcoscenico della poesia.”

<sup>103</sup> Kathy Eden, *The Renaissance Rediscovery of Intimacy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012).

<sup>104</sup> Meredith Ray, *Writing Gender*; Deanna Shemek, “Introduction” to Isabella d’Este, *Selected Letters*, ed. and trans. Deanna Shemek (Toronto: Iter, 2017), 1–20.

Appearing posthumously in print, Isabella's *Lettere* were edited by her husband Francesco Andreini (c.1548–1624).<sup>105</sup> While critics are often tempted to linger on the question of Isabella's authorship, my interest in these pages lies primarily with the *figure* of "Isabella Andreini" that emerges through a careful reading of all 154 individual elements of the collection. Dedicated to the Duke of Savoy, Carlo Emanuele (1580–1630),<sup>106</sup> the *Lettere* saw nineteen printed editions between 1607 and 1663. In terms of content, the majority of letters address fictional concerns about love by a cast of cross-dressed authorial personae,<sup>107</sup> while the letters which are more philosophically oriented tackle questions of life at court, the expectations of friendship and charity, and the potential for freedom among humankind. While the *Lettere* have received critical attention for their interplay between Isabella's career as an actress and her literary production, the pages that follow are interested in tracing the meta-literary orientation of the letters towards the relationship between the reader and the writer. Specifically, I examine the ways in which Isabella's pervasive application of Tasso's authority throughout her collection reflects certain reader-writer dynamics for which the male poet advocated. In particular, this phenomenon occurs most often in moments where the *Lettere* intermix with the other genres for which Tasso is best known: the dialogue, the treatise, and the epic.

Isabella's ability to blend different genres together brings into high relief the historical reality whereby, as Virginia Cox has shown, women writers of Isabella's time became increasingly more ambitious and experimental in literary fields that had been dominated previously by their male counterparts.<sup>108</sup> If John Donne famously said that "letters mingle souls," Isabella demonstrates how letters mingle genres.<sup>109</sup> Consequently, Andreini's *Lettere* may be read alongside those by Petrarch, Catherine of Siena and Aretino, for how they disable the preconception that letter writing in the early modern period was simply a spontaneous, unartistic translation of experience. Mirroring her training

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<sup>105</sup> Francesco Andreini was also instrumental in publishing Isabella's *Frammenti* (Venice: Combi, 1617), which include her thirty-one *Contrasti amorosi*. On Francesco's "duplice intento di eternare la fama di Isabella e di raccoglierne l'invidiabile lascito in termini di continuità," see Fabrizio Fiaschini, *L'"incessabil agitazione": Giovan Battista Andreini tra professione teatrale, cultura letteraria e religione* (Pisa: Giardini, 2007), n. 5. On the collaborations of the Andreini family as a whole, see Sarah Gwenyth Ross, "Learned Wives and Mothers in Italy," in *The Birth of Feminism: Women as Intellect in Renaissance Italy and England* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 193–234.

<sup>106</sup> The son of Margaret of France and Emmanuel Philibert, Carlo Emanuele, was just one of Isabella's influential French patrons. The wedding between Henry IV and Maria de' Medici in 1600 brought Isabella and the *Comici Gelosi* to the French royal court, where they were commissioned as the in-residence acting company. Isabella's literary works enjoyed a notable fortune among French audiences. As Bernard Bray has shown, some of her *Lettere* were translated into French, alongside examples from Ovid, Abelard and Heloise. French translations of her *Mirtilla* also appeared in 1599 and 1602, in "La lettre d'amour féminine au XVIIe siècle: François de Grenaille transmetteur des *Lettere* d'Isabella Andreini," *Littératures classiques* 71 (2010): 153–74. Cf. Silvia Fabrizio-Costa, "'Una traduzione (?) francese delle lettere di Isabella Andreini: François de Grenaille (1642),' in *Isabella Andreini una letterata in scena*, 195–211. On Isabella's stay in France and her influence on French actresses, see Virginia Scott, *Women on the Stage in Early Modern France: 1540–1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

<sup>107</sup> Male writers of letter collections in the early modern period similarly oscillated between male and female voices. See Andrea Zenofonte da Ugobio, *Formulario novo da dittar lettere amorose* (Venice, 1531). Zenofonte, among others, may be seen to continue in the tradition of Ovid's *Heroides* and Boccaccio's *Elegia di madonna Fiammetta*. Three decades after Andreini, Margherita Costa's *Lettere amorose* (Venice: N.p., 1639) will similarly stage male-female epistolary dialogues among such figures as hunchbacks, dwarves, and women without noses. On this collection, see Meredith Ray, *Writing Gender*, 181–183.

<sup>108</sup> Cox, *Women's Writing in Italy (1400–1650)* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008); Id., *The Prodigious Muse*.

<sup>109</sup> Andreini's *Lettere* are just one example of what Siro Ferrone defines as the "theatrical experimentalization" that took place at the turn of the seventeenth century: "il repertorio degli attori della cosiddetta commedia all'improvviso accoglieva le più ardite contaminazioni dei generi, in contrasto con l'orientamento prevalente in una letteratura italiana sempre più inclina alla separazione del registro comico da quello tragico o tragicomico," in *La commedia dell'Arte: Attrici e attori italiani in Europa (XVI–XVIII secolo)* (Turin: Einaudi, 2014), 114.

as an actress, Isabella embroiders her collection with nuance, allure, and illusion.<sup>110</sup> As a genre-bending “bricoleuse,” to use Ann Rosalind Jones’s term,<sup>111</sup> Isabella demonstrates with her *Lettere* how contemporary women’s integration in literary activity destabilizes the modern separatist construct of literary history that divides “women’s writing” from the somewhat unspoken category of “men’s writing.”<sup>112</sup> Tasso’s privileged place in Isabella’s collection—through the citation, imitation, and re-figuration of his poetics and poetic persona—exposes the very fragility of such constructs.

To determine how Tasso’s authorship manifests itself in Andreini’s letters, the analysis that follows evolves according to two aims: first, to show how, through variations on Tasso’s epistolary voice, Andreini sets into motion two opposing models for letter writing, one that seeks to exclude the reader from a shared experience with the writer, and another that, in contrast, reaches to include the reader by considering questions of more “universal” interest; and second, to suggest that these models reflect the progressive developments undertaken by seventeenth-century women writers, their sometimes provocative stances on literary imitation, and, most importantly, the communities—both institutional and textual—wherein male and female authors collaborate to preserve one another’s literary legacies. My hypothesis is that the meta-literary work performed by Isabella’s letters may be considered forward-thinking for its representation of literary activity as “androgynous”; for example, in how the letters alternate between male and female authorial voices in the creation of a mixed-sex reading audience. By doing so, Andreini disproves the critical distinctions in literary production that an author’s gender and sex might generate. She proves instead, that such ambiguities fade when women participate alongside men in re-charting literary history and its contemporary practice.

As a shift away from critiquing, through imitation and deconstruction, the dominant literary practices of her time—what the so-called “anti-Petrarchan” female poets from the first half of the sixteenth century sought to do—Isabella blends genres together so as to formulate a new kind of critique.<sup>113</sup> Such innovation is reflected in Andreini’s immersion in the Baroque poetics of hybridity, with figures such as Gabriello Chiabrera (1552–1638) and Marino—both enthusiastic supporters of Andreini and her profession—among its creative pioneers.<sup>114</sup> With women writers now practicing a

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<sup>110</sup> See Ray, *Writing Gender*, for an interpretation of Isabella’s *Lettere* as a kind of theatrical “reference book,” a hybrid product of the letter and the dramatic sketch.

<sup>111</sup> I employ Jones’s term here as it fits within her broader classification of Renaissance women’s writings as “a literate kind of tinkering, the hybridization of disparate literary modes through which women produce new mixed genres,” in *The Currency of Eros: Women’s Love Lyric in Europe, 1540–1620* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 36.

<sup>112</sup> On this note, Virginia Cox has expressed encouraging confidence that, with advances widely made and measured in the study of early modern women over the past three decades, current and future scholarship may be in a position to move “beyond these categories.” See the “Introduction” to her *The Prodigious Muse*.

<sup>113</sup> The scholarship on early modern female poets and the question of Petrarchism is extensive. See, for example: Ann Rosalind Jones, *The Currency of Eros*; Margaret Rosenthal, *The Honest Courtesan: Veronica Franco, Citizen and Writer in Sixteenth-Century Venice* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); Gabriella Zarri, ed., *Donna, disciplina, creanza cristiana dal XV al XVII secolo: studi e testi a stampa* (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1996); Deanna Shemek, *Ladies Errant: Wayward Women and Social Order in Early Modern Italy* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998); Virginia Cox, “Sixteenth-Century Women Petrarchists and the Legacy of Laura,” *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 35, no. 3 (2005): 583–606; Id., *Women’s Writing*, Id., *The Prodigious Muse*; Stefano Bianchi, *La scrittura poetica femminile nel Cinquecento veneto: Gaspara Stampa e Veronica Franco* (Manziana: Vecchiarelli, 2013); Virginia Cox, *Lyric Poetry by Women of the Italian Renaissance* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013); Alexandra Collier, *Women, Rhetoric, and Drama in Early Modern Italy* (New York: Routledge, 2017); Aileen Feng, *Writing Beloveds: Humanist Petrarchism and the Politics of Gender* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017); Maria Chiara Tarsi, *Studio sulla poesia femminile del Cinquecento* (Bologna: I libri di Emil, 2018).

<sup>114</sup> Andreini’s hybrid activities may be framed within the broader Marinist compositional goals of “rule-breaking.” On the question of literary hybridity as innovation in this period, see Jon Snyder, *L’estetica del barocco* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2005). On innovation in Chiabrera’s poetry, specifically, see Fulvio Bianchi and Paolo Russo, eds., *La scelta della misura: Gabriello Chiabrera, l’altro fuoco del barocco italiano. Atti del convegno di studi su Gabriello Chiabrera nel 350° anniversario della morte. Savona, 3–6 novembre 1988* (Genoa: Costa and Nolan, 1993). On the literary friendship between Andreini and Chiabrera, see A. Bruno,

plurality of new genres, this inclusivity resounds in the collaborative aspects of Isabella's literary career. As it relates to Tasso's presence in her *Lettere*, the very term "collaboration" conveys the responsibility the male poet had imagined for authors and readers to shape one another's literary legacies. This practice models a different kind of political letter-writing, whereby the gesture towards a community of readers—a local variant on the republic of letters—recalls once more the Gadamerian principle of "interpenetration" between acts of reading and those of writing.

For, indeed, maintaining positive relations with her many readers would have been of paramount concern for a woman like Andreini, who worked at length to protect her image as a wife, mother, Academy member, and "wonder woman" of the theater, especially during a time when Counter-Reformation moralists sought to demonize early actresses at nearly every turn.<sup>115</sup> Those who showered Andreini with glowing encomia were among the first to describe her success as that of a woman who transcends the expectations of her sex. We can here recall Erius Puteanus's description of Isabella as self-transformative: "abandoning your own sex, you transform yourself by the labour of virtue into a man."<sup>116</sup> What has often gone overlooked in the context of these accounts, however, is the degree to which Andreini similarly returned encomiastic favors by joining communities of poets and theater enthusiasts who preserved and circulated one other's positive public reputations in their works. Just as Andreini received praise, it would seem, so too was she generous in giving it.

If the rule is that history escapes the pages of Isabella's *Lettere*, the critical exception is the collection's single reference to an historical figure, Torquato Tasso. Before elaborating upon the potential reasons for this anomaly, it is first necessary to emphasize that the letter on Tasso's legacy, which appears rather late in the collection, offers a variant on the monotonous sequence of love letters that surround it. By pushing to the margins the claustrophobic relationship between the "io" and "voi" of the love letters, the letter on Tasso opens up broader questions concerning the civic roles played by poets, regardless of their sex. Indeed, the question of poets' civic responsibility to one another conditions the theoretical fabric of Isabella's dedicatory letter, in which she claims:

Io [sono] stata [...] mandata ad esser Cittadina del Mondo [...] [e] essendo per avventura questo desiderio di sapere nato in me più ardente, che in molt'altre Donne dell'età nostra [...] hò voluto à tutta mia possanza alimentarlo [...] sapend'io, che ogni buon Cittadino è tenuto per quanto può à beneficar la sua Patria.

Andreini self-identifies as a "Cittadina del Mondo" born with an innate Aristotelian and Dantean desire for knowledge ("un desiderio di saper"). Like "ogni buon Cittadino," Isabella imagines herself responsible for benefitting her "Patria," for employing authorship as a form of authority. For poetic "citizens of the world," writing becomes political so that *writers* may be remembered. The lesson Andreini seems to communicate, here and throughout the collection, is that a poet's name hinges as much on what she writes as on what others write about her.

Though fundamental to the theoretical coordinates of this first letter, the discursive attention paid to poets' civic responsibilities competes—in terms of time and space—with the content of the love letters, which mirror the many trending discourses on love that had long circulated throughout Cinquecento lyric impersonations of the figure of the tortured lover from Petrarch's *canzoniere*. In Andreini's letters, this figure's self-consuming rhetoric nearly deafens the voice of universal concern,

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"Gabriello Chiabrera e Isabella Andreini," *Bullettino della Società Savonese* 1, no. 1 (1891); Franco Vazzoler, "Chiabrera fra dilettanti e professionisti dello spettacolo," in *La scelta della misura*, 429–66.

<sup>115</sup> Cf. Taviani, *La commedia dell'arte e la società barocca*. On critiques against theater's "corruption" of audiences, because of its "duplicitous and invasive nature," see Jane Tylus, "Veiling the Stage."

<sup>116</sup> See n. 42.

which is free to speak only in letters wholly *unconcerned* with love. These dueling mouthpieces establish two models of writing and reading in the collection; their very juxtaposition reveals their respective effectiveness. The first model takes the metaphorical shape of the auto-cannibalistic ouroboros: the snake that eats its own tail in cyclical repetition of creation and destruction. Like this serpentine creature, the (often male) voice of the love letters turns on its own self-destructive rehearsal of an experience that can only be renewed discursively, thus generating a kind of exclusive language of singular familiarity that divides the reader from the writer. In other words, the lonely lover loves and is understood by no one. Such a process nearly becomes a parody in the example “Scherzi amorosi e civili,” where the parallel pursuits of romantic recollection and civic responsibility clash in their failure to sustain a dual focus on the reader and the writer. This leaves the defeated male speaker to conclude: “ma perche racconto io le vostre divine doti, hormai in ogni parte palesi? meglio è (per dir così) che invece di cantar la vostra gloria, io pianga il mio tormento.” Echoes of Narcissus and the Petrarchan lover ironically “triumph” as the speaker redirects his attention from his reader’s affect to his own torment.

Further moments of failed integration between the reader and the writer operate at the junction between titles that suggest philosophical insights, such as “Della compassione” and “Dei pensieri,” and the narrow content therein that sacrifices universal applicability for individual fanaticism. This first model of reading and writing, that of the ouroboros, which dominates the collection, depicts the lover’s tale/tail as the vehicle of tortured uniqueness, reliant upon discursive circularity for withdrawing into self-imposed exile. The speakers of Andreini’s love letters, who fail to combine words capable of persuading readers, measure the epistolary genre as a fragmented form, problematic for its writeability and, more importantly, its readability.

In the letter “Scherzi amorosi honesti,” the speaker appears in the likeness of the *Capitano* character of the *commedia dell’arte* cast, who, in this example, struggles to remain afloat in his “debile e combattuta Navicella.”<sup>117</sup> Boasting even while drowning, the *Capitano* claims: “Chi provò mai pari doglia in amore, per sì fieri accidenti? Chi mai trà l’onde horribili d’incessabil avversità fù, com’io sono agitato, e sbattuto?” The sinking imposter of the epic hero reduces the language of political community-building to emergency expressions of solitary victimhood. Singularity becomes the speaker’s anthem in his following words: “Io, io son quel solo, che per tormenti (preminenza infelice) supero qual si sia più tormentato.” Andreini’s language of divisive experience anticipates the dissolution of the reader-writer community, whereby the speaker’s self-generated tempest claims—as the Petrarchan lover does—a form of singularity in which the reader cannot participate.

Such an act in crisis nearly demands its own form of recovery, a reinstatement of the hospitable reader-writer dynamic and an antidote to its own regretful condition. Thus, an alternative paradigm of reading and writing emerges in the form of a gesture outwards onto more inclusive topics, which transcend miserable love in order to pay homage to the very work that letter writing can do. With this, it is appropriate to return to Tasso. It seems important to note that, in some ways, the self-destructive model of writing practiced by the suffering lover shares common ground with Tasso’s “scrittura della solitudine,” a writing so often lost in its repetitive circularity of grievances and laments that readers cannot help but feel the weight of the poet’s isolation inflicted upon them. Tasso engaged with this style of writing most frequently in his letters; its reappearance in Andreini—though notably tied to amorous vocabulary, rather than religious, financial, or literary subject matters—operates within the larger context of how she applies the poet’s *other* writing styles that appear throughout his literary production, and often prove to be more hospitable to interaction with the reader.

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<sup>117</sup> On the “theatricality” of Isabella’s *Lettere*, see Meredith Ray, *Writing Gender*; Richard Andrews, “Isabella Andreini’s Stage Repertoire: The *Lettere* and *Fragments*,” in *The Tradition of the Actor-Author in Italian Theatre*, ed. Donatella Fischer (London: Legenda, 2013), 30–40.

Eulogized by Andreini as the “honor di questo secolo,” the letter on Tasso’s death plays a gravitational role in Isabella’s broadly unhistorical collection: Tasso’s name alone situates Isabella’s *Lettere* chronologically at the turn of the seventeenth century.<sup>118</sup> The reasons for Tasso’s unique appearance are many: first, like women writers, Tasso had grown tired of the Cinquecento tradition of faithful, though slavish, service to lyric Petrarchism, for it often occurred at the expense of literary invention; second, Tasso was an experimental poet who, like Andreini, practiced nearly every genre available to him; and third, Tasso encouraged women writers’ participation among literary communities, and influenced Isabella’s career both as an actress and as a poet, reflected especially in her pastoral play *Mirtilla*, modeled on—though more comic than—Tasso’s *Aminta*.<sup>119</sup> Tasso’s figuration as “un pastore” in the text of his *Aminta* possibly served as a model for Isabella’s pastoral guise “Filli” in her *Mirtilla*.<sup>120</sup> Thus, it is not wholly unexpected that Tasso would appear as the prioritized historical reference for Isabella’s *Lettere*.

In more nuanced ways, the male poet’s authorial figure floats throughout Andreini’s collection in citations of his *Discorsi dell’arte poetica*, dialogues on jealousy and life at court,<sup>121</sup> epistolary debates about women and marriage, and epic personality as a “peregrino errante.”<sup>122</sup> The “agitato” *Capitano* character cited above thrashes in the waters of unrequited love similar to how the narrator of the *Liberata* first appears “fra l’onde agitato e quasi absorto” (*GL* 1.4). In terms of Andreini’s reception of Tasso’s representation of women in his letters, her letter on marriage (“Del prender moglie”) celebrates this form of union as an equal exchange of love, friendship, and mutual respect.<sup>123</sup> As is the case in Tasso’s debate on marriage with his cousin Ercole, Isabella’s letters offer two contrasting points of view: one in favor of marriage, and the other severely against it. Andreini’s claim that the most rewarding relationship is that which exists between a husband and a wife draws directly upon the same point Tasso makes in defending women and marriage in his letter.<sup>124</sup> Isabella thus invokes Tasso’s

<sup>118</sup> Tasso died in 1595 and Isabella’s *Lettere* were published just over a decade later in 1607.

<sup>119</sup> On echoes of *Aminta* in Andreini’s *Mirtilla*, see Campbell, *Literary Circles*; Sampson, *Pastoral Drama*; and Galli Stampino, “Pastoral Constraints, Textual and Dramatic Strategies.”

<sup>120</sup> My understanding of this possible connection draws upon Eric Nicholson’s presentation, “Serious Fun with ‘quel gran pastore’: Tasso in Pastoral Drama by Italian Women Writers,” delivered at the Renaissance Society of America Annual Meeting held in Toronto in March 2019.

<sup>121</sup> Isabella’s letter “Del servir in Corte” is largely modeled on Tasso’s dialogue *Il Malpiglio*. In her letter, Andreini nimbly evokes Tasso’s own name: “Per dir, come dice quel nostro amico, disponetevi ancor di fare stomaco di Gallina, sonno di Tasso, e piè di Cervo” (emphasis added).

<sup>122</sup> The languishing lover in “Delle lingue bugiarde” identifies as a “peregrino errante” for having erred and taken a brief absence from his beloved.

<sup>123</sup> Critical interest in Andreini’s letter on marriage has emphasized how it implicitly touts the author’s own loyalty as a devout wife. For example, Nicla Rivero has suggested: “In a time when actresses—among other defamatory allegations—were accused of prostitution because they lived in promiscuity with other actors, Andreini praises the marital union as a way to reach human perfection. Declaring that the sacred tie of marriage creates an honorable alliance that leads to friendship, Andreini herself offers proof in the success of her own marriage, basing her relationship with the actor Francesco on the principles of love, virtue, trust and respect,” in “Isabella Andreini: Standing out through Letter-Writing,” *Schede umanistiche: Rivista annuale dell’Archivio Umanistico Rinascimentale Bolognese* 31 (2017): 151–77, 165. On broader discussions of Italian women and early modern marriage, see Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, *Women, Family, and Ritual in Renaissance Italy* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1985); Daniela Lombardi, *Storia del matrimonio: Dal Medioevo a oggi* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2008); Julius Kirshner, *Marriage, Dowry, and Citizenship in Late Medieval and Renaissance Italy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015); Alexander Cowan, *Marriage, Manners and Mobility in Early Modern Venice* (New York: Routledge, 2016).

<sup>124</sup> Much of the language in Isabella’s letter may be found in Tasso’s *Lettera sul matrimonio*, discussed in chapter two of this study. For example, Andreini writes: “Niuna conversatione, o congiunzione è più necessaria, nè più soave di quella di marito, e moglie qual amico all’amico, qual fratello al fratello, o qual figlio al Padre è tanto caro quant’è ’l marito alla moglie, e la moglie al marito, dal che mossi i nostri primi Padri contrassero con tanto lor piacere il matrimonio, senza cui hora noi non godieramo di questa dolce vita [...] Nel matrimonio le ricchezze, i corpi, e le anime sono comuni, la presenza della

authorship in order to offer a counter-example to the raging lover's complaints against "donne crudeli." Further resonances of Tasso's defenses of women appear in Andreini's letter "Del nascimento della Donna," in which she cites the *Discorso della virtù femminile e donnesca* and similarly lists Corinna, Sappho, Aspasia, and Diotima as the classical pillars of female virtue.<sup>125</sup> Tasso's philosophical reflections on women are constructed as integral parts in Andreini's campaign to protect the female sex and its reputation.

The letter specifically on Tasso represents a rare case of epistolary exchange in the collection—albeit likely fictional—between the author of this composition and the reader who prompted her to reply: "La vostra lettera affettuosa, e lamentevole mostra veramente quanto eravate amico, [e] ammiratore delle virtù singolari del Signor Torquato Tasso, honor di questo secolo, e gloria del suo nome." Thus, a circuit is born, even when specific names remain unknown. The subject of Tasso's death becomes a laboratory for reflection upon the intersections between the *vita attiva* and the *vita contemplativa*, since to cope with the physical loss of Tasso is to "haver in mente, che non pur gli huomini, le Cittadi, [e] i Regni si ridurranno in polvere" and to recognize the ostensibly inescapable fate that "questo gran Mondo, che par, che non possa cadere, caderà anch'egli, riducendosi ogni sua delitia in cenere." With the death of a great author, Isabella's readers are reminded of the fall of great empires. The memory of Tasso acts as an essential instrument in redirecting the focus away from lamenting individuals in order to consider the broader history of the world: its triumphs, failures, and citizens. This message is especially revealing in a collection in which the dominant voice is that of an isolated individual—like the *Capitano* character—who rejects community and bemoans the lack of interaction.<sup>126</sup> In some ways, the *Capitano*'s claim to miserable existence echoes, in part, the anxieties of Tasso's *peregrino errante* and the speaker of many of his *Lettere*. Andreini's playful parsing of Tasso's authorial figures manifests in her *Lettere* through both implicit and explicit references, suggesting that readers ought to take more seriously the distinction between the discursive representations that poets create of themselves and the authorial-historical name for which they are best remembered.

Employing Tasso as the figure through whom she can broaden her reach, Isabella celebrates the male poet for his role in bestowing double life onto others in his writing:

[Tasso] ha fatto maravigliosamente rinverdir le già secche palme latine, e greche, un'huomo il quale con la felicità del suo stile *tanti hà tratti dall'oblio [e] hà data loro l'immortalità*, sia morto non men di quello che si faccia uno venuto in questa vita *solamente per far numero à i vivi* (emphasis mine)

Recalling, though perhaps with less irony, the lines from Ariosto's *Furioso* "gli uomini degni da' poeti/son tolti da l'oblio, più che morte empio" (35.22), Andreini constructs Tasso's legacy around his ability to revive not only the "secche palme" of classical epic, but also names from history that might otherwise be lost to oblivion. As a gesture of immortal reciprocity to Tasso, Andreini seeks to give

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moglie leva ogni dispiacere al marito, quella di marito alla moglie, e così vicendevolmente [...] È cosa chiara che niuna amicitia è maggior di quella, che è tra marito, e moglie, poichè son una carne, un corpo e un'anima." Andreini further cites Tasso's argument that children play a fundamental role in carrying on the legacies of their parents: "mentre son piccioli [i bambini] servono per un dolce trattenimento, e sollevamento di pensieri, quando sono grandi li sono tutte le fortune d'aiuto, e di conforto, e quello, che più importa dano l'immortalità al Padre."

<sup>125</sup> Andreini takes Tasso's defense of female virtue one step further by claiming that these female figures were, indeed, superior to their male counterparts. Tasso will not go this far in his *Discorso*, but the "protofeminist" publications by Moderata Fonte and Lucrezia Marinella certainly will.

<sup>126</sup> Isabella's playful engagement with the figure of the *Capitano* may be read alongside her husband Francesco Andreini's performances and later publications as "il Capitano Spavento." Cf. Francesco Andreini, *Le Bravure del Capitano Spavento* (Venice: Somasco, 1615).

peace to her mourning interlocutor, and keep alive the civic project among poets to protect legacies through literature, a practice with historical roots as far back as Cicero's and Petrarch's epistolary experiments:

Voglio terminar questa lettera sperando, che voi ancora terminerete il dolore, ricordandovi, che morto non si può chiamar il Signor Torquato, essendoche morto non si può dir colui, che alle sue ceneri sopravive. Morte non è altro, che un perpetuo oblio, dunque il Signor Tasso non morirà mai, poiche l'oblio non gli havrà mai forza sopra.

The letter's final remarks reflect upon Tasso's "esempio di vita" and the specific lessons he imparts to poets, placing emphasis on the notion that "chi vorrà lungamente vivere bisognerà, che lungamente muoia, nella nobil lettura de' suoi dottissimi scritti." As Isabella's collection makes evident, this process requires that readers do more than simply re-open the pages of Tasso's works, but rather weave the poet's living memory into their own literary creations. Just as Isabella advocates for the "nobil lettura" of Tasso's "most learned writings," so too does she imply that his immortal presence in *her* works will likewise keep them from falling victim to "un perpetuo oblio."

Isabella's lifelong ambition to secure and circulate her fame—confidently articulated in her *canzonetta morale* to Chiabrera as "di tentar fama io non sarò mai stanca"—adopts here a concern for community.<sup>127</sup> As the embodied icon of *Aeterna Fama* herself, materially manifested in the authorial portraits included in her *Lettere*, *Mirtilla*, and *Rime* (Figure 6) and the bronze medal cast in commemoration of her death in 1604 (Figure 7), Andreini takes on the same responsibility as Tasso



Fig. 6. Raphael Sadeler, engraved portrait of Isabella Andreini, 1603.

<sup>127</sup> Cf. Kerr, *The Rise of the Diva*.



Fig. 7. Guillaume Dupré, copper alloy cast of Isabella Andreini, 1604.  
Front (left) and back (right). Copyright The Frick Collection.

had to preserve the reputation of other poets, fully aware of the potentially compromising associations, as noted by Eric Nicholson and Jane Tylus, between her quest for a positive reputation and Virgil's emblematic image of the shrieking, many-tongued monster 'Fama' from the *Aeneid*, Book IV—a figure revisited and revised in Leon Battista Alberti's configurations of the "public spheres" in Renaissance Florence.<sup>128</sup> Those who followed in similar footsteps upon Andreini's death included her son, the playwright Giambattista Andreini (1576–1654), his wife and star singer Virginia Ramponi-Andreini (1583–1630), as well as Marino and many others.<sup>129</sup> What Nicholson has persuasively suggested regarding the different media that commemorated actresses like Isabella, "whose fleeting, ephemeral apparitions on stage needed description and memorial 'reconstructions,'" can aptly be anticipated in Andreini's service to Tasso and her textual contributions as "currencies" of their shared fame.<sup>130</sup>

It is worth repeating that, for Andreini, a poet's name depends both on what she writes and what others write about her. This particular form of power in numbers clarifies why Tasso's sonnet in praise of Isabella, *Quando v'ordiva il pretioso velo*, appears among the prefatory material to her *Lettere*. Since both Andreini and Tasso were active in seeking public affirmation among elites and academics—for each conducted somewhat untraditional and thus precarious professions (Isabella as a mobile performer and Tasso as an errant poet)—both appear eager and willing to act in the service of the other, possibly out of mutual recognition of the civic responsibilities that poets share. If "morto non

<sup>128</sup> Jane Tylus, "Women's Errant Speech in Renaissance Theater," in *Italian Women and the City: Essays*, eds. Janet L. Smarr and Daria Valentini (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2003), 77–97; Nicholson, "Waxing Poetic," 383–84. On the long history of women's association with the "monstrous" spread of reputations, see Rosalind Kerr, "The Fame Monster: Diva Worship from Isabella Andreini to Lady Gaga," *Italian Studies* 70, no. 3 (2015): 402–15. It is worth also recalling the paradoxes, studied by Ann Rosalind Jones, concerning how the personification of Fame as a woman conflicts with some early modern gender ideologies that determined that "fame was not for women," in "Surprising Fame: Renaissance Gender Ideologies and Women's Lyric," in *Feminism and Renaissance Studies*, ed. Lorna Hutson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 317–36.

<sup>129</sup> Cf. Andreini, ed., *Pianto d'Apollo*.

<sup>130</sup> Nicholson, "Waxing Poetic," 384. On the "currency of fame" in iconography, see Stephen K. Scher, ed., *The Currency of Fame: Portrait Medals of the Renaissance* (New York: Abrams, 1994). On other questions of early modern presentation and representation in print and visual images, see Susan Gaylard, *Hollow Men: Writing, Objects, and Public Image in Renaissance Italy* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013).

si può chiamar il Signor Torquato,” Andreini’s epistolary monument to him explains the very purpose of his poetic fame: “Egli col suo sapere ha dato ad altrui tal esempio di vita, che chi vorrà lungamente vivere bisognerà che lungamente muoia nella nobil *lettura* de’ suoi dottissimi *scritti*” (emphasis mine). Thus, reading and writings—“lettura” and “scritti”—shape the continuities among poets so that they may overcome the mortal limitations of death and potentially expiring fame, threats which equally haunt poets and actors alike.

As for Tasso’s idea of a reading audience, his role as a sociable networker created vast communities in which he imagined readers as thoroughly engaged with his writing. As it applies specifically to his epistolary readership, Tasso’s treatise *Il segretario* (1587), a text that Isabella likely read, theorizes how the civil man (“l’uomo civile”) should speak with readers in epistolary communication.<sup>131</sup> The treatise prescribes a model of tacit persuasion: the fewest number of words persuades most effectively, and succeeds in conveying “fede” to the reader, while its verbose counterpart fails to achieve the same end. The voice of the bombastic lover in Isabella’s *Lettere* proves Tasso’s point: his exaggerating windpipes fail to convince readers. In his treatise, Tasso defines this as a problem of the theater, explaining that: “così al gentilhuomo di corte, come à l’uomo civile non conviene quella eloquenza piena d’ambitione, o di fasto, che suol muover gran maraviglia ne’ Teatri, ò ne la Scena.” Far from expressing theater criticism *per se*, Tasso’s point seems less about the “marvels” that appear in theatrical performances and more about how individuals (“uomini civili”) should speak to one another concisely.<sup>132</sup> Among the fictional models Tasso may have had in mind while formulating this point was the *commedia dell’arte* *maschera* of the *Dottore*, whose often absurd long-windedness was the guarantee of his lack of credible authority.

In Isabella’s letters, the subtle moments of philosophical insight into the civic role among poets, in which rhetoric emphasizes its effects through conciseness, correspond to Tasso’s ideas concerning reader-engaged communication. Although it is possible that Isabella playfully manipulated the voice of the lover/actor in order to express a desire for new forms of theatrical improvisation, she appears especially attuned to the experience of her readers. To recall once more her dedicatory letter, Isabella’s self-fashioning as a “cittadina” of the discursive world mirrors the self-portrait found in Tasso’s *Lettere familiari*: “In Napoli non mi fermerò lungamente, s’io non trovo o giustizia o amicizia: nè potendo esser gentiluomo napoletano, cercherò di esser cittadino del mondo.”<sup>133</sup> By casting her authorial figure in the light of Tasso’s political and poetic shadows, Isabella self-enlists in a genealogy of predominantly male writers—from Dante to Tasso—who had attributed their penchant for authorship to the same Aristotelian “desiderio di saper,” to which Isabella attributes her motivation to write.

Isabella’s rhetorical self-representations, together with her reader-sensitive way of writing, raise the question of the fragility of discursive backwardness. Not only does Isabella’s collection expand the epistolary genre as it echoes throughout Tasso’s poetic and philosophical voice, but the very choice of *Lettere* for its 1607 title reveals the potential for non-conforming nuances to re-shape literary history. If we look to the possible portrait of Isabella painted by Veronese (Figure 8), the model of letter writing that evokes Tasso’s authorship and is inclusive toward the reader may be seen to take

<sup>131</sup> Tasso, *Il Segretario* (Ferrara: Vittorio Baldini, 1587). Tasso’s dialogue *Il Gianluca* makes a case for “new comedy” to serve as the “maestra de la vita civile.”

<sup>132</sup> A similar case for brevity in language use, especially as it relates to leaving particular words out from diplomatic discourse, appears in Tasso’s dialogue *Il Messaggero*. On this topic and its relationship to the role of the ambassador in Tasso’s poetry and prose, see Timothy Hampton, *Fictions of Embassy: Literature and Diplomacy in Early Modern Europe* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009), 51–62, 73–96; and Diego Pirillo, *The Refugee Diplomat: Venice, England and the Reformation* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2018), 98–117.

<sup>133</sup> Tasso, *Lettere*, 5:87, n. 1376.



Fig. 8. Paolo Veronese, *Portrait of a Woman with a Dog*, c.1585.

the form of an open book—an unsealed composition symbolic of its potential for engagement with an active readership.<sup>134</sup> This potential evolves as socially determined when it stages a community as the prime player in shaping individual poetic legacies. Just as Tasso's principles regarding the “peregrino” and the “meraviglioso” informed the demonstration of versatility in Isabella's lyric poetry, his reflections upon the acts that unite poets as communities renew themselves in her *Lettere*.

By way of conclusion, Isabella's sonnet on Tasso's death from her 1601 *Rime* (“In morte del Sig. Torquato Tasso”) similarly evokes the sense that an entire community is affected when one of its members is no longer present. The moment of Tasso's death occurs three times in this sonnet: once, through his historical passing; twice, through Isabella's lyric reconstruction of it; and third, through the heavy sighs of the “miseri” left behind to mourn him:

Hor qual grave per l'aria odo lamento?  
 Ond'è, che rugiadoso ognun il ciglio  
 danna di Morte il dispietato artiglio,  
 c'have d'Apollo il maggior lume spento?  
 La nostra gloria, il gran TORQUATO io sento  
 gridar miseri è morto, è morto il figlio

<sup>134</sup> Maria Ines Aliverti carefully studies this painting and its context, in “An Icon for a New Woman: A Previously Unidentified Portrait of Isabella Andreini by Paolo Veronese,” *Early Theatre* 11, no. 2 (2008): 159–80, 160. As Aliverti suggests, it is possible to compare this portrait with Andrea del Sarto's *Dama col Petrarchino* (1528, Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence), and Agnolo Bronzino's portrait of the poet Laura Battiferri (1560, Palazzo Vecchio, Florence).

de l'alte Muse, onde l'amaro essiglio  
 ogni nostro piacer volge in tormento.  
 Chi la mente v'accieca egri mortali.  
 Morir può quei, che col suo divo ingegno  
 rese à l'Eternità mill'altri eguali?  
 Saggio il TASSO aspirando al santo Regno  
 spiegò celeste Cigno altero l'ali  
 lasciando il Mondo di sua luce indegno.<sup>135</sup>

Readers and admirers of Tasso join in his “amaro essiglio” from the world. Even as the laments of the “egri mortali” would attest to the poet’s passing, the question of poetic (im)mortality that *Hor qual grave per l'aria odo lamento* raises in lines 10 and 11 recognizes, once more, how Tasso’s “divo ingegno” acts in the service of others. If the “godlike skill” of this son of the Muses has given life to “a thousand like him,” then among the many roles that Isabella imagines Tasso playing is that of a teacher. The *querelle des femmes* encouraged women like Andreini to enter the public arena in a variety of innovative ways, and to seek support from similarly marginalized figures. Tasso’s “public intimacy” was thus vital for Andreini’s self-fashioning. Perpetuating his legacy, fame, and pseudo-celebrity status as “d’Apollo il maggior lume” in her letters, lyric poetry, and dramas not only reflected Andreini’s personal poetic mission (“di tentar fama io mai non sarò stanca”),<sup>136</sup> but painted the figure of Tasso as visibly and thoroughly social. For Andreini and Tasso, no poet can exist without a reader, just as no legacy may be conferred without a community. Inscribing Tasso in her lyric and epistolary compositions as a model, peer, and friend, Isabella creates a group portrait of early modern sociability wherein poets share and harbor a communal sense of belonging, one that depends as much on generous acts of reading as it does on those of writing.<sup>137</sup>

#### CODA:

#### TASSO’S GIFT AND THE MIRROR OF SOCIABILITY

The literary and historical interactions between Tasso and Isabella Andreini, through which they reciprocally preserve one another’s careers, extend a long genealogy of early modern male-female camaraderie. Following in the footsteps of such figures as Vittoria Colonna and Michelangelo, Veronica Gambara and Pietro Bembo, Tullia d’Aragona and Bernardo Tasso, and others,<sup>138</sup> the Tasso-

<sup>135</sup> For other examples of poetry written about Tasso’s death, see Chiodo, *L’onorato sasso*.

<sup>136</sup> This lyric appears in Isabella’s *canzonetta morale*, *Vago di posseder*, addressed to Chiabrera and included in the 1601 *Rime*.

<sup>137</sup> On the question of early modern sociability more generally, both within and beyond Italy, see Michelle O’Callaghan, *The English Wits: Literature and Sociability in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Nicholas A. Eckstein and Nicholas Terpstra, eds., *Sociability and its Discontents: Civil Society, Social Capital, and their Alternatives in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2009); Hannah Chapelle Wojciehowski, *Group Identity in the Renaissance World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Tim Reinke-Williams, *Women, Work and Sociability in Early Modern London* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); Paul Trolander, *Literary Sociability in Early Modern England: The Epistolary Record* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2014); Amyrose McCue Gill and Sarah Rolfe Prodan, eds., *Friendship and Sociability in Premodern Europe: Contexts, Concepts, and Expressions* (Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2014).

<sup>138</sup> On Colonna and Michelangelo, see Abigail Brundin, “Introduction,” in Vittoria Colonna, *Sonnets for Michelangelo: A Bilingual Edition*, ed. and trans. Abigail Brundin (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005); Id., *Vittoria Colonna and the Spiritual Poetics of the Italian Reformation* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2008); Maria Forcellino, *Michelangelo, Vittoria Colonna e gli “spirituali”: religiosità e vita artistica a Roma negli anni Quaranta* (Rome: Viella, 2009); Andrea Donati, *Vittoria Colonna e l’eredità degli spirituali* (Rome: EtGraphiae, 2019). On Gambara and Bembo, see Molly M. Martin and Paola Ugolini, “Introduction,” in *The Complete Poems of Veronica Gambara*, ed. and trans. Molly M. Martin and Paola Ugolini (Toronto: Iter, 2014); Veronica

Andreini pair recognize their mutually beneficial professional relationship. If one were to look further into the broader cast of Tasso's contemporary female interlocutors, with whom he shared a similar relationship to the one he garnered with Isabella, the examples of Maddalena Campiglia and Margherita Sarrocchi might first come to mind. Campiglia sought out Tasso as a literary mentor during the composition of her pastoral play *Flori*, and, after instigating an exchange of lyric verse and letters, Margherita Sarrocchi defended Tasso's legacy and his epic poetry among literary-scientific communities between Rome and Naples. Like Andreini, these women may be considered key players in the earliest reception of Tasso among European poetic-artistic communities. Contrary to the Romantic imagination, which sought to label and represent Tasso as tragically divided from groups of friends and fellow poets, the manifold exchanges in which he dialogued with others invalidate that very image.

By emphasizing the collaborative networks among which poets circulated, Tasso's example brings questions of group identity to the center of the study of literary history. As these pages have sought to demonstrate, the literary-intellectual interactions between Tasso and women reflect multi-authored transmission more than they indicate linear processes of reception. Tasso learned from women as much as women learned from Tasso. Such reciprocity challenges the traditional notions of literary history that assert the dominant influence of one canonical author. Moreover, this work has further addressed how early modern women's integration in poetic production—as makers and muses—complements the history of women's one-sided efforts to “transcend their sex.” While the figure of “Tasso, the errant madman” has prevailed in shaping the study of, and much of the scholarship on, the poet, his sociable counterpart is only just now coming into focus. What this study has begun to verify is early modern women's importance for the early reception of Tasso and his works, since their contributions impacted the *questione della lingua*, the Baroque affinity for the “marvelous,” generic debates about epic and its variations, and later representations of women readers, from Spenser and Cervantes, to Madeleine de Scudéry, Charlotte Lennox, and George Eliot. The undercurrent that gives definition to many of the aims of *Tasso among the Muses* is the hope that future studies of the early modern world might trace further examples of men and women acting together as cultural protagonists—exemplars of expanding ideas of authorship and audience, in which readers still today are cast as active players.

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Andreani, ““I comandamento [...] che già mi fece in Bollogna”: una lettera inedita di Veronica Gambara a Pietro Bembo,” *Filologia e critica* 43 (2018): 226–46. On d'Aragona and Bernardo Tasso, see the “Introduction” to Tullia d'Aragona, *The Poems and Letters of Tullia d'Aragona and Others*, ed. and trans. Julia L. Hairston (Toronto: Iter, 2014).

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