

Editor's Introduction

Pastoral Drama and Women's Authorial Voice

The Other Voice

Isabella Andreini (1562–1604) was the most famous actress of the Italian Renaissance. Princes and kings invited her to their courts and showered her with praises and gifts; poets celebrated her art and beauty; academicians admitted her to their male-only gatherings; and people of every social class declared over and over that they were moved, indeed stunned, by her acting gifts. Together with her husband, Francesco, she directed a Commedia dell'Arte company, the Gelosi, and ceaselessly traveled through Italy and France for performances. Andreini was also a poet, a letter writer, a singer, a composer of pastoral eclogues, and a playwright. As a poet, she penned more than four hundred poems of varying length and meter, such as sonnets, canzoni, scherzi, madrigals, and the new canzonette. She was as good an extemporizer as she was with polished humanistic pieces, was popular both in Italy and abroad, and was the recipient of celebratory verses by the most revered poets of the time, including Torquato Tasso, Giambattista Marino, and Gabriello Chiabrera. As an epistolarian, she composed dozens of elegant letters, many of them reflections on life and not necessarily meant for publication, but which nevertheless became a model for love letters in France. She was also a singer, performed her own poems set to music, and was praised and recognized for her gifts by two musical academies, the Filarmonica of Verona and the Olimpica of Vicenza. She may even have written a chivalric epic, according to a fellow poet.¹ And she composed nine pastoral eclogues that, rather than being simple verse exercises *à la mode*, may have been staged between longer plays.

But it is as a dramatist that she is most known today. Surely it is a feat of historical significance that she published the first play ever written by a woman in Italian, *La Mirtilla*, in 1588—the same year in which Maddalena Campiglia published her *Flori*. In the words of a French contemporary, Pierre Mathieu, Andreini was “an Italian woman learned in poetry, whose equal has not been found for elegance, readiness and ease in all sorts of style suited to the stage. If she had lived in Greece when comedy was in vogue statues would have been raised

1. The mention that Andreini was engaged in writing an epic romance, now lost, comes from her fellow poet, Muzio Manfredi. See his *Cento lettere scritte da Mutio Manfredi nuovamente date in luce* (Pavia: Andrea Viano, 1594), 100.

to her and she would have been crowned with flowers in the theater.²² Although *Mirtilla* went through many editions and was swiftly translated into French, and although the comic bent with which the author infused it proved fruitful to other women writers who chose to approach theater, the play still came to be dismissed as imitative, overly plotted, and escapist, another example on a minor note of a repetitive pastoral modeled on the two main sources for the genre: Torquato Tasso's *Aminta* (1573) and Giovan Battista Guarini's *Il pastor fido* (published in 1590, but in circulation earlier).³ Yet then is not now. The gendered script of *Mirtilla* is finding anew its rightful place among the ever-growing field of "other voices" in the European early modern period, to which this edition of her work will testify.

Biography

Isabella Andreini, née Isabella Canali, belongs to the growing list of early modern intellectual women born in Padua, a well-connected and lively Renaissance town, where Venice established its university. Hailing from that city, for instance, are a poet, Gaspara Stampa (1523–1554); a novelist, Giulia Bigolina (ca. 1518–ca. 1569); a playwright, Valeria Miani (ca. 1563–post 1620); a chemist, Camilla Erculiani (1540–ca. 1590); and a painter, Chiara Varotari (1584–ca. 1663).⁴ Andreini's father, Paolo, was probably of Venetian origin and may have been quite poor. At

2. I cite from Domnica Radulescu, "Isabella's Trick or What a Sixteenth-Century Comedienne Can Teach Us Today," in *The Theater of Teaching and the Lessons of Theater*, ed. Domnica Radulescu and Maria Stadter Fox (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2005), 161–89, at 167.

3. For an example among many of a negative opinion of *Mirtilla*, see Piermario Vescovo, "Isabella Andreini," in *Le stanze ritrovate: Antologia di scrittrici venete dal Quattrocento al Novecento*, ed. Antonia Arslan, Adriana Chemello, and Gilberto Pizzamiglio (Venice: Eidos, 1991), 83–94, at 86–87. For a critique of Vescovo's take, see my review essay, "La scrittura femminile. Considerazioni in margine alla lettura di *Le stanze ritrovate: Antologia di scrittrici venete dal Quattrocento al Novecento*," *Annali d'Italianistica* 9 (1991): 322–29.

4. Until a couple of decades ago only the name of Gaspara Stampa was familiar to readers; the others had to be recovered or simply discovered, as in the case of Bigolina. Now Bigolina's manuscript, the first prose romance in Italian written by a woman, has appeared in a critical edition in Italian as *Urania*, ed. Valeria Finucci (Rome: Bulzoni, 2002), and in English translation as *Urania: A Romance*, ed. and trans. Valeria Finucci (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005). As for Miani, her tragedy, the first in the genre for women writers, has been published in a bilingual edition as *Celinda, a Tragedy*, ed. Valeria Finucci and trans. Julia Kisacky (Toronto: Iter Inc. and Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2010). Now Miani's pastoral, *Amorosa speranza. Favola pastorale della molto mag[nifi]ca signora Valeria Miani* (Venice: Francesco Bolzetta, 1604) is being translated into English as *Amorosa speranza, a Pastoral Drama*, by Alexandra Collier. Herculiana has been a serious subject of study by Meredith Ray in *Daughters of Alchemy: Women and Scientific Culture in Early Modern Italy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015), and paintings by Chiara Varotari have been exhibited in a number of venues in Padua as well as at the National Museum of Women in the Arts in Washington, DC, in 2007. For a lucid, nuanced, and comprehensive examination of the work of early

thirteen Isabella encountered Francesco Andreini, an actor already well known for playing on stage the part of the lover, the *innamorato*. The year after, in 1576, she had her first child, Giovan Battista, who later became a famous actor in the role of the male love interest, Lelio, as well as one of the best Italian playwrights of the seventeenth century.⁵ Isabella may have been married already by now to Francesco, or have married him some time after her son's birth.⁶ This early part of her life, unlike her period of adulthood and fame, is still clouded in secrecy, as documents relative to herself and her husband seem to have been destroyed on purpose, a choice perhaps made in order to project the image for which Andreini became widely known and respected in Italy and abroad: that of the chaste wife and of the riveting performer. We know that Francesco was born in Pistoia, Tuscany, around or before 1548, and that his family surname was de Cerrachi, although he abandoned it after he became an actor. His theatrical persona—he moved from playing the love interest to the signature role of Capitan Spaventa da Vall'Inferno—was deeply influenced by an event that took place earlier in his life when he served as a soldier: captured by the Turks, he was enslaved in Barbary for eight years.⁷ Francesco and Isabella probably joined the Compagnia dei Gelosi in the winter of 1578 in Florence; by the time of the pre-Lenten Carnival of Venice in 1579, Francesco could list a full roster of committed actors, with Isabella recorded

modern Italian women writers, see Virginia Cox, *Women's Writing in Italy, 1400–1650* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008).

5. Giovan Battista [Giambattista] Andreini (1576–1654) became the capocomico (director) and leading actor of the Compagnia dei Gelosi as well as of the Compagnia dei Fedeli, in which his first wife as well as the second were also primadonnas. He published a good number of comedies and pastorals, such as *La Florinda* (1603), *Lo Schiavetto* (1612), *La Veneziana* (1619), *Amore nello specchio* (1622), *La Sultana* (1622), *La Ferinda* (1622), *La Centaura* (1622), *Li duo Lelii* (1622), *Le due commedie in commedia* (1623), *I due baci* (1634), and *Ismeria* (1639), as well as sacred representations, such as *Adamo* (1613, considered a source for John Milton's *Paradise Lost*), and *La Maddalena* (1617).

6. The plausible date of 1575 (and not 1576 or 1578) has been posited most convincingly by Claudia Burattelli in *Comici dell'Arte: Corrispondenze*, ed. Claudia Burattelli, Domenica Landolfi, and Anna Zinanni (Florence: Le Lettere, 1993), 1:97 (note), given that the couple's first son, Giovan Battista, was born on February 9, 1576, as written in his baptism certificate in the *Registro dei battezzati maschi dal 1571 al 1577 dalla lettera A alla lettera G* (Florence: Archivio dell'Opera del Duomo), c. 172v. See also Maurizio Rebaudengo, *Giovan Battista Andreini tra poetica e drammaturgia* (Turin: Rosenberg and Sellier, 1994), 10. For an extended biography of Isabella Andreini, see Francesca Romana De' Angelis, *La divina Isabella* (Florence: Sansoni, 1991).

7. Andreini's son, Giovan Battista, testifies to his father's imprisonment: "Preso dal turco, otto anni colà dimorò." See his *La Ferza. Ragionamento secondo contro l'accusa data alla commedia* (Paris: Nicolao Callemont, 1625), now in *La Commedia dell'Arte e la società barocca. Volume 2: La professione del teatro*, ed. Ferruccio Marotti and Giovanna Romei (Rome: Bulzoni, 1991), 489–534, at 509. See also Stefano Mazzoni, "Genealogia e vicende della famiglia Andreini," in *Origini della commedia improvvisa o dell'arte: XIX Convegno Internazionale, Roma 1995*, ed. Maria Luisa Chiabò and Federico Doglio (Rome: Edizioni Torre d'Orfeo, 1996), 107–52, esp. 109–10.

as playing the part of the “innamorata” and he that of the braggart captain.⁸ They soon made of “I Gelosi” one of the most sought after acting groups of the late Renaissance, both in Italy and abroad.⁹ During the many years of their marriage, she gave birth to seven other children: four daughters (all destined to the convent in order to guarantee them an “honest” life, given the itinerant nature of actors performing in Compagnie dell’Arte) and three sons.¹⁰

It has been suggested that the reason Andreini was educated, was able to sing and play an instrument, and could write poetry from an early age should be self-evident: her humble family was apprenticing her for a career that in the end (and fortunately for her) she was able not to embrace, that of the high-class courtesan. This profession marked—in reality or more often just in fantasy—most, if not all, the first actresses on the early modern stage because it was understood that while actors imitated reality in their performances, actresses instead “incarnated” it: if the parts they played had sensual connotations, it followed that they must have been sexually available.¹¹ Be that as it may, one could also hypothesize

8. The list of actors of 1579 appears in “Ragionamento XIV” of Francesco Andreini, *Le Bravure del Capitano Spavento, divise in molti ragionamenti* (Venice: Giacomo Antonio Somasco, 1607), now in vol. 2 of Marotti and Romei, *La Commedia dell’Arte e la società barocca*. For the timing of the couple’s joining the Gelosi, see also Kenneth Richards and Laura Richards, *The Commedia dell’Arte: A Documentary History* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), 63. The choice of the name I Gelosi (Company of the Jealous Ones) comes from the troupe’s motto: “Virtù, fama et honor ne fêr gelosi” (“We are jealous of attaining virtue, fame, and honour”), as noted in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.

9. The Andreini may have also recited outside the company, according to Ireneo Sanesi: for example, with the Compagnia de’ Confidenti in 1589, elsewhere in 1590, and with the Uniti in 1601. See Sanesi, *La commedia*, 2 vols. (Milan: Vallardi, 1935), excerpted in Ferdinando Taviani and Mirella Schino, *Il segreto della Commedia dell’Arte: La memoria delle compagnie italiane del XVI, XVII e XVIII secolo*, 4th ed. (Florence: Usher, 2007), 96.

10. In 1587 the eldest daughter, Lavinia, was placed in the service of Duchess Eleonora de’ Medici in Mantua, and her younger sister was accepted in the service of the Grand Duke and Duchess of Tuscany. On February 1, 1597, Lavinia Andreini is recorded as entering the monastery of the Madri della Cantelma in Mantua. She took the vows as Sister Fulvia in June 1599. In 1606, a sister is also listed as being among the Madri della Cantelma. See Anne MacNeil, “Chronology,” in *Music and Women of the Commedia dell’Arte in the Late Sixteenth Century* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 222, 241, 247, and 259. All daughters were eventually placed in Mantuan convents, and Duke Vincenzo Gonzaga paid for their dowry, since the Compagnia de’ Gelosi and later that of de’ Fedeli were under his sponsorship. One son, Domenico, became an army captain in the Gonzaga retinue; another, Paolo, was a monk in the Vallumbrosian order in Pavia. For more information on the Andreini children, see Burattelli, Landolfi, and Zinanni, eds., *Comici dell’Arte: Corrispondenze*, 1:85, 96, 114, and 167.

11. The suggestion that Andreini could have been primed at a young age for a career as a courtesan has been made often, most seriously by Ferdinando Taviani in “La fleur et le guerrier: Les actrices de la Commedia dell’Arte,” *Bouffonneries* 15/16 (1986): 61–93, at 75–76 and 89–90. For a contrary view, see Virginia Scott, “La vertu et la volupté: Models for the Actress in Early Modern Italy and France,” *Theatre Research International* 23 (1998): 152–58.

that what determined Isabella's success was a vivid intelligence and a lively nature, coupled with a resolve on the part of her husband and fellow actor both to protect her reputation by marrying her and to enable her self-expression and boost her accomplishments as member of a professional acting group. Although historically the first actresses were very poor, often employed as mimes or mountebanks, we know that when they were able to be taken in by a Compagnia—as in Isabella's case—they could be the darlings of the day and even acquire the honorific title of “Signoras,” in the assessment of the Jesuit Gian Domenico Ottonelli.¹² For decades the Andreinis cooperated on stage and “composed and recited comedies, tragicomedies, tragedies, pastorals, intermezzi, and other staged inventions.”¹³ In writing about herself, the actress/playwright was demure, as when she acknowledged in a letter, for example, that she “had just learned how to write (so to speak) when she started to compose my *Mirtilla*.”¹⁴ She also worked ceaselessly at shedding any appearance of impropriety when dancing, playing an instrument, and reciting. Her gestures were controlled; her shows of love or affection when playing the love interest on stage were justified because either she was too outraged to understand what she was saying, or a wedding ceremony was scripted for her at the end of the play. Time and again she affirmed in writing the importance of marriage and of an honest life for women, as in her *Lettere*.¹⁵ Her choice to express herself only in the high Tuscan language and not in dialectal form made her appear cultivated, and

12. “[L]e comiche, escluse dal banco e dalla scena, sono per ordinario confinate alla fatica dell’ago e della conocchia e se la passano in travagliosa vita, guadagnando il vitto co’ quotidiani sudori e con gli stenti. Ma ricevute nelle compagnie de’ comici hanno la parte migliore e più sicura; son accarezzate et onorate; e si posson pregare del grazioso titolo di Signora.” In Giovanni Domenico Ottonelli, *Della Christiana Moderazione del Theatro*, now in Ferdinando Taviani, *La commedia dell’arte e la società barocca, Volume 1: La fascinazione del teatro* (Rome: Bulzoni, 1969), 356. On marriage strategies in the Renaissance, see Daniela Hacke, *Women, Sex and Marriage in Early Modern Venice* (Aldershot, UK, and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004).

13. As Francesco recalls in his memoir, the Gelosi showed future companies the true way of “compone-re e di recitar Comedie, Tragicomédie, Tragedie, Pastorali, intermedii apparenti, ed altre invenzioni rappresentative.” See his *Le Bravure del Capitano Spavento* in Marotti and Romei, eds., *La commedia dell’Arte e la società barocca*, 218.

14. The letter is addressed to Duke Carlo Emanuele of Savoy and was published after her death by her husband in *Lettere d’Isabella Andreini Padovana, Comica Gelosa et Academica Intenta Nominata l’Accesa* (Venice: Marc’ Antonio Zaltieri, 1607).

15. Andreini often returned to the issue of the importance of matrimony, even when she considered it not advantageous to women, as in her often-reprinted letter “On the Birth of a Woman,” in *Lettere d’Isabella Andreini*. For an extended reading of the importance of the issue of matrimonial contentment in Andreini’s life in the context of women’s writing in the period, see Alexandra Coller, “Isabella Andreini’s *La Mirtilla* (1588): Pastoral Drama and Conjugal Love in Counter-Reformation Italy,” *Italian Quarterly* 46 (2009): 17–29.

her clothes on stage were never scant or unrefined because, as she wrote, “a lovely figure in disheveled dress / will lose its grace.”¹⁶

Throughout Andreini's life, poets celebrated her output in verse, her reciting style, her facility in improvising, her verbal skills, her exemplary ways, and (as it was also customary) her beauty, as in a well-known sonnet by her contemporary Torquato Tasso:

When fostering Mother Nature fashioned
Your precious veil and mortal spoils,
She sought out beauty and gathered it like a flower,
Taking jewels from the earth and stars from the Heavens.¹⁷

The encyclopedist Tommaso Garzoni called her “a superb spectacle of virtue and beauty.”¹⁸ The literary critic and poet Giovanni Crescimbeni praised her “extreme chastity and most innocent costumes.”¹⁹ She was so well known as “eloquent in her mouth” (“ore facunda,” the inscription on her tomb says) that in 1601 she was invited to become a member of the Accademia degli Intenti of Pavia, an uncommon feat for a woman in that era, taking the name of “Accesa” and the motto “Elevat Ardor [The Flame Rises].”²⁰ Her resolve was to present herself to a distinguished and influential brotherhood of well-known erudites as an intellectual, not as a mere actress. Andreini had numerous contacts with the artistic and literary intelligentsia of the time: Tasso and his fellow writers Gabriello Chiabrera, Giovan

16. In *Selected Poems of Isabella Andreini*, ed. Anne MacNeil, trans. James Wyatt Cook (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2005), 189.

17. “Quando v'ordiva il prezioso 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.” In Torquato Tasso, *Rime*. Reprinted, together with poems of other contemporaries, in Andreini, *Lettere*. See also Ferdinando Taviani, “‘Bella d'Asia': Torquato Tasso, gli attori, e l'immortalità,” *Paragone Letteratura* 36 (1984): 3–76, at 3.

18. Tommaso Garzoni, “De comici,” in *La piazza universale di tutte le professioni del mondo, e nobili et ignobili* (Venice: Giovanni Battista Somasco, 1585).

19. “[U]na somma castità e un costume inocentissimo,” in Giovanni Mario Crescimbeni, *Comentarj ... intorno alla sua historia della volgar poesia*, vol. 4, bk. 3 (Rome: Antonio de' Rossi, 1710), 148.

20. After induction there, Andreini added the appellative of “Accademica Intenta” to her usual one of “Comica Gelosa.” She also had contacts with two other academies, the Olimpici in Vicenza and the Filarmonici in Verona, although she was not officially inducted into either. On the Accademia degli Intenti, see Michele Maylender, *Storia delle accademie d'Italia*, 5 vols. (Bologna: Forni, 1926–30; facsimile reprint, 1976), *ad vocem* “Intenti.” On the participation of women in Italian academies, see Virginia Cox, “Members, Muses, Mascots: Women and Italian Academies,” in *The Italian Academies, 1525–1700: Networks of Culture, Innovation and Dissent*, ed. Jane E. Everson, Denis V. Reidy, and Lisa Sampson (Cambridge: Legenda, 2016), 53–78. On the difficulty for women writers to enter into academies well into the eighteenth century (they were often inducted as honorary members but not as effective members *tout court*), see Elisabetta Graziosi, “Arcadia femminile: presenze e modelli,” *Filologia e critica* 17 (1992): 321–58.

Battista Marino, Angelo Ingegneri, Laura Guidiccioni, and Gherardo Borgogni, the nobleman and art patron Pirro Visconti, the philologist Erycius Puteanus, and the composers Leone Leoni, Ottavio Rinuccini, and Claudio Monteverdi.²¹ Her presence was sought in many courts and cities, and her performances inevitably drew large crowds. In 1583, when trying to form a company of actors for his own enjoyment at the Mantuan court by uniting three different troupes, Duke Vincenzo Gonzaga pushed to have the Andreini duo at his court. His attempt failed because the Gelosi were under an obligation to perform in Venice at the time, but the duke employed the Gelosi on numerous occasions, such as in 1588, 1589, and 1590; he very often recommended them for employment elsewhere; and he released them from obligations in Mantua only when politically or economically advisable. Although the Gelosi performed in Venice, Milan, Turin, Padua, Ferrara, Rome, Bologna, Pavia, and Florence in their many touring engagements, their ideal home was Mantua, and they, as well as their son Giovan Battista, regularly returned to that city.²²

France also beckoned, however, and Andreini was able to recite in front of two French kings: Henri III in 1577, and Henri IV in 1603.²³ When going to Blois in 1577, for a performance specifically requested by Henri III, the Gelosi were stopped at Charité-sur-Loire by Huguenots who “would not let them go except for the king’s ransom,” an indication of how much the Italian troupe was admired in the French court.²⁴ The success of their acts was so remarkable, and so many people rushed to see them, that as Pierre de l’Estoile notes in his journal, the four most famous Parisian preachers could not have much of an audience until the company stayed in town.²⁵ Andreini also performed in Paris in 1601, and

21. For the verses that Andreini wrote to honor Guidiccioni, see *Selected Poems of Isabella Andreini*, ed. MacNeil, 106–15; for the correspondence with Puteanus, see MacNeil, *Music and Women*. For Andreini’s relationship with literati and musicians such as Leoni and Monteverdi, see Kathryn Bosi, “Accolades for an Actress: On Some Literary and Musical Tributes for Isabella Andreini,” *Recercare* 15 (2003): 73–117.

22. See Emilio Faccioli, “Cronache e personaggi della vita teatrale,” in Faccioli, ed., *Mantova: Le Lettere*, 3 vols. (Mantua: Istituto d’Arco per la Storia di Mantova, 1962), 2:553–611, and the abundant section on chronology covering the years of Isabella Andreini’s performances with the Gelosi, 1579–1604, in MacNeil, *Music and Women*, 202–58.

23. The first, fully documented presence of the Andreini in France is actually in 1578, but some critics agree that the couple may have been there earlier. See, for example, Julie Campbell, *Literary Circles and Gender in Early Modern Europe: A Cross-Cultural Approach* (Aldershot, UK, and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006), 84. Performance of the company with the primadonna Vittoria Piissimi was specifically requested by Henri III, who had seen Piissimi perform for him at the time of his visit to Venice in 1574.

24. See Charles Sterling, “Early Paintings of the Commedia dell’Arte in France,” *Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*, n.s. 2, no. 1 (1943): 11–32, at 15.

25. Pierre de L’Estoile, *Journal des choses memorables advenuës durant tout le règne de Henri III Roy de France et de Pologne* (1621) – *Extraits*, introd. Edme Champion (Paris: A. Colin, 1906), 38.

again in 1603, as noted above, before Henri IV—“with complete contentment” on both his part and that of his queen, Marie de' Medici, who actively promoted her performances.²⁶ Given that French actresses did not appear on stage until 1672, the Gelosi fascinated the Valois and the Navarre courts not only with their stock comedic routines (*lazzi*), horseplay, pranks, and dance shows, but also with the literary references, mythological allusions, and refined Petrarchan vocabulary that the actresses in their company injected into their routines. Andreini's reputation was such, in fact, that she was honored as the exceptional and accomplished performer in the very first French publication that defended the new comedies from their detractors, that of Mademoiselle de Beau-Lieu.²⁷

It was on her return journey to Italy from France that Andreini died following a miscarriage. It was her ninth pregnancy.²⁸ For years on end people kept visiting her tomb in the Church of St. Croix in Lyon.²⁹ There, as the Latin inscription reads, she was celebrated as a good wife, an honest and religious woman, a well-spoken intellectual, and a friend of music and theater.³⁰ She was given a state funeral, and a celebratory medal was coined after her death, showing her image on one side and two trumpets on the other. After she passed away, the Gelosi ceased to exist. Left bereft by the one “who was the reason of my entire happiness,” Francesco ended his acting career. He retired in Mantua, lived peacefully under the protection of the couple's greatest admirer, its duke (who had already granted him the title of citizen of Mantua in 1601), and asked that at his death his

26. Marie de' Medici wrote her sister Eleonora de' Medici in Mantua about her satisfaction at being entertained by the Gelosi in Paris in April 1603. Henri IV, too, wrote a letter asking that the company be treated well during their return trip. See MacNeil, “Chronology,” in *Music and Women*, 256. On the reception of Andreini in France, see Daniela Mauri, “La *Mirtilla* di Isabella Andreini e la sua seconda traduzione francese,” in *Studi di filologia e letteratura francese in onore di Anna Maria Finoli*, ed. Maria Colombo, Marina Fumagalli, and Anna Maria Raugei (Pisa: Edizioni ETS, 1996): 243–60; and Armand Baschet, *Les comédiens italiens à la cour de France* (Paris: E. Plon et Cie), 1882. On Marie de' Medici's contacts with Italian actors of the Commedia dell'Arte, see Siro Ferrone, *Attori, mercanti, corsari: La Commedia dell'Arte in Europa tra Cinque e Seicento* (Turin: Einaudi, 1993), 66–67.

27. Mademoiselle de Beau-Lieu, *La première atteinte contre ceux qui accusent les comédies* (Paris: Jean Richer, 1603). See also Raymond Lebègue, “Les débuts de la Commedia dell'Arte en France,” *Rivista di studi teatrali* 9/10 (1954): 71–77, at 73.

28. For an extended reading of the event, see Roberto Tessari, “O Diva, o ‘Estable à tous chevaux’: L'ultimo viaggio di Isabella Andreini,” in *Viaggi teatrali dall'Italia a Parigi fra Cinque e Seicento*, ed. Roberto Alonge (Genoa: Costa and Nolan, 1989), 128–42, at 129.

29. As her son Giovan Battista recollects, “Et ogni giorno pellegrine genti ... da così famosa città passando ... vanno ad onorar il sepolcro di quella con preghiere e a celebrarla con lodi.” In *La Ferza*, 68. Giambattista also published a work to honor his mother, *Pianto d'Apollo. Rime funebri in morte d'Isabella Andreini* (Milan: Girolamo Bordononi and Pietromartire Locarni, 1606).

30. “Isabella Andreina Patavina Mulier magna virtute praedita. Honestatis ornamentum, maritalique, pudicitiae decus, ore facunda, mente facunda, religiosa, pia, Musis amica, & artis Scenicae caput hic resurrectionem expectat.” See Taviani and Schino, eds., *Il segreto della Commedia dell'Arte*, 126.

ashes be mixed with hers.³¹ He became her hagiographer, writing profusely about her and about the way they had functioned within the Gelosi. He may have even published his own writings by attributing them to his wife, since she was the diva and the more famous of the two.

Works

Andreini's most well-known work today is *La Mirtilla*, a pastoral drama in five acts written a few years before its publication in 1588 and likely tried out many times on stage by the Gelosi before being released in print. It was published in Verona by the printing house of Girolamo Discepolo in an edition of a few copies on February 24, 1588, and was dedicated to Lavinia della Rovere, a distinguished aristocratic patron of the arts.³² The play sold out right away, and so many people had been unable to get a copy or even just to see the book, according to the new printers Sebastiano Dalle Donne and Camillo Franceschini, that they resolved to make more buyers happy ("dar contentezza") with a new edition, which they printed, again in Verona, on April 26.³³ It was dedicated to Lodovica Pellegrina.³⁴ A revised version came out in 1594 with changes likely made as a result of live performances, mostly involving cutting back lengthy dialogues.³⁵

31. "[C]olei ch'era cagione d'ogni mia allegrezza," Andreini, *Lettere*, 136r and 155r-v. For more on Francesco's life and theatrical activities after his wife's death, see Roberto Tessari, "Francesco Andreini e la stagione d'oro," in *Origini della commedia improvvisa o dell'arte: XIX Convegno Internazionale, Roma 1995*, ed. Maria Luisa Chiabò and Federico Doglio (Rome: Edizioni Torre d'Orfeo, 1996), 85–105. For the granting of citizenship, see MacNeil, "Chronology," in *Music and Women*, 252.

32. Lavinia Feltria della Rovere (1558–1632), princess of Urbino and marchioness of Vasto, was the wife of Alfonso Felice d'Avalos, by whom she had four children. Raised at the refined court of Urbino, she loved art and poetry. Her friendship with Torquato Tasso is attested to by a number of poems that he dedicated to her.

33. As they write in the dedication section: "La pastorale della signora Isabella Andreini piacque sì fattamente à tutti quelli che l'hanno havuta per le mani questi giorni adietro, che fù stampata, ch'io mi sono risoluto di adornar d'essa le mie stampe, e appresso dar contentezza à quelli che la desiderano, non avendone potuto, non dico havere, ma appena vedere in quella prima inpressione."

34. Very little is known about Lodovica Pellegrina besides her status of dame. Together with the other dedicatee, Lavinia della Rovere, she demonstrates how increasingly important was the role of secular women in patronage networks, often with gender in mind. On female patronage of the arts, see *Beyond Isabella: Secular Women Patrons of Art in Renaissance Italy*, ed. Sheryl E. Reiss and David. G. Wilkins (Kirkville, MO: Truman State University Press, 2001), and Catherine E. King, *Renaissance Women Patrons: Wives and Widows in Italy, c. 1300–1550* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1998).

35. Changes are mostly stylistic or were meant for a better delivery on stage, especially in Act 1.1. See Mauri, "La *Mirtilla* di Isabella Andreini," 246–47. For an accurate list of changes, see Maria Luisa Doglio, "Introduzione," in Isabella Andreini, *La Mirtilla* (Pisa: Pacini Fazzi, 1995), 24–28.

Mirtilla enjoyed many editions. Beside the two in 1588, there were two in 1590, one in 1594 as mentioned, and then one each in 1598, in 1599, in 1602, in 1605, in 1616, and in 1620.³⁶ The play was also translated twice into French: in a 1599 unpublished prose translation by Roland du Jardin Sieur des Roches, entitled *Amours de Bergers*, now at the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris; and in 1602 by an anonymous translator.³⁷ A modern edition appeared in Italian in 1995, edited by Maria Luisa Doglio; and a first, witty translation into English by Julie Campbell came out in 2002. Both the Doglio and Campbell editions have commendably presented Andreini to modern audiences. Campbell's rendering of *Mirtilla* is rich, modern, and captivating. Missing from it, however, is a full-fledged critical and annotated commentary.³⁸ This present edition in the Other Voice series, which places the original Italian facing an English translation, is warranted by an increased recognition in the last few years of the importance of female-authored drama in early modern letters and by an ongoing positive rethinking of the Commedia dell'Arte genre.

Thirteen years after *Mirtilla* appeared in print, Andreini published *Rime*, a collection of 359 poems dedicated to Cardinal Cinzio Aldobrandini, nephew of Pope Clement VIII and a powerful admirer of poets and of intellectuals. She had worked at it for five years.³⁹ The collection appeared in a new edition in France two years later, in 1603, just as she was invited to perform with the Gelosi at the French court.⁴⁰ The majority of Andreini's verses were sonnets and madrigals, but she also experimented with other forms, such as *scherzi*, *conzonette morali*, *egloghe boscherecce*, *sestine*, *epitalami*, *capitoli*, *centoni*, and *versi funerari*, all in-

36. *Mirtilla. Pastorale d'Isabella Andreini, comica gelosa* (Verona: Girolamo Discepolo, 1588); *Mirtilla. Pastorale* (Verona: Sebastiano Dalle Donne and Camillo Franceschini, 1588); *Mirtilla. Pastorale* (Ferrara: Vittorio Baldini, 1590); *Mirtilla. Pastorale* (Mantua: Francesco Osanna, 1590); *Mirtilla. Pastorale* (Bergamo: Comin Ventura, 1594); *Mirtilla. Pastorale* (Venice: Marc'Antonio Bonibelli, 1598); *Mirtilla. Pastorale* (Verona: Francesco Dalle Donne and Scipione Vargnano, 1599); *Mirtilla. Pastorale* (Venice: Lucio Spineda, 1602); *Mirtilla. Pastorale* (Milan: Girolamo Bordoni and Pietromartire Locarni, 1605); *Mirtilla. Pastorale* (Venice: Ghirardo Imberti, 1616); *Mirtilla. Pastorale* (Venice: Ghirardo Imberti, 1620).

37. *Amours de Bergers* (Paris: B.N., Ms. FR 25483), trans. Roland du Jardin Sieur des Roches; *Myrtille. Bergerie* (Paris: Matthieu Guillemot, 1602). For the French versions, see Mauri, "La *Mirtilla* di Isabella Andreini," 255–60.

38. *La Mirtilla*, ed. Maria Luisa Doglio; and *Mirtilla, a Pastoral*, ed. and trans. Julie Campbell (Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2002).

39. Isabella Andreini, *Rime d'Isabella Andreini Padovana, comica gelosa* (Milan: Girolamo Bordoni and Pietromartire Locarni, 1601). A number of poems in *Rime* are now in English translation in *Selected Poems by Isabella Andreini*, ed. MacNeil. The reference that Andreini had been writing poems for a few years with the aim of publishing them in the *Rime* is in a dialogue by her fellow correspondent, Pietro Borgogni. See MacNeil, "Introduction" to *Selected Poems*, 1–28, at 10.

40. Isabella Andreini, *Rime* (Paris: Claude de Monstr'ceil, 1603).

terestingly written in a voice that is purposely gendered male, thus allowing her to participate as equal to the literary and humanistic skirmishes popular at the time in Italy.⁴¹ Whether she experimented with and even parodied the Petrarchan style or switched to the more self-absorbed vein of Torquato Tasso, whether she paid homage to the *scherzi* of Gabriello Chiabrera or to the neoclassical conventions of Pierre de Ronsard, Andreini was keen to have many of her poems set to music, and sang at least twenty of them. A new edition of *Rime* appeared after her death in 1605, curated, as the publisher states, by Francesco and his children. It is quite different from the first: it has 105 sonnets, 18 madrigals, and a single canzone, and is composed of poetry sent by her and to her by known poets and academicians and French nobles. It cements the notion that Andreini enjoyed a varied and vigorous interaction with, and accolades from, fellow poets, academicians, philosophers, and admirers throughout Italy and France.⁴²

Andreini's *Lettere*, some written in the female and some in the male voice, and most not intended to be actually sent to a reader, were published posthumously by Francesco in 1607. She had started writing them, a collection of more than one hundred missives, in 1601. We do not know how many she wrote, because Francesco added some of his own letters to the compilation before sending them to press and may have also modified a number of those written by his wife, thus making difficult any attribution. The *Lettere* turned out to be extremely popular and enjoyed nineteen editions between 1607 and 1663—a literary feast.⁴³ They were soon translated into French, and their structure and themes became so pop-

41. As MacNeil writes, "Andreini's literary persona invokes a male voice, achieved mainly through a masculine gendering of the poems' subjects, but also through humanistic imitation. Her verses are written from a man's point of view and in a forceful literary style associated with men. ... At the same time, it [the style] affords her a wider scope of literary influence and social mobility, which she achieves in scholarly circles and academy." In "Introduction," *Selected Poems*, 2–3. See also Luisella Giachino, "Dall'effimero teatrale alla quète dell'immortalità: Le *Rime* di Isabella Andreini," *Giornale storico della letteratura italiana* 178 (2001): 530–52.

42. Isabella Andreini, *Rime. Parte seconda* (Milan: Girolamo Bordononi and Pietromartire Locarni, 1605).

43. The book comprises 151 letters, organized by title but with no date or addressee. For a thorough reading, see Silvia Fabrizio-Costa, "'Onore'/'Amore': Une interprétation des '*Lettere*' d'Isabella Andreini (1562–1604), la première 'Diva' du théâtre moderne," *Les langues néo-latines: Revue des langues romanes* 281 (1992): 29–55; and more recently Meredith Ray, "Between Stage and Page: The Letters of Isabella Andreini," in her *Writing Gender in Women's Letter Collections of the Italian Renaissance* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 156–83. There are also some private and unpublished letters from Andreini to Erycius Puteanus (1574–1646), a Dutch encyclopedist who lived briefly in Padua, in Charles Ruelens, *Erycius Puteanus et Isabelle Andreini: Lecture faite à l'Académie d'Archéologie le 3 Février 1889* (Antwerp: Van Merlen, 1889). On this correspondence, see MacNeil, *Music and Women*. For a list of books of letters published in the period, see Amedeo Quondam, *Le 'carte messaggiera': Retorica e modelli di comunicazione epistolare. Per un indice dei libri di lettere del Cinquecento* (Rome: Bulzoni, 1981), 286.

ular that, according to Bernard Bray, the form of the love letter in France comes from three specific sources: Ovid's *Heroides*, the letters of Abelard and Heloise, and (startlingly) the Italian letters of Isabella Andreini.⁴⁴ In 1617, *Frammenti di alcune scritture della Signora Isabella Andreini*, a set of dialogues on how various expressions of love were recited on stage, were published by Francesco to keep the memory of his wife alive. They were reprinted in 1620 and 1621. These dialogues were unconnected to specific plots and thus could be adapted to serve *ad hoc* purposes on stage, whether a lamentation on true love was needed or a more general *questione d'amore* on a male/female relationship was pertinent.⁴⁵ Andreini was a gifted writer, and after her death her name kept appearing, even if often *en passant*, in the majority of theatrical anthologies and historical biographies of the following centuries.⁴⁶ As the philologist Erycius Putenaus put it, "Truly in my opinion you supply a defect of Nature, Andreina—you, who are not only capable of male glory but in fact an equal partner to it."⁴⁷

44. Bernard A. Bray, *L'art de la lettre amoureuse: Des manuels aux romans, 1550–1700* (The Hague: Mouton, 1967), 14. Giovanna Malquori Fondi is of the same opinion. See "De la 'lettre-canevas' à la 'pièce de cabinet': Les *Lettere d'Isabella Andreini*, traduites par François de Grenaille," in *Contacts culturels et échanges linguistiques au XVII^e siècle en France*, ed. Yves Giraud (Paris: Papers in Seventeenth-Century Literature, 1997), 125–45.

45. Some titles are sufficient to give an idea of the content, such as "On True Love," or "Whether it is better to love someone rather than oneself," or "Whether a loved one should also love," or "On amorous fever." See Isabella Andreini, *Frammenti di alcune scritture della Signora Isabella Andreini Comica Gelosa et Academica Intenta. Raccolti dal marito Francesco Andreini Comico Geloso detto il Capitano Spavento* (Venice: Giovanni Battista Combi, 1617); *Frammenti di alcune scritture della Signora Isabella Andreini Comica Gelosa, et Academica Intenta. Raccolti da Francesco Andreini Comico Geloso, detto il Capitano Spavento, e dati in luce da Flaminio Scala Comico* (Venice: Giovanni Battista Combi, 1620); and *Frammenti di alcune scritture della Signora Isabella Andreini Comica Gelosa et Academica Intenta, Raccolti dal marito Francesco Andreini Comico Geloso detto il Capitan Spavento* (Turin: Giovanni Domenico Tarino, 1621). For a reading of this work, see Daniela Mauri, "I *Frammenti di alcune scritture di Isabella Andreini 'comica gelosa'*," in *Studi sul teatro in Europa in onore di Mariangela Mazzocchi Doglio*, ed. Paolo Bosisio (Rome: Bulzoni, 2011), 385–99.

46. See for example, Claude and François Parfaict, *Histoire de l'Ancien Théâtre Italien depuis son origine en France jusqu'à sa suppression en l'année 1697* (Paris: Lambert, 1753), 4–7; Gian Maria Mazzuchelli, *Gli scrittori d'Italia* (Brescia: Giambattista Bossini, 1753), vol. 2, Part 2: 711–13; Francesco Bartoli, *Notizie storiche de' comici italiani che fiorirono intorno all'anno MDL fino ai giorni presenti* (Padua: Li Conzatti, 1781–82; facsimile reprint, Bologna: Forni, 1978), 31–36; Luigi Rasi, *I comici italiani*, 2 vols. (Florence: Fratelli Bocca, 1897–1905), 1:87–117; Jolanda De Blasi, *Le scrittrici italiane dalle origini al 1800* (Florence: Nemi, 1930), 160–65; Ugo Falena, "Isabella Andreini," in *La Rassegna nazionale* (1905), 267–79; Rosamond Gilder, "Isabella Andreini," in *Enter the Actress: The First Women in Theatre* (London: Harrap, 1931), 67–81. For more bibliography, see de' Angelis, *La divina Isabella*.

47. "Epistle 19" of November 1601 to Isabella Andreini, in MacNeil, *Music and Women*, 306. Women's last names were often rendered in the feminine in the Renaissance, thus "Andreini" becomes "Andreina."

Andreini, the Actress

Let me introduce a story that contextualizes Andreini's personality as a woman, actress, and playwright. It is recounted in a collection of fictional "histories" authored by the historian and novelist Luca Assarino at the start of the seventeenth century and published as *Raguagli del regno d'amore Cipro* (*News from Cyprus, the Kingdom of Love*).⁴⁸ In the kingdom ruled by Venus in Cyprus, Assarino wrote in "Raguaglio" 12, a dispute arose between Isabella Andreini, on the one hand, and Laura di Chabrières, the ethereal woman crowding Francesco Petrarca's mind and days, on the other, as to which of the two should have the rights of precedence and the honor of sitting ahead of the other during a feast.⁴⁹ Since the quarrel between the two ladies was proving insoluble, a meeting was arranged for them to defend their position in front of the island's Senate Tribunal. Some people felt that Isabella was too presumptuous in asserting her rights to precedence and honor, but she looked forward to defending her station. In her argument before the justices, Isabella first granted that Laura was beautiful. But she also claimed that Laura would have had no merit were it not for Petrarch singing her praises in worshipful admiration, and that her fame was predicated on Petrarch living a long life in which he could continually reassert the importance of her beauty. In her own case, Isabella argued, her fame rested only on her output and on her own self-fashioning as a stage presence. Next, Isabella contested Laura's supremacy in rectitude and virtue. It was true that Laura was virtuous, she claimed, but she had a noble family to protect her; moreover, she lived in a small village where there was hardly any temptation to rebuff. In her own case, however, Isabella had to overcome her low origins and lack of protection and had to defend her chosen lifestyle in places as far away from her native Padua as Paris, and in a profession not particularly known for the probity of its practitioners.

The result of this dispute was amicably solved by the Senate. Isabella did indeed have the rights of precedence over Laura, it was decreed, because what she had implied made sense to the justices. She was a self-made woman who had been able to present herself to society as women of the time almost never had the possibility of doing: if not noble by birth, at least noble in her actions; if unprotected by family lineage, at least notoriously virtuous; if beautiful, then chaste by choice. To this Isabella had astutely added her most important card: intellectual merits,

48. Luca Assarino (1602–1672), *Raguagli del regno d'amore Cipro* (Venice: Li Turrini, 1646). Assarino is still known today for his romance, *La stratonica* (1635), a true bestseller at the time.

49. The "Raguaglio" is entitled: "Professing the most immaculate honesty, Madonna Laura and Isabella Andreini banter with each other at a feast, and then, after complaining about each other in the Senate, Madonna Laura loses the contest" ("Professando Mad. Laura e Isabella Andreini immacolatissima honestà, si motteggiano in una festa, e querelandosi poi l'una dell'altra nel Senato, Mad. Laura perdè la lite"). In *Raguagli*, 57–63. The translation from Italian is mine.

for she needed no Petrarch to sing her praises. Her recognition in the republic of letters, she professed, could easily last beyond her lifetime.

That Andreini as a woman would claim to be beautiful, just like the Laura celebrated on paper by Petrarch, we can glean from contemporary images. In a number of drawings that have come to us through the centuries, including those in the frontispieces of *Mirtilla* and *Rime*, Andreini looks directly at the viewer, her long hair framing an attractive, round face (Figure 1). We know that in many of her performances she sported ribbons and brooches with small jewels and a pearl necklace, and that she adorned her neck with ornate white ruffs.⁵⁰ She consistently worked to project the image of a confident actress, conscious of how best to promote a feminine persona in command of her representation, the “celebrity artist,” as Rosalind Kerr calls her.⁵¹ This identity is perfectly displayed in the recently recognized portrait that constitutes the cover of this edition of *Mirtilla, Portrait of a Woman with a Dog*, by the Venetian Paolo Veronese, at the Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza in Madrid. The gorgeous young woman with a striped dress half open at the knee and a masculine cut of her bodice, with no jewels but a slim book in her hand (perhaps a Petrarchino or a *canovaccio*),⁵² has the same round face that distinguishes other portraits of the actress. The painting can be dated probably around 1583, when the Andreini were engaged in Venice for the Carnival at the newly established Teatro Michel; Veronese’s studio was not far away.⁵³

50. “Portava i capelli ammassati nella parte anteriore del capo, come una corona, lasciando spoglia la curva della nuca. Ai capelli intrecciava nastri con spille e piccoli gioielli e completava l’ascesa con uno spillone prezioso, appuntato di lato, ornato come un ramoscello di fiori o una piuma di pavone.” In Taviani, “Bella d’Asia,” 5. On the importance of hair for women’s individuality and sociability in the Renaissance, see Evelyn Welch, “Art on the Edge: Hair and Hands in Renaissance Italy,” *Renaissance Studies* 23, no. 3 (2009): 241–68. On Andreini’s portraits, see Renzo Guardenti, “Attrici in effigie,” *Culture teatrali* 10 (2004): 55–71; Stefano Mazzoni, “La vita di Isabella,” *Culture teatrali* 10 (2004): 87–92; and Mazzoni, “Genealogia e vicende della famiglia Andreini.” On the style, color, and material of clothes in Venice in the 1570s, see Valeria Finucci, “Intellectual Tourism in Late Sixteenth-Century Italy: Costume and Manners in Venice and Padua,” in *Mores Italiae: Costumi e scene di vita nel Rinascimento // Mores Italiae: Costume and Life in the Renaissance*, ed. Maurizio Ripa Bonati and Valeria Finucci (Cittadella: Biblos, 2007), 37–77.

51. Rosalind Kerr, “Isabella Andreini: The Making of a Diva,” in *The Rise of the Diva on the Sixteenth Century Commedia dell’Arte Stage* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016), 102–46.

52. It was typical for rich Renaissance women to be portrayed with a slim book in their hands containing poems by Petrarch to testify to their literacy and, metonymically, to the fact that they embodied the ideal feminine features that Petrarch had immortalized in his poetry. But given Andreini’s profession, she may be holding instead a script, thus fashioning herself as author, idealized wife, and actress.

53. “As the only visual depiction of Isabella Andreini which reveals such feminine/masculine playing with gender,” Maria Ines Aliverti notes, “our portrait may quite literally be regarded as a genuine demonstration of her self-fashioning.” See Aliverti, “An Icon for a New Woman: A Previously Unidentified Portrait of Isabella Andreini by Paolo Veronese,” *Early Theatre* 11, no. 2 (2008): 159–80, at 170. We know that the Andreini were engaged in 1583 by the nobleman Alvise Michel, patron of the “Stanza



Figure 1. Isabella Andreini Comica Gelosa.

That Andreini as an actress would know how to convince the public of her performing abilities goes without saying, given the fame that surrounded her on that score. She herself, in the introductory sonnet of her *Rime*, mentioned the necessary falseness (“false ardor,” “false words,” “false sorrows” “spurious delights”) needed by an actress and a love poet. Her arguing for poetic distance in matters of love—a rhetorical strategy required by the customary presentation of her persona as above reproach—matches her argument that as an artist she is also mimetically embodying other people’s emotions:

delle commedie” in Venice, from a letter that Francesco wrote to Duke Vincenzo Gonzaga on April 13, 1588. See MacNeil, *Music and Women*, entry # 9, 272–73.