

Partenia, a Pastoral Play
A Bilingual Edition

BARBARA TORELLI BENEDETTI



Edited and translated by

LISA SAMPSON

AND

BARBARA BURGESS-VAN AKEN



Iter Inc.
Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies
Toronto
2013

Iter: Gateway to the Middle Ages and Renaissance

Tel: 416/978-7074 Email: iter@utoronto.ca

Fax: 416/978-1668 Web: www.itergateway.org

Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies

Victoria University in the University of Toronto

Tel: 416/585-4465 Email: crrs.publications@utoronto.ca

Fax: 416/585-4430 Web: www.crrs.ca

© 2013 Iter Inc. & Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies

All rights reserved.

Printed in Canada.

Iter and the Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies gratefully acknowledge the generous support of James E. Rabil, in memory of Scottie W. Rabil, toward the publication of this book.

Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication

Benedetti, Barbara Torelli, b. 1546

[Partenia, favola boschereccia. English & Italian]

Partenia, a pastoral play : a bilingual edition / Barbara Torelli Benedetti ; edited and translated by Lisa Sampson and Barbara Burgess-Van Aken.

(Other voice in early modern Europe. Toronto series ; 22)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

Issued also in electronic format.

Text in English and Italian; translated from the Italian.

Co-published by: Iter.

ISBN 978-0-7727-2136-5

1. Benedetti, Barbara Torelli, b. 1546--Translations into English. 2. Pastoral drama, Italian--16th century--Translations into English. 3. Italian drama--16th century--Translations into English. I. Sampson, Lisa II. Burgess-Van Aken, Barbara, 1948- III. Victoria University (Toronto, Ont.). Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies IV. Iter Inc. V. Title. VI. Title: Partenia, favola boschereccia. English & Italian. VII. Series: Other voice in early modern Europe. Toronto series ; 22

PS4610.B35P3813 2013

852'.4

C2013-901217-6

Cover illustration:

St. Catherine of Alexandria (oil on canvas), Longhi, Barbara (1552-c.1638) / Pinacoteca Nazionale, Bologna, Italy / Alinari / The Bridgeman Art Library ALG 164536.

Cover design:

Maureen Morin, Information Technology Services, University of Toronto Libraries.

Typesetting and production:

Iter Inc.

Introduction

The Other Voice

Within the rapidly growing canon of early modern women's writing, the work of Barbara Torelli Benedetti (Parma, 1546–post-1607) is undeservedly neglected. Of her extensive poetic activities, only six sonnets have appeared in print in scattered editions, all apparently within her lifetime, and her major work, a pastoral play entitled *Partenia*, *favola boschereccia*, survives only in two undated manuscript copies: one held in the Biblioteca Statale, Cremona (MS.AA.1.33), and the other, still to our knowledge unknown to literary scholars, in the Biblioteca Angelica, Rome (MS 1690). Nonetheless, in her own time Torelli was highly regarded as both a poet and a playwright within the lively cultural scene of the courts and academies in Northern Italy. Her aristocratic background and her connections with the Farnese rulers of Parma, who may also have brought attention to her work further south in Rome, doubtless facilitated her engagement with such circles. Torelli's reputation was established especially with her pastoral play, *Partenia*, which marks a significant milestone in the development of Italian drama, not only because it is the first known, neoclassical secular play written by a woman but also because of its pioneering treatment of this particular genre. Composed as early as 1586 and rehearsed for performance the following year, *Partenia* completes a trio of recently edited female-authored Italian pastoral plays now available in English, the others being *Flori*, by the Vincentine noblewoman Maddalena Campiglia (1553–95), and *Mirtilla*, by the renowned actress Isabella Andreini (1562–1604), both printed in 1588. As such, *Partenia* makes an important contribution to ongoing comparative research into early modern women's writing in the pastoral mode and into dramatic production across Europe.

Torelli wrote *Partenia* just as the pastoral drama was gaining great popularity in the wake of Torquato Tasso's landmark *Aminta* (first printed 1580) and shortly before Battista Guarini's *Pastor fido* (first printed in 1590) took the continent by storm. From the time the first examples of "regular," five-act pastoral drama were written in

2 Introduction

the 1550s, dramatists had been drawn to this intrinsically tragicomic genre because of its flexibility of structure, style and cast—especially given the absence of clear classical models and legitimizing theory—and its possibilities for different forms of staging. Nevertheless, certain elements had become customary, including an action involving the erotic entanglements of shepherds and nymphs; a green world (typically Arcadia, but sometimes a disguised local setting); and a happy ending. Barbara Torelli's *Partenia* is no exception in these respects. Set in the country estate of the Farnese dukes of Parma, the main plot of the play traces the love-rivalry of two shepherds over the virginal nymph Partenia, who, despite her wish to lead a celibate life in the service of her goddess, agrees to marriage in order to satisfy her father.

Briefly, what is distinctive about *Partenia* within the contemporary tradition of pastoral drama is, on the one hand, its emphasis on tragic elements and its exclusion of traditional comic-pastoral elements, and on the other, its strong spiritual and specifically Christian dimension. This combination explains *Partenia's* muted approach to earthly love, which is in striking contrast to the representation of the pastoral realm in most plays of this kind as a space in which earthly passions and sensuality could be fulfilled, thereby providing something of an antidote to the repression and sublimation of physical desire in Petrarchan verse. Torelli's play is thus an early harbinger of a prominent trend of moralizing and spiritualizing secular drama and fiction, in line with Counter-Reformation principles, and may be seen to anticipate Guarini's *Pastor fido*, which has hitherto been considered the first pastoral drama to include Christian elements. Torelli's addition of Christian aspects to the genre was undoubtedly part of her bid to legitimize her boldness as the first noblewoman to attempt a secular play, and follows an established procedure among Italian women poets, following Vittoria Colonna, of spiritualizing expressions of earthly love in polite literature. Torelli could also draw on a distinguished medieval tradition of pastoral writings that integrated religious themes, as well on writings by humanists such as Jacopo Sanzaro, whose prose romance *Arcadia* (1504) has a notable neoplatonic and spiritual dimension. *Partenia* seems to borrow from religious drama too, perhaps especially from the flourishing—though today still little known—female-oriented tradition of convent drama, per-

formed by and for women and composed by dramatists of both sexes. In this respect, Torelli's *Partenia* introduces an "other voice," namely, a feminine, spiritual one, within the male-authored dramatic tradition, which may have inspired other contemporary female dramatists, including Maddalena Campiglia. Furthermore, while firmly operating within the tenets of the Counter-Reformation agenda, Torelli subtly raises an "oppositional voice" on questions of gender, especially as these relate to friendship, personal piety, and the abusive practice of forced marriage.

Fortunately for her legacy, Torelli wrote at a time when verse praising virtuoso women was still a subgenre popular with male writers and readers alike. This trend ended when a backlash against women writers reignited the *querelle des femmes* at the start of the seventeenth century and contributed to the creation of a more repressive environment for women poets that persisted into the eighteenth century.¹ It is a testament particularly to Torelli's major work that she continued to hold a place in literary histories, albeit a modest one, after her death, and this legacy has recently sparked a renewed interest in her play. The present edition, which provides both the first transcription of *Partenia* and the first edition of Torelli's collected verse, both with facing translation, builds upon this interest. It aims to place *Partenia* more firmly on the historical map of Italian theater and to claim Torelli as an innovative voice within a genre that resonated throughout early modern Europe and held a particular appeal for women authors.

The Life, Works, and Context of Barbara Torelli Benedetti

Compared to those of her contemporary female dramatists Maddalena Campiglia and Isabella Andreini,² the life and cultural activi-

1. Virginia Cox, *Women's Writing in Italy: 1400–1650* (hereinafter *WW*) (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), particularly ch. 6, "Backlash (1590–1650)."

2. Maddalena Campiglia, *Flori: favola boscareccia* (Vicenza: presso gl'heredi di Perin Libraro & Tomaso Brunelli compagni, 1588); see Virginia Cox and Lisa Sampson, eds., *Flori: A Pastoral Drama; A Bilingual Edition*, intro. and notes by Cox and Sampson, trans. Cox, *The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe* (hereinafter *OVIEME*) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004). Isabella Andreini, *La Mirtilla* (Verona: Girolamo Discepolo, 1588), has been edited by Maria Luisa Doglio (Lucca: Pacini Fazzi, 1995); see also *La Mirtilla: A Pas-*

ties of Barbara Torelli are largely unknown. We do know that she was born into to one of the most prominent feudal families in northern Italy, and this at least sheds some light on her social background. The Torelli genealogy dates back to the eleventh century, with branches associated with many of the famous courts and important cities, such as Ferrara, Mantua, and Naples. The family earned a distinguished reputation for its military service to the powerful Visconti dynasty of Milan, for which Guido Torelli was granted in the early fifteenth century the small, but strategically important, feud of Montechiarugolo, whose lands lay about ten miles southeast of Parma, together with the territory of Guastalla, about twenty-three miles northeast of Parma.³ Despite the frequent turbulence in the area, and the sway of the Farnese dynasty over the Duchy of Parma and Piacenza from 1545, the Torelli family managed to hold onto Montechiarugolo until 1612, when their lands and possessions were confiscated following Count Pio Torelli's involvement in a failed anti-Farnese plot.⁴

Barbara Torelli was born in Parma on February 21, 1546, one of four children of Gaspare Torelli (d. 1562), the legitimized natural son of Count Francesco Torelli of Montechiarugolo, and the Parmense noblewoman Maddalena Musacchi (d. 1592). The record of Barbara's baptism, which took place on the day of her birth, indicates that her godparents came from important noble families from the Parma re-

toral, trans. with an intro. and notes by Julie D. Campbell (Tempe, AZ: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2002).

3. For genealogies, see Pompeo Litta, *Famiglie celebri Italiane*, vol. 4, 1819, "Torelli," tables 7–10 (esp. 7, "Conti di Guastalla e di Montechiarugolo"). See also Lorenzo Molossi, *Vocabolario topografico dei ducati di Parma, Piacenza e Guastalla* (Parma: Della Tip. Ducale, 1832–34), 220–226; Rossella Cattani and Stefania Colla, *Il Castello di Montechiarugolo... fortissimo e inespugnabile fabrica* (Parma: Monte Università Parma Editore, 2006). On the cession of the territories of Guastalla in 1547 to Ferrante I Gonzaga, son of Marchese Francesco of Mantua and Isabella d'Este, see Affò, *Memorie degli scrittori e letterati Parmigiani...*, 7 vols. (Parma: Dalla Stamperia Reale, 1793; anas. repr. Bologna: Forni, 1969), 4:263; Litta, *Famiglie celebri*, "Torelli," tables 8, 9.

4. Emilio Nasalli Rocca, *I Farnese* (Milan: Dall'Oglio, 1969), 140–45; Giovanni Drei, *I Farnese: Grandezza e decadenza di una dinastia italiana* (Rome: La Libreria dello Stato, 1954), 179–200; Giovanna Solari, *The House of Farnese* (New York: Doubleday, 1968), 166–93; for its impact on the Torelli family, see Marzio Dall'Acqua, "Le carte Torelli: saggio storico-archivistico," in *Le corti farnesiane di Parma e Piacenza, 1545–1622*, vol. 2, *Forme e istituzioni della produzione culturale*, ed. Amedeo Quondam (Rome: Bulzoni, 1978), 210–13.

gion.⁵ The marriage in 1553 of Barbara's older sister Maddalena to Veltro (or Veltrio) Lalatta, who hailed from another noble Parmense family close to the Farnese, confirms this allegiance.⁶ Her family's status must have made Barbara a first-hand spectator to the political and cultural events of her day, especially given the close ties her brother Guido and her cousin, Pomponio Torelli, Count of Montechiarugolo (1539–1608), enjoyed with the Farnese rulers. Famous now primarily for his five tragedies, Pomponio was also one of the most distinguished diplomats at the Farnese court, entrusted with numerous important missions to represent Farnese interests, for example, in Spain and in the Netherlands, where Alessandro Farnese (Duke of Parma, 1586–92) commanded the imperial forces.⁷ Pomponio gained special favor with Duke Ottavio Farnese (1547–86), as his appoint-

5. The record of her baptism here reproduced for the first time reads: "Barbara Calidonia filia D[ominus] Gasparis de Taurellis, et D[ominia] Magdalena Ux[or], nata, et bapt.a 21 Feb. ij: Comp[adr]i D. Hieronijmus de Pegulijis, et D. Geli[c]ala de Rubeis, et D. Portia de Puteo. (Barbara Calidonia, daughter of Don Gaspare Torelli and his wife, Donna Maddalena, born and baptized 21 February. Godparents Don Girolamo de Pegulijis and Donna Gelicala [Angelica?] de' Rossi, and Donna Porzia [dal Pozzo].)" Archivio di Stato, Parma (hereinafter ASP), Registri Battesimali (February 21, 1546), Microfilm 906427. On the aristocratic Rossi of San Secondo and the dal Pozzo families (made Counts by Duke Ottavio Farnese in 1573), see Roberto Lasagni, *Dizionario biografico dei Parmigiani*, 4 vols. (Parma: PPS, 1999), partially available online at <http://biblioteche2.comune.parma.it/lasagni/>, s.v. "Dal Pozzo Farnese, Alfonso" and "Rossi, Troilo (1524c–1591)."

6. See Gaspare Torelli's transfer of land to the dowry fund of Maddalena Torelli, and promissory note to pay 3000 Lira into it on his death (September 9, 1553, notary Giacomo Cavicchi), Archivio di Stato Reggio Emilia (hereinafter ASRE), Fondo Privati, Malaspina-Torello, famiglia (hereinafter MT), I° Versamento, fol. 41, "Memorie nell'Archivio di Parma," fol. 83 (eighteenth-century register); also fol. 29 ("Memorie Cavate dall'Archivio di Bologna dal Conte Adriano mio Fratello"). This newly discovered evidence contradicts Affò, *Memorie*, 4:293. On Veltro Lalatta, see entry in Lasagni, *Dizionario biografico*.

7. For Torelli's political and cultural career, see Lucia Denarosi, *L'Accademia degli Innominati di Parma: Teorie letterarie e progetti di scrittura (1574–1608)* (hereinafter ADIP), (Florence: Società Editrice Fiorentina, 2003), 168–71, 174–81 (his contacts with Alessandro Farnese in Flanders in 1584–85, his planned biography of the general and account of his conquest of Anvers, which formed the basis for Cesare Campana's *Assedio e racquisto d'Anversa*, printed 1595); Gabriele Nori, "Lettere inedite di Pomponio Torelli (1559–1605)," unpublished "laurea" thesis, Università degli Studi di Parma, Facoltà di Magistero, 1974–75: 21–29; Arnaldo Barilli, *Nuova biografia di Pomponio Torelli e critica della sua tragedia "Vittoria"* (Parma, 1903), 25–40.

ment in 1583 as tutor to Ottavio's grandson Ranuccio, the son and heir of Alessandro, indicates. Torelli seems to have composed the first draft of *Partenia* during this period. However, after Ottavio's death on September 18, 1586, Pomponio apparently lost favor with the Farnese; he was only restored to ducal grace when Ranuccio became duke (1592–1627). Barbara's brother, Guido, was also very close to Duke Ranuccio, initially as one of his gentleman at court and later as a *camariero* (i.e., a servant of the privy chamber) until some time after 1601 when he left ducal service because of a perceived slight to his honor.⁸

Like other aristocratic families in the region, the Torelli boasted important cultural as well as political connections and produced various writers of both sexes. Most notable of these was, as mentioned, Barbara's cousin Pomponio (grandson of Giovanni Pico della Mirandola). In addition to composing tragedies, he wrote poetry, prose treatises, and works on literary theory, and was a rallying figure for culture in his native Parma.⁹ However, the precise relationship that Barbara and Pomponio enjoyed as cousins remains unclear, given the surprising absence of any documented connection. Barbara's father seems to have acted as guardian to his orphaned nephew Pomponio and Pomponio's siblings until 1561, and relations between the two sides of the family appear to have been cordial during Barbara's early years, when her family lodged on lands in Montechiarugolo. However, matters may have changed as a result of quarrels between Pomponio and Barbara's brother over issues of inheritance.¹⁰

8. Ranuccio Pico, *Aggiunte fatte alla soprascritta Appendice, con la correzione de gli errori più notabili*. In *Appendice de Vari Soggetti Parmigiani...* (Parma: Per Mario Vigna, 1642), 110–12.

9. See the recent editions of Pomponio Torelli's works that mark the four-hundredth anniversary of his death, *Opere di Pomponio Torelli*, 3 vols. (Parma: Guanda, 2008–forthcoming), esp. vol. 2, *Teatro*, with intro. by Vincenzo Guercio (2009); Denarosi, *ADIP*; Affò, *Memorie*, 4:I–XIII (Innominati), 262–91.

10. The listed estate divided between the brothers Counts Pomponio and Adriano Torelli (November 19, 1562) includes estates (Romito, Casaccia) “which the heirs of Count Gaspare Torelli currently enjoy, with other pieces of land alienated by the brothers with an agreement that they be recuperated” (ASRE, MT, Vers.1, b. 41, fol. 58); note that archival sources are referenced using the Italian classification (*fondo/versamento, busta, fascicolo*). An acrimonious dispute between Pomponio and Guido Torelli over the feud of Coenzo (won by Pomponio) is noted in Litta, *Famiglie celebri*, “Torelli,” table 8 (under “Guido” and “Roberto”);

Of Barbara's immediate family members, her father was educated in letters and known to write poetry, while either her mother or sister, Maddalena, apparently also had literary proclivities. Guido, though not a man of letters himself, seems to have had a keen interest in ancient and modern history, as well as in artworks and medals, eventually amassing a prestigious collection.¹¹ Furthermore, Barbara could take inspiration from a long line of cultured Torelli women, including Ippolita (1499–1520), wife of Baldassar Castiglione, and Barbara Torelli Bentivoglio Strozzi (1475–1533)—often confused in earlier criticism with the subject of our study—to whom a single sonnet is attributed in the first printed anthology of female-authored poetry (edited by Ludovico Domenichi; printed in 1559), probably as Virginia Cox suggests of “ventriloquized” production. More importantly, Alda Torelli Lunati from the Pavia branch of the family, who also appeared in the Domenichi anthology but is now barely known and has little extant printed verse, seems to have been a widely famed poet and a cultural figurehead for her city, attracting numerous poetic dedications by individual poets—including from Laodomia Forteguerra—and collectively from members of the local Affidati Academy.¹²

and Pico, *Aggiunte*, 110. However, Guido is not named among the contenders for this feud in the 1570s in ASRE, Fondo Privati, MT famiglia, b. 41, fol. 84; other possessions may have caused conflict (Gaspare Torelli left his farm in Romito to his (unmarried) daughter Ottavia in his will, March 28, 1562, notary Giacomo Cavicchi, 83). On Gaspare Torelli, see also (with rather uneven documentation) Vittorio Barbieri, *I Torelli: Conti di Montechiarugolo (1406–1612)* (Montechiarugolo (Parma): n.p., 1998), 75–76, 109, 191; Affò, *Memorie*, 4:297.

11. A Maddalena Torelli is noted as belonging to a literary group predating the Innominati with clerical links and probable Farnese connections in Paolo Luigi Gozzi's not wholly reliable *Parma Accademica...* (Parma: Stamperia Gozzi, 1778), 20; see also Fortunato Rizzi, “Figure dimenticate del Parnaso Parmense,” *Aurea Parma* 42, no. 1 (1958): 31, 39 (on female poets in Barbara Torelli's family). On Guido, see Affò, *Memorie*, 4: 292; Pico, *Aggiunte*, 112.

12. Cox, *WW*, 102–03, 306n106 (Alda Torelli); and 282n37 (doubts about Barbara Torelli Strozzi's authorship); 49–50 (“ventriloquized” verse attributed to fifteenth-century court ladies). Thanks to the author for noting this point. See also Luisa Bergalli, *Componimenti poetici delle più illustri rimatrici d'ogni secolo*. 2 vols. (Venice: Appresso Antonio Mora, 1726), 1:165 (2 printed verses by Alda Torelli (Torrella)); 1: 33 (1 sonnet by Barbara Torelli Strozzi); Litta, table 8 (Ippolita Torelli). On Barbara Torelli Strozzi, see also Rinaldina Russell, ed., *Italian Women Writers: A Bio-bibliographical Sourcebook* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1994), xix. Quatrains by Lucrezia and Caterina Torelli (printed 1521 to accompany a saint's life) are quoted in Angelo Pezzana, *Memorie degli scrittori e letterati*

Two other Torelli women, Lucrezia and Caterina, also seem to have composed poetry in the early decades of the sixteenth century.

We know nothing of Barbara Torelli's education, though her aristocratic background makes it probable that she gained a grounding in the liberal arts and vernacular literature, as well as some aspects of classical languages and culture, perhaps through home tutoring alongside her brother, as part of her preparation for marriage. The strong emphasis on Christian themes in her writings and her choice to compose a play may suggest that she received some convent education involving theatrical activities, as Elissa Weaver has postulated for Moderata Fonte, who also authored a secular play (*Le Feste* [the Festivities], 1581).¹³ In either case, Torelli's limited access to "the places where grave or humble style are taught," as Paolo Filippi dalla Briga suggests in his verse (appendix B, poem 4, line 6), would doubtless have encouraged her to supplement her literary education with intellectual guidance from male elites. Such guidance was especially necessary given the value placed on humanist and courtly eloquence, and on neo-Aristotelian theory, in local academic circles. Certainly, *Partenia* demonstrates Torelli's familiarity with a range of ancient and modern writings, including Ovid's *Heroides* and *Metamorphoses*, ancient and modern drama and pastoral writings, and especially the vernacular writings of Petrarch, Dante, and Boccaccio. Marco Pio of Savoy, in his encomiastic verse for the Cremona manuscript, praises Torelli's knowledge of Greek epic culture ("in Homer's fields you have gathered laurels," appendix A, poem 13, line 11). Pio reinforces Torelli's serious literary commitment by observing that she rejects the typically feminine pursuits of vain pleasures and worldly beauty, calling these "base burdens," in favor of the glory to be gained from learning.

Parmigiani raccolte da Ireneo Affò e continuate da Angelo Pezzana (Bologna: Forni, 1969; first ed. 1789–1833 [1827]), 6:974; and see Lasagni, *Dizionario biografico dei Parmigiani*, 581 (Caterina Torelli). For the confusion between the Barbara Torellis, see Affò, *Memorie*, 4: 297, Carlo D'Arco, *Mille Famiglie Mantovane* (ms) vol. 4. Archivio di Stato, Mantua; and below note 123.

13. Elissa Weaver, *Convent Theatre in Early Modern Italy: Spiritual Fun and Learning for Women* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 64; for recent analysis of Fonte's *Feste*, see Virginia Cox's comprehensive study of female-authored Italian drama of the period, *"The Prodigious Muse": Women's Writing in Counter-Reformation Italy* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011), 99–91.

Torelli's literary activities were apparently well underway by 1580, when Muzio Manfredi—a key literary mentor to whom we will return—commended her considerable poetic expertise and composition of correspondence verse.¹⁴ By then she had married the Parmense knight, Giovanni Paolo Benedetti, about whom nothing is securely known other than that he was born on October 18, 1546, making him ten months younger than Torelli, and that he died shortly before January 2, 1593.¹⁵ It is unclear whether the couple had children, or indeed where they lived, though a letter Manfredi wrote to Benedetti (dated 1591) was sent to Parma, which suggests they were domiciled there.¹⁶ Since so little documentary evidence survives in relation to Torelli's personal life outside of literary sources, and almost nothing remains from the years of her marriage, it is tempting to build on suggestions from Muzio Manfredi's pastoral play *Il contrasto amoroso* [Amorous dispute] (1602). This work is explicitly identified as a *drame à clef* and contains many verifiable details about Torelli through the character Talia (a name also used in *Partenia* and elsewhere).¹⁷ Talia is described as having been married as “young girl” to a younger man called Coridone—the name of Talia's lover in Torelli's *Partenia*—and herself declares: “I have never felt what love for a child is, because I never had any.”¹⁸ Whether Torelli was indeed childless is unknown,

14. Muzio Manfredi, *Cento donne...* (Parma: Erasmo Viotti, 1580), 257.

15. Affò, *Memorie*, 4:293; ASP, Registri Battesimali (respectively born and baptized October 18 and 24, 1546), Microfilm 906427.

16. Manfredi, *Lettere brevissime...* (hereinafter *LB*), letter no. 297, dated October 24, 1591, to Signor Cavalier Gio. Paolo Benedetti, Parma (Venice: Appresso Roberto Meglietti, 1606), 244. For the literary construction and possibly fictional aspect of this collection, see Pignatti, “Manfredi, Muzio,” in *Dizionario biografico degli Italiani* (hereinafter *DBI*), 68 (2007): 722. The inventory of the inheritance of Barbara Torelli's brother Guido also lists a house in Parma “da S. Paolo” (ASRE, MT, b. 41, p. 48).

17. “tutte l'altre Ninfe della favola, Dame sono di coteste contrade... : e sonovi non poche cose per intro accennate, le quali vere, et avvenute sono” (all the other nymphs of the play represent ladies from these parts...; and there are many things referred to in the play that are true and did occur), Muzio Manfredi, Dedicatory letter to Vittoria Doria Gonzaga, Princess of Molfetta and Signora of Guastalla, *Il contrasto Amoroso...* (Venice: Appresso Giacomo Anton Somascho, 1602), fols. A3^{r-v}. On Torelli as Talia in this work, see below p. 49.

18. “[Talia:] ‘Nicora, io no ho mai / Provato quel che sia l'amor dei figli, / Perché non nebbi mai’ ” (Manfredi, *Contrasto amoroso*, 2.5, p. 45).

but her happy marriage is attested to in Manfredi's above-mentioned letter to Benedetti, in which he notes that his frequent correspondence with Barbara makes it superfluous to write to the Cavaliere because "together you seem one person" ("mi par tutt'uno"). That the Talia in Manfredi's play, who never remarried after the death of Coridone (her husband), likely parallels Torelli's experience is supported by a sonnet composed for Torelli by Giovanni Maria Agaccio (printed in 1598).¹⁹

The most recent document relating to Barbara Torelli's life is her only known autograph letter, held in the Torelli family archive, which she penned at the age of fifty-seven on December 13, 1603. In this letter she requests on her brother Guido's behalf that he be granted certain territorial benefices, and mentions a legal document ("polizza") that she had had drawn up (fig. 1).²⁰ It is quite possible that from at least the time of her marriage, Barbara, like her mother before her, capably managed legal and financial affairs as a landowner.²¹ Barbara survived her unmarried brother and seems, following the specifications of her father's will, to have inherited what remained of Guido's estate after his most important asset—his beloved collection of antiquities—had been bestowed upon close male friends, who promptly sold it.²² It is unclear how long she lived after 1603, given that no record of her death or burial has yet been found, though she

19. Manfredi, *Contrasto amoroso*, 2.5, p. 48; "Né del primo Imeneo sciolse il monile" (nor [has she] loosened Hymen's first bond), Giovanni Maria Agaccio, *Rime del Signor Gio: Maria Agaccio* (Parma: Appresso Erasmo Viotti, 1598), appendix B, poem 3, line 14.

20. ASP, Fondo Famiglie e feudali, Archivio Torelli, Epistolario, b. 19, fasc.11; for a transcription, see appendix B, doc. 6.

21. ASRE, MT, b. 41, p. 83 (March 28, 1562, Gaspare Torelli left Barbara in his will a territory in Povilio (Puilio), in the Parma region). Barbara Torelli Benedetti cannot be identified, however, with the Barbara Benedetti who made financial transactions recorded in ASP, Notai Camerali, vol. 223 (notaio Avanzi), September 19, 1575, and January 13, 1576 (thanks to Alberta Cardinale for checking this). For documents on the financial dealings of Maddalena Musacchi, see fol. 74 (December 1555, revocation of will and donation), 81 (January 4, 1563), 92 (March 17, 1569, unspecified transaction with Count Adriano Torelli); ASP, Archivio Notarile, Fondo notai, filza 1482, n. 5 (March 28, 1562, Jacopo Cavizzi: loan of one thousand pounds to her husband Gaspare Torelli). Thanks to the late Prof. George Holmes for help in deciphering the hand.

22. Pico, *Aggiunte*, 112–3.

may have been composing verse until at least 1607.²³ Unfortunately, no likeness of Barbara Torelli is known to exist.

While historical documents relating to Torelli's life are few and problematic, her works provide a clear sense of her lively involvement with male elites in courts, academies, or literary coteries, as well as in spiritual circles. What little is known of her literary connections with other women, including the celebrated painter Barbara Longhi of Ravenna (1552–1638), may suggest potentially fruitful exchanges. Torelli's relationship with Maddalena Campiglia can unfortunately only be guessed at indirectly, through common features in their works and through their mutual association with Muzio Manfredi and Isabella Pallavicino Lupi, the Marchioness of Soragna. This noblewoman, alluded to in the play under her pastoral pseudonym "Calisa" (5.3.376), was an important patron of literati of both sexes, including—besides Maddalena Campiglia, Muzio Manfredi, Bernardino Baldi, and other contributors to the Cremona manuscript of *Partenia*—Torquato Tasso, the most eminent poet of the day. Pallavicino Lupi was instrumental in getting one of the two first complete editions of Tasso's *Gerusalemme Liberata* printed in 1581.²⁴ Torelli's six sonnets, which constitute her sole surviving literary oeuvre besides *Partenia* and which appeared in rare editions printed between 1581 and 1608 (of which five are collected here for the first time in appendix B), generally indicate her taste for poetic correspondence within wide literary networks and provide a sense of Torelli's confident technical skills and her capacity for witty verbal play. Her literary endeavors ranged from a gratulatory verse for a much-discussed contemporary tragedy (Muzio Manfredi's

23. Further records may be held in the Archivio Notarile of ASP, which was unavailable for consultation during 2010–11 due to the relocation of the archive. For Torelli's verse from ca.1607, see below n25 and appendix B, poems 4–5.

24. On the still insufficiently studied Isabella Pallavicino Lupi and her relationship with Maddalena Campiglia, see Cox, "Prodigious Muse," 17–18, 77, 84, 116 (suggestion that Pallavicino herself composed verse), 265; and Cox and Sampson, eds., *Flori*, 4n8, 27–28. As this edition was going to press, Lisa Sampson discovered a hitherto unknown verse by Barbara Torelli Benedetti, addressed to the female painter Barbara Longhi (Longhi) of Ravenna—one of the few women celebrated by Vasari in his *Vite* [Lives of the Artists] (1568), in *Oratione, Rime, et versi latini de diversi eccellentiss. autori. In morte di M. Luca Lunghi Pittore Ravennate* (Ravenna: Appresso Francesco Tebaldini, 1581), 45. The verse will be further explored in a forthcoming publication.

Semiramis, 1593; completed after 1580), and a prefatory verse for a religious miscellany by the clergyman Vincenzo Ferrini (1596) to correspondence sonnets in works of courtly verse by Giovanni Maria Agaccio, a Farnese courtier (1598), and Paolo Filippi dalla Briga, the secretary of the Duke of Savoy (1607). These poems, importantly, also shed light on her ability both to manage her social persona—notably through her modest deflection of Filippi dalla Briga’s praise—and to express an autonomous, particularly feminine perspective within an important literary debate on Manfredi’s tragedy.²⁵

Furthermore, Torelli’s printed verse offers clear evidence of her commitment to ascetic piety and of her particular devotion to the Virgin, which is evident also in *Partenia*. In her sonnet replying to the courtier and priest Giovanni Maria Agaccio, she reinforces his image of her as a grieving widow in “humble, mortal garb” (appendix B, poem 3, line 10) by declaring her thoughts to be “turned to / the sign of honored virtue,” scorning wealth and “those / who are supported only by fortune” (lines 5–7). She adds that “my crude style [does not] equal the terse style / of the lady who drew others away from error” (lines 10–11). The fact that Torelli was one of only three to contribute verse to a popular work by Vincenzo (Vincenzio) Ferrini, a Dominican preacher and Vicar General to the Bishop of Parma and Piacenza,²⁶ strongly suggests her involvement with local religious circles, possibly through patronage or through connections with the Farnese, who

25. On Manfredi’s tragedy *La Semiramis tragedia* (Bergamo: Per Comin Ventura, 1593) and the accompanying 47 poems (including one by Torquato Tasso, and five by women including Torelli), see F. Pignatti, “Muzio Manfredi,” *DBI* 68 (2007): 721; Cox and Sampson, eds., *Flori*, 33. Cox notes the negative reaction of Torelli to the play (together with Maddalena Campiglia, Adriana Trevisani Contarini, and an anonymous woman) as opposed to Veronica Franco’s more straight-forward eulogy (*WW*, 166–67). Torelli’s other printed verse (see appendix B) appears in Vincenzo Ferrini, *Della Lima Universale De’ Vitti, Del R.P.F. Vicentio Ferrini Da Castelnovo di Garfagnana, Predicatore Dominicano. Parte Prima. Raccolta da Lui dalle Opere di’ Predicatori più famosi dell’età nostra, e da altri Autori fra i Moderni più illustri...* [On the Universal Correction of Vices, by Father Vincenzo Ferrini from Castelnovo in Garfagnana, A Dominican Preacher, Part 1. Collected by him from the works of the most famous preachers of our time and from among the most illustrious contemporary authors], (Venice: I Gionti, 1596), fol. 4^v; Agaccio, *Rime*, Part 4, fol. 12^v; Paolo Filippi dalla Briga, *Rime di Paolo Filippi dalla Briga* (Venice: Appresso Zuane Zenaro, 1607), fol. D3^r; a 1601 edition is mentioned in Affò, *Memorie*, 4:297, but the editors have been unable to consult a copy.

26. See appendix B, n5; his *Lima universale* appeared in five editions between 1596 and 1626.

were firm promoters of Catholic reform. Torelli's religious associations probably began during her married life, since by 1582 she was already the co-dedicatée of a religious work by another priest from Parma, Antonio Maria Garofani's *Sommario dell'Indulgenze di Parma, et di Gerusalemme* [Summary of the Indulgences of Parma and of Jerusalem], in which she is praised for her virtue and knowledge of devotional writings.²⁷

Together, these printed poems show that from the 1580s and especially the 1590s onward—the period of her widowhood and after the composition of her lauded play—Torelli enjoyed a respected reputation as a rare female writer. Evidently, the youthful Paolo Filippi dalla Briga (later secretary of the Duke of Savoy), who had been impressed by recitations of her verse, sought her out for poetic correspondence. Her poetry must also have been considered a desirable ornament to works authored or edited by others. Publishing her work by this means would have allowed Torelli to retain the “invisibility” that respectable, elite women traditionally sought, a practice evident also in the *Partenia* manuscript.²⁸ This verse must, however, represent only a small portion of her overall production, since she is described in 1580 (at the age of 36) as “writing verse most delightfully, besides many sonnets which she has written to [Muzio Manfredi] for him to reply to and in response to his.” She seems still to have been composing in 1607 (a new sonnet of hers appears in the revised edition of

27. “de' Virtuosi [lei] possede quella perfetta cognitione, che in Vita, e dopo Morte, si può da gli scritti loro sperare” (you have that perfect knowledge of the virtuous in life and after death, which one can hope to gain from their writings), Antonio Maria Garofani, *Sommario dell'Indulgenze di Parma, et di Gerusalemme, Con le peregrinationi di tutta Terra Santa; & altre Indulgenze, con gli Altari Privilegiati...* [Summary of the Indulgences of Parma and of Jerusalem, with the peregrinations of the entire Holy Land...] (Parma: the heirs of Seth Viotto, 1582), 123. Copy consulted in the Biblioteca Palatina, Parma (Misc. Parm. 8°, 442). The first part of this work is dedicated to Lucretia Scotti Angosciola Contessa di San Paolo; Barbara Torelli Benedetti is the dedicatée of the shorter *Sommario delle indulgenze e peregrinationi di Gerusalemme*, with separate title-page (pp. 121–44). On Garofani, author of religious and secular works, and editor of a comedy by Niccolò Secchi (*Il Beffa*, 1584) dedicated to Isabella Pallavicino Lupi, see Affò, *Memorie* 4: 301–3, also 297.

28. Cox, *WW*, 138–39; Paolo Filippi dalla Briga, “Lettere di complimenti misti,” in *Complimenti...* (Venice: Appresso Zuane Zenaro, 1607), 126.

Paolo Filippi dalla Briga's *Letters of Compliments*, 1608).²⁹ Paradoxically, Torelli's distinguished lineage, which would doubtless have enabled her, like other female elites, to participate prominently in cultural activities, may have contributed to the low survival rate of her writings. It is likely that her aristocratic rank made her favor the long-standing practice among her peers of circulating her works discreetly in manuscript form for select audiences, rather than seeking the publicity afforded by print like many female contemporaries in Italy, who increasingly came not just from lower social ranks, but also from the minor nobility.³⁰ A further reason for her verse's poor survival may be that she composed it predominantly for oral transmission in exclusive coteries, as suggested by the fact that Filippi dalla Briga heard some of her poems being recited and by Francesco Agostino Della Chiesa's comment that, at the peak of her fame, Torelli "improvised sonnets and madrigals of marvelous artifice."³¹

On the literary side, the most informative source for Torelli's career is the courtier, poet, dramatist, and critic Muzio Manfredi (Cesena 1535?–1609), a relatively impecunious nobleman who enjoyed considerable cultural prestige in his day. He had clearly become close to Torelli by 1580 and remained so until at least 1591, playing an instrumental role in the early circulation and promotion of *Partenia*

29. Manfredi, *Cento donne*, 257 ("scrive leggiadramente versi, et oltre molti sonetti, che ella ha scritti a lui et in proposta, et in risposta"). Paolo Filippi dalla Briga, *I Complimenti...* (Turin: Per Gio. Domenico Tarino, 1608), fol. 6^v (the dedicatory letter by the author is dated December 15, 1607); the Venice 1607 edition (consulted in the British Library, 1085. L. 13) includes a dedicatory letter dated 1601.

30. See Brian Richardson, *Manuscript Culture in Renaissance Italy* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 17–18; and the same author's "Print or Pen? Modes of Written Publication in Sixteenth-Century Italy," *Italian Studies* 59 (2004): 39–64; Virginia Cox, *WW*, 1–34 (women's writing practices in the fifteenth century), 235–45 (women's relationship with the press in sixteenth-century Italy). For the preference of elite English women for the scribal medium, see Harold Love, *Scribal Publication in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 54–58; and Julie Campbell, *Literary Circles and Gender in Early Modern Europe: A Cross-Cultural Approach*. Aldershot UK: Ashgate, 2006), 139–42.

31. Francesco Agostino Della Chiesa, *Theatro delle donne letterate. Con vn breue discorso della preminenza, e perfettione del sesso donnesco* (Mondovi: G. Gislandi & G. T. Rossi, 1620), 94 ("all'improviso componeva sonetti, e Madrigali di mirabil artificio").

and the preparation of the Cremona manuscript.³² He seems to have served as a sort of literary advisor, editor, and agent to Torelli, as well as possibly her publisher and publicist. These activities would have accorded well with his continuous (though not always successful) efforts to seek patronage, especially through courtly service and through the copious production of publications in which he advertised his connections with social and cultural elites and academies. In both of these activities, Manfredi assiduously courted noblewomen either to win their grace directly, or, following a well-established courtly practice, to attract indirectly the favor of their consorts by masking his ambition as amorous devotion.³³

It is unclear how far Manfredi's prolonged interest in Barbara Torelli was motivated by his pursuit of patronage. Torelli for her part may have favored Manfredi for his literary reputation, his noble pedigree, and his important connections in elite circles, which would have made him well suited to introduce her work to others and to facilitate communication where social decorum prevented face-to-face contact. Manfredi served as a courtier in several influential courts, including Parma under Farnese rule and Mantua under the Gonzagas, as well as its small but vibrant satellite court of Guastalla. Manfredi's first documented mention of *Partenia*, in 1586, is in fact linked to his attempts to enhance his own status at the courts of Guastalla and Mantua. In 1587, he offered the play as a court entertainment for the wedding of his patron, Don Ferrante II Gonzaga (1563–1630), possibly in an attempt to regain favor after a mysterious fall from grace.³⁴ Four years later he appears to have circulated it among other Italian

32. See F. Pignatti, "Manfredi, Muzio," *DBI*, 68 (2007): 720–25. On the production of the Cremona manuscript of *Partenia*, see "Note on the edition of *Partenia*."

33. Verse for Torelli appears in Manfredi's *Cento donne...* (1580) and *Cento madrigali...* (Mantua: Appresso Francesco Osanna, 1587); Manfredi also celebrated women explicitly in his anthologies *Per donne romane* (Bologna: Per Alessandro Benacci, 1575); *Cento sonetti in lode di cento donne di Pavia* (Pavia: Bartoli, 1601); and *Cento sonetti in lode di donne di Ravenna* (Ravenna: per gli heredi di Pietro Giovanelli, 1602). For the dynamics of literary patronage, cf. Mary Ellen Lamb, *Gender and Authorship in the Sidney Circle* (Madison: University Wisconsin Press, 1990).

34. Lucia Denarosi, "Il principe e il letterato: due carteggi inediti di Muzio Manfredi," *Studi Italiani*, 17 (1997), 151–76. On the proposed performance, see below "The Transmission and Fortunes of *Partenia*."

patrons, including Carlo Emanuele I, Duke of Savoy, who was known for his interest in drama. The duke had a notable collection of manuscript tragicomedies and pastoral plays, and was himself a writer and dramatist.³⁵

Muzio Manfredi's relations with courts frequently intersected with his literary affiliations. As a member of academies in Mantua, Parma, Vicenza, and Bologna he seems to have played an important role in discussions on dramatic theory and dramaturgical practice, which may have made him particularly useful to Torelli, given that women were normally not admitted to such institutions. Literary academies became ubiquitous across the Italian peninsula around the mid-sixteenth century and played an important role in unifying Italian intellectuals in an era of political upheaval.³⁶ Frequently more structured than French *salons* and English literary clubs, Italian academies presented an alternative forum for serious intellectual discussion to those provided by universities and courts. They often contributed to the region's culture through their educational activities, including lectures and debates on a range of disciplines across the arts and sciences, as well as the sponsorship or compilation of various works, including plays, some of which were published. They were also concerned with entertainment, as evidenced by the use of humorous nicknames for academies and their members.

35. Manfredi, *LB*, 214 (to Carlo Emanuele of Savoy). The Biblioteca Nazionale, Turin, holds many manuscript plays dedicated to Duke Carlo Emanuele, though only some survived the devastating fire in the library of 1904. These include various tragedies (sacred and secular) and pastoral plays such as Manfredi, *Semiramis* (Fondo italiano, XXXIX.K126 [=N-V-11], paper, fragments only); Leone de' Sommi, *L'Irifle*; Guidabaldo Bonarelli, *Fillo di Sciuro*; Ciro Spontone, *Lethea*; and Ludovico Martino d'Agliè, *Alvida*. Guarini's manuscript *Il Pastor Fido* (hereinafter PF) was destroyed, and there is no trace of a manuscript of *Partenia*. See Giuseppe Mazzatinti, ed., *Inventari dei manoscritti delle biblioteche d'Italia*, Torino, ed. Albano Sorbelli, 28 (Florence: Olschki, 1924), 169ff; see also Ferdinando Gabotto, "Un principe poeta: Saggio di un lavoro sulla corte letteraria di Carlo Emanuele I di Savoia," *Rivista storica italiana* 8, no.111 (1891): 181–231.

36. For an encyclopedia of academies, see Michele Maylender, *Storia delle accademie d'Italia*, vols. 1–5 (Bologna: Capelli, 1926–1930), and for a searchable database (not including Parma): <http://www.bl.uk/catalogues/ItalianAcademies/>. For an overview of academic culture, see Amedeo Quondam, "L'Accademia," in *Letteratura italiana*, vol. I, *Il letterato e le istituzioni* (Turin: Einaudi, 1982), 823–98.