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Renaissance Theatergrams: from Italy to England

Louise George Clubb

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S K E N È   Theatre and Drama Studies

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(Cesare Ripa, *Allegory of the Printing Press*, 1645)

Acknowledgments

This volume owes its existence and bears my warmest thanks to Michele Marrapodi, who launched it, Robert Henke, who filled its sails, and Matthew Mason, who brought it into port.

Contents

Introduction

Robert Henke

The twelve essays of Louise George Clubb collected in this volume comprise a body of work that has transformed our understanding of Renaissance theatre. Her books and essays, published over fifty years, have changed the ways we think about sources and influences, provided a new comparative methodology, and resituated Shakespeare not as an isolated, meteoric genius but as a figure belonging to the international, and not just English, theatre of the age. Collaboration and collective creation has marked the process, material, and result of her research. In regard to process, the work derives from both individual, steady persistence and deep absorption of Italian scholarship on Cinquecento theatre. Her material extends the clearly collaborative nature of commedia dell'arte "composition" to Italian Renaissance theatre – and Shakespeare – at large. And the result is that a generation of scholars, including the present author, has found the theatregram method extremely productive, as will generations to come. If Clubb argues that Renaissance theatre was made, in large part, out of theatre, considerable research has been made of her research.

For Clubb's reassessment of Italian Renaissance theatre, her reappraisal of what constitutes a "source", and her innovative comparative methodology that realigns Shakespeare within an international context all stem from her generative concept of the theatregram: a modular theatrical unit or microstructure that, by "fission and fusion" as she puts it, is transformed and combined with other modules in myriad ways. Types of modular units include character, character relationships, actions, dialogues, themes, topoi, gestures, moves, stage places, props, linguistic units, and more. Theatregrams can pertain to dramatic concepts, such as plot, and also to the physical and embodied stage. In the Della Porta essay

collected here, she deftly links discreet places on the Renaissance
stage to appropriate actions: "windows and balconies lend
themselves to love duets, serenades and deceitful masquerades; doors
and corners invite eavesdropping; roofs facilitate slanging matches
between combatants on different levels; while groundfloor rooms
(usually specified as *camere terrene*) are useful for imprisonment,
hiding lovers or exchanging identities" (122). This analysis makes
clear the self-generating nature of Renaissance theatre in Clubb's
picture, as theatregrams of place generate theatregrams of action.
As Clubb has shown us over the course of her distinguished
career, Renaissance theatre is structured like a language, at once
conceptual and embodied, spoken by Ariosto, the traveling *comici*,
and Shakespeare.

The essays collected here, reflecting Clubb's expertise as both
italianista and *comparatista*, divide into two sections: the first on
Italian drama and the second on the English reception of Italian
Renaissance theater.

If Clubb's craft-based insight into the "technology" of Renaissance
theatre were limited to the arenas of improvising actors and actor-
writers such as Ruzante and Shakespeare, it would be interesting
enough. But in reading hundreds of scripted Italian plays, she shows
that not only the more recognizable Italian Renaissance playwrights
(Ariosto, Bibbiena, Machiavelli) but a galaxy of *commedia erudita*
and *commedia grave* writers made up this system, and that it was
from them that the *comici* took their plots, characters, and actions.
What's more, as Clubb illustrates, late Cinquecento playwrights
such as Della Porta got as well as they gave, cycling *Arte* characters
and gags back into their own scripts. As Richard Andrews has
demonstrated in *Scripts and Scenarios: The Performance of Comedy in
Renaissance Italy,* scripted theatre and the kinds of plays performed
by the often highly literate *commedia dell'arte* actors formed one
system. And just as mathematical formulas offer endless variations,
the modular and formulaic repertory Clubb identifies in Renaissance
scripts and scenarios abounds in variety and plenitude. Witness the
diverse types of characters that range throughout Della Porta's
plays: "Moors, Neapolitan criminals, charlatan magicians, medical
doctors, boastful Spanish captains, Latinizing pedants, and seagoing
foreigners from the Croatian port of Ragusa" (118).

As Clubb elucidates the rich modular repertory of Italian Renaissance theatre, we appreciate the innovative, avant-garde, and generative contributions of an art form that has been undervalued when compared to the conspicuous achievements of Italian Renaissance painting, sculpture, architecture, philology, and humanistic inquiry. Clubb demonstrates the influential role of ancient theatre for the *commedia erudita*; it was a "luminous clue" (Clubb 1989, 6) for humanist playwrights reviving the dramatic texts of Plautus, Terence, and Seneca. Clue and inspiration, but not blueprint: the ancients alerted Italian Quattrocento and Cinquecento humanists to the idea of dramatic form and structure that they believed was lacking in medieval *feste*, *farse*, *sacre rappresentazioni* and *favole mitologiche*. Ancient theatre offered instead a theatrical model with coherent principles, a technology of playmaking, and a commitment to controlled verisimilitude and the representation of reality. And the Italians ran with it. What emerges in Clubb's work is a magisterial study of Renaissance *imitatio* beyond the more familiar cases of lyric poetry and romance epic. For Quattrocento humanists, the twelve plays of Plautus discovered by Nicholas of Cusa in 1428 were like the ancient texts "disinterred" by Petrarch in Thomas Greene's study (1982) of Renaissance imitation – creative prompts. One can even say that Clubb excavates the excavators, as her voluminous and attentive reading introduces us to neglected playwrights such as Girolamo Bargagli, Raffaello Borghini, Cristoforo Castelletti, Pietro Cresci, Bernardino Pino da Cagli, Antonfrancesco Grazzini, Luigi Groto, Angelo Ingegneri, Luigi Pasqualigo, Orlando Pescetti, Alessandro Piccolomini, and Sforza Oddi. Unconstrained by the regionalism of many Italian theatre historians, she provides both national and international perspectives. No theatrical genre is neglected: the harder-edged *commedia erudita* of the early Cinquecento, the invention of romantic comedy as epitomized by *Gl'ingannati*, the structurally tragicomedic *commedia grave*, tragedy, rich strands of religious drama, and of course pastoral. As the essays on Ferrara and "Italian Renaissance Theatre" here demonstrate, Clubb gives due attention to canonical figures like Ariosto and Bibbiena, along with their political and cultural contexts. But she goes well beyond them, providing a dioramic view of Italian theatre, from Ferraran court experiments in the 1470s to the early Seicento.

Many of the salient theatregrams of Italian Renaissance drama – and Shakespearean comedy – revolve around a sexual center, infused by medieval *novelle* and romances, that was alien to Plautus and Terence. (The eponymous female character in Plautus' *Casina* never sets foot on stage.) First, Bibbiena in his groundbreaking 1513 *Calandria* splits the twins of Plautus' *Menaechmi* by gender, with each sibling either choosing to or constrained to cross-dress – thus creating a new theatregram by "fission". Then, some twenty years later, and drawing on medieval romance and earlier plays such as Pollastra's *Parthenio* (an edited edition of which Clubb has published [2010]), the Sienese Accademia degli Intronati develops the theme of romantic pathos with the cross-dressed heroine Lelia of *Gl'ingannati*. A romantic heroine needs a confidante, and this theatregram of character alignment generates both modules of situated action, such as the mocking review of the suitors (e.g., Portia and Nerissa in *The Merchant of Venice*) and theatregrams of language, as the *innamorata* now has someone before whom she can articulate her pathos. In this way, Italian theatre develops a new stage technology for interior expression. A "neo-classical" theatre, to be sure, but one that used Plautus and Terence as "invitations to form" (Guillén 1971) as it went well beyond classical comedy to develop romantic comedy and as it experimented with mixed genres unknown to the ancients.

Many of Clubb's reflections on Italian Renaissance theatre correct unhelpful binaries mostly introduced by romantic and/or Marxist-tilting critics: classical/romantic, learned/spontaneous, conservative/progressive, and elite/popular. In fact, as Clubb shows, Italian Renaissance theatre was both neo-classical and romantic; drew from careful humanist study and created an enduring improvisatory theatre; conserved the legacy of classical drama and also innovated; and was developed in courts and academies even as it integrated performance traditions from street and piazza.

Another of Clubb's unique contributions is to weave Italian Renaissance drama into its cultural contexts, especially that of humanism, as is particularly clear in this volume's essay on Castiglione. The endeavor of "*nova commedia*", she astutely observes, was part of a humanist, project intent on making Ferrara, Florence, Rome, or even "Italy" an international cultural vanguard, just as with the other arts. In the "Staging Ferrara" essay, the work of humanist

excavation and imitation begins in the Estense court of the 1470s: the Plautine texts are collected, edited, translated, and performed, which sets the stage for Ariosto's breakout *La Cassaria* (1508) and *I suppositi* (1509). The Medici pope Leo X, who was tutored by the humanist Poliziano, is shown to be a powerful catalyzing force for theatrical production, whether in Florence, Ferrara, or Rome – the latter the site of the famous 1514 performance of Bibbiena's *La Calandria.* Clubb goes on to link the project of the new drama with the paradoxical, serio-ludic spirit of humanism itself. It is an "an art that tries to have it both ways" (102) – an art both ancient and modern, conservative and avant-garde, native and foreign.

The second section of essays in this volume examine the deep and pervasive effect that Italian Renaissance theater had on the English, particularly Shakespeare. In addition to demonstrating the innovation, the richness, and the plenitude of scripted and improvised Italian Renaissance theatre, Clubb points us to a new understanding of source and influence, and a new comparative methodology. Clubb does not discount the gains of traditional, positivistic *Quellenstudien* in the arena of Italian and English Renaissance theatre; in fact her work provides probably the most detailed catalogues available anywhere of one-to-one, Italian-to-English "influence", conventionally understood. Her choice of Giovanni Battista Della Porta for her first book may have been prompted by the fact that he was the Italian playwright most translated in England, whether in English or Latin. But she soon realized the limitations of traditional source study. Her expansive reading of Italian dramatic scripts, *Arte* scenarios, and Shakespeare's plays led to the striking conclusion that, if one considers modular structures, these worlds are strikingly the same – one essay of hers, not included in this collection, is titled "How Do We Know When Worlds Meet?" (2011). If traditional, play-to-play source study emphasizes difference (the brilliant *Twelfth Night* dwarfs any single Italian 'source', so one argues), the theatregram method italicizes similarities. And since theatregrams tend to sort by genre (though they can spark from one to another, particularly from comedy to tragedy), dramatic genre becomes the salient unit of comparison rather than the individual play. The modular units deployed in Italian and Shakespearean comedy and pastoral are

revealed to be remarkably consonant. Strikingly, for what is in each case a controlled and selective representation of reality, they share exclusions as well as inclusions. What emerges is a "kinship", a shared repertory, a common system. The "influence" of Italian drama on Shakespeare is, as Clubb aptly puts it, "the more pervasive for being unspecific" (1989, 2).

The method leads to surprising and interesting turns. Della Porta's *Gli Duoi Fratelli Rivali* certainly bears comparison with *Much Ado about Nothing*: they each are dramatic adaptations of a Bandello novella (for Shakespeare, probably through Belleforest's French translation). Similarities are duly noted, though of a wider-angle view than those normally favored by source hunters. What Clubb emphasizes instead are structural and generic features: the play's tragicomedic structure and mode, the mixing of high and low. But *Gli Duoi Fratelli Rivali*'s comparative importance goes beyond *Much Ado About Nothing*: its modular units appear elsewhere in Shakespeare, as with the mobile structure of "the balcony or window scene combined with lyric evocation of the beloved as sunlight" (319), which Clubb traces through a Flaminio Scala scenario, *Fratelli Rivali* (2.2), and of course *Romeo and Juliet* (2.2). Analysis by modular unit, rather than from play to play, leads to comparative studies of the heroine-confidante relationship, the mocking review of the suitors, and extraordinary connections between Italian pastoral drama and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, and *As You Like It* ("Pastoral Jazz from the Writ to the Liberty"). What is important, when looking at the Italians, is not the individual author, but the overall, collective production. This is easy enough to see for the commedia dell'arte collectives, and for the academies like the Intronati who wrote plays collaboratively, but it also rings true for all Italian Renaissance playwrights. Shakespeare's unique artistry comes into even clearer focus when one comes to know, after reading Clubb, the modular repertory that he absorbed from the Italians.

Without annulling the idea of authorial agency, especially regarding Shakespeare's deft deployment of Italian resources, Clubb offers us trans-authorial intertextuality in practice. Less a new theory of intertextuality, as if we needed one, than intertextuality from the ground up, and emerging from the facts. Renaissance

theatregrams belonged to no one in particular, as the traveling players knew so well. Influence is not linear and traceable, from Shakespeare play back to a single Italian script or scenario. If a filmmaker creates a work with cynical heroes, stark lighting effects, frequent flashbacks, and intricate plots, it may be both unnecessary and unhelpful to identify a particular film noir as the influence.

Fresh interpretive insights abound in these pages—when before has *Merry Wives'* final episode in Windsor Park been so elegantly interpreted in the light of Renaissance pastoral? ("Pastoral Jazz from the Writ to the Liberty") – but Clubb's self-professed central project is to uncover *what is there*. The work is inductive, and rigorously so: the data is collected from reading and assessing hundreds of Italian plays and scenarios along with Shakespeare's plays. Throughout her career, Clubb has both benefitted from and invited, in print and in person, collaborative endeavor of the kind that scientists practice every day. Some of Clubb's closest colleagues at the University of California at Berkeley have been scientists; when she describes theatregrams being created "by fission and fusion" we may catch a whiff of Berkeley science. And in "A Magic Book of Renaissance Shows", a portrait of Clubb the sleuth complements that of inductive scientist. Encountering, in the Spencer Collection of the New York Public Library, a strange codex of 115 watercolors featuring hunchback farces, *commedia dell'arte*-style performances, jousts, tournaments and landscapes, she works through and past the received view that the codex served to advertise the repertory of a *commedia dell'arte* company. A combination of persistence and serendipity led her to the rare book collection at the Getty Research Institute, where she examined a modern magic book by the magician and historian of magic Ricky Jay as well as similar books from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and to a meeting with Jay himself. The conclusion: rather than being a sample book for a *commedia dell'arte* company, the odd codex was a magic "blow book": a magic prop, divided by tabs into different categories, by which one can flip through the text displaying to the viewing only the images in a given category. Reading between the lines of this delightful essay suggests the joy – and even fun – that Clubb (a delightful conversationalist as well as accomplished pianist) has received from her research.

Reading hundreds of plays and scenarios offers an interesting third alternative to two contrasting reading methods associated with comparative literature. In what was in its day considered a kind of disciplinary Bible, Erich Auerbach in *Mimesis* conducts close, rhetorical readings that radiate outward into broader historical discussions. More recently, digital humanities has proposed various forms of "distant reading", using units of measurement such as book titles, or word phrases. In her own way, Clubb incorporates both the near and the far. The *attentiveness* of Clubb's reading allows her to assess the pulse and shape of dramatic form within a given play. At the same time the *range* of her purview provides an ample data base for modular repertories.

In addition to linking Italian Renaissance theatre to the intellectual movement of humanism, Clubb demonstrates its capacity to absorb both elite and popular forms and practices. The *novella* presents an interesting case. On the one hand, the role of Boccaccio, Giraldi, Ser Fiorentino, and Straparola in Shakespeare's work is obvious enough, and has been duly examined by Geoffrey Bullough and other source critics. But scholarly emphasis on the low-hanging fruit of *novella*-to-play influence has obscured the more important resonance of Shakespeare's theatrical peers in Italy, whether they are playwrights or actors or both, like Ruzante. Clubb's Shakespeare, far from being a solitary romantic genius, was a collaborative theatre technician, who was keen to know how the Italians themselves adapted the *novella* to the stage. Both Italian playwrights and Shakespeare ransacked the Italian stories (in fact, many of the same *novelle*), but they needed to transform this *materia* into dramatic form, which among other things involved fleshing out the relatively limited character alignments of Boccaccio and Giraldi for what suited an Italian or English acting company. Without allowing the *novella* to eclipse the formative resonance of Italian theatre for Shakespeare, Clubb specifies its importance in fresh ways. *Commedia erudita* plays such as *La Calandria*, which at points reads like a commonplace book for the *Decameron*, emerge from the fruitful marriage of medieval narrative (including epic romance) and a useable ancient theatre. Clubb tellingly notes that the Boccaccio stories chosen by both the Italian playwrights and Shakespeare tend to center on the romantic heroine (e.g., *All's Well that Ends Well* and *Cymbeline* and their

Boccaccian sources). The *novella*'s importance for Shakespeare is decentered to some extent, but italicized in its particularity. Beyond the *novella*, Clubb shows how permeable Italian Renaissance theatre was to various performative and extra-dramatic practices.

In her accounts of the particular *novelle* selected by Renaissance dramatists, the emergence of romantic comedy from *Parthenio* to *Gl'ingannati*, "woman as wonder" (Clubb 1977) in *commedia grave* and in plays such as *All's Well that Ends Well* or *Measure for Measure*, and the famous actresses of the *commedia dell'arte*, Clubb brilliantly evokes the central role of women in both fictional and actual theatrical worlds. Here, the underrated and understudied plays of the *commedia grave*, whose heroines are as intrepid as they are introspective, contribute richly to the picture. Furthermore, the famous *commedia dell'arte* actresses, most notably Isabella Andreini, provide a case in point for Clubb's argument, most fully developed in *Italian Drama in Shakespeare's Time*, that scripted Italian Renaissance theatre cannot be separated from improvised. Andreini herself published a pastoral play, *Mirtilla*, and in the collections of her stage monologues published by her grieving husband Francesco after her death indicate, she rhapsodically stitched together *pezzi* from Petrarch, Plato, and other authors for her on-the-ground stage "compositions".

A generation prior to Isabella Andreini, the Intronati academy had praised the professional actress Vincenza Armani for her literary acumen in stage improvisations that they deemed equal to that of male-scripted drama, singling out her proficiency in the arts of genre: her capacity to shift deftly between the decorums of comedy, tragedy, and pastoral. If the "luminous clue" for early Cinquecento humanist playwrights was the rediscovery of ancient dramatic forms, genre became both organizing principle and conceptual prompt. Clubb does not share the humanists' belief in genre as a natural form, but she understands, in her quest as theatre historian, how the humanists, playwrights, and professional actors did think about genre in their time.

The Italians certainly transformed comedic form, but Plautus and Terence had given them a good starting point. The gradual reveal of Aristotle's *Poetics* in the Cinquecento illuminated tragedic form, which then could be modified, following sound Aristotelian

principles, in Giraldi's *tragedie di fin lieto*. But the ancient clues for a possible third genre, from Horace's remarks on the satyr play and the single extant example of Euripides' *Cyclops*, were less clear. The intriguing indeterminacies of the emerging form thus prompt Clubb's career-long investigation of pastoral drama as it unfurled in the course of the sixteenth century. This is precisely where the close-but-wide reading method yields significant data, as she goes well beyond the canonical pastoral dramatists Tasso and Guarini, reading outliers such as Ruzante, a wide range of late Cinquecento and early Seicento dramatists, and the *commedia dell'arte* pastoral plays that have long been recognized as a deep source for *The Tempest*. What emerges are the modular units of Italian dramatic pastoral, as identified in "Pastoral Jazz from the Writ to the Liberty":

> a country setting, forest, wooded island or a pleasance near shepherds' cottages; the presiding figure of Hymen, and/or Venus, Cupid or Jove decreeing mass weddings; courtly shepherds and nymphs; at least one satyr; an enchanter, *mago/a*; sprites, super/subhuman beings; spells and magic potions; dreams and sleep onstage; Ovidian transformations; wild beasts; clown-bumpkins, defining class differences in Arcadia between *pastore* and *villano*, *pecoraio* or *capraio*, who is lustful and coarse but not a rapist like the *satiro*; and clown-visitors from the city, favored especially in the *commedia dell'arte* scenarios (289).

It's a perfect example of the superiority of the theatregram method as comparative instrument: even a quick glance at the above list reveals a much greater kinship between the Italians and Shakespeare (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *As You Like It*, and *The Tempest*) than between Shakespeare and Lyly. Reading beyond Tasso and Guarini, who both hold to the neo-classical principles of verisimilitude, takes us into the world of Ovidian transformation and magic shared by plays such as Luigi Pasqualigo's *Gl'intricati* (posthumously published 1581) and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Clubb thus uncovers Shakespeare's deep kinship with Italian pastoral drama.

Clubb has an intellectual, and one might even say contemplative interest that singles out the pastoral genre for special consideration. The spatial and mental distance from city or court fundamental to

the pastoral idea, whether imposed or chosen, becomes a "fictive room to contemplation" (128) for Clubb, a place for debate, reflection, and in its amatory focus an avenue of interiority, of exploring the human heart at levels that had not been plumbed in Cinquecento comedy and tragedy. And pastoral, whether in the Italians or Shakespeare, nicely illustrates the kind of artistic creativity enabled by Renaissance theatregrams, which Clubb likens to jazz in its continual recycling and reshaping of musical motifs. "Composing" from this rich repertory with a pen or on one's feet is itself like jazz composition, argues Clubb. Literary pastoral itself "is to comedy and tragedy as jazz is to classical music" (292). *Commedia dell'arte* pastoral riffs off of scripted pastoral, and Shakespeare, "the jazziest of all, knew and improvised on the whole repertory of Renaissance theatregrams" (293).

Clubb's own repertory of critical concepts revolving around the theatregram method, collected in these pages, provides a generative legacy for us today and for future scholars. It is at once a deeply learned understanding of Italian Renaissance theatre and Shakespeare, and a rich, and eminently useable, basis for critical and creative work. Perhaps one could even speculate that future work, recycling and transforming Clubb's own critical concepts, might bear some similarity to the creative process that she sees in jazz.

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Part 1
Italian Drama

Italian Renaissance Theatre

Even as the word 'Renaissance' is being dropped from the vocabularies of many historians, most of Burckhardt's myth lives on, to the benefit of historical synthesis. One corollary that is disappearing to no one's regret, however, is the denial of creative vitality to the Italian theatre because it produced no Shakespeare.

All European countries where Renaissance drama appeared had strong traditions of medieval theatrical forms, religious and festive plays, mumming, municipal pageants, court spectacles, and, eventually, humanistic neo-Latin school drama. In millennially disunited Italy the regional varieties of these forms were many. When a new generation of humanistically educated writers undertook to surpass antiquity by constructing vernacular genres out of Roman ruins, they made avant-garde models of classical comedy and tragedy which gradually established a standard for 'national' scripted theatre, while coexisting with older local or popular styles.

Italy was unique in producing the technology of modern theatre. From the Cinquecento (the 1500s) into the Seicento (the 1600s) it developed a new system of play-making, comprising generic structures, methods of acting, and innovations in scene design, as well as theoretical principles and vocabulary. There had evolved by *imitatio* and *contaminatio* a repertory of combinable structural units, or theatergrams, susceptible of variation and fusion — theatergrams of person, association, action, design — based on Latin theatrical models, adding dramatized narremes from Italian *novelle* and histories to create a storehouse of movable parts that would appear in theatrical structures throughout Europe and would be carried from *commedia erudita* and *commedia dell'arte* to Molière and Shakespeare and beyond. For sheer mass of archival data-printed and manuscript plays, scenarios, repertories of poems, speeches and dialogues, *intermezzi* texts, and descriptions of court festivities — Italian theatre is singular. Published plays alone amount to nearly

6,000 in Lione Allacci's *Drammaturgia* to 1755. Long before plays in other countries were signed or printed, Italian presses were publishing theatrical texts by Ariosto, Machiavelli, and Trissino. Before theatrical companies existed elsewhere, traveling Italian troupes were creating a foreign market for the *commedia dell'arte.*

A plenitude of forms was the result of this theatrical energy and a range of potential functions which would be increasingly conjoined: the play as holiday, as lesson, as display of and bid for power by competing signories and city-states, and as commodity. A sophisticated art of staging contributed to the functions of the play as mirror of reality and as simulacrum of the cosmos. Finally, when long cohabitation of drama and music produced opera, the generating power of the Italian Renaissance theatre had performed its last act.

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"Today you'll see a new comedy called *Calandria* (*The Follies of Calandro*): not in verse, not ancient, not in Latin. If anyone says it's stolen from Plautus, he can search Plautus but he won't find anything missing." Thus was introduced to a glittering audience of prelates, noblewomen, and courtiers surrounding the new Pope Leo X in 1514 a play already reputed a paragon of fashionable humanistic wit. It had been performed a year earlier at the court of Urbino under Baldassar Castiglione's direction and was destined to be a model for generations of playwrights bent on appropriating classical drama for the triumph of modern Italian culture.

The work of the pontiff's most powerful counsellor, Bernardo Dovizi, Cardinal Bibbiena, *Calandria* was sumptuously produced. *Intermezzi* were inserted as diversions to be danced and sung between the five acts. Baldassare Peruzzi designed an innovative perspective set to give a view of contemporary Rome. Acted by beautifully costumed male amateurs speaking a Tuscan prose modelled on Boccaccio's *Decameron*, the play was a concentration within a unified action, place, and time of theatregrams, units of structure (characters, situations, actions/words, thematic patterns) that would eventually grow into a universal theatrical repertory. The intrigue is formed by combining a version of Plautus' comedy of the twin Menaechmi brothers with a fusion of several Boccaccian

stories of ill-served wives and silly old cuckolds. The struggle toward reunion of the boy-and-girl Greek twins separated in childhood produces transvestite disguises for both and erroneous identifications, in counterpoint with the deceits and dodges to which Calandro's love-starved wife is driven in her passionate affair with the male twin.

Fig. 1: A stage-set by Baldassare Peruzzi. His perspective set for the 1514 *Calandria*, later described by Giorgio Vasari, would have structurally resembled this one, which shows the Roman Colosseum and Castel Sant'Angelo in the background. The predominance of palatial architecture in this sketch, however, could have accommodated a tragedy.

Bibbiena and his immediate contemporaries united such elements in a verisimilar but stylized model of urban middle-class domestic conflict between youth and age, masters and servants, love and money, wit and fortune. Comedy so constructed was called *erudita*, *grave*, or *osservata* because it was written in observance of rules derived from the Latin plays that these authors had read in school

and acted at court. To the nucleus of characters populating their ancient exemplars — fathers and mothers, sons, scheming servants and parasites, nurses, braggart soldiers, prostitutes, procurers, and cooks — they added more recent figures from the novella tradition or from contemporary society — the frisky young wife, the humanistic pedant, the charlatan magician-alchemist.

This avant-garde comic form was a shapely and capacious container for elements from the vernacular tradition of narrative and of theatrical representation, a wide cultural variety of masking customs and carnival shows, sacred plays, song, dance, mime, farce, dramatized game, eclogue. The organizers and actors of the new comedy were men of courtly or academic ambience but the various kinds of entertainers for hire who were perennially on hand for public and private shows were quick to add these play-making structures to their wares.

The brief and brilliant papacy of Leo X nurtured the modern theatre even as it did the Protestant Reformation. In the act of providing Luther with new fuel for accusing the Church of Rome of licentiousness, paganism, worldliness, and aggrandizement of its wealth and temporal state, the court of the first Medici pope offered conditions enormously favourable to the growth and proliferation of drama. Among the first events of his reign was a spectacular bestowal of Roman citizenship on his brother Giuliano and nephew Lorenzo, for which a special wooden theatre was constructed on the Campidoglio. In addition to a lavish performance by aristocratic youths of Plautus' *Poenulus* in Latin 'With the proper pronunciation that can be acquired only in Rome' there were plays, rituals, and processions employing the city itself as a stage for glorification of the Medici and publicizing their return to rule in Florence and assumption of world power in Rome, equating the Medici reacquisition and expansion of power with the revival of the imperial and cultural glory of the Roman Empire.

In the fifteenth century the Latin dramatists had been played in the humanists' schools and imitated in neo-Latin comedies by schoolmasters and their alumni. Duke Ercole d'Este had supported humanistic education in Ferrara and performance of Plautine plays, in Latin and in translation, interlaced with mythological tableaux, eclogues, and dances, as features of the famous Ferrarese classical

festivals. Pomponio Leto's academy in Rome had developed an élite audience for performances of Plautus, Terence, and Seneca.

Not segregated from other sources of theatre, academicians in the Rome of Leo X frequented the company of fashionable courtesans such as the celebrated Imperia, for whom music and recitation were part of an elegant erotic persona, and Niccolò Campani called Strascino, a one-man show in his role of Sienese clodhopper. This social mingling swelled the tide of drama. The Pope's legendary appetite for theatrical entertainment was seconded by awareness of its political uses. His reign illustrates a continuity in the tradition and variety of dramatic forms, and the vitality of the humanists' enthusiasm for recovering and competing with every aspect of the classical culture whose material remains lay about them thick on the ground. Moreover, Leo's exercise of patronage encouraged theorizing on structures of secular vernacular theatre and contributed to the new system of play-making that would be one of Italy's gifts to early modern Europe.

In his pre-papal years Giovanni de' Medici had been accustomed to theatre as part of municipal and religious life in Florence, as of his humanistic schooling and his sojourns at courts outside Tuscany. The carnival seasons was the principal time for entertainments of every sort, but religious feast-days, aristocratic weddings, and visits of dignitaries were also taken as occasions for theatre.

His father Lorenzo il Magnifico had written a *Sacra rappresentazione di SS. Giovanni e Paolo (Sacred Play of Saints John and Paul)* (1491) in the medieval rhymed octave format, for performance by confraternity boys. Such plays, chanted in public spaces by the sons of citizens of various social class, contained scenes from biblical and hagiographical tradition, history, romance, and local custom. Elaborate stage machinery made possible a multiplicity of settings from Heaven to Hell and all places and times in between. The entire community was the audience and its lore the subject; the genre was a vehicle for reassuring messages, political and ideological, and its popularity continued in the sixteenth century even as new kinds of theatrical styles were being generated by fashion, politics, and humanistic scholarship. The *sacre rappresentazioni* had some counterparts elsewhere in Italy. Among flourishing secular contemporary forms were the Ovidian myth play,

favola mitologica, and other hybrid works in the vernacular rhyme written and performed by courtly amateurs, with accompanying spectacle in which professional musicians and dancers took part.

The future pope had been tutored by the poet and humanist Angelo Poliziano, editor of Terence's *Andria* and author of *Orfeo*, a *favola mitologica* in mixed verse-forms with song that has been hailed variously as the restoration of Greek satyr play, as Poliziano's version of the Venetian festival mumming called *momaria*, and as the precursor of Italian Renaissance tragedy and pastoral drama. *Orfeo* was performed about 1480 on a hill-shaped float carried or wheeled into Cardinal Francesco Gonzaga's banquet hall in Mantua. By pre-empting structures from the *sacra rappresentazione* to re-enact a symbolically charged Greek myth, with a finale of Bacchantes tearing Orpheus apart to the rhythm of popular carnival songs, Poliziano probably aimed at pleasing an audience of humanistically educated ecclesiastical connoisseurs. But the shifting elements in this prophetic work illustrate the dangers and difficulties of distinguishing between high culture and low, for a two-way motion is visible here at the outset of Renaissance drama.

Fig. 2: Scenes from Terence's *Andria*, Venice, 1524. In the order of the woodcuts follows the progress of the plot; the back-curtains represent entrances to the habitations of the various characters, who are identified by the first letters of their names.

Before his accession Leo X was friendly with Ludovico Ariosto, who was engaged from his youth in Ferrarese court productions of Plautus and Terence in both Latin and translation. Ariosto's comedies *La cassaria* (*The Coffer Comedy*) (1508) and *I suppositi* (*The Pretenders*) (1509) established the primacy of the genre in which Bibbiena would follow, the *commedia erudita* constructed on the principles of Horace and Donatus but in contemporary Italian settings. In *Suppositi* these features are matched with traces of the schoolroom and of the undergraduate Goliardic spirit that in the preceding century had been cultivated in humanistic neo-Latin comedy; Ariosto modernizes the Latin comedy stock type of the *adulescens* as a Sicilian student at the University of Ferrara who exchanges identities with his servant in order to become 'a student of love'.

The innovation, identified admiringly in the comedies of Ariosto and his generation by imitators and commentators, inhered in the design, the structural coherence of beginning, middle, and end, the mechanism of presenting fiction on-stage so as to capture and embody in the vernacular the causality and illusion of quotidian reality summed up in the supposedly Ciceronian definition of comedy as "imitation of life, mirror of custom, image of truth". A technical advance in dramaturgy, this feat of theatrical engineering depended on analysing and translating Latin comedy.

More immediate and less intellectual pleasure was also to be had in these comedies. When *Suppositi* was produced for the Roman carnival of 1519 with singing and mythological morris dances in the *intermezzi*, French emissaries to the Vatican were scandalized by the Pope's delight in the prologues's puns about sodomy.

Niccolò Machiavelli also turned his pen to avant-garde comedy in hopes of Medici patronage. His *La mandragola* (*The Mandrake*) was considered a masterpiece from the time of its first appearance about 1518. Machiavelli had honed his stagecraft by translating Terence's *Andria* and now he welded narrative elements from the *Decameron* into a dramatic *tour de force* of adultery triumphant. The supposed generative power of a mandrake potion is the basis of a wickedly hilarious and profoundly Florentine trick perpetrated by a brilliant parasite, aided by a corrupt friar, to the satisfaction of the lover, the initially reluctant wife, and the oblivious cuckold himself. More than his Plautine *Clizia* (1525), Machiavelli's *Mandragola* reflects

his interest in the Attic Old Comedy model of political satire, much discussed in theoretical circles but discarded by the majority of dramatists as potentially libellous and dangerous to civic discourse. Machiavelli's reported imitation of Aristophanes, *Le maschere* (*The Masks*), has been lost but the capacity for satirical political allegory visible in *Mandragola* hints at his Aristophanic tendencies.

While classical models and precepts were searched for the basis of a new vernacular comedy, tragedy was under discussion by the same literary intelligentsia, the restored text of Aristotle's *Poetics* providing an impetus. Giangiorgio Trissino, a noble Vicentine frequenter of Leo's court, with his *Sofonisba* (1515) in unrhymed hendecasyllable verse made a vernacular claim on the territory of Greek tragedy, fashioning a version of Aristotelian 'tragedy of pathos' around the figure of the Carthaginian queen who was a casualty of imperial Roman policy administered by Scipio Africanus. Dramatizing a subject of Livy's history and of Petrarch's Latin epic *Africa* in a theatrical form evoking Euripides and Seneca, Trissino's tragedy was an act of cultural self-assertion typical of early Cinquecento literary playwrights.

Also in 1515 the Pope's kinsman Giovanni Rucellai, host to the critical discussions in the Florentine Orti Oricellari, put a Gothic legend into Senecan shape with *Rosmunda*, in which appear the political conflict and consequent violence contemplated in the theory of statecraft that emerged from the same intellectual context in Machiavelli's writings. Although the custom of performing tragedy would come only later, especially in the ambience of Ferrara, Padua, and Venice in the 1540s, these experiments in regular tragedy were soon imitated and published.

Just out of the incunabular stage, the printing industry was revolutionizing culture high and low. The place of theatrical entertainment in the culture changed accordingly. The practice begun in the preceding century of publishing illustrated editions of Terence's comedies continued in the Cinquecento, but now vernacular plays also were printed as texts for reading and acting or as commemorations of specific performances.

The first editions of Rucellai's tragedy, of Bibbiena's *Calandria*, and, very probably, of *La commedia di Callimaco e Lucrezia*, as Machiavelli's *Mandragola* was entitled in its original undated

appearance in print, were all enterprises of Giovanni di Alessandro Landi, a beadle at the University of Siena, whose involvement with the printing of plays illustrates the multiplicity of theatrical activity tangent to the papal court.

Among Leo's favourite entertainments were performances by Sienese actor-authors like Strascino the bell-maker, Mescolino the paint-mixer, and Mariano the farrier, whose dialect plays on the antics of the peasantry, sometimes joined with fantasy and legend, belonged to the municipal ludic tradition of Siena. An example of 1516 is the eclogue of *Mezucchio* by Pierantonio the cloth merchant (P. A. Legacci, called Stricca). Its basis is the genre of the *mogliazzo* or 'wifing play', of which this one is typical. A dramatized mating contest in one act for five peasants, it is dispute between two yokels for love of Vica, conducted by dialogue in tercets or octaves and songs accompanied by a rustic cittern. Vica decides at last to take both suitors and add Menichella, another of her lovers. The finale is a round dance sealing the four-way accord with an invitation to the audience to join Vica in bed.

Fig. 3: A rustic eclogue, Siena 1518. On the title-page to the second edition of Pierantonio dello Stricca Legacci's *Egloga rusticale di Mezucchio*, a woodcut shows Vica with her quarrelling suitors and a view of the countryside.

Though it would be an exaggeration to say that in the first half of the sixteenth century theatre throve in every city of the politically fragmented Italian peninsula, there were pageants and plays of many sorts and lines of communication open by which news of them travelled to the principal cites and variously allied courts: Venice, Ferrara, Milan, Mantua, Padua, Bologna Florence, Rome, Naples. Among them Siena figured more prominently in the theatrical life of the peninsula than its size and political power warranted, owing in part to geography and to its connection with the papacy. Almost any event in Siena was an occasion for theatre. Local rejoicing at the election of a Piccolomini pope, Pius III, in 1503 called forth not only processions, orations, and adornment of the city but also a spectacular enactment in the Campo of the rites of papal coronation, with music, fireworks, masked gentlemen, and priests playing the roles of bishops and cardinals for the edification of the populace.

The custom of the *veglia*, the evening pastime of story-telling, dialogue, and verbal games, long cherished in Siena and its countryside, helped develop rapport between performer and audience as a natural social bond. The local tradition of theatre was institutionalized by the founding of the Congrega dei Rozzi and the Accademia degli Intronati. This double event occurred in 1531-2, early in the city-state's long and finally losing struggle against Spanish-Florentine power.

That year, in a move toward specialization that seems an inevitable trope of cultural change, the Rozzi or 'Rough-cut' artisan play-makers officially established the Congrega, and thus limited their range but protected their territory by laying claim to the rustic *commedia villanesca*. In this genre the lower middle-class urban Rozzi represented the characters of semi-literate peasants, their dialect, desires, quarrels, and trials, portraying them in rhymed octaves and tercets with gusto, sympathy, or derision, but always at a distance that made it possible to use the peasant as an immutably Sienese voice or mouthpiece for local political sentiment, anti-Florentine or anti-Spanish. Despite bans imposed in the later Cinquecento, the Congrega would survive into the early Seicento but is members then would be drawn from the genteel classes and the forms of its production would change accordingly.

Simultaneously with the institution of the Rozzi, a group of aristocratic university wits declared a different theatrical mission in the Intronati Academy. They chose the name in reference to their pose of thunderstruck silliness and took as emblem a gourd, signifying sexual jesting and empty-headedness hiding wit. On the first day of carnival, or Twelfth Night, 6 January 1532, for an audience of ladies, the scions of such families as the Piccolomini, Sozzini, Tolomei, and Landucci staged a 'Sacrificio' in which they renounced love, and then repentantly followed it up later in the carnival season with the famous comedy of atonement *Gl'ingannati* (*The Deceived*). With an up-to-the-minute setting and a plot based on social upheavals following the sack of Rome in 1527 by the army of the emperor Charles V, *Ingannati* offered a mood of restorative conviviality, laced with badinage and bawdy, reminiscent of the traditional *veglia* blended with the *Decameron*.

Years later, Girolamo Bargagli's *Dialoghi*, idealizing the great early days of the Academy, described the Intronati's taste for romances and novellas containing 'beautiful examples of constancy, of greatness of spirit and of loyalty', like those in some favourite *Decameron* tales, especially stories of 'great virtue and endurance in women who after persecution and calumny are found to be chaste and innocent'.

Earlier loosely-built rhymed octave plays written for Siena by the Aretines Bernardo Accolti and Giovanni Pollastra had set precedents for dramatizing such romance narratives. *Ingannati* was the first of the modern line of Sienese comedies that bore witness to this taste. Incorporating the avant-garde methods and stage devices launched by the generation of Ariosto and Bibbiena, the academic playwrights, probably working in committee, gave the new idiomatic prose language and the unified verisimilar five-act intrigue form to the story of Lelia, whose spirit is scarred and family scattered by the Sack but whose love and audacity are strong. In male disguise she serves the man she loves, wooing for him another woman, who falls in love with the wooer; the return of Lelia's lost brother provides the peripety that concludes in double weddings and reunion of families.

With their carnival entertainment of 1532 the Intronati produced a romantic strain of avant-garde *commedia grave*, now as grave in content as in structure, that would become internationally successful

after accumulating several Sienese exemplars that disseminated the model throughout Italy. Contemporaries of Shakespeare, the playwright's playwright, recognized the kinship of *Twelfth Night* to the *Ingannati* family.

Women are central to this prophetic innovation. Ladies functioned in the theatre of the time primarily as spectators, whether as guests of honour or onlookers at male display. Female singers and dancers took part in spectacles and intermezzi, accomplished courtesans like Imperia and Tullia d'Aragona entertained the literati with music and recitation, nuns and convent girls engaged in cloistered performances, but the day of the professional actress was some thirty years in the future. It is the more significant, therefore, that the Intronati comedies not only concentrated on the adventures of romantic heroines but were fashioned for the approval of feminine audiences. The annals of law enforcement show, moreover, that women sometimes joined in the private performances. Among those attending a comedy at a *veglia* in 1542 and convicted of infringing prohibitions against secular gatherings and wearing disguise, three ladies were cited for performing, one in servant's costume.

<p style="text-align:center">***</p>

To the north, during the same carnival season of 1542, the sudden death of Angelo Beolco, the celebrated actor and writer famed as creator of Ruzante, leading character in many comedies, wrecked the grand programme planned by the Accademia degli Infiammati, founded the year before by gentlemen of the University of Padua (among whom was Alessandro Piccolomini, a key member of the Sienese Intronati who was continuing his studies in the Veneto). The crown of the occasion was to have been a performance of the tragedy *Canace* by Sperone Speroni, professor of philosophy and elected 'Principe' of the new academy. Rehearsals started under Beolco's direction, but the production was cancelled when he died before what would have been his first appearance in a tragic role.

It is interesting for theatre history that high culture by this decade regarded tragedy as so important. Intense discussion of the restored text of Aristotle's *Poetics* in such company produced experiments with a mythic incest plot and irregular verse lengths in *Canace*, and

the attacks on it from the Ferrarese circle of Giovanbattista Giraldi Cinthio were also couched in Aristotelian terms. Giraldi's own tragedy *Orbecche*, blending Thyestean horrors from Seneca with ruthless Machiavellian political motivation, was performed in 1541 for Duke Ercole d'Este and later on several great occasions, but in his *Discorso* on playwriting Giraldi championed the happy ending as more pleasing to audiences and he went on to write several tragedies in which virtue triumphs and villainy is punished.

The debates about Aristotle and the kinds, construction, and features of tragedy are revealing of the intellectual passion for theory in this age of academies. The invention of a new science of dramatic criticism was another achievement of sixteenth-century Italian culture. The various types of tragedy that followed, whether on historical, mythical, or chivalric subjects, would share principles of regularity and unity, and features in which Aristotle's analysis of structures and Seneca's practice were visible.

Tragedy was less often produced, less popular than comedy, and eventually both were less attractive to audiences than pastoral plays and anything served up by the professional *comici*. It is nevertheless instructive about the way theatre was produced, and about the flourishing of drama in the Veneto, to observe that the academic environment in which *Canace* evolved was inhabited by Ruzante, the supreme impersonation of the comic peasant.

Beolco was a comet from Padua whose fame was to remain for centuries limited to the Veneto because of his linguistic localism. Baseborn but well-connected, he had rare histrionic, literary, and musical gifts with which he created the character of Ruzante, who sings and comments on his world in a Paduan peasant dialect fortified and complicated with a parodic erudite lexicon. Beolco had been first observed playing the role of Ruzante in a 'comedia alla vilanesca' during the Venetian carnival of 1520. His performance was part of a grandiose entertainment with banquet, allegorical floats, and bull-running sponsored by the Immortali, one of the Compagnie della Calza, or clubs designated by coloured hose, whose patrician young members organized various kinds of spectacle in Venice.

Beolco followed the tradition of satirizing the grossness of peasants, a source also of the artisan plays in Siena and the Cava farces in Naples, but he simultaneously adopted the fashion of

burlesquing academic and elegant literary forms such as the courtly pastoral eclogue. Even his earliest works, *La pastoral* (1517?) and the *Prima oratione*, a dramatic monologue performed in 1521 for a new bishop of Padua, reveal Beolco's command of rhetoric and of dramatic technique, as well as a bond with the earthy world of the bumpkin he played. His sympathy would ferment into compassion and protest when the Wars of Cognac and bad harvests devastated the countryside around Padua, driving many peasants to sell out to large landholders and flee to town slums.

Of his seven full-length plays, the desperate comedy *La moscheta* (*The Fly-Specked Phony Lingo*) (c.1532) best exemplifies Beolco's power to catch grim reality and comic character in complex linguistic nets of monologues and dialogues. *Moscheta* shares some assumptions of *commedia erudita* in its five-act division, unity of time and place, and 'theatregrams' of disguise and eavesdropping, but its setting is a down-and-out underside of the regular urban scene and its pitiful scrap of a plot the threadbare events that occur there: with the help of Menato, another refugee peasant, Ruzante tries to pass himself off as a Tuscan-speaking foreigner to test his wife Betia's fidelity, but ends beaten by the soldier Tonin and sharing Betia with him and with Menato. The characters define themselves in vital speech and the compelling Ruzante is alternately parodic, craven, bitter, coarse, touching, and, above all, funny in his linguistic creativity.

In *L'Anconitana* (*The Woman from Ancona*) (1534-5?), a lighter comedy with a Decameronian plot and multiple love interest reminiscent of Bibbiena's *Calandria*, Beolco moves closer to *commedia erudita* and presents a different Ruzante, well fed, with a steady job in town, filling the role of clever mocking servant to a dodderer who lusts for a courtesan and is cuckolded by his wife. Ruzante is all fun here, dancing, making love, and singing Paduan songs; his Venetian master Tomao uses his own dialect and the elegant lovers speak Tuscan. Beolco's fellow actors in these comedies were gentlemen amateurs in the Paduan circles of Alvise Cornaro, the patron in whose palace garden the Loggia and Odeon built by Falconetto provided a place for Ruzante's plays and music. The milieu was upper class, close to the university, moved by intellectual currents and practical concerns, given to discussions of

Lutheranism and projects of land management. The role of Ruzante was a genre figure with special resonance for this audience, but Beolco was also in demand elsewhere and was invited to act as *choregos* in more than one theatrical centre.

He took his group to Ferrara in 1529 to perform rustic *intermezzi* at a ducal banquet preceded by a performance of *Cassaria* and in 1532 again collaborated on a production with Ariosto, who was still functioning as the Este court *choregos* near the end of his life. In the role of Ruzante folk and high culture touched, and its creator belonged to the private gentlemanly ambience in which theatre was sponsored, as the failed project to produce Speroni's *Canace* attests. Beolco's reputation is so exclusively theatrical, however, as to explain why he should sometimes have been incorrectly presented in theatre history as a *comico*, or player of the *commedia dell'arte*. Capering Ruzante and fatuous, rich Venetian Tomao prefigure Arlecchino and Pantalone, but Ruzante's status as the director, writer, and leading actor of a group of amateurs should not be mistaken for the later one of the *capo-comico*, or actor-manager, of a professional acting troupe. That Beolco's example led the way, however, is more than likely. The first extant professional contract binding a group of men to travel about playing comedies for money was signed in 1545 in Padua. The documented *commedia dell'arte* begins here.

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The long-remembered festivities for the wedding of Ferdinando de' Medici, Grand Duke of Florence, with Christine of Lorraine in May 1589 included a marine spectacle, the *Naumachia*, in the courtyard of the Pitti Palace, and in the Uffizi a Sienese *commedia grave* with *intermezzi* that were a milestone in theatre music and stage design, as well as two *commedia dell'arte* performances with well-known actresses in competition. This occasion offers a convenient chronological vantage-point for viewing the immediate past and future of the theatre in Italy, for seeing what was in vogue, how the technology had developed, how the immemorial variety of entertainment from all parts of the peninsula had contributed to a self-consciously mature institution of the theatre. It was an institution that still provided élite and corporate patrons with

instruments of self-celebration and political competition, but now
was proliferating and organizing forms of entertainment to sell to
many markets, and in the process expressing the cultural paradigm
of the spirit of Catholic Reform, the charge to revitalize and
internalize the substance of doctrine by means of theatrical images.

Fig. 4: Illustration to a printed *commedia grave*. A nurse remonstrates with a
cross-dressed *innamorata* in Oddi's *Prigione d'amore*, 1591. One of thirty-one
woodcuts in a series used by Venetian printers for different regular comedies
in 1591 and 1592.

The dramatic productions on the varied programme took place in
a hall of the Uffizi that in 1586 had been decorated by Bernardo
Buontalenti for another Medici wedding and was redisposed
when great occasions demanded. Here gentlemen of the Intronati
Academy played one of their romantic regular comedies, Bargagli's
La pellegrina (*The Pilgrim*) (*c.* 1568), revised to compliment the French
bride. It bore the features of standard literary comedy: five acts of
intrigue plot, disguises, and deceits, prose ranging from impassioned

love speeches by the high-minded pilgrim Drusilla, seeking her lost husband, to satire and scurrility in the mouths of gluttons and bawds — all contracted into a one-day, single-set dramatization of the emotional narrative of feminine heroism typical of the Intronati and in the late Cinquecento cultivated by many other playwrights such as Giambattista Della Porta and Sforza Oddi.

Intermezzi, compact of verse, music, and dance, had now achieved the status of genre in themselves, although the cultural prestige of the dramatic text was unchallenged and a noble entertainment would have been thought insubstantial without a regular five-act play. Thematic connection between comedy and intermezzi was desirable in theory, as Bernardino Pino asserted in a treatise on comedy in 1572. At a wedding feast, the occasion itself offered the theme-union, harmony, divinely providential plan. Suitably, the plot of *Pellegrina* is a domestic intrigue combining several levels of love and contemporary manners, with a denouement in which wit and Christian forgiveness reconcile families, uniting Tuscan and French lovers.

Seated on movable tiers around three sides of the Medici theatre, the spectators watched the comedy unfold on a painted perspective set offering a single composite view of Pisa rising beyond a proscenium arch. But between each act Pisa was eclipsed by cosmic visions, as lighting and machinery illustrated the Platonic theme of music as a magic influence on gods and humankind, symbol of nuptial harmony and binding force of the universe in all its elements, air, fire, earth, and water. Conceived by Giovanni de' Bardi and staged by Buontalenti, the *intermezzi* displayed celestial cloud-riders, terrestrial gardens, infernal fire-demons and a Dantesque Lucifer, a flying Orphic sorceress, and sea waves with deities, barges, and ships afloat. Danced and sung to texts by Ottavio Rinuccini, Giovanbattista Strozzi, and Laura Lucchesini Guidiccioni and music by Bardi, Luca Marenzio, Cristofano Malvezzi, and others, these *intermezzi* are theatrical agglomerations representing long cumulative experience of the various resources of municipal and courtly diversion.

Fig. 5: 'Hades', the fourth intermezzo to Bargagli's *Pellegrina*. Engraving by Epifanio d'Alfiano, 1592, from the original scene designed by Bernardo Buontalenti for the 1589 performance.

By this time professional acting troupes had multiplied, and for at least two decades had included women, a few of whom quickly achieved fame, becoming the first leading ladies of the modern theatre. The presence in Florence of the celebrated Gelosi Company resulted in an invitation to perform their specialty, an improvised or non-scripted comedy in three acts, for the wedding guests. Two actresses vied for the limelight; the contention was resolved by performing two improvised comedies, using the *Pellegrina* set and repeating the hugely successful *intermezzi*. The wedding guests thus saw both Vittoria Piisimi's gypsy role in *La çingana*, and Isabella Andreini's multilingual mad-scene in *La pazzia d'Isabella*.
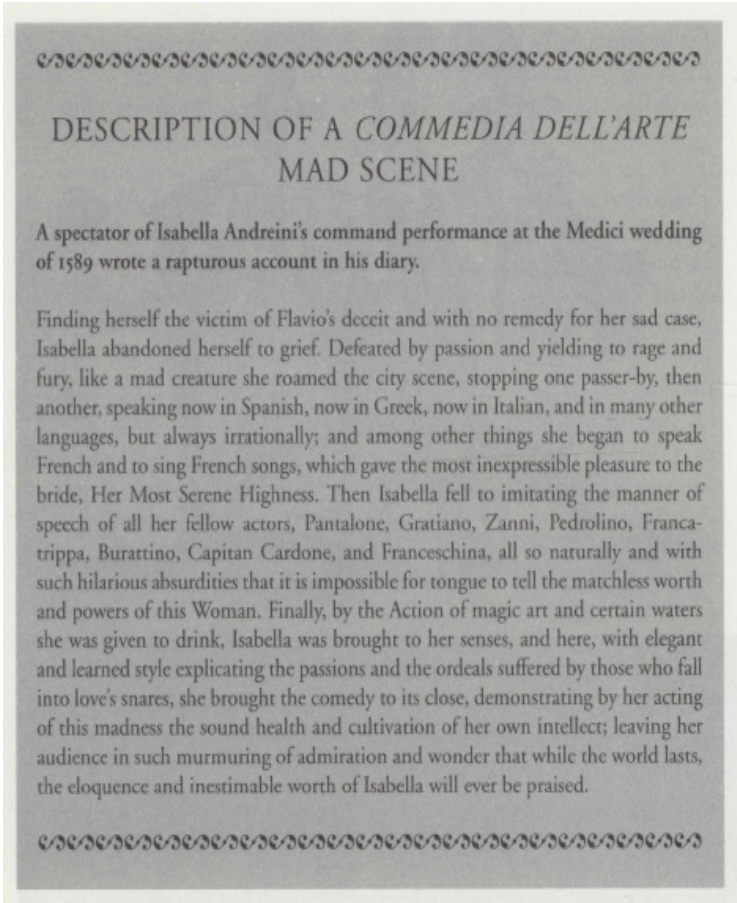
DESCRIPTION OF A *COMMEDIA DELL'ARTE* MAD SCENE

A spectator of Isabella Andreini's command performance at the Medici wedding of 1589 wrote a rapturous account in his diary.

Finding herself the victim of Flavio's deceit and with no remedy for her sad case, Isabella abandoned herself to grief. Defeated by passion and yielding to rage and fury, like a mad creature she roamed the city scene, stopping one passer-by, then another, speaking now in Spanish, now in Greek, now in Italian, and in many other languages, but always irrationally; and among other things she began to speak French and to sing French songs, which gave the most inexpressible pleasure to the bride, Her Most Serene Highness. Then Isabella fell to imitating the manner of speech of all her fellow actors, Pantalone, Gratiano, Zanni, Pedrolino, Francatrippa, Burattino, Capitan Cardone, and Franceschina, all so naturally and with such hilarious absurdities that it is impossible for tongue to tell the matchless worth and powers of this Woman. Finally, by the Action of magic art and certain waters she was given to drink, Isabella was brought to her senses, and here, with elegant and learned style explicating the passions and the ordeals suffered by those who fall into love's snares, she brought the comedy to its close, demonstrating by her acting of this madness the sound health and cultivation of her own intellect; leaving her audience in such murmuring of admiration and wonder that while the world lasts, the eloquence and inestimable worth of Isabella will ever be praised.

Fig. 6

Theatrical spaces also were increasing in number and function in the last quarter of the Cinquecento. As early as 1576 there was a 'stanzone', or large room, named for the nearby Baldracca tavern behind the Uffizi, where, under the administration of the customs office, travelling troupes performed for payment to bourgeois spectators and to the ducal audience, which had access through a palace corridor and a point of vantage behind a grate. In Spanish-ruled Milan also a small theatre for commercial comedy was built in 1598, attached to the Palazzo Ducale.

Fig. 7: Venetian carnival maskers c.1600. Depicted in tempera in the Paduan Codicetto Bottacin, the revellers are costumed as if for comedy. The lady walks on high wooden clogs to keep her feet dry and is supported by companions disguised as a lover and a *zanni*.

The modern centralized stage space, as opposed to the scattered or consecutively ordered 'luoghi', or multiple places, of medieval staging, had been defined before 1508, when *Cassaria* was performed at the Este court on a perspective set painted by Pellegrino da Udine. But experiments in scenic illusion and research on Vitruvius and Roman theatre had not all moved in the same direction, and, even in cities where theatre was most abundant, permanent stages were slow to appear. A wooden theatre built in Ferrara for Ariosto had burned down and was not replaced. Within the usual theatrical venues — courts, municipal buildings, private houses — different spaces were adapted for individual performances.

When Leone De' Sommi, author and producer of Hebrew and Italian plays for the Jewish community's actors and the Gonzagas' Invaghiti Academy in Mantua, wrote the earliest Italian treatise on practical staging, *Quattro dialoghi* (*Four Dialogues Concerning*

Stage Representations) (1556), he was thinking of temporary stages at court. In 1567 De' Sommi applied, unsuccessfully, for exclusive right for ten years to provide space for commercial players. The impresarial approach would eventually make theatre regularly available at prices to attract a broad public. The Spanish system of linking theatre revenues with rentable space owned by charitable institutions was followed in Milan and Naples. In Venice the mercantile aristocracy, families like the Giustinian and the Tron, bypassed the hospitals and entered directly into commerce, fitting up their properties as theatres and pocketing a profit from the sale of tickets and refreshments. As early as the 1570s there were two theatres in the vicinity of San Cassiano frequented by the public for comedies at carnival, although in subsequent periods playhouses were closed and commercial players banned.

A permanent theatre was established and an epoch of research on classical theatre architecture was ended in 1585 with the completion by Vincenzo Scamozzi of Palladio's plan of the Olympic Academy's theatre in Vicenza. The way of the future would lie with the box stage and movable flats used by Buontalenti and earlier Cinquecento scene-painters, rather than with the fixed architectural perspectives receding from the arched openings of the *frons scenae* built by Scamozzi, but the Teatro Olimpico was both a monument to the past and a herald of the permanent playhouse as an urban necessity. The academicians used their theatre for many kinds of events, such as the reception of the first Japanese visitors to Europe. For the inauguration of such a building, however, drama was required. A pastoral play was first intended, but decades of intense theorizing about Aristotle's *Poetics* favoured his prime exemplar of tragic structure and the Teatro Olimpico opened with *Edipo re*, Orsatto Giustiniani's verse translation with choral music by Andrea Gabrieli.
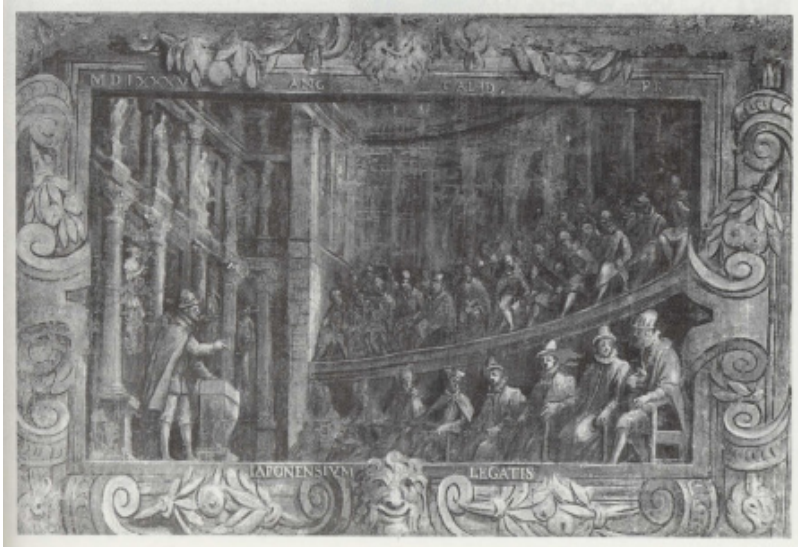
Fig. 8: The first Japanese visitors to the Teatro Olimpico. A monochrome fresco records the welcome of the Olympian Academicians in 1585 to new Christian converts who were being escorted around Italy by Jesuit missionaries.

The general conviction of the superiority of *Oedipus rex*, manifest also in Torquato Tasso's challenging it with an elaboration of its structure in *Il Re Torrismondo*: *tragedia* (1587), collided with the Church's condemnation of Protestant tenets of predestination — the ironic reversal in Sophocles' 'perfect' plot being a figure of the inescapability of fate. This conundrum challenged Catholic imagination and called forth theatrical counter-demonstrations of providence, a benign pre-vision that leaves intact the concept of free will. Writers of *commedia grave* in the period often adduced Sophoclean principles for their labyrinthine intrigue structure illustrating the workings of a heavenly plan for human happiness. The genre that best embodied the concept, however, was the pastoral play, which, after Ferrarese experiments culminating in Tasso's *Aminta* (1573), became the dominant form of dramatic literature. Italian stages and presses were inundated with varieties of *favole pastorali* in occasionally rhymed verse, set in a rustic landscape of the mind distant from the urban realism required of comedy and the courtly solemnity of tragedy.

Fig. 9: Guarini's *Pastor fido*, 2, Venice, 1602. In the augmented 20th edition G. B. Aleotti's engravings represent each act's scenes simultaneously, disposed narratively in order of occurrence from foreground to background, with characters labelled at every appearance. Spatial relations signify time's passage, so that the primary subject illustrated is the structure of the plot, rather than the spectacle of action on stage.

The most influential example was Guarini's *Il pastor fido: tragicommedia* (*The Faithful Shepherd*), published at the end of the 1580s amid polemics about the mixing of the two regular genres. Its happily ironic Sophoclean plot demonstrates the inescapability of a divine providence that uses the power of faithful love to lift the ancient curse on Arcadia. With song and emblematic dancing, philosophical choruses, and thematized metamorphic *intermezzi*, *Pastor fido* continued the humanistic programme to surpass the ancients by creating a mixture of tragedy and comedy that could pass muster with the 'new science' of dramatic criticism and with Catholic doctrine. After a long gestation from the distant time of Poliziano's *Orfeo*, the idea of a pastoral world gradually permeated every branch of theatrical enterprise, offering freedom to enact psychological change and opening new symbolic and festive spaces. A practical advantage of the new genre, as Angelo Ingegneri, playwright, theoretician, and director, noted, was that pastoral plays could be produced inexpensively.

Fig. 10: Music in the *commedia dell'arte.* Pantalone serenades a lady, helped by Arlecchino and Zanni. A scene from the late sixteenth-century Recueil Fossard containing images of the Italian players in France in the time of Henri III.

As the Seicento approached, music drama was on the horizon. Contributing to its development was the interest in the lost music of Greek tragedy that stirred discussion in Bardi's Florentine circle, the Camerata. But the works of its members, the pastoral *Favola di Dafne* (1597) with Rinuccini's verse sung to music by Iacopo Peri and their *L'Euridice* (1600), partly scored by Giulio Caccini, were not the only announcements of the coming *melodramma*. It had been prepared in the union of text and melody in *intermezzi*, and in the long cultivation of Neo-platonic theory concerning Orphic music. In their 'madrigal comedies' Orazio Vecchi and Adriano Banchieri commandeered characters of the *commedia dell'arte* for extended polyphonic compositions. Music had had a place in or around the earliest and humblest plays of the Cinquecento, and became essential to the art of the professional *comici*.

Fig. 11: Early images of *zanni* and Pantalone played by acrobatic streetplayers. The composite of figures etched by Ambrogio Brambilla about 1580 was printed in Rome by Lorenzo Vaccari with snippets of characteristic patter. The figures were later cut apart and used in the Recueil Fossard.

Descriptions of professional acting companies and their comedy improvised on a plot sketch began to appear in the 1560s, witnessing the presence of women onstage. Isabella Andreini's *tour de force*, admired at the Medici wedding, as the crazed *innamorata*, mimicking the Venetian, Bolognese, and Neapolitan dialects of other characters and singing in French to please the bride, represents contemporary *commedia dell'arte* performance in its most brilliant vein and circumstances. But there were other sides to a profession often described as a lower-class alternative to the private theatre of courts and academies.

Like the medieval minstrels, mountebanks, and hawkers of cure-alls who were their predecessors, the *comici* made their living by selling entertainment wherever they could, in public or private places, adding whatever they found there to the store out of which they made theatre. There was a class system within the world of the paid players and a social abyss between all of them (including the Andreinis, though they maintained familiar correspondence with royalty and eventually set up a family crest, or Pier Maria Cecchini, who held a patent of nobility from the Emperor) and the philodramatic amateurs. But the encounter between humanistic writers and courtiers who wrote and performed plays as pastime or by command as courtly function and the vendors of entertainment was a generative event for the *commedia dell'arte* and for the modern theatre.

When travelling troupes were organized from the mid-1540s on, they ranged in quality from those who set up trestle-stages in piazzas, selling medicines, pulling teeth, and passing the hat, to the companies who were invited to Medici weddings. Professional players had their own specialities and eventually would be identified with one of them — the improvised three-act comedy of masked Pantalone and Doctor Graziano, various *zanni*, and the non-masked *innamorati*, maidservants, and swaggering *capitano* — but they participated in as much of the literary private theatre as they could and offered for hire the widest possible range of genres. In the 1570s they were carrying their wares to France, Spain, and England.

Among the early troupes known by name, the Gelosi, under the sometimes oppressive patronage of the Gonzaga dukes of Mantua, travelled in 1571 to Paris, where the tradition of the *comédie*

italienne would become a formative resource of the French theatre. Often called to Ferrara by the Este duke, the Gelosi company performed such exquisite pieces as the lyric and literary five-act pastoral *Aminta*, which Tasso wrote for the court in 1573. At the other extreme of their repertory, in 1579, they gave a command performance to Guglielmo Gonzaga of a comedy of *gobbi*, with Zanni, Pantalone, Graziano, and the whole cast playing hunchbacks.

The variety of spectacle in Italian show business at this period is illustrated by a unique and recently discovered watercolour picture book containing 115 images of entertainments. Some of the figures depicted were staples of the scenarios for improvised comedy: a masked Zanni (or one of the *zanni*, perhaps Francatrippa) pursues the lean and slippered Pantalone; a captain with cape and sword, bearded like the pard, accosts an elegantly dressed lady; a doctor adjusts his spectacles to inspect the bottom of an untrussed bumpkin.

Fig. 12

Other images in the codex are far removed from comedy: grotesque netherworld regents ride a float drawn by dragons, the skeleton Death stalks his domain, damned male and female souls are ferried in flames by Charon, herded toward Hell-mouth by bat-winged devils, and toasted on spits. Such scenes might have figured in banquets and carnival pageants, infernal *intermezzi* like Buontalenti's, traditional *sacre rappresentazioni* of the Last Judgement, or even, with appropriate modifications, of the martyrdom of St Lawrence on a grill. Fit for tournaments and some kinds of tragedy were the suits of armour, Moorish costumes, and tents depicted in images of chivalric battle, and the parades of festooned and caparisoned horses, some of them trained, seemingly, to fall down and die.

Also represented are scenes of *gobbo* farce, in which humpbacked friars preach to humpbacked congregations, humpbacked barber-surgeons attend humpback clients, acrobatic humpbacks and dwarves dance, walk on stilts, and grab at a goose hung high. Descendants of court buffoons and sideshow clowns, tuned to the grotesqueries of Arlecchino's early stage postures, the comic hunchbacks prefigure Shakespeare's Launcelot Gobbo and the Neapolitan mask of Pulcinella. In the scripted *commedia ridiculosa* of later years, the longevity of the *gobbo* was demonstrated by the cast of Margherita Costa's *Buffoni* (1641).
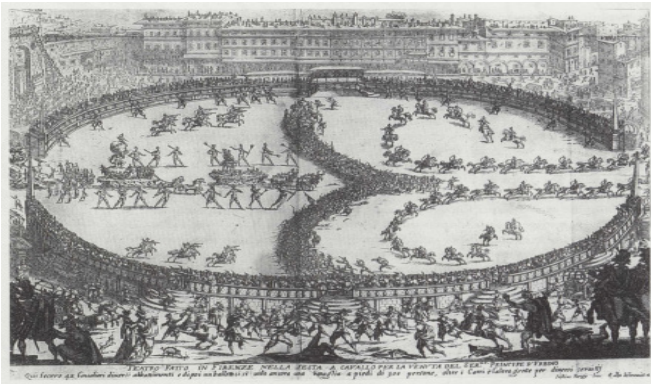
Fig. 13: Festival tournament for the Duke of Urbino's visit to the Grand Duke of Tuscany, 1616. *Guerra di bellezza, festa a cavallo*, with poetic text by Angelo Salvadori, machines and costumes by Giulio Parigi. Printed the same year in Florence by Zanobi Pignoni with engravings by Jacques Callot.

Among the images of entertainment are many of dancing and making music, from a pastoral scene of Orpheus charming the animal kingdom with his viol on through an astonishing series of solo performances on instruments — strings, winds, brasses, keyboards, harps — to which ladies dance, one with a tambourine. A busty peasant woman jigs to bagpipe music.

The publication in 1611 of fifty scenarios in Flaminio Scala's *Teatro delle favole rappresentative* (*The Theatre of Stage Plots*) was an event of the first importance for theatre history. Although it is the repertory of a company that never existed, Scala's compilation gives a fuller idea of the dynamics, tropes, and variety of the improvised comedy than any other single text has done, and was the only such collection to be printed in the period.

Fig. 14: Grotesque finale of a 'comedia ridicola'. Stefano Della Bella's engraved frontispiece to Margherita Costa's *Li buffoni*, printed by Amador Massi and L. Landi, Florence, 1641.

There were numbers of troupes in the public eye, their names no more stable than their constitution, and there was rivalry among them and for control of them. Courtly patrons like the Duke of Mantua and Don Giovanni de' Medici made demands, Venetian impresarios made offers. Cecchini, the great Frittellino, director and principal *zanni* of the Accesi, competed bitterly with the leader of the Fedeli, G. B. Andreini, whose acting of Lelio's *innamorato* matched the fame of his mother as Isabella and his father as Capitan Spavento. Scala had retired from his role of Flavio *innamorato* when he published the *Teatro*, but soon returned to manage the Confidenti for Don Giovanni, opening the 1613 season of the Giustinian family's Teatro San Moisè in Venice.

Scala furnishes his 'theatre of the theatre' with an imaginary company, including the late Isabella and the retired Francesco Andreini, disposed in scene-by-scene plot summaries with stage directions and prop lists useful for improvising amateurs. The scenarios represent the most characteristic genre of the *commedia dell'arte*, the three-act improvisation, a technique requiring reading, memory, timing, and regular practice in dialogue. Training and exercise were as necessary to this kind of acting as to the dancing and singing which were intrinsic to the performance, although only occasionally are they indicated.

Whereas the written regular drama in which the *comici* also participated shares with the genres of classical music an aspiration to form and immutable structure, the improvised comedy is akin to jazz: the scenario provides the guiding modulations for the ensemble, mood sets a tempo, solo flights are sustained and anchored by individual resources and by the habitual give-and-take of collaboration.

A standard cast required about ten or a dozen players for the basic comic relationships: two pairs of Tuscan-speaking young lovers, two senior men to oppose them as parents or husbands, the Venetian merchant Pantalone and the Bolognese (Fig. 16) doctor Graziano, two zanni for male servants, one or two female servants, and the captain, who might also be a lover. One of the maidservants, the older Franceschina, could be played by a man, and the troupe among them covered the occasional roles by doubling as Moors and Turks, Ragusan seafarers and whoremongers, gypsies, innkeepers,

constables, fake magicians, French, Greek, and German travellers. In Scala's ten pastoral or tragic-heroic scenarios the nuclear cast was redisposed as nymphs and shepherds, kings, real magicians, lions, bears, and aerial spirits.
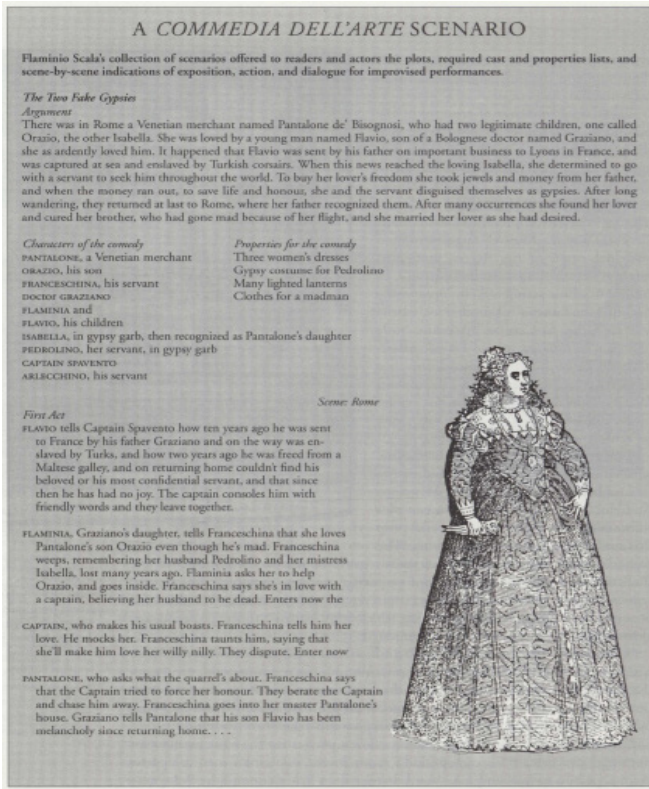

Fig. 15

The identities of the stock roles survived the ceaseless disguisings of the plots, bringing their enduring functions and cumulative histories to each ephemeral scenario. Together with their immediate social and linguistic features, the lovers, the elders, and the captain manifested their descent from the classical Roman *adulescens*, *senex*, and the *miles* respectively, by way of *commedia erudita*, while some of the *zanni* — notably Arlecchino — had folk-festival roots on to which qualities of the *servus* and *parasitus* had been grafted.

Fig. 16: *Above*: Captain Spezzamonti and the *zanni* Bagattino. Late
seventeenth-century anonymous painting based on Jacques Callot's series
of engravings *I balli di Sfessania*, Naples, 1622, depicting *commedia dell'arte*
figures in fantastic balletic postures.

Fig. 17: *Left*: portrait of an Italian troupe performing at the French court. The sixteenth-century 'Bayeux' painting, long doubtfully attributed to Frans Porbus, depicts *comici dell'arte* in the 1570s or 1580s, possibly the Gelosi, in performances before members of the French royal family. Left to right downstage, Franceschina and a *zanni* in characteristic bawdy embrace, two lovers quarrel, an *innamorata*, possibly Isabella Andreini, kneels to her father Pantalone, who stands with Arlecchino and Graziano.

Within the stylized and specialized functions shared by all *commedia dell arte* casts, each player invested original features in his roles and many became permanently associated with their interpretations of one or the other of them. Thus the *zanni* were subdivided into Arlecchino, Francatrippa, Pedrolino, Frittellino, Scapino, and others, and thus arose the differences among the military blusterers, Captains Spavento, Coccodrillo, Rinoceronte, Matamoros. Plurilinguism made for another variable: Bergamasque for Zanni, Mantuan for Arlecchino, Neapolitan for Pulcinella, Spanish for some captains, pidgin Slavonic for Ragusans, and so on.

The plots in which these characters meet were built of condensed and recombined structures from the repertory developed in regular comedy, stories of crossed love, mistaken identity, disguises of sex and status, runaway wives and children, adventurous rescues, madness, apparent death, reunion of separated families, clowning, ingenious tricks, ridicule of jealous husbands and lustful old men, mocking of masters by servants, witty extortion, gulling, and unlimited opportunities for mayhem, erotic play, and coarseness. The actors fleshed out the scenes by drawing on their stores of stage business, slapstick, double-takes, and quick changes, their tirades and dialogues, their verbal and gestural *lazzi*, or comic quips and turns. The situations are entangled but the action on-stage is usually unified and limited to a short time and a single place, ordinarily a contemporary Italian city.

Some *comici* had published plays in the late Cinquecento, using the five-act form of regular drama to expand and fix in literary form material used in improvisation on-stage. Isabella Andreini's pastoral *Mirtilla* 1588), Adriano Valerini's tragedy *Afrodite* (1578), and a few comedies by other actors set a precedent for the printing in the Seicento of comedies by Scala and Cecchini, of the *Bravure* or bragging dialogues from his former stage practice by Francesco Andreini, and of a very mixed series of eighteen plays by his son Giovanni Battista.

LA SVPPLICA
DISCORSO FAMIGLIARE
DI Nicolò Barbieri detto
BELTRAME
diretta à quelli che scriuẽdo
ò parlando trattano de Comici
trascurando i meriti dellé
azzioni uirtuosé .
Lettura per que' galanthuomini
che non sono in tutto critici ,
ne affatto balordi

IN VENEZIA
Con licenza de' Superiori
e Priuilegio
PER MARCO GINAMMI
L'ANNO MDCXXXIV

Fig. 18: Barbieri masked as Beltrame. Title-page of *La supplica*, or *The Supplication: Familiar Discourse of Nicolò Barbieri called Beltrame, addressed to those write or speak of Actors without recognizing the merits of their virtuous actions. To be read by gentlemen of parts who are not compleat critics nor in any way dullards* (1634*)*.

A few of them wrote defences of play-acting. *La supplica* by Nicolò Barbieri, acclaimed for his improvisations of the Lombard *zanni* Beltrame, shows where the profession had arrived and how its members were seen by the society at large in 1634. The demand for their services was widespread but the obstacles to providing them were many. Following the Council of Trent, campaigns against the theatre caused old prohibitions to be taken more seriously. In Milan between 1565 and 1584 Archbishop Carlo Borromeo had inveighed against the theatre, urged that *sacre rappresentazioni* be replaced with oratorios, and warned against traffic with dissolute actors. Promoting the same end by different means, some religious orders, especially the Jesuits, offered a substitute drama in their schools and invited the community to attend. Sometimes travelling troupes were denied local permission to perform, customs officers confiscated their costumes and props, townspeople feared them as criminals, magicians, and prostitutes. The actors often supplicated the intervention of higher authorities and noble protectors.

Barbieri's defence takes the form of a supplication to the world in general, presenting the instructive and recreational value of theatre in the most positive way, appealing to the educated and worldly-wise against the superstitions of those who suspect all outsiders, particularly those who create magical illusions. He relies on anecdotes of how the actual performances of his company have repeatedly won over such ignorant provincials, especially among the clergy. He appeals to higher minds who recognize the wholesomeness of theatrical entertainment and can distinguish the grain of his *métier* from the chaff. The Jesuit theologian G. D. Ottonelli, author of the massive *Della Christiana moderatione del theatro* (1646-52), agreed in principle but deplored the immorality to be found even on Barbieri's stage.

Stardom did not guarantee success. Although upper-class dilettantes sometimes joined their ranks and exceptional players like Cecchini obtained honours, the profession itself would remain less than respectable even after it was somewhat bureaucratized. But theatre was increasingly desired at all levels; moreover, it was a commodity and a profitable one. The *comici* would not achieve the economic independence of a guild, as Cecchini recommended in his *Brevi discorsi* (*Brief Discourses on Comedies, Comedians and Spectators*)

(1621), but the success of ticket-selling theatres in Seicento Naples, Milan, and Venice multiplied audiences and put money into the pockets of impresarios. Actors depended increasingly on the kind of patronage from which the security of pensions might be expected, and freedom both of movement and of improvisation was restricted by their progressive need for organization under directors able to deal with finances, logistics, and politics as well as programmes. Great, though not always enviable, success in this line was achieved by G. B. Andreini, whose ability to manage a company and maintain the favour of patrons at the courts of Mantua and France, even more than his celebrated acting and writing of plays and treatises, made him a model *capocomico*, the theatrical administrator around whom the organization of professional troupes would depend long into the future.

The *comici* continued to play all genres, but the defining image of the *commedia dell'arte* established by their travels around Europe was of the improvising style. With its invention nearly played out at the end of the Seicento, though with decades of popularity still ahead, the style was codified for scholars and amateurs by Andrea Perrucci, a Sicilian lawyer in Naples, city of rich theatrical tradition.

Perrucci was also a playwright and the artistic director of the Teatro San Bartolomeo, but he insisted on his status as a dilettante rather than a professional. Half of his analytical treatise *Dell'arte rappresentativa* (*The Art of Staging Plays, Premeditated and Improvised*) (1699) is devoted to improvisation and its superiority to other acting techniques. The work is a mine of examples of types, topoi, dialogues, and specific language and dialectal locutions used for playing the various stock roles in solo and ensemble scenes. There is also a whole scenario called *La Trapolaria* (*The Play of Trapola the Trapper*) taken in part from Della Porta's eponymous comedy published more than a century earlier, a vestige of the creative exchange that had once linked the professional improvisers with the best Neapolitan literary comedy. By Perrucci's time, the *commedia dell'arte* style was a subject for history.

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It is significant that so quintessential a *capocomico* as G. B. Andreini should in 1613 have written a closet drama, a religious one on the ambitious subject of the Creation, *L'Adamo*, dedicated to Maria de' Medici, Queen of France. Although subtitled "*sacra rapresentatione*", the play is laid out as regular tragedy, with five acts, the unities observed, dialogue in unrhymed verse, a chorus, and as much decorum and verisimilitude as its subject permits. Andreini's preface defines his purpose as "representing internal conflict by means of images and words in the 'Theatre of the Soul', with the heart as spectator". To assist the inward spectacle the printer provided illustrations of every scene, many of them depicting the characters treading the boards in front of a backdrop in perspective.

Fig. 19: Andreini's sacred tragedy of Adam and Eve. Title-page of *L'Adamo*, first published by Geronimo Bordoni, Milan, 1613, engravings by C. Bassano from drawings by C. A. Procaccino.

This is no penitent repudiation of the stage; Andreini was launched on a career that would be thoroughly theatrical from beginning to end — in the 1650s his *Maddalena* was a multimedia event. Rather, *Adamo* shows the importance assumed by sacred drama in the Catholic sphere and gives another example of the cultural paradigm of the world-as-theatre which increasingly dominated the imagination of seventeenth-century Europeans, regardless of sect.

Beginning in the mid-Cinquecento a redesigning and overhauling of the old-fashioned *sacre rappresentazioni* had become evident. In a process which repeated the fifteenth-century humanistic progression from recitation to oration to dialogue to playacting, moving from Latin to the vernacular, the newly founded Jesuit schools especially encouraged drama. Their reasons were pedagogical, promotional, and social, aiming to kindle devotion and to appropriate theatre as a weapon in the battle for Catholic reunification. Wherever they established ministries in Europe and Asia they continued and elaborated on spectacular Corpus Christi processions and introduced theatrical performances by student actors. In the Seicento sacred drama become a major genre, proliferating into subgenres in several venues, most brilliantly in the Rome of the Barberini Pope Urban VIII.

The critical treatise printed with *Ermenegildo martire: tragedia* (*Hermenegild the Martyr*) (1644) by the Reverend (later Cardinal) Pietro Sforza Pallavicino after the first of several performances at the Jesuit Seminario Romano measures the cultural distance travelled since another cardinal produced *Calandria* for another theatre-loving papacy. Pallavicino wrote in an age of debate over the theatre, Ottonelli and 'Christian moderation' on one side, Barbieri and the defenders of professional acting on the other. No ideological battle was waged, there was no argument for liberty against censorship or over desirable content, but merely over who was fit to produce socially responsible drama. No one defended the lascivious productions of the lowest strolling players. Champions of sacred theatre, like modern exponents of superior television programming, aimed at displacing vain theatre, maintaining the high genres and appropriating them as instruments of education. Like Tasso's and Milton's undertakings in the epic form, *Ermenegildo* with its accompanying treatise incorporates the formal achievements of

neo-Aristotelian theory of tragedy into a reading and writing of history that was for its times a representative declaration of the spiritually imperial mission of the Church and the civilizing power of Christianity.
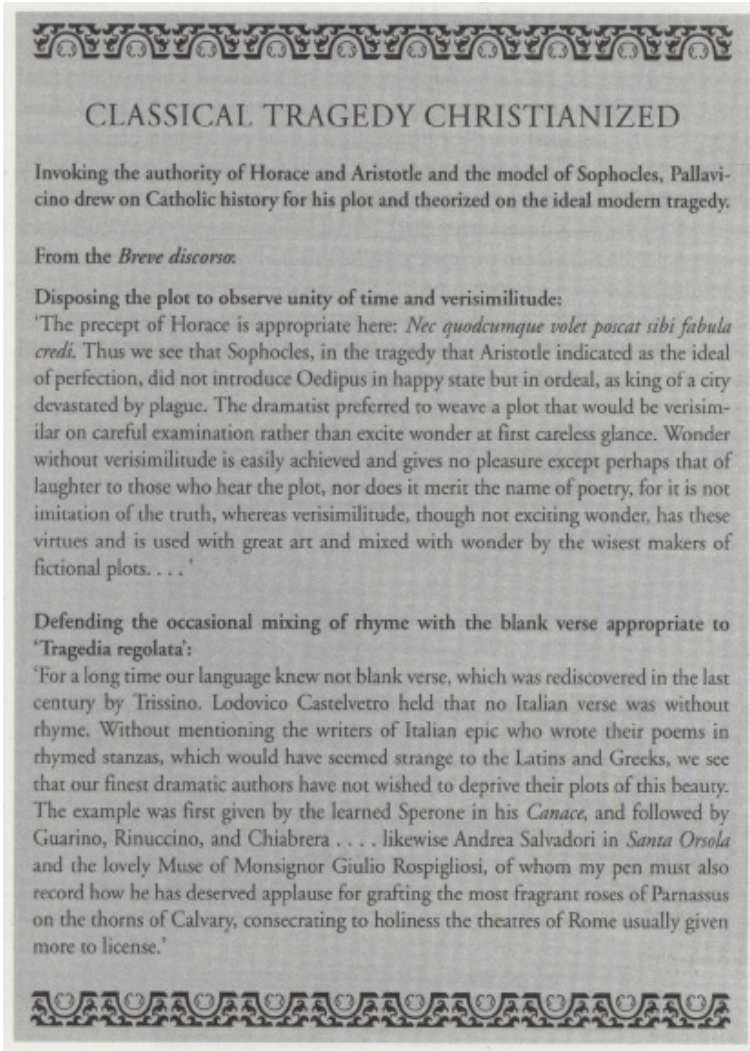
CLASSICAL TRAGEDY CHRISTIANIZED

Invoking the authority of Horace and Aristotle and the model of Sophocles, Pallavicino drew on Catholic history for his plot and theorized on the ideal modern tragedy.

From the *Breve discorso*:

Disposing the plot to observe unity of time and verisimilitude:
'The precept of Horace is appropriate here: *Nec quodcumque volet poscat sibi fabula credi*. Thus we see that Sophocles, in the tragedy that Aristotle indicated as the ideal of perfection, did not introduce Oedipus in happy state but in ordeal, as king of a city devastated by plague. The dramatist preferred to weave a plot that would be verisimilar on careful examination rather than excite wonder at first careless glance. Wonder without verisimilitude is easily achieved and gives no pleasure except perhaps that of laughter to those who hear the plot, nor does it merit the name of poetry, for it is not imitation of the truth, whereas verisimilitude, though not exciting wonder, has these virtues and is used with great art and mixed with wonder by the wisest makers of fictional plots. . . .'

Defending the occasional mixing of rhyme with the blank verse appropriate to 'Tragedia regolata':
'For a long time our language knew not blank verse, which was rediscovered in the last century by Trissino. Lodovico Castelvetro held that no Italian verse was without rhyme. Without mentioning the writers of Italian epic who wrote their poems in rhymed stanzas, which would have seemed strange to the Latins and Greeks, we see that our finest dramatic authors have not wished to deprive their plots of this beauty. The example was first given by the learned Sperone in his *Canace*, and followed by Guarino, Rinuccino, and Chiabrera . . . . likewise Andrea Salvadori in *Santa Orsola* and the lovely Muse of Monsignor Giulio Rospigliosi, of whom my pen must also record how he has deserved applause for grafting the most fragrant roses of Parnassus on the thorns of Calvary, consecrating to holiness the theatres of Rome usually given more to license.'

Fig. 20

Pallavicino's subject was timely. The Church was encouraging the cult of martyrs in the cause of orthodoxy. Uniting contemporary innovations in regular genre with traditional biblical and hagiographical subjects from *sacre rappresentazioni*, the new sacred tragedy also invited legends of national conversion and of modern sufferers for the faith. Tragedies were written about Thomas More and Mary Stuart. Pallavicino's Ermenegildo, son of the sixth-century Visigothic King Levogildo, is converted from the Arian heresy by his wife Ingonda. She overhears a wrong message and therefore fails to save her husband from execution, but by the divinely providential irony (turning inside-out the Sophoclean pattern admired by Aristotle and held to be the highest aim of serious tragedy) her error begets triumph, for it brings Spain to Roman Catholic orthodoxy, as Ingonda's ancestress Clothilde had done for France.
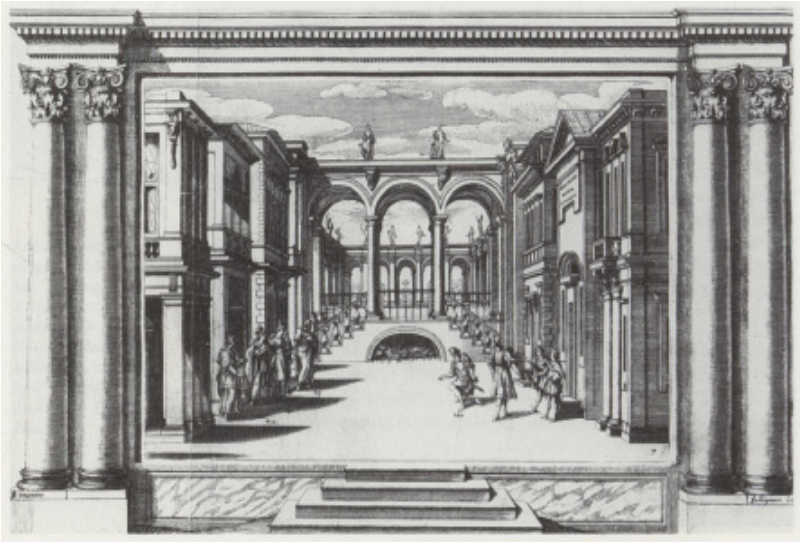
Fig. 21: The stage as funerary chapel. The saint lies dead amid splendour in the niche where he has lived in anonymous humility. Rospigliosi's *Sant'Alessio*, 3, printed by Paolo Massotti, Rome, 1634, with engravings by F. Collignon.

Naturally sacred tragedy also found its way into music drama, the theatrical genre that finally surpassed all others, as Italian opera assumed the shape in which it would conquer Europe. The famous private theatre in Palazzo Barberini to which a large though select audience of Romans and visitors had frequent access opened its first season in 1631-2 with *Il S. Alessio: dramma musicale* by Giulio Rospigliosi and the composer Stefano Landi. As a cardinal, Rospigliosi found time to write various dramatic texts for the Barberini, many of them on secular subjects, employing styles and characters from Spanish drama and from the *commedia dell'arte*, and even after he became Pope Clement IX he had his *La comica del cielo* (*The Actress of Heaven*) performed at Palazzo Rospigliosi.

Reputed to be the most dazzling theatrical event of its time, *Sant'Alessio* represents an intensely inward experience by means of striking outward display and variety of verse and musical forms, dances by devils, peasants, and others, disguises and metamorphoses, *intermezzi* with transformation machinery, splendid architectural sets for each of the three acts (the city of Rome, Hell, the saint's tomb), and a final view of Paradise with angelic hosts. A story from an old *sacra rappresentazione* frequently retold is here made an affirmation of the religious life, a rejection of the world, of Rome, wealth, family, bride, and honours. Alessio's inner struggle with the devil and spiritual redefinition of honour are made visible and universal. Roma personified appears in the prologue, as mother of heroes and owner of slaves, and proposes a new concept of heroism, based not on arms but on imitation of Christ, humility, self-knowledge, with anonymity in the world; Roma herself is transfigured and frees her slaves in order to rule within their hearts. Alessio, torn by the grief of his parents and bride at his flight, admits to a "fierce battle in the theatre of his heart" but resists the temptation to return to the world's joys.

The stage transformations and spectacles most admired at the time were those of the versatile Gian Lorenzo Bernini, whose sculpture, architecture, and dramatic texts also reveal him as the emblematic exponent of the baroque age. An iconic *summa* of its governing metaphor is provided by the *mise-en-scène* of his Roman Cornaro chapel, where St Theresa's ecstasy observed by Cornaro prelates in theatre boxes is represented in marble with lighting by heaven.

While Bernini's doubling of illusions to make the spectator a part of the spectacle — by comedies within comedies or simulated floods that threaten to wash away the audience — has been seen as reducing humankind to the level of other merely natural phenomena and the spectacle of life to a theatrical illusion, the resulting emptiness of earthly existence need not be received as a tragic vision. As the dramatic genre of tragedy was then understood, life as a vale of tears and the human condition as limited by its terrestrial end were fit subjects for non-Christian tragedy, but the stage effects of Bernini and the later baroque era, like Calderón's dramatizations of the insubstantiality of life, ultimately express joyful transcendence.

Meanwhile the extreme development of *intermezzi* effects now extended into or sometimes simply displaced dramatic action. The material products of Italian stage designers' technical ingenuity in this and in the succeeding generations of Ferdinando Tacca, Giacomo Torelli, Ludovico Burnacini, and the Bibiena-Galli family, and the lavish expenditures possible at great courts, produced marvels of landscape, action scenes, and sumptuously complex architecture, which did much to weaken the hold of the concept of unity of place, already loosened by the influence of Spanish drama. Increasingly Italian artists who worked wonders at the courts of Parma, Modena, Mantua, Rome, and Florence were called to Paris and Vienna and wherever there was a demand for splendour.

Fig. 22: *Facing*, above: pastoral landscape and Ovidian transformation. Aurelio Aureli's *Il favore degli dèi: drama fantastico musicale (The Favour of the Gods)*, 3.2. Printed by the Farnese ducal press in Parma, 1690, with engravings by D. Bonavera from scene designs by Domenico Mauro and Ferdinando Galli Bibiena.

Fig. 23: Facing, below: staged siege with gods in cloud machines. Giovanni Andrea Moniglia's *Ercole in Tebe: festa teatrale (Hercules in Thebes)*, 4.19. Printed at the Insegna della Stella press, Florence, 1661, with engravings from scene designs by Ferdinando Tacca.

The spectacles and the rise of music-drama caused many to deplore the diminishment of the literary text, even in the act of welcoming the hybrid forms. Although overshadowed by developments in scenery, acting, and music, however, the writing of plays did not cease in Seicento Italy. Hispanoid three-act prose cloak-and-sword plays by Giacinto Andrea Cicognini in abundance were performed and printed. Regular five-act verse tragedies romanticizing foreign history in the tradition of Prospero Bonarelli were projected with all the advantages of the latest scene designs, as Girolamo Graziani's tragedy on Cromwell reveals. For audiences of literary connoisseurs the severe Aristotelian tragedy remained the great tradition and highest aim of the serious dramatist; Carlo de' Dottori's uncompromisingly intellectual and classical *Aristodemo: tragedia*, first performed in Padua in 1654, went into several editions and aroused great critical interest.

The liveliest phenomena, with the greatest following, were the commercial theatres of impresarios and the *melodramma* or *dramma per musica*, as early opera was commonly called by mid-Seicento. Here the emphasis was shifted from special-effect machines and costumes of court spectacle to more remunerative and economical programmes of singing and scene-changes. After debates about music in Greek tragedy, Aristotle on *melos*, and the propriety of sung dialogue, and following the success of the Florentine collaborations of Rinuccini, Peri, and Caccini that had produced *Dafne* and *Euridice*, the demand for more and more use of music in drama prevailed. Even the opponents of commercial theatre were more lenient toward music. In Rome singers like Adriana Basile and her daughter Leonora Baroni prospered, but, because of a papal ban against women in plays, *castrati* usually took the feminine roles on-stage.

In Venice, with *L'incoronazione di Poppea* (*The Coronation of Poppaea*), the three-act opera musicale with Giovanni Francesco Busenello's text and some of Claudio Monteverdi's last music, performed in the 1642-3 season of the Grimani family's Teatro SS. Giovanni e Paolo, with the noted singer Anna Renzi as Ottavia, we see fully established the commercial music drama and the institution of the operatic diva. Compared with Monteverdi's earlier *Orfeo* at the Gonzaga court of Mantua, the text of *Poppea* is kaleidoscopic, inclusive of favourite elements from different sides of the theatrical

tradition: from comedy the amatory intrigue, the transvestite disguise, the comic nurse Arnalta with a specific *commedia dell'arte* flavour borrowed from the Franceschina role, from tragedy the stichomythic debate, the narrating messenger, the *sententia*, and from pastoral drama the triumphant figure of Amor.

The score matches this variety with is range of song-forms, contrasting mode brilliant artifice, diversity of musical structuring, and lyrical expansion. Monteverdi's superlative gift for melodic expression of emotion was no impediment to a brilliant musical externalization of Busenello's Marinistic and intellectual text. With ingenious musical structures and interweaving dialogue to display conflict, Monteverdi even manipulated the text to make more theatrical effects. His stylistic diversity recalls the linguistic gamut for which the best of the *comici dell'arte* were admired.

Seen not as words set to music but as a vital organ of a theatrical body, each part inseparable from the other in performance, the text, written for the music but later published as if to be read, is very revealing for theatre history. With its mixed genres and multiple effects, its intellectual bent informed by the philosophical scepticism of the Venetian Academy of the Incogniti to which Busenello and other aristocratic dramatists belonged, the libretto of *Poppea* is also typical of Seicento ideology. Moods and emotions are evoked, but primarily in relation to a formal inclusive plan that represented logical relationships seen from the distance of the audience, though not by characters confined within the play.

The triumph of love over fortune and virtue in *Poppea* echoes the Incogniti's free-thinking rhetorical debates. Their motto "Ignoto Deo" was a declaration of philosophical scepticism and also of a more mainstream concept: the unknowability of the divine mind. At still further distance the triumph of love and ambition over goodness and wisdom illustrates human beings' ignorance of what lies beyond them in time. With tacit reference to the pseudo-Senecan *Octavia*, Busenello selects a few events and excludes the rest of Nero and Poppea's bloody history from the plot. Addressing an audience aware of the whole story, he adds a definitive layer of irony to the ostensible victory of love. The godlike superiority of view thus established invites the spectators by extension to recognize themselves as actors in a play of which God alone knows
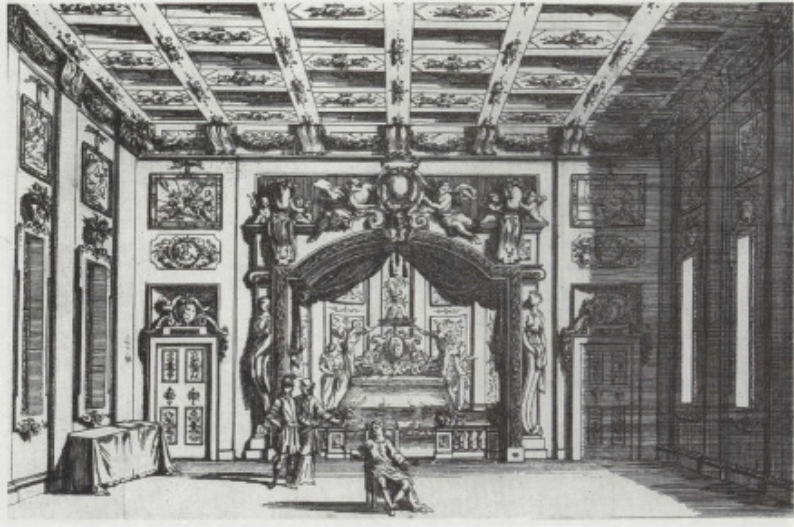
Fig. 24: Cromwell in his bedroom having bad dreams. Girolamo Graziani's *Il Cromuele: tragedia*, 5.11. Printed by the Manolessi press, Bologna, 1671, with engravings of scene-changes for each act, designed for a performance which may not have taken place.

the ending. The theatrical variety, the stylized series of scenes, characters, styles, and emotions from which Busenello builds his libretto, functions as a cultural whole with Monteverdi's theatrical and stylized structural music.

The only direction that the theatre could take in the next age would be away from the hybrid globalism of baroque symbol and spectacle, toward refinement and reason, toward Metastasio's lyric restraint, Goldoni's realistic and nuanced bourgeois comedy, and Alfieri's austere tragedy. For the time being, total theatricality had gone as far as it could go in Italy.

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2

Staging Ferrara: State Theater from Borso to Alfonso II

1.

Theatrical activity in Ferrara emanated from a theatrical Ferrara that was itself a stage, a protagonist, a producer and a generator of theater, an object of representation. In Ferrara modern comedy came into its own, tragedy was first fully performed, pastoral drama was invented, drama theory was nourished. Ludovico Zorzi called the city a crossroads of experimentation; his treatment of the municipal attitude toward the common space (1977) is part of the illuminating scrutiny that has documented the Ferrarese self-representational spirit. Less attention has been given to the way that 'Ferrara palcoscenico' was perceived and portrayed elsewhere. In my *cavalcata* through Ferrarese drama I shall introduce and linger on three dissimilar examples of the way Ferrara was theatrically projected from outside the city itself.

The Ferrarese tradition of literature, dramatic and other, is so star-studded that we tend naturally to define its theatrical span as from Boiardo to Tasso. But the tradition was not begun by Boiardo nor ended by Tasso, nor in fact did the weight of Ferrara's illustrious writers, almost overpowering in other regards, determine the climate and create the agenda of the stage. Ferrara called forth the powers of her *literati* great and small and made them dramatists, and then *they* made "Ferrara palcoscenico". The demand came first from the court, and the staging of Ferrara is more usefully ordered according to Estensi rulers than to their poet-playwrights, the greatest of whom wrote to more than one court climate. For this reason I prefer to set the boundaries from Borso to the second Alfonso and the aftermath of the latter's reign.

The marquis Borso d'Este, whose pursuit of *magnificenza* caused an ideal dramatic image of feudal Ferrara to be played out in

paint on the walls of Palazzo Schifanoia, expanded the apparatus of spectacle with public ceremonies and *giostre*, processions with floats, machines, tableaux vivants, and courtiers in romanticized armor and classical costume. The ducal grandeur of Borso's court was expressed by his style long before the title of Duke of Ferrara was granted just before his death in 1471.

Borso's successor and brother Ercole I put humanistic pedagogy into state service, adding to Ferrara's representational and musical splendor, ordering Latin plays performed and translated. When Ercole's son Alfonso I came to power in 1505 the stage literally and figuratively was set for modern vernacular drama, and Ludovico Ariosto was at hand to write the earliest classics of *commedia erudita.*

The second Ercole, son of Alfonso, ruling from 1534 to 1559, saw the launching of the Council of Trent, and presided over a Ferrarese theatrical scene dominated by Giambattista Giraldi Cinzio, professor of rhetoric at the Studio, ducal secretary, and prolific playwright and theorist. The first performances of modern tragedy were of his Senecan works by his students, under his direction.

The reign of Alfonso II, the last duke of Ferrara, was the longest and, in sheer quantity and variety, the most theatrical. Pastoral drama triumphed in the decades preceding his death in 1597, Tasso's *Aminta* and Guarini's *Pastor fido* the supreme examples. Even more intensely than his predecessors, Alfonso II patronized music and the gestation of music drama. Jousts and *tornei* continued to be Ferrarese specialties, while *commedia dell'arte* troupes were regularly welcomed. Taxes went up in these years and then down in 1598, when the papacy took Ferrara away from the Estensi.

2.

It has been thought that Ferrara became a theatrical model to other cities by answering a widespread contemporary need for form and norms. Thus Mario Apollonio could narrate the appearance of regular comedy as a response to fragmenting wars and cultural crisis in Italy (1954, 1.272-73). The troubled times of Ercole I and Alfonso I would constitute the first two chapters of such a narrative. But a remarkable Florentine Griselda play, surviving only in manuscript

until 1993, shows that the theatrical exemplarity of Ferrara was established even before classical norms were excavated. Called a "sacra rappresentazione profana" by its modern editor (Morabito 1993), this dramatization of the Griselda story in the ottava rima form of the medieval *sacra rappresentazione* sheds all claim to the supernatural, though Griselda is treated as an exemplum of saintly patience.

An audience familiar with Griselda's story from Boccaccio, Petrarch, or other versions, would expect Griselda's insatiably experimental husband to test her by sending away her children to a nobleman in Bologna and returning them like packages for the final unwrapping; instead, the play transports the audience to Ferrara and introduces the "Marchese" and his court, where the two children are reared in learning and grace, and Griselda's daughter is given an aristocratic finish that stands her in good stead when she is betrothed to the Marchese's heir in the last scene.

This is secular drama, astoundingly early, possibly written by Feo Belcari for Lorenzo il Magnifico's marriage festivities in June 1469, or for the *giostra* in which he triumphed earlier that year, or for some other event while the Estensi were still *marchesi* in Ferrara, though *duchi* in Modena and Reggio since 1453. Relations between Florence and Ferrara were serene in these years; a peace had been ratified in 1468, and Borso had graciously sent his horse (named, of course, Baiardo) to young Lorenzo for his *giostra*.[1]

While both the rambling medieval form of the *rappresentazione* and the Boccaccian source are Tuscan, the unwontedly secular subject and the introduction into the play of a major and flattering role for the "Marchese di Ferrara" (only once referred to as "duca") are diplomatic compliments to the image of elegant worldly entertainment and the court of Borso d'Este, who would live to see his Ferrarese marquisate elevated to a duchy in 1471.

The part of the action that takes place in Ferrara is theatrically courtly, suggesting scenes from the Schifanoia frescoes: ladies play and sing, banquets are spread, the Marquis and his court perform the roles of a marquis holding court. In short, the music, banquet,

1 For the dating and further historical context of the Griselda *rappresentazione*, see Stefanini 200, 17-40, esp. 27n21 and 22.

and dancing that would actually have been part of the performance in Florence are fictionally set in a Ferrara that existed in the imagination as a source and image of theatrical spectacle. Borso would doubtless have been pleased by the evidence that it was so. We need not agree with André Chastel that Ferrara constituted an anti-Firenze (1965, 177) to see here early signs of a theatrical *concorso di eleganza*, between Medici and Estensi, with Ferrara in the lead.

3.

At the court of Ercole I the theatrical ventures were of many kinds, some with more future than others. In celebration of a family wedding in 1487, the duke's half-brother Niccolò da Correggio wrote the *Fabula di Cefalo*, an Ovidian *favola mitologica* which would be re-evoked in Tasso's *Aminta*. Ercole's programmatic encouragement of avant-garde humanistic theater spurred Boiardo about 1490 to write his *Timone*, dramatizing and moralizing a Lucianic dialogue. Ariosto was involved in Ferrarese theater from the beginning of his career, even while he was still a law student. When Ludovico Sforza requested a theatrical loan in 1493, among the youths Ercole took to Pavia to play comedies of Plautus in Latin was nineteen-year-old Ariosto. On the way they stopped at Reggio Emilia, where Boiardo rehearsed them for performance.

4.

Though the logical classical structure of Ariosto's own plays, a natural progression from acting Latin and translated scripts, was hailed as the foundation of modern vernacular comedy, what really electrified audiences in 1508 and 1509 were his settings, namely contemporary Italian cities: his second comedy, *I suppositi*, brought onstage the bourgeois Ferrara of merchants, customs officers, and travelers, with the offstage court invoked as a guarantor of order. Above all, this was the Ferrara of university students, from whom the actors for court productions, like Ariosto himself, were

drawn. The *jeune premier* is a young Sicilian law student who turns himself instead into a "studente di amore" (1.1), exchanging identities with his servant and getting a job in his beloved's house. The local references and flavor, the prologue, spoken by Ariosto himself, punning on the title's suggestion of sodomy, belong to the campy in-joking of an undergraduate cum court/club atmosphere, transferable, however, to similar locales, such as the papal court of Ariosto's not very faithful friend Leo X, where Ferrarese drama was in demand. Both Ariosto's admired classical construction of his own Ferrara were natural consequences of Ercole's humanistic theatrical program and of Alfonso's succession to his father's place.

5.

Although tragedy had been broached in the classical program of Ercole I, in this genre Ferrara may have appeared to lag behind Florence, in that the most admired early experiments in vernacular tragedy (on the page and in declamation, if not in actual performance), Giangiorgio Trissino's *Sofonisba* and Giovanni Rucellai's *Rosmunda*, came from the Medici circle, its perimeter enclosing Rome and Florence. But Ferrara took the lead when Giraldi Cinzio began writing for the Ferrarese court and had his blood-soaked neo-Senecan *Orbecche* first performed in 1541, for Ercole II and other friends. This led not only to further performances of *Orbecche* but also to the composition and performance of other tragedies, many by Giraldi himself, and to the Aristotle-based polemics on the theory of tragedy, involving Giraldi's neighbors at the University of Padua, and the rival academic playwright Sperone Speroni, among others. Some of Giraldi's tragedies after *Orbecche* — such as the romantic or chivalric *Antivalomeni*, *Arrenopia*, and *Epitia*, which end with rewards and punishments distributed according to strict justice — were really experiments with tragicomedy and exemplify the genre he championed as *tragedia di fin lieto* in his theatrical *Discorsi*.

With Giraldi Ferrara laid a weighty and early claim on the new science of literary criticism. From our vantage point in the critical tradition, the importance of these events in the reign of Ercole II and the youth of Alfonso II is huge, whether for

1. what they disclose of the direction the *speculum principis* tradition had taken — we see the *Estensi*, whose dungeons had more than once held other Estensi, watching enactments of exotic displacements of Senecan mayhem in royal families; or for

2. what they reveal of the approach to and retreat from the political tragedy of engagement that might have been created from Machiavelli's framing of the conflict between power and morality — Riccardo Bruscagli has written penetratingly on this subject (1983, 127-59; 1993); or for

3. the vein of dramatic theory they uncover, flowing toward intensified Aristotelian experiments in stagecraft and Counter-Reformation ideology as it felt its way to its true goal, the expression of the idea of the world as a great theater directed by the Prime Mover of the universe. Again Ferrara is the nurturer of new theater as well as of the theater where the new is seen.

6.

The pastoral play was the newest and most original dramatic genre of the Renaissance. It is not a coincidence that the genre which staged the landscape of the mind should arise in the city that had become a theatrical landscape in the minds of contemporaries. The process of shaping and disseminating was lengthier for pastoral drama than it had been for the Ariostean model of comedy. From the ancients' fragmentarily defined and exemplified genre of satyr play and from Quattrocento *favole mitologiche* — Poliziano's *Orfeo* gestated during his sojourn among humanists in Venice, Ferrara, and Mantova, and Niccolò da Correggio's *Cefalo* followed in Ferrara in 1487 — the Estense theater culture developed the Arcadian play, the *favola satirica*, *silvestre*, *boscareccia*, and the *tragicommedia pastorale.*

Giraldi's *Egle, satira*, dedicated to Ercole II and performed in 1545 for him and Cardinal Ippolito in Giraldi's house, though rejected as a specific model by subsequent pastoral dramatists, was recognized as the opening of a new theatrical phase. Giraldi applied evolving neoclassical theory to fashion a modern satyr play: five acts in hendecasyllable verse about some satyrs' attempted gang

rape of nymphs who elude them by turning into plants, concluding with a moral:

> Non si dee desiar cosa, che neghi
> Il ciel, ne cosa a l'honestà contraria;
> Che non sen puo veder felice fine.

> [One must not desire that which / heaven forbids or that which is contrary to chastity; / from this no happy outcome can be foreseen.]

The pastoral wave of the next decades is sometimes interpreted as a predictable expression of the climate of Alfonso II's reign: aesthetic and enervated, quaking at the looming specters of the Inquisition and the Papal States, holding back the grim dawn, drowning out the thunder of impending devolution with Arcadian music, escapist, elitist, exquisite. In the many Ferrarese places of delight, in palaces and those gardens which Gianni Venturi has described as "tramite necessario tra paesaggio e città, luogo di contemplazione estetica e di forza politica insieme" [necessary connection between landscape and city, a place of both aesthetic contemplation and political power] (1977, 553), the pastoral experiments multiplied: in 1563 Alberto Lollio's *Aretusa* at Schifanoia for Alfonso II and Cardinal Luigi, financed by "scolari delle leggi"; in 1567 Agostino Argenti's *Sfortunato* for Cardinal Luigi, also paid for by the university. This phase culminated in the *Aminta* of 1573, directed by Tasso himself in the gardens of the Isoletta di Belvedere del Po, with the professional company of Zan Battista Boschetti; it would become a standard repertory piece for the renowned Gelosi troupe. The permutations of the *favola boscareccia* now grew numberless and ubiquitous, and the Este court saw a steady stream of them. Giovanni Da Pozzo regards their proliferation as no longer dependent on ducal initiative: at this point in Ferrarese artistic production, he writes, "il genio originario locale non ha bisogno di essere incentivato, continua da solo, per sua forza di riproduzione" [native local spirit needs no incentive, continues by itself, through its own reproductive power] (Da Pozzo 1983, 26).

But certainly the mature pastoral drama reflects the climate of Alfonso II's reign, although I think both are susceptible of a more searching reading. True, these plays supplied the demand for

sophisticated recreations in gardens and offered theatrical mirrors at which the Este courtiers preened themselves and spied on one another, but that the pastoral play could accommodate more than gossamer and gossipy court-masquerade is clear, on the one hand from the fact of its easy fusion with popular forms of comedy and its success on the playbills of commercial troupes, and on the other from the Aristotelian debates that Guarini's *Pastor fido* nourished and the philosophical and religious content that could be dramatized in this form. The intellectual atmosphere at Ferrara was, after all, charged with the spirit of inquiry into dramatic theory and into questions of orthodoxy and heresy, moved by reforming and synthesizing impulses toward Catholic unity, and in the 1580s and 1590s the capacity of the pastoral for such content was increasingly manifested. The pastoral play filled a need for a structure of hope, a scene out of time, court, and city, as a landscape of the mind allowing representation of fantasy and of otherwise invisible "realities" of life, primarily the internal psychological scene of the heart and the external designs of a divine providential plan.[2]

Guarini's super-*contaminatio* of Sophocles, Tasso, and the Old Testament, and the many *trattati* concerning it all germinated in Ferrara's pastoral plantation. Angelo Ingegneri, himself the author of the *Danza di Venere, pastorale*, published his *Della poesia rappresentativa* there in 1598, and Cesare Cremonini, university professor and *oratore di stato* until 1590, dedicated *Le pompe funebri, overo Aminta e Clori, favola silvestre* to Alfonso and printed it in Ferrara that year. At the end of the decade Cremonini would pronounce Alfonso's funeral oration and would also speak the welcome to Clement VIII on his triumphant arrival the following year (Garbero-Zorzi and Seragnoli 1991, 308 and 316). In 1590 Cremonini had not yet been investigated for heresy by the Inquisition, but he was already a free-thinking philosopher to watch, and his pastoral play is an intellectually weighty excursus on religion, nature, and society served up playfully with echoes of Giraldi and Tasso. Using the genre that was the most Ferrarese of all Renaissance theatrical products, he celebrated its famous practitioners and dramatized the

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2 These general premises are developed at length in Clubb 1989, chaps. 4-6, and 1992, 110-27.

city as a new Athens by propounding philosophical principles in pastoral terms (Clubb 1992, 115-16).

7.

Approaches to Italian Cinquecento tragedy—Bruscagli's to Giraldi's returns to mind (ibid. n7) — provide clues to the celebratory intentions of representations of ruling-class ethos and to the fault-lines beneath their surfaces. Comedy also was used politically to celebrate and, less often, to advise. Sforza Oddi's 'court comedy', *Prigione d'amore* (1592),[3] set in the environs of the Este dungeons and treating the loves of courtiers under the aegis of the benign but exacting *duchi* in the castle above, is a case of heavily pro-establishment propaganda (with perhaps a titillating echo of the unforgotten scandal of the first Alfonso keeping his treacherous kinsmen in the very same prison, or even, depending on the date of composition, a suggestion of Tasso's incarceration at Sant'Anna). This comedy, *not* a Ferrarese one, rests upon an idea of Ferrara as an appropriate setting for *commedia grave*, a genre originally bourgeois but gradually opened up to treat subjects of moral elevation and romantic exaltation, without loss of laughter, and to present characters of somewhat higher social standing — in this case minor courtiers, a pair of refined and musical boy-girl twins and their friends and lovers, summoned by the duke from Padua, Mantua, and Bologna to contribute their talents to the superior culture of Ferrara. The city is represented as a place where private actions, disguises, and dramatic gestures, fine points of honor, emotional conflicts, and glamorous attitudes were at home, carried out in the middle of town, watched by the entire municipality, and watched over by the benevolent *duchi*, powerful spectators whose displeasure at an act of apparent *lèse majesté* is the threat that moves the action but who interfere with it only to seal and applaud its happy ending.

Oddi, a Perugian jurist, was an ideologue for the reformed stage, and wrote *Prigione d'amore* not *for* Ferrara but *about* Ferrara because

3 The work was first printed in 1590, colophon 1589, and was written some years earlier.

of what its theatrical image in the late Cinquecento contributed to the thematic design of his play. The Ferrara setting provided an atmosphere of guaranteed law and order, absolute but just and responsive to chivalrous gestures and popular humors combined with courtly elegance and leisure, compassionate paternalism, and a social scene that was simultaneously intimate and hierarchical — a Counter-Reformation utopia, but with room for irony. Changes in the "moralità" — we remember that at its first performance Ariosto's *Suppositi* was praised as "moderna tuta deletevole e piena de moralità" (Bonini, ed. 1977-78, 1:415; qtd. from Catalano, *Vita*, 2:88; modern, thoroughly delightful, and filled with customs and moral lessons) — expected of comedy may be illustrated by contrast with *Suppositi* and its ethos of the laughing sodomite — Ariosto had laced his comedies with this topos jestingly, as had Aretino and other *commediografi* of the earlier Cinquecento. But when it came to rearing his son, Ariosto's strictures to Bembo in *Satira* VI on choosing a tutor looked forward rather to Oddi, whose comedy makes a pointed condemnation of homosexuality. This is communicated in *Prigione d'amore* through comic theatergrams — quarrels between a clownish underling named Grillo and a Latin pedant, misunderstandings arising from eavesdropping and cross-dressing — but the lesson is no less grave for that. Grillo's horror at the idea of forbidden love, "cose brutte" (3.4.5; ugly things) or "vizio" (5.5; vice), between Lelio and Flamminio, with hellfire as its consequence, reflects a serious ethical shift in regular comedy.

The first play performed in Ferrara after the devolution, by command of the pope's cardinal-legate and nephew Pietro Aldobrandini, was a Jesuit sacred tragedy on Judith and Holofernes played by students in the Castello in 1598 (Mitchell 1990, 41 and Mocante 1598, C3*v* of Facsimile 5, 130) a choice of entertainment usually interpreted as a complete break with the past and a recipe for the future. Sacred drama, however, although not the most characteristic feature of the Ferrarese theatrical tradition, was nevertheless part of it from Borso's time and thereafter: witness the Good Friday Passion played before Ercole I in Piazza Duomo. During the reign of Alfonso II as well, the flourishing Counter-Reformation genre of *tragedia sacra* was used to stage Ferrara, as I propose to demonstrate by revisiting a text that I have presented heretofore

only in the context of the career of Galileo's rival, the Neapolitan 'mago' and dramatist Giambattista Della Porta (Clubb 1965).

Unlike Sforza Oddi, Della Porta was no ideologue, nor was his pen generally for hire, but he used it for more than one purpose. He always referred to his plays as scherzo — of youth or of leisure — and although we recognize this stance as a conventional topos, it is obvious that what he held to be serious was his incessant investigation of the physical world; call it science or magic, his life's work was among the secrets of nature. His plays stemmed from various causes, but it may be conjectured that he reserved for them the task of cushioning his scientific career against unyielding contexts or of demonstrating his orthodoxy. He must often have felt his safety threatened by his other works, so diverse were their directions, and potentially so suspect in an era of programmed reunification and reconsolidation of Catholic power over the acquisition of knowledge, and the Neapolitan Inquisition once enjoined him to leave off predicting the future and write plays instead.

Della Porta reputedly wrote three sacred dramas, but the only one known among his seventeen extant plays is *Il Georgio*, printed in 1611.[4] Labeled "tragedia" and proceeding by means of familiar combinations of characters and events of the favored neoclassical kind, compact of such Oedipal commonplaces as a kingdom under a curse and a mysterious oracle, together with the Agamemnonian elements of the sacrificing of a royal maiden to her father's ambition and the society's safety, the action disposed according to the supposedly Aristotelian unities and by means of encounters with messengers, narrating counselors, chorus and semi-chorus, *Il Georgio* turns out in the final analysis to be *San Giorgio, tragedia sacra*, or *tragedia di fin lieto* in the manner of Giraldi — in short, tragicommedia. Capping and redirecting the *contaminatio* of classical motives is the familiar story (known in the *Legenda Aurea* and the old popular *sacre rappresentazioni*) of the Cappadocian warrior St. George and the dragon and of how the holy "cappadoco duce" (5.3.478) or "cavalier di Cristo" (5.1.134), as Della Porta calls him, saves a king's daughter and converts the realm to Christianity — in this version not one but two realms, for a Moroccan king, a

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4 My quotations are from Raffaele Siri, ed. 1978.

knight errant, passes by on a quest for his destined bride and, with
Georgio's backing, gains both the princess and a new religion to
take home to his people.

The action assigned to the holy hero is a prescribed miracle
performed by what might be called a *machina ex Deo*, while that
of the princess and her royal lover is an episode from a *romanzo
cavalleresco*; what classically tragic action there is belongs to the king
caught in a crossfire of conflicting duties, ambition and affections.
His position is carefully made morally perplexing: the *antefatto* is
narrated to emphasize that he is historically responsible for the
continuing disaster in his state and for the toll it now threatens to
take in his own family. At the time when the dragon first began
devouring the populace, there arose a motion to disperse, but the
king, desiring to maintain his power, persuaded his subjects to stay
together and agreed to uphold a law destining victims drawn by lot
to appease the dragon (1.1.153-6; 1.2.322-30). Now that the lot has
fallen to his only child, the king claims to be above the law:

> Dunque, il popol co 'l re concorrer deve?
> e commun sia la sorte all'uno e all'altro?
> E qual distinzion sarebbe mai
> tra 'l popolo e 'l suo regge, s'alla legge
> fusse l'un sottoposto come l'altro?
> (1.2.308-12)

> [So, must the people and the king equally compete? / Can they
> share a common lot? / Then what distinction would there be /
> between people and ruler / were they alike subject to the law?]

Della Porta designs a government more complex than a mere
despotism: this kingdom includes a Senate and a Prefetto *vox
populi*, with ideas about the uses of power, laws, and political
responsibilities. The king opposes the populace; their response is
to take the law into their own hands and seize the princess. He
sends his secretary of state to persuade the Senate that kings are
not subject to the common lot and should not be deprived of their
daughters. The answer he receives from a senator is the standard
topos of advice to princes:

vinci te stesso, e l'ira che ti bolle
intorno 'l cor intiepidisci e molci,
e soffri di fortuna il duro colpo.
Ché non convien a un re che gli altri regge
esser d'un cuor sì tenero

. . .
(1.2.420-4)

[conquer yourself, cool down and soften that rage that boils in your
heart, and bear the hard blow of fortune. For it is unseemly in a
king who rules others to be so tenderhearted . . .]

Like Oedipus Rex, this king must recognize that he has contributed
to the curse on his realm and must face the consequences of his
past mistake; like Agamemnon in *Iphigenia in Aulis*, he determines
to deceive his wife and sacrifice their daughter for the sake of the
state and of his own power.

By the end of the third act there has been no sign of the titular
hero of the play or of a brake on the inevitable tragic movement
downward to general woe. Both king and people are presented as
being in the wrong, they to rebel seditiously against his power, he
to abuse it and set himself above the law. Both are also in the right,
he to oppose human sacrifice, they to demand justice and equality
before the law. Attempts by the queen, the courtiers, and the royal
Moroccan visitor to save the princess having failed, she is led away
to be fed to the dragon, like the classical Andromeda and Hesione,
like Ariosto's Angelica and Olimpia, and like all the maidens in all
the versions of the St. George legend. Everyone is wrapped in error
and doomed to suffer the consequences of the unmitigated human
condition. At this pass a reconciliation between ruler and people
would not save the future victims required by the law, and even the
best humanistic advice to princes is useless.

Only a higher power can help, and in the middle of the chorus
following the third act, the play shifts from pagan tragic into
Christian comic gear. The error of belief in fate is unmasked, the
Redeemer, "cavalier istrano e d'altra legge" (1.1.190; foreign knight
of another law), of the oracle is announced, and Georgio appears
in the fourth act, stopping off on his way to missionary work in
the Indies, a kind of lay Jesuit (a condition actually assumed by

Della Porta himself after his reprimand by the Inquisition). After Georgio's miraculous rescue of the princess, a political accord is achieved together with a mass conversion (5.5.667-90; 733-41). At first reading, Georgio's entrance suggests a naive awkwardness in Della Porta's dramaturgy: a chorus in six stanzas, the first three in classical accents, lamenting the inescapability of fate, the last three denying the premises just stated and substituting for them an enunciation of the doctrine of human free will and a rejection of any idea of fate or predestination except the providence of a divinity that guarantees that freedom. The lack of modulation, the sudden grafting of a Christian resolution onto a classical conflict might well appear both illogical and indecorous.

It does not make Georgio seem necessarily a better play but indubitably a more complex and communicative one to recognize, rather, that its startling generic juxtapositions and conflations are akin to the calculated assonances at work in otherwise dissimilar theatrical structures of these years. Change of genre could be a flaunting of technical versatility or a theatrical sign of a profound change of dispensation.

Both the general advice to princes and the representation of the sterility equally of good and evil intentions, absent the enlightenment and blessing of Christianity, which are intrinsic to the plot of *Georgio*, would have been suitable generalities for performance or reading at any school, academy, or court of the epoch. As it issued from the press the tragedy was dedicated to the Neapolitan Ferrante Rovito, but I think it was originally intended for another recipient, Cardinale Luigi d'Este, the patron whose circle Della Porta frequented in Ferrara and Rome between 1579 and 1581 and for whom he undertook experiments in optics and lens-making in Venice, assisted by the glassworkers of Murano. The cardinal also wanted plays for court performance and Della Porta furnished him with at least two, perhaps more (Clubb 1965, 19-22).

The tragedy of *Georgio* is full of marks of deference to Ferrarese culture; even the choice of the *tragedia di fin lieto* as a mold for casting this conflation of classical and chivalric motifs points to Giraldi. But the strongest indication is the choice of George as a subject. Della Porta's two other saints' plays, on the virgin martyrs Dorotea and Eugenia, are lost, known to us by name only. In the

portrayal of a *cavaliere errante*, in a setting embellishing the popular hagio-graphical version with "armi e amori" from the chivalric epic genre, theatergrams from classical tragedy, and discussions of the duties of rulers and subjects, *Georgio* is an image of Este power that functions without explicit parallels drawn by the playwright; it is enough to know, as anyone likely to see the text in the 1580s would have known, that George was the patron saint of Ferrara and of the city's Estensi lords.

Clement VIII also may have had this in mind in 1593 when he created his nephew Cinzio Aldobrandini Cardinale di San Giorgio in Velabro. The cardinal's cultivation of Ferrarese intellectuals and writers involved not only his well-known protection of Tasso in the 1590s but patronage also of Guarini and Ingegneri. In the event it was the other nephew, Pietro, who became papal legate of Ferrara, but Clement had not yet decided that in 1593. When he entered the city to take possession in May 1598, Cinzio and Pietro flanked him; the trio spent the night at the monastery of San Giorgio, then crossed the bridge by the Porta San Giorgio to proceed to the Duomo dedicated to San Giorgio and thence to the Castello (Mitchell 1990, A3-A4 of Facsimile 2).

Even if no immediate references are posited, the total charge of *Georgio, tragedia* is complex. Della Porta transforms the commonplaces of classical tragedy of fate, within classicizing rules, into a Christian spectacle of providence. He depicts an ideal adjustment in the relation of ruler to subjects and to God by presenting a conflict and its resolution in terms familiar to the humanistic tradition of advice to princes (the same terms, incidentally or not, that Machiavelli presupposed as objects of subversion and that Counter-Reformation policy aimed to revalidate). Simultaneously he re-presents Christian redemption in his peripety and denouement: Georgio is insistently portrayed as a Messianic figure, his coming obscurely prophesied, who fights the dragon a mystical three times, calling on divine power to defeat it at last, not killing but temporarily subduing and sending back to the abyss the sea monster identified at last as a rebel "angiol dell'inferno" (5.3.468).[5]

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5 The Saint George of the *Legenda Aurea* and the Quattrocento *sacre*

As a celebration of a political patron, however, the play is still more subtly complex. It adds to the large number of representations in art, pictorial and literary, of the Ferrarese patron saint, in whom appears a combination of the chivalric attitudes and trappings long and insistently appropriated by the Este court with suggestions of both Christ and Michael the Archangel, functioning as Christian improvements on and fulfillments of the various classical ancestries and affinities claimed for the Estensi by their poets, not only in the artificial Trojan genealogy concocted by Boiardo but also in numerous thematically associative allusions to Perseus, to Hercules, and so on. Just as in the *Orlando Furioso* Ruggiero's and Orlando's performance of the Perseus action of rescuing a princess from an *orca marina* (also featured in the classical Hercules myth) tacitly unites them as Este heroes under the ensign of St. George; and as in the *Gerusalemme Liberata*, in addition to the ancestral hero Rinaldo, the African warrior princess Clorinda also is claimed for the Estes, having been born white by virtue of the prenatal influence of St. George (Patron of Ethiopia) on her Ethiopian mother; so in Della Porta's tragedy the first chorus, in the pagan and "tragic" part of the tragicomedy of conversion, prays for help against the dragon to Hercules the Hydra-killer:

> . . .
> cala giú dal Cielo
> o vincitor de mostri
> . . .
> l'Idra, mirabil angue
> . . .
> uccidesti
> . . .
> Vien, vincitor Alcide
> . . .
> (1, Coro, 564-95)

> [. . . descend from heaven, / O conqueror of monsters . . . / you killed / the Hydra, awesome serpent /. . . Come, victor (Hercules) Alcides . . .]

rappresentazioni fights the dragon only once and kills it; Della Porta's Georgio, however, is related to the Archangel Michael and also resembles Spenser's figure of St. George the Redcrosse Knight in *The Faerie Queene* 1.11.

and with that invocation links the Este name of Ercole to Perseus and his Christian metamorph George and sets the stage for the Christian answer to a classical pagan prayer, for the Christian "comic" denouement to a classical pagan tragedy.

The date of *Georgio* is uncertain. The 1610 dedication to Rovito states vaguely that it was written "anni a dietro" (years ago).[6] If Della Porta originally drafted this play while he was in Este service, there was a lapse of some thirty years between composition and publication. We know, however, that many of his plays were written long before he published any, the first not appearing until 1589, when he was in his fifties. The subject of the knightly saint is unique in his theater and lends credence to the assumption that he chose it while employed by Cardinal Luigi and as a compliment to his patron, at a time when the Estensi still ruled in Ferrara and hoped for continuance, but that he published it thirteen years after those hopes were definitively quashed. It is possible, of course, that if *Georgio* was written around 1580 it may originally have contained partisan pro-Este sections which had to be excised in 1610, but this is unlikely, considering that Della Porta had had his troubles with the Inquisition before 1579 and that everything else in his career suggests that these made him careful to keep on good terms with the Vatican.

If the play in its only extant form was written while the Estensi were in power, it constitutes a triumph of ambiguity. In the act of depicting a fallible ruler who needs divine help, Della Porta celebrates the Estes through the redemptive deeds of their *santo protettore*, and does so at a moment when the family was obsessed with maintaining its hold on Ferrara, when the brother of Della Porta's patron had already contracted three marriages in hopes of an heir. Meanwhile the Vatican waited for the reversion of the city to the Holy See, as ultimately came about on the death without issue in 1597 of Alfonso II, when the Estense failure to obtain the right of succession in Ferrara forced his cousin Cesare d'Este to move the court to the family duchy of Modena.

6 The manuscript sent to the censor in this year is indubitably the basis for the printing by Gargano and Nucci in Naples, 1611. Also see Clubb 1965, 62-63 and 101-21.

In the absence of an earlier version substantially different from the printed *Georgio* of 1611, if we assume that the work was drafted for the Estensi between 1579 and 1581 and regard it as a patronage play, we find that it manages to serve two parties without commitment to the politics of either. *Georgio* can be read as divine providential confirmation and reformation of an existing government, but in a non-partisan way unobjectionable either to the Estes or to the papacy. In 1611 Georgio's conversion of the city could even have been equated with the devolution; the rescued princess is the king's only child and, as she presumably accompanies her new husband to Morocco (or Modena?), her father's dynasty would end in her homeland, now become a Christian state, whatever its form of government. In any case, once Ferrara was under the rule of a papal legate, the name of *Georgio* sounded no echo of dissent; perhaps as a knight George was identified with the Estes but, despite their efforts to claim him entirely, as a saint he belonged to the Church. Only in the late twentieth century would St. George be disavowed as uncanonical, the last of the Estensi to be dispossessed by Rome.

8.

I have mentioned the opinion that by the time of Alfonso II theater in Ferrara had become a municipal activity not requiring a ducal drive. After the dynasty's end, the year of the devolution was marked by theatrical pageantry, connoting union of church and state. Thereafter, *tornei*, horse ballets, and the developing music drama still held a place in municipal life, limited and directed by the policies of the new government, which relied on university circles for suitable texts (Fabbri 1991, 331-32).

The Estes' claim on the iconic action associating them with Perseus and St. George was now disputed, as may be illustrated by a brief consideration of the musician and poet Benedetto Ferrari's *Andromeda . . . rappresentata in musica* (1637), the first of the Venetian commercial opera *libretti*, and the *Andromeda cantata e combattuta in Ferrara* (1638) of Ascanio Pio, a Riformatore of the University of Ferrara (Ferrari 1637; Pio 1639).[7]

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7 Though printed in 1639, Pio's play was performed in 1638.

Although Ferrari's choice of subject, like that of his *Armida* two years later, may have originated in the remaining Estense duchy, where he was born in Reggio and died in Modena, his treatment of the myth has no Ferrarese connections, aside from some verbal echoes of Ariosto; rather, its representation of a sea rescue contributed to the Academia degli Incogniti's campaign to glorify Venice (Rosand 1991, 140-41).

Pio's *Andromeda,* on the other hand, is concentrated on Ferrara and represents the new regime's determination to appropriate Estense imagery for the Papal States. First adducing a superabundance of reasons for staging this "festa" — the post - nuptial visit to Ferrara of Costanza Sforza and Cornelio Bentivoglio, the carnival season, the desire of the Ferrarese nobility to offer a special "segno di divozione" to Cardinal-Legate Ciriacco Rocci and because public theatrical productions "paiono proprie, ed innate a questa Citta" [seem to belong innately to this city] (Pio 1639, A-A2, 1-3), a commentary provides complete coverage of the production, describing the scenes and machinery, the music, dances, and choreographed skirmishes and "Euclidian" martial formations, and their effect on the spectators, narrating the plot and reproducing the *libretto*, which ends with Giove's confirmation of Perseo as his son, destined to rescue Andromeda and to rule. The father of the gods then concludes the occasion by revealing its primary cause in direct address to the three cardinals in the audience:

> Voi purpurati Eroi, ch'al Ciel Romano
> Sin dal Reno, e dal Po lume accrescete,
> E con l'opre magnanime rendete
> Di novo glorie adorno il Vaticano.
> (125)

> [You scarlet-robed heroes who brighten the Roman sky / even from the Reno and the Po, / and by your magnanimous works / adorn the Vatican anew with glories.]

The spectacular machinery for the production was designed by Francesco Guitti, celebrated especially for his successes in Rome under the auspices of the Barberini papacy, and the Vatican doubtless paid the bill for this Ferrarese *Andromeda.*

Although not formally divided into five acts, the action has five phases and is longer and more intricate than the plot of Ferrari's Venetian *Andromeda*; the unities and other conventions of high tragedy are observed; and the text, too complex to be grasped through song along, is obviously designed for reading as well. St. George and the Estes' epic heroes Ruggiero and Orlando are not alluded to, and the allegory is set forth in purely classical terms: Andromeda is Ferrara, Perseo her divinely-appointed rescuer and spouse. With a tinge of classical authority, Pio clinches the political allegory by the addition of a plot which unfolds after the rescue: Andromeda's uncle Fineo claims hereditary right to her hand and kingdom, challenges Perseo, and is defeated in a combat of seven against seven (the winning team clad all in white, the papal non-color). Perseo uses the Medusa's head to petrify Fineo, who thus joins the former Este rulers of Ferrara as a stone monument to the past.

In the same year that saw the production of *Andromeda* Pio also wrote *Ferrara trionfante*, the libretto for an elaborate open-air "festa" for the coronation of the Blessed Virgin of the Rosary, published twenty-four years later while the late author's son was bishop of Ferrara (Pio 1662). Presenting the rediscovered designs and description of the distant occasion, Giovanni Bascarini explained that the sacred "pompa" was inspired by municipal satiety even to the point of nausea with spectacles of chivalry, which had long and frequently filled the theaters and public spaces with "profane materie." These had earned for Ferrara superlative fame for arms and letters, but finally there prevailed a desire for nobler subjects: "quando collo sfoggio estremo della magnificenza le profane materie cominciarono à venir meno, & à nauseare l'appagata curiosità de Cavalieri, e de Cittadini: si mossero muse più solevate in traccia di soggetti più riguardevoli, e più eroici" (12).

Bascarini leaves no doubt that although spectacles and music drama on mythological subjects did not die out, Ferrarese theater dwindled after Estense rule ceased. If papal Rome was a great theater center in the seventeenth century, papal Ferrara was not. What was left of the Estes' staged Ferrara was in printed texts and in memories, a glorious "Ferrara palcoscenico" that went on — and goes on — playing in the mind.

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Castiglione's Humanistic Art and Renaissance Drama

In an eighty-year-old number of *PMLA* there is to be found an earnestly argued claim that in *Much Ado About Nothing* Shakespeare is indebted to Castiglione for the characters of Beatrice and Benedick, having adapted the merry war between Emilia Pia and Gaspare Pallavicino as it reached England in Hoby's translation, *The Book of the Courtyer* (Scott 1901). The argument smacks of that desperation which is an occupational hazard to source hunters, especially Shakespearean ones.

But if, after acknowledging the dangers of that chase, we look back across the years that separate Shakespeare's plays from Castiglione's nontheatrical (but hardly undramatic) work, we see a century that coincides with the coming of age of Italian Renaissance drama, a process that long preceded equivalent events in other countries. And thinking about Beatrice and Benedick in Anglicized Messina and about Emilia Pia and Gaspare Pallavicino in idealized Urbino leads to some thoughts, of the kind comparatists think, about Castiglione in relation to drama. For the *Courtier*, its growth, publication, and even its fictional time belong to the period when modern vernacular genres were finally established onstage. Castiglione himself had written the dramatic eclogue *Tirsi* in 1506, and the founding fathers of cinquecento theater were his contemporaries, some his acquaintances, some his friends.

Until fairly recently it has been thought that Castiglione wrote the prologue for Cardinal Bibbiena's comedy *La Calandria*.[1] Of Bibbiena and Bembo, Mario Baratto has said that they are in the *Courtier* "two faces of a single culture" (1975, 32). Agreeing with Baratto, I would emphasize "in the *Courtier*," for it is what

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1 Giorgio Padoan makes a convincing argument for Bibbiena's authorship of the "Castiglione prologue" in the introduction to his edition of *Calandria* (Verona, 1970).

Castiglione does with these two figures that is relevant to the view
I am taking of cinquecento humanistic art.

As an interlocutor in dialogues set in the fictionally recreated
year 1507 but composed long after *Calandria*'s premiere in 1513,
Bibbiena was to Castiglione, as to all playgoers and patrons by the
1520s, an Olympian of the drama, author of the *commedia erudita*
most exemplary of the genre and most likely to succeed forever, an
expectation abundantly fulfilled throughout the sixteenth century
and after that hardly at all. In the *Courtier*, book 2, however, Bibbiena
is assigned a task not unsuited to the author of *Calandria* but
restricted so that he talks about some of the matters of *commedia*
but not about the form or the principles of their combination. The
brief discourse on the risible with which he begins retraces the
opening of Gaius Julius Caesar's speech in the *De oratore*, book 2.
Bibbiena's ostensible function is primarily that of raconteur and
anchorman for a panel on jests. In his analysis of *facezie* there is the
merest gesture at the genre of comedy, and the playwright is not
immediately visible. The "lower face" of Renaissance civilization
that Baratto finds characterized by Bibbiena as a witty imitator of
daily life is very much in evidence. A closer look, however, shows
that even in what Bibbiena is allowed to *tell* there is more than
the underside of the Renaissance. The concerns of the serious
dramatist are sketched: the theoretical in the discussion of what
is laughable; the substantial in the kinds and examples of comic
narrazioni (festività, urbanità), *detti*, and *burle*; and the tonal —
surprisingly moral — in the concluding judgments on tricks such
as the substitution of bodies in dark bedrooms which were staples
of the *novellieri* and would be of the *commediografi*. The structural
and technical concerns of the dramatist are not absent from the
Courtier either, but instead of being discussed by Bibbiena they are
demonstrated, later, by Castiglione.

Bembo is Baratto's upper side of the Renaissance by virtue of
his solemn soaring into the disquisition on progressively idealized
love in book 4. As everyone knows, his, the most influential voice
on the vexed old *questione della lingua*, is not heard in the debate on
language in book 1. Despite an earlier intention of involving Bembo
in the linguistic section, Castiglione chose to hold him in reserve
as the exponent of a Neoplatonism that, despite the pedagogical

orderliness of its exposition, leads to a rapture of the kind associated rather with Ficinian Platonism than with the Ciceronian variety described by Giancarlo Mazzacurati (1967) and of a kind quite alien to the unecstatic climax of Bembo's own Platonic dialogues, *Gli Asolani.*

Polariziation – Baratto's two faces of the Renaissance, Mazzacurati's two Platonisms, the active versus the contemplative strains in humanism, the ideal and the real in Castiglione's vision of the world – are essential to organizing our thinking and teaching about the Renaissance. But in this essay I prefer to comment on the unitary thrust discernible in the art often polarized, the single aim that required polarizable issues and that was an ideal held in common by Bibbiena, Bembo, and Castiglione. It was, moreover, common to the art of the first contemporary names that come to mind – Ariosto, Rabelais, Machiavelli – I would say to the vernacular humanists of the early cinquecento, except that I would not wish to exclude the neo-Latinists Erasmus and More.

What I am calling humanist art is the art that sets out to have it both ways, an art that rests on principles of imitation and of contamination of plural elements, not merely in the Terentian sense of fusing two plots but in that of seeking out opposites for the *contaminatio.* This is different from the hybridism present to some degree in almost any art, different too from medieval syntheses of invitingly recognizable traditions of figures, and different even from quattrocento humanistic syncretism. The humanistic art I mean tries to reconcile in creative tension what is held to be unreconcilable, a self-conscious dandified art that plunges at challenge, sets out to square the circle, and tries to do it all: to be old while new, dark while light, ideal while real, *grave* while *piacevole.* An art of which Neoplatonic phrases like *discordia concors* and *serio ludere* could serve as mottoes, though many practitioners of it were only armchair Neoplatonists, if at all.

In the *Courtier* this intention transpires in Castiglione's choices of matter and in his techniques of disposition. A similar goal was set for regular drama when the vernacular humanists and humanist sympathizers took to it, and it remained in diminished force into the seicento, ossifying with time into schemata and fragments.

One reason that for centuries no one challenged Castiglione's authorship of the prologue to Bibbiena's *Calandria* was undoubtedly

the harmony between the statement made there and the premises on which the *Courtier* rests. "Una nova commedia," the prologue announces:

> In prosa, non in versi; moderna, non antiqua; vulgare, non latina . . . Calandria detta è da Calandro el quale voi troverrete sì sciocco che forse difficil vi fia di credere che Natura omo sì sciocco crease già mai. Ma, se viste o udite avete le cose di molti simili, e precipue quelle di Martino da Amelia (el quale crede la stella Diana essere suo' moglie, lui essere lo Amen, diventare donna, Dio, pesce ed arbore a posta sua), maraviglia non vi fia che Calandro creda e faccia le sciocchezze che vedrete.

> [A new comedy, in prose, not verse; modern, not ancient; vernacular, not Latin . . . is called *Calandria* from Calandro, whom you will find so foolish that you may find it hard to believe Nature ever created so foolish a man. But, if you have seen or heard of similar things, especially those of Martino da Amelia (who believes the star Diana to be his wife, himself to be the end all, woman, God, fish and tree as he pleases), marvel not that Calandro believes in and does the foolishness that you will see].

Using the vernacular is justified thus:

> La lingua che Dio e Natura ci ha data non deve, appresso di noi, essere di manco estimazione né di minor grazia che la latina, la greca e la ebraica: alle quali la nostra non saria forse punto inferior se la esaltassimo, la osservassimo, la polissimo con quella diligente cura che li greci e altri ferno la loro.

> [The language that God and Nature have given us must not, once learned by us, be held in less esteem or of less grace than Latin, Greek, or Hebrew, to which our language would be in no way inferior if we praised it, maintained it, and polished it with that diligent care which the Greeks and others lavished upon theirs.][2]

Note the procedure. The *prologo* sets up opposites and declares for one of them — *vulgare* as opposed to *latina* — but then explains the choice in such a way as to associate the *vulgare* not only with *latina*

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2 I quote *Calandria* from the edition of Borsellino 1967, 2, 16-17.

but with all three of the ancient languages supporting Renaissance civilization, not to contrast it with them but to make it more like them by according it the treatment they have received. The program is that of European vernacular humanists in general, *l'illustration de la langue*. The presentation is playful. Such legerdemain of argumentation is used also with regard to the title of the play itself and the content it indicates: Calandro from the Decameronian figure who was a byword for foolishness. In other words the fiction is derived from fiction, the art from art, ostentatiously borrowed and expanded (for Boccaccio's Calandrino is different in character and situation from Bibbiena's Calandro), but the extreme artfulness, the very *maraviglia* of Calandro's silliness, which is opposed to nature, is deftly defended by recourse to nature and to real examples from popular knowledge.

Finally the pretense of opting for the modern instead of the ancient is contradicted doubly by introducing the charge of those "who will accuse the author of being a great thief of Plautus" and fending it off with a brazen assurance that "he has not robbed him," the doubter being urged "to seek how much Plautus has and he will find that nothing is missing."

The comedy brings together an expanded cast of stock characters from Roman comedy with Decameronian figures in a stream of all three kinds of *facezie* discussed in the *Courtier*, book 2. But Bibbiena the *commediografo*, albeit unremittingly making fun, hilariously or ironically, is not concerned with *piacevolezza* to the exclusion of *gravità*. His seriousness resides not in the matter — for all its potentially bitter aftertaste, *Calandria* is laughing comedy — but in his disposition of it. In a balancing act Bibbiena performs a gravely humanistic exercise of uniting disparate things without canceling the disparity. Consider how he sets up the basic *intreccio*. He takes twins from Roman comedy, makes one of them a girl disguised as a boy (a device of the novella tradition), gives them Greek nationality, and leads them to a new life in Rome, a Rome peopled by types from Plautus, from Boccaccio, and from the sixteenth-century streets of the city under Leo X. He conducts the intrigue in Tuscan and causes it to culminate in a reconciliation of two families — and of more than two cultural and generic lines. The most authoritative character of the play says portentously at the very end that the

Greeks will be better off in Rome than at home, as much better as Italy is better than Greece, as Rome is worthier than Methone (the Greek city from which they came), and as two fortunes are worth more than one. Etc. *Valete et plaudite. "As two fortunes are worth more than one"* — there's the paydirt. The final result is not better because of compromise or substitution of the worthier for the less worthy but because both are to be kept, nothing lost. I think this concluding speech is a humanistic signpost planted to point out the aim and the achievement of the vernacular humanists' activity in the recreation of the comic genre. It is one with the tenets and with the jesting method of the prologue, which also has serious aesthetic and structural aims.

The movement of the new, consciously unmedieval vernacular drama was a movement towards mixture. This was so, paradoxically, even at the time when the forms of "pure" comedy and "pure" tragedy were being recovered. The supposed restoration of authentic Greek tragedy by Trissino in *Sofonisba* can be identified more readily as a reconciling *contaminatio* of Euripides, Sophocles, Seneca, Petrarch, and Roman and sixteenth-century history with Aristotle — in principle comparable with the comic enterprise of Bibbiena.

Almost simultaneously with segregating the matters appropriate to the two primary dramatic genres — the public, state and court, for tragedy; the domestic, urban society for comedy — came recognition that the formulation was inadequate. There was no genre that could concern itself directly with the individual self, the heart or the soul, in a nonsocietal privacy. Eventually the best vehicle for this third matter turned out to be pastoral tragicomedy. But long before that genre assumed regular shape, the humanistic art of creative contamination was feeling its way toward something of the kind.

If few would wish to attach to the *Courtier* the label of pastoral, notwithstanding the link between the figure of the courtier and that of the shepherd so often made in Renaissance poetry, there can be little argument that Castiglione tacitly introduces the idea of tragicomedy into his work and that his art of *contaminatio* reconciling opposed forces employs, among other techniques, those of comic dramaturgy. Richard Cody sees Ficinian Platonism as dominant in the *Courtier*, love as the central subject and force, Signor Morello as a pastoral satyr (1969, 52) — tantalizing

perceptions that leave out of consideration most of the work other than its spirit of *serio ludere*. The humanistic art that Castiglione shared with contemporary playwrights may be seen better in his primary formal and substantial *contaminatio*, of Cicero's *De oratore* with Plato's *Symposium* (not ignoring Ficino, Mario Equicola, or Leone Ebreo), in which the subjects of rhetoric, political duty, social responsibility, and self-cultivation, discussed as both ideal and practical, are joined with the subject of love, moving from the real to the abstract to the ideal. Ciceronian pedagogical Platonism *and* Florentine hermetic or rapturous Platonism are introduced. The tour de force of humanistically artful reconciliation is accomplished by continual practice of the very principle that Castiglione defines as the key to success in all undertakings: *difficile* and *onesta mediocrità,* a golden mean.

It is perhaps coincidence that the matters distinguished for the regular drama from this time forward through the sixteenth century should be those among which Castiglione works his integration — that of tragedy: the state, its government, the primary duty of the courtier to counsel the prince and bear arms in his cause; that of comedy: society, its relationships, styles of communication, amusements, groupings, and its give-and-take. The casting of the interlocutors as well as their subjects frequently derives from the sources used by dramatists, especially *commediografi.* Morello is less a satyr than a *vecchio amoroso*, younger lovers are present as topics of discussion and their behavior is adumbrated in the courteous bantering of the *urbinati* courtiers, braggarts and pedants are not only described but also quoted, in lines that could serve in *commedie.* The discourse on love, of course, contains the issues and the levels of loving that were to be established after mid-century as standard features of the regular tragicomedy.

All of these are held together by timing and by the famous moderation of tone and balance between threatening extremes, but also by the use of interlocutors in unexpected ways and by constant recourse to comic surprise and dialogue in ways surpassing anything similar in the sources. Book 1 opens with a dramatized act of choice which both introduces and rejects the subject of love as treated in the social pastime of *questioni d'amore* and settles on the task of forming a courtier, thereby announcing by association

the Ciceronian model of *De oratore* and the Castiglionian variations and departures to come. Shortly thereafter it launches into a conspicuously long excursus on imitation — ostensibly restricted to the question of language and introducing points from Cicero but in the spirit of the art that tries to have it both ways; Mazzacurati calls the *Cortegiano* "an imitation of Cicero that stands opposed to *ciceronismo*" (1967, 27).

At the other end, Bembo is made to imitate Socrates from the *Symposium* in a climactic moment of book 4, not the first or the last Renaissance dialogue to conclude with an imitation of the Platonic crescendo. But what Castiglione's Bembo does specifically is to quote Socrates, imitate him by his stance and subject, expound it in the rational manner of the Ciceronian Platonists, and propel himself into an ecstasy at the end that, on the other hand, invokes the spirit of the Florentine Platonists. This is accomplished by soliloquy with narrated stage directions aiding the reader to envisage the climax: Bembo sitting there in rapt silence, interrupting the verbal flow. The pause, furthermore, invites the reader to remember the end of the *Symposium*, when after Socrates' discourse and Alcibiades' praise of him, everyone falls asleep until at dawn there are only Aristophanes and Agathon drowsily listening to Socrates as he holds forth to these comic and tragic playwrights on the common source of the two genres — the tragicomic principle, we might call it. It is a joke, of course, one made of serious stuff. *Serio ludere.* However, Bembo finishes his discourse and sits mute until he is physically roused by a theatrical gesture and a theatrical line changing pace and subject, delivered by Emilia Pia as she pulls him by "the hem of his robe and, shaking him a little, said: "Take care messer Pietro, that with these thoughts your soul, too, does not forsake your body'" (4.71). The moment is one of stage timing, stage contrast, gesture, and dialogue, and it both recalls and reconciles the contradictory sources, moods, and kinds of human experience and works of art it conjoins. Too, Bembo was a spokesman for a combination of *gravità* and *piacevolezza* in art, although he is usually thought of as gravity incarnate; Pietro Floriani has remarked that Bembo could only preach the equilibrium of the two that Castiglione could achieve (1976, 186). It is important, nevertheless, that Bembo did preach this balance of opposites and was associated with it in the

minds of his contemporaries. Moreover, although Bembo is kept out of the discussion of language, where it would have been natural to give him a leading role, in the *Courtier* he is not exclusively the instructive and rapturous Neoplatonist of book 4. His assignment there is exceedingly grave, but in book 2, in the witty discussion of wit, Bembo and Bibbiena jocosely fight a round of chauvinistic insult. Castiglione makes Bembo not only *piacevole* but even, briefly, funny. Altogether, Castiglione's handling of Bembo as an interlocutor typifies his procedures: assigning to Bembo the most gravely spiritual portion of the entire *convegno* while also depicting him in a comic *battuta* with Bibbiena (where, to add to the *ridiculum*, Bembo supports the Venetians against Bibbiena's Tuscans — a natural regional partisanship, were it not for Bembo's known view on the language). Castiglione uses a friend whose views were well known, uses, therefore, his reality as a datum, sets him in an ideal structure of triumphantly triple origin — Ciceronian dialogue, Platonic dialogue, and Renaissance humanistic dialogue cum courtly pastime — and causes him to display the extremes of *piacevolezza* and *gravità*. Castigione's theatrical finesse is furthermore illustrated by his modulating from Bembo's almost inaudibly high solo ascent into a harmonious *tutti* by his every-one-onstage-for-the-last-scene technique of assigning speeches in the finale. Everyone already *is* onstage, as it were, but following Emilia Pia's physical gesture of pulling Bembo's clothes and her jesting to retrieve him from his rapture, there comes a spate of interjections from various members of the group: seven speakers in eighty-four lines, back and forth rapidly. More people are talking at once in a short space than is usual in the *Courtier* as the conversation moves away from Platonism back toward sexual sparring, disjunctions preliminary to disbanding, description of the dawn signifying the natural end of the discussion as well as the unnatural length of it, with further joys promised in the near future. The culmination is a ceremonious yet lighthearted withdrawal punctuated by a laughing curtain line: "On condition that if signor Gasparo wishes to accuse and slander women . . . let him give bond to stand trial, for I cite him as a suspect and fugitive" (4.73). An ending looking toward happily-ever-after. A tragicomic ending, for the author has repeatedly reminded us in his own voice, in this imitating Cicero, as in the

ending at dawn and the double tone he has imitated Plato, that death has swept it all away. The finale of the *Courtier*, more than those of its main sources, has a predominantly theatrical aspect — its gestures, general movement and number of speakers, its windup at once conclusive and promising for the future, are all redolent of the stage. The ending is a primarily happy one, even with its tragic undercurrent. As was graphically documented later in the century, when illustrations of stage sets with actors in place were often printed, comic final scenes, in contrast to those preceding them, were densely populated — *commedia* visibly pulls together the society and its members proceed together to future happiness, to feasting, to marriage, to bed, to life going on. Moreover, a pattern that became fashionable for both comedy and tragicomedy was that of the night piece, with action that involves grave troubles in the dark and turns out well and pleasantly when the sun comes up.

As for the theater proper, Italian regular drama in its century-long development that fertilized and marked the European stage in general, in its proliferation and diversification, continued to be spurred by the humanistic hope of reaching two goals in one movement. So many Italian scholars from the ottocento on have tried variously to get away from the humanism of vernacular Renaissance drama, emphasizing everything that conceivably can be considered nonclassical, nonimitative, and irregular, that the originality of the dramatists' aims has often been denied or misunderstood. This originality consists in Renaissance *imitatio* of the classical genres, in searching for rules and in pushing incessantly toward mixed forms that would be simultaneously ideal/universal and real/Italian cinquecento.

The great challenge was to mix tragedy and comedy. Pre-regular vernacular plays in which it was doubtful where one genre left off and another began were followed by the establishment of distinct *commedia* and *tragedia*, but very soon the germs of the one in the other began to be cultivated toward a regular third genre. From as early as the 1530s the comedies of the Intronati of Siena were freighted increasingly with the psychology of feeling, with suffering and pathos, and through the century a certain kind of gravity became their trademark, extending beyond personal emotion to cautious indication of social problems and propaganda for religious reform.

Especially after the Council of Trent got under way did the substance of comedies comprehend the potentially tragic. This included not only promotions in rank for some characters from burghers to aristocrats but also such grave matters as madness (temporary), death (supposed), and bloody feuds (threatened). But although such weighty substance is juxtaposed with *facezie* of all sorts, the mixing is accomplished not only by alternation of heavy and light but also by involving the serious characters in the laughter, as instigators or butts, and by letting the clowns sometimes brush up against tragedy. That the yoked and blended contraries were not fortuitous but corresponded to a principle both humanistic and purposefully contaminating is attested by many prefaces, such as Alessandro Centio's to his *commedia Il padre afflitto* of 1578. He boasts that he has achieved the *piacevolezza* of Plautus with the *honesta gravità* of Terence, has imitated them both à la Bibbiena and Ariosto, and has added borrowings from Alessandro Piccolomini, the leading dramatist of the Sienese Intronati.

Another approach to the double goal was from the direction of tragedy, lightening its gravity and adducing in justification Aristotle, Euripides, and even Plautus's *Amphitruo*. When Giraldi Cinthio distinguishes in the *Discorsi* (1554) between "un-happy tragedies . . . like the *Iliad*" and "happy ones like the *Odyssey*," (1554, 225) he is citing classical authority for the different kinds he wrote himself: the bloodbath type of *Orbecche*, which leaves almost no one alive but the chorus, and the *tragedia di fin lieto*, such as *Altile*, in which the good characters end up with thrones and marriages and the villains just end. But the spirit of *serio ludere* and even the *discordia concors* have departed from this phase of humanistic dramatic art. The unanswerable injustice of true tragedy has been excised to permit the simple concord of a justice calculated to the last *centesimo*. The opposites of tragedy and comedy are reconciled not by tension but by distribution along dual tracks.

Other dramatists tried other combinations, bold, often bizarre — or as bizarre as was consonant with the neoclassical essentials they held in common. Not relaxing their grip on unities, five-act structure, touchstones of decorum, and the like, they produced experimental contaminations labeled *tragedia sacra*, *commedia spirituale* (*spirituale* not synonymous with *spiritosa*), *tragicommedia*

(with various modifiers, *pastorale* or *boscareccia*, *marittima* or *pescatoria*), *commedia pastorale* and *tragedia pastorale*, both different mixtures from those justified as *tragicommedie*. I have read an *Arcicommedia capriciosa morale* (Cenati 1608), which is an allegory about the Patriarch of Venice, no less, and a fascinating play by G. B. Leoni described as *tragisatiricomica* (1595).

The reconciling of opposites became more and more a question of joining genres. In tragedy classical and medieval subjects were added to others from modern history, sad novellas and epic romance; courtly love conflicts, warrior maidens in armor, and episodes from Dante were grafted onto Senecan and Sophoclean plots. So-called comedies often headed straight for tragic endings, swerving aside at the eleventh hour, i.e., the fifth act, and built to a crescendo of solemn, sometimes religious thanksgiving, on the rapturous side, in group finales brought back to earth with quips, invitations to wedding feasts, and future revels.

One of the most articulate voices in the later phase of humanistic art in drama was heard in the duchy of Urbino thirty years after Castiglione's death and until the end of the cinquecento. It was that of Bernardino Pino from nearby Cagli, whose ecclesiastical career did not interfere with his theatrical writing, which included a treatise on comedy and a group of plays with happy endings and various generic subtitles. His *Ingiusti sdegni*, one of the most successful comedies of the time, was introduced by a typical prologue boast of being both *grave* and *piacevole* without diminution of either quality. Torquato Tasso's often-quoted sonnet congratulating Pino on having brought comedy and tragedy together is a demonstration of contemporary critical regard for *contaminatio* by one who knew something about its difficulties.[3]

Pino drew, as many other regular playwrights had done, on the *trattatistica d'amore* and the by-then vast dialogue literature for types of scenes, but he really preferred that his comedies be called

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3 Of the plays of Pino referred to here the first editions are as follows: *Gli ingiusti sdegni* (Rome: Valerio & Luigi Dorici, 1553); *Gli affetti* (Venice: Simbeni, 1570); *I falsi sospetti* (Venice: Giovanni Battista Sessa, 1579); and *L'Evagria* (Venice: Giovanni Battista Sessa, 1584). Tasso's sonnet is in ed. Solerti 1902, 190. For recent work on Pino, see Temelini 1969.

ragionamenti. The printer suppressed that subtitle in issuing the celebrated *Falsi sospetti* as simply "*commedia*" but several of Pino's other plays were published — and performed — as *ragionamenti.*

Gli affetti, written in 1566 and played several times in Pesaro, is called *ragionamenti familiari*, and although less philosophical, is as full of discourses on abstractions as the nontheatrical works of Ficino, Leone Ebreo, or Castiglione. But *Gli affetti* is also an intrigue comedy and Pino makes clear his determined development of the genre and its range of *contaminatio.* His dedication of the play to "Guido Baldo Feltrio della Rovere Duca quarto d'Urbino" defines comedy as *conversatione* and, varying the pseudo-Ciceronian *speculum consuetudinis* and *imitatio vitae*, he calls it a mirror of thought and an imitation of Idea. The plot, too, has been Neoplatonized. The comic twist of the go-between who falls for his friend's girl is here charged with significance when a courtier woos a beautiful widow with the help of a half-blind intermediary who cannot see her but falls in love with "the Idea of her beauty" (2.1). The resolution that disposes of several different sorts of couples in marriages all round achieves the standard *piacevolezza* of *commedia* with philosophical *gravità* — the fiction illustrates the movement of the soul toward beauty and love and its ascent to the various levels familiar to armchair Neoplatonists. The resolution is described metaphorically in terms of the *discordia concors* which was the password of Neoplatonic mystery and an ideal of humanistic art: "From a discordant tone, by the work of an able musician is born sweet harmony" (5.4).

In *L'Evagria*, another of his five-act *ragionamenti famigliari*, Pino makes the discourses on various topics almost detachable from the context, yet he maintains the comic intreccio plot while constantly emphasizing the ideality of his enterprise and employs all the features that the essentially realistic *commedia erudita* had acquired in several decades.

Castiglione had achieved precarious *contaminatio* of the ideal and the real partly by intensifying the reality and the lively dramatic quality of theoretical dialogues among idealized interlocutors on abstract subjects. Pino, the lesser and later frequenter of the court of Urbino, intensifies the ideal and introduces the abstract as much as possible into a primarily theatrical and, in intention, realistic genre. Despite the abyss that lies between the two in the

matter of quality, they share the principle of maintaining a genre in form while expanding it to the extreme of its recognizability and contaminating it not only with other material but also with other genres to multiply and to unify simultaneously.

The crisis of the cinquecento fever to bond contraries was reached in the 1580s and 1590s, when *Il pastor fido* and the polemic surrounding it emphasized homogenizing as the method for making tragicomedy, as represented by Guarini's blend of blunted general tragic and comic features with particular ingredients from Sophocles, Seneca, *commedia grave*, Tasso, and both the Old and New Testaments of the Bible in meticulously neoclassical structure (the straight way from humanism to baroque).

The breakdown of structures was also in process, however, especially at the hands of the *comici dell'arte*, whose proficiency in improvising has been blamed for the withering up of regular comedy in the seicento. But in the late cinquecento the *commedia dell'arte* was still much involved with the regular literary drama, never more than in the first period of its adulthood, which was marked by the successes of the great troupes, the Gelosi, the Confidenti, and others, and culminating in the early seventeenth century with Flaminio Scala's publication of fifty ideal scenarios.

Scala and colleagues such as the Andreini were not limited to improvising. They also performed, as written, literary plays of all genres and sometimes wrote them themselves. A few who were famous for the learning that went into their improvisations also published their star turns. After Isabella Andreini's death, her husband brought out a volume called *Fragmenti* (1620), including many *contrasti amorosi* composed by both of them for her use onstage in almost any scenario. Such documents from a unique moment in theater history suggest another kind of *contaminatio*, that of the reality of craft and performance with the literary idea of genre. These *contrasti amorosi* give us a taste of what was actually said in the tonier of the "improvised" comedies and a glimpse of how much they retained of the literary drama that had been fueled for over a century by the aims of humanistic art. The range of subjects is wide. There are, for instance, *contrasti* on the passion of hate and love, on being a courtier, on doctors and lawyers, on the death of love, on vows, on tragedy and epic poetry, and on comedy.

Under the last heading the *innamorati* Ersilia and Diomede discuss the arrival in their city of "actors who daily recite comedies in public" (58). They criticize the sloppiness and irrelevance of the pieces often presented by the worst companies and they approve adherence to the rules of Aristotle. Ersilia waxes learned on the importance of plot as soul of the play, on the disposition of *burle* and jests, on motivation, peripety, and recognition. She opines that playwrights and *comici* (note the union of what so many would put asunder) should imitate multiple models, notably Bernadino Pino. Diomede responds that he wants to write a comedy named *Ersilia* so that the peripety and recognition of his love may befall her. They return to analysis of the parts of drama but Diomede's transmogrification of the topic into love banter has revealed the procedure of these *contrasti*. Leone Ebreo had sugarcoated a philosophical bolus on the nature of love by presenting it as an attempted seduction in a dialogue between Philo and Sophia. In the Andreini *contrasti* dialogue is not a means but an end in itself; the *piacevolezza* becomes the main point, the *gravità* of learned discourse is an ornament.

The *contrasto* on the dignity of lovers between Attilio and a lady with the Platonic name of Diotima, no less, reaches a conclusion no deeper than that his love for her is noble and should be requited. The *contrasto* on the courtier's service is an attack on courts as dens of flatterers in a typical late cinquecento fashion ("the Court [*corte*] is not short [*corta*] but terribly long in rewarding the worthy") (122). In this *contrasto* the distance from the *Courtier* is much greater than in the many others full of Neoplatonic names and topoi. The tone of all of them, too arch and precious both for modern taste and for taste formed on the *Courtier* is, nevertheless, reminiscent of Castiglione's provocatively witty interlocutors. I say this not to claim reflected excellence for Andreini but to reemphasize the theatrical tension achieved in the *Courtier*. But only the vestiges of the humanistic art remain in the *contrasti*. The concern for genres and forms, the idea of creative *contaminatio* and of reconciling opposites have dwindled into a set of topics in each of which the nucleus turns out to be not the tenor but a vehicle for amatory compliment.

Not always compliment, either, though always *amoroso*: the *contrasto* on the death of love, a sharp exchange between Eudosia

and Manlio, ends with his threatening her that if the stars do not force her to love him he will do some forcing himself, and she mocks him for thinking that he is up to any such feats out of epic romance ("the time of knights-errant is past, and you are not one of these") (41).

With this we are in the world of Beatrice and Benedick and come back to M.A. Scott's theory in 1901 that Shakespeare took them from Hoby's rendering of Emilia Pia and Gaspare Pallavicino. If Shakespeare used any Italian source, however, it was less likely to have been the English translation of the *Courtier* than the fashionable and Channel-crossing sex-war dialogue that *comici dell'arte* had developed from a line of literary dramatists, *dialoghisti*, *trattatisti*, and contaminators of genre leading back to the vernacular humanistic art that was practiced better by no one than by Castiglione.

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Not By Word Alone:
Beyond the Language of Della Porta's Theater

Della Porta's theatrical works have been, and continue to be, overshadowed by his astonishingly abundant and varied scientific writings, yet at the height of his fame for these, his printed plays were the most numerous and admired of his time, which was also Shakespeare's time. Although Della Porta was born some twenty-eight years earlier, the two died within a year of each other, one in Naples in 1615, the other in Stratford-upon-Avon in 1616.

Hyperactive overachiever, running off at the pen while endlessly experimenting with a dozen facets of nature, Della Porta was bent on discovering as many of its secrets as possible. Not the least remarkable thing about him was that unlike many workaholics, he was extraordinarily sociable, a member of various academies and apparently engaged in theatrical occasions from childhood, when his father was associated with the princely Ferrante Sanseverino, known before his exile from the Regno di Napoli as an avant-garde patron of theater who sponsored plays in his palace.

My first approach to Della Porta was that of a scholar of English literature, and only secondarily of Italian drama. Encountering his seventeen printed plays half a century ago while attempting to fill the yawning gap in knowledge about Shakespeare and Italy, I discovered that in Elizabethan/Jacobean England, the Italian plays most often translated or adapted were not those of Ariosto, Aretino, Machiavelli or any other familiar name, but were instead those of the Neapolitan 'Mago', author of the *Magia naturalis*, whose comedies, *La Cintia*, *Gli duoi fratelli rivali*, *La sorella*, *l'astrologo*, *La Trappolaria*, and possibly *La furiosa* and *La fantesca* all traveled in print across the English Channel during his lifetime. First adapted at Cambridge in the late 1590's and then in London, his work was also borrowed in 17th-century France by Tristan l'Hermite and Jean Rotrou.

In Italy, decades after his death, he began to be considered old fashioned because of his essential commitment to the neoclassical *commedia erudita*, the innovations of which were by that time no longer perceived as such but, rather, were accepted as standard precepts of playmaking. Still, his comedies continued on stage and in the succeeding century all fourteen of them were republished in standardized Italian. Goldoni, the revolutionary theatrical reformer of the 18th century, kept them on his bookshelves as models of dramaturgy.

As the Italian contemporary of Shakespeare most frequently imitated in England, then, Della Porta was the logical point of departure for a comparative investigation of the perennially bedeviling question of the rapport between the comic theaters of the two countries, one the established workshop of modern drama, the other the cradle of the world's arguably greatest dramatist, whose comedies are famously Italianate. At that time, around 1960, it was not easy to do such research, but the discoveries were worth the effort and confirmed the correctness of my choice.[1] Today we can approach Della Porta with greater ease and confidence because of the contributions of recent scholars, especially because of the Edizione Nazionale of his complete works. With regard to the theater, the four volumes edited by Raffaele Sirri fill a longstanding abyss and constitute the foundation of all future research (2000-2003).

The attention of modern scholars has been most pointedly directed to Della Porta's language, whether from the point of view of a linguistic specialist such as Laura Balbiani, who studies the first edition of the *Magia naturalis* in its Latin, Italian and German versions in order to explore the development of a European scientific vocabulary (Balbiani 2001) or from that of philologists and literary scholars who analyze the language of characters in the plays to reach conclusions about period stylistics and about the variety of Della Porta's linguistic registers and verbal polyphony or his plurilingual and dialectal usages.[2]

1 The results may be read in Clubb 1965; 2010, 3-19.
2 Significant studies of these topics are included in Sirri's selective bibliography in the *Edizione Nazionale* of Della Porta's works, *Teatro. Primo tomo. Tragedie* (2001, xvii-xxv).

Their conclusions are not invariably in praise of Della Porta. Giorgio Bàrberi-Squarotti, who finds his plots derivative, non-experimental imitations of classical forms, locates his originality solely in his language (1990, 441-67), which, however, Bàrberi-Squarotti regards negatively as being characterized by extrapolation of the language of standard comic scenes and exaggeration of it into arias that constitute an end in themselves and the opposite of a mirror of reality, social realism of the Auerbachian stamp apparently being for this critic the most desirable of the theatrical aims.

Della Porta's language is undeniably exaggerated, although this has more often excited admiration than not. The verbal flow of his plays, like that of his non-dramatic works is inventive, varied, abundant, multi-faceted and fantastic—it shares these qualities with Shakespeare's language and with what we have been able to reconstruct of the speeches actually used by many typical professionals of the *commedia dell'arte* in their improvisations and written plays.

But the theatrical vitality of Della Porta's Italian prose—an amalgam of rhetorical literary artifice and demotic dialectal colloquialism—which is without doubt a defining essence of his work—would have been largely lost in translation; the content it communicated would naturally have been the main attraction for his foreign admirers. Scholarship has not completely ignored the content, of course.

There have been illuminating studies of individual figures, such as the Spanish braggart, the glutton, the Neapolitan, the Turk, the pedant, etc., and of the relationship of the comedies to Della Porta's scientific works, where the *Zietgeist* of Counter-Reformation Italy manifests itself in the controlling ethos of a play, where a correspondence can be detected between physical descriptions of stage character and actions and his *Physiognomonia*, and where his idea of the theater coincides with his theory of memory in the *Ars reminiscendi*, as Lina Bolzoni has shown (1995, 164-86; 219-21). Frederick De Armas has speculated (2006, 17-18) that Cervantes read the earlier Italian version, *L'arte del ricordare* (1560), and that a probable encounter with Della Porta and his other works in Naples sometime after 1570 could have moved Cervantes to try his hand at drama and may even have contributed to the gestation of *Don Quixote*.

Allowing for the fact that we have little but words as witness to the theater of that time in which the vernacular languages were still growing, finding their way to compete with Latin, far from later standardization of grammar, spelling or vocabulary, a period inviting intense scholarly scrutiny, the structural principles of Della Porta's dramatic construction are nevertheless as compelling of attention as his language. This is so, first of all, because the entire movement of early modern Italian playwriting based on the principle of imitation of classical forms was in itself signally experimental, although by the lingering anticlassical prejudice that began in the early 19th century to cloud the critical judgement of the nation.

More specifically, however, I see Della Porta's comic structure as paramount because his way of building modern plays from the Latin models which were the point of departure of the regular, so called "erudite", theater (at which high-culture dramaturgy aimed), illustrates the construction by theatregrams which was a primary mode of playmaking in the Renaissance, first in Italy and subsequently throughout Europe (Clubb 1989, 1-26). A suggestive parallel is Arielle Saiber's insight into Della Porta the mathematician's attempt to square the circle by juxtaposing combinations of curvilinear parts, a procedure which she likens to the composition of an intrigue comedy. She writes:

> . . . thinking of curvilinear figures in terms of their elementary parts, and then building upon them to the spectacular result of squaring the circle was not much different than [sic] writing a script of intrigue that would reach perfect resolution. (Saiber 2005, 94)

Saiber's comparison might be expended to describe the method of construction by *contaminatio* and reshuffling of theatergrams developed by Cinquecento Italian *commediografi* and practiced with mastery by Della Porta the playwright. The formal principles of which he is a particularly fecund and versatile exponent in the period of their most complete development were what would instruct modern Europe in writing comic drama.

Fueling the Italian Renaissance movement to create a new vernacular literature was a search for genres, for possible kinds of

construction, carried on in assiduous debate about lyric, narrative and, above all, dramatic form. Della Porta's treatise on the art of making comedy we know only by title but, whether it was finished or not, its existence, reported by his contemporary editor Bartolomeo Zanetti (1610), shows that he was interested in theory, of the principles and rules of dramatic genres. These rules were held to exist in literary nature and to be capable of discovery, like the rules of physical nature. This view, more familiar to science than to aesthetics or to the history of taste, has its basis in the writings on physics and philosophy as well as poetics, of Aristotle, for whom everything had a true or natural form by which its health, realization or success could be judged. So it was thought that just as the physical world contained structural norms for all species, vegetable and animal, so in literary nature innate regulatory forms were to be found for epic, tragedy and comedy (Clubb 2019).

Della Porta clearly shared to the full the motivating belief of Italian dramatists that the ancients had known the secret of construction of true tragedy and true comedy, that there was a right way that had been lost and that should be rediscovered so that the moderns could rival their ancestors and provide their vernacular culture with dramatic genres of equal excellence. He also believed, to judge by some of his prologues, that he could improve on the tradition, augment and develop the legacy and go beyond Aristotle.[3] As usual in everything he did, he sought for the principles underlying all phenomena and undertook personally to test their applicability. Also as usual, he was expansive in his output; his choices and handlings of materials and subjects for experiment are inexact, even careless, about details. There are many negligent inconsistencies in the early printed plays, and we are told by his contemporary admirers that he allowed his manuscripts to circulate promiscuously.

In all his undertakings Della Porta was amazingly eclectic and abundant, qualities that in science may sometimes be a defect, in the theater more often a virtue. Like his scientific works, his plays

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3 The most complete statement of his intention to surpass the ancients is in the prologue attached to the first edition, both in 1601, of *Gli duoi fratelli rivali* and *La carbonaria.*

are of several kinds. The fourteen extant comedies are all modern structures tailored to Aristotle's and Horace's *dicta*, boasting unity of time and place, beginning *in medias res* with a specific problem, ordinarily a domestic dispute over money and/or marriage, followed by complications and arriving at a resolution, usually uniting lovers and pacifying parents. In the layout and sequence of events, Della Porta took Plautus as basic model and intensified Terence's *contaminatio* or double plot, multiplying intrigue with technical skill while employing relatively few characters, an economy that would prove to be suited to the commercial theater which borrowed from him.

The variety of comic plots for which this structure is a serviceable container is striking, ranging from the farce of *La chiappinaria* to the satire of *La turca* and *L'astrologo*, from melodramatic adventure in *Il moro* to pathetic love story in *La furiosa*. The wide scope opened the possibility of using diverse character types: Moors, Neapolitan criminals, charlatan magicians, medical doctors, boastful Spanish captains, Latinizing pedants, and seagoing foreigners from the Croatian port of Ragusa. It has been erroneously held, and still is so in some quarters, that the sub-genre of romantic comedy was invented by Shakespeare. In fact, it was launched in Siena in the early 1500's and by Shakespeare's time was already well-established in Italy, some of Della Porta's plays being among the best known exemplars.

Although prose comedy was Della Porta's preferred genre, he also experimented with non-comic forms, switching to verse, as sanctioned by theory for tragedy and pastoral drama. He described as "tragicommedia" his verse play *Penelope* dramatizing the Homeric Ulysses' return to Ithaca after the Trojan War. Two of his sacred tragedies we know only by title, but we have his drama about Saint George, which he labeled simply *Georgio, tragedia*, in an experimental fusion of two fashionable genres, sacred tragedy and tragedy with a happy ending, producing what is actually a "tragedia sacra di fin lieto".[4] For his final non-comic verse drama

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4 "Tragedia di fin lieto" was the term used to describe his own innovative mixed genre by the Ferrarese literary authority Giovanni Giraldi Cinthio in *Discorso intorno al comporre delle comedie e delle tragedie*, a work Della Porta

he returned to the figure of Ulysses. *L'Ulisse, tragedia* shows him at grips with the theatrical problem of making tragedy in the classical sense (in his time still a relatively new idea in process of definition), challenging Aristotle, not by departing from him but by proving that a modern dramatist could create the form of tragedy he would most admire, that is, one modeled on Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, employing all four levels of construction possible to tragedy, as described in the *Poetics*.

What Bàrberi-Squarotti says about the comedies not being imitations of life but totally "teatro di finzione" (1990, 467), presenting exaggerated characters living in isolated linguistic capsules, may be taken more positively as evidence of Della Porta's concern for theory and structure, and for being more Plautine than Plautus, that triumphant master of fiction and exaggeration, again in order to satisfy and exceed what Aristotle might have demanded from comedy. Della Porta is reported to have translated Plautus entire, and though his work is not extant, the claim is substantiated by the total familiarity with Plautus' twenty-two comedies manifested in his fluently self-confident recombinations of situations and stock characters. In the prologue to *La Trappolaria* he points with pride to *Pseudolus* as his point of departure but he reconfigures the structure with elements from other unnamed Plautine comedies.

In true Della Portean fashion, making connections wherever possible, he brings Plautus into his non-theatrical work on the art of memory, where he adduces its utility for performers memorizing the complicated Latin names of Plautus' characters. This gives us a glimpse of his experience with staging, not only of his own plays but also of Latin plays, probably for one of the various academies with which this eminently sociable polymath was associated. In Naples the Accademia degli Svegliati and the later Accademia degli Oziosi were venues for literary and theatrical presentations. Given his temperament, Della Porta probably introduced a theatrical element even into his purely scientific academies. His letter to Federico Cesi describing the ritual with costumes and props that he had arranged for the initiation of members into the Neapolitan branch of the newly-founded Accademia dei Lincei confirms this

probably knew even before his stay at the Este court in the 1580s.

supposition. And in what was almost certainly the headquarters of his famous early Accademia degli Secreti, disbanded by order of the Inquisition, recent excavations at the site of his villa in Via Cattaneo above the city have unearthed symbolic Egyptian designs and columnar framing reminiscent of stage décor.[5]

Although he says, doubtless truly, that his plays were merely a relaxation, and though they very likely were aimed at providing entertainment for his friends and court circles, rather than instruction for a general audience, there was variety also in the way he used them and gravity in some of his themes. In *Il moro* he lightly satirizes Neapolitan social climbing; in *La turca* the penal practices of his day; in *Gli duoi fratelli rivali* the inequities of the law. He employed comedies for his own advancement, as in *L'Olimpia* to amuse and flatter the Spanish viceroy, and for self-defense from the Inquisition, in *L'astrologo* demonstrating his orthodoxy and distinguishing his own 'natural magic' from that of charlatans, and sometimes for giving advice indirectly to princes. *Gli duoi fratelli rivali* compliments the King of Spain's government in the Regno di Napoli for granting the status of demesne to the city of Salerno

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5 See online www.napoliunderground.org for photographs published with a description by the engineer Clemente Esposito, President of the *Centro Speleologico Meridionale*, 4 October 2004, referring to the discovery of "una cavità avente come accesso un corridoio che ha ai lati delle strane nicchie. Il corridoio, una volta affrescato con disegni che riproducevano l'opus reticolatum, termina con un arco sul quale fa bella mostra un affresco, tra il sacro e il profane, il moderno e l'egiziano. L'affresco potrebbe rappresentare Seth al cospetto di Iside che allatta Horus. Superato l'arco, una stanza, con una Colonna alla destra e un pozzo a sinistra, conduce, attraverso uno stretto cunicolo, a una terza stanza che ha la parete opposta costituita da una muratura di grossi blocchi di tufo raffigurante un teschio con la bocca spalancata che fa da porta a una zona oggi adattata a garage . . . Da questa stanza si aprono due varchi che hanno all'ingresso colonne costruite o scolpite nel tufo. Su alcune colonne ricorrono dei signi riconducibili ai numeri sei ed otto; altre colonne, con altrettanti simboli, si vedono lungo la cavità, nella quale compare anche un falso opus reticolatum o scolpito o affrescato sulle pareti. Per quanto sopra detto non credo di sbagliare di molto dicendo che abbiamo trovato gli ambienti in cui il della Porta faceva i suoi esperimenti di magia e i suoi studi e probabilmente la sede dell'Accademia dei Segreti".

(Clubb 1980, 16-20), and the sacred tragedy *Georgio* offered to the ducal Este family an allegory of its dispute with the Vatican over the rule of Ferrara (Clubb 2005, 345-62). Perhaps the most serious of his themes, also illustrated in *Gli duoi fratelli rivali* and in *Georgio*, was that of Divine Providence, represented by his handling of the intrigue plot as a signifying form expressing the orthodox view of God's benign intervention in tangled human affairs, a hot topic in Catholic countries battling Protestant heresy.

Della Porta inherited from the technology developed in Italian *commedia erudita or regolare*, comedy by the rules, from the time of Ariosto, a blueprint for building a container and a growing repertory of usable plot units or theatergrams with which to fill it. He absorbed the whole system, streamlining the construction, complicating the *contaminatio* and expanding the repertory with new fusions of theatergrams drawn from Plautus, medieval *novelle,* romances and scenes from contemporary society welded into new combinations that would become a favorite resource for the *commedia dell'arte.* The results can be criticized as formulaic but it was precisely because they offered a well-articulated formula that they were so attractive to the professionals.

Keeping the cast relatively compact, about the size of the best commercial troupes, though larger than those of Plautus, smaller than those of some contemporary plays with which his are often compared - Giordano Bruno's *Candelaio*, for example, Girolamo Bargagli's *Pellegrina*, or the comedies of Sforza Oddi or Girolamo Razzi - Della Porta shuffles and recombines various kinds of theatregrams.

One is the theatregram of person or relationship, such as pairs of lovers: in *La Cintia* one, an idealist of high neo-Platonic views, is loved by a resourceful brave girl who dresses as a man and fights with a duel, while his hot-blooded friend, an enterprising man of action, loves a shy gentle girl and disguises himself as a serving-maid to penetrate her gates and force his way into her bed. In *La furiosa* one pair of lovers is as lyrical and pathetic as Romeo and Juliet, another is mature, lustful, and adulterous. In *Gli duoi fratelli rivali* two jealous brothers fight over the same girl but, fortunately for the resolution, she has a sister. In *La sorella*, a lover tricks himself inadvertently into supposed incest but at last discovers that the girl he has secretly married is not his sister after all, and that his real

sister is the girl loved by his friend. In *Il moro* a romantic nobleman disguised as an Arab returns like Ulysses from long exile to save his wife from remarriage with an amorous mendacious warrior, even though he wrongly believes her to have been unfaithful to him.

All these lovers have clever servants or nurses to help and advise them, in apposite basic dialogues suitable for variation. Most of them have opposing father figures, also often paired and always assigned positions in dialogues apt for embroidery. Other theatregrams of person or relationships are concocted of the many comic characters, among them numerous braggart captains, Latin tutors, fake astrologers, innkeepers and parasites, Neapolitan cutpurses and clowns, and one brilliant Turkish pirate.

The repertory of recombinable units includes the category of place. On the single city set prescribed by classicizing theory, the actions of the theatregrams of person vary and shuffle the uses of architectural features: windows and balconies lend themselves to love duets, serenades and deceitful masquerades; doors and corners invite eavesdropping; roofs facilitate slanging matches between combatants on different levels; while groundfloor rooms (usually specified as "camere terrene") are useful for imprisonment, hiding lovers or exchanging identities.

The theatregrams of action with which Della Porta constructed his plots would be those later preferred by the professional players of the *commedia dell'arte* and offered a range of possibilities for variation and combination: lovers' duets, quarrels and mocking of opponents, skirmishes, hoaxes and dodges to outwit interfering parents and rivals; stratagems of clever servants and blunderings of stupid ones; touching reconciliations of longlost relatives; duels; mad scenes, real or pretended; disguises of all sorts—of sex, of class, of profession, of race, even of species. Della Porta introduces male and female transvestites in *La Cintia*, lovers who truly run mad in *La furiosa* in contrast to another who uses madness as a disguise, tricksters disguised as black slaves in *La carbonaria*, lovers dressed as bears in *La Chiappinaria*, and schemers who sneak into and out of private houses by unlikely means, including the fatuous suitor in *Il moro* who dons a bird costume and tries to pass himself off as a "pappagallo d'India" by being hoisted through a lady's window in a cage.

Actions are sometimes expanded into theatregrams of design, themes running through the total combinations of a plot, as when Della Porta displays different forms of madness in *La furiosa*, or of jealousy in *La fantesca*, or when he makes the deceits and mistakes of the intrigue illustrate the workings of providence, as he does in *Gli duoi fratelli rivali* and in his sacred tragedy *Georgio*. There are countless other such theatregrams in Renaissance drama and as soon as Italy developed and exported them, they appeared in France, England and elsewhere—and still do, especially in opera.

In an acute analysis of Italian theater in Della Porta's years, Michele Rak has observed its transformation from an elite literary entertainment to a more inclusive participation (1990). Reflecting changes in society and together with the entrance into stage production of many social levels with their proper interests and the concomitant possibilities of representing social realities by casting them as comic, an increase in the number of plays acted and in the size of the theatergoing public became evident.

The long-term accumulation of usable theatregrams is ultimately most recognizable as a working repertory in the scenarios of the *commedia dell'arte*. These were jealously guarded, none of them published until Flaminio Scala in retirement printed fifty 'ideal' scenarios in 1611. He did not set a trend in his own time, but from the 19th-century on, many scenarios have come to light and in the fine scholarly editions of a number of collections today[6] we can see the common body of theatrical structures first derived by self-aware modern playwrights from Latin comedy and medieval Italian novellas and then commandeered by actors.

They borrowed especially from Della Porta. His plays were strikingly more actable than those of most dramatists who wrote and published in the regular genre, perhaps partly because, more than they, he allowed the *commedia dell'arte* to influence his writing in a sort of ongoing synergy. It has been suggested that he actually wrote for the *commedia dell'arte*, but this is an untenable notion. We know that his plays were often performed, both in private and at court—for the latter kind of production auxiliary professionals were often hired—and he was clearly familiar with the commercial

6 The prime example is Cotticelli et al. 2001.

theater of improvisation which flourished throughout Italy and with great vigor in Naples. The well-traveled *capocomico* Fabrizio Fornaris writes in the dedication of his comedy *Angelica*, which he first used for improvising his own role and then published, that he had been given the comedy in Venice by a distinguished Neapolitan writer (Fornaris 1585), - and, indeed, a reading of *Angelica* shows that it is an altered paraphrase of Della Porta's *Olimpia* - from which we can conclude that even when he was not at home in Naples, Della Porta stayed in touch with the theater. When he was attached for a time to the court of Cardinal Luigi d'Este, variously in Rome, Ferrara and the Veneto, Della Porta was expected to conduct experiments on lens making, to search for the philosopher's stone, and to write plays. The defining features of *commedia dell'arte* style, as they can be deduced from scenarios and descriptions, are closer to those of Della Porta's comedies than to those of any other contemporary playwright. The plurilingualism and various registers of the professional troupes and the individual voices of the actors' specialties, always open to improvisations, their show-stopping cadenzas and rapid-fire dialogue resemble the linguistic textures of Della Porta's comedies, just as the complex plots of scenarios and the economical number of cast members correspond to his shapes.

What was the reason for the appeal of his theatre to such disparate audiences? Is it to be found in its superior quality? Not entirely, for there are other single comedies as good as any of his. Was his popularity a matter of availability caused by the printing of many editions? Again not, for that was a result rather than a cause of his attraction. The supply was provided to meet the demand. Might sheer number have created the demand? Among 16th-century Italian playwrights, only Gianmaria Cecchi wrote so many comedies. Indeed, Cecchi wrote more, and yet he was not embraced by so many admirers and of such different kinds.

Della Porta's appeal to me is that through his work I first began to see the current state and tastes of Italian comic theater in exactly the period that produced the great Renaissance drama of England and of France, and to discern the broad system of playmaking that evolved in Italy from the early 1500's and established a method of construction by controlled contamination of Latin comedy with Italian narrative, novellas and epic romances, accumulating a

repertory of theatregrams that were infinitely combinable within the parameters of the genre undergoing definition, and offering a sound vessel for the language of the individual dramatist, Italian or other.

Della Porta's comedies were not only often in print, but often performed, undoubtedly much more often than we can know, in the court and academic circles of his own Naples and those of Ferrara and Rome. We do know of many scenarios drawing on his plays. From the few scenarios in print in his lifetime and the collections printed much later, it is possible to see how the theatregrams fashioned for *commedie erudite* by his 16th-century precursors were in Della Porta's hands made to build more than a single comic genre. And the kind and variety he produced were the kind favored by the *comici dell'arte*, as well as by Shakespeare.

Of course it is the words that breathe life into the structure and in them the unique flavor of Della Porta's style is to be tasted. But it is the structure that reveals the character of his intellect, the theoretical scientist bent on discovering the principles of the genre and the applied scientist experimenting with ways to put the principles into practice and make them work in performances. No wonder the professional actors and the foreign playwrights of that day, looking for Italian models, preferred him to all others.

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5

Pastoral Elasticity on the Italian Stage and Page

Fig.: Guarini, *Il pastor fido*, 1602 ed.

In 1598, according to Angelo Ingegneri, nothing but the popularity of the pastoral kept the theater alive and gave dramatists a hope of seeing their works performed:

> Chiara cosa è che, se le pastorali non fossero, si potria dire poco men che perduto a fatto l'uso del palco, e 'n conseguenza reso disperato il fine de i poeti scenici. (qtd in Marotti 1974, 275)

> [Clearly, if it were not for pastorals, it could be said that the practice of staging plays had all but ceased and consequently the aim of dramatic poets had been rendered impossible to fulfill.]

Ingegneri's famous observation on the supremacy of the pastoral play in the Italian theater by the time he published his treatise on dramatic poetry and the staging of plays does not announce an overnight sensation. There was already a long history of shepherds on the Italian stage and a longer one in literature if we count all the kinds of lyric poetry about love in the country and the imitations of Virgil's eclogues written before the fifteenth century. But the Renaissance was the heyday of the pastoral in literature, and the developments in drama reported by Ingegneri are a measure of the enthusiasm of an entire age.

The depiction of the physical natural world that seems the essence of pastoralism in Renaissance painting, however, was neither the primary gain nor the goal of the Italian literary regeneration of Arcadia. Nature as an object of representation and the mystic or rustic relationships belonging to the Other Place constituted by a country scene were sometimes present in medieval Latin and pre-Renaissance Italian writing. An outdoor space, a pleasant semi-solitude, a distance from the city or court or church or battlefield or any other locale of societally determined *negotium* is perennially desirable for giving fictive room to contemplation, recreation, or decision that requires internal debate. And the appearances of all landscapes of the mind, their ideal beauties, and the manner of being that inhabits them inevitably have some features in common with all other such landscapes, regardless of period.

The difference in the Renaissance was that a changed perception of the past, a historical awareness, nourished new bonds with classical culture and attempted to acculturate nature — that is, to

connect modern representation of it with precedents in antiquity. The innovation of Renaissance literary pastoral was principally structural: it offered an open form and unlimited scope for allusion within the classical mode that commanded quattrocento investigation and emulation. Authorized by a reception of Virgil not alien to Paul Alpers' reading of the *Eclogues* in our time, Italian pastoral invited both the simpler substantiality of Theocritus' *Idylls* and the complicated profusion of Renaissance *contaminatio* (Alpers 1979).[1]

In the quest for a cultural continuum Jacopo Sannazaro metamorphosed Virgilian eclogue, with its Theocritan ghosts, into a capacious vehicle for linguistic experiment and for fusions of the genres of lyric, dialogue, and narrative. The immeasurable importance of his *Arcadia* to the fashioning of literary language is causally connected with his choice of pastoral content, his decision to appropriate Latin, pagan, rural terms for communication in a vernacular, Christian, urban society intellectually exercised by the *questione della lingua*, the debate about language that showed a determination to express Italy's cultural unification nearly four hundred years before political unification was nominally completed. What William Kennedy calls the "self-reflexivity and topical referentiality" of the pastoral mode, "where allusion enables the author and the audience to share their awareness of a common source," (1983, 7-8) had impressed themselves on the Italian literary imagination and practice during the century that separates Sannazaro from Ingegneri and his friend Torquato Tasso.

In *Della poesia rappresentativa* Ingegneri values both reading and staging, but his main concern is for the play in performance. He does not champion everything belonging to the theater (indeed he blames the run-of-the-mill professional actors for the decline in which he purports to find comedy); he speaks only for literary playwrights, "poeti scenici." He writes as a director and dramatist and as a frontline theorist in the war over the genre of tragicomedy. In attributing moral and social value (especially benefits for the "vita civile") to drama, even pastoral drama, which, more than comedy and tragedy, aims at "diletto", Ingegneri is a mainstream drama critic for whom Arcadia is a place of delight, but for a useful purpose.

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1 For Theocritus I refer to Rosenmeyer 1969.

The theater, flourishing under pressure simultaneously to fulfill and to surpass a blueprint for drama polemically extrapolated from Aristotle's *Poetics*, found in the pastoral mode the materials for the missing third genre fit to represent what the emerging rules about genres forbade to comedy and tragedy.[2] With the treatises of Aristotle, Horace, and Donatus as handbooks and with a new abundance of classical models of comedy and tragedy available, Renaissance research and development in a technology of the theater gradually formulated a comedy of cityscapes populated by a bourgeoisie in domestic contests about marriage and money, and a tragedy of palace courts where matters of state, ambition, desire, conscience, and power collided. Both genres were shaped by principles of unity and time, place, and action; rational divisions and disposition of parts; and a concern for plausibility manifest in requirements of verisimilitude and decorum. Especially after Francesco Robortelli's commentary on the *Poetics* in 1548, the ideal of structure was clarified and exemplified by Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*. Neither genre so defined could accommodate actions that were frankly unverisimilar; excepting only those phenomena of tragedy that manifested divine will, plots were held within the bounds of physical reality.

Nevertheless, as the texts of pastoral plays reveal, there was in the theater an aspiration to represent realities not directly accessible to the physical senses, especially two such realities. The more immediate of these was the interior world of emotion, in particular love and its related feelings, running a gamut of psychological refinements and variations. No romantic comedy or tragedy of love could fully satisfy the desire of dramatist and audience alike for a "regular" genre that could concentrate on emotion without having to offer a mirror of custom, according to the formula for comedy, or a purgation of pity and terror, as tragedy required. A need was felt for a genre that could function as the vehicle of love, with love itself as a protagonist, without the distraction of the social or political considerations held to be appropriate to the other two genres. The pastoral world was seen as the home of natural simplicity and the naked heart.

2 For fuller discussion of this issue see chapter 6 of Clubb 1989, some of which I paraphrase in the next paragraphs.

The idea of an invisible reality was extended outward, furthermore, to a circumambient truth envisaged as giving form and meaning to life and its tangled action. This was a realty of abstract pattern, visible only to the eyes of the mind, "gl'occhi dell'intelletto," the neoplatonic phrase that was reiterated in innumerable pastoral plays by the imagery of blindness and by a choreographed confusion of plots, apparently chaotic except to the enlightened spectator, who was supposed capable of discerning in them a pattern of higher meaning that accorded with the providential plan of a divinity.

In addition to a utilitarian elasticity in the new genre — Ingegneri points out that pastoral drama can be well produced inexpensively, given the shepherds' simplicity of garb and setting (276) — playwright were offered broad convenience in the hospitable rural scene, unrestricted by protocol that forbid mixtures of social ranks, of public matters with private, of the tragic with the comic, or of the supernatural and the mystical with the everyday and the ribald. Ingegneri himself emphasizes structure, disposition, and interrelation of parts, giving advice on pastorals by referring continually to *Oedipus Rex*. His linking pastoral with tragic drama is not unexpected, inasmuch as the origin of the treatise lay in his experience as choragus for the much-acclaimed opening of the Teatro Olimpico of Vicenza with a performance of Giustiniani's adaptation of Sophocles' tragedy.[3] But Ingegneri's extending to pastoral drama the structural imperative of what Aristotle had classified as the best kind of tragedy shows how far the concern with form went in his day. He expects any serious dramatic work to be capable of sustaining the kind of analysis he makes of *Oedipus Rex*, and he flatters Ferrante Gonzaga, count of Guastalla, by praising the tragic grandeur of his "famosissima" pastoral *Enone* and adding that if the illustrious and excellent prince had deigned to give him a copy of this play, *Oedipus* could have been dispensed with as a touchstone (298).

Although Gonzaga's pastoral paragon is lost to us, we may measure the theatrical scope that Ingegneri sought in Arcadia by his own *Danza di Venere, pastorale*, published in Vicenza in 1584.

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3 He declares the connection in a letter to the members of the Accademia Olimpica, reprinted by Alberto Gallo (1973, xxiv-xxv).

It is not the kind of pastoral drama that could as well be called a "tragedia ne' boschi di lieto fine" (a sylvan tragedy with a happy ending), as he says admiringly of *Enone*, but it is structurally tight and literarily polished, allusive, and calculated. Given the very nature of the genre that Ingegneri praises, *Danza* does not require expensive sets and conceivably could be produced in good weather in a garden with only a few props and some lengths of gauze draperies and home-woven garlands for costumes. It is unlikely, however, that the courtiers who first played it for Rainutio Farnese, duke of Parma, so limited themselves. If the pastoral play permitted great economy, it also invited sumptuousness in design of abundantly varied rural landscapes and trappings both elegant and ingenious, as well as expensive visual special effects: waterfalls and rivers from which deities might emerge, costumes for humanoid characters such as cloven-hooved satyrs, and for animal, vegetable, and mineral transformations of nymphs and shepherds.

If we sample critical taste at the turn of the seventeenth century by pooling Ingegneri's preferences among the "terza spezie di drama" (272) with those of Orlando Pescetti, Giovanni Paolo Trapolini, and Francesco Belli (Kennedy 1983, 7-8),[4] some of the pastoral dramatists we have to conjure with are: Antonio Ongaro, Gabriele Zinano, Nicola Degli Angeli, Francesco Bracciolini, Cristoforo Castelletti, Cesare Cremonini, Carlo Noci, Pietro Cresci, Giovanbattista Pona, Cesare Simonetti, Isabella Andreini, Diomisso Guazzoni, Francesco Contarini, Marcello Ferro, Muzio Manfredi, Scipione Manzano, Giovanbattista Leoni, and, of course, Tasso, Battista Guarini, and Guidubaldo Bonarelli.[5]

In Cresci's *Tirena* and Pona's *Tirreno* we find examples of effects that could be brought off either with a gesture or, budget permitting, with a large expenditure: Cresci's nymph, who turns into a stream to avoid rape (3.1), could disappear into an appointed receptacle either without fanfare or with a giant water spectacle;

4 Like Ingegneri, each proposes a canon of "critic's choices": Pescetti 1601, 108; Trapolini 1600, dedication (1598); Francesco Belli 1621, dedication.

5 Ongaro 1582; Zinano 1582; Degli Angeli 1574; Bracciolini 1597; Castelletti 1580; Cremonini 1590; Noci 1594; Cresci 1584; Pona 1589; Simonetti 1588; Andreini 1588; Guazzoni 1587; Contarini 1595; Ferro 1598; Manfredi 1593; Manzano 1600; Leoni 1595; Tasso 1580; Guarini 1590; Bonarelli 1607.

Pona's Cupid, who turns a fountain to flame (5.3), giving visible form to the power of Venus and to the Petrarchan antitheses of the poetic text (fire/water, hot/cold), might do this by performing in a basin some simple chemical demonstration of ignition of liquid, by introducing a large-scale fiery extravaganza, or by whatever intermediate means the expense account would bear.

Ingegneri's *Danza di Venere* has as its centerpiece a round dance involving all the characters, human and otherwise, creating a physical image of the neoplatonic theme of venereal power moving discordant elements into concord (111.3). Aside from the cost of rehearsing, this effect could have been very economically achieved, especially when the performers were courtiers not requiring to be paid overtime, but the opportunity it presented for elaborate and expensive display is nevertheless obvious. Neither comedy nor tragedy allowed so much leeway, committed as they were, respectively, to the city and the court for settings and kinds of action. In the rural landscape of Arcadia, magic, fantasy, and symbolic dancing could be introduced without breach of verisimilitude, much as in the *locus amoenus* of a Giorgione painting nudes and fashionably dressed lute players could consort on the grass. Most important, both the *favola*, that is, the plot about nymphs and shepherds, and the magic incidents and spectacles of such pastoral plays have as their object of representation the workings of the heart, made visible in the third genre as they could not be in the first and second.

But in constructing an emblem, both decorative and philosophically serious, of the neoplatonic psychology of love, Ingegneri is doing something that he does not write about in his treatise. None of the other theorists of the pastoral wrote about it either: the assumption of substance, of some degree of "utile" or precept, needed no declaration, for it was inherent in the late Renaissance view of literary art and of the allusive pastoral mode. Overt recognition of the pastoral mode as signifier appears casually when required by the circumstances, as in Grazzini's description of G. B. Cini's *intermedi*, presented with Francesco D'Ambra's comedy La *cofanaria* at the wedding of Francesco de' Medici and Giovanna of Austria in 1565. Linking the comic plot with the elaborate *intermedi* drawn from the story of Cupid and Psyche and culminating in the

appearance of Hymen with a pastoral retinue that included Pan and nine musical satyrs, Grazzini explains that the divine actions in the *intermedi* represent the motivation of the human action in the comedy:

> con intenzione di far parere che quel che operavano gli Dii nella favola degli'intermedii, operassino, quasi costretti da superior potenza, gl'uomini ancora nella commedia. (Grazzini 1953, 559)

> [intending to show that what the gods did in the plot of the intermedi, the humans also did in the comedy, as if forced by a higher power.]

The pastoral plays distinguished by Ingegneri, Pescetti, Trapolini, and Belli have various agendas, depending on their provenance. Much is to be learned about the genre by study of local contexts,[6] but the differences owed to milieus only increase the significance of the common features. They reveal an agreement on the basic lineaments of the Arcadian scene and the requirement of unified classical dramatic structure dependent on Aristotelian and Horatian principles. They also testify to an expectation of inclusiveness, of the pastoral play's special ability to expand as well as to contract. All these dramatists write with Empsonian intentions *avant la lettre*, that is, neither for nor about the ostensible subject, for they themselves and their audiences belong to the courtly literate class that claims knowledge of the frame of reference, of the pre-texts in this highly intertextual genre, and they expect to recognize their own interests costumed as those of shepherds. Sometimes they can expect to see more than their general concerns, to see individual portraits of themselves, for one of the pastoralists' options was to follow Virgil and his medieval successors in using shepherds as mouthpieces. Sometimes encomium is the message, solemn and allegorized as in Bernardino Cenati's *La Silvia errante, arcicomedia capriciosa morale*, published in Venice in 1605, a commonplace-enough pastoral despite its subtitle, were it not that the author appends a dedication announcing that it is really the story of the benevolent actions of the Patriarch elect of Venice.

6 Pieri 1983 offers a basis for such study.

Sometimes the *drame à clef* character of a work is complimentary, advisory, teasing, or self-exhibiting, as in Tasso's references to members of the Este court, to himself as Tirsi, probably to Guarini as Batto, to G. B. Pigna as Elpino, and to Sperone Speroni as Mopso, or as in Ingegneri's undoubted reference to himself as the aging (he was thirty-four) chorus leader Leucippo, who bewails his "Smarrito Ingegno," having lost his wits for love in the best Ariostean — and pastoral — fashion.

Occasionally we can glimpse gossip and backbiting behind the Arcadian veil. The prologue to Zinano's *Caride* is spoken by the figure of Virgil, who expects historical truth to be latent in pastoral depictions — "Anco'io copersi / Sotto favole finte historie vere, / E Sotto rozzi casi illustri fatti" (I too covered true histories with fictional plots/ And beneath rustic events illustrious facts) — but recognizes that his latest successor Zinano — "De l'antiche orme mie nuovo seguace" (a new follower in my ancient footsteps) — proposes to exceed the limits of pastoral fiction and refer more openly to his patrons, the Este and the Gonzaga of Virgil's own Mantuan "patria," semidivinities whom he would have praised above Augustus himself. But to the celebration of the regime and reminders of the playwright's value to it, Zinano adds another kind of personal flavor, more particularly mischievous than that of universal satire, in his delineation of several figures: the Satiro who is explicit about his willingness to dispense with youth and chastity in nymphs — he likes them all as long as they're fat; the censorious old virgin Eura; the shepherdess Melia, not yet fallen into age but described as falling — a "ninfa cadente" — not at all shy of sex, on the contrary, she has had to take to cosmetics, false hair, and padded clothes in order to remain active and competitive in the field; and the shepherd Olindo, who marries her at the end, convincing himself that her character has been reformed by true love. Even at this distance in time such characterizations smack of in-jokes and satire at the expense of personalities at the court of Mantua.

Other pastorals show that the elasticity of the third genre allowed it to represent in texts and spectacles not only the social and psychological subjects suggested by encomia, counsel, gossip, and neoplatonic visions but also philosophical and theological conceptions of human nature. One example is the *favola silvestre*

of Cremonini, known as a "diehard Aristotelian" (Cochrane 1973, 171). If the story is true that he refused to look through his friend Galileo's telescope so as not to be confused by the false testimony of the senses, Cremonini presents an extreme case of the application to daily life of the widespread conviction that truth is to be obtained only through the eyes of the intellect. This doctrine belongs to a general late Renaissance mind-set and is voiced in many comedies and tragedies, but it may be said to be the natural content of the dramatic pastoral. The belief that divine providence in a Christian era displaces the classical idea of fate and limits the action of chance or fortune was most clearly represented in plots moving from troubles through deadly menace to a happy ending — that is, in the movement of tragicomedy. The kind of tragicomedy that most easily carried theological allusions was the genre that not only was developed from antiquity for its power of allusion but that in Christian times invited the symbolism associated with the pastoral world of the Old and New Testaments equally, encompassing the original Garden, the shepherd kings, the shepherds to whom the angels sang the Gospel, and the Good Shepherd himself. The parallel with Eden waited like a static charge within late sixteenth-century representations of Arcadia; the charge was released often and to various ends. Trapolini, also a Paduan Aristotelian, explicating his pastoral *Tirsi*, uses the episode of Celia's transformation into a plant as a result of offending the goddess Diana to demonstrate that man resembles God through reason, bestowed at the Creation by divine grace to elevate human life beyond the vegetative state.[7]

Cremonini's *Le pompe funebri* is more philosophical than theological, as might be expected from such a pure rationalist (destined, in fact, to be suspected by the Inquisition of philosophically libertine atheism), but his pastoral drama relies on the proven capacity of the genre to support both intellectual and spiritual weight. He uses the rites and conventions, topoi and machinery of

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7 Not content with the genre's tacit allegorical potential, Trapolini advertises on his title page: "Tirsi, egloga boschereccia tragicomica . . . oltre le allegorie poste nel fin dell'opera vi sono anco interposti gli argomenti, over sommarij a ciascun' atto, & altre cose notabili: Con l'intervento di un' echo doppio; cosa non meno piacevole, che morale, & accomodata ad ogni stato di persone".

Arcadia almost lightly, certainly humorously, yet does so for the purpose of examining such matters as the relation of faith to reason and of religious cult to society. An expository dialogue between a priest of Jove and his acolyte sets forth the proposition that religion is God's art for the control of the violent contrasts in nature and for the order and form of the human community, that its rites, principally the annual song contests and funeral games of the play's title, are to be understood as structures decreed for human benefit by the law of providence (1.2). Such questions and others, treated in a pastoral love story replete with woodland deities, Silenus and mischievous baby satyrs or "satirini," ghosts, transformed trees, and other stage lumber, might be expected to have seemed monstrous even to a seicento audience; to baroque drama, after all, theoretical principles of the unities, verisimilitude, and decorum remained vital. But, quite to the contrary, Cremonini's play figures on more than one contemporary critic's list of the best pastorals.

The substance of Cremonini's philosophical probings is much more commonly expressed in general theological terms and in references to providence and human blindness, to the deception of the physical senses by appearances, and to spiritual recognition of the higher reality seen by the Great Playwright in the sky who plans happy endings. Usually the doctrine is made explicit in the final scenes, but often the entire play is laced with such ideological references. Noci, Pona, and many others demonstrate this habitual contemporary notion, but of course the prime example is the pastoral tragicomedy that was a byword of European culture for about two centuries: Guarini's *Il pastor fido*. For this play Tasso's *Aminta* served as a kind of essence or abstract, a pre-text tracing a conversion to love that triumphs over violence and death, leading blind humans from the labyrinth of their own confusion to the fulfillment of a supernatural design for happiness. Guarini develops this pattern into a network of ignorance and deceit, misunderstood Sophoclean oracles, and final redemption of the polluted Arcadian paradise from an ancient curse through the self-sacrificing love of a semi-divine faithful shepherd resurrected from apparent death. By exploiting opportunities for polyvalency and by the sheer abundance of his material, Guarini fully utilizes the elasticity of the pastoral landscape. The Arcadia of *Il pastor fido* is a Counter-Reformation

courtly postlapsarian Eden, cursed like Oedipus' Thebes, where "virgin human nature"[8] struggles instinctively against original sin and the sophisticated intellectual errors to which it leads. The erotically charged situations, the symbolic spectacle of blindman's buff, and the labyrinthine plot acquire psychological and religious resonance by being enclosed in pastoral spaces. Its hospitality to universal interior visions makes *Arcadia* the setting where love and providential design can best be imagined, literally given images.

Of the three canonical theatrical scenes authorized by Vitruvius and illustrated in Sebastiano Serlio's *Il secondo libro di perspettiva* — the *scena comica* street scene (fig. 1), the courtly *scena tragica* (fig. 2), and the rustic *scena satirica* (fig. 3) (first published with his *Il primo Libro di architettura* in 1545 and redrawn in the Latin translation of 1569) — only the last offered the idea of inner labyrinths, the heart of man and the mind of God, a truly theatrical substance. The pleasance and the surrounding woods are universal places; the regulation cottages are closer to the archetypal idea of a dwelling than are the cinquecento houses or palaces of the comic and tragic scenes; the usually added altar or temple to Pan, Venus, or Diana is a more generic representation of religious cult than some well-known church in a piazza setting. In regular, or erudite, comedy characters frequently exclaim "In che labirinto mi trovo!" but to have to say this on a set representing some familiar Roman, Florentine, or Venetian architectural monuments underlines the discrepancy between the represented reality and the state of mind expressed. Not so in Arcadia. There, when the spectators hear prayers for deliverance from a labyrinth of misconceptions and the god of love reveals a benign plan, with or without Christian overtones, the visible reality onstage and the invisible reality presented to the mind suddenly coalesce.

Guarini's phenomenally popular play has been said to incarnate baroque eroticism in the theater, but the capacity of its setting is such as to allow it also to receive the heavy weight of a confluence of major aesthetic and intellectual currents in Counter-Reformation

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8 "La nostra natura quasi vergine senza lisci" (our nature like a virgin without embellishments) is Guarini's description of the proper subject of pastoral eclogue in 1588, 11*v*.
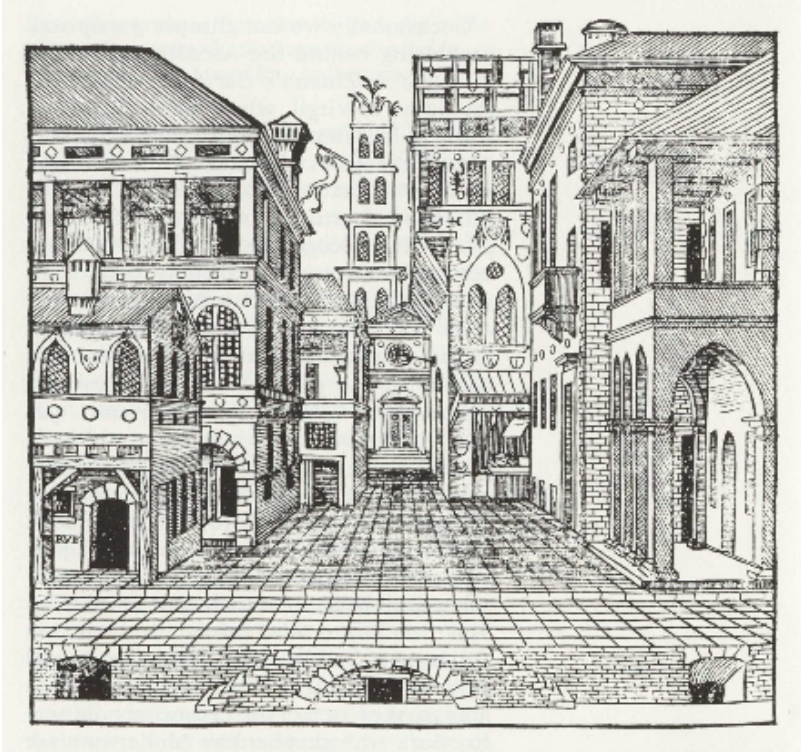
Fig. 1: Sebastian Serlio, Scena comica, woodcut from *De architectura libri quinque . . . a Ioanne Carolo Saraceno ex italica in latinam linguam nunc primum translati* (Venice 1569, 68). Kunsthistorisches Institute, Florence.
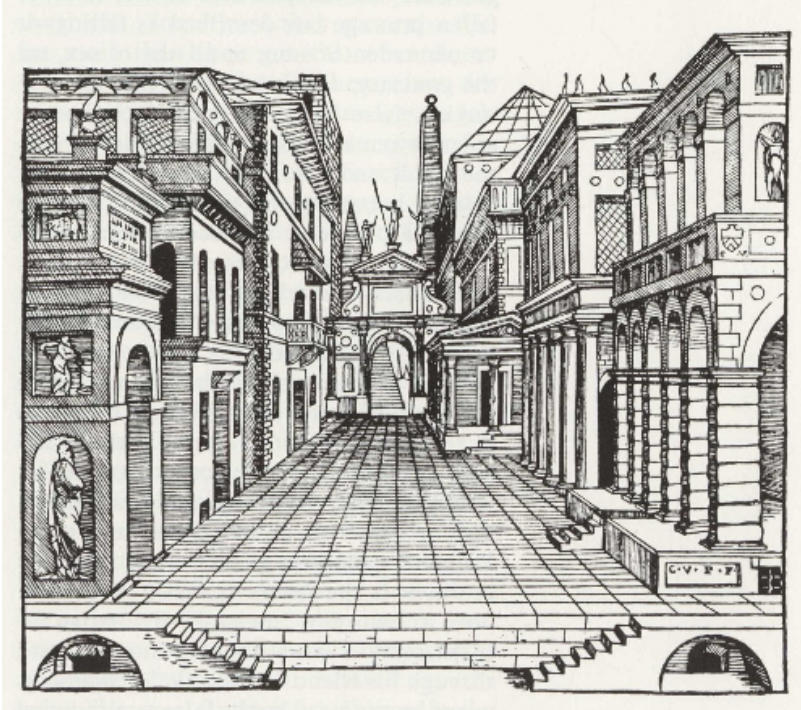
Fig. 2: Sebastian Serlio, Scena tragica, woodcut from *De architectura*, 69.
Kunsthistorisches Institute, Florence.

Fig. 3: Sebastian Serlio, Scena satirica, woodcut from *De architectura* (1569, 70). Kunsthistorisches Institute, Florence.

Italy, of poetics and an ideology of neomedievalism and universalism in religious thought, carried over into political hopes for world reunification led by a Catholic monarchy. In the polysemous space opened by *Il pastor fido*, the striving of playwrights and theorists to constitute a third "regular" theatrical genre could be joined with the collective Tridentine response to Lutheran denial of free will and Calvinistic ideas of predestination, against which Catholic policy encouraged the arts to reiterate the doctrine of a divine providence that guarantees the freedom of the human will to cooperate by virtuous action in the plan of salvation.

A hint of Renaissance awareness of the pastoral scene as a peculiarly capacious mental landscape is to be found in the way that plays were illustrated. In the seicento it would not be uncommon to print plays with copies of the scene designs for particular productions, but earlier pictures of specifically theatrical scenes were rare. A few editions of cinquecento comedies were illustrated with woodcut depictions of stock characters in stock situations, some of which reappeared in other texts with minimal appropriateness. A very early example is from the da Sabio brothers' Venetian edition of Bernardo Dovizi, Cardinal Bibbiena's *Calandra* in 1526; it shows five characters moving against a curtained backdrop, through which another character peeks (fig. 4).

In the same year these printers used the woodcut again for the anonymous comedy *Floriana*. Sixty-five years later three other printers in Venice shared a series of twenty-nine woodcuts to illustrate unrelated comedies: Castelletti's *Torti amorosi* and Sforza Oddi's *Prigione d'amore* in 1591 and Curzio Gonzaga's *Gl'inganni* in 1592. The same woodcuts were shuffled and redeployed for every scene in each of the three plays, and in some of the images the number and type of speakers did not quite correspond to those in the text. The different architectural perspectives in each picture leave no doubt that the series did not prescribe the details for a specific setting or record a particular production but was intended for general use in illustrating printed comedies. The most significant thing for comedy about the content of these woodcuts is that they attempt to represent the action as it would appear on the stage. Donatus' precept, "mirror of custom and imitation of life," was the *sine qua non* of cinquecento comedy, and these illustrations maintain

the idea of verisimilitude by showing actors against a perspective scene as a sort of snapshot of what the spectators would see in a theater: a Serlian street set on which characters converse (fig. 5).

Fig. 4: Anonymous woodcut from Bernardo Dovizi, Cardinal Bibbiena, *La Calandra, comedia nobilissima e ridiculosa, tratta dallo originale del proprio autore*, act 5 (Venice, 1526). Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington.

Fig. 5: Anonymous woodcut from Curzio Gonzaga, *Gl'inganni, comedia*, act 1
(Venice, 1592). Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington.

The same approach was used in illustrations of tragedy, which are
rarer still. A characteristic one precedes the opening act of the
unique edition of Trapolini' s *Antigone* in 1581; as in the series of
woodcuts for comedy, the scene is a stage set and corresponds to
Serlio's model of the proper setting for the genre: a *prospettiva* of
courtly architecture, displayed as a portrait of theatrical scenery
with an actor declaiming his lines (fig. 6) — not necessarily a
specific place, but a "real" one existing in physical nature and in
a moment of actual time as perceived by the senses. The reader is
invited to imagine what he would see physically if the page were a
stage, rather than to construct an image of the text as an unfolding
narrative.

Fig. 6: Anonymous woodcut from Giovanni Paolo Trapolini, *Antigone, tragedia*, act 1 (Padua, 1581). Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington.

Per Bjurström has written that the early cinquecento perspective staging constitutes an illusionistic step toward modern theatrical realism, but also that the seicento use of spatial planes to symbolize time planes was a means of liberation from the servile imitation of reality that could be imposed by a strict regard for verisimilitude. Because Bjurström's subject is the relation of scene design to painting and theory of art, his examples come from depictions of stage sets, including seicento productions designed by Gianlorenzo Bernini, Francesco Guitti, and Giacomo Torelli. When scrutiny is shifted to the way in which the stage was presented on the page in the cinquecento, the representation of time reveals an ontological difference in the perception of the reality of the pastoral world and a less stringent interpretation of the demands of verisimilitude.

Serlio's *scena satirica* had authorized a woodland stage set for the performance of pastorals; yet although cinquecento book illustrations of pastoral plays include the scenic features and stage properties he prescribes — the trees, rocks, hills, mountains, greensward, flowers, and rustic cottages, as well as the temples, grottos, altars, woods, and clearings specified by playwrights[9] — they diverge from contemporary book illustrations of comedy and tragedy by depicting chronologically separate parts of the plot simultaneously, repeating the characters when necessary in a receding perspective format that makes no claim to duplicate a stage set. This kind of visual representation is not a mirror image of the theatrical scene; it treats space exclusively as an expression of time and forms the image not as a reminder of realistic staging but as a mental visualization of the order of events in the plot. Although this mapping of time was used in the Renaissance with greater sophistication of technique and organization, it had been a familiar medieval method of representing narrated events as an aid to the imagination. Therefore it is not surprising to find it employed in the earliest Italian printed books. In a well-known incunabulum, the Venalius and Capcasa *La divina commedia* published in Venice in 1491, for example, a naive woodcut imitating the format of an illuminated initial of a manuscript shows both the meeting in *Inferno*, canto 2, of Dante and Virgil and, farther off, the meeting between them and Beatrice, which is prepared for by Virgil's speech in canto 2 but actually takes place much later in the poem, near the end of the *Purgatorio* (fig. 7).

This method served Sebastian Brant in 1502 for the two-hundred-odd woodcuts illustrating his famous Strasbourg edition of Virgil's complete works, in which he applied it equally to the *Eclogues* and the *Aeneid* without distinguishing between genres. Each of the pastoral dialogues is accompanied by a picture that includes speakers and the contents of their speeches in a diminishing uphill format, also giving, as Eleanor Leach has observed, "visual

9 Serlio lists "arbori, sassi, colli, montagne, erbe, fiori e fontane . . . capanne alla rustica" (Marotti 1974, 201). Stage directions and dialogue throughout the plays attest to the general need for these features and for the "tempio . . . grotto . . . selva, fonte, prato" listed by Pasqualigo 1581, A8.
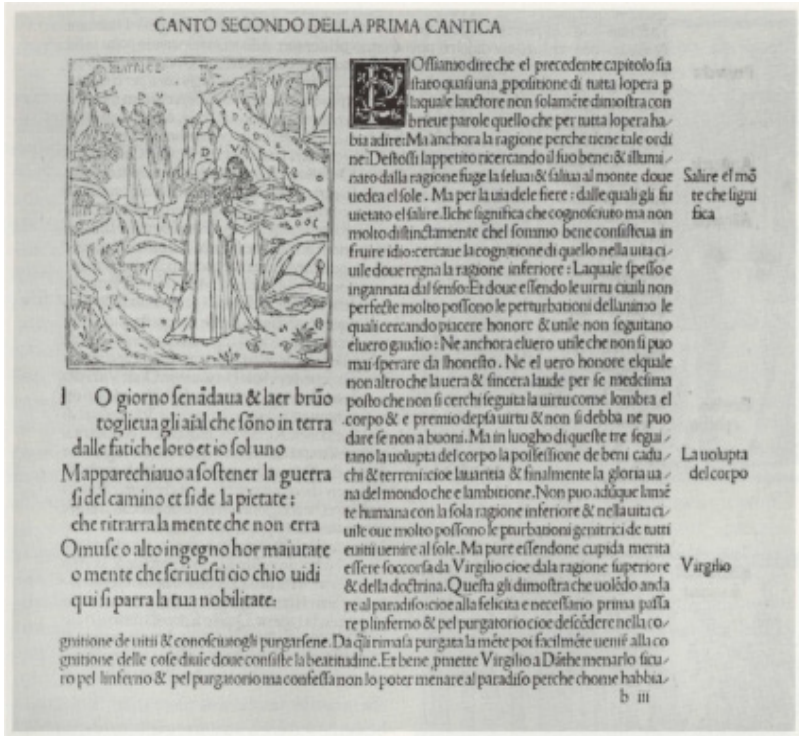
Fig. 7:. Anonymous woodcut from Dante Alighieri, *La divina commedia: Inferno*, canto 2 (Venice 1491).

articulation to images that appear in the poems as imaginary images, thus organizing mental space as real space" (1982, 179).[10] The constantly increasing reality given to the pastoral space in illustrations, however, did not take it in the direction pursued by illustrators of comedy and tragedy. Although the 1496 Strasbourg edition of Terence's comedies, reflecting the medieval use of these works as Latin school texts, contains woodcuts of receding perspectives in which past events appear in the distance, it is significant that in the sixteenth century, when the staging of plays became common, new editions of Terence were usually illustrated with separate pictures of individual moments in the plot and eventually with sets in the Serlian manner.[11]

For visualizing narrative works, however, the imaginary compound landscape continued to be the preferred method. Typical are the full-page woodcuts adorning the first edition of Sevin's translation of Boccaccio's *Filocolo*.[12] Used by a group of printers, they were taken from a series of eighty-one blocks executed by various artists for the express purpose of illustrating romances. One of the characteristic woodcuts in the French *Filocolo* shows a knight in the foreground reclining under a tree while his horse grazes nearby; in a background of diminishing perspective four episodes of chivalric errantry are disposed on a road winding up to a chapel, topped by a combination moon-sun, indicating the passage of time between textual episodes.

The earliest illustrations of Ariosto's *Orlando furioso* were likewise receding perspectives of multiple scenes disposed to signify time passing between episodes; the picture accompanying the central canto in the 1548 Giolito edition presents a foreground dominated by the mad Orlando tearing up the pastoral *locus amoenus*, this climax preceded by events shown in graduated size

10 Leach is quoted by Annabel Patterson (1987, 94) in the course of her reading of these illustrations as an exegesis of pastoral in the Servian tradition, with conclusion that clearly could be illuminatingly applied to many theatrical pastorals of the later Renaissance.

11 Representative illustrations of editions from 1496 to 1614 are provided by Lawrenson and Purkis 1964.

12 Boccaccio 1542. Described and illustrated in E.P. Goldschmidt n.d., 34-35.

in the background (fig. 8).

IN QVESTO VENTESIMOTERZO LO AVTORE DOPO
le fcelerirà di Gabrina , & la liberation di Zerbino : alquale è ritornata la tanto da lui defiderata Ifabella,Nel
la perfona di Orlando per amore diuenuto pazzo ci infegna,quanto ne gli humani petti habbia potere
quefta mirabile paffione : contra laquale ne il dono dell'intelletto ne fortezza , che fia in noi
(ambedue fi fatti effetti in Orlando affigurari)le piu uolte fi poffono difendere,
CANTO VENTESIMOTERZO.

Fig. 8: Anonymous woodcut from Ludovico Ariosto, *Orlando furioso*, canto 23 (1548; reprint, Venice, 1552). Bancroft Library, University California, Berkeley.

The great Harington translation of the *Furioso* in 1591 was adorned with English copies of Girolamo Porro's copper engravings from the 1584 edition of Francesco de Franceschi. Harington ordered them himself and called attention, as Ariosto's Italian editor Ruscelli had done before him, to the use of perspective:

> that (having read over the booke) you may read it (as it were againe) in the very picture, and one thing is to be noted which every one (haply) will not observe, namely the perspective in every figure. For the personages of men, the shapes of horses, and such like, are made large at the bottome and lesser upward, as if you were to behold all the same in a plaine, that which is nearest seemes greatest and the fardest shewes smallest, which is the chiefe art in picture. (McNulty 1972, 17)

The plate to canto 5 furnishes the entire story of Ariodante and Ginevra disposed from foreground to background (fig. 9).

Fig. 9: [Thomas Coxon?] copperplate engraving [copied from Girolamo Porro] from *Ludovico Ariosto's* Orlando furioso. *Translated into English Heroical Verse by Sir John Harrington*, canto 5 [London 1591]. Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

The same plan is observed in Tasso's *Gerusalemme liberata*; a typical illustration from the 1590 edition shows all of canto 7 (fig. 10); from the beginning in which Erminia disguised as a knight takes refuge in the pastoral ambience of a hospitable old shepherd, to Rinaldo, in the next plane, fighting with Rambaldo outside the walls of Armida's castle as Armida watches from the ramparts, through the action of the whole canto to the storm aroused by devils in the farthest distance of the receding perspective.

This narrative method of illustration was also considered appropriate for pastoral drama. The 1583 Aldine edition of Tasso's *Aminta* has a simpler series of this kind in which pictures forecasting events in every act are matched at the end of the act by illustrations for the final choruses; in these the receding perspective regresses in time, alluding to the foregoing scene and signifying memory rather than foresight or prevision. Two of these choral woodcuts reappeared fourteen years later in Ranieri Totti's *Gli amanti furiosi, favola boscareccia* both of them linked inappropriately with solo scenes (fig. 11).

Giovanni Battista Aleotti's celebrated engravings for the 1602 Venetian edition of *Il pastor fido* demonstrate the preferred method of illustrating the pastoral play in its prime. Directed first to the center foreground for the dialogue between Silvio and Linco, who move to the right on their way to hunt the boar with dog and companions, the reader's eye and imagination are led next to Ergasto and Mirtillo, the "pastor fido" himself, conversing slightly to the left and back, and thence by a zigzag course in time through the other scenes of the first act: Corisca the deceiver declares her motives, the patriarchs Titiro and Montano confer about the heavenly oracle and send the servant Dameta on an errand, and the satyr's soliloquy completes the exposition in the fifth and last scene before the choral ode that ends act 1 (fig. 12).

This handful of illustrations suggests a hypothesis: that although the three "regular" dramatic genres shared basic formal principles and were all actually performed onstage, the pastoral play of the cinquecento was differentiated from the other two as the genre in which the imagination was invoked as by a narrative, and which invited depiction for a beholder placed at a providential distance rather than in the immediacy of the theater. In pastoral-play illustrations

the action is laid out as a theatrical one, according to act and scene division, but instead of being shown in snapshots of historical clock-time, it is disposed in clusters of images offered simultaneously on perspective maps of the fictional time to viewers placed outside of that time. The format reinforces the genre's announcement of "time out" — for thought, understanding, and, in the pastoral generally and onstage uniquely, for growth, for healing sleep and dreams, and for change. At its farthest spiritual reach the pastoral play represented religious conversion, sanctification, or confirmation, as in Nicolò Tagliapiera's *Virginia tentata e confiimata, favola rappresentabile.* With slight changes of costume, nymphs and shepherds become saintly nuns and monks, magicians become holy hermits, satyrs are turned into devils, and the pastoral landscape functions as usual, even onstage, as an invitation to the reader to form an interior vision on his own time (fig. 13).

Although we can dispute neither the status of the pastoral world (at least that of "soft" pastoral) as *locus amoenus*, both in its absolute sense and as a contrast to other *loci*, nor an increased interest in natural scenery in the Renaissance, both as a source of pleasure in itself and as stimulus to artists' skills in exploiting classical sources of inspiration, it seems that to literary art the amenity of the delightful place was less important than the liberty it afforded. Post-Renaissance criticism has often taken the pastoral, especially pastoral drama, to be the vehicle of pure escape, or perhaps impure escape, from social propriety to licentiousness or from a complex and dangerous world of late Renaissance religious and political turbulence, militancy, and severity into an uncontroversial and protected environment of harmless voluptuousness. Undoubtedly this amorous spirit helped make pastoral drama a sweeping success at cinquecento wedding festivities. Certainly the Arcadian places of the page and the stage are hospitable to *volupté*, but escape into them is liberating from more kinds of repression than merely sexual ones. The pastoral landscape is forever the place where release from some kind of oppression is imagined; in the Renaissance the escape was neither solely from serious content nor into it but, rather, into the freedom to choose.

Fig. 10: Bernardo Castello, copperplace engraving from Torquato Tasso, *La gerusalemme liberata di Torquato Tasso. Con le figure di Bernardo Castello; e le annotationi di Scipio Gentili, e di Giulio Guastavini*, Canto 7 (Genova, 1590).
Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

Fig. 11: Anonymous woodcut from Ranieri Totti, *Gli amanti furiosi, favola boscareccia*, act 2, scene 1 (Venice 1597). Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington.

Fig. 12: Giovanni Battista Aleotti, copperplate engraving from Battista Guarini, *Il pastor fido, tragicomedia pastorale . . . di bellissime figure in rame ornato . . .*, act 1 (Venice 1602).

Fig. 13: Anonymous woodcut from Nicolò Tagliapietra, *Virgina tentata e confirmata, favola rappresentabile*, act 1 (Venice, 1625). Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington.

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A Magic Book of Renaissance Shows

In the Spencer Collection of the New York Public Library there is an object which constitutes a longstanding mystery. It is catalogued as a manuscript and is generally called a codex but neither term really defines it. More than one scholar, I among them, has been misled by past attempts at definition and by the absence of things to compare it with. With new evidence I can now give a correct name to this nonesuch and, by narrating a quest, clear up some of the mystery.

Over decades my scholarly endeavors have come to remind me of the nineteenth-century European search for the source of the Nile. As I have explored the vast field of Renaissance Italian drama and its immeasurable — or at least insufficiently measured — effect on the rest of Europe, still only partly charted by Italian scholars and distantly glimpsed by the English-speaking world, I have often thought of Speke, Grant, Bruce, Burton and the other adventurous geographers who headed up the Nile into the unmapped heart of Africa. And like them, I have sometimes drifted away from the great river into fascinating little eddies and undiscovered ecosystems. One of these is the curiosity now lodged at the New York Public Library, which drew me away from the verbal texts of literary studies and into a codex which contains not a single word, only 115 watercolor images.

The *antefatto* of this story goes back to Washington D.C. in 1965. Working on the Italian drama collection of the Folger Shakespeare Library, I was shown by the library's director, Louis B. Wright, a catalogue from the Milanese book-dealer L'Antiquariato Librario Radaeli, offering the following:

> Repertorio di una compagnia della commedia dell'arte. Codice cartaceo della seconda metà del '500, o al più tardi, dei primi anni del '600 appunti di un capocomico . . . da sottoporre all'esame di un commitente . . . predisposto per una consultazione rapida, come una specie di un taccuino enciclopedico . . .

[Repertory of a company of the *commedia dell'arte.* Codex on paper from the second half of the '500, or at the latest, the first years of the '600 notes of an actor/manager . . . for display to a potential client . . . arranged for rapid consultation, as a kind of encyclopedic notebook or catalogue.]

Of "appunti" there is not a trace, only pictures, one of which was reproduced in the Radaeli catalogue. It is spread over an opening of two leaves and depicts on the left [*verso*] side a seated congregation of humpbacks, or *gobbi,* listening to a sermon preached from a pulpit on the right [*recto*] side by a very evil looking friar whose robe covers a protuberance that might be either a hump or a devil's batwings. At his side is another friar of equally sinister appearance (Fig. 1a, b).

This image was astonishing, an extreme rarity in the iconography of the Italian theater but simultaneously a witness to a familiar phenomenon. *Gobbi* occupied a permanent niche in Renaissance entertainment in various venues — as public street and circus performers, court jesters and picturesque participants in parades, festival processions and other spectacles, religious, courtly and municipal. The twenty-one engravings of Jacques Callot's fanciful *Varie figure gobbi* (Firenze, 1616) testify to the popularity of the figure. A glimpse of the presence of *gobbi* in improvised farce is provided by a command of the Duke of Mantua, a major patron of the famous *commedia dell'arte* troupe known as the *Gelosi.* He was reputedly so much amused by some kind of *gobbo* performance in 1579 that he called for a "commedia" in which the entire company would appear costumed as *gobbi.*[1] The image published in the Radaeli catalogue suggests a scene from such a play. Images of the *commedia dell'arte* from this period of its history being scarcer than hen's teeth, the Radaeli description announced a unique curiosity well worth a trip to Italy to examine the codex, perhaps to recommend that the Folger acquire it. On arrival, however, I learned that Radaeli had sold it to a private collector who wished to remain anonymous.

Nearly thirty years later in Venice, searching at the Fondazione Cini for illustrations to accompany a chapter on the Italian Renaissance that I was writing for *The Oxford Illustrated History of*

1 Ms. in Este archives in Modena quoted in French translation by Miklashevsky 1927, 187.

Fig.1a: "Gobbo congregation" (94*v*)

Fig. 1b: "Preaching friar" (95*r*)

Theatre, I learned that the Milanese firm of Carlo Alberto Chiesa had acquired the codex in the late 1960s from the estate of the private collector and had offered it to the Cini, endorsing and enlarging Radaeli's description in consultation with the few scholars who had seen it. Vittore Branca, then in command at the Cini, and Maria Teresa Muraro, chief curator of the theater collections, informed me rather remorsefully that the Cini had declined to buy the codex because it was too expensive, and they referred me to Chiesa, who revealed that he had sold it to the New York Public Library.

Obviously the next stop was New York. There Robert Rainwater, Curator of Special Collections, put into my hands for the first time the parchment-bound book, in quarto format measuring 205 x 265 mm, of much-thumbed and mended leaves catalogued as Spencer Collection Ms. 180. Examining thousands of watermarks in Briquet (1968) and Zonghi (1953), I found no exact match for any of several on the leaves, but encountered similar marks used by some Italian and French paper makers in the sixteenth century. The watercolor images, all by the same hasty professional hand, were indeed not only remarkable in themselves but also indicative of a much wider scope than had been conventionally imagined for the repertory of any *commedia dell'arte* troupe, including as they did scenes of jousting, battles between armored warriors on horseback, and infernal spectacles of devils and monsters torturing sinners. Lacking any object of comparison, I saw no reason to dispute Radaeli's, Chiesa's and the New York Public Library's identification of the codex as a sample book of the wares of an acting company's manager for organizing festivals that could include kinds of entertainments above and beyond the plays acted by his own troupe. I interpreted the scenes of equestrian warriors and those of hell-fire as illustrations of the spectacles that a manager with connections in other branches of entertainment might be able to procure for his patron in addition to the plays to be performed by his immediate company. Such spectacles, *tornei*, *giostre*, processions with elaborate floats and the like, were a popular part of courtly and municipal festive life in many cities at the time, and although not in the immediate purview of the professional acting troupes, were often part of the same program, for example, during carnival season or for some weeks-long celebration of a ducal wedding. By

a stretch of the imagination one could make a case for the inclusion of all these pictures in a "taccuino enciclopedico" to be shown to a potential client planning a large theatrical event.

Accordingly, I published a descriptive note about the codex in *Letteratura Italiana* (Clubb 1995a) and six of the images in *The Oxford Illustrated History* (1995b). With the intention of eventually organizing an investigative symposium at the New York Public Library and publishing the images together with the papers issuing from the theater historians, art historians and musicologists convoked there, I presented the slides at a conference on theatrical iconography sponsored by the University of Florence and invited responses from the assembled *conferenzieri* (1996). As expected, none of them had ever seen anything like it, and while all agreed that the images testified uniquely to Italian entertainments at the turn of the Seicento, they were as baffled as I was by the range of subjects represented. Since no other sample books exist, however, we could only speculate, with various kinds of reservations, that this codex constituted the solitary exemplar of that imagined genre.

The puzzling order of presentation of the categories of images is as follows:
A: *commedia ridicola* — farces and circus turns featuring *gobbi* (Fig. 2a, b);
B: *commedia* of lovers, scenes of courting, music and dance (Fig. 3a, b);
C. blank
D. *tornei* — cavalcades and tournaments (Fig. 4a, b);
E. *paesaggi* — backdrop landscapes, countrysides and towns (Fig. 5a, b);
F. *inferno* — scenes of hell for *intermezzi*, festival processions with floats and *sacre rappresentazioni* (Fig. 6a, b).

In categories A, B and C we see features of contemporary *commedia erudita,* and its offsprings, *commedia dell'arte* and *drama pastorale.* Category A contains a typical Bergamasque *zanni* and a Venetian Pantalone, here equipped with a hump.

In Category B are some recognizable stock figures of comedy plots: pairs of lovers in upperclass dress and their servants: the *innamorate* dance to music played on instruments appropriate to their class – viols, flutes, lutes, lyres; servants and peasants dance and play bagpipes, drums, horns and ankle bells; a suitor in cape and sword courts a lady; an *innamorata* lifts her skirt to reveal male

Fig. 2a: "Gobbo barber scene" (106*v*)

Fig. 2b: "*Gobbo* barber scene" (107*r*).

Fig. 3a: "Lover with a guitar" (109*v*)

Fig. 3b: "Dancing lady" (108*r*)

Fig. 4a: "Mounted *chiarino* player" (109*v*)

Fig. 4b: "Knight in armor" (110*r*)

Fig. 5a: "Walled town with a campanile and dome" (98*v*)

Fig. 5b: "Walled town with a campanile" (99r)

Fig. 6a: "Monstrous hellish couple drown on a float" (105*v*)

Fig. 6b: "Monstrous hellish couple drawn on a float" (106*r*).

disguise; a veiled pilgrim in black suggests another disguise in such celebrated *commedie erudite* as Scipione Bargagli's *La pellegrina* and Gianmaria Cecchi's *Le pellegrine*.

Category C indicates the standard generic locus – town for *commedia*, country for *pastorale*.

At first glance there seemed to be no reason why the images were presented in this pattern of alternating types, almost like a rhyme scheme for a long stanzaic poem: ABCDEF/ABCDEF etc., instead of according to unified categories, that is, all the *gobbi* farces together, followed by all the figures of love comedies, then by all the cavalcades and tournaments, and so on. Why should there always be a blank page between the comedy figures and the cavalcades, except where a bookbinder, probably in the eighteenth century, had neglected to insert one? And what purpose was served by every leaf's having a scalloped edge with reinforced tabs on either side of each half-moon cut-out, one for each of the six categories?

* * *

With these questions still unanswered and other, unrelated, projects pre-empting my attention, I made two visits in the 1990s to the Getty Research Institute in Los Angeles, where a conversation with Marcia Reed, Curator of Rare Books, resulted in my examining the limited edition of a modern book in two volumes by the professional magician, actor and historian of magic Ricky Jay and a team of artists, entitled *The Magic Magic Book. An Inquiry into the Venerable History & Operation of the Oldest Trick Conjuring Volumes, Designated 'Blow Books' (For Whosoever Bloweth on the Pages, if He be Versed in the Secret Method May Cause the Images to Appear, Vanish & Change at Will Many Several Times. . .)* (1994).

A "blow-book", sometimes called a "flip book", is not really a book at all but a magician's book-shaped prop in which categories — in this case six, comprising five sets of pictures and one of blank pages — are established by tabs affixed to the pages: at the top of the right-hand leaf of the first opening, down one inch on the seventh opening, down two inches on the fourteenth, three inches on the twenty-first etc., so that the picture (or category of

picture) at opening #1 occurs again at openings #7 and #14, and so on. The pages are cut or indented above and below the tabs so that the tabs don't protrude beyond the width of the leaves. In theory, after learning the feel of the tabs and indentations, the presenter can flip the pages so as to display images in one category as if these were the only ones in the book.

I thought it likely that I could now correctly identify the genre of the New York Public Library's codex, and after Ricky Jay showed me the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century blow books in his private collection in Los Angeles, I felt certain. To be sure, there are differences between the exemplars in Jay's collection and Ms. Spencer 180. Judging from the costumes, the watermarks and the paper, the dealers and scholars who had examined Spencer 180 all dated it from the late sixteenth to the early seventeenth century, whereas the earliest blow-book listed in Jay's history, known only by report, is a Belgian one from the late seventeenth century.

Moreover, the French and English blow-books in Jay's collection are small in format and are composed of images repeatedly duplicated and interspersed with blank pages in the prescribed order, clearly put together and sold by printers, whereas Spencer 180 is larger in format, its images hand-painted in watercolor, each different from its predecessor within the category, all 115 of them the work of a single artist for one client.

Most significant of all for all theater history is the fact that while the categories of other blow-books are miscellaneous, including flowers and dogs, for example, along with clowns and devils, the categories in Spencer 180 are derived exclusively from elements of Renaissance entertainments: farces and acrobatics, comedies with music and dancing, tournaments and parades with floats, painted backdrops, and scenes of the underworld.

When I discussed these new findings with Carlo Alberto Chiesa, he was reluctant to accept my conclusions, refusing to relinquish his view of the codex as the sample book of a *commedia dell'arte* troupe, adducing the above-mentioned differences between it and Ricky Jay's later printed blow-books as proof that they could not be of the same genre. He added to his objections the fact that the sequence of leaves was irregular in a couple of

spots, not corresponding to the order of categories required in a blow-book. This aberration, however, is easily explained by the rebinding which appears to have occurred in the eighteenth century, with the consequent loss of some blank leaves and of four whole images (*verso* plus *recto*) and two halves (a *recto* in one case misbound to face a *verso* of another category). Clearly, neither the bookbinder nor whoever wrote on the spine *Libro dei diavoli* was aware of the exigencies of blow-book construction. It is reasonable to speculate that the original of the codex contained 144 openings, twenty-four images per category plus twenty-four blank pages, reduced during or before the rebinding to 115 images and twenty-odd blank pages.

Meanwhile Ricky Jay, the unchallenged expert on blow-books, flew to New York in late 1999, inspected Spencer 180 and sent me an exultant message confirming its genre, "It's a blow-book. It's wonderful!". Had Chiesa lived longer, I believe that eventually he too would have been convinced by these findings and would have subscribed to my current view of Spencer Ms. 180. It is not a sample book of the *commedia dell'arte*, but a blow-book commissioned in the early seventeenth century by a magician or *afficionado* of magic tricks who delighted in images of contemporary entertainments. The landscapes, generic Italian scenes, except for a few recognizable Roman and Florentine monuments, suggest that the artist was familiar with entertainments confined to, or at least representing, the regions of Lazio, Umbria, and Toscana.

The codex remains unique but even more complex than it seemed when it was thought to be an acting company's sampler. It tells us less than was hoped for about the *commedia dell'arte*, since it is not restricted to the stage repertory, but it promises to tell much more than was expected about Italian Renaissance entertainment in general. Will we ever know why or exactly when or where this anomalous blow-book was produced? Do the images record specific occasions or troupes? How did the codex survive? These and other questions are yet to be answered, but my original plan for an interdisciplinary symposium followed by publication of various opinions with a facsimile edition of the blow-book has been relegated to the bottom of a list of more immediate ventures. Meanwhile, individual images are being studied and used in art

history exhibitions and discussed in literary conferences. I've lectured on the subject at the Getty Research Institute in 1999, at Berkeley in 2003, at the Accademia Galileiana of Padua in 2008, and in his 2002 off-Broadway show *On the Stem* Ricky Jay included a dazzling legerdemain sketch based on the principle of the blow-book, although not with reference to Spencer Ms. 180. Until a full reproduction of the codex becomes possible, this partial account of my research will at least correct the error of calling it a sample book of the *commedia dell'arte*.

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Part 2
English Reception

Looking Back on Shakespeare and Italian Theater

The new work in this volume so well illustrates the blooming state of today's scholarship on early modern Italian theater and its future that no prognostications from me are called for. The general bibliography attesting the invigorating Anglo-American wave of study shows the paths recently taken and where they lead: to performance theory, intertextuality, contextual revelations, new archival digs, and critical editions and translations that supplement or challenge the equally abundant current Italian approaches.

Instead, I can offer to measure the distance traversed to reach the present prosperity by contributing a view of the past, remembering what was available — and not available — to a neophyte venturing into a field that could almost be said not to exist half a century ago, when the scholarly climate was still postwar and precomputer. The challenging lacunae then faced by an aspiring Shakespearean with some knowledge of Italian literature dictated the shape of much of what I wrote thereafter and eventually determined a life's work.

Two mysteries appeared to me at the outset. First, Shakespeare's Italianate flavor was much stronger and more consistent than could be accounted for by the standard explanation that he had read many novellas in some form or other and put pieces of them into his plays. Second, however much his moods and themes changed from the beginning to the end of his career, his plays from the first were expertly theatrical. Not for him a gradual progress from clumsy apprentice to master builder. The earliest comedies are fully stageworthy, as if he already learned playmaking from professionals. Which is, more or less, what I think he did.

Years of reading Italian scripted plays and *canovacci* preceding or contemporary with Shakespeare have gradually shown me an international movement of playmaking recognizable as Renaissance Drama, a technology consciously developed by writers and actors

in various ways from common principles of construction based on a Latin footprint and employing material from both classical and medieval narrative and drama, shaped into movable theatrical units, or theatergrams, which grew over time into a repertory of combinable parts that became the common property of the European stage. The collection of reshuffleable pieces included types of characters, of relationships between and among characters, of actions and speeches, and of thematic design.[1] The existence of such a repertory is today widely, though not universally, acknowledged, but it was invisible in the way Renaissance drama and the relation of Shakespeare to Italy was presented fifty years ago.

Before recognizing the theatergram system, I had concurred in the general critical opinion that the innumerable similarities between Italian theater and other European theater were to be attributed to specific printed sources, narrative or theatrical, an assumption both justifiable and useful when a clear relationship could be established between an Italian play and its imitation or adaptation abroad, but bordering on the absurd when a situation, character, turn of phrase, or even a single word occurring in an Italian play could lead to deducing direct knowledge of it on the part of a later playwright who used it, as in the case, for example, of the scholar who claimed in 1916 that Molière knew Della Porta's *Astrologo* because in it a character says "sei un tartufo" (Wolff 1916, 148).

The task I undertook originally turned out to be a comparatist's quest, in not one field, but three. Shakespeare was the starting point for me, the first field of research; the Shakespeare scholarship I encountered was concentrated on his plays, his context, his literary resources. Italian drama was the second field; Italian scholarship on this subject was deep but rarely broad, the angle more likely to be municipal, regional or, at the most, national. But the third field was my goal, the envisaged ground for a comparison between the other two that might illuminate their kinship and open a new view of Renaissance theater. Presenting Italian drama as Shakespeare could have known it required an approach that could be broad while not shallow. In those days the available works on Elizabethan

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1 On theatregrams and other issues touched on in this retrospective essay, see Clubb 1989, 6-8, and throughout; and Clubb 2002.

drama and Italy were mostly source studies concentrated on English production; the few Italian plays known to most English scholars were written in the first half of the sixteenth century, to the exclusion of the mass of plays printed in Italy during the second half, and whoever gave thought to a comparison with Italian theater in Shakespeare's lifetime was likely to limit it to three or four *commedie* or to conclude that it was an "incontro mancato," a missed encounter (D'Andrea 1980, 617).[2]

Among the great exceptions, Kathleen M. Lea's landmark work on the *commedia dell'arte* with reference to England (1934) should have revolutionized Shakespeare studies in the 1930s, but neither it nor the article of Ferdinando Neri seminal to it (1913), had yet been taken to heart, and the paucity of documentation of the visits that troupes and individual actors undoubtedly made to England weakened their impact.[3] Allardyce Nicoll's (1931; 1963) and Winifred Smith's (1912) important works on the *commedia dell'arte* were at hand, and Marvin T. Herrick's (1960; 1965) descriptions of selected scripted erudite plays were soon to be printed, but the connection between *commedia dell'arte* (or *a soggetto* and *all'improvviso*) and *commedia erudita* (also called *osservata*, *regolare*, *grave* and *letteraria*) was dimly understood, and the same lack of documentation stood in the way of making convincing connections with the English theater. Yet the features of Shakespeare's plays insistently proclaimed a kinship, so it was apparent that, lacking sufficient archival records of visits and payments, a new methodology was needed to investigate

2 This follows in the line of Bond 1911 and Scott 1916. Geoffrey Bullough's essential *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare* (1957-66) did not challenge the general view.

3 Neri published six *canovacci* (scenarios) from seventeenth-century manuscripts in Rome and Naples as examples of the *commedia dell'arte*'s pastoral plots, relating them to various Italian plays and to Shakespeare's, especially to *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Tempest*. The first volume of Lea's voluminous history surveyed the known collections of scenarios between 1611 and 1734, one in print and eight in manuscript, described and classified plots and character types, identified the major troupes, reprinted some scenarios, and accounted for the background and practices of the professional theater. The second volume probed a substantial number of English analogues and references in drama and literature, with special attention to Shakespeare.

it. More evidence for the link with Italian acting troupes would have to come from within, from comparing his plays with Italian ones, both the "writ" and the "liberty," the literary drama and the scenarios for improvisation. There was hardly anyone to talk to on this subject, but I was encouraged by the valuable resources offered by Lea, Nicoll, Herrick, and Daniel C. Boughner (1954), and I began gratefully in their footsteps.

Giambattista Della Porta offered a way into the Italian drama of Shakespeare's time. In the 1950s he was less studied than he is today by historians of science and of linguistics and was sometimes dismissed as a prescientific polymath, a curiosity who vied with his younger acquaintance Galileo for title to the invention of the telescope. My first knowledge of him came from Mary Augusta Scott's *Elizabethan Translations from the Italian*, where he was listed as the Italian playwright most often translated or adapted in England. His seventeen extant plays, published between 1589 and 1614, the year before his death, were counted important by Italian historians and even by some theatrical companies, but no critical edition then existed. Today major scholars are publishing the *Edizione Nazionale* of his complete works one by one, and Raffaele Sirri's four volumes of Della Porta's *Teatro* provide the excellent critical texts of all the plays, which in 1958 could be read only in the original editions or in incomplete versions.[4]

Delia Porta's works displayed the peak of Italian fashion in regular drama in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, primarily the fourteen *commedie*, well-known and reprinted in Italy, sometimes adapted in France and England and often by the improvising players for their scenarios. A great variety appeared in these comedies, from farce to satire to tear-jerking love conflicts, representing high-tech dramatic theory, all constructed by masterly *contaminatio* of Plautus and Terence with dismembered and reconstituted plot elements from medieval narrative, especially Boccaccio's *Decameron*, and with savvy stagecraft and comic liveliness that attest Della Porta's reciprocal

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4 Gennaro Muzio had published the fourteen comedies in four volumes with standardized spelling (1726), and Vincenzo Spampanato edited eight of them in two volumes (1910-11).

appreciation of the professional *commedia dell'arte* that borrowed from him (Clubb 1965).

By the time I came to edit and translate *Gli duoi fratelli rivali* (1980), Della Porta's *commedia grave*, I had read enough to recognize the existence of a repertory of what the irreplaceable Mario Baratto first suggested I call *teatrogrammi*, the constantly recombinable units of playmaking, not simply plots, but raw micromaterials of plots and the techniques of putting them together that had been accumulated over years into a pool of exchangeable parts and practices, the unpublished common property of playwrights and actors. Recognition of these theatergrams in Shakespeare's works finally clarified for me the means and nature of his Italian connection and allowed me to compare Della Porta's and Shakespeare's treatment of them in dramatizing the same Bandello novella plot, arriving at different results highly illustrative of the way the system functioned in England and in Italy about 1600, in the hands of two playwrights presumably unknown to each other.[5]

Within the standard view of each Italian play as an individual text constructed by a single author, the principle of intertextuality had been considered relevant only to evidence of plagiarism or to the search for sources, each element in each play to be traced to an analogue in Plautus, Seneca, or medieval narrative. Judging from the handful of plays known to non-Italians, a reader might conclude that each has a unique relationship with its ultimate sources, the way he himself might resemble this or that portrait of his ancestors, but immersion reading in the thousands of Italian

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5 Barrato's beautifully succinct study (1975) focused on other aspects of theater but appreciated the importance to the development of the genre of the repeatable "formula teatrale" or "modello topico," as he termed it (95 and following). The more detailed recognition of the concept and the system by recent scholars, Zorzi's heirs, is expressed by Anna Maria Testaverde's introduction to an admirable edition of texts (2007): "si era creato una sorta di immense repertorio drammaturgico dal quale era facile attingere senza alcuna remora" (xxvii) and extension of the conclusion to Shakespeare's plays where the *commedia dell'arte* is present: "non limitandosi esclusivamente al 'riecheggiamento' di tematiche e al recupero di tipologie di ruoli, quanto piuttosto alla ricezione di topologie teatrali e alla condivisione di un metodo della practica scenica" (lx-lxi).

plays printed in the cinquecento and the seicento reveals a plurality of generations and combinations of features that suggests more complicated genetic connections and illuminates a method of composition different from imitation of discrete sources, one based instead on the existence of a repertory of theatergrams and of a default structure for each genre in which to combine them.

Most theatergrams show up first in regular drama (called *regolare* or *erudita* because written according to rules derived from classical sources), which laid the foundation on a combination of Latin drama structure with novella narremes and began amassing the repertory, which includes physical and verbal *lazzi* and *burle* of many kinds and thematic plot designs involving various character types and relationships that in turn generate patterns of dialogue, actions, stage loci, and props: an abundance of deceits and disguises (of sex, race, rank, nationality, profession); standard exposition dialogues; colloquies and confidences between lovers and with their servants or nurses; eavesdropping; utilization of doors, windows, balconies and *camere terrene*; patterned clashes between illiterate and learned speech; mad scenes; pastoral class distinctions; womanizing braggarts; friars managing love affairs; seamen; shipwrecks; twins; *contrasti* or monologues on such subjects as jealousy, cosmetics, honor and marriage; contests of friendship; duels; sorcerers and transformations; paired lovers contrasted and/or loving in the wrong direction; coffins, chests and laundry baskets; providential plot patterns; questions of succession; usurpers; clowns at court and in Arcadia, substitutions in dark rooms; wives condemned to death for supposed infidelity. . .

If these seem too numerous and inclusive to constitute a well-defined collection useful for tracking resemblances, we need only consider how much of representable life and imagination was excluded from the repertory and to note the literally innumerable incidences of shuffled repetitions of the above prefabricated elements that had, by Shakespeare's time, become accessible in Europe through printed drama and performances by *commedia dell'arte* players. These elements were fitted together in different combinations and were fleshed out by the skills of actors, whether in memorized scripted five-act plays or in those improvised in three acts *a soggetto*. When Polonius describes the players to Hamlet,

he pairs these modes of the performance as "the law of writ and the liberty" (Shakespeare, 2.2.387-92; Clubb 1989, 249). In the latter case the dialogues, monologues, and gestures, including dancing, singing, and playing instruments, were part of the individual repertory created by each actor's reading, practice, and experience of interaction with his fellows.[6]

At the end of the 1950s Italian scholarship on Italian drama was plenteous, nationalistic, and richly detailed, faithful to the great nineteenth-century positivists, those exacting historians whose invaluable contributions were marked by a lingering Risorgimento combination of anticlassical romanticism and general Italian anticlericalism. They had unearthed texts and subjected masses of plays to critical investigation. While the eighteenth century had produced the updated version (1755) of Leone Allacci's 1666 *Drammaturgia*, the indispensable bibliographical tool for primary excavations, as well as some new editions (using questionable settecento standards) of major playwrights like Guarini and Della Porta, it was nineteenth-century scholars who delved into the mass of play texts listed by Allacci to construct the solid histories and narratives that, however tendentious, organized the field, as it were. After the turn of the century Benedetto Croce's idealism had added interpretative latitude to the study of theater, and Mario Apollonio's inclusive panorama gave off original sparks, but the major thrust of the Italian scholarship I encountered in the 1950s was still toward classification of genres and teleological histories tracing the development of the vernacular and of the popular spirit. In addition to valuable local histories in the *storia patria* vein, there were some noncritical editions of scripted plays with standardized spelling and scattered printings of small clusters of scenarios, a

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6 Daniele Vianello's study (2005, 35) of the *buffoni* from the fifteenth century reveals that these were not merely predecessors of the *commedia dell'arte* actors but continued to ply their largely solo trade through the sixteenth century, sharing many techniques with the acting companies and building their own repertories by means of the same "continuo *bricolage*" that appropriated whatever materials were to be found in books, plays, popular entertainment and personal experience of all sorts. Both freelance *buffoni* and *comici* in troupes improvised by drawing on a store of remembered variety.

few anthologies, and occasional source studies of individual plays. The *commedia dell'arte* had been taken up in France by Pierre Duchartre and Constantin Mic (Miklachevski) and earlier in the impressionistic studies of Maurice Sand, while Ruzante had been romantically celebrated by Henri Mortier; but Ludovico Zorzi's later monumental projects, as well as those of Cesare Molinari and the harvest of dialect studies fostered by Gianfranco Folena, were yet to appear.

Gradually it became apparent that the available Italian scholarship itself was as much an obstacle to the comparative goal I shared with the preceding generation of Lea and Herrick as it was a necessary source of information: not only did the huge mass of Shakespeare studies in English give very short shrift to Italian theater, as opposed to narrative sources, and not only was it almost totally out of touch with Italian theater history, but Italian scholarship on the native drama was equally out of touch with Shakespeareans, and its views of Shakespeare himself followed a Germanic notion of an untaught genius, or a Baroque natural psychologist, at the antipodes from its rather apologetic evaluation of Italy's own Renaissance theater. Romantic reaction against neoclassicism and a preference for whatever seemed vernacular, spontaneous, and popular still colored attitudes toward a drama derived from elite Latin models and constructed according to emerging rules about the unities, verisimilitude, and decorum. The handful of twentieth-century pioneers who began adding to or questioning this legacy had not yet made a dent in the positivistic evaluation of Italian drama, and as for the gap between Italy and the English-speaking scholarly worlds on the subject of Shakespeare, construction of bridges had barely begun.

The second half of the twentieth century would begin filling in the gaps with bibliographies and editions, heralding the present abundance: the editions and collections of both scripted plays and *canovacci*, the new panorama constructed by younger Italianists. The English scholars, even those who read cinquecento and seicento plays, usually had difficulty finding the texts or the time to read enough of them to gauge the enormous output and grasp the family characteristics of the dramatic genres and the innumerable variations they invite. But today's leading Shakespeareans, Stephen

Orgel a stellar example, command a more cosmopolitan view, and new work in comparative drama and in theatrical music has further enlarged the horizon.[7]

Teaching Italian drama in the United States in the old days was pretty much out of the question, except as an arbitrary sampling, for lack of texts and translations. The UTET anthologies were only beginning to appear in the late fifties, Aulo Greco published eighteen comedies in 1959, but only in the sixties were they followed by Nino Borsellino's edition of eleven and by the Einaudi series of individual plays (precursor of the later admirable Italian drama collection edited by Guido Davico Bonino). Even Allacci's *Drammaturgia* was not available in facsimile until 1961.

Research in any depth was largely a solo struggle and could be done only in rare book libraries, beginning with the collections of Italian printed drama in the Folger Library, the Library of Congress, the University of Chicago's Regenstein Library, and later Yale's Beinecke Library, then proceeding to the British Museum, the St. John's College and Trinity College Libraries at Cambridge, and naturally to Italy, where the great national and apostolic libraries (Florence, Venice, Naples, the Vatican) and the more specialized ones (the Sienese Intronati, the Paduan Biblioteca Civica, the Fondazione Cini, the Correr, the Ambrosiana, the Casanatense) all yielded treasures.

Most of the texts had to be read in the original editions. The available *canovacci* were limited to the fifty printed by Flaminio

7 Such scholars as Ferdinando Taviani and Mirella Schino, Franco Ruffini, Ferruccio Marotti, Giulio Ferroni, Maria Luisa Doglio, Riccardo Bruscagli, Siro Ferrone, Marco Ariani, Roberto Tessari, Elissa Weaver, and others too numerous to list have transformed the view of Italian theater. Anglo-Italian comparative studies also have bloomed, as attested by the contributors to this volume and by the distinguished work of Richard Andrews, Michele Marrapodi, Murray Levith, Leo Salingar, Christopher Cairns, Kenneth and Laura Richards, Nerida Newbigin, Keir Elam, Julie D. Campbell, Frances Barasch, Natalie Cohn-Schmitt, Donald Beecher, Pamela Allen Brown and Peter Parolin, and M. A. Katritsky, to name only a few. In addition, musicologists of the generation following Nino Pirrotta's, such as Anne MacNeil, Jessie Ann Owen, Ellen Rosand, Gary Tomlinson, and Giuseppe Gerbino, have illuminated another dimension of the theater.

Scala in 1611 and to the selected handfuls published by Neri, Lea, Francesco Bartoli, Vito Pandolfi, and a few others. At the time, the Folger Library was acquiring what would become its rich collection of Italian drama. There were a few catalogues of other collections — Allacci and, eventually, Corrigan and Herrick were invaluable, but the easier access that later printed catalogues and the computer have provided was then impossible, so that much travel, domestic and European, was necessary, furnishing me with memorable scholarly experiences totally unavailable online.[8]

A misleading spin was put on decades of scholarship by nineteenth-century polarizations: scripted regular drama versus improvised *commedia dell'arte*, Church versus theater, native versus foreign origins, 'ancient' versus 'modern'. Obviously such comparisons and oppositions are valid methods of analysis of some aspects of the field, but they are, after all, only organizing devices, unable to provide the widest perspective and, if treated as more than such, they obfuscate the internal tensions within the terms. Supplementary organizing devices are needed to reveal the non-oppositional relations of these binary pairs of concepts and their interactions and collaborations in a larger theatrical enterprise. The approach that focuses exclusively on conflicting forces obscures the international character of Renaissance theater; consequently, the very idea of a theatrical common market formerly seemed untenable and impossible to substantiate.

The Renaissance movement to define dramatic genres was a structural imperative acknowledged by the positivistic generations of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but it was interpreted rather as aping of the ancients than as innovation in playmaking. The 'scientific' approach to drama taken by humanistic

8 Beatrice Corrigan catalogued the University of Toronto's Italian drama collection (1961-6), as Marvin Herrick did for the University of Illinois, Urbana (1966). These and Italian instruments such as Achille Mango's *Le commedie in lingua del Cinquecento* (1966) and Raffaele De Bello's, Franca Ritzu's, and Giovanni Favilli's catalogues of *pastorali* (1964-5), *drammi* (1962), and *commedie* (1963-4), respectively, at the Biblioteca Nazionale di Firenze were not available at the outset, although they were there to assist me in compiling *Italian Plays in the Folger Library (1500-1700): a Bibliography with Introduction* (Firenze: Olschki, 1968).

playwrights bent on finding the principles of its construction in "literary nature" and applying them to the representation of modern life and its surrounding culture in the early *commedie* and *tragedie erudite* was noted but little admired as a breakthrough in technology. Even recent work that recognizes innovative character of the *tragicommedia pastorale* and the *favola boschereccia* tends to treat cinquecento neoclassical tragedy and comedy simply as conservative forms associated with reactionary politics, ideologies, and poetics, again misleadingly pitting the "modern" Guarini against the 'ancient' Denores, for example. Like the opposition of *commedia erudita* to *commedia dell'arte*, this controversy really belongs to infighting among moderns — the regular comedy and tragedy rooted in fifteenth-century humanism was still as experimental and innovative as humanism itself had been when its exponents first made a revolutionary turn toward ancient texts to search for principles on which to base their new constructions.

Compared with the newly investigated classical drama, the rambling stanzaic *feste*, *sacre rappresentazioni*, *farse*, and *favole mitologiche* of the quattrocento were perceived as formless, antiquated, unverisimilar, and irregular and were challenged by Ariosto's comedies and the plays of his contemporary experimenters. The search for rules in which they engaged was in itself an innovation, and in the latter cinquecento was still in progress. Finding the true form of modern tragedy continued as a critical quest into the seicento. The great drama of early modern France and England was nourished by it, and the fact that Aristotle was invoked and challenged should not automatically make the results appear 'ancient' — the very fact of introducing Aristotelian criteria into the art of playmaking and the science of literary criticism was, if we view it from the right distance in cultural history, as completely new an undertaking in relation to medieval drama as twentieth-century aviation was to ground travel.

The polarization 'ancient/modern' has long remained a useful means of sorting out the issues of genre and was actually necessary to the polemics of those who embraced it at that time, as in the quarrel over epic and romance, referring to the 'ancients'' choice of Aristotelian classic structure imitating Homer and Virgil and the 'moderns'' continuation of chivalric romance imitating Boiardo and

the others writing in a form with a more recent origin in medieval narrative. But this polarization can mislead today's readers to the conclusion that the 'ancients' were conservatives and the 'moderns' innovative, with the further built-in conclusion that to be conservative is necessarily less desirable than to be innovative. Whatever relative values may be or have been attached to the 'conservative/innovative' polarization, however, the humanistic turn toward classical examples constituted an innovation in literary theory and practice, while the continuing taste for vernacular theatrical forms such as the various *rappresentazioni*, *feste*, and *egloghe* dear to the grandparents of the 'moderns' was a conservative stance. What David Quint (2007) has so well argued about the controversy over the chivalric romance and the epic, perceiving the multiplicity of Ariosto's *Orlando furioso* and his predecessors as "modern" and the controlled unity of Tasso's adherence to classical models in *Gerusalemme liberate* as 'ancient', is not really applicable to Italian theater.

Vestigially romantic nineteenth-century scholarship underestimated the innovative rediscovery and vernacular application of dramatic structure founded on Aristotle, Horace, Plautus, Terence, and Seneca that distinguishes sixteenth-century Italian drama from its medieval predecessors. As a playwright, Ariosto and the other early *commediografi eruditi* were performing, in fact, an avant-garde act of comparative playwriting, the Plautine/Terentian model being one pole of the comparison and their modern *commedia erudita* the other, offered to a knowledgeable audience as a new bloom cultivated from an old stock and to be compared with it. Even when, at the dawn of the seicento, pastoral plays were more in vogue than comedy and tragedy, the latter were still a matter of theoretical controversy, their forms not yet fixed, as attested, for example, by Flaminio Scala's prologue on the form of comedy or Della Porta's attempting pure Sophoclean tragedy in *Ulisse*, as Carlo de' Dottori would still try to do at midcentury in *Aristodemo*. Nor do plays of the late sixteenth century support the assumption that making comedies continued to be a matter of choosing narrative sources and directly dramatizing them. This is not a false perception but one that, regarding plays from midcentury on, leaves out the essential middle term: the technology based on the resources accumulated

by literary writers and expanded by commercial actors, who, even when beginning with a novella plot, reached into the repertory of theatergrams in order to put it onstage.

In the long course of reading, I learned why these and some other common assumptions were inadequate, for example, that the most Shakespeare may have learned from Italian theater was a technique of plotting intrigue comedy, and that the neoclassical *commedia erudita* was a mechanical construction, without sentiment or psychological depth, waiting for Shakespeare to invent romantic comedy and to give inner life or individuality to young female characters for the first time. As early as the predecessors of the Sienese Intronati, in fact, romantic comedy was in demand in Italy, and many examples were published from 1520 on, in growing number as professional women players took the stage after midcentury, influencing the style and content of both commercial and literary drama (Clubb and Black, 1993).

The erstwhile notion that Shakespeare was the first to introduce 'real', that is, lower-class, shepherds into Arcadian scenes and to mix hard with soft pastoral was another sign of the shallowness of knowledge about cinquecento drama. Pastoral drama was usually treated as a lyrical lightweight confection facilitating elite escapism, graceful bootlicking, veiled criticism — artificial and sensual at best. The principle of genre, on which the *commediografi eruditi* focused, while recognized by the positivistic source-oriented scholars, was conceived primarily in terms of its classical origins, and therefore the search for the 'natural rules' of literary genres was not grasped as the revolutionary foundation of modern drama. The pastoral play, in particular, which in the absence of an ancient theatrical model declared itself a new-fashioned Renaissance form, a third genre observing the rediscovered rules, was treated mainly as an aesthetic and encomiastic court exercise and therefore did not receive the scrutiny that would have revealed the variety of theoretical, social, intellectual, and cultural forces that produced this enormously influential theatrical invention. Its religious potential, like the clearly fideistic bent of many late cinquecento or early seicento *commedie gravi* and *tragicommedie pastorali*, was likewise neglected as a subject distasteful to Italian anticlerical

scholarship (Clubb 1992; 2007).[9] Only gradually did I perceive these fallacies as such, while pursuing my original goal to account for the theatrical Italianate quality in Shakespeare by learning more about Italian drama and seeing it as it might have come to him, not as Italian scholars had been presenting it for more than a century in self-perpetuating histories, nor as Shakespearan scholars had been seeing (or not seeing) it for the same length of time.

Formerly the evolving symbiosis between improvised and scripted plays was played down or acknowledged only cursorily by theater historians because of a preference for the idea of a conflict between the supposedly spontaneously improvised "liberty" and the observance of classical rules in the "writ." This romantic notion was supported by occasional documented evidence of some writers' scorn for the commercial *zannate* and of self-aggrandizing challenges from the actors, but the overinterpretation of such internecine clashes long retarded the needed investigation into the inclusive theatrical network that produced all kinds of theater in Italy in the cinquecento and seicento. The *commedianti dell'arte* plundered scripted plays as they did everything turned up by their constant reading. They memorized and performed regular drama, sometimes participating in court productions, as Isabella Andreini did in playing the title role of *Aminta*. From the regular drama they took structure, usable in all three genres, contracted the five acts to three in improvisation, expanded them again to five when, occasionally, they published them. In turn, *commediografi* like Della Porta and Pasqualigo borrowed characters and styles from the professionals.

When Shakespeare put together his only comedy in which there are no foreign names or characters, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, he produced a perfect example of Italian comic construction by recombination of theatregrams native to both the "writ" and the "liberty": the jealous husband; the *inganno* to test his wife; the would-be seducer, impecunious and boastful as any *capitano*; the *innamorati* disguised to outwit a blocking father; the flattering go-

9 New interest in the pastoral is now producing welcome editions such as Perella's translation of Bonarelli's *Filli di Sciro* (2007) and studies such as Sampson 2006 and Stampino 2005.

between; the pedant; the word-games with his pupil; the *burla* that hides the seducer in a laundry basket and tosses him into the river; the *travestimenti* as fairies and ghosts — all directed to a reconciling finale of marriage and feasting. Translated into Italian terms for the page or the stage, minus the English names and references and assimilating the *commedia dell'arte*'s occasional latitude concerning scene shifting, *Merry Wives* could have passed muster as an indigenous Italian *commedia*.

The specific contacts that generated Shakespeare's unmistakable familiarity with Italian drama are still in doubt. The probabilities are various. There were the court musicians, the Alfonso Ferrabosco who was once commanded to procure a *commedia all'italiana* for Queen Elizabeth, or the musical family of Emilia Bassano Lanier, a sometime candidate for the title of 'Dark Lady'. There was the likely acquaintance with John Florio, not to mention the extensive sojourn among actors in Italy of Shakespeare's colleagues Will Kempe and his fellow dramatist Anthony Munday. There was the presence in England of Italian diplomats, such as the Pasqualigo family, whose members served the Venetian Republic in London and included Luigi Pasqualigo, author in the 1570s of a comedy adapted by Munday and of the *Intricati*, *pastorale* that shares a blueprint with *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Furthermore, in addition to the kind of knowledge of Italian theater disseminated by well-travelled Englishmen, such as is displayed in Sidney's *Apology*, by the performances at Cambridge in the 1590s and thereafter of adaptations of *commedie regolari* and *favole pastorali*, and by the plays in Italian issuing from John Wolfe's London press, there were visits to England of acting troupes, still sparsely documented, to be sure, but frequent enough to have been regarded as a plausible cover for Catholic spies from the Continent.

Early in my absorption with *commedia erudita*, I was asked by a colleague, an Italian scientist well-read in the humanities whose belief in the possibility of exactly measuring excellence had been bolstered by receiving a Nobel prize, whether the plays I was studying were any good, by which he seemed to be asking if they could attract modern audiences as Shakespeare's and Molière's do. While always diffident of absolute Platonic ideals of excellence, I nevertheless regard Shakespeare as peerless and so admitted that

I hadn't found a single Italian play that could compete with his. Still, this opinion was neither universal nor timeless; although my distinguished colleague and I and everyone we knew revered Shakespeare, Voltaire did not.

Inevitably, having studied hundreds of Italian Renaissance printed theatrical texts in more than one genre for so long, I have developed a taste for them, have established my own hierarchy of values, and enjoy rereading not only from the top of the list — the *Mandragola*s, the *Aminta*s, and the *Pastor fido*s — but also comedies of Ariosto, Cardinal Bibbiena, the Intronati, the Divine Aretino, Giordano Bruno, and Della Porta; the tragedies of Tasso, G. B. Giraldi-Cinzio, Luigi Groto, Ludovico Dolce, and Pomponio Torelli; and the pastoral plays of Guidubaldo Bonarelli, Isabella Andreini, Giovanni Paolo Trapolini, or Pietro Cresci. These, of course, are only the best known members of the family. If we think of the unwavering esteem Lope de Vega's contemporaries enjoy in Spain, and the spirit that keeps Rotrou alive in France along with Corneille, or of the continuing viability of Middleton and Ford in England, there is no doubt that an equal claim could be made for any number of cinquecento and seicento Italian playwrights: Sforza Oddi, Girolamo Bargagli, Annibale Caro, Bernardino Pino, Giovanni Battista Andreini, Antonfrancesco Grazzini, Giovanni Maria Cecchi, Cristoforo Castelletti, and others, some still performed by Italian repertory companies.

The international theater movement that Shakespeare joined became visible to me during years of ingesting medieval *favole mitologiche*, *feste* and *rappresentazioni*, *commedie regolari*, *favole boscareccie*, *tragi-commedie*, and *canovacci*, revealing a theatrical genealogy that can be followed from quattrocento Italy to Elizabethan/Jacobean England and beyond, and a stage technology that can be called the single most generative force in Renaissance dramaturgy. Without denying importance to the continued influence of national medieval traditions, we can recognize the global potential of the Italian repertory of combinable units and witness its use by Shakespeare and countless others.

Some initial reactions to my first demonstrations of Shakespeare's use of the theatergram system were negative, as if his achievement were thereby rendered less original, even mechanical, but on the

whole scholars now agree that employing repertorial materials, even prefabricated ones, in recognizably individual combinations is more akin to intertextuality than to automatic assembly-line construction or to plagiarism. Though not universally acknowledged, the functioning of the repertory system is generally accepted now, partially by those who think of it as a collection of plots transmitted by *canovacci*, more fully by others who recognize the repertory as including the units of character, actions, relationships, language, gesture, topoi, and structural themes by means of which plots and variations can be staged. If disagreement and some lacunae persist, it is nonetheless satisfying to see how Shakespeare's kinship with Italy's theater is understood today and how much more we know about Italian drama itself.

Current analyses of communication and art in the digital age are peculiarly relevant to Renaissance drama and to the process of construction by *contaminatio* of theatergrams that had not been apparent fifty years ago. At the first plenary session of the fifth Media in Transition international conference in 2007 Thomas Pettit announced the

> closing, in our time, and in the first instance in the mass media, of what might be termed the "Gutenberg Parenthesis," a period in the history of expressive culture dominated by the notion of the original and autonomous cultural product: (1) readily distinguishable from other products within the same cultural system; (2) acknowledged as the creation (and by implication the property) of a specific individual; (3) its stability and integrity sustained over time.[10]

According to the mission statement of this conference at MIT:

> An emerging generation of media producers is sampling and remixing existing materials as core ingredients in their own work . . . Readers are actively reshaping media content as they personalize it for their own use or customize it for the needs of grassroots and online communities. Bloggers are appropriating and recontextualizing news stories; fans are rewriting stories from

10 Borrowing the concept and term from Lars Ole Sauerberg, and referring back to Marshall McLuhan, Pettit compares pre- and postparenthetical cultures in 2007, 1.

> popular culture; and rappers and techno artists are sampling and
> remixing sounds. (2007)

In the context of this occasion and the cultural climate it breathes,
the playmaking system of the Renaissance assumes a modernity
— more precisely, a postmodernity — through the similarity of
the modes of creative production before and after the parenthesis.
Recognizing a "Gutenberg Parenthesis" makes it easier to recognize
a theater technology that overlapped with the print culture of the
era Marshall McLuhan called the "Gutenberg Galaxy," which fifty
years ago was not yet established in the critical vocabulary as a
perception of a major paradigm shift, much less of a passing phase.
Shakespeare straddled the threshold, entering the parenthesis
simultaneously with the actors of the *commedia dell'arte*, whose
literary progenitors were already in it, at least insofar as their
plays were written in the hope of printing, although those which
were actually performed probably included elements — digressive,
gestural, musical, balletic — characteristic of unstable cobbled
preparenthetical theater that were excised when the texts were
editorially stabilized for the press.

Cultural positions in the Romantic and Modernist eras founded
on premises of the solitary author and the natural genius, of
absolute originality and the paramount importance of text,
encouraged a scholarship that obscured some important aspects
of the Renaissance theater. Perhaps our own moment in a new
millennium is more conducive to understanding the workings and
the qualities of the fertile early modern Italian playmaking system,
which produced an international drama that prospered precisely by
displaying its shared origins, associations and common materials.

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Commedia erudita: Birth and Transfiguration

The mislabelled *commedia erudita*, more accurately termed *regolare*, *grave* or *osservata*, written in observation of newly forged rules in the early sixteenth century, was long stereotyped as a laboured Italian imitation of ancient Roman Comedy, the label usually being applied in contrast to the later improvised *commedia dell'arte*, which fed on the "erudite" plots and repertory of theatregrams.[1] The two styles were known in Elizabethan England, characterized by Polonius' praise to Hamlet of a travelling troupe's ability to play both the "writ" and the "liberty". The ideal of imitation, which gave birth to the *commedia erudita*, can more properly be understood in the context of the first decades of the century contemporary with the aims and achievements in painting, architecture, linguistics, and literature of the generation of Michelangelo and Raphael, of Sebastiano Serlio, Pietro Bembo, and Baldassare Castiglione.[2]

The Italian peninsula could boast comedy of one sort or another going back to the Atellan farces and rejoiced in the Roman New Comedy of Plautus and Terence, modelled on the Greek comedy of Menander. During the Middle Ages the six plays of Terence were used as Latin school texts, but Plautus was known only in part until the fifteenth century. Comic entertainment was abundant, however, in the activity of buffoons, clowns, and jesters, as well as in the peasant/artisan farce tradition in many regions, exemplified by Cava in Campania, Siena in Tuscany, and Padua in the Veneto. From the late Middle Ages and continuing for centuries there were festivals and religious re-enactments mixing laughter

1 Clubb 1989, 'Prologue'. On the influence of Italian comedy on early modern English drama, see Clubb 2010a. Among the most important works in the field, see part. Herrick 1960, Ferroni 1972, Salingar 1974, Greco 1976, Bonino 1977-78, Baratto 1977, Andrews 1993, Beecher 2008-9, Martinez 2010.

2 The cultural and intellectual ambience that nourished regular comedy is splendidly evoked and illustrated in the catalogue to the remarkable exhibition in Padua in 2013, Beltramini et al. 2013.

and reverence. Florence was especially known for its municipal confraternity-sponsored *rappresentazioni sacre* dramatizing biblical and hagiographic subjects in rhymed verse, episodic plots without time limits, depicting characters supernatural and human, kings and commoners, serious subjects with comic interpolations.

The fifteenth-century discoveries of lost classical texts and the accompanying interest in philology, followed by experiments in rescuing classical Latin from medieval corruptions and eventually rivalling its achievements, produced in schools and courts a new set of cultural goals. In the Latin schools teaching literacy in preparation for courtly, municipal, or ecclesiastical professions, Terence and Seneca had long been read and played in class, sometimes Christianized by schoolmasters. The awakened attention to the original language of the Greek and Latin texts and genres was spurred by discovery of fourteen unknown comedies of Plautus in 1422 and later intensified by Angelo Poliziano's edition of Terence's *Andria* and his epochal contribution to vernacular drama, *Orfeo, favola mitologica* (ca. 1480). Courtly and academic performances, of Terence in Florence in 1476, of *Oedipus tyrannos* in Greek and the like in Rome and elsewhere, declared a new intellectual fashion. For theoretical underpinnings humanists of this generation depended on Horace's *Ars poetica* and the fourth-century commentators Evanthius, author of *De fabula*, and Aelius Donatus, who stated in *De comoedia*, with regard to Terence, that Cicero had declared comedy to be imitation of life, mirror of custom, image of truth.[3]

At the Este court in Ferrara before the turn of the century Plautus was performed both in Latin and then in ponderous Italian translations. Such entertainment was not popular theatre nor was it meant to be; rather, it was an undertaking of high art and ceremony for noble patrons and educated audiences, engaging leading courtiers and literati as writers and actors. As a very young courtier, Ludovico Ariosto participated in the admittedly boring high fashion that was supported by the Estes as a sign of cultural superiority. Rival courts and hubs of power in Milan, Urbino, Florence, and Venice vied and collaborated with them. When

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3 "Commediam esse Cicero ait imitationem vitae, speculum consuetudinis, imaginem veritatis" (qtd in Wessmer 1902, 22).

Lodovico Sforza, il Moro, asked Ercole I to lend him some of this avant-garde entertainment and a troupe of ducal dependents was accordingly dispatched to perform Plautus in Milan, Ariosto was among them, and they stopped at Reggio Emilia for some additional coaching by Matteo Maria Boiardo.

The Roman academy of Pomponio Leto also performed Plautus, encouraged by the papal court's enthusiasm for every aspect of the ancient Greek and Roman world, beginning with the architectural ruins which lay about them, waiting to be resurrected to the glory of a modern Christian empire. In an Italy torn by internecine wars and foreign invasions, the papacy under Julius II and Leo X aimed not only at consolidating power in the Papal States but also encouraged its humanistically educated adherents towards a cultural unification that would proclaim the new empire, as the famous letter of Raphael and Castiglione to Leo states (Di Teodoro 2013, 262-63), by restoring and imitating Roman ruins to recreate past glory and demonstrate the genius of modern Italy. Culture was both a refuge and a defence. In supporting the urban reconstruction of ancient Rome Julius hoped to be a "new Caesar", Leo a "new Augustus", adapting and surpassing the ancients through Bramante's and Raphael's architectural programmes.

For the generation around Leo the classical ruins included all the arts: architecture, painting, literature, and theatre. Pietro Bembo's linguistic analysis of Virgil and Terence likens his project of purifying the literary and diplomatic Latin in use in his time by imitating the best classical models to the restorations and advances in painting and architecture of Michelangelo and Raphael. His proposal to create a worthy Italian literature, shared and disputed with Castiglione and other peers, also defined the force behind creating noble vernacular forms to restore and rival classical literary genres.[4] We see the results in the common enterprise of scholars, writers, artists, and papal advisers, in Bembo's own *Asolani* and *Prose* and in Castiglione's *Libro del Cortegiano*, an ultra-modern neo-classical masterpiece of the dialogue form, incorporating Cicero's *De oratore* and Plato's *Symposium* in a monument of Italian culture.

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4 Finotti 2004 makes illuminating observations on the direction of this force (see Parts 1 and 2).

The *commedia erudita* should be recognized as a major result of this enterprise. Implicit in its structure, sometimes openly declared, was the claim to permanent dignity of a modern comic genre with noble roots, a humanistic display of a new civilization built on and equal to that of the ancients. Just as the linguistic programme presented by Bembo aimed at creating a national language for the literate classes, uniting them in a stratosphere of communication above the Babel of regional dialects, so the *commedia erudita* was intended to establish a national comedy, a deliberately created genre of Italian theatrical culture.

Underlying the development was an almost Linnaean belief fostered by humanism in the existence of prototypical genres in literary nature, as demonstrated by classical models. 'Natural' rules were sought in Horace and later in Aristotle, as the *Poetics* was gradually translated and disseminated, resulting in a commitment to the unities of time, place, and plot structure, to verisimilitude and decorum of characters, and to the idea of genre. The quest for genre, belief in literary nature, and the clues to it and its rules in ancient works, arose from the same movement that had moved fifteenth-century humanists to search for classical texts, examine their language, and purify the use and teaching of Latin from corruptions of canon and civil law, thereby laying the foundations of modern philology and making way for the generation of Pietro Bembo to develop a vernacular "lingua aulica" that was Italic rather than regional and dialectal, in order to improve and disseminate the modern idiom so as to rival and surpass the achievement inherited from Greece and Rome.

From the network of the intelligentsia linking Leo's Roman and Florentine power bases with the exemplary Ferrarese theatrical tradition and the other communicating courts, there ultimately emerged the early *commedie erudite* that would be hailed as preeminent examples of the new genre. From Leo's immediate circle, which included Bembo, Raphael, and Castiglione, came *La calandria, commedia* (1513) the work of the prime papal adviser Bernardo Dovizi, Cardinal Bibbiena. This had been preceded by *La cassaria* (1508) and *I suppositi* (1509) of the sometimes Ferrarese ambassador to Rome Ariosto and was soon followed by *La mandragola* (ca. 1518) of Niccolò Machiavelli, the erstwhile Florentine secretary now seeking Medici favour.

These heirs of the fifteenth-century humanists produced the model for the new comedy written by educated men, courtiers, schoolmasters, and university wits and printed with their names on title-pages and complimentary dedications to highly placed patrons, noblemen, and popes. When they were performed it was for this kind of audience, in courts, academies, and universities on special occasions, most frequently for Carnival. Depending on the resources available, the single set required by the new rule of unity of place was represented by a city street painted in perspective on a backcloth or by more elaborate wooden constructions with *trompe l'oeil* effects, including Roman ruins. The grandest productions, like that of *Calandria* in Rome in 1514, probably built by Baldassare Peruzzi, made visual the relation of the new comedy to the common endeavor of artists, architects, and writers in their commitment to verisimilitude, temporal specificity, and unity of composition, absorbing the historical past into the present.

The *commedie erudite* of this generation set the standard for the genre which was immediately copied and fully established by 1542, clearly distinguishing what Ariosto called "nova comedia" from earlier theatrical kinds, *farse*, *feste*, or *rappresentazioni* partly or wholly comic. With few exceptions the ingredients were sixteenth-century versions of the urban middle-class stock characters from Roman New Comedy: *senex*, *senex amans*, *servus correns*, *servus scaltrus*, *meretrix*, *matrona*, *miles gloriosus*, *parasitus*, *leno*, *adulescens*. Moved by love, hunger, or avarice, they were engaged in domestic struggles of youth with age, in plots woven by clever servants towards the victory of young lovers over mercenary parents or foolish elderly rivals. The specific design of the intrigue in five acts ordinarily combined situations from Plautus, Terence, and *novelle* from the *Decameron* tradition and was played out in encounters on a single street in some contemporary Italian city within the span of one day, *in medias res*, so that the represented action took place just before the resolution of the crisis. The language was a Boccaccian-inflected modern prose, more or less Tuscan, depending on the playwright's origins, with socially different levels of style and room for slang and some dialect. The mixture of these elements claimed a place for comedy in the programme that engaged the leading writers, painters, and

architects of the day to produce Italian forms, incorporating and surpassing those of the ancients. It was a theatrical version of Renaissance neo-classical architecture and paintings of biblical subjects in modern décor and dress with classical ruins in the background. An audience for such productions was prepared, according to Donald Beecher's perceptive analysis, by the general reliance on Donatus' commentary on Terence for a revolution in conceptualizing all subsequent readings and performances of Terence within a body of critical thought that was preoccupied with correctness of form and procedures. The Donatus phenomenon set the model for reception of these plays. "The humanists, in their iconization of this treatise, invented reception theory" (Beecher 2008-9, vol. 1, 7).

In the decades contemporary with the gestation and debut of *commedia erudita* in the early sixteenth century, other theatrical kinds abounded. Presages had appeared in the late fifteenth century of the use of plays to display social and political power, such as Lorenzo il Magnifico's *Sacra rappresentazione dei SS. Giovanni e Paolo* (1491), ostensibly a saints' play but actually a calculated and self-promoting representation of good government; or *Griselda*, an anonymous secular play not published until 1993, based on Boccaccio, made to flatter the Este and the Medici courts, and labelled "sacra rappresentazione profana" by its modern editor (Morabito 1993). Both, however, took the form of the medieval sacred drama without concern for Greek or Roman precedents or the coming wave of neo-classicism. Hybrids also appeared, secular plays using the stanzaic form, meandering episodic procedure, and socially inclusive *dramatis personae* of the sacred dramas: in Siena *Virginia, opera* (1494) on a tale from Roman history, by Bernardo Accolti, known as "l'Unico Aretino", and Giovanni Pollastra's *Parthenio, commedia elegantissima* (1516). The indeterminate use of the term "commedia" illustrates the general awareness of the search for a new genre: Giambattista Dell'Ottonaio said of his *Commedia della Ingratitudine* (1526), "Ella non è commedia, farsa, o festa" (Ventrone 1993, 127), distinguishing, as Anton Francesco Grazzini would do twenty years later, between farce and comedy proper in the prologue to his three-act farce *Il frate* (1540): "le farse non son commedie" (Borsellino 1967, vol. 2, 93).

The defining difference in the search for form, for keys to construction of the best genres, as if the Greek and Roman past contained scientific criteria of the nature of true art, was the principle of *imitatio*. In its time this was not the "slavish imitation" that would be charged against *commedia erudita* in later centuries, when the skeletal features of the genre seemed sufficient for its characterization by positivistic critics, but was rather a concept of construction that discerned a universal principle in ancient models applicable to a new cultural formation whose features would proclaim its ancestry, history, and continuity while constituting both a sociological innovation and a technological advance. *Imitatio* of course meant using a model but not simply copying or translating Plautus and Terence into Italian. Rather it meant after models were known through translation and performance, constructing a play referential to the model, requiring knowledge of the set of criteria derived from it but departing from it in a spirit of competition.

The principle was invoked as practice and aim, though its interpretation was a matter for argument. But it was agreed that the imitation was not merely of Roman Comedy but that the final result would qualify as *imitatio vitae*, an updating of Donatus' dictum to include modern Italy and demonstrate both continuity and progress. As Adolfo Tura has said, imitation of the ancients was understood as the human search for form, like Bembo's in literature and Machiavelli's in government (Beltramini et al. 2013, 263). Torquato Tasso would later specify in his *Discorsi* (1959, 532) that literary creation involved *materia* and *forma* — the first a choice of referential source materials; the second the shaping of them into a new and original structure. The entire procedure constituted the act of *imitatio*.

The trio of regular comedies produced by Ariosto, Bibbiena, and Machiavelli fused situations, characters, encounters, and plot lines from Roman comedy and Boccaccio into building blocks which would become theatregrams of the developing genre. Ariosto announced *La cassaria* (1508) as a "nova comedia . . . piena di vari giochi, che ne mai latine/ne' greche lingue recitarno in scena" (1954, 242), although the plot came from Plautus. It is set in Greece, and the lovers bent on finding money to buy their girls from a pimp are a Greek and a Turk. The girls are slaves, but when later he revised

the comedy in 1529 he transferred the action to southern Italy and made the lovers an Italian and a Spaniard. With *I suppositi* (1509) he again used the classical blueprint but departed from Plautine and Terentian hellenizing by bringing the plot home and updating the customs, making the lover a Sicilian student at the university of Ferrara, helped by the tricks and disguises devised by his clever servant to win parental approval of a marriage with the daughter of a prosperous local citizen. It was Ariosto's illustration of proper structure that most aroused admiration in subsequent writers. Giovanmaria Cecchi would proclaim him superior to the Greek and Romans because the form of his comedies demonstrated unity and the logic of successive action, beginning, middle, and end (Cecchi 1855, Intermedio 6).

La calandria of Cardinal Bibbiena had its debut in 1513 at the court of Urbino before an audience immortalized in Castiglione's *Libro del Cortegiano* and directed by Castiglione himself. Immediately hailed as a paragon of its kind, it was performed again sumptuously in Rome the following year for Leo X and his guest Isabella d'Este, with an elaborate set depicting modern Rome with classical ruins and with *intermezzi* sung and danced between the acts. The intrigue combines a version of Plautus's *Menaechmi* fused with several Boccaccian tales of ill-served young wives and silly old cuckolds in pursuit of courtesans. The struggle towards reunion in Rome of the Greek twins from Methone separated in childhood, one transformed by Bibbiena into a girl, produces transvestite disguises for both with accompanying erroneous identifications, in counterpoint with the deceits and dodges to which Calandro's love-starved wife is driven in her passionate affair with the male twin and the *beffe*, which the husband's lust brings down upon himself. Written in a Tuscan prose modelled on the *Decameron* and rich in linguistic, historical, and political allusions celebrating the glory of the Medicean papacy, the play was a concentration within a unified action, place, and time of theatregrams that would eventually be accumulated into a universal theatrical repertory of comic parts. The finale is an open declaration of the aims of the entire cultural movement which inspired it. The clever servant Fessenio, mastermind of the complex plot and spokesman for Bibbiena, as Bibbiena himself was for Leo's court and other centres of the avant-garde, exults in the conclusion

that restores the exiled twins to each other and to better fortune than ever, "As much better as Italy is better than Greece, as Rome is than Methone, as two fortunes are better than one. And we all triumph". Thus modern Italian culture triumphs by assimilating and embellishing its classical past.

The first of Machiavelli's two comedies was part of his bid for employment by the Medici and aimed to attract the attention of Leo's theatrical circle; its date has been disputed, but under the title *Comedia di Callimaco e di Lucretia* it appears to have issued about 1518 from the Sienese press that produced the first editions of *La calandria* (1521) and of *Rosmunda, tragedia* (1525) by Leo's kinsman Giovanni Rucellai (Clubb 2010b, 16). Although *La mandragola* was recognized in its own time as a major achievement in the new genre and today is certainly the best known of all *commedie erudite*, it was criticized for the simplicity of its plot. Based on the adultery *beffe* of the *Decameron*, it represents the seduction of the virtuous wife Lucrezia by young Callimaco through a lethal disguise plot engineered by his hanger-on Ligurio and connived at collectively by Lucrezia's mother, by the friar Timoteo, and by her foolish sterile husband Nicia, who enthusiastically helps to cuckold himself. While Machiavelli eschews the typical Plautine situation, his middle-class Florentine characters are silhouettes of the standard Latin parasite, lover, bawd, and gull, and he employs theatregrams of disguise, bedroom substitution, and rhetorical persuasion. His primary adherence to the innovative regular comedy, however, consists in the compact logical structure of action in a single twenty-four-hour day in Florence, the compression of his witty colloquial Tuscan, and the strong effect of verisimilitude, albeit satirical, political, and possibly allegorical in intent.[5]

The recently rediscovered *Parthenio, commedia elegantissima* of the pro-Medici Aretine schoolmaster in exile, Giovanni Lappoli, known as Pollastra, performed with pomp at the University of Siena

5 Like all of Machiavelli's works, this comedy is different from other examples of its genre, and the special status it was accorded in its own century is matched by the continued modern debate over its intentions. Martinez 2000, 102–19 is an illustration, and the unending fertility of *La mandragola* is well represented by other essays in the same volume.

in 1516 and published there in 1520 by Giovanni Landi, the beadle who was also responsible for the first editions of *La calandria*, *Rosmunda*, and, probably, of *Callimaco e Lucrezia*, looks like a hybrid *sacra rappresentazione* trying out the medieval form on a secular subject.[6] But more is going on under the surface; instead of groping indecisively towards a change in form, this play, on the contrary, seems a deliberate compendium of contemporary comic theatre. It is in the tradition of the medieval *festa* but gestures also towards goliardic plays, Latin school recitations, and peasant farces. With an eye on the past, Pollastra aimed at a socially inclusive audience but simultaneously displayed awareness of an avant-garde style of comedy that had only recently become the *sine qua non* of courtly elites in Ferrara, Urbino, and the Vatican. In addition to all the trappings of the old-fashioned stanzaic *rappresentazioni* — exotic settings, a quest through Europe ending in Babylon, magic, royal spectacle, banquets, processions in unlimited time and space — within the principal heroic action Acts 4 and 5 also encapsulate an abbreviated *commedia erudita* seduction plot in tightly unified time and space, tenuously related to the heroic action but showing off Pollastra's knowledge and handling of the latest fashion. It is telling for theatrical history that a poet and pedant bent on impressing the Medicis and on complimenting and thanking Siena for sheltering him in exile would adopt the highly traditional and popular, yet potentially very inclusive and elastic, form of the medieval *rappresentazione* for his acclaimed festival play, but would pointedly embed at the heart of its rambling plot a miniature example of the tightly sculpted structure of the new-wave *commedia erudita*.

This episode, together with the rest of *Parthenio*, lays out a series of theatregrams that would constantly reappear in the *commedia erudita* and its progeny: a heroic cross-dressed *innamorata* seeking her wandering lover, sent in his service to woo another who falls in love with the messenger, her subsequent disguise as a maid-servant, peasant clowns, and lustful lackeys in counterpoint with high-thinking lovers, low slanging matches, inn-keepers, a courtesan, a bawd, an old man in love, a letter scene, a substitution in bed,

6 For further details on the relationship with the *sacra rappresentazione*, see Clubb 2010b, 38-39.

as well as dialogues and monologues on stock topoi — country vs. city, justification of love by nature and the gods, and so forth. All is resolved in a multiple recognition scene that reunites long-lost families. Like the closing claim of Fessenio in *Calandria*, alluding to the grand design shared by the artists and intellectuals of Pope Leo's time, the finale of *Parthenio* goes into detail concerning the achievements of Eastern and Western cultures joined in the match of a noble Roman woman and the Sultan of Babylon's son, creating a new and richer imperial future. For Pollastra Babylon stood for idealized Rome, the world centre redeemed and triumphant through the union of East and West, thereby rising superior to both.

A second generation of literary courtiers and academicians quickly took to the elegant design of the elite *commedia erudita*, which, by the 1540s, was established for the cultured classes as the standard shape of comedy, hospitable to a variety of new contents. But the atmosphere was shattered; the wars intensified, the mood darkened, and the Sack of Rome in 1527 destroyed the grand plan for reviving the glory of the ancient Empire, the dream of Italians expressed over the centuries by Petrarch, Machiavelli, Mazzini, and Mussolini. As the response to Luther's excoriation of the corrupt and paganized Vatican slowly nurtured religious dissent, and the goals of the Counter-Reformation became apparent in all the arts, the major concerns shifted from reviving ancient Roman values to reunifying the Catholic world and reconfirming the power of a reform-minded papacy. The Post-Sack era was a period of general codification, and the *commedie erudite*, multiplying in the changing climate, now testified to a different environment.

Siena remained a theatrical centre, primarily because of the official founding in 1531 by young nobles from the generation taught by Pollastra of the Academy of the Intronati. They jestingly took their name from the reproof of a teacher who dubbed them "Dumbstruck" for their lack of studious engagement, reinterpreting it to indicate their indifference to political upheavals and their decision to concentrate on literary activity. The academicians jointly composed *commedie erudite* and gave them a romantic twist, finding plots in the *Decameron*, not from the bawdy tales of cuckolding and seduction but from those pleasing to the Sienese ladies who formed the audience and occasionally took roles, whose favourite stories

were about virtuous enterprising women triumphing over adversity and false accusations. The theatregram of the cross-dressing heroine was especially dear to the Intronati, whose performances courted a feminine public, although their founder Antonio Vignali and others among the author-actors were known privately to prefer men.

The academy's first and most famous play was *Gl'ingannati* (1537–38), in which the transvestite Lelia, her family torn apart by the Sack of Rome, goes in search of her forgetful betrothed who employs her as messenger to his new love who, of course, falls in love with Lelia but is happy in the final family reunion to marry Lelia's twin brother. Fleshed out with comic servants, Spanish swaggerers, and resistant fathers, this regular comedy is a well-wrought urn of theatregrams by then familiar to audiences. Members of the Intronati continued to produce *commedie erudite* of this romantic and increasingly courtly stamp. The independent *innamorate* who, by cross-dressing, escape the ban on decent virgins appearing on the street set had a precedent in Bibbiena's *Calandria*, but in *Ingannati* and subsequent plays, whether in bodices and skirts or doublets and hose, they become protagonists and manifest a sensibility and eloquence hitherto uncommon but destined to change comedy profoundly.

Other themes, social and political, also engaged the Intronati. Alessandro Piccolomini, probably working in committee with his colleagues, used historical events to reflect Sienese politics: the Palermitan revolt in *Alessandro* and the putative Pisan setting in *Ortensio*, shadow forth Sienese hopes of peace and order from the Tuscan ducal policies of Cosimo dei Medici. At the famous celebration of the wedding of Cosimo's son Ferdinando to Christine of Lorraine in 1589, the Intronati comedy of Girolamo Bargagli, *La pellegrina* (written in the 1560s), revised to compliment the French bride, was the featured event in a theatrical festival which also included *commedia dell'arte* performances, splendid scenographic musical *intermezzi* and pageantry. The exception constituted by the Sienese comedies dictated by feminine taste from the 1530s on were prophetic of the more serious, moral, romantic tone of the later sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century comedy which Italian critics of the twentieth century dubbed *commedie lacrimevoli*, actually an exaggeration, as very few of them were really any more lachrymose than Shakespeare's romantic comedies.

Elsewhere, scholarly and courtly writers in increasing numbers cultivated and analysed the new form. Donato Giannotti, for example, who conferred with Bembo while writing his *Libro de la republica de vinitiani*, detailed in the prologue to *Il vecchio amoroso, commedia* (1533–36) his Plautine sources and innovative departures from them (Borsellino 1967, 8-9). By mid-century the regular comedy was no longer just a cutting-edge style of the elite culture but had been established as the primary model for Italian theatrical art, defining anything else as old-fashioned. The number of *commedie erudite* performed and printed multiplied explosively, to the benefit of booksellers.

Without ever dulling his distinctive edge, Pietro Aretino, a former pupil of Pollastra, also eventually adopted the dominant form and used it in all his phases, differently in each. The first version of *Cortigiana* (1525) was all shapeless vitality, barely gesturing at regularity, but the second version and his four other comedies moved mainstream, showing off his technical skill with the *commedia erudita*, while imprinting it with his own self-publicizing, satirical and superabundant verbosity, and making it one of the vehicles for his pen-for-hire. *Il marescalco* (1537?) is a late development of a traditional *beffa* expanded into *commedia erudita* form but unique in that the practical joke is not for the purpose of seduction or marriage but solely for the carrying out of a practical joke in the spirit of court games. The butt of the homophobic joke was very likely a real member of the Gonzaga court in Mantua where Aretino was temporarily employed, but a secondary target was the court itself, satirized in Aretino's signature style. The regular comedy provided him with formal features: a precedent in the boy-bride of Plautus's *Casina*, the use of prose, five acts in crisis structure, such stock characters as a *balia*, a *pedante*, a *ragazzo* etc., but the atmosphere is a fusion of medieval *burla* with the courtly playfulness depicted in Castiglione's *Book of the Courtier*. In contrast, *Talanta* (1540) has a complicated traffic pattern of stock types evolved into Venetians and outsiders, in which Aretino displays his mastery of the rules by pushing them to their limit. The intrigue centres on the figure of Talanta herself, a knowing portrait of the sort of *cortegiana onesta* in whose company he delighted. The play was

good publicity for the city and for the Compagnia dei Sempiterni that sponsored its costly production. When his complete works were put on the *Index Librorum Prohibitorum* in 1558, such was the renown of Aretino's *commedie erudite* that they were re-issued in Italy under other names and published in London in 1588 by John Wolfe, the adventurous printer always responsive to English demand for Italian high fashion.

Like Aretino, Ruzante (Angelo Beolco) gradually turned towards the erudite form. Despite his enormous popularity, Ruzante never became part of the mainstream, owing to the Paduan dialect which was the primary, though not the sole, language of his comedies, but as his connections expanded beyond the Veneto he approached Plautus and Terence and, in his own mocking but exploitative way, adopted the *nova comedia* style in his *Piovana* and *Vaccaria* (before 1533) and *L'anconitana* (1536?).

As the formal aspects of the regular comedy were increasingly accepted by audiences and readers, the diversity of the contents grew. The local and political tones sounded early in Ariosto's *Lena* (1528) were heard more often in comedies of the subsequent generation. In Ruzante's *Moscheta*, in Annibale Caro's *Straccioni* (1543), Piccolomini's *Alessandro* (1545), and Benedetto Varchi's *La suocera* (1549), reflections of social reality and the effects of war are seen in varying degrees. In the theatrical climate of Mantua maintained by the Gonzagas, *A Comedy of Betrothal*, written in Hebrew (ca. 1550), was probably a Purim feast play for the Jewish community, but though the subject is Talmudic law and a debate on marriage contracts, it is cast in the mould of the regular comedy, employing familiar theatregrams: a Pantalone type of merchant father in conflict with young *innamorati*, etc. It has been attributed to the theatre director Leone de Sommi, author of a treatise on staging, *Quattro dialoghi in materia di rappresentazioni sceniche* (1556), who also wrote comedies in Italian. He associated as well with professional actors of the *commedia dell'arte*, but his *Tre sorelle* (1588) is a standard *commedia erudita* in five acts, with a unified crisis structure based on a *contaminatio* of *Mandragola* and Publio Filippo's *Formicone*, containing the theatregrams of the braggart and the bawd, feigned madness, and disguises in aid of the usual generational conflict.

Grazzini considered some theatregrams, especially the recognition and reunion of long lost relatives, already old hat by 1555, but neither he nor the next generations stopped using them routinely. His fellow Florentine Giovanmaria Cecchi, most prolific of all *commediografi*, spanned two generations and continued to depend on *commedia erudita* conventions, often in verse, but he tailored his content increasingly to Counter-Reformation taste. *Le maschere* (1585) includes the fashionable comic use of the incest dilemma, resolved by the *cri du sang*.

Illustrations of the *commedia erudita* are rare, but Venetian woodcuts from the 1590s demonstrate the appearance of a variety of typical stages and combinations of characters, theatregrams of groups, and encounters. Intended for use in printed comedies in general, shared by printers, they are indicative of a consensus regarding urban setting, scene divisions, groupings, characters, and of demand by a readership. These appeared late in the century but would have served as well to illustrate any example of the genre, from *Suppositi* and *Calandria* on (Clubb 1966; 1968, 340-1).

After the middle of the century, when the number of comedies written and printed had multiplied, the effect of a cultural and political climate-change caused by religious dissent and its conflicts appeared in the features of the genre, which by now constituted a repertory of movable parts. The Council of Trent, in session from 1545 to 1563, emphasized the use of the arts for Catholic reform, and many of these theatregrams were modified to support current ideology. The natural and gradual transformation of the regular comedy now appeared as policy. Although the so- called Counter-Reformation has frequently been characterized as repressive, censoring, and hampering, to its sincere adherents it was a reform movement fuelled by faith, aimed at fighting corruption of every kind, and its successes were not without importance for the theatre. In an invigorating attempt to enrich and purge theatre and turn it to serious purposes while using comic situations and traditions to amuse, satirize, and instruct, post-Council policy enlarged the principle of *imitatio vitae* to include abstractions and moral ideals. The cynical and carnivalesque amorality often evident in plays before mid-century decreased as the number of comedies written and printed multiplied, and the comedic spirit of unruliness

receded before the affirmation of social order. The form earlier sometimes described as *commedia grave* by virtue of its studiedly regular construction became graver in content as well, verging on tragicomedy, as witnessed by the emotional and ethically sophisticated comedies of the law professor Sforza Oddi, the scholarly Benedictine prior Vincenzo Borghini, the abbot Bernardino Pino, as by the Neapolitan "mago" Giambattista Della Porta and his learned southern imitators, the Franciscan priest Francesco D'Isa, the duke of Sermoneta, Filippo Caetani, and others.[7]

Political consolidation of power and celebration of rulers hand in hand with the principles of Catholic reform became themes for regular comedy in references to government, not as it was but as it should be. Where Ariosto had represented Ferrarese urban economy in *La Lena*, Machiavelli's *Mandragola* had satirized Florentine institutions, Annibal Caro's *Straccioni* had curried Farnese favour in Rome, and Aretino's *Marescalco* could raise a laugh at the court of Mantua, in the later Cinquecento Pino, Oddi, Bargagli, and Della Porta offered solemn advice to rulers in depictions of situations in which the existence of good rulers offstage guarantees a just resolution of domestic and legal problems in the plot. Often the ordinary characters are socially promoted from merchants to courtiers and nobles, invoking the unseen presence of the ruler.

More infrequently, a figure of authority actually appears and participates in the action, as in Della Porta's *Duoi fratelli rivali* (1601), in which the Viceroy of Salerno has to judge the dispute between his rival nephews and is faced with having to put one of them to death, until divine providence intervenes. This comedy illustrates how the enduringly typical method by which *commedia erudita* had been composed in Ariosto's time was still in use at the end of the century: choosing a tale from Bandello about an event in thirteenth-century Messina (the same that underlies *Much Ado About Nothing*), Della Porta set the action in sixteenth-century Salerno, beginning at the catastrophe, observing the unities of time and place, recasting the characters in Plautine roles, young lovers, parents, servants both clever and stupid, adding a parasite, a nurse, and a braggart captain. In an unusual move, Della Porta used

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7 For Della Porta's works and context, see Clubb 1965.

Salernitan history and that of his own family to make the story more relevant to local time and audience but set it not in the time of its writing but in 1504, some twenty years after the Congiura dei Baroni when a viceroy of Naples pardoned the conspirators and appointed a representative to bring good government to Salerno. By means of historical allusion Della Porta gratefully flattered the current Spanish Viceroy of Naples, who had recently signed Salerno into the Royal Demesne and put an end to the buying and selling of the city (Della Porta 1980, 10-16). As a famous natural historian and suspected magician who had been admonished by the Inquisition to leave off experimenting and stick to writing comedies, Della Porta usually chose themes acceptable to the ruling powers before whom his comedies were often performed, long before he began to print them in 1589. His *Astrologo* (1606), a pitiless satire on astrology set in his own Naples and full of local dialect, was probably his acquiescent self-defence against charges of practising magic and judiciary astrology, both emphatically condemned by the Church. *L'astrologo* was one of the comedies supporting Della Porta's claim to have been the Italian *commediografo* most often adapted in Elizabethan/Jacobean England (Scott 1916). As such, his plays represent the *commedia grave* flourishing in Shakespeare's day. They were also favourites with the *commedia dell'arte* players who carried the "liberty" versions of his "writ" everywhere, sowing theatregrams abroad for Shakespeare to harvest.

The shift towards moral orthodoxy and romantic content brought to the fore serious themes, opening the way to psychological probing and rhetorical subtlety. The well-tried theatregrams of *inganno* and *beffa*, and the triumph of wit, continued as staples but were now entwined with motives of dangerous jealousy, murderous hatred, and fear of death. Other grave theatregrams, infused with comic horror, include conversations with hangmen, police bullies, and jailers, as in Della Porta's *La turca* (1606) and *Gli duoi fratelli rivali*, and in Oddi's *Prigion d'amore* (1590), foreshadowing the prison atmosphere of *Measure for Measure*. Moors, Turks, and pirates, exotic figures from chivalric *romanzi*, made plausible by the ever-present Mediterranean conflict with Muslim power to the east and south, appeared onstage more often, offering new possibilities of disguises and encouraging edifying conversions to Christianity, as

in Oddi's *Morti vivi* (1576). As Aristotle's *Poetics* became generally available, his esteem for Sophocles' *Oedipus rex*, the tragic theme of incest introduced into tragedies like Sperone Speroni's *Canace* (1546) and Tasso's *Torrismondo* (1587), found its way into comedies like Della Porta's *Sorella* (1604) as incest feared but avoided by invoking the motif of the *cri du sang*.

Some theatregrams disappeared. The figure of the friar was banished from the stage as it was likewise from the expurgated *Decameron*. As early as 1540, before the Council of Trent opened, the prologue to Grazzini's farce *Il frate* admits that it might be improper to depict the clergy behaving badly, but the author did so anyway, with the excuse that a three-act *farsa* is not a genre of high art, that is, a *commedia*. Other theatregrams were modified or reversed, downplaying adultery and fornication, and decrying homosexuality. The pederastic pedants of Bibbiena's *Calandria*, Aretino's *Marescalco*, or the Intronati's *Ingannati*, tacitly become heterosexual in Marc'Antonio Raimondo's *Parto finto* (1618) and paternal in Della Porta's *Tabernaria* (1610), though still caricatured for their absurd Latinate lingo. Homoeroticism, formerly an object of jocose punning in Ariosto's *Suppositi*, or an interpretive key to ambiguous sexual desire in Piccolomini's *Alessandro*, was explicitly condemned as a vice in Oddi's *Prigion d'amore*.

The *innamorati* became more expressively emotional and idealistic, their language in *contrasti amorosi* ever more richly baroque. The dialogue between servants' and lovers' contrasting love of food with the food of love remained a popular theatregram and was joined more frequently by debates between different kinds of lovers on the topic of love versus lust, a subject seriously cultivated in neo-Platonic and courtly dialogue by the generation of Castiglione, Bembo, and Ariosto, which did not find its way into the early *commedia erudita* launched by Bibbiena when they all frequented the courts of Urbino and Rome, but appearing late in the century as an expansion of the theatregram of the *innamorato*. Even when Counter-Reformation influence is visible in the waning Cinquecento, however, and sex acts of most kinds are comparatively restrained, when chastity in women is more urgently invoked and homosexuality in men castigated, the *commedia erudita* never matched the contemporary Elizabethan

reverence for virginity. Unchastity of all sorts remained a common subject and in the lower classes was good-humoredly tolerated, but though Oddi condemned male homosexuality and pederastic pedants disappeared, though Della Porta and Girolamo Bargagli exalted heroically pure *innamorate* as agents of Divine Providence, unchastity in comedy still aroused sympathy or mirth, and reproof was rarely rigorous. Still, the open-ended conclusions that allow for happy continuation of adulterous affairs, a typically Boccaccian outcome in *Calandria*, *La mandragola* and Cecchi's *Assiuolo* (1550), were fewer in number in the latter Cinquecento. In their place were sacramental marriages, conversions, and reconciliations buttressed by allegorical *intermezzi*. And though Fortune still aided young love, as it had done in Roman New Comedy, and respectable *innamorate* continued always to get what they wanted, whatever that might be, ultimately Catholic orthodoxy triumphed, and Fortune was displaced by Divine Providence.

Female roles were greatly enlarged in this period, owing partly to the increasingly romantic plots and to the success of the Intronati academy's preference for enterprising heroines, even though men still played women's parts in the courtly and academic venues for which *commedie erudite* were written. But when real women appeared onstage in the *commedia dell'arte* sometime in the 1560s, perhaps earlier, still juicier roles appeared for them in written comedy as well. The most celebrated commercial companies, though best known for their improvised format, "the liberty", were also recruited for scripted plays, "the writ". Isabella Andreini, for example, played the title male character in Tasso's iconic pastoral *Aminta*. We must suppose that she and her rival Vittoria Piissimi played many of the rich female roles in *commedie erudite*, and there is no doubt that they lifted theatregrams from them for mixing in their improvised *commedie a soggetto*. The prominence of such roles in extant *canovacci* was obviously preceded by the players' reading of many *commedie erudite* and more than likely by the performing of them in mixed casts of amateurs and hired professionals. The well-established theatregram of female cross-dressing continued in variations, becoming especially popular in *commedia dell'arte*, and lent itself to more complex characterization and ever-longer rhetorical exercises in self-analysis.

Whores with hearts of gold now became high-minded. Aretino had already elevated the *bona meretrix* of Plautus and Terence, making the eponymous protagonist of *Talanta* intelligent, rich, powerful, and generous, but some later theatrical courtesans surpassed her in moral delicacy, selflessness, and even piety. In Oddi's *Erofilomachia* (1572), Ardelia keeps her lover by being scrupulously honest, unselfish, and psychologically subtle as she contributes to the theme of conflict between eros and friendship. The courtesan Aurelia of Pino's *Ingiusti sdegni* (1553) calms the unjust anger of her lover's father by offering to finance his son's academic and social education, leave him her fortune, and promising to retire to a convent.

The most exemplary behaviour of all was reserved for the theatregram of the *innamorata* who figured as an incarnation of Petrarchan love metaphors, as in Della Porta's *Furiosa* (1609), or as a wonderful manifestation of God's providence, as in Raffaello Borghini's *Donna costante* (1578), Della Porta's *Fratelli rivali*, Bargagli's *Pellegrina*, and Oddi's *Morti vivi*.

Like the baroque language which flowered in the dialogues and interpolated poetry of late *commedie erudite*, the intrigue plots grew in complexity. The double plots learned from Terence had become triple with Caro's *Straccioni* and now reached an extreme in *Gl'intrichi d'amore* (1604), in which Tasso had had a hand, interweaving six love stories. All other competitors in the contest for complexity were outdone by Giordano Bruno, whose *Candelaio* (1582), with every element and theatregram of the *commedia erudita* from prologue to conclusion multiplied by three, is not comparable to others in the mainstream of scripted comedy, however, in that Bruno wrote it far from Italy, probably for non-theatrical reasons of his own without expectation of performance, using the genre as a vehicle for his quirky intellectual exuberance, satire, and homesickness, but thereby illustrating the diverse functionality of its form.

Technical experiments in intrigue structure produced more and more thematized plots like Grazzini's *La gelosia* (1551), in which everyone is jealous, and Pino's *Ingiusti sdegni*, in which everyone is unjustly angry, as well as symbolic plots demonstrating unity achieved through complexity, a motif buttressed by mythical *intermezzi*, which developed into a genre in themselves. The pattern

of seemingly unresolvable complexities in plots full of deceit, trickery, disguises, and cross purposes, which are worked out to an unexpectedly simple and satisfying conclusion, the structural ideal of the doubly grave *commedia grave*, was held to be a reflection of the action of divine omniscience. Attempts to adapt the universally admired peripety of *Oedipus rex* to comedy, as was claimed for Flaminio Maleguzzi's *Theodora* (1568), meant transposing sombre dramatic irony into a happy key: unavoidable fate was replaced by unhoped-for providence. The comic peripety, heretofore functional primarily as a mechanism, became itself a content-structure full of orthodox Catholic meaning. The old theatregram of the tangled web, the exclamation of confused and frustrated characters from earlier comedies, "In what a labyrinth do I find myself!" now indicated the signifying form of comedy in the abstract, a sign of the complexity of human life and of a providential pattern which reveals its purposes and resolves all.

The *commedia erudita* of the late sixteenth century, though less known today than its early models, best represents the maturity and fecundity of the genre in all its complexity, technical skill, and innovation, spilling over into other theatrical forms, and it was what contemporary foreign playwrights like Lope, Molière, and Jonson would first have read of Italian theatre. Shakespeare, more than any, employed the methods of the *commedia erudita*, which probably reached him primarily through knowledge of the *commedia dell'arte*, its performances seen or described, demonstrating their evolution from the players' reading of *novelle*, acting in *commedie erudite*, and then adapting the theatregrams to their own specialized format.

In the second half of the century the idea of genre, the dominant theoretical driving force behind the first experiments in creating a modern theatre to rival the ancients, having produced regular comedy and tragedy, fuelled a campaign to rediscover tragicomedy and to dramatize the literary pastoral world of Theocritus, Virgil, and Sannazaro. As the first genre to achieve this aim, the *commedia erudita* served as the foundation for future construction, and its five-act order, intrigue plot, unity of time and place, theatregrams of relationships and dialogues constituted the default form.

In the act of expanding the legacy of theatrical genres from the ancients, playwrights distinguished one genre from the other

in critical treatises and theoretical prologues that examined and defended the increasing mixtures and complexities that could be accommodated without losing the name or lineaments of regular comedy or tragedy. While some *commedie gravi*, like Oddi's, Borghini's, and a few of Della Porta's, approached tragicomedy by virtue of the high rank of characters, seriousness of theme, and almost fatal conclusions, the label *tragicommedia* was reserved for verse plays on distant or mythical subjects, like Della Porta's Homeric *Penelope* (1591) and for the most influential result of the mixing: the theatrical pastoral in verse, built from Greek and Latin lyrics, eclogues, and narratives and invoking the mysterious classical satyr play, of which no example was extant. The model of the *commedia erudita* had been proved roomy enough for some subjects and themes not foreseen by strict interpretation of the neoclassical rules, so it provided the foundation for the invention of a third genre, the *tragicommedia pastorale* or *favola boscareccia*, in which country settings, supernatural elements, psychological conversions, and invisible realities could be represented. But all relied on the compact intrigue structure achieved in comedy, with its setting and theatregrams of character reconfigured: the Italian street scene as a woodland pleasance, lovers as nymphs and shepherds, comic servants as goatherds, lustful braggarts as satyrs, courtesans as promiscuous nymphs, nurses and bawds as old nymphs, elders as pagan priests or magicians, and so on.

The essential action represented the forces of love at work rather than the clever tricks by which lovers and servants obtain their goals, but disguises, eavesdropping, and other staples of *commedia erudita* were introduced as needed. The plots turned away from conflicts between money and love, to follow the comic tensions of misplaced affections, misunderstandings, and, above all, change of heart as the lesson of love was learned. Long-lost family reunions occurred, but the resolution of conflicts usually relied finally on dictates from gods or goddesses, always ending in redirected loves, multiple marriages, and reintegration of society, Arcadia by name or implication. When the pastoral play took its structure from *commedia erudita* and the inner world of emotion and the outer world of faith in the supernatural were brought onstage, the signifying plot was made more overt and the labyrinth

so often invoked in comedy to express the complexity of plot and eventually extended as a metaphoric recognition of the workings of Providence, was reified in the pastoral by the setting — a clearing on the edge of a dark tangled wood, following Serlio's stage design after Vitruvius.

There were two kinds of pastoral play: the Ovidian kind represented by Alvise Pasqualigo's *Intricati* (1581) and Diomisso Guazzoni's *Andromeda* (1587), on the one hand; and the high tragicomedy of Guarini's *Pastor fido* (1589), Orlando Pescetti's *Regia pastorella* (1589), and Guidobaldo Bonarelli's *Filli di Sciro* (1607), on the other. Both kinds borrowed the essential *commedia erudita* structure, but the Ovidian sort permitted magic, as in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Tempest*, both of which are pastorals minus pastors, in which shepherds are recostumed as Athenian courtiers and Italian nobles, the magician with his attendant spirit as Oberon and Puck, Prospero and Ariel, comic servants as mechanicals and drunken Neapolitan butlers. In contrast, the Shakespearean reflections of the graver and more verisimilar pastorals appear in *As You Like It*, and the pastoral sections of *Cymbeline* and *The Winter's Tale*, in which noble characters sojourn for a time in Arcadia where they discover truth and the path to redemption. Invariably the pastoral plays end with the recognition that, as Prospero says, a higher power has guided all the humans out of a maze. Inevitably the providential plot invited overtly religious or philosophical content, as in Nicolò Tagliapiero's *Virginia tentata e confirmata, favola rappresentabile* (1625), Barbara Torelli Benedetti's *Partenia, favola boschereccia* (1586), or Cesare Cremonini's *Pompe funebri, over Aminta e Clori* (1590).

Of all the theatrical phenomena to which the *commedia erudita* gave birth, the most famous was the *commedia dell'arte.* A practice rather than a deliberately constructed single genre, this was the professional players' way of presenting plays by improvising on a plot summary. The actors undoubtedly owed much to previous kinds of hired entertainment, but the commercial troupes that began to form in the middle of the sixteenth century established their identity and fame on the actors' appropriation of literary drama, especially the *commedia erudita*. From the scripts they encountered in print and in the private venues where they were

summoned to participate in theatrical events, they accumulated the repertories on which they based their *canovacci*, the three-act scenarios which were the basis for innumerable improvisations. In this, their signature format, they presented whatever they acquired from the three established literary genres, but when paid to do so, they also performed five-act regular dramas as written. Thus they played both "the writ and the liberty". Occasionally, the most celebrated *comici* also wrote and published comedies, pastorals, and even tragedies; when they did, significantly, they reverted to the five-act form and features of the literary genres. Some duelled in print with the *commedia erudita*, defending their professional practice of improvising and abbreviating borrowed plots, aspiring to the level of respect enjoyed by their models by demonstrating how well they could imitate them.

The relationship between the *commedia erudita* and its commercial offshoot gradually became symbiotic, as playwrights like Della Porta and Pasqualigo introduced into their comedies figures and modified theatregrams from the *commedia dell'arte. Commedia dell'arte* was born from *commedia erudita*, but ultimately, as Richard Andrews puts it, "script and improvisation were subclasses of a single phenomenon" (Andrews 2008, xxxiii).

If the achievement of the early sixteenth-century exponents of the *commedia erudita* fell short of their goal to create a new Roman Empire of culture, the genre born from their search for form endured. The regular comedy they established remained a standard measure, a norm and form that accommodated variety while admitting, even inviting, plunder. In the last decades of the century the *commedia erudita* in print and in its various modifications in the performances of the *commedia dell'arte* troupes was carried beyond the Alps and across the Channel. Today's scholarship has largely revised earlier opinions of Italian regular comedy and now recognizes the enduring value of the capacious and elastic form which demonstrably left its mark on European dramaturgy.

The direct connection between Molière and the Italian players and playwrights from whom he took his first bearings has always been recognized, as have the many traces of the *commedia dell'arte* in drama and painting throughout northern Europe. In the eighteenth century even Goldoni's comedies, while turning away from *commedia*

dell'arte caricatures towards social reality, still held to the compact structure and many basic theatregrams of the *commedia erudita*. The same pattern is visible in the libretti of innumerable comic operas, not only the most obvious, *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, *Le nozze di Figaro*, *Così fan tutte*, and the like but also submerged beneath the later trappings of *La rondine*, *Die Meistersinger*, and *Der Rosenkavalier*.

English cognizance of the *commedia erudita* is less well documented, but Philip Sidney's statement in *The Defense of Poesie* that in Italy even the "common players" constructed their plays better and more according to rule than their English counterparts, attests to the awareness of the principles of playmaking that the professional *comici* had learned from the *commedia erudita*. George Gascoigne's *Supposes* and Ben Jonson's *Volpone* and *The Alchemist* are obviously related to the Italian genre, but more than any, Shakespeare's plays are intimately connected with it. From *A Comedy of Errors* to *The Tempest*, he showed that he could easily construct according to the unities. For the most part, of course, he played fast and loose with the rules but clearly demonstrated that he knew them. He very likely encountered them both through the travelling troupes and accounts of them and through available scripts and performances of *commedie erudite* and pastorals developed from them. All of his comedies betray familiarity with Italian technology and theatregrams (Clubb 2002, 32-46).

From the early *Taming of the Shrew* on through other comedies, *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, and *Twelfth Night*, recognized in its own time as an offshoot of the *Ingannati* family, the Italian form and theatregrams are evident, reshuffled and infused with new English flavours and vigour. The same is true of the darker comedies, *Measure for Measure* and *All's Well That Ends Well*, in which the tone corresponds to that of the gravest of *commedie gravi*. Shakespeare's grasp of the ultra-fashionable Italian *tragicommedia pastorale*, in which noble characters in Arcadia resolve problems of state and discover the truth of their own hearts, is suggested in *Love's Labour's Lost* and *As You Like It*, while the Ovidian magic *pastorale* is unmistakably the generic foundation of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Tempest*.[8]

8 Further complexities of the Anglo-Italian relationship are penetratingly

Even the tragedies reveal the breadth of content that the form of *commedia erudita* could accommodate. In Italy the tale of Romeo and Juliet had been cast as tragedy in Luigi Groto's *Adriana*, as comedy in Borghini's *Donna costante*, but in both cases the shape of the *commedia erudita* was visible. The latter was a *commedia grave* borrowed more than once by the *commedia dell'arte* players. Shakespeare had a source in Arthur Brooke's narrative, which Brooke said he had lately seen onstage, and Shakespeare dramatized Brooke's poem with theatregrams from the *commedia grave*, minus the happy ending of that genre. More unprecedentedly, in *Othello*, Shakespeare expanded a bare plot from one of Giraldi's *novelle* into the standard shape of a regular comedy about jealousy and deceptions, populating it with familiar theatregrams — jealous husband, boasting warrior, tricky subordinate, courtesan, faithful servant, multiple suitors — and treated it all with a psychological intensity that plunges the shallow farce of supposed cuckoldry and trickery into abysmal tragedy.

The *commedia erudita* has always offered scholars sources for social history as well as rich deposits of material to be excavated for theorizing on attitudes towards political injustice, fiscal usages, crime and punishment, madness, prostitution, class, and family relations. Its intrigue plot has invited interpretation of such structure as a metaphor for the operations of God's providence and has provided a serviceable vehicle for romance and semi-tragedy and for Bruno's pullulating urban impressions of Naples. Only a construction as solid as that of the *commedia erudita* could have allowed him to cram so much into a single comedy without falling into chaos. From the soundness of the form supporting his riotous matter emerged baroque art rather than merely the haemorrhage of an over-stuffed brain.

Earlier studies were focused on language, mining the *commedia erudita* for the history of standard Italian, as of regional dialects and idioms, and on establishing specific sources in Plautus, Terence, Boccaccio, or in local historical happenings. Later, Mario Baratto's Marxist departure pointed to social implications in the genre (1977). Individual figures or theatregrams of character have invited such

pursued by Henke 1997, Chapters 1 and 2.

analyses as Daniel Boughner's of the braggart (1954), Antonio Stäuble's of the pedant (1991), Anthony Ellis' of comic old men (2009), and various others.

Theatregrams and other recycled elements are especially valuable quarries for historical cultural anthropology, under scrutiny along sociological, political, and theoretical lines, with attention to pre-modern sexual identity, gender analysis, domestic hierarchy, power/class conflict, marriage arrangements, and the contrast between law and custom. The frequent appearance onstage of male and female transvestites, more often the latter, especially has generated diverse studies of cross-dressing and homosexuality which illuminate the historical/social context and the audience reception of these phenomena. The *commedia erudita* has yielded to Laura Giannetti's probing some thought-provoking revelations about the age-old subculture of sodomy as it existed in public awareness in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries (2009, 191 and 164), on the whole confirming Foucault's distinction between practice and construction of homosexual identity. Quoting Michael Shapiro, she agrees with the definition of comedy as a privileged space, a "field of play" where these various discourses could be explored (Shapiro 1994, 6). It should be added, however, that the discourses existed only *in potens*; the evidence was not used within the comedies to construct another discourse; the standard structure and plot followed the expected path to a happy ending that was rarely ironic, whether it reaffirmed the social norm or integrated threatening elements into a conclusion that concealed or assimilated aberrations and promised harmonious continuation. The form stood as a stable vehicle for representing a universal domestic reality; destabilizing matters could be introduced but not fully investigated or resolved and were never allowed to subvert the course of the plot towards municipal reconciliation.

With the success of the original quest for genre, the *commedia erudita* became a starting point, a vessel into which a playwright could pour his material, a shape within which he could attempt to assert his originality, a form received by the society and accommodating its changing views. The idea, still popular today, that rules are by definition oppressive and writers admirable for breaking or disregarding them, often obscures the fact that the

achievement of rules was one of the most innovative and creative discoveries in theatre history. Emerging from the new vision of culture shared by artists and writers in the early decades of the century, the *commedia erudita* was born of the humanistic belief in the natural existence of norms and forms to which the ancients held a key with which their Italian heirs could unlock future glory. Cecchi prophesied that playwrights to come would imitate the Italians of his time (1585, Prologo). Clearly, he was right.

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9

Ridding Egypt of Crocodiles:
Church *vs* Stage in England and Italy

I offer some observations on the subject of church and stage from the conclusion of the Council of Trent in Italy to the Restoration of the monarchy in England, seen through the optic of a comparatist. The great communication gap that caused me to turn from English to comparative literature decades ago has been narrowed by today's scholars but still exists, especially with regard to theater. Few *Italianisti* who read Shakespeare also read Shakespeare criticism, and hardly realize how sketchy an idea of Italian drama subsists among British and American Shakespeareans, the majority of whom have read, at most, Machiavelli, Tasso, and a few others. The result is that the presence of Italian drama in almost every aspect of the European Renaissance has yet to be seen clearly. Much has been written about church and stage in England and about church and stage in Italy. Only rarely are the two situations compared.

My title comes from Niccolò Barbieri's simile in *La Supplica* (1634) where he wittily calculates the likelihood of suppressing play actors. Inveighing not against censorship but against *indiscriminate* censorship, Barbieri likens ill-informed enemies of the theater to inept hunters who "prendono per impresa di uccidere con le colubrine i grilli e mandar a fuoco e a sangue le farfalle; figurandosi che i comici siano peggiori de gli eretici, e s'accingono alla dissipazione di quelli con istudio maggiore che se avessero a scacciar i cocodrilli dell'Egitto". Barbieri's defense, like the attacks it undertook to parry, pertained to the *professional* theater (1971, 111).[1]

In England the distinction between professionals and dilettanti was less significant and general antitheatricality was stronger,

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1 ". . . they undertake to kill crickets with cannons and to direct fire and blood at butterflies; imagining that stage players are worse than heretics, they devote themselves to their extermination with more effort than if they had to rid Egypt of crocodiles".

running deep in society (Barish 1981, 91ff; Knapp 2002 passim). But English and Italian critics shared some suspicions, perennial from Plato to Stalin:

1. of theater as occasion for gathering and mob action;

2. of theater as breeder of indecency, dissipation, transvestism and blasphemy—anyone who works with original editions of Cinquecento and Seicento plays is used to finding unmentionable words like *Dio, sorte, fortuna, fato, divinità, trinità, idolo,* etc. — scratched through or inked out, and texts preceded by disclaimers explaining that certain words and ideas in the play belong to the unilluminated pagan characters represented, not to the author, a good child of Holy Mother Church. Similarly, the English Parliament in 1606 banned profane reference to the name of God, Christ, Holy Ghost or Trinity;[2]

3. as vehicle for heresy, political dissent, protest, sowing discord — censorship rules in both countries barred plays from openly considering and debating doctrinal questions (Knapp 14). Earlier polemical anti-Catholic works outside of Italy, like Francesco Negri's *Libero arbitrio* (1550) and Latin plays such as George Buchanan's, on the contrary, had deliberately confronted such questions. The engaged drama of the Italian Catholic Reformation would take up doctrine not for polemical purposes but for the propagation of the faith.

In Italy, by the time Barbieri wrote, the theater was a well-established Renaissance institution with about 150 years of history, teaching the world to write plays with noble Aristotelian claims offering distinctions of genres, principles of criticism and combinable theatergrams useful to construction of "regular" drama. This highbrow institution supported by municipalities, academies and courts, including that of the Vatican. Like every other aspect of Italian society, the theater, high and low, came under scrutiny from the post-conciliar Catholic reform movement.

Against charges originally brought by Cardinal Carlo Borromeo's Milanese Curia, Barbieri incorporated the defenses attempted

2 After briefly encouraging vilification of the radical Martin Marprelate, 1588-89, authorities recoiled from spectacles of "divinity" in plays (Knapp 2002, 1).

by more than a generation of actors and his argument makes use of the flourishing state of theater throughout Europe, a theatre deeply indebted to Italian precedents. In calm tones, playing on the rhetorical premise that the only readers who will not be convinced by him are ignorant provincials, he invokes classical drama, the modern Imperial court, France, Spain and England to justify the professional stage, and insists that where comedies are allowed, cardplaying and whoremongering decrease (Taviani and Schino 1982, 209), and that actors are studious and serious, able to teach youth by example to fear evil, and so forth. Only social and cultural inferiors are enemies of the theater, for the ruling classes and the prelacy sponsor splendid *mascherate* and *feste,* protecting and collaborating with the commercial *comici.*

His arguments deftly mingle the specious with the true. Theater historians document many instances of theatrical collaboration between professional acting troupes and the academic and courtly drama of the *alta cultura* in the late Cinquecento. Examples are abundant: the Veronese Podestà opposed commercial companies but the professional actor-playwright Adriano Valerini was a member of the local theatrical Accademia dei Filarmonici; countless weddings, like Vincenzo Gonzaga's in 1583, joined court and commerce, in this case organized by Mantuan noblemen, combining amateur and professional acting, music and dances in plays by the cleric Bernardino Pino and the impresario Leone de' Sommi, director of the for-profit Hebrew company. And so on. On the other hand, the debauchery of the public theater was well-known, though Barbieri skillfully sidesteps this reality to concentrate on the ideal capabilities of the stage.[3]

As the absence of a stable written text was a major reason for Church opposition to the professionals' *commedie all'improvviso*, Barbieri disingenuously enlists Borromeo "Il buon Pastore" and "Glorioso Santo" on his side, turning him from enemy of the

3 Taviani and Schino 1982 gives a good account of the strategies of the Borromeo-led Church and of the civil authorities, as also of those of the actors (381-89). Valuable additions are in Bosi 2003. When the Milanese government declared comedy a mortal sin in 1583, Valerini's Gelosi company had direct recourse to the Curia of the "benedetto Cardinale" (Taviani and Schino, 210; Bosi, 102).

stage into its wise regulator, by recounting how in 1583 Valerini's troupe had pitted the Milanese civil governor's right to license performances against the Church's right of censorship (which couldn't function effectively without full texts), and obtained permission to play, on condition "che mostrassero scenari giorno per giorno", as St. Thomas Aquinas recommended (Barbieri 1971, 87). The outcome seemed an important victory to generations of actors, not least because the condition was totally unenforceable, but it had no effect on Borromeo's antitheatrical stance.

As Philiep Bossier emphasizes, quoting Taviani, theater was classed with *mores,* not *Artes*, and therefore the profession was expelled from "l'ordine del vivere civile" (2004, 243). Officially, Borromeo regarded all plays as corrupting, though he occasionally permitted them out of pragmatism, but his target was not the practice of mimesis but the theater's invitation to vice, antisocial behavior and "oscenità, [senza la quale] pare che gli spettatori non gustino quelle commedie".[4] Though he sweepingly condemned all manner of masquerading and "pompe" along with comedies, his concern seems to have been exclusively with municipal/diocesan peace, order and, ultimately, salvation, rather than with the concept of drama *per se.* He made no arguments against it, Platonic or otherwise, and clearly thought it impractical to attack too strongly the many kinds of private theater flourishing in his spiritual territory.[5]

The actors obviously used any kind of spin to continue making a living but the arguments were rhetorically skillful and necessarily duplicitous. In private Barbieri himself was said to be a model of piety, charity, paternal responsibility and orthodoxy. The Jesuit G. D. Ottonelli's five-volume work *Della Christiana Moderatione del Theatro*, disputes all Barbieri's premises but lauds his moral character. Isabella Andreini was likewise celebrated for her chastity

4 Quoted in Taviani and Schino, 381.

5 Unlike the French opponents of theater, including the redoubtable bishop Bossuet, who emphasized Plato and attacked the very concept of mimesis (Barish 1981, 194ff). Furthermore, the *comici* in the A-series could count on some protection from nobles and prelates given to theatricals, masquerades and various *feste*; the main target of Italian anti-theatrical forces seem to have been the commercial manifestations offered to socially and culturally inferior audiences.

and maternal virtues and Eulalia dei Bianchi was reputed to be saintly. Yet acting companies always aimed to give the public what it wanted and *commedie a soggetto* invariably contained bawdry. Borromeo was above all pragmatic, carrying out the Council's policy of reform of corruption, a policy so vociferously supported by the actors' defenses that we must suppose them sincere in that, insincere only in pretending that their plays were pure and morally uplifting. Neither camp was making any philosophical, theoretical or physiological arguments in favor of free speech or freethinking or the salutary effects of sexual license—the actors' statements, riddled with contradictions and undermined by the facts of performance, were invariably (and obviously prudently) in support of religious orthodoxy, civil obedience and family values. Borromeo's enemy was the Devil and theater was one of the Devil's arms. In a modern recasting of his mission, he might be compared to a crime-fighting judge like Giovanni Falcone, a reformer sent to protect his flock from municipal corruption and the menace of heresy, to restore peace and stability to family and community, to restore trust in institutions, and to make a clean sweep with the new broom of the edicts of the Council of Trent. *Comici, giostrai, ladri zingari*, public license destabilizing the liturgical calendar—all these, for Borromeo, were tentacles of the Devil's "piovra". But he never took the tone so often heard in England and sounded at its most piercing by William Prynne.

We all know Stephen Gosson's attack on the theater, *Plays Confuted in Five Acts* (1582), in which he specifically placed the blame for the corruption of the stage on the example of the Italians, their filthy stories and bawdy comedies. Phillip Stubbes, in *An Anatomie of Abuse* (1583) wanted players excommunicated, with exceptions which he later cancelled. William Tyndale fulminated against deception, costume, and outer show.[6]

But the most notorious theater-hater was Barbieri's close contemporary, the earless Puritan William Prynne, who excoriated all imitation, exhibitionism, adornment, carnality etc., associating them with weakness, deception, and effeminacy aimed at overthrowing maleness itself, in two treatises: *Perpetuitie of a*

6 See Knapp, 1 and Barish 1981, 159ff.

Regenerate Man's Estate (1626) and *Histrio-Mastix, the Players Scourge, or Actors Tragedie . . . (showing)That popular Stage-playes (the very Pompes of the Divell) . . . are sinfull, heathenish, lewde, ungodly Spectacles and most pernicious Corruptions... besides sundry other particular concerning Dancing, Dicing, Health-Drinking . . .* (1633). Prynne went Stubbes one better and urged excommunication of playgoers as well.

Borromeo, the most denunciatory Italian opponent of theater, had attached blame to viewing plays, as also to participating in balls and feasting, but never went so far as threatening excommunication. He might have wanted to but could hardly afford to cut off from the Church the majority of his own class — nobles and intelligentsia — who routinely sponsored the theater. In England too academic and private spectacles were tolerated, but much less often, and some antitheatricalists, namely Anthony Munday and Gosson, even wrote plays, while some playwrights were avowed antitheatricalists, namely, Ben Jonson (Barish 132ff). Clearly, English opposition to the stage was not entirely determined by party—Gosson, though a clergyman, was not a Puritan.[7] Milton who *was*, wrote *Comus* in 1634, but eight years later objected to clergymen in "Colleges writhing as Trinculos, Buffoons and Bawds"[8] (this although — or was it *because*? — there was a tradition at his own beloved Cambridge University of translation, adaptation and performance of comedies by the Accademia degli Intronati, G. B. Della Porta, Sforza Oddi and other Italians) (Clubb 1965, 275ff).

Prynne's violent *Histriomastix* was not a freak, rather, a caricature of most English antitheatrical polemics from 1575 to 1642, which, as Barish says, on the whole, "disintegrate into free-associative rambles" (88). But if Italian attacks (and most defenses) were more urbane and artfully constructed, the English ones more often adduced Biblical and classical precedents and arguments founded on *Deuteronomy* (22:5), and Plato. Italians, bent on practical ends and less fixed on the Bible, didn't reach in that direction for weapons, and if moved to invoke classical principles, would turn first to Aristotle, who offered principles more apt for defense

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7 Indeed, his treatise was dedicated to Walsingham (Barish 1981, 82n5).
8 From the Columbia edition of Milton, 3.1.300, as quoted by Knapp, 2.

than for attack. English defenses were few and feeble — Thomas Heywood's *Apologie for Actors* (1612) defended players (as distinct from dramatic poetry, Philip Sidney's subject), making some of the same arguments that Barbieri used, but his examples actually offered ammunition to attackers, as he argued the good effects of tragedy, comedy, pastoral and history, but the evil ones of lascivious shows (Barish, 117).

A fundamental difference between English and Italian attitudes toward the theater was that, as Henry Barrows' writing indicates (1591), dissident Protestants agreed on the popishness of the episcopal clergy's feeding people with pageantry and hated Archbishop's Laud's use of theater to ridicule Puritans (Knapp, 4). Indeed, Protestants in general associated Catholicism with theatricality. Attacks on the stage were a "logical next step" after iconoclastic spoliation of churches and monasteries under Henry VIII. Even Catholic prelates in England condemned public theatergoing, and in 1618 priests had to be forbidden by their superior to attend "plays acted by common players upon common stages" (Semper 1952, 116, n. 68),[9] and John Rainolds' *Overthrow of Stage Plays* (1599) declared passion plays and Jesuit-sponsored drama on the Continent to be no better than these.

Prynne's designation of stage plays as "pompes of the Divell" was often interpreted as fact. Some plays were literally demonized by instant legends. Prynne recounted "The visible apparition of the Devill on the stage at the Belsavage Play-House, in Queen Elizabeth's days... while they were there prophanely playing the History of Faustus (the truth of which I have heard from many now alive, who well remember it), there being some distracted with that fearful sight". Another, more detailed, version places this event at Exeter where in the acting of the "tragical storie of Dr. Faustus the Conjuror; as a certain nomber [sic] of Devels kept everie one his circle there, and as Faustus was busie in his magicall invocations, on a sudden they [the Players] were all dasht, every one harkning other in the eare, for they were all perswaded, there was one devell too many amongst them; and so after a little pause desired the people to pardon them, they could go no further with this matter; the people

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9 Semper 1952, qtd in Barish 1981, 116n68.

also understanding the thing as it was, every man hastened to be the first out of dores. The players (as I heard it) contrarye to their custome spending the night in reading and in prayer got them out of the town the next morning.[10] The same genre of theatrical legend has Protestants rejoicing when a Jesuit play in Lyons in 1607 met with disaster from bad weather by God's hand.[11]

The anonymous *Third Blast of Retrait for Plaies and Theaters* (1580) defined theaters as "chapels of Satan" (See Knapp 2002, 5); an Italian letter six years later purported to verify this claim from a contrary angle, demonstrating how the myth of divine intervention onstage could be a weapon wielded by the counter-attackers. Paolo Lardi writes from Calais to his patron "il molto Magnifico et Sig... Gioseffe Rosaccio" in Venice:

> Sapendo io . . . quanto V[ostra]. S[ignoria]. sia vaga d'udir sempre cose noue . . . ne paesi stranieri occorono alla giornata.. [Le diro'] come in questi giorni quiui nella fortezza di cales confino della Franza e' stato referto per cosa certissima da persone degne di fede de quei paesi li quali fuggiti per le crudeli persecutioni della Regina di quel loco uenuti in queste parti . . . [A] Londra . . . si fa' particolar professione di recitar comedie con tutta quella eccellenza, ornamenti, & spesa che sia possibile...uno de principali Signori di essa Città determinò con marauiglioso & superbo apparecchio far recitare in una gran sala del suo palazo una di dette comedie . . . concorsegli molti de più ricchi & nobili della Citta' & alli 24 d'Aprile essa comedia si recito' nella quale fra molti apparenti intramedii, che le douea intrauenire, in una fu' concertato, per dispregio di nostra santa fede, che un prete vestito da magnifico & un chierico vestito da Zani sacerdotalmente apparati douessero sopra un altare celebrare la mesa, & peruenuti alla eleuatione dell'Ostia, douesse comparire un uestito da Diauolo, & con molto furore rapir detta ostia dalle mani del Prete, onde così come s'era ordinato così si fece; peruenutisi adunque a detta eleuatione ecco furiosamente il finto Diauolo comparire, e non così tosto ei posi le mani a' l'ostia per farne stratio, che molti

10 Chambers 1923, 423-4 and 424, quoting from a manuscript note in an old book.

11 Barish 1981, 163n23, quoting the anonymous *The Iesuites Comedie* . . . with a *Récit touchant la comédie jouée par les jesuites, et leurs disciples* (London 1607).

ueri, & horrendi Diauoli del l'oscure, & profonde caue dell'inferno uscire quiui uisibilmente si uidero per l'aer caliginoso uenire & con molta furia, urli, & spauento uia se ne portorono il Magnifico vestito da prete, il chierico, il finto Diauolo, & altri principali, & recitanti di detta comedia. Se tal horrido spetacolo porse grandissimo spauento, & terrore a' i circonstanti, pensilo ciascuno, però che come si riferisce, tante fiamme, foco, fumo, puzzore, & strepito in quel punto iui comparse, che per gran tema, & spauento uscito ognuno fuor di se, chi si die' a fuggire, che si precipitò giù dalle finestre, chi cercò di nascondersi in lochi così caui, e' oscuri, che mai più si uidero, chi fra loro stessi colmi d'ira & di rabia s'ammazzorono, di modo tale, che di essi quasi nessuno campo'...[Tutto questo] ha apportato in quei lochi non picciola contritione alli cuori p[er]uersi, & ostinati contro alla nostra uera, & santissima fede Christiana. Ma la sudetta Regina come nemica capitalissima de Catolici, accio che bene il tutto V.S. intenda; più peruersa empia e' crudele che mai qual nouo faraone ostinato, fece subito mandare un stremissimo bando, che sotto durissime pene nessuno hauesse ardire per tutto il suo regno di tal suceso fauellare. La onde molti di quei paesi lasciando li propri alberghi, & le lor faculta' per gran tema si sono da quella peruersa setta nascostamente fugiti per ridursi a' penitenza de loro passati errori & drizzare tutti i suoi pensieri alla sicura & vera strada del Cielo, de quali, come le detto qui ce ne sono molti....che esso marauiglioso succeso sia chiaro & noto a' tutto il mondo, accio' che ogni huomo cio' udendo, stabilisca nel suo cor una pura viva, & ferma fede, per le buone, & sante operationi, tutti potiamo al fine sciolti da ogni terreno, & grauoso incarco, salire a' quella celeste, & perpetua gloria che il grande Iddio per sua infinita bonta' & misercordia ha' ueramente promesso a' suoi beati & Santi eletti... Di Cales alli 3 di Maggio 1586. Di V.S. M.M. Obligatiss Seru. Paulo Lardi[12]

12 *COPIA / D'VNA LETTERA / VENUTA NOVAMENTE / dalla fortezza di Cales nella Magnif. Citta' di Venetia...* (printed in Modena, May 4, 1586), Av-A4v. I quote from the copy in the Yale University Beinecke Library. ". . . to the Most Honorable Sir Gioseffe Rosaccio in Venice: Knowing . . . how much Your Honor desires to hear daily news from foreign countries . . . I'll tell you what has been reported as fact recently to the fortress of Calais at the French confines by trustworthy persons of those countries [England and France] who have fled to these parts from the cruel persecutions of the Queen . . . In London they set great store by performing comedies with all possible excellence, ornament and expense...one of the principal Lords of

This dubious report pre-dates the Martin Marprelate controversy, before the authorities forbade representation of divinity and I

this city decreed a performance of one of these comedies with marvellous and splendid sets in a great hall of his palace,...many of the richest and most noble people of the city flocked there and on April 24 this comedy was performed with many showy interludes between the acts, in one of which was presented, in order to insult our holy faith, a priest costumed as a *magnifico* [the stock *commedia dell'arte* character of the Venetian magnifico Pantalone] and a sub-deacon costumed as Zani [the stock clown and servant of Pantalone] who, with sacerdotal accoutrements, were supposed to celebrate the mass on an altar, and at the moment of the elevation of the Host, an actor dressed as a Devil was supposed to appear and furiously to snatch the host from priest's hand, all of which was done as planned; arrived then at the said elevation, here the fake Devil appeared, and no sooner did he put his hands on the host to tear it up, than were seen many real and horrid Devils come from the dark and deep pits of hell through the smoky air who with great fury, screeches and menace carried away the Pantalone in priest's vestments, the sub-deacon, the fake Devil, and other principal actors and performers of the said comedy. Let it be imagined with what enormous fright and terror such a horrid spectacle struck the bystanders, so that, as it is reported, such flames, fire, smoke, stink and uproar occurred then that some for fear and shock went out of their minds, some took flight, some leapt from the windows, some tried to hide in places so deep and dark that they were never seen again, some, overcome by rage and madness, killed themselves, in such wise that of those present almost no one survived...All of this has caused no little contrition in those parts in those perverse hearts stubbornly hostile to our true and most holy Christian faith. But the above-mentioned Queen as foremost enemy of Catholics, so that Your Honor may understand all, more perverse, impious and cruel than ever, like an unremitting modern-day Pharoah, instantly decreed a most severe ban, subjecting to extreme punishment anyone in all her kingdom who might dare to speak of the event. Wherefore many people there leaving their homes and their wealth for great fear have secretly fled from that perverse sect [Anglican] to humble themselves in repentance for their former errors and direct all their thoughts to the sure and true way of Heaven, of which people, as I have told you, there are many here... may this miraculous occurrence be clear and known to the whole world, so that everyone hearing it may fix in his heart a pure, lively and firm faith, by good and holy living may we all at the end, freed from every earthly and heavy weight, rise to that celestial and perpetual glory that the great God through his infinite goodness and compassion has truly promised to his blessed and chosen Saints . . . From Calais, 3 May, 1586. From Your Honor's most obliged servant Paulo Lardi".

include it in my examples of religious content on the stage because, whether it is entirely fictional anti-Protestant propaganda or a mythifying interpretation of a natural catastrophe (fire, earthquake or tornado) and whether the described content of the "intramedio" is partly accurate or merely a fanciful Italian idea of English stage fare, the letter attests that if in England the theatre was the Devil's workshop, Italians could see it as God's forum for manifesting the triumph of truth and the terrible judgement awaiting blasphemers and heretics. Lardi outdoes the English enemy by reifying the idea of the world as God's stage, a concept which was a characteristic determinant of Italian and Spanish views of drama. The divine theatricality of its ending surpasses even that of Don Juan in Tirso de Molina's *Burlador de Sevilla* (pre-1630) in claiming to be more than merely a representation, an actual event.

The outcome of all the controversy was that in England the theaters were closed in 1642 for eighteen years, and the Protestants were proved right about the popishness of theater and the theatricality of popery, for in Italy, though individual theatrical spaces closed and opened, the theater in general was simply infiltrated and appropriated by Catholic Reform policy.

Aside from attacks and debates, there were in both countries those who wanted to use the theater for purposes of religion. More interesting to me than the attacks is the comparison of the means adopted to affect the character of the theater by counter-structures, benignly undermining its deceptions and infiltrating it with truth. Important in this regard is Knapp's study, which opposes secularist scholars from the Romantics to the new historicists who "sustain the myth that piety and popular entertainment were cultural opposites, at war with each other" (2002, 8) and discount the possibility that the established Church had cultural capital of its own to invest Shakespeare's plays with religious purpose. Knapp maintains that religion had a say in the creation of plays, their content and their social effects and that it provided rationales and motives for acting and playwriting. Against opposition of various kinds, a "tribe" of the theatrical world including actors, writers, entrepreneurs, hired men and amateurs supported the idea of what in the Italian context I call engaged drama, though these English theater-lovers rarely said so directly.

England had had its famous religious cycle plays in the fifteenth century and earlier, and after the separation from Rome under Henry VIII, John Bale, author of the play *John Baptist*, wrote in defense of the theater and was "principal agent of Thomas Cromwell's statecraft in what was probably a deliberate attempt to capture so powerful an engine as the stage in the interests of Protestantism" (Chambers 1923, vol. 1, 242). But after the Marprelate controversy and a brief spate of caricatures of Puritans onstage, the authorities objected to "spectacles of divinity" and declared blasphemous most references to things sacred. Thenceforth, though there were political plays like Marlowe's *Massacre at Paris* indicting Catholic atrocities and Chapman's tragedies on the period of Huguenot struggles, there was relatively little overtly religious drama in England — the fragmentation of faith militated against it.

I think nevertheless that Knapp is right: only bias can deny the largely Christian assumptions underlying most Elizabethan and Jacobean drama. Scholars still argue over Shakespeare's Anglican orthodoxy or the degree of sympathy he evidences for the "Old Religion": Stephen Greenblatt's *Hamlet in Purgatory* treats Shakespeare's Catholic references as a recourse to the past necessitated by the absence of ritual and common belief in England after the break with Rome.[13] Disagreement between Greenblatt and Knapp on the specific nature of Christian signs aside, ultimately the plays themselves show that there can be no more doubt of Shakespeare's general belief system being pro-Christian than of his politics being pro-monarchist. But English law forbade introducing doctrinal questions and religion took the stage silently and indirectly.

An ironic quirk: whereas in Italy, with a rising production of overtly sacred theater, post-Tridentine censorship supporting reform of the clergy made it impossible to bring priests and monks onstage — even in narrative, witness the transforming of Boccaccio's sin-ridden friars into laymen — so that bad friars like Machiavelli's Fra Timoteo or even good ones like Piccolomini's Fra Cherubino disappeared from the theater, while in England they continued to figure benignly or ambiguously in plots like those of *Romeo and*

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13 The same premise informs Greenblatt's biographical *Will in the World* (2004).

Juliet and *Measure for Measure*, and in diabolic malignancy, as in Marlowe's *Faustus*.

In Italy there was no doubt that the Church had cultural capital and was prepared to invest it openly in reform of the theater, as of all Catholic institutions weakened by past corruption into an easy target for Protestant heresy. The means of appropriation were various. One was the symbolic plot and vocabulary, often employed in the new third genre of pastoral tragicomedy, an obvious example being Battista Guarini's *Il pastor fido*, in which the very shape of the standard action (from problematic beginning into a deeply sinister mid-section and thence to a providentially happy ending) retraces the pattern of Christian salvation, while remaining in the fiction of a pagan world and rising to the challenge of Aristotelian theory and the Sophoclean model of *Oedipus Tyrannus.*

A more direct means was the Jesuit drama, both Latin and vernacular, excoriated by Protestants: this is one of those genres which has been studied by Italianists but I think underrated even by the most knowledgeable Anglicists; Barish, for example, wrote that Jesuit drama had only limited effect and he left vernacular sacred tragedy out of consideration, referring to Racine's exemplars of the genre as "autos sacramentales" (1981, 191).

Correction would begin with reading Italian studies like those of Silvia Carandini[14] with a provenance from medieval *laudi* and early Renaissance *sacre rappresentazioni*, Jesuit plays offered *alta cultura* spectacle with lavish up-to-date theatrical elements, costumes, professional singers, musicians and dancers, organized first to move and persuade a select audience and then to provide a model of the new Catholic reformed drama for dissemination to the larger public. Carandini's "esempio tipico" is Padre Stefonio's Latin *Flavia* — conjoining the theoretical principles of Cinquecento neoclassical tragedy in the Senecan tradition with the new baroque spectacle and the use of visual and sensorial stimulation to psychological and spiritual involvement, as elaborated by Ignatius Loyola in his *Esercitia spiritualia* (1548).

The European network of Jesuit colleges created stable centers of theatrical production in which the most sophisticated technical

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14 For example, Carandini 1990.

and theoretical means nourished a discriminating public with a new dramaturgy that was both spectacular and ideologically substantial — in Sforza Pallavicino's words praising Giulio Rospigliosi: "innestando le rose più odorifere di Parnaso in sù le spine del Calvario, hà consagrati in Roma i Teatri alla santità, che soglion esser più tosto asili della licenza".[15] The theoreticians in this context included Tesauro and Ottonelli, whose encyclopedic work damned the mercenaries but advocated positive reform for a Catholic theater as a substitute for every kind of corrupting carnival and public entertainment.

Engaged Catholic drama was soon supported by other religious orders, academies, court and municipal sponsorship. But the *zanni* still appeared commercially, though less often and in competition with privately-funded entertainments offered free to an increasing public. A long-accumulated repertory of theatergrams was now put to work in religious spectacle — Iacopo Cicognini's *Martirio di Sant'Agata* (1622) includes twins in love, comic peripety, *commedia dell'arte*-style servants, Capitan Briareo, a pastoral *maga*, dancers and an angel sung by a *castrato*. The forms and conventions of profane commercial theater survived in almost every type of religious play — despite moral objections to transvestism, a late "historical" tragedy with Catholic Counter-Reformation anti-Protestant content such as Graziani's *Cromuele* (1671) could include various disguises, including two women "travestite da uomo" one of them Queen Henriette Marie of England and another Cromwell's daughter.

One thing obvious about any conflict between church and stage is that, in the long run, the stage always wins. But nothing stays the same, and the shaping power of Catholic reform burgeoned in the theater throughout the Continent, though not sufficiently perceived by scholars of English drama.

The *tragedia sacra* was the most directly religious genre, taking its subjects from the Old and New Testaments, the lives of

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15 *Breve discorso*, attached to the first edition of Pallavicino's *Ermenegildo martire, tragedia* (Roma: per gli Eredi del Corbelletti, 1644) 158: ". . . grafting the most fragrant roses of Parnassus onto the thorns of Calvary, he has in Rome consecrated to holiness the theaters, which usually are the refuge rather of license."

the saints and, less frequently, from contemporary events in the Catholic/Protestant conflict. Best known to English scholarship but least representative, in that it is a closet drama and the work of a commercial actor/manager, is G. B. Andreini's *Adamo* (1613), a precedent for Padre Serafino della Salandra's *Adamo caduto, tragedia sacra* (1647).

Perhaps the most frequent source for the *tragedia sacra* was official hagiography: before becoming Pope Clement IX, Rospigliosi wrote a spectacular *S. Alessio*. There were virgin martyrs in abundance, the same ones popular in the old *sacre rappresentazioni*, Agnese, Dorotea, Orsola, Eulalia, Cecilia and others — rare English counterparts of this genre are Massinger's *Virgin Martyr*, and his veiled drama on Saint Genesius, *The Roman Actor*.[16]

There were conversion-to-Christianity plays like Della Porta's *Georgio*, or celebration of local saints connected with political events,[17] such as Veneto plays about Santa Giustina after the victory of Lépanto on her feast day, or referential historical tragedies, for example, Pallavicino's *Ermenegildo*, in which the victory of orthodoxy over Arian heresy in medieval Spain tacitly points to the hopes of the Catholic Reformation in Europe. Modern history too offered political/religious martyrs: at least five Mary Queen of Scots plays appeared before the end of the Seicento and several *Tommaso Moro*'s.[18]

In Italy Church and State were united — despite plenty of infighting — on the question of orthodoxy and reform, a fact that underlies the difference between the relationship of religion to theater in the two countries. In England the shifts from Roman to Anglican Episcopacy under Henry VIII, back briefly to Catholicism under Mary Tudor, again to Anglicanism with Elizabeth and James, followed by Cromwell's Puritan Protectorate and returning to Anglicanism with the Restoration of the Frenchified and crypto-Catholic Charles II, made theater a political/religious issue,

16 On the *tragedia sacra* and English drama, see Clubb 1989, 205ff.

17 For fuller treatment of this issue, see Clubb 2005, 345-62.

18 Including Federico Della Valle's *La reina di Scozia* (1592); Gio. Francesco Savaro del Pizzo's *Maria Stuarda* (1665); Orazio Celli's *Maria Stuarda Regina di Scozia e d'Inghilterra* (1665); Anselmo Sansone's *Maria Stuarda* (1672); Ortensio Scamacca's *Tommaso Moro* (1648); and Jacopo Rossi's *Tommaso Moro*, n.d.

inseparable from party and ideology, not solely a factor in problems regarding public order or a communicative instrument of orthodoxy. Both the extreme measures of the Puritans — the closing of the theaters in 1642 and the killing of the king in 1649 — were matched in intensity in 1660 by the counter-revolutionary acts of restoring the beheaded king's son to the throne and reopening the theaters to plays which were (in confirmation of the worst Puritan suspicions) more frankly licentious and libertine than their French sources, indeed more so than anything seen in Italy since the theatrical performances at the Vatican in the days of Leo X.

The Italian Church meanwhile had commandeered the stage, and while the dictates of law and order still troubled and regulated its commercial purveyors, the baroque Italian theater in all its Aristotelian theoretical, musical, spectacular scenographic engineering splendor, went hand in glove with Tridentine policy, nourished by cardinals and popes, producing countless examples of religious genres that bloomed in private and public throughout Europe. Calderòn and Racine are only the most obvious exponents. Ironically, though English players were not interested in reviving the old Bible plays, the Italian models were not lost on learned writers, and in opposition to the restored monarchy, the same Milton who in 1642 had deplored the antics of clergymen in college productions of what were obviously Italianate plays wrote a rare and perfect exemplar of the *tragedia sacra* in *Samson Agonistes* (1671).

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Much Ado About Rival Brothers

When Alessandro Fersen's production of *La fantesca* for the Teatro Stabile di Bolzano was taken on tour in the season of 1976-77, the revival and its success gave the latest sign of a perennial Italian regard for Giambattista Della Porta's comedies. Of the extant fourteen, several have been kept alive on stage, and *Gli duoi fratelli rivali* is one of these. Near the end of the Fascist period it was among Anton Giulio Bragaglia's presentations of classical national drama at the Teatro delle Arti di Roma, where it appeared in Gerardo Guerrieri's adaptation with actresses playing the rival brothers, the young Anna Proclemer in the role of Don Ignazio. *Fratelli rivali* even found its way into Fersen's recent *Fantesca* by means of some transplanted lines. Neither Della Porta's place in Renaissance drama nor the new scholarly enthusiasm for Italian theater history, however, has yet produced a modern edition of his dramatic works: Gennaro Muzio's four volumes of 1726 constitute the unique complete edition of the comedies, eight of which were republished in the 1910-11 collection of Vincenzo Spampanato; while the three plays in verse, *Il Georgio: tragedia*, *L'Ulisse: tragedia*, and *La Penelope: tragicomedia*, exist only in rare sixteenth- or seventeenth-century editions until very recently.[1]

To the student of Renaissance drama as an international phenomenon, Della Porta makes a particular appeal by virtue of the number of translators he quickly attracted. In England alone, three Latin and two English adaptations of his comedies were performed at Cambridge or on the London stage in the first two decades of the seventeenth century. King James I was so delighted by *Ignoramus*, George Ruggle's Latin version of *La trappolaria*, that he commanded

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1 The first volume of an edition of Della Porta's theatrical works by Raffaele Sirri (1978) appeared while my volume was in press. Volume 2, containing five comedies (*Olympia*, *La fantesca*, and *La trappolaria*) is to appear in 1980.

a second performance, and in the eighteenth century Garrick was still playing *The Astrologer*, a late updating of *L'astrologo*. Among the reasons for Della Porta's early launching abroad, his contemporaneity may have weighed most with fashionable English audiences. Born in 1535 and at work until the end of his life in 1615, a year before Shakespeare's death, Della Porta stood for the kind of comedy most admired in his own country immediately before and during the great flowering of drama in England, a period in which Catholic Italy figured in the English imagination as the civilized world's capital of luxury, depravity, willful error, secular learning and the arts.

The comedy at which Della Porta excelled belongs to an Italian Renaissance genre little remarked by most historians of English drama, despite its affinity with some of the best achievements of the Elizabethan theater. It is a comedy that could as easily be called tragicomedy. Names aside, it testifies to the Italian search for mixed genres, which by the last part of the sixteenth century had produced many variations on the better-known but different basic types of comedy established much earlier by Ariosto, Bibbiena and Machiavelli. The late variety exemplified by *Fratelli rivali* is strong in romantic elements, with a notably idealistic side and a dosage of moral rectitude amounting sometimes to didacticism. Matters thought by Renaissance theorists to be fit for tragedy are here: characters of noble rank exposed to danger or death, and moral menaces offering occasions of heroism and pathos. This is a kind of comedy that often looks back toward the medieval theater, readmitting abstract content, symbolism, even allegory, and seeking to represent invisible realities that had been discarded in the transition from medieval to Renaissance drama, but now employing means sophisticated enough to function within contemporary structures developed for neoclassical genres. Such comedy is a continuation and reinterpretation of the humanistic idea of *commedia erudita* or *grave,* with the *gravità* expanded to include more varied and serious content and more significant form. Earlier sixteenth-century principles of *contaminatio* and complication of plots remain fundamental here — indeed are invoked to the limit. The essential materials of which the comedy is made, the structural formulae and units by which the elements of the *favola*

acquire stage presence, come from a repertory of theatergrams, movable parts, combinable units or frames developed by decades of experiment. The Italian repertory of generic structures was a pool which irrigated more than local terrain. In print, in performances at courts, academies, universities and private houses, and in the adaptations transmitted by mobile troupes of the *commedia dell'arte*, the repertory was available to any place in western Europe that could afford theater. There was no center of drama on which it did not make its impression.

Della Porta's comedies exhibit the repertory in full range. He had begun writing for the stage in youth, many years before his first play saw print in 1589, and he kept it up throughout a long and primarily scientific career. From the early *Olimpia* to the late *Tabernaria,* his comedies are neoclassical, in the competitive and hospitable Renaissance sense, constructed by contamination and complication of Roman New Comedy and narrative sources. The extant fourteen have much in common, including shuffled structural units and ubiquitous reminders that Della Porta had made a translation, now lost, of Plautus's complete works. All fourteen comedies also testify to a fruitful give-and-take with the *commedia dell'arte.* In tone they vary: some are farcical, but in half a dozen the grave and romantic elements are pronounced, and to this latter group *Fratelli rivali* belongs.

No single period of Della Porta's production can be distinguished indisputably as his serious phase, for the dates of writing and of publication may, in many cases, be widely separated. When Pompeo Barbarito listed Della Porta's unpublished works as of 1591 in the preface to *La Penelope*, he did not mention *Fratelli rivali*: we may assume that it was composed during the decade before 1601, when it was printed in Venice. Two of his other comedies, *La Cintia* and *La carbonaria*, also appeared there that year. Della Porta was probably not on hand for the event. He had lived in Venice for a time in the 1580s under the patronage of Cardinal Luigi d'Este and while it is not inconceivable that he was there again in the early months of 1601, it is certain that by spring he was at home in Naples. As Ciotti's dedication in May of that year states, Della Porta was now a famous author. Sixty-five years old, he was known throughout Europe for his works on natural physiognomy, cryptography, and

optics, and four of his plays were in print, one of them in three editions. He had come under the suspicion of the Inquisition in the 1580s because of the endorsement some of his works appeared to give to the forbidden arts of divination, judiciary astrology and other kinds of prophecy. This experience probably contributed to the wariness of the dangerous implications of the traditional comic theme of fortune that marks *L'astrologo* and also coincides with the increasing gravity of character and of situation found in such comedies as *Il moro*, *La furiosa*, *La Cintia*, *La sorella* and *Frateli rivali*.

I have singled out the last of theses for a new edition and a first English translation because it is a ripe specimen of *commedia grave* and because its relation to the English stage demands acknowledgement. Stiefel long ago established it as Rotrou's source for *Célie, ou le viceroi de Naples*, but it has escaped the notice of historians of Jacobean drama that *Fratelli rivali* was also used by at least two of Della Porta's Cambridge adapters. Walter Hawkesworth's *Labyrinthus*,[2] a Latin version of *Cintia*, contains a reference to the braggart "Marte bellonio," and Samuel Brooke's *Adelphe*,[3] a Latinized *Sorella*, takes from *Fratelli rivali* not only the names of the Count of Tricarico and of the heroine, "Charitia," but also the better part of a whole scene, the boasting contest between Martebellonio and Leccardo (1.3). Brooke's commandeering of this dialogue is an act of dramatic *contaminatio* worthy of Della Porta himself.

Finally, *Fratelli rivali* is an analogue to Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing*. D. J. Gordon has even suggested that the Carizia-Ignazio *imbroglio* was a source of the Hero-Claudio plot, a

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2 Walter Hawkesworth's Latin adaptations of Della Porta's *Cintia* and Oddi's *Erofilomachia*, reentitled *Labyrinthus* and *Leander* respectively, are preserved in three manuscripts at Cambridge University. In one of these, Trinity College MS R.3.9, it is stated that *Leander* was acted in 1598. This manuscript may have been a copy made for a revival in 1602, when *Labyrinthus* also was performed. Although a number of scholars have believed the two adaptations to be contemporaneous, the earliest certain date for *Labyrinthus* is 1602, as is recognized by Chambers 1923, 337 and Harbage 1949, 72-3.

3 *Adelphe* is in Trinity College MSS R.3.9 and R.10.4. The scene from *Fratelli rivali*, not recognized as such, is included in selections from *Adelphe* printed in Appendix F to Brooke 1928, 194ff.

possibility not disposed of by C. T. Prouty's rebuttal based on the mistaken notion that *Fratelli rivali* was not published until 1911.[4] The first edition actually appeared only a year too late to have served Shakespeare for *Much Ado*, printed in 1600. In manuscript or performance, of course, *Fratelli rivali* could have been known in England before the turn of the century. But aside from those shared traits that Gordon observes, and from some others that he misses, Della Porta's contemporary and representative dramatization of the story Shakespeare used is a godsend of an instrument for the critical method of comparative literature. In this case comparison brings to light differences that, paradoxically, go farther than the similarities can do to reveal an international community of Renaissance comedy. Some of the ways Shakespeare takes with the tale are dramatic techniques generally practiced in Italy and particularly by Della Porta, but not in *Fratelli rivali*; conversely, in order to dramatize Bandello, Della Porta uses structural units which Shakespeare foregoes in *Much Ado* but employs elsewhere. The common narrative source in the two plays provides a crux, a unique point of encounter for instituting a deductive line.

Although not to be found in modern anthologies with *La fantesca*, *La sorella* and *L'astrologo,* Della Porta's comedy of the two rival brothers has sometimes been called his best. It reminded Francesco Milano of Lope de Vega. Raffaele Sirri descries in it stirrings of social protest. Whether it is the best or merely good, however, *Fratelli rivali* is extraordinarily representative of trends in late cinquecento comedy. The prologue is a statement of critical principles, claiming classical lineage and generic correctness while simultaneously asserting modern superiority. The characters have a richly articulated but occasionally self-contradictory emotional intensity that arises less from Della Porta's concern for psychological complexity than from his mastery of structures in the repertory common to literary *commediografi* and improvising *comici.* The abundance is so great as to make the play almost a sampler of theatergrams.

At the same time, *Fratelli rivali* illustrates the hybridism of Italian theater and the movement within it that produced different sorts of *tragicommedia, tragedia di fin lieto, favola comitragica* and so

4 Gordon 1942, 279-90 and Prouty 1950, 14n18.

on. Della Porta seems to be testing the limits of *commedia grave*, stretching without breaking the rules of unity and decorum. Place is confined to a single street scene in a well-known city, time to about one day in a distant decade, so that the action is verisimilar and almost historical, but blurred and, possibly, allusive to a more contemporary reality. Written in prose and peopled by stock comic middle class types as well as by aristocrats, proceeding through deceits, disguises and bawdry to happy marriages, but also containing threats of death, dishonor, fratricide and governmental injustice, *Fratelli rivali* remains *commedia*, but just barely. Among Della Porta's comedies, only *Il moro* goes so far toward tragedy; *La sorella*, *La Cintia* and *La furiosa* lack the political elements and the emphasis on rank. The seventeenth-century criticism of Teodoro Amaideno, who liked *Fratelli rivali* but objected to bringing the viceroy of Sicily (*sic*) on stage, and to the indecorum of permitting him to embrace his nephews' future wives in public,[5] suggests the diverse hazards awaiting playwrights who experimented with genre while observing its rules.

It is by the selection and disposition of plots that this baroque version of *commedia erudita* and the individual practitioners of it may immediately be recognized. The principal source of *Fratelli rivali* is Bandello's twenty-second novella, a sombre romantic tale, which its author heads thus: "Timbreo di Cardona [che] essendo col re Piero di Ragona in Messina s'innamora di Fenicia Lionata, e i vari fortunevoli accidenti che avvennero prima che per moglie la prendesse" (1928, 283). Della Porta's choice is typical of the period: the whole century had witnessed a fashioning into *commedia* of novella material, but while the early cinquecento had given primacy to the comic tales in the *Decameron*, the later time saw these leavened with serious stories, often also from Boccaccio, as from other *novellieri* and from the Alexandrian romances that had begun to enjoy a vogue in translation.

Bandello's tale is a leisurely account of Timbreo's love for Fenicia, daughter of the noble but impoverished Lionato. Like Ariodante in Ariosto's similar story (*Orlando Furioso* 5), Timbreo

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5 Selections from the diary of this well-informed patron and judge of the drama have been published by Greco 1997, 209-68.

is persuaded by the deceits of a rival to believe that he has seen his beloved keep a night's assignation with another man. After repudiating her and believing that she consequently has sickened and died, Timbreo learns of Fenicia's innocence from the repentant calumniator and vows never to marry except as her bereaved father may dictate in satisfaction of wounded honor. A year later Lionato requires Timbreo to keep his promise, and at the culmination of the nuptial feast it is revealed that the bride is Fenicia, recovered from her nearly fatal illness and grown unrecognizably more lovely. The rival marries Fenicia's sister, Lionato's family is enriched again by the generosity of the Spanish ruler, Pedro of Aragon, and they all live happily thereafter.

The characters in the novella are verbose, especially Fenicia, who moralizes and laments at length, the range of mood is limited to a register that runs from lugubrious passion to courtly rejoicing, and the narrative shape is linear. For transformation into *commedia* the plot had to be disposed so as to provide opportunities for encounters and revealing conversations. It needed enlargement by countermotion, funny matter and variety of tempo, tone and character, but it also needed to be reduced to fit the temporal and spatial limits that Renaissance neoclassicists deemed a sacrosanct inheritance from antiquity.

Della Porta's method of making the novella stageworthy rests on the enlarged principle of contamination, which by his time countenanced intermingling not only plots but also genres themselves, and on complication of the elements into the most intricate possible tangle. The labyrinthine pattern should appear hopelessly frustrating until suddenly resolved by a final peripety, a *coup de théâtre* with unexpected and satisfying dramatic impact producing order out of chaos and a happy ending all round.

He collapses the train of events into a day: between Tuesday morning and dinnertime Wednesday the rival loves are revealed, the lady won, the marriage arranged, the tricks planned and perpetrated, the accusation lodged, the death reported, the deceit confessed, the judgement of the municipal authority passed, giving rise to further rivalry, and at last, still in time for dinner, a happy denouement visited on everyone. All of these actions are tightly scheduled to occur more or less plausibly on a single street in

Salerno. To each of the rivals — now brothers — is assigned a clever servant, and a venal parasite is brought in to play the go-between; together with a braggart captain and a bawdy maidservant; these add low echoes to the high tones. All of them multiply occasions of symmetrical confusion. Like the pattern of construction which packs the action into twenty-four hours and turns it out of doors, the added characters are borrowed from Roman New Comedy and its Renaissance continuators. The same is true for many verbal and gestural structures. When Leccardo exasperates his impatient love-sick master by stammering his message while finding breath to explain that he is breathless, or when Don Ignazio pretends to love the count's daughter and Don Flaminio tries to call his bluff by claiming to have arranged the match, they are doing in their way what characters of Plautus, Terence and earlier cinquecento comedy have done before them. Their way also includes the formalistic game of mocking conventional structures, as when Simbolo replies to the long preamble of Ignazio's expository monologue, "I know all that very well, for I was in your service at the time".

Theatergrams from the sizeable Boccaccian portion of the generic repertory also figure in Della Porta's *contaminatio*. The bed trick, or substitution of persons at assignations in dark rooms, had been a commonplace of *commedia* since Bibbiena's Decameronian *Calandria* of 1513, and the mutually disappointing encounter of Martebellonio and Chiaretta in *Fratelli rivali* is a practiced doubling of this familiar *inganno*. It simultaneously complicates the *intreccio*, intensifies the violent emotional pitch while providing a comic breather to it, and offers a moon-in-puddle reflection of the highflown love of Don Ignazio and Carizia.

A dimension that makes *Fratelli rivali* unique among Della Porta's comedies, — for they all demonstrate the principles of prefabricated assembly from materials of fiction, whether comedy or novella, ancient or recent, — is adduced by a historical framework of "facts" from the chronicles of his own family and of the Kingdom of Naples. Discarding Bandello's nominal association of Timbreo with Pedro of Aragon and thirteenth-century Messina, Della Porta transfers the action to sixteenth-century Salerno, a city in which his paternal relatives had repeatedly held high civil and ecclesiastical offices. This clan he brings onstage by rebaptizing Bandello's Lionato as

Eufranone Della Porta. Antonio Mazza's account of prominent Salernitans from the Middle Ages to the late seventeenth century includes many "de Porta's" and one "Eufranon de Porta Vicarius Generalis Regni": no date accompanies his appointment, which in this unsystematic list is mentioned immediately after one made in 1675 and before another in 1445 (1965, 95-6). While the historical existence of the Eufranone of the play remains uncertain, there seems to be no doubt that his uncommon given name was used at least once by the Salernitan branch of the author's family.

In the narrated *antefatto* which Simbolo drily recognizes as a structural convention (1.1), Don Ignazio explains that the Mendozas have come to Italy with the forces of the "Gran Capitán." Gonzalo Fernández of Cordova, known to history as the Great Captain, launched his second Italian Campaign in 1501, and by a victory over the French in 1503 brought the Kingdom of Naples fully under the control of Ferdinand V of Spain, the "Catholic King" (Ferdinand III of the Regno di Napoli). The new government, with Gonzalo Fernández as Ferdinand's viceroy until 1507, put the Regno into a more direct relation with the Spanish throne than had obtained under the rule of the Italianized branch of the house of Aragon in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Gonzalo Fernández's appointment of the fictional lovers' uncle, Don Rodorigo, as viceroy of the province and city of Salerno is a recent event as the play opens. Don Ignazio has seen Carizia a single time, at the games that his uncle commanded to be held in honor of the new order. As Don Ignazio is very young — his rival brother is only seventeen (6.1) — and counts six months without Carizia an eternity (2.6), it must be concluded that perhaps only about five months have passed since he fell in love at the bullfight. The temporal setting of the comedy, therefore, appears to be sometime not long after January 1504, when the Gran Capitán settled down in Naples to restore peaceful government to the Regno.

It has long been taken for granted that the events in *Fratelli rivali* are intended to occur considerably later than this. Spampanato identified the viceroy of the play with a "Roderico di Mendozza" listed by Tobia Almagiore among "Li Regente e Proregenti della G. C. [la Signoria del Gran Conestabile] della Vicaria" in the Kingdom of Naples for 1541 (Almagiore 1675, 115) and he speculated that this Mendoza held office in Salerno thereafter (Stampanato 1919, 199-

203).[6] The reports that Carizia's family had been impoverished by
the confiscation of property consequent to her father's part in the
rebellion of the Sanseverino Prince of Salerno (1.1, 2, 6), furthermore,
were taken by Spampanato to mean that there may have been a
real Eufranone Della Porta, perhaps a relative of the playwright,
who lost his fortune through the local conflict with the viceroy of
Naples, Pedro de Toledo, which ended in 1552 with the desertion
to France of Ferrante, the last Sanseverino Prince of Salerno.
Because of Francesco Fiorentino's facile agreement that this, and
not any earlier uprising of the inflammable Sanseverino party,
was the rebellion referred to in the play, the untenable assumption
has been sanctioned for a long time. Doubtless Della Porta had
boyhood memories of the magnificent Ferrante Sanseverino, who
offered lavish hospitality to the Emperor Charles V in Salerno, and
entertained the citizenry with sumptuous productions of comedies
in his Neapolitan palace; the fall and flight of this soon-to-become-
legendary figure would have left an unforgettable impression on
the imagination of the adolescent playwright. But associating
the characters of *Fratelli rivali* with both Ferrante Sanseverino's
rebellion and Gonzalo Fernández's conquest would require that the
action be set simultaneously in two periods separated from each
other by almost fifty years. To have allowed Don Flaminio to arrive
in Italy in 1501 and yet be less than eighteen years old sometime after
1552 would be a *contaminatio* of time foreshadowing Shakespeare's
bold juxtaposition in *Cymbeline* of the second century A.D. with
Italian Renaissance custom. All the evidence tells against this
fancy, however; sober arithmetic leads to the conclusion that Della
Porta intended Eufranone's misfortunes to date, rather, from the
"Congiura dei baroni" of 1485-86 against the local Aragonese king
of the Regno, Ferrante or Ferdinand I, a rebellion in which Antonello
Sanseverino, Prince of Salerno, played a leading and losing part.
Whatever loss of surrealistic simultaneity this conclusion entails
on the comedy is compensated for by gains in logic and historical
verisimilitude. If Eufranone was involved in the conspiracy of the

6 This important, though brief and careless, notice refers to two MSS I
have been unable to consult, but for this unwarranted conclusion it depends
primarily on jumbled readings of Mazza and Almagiore.

1480s, he would be at a more likely age to have nubile daughters in 1504 than in the 1550s or later. The viceroy's unreserved condemnation as "most unjust" of the confiscation of Eufranone's property, which he will request "His Majesty" to restore (5.4), is implausible if supposed to be pronounced by a viceroy of Philip II on an action approved by Philip's father, Charles V. It corresponds, however, to the spirit in which his great-grandfather, the Catholic king, attempted to douse the embers of old hostilities by restoring lands and titles to many rebel barons, including the principality of Salerno to Antonello Sanseverino's son, Roberto, in 1505.[7]

In keeping with a Renaissance tendency to the allusive use of history, Della Porta might have seen in the aftermath of the quattrocento conspiracy an instructive parallel with the condition of Salerno in his own time and a fleeting image of desirable relations between Spain and the cities of the Regno. Even for Naples itself there was propagandistic relevance in the fifth-act sketch of ideal government by an appointed resident viceroy determined to redress wrongs, responsive to civic opinion, and acting as a conduit rather than as a barrier between the city and the supreme authority of the Spanish king in Madrid. In Della Porta's time nearby Salerno had a long history of struggling to regain an autonomy lost in the Middle Ages. Owned successively by the Colonna, Orsini and Sanseverino families, the city fought incessantly to be placed in the Royal Demesne, free of feudal overlords and answerable directly to the Spanish crown.[8] The dismantling of the principality after Ferrante Sanseverino's exile in 1552 aroused new hope in the Salernitans; in 1565 they raised 25,000 *ducati* as down-payment toward the city's ransom, and received from the Spanish viceregency at Naples a promise of demesnial status. Not until 1590 was the promise kept, however, for in the wake of bankruptcy in 1572, Philip II handed

7 Luis Maria de Lojendio recounts that Gonzalo Fernández was reluctant to reinstate sympathizers with the cause of Anjou and to return to them the lands he had distributed among his own followers, but he had to accede to the conditions imposed by King Ferdinand's new alliance with Louis XII of France. See Lojendio 1952, 314; D'Agostino 1972, 8-10; and Pedio 1971, 30n8.

8 This chapter in Salernitan history is illuminated with documents from the Spanish Archivio General de Simancas by Carucci 1923, 128-39; and by Coniglio 1951, 37-56.

over Salerno in fief for 76,000 *ducati* to one of his creditors, the Genoese banker, Nicolò Grimaldi, who accepted the title of prince and the revenues as a means of recovering part of a bad debt. He seems to have taken no direct part in the government of Salerno. Describing the bureaucratic organization of the Kingdom of Naples between 1577 and 1579, Camillo Porzio mentioned that Spain provided two governors for the principality, one at Avellino for the province and another at Salerno for the city (Porzio 1964, 317-18). In 1584 when Grimaldi began to mortgage some of the property thus acquired, the representatives of Salerno offered the king 60,000 *ducati*, and by subsequent transaction put an end to the buying and selling of their city. If, as seems probable, *Fratelli rivali* was written in the 1590s, it belongs to a time when Salerno had achieved its goal of independence from local hereditary princes and was ruled only by Spain, through the appointed viceroy of Naples and his representative. The unified Salerno Della Porta depicts — under a governor whom he arbitrarily calls a viceroy, with authority covering both the province and city of the former principality but responsible to the Spanish crown — is an idealized version of the system achieved in 1590, for which there was no precedent except during the hiatus between the exclusion of Antonello Sanseverino after the "Congiura dei baroni" and the reinstatement of Roberto in 1505. By manipulating history to dramatize a moment in 1504 when a Spanish viceroy of Naples, Gonzalo Fernández, has just appointed a representative to bring good government to Salerno, Della Porta may have intended to compliment the viceregency on the current state of affairs in Salerno, and implicitly to further good government throughout the Regno. Any such message might well have been communicated by means of his plays, for they had the attention of the viceregal court. Don Juan de Zuñiga, Count of Miranda, the viceroy of Naples who signed the request to the Spanish crown on April 9th, 1590, that Salerno be confirmed as a city in the Royal Demesne, is known to have witnessed at least one performance of a Della Porta comedy, an elaborate production of L'*Olimpia* sometime between 1586 and 1589.[9]

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9 In his dedication to Della Porta's L'*Olimpia* (1589) Pompeo Barbarito says that the comedy was performed before the viceroy, the Count of

The semihistorical additions accentuate the mixed generic character of *Fratelli rivali* but, like the purely fictional elements in the *contaminatio*, are assimilated by means of conventional comic structures. Don Rodorigo's political significance as Spanish governor is brought on stage through his dramatic function as the *vecchio* who is an obstacle to the *giovani* in their loves and who ultimately pardons their misdemeanors and reconciles their differences.

Inconsistencies in the heterogeneous structure, sections improperly attached or not attached at all, are not results of any fault inherent in the idea of hybridism or in the principle of assembly by parts. Rather, they must be written down to carelessness — on the part of Della Porta or, conceivably, of a professional troupe that might have transmitted the text. They are the inconsistencies that beset swift composers ill-disposed to blot a line, of the same order as the lapses that trouble those who wish for seamless perfection in Shakespeare's constructions. Della Porta engages Mon'Angiola, for example, in the structural commonplace of eavesdropping, so that she hears Don Ignazio's attempt to throw Don Flaminio off the track of his true love and mistakenly concludes that he is unfaithful to Carizia (Il.iv). This unit of action had been useful to Terence and to his Italian successors, as it had to Della Porta himself in other comedies. In *Fratelli rivali* he brings it up only to drop it: the misconception, once created, pregnant with complication, is referred to no more. It causes no trouble but is never specifically resolved. Avanzino's abortive attempt to help his master is similarly baffling: once it is established that his well-intentioned officiousness threatens to wreck Don Ignazio's plan (3.4), neither the danger nor Avanzino himself is heard of again. Aberrations in character are also created by the negligent use of standard repertory devices. Carizia, who in every other part of the comedy is seen and talked of as an almost superhuman example of dignity, decorum and divine majesty, briefly and for no ulterior ironic effect or apparent authorial reason other than the wish to raise a laugh, turns rowdy in Leccardo's account of how she rejected his pandering for Don Flaminio (1.3). Likewise, the topos of the attack on cosmetics,

Miranda; Fiorentino 1921 establishes the *terminus a quo* as November 1586, the beginning of Miranda's viceregency (263).

comparing the false allure of ladies, who can afford them, with the solid charms of serving-maids, who cannot, is at odds with the facts when it is put into the mouth of Chiaretta and directed against the genuinely beautiful young mistress whom she loves (3.4).

Incongruity sometimes besets the language of the comedy too, for the contemporary eclectic temper and the repertory of shared comic terms made linguistic variation easy and contradictions inevitable. Labelling Della Porta's language baroque cannot adequately suggest either how representative of the cumulative genre are his choices of verbal structures or how distinctively his personal signature marks them. Although Chiaretta's speech on cosmetics is inappropriate to the relationship between her and Carizia, it pleases as a familiar comic turn suitable to a *fantesca*. At the same time, compared with the standard handling of the topos, as in Piccolomini's *L'Amor costante*, it is grotesquely scientific, studded with chemical and botanical terms from Della Porta's own *Magiae naturalis* (1589, passim),[10] one of the "studi più gravi" to which, in the prologue, he solemnly gives precedence over his comedies.

In the more dignified speeches the imagery is florid, with less in it of carnality than of a *conceptismo* as natural to Della Porta as it is to the stately Spanish characters of the play who have the lion's share of such language. The syntax at times strikes a Ciceronian balance, but more often it piles up, clogs itself, and creates disjunctures that, thwarting logic, intensify expression of emotion and offer the actors a jagged linguistic implement for carving a dialectical edge on what might otherwise have been a rounded tedium of parisons and similes.

To the lovers it is given to speak not only as becomes their station and region but as the genre had come to dictate for *innamorati*. Although they engage in ceremonious Hispanoid exchanges, their lexicon has a stilnovist and Petrarchan foundation. This is betrayed in echoes at appropriate moments: with "Oh maledetto giorno ch'io nacqui e che la viddi e che tanto piacque a gli occhi miei! Ahi dolenti

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10 The Italian translation, *Della Magia naturale* (Napoli: Appresso Gio. Giacomo Carlino, 1611), place, printer and date suggesting Della Porta's personal surveillance, renders the Latin terms in the words used by Chiaretta: *sollimati* for *sublimati* (399), *litargiri* for *lithargyri* (39), *rasura di verzino* for *brasili rasura* (411).

occhi . . ." (3.11), triggering memories of Petrarch's "Benedetto sia 'l giorno" (*Rime*, LXI) and Dante's "Gli dolenti occhi" (*Vita nuova*, Canzone 3), Don Ignazio is reacting with the emotion and vocabulary decreed for lovers in this situation, and for which *comici dell'arte* who specialized in *innamorati* roles prepared themselves in part by memorizing quantities of Petrarchan poetry. Sometimes the Petrarchism erupts in unexpected directions. At a moment of tribulation, Don Flaminio laments, predictably, in metaphors culled from Petrarch: tempests beset him, his bark is tossed by waves of ill-fortune, he has no hope of port save one (3.1);[11] his imaged pleas are addressed, however, not to a Laura-like lady or even to the god of love, but only to the late Renaissance version of the Plautine *davos* who manages his affairs for him. More recent poets are echoed as well, Tasso most often: Madonna Angiola's description of Carizia (2.2) evokes Armida's "canuto senno" hidden "sotto biondi capelli" (*Gerusalemme Liberata*, 4.24), and Don Ignazio's account of losing his heart while winning a bullfight is an expansion of Aminta's admission, "mentre io fea rapina d'animali, / Fui, non so come, a me stesso rapito" (*Aminta*, 1.2).

The lovers and their social equals are also permitted a more familiar style with fast colloquial dialogue and proverbs, but in this line the initiative is usually taken by their servants and social inferiors, whose range of language is even greater than that of their masters. Some of Leccardo's comic effects arise from his carefully rigged ignorance; still more of them depend on a knowledge of literary allusions and techniques that enables him to build parodic apostrophes to food, a kind of verbal flight fancied by gluttons from

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11 The ship in a sudden storm as a metaphor for dismay at a reversal of expectations was a commonplace in the poetry and prose of Cicero's and Ovid's medieval and Renaissance heirs. Karen Alison Newman has brought it to my attention that the image had been used in the genre of comedy as early as Menander's now-recovered *Samia* (2.1); see Newman 1978, 10. But Menander was not available to Della Porta, any more than he had been to Machiavelli, who used the metaphor of the "nave vessata" in comedy (*La Mandragola* 4.1) and elsewhere. Like most of his Renaissance predecessors, moreover, Della Porta amplified the ancient basic image by drawing entirely on Petrarchan clusters of details and lexicon: *tempesta*, *onda*, *pensieri*, *timore*, *timone*, *stella*, *occhi*, *naufragio*, etc.

Roman times through the Renaissance, becoming in Della Porta's comedies a counter-poetry of materialism. He characteristically uses the topos of obsession with food as an instrument of comment to deflate the affectations and exaggerations springing from less physical fixations — swollen ideas of honor, rhapsodic love, emotional or moral gigantism of many sorts. The *Bravure* of Francesco Andreini's famous mask, Capitano Spavento, first published six years after *Fratelli rivali*, contain many *ragionamenti* in which the braggart's bombast is punctured by his mockingly simpleminded dogsbody. Unlike Della Porta's Martebellonio, however, Spavento makes fantastic boasts about his appetite too. The theater was the natural habitat of statement and negation in linguistic confrontations between dramatic types: braggart versus glutton, glutton versus lover, the combinations were many. Della Porta, whose diction was kindled by contrast, and whose scientific work embraced the theory of the sympathy and antipathy of natural forces, knew better than most dramatists how to use theatrical stock types and encounters for expression and representation of equivalent forces in the fictional combinations by which the art of comedy imitated nature.

By the time such late cinquecento writers as Oddi were defending Comedy's right to poach on Tragedy's preserves, the *gravità* in *commedia grave* included very serious content indeed. Serious form had been enjoined from the early days of Ariosto and Bibbiena but received new emphasis after literary playwrights observed that they were at war with the zanies of the *commedia dell'arte* and began to denigrate as "zannate" the loosely constructed licentious improvisations that were the most popular result of the rise of professional acting companies. The success of these relatively shapeless theatrical happenings seemed to many dramatists to threaten the ideals of high comic art, and although the cannier ones among them freely borrowed the players' lively devices, they simultaneously attacked the baser and more slovenly aspects of their rivals' methods.

Concern for careful five-act structure, for definition of genre, for classical theory and practice, for experiment in variation and mixture of genres, for declaration of the relation to and distance from tradition and for principles of complication and unification:

these were held by cultivators of *commedia grave* to distinguish their work from what they regarded as quick and easy commercial effects. Della Porta was on the one hand more open to the influence of the *commedia dell'arte* and more in favor with the actors as a source of material than most of his contemporaries; on the other, he was perennially fascinated by classical paradigms of structure. Barbarito used the term "commedia grave" to define *L'Olimpia* in introducing Della Porta's comedies to the reading public in 1589, but the *gravità* of the genre as he practiced it is more fully seen in *Fratelli rivali.* True, the evidence of sympathy with the *commedia dell'arte* is strong here, most obviously in such extended set pieces as Martebellonio's contest with Leccardo (1.4) and Ignazio and Carizia's love scene (2.4). But even more prominent is Della Porta's seriousness about structure, set forth at the outset in the prologue, where he paraphrases Aristotle's *Poetics* to show his own adherence to the "rules" developed for the genre, then boasts of his departures and tweaks Aristotle's nose, but ends by claiming the approval of the deities of the classical tradition.

Gravità of content, though regularly interrupted by buffoonery and verbal play, shows itself throughout *Fratelli rivali* as emotional force, the kind and amount determined by a Counter-Reformation preference for turbulence, primary passions and embroidered expressions. Della Porta's additions to his sources and his elaborations of dialogue carry the brothers in their rivalry from one extreme of feeling to another and heighten the pathos in Eufranone's dignity and violently touchy sense of honor. Ideas about the proper object of representation in comedy were becoming more capacious, more hospitable to realities not perceived by the senses, to the psychological as well as the physical. The moral content is equally weighty. Carizia belongs to the late-blooming category of exemplary comedy heroine, a baroque icon of curved and florid virtue, elaborately chaste. An earlier *innamorata* in her position would likewise have guarded her virginity, as the fable requires, but Carizia is additionally concerned for appearances and reputation. She approves of her father's histrionic stance on family honor and is herself adept at demonstrating by diplomatic address and noble actions the virtues of the ideal lady. To the other characters she is a secular saint; and her name is linked with moral and theological

doctrines as a model of filial piety and womanly goodness and as a beneficiary of the blessings of divine providence. In the depiction of her family, the ideal of domestic life is upheld. The antique topos of woman's nature and honor, which traditionally could produce a variety of conclusions and which had often been developed in comedy as a show-stopping soliloquy, digressive dialogue or representation of contrasting feminine characters, appears in *Fratelli rivali* in Counter-Reformation dress. Carizia's character is elevated by artful contrast with Chiaretta's and by the chiaroscuro produced when the shadow cast by lies intrudes between the original brightness of her name and its heightened lustre as the truth is published. Her merit is discussed in the exchange between the idealistic Don Ignazio and the temporarily cynical Simbolo (1.3) and, most typically of the age, it is glorified by theatrical representation of its effect on spectators: Simbolo is converted from scoffer to admirer by watching Carizia go through her paces (2.4), and the amazed viceroy describes her as the star of a providential spectacle (5.4).

The seriousness and moral contemporaneity are insistently displayed in the movement between the opposing forces at the center of the action, with Don Ignazio and his advisers pitted against Don Flaminio and his, in an *intreccio* of deceit, mistakes, accidents and illusions, woven so as to form a reminder that fortune, the traditional generator of comic action, is merely a subsidiary mechanism of the providential Prime Mover who plans happy endings. All the characters feel the power of fortune and many lament its fickleness, but Don Flaminio, the "villain," and his crew exalt it most and understand least that it is subordinate to God's providence. Don Flaminio broods more than his brother does about the amity or enmity of "contraria fortuna" to his enterprises, which are systematically presented as being morally inferior to Don Ignazio's. Flaminio would rather have Carizia as his mistress than as his wife and would be willing to settle for her sister instead (2.9); he not only practices the venial kind of deceit that Ignazio, too, uses for self-protection, but even wrests his conscience around to let him calumniate the woman he loves. Trying to justify bad means to his ends and overrating the pagan power of fortune, Don Flaminio joins Panimbolo, his domestic exponent of Realpolitik, in endorsing precisely those evil principles that an enlightened

Counter-Reformation doctrine aimed to correct. Like his master, Panimbolo has a conscience, but it is no match for his arsenal of immoral plans. The arguments that he and Don Flaminio use to talk each other into bad courses are riddled with the pragmatic relativism that had become anathema to the world-view of Catholic reform. Panimbolo's wily assertions that winning is all that counts and treachery a necessary evil that can be made to appear admirable, if called by another name and judged by the outcome (3.1), are declarations of the kind set up to be knocked down by contemporary militants like Giovanni Botero and other orthodox moralists engaged in laying the ghost of the proscribed Machiavelli. In working out the unifying theme of fraternal rivalry Della Porta also demonstrates the evolution of elementary comic mechanisms. The *inganni*, the tricks and traps of the foxy deceiver that belong to the inheritance of the genre, are present in *Fratelli rivali* both as machinery and, *in toto*, as an object of contemplation. The comedy invites thought about deceit and self-deceit, especially the self-deceit of thinking, as both Don Flaminio and Don Ignazio do (1.2, 4.2), that it is difficult or rare to deceive oneself. Although Don Ignazio is less deluded than Don Flaminio by the seeming omnipotence of fortune, even he, the "good" brother, takes appearance for reality. He is too ready to trust the testimony of the senses, to draw inferences from their meagre perceptions. When he judges Carizia unfaithful because he sees her skirt in his brother's hands, Don Ignazio is rashly accepting as ocular proof what is no proof at all; in his later condition of remorseful enlightenment, when she reappears as if from the dead, he has learned enough to be cautious about believing his eyes. His harping on the evidence of the seen belongs to the chorus of Renaissance commentary on human blindness. The theme of a true celestial vision of reality contrasted with mankind's fallacious view of appearances rested on Platonic authority, and coincided with the Christian doctrine of divine providence that was reiterated with Counter-Reformation insistence just at a time when Italian drama was most deeply under the spell of Sophocles' *Oedipus the Tyrant*, praised in the canonical *Poetics*. The preoccupation with the ironies of sight and blindness, appearance and reality, that pervade the imagery and thematics of late cinquecento tragedy and pastoral tragicomedy are manifested

in comedy as emphasis on ocular mistakes and illusions, especially when seconded by darkness. The nocturnal scene in which Don Flaminio deceives Don Ignazio with a handful of clothes (while Leccardo simultaneously deceives Martebellonio and Chiaretta) and which culminates in Don Ignazio's passionate denunciation of Night (3.9) is a piece of legerdemain in the genre of Iago's brilliant passes with Desdemona's handkerchief, making trifles light as air seem more real than reality. The trusty plot mainspring of "tricker tricked" works toward a *reductio ad divinum*. Don Flaminio exults over his brother, "il volpone è caduto nella trappola" (4.4), but later finds that he has dug a deeper trap for himself, when his scheme to possess Carizia seems to have killed her. The irony inherent in the mechanism is pushed so far that there is no escape from tragedy except through the ultimate comic irony of providential action.

Don Flaminio is wrong about most things, among them his uncle's professional ethics; this error introduces another grave theme. The question of good government and the ruler's duty, which in the earlier Renaissance had engrossed such diverse minds as Erasmus, Rabelais, More, Elyot, Castiglione and Machiavelli, was hardly forgotten in the late sixteenth century. As a topos of drama like Shakespeare's or Lope de Vega's, and even in Italian comedy as early as the 1540s. Annibal Caro's *Gli straccioni* is laced with propaganda for the justice of Farnese rule in Rome, and a later, more typically Tridentine, adumbration of the virtues of an orthodox paternalistic government in the duchy of Ferrara is to be seen in Oddi's *Prigione d'amore*. The ruler familiar to Shakespeare's audiences, who seals and reconciles, and who may have something to learn which his involvement in the plot or his association with involved characters will teach him, is introduced by Della Porta in the figure of Don Rodorigo, the viceroy. There is no precedent for him in Bandello's novella. Although he is no *deus ex machina* — heaven does its own work, with Polisena as its messenger —, Don Rodorigo is brought onstage for the first time in the last act, charged with the duty of handing down a judgement. He recognizes that he may be required to shed the blood of a beloved nephew, and declares himself determined to do justice above all (5.1). Earlier in the play that nephew has cited his uncles's position as a guarantee to Leccardo that he may with impunity participate in the evil trick on

Don Ignazio (3.2). Even granted that Don Flaminio at this moment does not intend and cannot foresee the apparently fatal consequences that his actions will incur, his conviction that he and his accomplices are above the law, that his rank and family connections entitle him to a special dispensation, remain another of his wrong views, marked for demolition by Counter-Reformation instruction-in-action. Leccardo replies in the name of the class that pays; justice, he says with the bitterness of the underdog, is not equal for all: like a spider web, easily torn apart by big birds, it is a fatal trap to little flies (3.2). This exchange was incorporated into Fersen's 1976 production of *La fantesca*, in a manouvre of dramatic *contaminatio* that gave an effect of free-standing and unanswered social protest. In the comedy they were meant for, however, Leccardo's protest and Flaminio's facile reassurance, bear a different weight, for, contrary to Flaminio's expectations, his uncle is by no means disposed to tamper with justice by favoring his kin. Even though the offense has grown into a crime punishable by death, Don Rodorigo acknowledges that he must sentence his nephew accordingly, unless a bloodless alternative can be found and made acceptable to the injured party. As it happens, the offer of marriage with the sister of Flaminio's victim does satisfy the plaintiff, Eufranone, who is bent on restoration of honor rather than on vengeance. There is no doubt, however, that the injured party holds the upper hand. If Leccardo's and Don Flaminio's expectations betray social ills which Della Porta and his contemporaries knew all too well, Don Rodorigo's behavior as judge represents the ideal reformation of them. His actions in the remaining scenes further emphasize the bond between secular and divine authority which it was a part of church and state policy to preach. No sooner has he brought about a fair and happy settlement of one case than he is charged with injustice by his other nephew. This time only a higher power can solve the difficulty, but Don Rodorigo has the last word, and with it he identifies that power as divine. He casts himself as a spectator to the events and interprets them as a plan of providence, thus authorizing the proper doctrinal view of the situation; and by following up the resurrected Carizia's expressions of universal forgiveness with a legal pardon for Leccardo and a donation of his own money to free all political prisoners in Salerno (5.4), the viceroy carries private moral and religious spirit into the

public and political domain, managing the while to exercise both justice and mercy. He extends the happy ending beyond the characters affected by the plot, making it embrace the entire city. Thus the example of a good ruler is served up, briefly but gravely, as a subject for comedy. The happy ending itself, the expertly deferred "lieto fine" hoped for or marveled at by a succession of characters, had been the theme of the Second Day in the *Decameron* — that quarry of dramatic plots — and one of the generic features by which Dante had explained the title of his *Commedia*. In the cinquecento Giraldi Cinthio considered calling his experimental hybrid drama "tragicomedia" but settled instead on "tragedia di fin lieto." The ending traditionally determinant of genre becomes in such a *commedia grave* as *Fratelli rivali* a means of moving outward, not merely beyond the immediate plot into the semihistorical reality of Salerno, with its thousands of inhabitants whose names and lives are irrelevant to the fiction, but farther still to a reality not to be seen with the physical sense of sight but only by what are neoplatonically called the "eyes of the intellect" in the prologue. As an object of representation, the invisible reality of the mysterious ways by which divine providence guides human destinies to joyful fulfilment had been available to the medieval drama which was hospitable to magic and miracles, but it was hedged with obstacles for Renaissance playwrights, inhibited by humanistic theory and by rules of the new literary criticism tending toward a realism which was physical though generalized. Many of them wished to give theatrical life to a sphere of human experience above domestic conflicts of love, money and luck in middle-class urban scenes bound by rules of unity and verisimilitude, but they wished to do so without sacrificing any of the conventions of neoclassical comedy. The impulse to stretch the confines of genre would be more fully indulged in the triumphant mixture of the pastoral tragicomedy, but it was at work also in the tentative association of providential pattern with intrigue plot in the *commedia grave*. The treatment of the fortuitous complications in *Fratelli rivali* reflects a Counter-Reformation eagerness to curb belief in the judiciary arts and other sorts of fortune-telling, which by implication challenged the doctrine of free will and opposed a pagan idea of fate to the Christian concept of divine providence. Della Porta himself had been warned by the Inquisition of the dangers in

this regard of his own works on physiognomy and natural magic, and his circumscription of fortune's power attests his disposition to appear orthodox even in comedy. He stacks his plot to demonstrate that fortune is allowed a certain amount of play in human life, without impeding free will, but that providence sees to conclusions. The characters who attribute the happy ending to God (Polisena, Eufranone, and the viceroy) are those whose virtue or authority fit them to be spokesmen for the truth. Carizia, whose will to goodness is emphasized, is both the favored child of the directing providence and its agent by reason of that goodness, while the brothers, who worry about the outcome and express fear of peripeties that might reverse the direction of events, are conscious, like their uncle and like the ideal self-aware Catholic of the period, that all the world's a stage. They see themselves as actors in a drama and, at the same time, as "real" people in "real" action. Both of them are beneficiaries of the inevitable triumph of providence over capricious fortune, whose reversals and peripeties are merely random (although it is the climax of Don Flaminio's wrong headedness to be slightly muddled about the final truth [5.5]). Providence uses such turns of fortune — the peripeties born of peripeties about which Della Porta boasts in the prologue — not for the moment only but as part of an encompassing design. The deliberate *intreccio* of the plot, with its confusions, deceits and instances of mistaken reliance on the senses, becomes an image of human life with its fallacies, while the playwright's supervision and steering of the whole to a happy ending are tacitly compared to the workings of providence. Intrigue structure, originally a skeleton or organizing device, grows into a vehicle for representing fortune's games, and ends as a metaphor for a spiritual pattern believed by Tridentine Catholics to be a reality higher than that demonstrable by ocular proof. It would not do to claim consistent seriousness of purpose for this uneven play, nor to maintain that the medium here becomes the message; nevertheless, it deserves remark that structure and significance, signifier and signified never drew so close together in Italian Renaissance drama until the *commedia grave* became as grave as this.

The inevitable comparison of *Fratelli rivali* with *Much Ado About Nothing* could be marshalled to support and expand Gordon's suggestion of a debt on Shakespeare's part. Gordon thinks that

such a debt would have been contracted only through intermediate lost material influenced by Della Porta, but it is not impossible that Shakespeare might have seen a manuscript of *Fratelli rivali* or even a performance by travelling *comici*. There are details in the two plays not shared with Bandello or his translators, nor yet with any versions of Ariosto's tale of Ariodante and Ginevra. Gordon mentions the plan (not carried out) for the impersonators to call one another by the lovers' names, the deceived bridegroom's public denunciation in the presence of the wedding party, the use of the Spanish title "Don," and the father's willingness to believe his daughter guilty and to wish her dead. It may furthermore be observed that only Della Porta and Shakespeare add boisterous underlings and comic peace-officers and introduce the idea of fraternal hostility.

There are subcutaneous likenesses, too, that have eluded genealogists of Shakespeare's plots. The benignly ironic motif of beguiled sight in *Fratelli rivali* is paralleled in *Much Ado* by thematic play on seeing, or "noting",[12] begun by

> CLAUDIO Benedick, didst thou note the daughter of Signior Leonato?
> BENEDICK I noted her not, but I looked on her.
> (1.1.144-5)

continued by the eye-deceiving disguises of a plot which ends with a proper subordination of sensory sight, expressed in Beatrice's "eye of favor," Benedick's "eye of love," and Claudio's pledging himself

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12 I quote from *The Complete Shakespeare*, the Pelican edition under the general editorship of Alfred Harbage (1969, 279 and 286). The editor of *Much Ado About Nothing*, Josephine Waters Bennett, observes that "nothing" was pronounced "noting" (286, note to line 54); in the Variorum edition of Shakespeare, H. H. Furness goes into considerable detail, but remains skeptical as to the intentionality or significance of the pun. The best arguments against Furness are set forth by McPeek 1960. In a recent weighing of opinions about *Much Ado*, Heffner 1977 recognizes with some reservations "much warrant for reading the entire play as about 'noting,' in the sense of 'observing' or 'perceiving,'" (182), and himself follows a widespread contemporary preference for emphasizing the tragicomic character of the action and the focus on forms of deception and self-deception. The Pelican editions of *Romeo and Juliet* and of *Henry V* quoted below are by John E. Hankins and Alfred Harbage respectively.

to the veiled (unseen) Hero (5.6); and confirmed by the comedy's punning title, which in turn, is underscored by a verbal flourish,

> BALTHASAR Note this before my notes:
>   There's not a note of mine that's worth the noting.
> PEDRO Why, these are very crotchets that he speaks!
>   Note notes, forsooth, and nothing!
> (2.3.51-4)

The encounter between Benedick and Hero's attendant Margaret with which Shakespeare prefaces the love scene in 5.2, bears to Capitan Martebellonio and the *fantesca* Chiaretta's morning-after meeting in *Fratelli rivali* 4.3 a distant resemblance, which seems closer for the brief exchange's being without known sources and, as far as the plot goes, entirely gratuitous. In the deception of Claudio, of course, Margaret performs a function equivalent to that of Chiaretta in the deception of Don Ignazio, and her gamey challenge to Benedick, "To have no man come over me? Why, shall I always keep below stairs?" is one of her many utterances more suited to a *fantesca* than to a lady-in-waiting of the governor's daughter. There is no connection between Margaret and Benedick like that between Chiaretta and Martebellonio, nor such bitter matter in their conversation, but in Shakespeare's banter,

> BENEDICK Thy wit is as quick as the greyhound's mouth — it catches.
> MARGARET And your's as blunt as the fencer's foils, which hit but hurt not.
> BENEDICK A most manly wit, Margaret: it will not hurt a woman. And so I pray thee call Beatrice. I give thee the bucklers.
> MARGARET Give us the swords; we have bucklers of our own . . .
> (5.2.11-19)

the kind and the order of images — first hounds, then swords — and the male retreat covered by a show of reluctance to injure a woman are reminiscent of the recriminations between Chiaretta and the braggart captain. It is not irrelevant to remember also that Benedick has been linked with Spenser's Braggadochio (Potts 1942, 103-105). The connection is certainly too tenuous to explain Pedro's jest about Benedick, "in the managing of quarrels you may say he is wise, for

either he avoids them with great discretion, or undertakes them with a most Christian-like fear" (2.2), but if these words do not fit Benedick, they are suitable for Braggadochio and almost formulaic for the Italian stage braggart, a stock figure developed long before Spenser or Della Porta began to write.

Tracking such resemblances is a vital enterprise of literary historiography, but it can lead into a cul-de-sac of source study. A more adventurous comparison would examine the dramatic microstructures and frames which, for want of a better word (*generici*, *dramemes* and the like failing in precision or sobriety), Mario Baratto has quizzically suggested that I call *teatrogrammi*. When each of these plays is read as a control for the other, with greater weight given to dissimilarities than to similarities, *Much Ado* yields up theatergrams not to be found in *Fratelli rivali* but which are characteristic of Italian comedy as a genre; conversely, in *Fratelli rivali* there appear theatergrams which are absent in *Much Ado* but present in other plays of Shakespeare.[13]

Plot-design used as illustration of idea is one such theatergram, and here the dissimilarities between *Much Ado* and *Fratelli rivali* place them in different categories of *commedia grave*. Employing the principle of complication to produce not merely *inganni* and misunderstanding but patterns of *inganni* and misunderstanding was a technique brought almost to perfection in late cinquecento comedies. In some of them, as in *Fratelli rivali*, the happy ending shows that the pattern was made in heaven. Working the denouement of a tangled plot to confirm the superiority of providence to fortune and to human shortsightedness is an exercise in dramatic symbolism of a very Shakespearean kind. The "providential pattern" which Arthur Kirsch has traced exclusively in *All's Well That Ends Well* and Shakespeare's late romances (1972, 52-74) can also be seen emerging as early as *The Comedy of Errors*. But in many Italian comedies of the

13 While it is not appropriate here to go into the widely known but insufficiently studied fact of Shakespeare's awareness of the *commedia dell'arte*, nor to expound more than I have done above on the exchanges between literary *commediografi* and improvising *comici*, it should be remembered that Dogberry was originally played by Will Kempe, who had travelled in Italy and frequented theater circles there. For recent work on the subject, see Steele 1976.

period the pattern of unhappy confusion which suddenly gives birth to happy order is an end in itself. *Much Ado About Nothing* is of this kind, a fact emphasized by the title and constantly made visible by Shakespeare's changes in his sources: he reduces the difficulties but multiplies the misapprehensions and makes more ado about them, while rendering the truth of the case so perfectly apparent that even the stupidity of the investigators cannot obscure it. He does not carry the pattern to doctrinal lengths; consequently, in this feature *Much Ado* resembles *Fratelli rivali* less than it does some of the *commedie gravi* integrated by other themes than that of providence, such as Pino's *Gli ingiusti sdegni*, in which everyone is unjustly angry, or Castelletti's labyrinthine design of love's errors, *I torti amorosi*.

Shakespeare's most admired additions, Beatrice and Benedick, constitute another kind of dramatic structure for which a precedent existed in the Italian theatrical repertory. For their skirmishes of wit no unmistakable source has been established, although there has been an attempt to trace their ancestry to the relationship that Castiglione depicted between Emilia Pia and Gaspare Pallavicino in *Il libro del cortegiano* (Scott 1901). Shakespeare's other comedies testify to his chronic penchant for clever, sharp-tongued lovers, and if he had needed English models he could have found them in Lyly's arch dialogues, but it seems more than coincidence that in such an Italianate play as this one Beatrice and Benedick's stances and the tone of their mocking amatory exchanges are far less like Lyly's sexless volleys than like the "contrasti amorosi" from the actress Isabella Andreini's posthumously published repertory of pieces used in improvisation, and similar dialogues from the printed comedies of late cinquecento playwrights. Not the kind of *contrasto* evoked by Carizia and Don Ignazio's love scene in *Fratelli rivali*, however. While it is true that Carizia is wittier than her Bandellian and Shakespearean counterparts, Fenicia and Hero, she cannot come near Beatrice. Carizia's duet with Don Ignazio belongs with the gentler and more stately, Beatrice and Benedick's encounters with the nimblest and most provocative of the professional players' amorous contrasts. Even from the latter, moreover, the distance remains great; if Shakespeare's captivating pair inhabit a dramatic structure of relationship created in the Italian theater, they fill and transform it almost, but not quite, beyond recognition.

The love scene of *Fratelli rivali* also provides an instance of the reverse phenomenon, that is, a structure of stage action that Shakespeare takes for his own, but not to use in *Much Ado*. Don Ignazio greets Carizia's appearance at her window above him, "Già fuggono le tenebre dell'aria, ecco l'aurora che precede la chiarezza del mio bel sole, già spuntano i raggi intorno" (2.2). There is no corresponding scene in *Much Ado* but it has not escaped scholarly attention (Rubes 1968, 112) that his speech is like Romeo's, "But soft! what light through yonder window breaks? It is the east, and Juliet is the sun . . ." (2.2) The significance of the resemblance, however, has not been pursued. *Romeo and Juliet* preceded *Fratelli rivali* in print, though perhaps not in composition. There is only a slight possibility that Shakespeare knew Della Porta's comedy, and no reason at all to think that Della Porta knew anything about Shakespeare. The physical stages for which they wrote both permitted conversation on upper and lower levels, but Shakespeare, unlike his Italian contemporary, was not constrained by rules of decorum or of unity of place to devise ways of bringing young ladies onstage while keeping them safe at home. In short, the kinship of the love scenes in *Romeo and Juliet* and *Fratelli rivali* is not to be explained by direct imitation or by the determining influence of identical stage sets and conventions. It arises from the general, rather than from the particular, and begins with lyric poetry. The lady-as-sunlight-and-dawn is a topos with classical and Provençal antecedents and a firm place in the Petrarchan tradition. Italian dramaturgy developed it into a microstructure of another genre by combining the image with a situation — the encounter of lovers, to whom Petrarchan vocabulary was categorically assigned — and with a theatrical space — the distance and rapport between the street level and the upper-storey window or balcony. Pino's *Gli ingiusti sdegni* includes a scene (1.5) in which Licinio hails Delia as his sun when she appears at her window and says that darkness has returned when she leaves. Ercole Bentivoglio had already introduced a negative version of the compound structural motif in *Il geloso* (1544), when Fausto looks up at Livia's house, apostrophizes it as the abode of the sun and complains that Livia does not come forth (2.1). The Neapolitan poetaster *Bell'umore* of Castelletti's *Le stravaganze d'amore* shows off his knowledge of poetic theory

and gives as an example of Tuscan love poetry the conceit: ". . .al vostra fenestra è il mio Oriente, e'l lume de l'occhi vostri è il mio Parnaso" (3.5). In Isabella Andreini's repertory there are numerous variations on this generic encounter, such as that in the "contrasto amoroso sopra la gelosia," which begins with Eliodoro greeting Theossena, "Hor sì ch'io posso dire vedendovi, ecco l'Aurora, che sponta della dorata porta d'Oriente."[14] Della Porta had already used this theatergram in *La fantesca* (2.3) as Shakespeare also had done, minus its amorous aspect, in *Richard II* (3.3). The various examples that can be adduced do more than establish that the same venerable topos underlies the Della Portean and Shakespearean scenes that respectively end and pause with

> Carizia A Dio.
> Don Ignazio Ecco tramontata la sfera del mio bel sole, che sola può
>   far serena il mio giorno. O fenestra, è sparito il tuo pregio.
> (2.3)

and

> Juliet A thousand times good night.
> Romeo A thousand times the worse, to want thy light.
> (2.2)

The topos had been developed in Italian comedy as a mobile structure of stage action, for insertion into plots usually deriving from narrative sources, the lyric trope fused with the theatrical exigency of the *scène à faire* between lovers, with the space provided by the set and with the relative positions assigned to them in it by theoretical and practical investigations of the genre. The compound is an empirical result, a movable part forged in the Italian theater and rendered functional and variable long before it appeared among members of the common market of Renaissance drama. The fact that Shakespeare does not use it in *Much Ado*, when his source is one with Della Porta's, but does use it in his dramatization of a translation of another Italianate narrative suggests that he was familiar not merely with one Italian drama but with a repertory of dramatic structures.

14 Pino 1553; Bentivoglio 1544 (ed. 1972); Castelletti 1584; Andreini 1620, 134.

Don Rodorigo de Mendoza, viceroy of Salerno, the figure of civil authority placed in a potentially tragic position of moral choice and operating as symbol of social reconciliation and as propaganda for order, is not one of the common theatergrams of character and function. But he is not unique in late *commedia grave* and therefore invites comparison with governors in several of Shakespeare's plays. Once again the key is not to be found in a common source-plot. The equivalent figure in *Much Ado*, "Don Pedro, Prince of Arragon," shares neither the moral dilemma nor the dramatic function assigned to Don Rodorigo: for similar examples of rulers used theatrically to confirm meaning and to extend it to farther fields, political or moral, we must look to Duke Solinus of Ephesus in *The Comedy of Errors*, to Prince Escalus of Verona in *Romeo and Juliet* or, with a different eye, to the duke in *Measure for Measure* and the king in *All's Well That Ends Well*.

A more familiar figure in *commedia grave* is the "donna mirabile"; the phrase is Girolamo Bargagli's, but Della Porta could properly have applied it to the character of Carizia. A variation on the standard *innamorata*, the wondrous woman appears early in Piccolomini's *L'amor costante* (1536) as a saint of love, about whom religious vocabulary is used as a metaphor, the religion in question being the cult of love. Although she comes onstage only twice, Carizia demonstrates how in the late cinquecento the figure took on more didactic orthodox spiritual weight, and was made a saint of the kind of love linked with the sacrament of matrimony and a nearly miraculous example of the virtues extolled from contemporary pulpits. Carizia imparts a sense of the supernatural, of miracle, without departing from the letter of the rule of verisimilitude or returning to medieval *rappresentazioni sacre*. Her presence creates an abstract dimension for the sporadic or subliminal dramatizing of some "realities" important to late Renaissance Christian thought but difficult to represent in a genre nominally committed to imitation of plausible reality. She is a phenomenon of which other examples are at hand in comedies of Bargagli, of Oddi, and of Shakespeare.[15] Not *Much Ado* but the so-called "twin" comedies, *All's Well* and *Measure for Measure*, provide the comparable generic figures. Both

15 The figure is discussed more fully in Clubb 1977.

plays are mixtures of tragedy and comedy, both turn on the strength and suffering of uncomfortably extraordinary women who stand in special relation to the powers of heaven and who, in different ways, preside over or ritualistically embody actions of reconciliation and pardon. In both some critics have detected vestigial patterns of Christian ritual and even forthright Christian allegory.

Shakespeare's recasting Bandello's novella in the genre rather than in the mold of *Fratelli rivali* and Della Porta's dramatizing of the story to suggest now *Romeo and Juliet*, now *All's Well*, and sometimes even Shakespeare's crypto-pastoral celebrations of magical or divinely providential pattern, from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* to *The Tempest*, can hardly be accounted for by a universal Renaissance debt to Plautus and Terence or by the wide diffusion of novellas suitable for staging. Were *Fratelli rivali* not valued as it is by Italian tradition, or were it not so fullblown an example of a late Renaissance genre poorly represented in modern editions and translations, it would still cry out for use in dramatic criticism as an instrument of analysis that goes deeper than what Harry Levin once deplored as the Fluellen style of comparative literature:

> I warrant you shall find, in the comparisons between Macedon and Monmouth, that the situations, look you, is poth alike. There is a river in Macedon, and there is also moreover a river at Monmouth. It is called Wye at Monmouth. But it is out of my prains what is the name of the other river; but 'tis all one; 'tis alike as my fingers is to my fingers, and there is salmons in poth. (*Henry V*, 4.7)[16]

Originally published 1980. As Della Porta, Giambattista. *Gli duoi fratelli rivali / The Two Rival Brothers*. Edited and translated by Louise George Clubb. Berkeley: University of California Press.

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16 The Plutarchan parody is spoken by Shakespeare's Welsh captain, a classic caveat against false parallels, as used recently, for example, by Hibbard 1977, 1, was never better applied than in Levin's 1962 Washington, D.C. lecture on pitfalls in the field of comparative literature.

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Pastoral Jazz from the Writ to the Liberty

Even in this day and time there is, alas, some evidence that Shakespeare's debts and references to Italian drama are not generally grasped, though it has slowly begun to sink in that his comic dramaturgy was based on the principle of ransacking narratives for plots and accumulating a repertory of units to be recombined in close-knit structures along lines originating in the domestic comedies of Plautus and Terence, a practice that had been in force in Italy for the better part of a century before he left Stratford, whenever that was, exactly.

This fact is one that I have written about at length (Clubb 1989; 2002) and restate now to reinforce a point about pastoral drama, its production and function, perhaps even about its material and final causes. Understanding Polonius's vocabulary is essential to this, as to other arguments I have sometimes made. If the editors of the new Norton Shakespeare, currently my edition of choice, gave more attention to Italian drama, they would not be satisfied with defining "the law of writ and the liberty" as a reference to "plays where classical rules are either observed or abandoned".[1] The contrast is, in fact, between *scripted* five-act plays observing the rules (the "writ") and *improvised* three-act performances from a *canevaccio* or *scenario* (the "liberty"), also obeying some of the rules, sometimes. Polonius makes it clear that Shakespeare knew the implications of both.

Thanks to a new breed of comparatists, the pastoral mode is no longer in the intellectual limbo where it lay bulky but obscure for

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1 *Hamlet* 2.2.387-92: ". . . the best actors in the world, either for tragedy, comedy, history, pastoral, pastoral-comical, historical-pastoral, tragical-historical, tragical-comical-historical-pastoral; scene individable, or poem unlimited. Seneca cannot be too heavy, nor Plautus too light. For the law of writ and the liberty, these are the only men" (Shakespeare 1997, 1700n9). For a corrective, see Clubb 1989, chapter 9, "The Law of Writ and the Liberty: Italian Professional Theater"; and Andersen 1995.

several generations.[2] With regard to drama, Robert Henke's book on Italian tragicomedy in Shakespeare's late plays (Henke 1998) should alone be enough to dispel lingering clouds of ignorance. And yet the pastoral play of the Renaissance remains the least understood genre of the period. Despite Angelo Ingegneri's statement in 1598 that it had come to dominate the stage,[3] even in Italy, where it was born, its character is still only half glimpsed, after long being stereotyped as sensual escapism, artificial prettiness, bloodless preciosity.[4]

More justice is done now to its capacity for commentary as satire, allegory, and metaphor. No one is unaware these days that the pastoral *topoi* invited the honing of poetic skill, of continuing communion and rivalry with the ancients and of investigating subjectivity and airing modern views of universal bi-polarities: nature/art, city/country, love/independence, solitude/society. All of this came into the dramatized pastoral and the very fact of dramatization offered the possibility of representing other intangible but supremely important ideas. Not the least of these was the interior phenomenon of psychological change. The *commedia*, whether *regolare* and written or improvised a *soggetto*, was always about marriage and impeded love, but not much about *falling in love*. The development of the comic genre over the century reveals an increasing pull toward emotion and analysis of the workings of the heart, but for depiction of growth, change, maturation, and self-knowledge, the pastoral play was required. As it grew in shape and popularity in the second half of the *Cinquecento*, reaching an ever-larger audience as the relation between private and commercial

2 The rescue came gradually over decades in the late Twentieth century with major re-evaluations by Edward Tayler, William Kennedy, Thomas Rosenmeyer, Paul Alpers and Annabel Patterson and in the more recent work of Jane Tylus.

3 ". . . se le pastorali non fossero, si potria dire poco men che perduto a fatto l'uso del palco, e'n conseguenza reso disperato il fine de i poeti scenici" (*Della poesia rappresentativa e del modo di rappresentar le favole sceniche*, 1598; qtd in Marotti 1974, 275)

4 The editor of the Norton *As You Like It* rejects this facile stereotype, and further recognition of the pastoral play's significance is promised by Maria Galli Stampino's *Staging the Pastoral: Tasso's 'Aminta' and the Emergence of Modern Western Theater* (2005).

theatre organized the means of production and expanded the range of drama as propaganda (among other things making the touring troupes a cover for political spies) the pastoral play was molded by Counter-Reformation vision and, though not often overtly ideological, offered a theatrical paradigm of hope. Henke identifies tragicomedy as the natural goal of pastoral drama, and I would extend its domain. The third genre authorized a venue for liberty of imagination and included traditional elements, folk and literary, not elsewhere accommodated by the *alta cultura*, in a depiction of fulfilment, order and providence for all classes.

This phase of Italian theatre history seems to me pregnant in connection with Shakespeare, and with his title not only to the new form of English tragicomedy but also to the invention of romantic comedy. I propose to look beyond the handful of pastoral *topoi* and theatregrams found in Elizabethan plays, especially Lyly's, but used with greatest ease and consistency by Shakespeare, including:

– a country setting, forest, wooded island or a pleasance near shepherds' cottages;
– the presiding figure of Hymen, and/or Venus, Cupid or Jove decreeing mass wedding;
– courtly shepherds and nymphs;
– at least one satyr;
– an enchanter, *mago/a*;
– sprites, super/subhuman beings;
– spells and magic potions;
– dreams and sleep onstage;
– Ovidian transformations;
– wild beasts;
– clown-bumpkins, defining class differences in Arcadia between *pastore* and *villano*, *pecoraio* or *capraio*, who is lustful and coarse but not a rapist like the *satiro*;
– clown-visitors from the city, favored especially in the *commedia dell'arte* scenarios, where various comic masks, Pantalone, Graziano and some of the *zanni*, assumed this function.

Shakespeare's use of these ingredients from the Italian repertory has been known ever since the discovery of Neri (1913) and of Lea (1934), yet even this essential knowledge has not found its way into all editions of Shakespeare. Many editors are still unaware, for

example, that the contrast between real and ideal shepherds was an established theatrical *topos* probably antedating Ruzante. For that matter, even the authoritative Lea contented herself with stating that the "intrusion of buffoonery upon literary pastoral, which constitutes a new dramatic type, was one of the most fruitful of the comic ideas fertilized by the *commedia dell'arte*" (1.121). Although she knew of Ruzante as a precursor of the *commedia dell'arte*, she recognized neither the intrusion of parody in his early play *La pastoral* (1521) nor the still older lineage of both these elements.

Even less understood is that pastoral drama, destined eventually to deserve the name of empty masquerade, was in the time of its invention and flourishing an innovative achievement of structure which offered unique ways of signifying and means of expressing emotional and spiritual realities, communicating lessons in love and achieving the reification and visualization of metaphors of transformation, psychological change and self-knowledge. In the spectacle of lovers in a labyrinth like Ariosto's 'gran selva' of love[5] the *favola boscareccia* projected an icon, happier than Ariosto's, of human ignorance of a destiny planned by the gods.

Consider its history. As a kind, it grew within the Italian critical movement that invented the new science of literary criticism. The key to that enterprise was the idea of genre, the naming and description of kinds. Its first aim was to establish principles and models that would set standards for the construction of *true commedia* and *tragedia*, that is, corresponding to dicta of Horace, Donatus, and Aristotle and equaling or even surpassing Greek and Latin examples of drama. The kind labelled *favola boscareccia*, *favola pastorale* or, when warranted, *tragicomedia pastorale*, partook of the nature of other pastoral types, lyric, or narrative or eclogue, but being drama, indeed having emerged in response to a major dramaturgical movement fueled by critical, social, and psychological demands, it developed specifically theatrical features. As the need for the third genre was based in theory, its form would correspond to the theoretically established forms of the other two.

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5 ". . . che non è in somma amor, se non insania, / . . . Gli è come una gran selva, ove la via/ conviene a forza, a chi vi va, fallire", *Orlando Furioso*, 24.1-2.

The second aim of theorizing playwrights resulted from the frustration accompanying progress towards the first aim, as what Guarini called "rules of nature"[6] underlying Aristotle's *Poetics* seemed to exclude many materials and features dear to humanistically educated vernacular-proud constructors of the New Italian classics. Plautus and Terence could be combined with Boccaccio and the *novella* tradition in the high-tech *contaminatio* that was an essential principle of comedy; but most of Ovid and Virgil, Apuleius, the Greek romances, Dante, Petrarch, Sannazaro, Ariosto and the chivalric epic could be accommodated only partly and inadequately in tragedy, and hardly at all in modern comedy as it was defined by the authoritative models produced by Ariosto himself and by his contemporaries Bibbiena and Machiavelli. Both svelte new genres were regulated by principles of verisimilitude and social rank, of unity of time and of place, the latter limited to the streets of a real city for comedy, and to the mythical or historical palaces of gods and human rulers for tragedy. The third genre was needed to free and to legitimate fancy.

Although the *Quattrocento* theatre had included every kind of subject and venue, from myth to faith, from fabulous landscapes to heaven or hell in popular *feste* and *sacre rappresentazioni,* and though there were influential heralds of the pastoral play in the Ovidian *mascherate*, in Venetian *momarie*, in Ferrarese *favole mitologiche* such as Nicolò da Correggio's and, most of all in Poliziano's *Orfeo,* the *Cinquecento* pantheon of avant-garde drama had no assigned space for Arcadia or for the countryside, and no clear theatrical models from antiquity, only eclogues, fragments, and notions about Greek satyr plays. The idea of this lost third classical genre was another spur and justification for *Cinquecento* theatrical scientists.

The *favola pastorale* or *boscareccia* they gradually and experimentally constructed, with Ferrara in the van, from Giraldi in 1550 and on, established a green place in regular drama and licensed unverisimilar subjects. It bore the imprint of late *Cinquecento* Catholic culture and offered an official genre for representing

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6 *Il Verrato* (1588, 13): ". . . nella Poetica sono alcuni precetti universali, che per esser tratti dalla natura non si posson mutare . . . le prime regole, come quelle che sono della natura, & non si possono ne preterire ne alterare."

invisible realities, both the intimate workings of human emotions and the cosmic design of Divine Providence. The universal tragicomedy of Christianity—life, death, resurrection—also claimed representation in this welcoming and inclusive form as it developed and by natural process culminated in Guarini's *Pastor fido*, among shepherds and satyrs in a restored Eden called Arcadia. Indeed, the pastoral structure of hope both invited tragicomedy and offered a means of transportation from one genre to another.

Like *commedia* and *tragedia*, the *favola pastorale* began with literary texts on the private stage and was eventually played by both private performers, academic and courtly, and professionals. I have written elsewhere that the difference between scripted and improvised plays, whether composed and acted by litterati or by actors-for-hire, is not unlike the difference between classical music and jazz, distinct in several ways but most obviously in that one is performed from a full score and the other is improvised on the chord progressions of a tune (Clubb 1995, 129). Here I would reapply the simile to the activity of the early experimenters in written drama who were inventing a third genre departing from the other two, one that would maintain the principles and advances achieved in forging a modern comedy and modern tragedy and that would have passed muster with Aristotle. In undertaking to produce pastoral plays in the form Polonius call the "writ", dramatists were in effect performing a jazz operation, improvising a theatrical structure from a canon of non-theatrical Arcadian literature, introducing matters and mixtures excluded from the avant-garde comedy and tragedy, bypassing verisimilitude, incorporating fanciful spectacle and multiplying occasions for music and dancing.

Only some of the new elements of improvisation are evident in the two most admired pastoral plays of the sixteenth century, *Aminta* (1573) and *Pastor fido* (1589); for the full range of riffs and fusions we must regard Giraldi's *Egle* (1550), with its nymphs turning into trees, Cristoforo Castelletti's *Amarilli* (first version 1580), in which a talkative fountain proves to be a watery nymph, Diomisso Guazzoni's *Andromeda* (1574), where a *mago* with a pet dragon turns a shepherd into a marble statue, or the Venetian Alvise Pasqualigo's *Intricati* (1581), in which a *incantatrice* and her familiar spirit attach animal heads to clowns vacationing in Arcadia.

Once the literary playwrights had created a substantial body of *favole pastorali* in the "writ", professional *comici*, expert in the "liberty", came on the scene and engaged in a sort of double jazz by improvising still farther on the models they took up. In brief, I propose not a syllogism but a triple reapplication of my simile:

1. the literary pastoral play is to comedy and tragedy as jazz is to classical music.

2. *commedia dell'arte* improvisation, which is already as jazz to written drama, further mixed and jazzed up the third genre

3. Shakespeare, the jazziest of all, knew and improvised on the whole repertory of pastoral theatregrams.

Examples of the *comici*'s incorporations and departures appear in early *Seicento* scenarios in manuscript and in Flaminio Scala's printed collection *Il teatro delle favole rappresentative* (Marotti 1976, 129), illustrating a stage practice going back a couple of decades. This is the experimental phase of *commedia dell'arte* history that has been called its golden age of artistry before being bureaucratized into an industry (Tessari 1969, esp. Chapter 2) and that coincides with Shakespeare's career. Though scenarios reveal only the genre and theatregrams of pastoral drama, an awareness of its transcendent message shared by the *comici* with the literary establishment is suggested by François de Beroalde de Verville's sonnet appended to Bartolomeo Rossi's *Fiammella, pastorale* (1584):

> Sous ces divers discours qui doucement souspirent
> Les amours de bergers, et chantent la grandeur
> Des espris ocieux qui, vains en leur erreur,
> Font que les ignorans tous confus les admirent,
> Sous ces diversités qui plaisantes attirent
> A suivre un bel objet qui touche jusqu'au cœur,
> Sous ce contentement, ce dedain, ce malheur,
> Tu compares les biens aux maux qui nous martirent.
> Tu monstres à chasq'un que sa felicité
> Ne depend de soy-mesme, ains de l'eternité
> Qui des humains destins establit l'ordonnance.
> Puis te portant au Ciel, d'où tu vois ces bas lieux,
> Tu nous dis qu'en ostant le bandeau de nos yeux,
> *Nous cognoistrons que tout est suivi d'ignorance.*
> (qtd in Molinari 1999, 370)

[Beneath these light discourses that breathe the loves of shepherds
and sing the joys of idle spirits who, lost in error, cause the
confused ignorant to admire them, Beneath these entertainments
that playfully attract one to follow a noble aim that touches the
heart, Beneath this contentment, this disdain, this unhappiness,
you compare the good to the evil that besets us.
You show everyone that his happiness does not depend on himself,
but on the eternity that established the order of human destinies.
Then moving to Heaven, from where you observe these lower
regions, You tell us that in removing the blindfold from our eyes,
We recognize that all is followed by ignorance.]

Fiammella is an odd piece, in that it was the work of an actor
specializing in the "liberty" but was printed in Paris in the form
of the five-act full-scripted "writ", and that its plot about an
island magician raising tempests, performing transformations
on young lovers and clashing with visiting *commedia dell'arte*
masks until deprived of his powers by the gods, made it important
evidence in Lea's case for the derivation of *The Tempest* from the
commedia dell'arte. But that such a play, exemplar of professional
entertainment, discordant with mixtures excluded from all three
regular genres and clearly originating in improvised stage turns of
the "liberty", should be labelled "*pastorale*" and follow theatregrams
that cued a poet to praise it for using "amours de bergers" in order
to demonstrate human blindness and heavenly providence, shows
that even before *Pastor fido* was published, the *litterati* discerned
a high potential and signifying function in the third genre and the
comici catered to this expectation. It is also an example of how actors
angled for the critical respect accorded to regular plays while taking
liberties with the rules.

In their improvised comedy at this time the players usually
observed the rules of unity of time and place and of verisimilitude,
but when they took up pastoral play structures they improvised
changes in scene, lapses in time, and allowed themselves even more
unverisimilar plot data than were licensed by Ovidian pastorals
of the "writ". Scala's scenarios 46, 47 and 48, *L'Orseida, opera
reale* in three parts, for instance, moves Arcadia to the city walls
of Amatunta, from wood to court, covers some twenty years of
pastoral, comic, and warlike royal events and takes its name from

the dynasty founded by the mating of a bear and a human princess. In England, however, the pastoral play was not born of necessity or of theory. Some have said that it was not born at all or that it died aborning, there being very few Daniels or Fletchers to produce English *favole boscareccie*, and few limitations on genre. Lyly's plays had contained shepherds, nymphs, and fairies and reflect the knowledge we know he had of the Italian fashion, but neither in tone nor in construction did these ingredients assume the weight of the third genre crafted amid polemics by Italian playwrights, assimilated by acting troupes and disseminated in print and performances.

Whether Shakespeare was writing specifically for Southampton's private circle early or for the royal court later on, the public he aimed to please included well-travelled or by other means knowledgeable courtiers who shared Sir Philip Sidney's good opinion of Italian theatre (*Defense of Poesie*, 1583) and knew its varied fashionable elements, none of which were more admired and cultivated in Italy than what Ingegneri called "le pastorali". For Shakespeare Italian stage pastoral was less a blueprint than an exploitable repertory, on which he improvised to the farthest reach of the "liberty". Though shepherds as such appear only in *As You Like It*, *The Winter's Tale*, and *Cymbeline*, his familiarity with the genre is visible in his confident manipulation of its contents and theatregrams in several other plays, and most tellingly in his grasp of its signifying structure. When Agostino Lombardo likens Portia's Belmont to Arcadia (1997, 143-57), when Muriel Bradbrook points to courtly games in *The Two Gentlemen* (1987, 38-9), when Roy Erikson discerns Apuleius in *The Tempest* (1992, 285-303), or when Mario Praz finds Ariosto in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1958, 301), they are seeing aright, but without recognizing the fundamental enabling structure that invited these elements onstage.

In addition to what is generally recognized as the default *favola pastorale*, an expansion of the *Aminta* pattern—nymphs and shepherds wandering the woods in or out of love, admonished by Arcadian elders, parodied by earthly *villani* and menaced by satyrs— two elaborations of this standard model especially attracted the *comici* and turn up in their scenarios:
1. the Guarinian tragicomic plot in which courtly visitors learn truth and love in the country, curses are lifted and wrongs righted;

2. the Ariostean spectacular fantasy type in which a *mago* directs traffic, usually with familiar spirits and spells, and transformations of one sort or another.

As You Like It and *Love's Labour's Lost* use country places for concentrating on time out, lessons in love, repentance, and weddings (postponed in the latter by Marcade, whose name announces his interference with the Arcadian finale). *As You Like It* is actually framed as a pastoral — in a regular *favola boscareccia*, or in this case probably *tragicommedia pastorale* (because of the high-ranking characters and the background struggle for ducal power), the first act would not have been set at court but the same information would have been communicated in some form of prologue *antefatto* or expository scene. The changes Shakespeare made in dramatizing his primary narrative source in Lodge are characteristic of the Italian genre, crisscrossed encounters in an Ariostean "wood of love" inhabited by dangerous fauna, the ultimate appearance of Hymen to "bar confusion and make conclusion" with four weddings, Petrarchan shepherds mocked by Rosalind's common sense and wit and contrasted with hard and gross realities of country life represented by William and Audrey. Even Touchstone, often thought to be without precedent, is a typically Shakespearean variation on the city clowns who visit Arcadia, dazzle or fight the yokels and, like them, pursue nymphs in ways that parody Petrarch. *As You Like It* lacks the *mago* or *maga* of *favola boscareccia*, but Rosalind, adept in arranging the matches and the hymeneal tableau, fills that lacuna when she attributes her rearing to "an old religious uncle" retired from court to the Forest (3.3), "a magician, most profound in his art, and yet not damnable . . ." and declares herself his heir, "I am a magician" (5.2).

In *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, by their superficial but effective appearance some pastoral theatregrams are made to conclude and transform a play which is at once Shakespeare's most English and most Italianate comedy. Although, unlike Bottom's asses' ears and idyll with Titiana, Falstaff's disguise wearing horns as Herne the Hunter and his tormenting by fairies is only a townsfolk *burla,* keeping the play as verisimilar as the standard *commedia giocosa* from which it takes its shape, this woodland finale with feigned metamorphoses, supernatural beings, and weddings makes a

pastoral tableau that lifts the denouement out of a mere foiling of Falstaff's plot against marriage and Ford's against love and into a representation of self-knowledge, social reconciliation, and renewal.

A Midsummer Night's Dream and the *The Tempest* correspond exactly to one kind of pastoral play, except in name and costume. Among the *favole pastorali* that featured Ovidian metamorphoses, often of the sort mentioned in connection with the woodland god Vertumnus and used as metaphors by Petrarch in Canzone 23 — stone, fountain, trees, wild beasts, birds,[7] there are those in which humans take animal shapes. When the shape is that of an ass, as in Pasqualigo's *Intricati, A Midsummer Night's Dream*, or the scenario *Il Pantaloncino* described by Lea (1934, 1.332), we see how the pastoral genre offered accommodation for the Midas myth and Apuleius. *Intricati* is a "pastorale" with which *A Midsummer Night's Dream* has so many points in common that an advocate of the old-fashioned method of source study would doubtless have posited a direct debt, especially in light of Pasqualigo's London connections: his comedy *Il fedele* was adapted by Anthony Munday as *The Two Italian Gentlemen*, and Nella Nencini's recent research (2002, 78-81) reveals that the Pasqualigo family was distinguished for its history of diplomatic service to the Republic of Venice conducted in England.

But of course *Intricati* is not the only Italian pastoral play that includes comic outsiders visiting Arcadia and undergoing animal transformations by enchanters with assistant sprites who also administer potions to mismatched lovers wandering in the woods, causing sleep and dreams and leading to emotional readjustments and weddings. It is likely that, whether or not he encountered *Intricati* itself, Shakespeare knew of more than one combination of these theatregrams. In Scala's scenario *L'arbore incantato, pastorale* (49) an Arcadian magician calls up spirits and visions and administers the water of oblivion to mismatched shepherds and nymphs and to the visiting Arlecchino. For speaking ill of Love the clown is turned into a wild crane, the lovers lose their minds and memories, sleep or rave, one turns into a tree, and at last all are wed in a ritual sorting-out. Puck would say "what fools these mortals

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7 "Nel dolce tempo della prima etade . . ." *Rime sparse*, 23.

be!" (*MND*, 3.2.115). The later *Seicento* scenario *Arcadia incantata*, the sole pastoral in the Casamarciano collection (Cotticelli et al. 2001, 2.1) contains variations of some of these theatregrams: the sorcerer uses a magic garland to confuse the shepherds and the *commedia dell'arte* comic masks, here dominated by the Neapolitan clown Pollicinella.

Among the five scenarios from the Casanatense Locatelli ms. published by Neri in 1913 was *Il gran mago*, in which Pantalone, Gratiano and Burattino are turned into animals, and *Il Pantaloncino* in which Pantaloncino turns into an ass, as in the old Midas mythological entertainments or in Apuleius or in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. In his "wood outside Athens", Shakespeare dispenses with shepherds, knowing that the powers of the deep pastoral play structure need not depend on the names and costumes of Arcadia or of Harlequin, and could function as well with English fairies and English mechanicals in any natural landscape. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is particularly important to my account because, unlike the late Shakespearean plays emphasized by Henke, it keeps its distance from tragicomedy and shows us Shakespeare exploiting the *favola boscareccia*'s power of more eclectic inclusion. The famous exchange between Theseus and Hippolyta in the wedding scene (*MND*, 5.1.2-27) belongs to the critical debate about verisimilitude and fancy, concluding with recognition of the coherent vision that may be enabled by a fanciful "story of the night", a typical *favola boscareccia*.[8]

In *The Tempest* a seascape vibrates with pastoral significance in a *favola marittima*, like Antonio Ongaro's *Alceo* (1582), with an ancestor in the *Rudens* of Plautus, but closest to the *commedia dell'arte* island scenarios in Scala, in the Casanatense Locatelli ms., or in Rossi's scripted *Fiammella*. Prospero is a more verisimilar *mago* than Oberon, his rank and *antefatto* befitting tragedy, but he

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8 Theseus scoffs at the loves' account of what happened in the woods as "More strange than true . . . / antique . . . fairy toys. / . . . fantasies, that apprehend/ More than cool reason ever comprehends./ The lunatic, the lover, and the poet/ Are of imagination all compact.", while Hippolyta defends it: "But all the story of the night told over,/ And all their minds transfigured so together,/ More witnesseth than fancy's images,/ And grows to something of great constancy;/ But howsoever, strange and admirable."

has all the supernatural appurtenances of the pastoral enchanter—book, wand, familiar spirit—and conjures the usual spells, visions, spectacles, shipwrecks and labyrinthine confusions intended to right old wrongs and reveal truths. The Arlecchinos, Pedrolinos, Coviellos, Tartaglias and Pulcinellas who visit Arcadia in Neri's Casanatense Locatelli scenario *La nave*, in Scala's *Avvenimenti* (42) and *Rosalba incantatrice* (44) or in the Casamarciano *Arcadia incantata* (2/1), have their counterparts in the squabbling clowns Stefano and Trinculo, while the pastoral satyr, through Shakespeare's own magic, is perfectly recognizable recast as Caliban, the fishy would-be rapist, convinced of his rights and resentful of intruders on his territory, eloquent in his half-human sensibility, his savage breast sometimes soothed by music.

The Tempest illustrates the pastoral as a language, a limitlessly recombinable repertory of *topoi*, characters, and relationships, actions (in short, theatregrams), that creates another world or dimension with another temporal system that issues from the space and time that it is not. It is, precisely, the other, the invisible, an out-of-this-world trip offering *otium* for contemplation and pursuits not determined by *negotium*, a means of passage into other genres or of return, enlightened, to a city or court. Shakespeare's blending of the commonplaces of usurpation and revenge and those of knockabout farce into *The Tempest*'s luminous vision of forgiveness, self-knowledge, and tempered hope begins with his choice of form, the liberating and receptive third genre.[9]

The Winter's Tale and *Cymbeline* attest both their author's grasp of the signifying function with which the pastoral play structure had been endowed by its inventors and his characteristic audacity in making it his own. The London printing of *Il pastor fido* in 1591 placed near-to-hand the supreme literary example of pastoral drama at its most sublime, representing the actions of the human heart and the mind of God by means of an *Aminta*-based plot expanded

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9 Incidentally, to refute the occasional knee-jerk denial that the *favola boscareccia* had any significant progeny, we need only point to the genre of the opera. *Ariadne auf Naxos* clearly descends from the scenarios about islands visited by princesses, gods, and *commedia dell'arte* masks, and Mozart's Sarastro is grandson to Prospero; other, less obvious, family resemblances are innumerable.

into an Oedipal tragedy ending in a divinely-destined redemption through love and sacrifice. *Commedia dell'arte* scenarios, however, bear a more immediate likeness to the late Shakespearen so-called 'romances'. Comparison between Scala's *Gli avvenimenti comici, pastorali e tragici, opera mista* (42) and *The Winter's Tale*, not particularly similar in plot, though containing a few of the same theatregrams, reveal to what degree *comici* and Shakespeare shared a view of the *favola pastorale* as a third canonical genre, and as a structure that could move the action from comedy to tragedy, functioning as a bridge.

Scala's scenario begins with city comedy and clowns, shifts to Arcadia and shepherds and ends at court with the deaths of royal characters, leaving the clowns to comment. Shakespeare uses this pattern in reverse, making the pastoral scenes a central hinge between tragedy and comedy, moving from the complete tragic action of Leontes' self-deluded destruction of his family, through the Bohemian pastoral idyll of Perdita and Florizel which brings life out of death and, with the stage-managed tableau of Paulina, a *maga* in court costume, transforming a marble statue into the lost Hermione, achieves the 'comic' reconciliation of the old and creation of a new society by marriages. Deviating from his narrative source in Greene, Shakespeare makes the action begin and end in Sicily, site of Virgil's Arcadia, so that not only the pivotal mid-section but also the entire play suggests the *tragicommedia pastorale*. His improvisations transgress the rules in the manner of the *comici* but he was aware of the more theatrical improvisation that had originally produced the scripted third genre and of the power of the pastoral play to give stage presence to invisible realities of human self-discovery and divine providence.

If Shakespeare's *first* editors, his colleagues Hemings and Condell who published the First Folio of 1623, had used Scala's categories, they would not have had to classify *Cymbeline* as a "Tragedie", for clearly, like *The Tempest*, *The Winter's Tale* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Cymbeline* is kin to the ten *favole rappresentative* in Scala's *Teatro*, and would qualify as an *opera reale*, "tragical-comical-pastoral-historical", the ultimate improvisation, undeniably "writ" and manifesting unprecedented "liberty" in knowledgeable ransacking of Italian theory and practice.

Contrary to long-standing opinion, romantic comedy was not born in England (if anywhere, in Siena), and there not out of nothing—a clear line stretches from Boccaccio's most romantic tales through *Quattrocento feste*, to the Aretine *commedie*, Accolti's *Virginia* and Pollastra's *Parthenio*, to the Sienese Academy of the Intronati (Clubb and Black 1993). Not long after the first experiments with Roman New Comedy the *commedia erudita*, also called *grave* for its regular form, increasingly showed signs of *gravitas* also in its content, betraying an increasing desire for emotional desire and in part owes its existence to the need for a more open form conducive to representing realities of the spirit. Shakespeare's comedies are more romantic, inward and psychologically probing than any *commedia grave*, akin in this to Italian pastoral drama. His methods are an intensified application of the modern Italian technology of ransacking, collecting and combining, adapting and recostuming from an international repertory within an established framework, a framework in which the pastoral play had assumed a unique and potent position.

The wars of Shakespearean classification are petering out: there may still be some use to clustering plays a 'dark' or 'problem' or 'romances' but on the whole these impressionistic categories refer only to mood and atmosphere and are unenlightening about form and unapt for distinguishing kinds in the canon and premises of composition. After all, Shakespeare had used old romances from his earliest period: *The Comedy of Errors* begins and ends with medieval romance framing an Italianate Plautine comedy. Organizing by genre, as Hemings and Condell did, or tried to do, is more acute, but as we have seen, they were stumped by *Cymbeline*—and Shakespeare himself might have scratched his head over making a table of contents for the First Folio, for he and his colleagues were not engaged in dramatic theory.

But they knew about it and the plays testify that Shakespeare noted the Italian experiments in genre theory and the *comici*'s improvisations on the results. The construction of the third genre offered him tragicomedy, as Henke makes clear; moreover, it offered the larger idea of the pastoral drama as a theatrical kind hospitable not only to mixtures of tragedy and comedy but also to imaginative flights alien to both but natural to "the lunatic, the lover,

and the poets" adduced by Theseus. Perhaps the squabbling over classification would cease altogether if Scala's *favole boscareccie* were made required reading and Polonius' description of the player' repertory were accepted literally as the table of contents of the *commedia dell'arte*'s range. With his eyes on the Italian genres and mixtures thereof, in both the "writ" and the jazzier versions in the "liberty", moving as the bee sucks, improvising back and forth from tragical to pastoral to comical, Shakespeare produced a different quality of honey from play to play.

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Italian Stories on the Stage

Stephen Gosson might treble and intensify his famous antitheatrical malediction could he know what a cliché of theatre history one sentence of it has become:

> I have seen it that the *Palace of Pleasure*, the *Golden Ass*, the *Ethiopian History*, *Amadis of France*, the *Round Table*, bawdy comedies in Latin, French, Italian and Spanish have been thoroughly ransacked to furnish the playhouses in London. (qtd in Chambers 1923, vol. 4, 216)

It is time to take Gosson seriously, to identify Shakespeare as one of the ransackers and to treat his Italian stories as a chapter in the history of ransacking, which also entails treating ransacking itself as a first premise of Renaissance dramaturgy.

Ever since Chaucer's Clerk and Franklin told tales from the *Decameron*, English literature has borne traces of Italian stories, though to call them "Italian" is to dismiss their remote origins, in many cases lost in the distance of antiquity and Indo-European folklore. It was the Renaissance versions, however, the "mery books of *Italie*" that delighted sixteenth-century English readers and, according to Roger Ascham, undermined their faith and morals. Playwrights in those times before copyright laws were under no pressure to invent original stories and instead valued new presentation of old material. Italy was the contemporary crucible of dramatic theory and Tasso, foremost among theorists, wrote that originality in dramatic composition should consist in form rather than in matter. Shakespeare took his plots wherever he found them, and he makes Hamlet explicit about his play-within-the-play: "The story is extant, and writ in choice Italian" (Shakespeare 1997, 3.2.240).

Shakespeare's Italianate plays, broadly classified, comprise five comedies and two tragedies entirely or partly set in Italy and for which ultimate sources of plot have been identified in Italian *novelle*: *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *The*

Merchant of Venice, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *All's Well That Ends Well*, *Romeo and Juliet* and *Othello*, not counting the Rome of *Titus Andronicus*, *Julius Caesar*, *Anthony and Cleopatra*, and *Coriolanus*; two "romances," better described as tragi-comedies, *The Winter's Tale*, with its beginning and ending in Sicily, and *Cymbeline*, in which Jachimo's name and ruse belong to the Boccaccian *novella* tradition and to the Rome of the Renaissance rather than to the Empire of the play's time setting; two comedies not set in Italy but based on Italian stories that circulated both in *novella* and dramatic form, *Twelfth Night* and *Measure for Measure*; and six that either came principally from the Italian theatre, *The Tempest* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, or contain some characters or scenes typical of its repertory, *The Comedy of Errors*, *Love's Labor's Lost*, *As You Like It*, and *The Merry Wives of Windsor*.

The method traditionally employed to account for Shakespeare's Italophilia is a long and instructive, but now exhausted, practice of source study that has pursued specific parallels in innumerable Italian texts, especially in narrative genres such as *novelle*, a number of which were "Englished" from French translations, chivalric *romanzi*, histories and such dialogues as Castiglione's *Libro del cortegiano*. Scrutiny of Painter's *Palace of Pleasure* and other compilations has revealed ultimate sources of various Shakespearean plays in Italian prose fiction from the fourteenth through the sixteenth centuries, flowering particularly in Boccaccio's collection of *novelle* and its abundant progeny:

1. *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* has sometimes been connected with Boccaccio's *novella* of Tito and Gisippo, *Decameron* (c. 1352), 10.8, through Elyot's *Boke named the Governour* (1531) and other English versions. The complete *Decameron* was not translated into English until 1620.

2. *Romeo and Juliet* is related to a story in Masuccio Salernitano, *Il Novellino* (1476) 33, retold in Luigi Da Porto's *Historia novellamente ritrovata di due nobili amanti*, "Romeo e Giulietta" (1530), again in Matteo Bandello's *Novelle* (1554-73), 2.19, translated by Pierre Boaistuau and appended to François de Belleforest, *Histoires Tragiques Extraictes des Oeuvres Italiennes de Bandel* (1559), by William Painter, *Palace of Pleasure* (1566-67), 2.25, and into verse by Arthur Brooke, "The Tragicall Historye of Romeus and Juliet" (1562).

3. *The Merchant of Venice* fuses several sources, including Masuccio's *Novellino* 14, and Ser Giovanni Fiorentino, *Il Pecorone* (c. 1390), 4.1, not translated in Shakespeare's time.

4. *The Merry Wives of Windsor* has been thought to owe something to *Pecorone* 2.2.

5. *Much Ado About Nothing* is indebted to Bandello's *novella* 1.22, of Timbreo and Fenicia.

6. *Twelfth Night* comes from a plot also used in Bandello 2.36, and Barnabe Riche, *Farewell to the Militarie Profession*, the tale of Apolonius and Silla (1581).

7. *Measure for Measure* is based on Giovanni Battista Giraldi's *Ecatommiti* 8.5, the *novella* of Iuriste and Epitia (1565), the whole collection translated into French by Gabriel Chappuys (1584); the same story was adapted by George Whetstone as a play *Promos and Cassandra* (1578) and in *Heptameron of Civil Discourse* (1582).

8. *Othello* also is from *Ecatommiti* 3.7, the tale of the Moor of Venice.

9. *All's Well That Ends Well* follows *Decameron* 3.9, the tale of Giletta, translated by William Painter, *Palace of Pleasure* (1566-67), 1.38.

10. *Cymbeline* contains elements suggesting that Shakespeare knew both *Decameron* 2.9, the tale of Zinervra, and an anonymous English version *Frederyke of Jennen* (1516).

More Italian stories than these were known and adapted in England, but the best known were the complete *novelle* collections available in French: Boccaccio's, Bandello's and Giraldi's; and the chivalric romance cycles, of which the crown jewel, Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*, was translated by John Harington in 1591. All of these narratives were outgrowths of longer traditions, with roots in the classics—Homer, Ovid, Apuleius, Heliodorus, Achilles Tatius— and in folktales from as far away as India, transmitted in the *Gesta Romanorum*, hagiographies, and various other forms.

If, as Gosson said, English playwrights ransacked Italian narratives and comedies, it is equally true that Italian *novellieri* took their stories from anywhere and that Italian playwrights also ransacked *novelle*, *romanzi* and other narrative sources to make comedies, tragedies, and pastoral plays. Sometimes the playwright and the *novelliere* were the same person, as in the case of Giraldi, who dramatized one tale from his own *Ecatommiti* as *Orbecche*, *tragedia* and another as *Epitia, tragedia di fin lieto* (tragedy with

happy ending). Indeed, the Italian sixteenth-century invention of a modern dramaturgy was based on the principle of staging mixed narrative sources within a five-act theatrical structure purposefully defined by imitating the classical comedies of Plautus and Terence, according to the latter's practice of *contaminatio* or commingling plots. Boccaccio, widely endorsed as the model for Italian prose, had a special status as a source for both comic and romantic matter. The theatrical receptacle into which the stories were poured was known as *commedia erudita* or *grave* because of its classical lineage; its regular plan of unified place, time, and action gave focus and climax to imbroglio plots and a variety of interchangeable structural units or "theatregrams" (characters, situations, actions, speeches, thematic patterns) which could be combined in dialogue and visual encounters to act out the fiction with verisimilitude.

The relation between Shakespeare and the *novelle* and *romanzo* is a staple of Shakespeare studies, but the form in which these Italian narratives reached him is less commonly considered. Except for Giraldi's tale of the Moor of Venice, all the stories Shakespeare used had already been used in Italian drama, either whole or in pieces differently combined. The old method of source study also sifted some Italian plays, with modest results linking parts of Shakespeare's comedies to specific theatrical texts: *The Taming of the Shrew* to Ariosto's *Suppositi* through Gascoigne's *Supposes*, *Twelfth Night* to the Intronati Academy's collaborative *Gl'ingannati*, *The Tempest* to Rossi's *Fiammella* and analogous Arcadian scenarios, *Two Gentlemen of Verona* to Scala's fifth scenario, *Flavio tradito*, *Measure for Measure* to Giraldi *Epitia*, and a few other like pairings.

A richer harvest of connections appears when general Italian theatrical practice and repertory, rather than specific sources, are surveyed. From the time of Ariosto's *La cassaria* (1508), Bibbiena's influential *Calandria* (1512) and Machiavelli's *La mandragola* (1518), the Plautine-Terentian form, modernized, Italianized, and amplified with Boccaccian or other *novella* content was established as the model of the new *commedia erudita*. Hundreds of plays flowing from competing courts and academies were printed during the course of the century. When Shakespeare began writing for the stage, the Italian comedy was in a state of full development and had produced different strains and styles, approaches to tragicomedy,

romantic courtship plays of revelation, satirical adulterous farces of concealment, and double-plotted combinations of the two. The literary comedy also opened the way to a new "regular" third genre, the pastoral play, cultivated in the second half of the century with huge success.

Professional companies of what would eventually be called the *commedia dell'arte* were formed about mid-century, and the *comici* in turn ransacked the literary plays for materials for their improvised three-act scenarios or for their own occasional five-act scripted plays. On tour they disseminated theatregrams throughout Italy and abroad. In the 1570s they achieved lasting popularity in France and Spain. Shakespeare had access to printed plays; to accounts of the *commedia dell'arte* from Italians in London and Englishmen who traveled on the Continent, among them his colleague William Kempe; and to who knows how many actual performances. In whatever he encountered of the Italian theatre, whether literary plays, manuscript scenarios or performances, Shakespeare would have found narremes from *novelle* trimmed, shaped, and made stageworthy. Those in the scenarios would have been tailored specifically to the size and specialties of professional troupes.

The mass of such evidence, from printed and reprinted regular comedies and pastoral plays to fragmentary scenarios and dialogues for improvisation, yields no document more revealing than the actor Flaminio Scala's *Teatro delle favole rappresentative* (*The Theatre of Stage Plots*) (1611). These fifty 'ideal' scenarios (forty *comedie* and ten pastoral or mixed *opere*) memorialize several decades of experience in the Italian professional theatre and demonstrate much of its range. They attest to a continual mining of the kinds of fictive material also used by Shakespeare and to a method of selecting, combining and disposing stageworthy elements from a shared repertory.

Scala's scenarios are skeletons, a shorthand series of entrances, exits, disguises, and errors. They represent the kinds of plays improvised by Italian actors on plots appropriated from scripted *commedie erudite* that they read in print or memorized when invited to participate in court theatricals, ceaselessly augmenting their store with *novelle*, lyric poetry, classical compendia, and whatever else might serve for performing—and occasionally writing—new

plays. Their immediate audiences heard what no scenario can show: the language that the *comici* brought to the blueprints of action. Our only knowledge of this comes from poems and dialogues that some published after retirement and from the regular five-act plays resembling *commedie erudite* written by a few. Nicolò Barbieri's famous defense of the players, *La supplica* (1634), refers to the many kinds of reading and writing necessary to their art. This exercise of the mind, like the constant practice in the dancing, singing and instrumental performances that were standard features of their plays, though invisible in most scenarios, was the discipline of the *commedia dell'arte*. Thus the best troupes prepared themselves for whatever occasions might arise; readiness was all.

Italian regular comedy and pastoral plays (what Polonius describes to Hamlet at the "writ"; 2.2.384) and the scenarios for improvising (the "liberty") all drew on the stage repertory accumulated in decades of ransacking and recombination, composed of pieces of stories, situations, speeches, moves, themes, and characters. The classical Plautine cast was updated and augmented in *commedia erudita*, the old man as the *vecchio*, the young lovers as *giovani innamorati*, with *servi* and freeloaders, the braggart *capitano* frequently Hispanized, the procurer as *ruffiano*, the prostitute as *cortegiana*, the nurse as *balia*, together with friars, pedants, alchemists, Moors, Jews, Germans and Ragusan seafarers, innkeepers, gypsies, comic hangmen, constables, and other additions from narrative sources, especially the *Decameron*.

A difference between the regular scripted *commedia erudita* and the improvised *commedia dell'arte* was that scenario plots were cut to fit a nuclear company of fixed roles with variable doubled parts. Scala's ideal company evokes his old friends the Andreini family and their stage names: thus the leading *innamorata* is always Isabella, the *capitano* always Spavento, one of the *innamorati* always Flavio (Scala's own role). The two *vecchi* are the universal *veneziano* Pantalone and *dottore* Graziano, the middle-aged *serva* is Franceschina, and the *servo* roles go to masked *zanni* with stable identities: Arlecchino, Burattino, Pedrolino. The plots in the bare-bones scenarios seem slapdash compared to regular comedies but indications of motion, music, comic turns, and dialects suggest the complex demands made on the actors. Essentially, however,

the theatregrams of character and plot in the writ and the liberty come from the same repertory. Common among them are errors involving twins; the bed trick in a dark room; disguise of sex or social condition in order to serve a beloved, often entailing carrying messages to a new love and becoming the object of his or her affections; revelations of identity and reunions of separated families; tricks to fleece misers and to mock would-be seducers, presumptuous wooers and fortune hunters; madness and pretended madness; supposed death.

The fashionable pastoral play was invented by theorizing playwrights for court productions, adapting many features from comedy and a few from tragedy to an Arcadian setting. The compelling themes of love and providence had been staged increasingly in *commedia grave* as far as the rule of unity of place permitted, but a change of venue was needed for fully representing inner realities of emotion, psychological change, and supernatural providence, and so was born a new third genre, presided over by Amore. Unawakened or ill-assorted lovers learning to know their hearts constituted the primary cluster of types in the *favola pastorale*—their names and occupations came from classical and early Renaissance pastoral eclogues and narratives, and *innamorati* with assisting or competing friends, *servi* and *vecchi*, became shepherds or nymphs, principal and subordinate; the lustful importuning *capitano* and the more transgressive *zanni* were replaced by satyrs.

The best known of all pastoral plays, Tasso's *Aminta, favola boscareccia* (1573), is in its simple brevity the least representative exemplar of the genre. Experimentation with the stage pastoral was intense and produced imbroglio plots of several types, one of which allowed for magic, transformations and hybrid elements, while maintaining the unities of place, time, and action. Plays like Luigi Pasqualigo's *Gl'intricati, pastorale* (1575), Cristoforo Castelletti's *L'Amarilli, pastorale* (1580), and Orlando Pescetti's *La regia pastorella, favola boschereccia* (1589) contain some typical theatregrams; sorcerers with spirits at their command; visions and dreams, working towards a denouement revelation; cloddish rustics contrasting with the refined shepherds, like the bawdy servants of comedy—one of Castelletti's is temporarily turned into a tree; courtiers or citizens lost or shipwrecked in Arcadia, destined to

figure in a recognition scene, like long-lost relations in comedy; even visitors from the *commedia dell'arte*, such as Pasqualigo's Gracian, who magically acquires an ass's head. Scala's scenarios accommodate theatregrams from the written pastoral drama to the personnel of an acting troupe: in *L'arbore incantato* (49) Arlecchino is turned into a crane and a nymph into a tree, finally restored by a magician with his book and rod. This type of pastoral plot, so well established that it had even been reexpanded into a full-length play by the actor Bartolomeo Rossi in *La fiammella, pastorale* (1584), was repeated in the Arcadian scenarios from the Locatelli/Corsini manuscripts (1618-22), not printed until 1913 (Neri 1961).

What Scala recorded was the high fashion of the *commedia dell'arte* repertory before 1611, just what William Kempe would have brough back from his Italian sojourn in 1601. His successor as a clown in Shakespeare's company, Robert Armin, knew Italian well enough to translate a *novella* of Straparola and very likely read plays too. Many were available in England; Aretino's were even printed there in Italian by John Wolfe in 1588, Guarini's and Tasso's in 1591. Knowing how writers of *commedia erudita* and players of *commedia dell'arte* made theatregrams from myriad stories and plays, Shakespeare could do the same with any source, mixing his own, proportioning them to his company's and his audience's expectations. Whenever he takes up a story, he disposes it with boundless creativity and, even in the earliest plays, with the confidence of one whose methods and normative plots have been tested on stage. Even where Shakespeare unquestionably follows a specific *novella*, comparisons with the *commedie erudite*, scenarios, and dialogues of *comici* suggest that the narrative has been processed for the theatre and belongs to the common repertory of playmakers. The more extensive the comparison the more unavoidable the conclusion that a primary object of Shakespeare's ransacking was Italian stage production, tradition, and technology.

The audience of his own day recognized as much. John Manningham noted in his diary a performance at the Inns of Court, 1602: "At our feast wee had a play called 'Twelve Night, or What You Will', much like the *Commedy of Errores*, or *Menechmi* in Plautus, but most like and neere to that in Italian called *Inganni*" (qtd. in Bullough 1957-75, 2.269). The inexact reference is to the Sienese"

Intronati Academy's famous *Gl'ingannati* (The Deceived), produced as a sequel to their celebration of the opening of the carnival season on the twelfth night of Christmas, 1531/32. It was in this year that a literary fellowship of witty gentlemen in Siena was formally baptized "The Academy of the Thunderstruck," inaugurating a series of elegant comedies that would continue into the next century, despite periodic prohibitions by municipal authorities. The plays were written and privately performed by the academicians, ostensibly in compliment to the ladies in their audience. Their first production became the single most imitated *commedia erudita* of the Renaissance, a point of departure for dozens of others throughout Europe. In the 1590s it was performed at Cambridge in Latin as *Laelia.*

Shakespeare's Viola is obviously sister to Lelia of *Gl'ingannati.* A courageous but sensitive girl with a troubled history, Lelia has survived the Sack of Rome in which her brother is believed to have perished. She disguises her sex to escape a marriage arranged by her impoverished father and takes service with a man who has forgotten her and now sends her to woo another, who in turn falls in love with the deputy wooer but finally is contented with the long-lost brother while Lelia recaptures her beloved's heart.

The Sienese play is a variation on Bibbiena's pioneering *commedia erudita Calandria*, itself a modern *contaminatio* of *Menaechmi* with comic tales from Boccaccio and a sex change for one twin. The plot of *Gl'ingannati* is disposed dramatically with theatregrams typical of the new well-made genre: disputes of the disguised girl with her *balia*, parents planning distasteful marriages for children, *servi* intriguing on behalf of their *padroni*, tricking and outwitting each other and mocking whatever is high-flown and solemn, from sententious pederastic tutors to strutting Spanish soldiers to ecstatic lovers. Competing innkeepers and rollicking feasters add to the various registers of style, love speeches are interspersed with fast-talking comic turns. The action flows constantly around the streets of Modena, complexity of motive and action given tension by a time frame and an interrelation of parts, the characters all tangled in a knot of deceits and errors arising from family separations, sex disguise, conflicting loves and lusts, hungers and greeds, most of them satisfied by the denouement. If its atmosphere lacks the

lyricism and psychological delicacy of *Twelfth Night*, *Gl'ingannati* is markedly more romantic than its precursor *Calandria*.

Twelfth Night also inherits from Sienese comedy a history involving both narrative and drama, which illuminates the developing technology of Italian theatre and points to Shakespeare's grasp of it. The recent rediscovery of Giovanni Lappoli Pollastra's *Parthenio* (1516),[1] long lost because its only edition was so quickly sold out that too few copies survived to be noted in early bibliographies, reveals the theatrical origins of *Gli'ingannati* itself. *Parthenio* was a major carnival event, the first published play sponsored by the University of Siena, certainly witnessed and possibly acted in by some of the spirited young noblemen who would found the Academy of the Intronati fifteen years later.

Parthenio has characters and plot material enough to furnish forth several plays. In a disjointed episodic form and meter characteristic of the medieval *sacra rappresentatzione* but demonstrating some knowledge of the new well-built and linguistically current *commedia erudita*, the Aretine schoolmaster Pollastra drew on Roman legend, medieval narrative romance, and Terentian comedy for his "commedia" about the resourceful Galicella (named from the chivalric romance cycles), who dons male disguise to follow Parthenio from her Greek pastoral retreat to Babylon and win back his love. He sends her to court his new love, who falls in love with the messenger, and at last, after redisguising herself as a servant girl and substituting herself for another woman in his bed, Galicella reclaims her husband and is crowned empress. Here, with a variety of low comedy scenes, are combined narremes from folktale, romance, and two *Decameron novelle*: that of the calumniated Zinevra husband, and that of the repudiated Giletta di Narbona (3.9) who, unrecognized in the dark, manages to conceive by her husband and so to gain his love.

When the Intronati winnowed this superabundance for materials to construct their up-to-date *commedia erudita*, catering to a feminine Sienese audience's stated preference for *Decameron*

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1 A critical and historical account of the play and its author appear with a transcription of the complete text of *Parthenio* and of Pollastra's unpublished poem *Triumphi* in Clubb and Black 1993.

tales featuring resolute and loyal heroines, the narremes became theatregrams through which the seeds of romantic comedy would be sowed throughout Europe. The sequence demonstrates the evolution of modern comedy. Using the model of plotting represented by *Calandria*, the Intronati made selections from *Parthenio*, the momentous theatrical initiation of their adolescence. They tightened the action, concentrated on the primary love plot, and gave it unity of place and relevance to its audience by setting it in actual time in a real Italian city and discarding the antiquated verse for idiomatic modern prose.

Imitations of *Gl'ingannati* soon appeared on stage in Italy, France, Spain, and the coast of Illyria, where it was adapted in Ragusa by the Croatian playwright Marin Držić, who had studied in Siena. The story was also retold in *novella* form by Giraldi, Bandello, Belleforest in his translation of Bandello, and by Barnabe Riche in his tale of Apolonius and Silla. Above all, its scattered members (themselves derived from scattered members) appear in dozens of scripted *commedie erudite* and in scenarios like Scala's. Details of the love plot of *Twelfth Night* suggest that Shakespeare had read Riche and probably Belleforest, but he disposed, cut, and augmented the narrative material according to the theatrical structures of the Italian comedy already widely disseminated as a repertory of combinable parts in printed texts and *commedia dell'arte* performances.

Many *commedie erudite* with different plots have clusters of the same theatregrams: that of the transvestite woman, disguised for safety and/or love; brotherless in *Pathenio* and in numerous later comedies, she is sometimes joined by an identical male twin, as in *Gl'ingannati*, Niccolò Secchi's *Inganni* (1547), Curzio Gonzaga's *Inganni* (1592), Sforza Oddi's *Prigione d'amore* (1590), and many others, not counting the cases in pastoral plays and even in a *tragedia di fin lieto* like Giraldi's *Antivalomeni* (1548), where there are two sets of boy/girl twins; the disguise of sex may be linked to serving a lover or spouse and becoming the mistaken object of love to third or even fourth parties, as in Andrea Calmo's *Travaglia* (1556) and Della Porta's *Cintia* (1601); a witty dialogue on wooing between loved one and cross-dressed lover commonly occurs in connection with the situation of Orlando in *As You Like It* (4.1); and *commedie erudite* with romantic disguise plots routinely contain

interspersed scenes of below-stairs carousing of *servi*, altercations with comic suitors, and similar standard Plautine elements absent in the source *novelle*.

Conversely, there are theatregrams in *Parthenio* that are omitted from *Gl'ingannati* but present in scores of other comedies, such as the substitution of lovers in the dark. Although *Gl'ingannati* includes the tactic of locking two girls in a room and discovering that one is a boy, a variation on *Calandria*, in which shutting up a pair as a proof of adultery backfires when they are discovered to be of the same sex, it lacks the Boccaccian bed trick found in *Parthenio*, Della Porta's *Cintia*, *Measure for Measure* and *All's Well That Ends Well*. For the latter Shakespeare probably read a French version of the *Decameron* tale of Giletta, but he structured the bed trick theatrically in the manner of *commedia erudita*, with apposite dialogues between Helena and the Widow, the Widow and her friends, Helena and Diana, Diana and Bertram and so forth. These scenes are also reminiscent of Girlamo Bargagli's *Pellegrina* (1563), the most renowned of the later Sienese *commedie erudite*; here the disguise is varied in the primary *innamorata*'s disguise as a pilgrim and the secondary *innamorato*'s as a tutor, while the secondary *innamorata* disguises her true state of mind by pretending to be insane. Most of these plays end with revelations of identity and reunions of families, a finale that was itself a repertorial setpiece.

Parthenio was a prophetic compendium of playwrights' and players' choices among narrative sources that would export the recipe for romantic comedy to the rest of Europe and to Shakespeare. Looking back in 1572 at the tastes of the founding members of the Intronati, Bargagli cited their preference for stories about greatness of spirit, especially in virtuous and long-suffering women like the patient Griselda (*Decameron* 10.10), or those who after persecution and calumny are found to be chaste and innocent, such as Giletta, who won her husband twice (*Decameron* 3.9), Ariosto's traduced Ginevra (*Orlando Furioso* 5), and Boccacio's Zinevra (*Decameron* 2.9), who was found alive and innocent when her husband thought her dead and guilty (Bargagli 1982, 223-24). A predecessor of Imogen in *Cymbeline*, Zinevra's plight figures also in Luigi Groto's *Pentimento amoroso*, a pastoral play, its single set permitting the scene of the calumniated wife's escape from execution in the woods

to be staged without loss of unity of place. One feature of *Parthenio* that could not have been transferred to a *commedia erudita* is the sojourn in the country; change of scene was regarded as sloppy and unverisimilar in the regular modern genres. A desire to use country settings and Arcadian themes was one of the forces behind the development of the pastoral play.

In eighteen of Scala's forty comedy scenarios the primary *innamorata* puts on boy's clothes, usually to seek the man she loves. *Li finti servi* (30) uses the boy/girl twins of the *Gli'ingannati* story (Isabella as *servo* to Orazio) but ends with three marriages, including that of the Capitano with the pregnant slave Ortensia, in reality long-lost sister to Flavio. In a different plot, *La gelosa Isabella* (25), Isabella dresses as a man and is taken for her missing brother Fabrizio: here she is not servant to Orazio, whom she believes faithless, her father Pantalone boozes with household cronies, like Sir Toby in *Twelfth Night*, and a *serva* Franceschina practices the deceit of imitating her mistress from a window, varying the familiar deceit used in *Much Ado About Nothing* and in Della Porta's regular comedy *Gli duoi fratelli rivali* (1601). The transvestite *innamorata* appears in another combination in *Il ritratto* (39) when "Silvia milanese," a name reminiscent of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, masquerades as the page Lesbino and performs the bed trick, substituting herself for the actress Vittoria in a dark room.

With *Twelfth Night*, Shakespeare was not just adapting *Gl'ingannati* for the English stage but rather participating in the ingenious and by then well-tried Italian way of making comedy by reshuffling pieces from the repertory and fusing them into an intrigue structure. He combined features of *The Comedy of Errors* with the new plot, this time using a single pair of twins but changing the sex of one, mixing in remembered details from *novelle* and Plautus, adding different theatregrams, such as the tricks played on Malvolio, typical of *commedia* subplots: in Della Porta's *Il moro* (1607) a presumptuous wooer is tricked into dressing like a parrot to please his lady and ridiculed for his pains, in his *La furiosa* (1609) a *capitano* bent on seduction is taken for a madman and shut up in a dark basement.

Another view of Shakespeare's dramatizing of Italian stories on the principles of *commedia* is obtained by comparing *Much Ado*

About Nothing with the contemporaneous *Fratelli rivali*. The point of departure for both was Bandello's *novella* (1, 22) about a deceit practiced to discredit a lady, a traditional plot that had been used by Ariosto and others before him. Pieces of it turn up in Scala's scenarios in the wake of the *comici dell'arte* traveling abroad. In Bandello's version, Timbreo di Cardona, arriving in thirteenth-century Messina in the train of Pedro of Aragon, falls in love and plights his troth with Fenicia, whose chastity a rival traduces with the help of a servant who poses as her mistress entertaining a lover from her window. Fenicia appears to die of shock, the wicked rival confesses, and when Timbreo keeps his pledge to marry as Fenicia's father decrees, he finds himself wed to the revived Fenicia herself.

Shakespeare takes his setting, Messina in the time of Pedro of Aragon, from Bandello, perhaps in French translation, but once again his manner of dramatizing the story shows his adherence to the *commedia* method and its repertory of movable parts. The parts he chooses, however, dramatize the *novella* differently from Della Porta's more melodramatic and tragicomic handling of it. Della Porta also uses details of action from Bandello not to be found in other versions, but he changes the names and brings the action closer to his audience by setting it in sixteenth-century Salerno, adding pieces of local history and making the plot turn on the rivalry of brothers in love and the moral dilemma of their uncle the viceroy who must see justice done. Both Della Porta and Shakespeare double the sets of characters, omit long gaps in time, add clowns and constables, clever and stupid servants, mocking speeches, malapropisms and puns, eavesdropping and mistakes, encounters contrasting the young men in love, sword play and lovers' dialogues, all in the established Italian way of fitting *novella* matter by *contaminatio* and redistribution into high-tech *commedia* form. But the contrast is as revealing as the resemblance, for the two dramatists vary and stage the story with different theatregrams from the same repertory. Della Porta makes much of the baroquely swaggering amorous Capitano Martebellonio; Shakespeare had used this theatregrams in its basic form dear to both scripted and improvised *commedia* in *Love's Labor's Lost*, but thereafter preferred to perform variations on it for brilliantly diverse characterizations, Falstaff, Othello, and Parolles. In *Much Ado About Nothing* only

the traces of the typical *capitano* may faintly be seen in some of Benedick's attitudes and speeches.

An effective mobile structure in the common repertory was the balcony or window scene combined with lyric evocation of the beloved as sunlight. It appears in scenarios for romantic or comic purposes, with the speech barely indicated, as in Scala's *La caccia* (37): "Isabella alla fenestra, invoca il sole" (Isabella at the window invokes the sun), and in *Fratelli rivali* (2.2-3) it opens with an impassioned love scene as Ignazio beholds Carizia at her window "Già fuggono le tenebre dell'aria, ecco l'aurora che precede la chiarezza del mio bel sole" (Now darkness flees from the air, here is the dawn preceding the brightness of my beautiful sun), and closes it "Ecco tramontata la sfera del mio bel sole" (There sets the sphere of my beautiful sun). Shakespeare does not use this theatregrams in *Much Ado About Nothing*, perhaps because it had already figured in *Romeo and Juliet* (2.2) and with a different in *Richard II* (3.3). The ceremoniously metaphorical love exchange between Ignazio and Carizia has no equivalent scene between Claudio and Hero in *Much Ado About Nothing*, and *Fratelli rivali* has no Beatrice and Benedick. But for them too the Italian theatre offered parallels. Although scenarios are by definition too sketchy to reveal more than the gist of scenes, dialogues like Francesco Andreini's *Bravure* (1607) and his late wife's "contrasti amorosi," which he published after retirement, display a range of dialogues actually used on stage, including both the lyrical wooing type of duet and the verbal fencing style that Shakespeare used in creating Beatrice and Benedick.

The balcony scene is not the only theatregram from *commedia* in *Romeo and Juliet*. Its plot is tragic in all the many narrative versions, of which Shakespeare seems to have known more than one. He principally follows Brooke's "Tragicall Historye of Romeus and Juliet," a 1562 verse translation of Boaistuau's translation of Bandello's novella (2.19) based on Da Porto's version of a still older story. Brooke saw "the same argument lately set foorth on stage," (Gibbons 1980, 240) but says neither where nor in what language. The details he added to his source in "Bandell" are Italianate comic theatregrams, Juliet's nurse for example. Whereas in the repertory of *tragedia* this role, labeled *nutrice*, customarily calls for moralizing or pathos, in *commedia* the speeches of the equivalent character of the *balia* (a

lower domestic term for the same function) are bawdy, quarrelsome, garrulous, and tinged with greed (her function often conflated with that of the go-between *ruffiana*). In Italy the story had been staged in several formats. Groto's *Adriana* (1578) presents the narrative as unrelieved tragedy set in ancient times; Scala's scenarios *La creduta morta* (97) and *Li tragici successi* (18) show how improvised comedy could make various combinations from pieces of the tale; Raffaello Borghini's late *commedia grave La donna costante* (1578), in tone, mixture of comic and serious, and emphasis on the theme of Fortune, best exemplifies the theatrical genre on which *Romeo and Juliet* was built: Shakespeare used the blueprint but excised the last turn of Fortune. To Brooke's embellishment of the *novella* with movable parts from the theatrical repertory Shakespeare added more in the same vein and introduced Mercutio's mocking of the Nurse (2.4), a standard stage device of youth baiting age. The entire dramaturgical procedure, the encounters and skirmishes, the alternation of jesting and lovemaking in *Romeo and Juliet* belong to Borghini's and Della Porta's genre of comedy—until the denouement, when the disasters averted in *commedia grave* are allowed to run their tragic course.

Othello is another extraordinary Shakespearean variation on Italian theatrical structures. Giraldi's *novella* of the Moor of Venice (*Ecatommiti* 3.7) is too sordid to be called tragic, uniformly dismal in its ending. A handsome but wicked Ensign importunes the Moor's wife in vain, concludes that she loves a subaltern and persuades her husband of this, attacks the subaltern in the dark as he comes from a prostitute's house, cuts off his leg and, with the Moor's connivance, bludgeons Disdemona to death with a sock filled with sand. Eventually the Moor is killed by his wife's relatives. The Ensign dies from damage done under torture for another crime, after which his wife tells all. The characters are sketchy types and only one of them has a name, "Disdemona." To stage this brutal tale Shakespeare employed the *dramatis personae* of a standard Italian scenario and a couple of themes varied in innumerable scenarios and *commedie erudite*: jealousy and optical illusion presented in familiar comic actions and relationships. Desdemona and Emilia are placed in the rapport of *padrona* with *serva*. Brabantio is assigned the stage function of the Pantalone, father of the runaway bride, resembling Shylock in this, and his brother's name, "Gratiano," is that of the

second *vecchio* in improvised comedy. Othello's stage lineage may be traced to the figure of the *capitano*, here transformed in that his eloquent female-fascinating stories of military prowess and exotic travels are all true. Cassio and Rodrigo belong to the range of suitors, worthy and foolish, who pursue the *innamorata*. Bianca is a *cortegiana*, and Iago a diabolic mutant of the clever scheming *servo* who creates the illusion in Othello's mind that his situation is a stereotypical comedy of adultery, complete with stock figures and himself as the cuckold. Shakespeare propels this farce into tragedy by means of the psychological power he gives to his characters, by Othello's refusal to play the role, showing how a "real" captain and husband might act if he took the scenario seriously. Making tragedy of comedy, Shakespeare also makes his own play seem "real" by contrast with farcical theatregrams.

Although neither originated in a *novella*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Tempest* must be counted among Shakespeare's Italianate plays because their sylvan settings, fantasy plots, magic, super- and subhuman beings link them with the popular pastoral play. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was printed with the comedies in the first folio, but in Italy it would have been classified *favola boscareccia* or *pastorale*, like Pasqualigo's *Intricati*, in which mismatched shepherds and nymphs are properly paired off in love by means of sleep, dreams, and a potion administered by a sorceress and her Puck-like familiar. By magic she attaches animal heads to three clownish visitors to the woods. Shakespeare chose to use all of these theatregrams minus the pastoral trappings. Scala's *Rosalba incantatrice* (44) employs the sorceress and her spirits but sets her on an island and introduces wandering princes and princesses in episodes reminiscent of *Cymbeline*, *The Winter's Tale*, and *The Tempest*. Like *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Tempest* has no single narrative source but is composed on the principles of the Arcadian scenarios from the Locatelli/Corsini manuscripts and Scala's hybrids, such as *Gli avvenimenti comici, pastorali e tragici, opera mista* (42). Like some of them, it is a maritime version of the pastoral plays in which clowns, nobles, magicians, and lovers meet in the wild to know themselves and their hearts and to right old wrongs.

Polonius' praise of the traveling players for their productions "pastoral, pastoral-comical, historical-pastoral, tragical-historical,

tragical-comical-historical-pastoral" performed by both "the law of writ and the liberty" (2.2.380-83), inevitably sounds like Shakespeare's jesting acknowledgment of a range of possibilities and principles of playmaking that came from Italy and found a matchlessly creative exponent in London.

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Louise George Clubb is Professor Emerita of Italian Studies and Comparative Literature at Berkeley. A former Chair of the Department of Italian and Dean of Humanities in the College of Letters and Science, she is a leading expert on Italian Renaissance theater and literary relations between Italy and England during the Renaissance.

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Francesco Furini, *Pittura e Poesia* (1626)