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# *Beyond Books and Plays Cultures and Practices of Writing in Early Modern Theatre*

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Raimondo Guarino and Lene Buhl Petersen

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Thanks awfully muchly  
(James Joyce, *Ulysses*, 11.299)

*Donatella Pallotti, Paola Pugliatti*

## Contents

<i>Editorial</i> Raimondo Guarino	7
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### PART ONE

#### INTRODUCTION

<i>Beyond Books and Plays: A Nomenclature for the Cultures and Practices of Writing in Early Modern Theatre</i> Lene Buhl Petersen	19
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### PART TWO

#### CASE STUDIES

#### TEXT AND STAGE: (VERNACULAR) TRADITIONS AND AFTERLIFE

<i>About French Vernacular Traditions: Medieval Roots of Modern Theatre Practices</i> Darwin Smith	33
<i>Acting and Reading Drama: Notes on Florentine sacre rappresentazioni in Print</i> Paola Ventrone	69
<i>Beyond the Bad Quarto: Exploring the Vernacular Afterlife of Early Modern Drama</i> Thomas Pettitt	133
<i>Visions of the City in Seventeenth-Century Roman Popular Theatre</i> Roberto Ciancarelli	173

## NEGOTIATING MEANINGS: TEXT AND STAGE RECEPTION

- 'Pawn! Sufficiently holy but unmeasurably politic': The Pawns Plot in Middleton's A Game at Chess* 191  
Christopher Haile
- An Eighteenth-Century mise en scène and the Play of Refractions: Essayists, Critics, Spectators, and an Actor Negotiate Meanings* 225  
Maria Grazia Dongu

## IMPERMANENCE OF AUTHORSHIP

- The Diminution of Thomas Kyd* 251  
Darren Freebury-Jones
- Contributors 279



## Editorial

This collection of essays is entitled *Beyond Books and Plays* precisely because its aim is to reflect on the relationship between performance cultures and practices of writing within and beyond the actual texts of the plays, or the material evidence of existing books. The attention to materiality that has emerged out of Textual Studies and the Sociology of Texts since the 1980s allows us – indeed requires us – to contextualize the production and transmission of texts within the specific context of early modern theatre.

Theatres are places for performance, and consequently represent points of contact between material traditions and immaterial legacies, between traces of written memory and practices in oral traditions. In medieval Europe, in a context of expansion and secularization of writing practices, adopting a written text for performances created a link between literary competence and traditions of entertainment or celebration. Darwin Smith's contribution, 'About French Vernacular Tradition' systematically examines French manuscripts of sacred and profane dramas performed between the thirteenth and the mid-sixteenth centuries. Smith's survey provides a glossary of terms used to classify manuscripts in terms of their form, content, and function. As 'theatre manuscripts' gradually became objects in their own right, they seemed 'to invade the complex process to performance through rehearsals and vice-versa: players' parts, books of prologues, conductor's books, sermons, panels for characters and locations on stage, reference books, lists of *secrets* (special effects), of players and characters – of which only a few still exist (30). Smith concludes by exploring the variations and 'performed layers' found in the writing processes of *Maistre Pierre Pathelin* and the *Mysteres des Trois Doms*. In the layers produced by performance processes, the *original*, between the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, served as a 'full text used as a reference book (*le livre*) in a definite place and time' (36). The same denomination – *original, book* – emerges from documents of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century cycles of English Mystery Plays (Mills 2007). The 'stage original', when used for rehearsals and performances, was transcribed in separate parts for the players. These parts had the characteristic size and shape of *rôles*, or *rolls*, like those used to perform the Passion in the Coliseum in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Rome, or like the Elizabethan scrolls, and the *papeles* for the actors of the professional

Spanish troupes (for this kind of manuscript see Lalou 1991; Palfrey and Stern 2007; for the *rotuli* used in the Coliseum Passion Plays, Wisch and Newbiggin 2013; for *papeles*, Vaccari 2006). Texts that were dismembered to be given to the players to perform were often lost, as was the case in the plays used in Italian court festivals (Bortoletti 2008). Theatre manuscripts were tools, and as such they convey information about their use and users. They served as aide-memoirs, supporting the transmission of information both in the context of the performance and beyond. In many cases, as with the Umbrian confraternities, they help us situate performance activities within the cults and ceremonies of the communities that adopted them (Nerbanò 2006). The fluctuation of writing practices between permanence and impermanence accompanied the transition and overlap between manuscript and print cultures (for the impact of printing on the textual tradition of French *Mystères*, Runnalls 1999).

The introduction of printing in the second half of the fifteenth century, allowed a text with an undefined readership to be defined. Paola Ventrone's essay 'Acting and Reading Drama' focuses on Florentine *sacre rappresentazioni* in print, analyzing how the development of printed text illustrated with woodcuts expanded and enhanced performances as spiritual experiences. Booklets were a shared *medium* which could be read out loud, or individually in silence. The relationship between text and woodcut added value to the written, memorized, and performed word.

With the spread of printing, anyone could buy the illustrated books produced for a large public, including those who could not read or wanted to learn, since the illustrations provided a useful aid for recalling the words heard at the group reading and reliving them in the dimension of private devotion. (p. 92 in this volume)

Darwin Smith's work on French texts, and Paola Ventrone's on Florentine booklets, help us trace the origins of the many different paths that theatre texts followed. The phenomenon of printed plays, which has become the focus of debate over the last few decades in research on the history of the book, placed the printed work in a peculiar relation to the context and writing practices that gave rise to them (McKenzie 1986; Chartier 1999). Printing transplanted and transformed theatre texts, but at the same time preserved the processes of writing for performance. At the time Shakespeare was working, two important phenomena came together. The printing of playbooks tended to consolidate both the unity of the text and the author's identity, while, by contrast, the texts of playbooks were modelled on the requirements of production, the sharing out of collaborative copying and writing, the division into parts so that actors could learn their lines, the vagaries of aural memory on the scribe, who wrote and put together the copies ready for the censors, stage management, and the company's repertoires. The Elizabethan and Jacobean professional

theatre system, it has been suggested, should be attributed to a 'collective mind' (Tribble 2011). There is no doubt some truth in this, with cognitive implications that become concrete whenever evidence of the texts' use can be found: textual transformations were, of course, the result of numerous transcriptions according to the frequency of performances. In addition, there was infinite potential for tension between a unified text and the variations that resulted from the practices and processes of memorization. There were many different factors to take into account: playwriting was prevalently a collaborative activity, copies transcribed and memorized were stratified, and a literary identity of the playwright became apparent only gradually after the introduction of printed plays. Surviving theatre manuscripts were not accounted for in a systematic way until relatively recently (Ioppolo 2006, Werstine 2012). Compared to preserved manuscripts, the old opposition 'foul papers vs prompt-books', and the very idea of prompt-books as operative texts, and tools for controlling the outcome of performances, has been circumscribed. They are now mostly labelled 'a manuscript of theatrical provenance' or as 'playhouse manuscripts' (Werstine 2012). Almost eighty years have not passed in vain from W.W. Greg's *Dramatic Documents from the Elizabethan Playhouses* (1931) to Tiffany Stern's *Documents of Performance in Early Modern England* (2009). On the one hand, the range of text types (manuscript and print) has widened (plot-scenarios, bills, advertising, scrolls, arguments, para-texts, backstage-plots); on the other, these text types show the wide range of written culture that framed playwriting.

The outcomes and appearance of printed texts give rise to rather generalized views regarding transcription processes: 'Many different kinds of copies, foul papers, authorial or scribal fair copies, and previously printed Quartos were used during Shakespeare's lifetime to print Quarto editions of his plays' (Ioppolo 2006, 157). The stratification of the Quartos and the genesis of the First Folio made it 'immediately apparent that "Shakespeare" was a book whose text could not be definitively established' (Kastan 2001, 98).

Shakespeare's texts and, more generally, theatre texts from Shakespeare's time that circulated in order to be performed, had a practical application. Freed from the conditioning and teleology of the 'editorial problem', these texts can be read as vehicles of memory and transformation. The title of Pettitt's contribution to this collection sums the issue up perfectly: 'Beyond the Bad Quarto'. Starting with twentieth-century Shakespearean philology, hypotheses regarding manuscripts and print books have given us concepts and categories that discriminate print versions that are considered 'suspect', or 'incorrect', simply because they conform less than other versions to the quality required of a literary text. Apart from the fact that these criteria for evaluating Quartos have generally been discredited, this discriminating view has changed: variations can equally be seen as being signs of generative processes; as tools for delving into the living tissue of the text, into the economy of transcriptions within theatre companies, and the interface

between the written and spoken word on stage. It is essential to go back to thinking in terms of practical memory dictated by the demands of performing on the stage. Memorial reconstruction in professional theatres has been considered by the New Bibliography as a hypothetical process of generating ‘bad Quartos’. Performing written plays requires a hybridization of written records and aural memory, which conditions the stratification of texts and the actual writing of the play. A strategy that adopts ‘suspect texts’ as crystallizations of deep processes concerning writing and performance draws inspiration from Pettitt’s reading of Marlowe’s ‘formulaic episodes’, discussed by Laurie Maguire (1996, 116) in her re-evaluation of memorial reconstruction. This research direction has been continued in Petersen’s *Errant Texts*, examining the signs and processes ‘of a much more wide-ranging notion of dramatic transmission’ (2010, 139).

In ‘Beyond the Bad Quarto’, Thomas Pettitt discovers the paths that segments of written (manuscript or printed) texts followed from London theatres, through the fragmentation of the drolls – the fragments recomposed and performed by strolling players – on to the local festive traditions of the mummers’ itinerant country performances. Tracing a relationship between bad Quartos and folk ballads, and other traditions of oral expression, started as an analogy of method. It has led, however, to a field where the dynamics of transformation and adaptation within the logic of the theatre, and in other performative traditions, have created important, lasting, and recurrent intercultural cross-pollination. This approach has led to consequences in other research areas. Studies on authorship and co-authorship, and on criteria for edition and interpretation, tend to have to deal with a more specific notion of ‘instability’, in the sense that a text functions within a living theatrical organism. An indication of authorship given on the basis of internal evidence cannot be completely separated from the idea of an environment where collaboration does not mean a sum of parts, and where actors’ memories interacted with the craft of writing. New contours of disseminated or disintegrated authorship lend depth and definition to the profiles of Kyd, Marlowe, Peele, and Middleton. These recognitions require a more precise reconstruction of both the individual production of playwrights and the configurations of collective writing (Taylor 2017). The development towards recognizing ‘secondary’ figures supports the argument for a re-consideration (and a wider canon of works) of Thomas Kyd called for, in this collection, by Darren Freebury-Jones in ‘The Diminution of Thomas Kyd’, where the examination of internal evidence, and methodologies of attribution, are immersed in an environmental, concrete, interpersonal framework of imitation and influence around 1590:

My evidence suggests that Shakespeare was deeply influenced by the phraseology of *The Spanish Tragedy*, *Soliman and Perseda*, *King Leir*, and *Arden of Faversham* (Shakespeare’s verbal borrowings from *The Spanish Tragedy* and *King Leir*

exceed *Arden of Faversham*), having perhaps seen or performed in these plays. Acknowledgement of Shakespeare's debt to Kyd can therefore offer an insight into the development of Shakespeare's dramatic language, and his aural, or 'actor's', memory of theatrical phrases. (p. 256 in this volume)

We are not in a no-man's-land, but, rather, in a recurrent situation of collaboration, which is far more important than the ability to attribute segments of text with certainty to one or another author. The quest to configure an author within frames of collaboration in the late Elizabethan age, and other periods of Shakespeare's trajectory, generates illuminating close-ups on the process of textual sedimentation.

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It is well known that the prevalent system for acting on stage and producing texts adopted by professional acting companies in Italy was the opposite of that adopted by commercial companies in England. The re-consideration of textual studies on Shakespeare and his contemporaries has its counterpart in research into the *Commedia dell'Arte*. For Italian actors, creating a structure for a play relied on putting together the actions catalogued in the repertoires of the *scenari* or *canovacci* (Testaverde 2007). By contrast, the actual acting of the parts relied more on the invention ('improvisation') of lines based on fixed conventions and *loci*, which were expressed freely, rather than based on the memorization of set, written scripts (on *parti libere* and *tipi fissi*, that is, 'free parts' and 'set roles', see Taviani and Schino 1982). It was another way of dealing with, managing, and publishing the relationship between stage craftsmanship and literary skill. The outcome was seen as a testament to the prestige and fame of the leaders and protagonists of the most successful companies (Marotti and Romei 1991). Research into these aspects has used sources and theatrical text types to contribute to a more valid reconstruction of the acting skills and writing habits of companies in Italy, as well as exploring their links with contemporary literary *élites*. Roberto Ciancarelli's crowded Roman landscape in 'Visions of the City' shows how the accumulation and contamination of stage inventions created a common ground for amateur and professional companies in seventeenth-century Rome. The seven-volume manuscript of the *Opere sceniche diverse in prosa* held in the *Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu*, from which Ciancarelli extracts the fragments published, is a depository of skills and identities, where texts are imbued with the practice of constant hybridization with carefully-wrought inlays. The dilemma between the permanence and impermanence of text would be purely speculative if it were not rooted in the way a text was put to use. It is vital to recognize what has gone into the breadth of the repertoires in order to appreciate how effective theatre culture was. Collections of manuscripts and printed repertoires provide different

perspectives. The monumental bibliography compiled by Saverio Franchi between 1988 and 1997 in *Drammaturgia romana* is worth citing here, as it focuses on Rome. It is a portrait, in the form of a chronological catalogue of prints, of theatrical life in a European city between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; a portrait re-evoked and re-constituted literally comparing the events on stage to printed pieces and *libretti* for operas and oratorios, the booklets which aimed to synchronize theatre seasons with opportunities for reading. They are not documenting facts; they are facts in themselves, which can provide a great deal of information, owing to their breadth, dissemination, and intensity of their ties with festive and everyday life. It is not a question of linking text to performance. It is, rather, a matter of exploring networks of relationships, and constellations of behaviours, between the public sphere and material culture of entertainment, in what Ferdinando Taviani (2010) has labelled ‘the literary space of the theatre’.

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In research on the editorial definition of Shakespeare’s texts around 1700, Kastan’s observations concerning Lewis Theobald are often cited. In Theobald’s single figure, ‘can be seen the era’s [i.e. early eighteenth century] schizophrenic relationship to Shakespeare, always admiring but, in one mode, presumptuously altering his plays for success on the stage, while, in another, determinedly seeking the authentic text in the succession of scholarly editions’ (2001, 93). This ‘schizophrenic relationship’ was, in fact, inevitable in the contradiction and counterpoint between the stage life of texts and their printed history. A few examples might be useful at this point. Both hand-copied manuscripts and printed texts could well be destined for reading, but editions of plays for reading – as we might expect today – often became the means for actors to learn their parts, or for copies to be reproduced in the form of scripts. Shakespeare’s Quartos and the 1623 Folio have been used as prompt-books, and they could well have been used as a basis for revisions and re-elaborations both of the text and performance – see, for example, the 1676 quarto of *Hamlet* annotated by John Ward in 1740s (Chartier 2015, but the chapter was first published in 2011, 201-212; and, in general, for the seventeenth century, Evans 1960-1996). The dialectic between printing of an author’s text and alterations for the stage has led to entire collections of texts with glosses by actors written in the margins (Knight 2015), while scripts, alterations and acting versions were stabilized by means of their printing into ‘performance publications’. The fate of texts that have given life to the theatre and then been transformed into books is not only a transformation in a work of literature; it is also a potential return to the stage of a play. In the junctures and discords between these two alternatives, the history of European theatre is mirrored in a history of theatre in print (for a collection of overviews, Forestier, Caldicott

and Bourqui 2007; for Italy, Riccò 2008; for Spain, Profeti 1999). As the relationship between theatre life and book culture became more consolidated (see, in general, Peters 2000), the literary space of the theatre became an *n*-dimensional system, a ground of forking paths, where books – not just *playbooks*, but every other material manifestation of text – take on and multiply their potential uses. And where, similarly, actor/readers cross-over with writer/spectators and remodel the text according to the transactions and metamorphoses that have taken place in performances.

Christopher Haile's essay, "Pawn! Sufficiently holy but unmeasurably politic", searching for the identity of the White Queen's Pawn in *A Game at Chess*, surveys the parody of theatrical clichés that Middleton, playwright and Chronologer of the City of London, adopted as a tool for representing the history of the day. To the extent that the making of Shakespeare's First Folio was involved in the staging of the sacrificed pawn. In Middleton's view, theatre could either frame or disrupt the readability of the world, or of contemporary affairs, in as much as spectators and readers acknowledged that the text of the play linked the small world of the stage to the big world outside by means of interpretations and metaphors.

The way that theatre interprets texts from the past is to breathe fresh life into the repertory by renegotiating different points of view. Maria Grazia Dongu, in her essay 'An Eighteenth-Century *mise en scène* and the Play of Refractions', explores Garrick's *Macbeth* (in various productions from 1744 to 1768) challenging an issue that is methodologically tricky: how far should one accept the dictates of treatises or the testimonies of critics when analyzing the work of the actor? The language of description, and the values of theoretical perception, are considered from the actor and playwright Garrick's perspective. In this game of refractions, 'actors, critics and theatre goers negotiated the text into a collective, distinctively provisional rewriting of *Macbeth*' (p. 229 in this volume).

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In the vortex of Shakespeare's work, in the endeavours of Italian actors in the *Commedia dell'Arte*, and the afterlife of repertoire modifications and the resurgence of playbooks, we are dealing with the things and voices that surround and underlie the text. There are different layers and different states of the spoken word that lead to – and lend life to – writing. In this dimension, the transitions – somewhere between imitations and variations – that take place in the transformation from speech, to text, to book, which are intrinsic to the theatre, are not linear paths but inter-textual and inter-cultural shifts. There is a lively, never-ending motion between listening, reading, and writing. This motion requires us to focus on a key-role, to which we now devote a brief conclusion. Who were the scribes, and what was their task in the production of texts for the theatre? The possible responses

are as many as the functions and interpretations of the part. Even scribes known to have worked with the company of the King's Men, such as Ralph Crane and Edward Knight, played different roles. Knight was the playhouse book-keeper (employed by the troupe in 1620s/1630s), while Crane was a professional scribe, much debated in his role as 'First Editor' of some of the texts published in the 1623 Folio (Werstine 2015).

The role of scribes makes us wonder about their long-lasting influence and extreme importance: scribes were effectively men of letters who were present and active in professional theatres. The renewal of interest for the surviving manuscripts, which has reshaped our hypotheses about the lost manuscripts behind Shakespeare's Quartos, have put scribes right at the centre of the theatrical *scriptorium*, responsible for the reproduction of copies and the transition from playhouse to printers. Their liminal identities have further resonance. In Scarron's *Roman comique* (1651), the troupe of travelling actors welcomed Léandre, the boy escaping from the Jesuit College at La Flèche. They went on to offer him employment as *le valet qui écrit tous nos rôles* ('the servant who copies all our roles'; Scarron 1967, 254). As the author of *Roscius Anglicanus* (1708), the prompter John Downes is famously considered responsible for providing the first history of the London theatres after the Restoration. Theatre scribes, who were seemingly confined by the specialization of their task, actually responded to the various requirements of writing for the theatre. Their ability to negotiate their way between preserving and changing, which can be traced back to their book-keeper function in medieval performances, fulfilled several different duties: stage management, preservation of the dramatic repertoire, negotiations with censorship. Early modern theatre was organized on the basis of many different processes of reading and writing that influenced practical memory. Its unwritten traditions re-surface, emerge, and conflict with the physical evidence of acts of writing.

The phenomena that Thomas Pettitt observes as degeneration of textual fragments along the 'low road' of the 'little traditions' (a category that goes back to the origins of the very notion of cultural performance) were a transplant of symbolic values, from London productions to wider and peripheral contexts. Cheap prints and manuscript fragments, drolls and dialogues, revisions and transpositions: in all these states and processes, textual polymorphism was the result of continuous transactions between written transmission and performance practices which involved adaptations and agencies that were both professional and non. The flow of texts which played an active part in theatre practice are a vitally revealing and identifying element of the dynamics of writing in modern Europe.

Raimondo Guarino



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# PART ONE

## Introduction



# Beyond Books and Plays: A Nomenclature for the Cultures and Practices of Writing in Early Modern Theatre

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## *Abstract*

This introductory essay constitutes a survey of the contributions gathered in this issue of *JEMS*. It begins with an overview of the volume's area of study and moves on to build a glossary for an academic field whose perimeters are perhaps not all that clear. The survey next dwells – in a little more depth – on the various perspectives offered and issues raised in the volume, concluding with an afterthought on where this collection of papers leaves us as a scholarly community wishing to continue to engage with a difficult interstitial field beyond books and plays and between cultures and practices of writing in early modern theatre.

Keywords: *Civic Drama, Early Modern Stage Products and Processes, Early Modern Theatre Media, Impermanence of Authorship, Vernacular Traditions*

You are about to read a collection of essays that address the major cultural phenomenon of the production of early modern spectacle, including the multiple practices, cultures, and uses of writing that underpin and surround that which was performed. This situates volume 8 of *JEMS* at the crossroads between textual studies, performance or theatre studies, cultural studies, authorship studies, and studies of orality vs. literacy. Venturing beyond any direct relationships between book and stage, as explored in studies of recent years, the topics covered here address textual practices both as sources and offshoots of contextual theatrical enterprises; the relationships between texts and performers' cultural environments in time and place, and the relationship between the popular professional theatre and a literary environment. If the production of text in theatrical practice from the late fifteenth to the seventeenth century (from printed canons to manuscript plays and fragments of plays onwards to variants of mummers' plays and the use of dramatic woodcut illustrations in printed performative genres) has your interest, then read on. This volume not only focuses on the contexts of major national



traditions (i.e. Elizabethan and Jacobean theatre, French theatre, Italian professional and popular theatre and their theatrical environments) but also on peripheral and lesser known domains.

The following papers accordingly explore the connections between printed texts and performances and, importantly, the (vernacular) afterlives of printed texts and performances, including popular, civic and religious representations and traditions of representation. It is our hope that this collection of articles will open up new horizons and allow you to ponder the syntheses and synergies between literary traditions and performance cultures in early modern Europe. These connections and synergies are first and foremost detectable through the critical vocabulary used across the volume, and as a co-editor I am indeed pleased to see a new vocabulary forming for the study of this field. Any academic realm arguably benefits from having its own glossary, both as inspiration for future studies and as a means for classification. Allow me therefore now, first of all, to highlight (cf. bold print below) some of the cross-cutting, analytical terminology used in the articles.

The very first paper, by Darwin Smith, speaks of ‘the original book’/‘full text’ as the **crossroads** of all processes; the source of all other reading practices. ‘The original text’ remains a much-contested theoretical concept, and rightly so, but defining this document type as a **crossroads** makes a difference because of the very uncertainty and the multiplicity of choice embedded in the cross-roads both as notion and *topos*. In this way, Smith successfully resituates the concept of originality, turning it from something static into something highly dynamic.

The first paper importantly and in several ways also highlights the centrality of **textual variance** (due to performance processes and the extemporising practices of players), and introduces the notion that playtexts may be seen as **sediments in written circulation**.

Sediments, in Smith’s interpretation, are **text tradition variations** that by definition are difficult to locate in the process between writing, performing and conserving. This gives rise to the first article’s all-important introduction of the concept of the *textus*. Here, specifically, the *textus* denotes a format or mediation tool of couplets designed for reproduction, but the concept can be more broadly applied, throughout the entire field of early modern studies, as a reminder that the dramatic canons that we study – if popular enough – are likely to have involved some type of memorized *textus* for each performance of a play which, when voiced ‘live’, remains **plastic in performance**.

The article moves on to introduce other very useful concepts and terminology, like the notion of a **dual writing-orality channel**, enabling the evolution of the performed material towards monumentality, facilitated by the ever-growing place of the written word. Smith’s paper offers up terminology such as **formatted texts** and **formulas in texts**, reminding us that the **author is corporate as much as an individual**.

The second article, by Paola Ventrone, continues in the vein of cross-cutting practices, identifying a **transformation** of the spectacular from **performance action** to **container of memory**, through images fixed in woodcut book illustrations. We also hear of a **repeatable format fixed in print**, and of **literary forms with spectacular dimensions**, as Ventrone continually highlights the two-way channel that exists between the 'live' and static formats of theatre. Equally apt is the terminological nexus of the **representation in body/performative action** vs. **representation as object/container of mental images** (i.e. illustrations in book form). Last but not least, the second paper also emphasizes the important link between performance and **community**. That is to say, that (early modern) theatre almost always incorporates the tastes of a public/an audience, and as such by definition functions on an adaptive and multi-original basis.

The third paper, by Thomas Pettitt, introduces a nomenclature for the general and generically wide-ranging **vernacular afterlives** of early modern plays. After a play's stage history, Pettitt explains, follows a vernacular afterlife, borne out not only through regular actors, but also by the people involved in non-institutional, **extra-theatrical performance** traditions. Pettitt thus makes a case for the cross-media dissemination of verbal material over time, across both professional and folk trajectories, involving what Pettitt refers to as **textual degradation** during **re-contextualization** and **recollection from memory in performance**.

To our glossary Pettitt's essay adds further key terms like the *Endform* and *Zielform*; terminology derived from the work of the Swiss folklorist Max Lüthi, but in Pettitt's scholarly *oeuvre* used more broadly than by Lüthi to denote an identifiable morphology that all kinds of transmitted performance material will tend towards.

Another significant term introduced in Pettitt's paper is the *theatergram* or **dramatic formula** (a notion first elaborated by Louise George Clubb), which enables 'new permutations of established common material in a broad and extended swathe of western drama from Greco-Roman theatre, through liturgical Easter Plays, German carnival interludes (*Fastnachtspiele*), French farces, and the *commedia dell'arte*, to the Elizabethan stage and beyond' (p. 136 in this volume). Thus defined, the **theatergram** is a familiar typology common to many forms of early theatre; and, to my mind, thus related to Darwin Smith's notion of the *textus*. Pettitt also speaks of **artisanal re-versifying** strictly within the metrical system and rhyme scheme of an original text, making use of typecast 'masks' and the like - notions that match the related concepts of the *textus/theatergram*.

In the fourth paper, Roberto Ciancarelli writes of the public or city theatre, where a whole city is performing in groups and associations, introducing the term **theatre as community** (unwittingly echoing Ventrone). In Ciancarelli's paper, we are reminded of the collaborative dramatic mechanics of **commune**

**masks**, and of the **stock figures** or **masked types** from the *commedia dell'arte*; and it is highlighted how an audience is always already an integral co-producer of meaning/significance in public and popular theatre. To our critical glossary, we can thus add Ciancarelli's concept of city theatre's assembly of **recognizable gags**, where the whole **city serves as *spectaculum*** and the masks as **vessels for spectacle**; concepts that incidentally also echo Ventrone's point about the important ability of early modern theatre to **act out topicality** – in this case a *comical* commentary on life as lived in early modern Rome.

The fifth essay, by Christopher Haile, investigates a single play that seems to have been dependent on a particular **public locale**, London, to function. More specifically, Haile explores how the seventeenth century play *A Game at Chess* operates as a vessel for a specific message or as a 'learning' contract reliant on a specific type of culture that was widespread in (and likely spatially limited to) Jacobean London. Haile goes on to expand this notion and suggests that the very nature of early modern theatre is a **spatially limited cultural form** that every single audience member needs must have been familiar with in order for the enterprise to function. The terms or notions we gain from Haile's contribution are important in the sense that they highlight the implicit contract between stage and public that enables the reception of the performed material. Haile further adds to our glossary the concepts of the **public theatre as allegory**, **theatre as topical code to be decoded**; **theatre as a paraphrase** of life as lived, **spectacle as coded message** about actual real events (here involving specific political events) – all notions that are reminiscent of the arguments also presented elsewhere in this volume by e.g. Smith, Ciancarelli and Dongu. Finally, the **systematic use of clichés** for specific communicative purposes, and the **use of parallelisms** in plays in cahoots with the audience to 'discuss' something topical/political are equally relevant concepts to add to our glossary.

The sixth article, by Maria Grazia Dongu, introduces the pertinent concept of **the text/performance complex**, providing us with new terminology for the live/living text and its (re)generative energy. We are reminded of the **distinctly unstable** Elizabethan playtext, born from the **cooperative act of a playwright and his company coming up with a text**, which is then **corrected during rehearsals and adjusted for new audiences and historical contingencies over time**. It is highlighted how the text shares **the transience** of its theatrical performances – and here Dongu ventures the extremely apt term **a text *in situ***, with all that this entails of impermanent linguistic and stylistic constituents. The **text *in situ*** at the same time functions as a warning against the consolidating trends manifested by many 'canon-makers' of recent years, and can as such be seen as a methodological antidote to overly author-centric attribution studies and editorial practises alike. Dongu's paper likewise reinvokes concepts like the '**Urtext**' and **metatext fragments**, concepts that remain relevant if scholars are to come to terms with the **paradox** of the early modern theatrical text's **re-emerging fluidity**.



Dongu finally mentions the **interdependence of eye and ear** in the making of theatre, in the sense that **spectators perceive polysensorially**. These dimensions remain essential to theatre studies, but the principle risks being neglected when scholars try to fit stagecraft into singularly literary rubrics. Granted that the written formats of early modern theatre were intended for polysensoric reception, these formats will from their very inception have been **co-dependent on the bodies of actors** who would enact the words (in Dongu's words, the actor's body is transformed into a readable book composed of iconic signs) and use their voices to transform recognizable visual signs into recognizable oral/aural output to transmit what Dongu calls the **energy of the text**.

The seventh and final article, by Darren Freebury-Jones, is a study of canonicity and authorship, which naturally avails itself of the hallmark terminology of attribution studies. But Freebury-Jones' paper fuses the methodological terminology of statistics, metrics and linguistics with a deeper glossary of cross-cutting, interstitial terms like **parallels of thought, verbal matches; parallel phraseology, shared repetitions, and corresponding plot features** – all of which are essential to authorship studies as well as to the extra-authorial aspects covered in this volume, and as such germane to the glossary we are compiling. The notion that one play **'echoes** another' or that a given play may **echo all parts of an author's work** is central to Freebury-Jones' argument, although it remains to be determined whether it is the authors who are influenced by other authors or the words that influence other words, as it were. Thus, a collaborative nexus remains central also in Freebury-Jones' paper because collaboration and co-authorship, in the broadest sense of those words, constitute the very foundation of authorship studies.

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Highlighted in bold above we have heartening evidence of a critical vocabulary for the study of the many intermediate aspects between playtexts and performances, cultures, and practices of the early modern stages.

The glossary ties the contributions of the volume together and offers inspiration to scholars working or wanting to carry out work in this same field. However, the essays also contain specificities worth dwelling on because of the original research they offer and as a pointer to the exciting new perspectives made available through this volume. The final part of the Introduction therefore offers a taste of what is fully unfolded in the essays, which means that the eager reader may now choose to simply move on to the essays themselves or dwell a little longer on the aspects of the articles that I as a co-editor find particularly pertinent or enlightening.

With his study of the writing processes surrounding theatrical performances in medieval France, Darwin Smith positions the *original full text* ('the Book', 'le Livre', 'les originaux') as the conceptual and material

basis from which all ensuing forms, modes and copies were produced for *different* reading practices – entertainment, meditation, devotion, teaching, learning – identified by specific content, layout and material features. We may rank Smith's case studies of *Maistre Pierre Pathelin*, a late fifteenth century comedy, and the *Mystère des Trois Doms*, an early sixteenth century urban play, as excellent new studies of textual variation, dependent on the extemporizing practices of professional players and resulting in co-occurring so-called sediments in written circulation. Moreover, Smith importantly positions his work within the scholarly practice of *codicology*: the study of manuscripts as cultural artefacts for historical purposes. By doing so, he reminds us that theatre manuscripts are not so *in and of themselves*, but rather textual incarnations of practices of copying and making books, which belonged to widespread cultural activities and not theatre in particular. Smith also brings to our attention that the texts in the French medieval theatre do not distinguish themselves from other literary genres, but are basically composed as a *textus* of octosyllabic couplets – a practical tool highly efficient for transmedial circulation (i.e. memorising, performing, writing) of all manner of early genres. Later on, the theatre texts gain formal and functional generic qualities of their own, but the root principle or mechanism is a *textus*. Smith's main contribution is thus his timely reminder that the author of early modern theatre, *qua* the *textus*, is as much corporate as individual. Finally, the documented extemporizing practices of professional players, from the thirteenth to the fifteenth century, may well be key to understanding the origins not only of early French theatre or the Italian *commedia dell'arte*, but also more generally the beginning of modern professional theatre practices in Europe.

Paola Ventrone's research into acting and reading drama in the Florentine *sacre rappresentazioni* highlights and offers evidence for the transformation of a performative action into a container of memory images, fixed through printed book illustrations in the form of woodcuts. As Ventrone reminds us, the woodcuts function like staged drama to portray real-life situations in recognizable contexts that are either realistic or meta-real in the sense of stock dramatic references or *theatergrams* (to use a glossary term). These woodcut images might also be topical (recognizable Florence settings) as they become re-readable in print and as such merge coeval popular communication with the dissemination of received religious teaching.

Woodcuts, in short, are also readings/representations/media and communicative forms. They 'travel' in tradition like other spectacular material and, as Ventrone points out, gain afterlives of their own in other works far from where they originally appeared, bridging genres and, potentially, communicative purposes. This is somewhat akin to what Pettitt notices when phraseology or character names or stock types reoccur across time and place in unrelated plays/Mummers' plays. Incidentally, but related to Ventrone's

commentary on dramatic illustration, woodcuts also form part of the parallel traditions of stage plays in early English popular culture, particularly in printed ballad texts. Although not all early modern English ballads contain images, a majority are designed to include woodcut illustrations and many sixteenth and seventeenth century broadside ballads do. The woodcut illustration published with the 1663 broadside ballad of *[The] complaint and lamentation of Mistresse Arden of [Fev]ersham in Kent* is a case in point. The ballad text and its woodcut illustration clearly lie beyond what Freebury-Jones seeks to cover in his paper on the canon of Thomas Kyd, who Freebury-Jones cautiously defends as the author of the 1592 stage play *Arden of Faversham*. It would nevertheless be interesting to hear how an attribution scholar would relate the ballad-*cum*-woodcut dramatization of the ‘real’ story of the murder of Arden of Faversham to the interplay between authorial canons, given Freebury-Jones’ observation that the oral/aural memorial repository of theatrical phrases in one canon is more than capable of crossing over into another.

With his new case studies for this volume of *JEMS*, Thomas Pettitt has provided an extraordinarily well-founded and textually oriented study of the relationship between folk drama and early English theatre. Pettitt’s five case studies all juxtapose an original text of an early English stage play (or other dramatic genre) with documentation of a ‘vernacular’ performance decades or centuries later of that same item or dramatic material extracted from it. In each case, it is known which is the original version, and which is the derivative. In some cases, Pettitt acknowledges, the vernacular or folk text may also have functioned as a script for up-coming performances, while in all cases the vernacular text qualifies as a transcript documenting anterior performances. In this way, Pettitt’s analyses of textual discrepancies show in phraseological detail *what* has happened to that original text, ‘deliberately or unconsciously, before performance, between performances, during performance’ (p. 167 in this volume), through a particular strand of a given play’s vernacular afterlife. This means that we, through Pettitt’s new work, gain access to a ‘recording of the most recent production of a given Elizabethan stage play in the latter’s theatrical afterlife’ (p. 151 in this volume) – an entirely exhilarating notion and a fresh insight into exactly which dramatic elements appear to survive extensive transmission.

Roberto Ciancarelli’s paper on ‘self-referential theatre’ (involving citizens, amateur actors and authors, and depicting clear images of milieus, conventions and habits of a city, in this case Rome) describes how students, teachers, artisans, traders, soldiers and also writers and academics, painters, musicians, courtesans, notaries, judges, lawyers, doctors, surgeons and even priests join efforts to become a ‘whole performing city’. Ciancarelli crucially provides a valuable new example of a fragment of such a city comedy, outlining a web of recognisable masks and an assembly of comic gags whose

interpretation relies on the collaboration of a city, or *locale*, and not so much on collaboration between the separate categories of performers and audiences. Ciancarelli's research thus confirms the use of communicative vessels like the *textus/theatergram* and adds important further documentary evidence to the volume's formative case studies.

Christopher Haile's essay on Thomas Middleton's allegorical play *A Game at Chess* provides a necessary and relevant re-visitation of a special play. A play that the London audiences had the upper hand in interpreting through their intense familiarity with the several theatres in operation within and without the city. Haile uses *A Game* to exemplify how an early modern play may tell its story through a *systematic use* of parodies of famous scenes of other plays, adding further weight to the self-referential aspects explored by Ciancarelli and others in this volume. Haile's examples of distinct parallelisms between *A Game* and *Measure for Measure* shows how the play and its performers are in cahoots with the audience to 'discuss' something topical/political. The hypothesis that interlinked plots of various plays/performative products could be used to convey a new message sits rather well with this volume's overall focus on moving beyond *the* text or any *one* text. What happens in the complex between play/performance/text/audience/time, Haile thus reminds us, is that *parallel thematics* and their use is as interesting as parallel phraseology (as discussed by the majority of the authors in this volume) when trying to grasp the interconnectedness of the products and productions of the early modern stages. Allegory is by necessity 'more than meets the eye' - more than one text or meaning - which is another reason why Haile's paper fits well in his volume, which focuses on what lies beyond and between.

Maria Grazia Dongu's excellent discussion of eighteenth-century *mise en scène* as collective and negotiable creations of meaning shows how actors, critics, and theatregoers knowingly negotiated texts into collective, distinctively provisional rewritings. With *Macbeth* as a case study, Dongu illustrates how the *mise en scène* function as a dynamic process triggered by multiple and diverse readings of Shakespeare's plays, provisionally ended by the performers, the spectators and the eighteenth-century reviewers. As the material resurfaced in eighteenth-century essays on acting and acting techniques, a parallel or metatextual analysis of anterior performances came into being. This 'debate', enacted by actors and audiences, shows that the co-dependent stakeholders were 'fully aware of their role as active participants in producing the performance, as testified in their letters' (p. 244 in this volume). With Dongu's evidence of the *conscious* cooperation of writers, actors, and audiences in the intermedial and cross-medial field of theatre-making, we have a valuable foundation for further work on the collaborative nature of early modern playwrighting, including the intermediate afterlives of such plays.

While most of the other papers of the volume occupy the realm of the text-performance nexus, Darren Freebury-Jones, in the final paper, focuses on the professional theatre as a literary environment, where authors write plays and in so doing amass what critics were later to call canons and have proceeded to study as works of authorial origin. What makes Freebury-Jones' paper relevant to this volume is first of all its insistence that canonicity is also something that lies beyond books and plays; an aspect of the afterlives of the texts produced for the early modern stage.

Freebury-Jones not only reminds us that the Elizabethan stage was supplied with material by a choir of playwrights who laboured to earn money and presumably fame in competition and collaboration with each other. He also incorporates the notion that actor-playwrights' (aural) memories might result in the migration of phraseology or patterns of phraseology across canons. Freebury-Jones' paper makes a case for a more expansive Kyd canon, based on recent scholarly practices of computational authorship attribution, but in so doing he also highlights how one playwright (Shakespeare) might have been influenced by the phraseology of a series of popular stage plays: *The Spanish Tragedy*, *Soliman and Perseda*, *King Leir*, and *Arden of Faversham*, with more verbal borrowings from *The Spanish Tragedy* and *King Leir* and less from *Arden of Faversham*. This, Freebury-Jones proposes, might be related to Shakespeare himself having seen, heard, or performed in these plays and not in *Arden*, thus accepting an element of oral/aural/memorial transmission that is not usually incorporated into attribution studies. Freebury-Jones likewise emphasizes that Kyd was a scrivener's son, acknowledging that any given playwright might also be influenced by extra-authorial, artisanal practices. It is always revitalising when one scholarly field enters into dialogue with another, and thus Freebury-Jones' paper is refreshing in more ways than one as it concludes this volume by adding further (no less quantifiable or documentable) dimensions of early modern English dramatic production to those usually explored in literary/linguistic/stylometric attribution studies.

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This survey has been an invitation to expand notions of theatrical production, introducing a series of studies that engage with a difficult realm beyond and between early modern text and performance. By offering these fresh perspectives on the visual, oral/aural, multi-generic, corporate, communal and cross-medial capacities of early modern plays and playtexts, along with a critical nomenclature to go with it, we hope to at least assist in inspiring further research that reflects the practices beyond the playtexts themselves.



PART TWO  
Case Studies





*Text and Stage*  
*(Vernacular) Traditions and Afterlife*



# About French Vernacular Traditions: Medieval Roots of Modern Theatre Practices

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## *Abstract*

The article gives an overview of the writing processes of theatre performances in medieval France. At the crossroads of all processes is the *original* (the Book, *le Livre, les originaux*) containing the full text, and from which all kind of copies were produced for different reading practices – entertainment, meditation, devotion, teaching, learning – identified by specific content, layout and material features. With the case study of *Maistre Pierre Pathelin*, a late fifteenth-century comedy, is shown how the text varies in the performance process and extemporizing practices of professional players, and finally sediments in its written circulation. Detail of the same process can be closely observed with the *Mystère des Trois Doms*, a great urban play of the early sixteenth century for which, exceptionally, both the Book and an account register of a unique performance have come to us. We conclude that, in the medieval history of theatre performance in France, the author is as much corporate as individual, and that extemporizing practices of professional players, from the thirteenth to the fifteenth century may well be a key in understanding the origins of the Italian *commedia dell'arte* which is generally presented as the beginning of modern professional theatre practices.

Keywords: *Codicology, Commedia dell'arte, Extemporization, Medieval theatre, Performance*

## 1. *Introduction*

The corpus of French medieval theatre totalizes at least 530 texts dating from the end of the twelfth century to the mid-sixteenth century.<sup>1</sup> About

<sup>1</sup> The canonic corpus of French medieval theatre texts includes at least 176 *farces* (Faire 1993), 125 *moralités* (Doudet 2018), 18 *sotties* (Kuroiwa 2017), around 50 *miracles* and 160 *dits, jeux, histoires* and *mystères*. Petit de Julleville has listed 64 documented performances of mystery plays for which no texts are known (1880, vol. II, 628-632). In this essay, Figure 1 (*Writing and performing processes of the medieval dramatic text in XIIIth-XVIth-century France*), is the common work of Taku Kuroiwa, Xavier Leroux and Darwin



half of these texts are manuscripts, and the other half are books or booklets printed between the 1480s and the 1550s. With a few exceptions, all these *jeux, farces, miracles, mystères, moralités* and *sotties*, either in manuscript or in print, are known by a unique copy, with no related information about any performance. Whenever a performance is mentioned or documented in the archives, the text of the play is nearly always lacking. Nevertheless, it was taken for granted that all were 'theatre texts' and 'theatre manuscripts' that were part of a performing process. Altogether, it was believed that their content mirrored what was actually played or to be played, even though material and textual differences were great in the sources and editorial problems difficult to solve: lavishly decorated and illustrated vellum copies were mixed with scribbled texts on paper quires which looked like work in progress and, in some of the rare multi-copy works, the text tradition showed variations difficult to locate in the process between writing, performing and conserving. Only in the 1980s did scholars begin to question the evidence of 'theatre manuscripts', to call for codicological analysis, and to propose elements of typology for fifteenth-sixteenth-century manuscripts (Lalou and Smith 1988; Runnalls 1990). For this part of the corpus, it was pointed out that from sole codicological observations, there were no 'theatre manuscripts' as such but practices of copying and making books which belonged to widespread areas of activities, not theatre in particular (Smith 1998) and, for thirteenth-fourteenth-century manuscripts, the general way of identifying theatre texts on the basis of layout and didascalic apparatus was thoroughly questioned by Symes (2002).

Together with material observations, formal criticism of texts observed that the earliest corpus showed no difference from other literary genres. Theatre texts were basically composed in a versified *textus* (weft, *trame*) of octosyllabic couplets (*aabbccdd...*), as *romans, fabliaux, lais, dits*, or moral poems. Behind its apparent simplicity, this *textus* was a universal tool. The format permitted a multimedial circulation (memorizing, performing, writing) of any content in a most rational way for its versatility when written down (one to three ④<sup>2</sup> columns on a single page), where it also allowed transmission of text, music and image ① (Cruse, Parussa and Ragnard 2004), ④. To these considerable advantages were added the never-ending possibilities to extend contents *ad libitum* by inserting, either mentally or on the page, an interpolation, i.e. one pair or *x* pairs of lines to the *textus* without disturbing the initial structure of

Smith, a revised version of Kuroiwa, Leroux and Smith 2010, 29. The author of the present article thanks Virginie Trachsler for having corrected his draft, and Robert L.A. Clark for having read, emended and criticized all aspects of the text; responsibility for mistakes and lacks of any kind remaining his own.

<sup>2</sup> Circled numbers refer to the *Manuscripts Sources* at the end of the essay.

the couplets: e.g. aabb–*xyyyzz*–ccdd ... or aab–*bxyyyzzb*–bccdd ...<sup>3</sup> (Kuroiwa, Leroux and Smith 2010). To sum up: in the beginning, all kinds of contents were written down as *textus*, whether it was to be performed as ‘theatre’ or not. Only little by little, in the thirteenth century, a didascalical apparatus of speaker headings (*noms de rôle*) begins to distinguish, in the writing, a ‘theatre text’ from other kinds of text. Still, in the fourteenth century, the *textus* of dramatic works *in the origin* could be written down without any speaker headings, such as *Courtois d’Arras* (34), and adapted for recitation, as Rousse has demonstrated in an exemplary manner (1978).

Up to that time, theatre texts appear only in miscellanies offering variegated but exclusively versified contents (26)(35)(74) written down to preserve narrative and teaching models through entertaining, learned, religious or moral works (Hasenohr 1999, 46-49). These miscellanies are necessarily linked to persons or communities who are in the institutional position to collect texts and who possess the financial means to have them reproduced in the luxury conservative form of a book. This is why, whenever it is possible to do the anamnesis of a miscellany, it goes back ultimately to prominent persons and/or institutions: e.g. the goldsmiths’ confraternity of Paris for the two volumes of the 40 *Miracles de Notre-Dame par personnages* (24)(25); the count of Artois, Gui de Dampierre, and the Hangest family, whose associated coats of arms frame the margins (an undelible mark of property) of the famous ms Paris BnF fr. 25566 (55), containing all major poetical works, music and plays (*Jeu de la Feuillée*, *Jeu de Robin et Marion*) of Adam de la Halle; King Charles the VI’s court for the phenomenal codex containing 1498 texts of Eustache Deschamps (27), which includes the remarkable *Dit des quatre offices de l’ostel du roy à jouer par personnaiges* (Doudet 2012a); the Collège de Navarre in Paris, where was performed a *moralité* (Bossuat 1955) on January 17, 1427, preserved as such in a compendium of schoolworks (54).

The expanding ‘literacy of the laity’ (Parkes 1973), thanks to schooling and to the production of paper which improved technically and reduced its costs constantly for our whole period (Bozzolo and Ornato 1980), transformed the relation between orality and the written word, both media functioning then more as a dual channel than one replacing the other. With the autonomization of theatre texts in self-contained units, as *Griseldis* (38),

<sup>3</sup> ‘Interpolations’ are to be distinguished from changes which don’t alter the structure of the weft. The technique symbolized in the second example, where the interpolation is added by copying at its extremities the color of the existing rhyme where inserted, thus producing four identical rhymes (aab–*bxyyyzzb*–bccdd...), has been called the ‘quadruple rime chevauchante’ a technique discovered and analyzed by Raymond Lebègue (1960). But it is often impossible to distinguish what is added from what has been cut and, moreover, an interpolation can also be a final integration of what was already intended to be performed but not written out in advance.

the new distinct genre qualifications of *moralité*<sup>4</sup> and *farce* appear,<sup>5</sup> this latter term referring to entertaining contents (not exclusively comical as it is usually believed). In mid-fifteenth century, a structural change modifies the relation between the production of a text (any text) and its circulation: with the invention of the printing press, hundreds of copies of the same work were produced to be sold to unknown readers for unknown purposes whereas, before then, a single manuscript was *always* prepared for a known person or an identified community for a specific need or potential uses. Contemporarily, writing seems to invade the complex process to performance through rehearsals and vice-versa: players' parts, books of prologues, conductor's books, sermons, panels for characters and locations onstage, reference books, lists of *secrets* (special effects), of players and characters – of which only a few exist today. They were recycled after the performance, particularly in book bindings, as was done for many technical documents of the time that had become useless (62)(63). Finally, from the 1480s on, many theatre texts are printed in Lyon, Paris, Angers and Rouen, some directly linked with a precise public performance, many others, the short ones, with texts often showing grammatical and lexical features of a distant and ancient language. Still, these printed plays, whether long or short, could be copied in manuscripts (29)(59).

In the long story of the written theatre text, from the most ancient one, copied around 1250, the *Ordo representationis Ade*, or *Jeu d'Adam* (70), to the mysteries of the mid-sixteenth century, whenever we can compare two or more manuscript versions of the same work,<sup>6</sup> as well as printed versions

<sup>4</sup> The most ancient mention of the term *moralité* qualifying a play comes from the testament's execution account register of Jean Hays, great vicar of Paris, deceased in the cloister of Notre-Dame, on March 24, 1421: 'Item, le jeu de .v. esglises en françois, avec plusieurs aultres moralitez, commençant ou second feuillet et sont seiles et ou penultieme que luy jeux d'amours, prisé 8 l.' (Paris, Archives nationales, S 851 B, n. 7, 21; 'Item, the play of the five churches, in French, with a few other *moralités*, beginning at the second folio et son seiles et on the penultimate one que luy jeux d'amours, valued 8 l.'). Unless otherwise stated, translations are mine.

<sup>5</sup> The most ancient example of the word *farce* for a play is a didascalical note ('cy est interposee une farsse') to an entertaining interval in the *Vie de saint Fiacre* from the MS 1131 of the Bibliothèque Sainte Geneviève in Paris, the manuscript dating from the 1420s-1440s, but the text dated between 1380-1400 (*Dictionnaire du Moyen Français*, <<http://atilf.atilf.fr>>, 'farce<sub>2</sub>', accessed 10 January 2019).

<sup>6</sup> *Jeu de Robin et Marion* (3 mss), *Courtois d'Arras* (4 mss), *Maistre Pierre Pathelin* (3 mss and many prints), *Mystère de la Passion* d'Arnoul Gréban (9 mss), *Jeu de la Destruction de Troie la Grant* (12 mss and many prints), *Mystère de saint Quentin* (2 mss), *Jeu du Cœur et des Cinq Sens* (4 mss). A few farces are known in different versions from the British Museum and the *Florence recueils*: *L'obstination des femmes* (Lewicka 1970, iii) and *La mauvaistié des femmes* (Koopmans 2011, xlvi); *Mahuet, badin natif de Bagnolet* (Lewicka 1970, xxviii) and *Mahuet* (Koopmans 2011, xxxix); *Sottie des trompeurs* (Lewicka 1970, xxxix) and *Sottie des sotz triumphans* (Droz 1966, x); *Colin fils de Thevot* (Lewicka 1970, xlvi) and *Thevot qui*

of a known play given as ‘newly performed’ on their frontispiece, we always face important modifications to the text. This is not particular to theatre but to medieval literature as a whole, and has been called, for forty years, the ‘*mouvance du texte*’ (Zumthor 1984). The *Jeu de Robin et Marion* is the first to display it, with short and lengthy interpolations added to the *textus*, thus *condensing in the written text what had to be developed through extemporization in performance* (Kuroiwa, Leroux and Smith 2010, 29-33). Two centuries later, the textual tradition of *Maistre Pierre Pathelin* shows a complicate sedimentation caused by the same process in a definite context of professional players associated in companies (see section 3. *Performed Layers: the Textual tradition of Maistre Pierre Pathelin*).

During these three centuries, public performances had not only developed in genre (*farce, moralité, sotties*), from the generic *ludus, jeu* and *dit*, but also in their dimensions towards monumentality, up to the extreme case of the *Mystère des Actes des Apôtres*, sixty thousand lines long (Smith, Parussa, Kanaoka, Mansfield 2009). This extreme case also shows the same type of *mouvance*, though not in the capillarity and substantiality of plays of the professional sphere (*farces*) where it concerns at least one sixth of the text (*Robin et Marion, Maistre Pierre Pathelin*). Evolution towards monumentality was made possible by the ever-growing place of the written word in the dual writing-orality channel. The written production was, on its side, ever more structured by scholarly models – *glossa* (‘commentary’), *lectio* (‘teaching’ and ‘interpreting’) – under the hand of clerics, of learned lay men and women (Christine de Pizan), who used these scholarly models in the vernacular following the basic principles of *oppositio* and *varietas* (Smith 2017). It helped develop the technicity of the relation between the performed and the written word from the jugglers’ tradition in the thirteenth century, as illustrated by Adam de la Halle, to the same kind of professional author/player/writers at the other end of our period, some very famous, as Pierre Gringore (47), but also many others who, in the sphere of the ‘amateur’ production of the great urban mysteries and moralities, display considerable know-how in handling and accompanying the text, between its written state to the final performance, as with canon Pra in Romans (see Section 4. *Writing and performing process of the Mystère des Trois Doms*).

The chart of the *Writing and performing processes* (Figure 1, p. 38) is an attempt at giving a global synchronic and diachronic synopsis of the circulation of theatre text from its creation as a *textus* – an (intellectual) formatting process – to the end of the (material) formalizing process of its diversified written forms. It is accompanied by a *glossary-commentary* which seemed the best way to describe the phases of the processes while giving references in a condensed manner.

*revient de Naples* (Koopmans 2011, v); *Débat de la nourrice et de la chambrière* (Lewicka 1970, xlix) and *Les Chambrières* (Koopmans 2011, li); *Le Savetier Audin* (Lewicka 1970, xxxii) and *Martin de Cambray* (Koopmans 2011, xli).

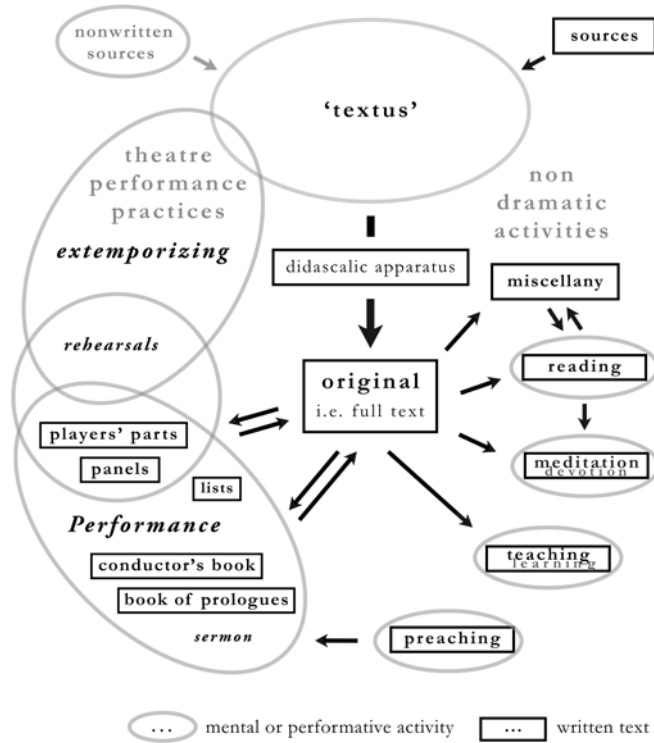


Figure 1 – Writing and performing processes of the medieval dramatic text in XIIIth-XVIth-century France (cf. Kuroiwa, Leroux and Smith 2010, 23)

## 2. Theatre Writing and Performing Processes: Glossary-Commentary

After the entry, when necessary, the corresponding Middle French and Latin terms are given in brackets.

**Book of prologues** (*Livre des prologues*) — In the case of a multi-day play, the book containing together all the *prologues* beginning and ending (*prologue final*) each day. The only surviving *Livre des prologues* comes from the *Passion* of Mons (18), containing the twenty-six *prologues* of the eight-day performance. The common practice to have *prologues* together as the part of the *Prologueur*, *Prêcheur*, *Messenger*, *Portitor libri* or whatever status he has or character he impersonates (Ridder and Smith 2017, 144-145), is attested indirectly by their absence in stage originals, and conversely by their integration at their right place in fair (7 23 44 45) or luxury copies (21 22).



Sometimes they remain partly grouped in fair copies (8) and conservatory originals (28), thus keeping an organization particular to their source material, i.e. the *Livre des prologues* (Smith 1998, 6-7).

**Conductor's book** (*Abrégé, protocole, protocollum*) — Register giving cue lines (first and last) of each speech, speaker headings and names of players, detailed stage directions for entries, movements and props (Cohen 1925; Smith 1998). As for the Book of prologues, the *Abrégé* of Mons is the only surviving manuscript of the type (17), composed originally of eight self-contained units of in-folio quires, *one for the morning (matinée) and one for the afternoon (après-dîner)* of each day of performance, in two twin copies. The simple but very clear and efficient layout designed for directing a complex staging makes clear that this *Abrégé* is but the sole witness of an elaborate tradition (Smith 2001). From the end of the fifteenth century, *tenir la direction du jeu* ('to hold the direction of the play') was given to men called *meneur du jeu* (2) (16) (65), *maître du jeu* (9), *conducteur* (39) (50). Some sources indicate they worked in pairs, each one having his role and register, 'the Book' (*le Livre, les originaux*) to control the text on one hand and the *protocollum* or Conductor's book, on the other. In the case of Mons, the twin series of the *Abrégé* might have been required by a separate direction of Hell and Paradise, the two most distant locations onstage where there were very many mechanical devices to monitor.<sup>7</sup>

**Devotion** see **Meditation**.

**Didascalic apparatus** — Speech headings (*noms de rôle*), marginal or interlinear texts or notes, signs (Figure 2, p. 40), music, images, drawings, added to the *textus* for reading, memorizing or performing purposes. Marginal and interlinear notes vary considerably according to the status of the copy, i.e. the needs to be fulfilled: reading, meditating, teaching, rehearsing, etc. Stage directions are rare before the second half of the fifteenth century. They are written at the table in the author's draft and originals. At that stage of the work, they are not very detailed, being only intended to give basic information for directing rehearsals and, in some case, for choosing what had to be done onstage – this explains the *ad libitum* type of notes such as, in the *Mystère de saint Vincent*, (41) f. 93r, 'Si c'est en chaffault, montent le Chrestien et Cruquart ...' ('If in scaffold, the Christian and Cruquart climb ...'), or in the *Jeu saint Lojs*, (49)

<sup>7</sup> In Mons, two *conducteurs des secrets* (literally a 'conductor of the secrets', a man acting a hidden machine or a technical device producing a special effect onstage) had been hired to prepare the technical devices (Cohen 1925, lxxiii), and 18 persons were paid to monitor these devices during the eight days' performance (Cohen 1925, lx). Other documented references of the kind are available for the sixteenth century, mentioning up to '24 ou 25 hommes et plus' (Couturier and Runnalls 1991, 165, 236rv) solely for monitoring the devices of Hell. Gordon Kipling (2006) has argued that the permanent directing function of the *meneur de jeu* (literally a 'play leader' acting as a stage director) is but a creation of Gustave Cohen and does not correspond to reality, but his analysis does not take into account the status of his sources for their interpretation, nor the variety of names and contexts of this necessary function.

f. 11v, 'S'il [l'Evesque de Paris] veut aller à la mule, le secretaire dist ceste ligne' ('If he [the Bishop of Paris] wants to go with the mule, the Secretary says the following line'). In texts written 'par personnages', as both a literary and performative genre, marginal notes can be long and written in a descriptive style, as narrative complement to the dialogues, such as in the *Ystoire de la Destruction de Troye la Grand* (51) or in the *Mystère du Siège d'Orléans*, – and not condensed as in originals or practical and focused on staging issues as in a Conductor's book.

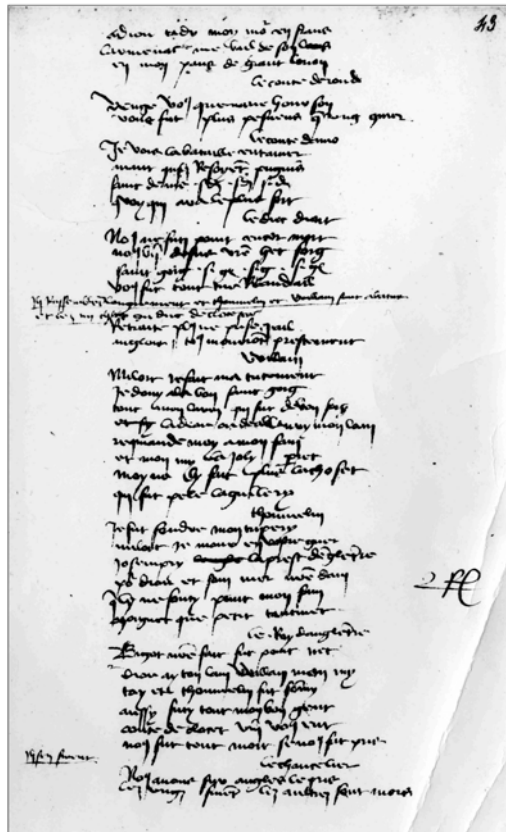


Figure 2 – *Jeu saint Lojis* (ca 1470), f. 43r, a rare (clean) author's draft presenting the constitutive features of an original. On the right side of the text, a big cursive –r with a curled suspension line, abbreviating the word 'redictes' ('repetition'), has been added over a 'crotchet' (∟): this composite sign indicates that the corresponding speech is a *textus* furnishing themes and verbal material for extemporization (Smith 1987, 265-279; 1998)

**Extemporizing** (*jouer à plaisance*) — To produce a link between the stage and the public with relevant playing on the basis of a memorized *textus*, voiced with dialogical developments, rhythmic, syllabic and metric echoes that could be inserted at any moment thanks to a peculiar look, an exclamation, a repetition, slapsticks and jokes, singing and farting. Some roles, like Devils, Fools or *Sots*, have a specific extemporizing character. In the second half of the fifteenth century, the *textus* for the Fool begins to be written down on leaflets in ‘stage originals’, or as memoranda in companies’ registers (Smith, Parussa, Halévy 2014, 107, 343-345). Most of the time, it is only indicated ‘Cy parle le Foul’ (‘Here the Fool speaks’) as in (37) f. 37r, or ‘... *et Stultus loquitur*’ (‘... and the Fool speaks’), (61) 13r, without any speech written out. Devils can be mentioned in lists of acting characters, and not appear in the text nor in the didascalical apparatus, meaning they have a nontextualized role: e.g. (49) 107r (Lucifer, Pluton, Penthagruel, Titynilluz).

**Learning** see **Teaching**.

**Lists** — For organizational purposes, lists are drawn up for the performance, such as the booklet of roles and *secrets* of the 1536 performance of the *Actes des Apôtres* in Bourges (5) (Smith, Parussa, Halévy 2014, 102). Lists of characters, grouping (*compagnie, train, societas*) those belonging to the same location (‘Le train de Babilonne’, ‘La Synagogue de Jérusalem’, ‘Enfer’, ‘Paradis’), or category (‘Les Juifs’, ‘Femmes à qui on tue les enfans’) can be included in author’s (clean) autograph, as in (49) 52rv and 106v-107r, in originals, as in (30) 1v, (64) 240r-241v (with players’ names), (40) 80v (with the number of lines of each character), (50) 255r-259v (by *matin* and *après-le-disner* of the three days of the performance), and fair copies: (7) 1r-2v, (51) 6r-7v.

**Meditation** and **Devotion** — Meditation is the act of reflecting on personal and moral issues through mental images by hearing or reading a text, looking at its paintings, to improve body and soul through emotions. A clerical and learned practice in the twelfth century, it entered religious practices of the laity in fourteen-fifteenth centuries to become central in spiritual exercises of the sixteenth-seventeenth centuries (Smith 2002, 60-61 and notes). Though meditation is distinct from devotion for it can be experienced with any kind of text or daily life event, it nevertheless leads to it as a step in the scale of praying. The life of Christ being the object of many treatises of meditation, it is likely that this practice is potentially involved in devotional readings of any *Passion* play and not only in copies prepared for (23)(36)-(46). Devotional reading is clearly expressed in a liminary text to the *Mystère de la Conception* (9) 1r: ‘Et est fait et compilé à l’onneur de Dieu et sa glorieuze mere, he à la singuliere devotion de treshaulte et puissante dame, madame la contesse de Monpansier’ (‘And this was done et compiled in honor of God and his glorious Mother, and for the particular devotion of the very high and powerful Lady, our mistress the countess of Montpansier’).

**Miscellany** — A group of autonomous texts assembled together or copied as a whole in a single manuscript (self-contained unit). Strictly speaking:

a ‘multitext book’ (Gumbert 1999, 27-28),<sup>8</sup> All ‘theatre’ texts before the end of the fourteenth century are part of miscellanies (see section 1. *Introduction*). Many plays, before that period, certainly had an autonomous circulation in independent self-contained units before being collected in such books. Theatre-oriented miscellanies were generally produced by communities involved in regularly producing plays for their feast, such as the aforementioned rich Parisian confraternity of goldsmiths who gathered forty years (1340-1382) of their annual miracle plays in honor of the Virgin in two volumes (24)(25) (Clark 1994; Maddox and Sturm-Maddox 2008), the companies competing for the Procession de Lille behind the performances and writing of 72 mysteries (75) (Knight 2001), or the confraternity of Notre-Dame de Liesse (56). Such also are some saints’ mystery plays which are a succession miracle plays, such as Gringore’s *Mystère de Saint Louis* (47) for the Carpenters of the *Grande Cognée*, or the *Mystère de saint Crépin* for the Shoemakers of Rouen and Paris (11)(58).

**Nondramatic activities** — All activities where the *textus* is copied, transmitted or performed for a different purpose than theatrical performance.

**Nonwritten sources** — Any event or cultural fact transmitted through a visual, aural or performative medium – image, song, tale, mime, dance, play. An imaginary debate and battle between the four services of the King’s household (Kitchen, Sauce, Bread, Wine) (27) is inspired by King Charles VI’s court environment. Major historical events lead to composition of plays: the Council of Basel (3), the peace treaties of Arras (72) and Péronne (14), the delivery of Orléans by Jeanne d’Arc (73). Many moralities and plays present deep contextual references to the time of the performance, but political content could be hidden behind an apparently religious subject. The *Jeu saint Loÿs*, apparently a hagiographical mystery play, is in fact a *chronicle play* (the *Grandes Chroniques de France* are its source) written as a propaganda instrument for Louis XI after the disastrous treaty of Péronne with the Duke of Burgundy (Smith 1987, 90-103).

**Original** (*le Livre, originalia, les originaux*) — The full text used as a reference book in a definite place and time, usually produced from an author’s draft (Figure 2, p. 40) or a conservatory original from a former performance in the same place, as in Troyes where they played a revised version of the same *Passion* for more than twenty years (71), or borrowed from some other town. Different *originaux* can be produced in the course of a single performance (Figure 7, p. 52). The most ancient ones date from the 1450s-1470s (31)(49) and their basic features remain the same in the sixteenth century (30)(40): an inverted double fold of whole in-folio paper quires (i.e. the sheets are not folded one by one, but in independent quires), perpendicular to the direction of writing, these folds justifying the text on the left of the recto and the verso of the folio (Smith 1998, 2003), no lineation, absolutely

<sup>8</sup> We do not use the word ‘miscellany’ in the meaning of ‘a purely haphazard arrangement’ as opposed to the ‘anthology’ which would be ‘a coherent grouping of texts’ as proposed by Stemmler (1991) quoted by Hunt (1999, 52). Gumbert (1999) remains fundamental for its critical analysis of the different terms describing ‘miscellanies’ and their correlated methodological issues.

no use of colored ink for any kind of decoration or punctuation, interlinear or marginal notes and signs (Figure 2, p. 40), interpolated lines and speeches (Figure 3, below and Figure 6, p. 51). Some ‘stage originals’ have their quires folded as holster books (see Figure 3, below).

There are different kinds of originals, depending on whether they were used for controlling rehearsals and performance (‘stage original’) or prepared afterwards for purposes of conservation (‘conservatory originals’) these being very clean copies without emendations. Stage originals are patent by their emendations (Figure 3 below), interpolations (Figure 6), cancellations and displaced parts. They can be modified to the point where it is necessary to have a new clean copy, as well as the players’ parts on which emendations of roles had been firstly reported during rehearsals. For evident reasons, this second original has to be executed as quickly as possible, so the whole work is given simultaneously to different copyists. The most obvious case is that of the *Mystère des Trois Doms*, where the three parts of the play are given on the same day to three notaries (Figure 7, p. 52), but in the *Jeu saint Loÿs* eight quires of the second and third days were given to eight copyists (Smith 1987, 10-14). This simultaneous selective distribution of work has been described by Gumbert (1989) as a copy system inspired by the *pecia* but fundamentally different. The format of holster book (*format agenda*) or long in-4° (two successive parallel foldings perpendicular to the long side of the full sheet in the middle, whereas the standard in-4° has the second folding perpendicular to the first one) is not the exclusive type of ‘stage original’: there are as many of those as in-folios (19 30 31 40 43 71) as of holster books (10 12 13 57 60). (It must be underlined, though, that some of these ‘stage originals’ are crossing the border delimited here and give also obvious conservatory features: 12 13 60 71).

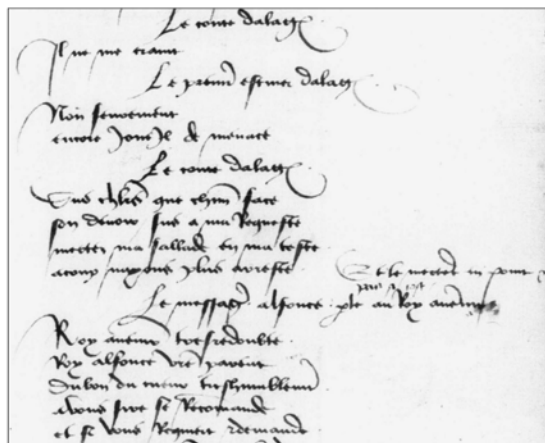


Figure 3 – *Mystère du Roy Advenir* (1455), original, f. 20r (detail): an interlinear note ‘pas si tost’ (‘not that early’) has been added in a small cursive hand by the author under the marginal note ‘Et le meccent en point’ (‘And they [the knights] arm him’); this interlinear note is neither transcribed nor indicated in the edition of the text (Meiller 1970, l. 1142)

Out of drafts and/or originals (in which quire signatures are numbered according to their different parts, or days, as independent self-contained units, Smith 1998), quires of the whole work are gathered and renumbered according to the new structure of the volume. From this source, together with other manuscript material of the performance – players’ parts, books of prologues, conductor’s book, lists – new copies for different needs, persons or communities are produced, all of them having their own personal, professional or moral link with the performance. Some are fair (9)(32)(33)(68) or luxury copies (21)(22)(39)(66), others display features of a conservatory original intended for keeping all necessary information for future reuses: clean copies, eventually with minor authorial corrections (15) (Smith 2017, 73), prosodic punctuation (69), music (28)(65). Copying this kind of text is the work of scribes, notaries and clerics who introduce peculiarities related to their proper professional practices, like the unusually dimensioned quires of the Rome manuscript of Gréban’s *Passion* with the third and fourth day following each other in the same quire (Smith 2011, 209-210), albeit days are normally copied in self-contained units in originals, as said earlier. Above all, the proximity with the performance, in the copying of any manuscript – whether original, private and current (37), fair or luxury – appears in various ways: lists, director’s name in the didascalical apparatus (65), performance account (50), unexpected presence of diacritic performative signs in a luxury copy of Gréban’s *Passion* (21) (Smith 2017, 165-166).

**Panel** (*brevet, écriteau, nom, nomen*) — Sheet of paper bearing a word naming a location or a person on stage, and pinned to a tapestry, a curtain, a scenery, or handled by a player. For the Mons performance in 1501, a priest was paid for having written 98 panels with big letters for locations’ names on the platform (*‘briefvés de grosses lettre des lieux sur le hourt’*, Cohen 1925, 536). Characters were carefully identified in the *Ascension* of Rodez, and it might have been a norm as for locations (68)53r: *‘Nota quod quilibet apostolorum suum tabernaculum habet et quilibet habet suum nomen et nomen provincie’* (‘Careful that each apostle has his location and each of them has his name and his province’s name’). When Mons’ conductor’s book specifies that [Adam] gives to [Eve] her name (*‘Il luy donne son nom’*), it means that he is handing her a panel with her own name (Smith 2001), implicitly emphasizing the woman’s role in teaching the alphabet and writing to small children. The holy origin and pedagogical use of the written word is also exemplified in a *Creation* (60) where God, having sent four angels in the cardinal directions, welcomes them back, each bringing a panel with a big gold letter that he spells out carefully to form the name of the first man: ADAM (Jeanroy and Teulié 1893, 2-6).

**Part** see **Player’s part**.

**Performance** — The time of the play (*jeu, ludus*), during which players (*joueurs, lusores, historiens*), in a definite playing area (*parcus, parc, platea, place*), sometimes on a scaffold (*échafaud, scafaldus, établie*) or platform (*plateforme, tabulatum*) give voices, gestures and sound to the *textus*. Performance can include moments of collective playing/reciting of episodes

extracted from such works as the *Ystoire de la destruction de Troye la Grand* for which no staged performance is recorded. The status of the manuscripts involved in its circulation and some didascalic notes clearly indicate performed readings, as for Cassandra’s prediction of Troy’s destruction in (51) 87r: ‘Il est asçavoir que Cassandra dira les huit lignes precedentes trois fois’ (‘Cassandra has to say three times the eight preceding lines’), reported as ‘Ter dicitur’ (‘It is said three times’) at the end of the last line of the same speech in (42) 97v.

**Player’s part** (*rôle, parchon*) — Manuscript containing all the speeches of the same character, with the cue words of its responding characters (61) (Figure 4, below). Prepared for transmitting, memorizing and rehearsing plays, parts have been closely studied by Lalou (1991). They are transcribed from an original, on folded sheets or scrolls of paper glued or sewed together and written on one side. Longer roles are copied recto and verso in booklets or in-4° registers (holster or standard). In great urban plays (Passions, Saints’ lives), parts are distributed to chosen players who commit themselves formally to rehearse and perform. It can happen that a second set of players’ parts is done in the course of rehearsals to update the *textus* with ongoing modifications (Figure 7).

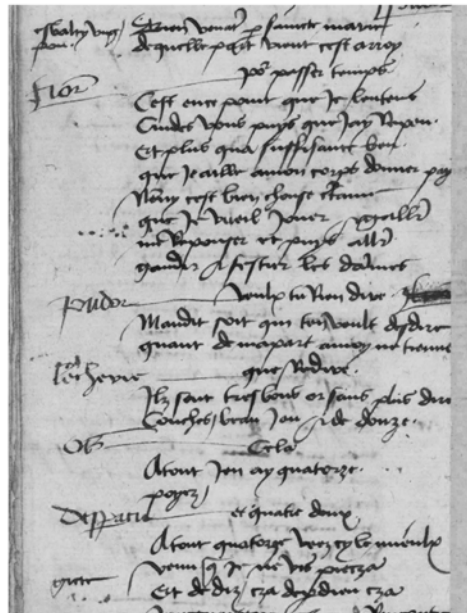


Figure 4 – *Moralité de l’Homme pécheur*, player’s part of Homo (XV<sup>3/3</sup>), containing all the speeches of the lead character. Because of its length (3500 lines), this part is a whole holster in-4° of 37 folios, also containing the names of its counterparts. Here (f. 5v), in the left margin, from top to bottom: ‘Timor’ (‘Fear’), ‘Pudor’ (‘Shame’), ‘Lecherie’ (‘Gluttony’), ‘Omnes’ (‘All’), ‘Desperacio’ (‘Despair’), linked by a follow-up line to their cue-words – and stage directions: in the top left margin, *a bit astonished* (‘esbahy ung pou’), and bottom, *he throws [dice]* (‘gicte’)

**Preaching** — Giving a sermon as a prologue, or in any part of a play, with the actual status of a preacher.

**Reading** — Individual or collective act of reading, silently or aloud.

**Rehearsal** (*récitation, répétition, record*) — Collective reciting of their parts by the players, to check their knowledge, teach them the necessary gestures and eventually adapt the text. Rehearsals are first conducted in a closed space (town hall, church), then on the platform or the chosen place of performance when ready.

**Sermon** — A sermon delivered as such during the performance of a play, which might later be incorporated in originals (41), fair or luxury copies (24)(25), in a prose or formatted version.

**Sources** — Any vernacular or Latin text: Scripture and its authorized or apocryphal commentaries, Church fathers, authorities, chronicles (*Historia Scolastica, Grandes chroniques de France, Journal du Siège d'Orléans ...*). Source references are very seldom indicated in the didascalical apparatus of manuscripts (9)(15), more often in some incunabula, sometimes with long Latin quotations, as in the *Incarnation et Nativité de Rouen* (Le Verdier 1884-1886) and printed editions of the sixteenth century.

**Teaching and learning** — Producing or using of a play in a pedagogical context (parish or town schools, pedagogies (a *pedagogium* is a primary boarding school) (20), colleges (54), convents (10)(44)(45) in order 'to teach while delighting' (*docere delectando*). For those manuscripts, it is very difficult to distinguish if they were produced by *magistri* or nuns for teaching (while entertaining), or by *scolares* for learning, or simply kept as models and memory of the event.

**Textus** — The formatted text: versified weft (*textus, trame*) to be memorized, copied, recited or performed, exclusive of any other textual element (belonging to the didascalical apparatus).

**Theatre performance practices** — Body, voice and mental techniques instrumentalizing the gestures, vocal and transformative capacities of a professional player (i.e. a person earning his living from these practices), transmitted as know-how through family links or apprenticeship.

### 3. *Performed Layers: the Textual Tradition of Maistre Pierre Pathelin*

The relation between text and performance among companies of players is best exemplified by *Maistre Pierre Pathelin*, the most celebrated play of medieval French theatre.<sup>9</sup> Generally coined a 'farce', the play was already considered a 'comedy' in the sixteenth century because of its complex plot.<sup>10</sup> Its tremendous success is testified by the existence of three manuscripts and a continuous flow of prints from the mid-1480s

<sup>9</sup> The most remarkable English translation of *Maistre Pierre Pathelin* has been given by the Scottish poet Edwin Morgan (1920-2010) who kept the verbal fantasy of the play within the original rhythm of octosyllabic couplets (Morgan 1983). Modern French translations of the Levet print has been done by Rousse (1999), and of manuscript Bigot (Smith and Dominguez 2008).

<sup>10</sup> The play, about 1.600 lines, is three times longer than most of the farces. In 1578, Henri Estienne writes in his *Dialogue du nouveau langage françois italianisé*: 'Il me semble que je luy fais grand tort en l'appelant une farce et qu'elle mérite bien le nom de comédie' ('It seems to me that I treat it quite unfairly if I call it farce, and that it merits the the name of comedy').



to the 1560s,<sup>11</sup> by continuations (*Le Nouveau Pathelin, Le Testament Pathelin*),<sup>12</sup> by scenes and neologisms quoted in contemporary plays (*Le Mystère des Actes des Apôtres, Le Mystère du Viel Testament, La Folie des Gorriers*), some of these having made their way into modern French, such as ‘revenons à nos moutons’ (‘let’s get back to the subject’), and ‘c’est lui tout craché’ (‘he is the very spitting image of him’).<sup>13</sup> Nothing is directly known about the composition and performance of the work, believed to have emerged during the 1460s in Paris or at the court of King René d’Anjou.

Both manuscripts Bigot (36) (46) and La Vallière (53) are miscellanies written in the mid-1470s.<sup>14</sup> The former is a book of meditation,<sup>15</sup> presenting exemplary men – saints or sinners, historical or literary – confronted with death and Man or God’s Justice, where *Pathelin* is included with sixteen other texts, its two main characters being utmost demonstrations of Pride (Maître Pierre) and Greed (Guillaume). The latter is a miscellany with exclusive theatre content: two moralities, followed by a long farce, a dyadic disposition emphasizing the performative nature of its content, as in the Hulthem manuscript (6),<sup>16</sup> with five characters in the plays’ cast of the first dyad (*Moralité à V personnages, Maître Pierre Pathelin*), and six in the second dyad (*Moralité à VI personnages, La Pipée*). The third manuscript, Taylor (59), is a copy of a lost incunabula (Smith 2002, 80). Between these manuscripts, the text of *Maître Pathelin* shows many variations. Not only are there hundreds of minute changes of vocabulary and word order, but also sixty-one interpolations (Figure 5 below). The longest of these interpolations is a 54-line scene<sup>17</sup> (‘Interpolations 5’,

<sup>11</sup> The most ancient known incunabula of *Pathelin* was printed in Lyon by Guillaume Le Roy, ca 1485-1486. The Parisian printings begin to be issued in the early 1490s, but it is not impossible that there had been some before. Up to 1560, at least 22 editions are known (Chartier and Martin 1982, 220), most of them preserved by a sole copy, which means that a great number of editions have completely disappeared.

<sup>12</sup> *Le Nouveau Pathelin, Le Testament Pathelin* (Tissier 1993-1994, vol. VIII).

<sup>13</sup> For the analysis of ‘c’est lui tout craché’ (‘he is the very spitting image of him’) to describe an absolute resemblance between two persons, see Väänänen 1981 and Smith 2002, 74-79.

<sup>14</sup> These manuscripts were given their names according to their last owner before integrating the King’s Library (today’s Bibliothèque nationale de France). It is only at the end of the twentieth century that MS Bigot and La Vallière have deserved real attention: they had been disregarded as late-sixteenth-century copies by the first scholarly editor of *Maître Pierre Pathelin*, Richard T. Holbrook, and subsequently by all scholars up to Michel Rousse for La Vallière (1973) and Darwin Smith for Bigot (2002), who showed that they were not only anterior to the incunabulas but keys in understanding the history of the textual tradition.

<sup>15</sup> When bought in 1706 by the abbot Louvois, Curator of the King’s Library, the three quires of *Pathelin* in the Bigot’s manuscript were extracted from the rest of the miscellany (which became Regius 7669<sup>2</sup>, then fr. 1707) to be stored secretly with a stock of other works of particular interest, without being cataloged or registered anywhere. The existence of this stock, only known to chief Curators, was accidentally uncovered in the 1840s by a reader who caused a public scandal, which led the Ministry of the Public Education to order its integration and cataloging in the regular collections of the Library. The *Pathelin* quires were then bound and given the shelf mark ‘fr. 15080’ (for the details of this story and the meditative structure of the original miscellany as a whole, Smith 2002, 10-11, 37-68).

<sup>16</sup> The Hulthem manuscript is the most celebrated Flemish miscellany. These dramatic dyads, four *abele spelen* (‘ingenious plays’) and six *sotternien* (‘farces’) – two *abele spelen* are lacking – are considered a possible link with companies’ repertory (Westphal 1999, 82-84).

<sup>17</sup> We use the word ‘scene’ to qualify the smallest unit of a distinctive action of a character/group of characters in the same location (Smith 2017, 164, n. 39). Structural parts are never indicated, excepting in long plays, where formal addresses to the audience (*prologues finaux*)

MS Bigot, 978-1031), where the lawyer Pathelin, having swindled the tight-fisted Draper Guillaume out of a large piece of costly cloth, proudly announces that he will do still better and obtain a year's worth of bread from their neighbor's baker without paying a single dime. Shocked by these delusions of grandeur, Guillemette exclaims: 'Haro, vous voulez un royaume! Oncques mais je ne vy nul tel.' (*Au secours, vous voulez toujours plus! Je n'ai jamais vu quelqu'un comme lui.* 'Lord, you want ever more! I have never seen such a man').

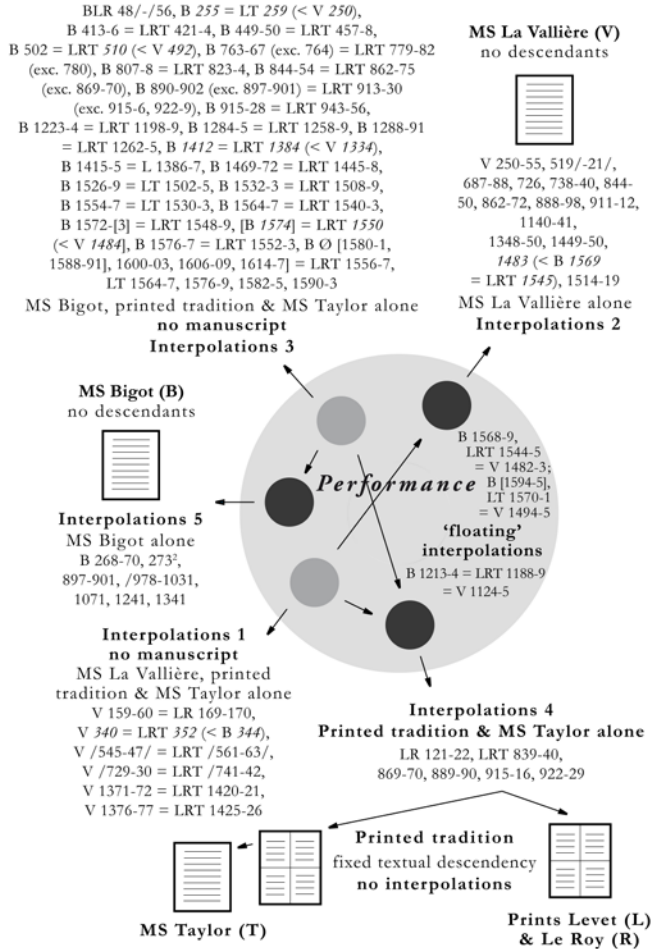


Figure 5 – The textual tradition of *Maistre Pierre Pathelin* as based on the interpolations between the different versions of the play (cf. Smith 2002, 79-101; 2012, 139)

acknowledge the ending of the performance, announcing the matter of the next part or day; in some originals, even the place of this separation can vary, and may be indicated by a sole line across the page, or a note of the type: 'hic potest pro eo die sufficere' ('It can suffice for this day').

Although the interpolation emphasizes the moral drift of the lawyer in the very perspective put forward by the miscellany, it fits the general design of the action as thematized in the opening of the play, when the quarreling Guillemette complains bitterly that they don't have anything more to eat nor to dress decently. Thus Pathelin is answering the first of her reproaches, the second one having driven him to look for cloth to swindle at the market. He then goes away, not behind the back curtain of the stage but through the spectators, as if leaving for the baker, and ends the first part of the play addressing the audience: 'PATELIN [*to Guillemette*] — Or gardez tres bien à l'ostel, je m'en vois par ycy devant. [*to the audience*] Messeigneurs, à Dieu vous command!' ('*Restez donc à la maison, je m'en vais par devant. Chers seigneurs, je vous recommande à Dieu!*'; 'So now stay at home, I'm going out frontway. Mylords, God be with you!'; Bigot, 1021-1023). The interval to follow, before the second part of the play, produces a strong dramatic effect by letting the spectator wonder, with Guillemette, how Pathelin could achieve such a task.<sup>18</sup>

All the other sixty interpolations show a link to theatre performance practices: jokes on stereotyped formulas, commented looks (Smith 2002, 83-99), mini scenarios built on gags of *lazzi* type with contrastive diastatic effects repeated according to different diatopic colors in the famous delirium scene (Smith 1989).<sup>19</sup> This link helps understand how, in opposition to the central idea behind most stemmatic research in medieval text traditions – i.e. that the exclusive presence of a singular element in one branch of the stemma, as opposed to the others, makes it independent –, in this particular case, all elements are working together in a circular way. The five groups of interpolations are five different written 'takes' of a *textus* performed by the same company of players, of the kind operating at that time (see Appendix I), the 'floating interpolations' being short dialogical gimmicks inserted independently of the main layers of variation (Smith 2002, 97-98; 2012, 138-140). The textual tradition of the play is thus transmitted in its repeated but not identical performances through five distinct written sedimentations.

On a broader time scale, we observe the same kind of process within the Shakespearian tradition, where the companions of the Poet, who had kept the body of their textual material under different forms – foul papers, prompt-books, drafts, the Book, plots, parts, memory – produced a *First Folio* presenting plays, notably *King Lear*, with many minute changes as well

<sup>18</sup> The end of the first part (we would call it an 'act') is clear in the couplet (*aa*) ending the Advocate's last speech, the following speech of the Draper beginning with a couplet on a new rhyme (*bb*), the speeches are not linked by the rhyme: 'LE DRAPPIER: En dea, maugré saint *Mathelin* ! Et mestre Pierre *Pathelin*...', a structural gap such as always occur between two days or two structurally independent episodes of a multi-days' play.

<sup>19</sup> In this famous scene, Pathelin is getting rid of the Draper by mocking him in different forged languages imitating regional dialects (diatopic), each of them structured according to various levels of language (diastatic), and simulating successively a too polite person, a braggart soldier, a dying man, etc.

as added lines and speeches in respect to the preceding *Quarto* (Taylor and Warren 1983). If nothing is known of the companies' performances and writing practices that could explain the various sedimentations of *Maistre Pierre Pathelin*, one can surmise that it happened in a way similar to the repertory of the King's Men. The death of their leading playwright caused publishing of what was their shared property, the text. That it happened for *Pathelin* in the mid-1470s, when both miscellanies were written down, fits with the departure of Triboulet, its leading performer/author,<sup>20</sup> following his master, King René, who left Anjou for Provence during Autumn 1471.<sup>21</sup> In this period of time, vernacular texts of the sort had not yet entered the printed book market,<sup>22</sup> and the five different sedimentations could correspond to a disbanded company of five players, each one having or producing his share of the common property through its own textual form. Repertories accumulated as textual treasures of companies over generations are certainly the source of the *Recueil de Florence*, the *Recueil Trepperel*, the *Recueil du British Museum*, and the *Grand Recueil La Vallière* (52), all printed or copied between 1515 and the 1570s, and constitute the bulk of the French *farces* and *sotties*.<sup>23</sup>

#### 4. Writing and Performing Process of the *Mystère des Trois Doms*

With the *Mystère des Trois Doms*, played at Romans in 1509, thanks to an account register of all the expenses of the performance, it is possible

<sup>20</sup> In 1980, Bruno Roy began to argue that *Pathelin* had been written by Triboulet, King René d'Anjou's fool (Roy 2009), and the principle of an Angevin origin has gained strong support from a thorough diatopic analysis (Greub 2003, 295-302). Today, on a different basis, the author of the present article agrees with Roy (Smith, Parussa, Halévy 2014, 511).

<sup>21</sup> It also fits chronologically with numerous quotes of *Pathelin* in the *Mystère des Actes des Apôtres*, in the dialogue between Ananie and his wife Saphire, work begun in 1473 (Smith, Parussa and Kanaoka 2009, 1<sup>er</sup> jour) by Simon Gréban and 'composés par le commandement du feu roy René de Cecille, duc d'Anjou et comte du Maine' ('composed by commission of the late King René of Sicily, duke of Anjou and count of Maine'), which indicates a possible channel by which Simon Gréban could have had copy of a text which had not yet widely circulated.

<sup>22</sup> The first printed vernacular books in Paris are the three volumes in-folio of the *Grandes Chroniques de France* (1475-1477) by Pasquier Bonhomme and only in the mid-1480s there appear the first small vernacular in-4<sup>os</sup> and in-8<sup>os</sup> of vernacular texts, such as the *Danse Macabre* by Guy Marchant (1485).

<sup>23</sup> Though the *Recueil de Florence* (53 texts, Koopmans 2011), the *Recueil Trepperel* (35 texts, Droz 1966), and the *Recueil du British Museum* (64 texts, Lewicka 1970) are gatherings of independent booklets (i.e. *recueils factices*), they are obviously constituting ensemble of their own, printed in the same span of time and, for the most part, produced by the same librarians and printers (see *Préfaces* of these editions and facsimiles), as is also the case for the 74 manuscript texts of the *Grand Recueil La Vallière* (Viollet Le Duc 1854).

to follow, together with the original (64), how layers of text, emendations and interpolations sediment in the writing process between author, town authorities and players. The only surviving manuscript shows all the features of an original (Figure 6, below), but detailed chronology of the work establishes it is but a second clean copy of a first one, integrating the emendations of commissaries in charge of censoring the text, as well as changes due to rehearsals, the first original having been made from the author’s draft by a copyist (Figure 7, p. 52). This second original integrates new performative emendations<sup>24</sup> and in particular long interpolations resulting from the wish of the commissaries to have the Tyrants’ parts – key roles due to their violent acting and coarse language – reviewed by a known playwright, with whom an initial collaboration had aborted.

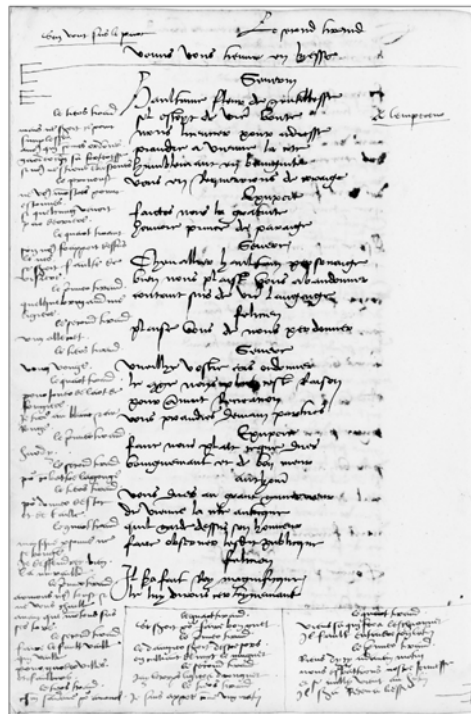


Figure 6 – *Mystère des Trois Doms* (1509), 2nd original, f. 162r, showing interpolations (in the margins) for the revised Tyrants’ parts (see Figure 7)

<sup>24</sup> Emendation of an original immediately after a rehearsal is reported for the 1573 *Passion* play in Saint-Jean-de-Maurienne: ‘Et après ledict records, iceulx commis ont baillé à moy, secrétaire subsigné, le livre dudict mistere pour iceluy mettre au net’, Runnalls 2003, 171, 27r (‘And after the said rehearsal, those in charge of it have given to me, undersigned secretary, the Book of the aforesaid mystery to make a clean copy’).

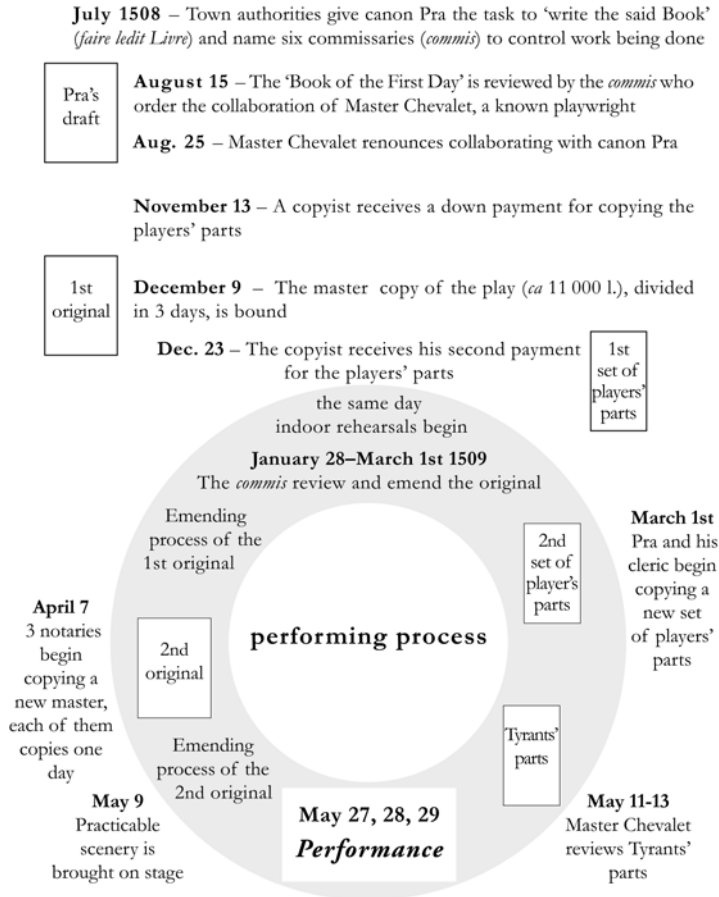


Figure 7 – Chronology of the writing and performing process of the *Mystère des Trois Doms* in Romans (sources for this chronology in Appendix II)

The whole process illustrates the necessity of having the reference book constantly updated with all wanted modifications, whether authorial, institutional or performative, in view of the expected performance, up to the moment when a new clean copy has to be produced and modified in its turn for the same reasons. It means that for a single performance different reference texts of the same work are produced, bearing witness to various moments of the process, apart from an author’s draft, or a conservatory original as model, or a printed copy used as a reference text, as occurs in the first half of the sixteenth century (Koopmans 1996).

## 5. Conclusions

In looking at different processes of text production such as those of *Maistre Pierre Pathelin* and the *Mystère des Trois Doms*, one has to recognize that the author is quite as much corporate as individual, and though in all types of playing a *textus* was certainly memorized, the voiced text remained plastic in performance, at least for some moments, some types of scene, some characters. *Fous, Stulti* or *Sots* had a central role in this plasticity. Appearing in the fifteenth century as masters of the juggler's tradition of singing, reciting, miming and playing, their role crystallized as commentators of the actions on stage as the world's scene, probably because their presence developed in parallel with the monumental forms of dramatic texts structured by the scholarly models of the *glossa* and the *ars oppositorum* (Smith 2017, 157, 170-172).

The *lazzi*-type of extemporization from a memorized *textus*, which appears in thirteenth-century France and continued throughout the end of the fifteenth century, and the existence of repertories kept by professional companies of players, challenge on the one hand the textualistic approach with which the written word has been taken at face value for the voiced text in performance and, on the other hand, the admitted frame of modern professional theatre's beginnings with the scenarios, playing practices and contracts of the Italian troops of the *commedia delle maschere* in mid-sixteenth-century Italy. What Jean-Auguste Desboulmiers describes, in 1769, as the 'jeu à l'impromptu' of the tradition known today as *commedia dell'arte* in his *Histoire anecdotique et raisonnée du théâtre italien*, is in accordance with what we understand about extemporizing in the French medieval playing traditions of companies. He concludes saying that 'l'impromptu, quant au fond, devient une affaire de mémoire, où l'Acteur ne fournit que des liaisons et un langage bien ordonné, dont il doit avoir l'habitude' (Taviani and Schino 1984, 33-35; 'extemporizing, basically, becomes a matter of memory where the actor gives only links and a well-ordered language which he must have mastered'). Our history of the theatre cannot be built on the literality of the written texts. Written diacritic signs and textual *mouvance* of the performance have to be understood through an effort to reconstruct playing practices that were viewed, heard, repeated over generations, and probably metabolized between two countries which had experienced dense cultural, individual and collective exchanges during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries in all other fields of artistic activity.

\* \* \*

**Appendix I** — Company's contract between four players in 1486 (translation); original text in Smith (2002, 152), and with contexts in Bouhaïk-Gironès and Lavéant (2011).

Jehan Brebion, Jehan Dondez, Philippot Huibost et Jehan Toustain, all inhabitants in Paris, acknowledged of having associated in a company, beginning today and for

a whole year, to play together farces and all other forms of entertainment, including banquets, dances and other feasts, in any places during the aforesaid period of time. They engage themselves to share among them in an equal way the profits that shall come out of it, each of them receiving its right share and portion. They also promise to declare to one another in a loyal manner all obtained benefits, without hiding any of them.

It was agreed between parties that all income earned by any of them ... either individually or all together shall be shared in an equal and fair manner and no one shall play in another company without consent of the other associates. Similarly, if one of them could not or didn't want to play and, by his absence, others could not play, he shall be bound to retribute to the others the money share they would have earned from the aforesaid performance; and if, in the aforesaid situation, they play without him, he would not have any of the obtained profits.

Each of the parties promise to respect what was establish above, under penalty of prison and a fine of two gold crowns, half of it payable to the companions. With the consent of all and without any objection, they promise to keep this contract in its form and force for any infraction whatsoever. Obliging ... Renouncing ... Done in Paris, Thursday 2 March 1486, four copies.

**Appendix II** — Sources for the writing and performing process of the *Mystère des Trois Doms* (Figure 7), from the account register of the performance (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, nouvelles acquisitions françaises 1261, edited by Giraud 1848).

**July 1508**, Giraud 1848, 41: '... fut donné charge à monsieur le chanoine Pra de Grenoble de fere ledit livre ...'. — **August 15**, Giraud 1848, 43: '... quant les commys visitarent ce que monsieur le chanoine Pra avoyt fait o livre du premier jour ... fut conclu par les comis d'aller à Vienne pour amener mestre Chivallet pour estre coajuteur avesque ledit chanoine Pra pour fere le livre des Troys Martirs ...'. — **August 25**, Giraud 1848, 43-44: '... le 25 d'ost à mestre Chivallet, fatiste de Vienne, tan pour sa venue que pour son retour pour ce qu'il ne volit pas besognier avesque ledit chanoine Pra ...'. — **November 13**, Giraud 1848, 45: 'Payé le 13<sup>e</sup> jour de novembre à Ponson Rollan en deducion des roles dudit livre monte à la part de la ville la somme de 2 fl.'. — **December 9**, Giraud 1848, 45: 'Payé le 9<sup>e</sup> jour de decembre à mestre Jehan Astier pour ugne peau de parchemyn pour covrir les livres des Troys Martirs ...'. — **December 23**, Giraud 1848, 45: 'Payé le 23<sup>e</sup> de decembre à Ponson Rollan en deducion des roles dudit livre et ... Payé ledit jour pour charbon pour porter o Courdelliers pour faire les records ...'. — **January 28-March 1st 1509**, Giraud 1848, 47: 'Payé le 28 de janvyer pour ugne colacion fecta en la meyson de la ville en relevant plusieurs fautes o livre du segond jour ... Payé le 24 de fevrier pour despance fecta en la meyson de la ville et autre part pour ce que l'on a vaqué certains jours et nuys pour adresser le livre du premier jour... Payé le 1<sup>er</sup> jour de mars pour despance fecta en la meyson de la ville et autre part pour ce que l'on a vaqué certains



jours et nuys pour adresser le livre des deux jours ...'. — **March 1st**, Giraud 1848, 47-48: 'Payé ledit jour pour apointement fet avesque monsieur le chanoyne Pra pour refere les rolles des troys jours enclus les rolles de la translacion ...'. — **April 7**, Giraud 1848, 64: 'Payé ledit jour à mestre Perdrychon, notere de Romans, pour copier le livre de la seconde journee, la somme de 2 fl. 4 s. ; Payé ledit jour à mestre Jaques Beille, notere de Romans, pour copier le livre du premier jour, la somme de 2 fl. 4 s.; Payé ledit jour à mestre Girard Rostaing, notere de Romans, pour copier le livre du tiers jour des Martirs, la somme de 2 fl. 4s.'. — **May 9**, Giraud 1848, 76: 'Payé ledit jour pour fere porter tours, tornelles, pourtaux et autres choses neceseres pour le jeu, monte 3 s.'. — **May 11-13**, Giraud 1848, 81-82: 'Plus ay demeuré à Vienne au Trois Roys 4 jours, que monte à 8 fl. par jour, 24 fl.; Plus pour 6 repas à mestre Guillaume et à Chevallet, 12 fl.; Plus bayhé à mestre Chevallet, 7 fl. 2 s. 6 d.'. 'Plus pour fere rabilher mon rolle particulier en aulcuns passages, dernièrement en venant de Lyon, ung reston, que fait 9 fl.'; 84: 'Payé ledit jour par le comandement de messieurs les commys à noble Estienne Combez pour aller à Vienne pour fere radouber les roles des quatre Tirans, comment coste par sa parcelle que monte 12 fl. 3 s.'.

*Works Cited*

One asterisk\* indicates a digital scanning of a black and white microfilm, two asterisks\*\* a direct digital colour image of the manuscript. Any date or period of time refers to the copying of the text/manuscript; unless otherwise specified, it gives the present author's estimation. 'Jonas' indicates that the content of the miscellany is detailed online by the site <<http://jonas.irht.cnrs.fr>>. Bibliography refers to editions.

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- ⑧ MS 615, fair copy, 15<sup>3/4</sup>, *Mystère de la Résurrection* MS A, Servet 1993.
- ⑨ MS 616\*\*<sup>decor.</sup>, fair copy, 15<sup>5/5</sup>, *Mystère de la Conception*, Leroux 2003, <<https://bvmm.irht.cnrs.fr/iiif/22333/canvas/canvas-2031579/view>>, accessed 10 January 2019.
- ⑩ MS 617, miscellany (5 theatre texts), original, holster in-4°, 15<sup>5/5</sup>, *Nativité, Nativité* (fragment), *Jeu des sept péchés et des sept vertus*, Hindley 2012a; *L'Alliance de Foy et de Loyauté*, Hindley 2012b; *Jeu de pèlerinage de vie humaine*, Doudet 2012c; MS as a whole, Cohen 1953.
- ⑪ MS 619\*\*, luxury copy dated 1443, *Mystère de saint Crépin et saint Crépinien*, Lalou 1980; see also n° (58), <[https://bvmm.irht.cnrs.fr/resultRecherche/resultRecherche.php?COMPOSITION\\_ID=10960](https://bvmm.irht.cnrs.fr/resultRecherche/resultRecherche.php?COMPOSITION_ID=10960)>, accessed 10 January 2019.

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# Acting and Reading Drama: Notes on Florentine *sacre rappresentazioni* in Print

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## *Abstract*

The purpose of the article is to investigate the complex link between theatre, as a practice involving a number of people, and the change in the use of dramatic texts occurred at the origins of the Italian printing industry, when dramatic texts were no longer only acted but also read as books. With the invention of printed books, theatre has been transformed from a performative action to a container of memory images fixed through the book illustration. On the one hand, the article investigates the printed tradition of *sacre rappresentazioni* ('sacred plays') in connection with the other religious literary texts published between the end of the fifteenth and the beginning of sixteenth centuries, putting it in relation with the birth of devotional books widely used in Florence during the age of Savonarola. On the other hand, it deals with the problem of illustrations by reconstructing the relationship between faithful people and sacred images before their diffusion was multiplied by the printing industry, and by looking at the real meaning of the link between written texts and woodcuts, in order to understand how the *sacra rappresentazione*, being a dramatic genre, was conceived when it was transformed into an object for reading.

Keywords: *Devotional Illustrated Books, Florentine Printing Industry, Girolamo Savonarola, Sacra Rappresentazione, Sacred Images and Devotion*

## 1. *Introduction*

The illustrations in the printed editions of the *sacre rappresentazioni* ('sacred plays')<sup>1</sup> have attracted the interest of drama historians mostly in terms of their

<sup>1</sup> I use the term *sacra rappresentazione* to indicate the dramatic genre characterized by the use of: a hendecasyllabic eight-line stanza – a verse form derived from the tradition of oral vernacular poetry performed by skilled singers in Florentine public squares –, stage directions with captions which were often extremely detailed, and the presence of an *Annunzio* ('Intimation') and a *Licenza* ('Valediction') delivered by an angel (these duplicated the roles played by the prologue and the epilogue in classic plays) and, finally, by

reliability as iconographic sources of information about the staging of the texts. In the absence of coeval descriptions, the only – hazardous – evidence of this consists of the texts themselves. As with other dramatic genres of the time, the related manuscripts were not in the form of the scripts used for the performances, which could have provided concrete indications about how they were produced, but rather of anthologies destined for personal perusal, with only rare cases of individual texts.<sup>2</sup> With the invention of print this already accentuated literary character became crystallised, fixing the texts in a repeatable format that was always the same. This had two effects: on the one hand, it blocked the instability proper to the manuscript tradition; on the other, it contributed to aligning these texts with the religious pamphlets produced for the edification of a vast public of semi-cultured or just literate people, determining the qualification as a ‘popular’ genre that is still widely accepted by historians and intellectuals. In both cases, it is difficult to establish what in the stage directions<sup>3</sup> belongs to the literary form and what to the spectacular dimension of the texts.

The same holds for the illustrations of the printed editions. Being related in type to the book format typical of the pamphlets destined for broad circulation, these do not always have characteristics that can reliably be assigned to the scenic conventions of the performances, especially in the absence of external evidence. This question was posed in considerable depth and detail by Cesare Molinari, who has examined a significant number of woodcuts of *sacre rappresentazioni*. Although in his study he did point out the actual connection of some of these images to the scarce information available on the textual apparatus of the texts, he also stressed that in the Florentine printing industry it was common practice to reutilise the wooden blocks for different books. It is therefore impossible to consider these illustrations as direct evidence of scenic practice; at most, they can indicate possible similarities in specific cases to be analysed in close correspondence with the plays (1961, 103-115).

While I am convinced of the utility of pursuing this line of research through a more meticulous comparison of texts, images and written

the selection of subjects variously taken from the *Old* and from the *New Testament*, or from hagiographic and devout literature. For a more detailed description of this dramatic genre see Ventrone 2016. The present essay is an updated version of Ventrone 2003. This essay has been translated by A.H. Cleary. Unless otherwise stated, all other passages taken from Italian originals, have been translated by the same.

<sup>2</sup> This statement is based on the repertory by Testaverde and Evangelista 1988, which records the largest existing collection of manuscript and printed *sacre rappresentazioni*, kept in the BNCF [Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, Firenze] and is, therefore, useful to introduce general and statistic considerations.

<sup>3</sup> Captions indicate the characters (*dramatis personae*), their movements on the stage, the dramatic situations and sometimes the location of the actions.



documents, here I wish to propose a different approach, shifting the focus from the history of the scenic space to that of the *libro di teatro* ('theatre book'). The aim is to explore the change in the character of fruition of dramatic texts that emerged at the dawn of the Italian printing industry. This was due to the passage from the performance as an event involving a community (irrespective of size)<sup>4</sup> to reading, and the metaphorical transformation from a theatre of performative action to a container of mental images fixed also through book illustrations.<sup>5</sup>

To do this it is necessary to retrace the printed tradition of the *sacre rappresentazioni* without isolating it from other literary forms published between the end of the fifteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth century, but setting it in relation to the emergence of the devotional book aimed at a wide public, to discern the similarities, differences and borrowings. It is also necessary to address the issue of the illustrations, both by reconstructing the relations which the faithful had with sacred images prior to benefiting from the multiplication enabled by the printing industry, and by considering the relation between text and woodcuts as a significant whole in itself. In other words, seeking to understand how the *sacra rappresentazione* was conceived, being a dramatic genre, when it was transformed into an object for reading.

## 2. Sacre rappresentazioni in Print

The publication of the *sacra rappresentazione* was a phenomenon that persisted at length, from the last two decades of the fifteenth century almost up to the nineteenth,<sup>6</sup> albeit in increasingly deteriorated form in terms of both quality of publication and textual contents. By the end, it had assumed a decidedly popular character, alongside hagiographic legends and almanacs. From the repertory of religious books in the vernacular compiled by Anne Jacobson Schutte (1983),<sup>7</sup> it was clearly an entirely local phenomenon, at least until the mid-sixteenth century. Editions of similar texts in other parts of Italy

<sup>4</sup> For instance, the restricted audience of a youth confraternity or the crowd attending a performance in a public square. On the different contexts of staging *sacre rappresentazioni* see Ventrone 2016, *passim*.

<sup>5</sup> Giulio Camillo Delminio's *Teatro della memoria*, for example, is one of the highest expressions of the fascinating story that for centuries has linked theatre to *ars memorativa* and, in the modern era, also to printing; see Bolzoni 1984 and 1995.

<sup>6</sup> In the nineteenth century scholars and positivists began to direct their interest to the *sacra rappresentazione* and to republish the ancient versions, as in the case of the broader modern anthology of these texts: D'Ancona 1872; see also D'Ancona 1891.

<sup>7</sup> This is the most extensive and complete inventory on vernacular religious book regarding the first century of printing activity in Italy, albeit with the limits of research carried out using library catalogues without direct viewing of the printed works.

are in fact rare and mostly later.<sup>8</sup> The titles too are significant, illustrating the exception that confirms the rule: a few plays by Feo Belcari, a writer appreciated both for his devotional compositions in prose and verse and for his dramatic texts (Marti 1970 and Martelli 1996, 20-47);<sup>9</sup> the *Passione del Gonfalone*, composed on the Florentine dramatic model in *ottava rima* by Giuliano Dati, Bernardo di Antonio and Mariano Particappa,<sup>10</sup> and a few other sporadic cases, above all in neighbouring cities such as Bologna and Perugia.<sup>11</sup> It was only after the middle of the sixteenth century, when Siena became part of the Tuscan Duchy, that its equally prolific enterprises, even in terms of print runs, came to supplement the Florentine editorial initiatives.<sup>12</sup>

Even in Florence, where there was already a copious circulation of manuscript *sacre rappresentazioni*,<sup>13</sup> their publication in book form was not immediately successful when the printing industry was set up in the city in 1471 (Ridolfi 1958, 13-28; Rhodes 1984).<sup>14</sup> The printing press of San Jacopo a Ripoli<sup>15</sup> is a significant illustration of this since, despite its specialisation in works of a devotional and hagiographic character destined to a broad and differentiated public, it did not print any text of *sacra rappresentazione*.<sup>16</sup> Similarly, other of the oldest print shops, such as that of Nicolaus Lorenz, although they published a great deal of religious material did not include this dramatic genre (Jacobson Schutte 1983, 425).

<sup>8</sup> On the *peculiarità geotipografica* ('geotypographic peculiarity') of the *sacra rappresentazione* see Quondam 1983, 610-611. Quondam's contribution is still fundamental for the history of printing in Italy, both for the amplitude of the panorama offered and for the wealth of suggested research perspectives.

<sup>9</sup> For the ancient editions of Belcari's dramatic and non-dramatic works see Jacobson Schutte 1983, 66-69.

<sup>10</sup> The popularity of this play stemmed from the famous performance held in Rome inside the Colosseum. See Jacobson Schutte 1983, 158-159. On the Colosseum *Passion play* see Cruciani 1983, 210-218, 470-473, 522-524, and Wisch and Newbigin 2013.

<sup>11</sup> In Bologna some *sacre rappresentazioni* were printed by Caligola Bazalieri around 1505; in Perugia by Cosimo from Verona called Bianchino del Leone in the first half of the sixteenth century: see Jacobson Schutte 1983, 385 and 404.

<sup>12</sup> Above all by Luca Bonetti and by the print shop 'Alla Loggia del Papa': see Cioni 1961, 343-345; Cioni 1969; Salvestro cartaio detto Il Fumoso 2016, 32-35.

<sup>13</sup> See Testaverde and Evangelista 1988, 3-31, and the list, extended to other Florentine and Italian libraries, contained in Newbigin 1983, liv-lv.

<sup>14</sup> See also the useful, albeit synthetic, notes by Scapecchi 1985, 21-23.

<sup>15</sup> It was opened in 1476, at the homonymous monastery, by the Dominican friars Domenico di Daniello from Pistoia and Pietro di Salvatore from Pisa, and remained one of the most flourishing until the end of activity in 1484: see Nesi 1903, who published the *Diario* ('Journal') of the printing press, an exceptional document for the history of fifteenth-century printing. See also the modern edition by Conway 1999.

<sup>16</sup> As can be deduced from the *Diario* itself and from the 'Index of works' provided by Nesi 1903, 125-127.

The oldest incunabula of *sacre rappresentazioni* printed in series date to the early 1490s.<sup>17</sup> Although they do not bear any typographical indications, they are now by consensus attributed by bibliologists to the print shop of Antonio Miscomini,<sup>18</sup> who took the initiative of publishing thirteen texts. These were sold both loose and collected in two volumes, the first containing nine plays<sup>19</sup> and the second four.<sup>20</sup> They were printed in the 4° format typical of popular literature, whether of a devout, romantic or legendary nature, because it was both manageable and relatively cheap (on the costs of producing incunabula see Pettas 1973). They were also elegant and readable in view of the use of the rounded and well-spaced Roman 112 R font and the arrangement of the text in a single column of 27 lines. There were no illustrations<sup>21</sup> (figure 1).

The operation carried out by Miscomini was very interesting from several aspects. The idea of commencing the publication of the *sacre rappresentazioni* in the form of anthologies, following the model of the manuscripts in which they had hitherto been preserved,<sup>22</sup> indicated the intention of creating a market bracket among those who liked to copy such texts for their own personal use or borrowed them from friends and acquaintances (figure 2). In addition, the possibility of breaking down the anthologies into individual units that could also be sold individually was a safeguard against the possibility of disappointing sales of the anthologies. The choice of the titles to be printed was also significant. They were all previously unpublished and no fifteenth-century manuscript copies of them are known. More specifically they included the entire known production of certain writers active in the Medici milieu and well-established in the city, such as Antonia and Bernardo Pulci.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Nerida Newbiggin (2016) has recently proposed anticipating the dating of these collections to 1483. This hypothesis, to be verified through further investigations, does not affect the contents of the present contribution which is focused on the later illustrated printed works.

<sup>18</sup> Informations about Miscomini's activity can be found in Turelli 1985b, 36-37, n. 22, and in Avigliano 2011.

<sup>19</sup> The texts are: *Santa Domitilla*, by Antonia Pulci; *Barlaam e Josafat*, by Bernardo Pulci; *Santa Guglielma*, by Antonia Pulci; *Ioseph figliuolo di Iacob*; *Santo Francesco*, by Antonia Pulci; and the anonymous *Reina Hester*; *Natività di Cristo*; *Sancto Antonio della Barba Romito*, *San Francesco come convertì tre ladroni*. Only two complete exemplars of this series exist. They are conserved in the BNCF, *Banco rari 187*, and *P.6.37.1-9*: see Cioni 1961, 23; Newbiggin 1988, 270-272; Newbiggin 2016, 340-341.

<sup>20</sup> The texts are: *Sant'Eustachio*, *Sant'Apollonia*, *Angelo Raffaele e Tobia*, *Stella*. Only two complete exemplars of this series exist. They are conserved in the BNCF, *Banco rari 186*, and *P.6.36.1-4*: Cioni 1961, 23-24; Newbiggin 1988, 272; Newbiggin 2016, 341-342.

<sup>21</sup> For these and other typographical details see Newbiggin 2016, 343.

<sup>22</sup> With the difference that in the manuscripts, the *sacre rappresentazioni* could be accompanied by works of different kinds such as *laudi*, prayers, *cantari* and others. Examples can be found in Testaverde and Evangelista 1988, 3-31.

<sup>23</sup> On the consolidated relationship between Miscomini and some of the most loyal Medici writers such as, in addition to the Pulci, Angelo Poliziano, Cristoforo Landino, Marsilio Ficino, see Avigliano 2011.

No information is available about the potential purchasers of the anthologies, and investigation of the reading public for printed books in this early period continues to be extremely complex.<sup>24</sup> What does appear certain is that the publishing enterprise met with success, at least as far as the loose copies were concerned, since immediately afterwards – and definitely before 1495<sup>25</sup> – Miscomini reprinted seven of the texts already published together with four new ones. These were printed in a different form, in the smaller 86 R font and with a page layout in two columns of 42-44 lines, allowing a saving on paper and, as a result, possibly lower costs. But most importantly it made room for the true novelty: the introduction of illustrations.<sup>26</sup>

Around the same time, Bartolomeo de' Libri,<sup>27</sup> apparently acting almost in tandem with his colleague, reprinted the five remaining dramas of Miscomini's two anthologies as well as another twenty-one, all unpublished and in this case drawn from the older plays that had already circulated widely in manuscript form. The typographic format was also very similar to that of Miscomini: Roman font 97 R in two columns of around 35 lines, complete with illustrations. Thus, between 1490 and 1495 just two printers had, between them, printed or reprinted no less than fifty *sacre rappresentazioni*. Although the numbers of the print runs are not known,<sup>28</sup> the total must have been in the region of several thousand exemplars.

This was just the beginning of the popularity of the printed versions of the religious plays in octaves. In fact the model established by Miscomini and de' Libri must have satisfied the tastes of the public, since it was consistently reproduced by other publishers in the following decades.

The *sacre rappresentazioni* continued to be published under the government of Soderini (1502-1512), although with less intensity than in the

<sup>24</sup> On this topic, see the historiographical overview, extended to the whole of Europe, collected by Chartier 1995: for the Italian situation, in particular the contribution by Braida 1995.

<sup>25</sup> This is the presumed date of Miscomini's death: see Avigliano 2011.

<sup>26</sup> The dimensions of the *sacre rappresentazioni* of the two unillustrated collections could, in fact, range between 20 and 26 folios, while those of the new format, in double column and illustrated, rarely exceeded 10. However, there is no evidence to establish to what extent the presence of the illustrations affected the cost of the booklets.

<sup>27</sup> He was chaplain in the Oratory of Orsanmichele and one of the most prolific Florentine printers of the fifteenth century. See: Poli 1949; Ridolfi 1958, 63-78; Cioni 1964; Bertoli 2001.

<sup>28</sup> As can be deduced from the aforementioned catalogues (in addition to the *Short-Title Catalogue* 1958), the incunabula and the sixteenth-century printed books currently conserved in Italian and foreign libraries amount to several hundred, many surviving in unique copies of a single edition (in the BNCf alone there are almost seven hundred). If one considers that nine-tenths of popular vernacular literature has probably disappeared, the print runs must have been in the region of a thousand for each play, which would be remarkable even in today's publishing industry: for this quantification see Rozzo 1993, 13, with bibliography.

previous years.<sup>29</sup> Instead, when the Medici returned to Florence and during the papacies of Leo X and Clement VII, there was a substantial revival in the printing of the genre. This was primarily due to Antonio Tubini and Andrea Ghirlandi, often on commission from Francesco di Giovanni Benvenuto, who took over the press of de' Libri and, in addition to reprinting the fifteenth-century dramas, also published the new works of Castellano Castellani.<sup>30</sup> This new burst of popularity may have had something to do with the first inklings of the Reformation and the Lutheran and Protestant pamphlets which began to circulate clandestinely, camouflaged as booklets of popular devotion. If this is so, the plays in octaves could have been one of the methods used by the Florentine Church to counter the spread of the prohibited works which were very soon placed on the Index.<sup>31</sup>

While the above is only a hypothesis that needs to be checked through further research, it is instead a fact that the publication of *sacre rappresentazioni* never dropped significantly in the course of the sixteenth century. On the contrary, it enjoyed periods of considerable growth following the Council of Trent, especially after the Giunti print shop undertook a major editorial project, comparable only to the early activity of Miscomini and de' Libri. Giunti collected and reprinted all the texts known to date – with the addition of *commedie sacre* ('sacred comedies') and lauds – in three volumes published in 1555, 1560 and 1578, each introduced by a letter 'from the printer to the readers'.<sup>32</sup> These anthologies are of the greatest interest, not only because of the publisher's insistence on the edifying purposes of the drama in octaves, but also because they proposed to bring together all the existing texts of sacred plays. The primary destination of these collections were the nuns' convents, both as a repertory for the performances that were frequently organised there and also to prevent them being lost at a time when other dramatic forms were taking over from the octave model:

<sup>29</sup> On the other hand, the numbers of both print runs and titles printed at the end of the previous century probably saturated the market for at least a few years and until new authors appeared to renew the repertoire.

<sup>30</sup> Significant of this interest in the *sacra rappresentazione* is the fact that Ghirlandi had been a compositor for Miscomini before starting his own business (Pettas 1973, 70-72; Breccia Fratadocchi 1999). On the revival of *sacre rappresentazioni* after the Medici's return to Florence see Ventrone 2016, chapter V.

<sup>31</sup> On the complex problem of the circulation of the Reformed literature in Italy before and after the Council of Trent and the religious publications promoted to oppose its diffusion, I refer only to the synthesis by Rozzo 1993, 40-45.

<sup>32</sup> For the description of these extremely rare collections see Cioni 1961, 24-31. I have consulted the volumes conserved in the Library of the Poldi Pezzoli Museum in Milan which, although incomplete, conserve intact the introductions for the readers, fundamental to shed light on the purposes of these editions. The Giuntine collections were followed by at least two other anthologies between the '80s and '90s of the sixteenth century, perhaps due respectively to Giovanni Baleni and to Jacopo Chiti (Cioni 1961, 31-32).

Quanto sia necessario alla rational creatura conoscere la diritta & sicura via di questo nostro corto & dubbioso pellegrinaggio, per venire a quel desiderato fine dove tutti intendiamo, non è niuno, ch'io mi creda così poco amorevole di se stesso & della salute dell'anima sua, il quale chiaramente nol sappia. Et chi a ciò non pensa se non sempre, bene spesso almeno, non si può dire, né ch'egli tema Dio, né ch'egli ami sé medesimo. Nasce dunque questo lodevole pensiero in noi principalmente dalla assidua oratione, & dalla lettione delle cose sacre. Ma perché altri non può di continuo orare, né sempre attendere a leggere libri spirituali, ho più volte pensato fra me medesimo che non disconverrebbe punto alla santissima professione di tutte le Vergini dedicate al servizio di Dio, l'havere talhora alle mani qualche honesto libro da pigliare con esso consolatione di spirito. Però prima a honor di Dio, & poi a sodisfattion vostra, ho procurato di ridurre insieme buona parte di Rappresentationi & feste di Santi & Sante altre volte stampate, e alcune anchora non più poste in luce. Et servirà come io aviso, questa mia raunanza, perché desiderando le persone religiose in qualche tempo dell'ano [sic, for anno] pigliare un poco di ricreatione, habbin cagione di recitare & leggere alcuna di queste rappresentazioni poste sul presente libro, le quali, per esser tutte cose spirituali & vere, insegneranno loro buoni esempi. Onde elle s'ingegneranno di caminar per la via che fu guidato al cielo quel Santo o Santa che rappresenteranno. Così facendo, che a Dio piaccia, verran[n]o ancho a fuggire l'occasione di recitar comedie, le quali il più delle volte recano danno all'anima, e al corpo. Et si come al presente ho raccolto insieme il primo libro, spero fra poco tempo di raunarne dell'altre, & farne il secondo volume a laude & gloria di Dio. Il quale vi degnerete pregar per me, che ogn'ora m'inspiri a far cosa che sia di suo Santo servitio. (*Il primo libro di rappresentazioni et feste 1555, f.1a r-v*)<sup>33</sup>

<sup>33</sup> 'I don't believe that there is anyone who cares so little for himself and for the health of his soul that does not clearly see how necessary it is for the rational creature to know the straight & safe path of this our short & doubtful pilgrimage, to arrive at that yearned-for end that we all aspire to. And anyone who does not think of it, if not always at least often, then it cannot be said that he fears God or that he cares for himself. And so this praiseworthy thought arises in us mostly through assiduous prayer & the reading of holy things. But since others cannot pray continuously, nor always attend to the reading of spiritual books, I have often thought to myself that it would not be at all inappropriate to the most holy profession of all the Virgins devoted to the service of God to have to hand now and then some honest book from which to draw consolation for the spirit. Therefore, firstly to honour God and secondly for your satisfaction I have sought to bring together most of the plays & feasts of Saints printed before, and some others not yet published. And as I see it, this collection of mine may serve because if the religious people at some times of the year may wish to make a little recreation, they may have reason to recite & read some of the plays to be found in this book, which, since they are all spiritual & true things, may teach them good examples. So that they will strive to follow the path by which the Saint in the play was guided to heaven. By doing this, which is pleasing to God, they will also be able to evade the occasion of acting comedies, which often are detrimental to the soul, and to the body. And as I have now gathered together the first book, I hope in a short time to bring together others & to make a second volume to the praise & glory of God. To whom I beg you to pray for me, that every hour I may be inspired to do things that are to his Holy service'. This is the text of the *Lettera dello stampatore ai lettori* ('Printer's letter to the readers') prefaced to the first volume of the collection. For performances in female convents see Weaver 2002a.

### 3. *The Savonarolian Model of Devotional Printed Books*

But let us return to the fifteenth century. Apart from the public appreciation of the *sacra rappresentazione*, which is also testified by the entity and the chronological concentration of the related editorial initiatives, what happened between Miscomini's first incunabula without illustrations and the second abundant production characterised by the presence of woodcuts? And what induced two of the most active and prolific printers in Florence to devote a considerable part of their activity to the production of this type of work?<sup>34</sup>

After the period dominated by the Neoplatonic philosophy of Marsilio Ficino, in the last years of Lorenzo the Magnificent, Florentine culture underwent a swift change of direction. This was rendered urgent not only by the changing of the times, but also by the convergence between the discontent of the anti-Medicean factions in the city and the open hostility of Pope Innocent VIII towards the political line of mediation between the various Italian states pursued by Lorenzo. This opposition materialised in the condemnation of the Medici intellectual entourage's inclination towards the artistic – literary, philosophical and figurative – expressions of the classical world, branded as paganism (see Martelli 1978; 1980; 1998). To defend himself against this attack, in 1490 Lorenzo summoned the Ferrara Dominican Girolamo Savonarola back to Florence in the conviction that his preaching would give a new imprint to the image of Florentine culture. In effect, Savonarola did draw into his orbit many of the leading intellectuals and artists connected with the ruling family.<sup>35</sup>

The first printed works by Savonarola, published between 1491 and 1492, were a series of ascetic pamphlets aimed at illustrating certain practices of devotion of an intimate and private character and conceived, like all the rest of his vernacular production, to be understood by both cultured people and the semi-literate and popular classes. The *Trattato dell'umiltà* ('On Humility'), the *Trattato dell'amore di Gesù* ('On the Love of Jesus'), and the *Trattato dell'orazione mentale* ('On Mental Prayer'), published by Miscomini and some immediately reprinted,<sup>36</sup> reveal in the typographic format and doctrinal content both the imprint and the catechetical purpose he wished to confer upon his writings as well as the importance he attributed to printing as a more powerful means of divulgation than the same words declaimed

<sup>34</sup> 209 printed works of various kinds, produced between 1483 and 1511, are actually attributed to Bartolomeo de' Libri: Poli 1949, 14-27; see also Ridolfi 1958, 63-78.

<sup>35</sup> For the reconstruction of this period and these problems, in addition to Martelli's studies mentioned above, see the classic Ridolfi 1952, and Weinstein 1970.

<sup>36</sup> See records 7 (75-76), 8 (77-78), 9 (79-80), in Turelli 1985a. This is a fundamental contribution to the study of the relationship between Savonarola and the printing industry, to which I refer, unless otherwise indicated, for all information on the Friar's publications. All catalogue records are by Elisabetta Turelli.

from the pulpit. Clearly, the printed work could be read over and over again, facilitating meditation and the assimilation of the contents.

This conviction is clarified in a later letter, dating to 1497. This is significant because it shows that the polemic about the legitimacy of frequenting classical culture which had marked the final years of the Laurentian hegemony was still alive.<sup>37</sup> Even more important is the fact that it dates to the period when Savonarola had been prohibited from preaching by Alexander VI, so that he sought to exploit print as much as possible to spread his message of redemption:

Ma al tempo presente, essendosi dati li cristiani alli studii de' pagani molti che si chiamano savi oggidì ingannano le persone semplice et illetterate sotto specie di dottrina vana et inflata, non mostrando la verità del ben vivere cristiano; et però per occorrere a questo errore non solo io, ma molti etiam divoti omini così religiosi come secolari, hanno composti diversi *trattati vulgari per le persone inletterate, circa la perfezione del ben vivere cristiano*, non scrivendo però altro che quello che è scritto nella Scrittura Sacra e nella dottrina della santa Chiesa e delli santi dottori. Avendo dunque noi scritto 'della semplicità della vita cristiana', 'della carità', 'della umiltà', 'della orazione', 'delli dieci comandamenti' e 'regule di perfezione alli religiosi', e molte altre cose appartenente alla perfezione della vita spirituale, non mi pare più necessario scrivere altre esortazione in vulgare, anzi superfluo, *essendo le predette opere poste in stampa e divulgate per tutto*, perché quelle sono sufficiente a chi vuole operare bene. ... Ma mettere in scritto e repetere quelle medesime cose è generare tedio e non fare frutto. *Altra cosa è il scrivere e altra è il predicare*; però che *quello che si predica non rimane nelle carte*, e comunemente li omini sono o di poca memoria o negligenti nello operare e però bisogna quel medesimo nelle prediche spesso rimemorare, sì per ricordarlo a chi lo avessi dimenticato, sì per insegnarlo a chi non fussi le altre volte stato presente, sì per riscaldare li negligenti, *perché la viva voce molto muove li auditori etiam quando l'omo dice le cose che sanno e che hanno udito altre volte*, perché *gran differenza è audire una cosa e leggerla*; e gran differenza è ancora in una medesima cosa audirla dire a uno modo e ad un altro. (Savonarola, 1984, 209-210; italics mine)<sup>38</sup>

<sup>37</sup> In fact, renewing a diatribe that has already been repeatedly proposed in the history of Florentine culture: see Martelli 1988, 104-123, and, regarding Savonarola's position, Viti 1998.

<sup>38</sup> 'At present, however, since Christians have dedicated themselves to the study of the pagans, many who today are called wise deceive simple and unlettered persons under the guise of a doctrine that is vain and inflated and hides the truth of righteous Christian living. So, to remedy this error, not only I, but also many devout men, both in orders and lay, have composed *in the vernacular language various treatises for unlettered persons on the perfection of righteous Christian living*, writing nothing else but what is written in Sacred Scripture and in the doctrine of the holy Church and of the holy doctors. Since we have written 'On the simplicity of the Christian life', 'On Charity', 'On humility', 'On prayer', 'On the ten commandments', and 'Rules for the perfection of people in orders', and many other things pertaining to the perfection of spiritual life, it seems to me not necessary but



And, again in 1497, in the *Epistola a tutti gli eletti di Dio* ('Letter to All the Elect of God') published by Bartolomeo de' Libri, he repeated:

quello che al presente non si può fare in parole lo farò per epistola, & forse questo sarà tanto più utile quanto sarà più universale, potendo la epistola haversi da quelli che non possono udire le parole. (BNCF, Cust D 1, f. a1v; italics mine)<sup>39</sup>

Savonarola had therefore grasped the educational potential offered by the new printing industry, and was a true pioneer in the intense and conscious use he made of it. His exploitation is indeed comparable only to that of Luther, who went so far as to consider printing the ultimate and greatest gift of God and founded the success of the Reformation on the circulation of his writings in print and on the direct approach to reading the Scriptures made possible by their translation into the vernacular and publication.<sup>40</sup>

superfluous to compose other exhortations in the vernacular *since the aforementioned works have been printed and distributed everywhere*, and they are enough for someone who wants to live righteously. ... But to write down and repeat those same things is nothing more than to create tedium and not bear fruit. *Writing is one thing, preaching another*. Since what is preached does not remain on paper, and because people generally have short memories or are negligent in their works, then in preaching the same thing must be brought back into people's memory, be it to remind those who have forgotten it, or to teach it to those who were not present the previous times, or to rekindle the negligent, *for the spoken voice moves the audience greatly*, even when one says things they know and have heard other times, for there is a big difference *between hearing something and reading it*, and there is also a big difference between hearing something said in one way or another' (translation taken from Savonarola 2003, 55-56).

<sup>39</sup> 'I will do by letter what at present cannot be done verbally, and perhaps this will be so much the more useful as it is *the more universal, since a letter can be received by those who cannot hear the words*' (translation taken from Savonarola 2006, 290). The quotations of the texts of incunabula and *cinquecentine*, including those of the titles, incipit and colophon, are conducted with criteria of moderate modernization, consisting of: separation of single words, distinction of *u* from *v*, regularization of capitalization and punctuation according to current uses, introduction of diacritical signs, dissolution of abbreviations and summaries, failure to report end-of-line and end of page.

<sup>40</sup> On this subject, widely treated by historians, see: Rozzo 1993, 25 and *passim*; on the consequences of the direct reading of the Scriptures by the illiterate or semi-literate, see the classic Ginzburg 1976, particularly 69-70; on the diffusion of sacred and religious texts, see also Ginzburg 1972. Savonarola's unusual use of printing for propaganda purposes is, moreover, confirmed by the number of the print runs and by comparative statistics that reveal a surge in Florentine religious publications during the Friar's time. On this issue, see Rozzo 1993, 14-16; Quondam stresses that 'Savonarola's timeliness and speed – required by his wanting / having to be caught up in the meshes of a debate that ends up activating other scriptures and other books – testify to his deep persuasion of the possibilities offered by the new art of artificial writing, of the facility with which it reaches an audience much larger than that which crowds his sermons (which were, in fact, immediately printed); and that 'Savonarola seems to be the first to think of his own work (rooted in the discursive statutes of the practiced genres) in book form' (1983, 596-597). On this topic, see also Rhodes: 'It can

I also believe that Savonarola played a prominent role in the typographical layout of the popular Florentine illustrated books, and obviously of religious books in particular. This hypothesis is supported by several significant coincidences: 1. the fact that the *Tractati vulgari* ('Vernacular Treatises'), as well as being his first published works, were also among the very first books illustrated with woodcuts published in the city (Turelli 1985a, 75, 77); 2. that the images contained within them were specifically conceived to move the readers and to fix the significance of the written pages; 3. that the printers who published these texts, and those who later joined them,<sup>41</sup> were the same who were responsible for producing most of the Florentine illustrated books between the fifteenth and sixteenth century, thus at the same time building up almost the entire woodcut corpus which was to be continually reutilised – even at the height of the sixteenth century – to illustrate other works, often very far removed from those in which they originally appeared;<sup>42</sup> 4- finally, the confirmation of how consciously Savonarola conceived the images to be inserted in his texts, in a literal relationship with the contents that goes far beyond a merely ornamental or generically educational purpose.<sup>43</sup>

The figures that accompany Savonarola's works reveal a marked artistic taste and an attention to the quality of the workmanship and the harmony of the page layout that reveal that he was very familiar with the latest figurative trends in Florence at the time and, as commissioner, was capable of choosing the solutions most suitable to the context to be illustrated. Not incidentally, most of these images were attributed to prominent artists, all closely linked to the convent of San Marco and the circle of Savonarola's followers (and, before that, to the milieu of the Medici). They included Domenico Ghirlandaio, Sandro Botticelli, Filippino Lippi, Bernardo Cennini (Ciardi Dupré 1985) and a certain Alunno di Domenico, Ghirlandaio's pupil, identified by Berenson as the painter and engraver Bartolomeo di Giovanni (Berenson 1903 and Marcucci 1964).

be said that Girolamo Savonarola is the most prolific author of the entire fifteenth century in Italy, in terms not of the length of each work but of their frequency; and that works by him were published in Florence every fortnight between 1495 and 1498. He was the journalist of the incunabula' (1988, 13). In general, for the transformations in European mentality and culture introduced by the printing industry a useful reference is still Eisenstein 1979.

<sup>41</sup> Bartolomeo de' Libri, Lorenzo Morgiani, alone or in collaboration with Giovanni Petri or with Giovanni di Magonza, Francesco Bonaccorsi, Antonio Tubini, alone or with Lorenzo d'Alopa and Andrea Ghirlandi, and the publisher Ser Piero Pacini da Pescia: on the latter see Casetti Brach 2014.

<sup>42</sup> For a history and a classification of the different graphic styles of the Florentine woodcuts from their appearance to the early sixteenth century the work by Kristeller 1897 continues to be indispensable.

<sup>43</sup> On the printed editions of Savonarola's works, which he himself edited, see Turelli 1985b and Garfagnini 1999, who does not take the illustrations into account.

In terms of communicative intentions, I would indicatively classify the woodcuts in three genres: 1. images intended to move the reader and stimulate identification; 2. those of an exemplary character; 3. those of a narrative nature. It seems useful here to take a look at a few examples.

#### 4. *Savonarolian Woodcuts and Their Function in Devotional Booklets*

Belonging to the first category are the Crucifixions, the Lamentations, the Ascents to Calvary and the portrayals of Christ in Pietà. The subject of Christ on the Cross, present in a remarkable variety of compositions in Savonarola's printed works (Turelli 1985a, *passim*), can effectively help the modern reader to grasp the tangible emotionally moving power that the Friar attributed to images. In fact, some of the works that contain this figure explain to the faithful the correct attitude to be adopted in front of it in order to derive the greatest moral benefit from it.

The *Operetta nuova* ('New Booklet'), dated around 1495 and printed by Lorenzo Morgiani and Giovanni Petri (Turelli 1985a, cat. 26, 131-133), contains two different Crucifixions, the repetition being intended to emphasise the substance of the booklet's message, namely that the love for Jesus is strengthened and amplified by the representation of his suffering. Referring to one of the woodcuts, Savonarola addresses the devout reader as follows:

Contemplatione circa Iesù già elevato in aria in su la croce: 'Ecco anima dilecta il tuo Iesù per tuo amore in croce crudelissimamente disteso. Ecco lo stendardo della salute nostra. Ecco il tuo creatore sopra quello alto legno conficto. Lieva gli occhi & guarda se mai al mondo si vidde tanta charità. Contempla se mai fu dimostrato tanto amore. ... Risguarda anima che *crudele spectaculo*, che *spietata stampa*, che forma da far diventare pietoso ogni cor duro'. (BNCF Cust C 16, s.n.t., f. 17r; italics mine)<sup>44</sup>

In these words we can note the *pathos* with which the preacher speaks to the faithful, from the printed page in the same way as from the pulpit, to induce them to identify with Christ's suffering through the engaged contemplation of the woodcut. We can also discern the telling association between the '*crudele spectaculo*' ('cruel spectacle') and the '*spietata stampa*' ('pitiless print') which goes well beyond the metaphorical use of the terms since, as I see it, these are intended in their more tangibly literal sense: 'spectacle' as action

<sup>44</sup> 'Contemplation of Jesus already raised on high upon the cross: "Here, beloved soul, is your Jesus, most cruelly stretched out upon the cross for love of you. Here is the banner of our salvation. Here is your creator nailed to the tall tree. Raise your eyes and look to see if ever so much charity was seen in the world. Contemplate if ever so much love was shown. ... Look, soul, what *cruel spectacle*, what *pitiless print*, what form to make every hard heart grow pitiful" '.

performed and seen<sup>45</sup> and ‘print’ as book illustration. This also calls to mind the analogous use which Saint Bernardino from Siena made of the painted images in the course of his fiery Sienese sermons, using the city’s figurative heritage as a reservoir of sites of memory, as well as for leverage of collective and individual sentiment.<sup>46</sup>

Following a long tradition – predominantly, but not exclusively Dominican – Savonarola therefore considered that the sacred images helped to strengthen devotion by acting on the imagination and emotional memory of the faithful. At the same time, he was aware of the way the public were accustomed to using images to stimulate their own religious sensitivity and facilitate the process of contrition.<sup>47</sup> This is why he believed it indispensable that there should be a crucifix to pray before in every home. In the *Copia d’una epistola ... a Madonna Magdalena Contessa della Mirandola la quale volea intrare in monasterio* (‘Copy of a Letter ... to Magdalen, Countess of Mirandola; Concerning her Design of Entering the Order of S. Clare’, dated c. 1490 and attributed to Bartolomeo de’ Libri), for example, he recommended that in the cell: ‘Voi habbate uno crucifixo, non d’oro né d’argento, né tutto gentile & pulito, ma *pietoso*, el quale vi *exciti la mente a devotione* & sia di poco prezzo’ (BNCF, Cust D. 8, f. 2v; italics mine).<sup>48</sup>

<sup>45</sup> The tradition of the *sacre rappresentazioni* and of the Saint John pageants (‘edifizi’) justifies a reference to ‘spectacle’ in the strict sense: in fact Savonarola himself could have had the opportunity to see both, for example, in 1491, when Lorenzo de’ Medici’s *Rappresentazione di San Giovanni Evangelista* (Masi 1906, 16), and the classical triumphs of Paolo Emilio, commissioned by the Magnificent, were added to the religious pageants organised for the Feast of Saint John (De’ Rossi 1786, 270-271).

<sup>46</sup> On this argument see Bolzoni 2002, particularly 167-190.

<sup>47</sup> On the question of the reception of images, see the classic Baxandall 1972, in particular the chapter dedicated to ‘The period eye’, 29-108. To illustrate ‘the religious function of religious pictures’, Baxandall quotes a passage from Giovanni da Genova’s *Catholicon*, a thirteenth-century text that circulated widely, which justifies it as follows: ‘Item scire te volo quod triplex fuit ratio institutionis imaginum in ecclesia. *Prima* ad instructionem rudium, qui eis quasi quibusdam libris edoceri videntur. *Secunda* ut incarnationis mysterium et sanctorum exempla magis in memoria nostra essent dum quotidie oculis nostris representantur. *Tertia* ad excitandum devotionis affectum, qui ex visis efficacius excitatur quam ex auditis’ (‘Know that there were three reasons for the institution of images in churches. *First*, for the instruction of simple people, because they are instructed by them as if by books. *Second*, so that the mystery of the incarnation and the examples of the Saints may be the more active in our memory through being presented daily to our eyes. *Third*, to excite feelings of devotion, these being aroused more effectively by things seen than by things heard’, 1972, 41). On the function of icons and the Christian cult of images see Belting 1990.

<sup>48</sup> ‘Thou must have thy crucifix, no part of it of gold or silver, nor finely wrought and finished, but rude and cheap, albeit of devout and godly spirit; that thou mayest be moved to compassion and devotion’ (translation by B.W. Randolph in Savonarola 1907,

The *Tractato ... in defensione & comendatione dell'oratione mentale composto ad instructione confirmatione et consolatione delle anime devote* ('Treatise ... in Defence and Commendation of Mental Prayer Composed for the Instruction, Confirmation and Consolation of Devout Souls') was printed around 1495 by Lorenzo Morgiani and Giovanni Petri, although probably written around three years earlier (Turelli 1985a, cat. 28, 137-138). The woodcut of the frontispiece shows a man and a woman in ordinary dress kneeling, contrite and absorbed in prayer, before a crucifix set on an altar. The purpose of this image was to portray 'the personal and everyday dimension of religious life'<sup>49</sup> and the attitude which Savonarola expected from the faithful (figure 3). Again, in the *Epistola a tutti gli eletti di Dio* ('Letter to All the Elect of God') addressed to the friars of San Marco of whom he was prior, the portrait on the frontispiece showing a worshipper absorbed in prayer before a crucifix set on the altar of a small chapel, reiterates the same concept, which in this case is also repeated in the text:

Et perché l'attenzione negli incipienti non può essere troppo lunga è buono a'lloro fare oratione breve & spesso, & quelle fare con grande attentione & devotione. *Perché il senso muove lo intellecto*, è buono che dinanzi all'occhio si ponghino qualche figura come è la imagine del crucifixo o della vergine Maria o di altri sancti. (BNCF, Cust D 1, f. 17r-v, italics mine)<sup>50</sup>

### 5. *The Sacred Image and Its Emotional Efficacy*

The emotional efficacy of the sacred images which Savonarola repeatedly insisted on is also borne out almost a century earlier, in 1407, by a long passage in the *Memoirs* of the Florentine merchant Giovanni di Pagolo Morelli

19). In this passage the exhortation as to the poverty of the crucifix as an artistic artefact is also interesting, since the *Letter* was addressed to a noblewoman, a relative of Pico della Mirandola, who could certainly have chosen a valuable object for her devotions. In fact Savonarola insists on this aspect by recommending: 'El breviario sia di poco prezzo, di quelli di stampa, senza minii, senza fibbie di seta & senza carte dorate o altro ornamento, col signaculo non d'oro ma di cuoio o di semplice filo' (BNCF, Cust D. 8, f. 2r), 'Let thy breviary be of no value, but roughly typed; not fine with the gold or with no silken latches, no gilded tooling, lettering or other adornment; the title or the cross not of gold, but of leather or of yarn' (Savonarola 1907, 18). For the description of the incunabulum see Turelli 1985a, cat. 11, 85-86.

<sup>49</sup> The citation is taken from the essay by Verdon 1985, 8.

<sup>50</sup> 'And, seeing that, when in this matter we make a beginning, it is not possible for us to maintain attention for long, it is a good thing for us to pray briefly and frequently, and that with much attention and devotion. And *since the senses move the mind*, it is well for us to appeal to the eye by means of some figure, such as the Crucifix or the image of Mary or of some other saint' (Savonarola 1907, 81-82).

in which he commemorates the anniversary of the death of his eldest son Alberto.<sup>51</sup> It is an account of the personal relationship of a worshipper with the sacred image and of the touching liveliness of emotion and engagement that the prayer acquired in its presence. This is evidence of exceptional rarity, although it certainly mirrored the common feeling of the faithful of the time.

Kneeling before a painting of the Crucifixion, Giovanni di Pagolo recites his prayer:

Con più fervore e amore disponendo l'anima e 'l corpo e tutti i miei sentimenti, dimenticando l'anima propria e ogni altro mio bene, *dinanzi alla figura del crocifisso Figliuolo di Dio*, alla quale esso [il figlio Alberto] molte volte la salute del corpo raccomandata nella sua infermità avea, a ginocchie ignude e 'n camicia, senza avere sopra alla testa alcuna cosa, colla correggia in collo, nel mio orazione così *verso di quello ragguardando*, incominciai prima a *immaginare e ragguardare* in me i miei peccati, ne' quai duramente *vedea* avere offeso il Figliuolo di Dio. E appresso, considerando con quanta dura, acerba e scura passione Iesù Cristo crocifisso, *la cui figura ragguardava*, avea dall'eternali pene ricomperato,<sup>52</sup> non patia miei occhi Lui con durezza *ragguardare*, ma, credo per dono di pietà per Lui a me conceduta, *il cuore e tutti i miei sensi rimossi a somma tenerezza*, per li miei occhi il viso di lagrime si bagnava.

E così per ispazio di buon pezzo dimorando, e già alleggerato la debolezza dello 'ntelletto, ripreso buon conforto, con divoti salmi e orazioni al crocifisso Figliuolo di Dio a orare incominciai; e dopo più salmi e laude a sua riverenza detti con voce piatosamente ordinata, a Lui *pregare coll'occhio, col cuore e colla mente* m'addirizzai, nelle seguenti parole procedendo: 'O santissimo e sagratissimo Padre, Figliuolo e Spirito Santo, nella cui maestà, divinità e unità allumina e risprende il Paradiso santo e 'l mondo universo, concedi al tuo picciolo servo e fedele cristiano tanto della tua infinita grazia ch' 'i' possa dire a tua laude e riverenza quelle parole le quai meritino trapassare dinanzi al tuo cospetto, facendole per tua misericordia favorevoli alla benedetta anima, della quale prima dalla tua grazia ricevetti dono, e quella, come desidera, sia beatificata nel tuo cospetto'.

E dette ch' 'i' ebbi queste poche parole, mi senti' tutto confortare, e della misericordia di Dio presi quella fidanza che se Esso per voce angelica m'avesse annunziato queste propie parole: 'Fedele cristiano, io odo volentieri la tua orazione e di tutti quelli che in me hanno fede e speranza. E, come vedi, io volli essere crocifisso acciò che questo prezzo<sup>53</sup> fusse, nel cospetto del Padre, giusto per la salute di tutti'. (Morelli 1986, 303-305; italics mine)<sup>54</sup>

<sup>51</sup> On Giovanni Morelli and his *Memoirs* see Trexler 1980, 159-186, in particular, on the prayer for the death of his son Alberto, 174-185.

<sup>52</sup> For the mercantile metaphors that, in Florence, marked the relationship of the faithful with God, see Martines 2001, 49-50, and also, in relation to the perception of the preachers' message, Zafarana 1968, 1024-1025; here, analysing a notebook of summaries of sermons compiled for personal use by a Florentine merchant in the second half of the fifteenth century, she noted in his attitude a sort of 'accounting of devotion'.

<sup>53</sup> Again a metaphor of mercantile nature.

<sup>54</sup> 'Disposing my soul and body and all my sentiments with more fervour and love, and forgetting about my own soul and all my business, dressed in my nightshirt, bare-

The portrayal of the Crucifixion therefore helps to predispose the soul of the worshipper to the correct meditative attitude for prayer, in a gradual progression which moves from the eye to the heart and then to the mind. This works by reawakening the awareness of the sacrifice made by Christ, through His own suffering, to redeem man's guilt, which is profoundly moving (*'il cuore e tutti i miei sensi rimossi a somma tenerezza'*), leading both to contrition and the plea for forgiveness and to the direct dialogue with Jesus. Rather, in the profound mystical sharing, the believer almost seems to hear Christ's answer, borne by an angel.

There is a striking insistence, in this and in the following passages, on verbs of vision, on 'gazing', 'looking', 'seeing', with reference both to the icon and to the sins of the worshipper, indicating a sort of project – a visual objectification of his actions – indicative of a deeply-rooted mentality which, in the case in question, may be mindful of other images such as that of the Last Judgement.<sup>55</sup>

The *memoir* then continues with the actual prayer, in which Giovanni di Pagolo asks:

che in quest'ora e in questo punto l'anima del mio figliuolo Alberto, la quale in quest'ora fa un anno si partì dallo isventurato corpo, dove essa pe' suoi peccati

knead and bare-headed, wearing a halter round my neck, I knelt down *before the figure of the crucified Son of God*, to which he [his son Alberto] had many times commended his bodily health during his illness, and *gazing towards this* during my prayer, I began first to *look into and see* my own sins, in which *I saw* I had grievously offended the Son of God. And then, thinking about how the harsh, bitter, dark passion of the crucified Jesus Christ, upon *whose figure I was gazing*, had *reacquired* us from eternal punishment, I could not bear that my eyes looked hard at him but, I believe through the gift of his pity, *my heart and all my senses were brought to the highest tenderness*, and my face was bathed in tears falling from my eyes. I remained thus for quite some time and when the weakness of my mind was alleviated and I felt comforted, I began to pray to the crucified Son of God with devout psalms and orations. And after many psalms and lauds in reverence to Him, delivered in a piously modulated voice, I set myself to *pray with the eye, the heart and the mind* in the following words: "O most holy and sacred Father, Son and Holy Spirit, whose majesty, unity and divinity illuminates holy Paradise and the worldly universe, making them shine, concede to your humble servant and faithful Christian so much of your infinite grace that I may speak in your praise and reverence words worthy to be uttered in your presence, in your mercy making them favourable to the blessed soul [of my son], which earlier I received as a gift from your grace, and let it be beatified in your sight as it desires". And after I had said these few words I felt a great sense of comfort, and I became so trustful of God's mercy that it was as if He had said these very words to me through the voice of an angel: 'Faithful Christian, I listen willingly to your prayers and to all those who place their faith and trust in me. And, as you see, it was my will to be crucified so that, before God the Father, this *price* would be just to save all mankind'.

<sup>55</sup> On the reception of the Last Judgement paintings, particularly in relationship to the Camposanto of Pisa, see Bolzoni 2002, 3-46.

non fusse a tanta gloria pervenuta, che essa per tuo ispeziale dono, le comandi che si rappresenti nel cospetto della tua santissima maestà, acciò che essa sia contenta dell'ultimo fine da lei desiderato. E come che di tanto dono io pe' miei peccati non sia degno, Signore mio, te lo domando pello merito della tua santissima incarnazione', e *in questo punto dissi il Vangelo della Annunziata Vergine Maria*. 'Ancora ti priego, Signore mio, che di questo mi facci partefice pel merito e infinito dono della tua dolcissima e soavissima natività', *ancora dicendo il santo suo Vangelo*. (Morelli 1986, 305; italics mine)<sup>56</sup>

For the merchant writer the painting of the Crucifixion acts as a species of guiding image for the prayer. By portraying the apex of Christ's earthly venture it leads to recollection of the different stages in his life through the recitation by memory of the respective Gospel passages, leading in a *crecendo* from the Annunciation and the Nativity up to 'tua santissima, gloriosissima e vettoriosa, come che dura e acerba, santa passione', con dicendo la passione di santo Giovanni Evangelista' (Morelli 1986, 305-306),<sup>57</sup> through to the Ascension, taking in the episodes of the forgiveness of Mary Magdalene and the resurrection of Lazarus, summoned as witnesses and as intermediaries of the divine mercy towards sinners. The icon is not, therefore, only an object destined to arouse devotion through emotion, but also an educational tool in that it aids the memory and guides it in the recitation of the Scriptures.

I shall leave the rest of the prayer to Christ crucified to move on to the point at which Morelli turns his gaze to another part of the painted panel, which triggers in him a different mechanism of identification. Here he is no longer only the sinner saved by Christ's sacrifice, although awareness of this condition persists; he is now also the father grieving the loss of his beloved son.

E quietato il cuore e la mia mente, si *volsono i miei occhi* sul lato destro del vero Crocifisso, dove, *riguardando*, a piè della croce vidi la pura e santa sua benedetta Madre. La quale considerai piena di sommo dolore e di somma tristizia; e considerando che' miei peccati l'erono cagione di tanta affrizione, non ardì la mia lingua a isciogliere alcuna parola né alcuna cosa manifestamente dire; ma considerando nella mente il dolore di quella pura Vergine, madre del puro e prezioso Figliuolo, e considerando i molti pericoli che dal dì della sua natività avea portati a utimamente innanzi a' suoi

<sup>56</sup> "If at this hour and at this point the soul of my son Alberto, which at this time one year ago departed from his unfortunate body, should not have arrived at glory on account of his sins, may you grant him a special gift and command that he should appear before your Most Holy Majesty, so that he may be granted the ultimate end he so desired. And since on account of my sins I am not worthy of such a gift, My Lord, I ask you for it by merit of your most holy incarnation", *and at this point I said the Gospel of the Annunciation of the Virgin Mary*. "Again I beg you my Lord, that you may make me a participant by the merit and infinite gift of your most sweet and gentle birth", *again saying His holy Gospel*'.

<sup>57</sup> "Your most holy, glorious and victorious, although harsh and bitter, passion", *saying the passion of Saint John the Evangelist*'.



occhi morto e fragellato dai dissoluti peccatori, e Lui abbandonato dai suoi apostoli e sola con Giovanni trovandosi a tanto crudele giudizio e a tanti crudeli martori quanti in quelle preziose carni del suo diletto Figliuolo s'erano potuti adoperare, none avendo niuno conforto e sola col suo Figliuolo abbandonati, *m'occorse in questa considerazione tanto dolore e tanta pena, che i' credetti veramente che l'anima dal corpo si partisse*. E come istordito per ispazio d'un poco istato e ricordandomi del dolore che io avea portato del mio figliuolo, forte mi cominciai a vergognare e di poco meno che io non mi levai dall'orazione. Ma pure, come piacque a Dio, preso sicurtà, istetti fermo; e *ragguardando* lei ripiena di tanto dolore, cominciai a piangere e in tanta fisima venni, che per gran pezzo non poterono i miei occhi raffrenare ... E detto ch'i' ebbi l'orazione sopra scritta con quella divota riverenza che mi fu da Dio conceduta, levatomi in piè, presi con divozione la tavola e ne' propi luoghi basciandola, dove dolcemente il mio figliuolo avea nella sua infermità baciata dopo il molto raccomandarsi della sua sanità racquistare; e di poi, riposta nel luogo usato e ripostomi ginocchione, dissi il Credo e di poi il Vangelo di San Giovanni. (Morelli 1986, 307-309; italics mine)<sup>58</sup>

Devotion therefore also passes through the physical relation with the painted image, which in this case is at the same time a channel of contact with both the deity and the dead son.

Morelli's words cast light on a particular aspect of mediaeval and Renaissance religious sensitivity, which sets the pain of contrition aroused by the will in opposition to that caused by human sensitivity. This is stated in the *Supplement* to Saint Thomas Aquinas' *Summa theologica*, where we read: '[dolor] in *parte sensitiva*, qui causatur ex primo dolore vel ex necessitate naturae ... vel ex electione, secundum quod homo poenitens in se ipso hunc dolorem excitat, ut de peccatis doleat' (quoted in Verdon 1985, 8; italics

<sup>58</sup> 'When my heart and mind had calmed down, I *turned my eyes* to the right side of the true Cross where, *looking at* the foot of the Cross, I *saw* the pure and holy and blessed Mother, whom I *saw* was full of the greatest grief and the greatest sadness. And considering that my sins were the reason for such affliction, my tongue did not dare to utter a single word, nor to speak anything out loud. But considering in my mind the pain of that pure Virgin, mother of the pure and precious Son, and thinking of the many trials she had undergone since the day of his birth up to the day when he was brought before her eyes dead and flagellated by dissolute sinners, and Him abandoned by his apostles and she alone with John to witness so much cruel punishment and torture inflicted on the precious flesh of her beloved, having no comfort and being alone and abandoned with her son, *this consideration caused me such grief and such suffering that I truly believed my soul would leave my body*. And for a few moments I was as if stunned and, *remembering the suffering which I had felt for my son, I began to be greatly ashamed*, so much so that I almost had to stop praying. And yet, God willing, I was reassured and remained still; and *gazing* at her full of so much sorrow I began to weep, and I was so overcome that for a long time I was unable to hold back my tears ... And after I had said the prayer written above with that devout reverence granted to me by God, I stood up and with the utmost devotion took up the panel and kissed it in the same places where my son in his sickness had gently kissed it, after praying that his health might be restored. Then, having put it back in its usual place, I knelt down again and recited the *Credo* and then the *Gospel* of St John'.

mine).<sup>59</sup> This type of sensitivity was programmatically solicited by the widely-circulated devotional handbooks and also by the *sacre rappresentazioni*.

Therefore, by combining words and images, the printed religious book introduced an even more stringent circularity into this mechanism of identification and compassion, and even more importantly brought it within reach of a vastly larger public.

### 6. Narrative and Exemplary Woodcuts

A second series of woodcuts from Savonarola's works show scenes of an exemplary character. Particularly interesting, not only in terms of subject but also in the sophistication of their execution, are those illustrating the *Predica dell'Arte del Bene Morire* ('Sermon on the art of dying well'), printed by Bartolomeo de' Libri after November 2, 1496.<sup>60</sup> On the frontispiece, against the background of a barren landscape, a skeletal Death, with unkempt hair, is shown carrying the scythe and a scroll with the motto 'EGO SUM' as he flies above several dead of different social extraction – a young man dressed as a commoner, one in royal costume, a pope and a religious man – illustrating the impartiality of death (figure 4). This woodcut, which follows the traditional iconography of *The Triumph of Death*, synthesises the profound meaning of the work and, given the position, announces its contents.

The other three illustrations are, instead, closely correlated to the text and described in detail by Savonarola himself, confirming that he was the direct commissioner. Speaking of the first he writes:

O mercatante se tu havessi havere una sententia la quale ti portassi in un puncto la perdita d'ogni tua cosa tu non haresti mai quiete né di né nocte, tu rivolteresti tucto il mondo per provvedere ad questo puncto. Et però, huomo, pensa alla morte, dove ne va l'anima che val più che tutto il mondo. Horsù io mi ricordo che io altra volta faccendoti simile predica ti dissi che volendoti tu preparare bene alla morte tu ti facessi dipingere tre carte. La prima fu che tu ti facessi dipingere in una carta il paradiso di sopra & lo inferno di sotto, & *tenessila in camera tua in loco che ti fussi spesso inanzi alli occhi*, ma non però *che tu ne facessi uno habito di vederla, & che poi*

<sup>59</sup> 'The other sorrow is in the *sensitive part*, and is caused by the former sorrow either from natural necessity ... or from choice, in so far as a penitent excites in himself this sorrow for his sins'.

<sup>60</sup> The sermon on dying well, delivered on November 2, 1496, is part of the cycle of twenty-nine sermons which that year the Friar dedicated to 'Ruth and Micheas' and that were recorded live by the Florentine notary Lorenzo Violi (Ridolfi 1952, I, 250-267). In the first sermon on Ezekiel, dated November 30, Savonarola states: 'Comincia a porre a stampa quello libro dell'arte del Ben Morire. Fa che ne abbi uno che vi sia di quelle figure', ('Begin to print that book on the art of Dying well. Make sure you have one in which there are those figures'); quoted in record 2 of the catalogue: Turelli 1985a, 53. I also refer to this record for the attributive hypotheses of the different woodcuts.

*la non ti movessi nulla*. Et dissiti che tu pensassi sempre & dicessi forte ‘hoggi morro’, & guardassi molto bene questa figura, & che la morte ti sta sempre incontro per levarti di questa vita quasi dicendoti ‘tu hai ad morire ad ogni modo & non puoi campare dalle mie mani: guarda dove tu vuoi andare: o quassù in paradiso o qua giù in inferno’. (Savonarola post 1496, f. 6r; italics mine)<sup>61</sup>

Responding perfectly to these words the figure, full page on the back of the page containing its description, shows Death as a skeleton with unkempt hair and with the scythe. With his right hand, surmounted by a legend ‘O QVA SV’ (‘either up above’), he points to Paradise, with God amidst his angels and the blessed souls, shown at the upper edge of the woodcut, while with his left – with another scroll bearing the words ‘O QVA GIV’ (‘or down below’) – he points to Hell, with Lucifer and his devils and the damned souls, set at the lower edge. Standing next to Death is a youth in modern dress, of the type of which there are many in the texts of *sacre rappresentazioni*,<sup>62</sup> who is gazing at hell with a terrified and stricken gaze, faced as he is with the two possible outcomes of the good and bad actions of his life: namely ‘above or below’(figure 5).<sup>63</sup>

<sup>61</sup> The passage is on f. 6r, the woodcut is on f. 6v. *Sermon on the art of Dying well made by the Reverend Father Friar Hieronymo from Ferrara the day ii of November MCCCCLXXXVI, and collected by Ser Lorenzo Violi directly from the living voice of the aforementioned father while he was preaching*: ‘O merchant, if you had to receive a sentence which in one fell blow would bring about the loss of everything you own, you would have no peace day or night; you would turn the whole world upside down to make provision for this. And so, man, think about death, and whither goes your soul, which is worth more than all the world. Now, I recall that another time, when I was preaching to you on a similar topic, I told you that, if you wanted to be well prepared for death, you should have three illustrations depicted for you. The first was that you should have depicted an illustration [showing] Paradise above and Hell below and *keep it in your room in a place where it would often be before your eyes, but not that you should make a habit of looking at it, for then it would no longer move you*. And I told you that you should be always thinking about it and should say, “I may die today,” and look well on this image, for death is always before you, ready to remove you from this life, as if it were to say to you, “You have to die in any event, and you cannot escape from my hands; consider where you want to go: to Paradise above, or down to Hell” ’(Savonarola 2006, 39-40).

<sup>62</sup> I recall only the *Rappresentazione del figliuol prodigo*, by Castellano Castellani, who was, moreover, a follower of Savonarola (the text is published in D’Ancona, 1872, I, 357-389); the ‘*frotola*’ *Anton, chi chiama?*, premised to the *Rappresentazione di Abramo e Agar*, attributed to Giovanbattista di Cristofano dell’Ottonaio (D’Ancona, 1872, I, 1-39), but the list could continue. On Castellani see Ponte 1969; Mutini 1978; Ventrone 2016, 279-298; on Ottonaio: Innamorati 1990.

<sup>63</sup> The description and the commentary on the woodcut are in record 2 of the catalogue: Turelli 1985a, 46-48, while the figure is n. 9, 57, erroneously inverted in the page numbering with another very similar on 46, from the reprint of the same work around 1500, attributed to Antonio Tubini: see Turelli 1985a, cat. 3, 55-59.

Savonarola's recommendations continue with the following illustration:

La secunda cartha che io ti dissi già altra volta è questa, che tucti [*sic*] facci dipingere uno huomo cominciato ad infirmarsi con la morte che sta allo uscio & picchia per entrare drento. Sappi che il diavolo è molto sollecito ad questo punto della morte, sì come è scripto 'insidiatur calcaneo eius' ... Il diavolo quando s'avede che tu vuoi pensare alla morte va excitando altri per levarti da questo pensiero: & mette in fantasia alla moglie tua & alli tuoi parenti così al medico che ti dichino che tu guarrai presto & che tu non ti dia pensiero & che tu non creda per questo havere ad morire. (ff. 12r-13-r)<sup>64</sup>

In this case too, the correspondence of the image is literal. It shows the interior of a bedroom with a young man lying down in an attitude of suffering, although still dressed in his day clothes. Hanging on a wall in a visible position is a *tondo* showing the Madonna and Child, frequently found in the Florentine homes of the period;<sup>65</sup> three angels hovering in the air above watch over the sick man. The devil is at the bedside, presumably tempting him in the manner described by Savonarola, which I have drastically abbreviated here. On the other side of the room his wife is talking to a doctor who appears to be examining a recipient containing the urine of the patient (which was common practice in medicine at the time), while two devils close to them incite them to advise him badly. Death is waiting beyond the door (figure 6). Savonarola goes on to say:

L'ultima cartha che io ti dixi – continua il Frate – si è che tu ti facessi dipingere uno infermo nel lecto che era conducto al puncto extremo ad fare penitentia: de' quali se ne salva pochi ... Sicché per questa ragione essendosi l'huomo indugiato allo ultimo & essendo stato ingrato delle vocationi di Dio, merita che anche Idio in quel puncto ritragga la sua gratia ... 'L diavolo in quello puncto gli mette la desperatione inanzi, & monstragli ch'egli ha facti tanti peccati che non pare ragionevole che Dio voglia salvarlo ... Anima non ti lassare ridurre ad quel puncto, ma pure, se tu vi sarai ridocta, non ti disperare, piglia questi remedii. Prima ricorri al crucifixo. Guarda la sua bontà che è voluto essere crucifixo et morto per salvarti: habbi gran confidentia in lui che se tu ricorri allui col core contrito ch'el ti adiuterà se bene tu havessi facti

<sup>64</sup> *Predica dell'Arte del Bene Morire*, the woodcut is on f. 12r: 'The second illustration, which I have already told you about another time, is this: that you have depicted a man beginning to grow ill, with death standing at the door and knocking to gain entrance. You know that the devil is very attentive at the point of death, as indeed it is written: *Insidiatur calcaneo eius* ["He lies in ambush at His heel"; Gen. 3:15] ... The devil, when he sees that you are trying to think about death, incites others to distract you from this thought, and he puts it into the heads of your wife and your relatives, as well as your doctor, to tell you that you will recover soon, and that you should not give yourself up to thinking [about death], and that you should not suppose that you are going to die from this [disease]' (Savonarola 2006, 47-49).

<sup>65</sup> For example, Botticelli's tondi, that have greatly contributed to the popularity of this format of religious paintings: see Rubin and Wright, 1999, 328-329.

migliaia di peccati ... Tertio chiama un buono confessore & confessati molto bene con ogni diligentia & comunicati. Quarto fa che sempre quivi appresso ad te vi sia qualcuno che stia in oratione. (ff. 14r-v, e 16r)<sup>66</sup>

The woodcut illustrating these words shows another bedroom. Here the sick man is older and is lying under the covers; around him are people praying, while at the bedside is a friar in Dominican habit hearing his confession. At the head of the bed devils are striving for his soul, while Death is seated at his feet. On the facing wall is a crucifix in a niche. The Madonna and Child, suspended in the air on a cloud, watch over and protect him (figure 7).

There is in these images a skilful narrative *crescendo* – we could almost say a structured ‘direction’ – with the relation between Death and the male protagonist as its guiding thread. The series is introduced by the *Triumph of Death* on the frontispiece as a reminder of all human destiny. This is followed by the presentation of Heaven and Hell as the final destinations of man’s earthly life. Here Death is addressing himself to a young man who is clearly wealthy judging by his clothes in the latest Florentine fashion, who still has his entire life ahead of him and can therefore decide whether to conduct himself with rectitude or set off along the road to perdition (‘above or below’). The young man falls ill and is tempted by the Devil not to take this opportunity to repent of his sins but rather to hope to return to health to continue his trafficking. And he is indeed cured, with the help of the doctor, while Death knocks at the door but remains outside waiting for the next call. In the last scene the man is now old; he is at the end of his life at the time of reckoning. Death is seated on the bed waiting for his soul, and here Savonarola indicates the path of potential salvation in the person of the confessor. This is not only an innovation in the iconography of the *ars moriendi*, but also a pivotal figure in the subsequent evolution of Christian education and in the relationship between Church and faithful, especially in the Tridentine sixteenth century.<sup>67</sup>

<sup>66</sup> *Predica dell’Arte del Bene Morire*; the woodcut is on f. 14r: ‘The final illustration, which I have told you about, is that you have depicted a sick person in bed; he has arrived at the last moment to do penances, at which point few [penitents] are saved ... For this reason, the man who has delayed up to the end and has remained unreceptive to God’s invitation also merits to have God retract His grace at that moment ... Another [reason] is that at that moment the devil sets despair before him and shows him that he has committed so many sins that it seems utterly beyond reason that God would want to save him ... O soul, do not let yourself be reduced to that point, but still, if you are so reduced, do not despair, take hold of these remedies. First, have recourse to the Crucified; consider the goodness of Him Who wanted to be crucified and to die to save you. Have great confidence in Him, that, if you have recourse to Him with a contrite heart, He will help you, even if you have committed thousands of sins ... Third, summon a good confessor and make a full confession as carefully as possible, and receive Communion. Fourth, make sure that someone will always be there with you praying’ (Savonarola 2006, 50-53).

<sup>67</sup> On this complex topic I refer to the impressive work by Prosperi 1996, and to Rusconi 2002.

In this series of illustrations, therefore, the functioning of the image as an *exemplum*, here too conceived to induce identification, depends on the substantiality of the situation drawing on the experience of illness which readers were bound to be familiar with, either directly or through a relative or friend. As I see it, however, the realism of the portrayal of the room, the people and the objects surrounding the sickbed play a primary role in making this effective, since precisely because they belong to the familiar everyday world they are more easily lodged in the memory along with the catechetical message. The bedrooms shown in the woodcuts portray with documentary precision the style of furnishing of the patrician residences (see the remarks by Turelli 1985a, 53). The bed is covered in precious quilts and has a bench all around it, the walls are hung with curtains and the clothes chests are elaborately decorated. There are elegantly tasteful accessories and sacred icons for personal devotion,<sup>68</sup> the use of which was illustrated in Morelli's moving *memoir*. The clothes of the figures too reflect the same affluent social status.

The wealthy reader was sure to recognise and identify with these illustrations, fully grasping the fleeting nature of earthly goods, the beauty of which contrasts with the frightful images of death and devils. The reader of more humble condition could see in them the social levelling brought about at the time of passing to the other life, when all men return to being equal before God. This is a remarkable iconographic innovation because, as Maria Grazia Ciardi Duprè points out, 'prior to this the deaths of saints, emperors and noble knights had been portrayed, but never that of the ordinary man in his fine bedchamber, surrounded by his little familiar world' (1985, 17).

### 7. *Mirroring Images and the Success of the Savonarolian Model*

The same mechanism of portraying real-life situations in realistically recognisable surroundings seen in the *Predica dell'Arte del Bene Morire* series is also found in other of Savonarola's woodcuts, such as those showing the faithful praying in church or attending mass or a sermon. Here too there is striking detail in the descriptions of the costumes and hairstyles and the architectural settings which are always of a distinctly Florentine style. An emblematic example is that of *Tractato del sacramento & de' mysterii della messa* ('On the Sacrament and Mysteries of the Mass').<sup>69</sup> The single large

<sup>68</sup> See the description of Florentine house furnishings in the classic Schiaparelli 1983 and, especially for the aristocratic residences, Rubin and Wright 1999, the chapter dedicated to 'The beautiful chamber', 312-345; Ajmar-Wollheim and Dennis 2006, the chapters dedicated to 'The Florentine *casa*', by Brenda Prayer, 34-49; and to 'Art in the *casa*', by Peta Motture and Luke Syson, 268-283.

<sup>69</sup> Incunabulum of uncertain dating attributed to Bartolomeo de' Libri (BNCF, Cust C 20); see Turelli 1985a, cat. 13, 91-93.

illustration, placed on the frontispiece, shows the moment of consecration of the Host during a mass celebrated in a Brunelleschi-style church. Here the figures of the faithful are remarkable for their lively characterisation: on the left a young man with his hair in the tapered style known as *all'angiolesca* ('angel-style') and a cloak with the typical hood held on the right shoulder by the scarf-like *becchetto* (a band), two nuns with their heads covered and a man in a cloak holding his beret in his hand. On the right a young altar boy is kneeling, holding the skirt of the priest's chasuble with one hand and a candle in the other (figure 8). This woodcut, conceived specially for the work it illustrates and attributed to Bartolomeo di Giovanni, is intended to facilitate the reader's reflection of himself in the images in the same way as those described above.

This distinctly realistic portrayal is also found in illustrations composed to make up a narrative series corresponding to the contents of the book. For instance in the *Compendio di rivelatione* ('Compendium of revelations'), printed *ad instantia* ('at the instance') of the publisher Piero Pacini da Pescia on 23 April 1496 and decorated with six woodcuts,<sup>70</sup> some of a narrative and realistic character. Underneath the title on the frontispiece is a full-page portrait of Savonarola, who is depicted with all the details of a chronicle of the time preaching from the pulpit in the Florentine cathedral, directing his tirade at the faithful with an admonitory index finger pointing at them. Among the public in the central aisle, with men and women separated by curtains as was the custom, a variety of dresses and hairstyles in vogue at the end of the fifteenth century are illustrated with great documentary fidelity (figure 9). This illustration brings back to the eyes and minds of the readers the memory of Savonarola's sermons, which at the time had been banned by Pope Alexander VI.<sup>71</sup> It introduces the argument of the treatise, in which the friar imagines himself going to the Virgin Mary with an embassy of the Florentine people, begging Her to intercede with the Eternal Father and convince Him to respond to their requests:

Dunque la nocte della octava, preparandomi io per andare a torre la risposta delle promissioni, considerai che mi bisognava havere decente compagnia et congrui vestimenti, & pensando quale dovesse essere la mia compagnia mi si ripresentorono dinanzi agli occhi molte donne ... Et però io esclusi la Philosophia & la Rhetorica & tutte le altre sapientie humane chome insufficiente a questa nostra ambasceria, & elessi la Semplicità della fede & della sapientia & eloquentia delle sacre Scripture ...

<sup>70</sup> *Compendio di rivelatione dello inutile servo di Iesù Christo frate Hieronimo da Ferrara dell'ordine de' frati predicatori*, Impresso in Firenze ad instantia di ser Piero Pacini da Pescia nel anno M.cccc lxxxvi. Adi xxiii D'aprile (BNCF, Sav. 146): see Turelli 1985a, cat. 4, 61-68.

<sup>71</sup> Despite repeated and unsuccessful requests by the city government to revoke the prohibition: see Ridolfi 1952, I, 223-228.

Accompagnato adunque dalla Semplicità condussi ancora la Fede, la Oratione & la Patientia, & mettemoci in cammino per andare alla porta del paradiso, havendo Madonna Semplicità in mano un bellissimo dono & pretioso coperto da presentare alla Maestà del Nostro Signore ... Essendo adunque noi in camino, eccho venire el Tentatore della humana natura in forma d'uno heremita vecchio barbuto, et acchostomisi. (Savonarola 1496, ff. 11r-12r)<sup>72</sup>

This entire scene is perfectly illustrated in a woodcut in which Savonarola, accompanied by the four allegorical figures described above – with Simplicity bearing in her hands the gift for the Virgin covered with a superfine decorated cloth – meets the Demon. Although he is disguised as a Dominican friar, the devil is recognisable by his horns, his tail and talons instead of feet (figure 10).<sup>73</sup> Having overcome this obstacle:

pacificamente seguendo il camino nostro arrivamo alla porta del paradiso el quale era cinto intorno intorno di uno muro altissimo di pietre pretiose, & pareva che circondasse tutto l'universo mondo. Sopra del quale, intorno intorno, erano Angeli che lo guardavano & cantavano dolcissimamente. (f. 28v)<sup>74</sup>

The corresponding figure, occupying the centre of the page bearing this passage, shows a city representing the heavenly Jerusalem, while being equated with Florence by the presence of the cupola of Santa Maria del Fiore. From the walls, a group of angels in devout poses are watching the arrival of Savonarola and the four women (figure 11). The last woodcut of the series shows the group of visitors who have just crossed the threshold of Paradise, with Saint Joseph who has taken Savonarola by the hand to guide him to the accomplishment

<sup>72</sup> 'On the night before the octave's last day, as I was about to set out to receive the hoped-for response, I thought that I ought to have fit companions and the correct garb. While I was thinking about the kind and number of companions I should choose, many women presented themselves ... Therefore I rejected philosophy and rhetoric and the other human sciences as unfit for this legation, and I chose simplicity of faith, of wisdom and of the elegance of the sacred scriptures ... Having taken Simplicity as a companion, and accompanied also by Faith, Prayer and Patience, we directed our journey to the threshold of paradise. Lady Simplicity bore a very beautiful and precious covered gift to offer the Supreme Majesty ... When we had just begun our journey, the cunning Tempter of the human race, pretending to be an aged and bearded hermit, met me and drew near' (Savonarola 1979, 211-212).

<sup>73</sup> *Compendio di rivelatione*, f. 11v. The same illustration is repeated on f. 17r, around the middle of the dialogue between Savonarola and the devil.

<sup>74</sup> The woodcut is on the same folio. 'We peacefully pursued the journey we had undertaken and came to the gates of heaven, which were surrounded by a very high wall of precious stones and seemed to encircle the whole universe. On the top of it angel guardians sat round about, sweetly singing' (Savonarola 1979, 241).



of his mission: 'Allhora el sancto vecchio Joseph con lieto volto ci prese per la mano et introducendoci dentro dalla porta, & quella serrando, disse ...' (f. 32v; figure 12).<sup>75</sup>

These images are of great interest in the history of the illustration of the Florentine book; it is important to remember that they represent the very first trials, and that almost every new edition constitutes the experimentation of a new module.<sup>76</sup> Their significance lies in the fact that, by dictating in his words the contents of the illustrations, and sometimes even their position on the page, Savonarola introduced into his texts a principle of illustrative consistency that was to mark the incunabula and the early sixteenth-century production, despite the practice of using the same woodblocks in works on different subjects. This contributed to creating a very important precedent for the imagery of the book that the reader began to construct.

Savonarola's innovations paved the way for the major editions of an enlightened entrepreneur such as Piero Pacini from Pescia who, in 1495, published the *Epistole & Evangelii* ('Epistles & Gospels'),<sup>77</sup> and in 1500 Luigi Pulci's *Morgante*, both enriched by around one hundred and fifty images,<sup>78</sup> and who not incidentally also sponsored some of Savonarola's publications.<sup>79</sup> Obviously, the definition of these prototypes was influenced by the precedent of the illuminated manuscripts, the Books of Hours and the first attempts at printing with copperplate engravings, as in the 1481 edition of the *Divine*

<sup>75</sup> The woodcut is on the front of the same folio at the bottom. 'Then that most holy old man Joseph joyfully grasped my right hand and brought us in when the gates had been shut. He said...' (Savonarola 1979, 246).

<sup>76</sup> Among the first woodcuts to appear in Florence there are, not coincidentally, two Savonarolian illustrations, both attributed to the same hand, close to the manner of Filippino Lippi: they are the large image of the *Tractato dell'humilità*, printed by Miscomini on June 30, 1492, and the Crucifixion of the *Trattato dell'amore di Gesù*, again Miscomini, on June 26, 1492. See Turelli 1985a, records 7 and 8, 75-76 and 77-78.

<sup>77</sup> Colophon: *Impresso nella inclyta città di Firenze per Ser Lorenzo de' Morgiani & Giovanni di Magontia ad instantia di Ser Piero Pacini da Pescia* ('Printed in the glorious city of Florence by Ser Lorenzo de' Morgiani & Giovanni of Magontia at the instance of Ser Piero Pacini from Pescia'); see Kristeller 1897, n. 135b, 44-45. On Piero Pacini from Pescia see also Ridolfi 1958, 23-25; Casetti Brach 2014.

<sup>78</sup> Colophon: *Finito il libro chiamato Morgante maggiore composto per Luigi Pulci. Impresso in Firenze nel anno M.CCCC. Adì XXII di Gennaio ad petitione & instantia di Ser Piero Pacini da Pescia* ('Finished the book called Morgante maggiore composed by Luigi Pulci. Printed in Florence in the year M.CCCC. on XXII of January at the request and instance of Ser Piero Pacini from Pescia'); see Kristeller 1897, n. 347a, 135-136. These are only two of the most significant examples of Pacini's editions which, on the one hand, also comprised woodcuts from previous incunabula and, on the other hand, served, in turn, as an authentic repertory for the printed works of the entire sixteenth century.

<sup>79</sup> The *Compendio di rivelatione*, dated 1496 (Turelli 1985a, cat. 4, 61); the treatise *Della semplicità della vita christiana* (Turelli 1985a, cat. 22, 119); the *Libro della vita viduale* (Turelli 1985a, cat. 23, 121), printed by Morgiani in 1496.

*Comedy*.<sup>80</sup> However, these were elite productions restricted to a narrow circle of readers, whereas it was only with the introduction of the woodcut that the illustrated book was able to reach the greater public.

Therefore, by programmatically using printing for the circulation of his writings and collaborating personally with the most important Florentine publishers and printers, Savonarola made a decisive contribution to the establishment of typographic models of great communicative efficiency, which were rapidly adopted by the other popular literary genres too. This is easily confirmed by glancing through the catalogues, such as the frequently-mentioned ones by Kristeller or Sander which, despite the variety of compositions and subjects, clearly reveal the substantial homogeneity in the conception of both sacred and profane illustrations. Within them, however, the Savonarola woodcuts are remarkable for their chronological precocity and for his documented involvement in their design, suggesting that – in view of their enormous market success – the formula he used was also extended to other products destined to a broad public.

#### 8. *The Booklets of sacre rappresentazioni as a 'Theatre of Memory'*

The editorial success of the *sacra rappresentazione* has to be projected onto this background of perceptive and visual conventions, mentalities and practices of everyday devotion, although it should be stressed that it actually began when the play as performance was still a strongly-rooted component of Florentine entertainment, as it continued to be – albeit with less regularity – almost up to the end of the sixteenth century. The influence of Savonarola's incunabula on the typographical layout of the genre must have been decisive: it cannot be accidental that the first editions of his works can be placed between the first collections produced by Miscomini around 1490, without illustrations, and the copious illustrated plays produced by Miscomini and de' Libri in the years immediately following, and that all Savonarola's works had woodcuts, some of them made on the presses of these same printers. Nor can it be ruled out that Fra' Girolamo himself may have encouraged the publication of the *sacre rappresentazioni*, considering that from their origins they were rooted in the Dominican milieu and culture of the convent of San Marco,<sup>81</sup> and

<sup>80</sup> On Dante's *Commedia*, printed *in folio* in Florence by Nicolaus Laurentii Alemannus with copper engravings by Baccio Baldini taken from Botticelli's drawings, see Sander 1942, 2311, and Rhodes 1984, cat. 6, 30-31. Not to limit the references only to book illustrations, see also the narration of stories through images used to decorate the wedding chests and the backrests of Florentine home furnishings, for which I refer to the classic repertory by Schubring 1915.

<sup>81</sup> For the role of Antonino Pierozzi, prior of San Marco from 1436 and then archbishop of Florence from 1446 to 1459, in the creation and promotion of the *sacra rappresentazione* as an educational tool, see Ventrone 2012, 549-567.

that they were also circulated by printers belonging to the clergy, foremost among them de' Libri himself (Turelli 1985b, 31 and 33).

The dramas in octaves were definitely considered by both printers and readers as one of the many declensions of the religious book which since its appearance had been acquiring an increasingly important role in the training of ecclesiastics and the faithful (Rozzo 1993, 30). However, this did not prevent the translation of the theatrical text into an illustrated booklet making it much more attractive, possibly also corresponding to a considerably greater educational efficacy. This was because, in the minds of those who had attended the plays as spectators, they combined the vividness of the printed images with the evocative memory of the performance with its sounds, the easily memorised cadence of the rhymes and its colours. Compared to the ordinary devotional book, this brought about a change in the informative and didactic quality, combining the pedagogic force of the theatre with the power of circulation in print.

In the booklets of *sacre rappresentazioni* the relation between text and image created a sort of 'theatre of memory' that condensed the forms of previous religious education, mostly oriented towards the collective reception of sermons, public painting, confraternal gatherings or sacred performances, into an instrument for individual use that nevertheless conserved the sedimentation of the communal experiences. I believe that this is one of the reasons for the editorial success of the *sacre rappresentazioni*, in terms both of production and reception.

Transformed into a book, the *sacra rappresentazione* also contributed to the introduction of another important novelty, since it applied the conventions of the individual relationship with the sacred images, hitherto largely confined to the illuminated Books of Hours or the domestic icons, to a vastly broader means of circulation, within reach even of the poorer classes to which it offered a collection of devotional images at a low price.<sup>82</sup>

In terms of catechetical education, this innovation had vast repercussions, partly due to the habits of the time. One of the common practices, which persisted throughout the sixteenth century, was that of group readings aloud for an audience of different levels of literacy, which enabled even the more ignorant to approach the culture of the written word, albeit passively (on this topic see the studies by Chartier 1990 and 1992, 983-985). Before the advent of so-called 'popular' printing, the manuscript remained with its owner, or at most could be lent to family or friends. This meant that the recollection of stories heard was entrusted to the mnemonic capacities of the listeners,

<sup>82</sup> In Rome, around 1515, the cost of several editions of *sacre rappresentazioni*, fluctuating between two and four *quattrini* in relation to the length of the work, is indicated in the catalog of books owned by Fernando Colón, a precious document for the history of book circulation at the beginning of the sixteenth century: see Huntington 1905.

with the additional stimulus of sermons or the '*biblia pauperum*' frescoed in the churches or in other public places. With the spread of printing, instead, anyone could buy the illustrated books produced for a large public, including those who could not read or wanted to learn, since the illustrations provided a useful aid for recalling the words heard at the group reading and reliving them in the dimension of private devotion within one's own four walls.

Therefore, the printed religious book – and in Florence a considerable market percentage was represented by the *sacre rappresentazioni* (Quondam 1983, 610-611) – expanded the possibility of spreading Christian education well beyond the scope of previous means of communication. In addition, it also extended to less affluent brackets of the population a cultural practice hitherto largely the prerogative of the rich or wealthy who could afford to buy painted icons or illuminated books and keep them in their homes. Previously only they had been constantly exhorted to such behaviour by theologians and preachers.

### 9. *Typographic Characteristics of the sacre rappresentazioni*

As we have seen, the transformation of the typographical model, and the consequent expansion of the destined audience, which Miscomini and de' Libri brought about through the introduction of woodcuts into the books of *sacre rappresentazioni* appears clearly when the exemplars belonging to the two anthologies without illustrations are compared with the single works published in the years immediately following. The first prints clearly derived from the prototype of the humanistic manuscripts and their oldest printed counterparts. They featured generous spacing between both the letters and the lines and the fine, round characters conforming to the humanist script of Bracciolini inspiration;<sup>83</sup> the text was arranged in a single column in the centre of the page, leaving wide margins that were suitable for filling with notes and glosses (figure 1).

The illustrated books had smaller characters and narrower spacing and a much larger printed area arranged in two columns and almost filling the entire page, as well as illustrations. They were therefore quite distinct from the model of the erudite book, rather conforming to (or even helping to define) the prototype of the booklet for broad circulation in which the illustration assumed almost as much importance as the written text. The need to indoctrinate the 'simple', illiterate folk, by both stimulating their devotion and assisting their recall through instruments more incisive than words, was still very strongly felt in these last years of the fifteenth century, as explained with great lucidity by the Franciscan Fra' Michele da Carcano in a sermon printed in 1492:

<sup>83</sup> See the classic Ullman 1960. For a long-term view, see Petrucci 1988, 1222-1275 on the situation of writing and book production between the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries.

'Imagines Virginis et sanctorum introducte fuerunt triplici de causa. Primo propter ruditatem simplicium, ut qui non possunt scripturas legere in picturis possint sacramenta nostre salutis et fidei cernere. ... Nam quod legentibus scriptura, hoc idiotis prostat pictura cernentibus: quia *in ipsa ignorantes vident quod sequi debeant: in ipsa legunt qui litteras nesciunt*. Unde et precipue gentibus pro lectione pictura est'. Verba hec scribit Gregorius Sireno episcopo marsiliensi. Secundo sunt imagines introducte propter *tarditatem affectivam*: ut homines qui non excitantur ad devotionem, cum aliqua audiunt de sanctorum memoria, saltem moveantur *dum ea in picturis quasi presentia cernunt. Plus enim excitatur affectus noster per ea que videt, quam per ea que audit*. Tertio introducte sunt propter *memorie labilitatem*: ... Et ideo quia *multi que audiunt tenere non possunt, sed cum imagines vident recordantur*: ideo introducte sunt. (Baxandall 1972, 41)<sup>84</sup>

The illustrated religious book for broad circulation also catered to this need, grasping the importance of the new means of communication and opportunely exploiting it. However, the *sacra rappresentazione* further enhanced this function since it was a theatrical rather than literary genre. The awareness of this difference between the *sacre rappresentazioni* and devotional works in general, although they shared the 4<sup>o</sup> typographical format, is revealed by the symbol used to distinguish them from the start. To allow purchasers to immediately recognise these booklets, from their very first illustrated works Miscomini and de' Libri significantly placed on the frontispiece the image of the angel (figure 13): the character who declaimed the *Annunzio* ('Intimation') and the *Licenza* ('Valediction'), which persisted throughout the editorial success of the genre.<sup>85</sup>

The distinction emerges very clearly from the comparison – as just one of many examples – between the first page of the *Rappresentazione di San Francesco* ('The Play of Saint Francis') by Antonia Tanini, Bernardo Pulci's

<sup>84</sup> This is his English translation: '“Images of the Virgin and the Saints were introduced for three reasons. First, on account of the ignorance of simple people, so that those who are not able to read the scriptures can yet learn by seeing the sacraments of our salvation and faith in pictures ... What a book is to those who can read, a picture is to the ignorant people who look at it. Because in a picture even the unlearned may see what example they should follow; in a picture they who know no letters may yet read”. St. Gregory the Great wrote these words to Serenus, Bishop of Marseilles. Second, images were introduced on account of our emotional sluggishness [*sic for sluggishness*]; so that men who are not aroused to devotion when they hear about the histories of the Saints may at least be moved *when they see them, as if actually present, in pictures. For our feelings are aroused by things seen more than by things heard*. Third, they were introduced on account of our *unreliable memories*. Images were introduced because many people cannot retain in their memories what they hear, but they do remember if they see images'.

<sup>85</sup> Miscomini's first non-illustrated books did not have any sign to distinguish the *sacre rappresentazioni* from the other published genres.

wife and sister-in-law of the more famous Luigi,<sup>86</sup> and that of the *Fioretti di San Francesco* ('The little flowers of Saint Francis').<sup>87</sup> In the former the only woodcut, placed under the emblem of the announcing angel, encapsulates the story of the saint from Assisi through the symbolically most significant moment of his mystic union with Christ: when the stigmata are conveyed to him by the Crucifix (figure 14).<sup>88</sup> The latter shows exactly the same illustration but without the addition of the angel (figure 15). Here too it is useful to analyse some examples.

#### 10. *Examples of Illustrated Booklets of sacre rappresentazioni*

The *Rappresentazione di Barlaam e Iosafat* by Bernardo Pulci<sup>89</sup> contains seven images illustrating the most significant episodes in the legend attributed to Saint John of Damascus through the filter of Iacopo da Varagine's *Legenda aurea* ('Golden Legend').<sup>90</sup> The story is summarised in an octave of the prologue:

Racconta San Giovanni Damasceno  
 una santa, divota e degna storia  
 di Barlaam e di Jòsafat, pieno  
 di virtù, chiara e degna di memoria,  
 che, lasciato ogni stato vil terreno,  
 si levò in alto alla superna gloria,  
 cui la strada del ciel a molti aperse,  
 e finalmente il suo padre converse.  
 (D'Ancona 1872, II, 163)<sup>91</sup>

<sup>86</sup> On Antonia Pulci, and on her *sacre rappresentazioni*, see: Cardini 1984; Ulysse 1994; Cook 1996, 3-38; Weaver 2002a, 97-104 and 2002b; Stallini 2005; Newbiggin 2016.

<sup>87</sup> Florentine incunabulum s.l.e.a.: Kristeller 1897, n. 155a, 54.

<sup>88</sup> A. Pulci, *San Francesco*, s.n.t. (but Firenze, Bartolomeo de' Libri, around 1495, where the text is authorless). I have consulted the booklet conserved in the BNCF, Banco Rari 189.m, on which see Cioni 1961, 143, n. 2, and Testaverde and Evangelista 1988, 108, n. 295. The text, probably taken from this edition, has been published in modern times in Toschi 1926-1927, II, 657-695 (the author refers generically to 'an incunabulum conserved at the National Library of Florence', 696).

<sup>89</sup> *La rappresentazione divota di Barlaam et Iosafat* ('The devout representation of Barlaam and Iosafat', Firenze, Miscomini, c. 1495), BNCF, Banco Rari 189.e, on which see Testaverde and Evangelista 1988, 106, n. 288. The text, taken from this edition, has been published by D'Ancona 1872, II, 163-186; on the oriental derivation of this story, see also 141-162. On Bernardo Pulci, and his works, see Ulysse 1994; Weaver 2002a, 97-98; Cicali 2006.

<sup>90</sup> I am using the edition of the successful fifteenth-century vernacular translation by Niccolò Manerbi published in Iacopo da Varagine 1993, 628-649.

<sup>91</sup> 'Saint John Damascene tells a holy, devout and worthy tale of Barlaam and Josephat, a man of great virtue and integrity and deserving to be remembered, who, leaving all lowly earthly things behind, rose to the supreme glory above, opening the path to heaven to many people and even converting his own father in the end'.

The frontispiece, with the angel above, shows the scene of the birth of prince Josaphat with which the drama opens (figure 16): in a typical interior of a Florentine bedchamber, such as we have already seen in Savonarola's book of the *Arte del Bene Morire* ('On the art of dying well'; figs. 6 and 7), the nurse shows the newborn baby to the king, accompanied by the servant sent to summon him, while the mother lies on the bed and a maidservant at the side of her bed is warming the bands to swaddle the baby.<sup>92</sup> The second illustration is divided into two parts: on the left, four astrologers predict the future of the prince to the king, identified by the crown and sceptre, announcing that he 'porrà la cristiana legge in cima, /la qual perseguito hai con ogni ingegno' (D'Ancona 1872, II, 165);<sup>93</sup> on the right, a camel is lying on the ground.<sup>94</sup> In the first part of the third illustration, in a room in the palace where Josaphat's father has locked him up to prevent him coming into contact with the Christian religion, Barlaam is preaching to Josaphat and converts him, while the second part shows hares running in the countryside (figure 17).<sup>95</sup> In the fourth a phoenix is shown rising from its ashes on the left, while on the right, in an area surrounded by battlemented walls, the king seated on a throne is listening to the dispute between Josaphat and the sages summoned to make him rescind his faith (figure 18).<sup>96</sup> The fifth illustration, which again was evidently not engraved for this play, but is consonant with the action it illustrates, shows a friar (alluding to the protagonist) baptising two men on the shores of a lake in front of a crowd of people. One of these is the king, identified by the crown lying on the ground, who has converted after hearing his son preach.<sup>97</sup> The sixth illustration is set in a throne room, a classic example of Brunelleschi's architecture. Josaphat, who has become king, abdicates in favour of the baron Barachia who is kneeling in front of him, handing him a mantle and a necklace as a sign of distinction (figure 19).<sup>98</sup> The last woodcut, again not original, shows an angel holding a friar

<sup>92</sup> The image is also found in Boccaccio's *Novella di Gualtieri e Griselda*, s.l.e.a.: see Kristeller 1897, n. 215a, 83-84.

<sup>93</sup> 'He will raise to the heights that Christianity which you have done your utmost to persecute'.

<sup>94</sup> BNCF, *Banco Rari* 189.e, f. a1v. The woodcut is taken from the *Fior di virtù* ('Flower of virtue'), Firenze, printed by ser Francesco Bonacorsi and Antonio Venetiano, 1498, of which there must however have been a previous edition now lost: see Kristeller 1897, n. 150a, 52, and XXII.

<sup>95</sup> BNCF, *Banco Rari* 189.e, f. a3r. This woodcut too is found in the *Fior di virtù* mentioned above, but it could also derive from Miscomini's book printed on July 17, 1494, containing the *Lucidario* by Honorius Augustodunensis: Sander 1942, 529.

<sup>96</sup> BNCF, *Banco Rari* 189.e, f. a5r. This image too is found in the *Fior di virtù*.

<sup>97</sup> BNCF, *Banco Rari* 189.e, f. a7r. I am not able to indicate for which text this woodcut was originally designed.

<sup>98</sup> BNCF, *Banco Rari* 189.e, f. a7v.

by the hand, leading him out of the sickroom, and recalls the illness and death of Barlaam, whom Josaphat managed to find in the desert and is now assisting at the time of his passing. The right-hand part shows a barrel with bees flying over it (figure 20).<sup>99</sup> This series of images coherently illustrates the subject of the play, even in the exemplars taken from other texts, and breaks up the monotony of the densely written page, always placed in precise correspondence with the respective dramatic event.

The anonymous *Rappresentazione di Sant'Agata* presents the story of the Sicilian saint, patron of nursing mothers and women with diseases of the breast:

Fu questa Agata sì con Dio congiunta,  
che volle ogni fragello aspro patire  
da Quintiano, in fin che fu defunta,  
prima ch'alla sua voglia aconsentire;  
& quando alfine in cielo ella fu assumpta  
portò palma & corona con disire.  
(BNCF, *Banco Rari* 179.8, f. a1v)<sup>100</sup>

There are five illustrations in this incunabulum, printed for Piero Pacini da Pescia and bearing one of his printer's marks at the end.<sup>101</sup> On the frontispiece, underneath the usual symbol of the angel, a woodcut indicates that this play is part of the hagiographic strand dealing with the martyrdom of saints.<sup>102</sup> The scene is set within a Renaissance-style room. It shows Agatha, bound to a pillar like the Christ of the Flagellation, being tortured by two villains who tear off her breasts with red-hot pincers, watched by the king sitting on his throne and a dignitary (figure 21). In the second illustration the saint is captured by a group of armed knights and taken before Quintianus, sitting

<sup>99</sup> BNCF, *Banco Rari* 189.e, f. a8r. This woodcut, too, is found in the *Fior di virtù* mentioned above.

<sup>100</sup> 'This Agatha was so close to God, that she preferred to suffer every bitter pain from Quintianus, and even death, rather than accepting to be possessed by him. And when, in the end, she was taken to heaven, she brought with her the palm of the martyrs and the crown with desire'. *La Rappresentazione di Sancta Agata Vergine & Martyre* ('The Play of Saint Agatha, virgin and martyr'), s.l.e.a., but I think the edition was printed by Bartolomeo de' Libri, around 1496. See Testaverde and Evangelista 1988, 37, n. 88, where it is dated 1490, probably due to an oversight. A facsimile of this incunabulum was published by Toschi 1969. The source of the story is, as always, Iacopo da Varagine 1993, 204-210.

<sup>101</sup> It is a crowned dolphin with the initials S and P on its sides and the inscription PESCIA below.

<sup>102</sup> The story of the persecuted maiden enjoyed enduring popularity and crossed different levels of literary narration. It is also a significant element in the oral folk tradition sedimented in fairy tales (which can be clearly seen simply by scrolling through the titles of Calvino 1956). On this argument see Veselovskij and De Sade 1977.



on his throne, with her hands bound and in a ‘humile & molto costumata’ (‘humble and very modest’) attitude (figure 22) (BNCF, *Banco Rari* 179.8, f. a2v).<sup>103</sup> In the third image, on the orders of the sovereign, the girl is ‘dalla terra sospesa / & con verghe & baston’ (‘raised above the ground/ and with rods and sticks’) (f. b1r) is beaten by two executioners, while a shaft of beams from heaven announces the palm of martyrdom (figure 23). The iconography combines that normally found in the images of the martyrdom of Saint Sebastian, where the saint is raised above the ground, with that of the Flagellation of Christ, with the torso leaning forward.<sup>104</sup> The scene of the cutting off of the breasts is illustrated by the same woodcut as that of the frontispiece. The last image comprises two separate narrations, with only the upper half corresponding to the text. It shows Agatha kneeling on a little cloud surrounded by rays being carried to heaven by two angels. The lower part instead shows a decapitated maiden, which in fact corresponds to the execution of Saint Apollonia, whereas Agatha died in prison praying to the Lord (figure 25).<sup>105</sup>

In this case, too, the illustrations visualise the hagiographic content in order to move the reader and to facilitate recollection. The crudity of the images of torture, like those dealing with the Passion of Christ, was due to the need to incite the ‘*tarditatem affectivam*’ (‘emotional sluggishness’) of those whose devotion was not ignited by the admonitions of the sermons, who were instead struck by the force of the figurative images, as expressed by Michele da Carcano: ‘ut homines qui non excitantur ad devotionem, cum aliqua audiunt de sanctorum memoria, saltem moveantur dum ea in picturis quasi presentia cernunt’ (Baxandall 1972, 41).<sup>106</sup> Even Savonarola

<sup>103</sup> With both the image and the citation in the text.

<sup>104</sup> As regards the scene of Saint Sebastian’s martyrdom see, for example, Antonio and Piero del Pollaiuolo’s painting, dated 1474 and commissioned by the Florentine merchant Antonio Pucci for the altar of the family chapel in the SS. Annunziata church (London, National Gallery, NG 292; see the catalogue record by Alison Wright in Rubin and Wright 1999, 226–229). An example of Christ’s Flagellation is a woodcut from Savonarola’s *Tractato dell’Humilità* (Florence, Miscomini, around 1493), where the position of the bust of Christ is very similar to that of Agatha (figure 24; Turelli 1985a, cat. 10, figure 26, 83).

<sup>105</sup> BNCF, *Banco Rari* 179.8, f. b4r.

<sup>106</sup> ‘So that men who are not aroused to devotion when they hear about the histories of the Saints may at least be moved when they see them, as if actually present, in pictures. For our feelings are aroused by things seen more than by things heard’ (Baxandall 1972, p. 41). I cannot therefore agree with Newbiggin, who – in view of the wealth of details about the tortures inflicted on the protagonist saints and duly illustrated in the woodcuts – considers the hagiographic *sacre rappresentazioni* a kind of ‘porno-violent hagiography . . . , the fifteenth-century equivalent of porno-violent *fumetti* and *fotoromanzi*’ (1988, 292), no longer tied to some form of performance. This opinion, although certainly emphasized and immediately tempered by the statement that in any case the primary aim of these printed editions continued to be pious, seems to me a simplification of a very complex phenomenon, appraised in the light of modern categories of thought very distant from the fifteenth-century mentality. This

saw the pitiless images of Christ's Passion as a means of inciting the faithful to compassion and repentance.<sup>107</sup>

### 11. *The Pedagogical Function of Realism in the Woodcuts of sacre rappresentazioni*

As already noted regarding certain of the Savonarola illustrations, the woodcuts of the *sacre rappresentazioni* also tend to insist on the fact that the internal and external architecture of the settings, the daily habits and the clothes are all recognisably Florentine. This is evident in some of the images of the two texts described above and in many others. In the *Rappresentazione del figliuol prodigo* ('The play of the prodigal son') by Antonia Pulci, we can, for example, see an old man talking to a younger one, who is standing with his arms crossed (evidently the father and son of the Gospel story) in a typically Florentine room with a chequered floor and the window opening onto a landscape. The older man is wearing a long indoor gown and on his head a low beret of the type worn by merchants and wealthy men; the younger one is dressed in a short skirt reaching to above the knee, with open sleeves hanging from the shoulders, soled hose and a toque over hair styled in the *angiolesca* fashion, all again typical of the dress of the scions of affluent families (Figure 26).<sup>108</sup> Instead, in the anonymous *Rappresentazione del miracolo del corpo di Christo* ('The play of the miracle of Christ's body'), inside a shop we can see several Jews, recognisable by the circular sign stitched onto their clothes, who take in pawn a dress from a woman, in exchange for a consecrated host, and then profane it by roasting it on a brazier (Figure 27).<sup>109</sup> Finally, in the *Rappresentazione di San Tommaso apostolo* ('The play of Saint Thomas Apostle') by Castellano Castellani, we see the image of a bedchamber where doctors are examining a sick man, with his wife and a maidservant in attendance, while one of them checks the chamber pot (Figure 28). This scene was often included in the *sacre rappresentazioni*, both for its educational value and for the possible comic effect. The realistic efficacy of this domestic image was also exploited in Savonarola's *Predica dell'Arte del Bene Morire* (Figure 6).<sup>110</sup>

phenomenon, in fact, involves the interweaving of religious sensibility, cultural formation and the invention of the typographic market in the Renaissance.

<sup>107</sup> 'Look, soul, what *cruel spectacle, what pitiless print*, what form to make every hard heart grow pitiful.' Savonarola wrote, as we have seen before, in the *Operetta nuova* (BNCF, Cust C 16, s.n.t., c. 17r).

<sup>108</sup> I consulted the exemplar, without date and typographical indications, conserved at the BNCF, Pal. E.6.5.1.III.13 (Testaverde and Evangelista 1988, n. 412, 149).

<sup>109</sup> The incunabulum, without typographic details, is attributed to Bartolomeo de' Libri, around 1496: see Tura 2001, n. 99, 102 (Triv. Inc. C 269).

<sup>110</sup> Col.: *Stampata in Firenze appresso alla Badia. MDLXI. Ad istantia di Paghol Bigio* (BNCF, Pal. E.6.5.1.V.22: see Testaverde and Evangelista 1988, n. 487, p. 173). On the educational function of the comic inserts, known as *inframessa*, of the *sacre rappresentazioni*,

The conformity of the images to Florentine places and costumes was definitely linked to the current Florentine figuration that rendered Scripture or hagiography topical by setting them in the Florence of the time and by giving the sacred characters the appearance of the commissioners and the famous figures of their entourage and dressing them in the current fashion. This trend was begun by Masolino and Masaccio in the Brancacci Chapel and was then cultivated by the painters of wedding chests and birth plates all through the fifteenth century. At the end of the century it became a specialisation of the workshop of Domenico Ghirlandaio, as testified by the frescoes in the Sassetti chapel in Santa Trinita, or in the Tornabuoni chapel in Santa Maria Novella, with the portraits of the members of the Medici establishment and their ladies, or those of the oratory of the Buonomini di San Martino showing the brothers intent on their works of mercy (Figure 29).

In addition to reasons of an aesthetic and propagandist nature, this approach also adhered to a specific educational principle that used realism to help fix the contents of Scripture and devotional texts in the mind so as to facilitate mental prayer.<sup>111</sup> A handbook for the exercise of this meditative practice, composed in 1454 and circulated in print between the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, casts light on the catechetical foundation of this realism. Starting with the classical rules of the mediaeval *ars memorativa* ('art of memory'), which acted primarily through the association of the arguments to be remembered with known places,<sup>112</sup> the *Zardino de oration fructuoso* ('Garden of Fruitful Prayer')<sup>113</sup> advised the worshipper absorbed in prayer to aid his recall and visualisation of the sacred stories by calling to mind his everyday life and the places he frequented and then associating the faces of the sacred protagonists with those of his friends and acquaintances.<sup>114</sup> In this

and in particular those involving doctors, see Ventrone 2016, 187-189. In general, for an illustration of the characters of the *inframessa* see D'Ancona 1891, I, 563-644; Ventrone 1982 and 1984.

<sup>111</sup> Plastic works, such as the *compianti sul Cristo morto* ('lamentations over the dead Christ') or the *sacri monti* ('sacred mountains') must have had a similar function, although this is not the place to introduce such ulterior and ramified subjects for reflection.

<sup>112</sup> As illustrated, for example, by a precious document in which the *canterino* ('street singer') Michele Del Giogante wrote down the mnemonic system explained to him by his friend Niccolò Cieco. This system was based precisely on the association between the things to be remembered and the places and objects of one's own home; see Tocco and Bacci 1898.

<sup>113</sup> For the attribution to Giovanni da Osimo see Stanislao da Campagnola 1971. On the editions up to 1550 see Jacobson Schutte 1993, 302-303, which records, between 1494 and 1543, five Venetian editions and a sixth attributed to the Venetian Filippo Pincio or to the Florentine Miscomini himself. On this text, and on its relations with late fifteenth-century devotion, see: Baxandall 1972, 57-58; Ginzburg 1972, 631-633; Arasse 2007, 82-84; Bolzoni 2002, 194-195.

<sup>114</sup> I have consulted what, to date, appears to be the *editio princeps*: BNCF, Guicc. 3.5.16. The colophon records: 'Impressa questa benedeta opera contemplativa e utilissima a ziaschadun

case too, as for Morelli, the scriptural episode in question was the Passion, namely one of the central references for individual devotion.

La quale historia aciò che tu meglio la possi *imprimere nela mente*, e che più facilmente ogni acto de essa ti si reduca alla memoria, ti serà utile e bisogno che ti *fermi nela mente lochi e persone*. Come una citade, la quale sia la citade de Hierusalem, pigliando una citade la quale ti sia bene praticata. Nela qual citade tu trovi li lochi principali neli quali furono exercitati tutti li acti dela passione: come è uno palacio nel quale sia el cenaculo dove Cristo fece la cena con li discipuli. Anchora la casa de Anna e la casa de Cayfas dove sia il loco dove fu menato la nocte Miser Iesu. E la stantia dove fu menato dinanti da Cayfas, e lui deriso e beffato. Anche il pretorio de Pilato dove li parlava con li iudei: et in esso la stantia dove fu legato Misser Iesu ala colonna. Anche el loco del monte de Calvario, dove esso fu posto in croce, e altri simili lochi, li quali ti fabrichi nela mente. E per questa *memoria locale* ti siano più facilmente *presentate* tutte quelle cose che furono nela passione. Anchora è di bisogno che ti formi nela mente alcune persone, le quale tu habbi pratiche e note, le quale te ti ripresentino quelle persone che principalmente intervennero de essa passione: come è la persona de Misser Iesu, della nostra Madonna, Sancto Pietro, Sancto Ioanne Evangelista, Sancta Maria Magdalena, Anna, Cayfas, Pilato, Iuda, e altri simili, li quali tutti *formarai nela mente*. Cossi adunque havendo formate tutte queste cose nela mente, sì che quivi sia posta tutta la fantasia, e entrarai nel cubiculo tuo e sola e solitaria, disciacciando ogni altro pensiero exteriore, incomincerai a pensare il principio de essa passione. Incominciando come esso Misser Iesu venne in Ierusalem sopra l'asino. E morosamente tu trascorrendo ogni acto pensarai faciando dimora sopra ogni acto e passo, e se tu sentirai alcuna divotione in alcuno passo ivi ti ferma: non passare più oltra fino che dura quella dolcezia e divotione. (BNCF, Guicc. 3.5.16, f. X2v, italics mine)<sup>115</sup>

fidel christiano che secondo Dio vuol reger la vita sua in allegrezza de spiritu, compiacere a Christo Salvatore et acquistar da lui salute. M.cccc.lxxxxiiij' ('Printed, this blessed contemplative work, most useful to every Christian believer who wants to lead his life in joyfulness of spirit according to the will of God, to be pleasing to Christ the Saviour and gain from him salvation'). This edition is attributed to Bernardino Benali of Venice; see IGI, n. 6862.

<sup>115</sup> 'The better to impress the story of the Passion on your mind, and to memorise each action of it more easily, it is helpful and necessary to fix the places and people in your mind: a city, for example, which will be the city of Jerusalem – taking for this purpose a city that is well known to you. In this city find the principal places in which all the episodes of the Passion would have taken place – for instance, a palace with the supper-room where Christ had the Last Supper with the Disciples, and the house of Anne, and that of Caiaphas, with the place where Jesus was taken in the night, and the room where He was brought before Caiaphas and mocked and beaten. Also the residence of Pilate where he spoke with the Jews, and in it the room where Jesus was bound to the Column. Also the site of Mount Calvary, where He was put on the Cross; and other like places that you have to build in your mind. And by this *local memory* all the things which were in Passion will be easier *presented* to you. And then too you must shape in your mind some people, people well-known to you, to represent for you the people involved in the Passion – the person of Jesus Himself, of the Virgin, Saint Peter, Saint John the Evangelist, Saint Mary Magdalen, Anne, Caiaphas, Pilate Judas and the others, every one of whom *you will fashion in your mind*. When you have done all this, putting all your imagination into it, then go into your chamber. Alone and solitary, excluding every external thought from your mind, start

This passage is important because it illustrates certain mental mechanisms of fifteenth-century devotion to be discerned, for example, in paintings such as the *Passione di Cristo* ('Passion of Christ', Figure 30) or the *Sette gioie di Maria* ('Seven Joys of Mary') by Hans Memling, which must have had an analogous purpose. Although the evocative spatial and diegetic composition of these has often led historians to identify the influence of the northern mystery plays,<sup>116</sup> in my opinion these works were not intended to communicate a mirroring between performance and painting, but rather used partially analogous expressive means, connected with the *ars memorativa*, to induce *pietas* and foster the contrition of the faithful. They were, in other words 'images of memory'.

The passage from the manual is also useful for casting light on the relation between the devotional book and that of the *libro di teatro* ('theatre book'). It explains how the capacity of the theatrical medium for amplifying the catechetical message does not depend only on the link with the *hic et nunc* of the performance and the immediacy of the *azione in presenza* ('live action') in line with a generic historiographical commonplace, but on something more concrete and more rooted in the religious culture of the time. The sacred actions were set in three-dimensionally constructed sites designed to resemble buildings and possibly city views known to the public,<sup>117</sup> and the parts to be played were assigned to figures known in the city. These could have been the youths of the confraternities or the members of the companies of *laudesi* who organised the various festivals that were customary in Florence, or again the Medici dressed as the Magi (for all these feasts see Ventrone 2016). In all this, what the theatre did was to associate known faces and places with the events of the sacred story, facilitating its memorisation by virtue of both the prestige and social visibility connected with participation in the spectacles and, obviously, the engagement generated by the performance in both actors and audience.

## 12. Conclusions

In the passage from performance to book the theatrical dimension of the *sacre rappresentazioni* added the function of performance to those of memory and identification already inherent in the illustrations. This generated a sort of

thinking of the beginning of the Passion, starting with how Jesus entered Jerusalem on the ass. Moving slowly from episode to episode, meditate on each one, dwelling on each single stage and step of the story. And if at any point you feel a sensation of piety, stop: do not pass on as long as that sweet and devout sentiment lasts'.

<sup>116</sup> The Turin painting of the Passion has been associated with the plan of the mansions attributed to the XVI-XVII sec. *Passion of Villingen*, by Mazzoni 2017, 182, Figure 92, while the Marian painting now in Munich has been proposed as an example of simultaneous stage by Konigson 1975, 279.

<sup>117</sup> This can be deduced from the captions and woodcuts of the *sacre rappresentazioni*. This scenic solution was the most natural and economic, compared to the invention of completely imaginary sites. However, I intend to return at another time to the modalities of staging *sacre rappresentazioni*, which calls for broader specific research.

circularity, through which the realism of the theatrical performance and its iconographic models were impressed on the imagination and on the ways of seeing the representation of places, objects and people, which in turn affected the illustrations of other printed works of devout character.

If we address from this perspective the question we started with, namely of the reliability of the woodcuts for knowledge of the staging of the texts, it seems more logical to ask ourselves why so many images evoking 'theatrical' suggestions are present in books of devotion that have nothing to do with dramatic performances, rather than whether and why some woodcuts reflect or evoke certain scenic enactments. In other words, what is surprising is not the 'theatricality' of the illustrations present in the printed versions of the dramas in octaves, but the considerable number of figures of this kind that appear in books unconnected with performance. This observation suggests that the conventions of religious stagecraft were so deeply impressed on the figurative mentality of the time that the sacred stories were regarded through the eyes of drama. This can be seen not only in book illustrations, but also in the more important production of paintings, such as those derived from the visual imagination created by Brunelleschi's paradises.

Again, a few examples can help to clarify the issue. One of the woodcuts most frequently referred to as a visualisation of one of the few stage sets for which descriptions and information exist is that illustrated on the frontispiece of the *Rappresentazione dell'Annunciazione*. Here, a *mandorla* (an almond-shaped machine) with rays carrying the archangel Gabriel, accompanied by an angel at each side with their feet resting on clouds, descends from a cupola-shaped sky to the Virgin Mary (Figure 31).<sup>118</sup> In this case, the relation with the mechanism invented by Filippo Brunelleschi for the feast organised almost annually in the Florentine church of San Felice in Piazza is indubitable. In fact there is a clear correspondence between the known information about this and other Florentine raising and lowering mechanisms and the technical details shown in the image, such as the thick rope holding up the device, the shape of the sky formed of concentric circles and that of the cotton wool clouds shaped so as to cover the pedestals supporting the angels.<sup>119</sup>

It is scarcely surprising to find a similar mechanism in the *Rappresentazione di Sant'Agata*, used to enact her assumption after martyrdom (Figure 25). But it is significant that one also appears in the *editio princeps* of the *Laudi* of Jacopone da Todi, published by Francesco Bonaccorsi on 28 September 1490,<sup>120</sup> where there is a woodcut showing the Franciscan poet kneeling before a vision of the Virgin, who appears seated in a *mandorla* with rays surrounded by angels, underneath which are

<sup>118</sup> This woodcut is reprinted in many editions of the *Rappresentazione dell'Annunciazione*. The one reproduced here is the BNCF, Pal. E.6 7.53.16, s.l.a., printed by Maestro Francesco di Giovanni Benvenuto (Testaverde and Evangelista 1988, n. 512, 186).

<sup>119</sup> For the tradition of Florentine raising mechanisms see Ventrone 2016, 56-85, with previous bibliography, in particular 76-79 on the relationship of the *Annunciation* woodcut with the scenic apparatus of the play. The known sources on these and other similar performances are published by Newbigin 1996.

<sup>120</sup> Kristeller 1897, n. 220, 86.

the usual clouds used to conceal the small supporting platform (Figure 32). Another appears in the anonymous *Life of Saint Bernardine*,<sup>121</sup> which shows the Sienese saint in glory with exactly the same iconography (Figure 33), confirming how much stagecraft had influenced the figurative imagination of the late fifteenth century, especially as regards the representation of heaven and the epiphanies of the saints.

There are many other examples, but I feel that these few are sufficient to reassess the terms of the question. Instead of persisting with the, by now outdated, issue of whether the borrowings were 'from art to theatre' or 'from theatre to art', attempting to establish a primacy between the two,<sup>122</sup> it seems more illuminating to reflect more generally on the perceptive conventions of the Renaissance. Namely, on the function of the icons, the ways in which the devotional books were used and the role of the religious performance in the catechetical education of the citizens and the construction of the popular imagination.

The massive effort of evangelisation and of opposition to heresies made by the Church, in particular with the establishment of the mendicant orders, brought about a radical revision of the mediaeval systems of communication, and the use that could be made of them to reach the various brackets of the population. Indeed, both the cultivated and wealthy classes and the semi-literate and ignorant folk were, for different reasons, potential targets for the circulation of unorthodox ideas and beliefs. As known, one of the key moments of this process was related to the manner of preaching, leading to the progressive abandonment of Latin in favour of the vernacular and to the choice of *exempla* and arguments that were increasingly closer to the problems of daily life. Giordano da Rivalto and Bernardino da Siena were pioneers and masters of this approach (on this process see Delcorno 1974, 1975 and 1989).

Particular attention was also devoted to the attempt to bring the story of Jesus, as recounted in the synoptic and apocryphal Gospels, closer to the sensibility of ordinary people by introducing a humanisation of sentiments and events that pivoted largely on the Marian cult. Prototypes of this process can be found in the *Meditationes vitae Christi* – attributed at the time to Saint Bonaventura, but now assigned to the Franciscan Giovanni de' Cauli from San Gimignano – and in other devotional and hagiographic texts which gained impetus primarily from the mendicant orders.<sup>123</sup> This tendency was also channelled through the powerful expressive form of the lauds that flourished in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries (Baldelli 1987). The figurative arts, with their capacity to evoke and aid memorisation of the sacred events and the practices of prayer, played a central role in this process which, as we have seen, was theorised by theologians and preachers.

<sup>121</sup> *Vita di San Bernardino*, s.n.t. [but Firenze, Lorenzo Morgiani (and Johann Petri?), after 28 VIII 1496], see: Tura 2001, n. 112, 103 [Triv. Inc. E 16].

<sup>122</sup> I refer, of course, without going into the matter here, to the classic works by Mâle 1908, in particular 3-74; Kernodle 1944; Zorzi 1979, 421-463; in addition to the more recent Mamone 2003, in particular 27-67.

<sup>123</sup> For a general overview of these transformations, mindful of the problems of communication and transversal cultural exchange, see Ginzburg 1972, in particular 610-636.

Theatre was retrieved for catechetical purposes largely by the Dominicans, and constituted the moment of synthesis of this vast parenetic operation, uniting the power of the word, the image and the *azione in presenza*, bringing concretely into play what was being elaborated in the treatises on the practice of mental prayer so that it could interact with the complexity of the social implications of theatre. For all these reasons the *sacra rappresentazione* became a crucial element of the religious imagination, a filter for a more realistic visualisation of the sacred stories and a point of encounter between the physical eye and the eye of the mind. It was also able to impress its technical peculiarities on the figurative arts and, with the advent of printing, on the new product of wide circulation represented by the devotional book.

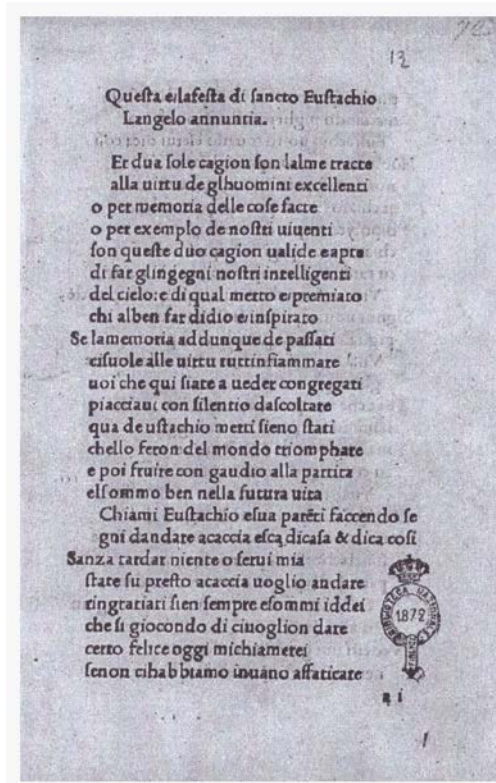


Figure 1 – *Rappresentazione di Sant'Eustachio*, [s.n.t., but Florence, Miscomini, before 1492], f. a1r (BNCF, P.6.36). By permission of Ministero per i beni e le attività culturali / Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, Firenze<sup>124</sup>

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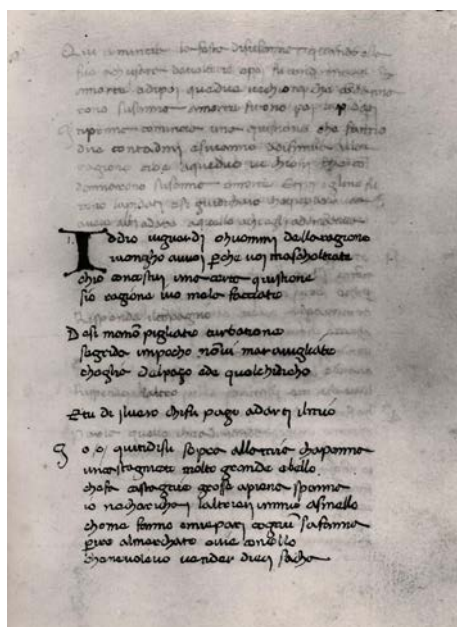


Figure 2 – *La festa di Susanna*, BNCF, ms. Conventi Soppressi F.3.488, f. 110r, around 1464. By permission of Ministero per i beni e le attività culturali | Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, Firenze



Figure 3 – Girolamo Savonarola, *Tractato dell'oratione mentale*, s.n.t. [but Firenze, Lorenzo Morgiani and Giovanni Petri, around 1495], f. 1r (BNCF, Cust C 23). By permission of Ministero per i beni e le attività culturali | Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, Firenze

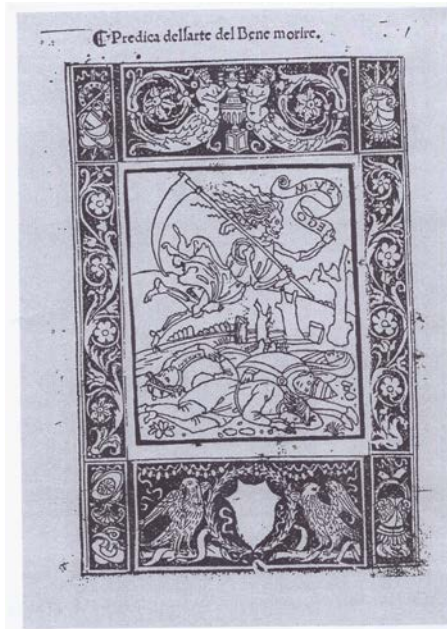


Figure 4 – Girolamo Savonarola, *Predica dell'arte del Bene morire*, s.n.t. [but Firenze, Bartolomeo de' Libri, after november 2, 1496), f. 1r (BNCF, Cust. E 6). By permission of Ministero per i beni e le attività culturali / Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale. Firenze



Figure 5 – Girolamo Savonarola, *Predica dell'arte del Bene morire*, s.n.t. [but Firenze, Bartolomeo de' Libri, after november 2, 1496), f. 6v (BNCF, Cust. E 6). By permission of Ministero per i beni e le attività culturali / Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale. Firenze



Figure 6 – Girolamo Savonarola, *Predica dell'arte del Bene morire*, s.n.t. [but Firenze, Bartolomeo de' Libri, after november 2, 1496), f. 12r (BNCF, Cust. E 6). By permission of Ministero per i beni e le attività culturali / Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale. Firenze



Figure 7 – Girolamo Savonarola, *Predica dell'arte del Bene morire*, s.n.t. [but Firenze, Bartolomeo de' Libri, after november 2, 1496), f. 14r (BNCF, Cust. E 6). By permission of Ministero per i beni e le attività culturali / Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale. Firenze





Figure 8 – Girolamo Savonarola, *Tractato del sacramento & de' mysterii della messa*, s.n.t. [but Firenze, Bartolomeo de' Libri, XV sec. ex.], f. 1r (BNCF, Cust. C 20). By permission of Ministero per i beni e le attività culturali | Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale. Firenze

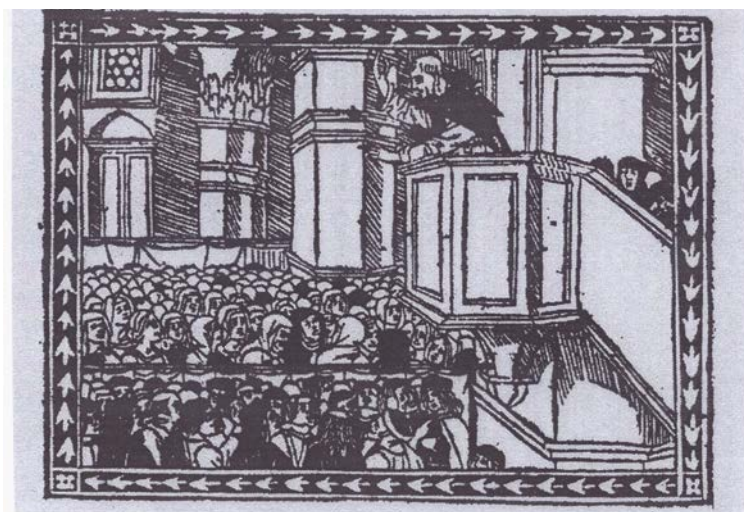


Figure 9 – Girolamo Savonarola, *Compendio di rivelatione*, ad instantia di ser Piero Pacini da Pescia, Firenze 23 aprile 1496, f. 1r (BNCF, Sav. 146). By permission of Ministero per i beni e le attività culturali | Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale. Firenze



Figure 10 – Girolamo Savonarola, *Compendio di rivelatione*, ad instantia di ser Piero Pacini da Pescia, Firenze 23 aprile 1496, f. 11v (BNCF, Sav. 146). By permission of *Ministero per i beni e le attività culturali* | *Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale. Firenze*



Figure 11 – Girolamo Savonarola, *Compendio di rivelatione*, ad instantia di ser Piero Pacini da Pescia, Firenze 23 aprile 1496, f. 28v (BNCF, Sav. 146). By permission of *Ministero per i beni e le attività culturali* | *Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale. Firenze*





Figure 12 – Girolamo Savonarola, *Compendio di rivelatione*, ad instantia di ser Piero Pacini da Pescia, Firenze 23 aprile 1496, f. 32r (BNCF, Sav. 146). By permission of Ministero per i beni e le attività culturali / Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale. Firenze



Figure 13 – *Angelo annunziante*, from Bernardo Pulci, *Rappresentazione di Barlaam et Iosafat*, [Firenze, Miscomini, around 1495], f. a1r (BNCF, Banco Rari 189.e). By permission of Ministero per i beni e le attività culturali / Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale. Firenze

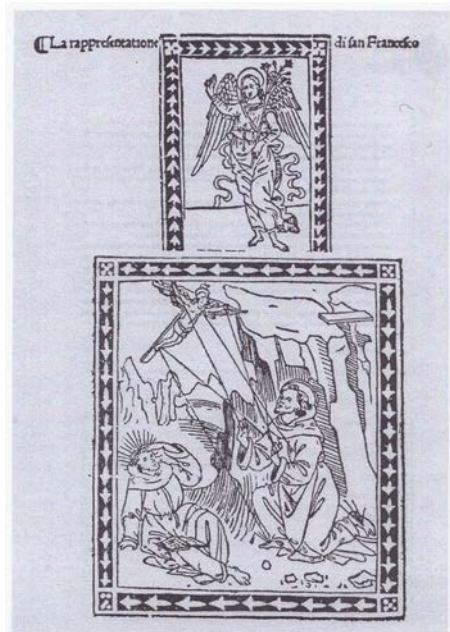


Figure 14 – Antonia Pulci, *La rappresentazione di San Francesco*, s.n.t. [but Firenze, Bartolomeo de' Libri, around 1495], f. a1r (BNCF, Banco Rari 189.m). By permission of *Ministero per i beni e le attività culturali | Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale. Firenze*



Figure 15 – *La tauola de Fioretti di sancto Francesco*, s.n.t. (from Kristeller 1897, n. 155a, 54, cut 27). Cornell University Library, Public Domain, <<https://archive.org/details/cu3192402955574/page/n8>>

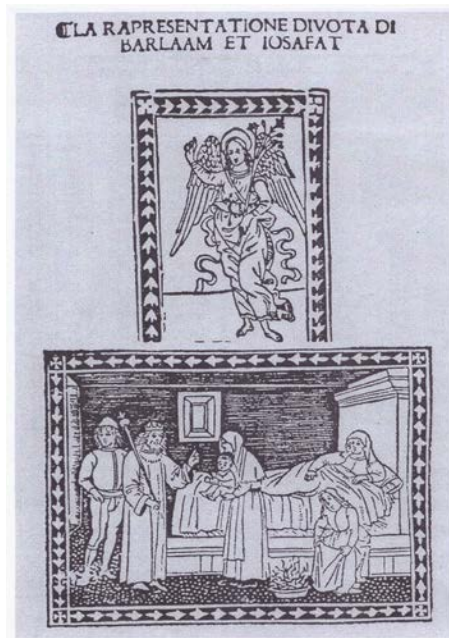


Figure 16 – Bernardo Pulci, *La Rapresentatione divota di Barlaam et Iosafat*, s.n.t. [but Firenze, Miscomini, around 1495], f. a1r (BNCF, Banco Rari 189.e). By permission of *Ministero per i beni e le attività culturali / Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale. Firenze*



Figure 17 – Bernardo Pulci, *La Rapresentatione divota di Barlaam et Iosafat*, s.n.t. [but Firenze, Miscomini, around 1495], f. a3r (BNCF, Banco Rari 189.e). By permission of *Ministero per i beni e le attività culturali / Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale. Firenze*





Figure 18 – Bernardo Pulci, *La Rappresentazione divota di Barlaam et Iosafat*, s.n.t. [but Firenze, Miscomini, around 1495], f. a5r (BNCF, Banco Rari 189.e). By permission of *Ministero per i beni e le attività culturali | Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale. Firenze*



Figure 19 – Bernardo Pulci, *La Rappresentazione divota di Barlaam et Iosafat*, s.n.t. [but Firenze, Miscomini, around 1495], f. a7v (BNCF, Banco Rari 189.e). By permission of *Ministero per i beni e le attività culturali | Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale. Firenze*



Figure 20 – Bernardo Pulci, *La Rappresentatione divota di Barlaam et Iosafat*, s.n.t. [but Firenze, Miscomini, around 1495], f. a8r (BNCF, Banco Rari 189.e). By permission of *Ministero per i beni e le attività culturali / Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale. Firenze*

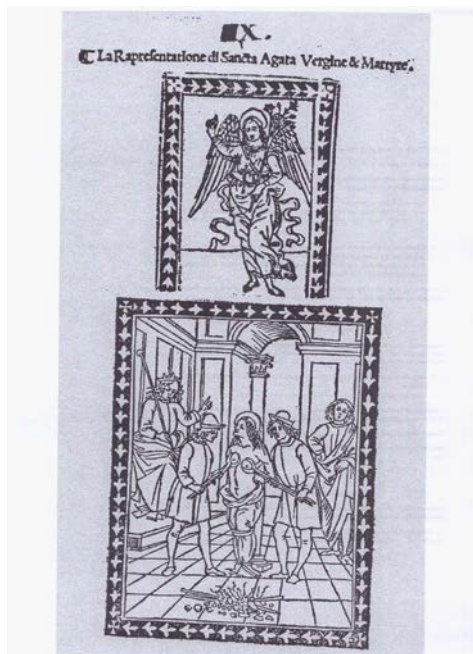


Figure 21 – *La Rappresentatione di Sancta Agata Vergine & Martyre*, ad instantia di ser Piero Pacini da Pescia, s.l.a. [but Firenze, Bartolomeo de' Libri, around 1496?], f. a1r (BNCF, Banco Rari 179.8). By permission of *Ministero per i beni e le attività culturali / Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale. Firenze*



Figure 22 – *La Rappresentatione di Sancta Agata Vergine & Martyre*, ad instantia di ser Piero Pacini da Pescia, s.l.a. [but Firenze, Bartolomeo de' Libri, around 1496?], f. a2v (BNCF, Banco Rari 179.8). By permission of Ministero per i beni e le attività culturali | Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale. Firenze



Figure 23 – *La Rappresentatione di Sancta Agata Vergine & Martyre*, ad instantia di ser Piero Pacini da Pescia, s.l.a. [but Firenze, Bartolomeo de' Libri, around 1496?], f. b1r (BNCF, Banco Rari 179.8). By permission of Ministero per i beni e le attività culturali | Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale. Firenze





Figure 24 – Girolamo Savonarola, *Tractato divoto & utile della Humilità*, s.n.t. [ma Firenze, Miscomini, 1493 ca.], f. 3r (BNCF, Cust. C 5). By permission of *Ministero per i beni e le attività culturali* / *Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale. Firenze*



Figure 25 – *La Rapresentatione di Sancta Agata Vergine & Martyre*, ad instantia di ser Piero Pacini da Pescia, s.l.a. [but Firenze, Bartolomeo de' Libri, around 1496?], f. b4r (BNCF, Banco Rari 179.8). By permission of *Ministero per i beni e le attività culturali* / *Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale. Firenze*



Figure 26 – Antonia Pulci, *Rappresentazione del Figliuol prodigo*, s.n.t., f. a2r (BNCf, Pal. E.6.5. 1.III. 13). By permission of Ministero per i beni e le attività culturali / Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale. Firenze

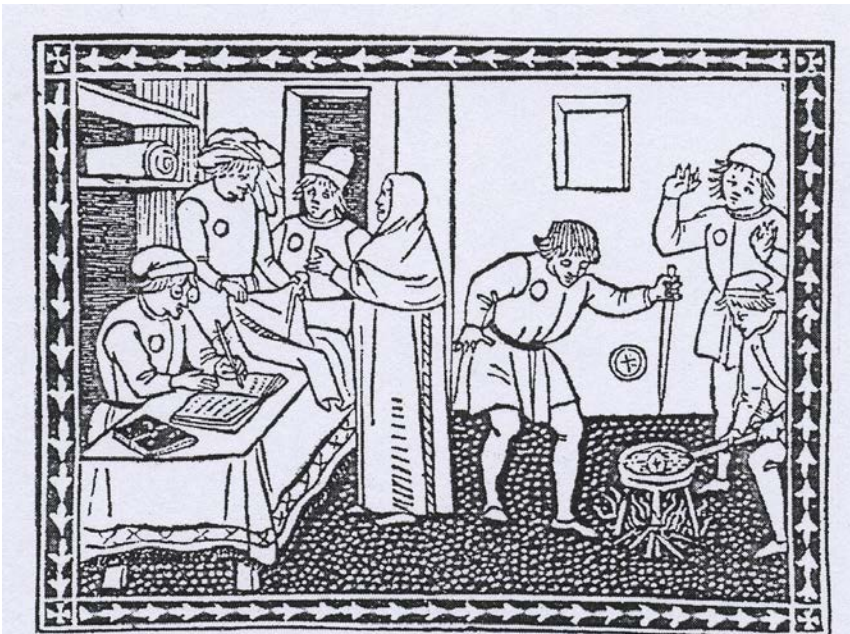


Figure 27 – *Rappresentazione del miracolo del corpo di Christo*, s.n.t. [but Firenze, Bartolomeo de' Libri, around 1496], f. a1r, (from Kristeller 1897, n. 180a, 65, cut 48). Cornell University Library, Public Domain, <<https://archive.org/details/cu31924029555574/page/n8>>





Figure 28 – Castellano Castellani, *Rappresentazione di San Tommaso apostolo*, Firenze, alla Badia, 1561, f. b4r (BNCF, Pal. E.6.5.1.V.22). By permission of Ministero per i beni e le attività culturali / Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, Firenze



Figure 29 – Domenico Ghirlandaio e aiuti, *Opere di misericordia: Visitare gli infermi*, Firenze, Oratorio dei Buonomini di San Martino, CC-BY-3.0, <[https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/6/63/Collaboratore\\_del\\_ghirlandaio\\_%28forse\\_francesco\\_d%27antonio%29%2C\\_curare\\_gli\\_infermi%2C\\_1478-81%2C\\_01.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/6/63/Collaboratore_del_ghirlandaio_%28forse_francesco_d%27antonio%29%2C_curare_gli_infermi%2C_1478-81%2C_01.jpg)>



Figure 30 – Hans Memling, *Passione di Cristo*, Torino, Galleria Sabauda, Public Domain, <[https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Passione\\_di\\_Torino#/media/File:Hans\\_Memling\\_Passione.jpg](https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Passione_di_Torino#/media/File:Hans_Memling_Passione.jpg)>



Figure 31 – *Rappresentazione dell'Annunciazione*, fece stampare Maestro Francesco di Giovanni Benvenuto, s.l.a. [but Firenze around 1495], f. a1r (BNCF, Pal. E.6 753.16). By permission of Ministero per i beni e le attività culturali / Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale. Firenze





Figure 32 – Jacopone da Todì, *Laudi*, Firenze, Francesco Bonaccorsi, 28 September 1490, (from Kristeller 1897, n. 220, 86, cut 9), Cornell University Library, Public Domain, <<https://archive.org/details/cu31924029555574/page/n8>>



Figure 33 – *Vita di San Bernardino*, s.n.t. [ma Firenze, Lorenzo Morgiani (e Johann Petri?), post 28 VIII 1496], (from Kristeller 1897, n. 54a, 19, cut 10), Cornell University Library, Public Domain, <<https://archive.org/details/cu31924029555574/page/n8>>



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# Beyond the Bad Quarto: Exploring the Vernacular Afterlife of Early Modern Drama

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## *Abstract*

Alongside the irregular 'stage history', early English plays also had a 'vernacular afterlife', comprising both a professional strand of performances by strolling players and puppet-masters, and a 'folk' strand of performances by local youths under customary, festive auspices. And while continuity on the high road of theatrical performance, thanks to intervening revolutions in staging and production, is mainly literary, continuity along the low road of the vernacular afterlife, thanks to intervening textual degradation, is more in regard to performance aspects, offering a different set of insights, not least on the matter of relationships between performance and text. Of the various options available, the article undertakes comparative analyses juxtaposing passages found in mummers' plays from ca 1780-1920 with their sources in specific early English stage productions (two plays, an opera, a Tudor interlude, and a droll). They reveal the impact on texts of both re-contextualization and recollection from memory in performance, and point to areas inviting further research, including the persisting significance of the Clown, and a neglected folk drama of amateur, festive performances independent of the mummers' plays, of which a concluding illustration is provided. The exercise is also designed to open up a new research avenue between Theatre History and Folklore, with folk traditions now seen as derivative from, rather than a source for, theatre productions.

Keywords: *Folklore, Mummers, Performance, Plays, Textual degradation*

We are not the London Actors  
That act upon the stage  
We are the country plough lads  
That ploughs for little wage.

Mummers' play from Clayworth,  
Nottinghamshire, c 1913-1916  
(Tiddy 1923, 241-244)

## 1. *The Low Road*

Introductions to standard editions of Elizabethan and Jacobean plays designed for academic and critical use have over recent decades included ever-lengthening surveys of their post-Restoration 'stage history', culminating in



television and film productions, evidently on the understanding that this theatrical afterlife is integral to what the play concerned fully is, or in other ways provides a valid avenue of approach to its study and appreciation. This article initiates an exploration of whether the same may also apply to what will be termed the ‘vernacular’ afterlife of early modern dramatic productions – an alternative trajectory comprising non-institutional, extra-theatrical performance traditions. Based on a rather different kind of continuity, this historical low road potentially offers insights usefully supplementing those provided by the high road of literary, ‘legitimate’ theatre, encompassing as it does both specific connections and more general analogies. Indeed it is anticipated that whatever this vernacular afterlife of early English drama has to offer on specific plays, equally valuable may prove the retrospective light it sheds on Elizabethan and Jacobean stage conditions more generally, including those complex relationships between text, print and performance which are the focus of the studies in this volume. To the extent some of the controversial ‘bad’ quartos of early stage plays reflect the impact of preparation for performance, changes in performance or the aftermath of performance under popular auspices (not least if ‘memorial reconstructions’), they should be considered the first phase of this vernacular afterlife, the latter in turn documenting what happened when the same or similar pressures continued operating thereafter, in the trajectory of a play beyond the bad quarto.

‘Afterlife’ is preferred to the *Nachleben* (of which it is a translation) more current in studying the perdurance of Classical and medieval literature – but which would of course be technically correct for a major segment of the topic, the popular success of early English plays in German-speaking lands. ‘Vernacular’ here invokes cultural production corresponding to the ‘Little Tradition’ of Peter Burke’s ground-breaking study (1978), where emphasis is on the hand-made, the local and useful; the achievement of artisanal rather than artistic skills. His title, *Popular Culture*, might be more appropriate for the quantitative and qualitative excesses of the modern mass media, but the Little Tradition does encompass early forms of popular professional entertainment as represented by itinerant entertainers. One significant strand of the vernacular afterlife of early English plays therefore comprises performances by such professionals, particularly the humblest of the latter day strolling players, whose treatment of Shakespeare’s plays seems to have differed in degree rather than in kind from that depicted in Mark Twain’s *Huckleberry Finn*, not least in the American frontier theatre chronicled by Lawrence Levine (1984). But similarly in England, as noted by Sybil Rosenfeld in her survey of eighteenth-century conditions,

the strollers ... were slow to adopt the methods and organisation of the London companies. They continued in fact to differ but little from the companies of Shakespeare’s day, and can therefore throw light on the methods and manners of the Elizabethan theatre. (1939, 9)



This strand also encompasses the puppet theatre, which by the nineteenth century, at least in Germany, had done interesting things with Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* (Mahal 2007, 111-131).

## 2. *Mummers' Plays: The End of the Line*

What follows will however focus rather on the 'folk' tradition constituted by amateur, local performances under seasonal, festive auspices. Of this folk drama the most intensely studied form comprises the so-called 'mummers' plays':<sup>1</sup> winter house-visit perambulations which, although documented from over a thousand English communities during the 'long' nineteenth century (ca. 1780-1920), have never been fully acknowledged and studied as a form of drama in their own right,<sup>2</sup> but consigned to an essentially auxiliary role in the study of English theatre history. Initial responses, prompted by the ubiquitous figure of St George, assumed a derivation from late-medieval miracle plays, while more recently it was confidently asserted that since the mummers' plays went back to an ancient fertility ritual, discerned parallels in Elizabethan and Jacobean drama must be a result of 'folk-play influence', or even 'ritual origins' (Pettitt 2005b).

While still occasionally encountered in theatre studies, academic folklorists refuted such notions several decades ago (in the footsteps of anthropologists even earlier), and the most likely scenario now seems to be that the mummers' *plays* only emerged when, from the seventeenth century onwards, various dramatic interludes were inserted into several perambulatory calendar customs which already encompassed a non- or sub-dramatic entertainment. This latter could include various permutations of song, dance and the exhibition of decorated artefacts, the cavorting of beast-figures, or even a sequence of speeches addressed directly to the audience (a pan-European feature identified in German scholarship as the *Reihenspiel* and established in the carnival plays or *Fastnachtspiele* by the fifteenth century). Such shows were performed by men in a 'guise' that might function as *disguise* in concealing identity, and/or as costume in attempting a degree of representation. Customs of this sub- or semi-dramatic kind had certainly developed by the later Middle Ages, and in this form might well have featured in or had influence on stage plays. But the forms with dramatic interludes cannot be documented until after the emergence of the English popular theatre, and any transfer of dramatic material is therefore more likely to have been in the opposite

<sup>1</sup> 'So-called' because the term is rarely encountered among those involved (and is in some ways misleading). The scholarly context for the following is usefully surveyed in Millington 2002, esp. 139-164; see also Fees 1994.

<sup>2</sup> For a belated attempt, on the basis of desperately few now-living traditions, see Brown 2011, and, from a much wider, international perspective, Tillis 1999.

direction, from stage to custom, by one route or another, in some instances perhaps via those same itinerant entertainers comprising the down-market professional segment of early drama's vernacular afterlife. In such instances, or in transfers via other intermediaries, the mummers' plays are 'the end of the line', the point where, when performances are discontinued (as often in the aftermath of the Great War), development ceases.

In principle these considerations apply to all the dialogue and dramatic action definitive of the major sub-genres of nineteenth-century English mummers' plays and which are common, nationally or regionally, to many local traditions (Chambers 1969; Millington 2002): the mortal combat of the Hero Combat Plays; the execution of the Fool in the Sword Dance Plays, in each instance usually leading to the 'cure' of the slain figure by a quack doctor; the courtship of a Lady by multiple wooers and/or a Fool in the Wooing Plays. But unless or until specific sources are identified it is equally possible that such interludes are better understood as new permutations of established theatergrams (Clubb 1986; Henke and Nicholson 2008; 2014) or dramatic formulas (Pettitt 1988; 2017) common to a broad and extended swathe of western drama from Greco-Roman theatre, through liturgical Easter Plays, German carnival interludes (*Fastnachtspiele*), French farces, and the *Commedia dell'arte*, to the Elizabethan stage and beyond.

What follows, therefore, will examine those few English local traditions, by this same token idiosyncratic, which supplement or substitute the plots and dialogue conventional in the mummers' plays generally with unique material that has been identified as deriving from specific early-modern dramatic productions. It has been suggested (Pettitt 2005a; Petersen 2010), borrowing a leaf from Swiss folklorist Max Lüthi's work on folk narrative, as subsequently applied to ballads (Pettitt 1997, 118), that the changes discernible in some Elizabethan and Jacobean bad quartos (and derivative German scripts) are not altogether haphazard, but can take an original play some steps towards a *Zielform*, an ultimate because inherent shape that, like rock formations after weathering, would fully emerge after further sustained subjection to the stresses of performance tradition. As the *Endform* of one particular line of development in the vernacular afterlife of the stage material concerned, its condition as performed in a mummers' play is technically qualified for assessment as its *Zielform*, but given the sometimes fragmented nature of the material, such assessment would need to be undertaken variously at the level of work, scene, dialogue sequence or even single speech. This aspect will be offered at most passing attention in the essentially exploratory survey that follows, which will focus rather on whether those same discernible discrepancies between folk performance and stage source can provide hints of the path taken by the material concerned on its way to where and how it is now.

From this it will emerge that there existed a parallel but neglected village folk theatre involving amateur performances of plays or extracts from plays

(and other early-modern stage genres) under seasonal, festive auspices other than the perambulatory mummers' plays. As yet we have no textual witness to the forms of say *Doctor Faustus* or *Mucedorus* as performed in this village theatre in the eighteenth century (which they evidently were), but this study will conclude with an instance where we have both the published original of a seventeenth-century stage droll and transcripts of it as performed not merely within a mummers' play but also under these alternative festive auspices one and a half centuries and more later.

Discussion will accordingly find only little room for the wider perspective, that despite or perhaps because of their humble, customary auspices, the mummers' plays offer potentially enlightening survivals of, or analogies to early English drama in matters such as performance 'in the round', all male companies, extensive doubling of parts (with a correspondingly imperfect distinction between player and character), ubiquitous and sometimes improvising clowns/fools (explored by Billington 1984, 117-188) very much in the Elizabethan stage tradition, and a 'presentational' dramaturgy consorting awkwardly with conventional dramatic representation and mimesis. Meanwhile the hundreds of surviving hand-written mummers' play texts include an ample supply of authentic reported texts or 'memorial reconstructions' (written down or dictated by performers), alongside a dozen or so texts printed in chapbook format and 'offered for acting', whose relationship to performance tradition is manifestly of considerable interest, but as yet not fully resolved. Altogether the comparatively simplex mummers' plays may offer a laboratory for developing, testing and refining textual approaches ahead of their application to more complex, early-modern, materials.

### 3. Case Studies

The following, the as yet only known specific instances of derivative stage material in mummers' plays, were all spotted and discussed by early students of folk drama with an academic background in English Literature (Baskervill 1924; Chambers 1969; Tiddy 1923), but with the exception of the first, there have hitherto been no close, comparative analyses of the respective original and derivative texts from the perspective adopted here.

#### 3.1 *Truro (Cornwall)*: Rosamond

The shortest chronological gap between source and recipient is manifested by the occurrence (presumably spoken) of passages from Joseph Addison's opera *Rosamond* of 1707 in a mummers' play from Cornwall recorded eighty or so years later. The connection has been known for a little over a century, but decisive textual and contextual clarification was achieved by Peter Millington's rigorous re-examination (2003). The 'Play for Christmas', published by local

folklorist Thurstan Peter (1916), was copied in 1905 from a manuscript in the possession of John D. Enys, the head of a major landowning family in the county. Enys stated that it was performed in Mylor, a community adjacent to his main estate (near Penryn), and it was assigned to this place and period in standard works thereafter. However, the text of the play also specifies the names of its five performers (who by doubling managed fifteen characters), and on the basis of official records Peter Millington was able to identify them all as cordwainers resident in the town of Truro and the adjacent parish of Kenwyn, some eight miles from Mylor. Furthermore they would all have been of the usual age (late teens to mid-twenties), and status (unmarried), customary for mummers' play performers, in the late 1780s. Millington also retrieved the original manuscript (misplaced in the interim) from among the Enys family documents now curated by the Cornwall Record Office, and found that paper and orthography likewise pointed to this earlier period. In the process he also determined that its four sheets had at some time before 1905 become disarranged, so that Thurstan Peter's transcript and subsequent editions (Tiddy 1923, 148-156; Chambers 1969, 71-82) misrepresented the structure and coherence of the play.<sup>3</sup>

The document has, as Millington notes, a 'smudgy appearance' due in part to 'wear and tear', suggesting it may have functioned as a script for performance (2003, 56). That it emerged from, and/or functioned within, a performance context, is also indicated by its consistent attribution of speeches to named performers rather than specific characters. Association with both Truro and Mylor can be explained by the contextual circumstance that Truro and the adjacent parish from which the 1780's players hailed together constituted a manor, of which that same Enys of Mylor family were lords,<sup>4</sup> and there is a discernible tendency for the earliest recorded mummers' plays to have significant connections with the great houses of the vicinity, including that of the manorial lord, of whom the performers are likely to have been tenants, employees or dependents in some other way. The Truro cordwainers may therefore have performed their Christmas play at the Enys manor houses (as perhaps respective residences of different sub-households) at both Truro and the main estate adjacent to Mylor, a day's walk distant.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> The play will accordingly be quoted from Millington's online transcript at Traditional Drama Research Group, Folk Play Research Home Page: 'Truro [Formerly Mylor]: "A Play for Christmas", 1780s', <[www.folkplay.info/Texts/78sw84em.htm](http://www.folkplay.info/Texts/78sw84em.htm)>, accessed 10 January 2019.

<sup>4</sup> For such contextual information see the Enys Family Archive Project, <<http://enysfamilyarchive.co.uk/>>, accessed 10 January 2019.

<sup>5</sup> On the basis of local knowledge folklorist Edith Rudkin noted that groups performing Lincolnshire mummers' plays could visit venues up to eight miles from their own community, which would allow them to get back overnight in time for the start of work the next morning (1952, 25). Eight miles a day was also the speed expected of vagabonds and masterless men trudging home after expulsion from major cities in accordance with a royal proclamation of 1551 (Hughes and Larkin 1964, 516).

There is also an understandable tendency for these great house performances to be somewhat more extensive than those vouchsafed to humbler parlours and kitchens, and of what might properly qualify as the ‘Enys Christmas Play’ we can note that its idiosyncrasy largely resides in its extensive textual additions to a fairly standard Hero Combat mummings’ interlude that could function perfectly well without them. The additions comprise substantial passages from a variety of sources, and among those that have been identified we find two sets of speeches from Addison’s opera, *Rosamond*.

The first occurs at the point in the standard Hero Combat plot where the figure slain in the fight is brought back to life by the quack Doctor. He not infrequently gives expression to his bewilderment, but uniquely to this version, rather than the most common formulation (with its own Elizabethan echoes),

Oh horrible, terrible, the like was never seen,  
A man drove out of seven senses into seventeen (Chambers 1969, 56)<sup>6</sup>

it comprises the exclamation of wonder by Addison’s Queen Eleanour on first seeing the pleasure-park in which her husband, Henry II, has secluded his mistress, Rosamond:<sup>7</sup>

1.1.	<i>Rosamond. A Tragic-Opera.</i>	Truro ‘Play for Christmas’
	<i>Queen</i>	<i>P. Langdon 14 [Turkish Knight]</i>
1.	What place is here! What scenes appear! Where’er I turn my eyes, All around	What places is are what sees appare whare ever itorn mine eye tis all around
5.	Enchanted ground And soft Elysiums rise: Flow’ry mountains, Mossy fountains, Shady woods,	in chantin ground and soft delusions rise floury mountins mosy fountins
10.	Chrystal floods, With wild variety surprise. As o’er the hollow vaults we walk, A hundred echoes round us talk: From hill to hill the voice is tost,	what will verietty surprize tis on the alow walks we walks an hundrd ecos round us stock from hils to hils the voices tost
15.	Rocks rebounding Caves resounding, Not a single word is lost.	rocks rebounding ecos resounding not one single words was lost.

<sup>6</sup> Chambers notes the similarity to an outburst by the Clown, Mouse, in the sixteenth-century romance-comedy *Mucedorus*, but at least the expression ‘horrible, terrible’ may have been a catchphrase of Elizabethan clowns more generally.

<sup>7</sup> Addison’s play *Rosamond* (1707) is quoted from the 1778 edition.

This might, if rather lengthy, be accepted as a plausible outburst of confusion, but any vestige of plausibility is lost when the victor in the combat, St George, continues (it can hardly be qualified as a reply) with lines in a similar spirit originally spoken by Queen Eleanor's Page a little later in the same scene:

	<i>Page.</i>		<i>Henry Crossman 15 [St George]</i>
35.	Behold on yonder rising ground the bower, that wanders In meanders, Ever bending, Never ending,		Behould on yander risen ground the bour that woander  ever ending ever bending
40.	Glades in glades, Shades in shades Running an eternal round.		glades an glades shades an shades running on eternal round.

With this the standard Hero Combat interlude is concluded, and there follows the sub-dramatic entertainment, a *Reihenspiel* of speeches to the audience by a series of unrelated figures, starting with Beelzebub.<sup>8</sup> But when the last of them, the 'King of France', expresses fear of an impending invasion by a 'King Henry', he effectively initiates a second dramatic interlude, a sequence of 7 speeches dramatizing the beginning of Henry V's 1415 invasion that culminated at Agincourt. This does not qualify as part of the vernacular afterlife of Shakespeare's play, but is constructed of dialogue from two ballads, one as yet unidentified, the other the very popular 'King Henry Fifth's Conquest of France', which by the 1780s would have been available both as multiple broadside printings and in oral tradition (Child 1965, 3.320-326).<sup>9</sup> It provides a scene in which a page delivers Henry's demands, and when the French King insultingly responds with the familiar offer of tennis balls, the page heralds Henry's imminent arrival. But the words are now Addison's, originally spoken by a quite different page concerning a quite different King Henry:

	<i>Rosamond. A Tragic-Opera.</i>		Truro 'Play for Christmas'
1.1.			
	<i>Page.</i>		<i>Penty Landin 24 [Page]</i>
68.	Hark, hark! what sound invades my ear? The conqueror's approach I hear.		Hark hark wot sonding vads my ears the conquars a porch I hear
70.	He comes, victorious Henry comes! Hautboys, trumpets, fifes and drums, In dreadful concert join'd, Send from afar A sound of war,		tis Henrys march tis Henry tune / I now he comes he comes victorus Henry comes with obboys Tropats fifes and drums send from a far and sound of war
75.	And fill with horror ev'ry wind.		foll of grief and every wind.

<sup>8</sup> Millington (2003, 56-57) notes that, independently of other confusions, this speech of 'Belzey Bob' has been misplaced in the MS; as indicated by the numbering of speeches it belongs here.

<sup>9</sup> It may qualify as a *Henry V* 'residual' in B.R. Smith's sense (Smith 2006, 195).

Given the congruence in names and circumstances this is a quite astute intrusion, but again plausibility is sacrificed by the sequel, when the Page continues with an unmotivated emotional outburst actually spoken by Addison's Rosamond in a later scene:

1.4.	<i>Rosamond.</i>	[ <i>Penty Landin 24 cont.</i> ] [ <i>Page</i> ]
1.	From walk to walk, from shade to shade, From stream to purling stream convey'd, Through all the mazes of the grove, Through all the mingling tracts I rove,	from walk to walk from shade to shade from Strim to poolin strim comvaidd thru all the minglin of the groove thru all the minglin tracks of love
5.	Turning, Burning, Changing, Ranging, Full of grief, and full of love!	tyrmin burnin changin Rangin full of grfe and full of woe
10.	Impatient for my Lord's return,	impashent from my Lords return.

This is our first glimpse of the 'end of the line' in the vernacular afterlife of material from a stage production, but in this instance its first seventy years or so followed not the low road of increasingly popular performance, but the broad avenue of print. In a study prompted by Millington's (Pettitt 2003), I established, on the basis of minor textual variations, that the passages interpolated into the Truro play were specifically from *Rosamond. A Tragic-opera*, printed in London by J. Harrison and J. Wenmann in 1778 (accordingly the edition cited in the above comparisons). This was nonetheless something of a cultural come-down, an octavo volume in a cheap series of dozens of popular theatre classics. Aimed at what a modern publishing historian has called 'the lower end of the trade', it was probably within the financial means of our Truro cordwainers, but may also have been aimed at, and accessed via, the period's circulating libraries (Bonnell 2008, 180-181).

In the remaining ten or a dozen years before transcription in the Enys manuscript these passages have nonetheless undergone, if not much by way of approaching a *Zielform*, at least a rapid vernacularisation. While the play manuscript may have been designed to function as a script for later performances (a 'pre-text'), the discrepancies from the printed source suggest it was also a transcript of anterior performances (a 'post-text'). The changes are not those of scribal copying. The transcriber evidently wrote down what he heard, in the dialect in which it was spoken, and some discrepancies may result from this process alone: say 'seens appare' for 'scenes appear' (1.1.2), or 'round us stock' for 'round us talk' (1.1.13). At some point these modulate into what are more likely a transcriber's rationalizing of what he heard, such as 'the conquars a porch I hear' for 'The conqueror's approach I hear' (1.1.69). But 'Soft delusions rise' for 'soft Elysiums rise' (1.1.6), is, however and by whomever achieved, a viable substitution.

Other changes result from inexact recall on the part of the performers, not least the few instances of internal verbal contamination, established in

ballad studies as symptomatic of transmission via memory and performance: that is, when formulation at one point in a word-sequence influences that at another, producing a verbal repetition (Pettitt 2005a). The Truro play has instances of this both at close proximity (a single word):

<i>Rosamond. A Tragic-Opera.</i>	Truro 'Play for Christmas'
1.1.13 A hundred <u>echoes</u> round us talk: From hill to hill the voice is tost, Rocks rebounding Caves resounding	→ an hundred <u>ecos</u> round us stock from hills to hills the voices tost rocks rebounding → <u>ecos</u> resounding.

and at a distance (a phrase):

<i>Rosamond. A Tragic-Opera.</i>	Truro 'Play for Christmas'
1.1.75 And <u>fill</u> with horror ev'ry wind. ...	→ <u>fol</u> of <u>grief</u> and every wind.
...	[... eight lines intervene]
1.4.9 <u>Full of grief, and</u> full of love!	→ <u>full of grfe</u> [ <i>sic</i> ] and full of woe.

Particularly intriguing is the one point at which the Truro play *adds* a line to a speech of Addison's:

<i>Rosamond. A Tragic-Opera.</i> <i>Page.</i>	Truro 'Play for Christmas' <i>Penty Landin 24</i> [= Henry's Page]
1.1.68 Hark, hark! what sound invades my ear? The conqueror's approach I hear.	Hark hark wot <u>sounding vads</u> my ears the conquars a porch I hear
70. He comes, victorious Henry comes!	<u>tis Henrys march tis Henry tune / I now</u> he comes he comes victorius Henry comes

This is not an addition of external material, however, for the line concerned derives from a speech by a quite different character in a later scene of Addison's *Rosamond*:

1.4. <i>Sir Trusty</i> (Rosamond's guardian)	<i>Penty Landin 24</i> [= Henry's Page]
71. But hah! a <u>sound</u> my bower <u>invades</u> , And echoes through the winding shades; ' <u>Tis Henry's march! the tune I know</u> ...	Hark hark wot <u>sounding vads</u> my ears the conquars a porch I hear <u>tis Henrys march tis Henry</u> <u>tune / I now</u>



This is technically another instance of internal verbal contamination, only now at a considerable distance, triggered, it would seem, by the occurrence of 'sound ... invades' in an adjacent line at both points. But it also has implications for the trajectory by which the Addison material reached the end of this particular line, for the contamination could of course occur only if the performer concerned was also familiar with the speech in a different scene from which this line derives. This in turn has to mean that the originating scene was previously part of one of his roles, suggesting either that the passages from Addison's *Rosamond* in the Truro Play were previously more substantial, but subject to loss in the interim, or more plausibly that our Truro cordwainers performed *Rosamond* as a whole (not a long text anyway, but perhaps in a cut-down form) under auspices other than the mummers' play and which will emerge in subsequent discussion here. This would also explain the presence of those speeches from Addison which are dramatically inappropriate for the new context in the mummers' play.

### 3.2 *Brant Broughton (Lincolnshire): Wily Beguiled*

There is a longer gap between the mummer's play from Brant Broughton, Lincolnshire, recorded in 1824 (Baskervill 1924, 250-258), and the late-Elizabethan stage play, *Wily Beguiled*, last printed in 1638 (Maxwell 1922, 206 n. 1), which provides a segment of its dialogue. Baskervill locates the former to the Broughton close to Brigg in north Lincolnshire, but in his detailed folkloristic study of the Lincolnshire plays Robert Pacey suggests rather the Brant Broughton (known locally simply as 'Broughton') further south (Pacey 2014, I, 104-105). It is one of several mummers' Wooing Plays in a manuscript collection which was probably assembled at the behest of a gentry household, the Bromheads of Thurlby Hall, perhaps because they had witnessed performances. As already noted groups perambulating with a mummers' play were particularly attracted to the great houses of the locality, and the two other plays in the collection for which a location is specified, Bassingham and Swinderby, were respectively one and a half and three miles from the Bromhead residence, Brant Broughton itself six miles distant.

Of the Brant Broughton Play the manuscript collection actually contains three texts, in different hands, which have a complex and as yet not fully resolved relationship to each other, to performance, and to a possible lost original (Baskervill 1924, 250 n. 2), although they vary only in details. Baskervill published the version he called 'A' which was in a clear hand, correct spelling and neatly set out, but the text cited below ('B', established from Baskervill's collation) is preferred here as its scribe 'wrote crudely' with 'many ... errors ... in grammar and spelling' and so is more likely to have been a performer, Baskervill noting of the collection more generally that 'It is obvious not only from the handwriting but from spelling and other features of the text that some of the plays were written down by uncultured actors who performed in them' (1924, 241). And indeed in a couple of details B is closer to the formulation in

the source than is A. The writer of text B signed himself at the end ‘Thomas Carr 1824’, almost certainly the person of this name registered in the England and Wales census of 1851 as living in nearby Bassingham (which was also his birthplace). His age in 1824, on the basis of the ‘estimated’ birth date specified, would have been around 21, quite typical for a mummers’ play performer, as was his bachelor status (he married in 1833), and indeed (in view of the Truro tradition) his occupation of cordwainer.<sup>10</sup>

*Wily Beguiled* meanwhile is an entertaining love-and-money ‘Pleasant Comedy’ (which in other respects may be indebted to folk traditions), but the material that made it into the Brant Broughton play derives exclusively from the Jonsonesque metadramatic Induction, where a figure personifying the Prologue is informed that the play to be performed is *Spectrum* (evidently a moral satire), but successfully insists it be replaced by *Wily Beguiled*. This is achieved in some lively comic dialogue, extracts from which interrupt the Brant Broughton play with considerable awkwardness: in their absence, the sequence of dialogue and action would have been much more logical and indeed traditional, and we may again be in the presence of a local play enhanced with additional material for a special, great house, performance.

As recorded, the play begins with a conventional enough Presentation in which a figure who introduces himself as the Fool, but who is interestingly labelled by this reporter as ‘Merryman’, greets the audience and heralds the arrival of the performers (Baskervill 1924, 250-252)<sup>11</sup>:

*Enter Merryman.*  
Gentlemen and Ladies  
I’m com’d to see you all  
This merry time of Christmas,  
I neither knock nor call  
I come in so brisk and bold  
with confidence I say.  
What can you expect of a Fool  
w[h]ich knows no other way.

<sup>10</sup> For the 1851 census (in which Bassingham was covered under Nottinghamshire): ‘England and Wales Census, 1851’, database with images, *FamilySearch* (<<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:SGDY-6RN>>, accessed 10 January 2019), Thomas Carr, Bassingham, Nottinghamshire, England; citing Bassingham, Nottinghamshire, England, p. 8, from ‘1851 England, Scotland and Wales census’, database and images, *findmypast* (<<http://www.findmypast.com>>, accessed 10 January 2019); citing PRO HO 107, The National Archives of the UK, Kew, Surrey; for the 1833 marriage: ‘England Marriages, 1538–1973’, database, *FamilySearch* (<<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:NVK7-XBH>>, accessed 10 January 2019), Thomas Carr and Hannah Moore, 14 Oct 1833; citing Bassingham, Lincoln, England, reference, index based upon data collected by the Genealogical Society of Utah, Salt Lake City; FHL microfilm 1542190 IT 2. The records have no plausible candidates for a Thomas Carr at the northern Broughton.

<sup>11</sup> The line numbering is Baskervill’s, but lineation has been rearranged here for purposes of comparison.

10.           for A Fool I know I am  
                 indeed and so do you  
                 for fools and little children  
                 for most parts speaks true.

Having introduced himself it is the next task of such a Presenter to introduce the performers, but our Merryman does so in a stanza that mixes the traditional ‘make room’ formula with phrases from the Induction to *Wily Beguiled* (underlined):

My name is noble Anthony  
as live and as blyth and as mad  
and as melancholy as A mantletree  
make room for noble Anthony  
and all his Jovial Company.

It would be appropriate enough for material from a stage Induction to form part of its folk play equivalent (conventionally termed the Presentation), but the play-proper begins immediately with the entry of the Lady, complaining of her lack of suitors (ll. 18-25). She would, as normal, have at once been wooed by a series of ‘Ribboners’ (beribboned dancers), had not the first of them (First Ribboner) instead engaged with the Merryman in the entirely unrelated dialogue extracted from *Wily Beguiled*:<sup>12</sup>

*Wily Beguilde*  
London: Clement Knight,  
1606 Induction (Baskervill  
1924, 251-252, n. 10)<sup>12</sup>

Brant Broughton Wooing Play  
Baskervill 1924, B-version

*Prologue.*  
What hoe,  
where are these paltrie Plaiers?  
  
stil pouring in their papers  
and neuer perfect?  
5 for shame come forth,  
your Audience stay so long,  
their eies waxe dim  
with expectation.

26.           *[Merryman.]*  
Heigh, O  
w[h]ere is all this paultry and poor  
Still paultry in this place  
and yet not perfect  
for shame, step forth  
  
peoples eyes looks dim  
with the very red expectations.

*Enter one of the Players*  
How now my honest Rogue;

*1st Ribboner*  
How now me Hamorous George

<sup>12</sup> Line numbering supplied here.

- [cf. ll. 31-33]
10. what play shall we haue  
here to night?
- Player*
- Sir you may looke vpon the  
Title.
- Prologue*
- What. Spectrum once again?  
Why noble Cerberus,  
15. nothing but patch-pannell stuffe,  
olde gally-mawfreies  
and cotten-candle eloquence?  
out you bawling bandogge
- fox-furd slaue:  
20. you dried stockefish you,  
out of my sight.  
*Exit the Player*
- ...
- Enter a Iuggler*
- Iuggler*
- Why how now humerous George?  
what as melancholy as a mantletree?  
Will you see any trickes of Leigerdermaine,  
slight of hand, clenly conuayance,  
35. or deceptio visus?  
what will you see Gentleman  
to driue you out of these dumps?
- Prologue*
- Out you soust gurnet, you Woolfist,  
be gon I say and bid the Players dispatch  
40. and come away quickly,
- ...
- Iuggler*
45. O Lord sir ye are deceiued in me,  
I am no tale-carrier, I am a Iuggler.  
I haue the superficial skill  
of all the seuen liberall sciences  
at my fingers end.
30. as live and blyth and as mad  
and as melancholy  
as a Mantletree  
What play have you got  
here today.
- Merryman.*  
play boy
- 1st Ribboner.*  
Yes play  
I look vpon the title
- of the spectimony once a year  
you old scallibush  
nothing but parch pennyworth  
tuffcoat calely old calleymufus
- you rolling bolling banging fool
- stand out of my sight.
- Merryman*  
Zounds what a man have I got here
- 1st Ribboner*  
you Quiet mistake in me.  
40. i'm no talker I'm a Juggler.

50. Ile shew you  
a tricke of the twelues,
- And turne him ouer the thumbes  
with a trice.  
Ile make him fly  
55 swifter then meditation.  
Ile shew you as many toies  
as there be minutes in a moneth,  
and as many trickes  
as there be motes in the sunne.
- Prologue*  
60 Prithce what trickes canst thou doe?  
*Juggler.*  
Marry sir I wil shew you  
a trick of cleanly conueiance.  
Hei fortuna furim nunquam credo,  
With a cast of clean conueyance,
- 65 come aloft Iack  
for thy master's aduantage  
(hees gone I warrant ye.)
- Spectrum is conueied away:  
and Wily beguiled, stands in  
the place of it*
- Prologue*  
Mas an tis wel done,  
now I see thou canst doe something,  
70 holde thee thers twelue pence  
for thy labour.  
Goe to that barme-froth Poet  
and to him say,  
He quite has lost the title  
75 of his play,  
His Calue skin iests  
from hence are cleane exil'd.  
Thus once you see  
that Wily is beguil'd.
- I can shew you  
the trick of the twelves,
- as many tricks  
as is days in A year
- toils and moils  
and motes of the Sun.  
I have them all upon  
my Finger end
- Jack and the loft  
quick and be gone.
- Merryman.*  
now man I'l warrant the  
*1st Ribboner*  
Hey now man  
I see thou can do something  
hold thy hand, here's a Shilling  
for thy labour;  
take that to the paultry of thee poor  
and thus to them say<sup>13</sup>  
50. thou hast quiet lost the title  
of this play,  
callyflaskin jest  
shall slenge our sight
- and you shall hear a new delight.

This is the full extent of the inserted material, after which the First Ribboner finally does proceed with his addresses, ‘Well met fair Lady in this place’ (l. 54).<sup>13</sup>

In addition to its manifest textual reduction and degradation the extract from *Wily Beguiled* has also lost its central stage action, the magic trick by which the Juggler switched titles on the placard displaying the name of the play to be performed. The Brant Broughton performer of the drastically reduced speech at this point may now make some other kind of gesture, or the words may have no practical meaning.

The discrepancies can doubtless be assigned both to an original adapter and to one or more of the players who had performed these roles in the interim. To the latter we may attribute the symptoms often associated with transmission through performance and memory, which also indicate that this is a reported text (a post-text), reflecting earlier performances. These include for example the verbal repetition patterns achieved by an instance of multiple textual contamination. In *Wily Beguiled* the Juggler’s greeting as he enters,

- Juggler*
31. Why how now humorous George?  
what as melancholy as a mantletree?<sup>14</sup>

while lost at this point in the Brant Boughton play, reappears earlier as a substitute for the Fool’s greeting to the Player, only now transferred to the Ribboner who has taken over the latter’s role (the ‘Hamorous’ substituted for ‘humorous’, presumably reflecting the Wooing Play context):

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>Prologue</i></p> <p>9. How now my honest Rogue;</p> | <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>1st Ribboner</i></p> <p>30. How now me Hamorous George<br/>still as live and blyth and as mad<br/>as a Mantletree.</p> |
|---|--|

And it was presumably from here that (together with the new ‘...blythe and ... mad’ line) it contaminated Merryman’s opening speech as Presenter, which in itself is not derivative from *Wily Beguiled*. An evidently derivative variant of this speech (with nothing else reminiscent of *Wily Beguiled* but including the added line) appears in the play from Revesby, Lincolnshire (Pettitt 2018, 2.2.6-11, and see below), indicating that the Brant Broughton Play must have been performed with these insertions before 1779.

Other changes, deliberate or otherwise, transform the character of the scene, most notably the redistribution between the characters of such speeches as remain.

<sup>13</sup> This is one of the points where B is closer to the source than A.

<sup>14</sup> The phrase also occurs in the body of the play at ll. 2474-5 (Malone Soc. edition), in reference to a morose figure. Fleay assumes without comment that it should properly be ‘melancholy as a myrtle-tree’ (1891, II. 159).

The Player has been omitted – incidentally bringing the episode into conformity with Axel Olrik’s ‘law of two to a scene’ characteristic of folk narrative (1965) – and his single line assigned to the First Ribboner. The latter now speaks all the lines that remain of both the Juggler’s part and the Prologue’s, in the latter instance usurping the part initially played by the Merryman who, after the Ribboner’s entry, has only three one-line speeches, none deriving from *Wily Beguiled*. He is effectively reduced to the straight man responding to the Ribboner’s semi-nonsensical solo harangue. On its own terms, and in a vernacular context, it is something of a comic tour de force – exuberant (‘Hey now man’; ‘How now’; ‘you rolling bolling bangling fool’), nonsensical (‘the paultry of thee poor’), but soundful (‘callyflaskin’; ‘tuffcoat calely old callymufus’). Like the familiar harangue of the Quack Doctor, a theatergram which the mummers’ plays share with many forms of early theatre (and which also includes boasting of professional skills), it would not be out of place on the Elizabethan stage. It is appropriate therefore that one of the additions deploys a familiar stage device:

10	<i>Prologue</i> what play shall we haue here tonight	What play have you got here today? <i>Merryman</i> ‘play’ boy? <i>1st Ribboner</i> Yes play.
----	--	---

I have supplied punctuation to indicate that it involves one character querying a term just used by another: it is fairly common in Elizabethan stage dialogue involving the Clown (not least in possibly ‘bad’ texts such as the A-Text of *Doctor Faustus*, *The Taming of A Shrew* and *The Famous Victories of Henry V*), and might even have been inserted by a frustrated performer in the role of Merryman.<sup>15</sup>

### 3.3 *Revesby (Lincolnshire)*: The Interlude of Youth

With a documented performance in 1779, the Revesby Play has long been hailed as the earliest complete mummers’ play text, and on this account, alongside its unusual length and complexity, it has been the object of extensive analysis and discussion (reviewed in Preston 1972). Like several others examined here it is a medley, composed of material from a variety of mummers’ play genres and other customary perambulations. The British Library manuscript, long the only text available and the source of all printed editions (notably Chambers 1969, 105–120) is headed ‘The Plow Boys, or Morris Dancers’ (Preston, Smith and Smith

<sup>15</sup> In Baskervill’s A text the same device figures in another of the added lines, if with the roles reversed (*Merryman*. Zounds what a man have I got here? 1st Ribboner. man? you mistake me ...), but our B text lacks the repetition of ‘man’.

1976), suggesting an at least historical association with plough-trailing, and correspondingly that the interlude will include a wooing plot. This it does, but the wooers include a set of dancers who also perform sword dances, and although Revesby is some way outside the normal geographical range of Sword Dance plays, this one includes its characteristic interlude, in which the Fool is executed in the traditional way by a ring of interlaced swords around his neck (Pettitt 1981).

Such complexity in relation to regular customary house-visit shows again suggests special circumstances, and in this instance a specific great house connection is indicated by both internal and external evidence. The British Library manuscript has a note to the effect that 'October ye 20 1779 the Morrice Dancers ... acted their merry dancing &c at Revesby in their Ribbon dresses ...' (Preston, Smith and Smith 1976, 5)

Revesby Abbey in Lincolnshire was the seat of Sir Joseph Banks, celebrated botanist and antiquarian, where he lived with his sister, Sara Sophia Banks, who wrote her name and the date 1780 at the top of one of its pages (Preston 1972, 81 – this page not included in the Preston, Smith and Smith facsimile). Most of the dramatic material in the play is traditionally associated with mummers' plays of Christmastide, and one segment of the play makes specific reference to performance at this season. October 20th therefore indicates a special occasion in calendrical as well as social terms, and it is generally reckoned that the play in this form was produced in connection with the annual fair at Revesby, when, Sir Joseph remarked in 1783, 'according to immemorial custom I am to feed and make drunk everyone who chooses to come, which will cost me in beef and ale near 20 pounds' (Malcolmson 1973, 69). The fair of 1779 might have been particularly significant in marking the first appearance of Sir Joseph's new wife at his country seat (Helm 1965, 125): there is sporadic evidence that in elite families nuptial revels, which anyway could involve out-of-season performances of customary shows, might be extended to include the bride's introduction to her husband's household (the nuptials themselves normally celebrated at the home of the bride's family).

These great house auspices have prompted the suggestion that the whole show may have been a rather artificial concoction, perhaps even composed by a member of the Banks family (Helm 1965, 125; Hutton 2001, 130). This would consort well with the generally tidy appearance and organized feel of the British Museum manuscript, which would then have the status of the original script (pre-text) for the bespoke performance. Fortunately this issue was settled when the indefatigable quest of Michael Preston and Georgina and Paul Smith for more information on the Revesby production unearthed another manuscript of the play in the Lincolnshire Archives (Preston and Smith 1999). Also once the property of Banks's sister Sara Sophia, it was earlier than the British Library text both chronologically – she had signed this one in 1779 – and in relation to the performance. It was manifestly a reported text, written down by one of the performers, in a pretty rough hand and primitive spelling, of which the British Library manuscript provided a corrected fair copy, and Preston and the Smiths identified the copier/corrector with some confidence as the Steward of Revesby estate at this time. They also identified the performers named in the BL



manuscript as local residents, some of them tenants of the Banks estate (Smith and Smith 1980, 8). And, as Michael Heaney has pointed out, Sir Joseph himself commented almost thirty years later that shows by ‘morrice dancers’ involving matters corresponding to major parts of the 1779 version were traditional in his part of Lincolnshire ‘in my time, tho now I beleive extinct’ (Heaney 1988, 192).

What we have from Revesby therefore is a retrospective memorial reconstruction of the October 1779 performance, presumably made at the behest of the big house people who, far from having written it, wanted a memento of it. The character of the Lincoln Archives text as a report is also indicated by speech headings which are in the past tense, ‘sislay said’; ‘fool said’, and stage directions which are narratives of what happened: *‘the next man cauld in pepper bretcheshee said’* (Preston and Smith 1999, 34, line 1).

The Revesby Play is a vernacular dramatic production, emerging from local tradition, and any intertextual intrusions from an early-modern play are therefore part of the latter’s vernacular afterlife, although in this case the play concerned is remarkably early:<sup>16</sup>

	<i>The Interlude of Youth</i> , ca 1513-1514 (Lancashire 1980b) ll. 40-56.		The Revesby Play, 1799 (Pettitt 2018) 2.2.68-75 <sup>16</sup>
	<i>Youth</i> . ...		<i>Blue Britches</i> .
40.	Aback, felows, and give me room, Or I shall make you to avoid soon! I an goodly of person; I am peerless wherever I come		I am a <u>Youth</u> of <u>Jollitree</u> ,
45.	My name is <u>Youth</u> , I tell thee. I flourish as the vine tree Who may be <u>likened unto me</u> In my <u>youth and jollity</u> ?		Where is there one <u>like unto me</u>
	<u>My hair</u> is royal and <u>bushed thick</u> , <u>My body</u> pliant as a <u>hazel stick</u> ;	70.	<u>My hair</u> is <u>bush'd</u> very <u>thick</u> , <u>My Body</u> is like an <u>Hasel stick</u> , My Legs they quaver like an Eel, <u>My Arms</u> become my Body weel, <u>My Fingers</u> they are long & small,
50.	<u>Mine arms</u> be both big and strong; <u>My fingers</u> be both fair and long,  My chest big as a tun; <u>My legs</u> be full light for to run,	75.	Am not I a jolly Youth proper & tall.
55.	To hop and dance and make merry. By the mass, I reck not a cherry Whatsoever I do!		

<sup>16</sup> Line references are to the ‘working edition’ of the BL MS (Preston, Smith and Smith 1976) fully collated with that in the Lincolnshire Archives (Preston and Smith 1999) prepared for this study (Pettitt 2018); it should in due course be superseded by an authoritative edition by Smith and Preston.

The relationship between the three renditions of this passage (source play; performance report; fair copy) is indicated by a rare case (the second line quoted) in which there is a small but significant textual discrepancy between the British Library and Lincoln Archives texts of the Revesby play. In the latter the reporter garbles a word in Youth's 'My body *pliant* as a hazel stick' (l. 49) to produce what might for him have been a more familiar image, 'my body is *planted* licke a hesel stick' (that's how nut trees were propagated).<sup>17</sup> The reviser preparing the British Library version for educated readers recognizes this as nonsense, but with no access to the original opts for simply excising the offending word: 'My Body is like an Hasel stick' (2.2.71).

The source passage occurs at the point in *Youth* where the moral interlude's central, everyman figure first introduces himself to the audience. Parts of his speech have been redeployed in the Revesby play in the sequence where the sword-dancers enter in turn with self-descriptive speeches (another *Reihenspiel*) prior to their engagement in the wooing interlude. Some of the discrepancies are evidently deliberate, and quite competent, revisions, by whoever introduced this material into the Revesby tradition. The couplet form of the original is sustained, but in addition to retaining both lines and their rhymes from the original ('thick'/'stick'), new line pairs are achieved by retaining one line and constructing the other out of words from different lines in the original ('tree'/'me'; 'small'/'tall'), or by composing a new line and adapting another to match its rhyme ('eel'/'weel'). This brief passage has no symptoms of textual disturbance through memorization and recollection.

The Blue Britches speaking here is followed by Ginger Britches, who speaks more traditional lines, after which the next dancer introduces himself with what is left from the introductory speech of Youth from *The Interlude of Youth*:

57-59

I am the heir of all my father's land

And it is come into my hand --  
I care for no mo!

90-93

*Pepper Britches.*

I am my Fathers eldest Son

And Heir of all his Land

And in a short time I hope

It will fall into my Hands.

Here too the derivation is clear enough, but while the Revesby play-cobbler has thus far reproduced the original's couplet form he here restructures the phrases into a ballad quatrain (and has either mistaken or chosen not to deploy the for him archaic sense of 'and' in the corresponding line from *Youth*, where it means, 'If it were come ...').

<sup>17</sup> A country life context, not least in Lincolnshire, may lie behind the quivering eel image in an added line.

In the Introduction to his edition of *Youth*, Ian Lancashire invokes this connection with a Lincolnshire mummers' play in support of the north-east England provenance of this moral interlude (1980a, 26), which would have been more relevant if the influence had been in the other direction, and anyway implying that the mediation occurred locally and directly, so presumably independently of London printings. But in his discussion of 'Source and Analogue Materials', he speculates that the Revesby playwright 'might have used *Youth* in original quarto form' (1980b, 258), adding in support that if his 'Youth of Jollitree' (68) for the original's 'My name is Youth ...' has been influenced by Youth's 'youth and jollity' three lines later, then he evidently 'had a quarto copy before him' (Lancashire 1980b, 258, n.7).

In which case it is relevant that the *Interlude of Youth* appeared in three early quartos, the last (William Copland's) from 1562-1565, and while thereafter the rights to print the work are registered in documents up to 1582 or perhaps 1627, there is no indication that it was actually printed later than the 1560's (Lancashire 1980a, 5). The ultimate source for the Revesby passage was undoubtedly a copy of one of the quartos, but it cannot for now be determined at what point in the evolution of the Revesby Play the material was inserted. The manifestly deliberate textual revisions, not least the rendition of some lines into a ballad quatrain, leave open the possibility of transmission via some intermediate, vernacular, performance tradition. It may be relevant here that beyond the specific textual indebtedness just examined the Revesby Play more generally has strong echoes of the early popular theatre, not least thanks to its energetic Clown ('Pickle Herring' – the standard name for the clown among the English players travelling in Germany). A couple of his comic scenes (Pettit 2018, sections 1.3 and 2.3) in terms of dramatic style and technique (including what looks like occasional ad libbing) are very much in the style of the Elizabethan stage clown.

### 3.4 *Ampleforth (North Yorkshire): Love for Love*

A more complex instance of the transfer of material from the early modern stage to a mummers' play, with stronger hints of an intermediary phase, is provided by the use of William Congreve's *Love for Love* (1695) in the Sword Dance Play from Ampleforth in North Yorkshire. In the version concerned this is a medley of more than one type of mummers' play, its dances interspersed with a series of dramatic interludes: a Fool's Wooing and a Multiple Wooing (similar to those of the Wooing Plays of the East Midlands); the usual execution of the Clown with the swords of the dancers; his revival by a Quack Doctor. We owe our knowledge of it to the efforts of Cecil Sharp, who (in pursuit of the dances) visited the area in 1913. He acquired an incomplete account from a local farmer who (like his father and grandfather) had been one of the dancers, and a full text from a George Wright, who as a young man

had been a dancer too, but had also performed the central role of the Clown. Wright's memorial reconstruction was recorded in two forms: as transcribed by Cecil Sharp during his visit, and as subsequently written down and sent to Sharp by George Wright's daughter, reflecting his further recollection efforts and including lines omitted in the first instance.<sup>18</sup> Given the informant's age (75) at the time, this version should represent the Ampleforth play as it was in the years either side of 1860.

Along with substantial material which is original or from as yet unidentified sources, the first of its wooing sequences has mined scattered snippets of dialogue from the third act of Congreve's *Love for Love*, but with the significant difference compared to those discussed so far (except for those few lines at Revesby) that the source text has been deliberately and substantially reshaped and reformulated prior to insertion, more specifically with the conversion of Congreve's elegant prose into ballad quatrains, which (as often in wooing plays) are sung by the performers.

This re-writing makes it unnecessary (and effectively impossible) to pin down the precise edition (or local stage production) of *Love for Love* that might have inspired the insertion of this material at Ampleforth, but aspects of the play's afterlife, vernacular or otherwise, may have a broader contextual relevance. This very popular play seems to have been in print without interruption since 1695, and in their provisional but highly informative consideration of the Ampleforth Play, Steve Roud and Paul Smith observe that *Love for Love* 'was regularly produced on the London stage, and elsewhere, up to about 1830, albeit in increasingly bowdlerised and shortened versions'. It declined in stage popularity thereafter, but in the meantime (introducing yet another strand in the vernacular afterlife of early-modern drama):

The dialogue scene which appears embedded in the Ampleforth sword play was one of the most popular parts of the play, at least in the eighteenth century, as shown by its regular inclusion in medleys—stage performances which included favourite bits from regular plays interspersed with songs, dances and skits. (Roud and Smith 1998, 506)

<sup>18</sup> Photographic reproduction of the original manuscripts (with modern transcriptions), including the headnotes explaining the auspices of collection are accessible at the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library Digital Archive, respectively: <<https://www.vwml.org/record/CJS2/11/3/49>>, accessed 10 January 2019; <<https://www.vwml.org/record/CJS2/11/3/73>>, accessed 10 January 2019. The latter will be quoted here. There are substantial discussions of the play from other perspectives in Boyes 1985, 24-27, Brody 1971, 83-93, and Chambers 1969, 131-149.

This indicates that the play in general or this scene in particular may already have been known and popular in the locality, but the versification was evidently undertaken under other than professional stage auspices (for which evidence will be invoked in the concluding discussion here on village theatre).

In the scene concerned,<sup>19</sup> Sir Sampson Legend was anticipating the arrival of his younger son Ben, a sailor; his lines now contribute to the part of the Ampleforth Clown, although some sentiments are transferred to the lady who will shortly be the object of a wooing sequence, now designated as ‘Queen’, the more traditional role performed by this player in another part of the Ampleforth play (underlining signals verbal echoes):

Congreve, *Love for Love*  
1695

Ampleforth Play  
ca 1860 (reported 1913)

3.

(p. 39)  
Sir Sam.  
Is Ben come? Odso, my son Ben come?  
Odd, I'm glad on't. Where is he?  
I long to see him.  
Now, Mrs. Frail,  
you shall see my son Ben.  
Body o' me, he's the hopes of my family.  
  
I han't seen him these three years—  
I warrant he's grown.  
Call him in, bid him make haste.  
I'm ready to cry for joy. (q.v.)

*Enter Queen. Clown (sings)*

Madam behold a lover!  
You shall quickly see my son.  
*Queen (sings)*  
Long time have I been waiting  
Expecting Ben would come;  
Ben's grown a sweet young fellow  
And his face I long to see

After some intervening business omitted in the Ampleforth play, ‘Ben’ duly arrives, and although still addressed as such, he is designated in speech headings as ‘King’, this performer’s more traditional role in another segment:

<sup>19</sup> Quoted here from *Love for love a comedy: acted at the Theatre in Little Lincolns-Inn Fields by His Majesty's servants* (London, Printed for Jacob Tonson ..., 1695), online transcript at <<http://name.umdl.umich.edu/A34302.0001.001>>, accessed 10 January 2019. In this edition, each act consists of only one scene (and lines are unnumbered); others follow the French convention of registering a new scene each time a character enters or leaves (by which standards the extracts in the Ampleforth play are scattered among scenes 4, 6 and 7 of act 3).

(p. 41)

Ben.

Where's father?

Serv.

There, sir, his back's toward you.

Sir Sam.

My son Ben!

Bless thee, my dear body.

Body o' me, thou art heartily welcome.

Ben.

Thank you, father,

and I'm glad to see you.

Sir Sam.

Odsbud, and I'm glad to see thee;

kiss me, boy, kiss me again and again,

dear Ben. [*Kisses him.*]

Ben.

So, so, enough, father,

Mess, I'd rather kiss these gentlewomen.

*Clown (sings)*

Here's one that doth me follow

And perhaps it may be he.

O Ben how dost thou do, my lad?

Thou'st welcome from the seas

*King*

Thank you father, how do you do?

I am well at ease.

*Clown*

O Ben let me kiss thee

For with joy I am fit to cry (see above)

*King*

O father I'd rather kiss

That lady standing by

*Clown*

O Ben come show thy breeding

Give to her a gentle touch

She's got such a face to feed upon,

The seas could afford none such

She's a sweet and modest creature

And she's of a noble fame;

She's a sweet and modest creature,

And Susannah is her name.<sup>20</sup>

20

That 'lady standing by' is a quite different character in Congreve, here conflated with the 'Queen' so the wooing can proceed, after a brief exchange of family news between father and son:

<sup>20</sup> There is no one of this name in Congreve's play. In his Prologue this Ampleforth Clown boasts of courting 'Miss Susannah Parkin / She was so fine and gay'.

Sir Sam.  
 Thou hast been many a weary league,  
 Ben, since I saw thee.  
 Ben. *King*  
 Ay, ay, been! Been far enough,  
 an' that be all. Father that's well remembered  
 Well, father, and how do all at home?  
How does brother Dick, and brother Val? *How* is Dick and Val?  
 Sir Sam.  
 Dick—body o' me— *Clown*  
 Dick has been dead these two years Did not I write last summer  
 I writ you word  
 That pale death has closed his sides  
 when you were at Leghorn.  
 Ben. *King*  
 Mess, that's true; marry! I had forgot. Its as true as I'm a sinner!  
 Dick's dead, as you say. I had forgotten quite.

And the young man expresses views on marriage that do not augur well:

(p. 42)  
 Ben. *King*  
A man that is married, d'ye see,  
 is no more like another man  
 than a galley-slave  
 is like one of us free sailors;  
 he is chained to an oar all his life,  
 For when a man gets married  
 He's down like a galley slave  
 Bachelors like sailors  
 When the liberties there air

Accordingly the wooing is a fiasco, in both Congreve and the Ampleforth play, but there are only exceptional moments where the latter's eight stanzas of dialogue seem to be drawing directly on *Love for Love*, and the individual passages are not necessarily in the same order or assigned to the same speaker:

(p. 43-45)  
 You need not sit so near one,  
 if you have anything to say,  
 I can hear you farther off,  
 I an't deaf.  
nor I an't dumb,  
 ...  
 you may learn to give good words,  
 ...  
 you cheese-curd you:—marry thee?  
 ...  
 you stinking tar-barrel.  
 Don't stand so near hard by me  
 Stand further off I pray  
 I have not lost my hearing  
Nor yet I am not dumb;  
 Thee might give me better words  
 thou Mistress Cheesemouth?  
 for thou smells of pitch & tar.

There are moments when the Ampleforth dialogue sustains the situation and characters of Congreve's play in new quatrains which have no verbal indebtedness to the latter; two are quoted above (the advice on wooing), and there is another in the lady's spirited last words in the confrontation:

Take along with thee my wishes  
To the bottom of the sea;  
Thou's fitter for the fishes  
Than a woman's company.

Taken together with the transmutation into quatrains this suggests that the initial aim was to construct an entertaining sequence corresponding to, and partly borrowing from specific scenes in *Love for Love*, but not necessarily in the context of the mummers' play. On this occasion material from the stage play is inserted into the customary host as a complete, rounded unit, and somewhat artificially: commencing at a point when the two figures initially involved (Clown and King) have actually just announced their exit, and followed by a new unit which the Clown returns to introduce. And it may have been a short-lived insertion, perhaps for some special occasion: when the American folklorist James Madison Carpenter visited Ampleforth twenty years later, consciously following in Cecil Sharp's footsteps, he interviewed men not much younger than Sharp's informant who remembered him in the role of the Clown, but the fragments of the play they remembered included only a couple of snippets from this wooing scene, none of the lines concerned from Congreve's play (Roud and Smith 1998, 507). For its part this wooing sequence would be quite viable as a free-standing entertainment, which as an extract from a stage play would qualify as a droll; in being in the form of a song it is perhaps more correctly considered a jig – although there is no indication in reports that the performers danced as they sang.<sup>21</sup>

### 3.5 *Keynsham (Somerset): Diphilo and Granida*

At this juncture therefore it is appropriate to examine, as the final instance of the transition of material from theatre to custom, the vernacular afterlife of a stage droll, *Diphilo and Granida*, from one of the standard seventeenth-century collections, published in 1673 (Elson 1932, 295-296). In most cases a droll itself represented one early (if often short) strand in the vernacular afterlife of the play from which it was extracted (like *The Merry Conceited Humors of Bottom the Weaver* in relation to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*). In this instance, exceptionally, the dramatic source has not been identified, but the documented

<sup>21</sup> On the jig as stage (and folk) genre see Baskerville 1965.



further afterlife is relatively extensive.<sup>22</sup> The single scene constituting the droll is very much in the manner of romantic comedy with a princess lost in a forest encountering and falling in love with a shepherd who is of course royally born (the original play presumably explained why and how they each got there). Its 44 pentameter lines constitute 22 couplets, a little more than half of which, following their respective opening soliloquies, comprise dialogue, including several instances where the lines of a couplet, in a manner more familiar in early French drama, are shared between the two speakers.

*Diphilo and Granida* re-emerges in the early nineteenth century in the mummers' play from Keynsham, Somerset, yet another medley, where it is inserted between a typical combat and cure scene and a traditional wooing sequence. Here too we are working with a text documenting performance, the antiquarian to whom we owe its preservation, Joseph Hunter, remarking, 'I have obtained from a Country youth who was one of the performers a copy of the Dialogue in a play which I witnessed at Keynsham in Somersetshire on the 27 of December 1822'. The British Library has both the text written down and signed by this performer, James Cantle, and Joseph Hunter's corrected transcript of it (Baskervill 1924, 268-272).<sup>23</sup>

*Diphilo and Granida* is inserted into the Keynsham play as a single, uninterrupted unit, reduced by extensive subtractions to a third of the original (15 lines), but sustaining a generally coherent sequence of dialogue: perhaps qualifying as a *Zielform*. Its autonomy is however compromised somewhat at the joins with the traditional materials of the host play. Thus at the outset the mummer performing the traditional compere role of Father Christmas, having previously, in accordance with the ambient, presentational dramaturgy, 'called on' the champions, St George and Slasher for the Hero Combat sequence, intervenes again when they are done to call on the princess (now a 'shepherdess'), only to proceed, manifestly with no costume change, to woo her himself:<sup>24</sup>

<sup>22</sup> On a possible derivation from a Dutch play of 1605 (or from their common, probably Italian, source), see Bolte 1891, 286-287.

<sup>23</sup> Of the two men of this name in the 1861 census both born and resident in Keynsham, this reporter is most likely the James Cantle, basket-maker, who in 1822 would have been 24. 'England and Wales Census, 1861', database with images, *FamilySearch* (<<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:M7J8-MML>>, accessed 10 January 2019), James Cantle, Keynsham, Somersetshire, England; from '1861 England, Scotland and Wales census', database and images, *findmypast* (<<http://www.findmypast.com>>, accessed 10 January 2019); citing PRO RG 9, The National Archives, Kew, Surrey.

<sup>24</sup> Baskervill notes (1924, 270, n. 4) that the attribution of this and following speeches of the Shepherd to Father Christmas is the antiquarian, Hunter's. This is reasonable enough, given this figure's role as Presenter, but the performer transcribing the words has at this point ceased to specify speakers, and the role might in theory be played by the last speaker in the previous episode, Saint George (which would be no less incongruous).

*Diphilo and Granida* (1673)*Diphilo*

I once a shepherd was  
 upon the plains,  
 Courting my Shepherdess  
 among the Swains.  
 But now that Courty Life I bid adieu,  
 And here a melancholy Life pursue.  
 ... [eight more lines to this effect]

*Espies Granida*

But ha, what's here?  
 What shining Beauty's this?  
 Which equally desires  
 my shady bliss.

*Granida*

I'm lost in this dark Wilderness of Care,  
 Where I find nothing to prevent despair.  
 No harmless Damsel  
 wandring, no, nor Man:

I am afraid I shan't be found again.  
 I am so thirsty, that I scarce can speak.

*Diphilo*

Can she grieve thus,  
 and not my heart-strings break?  
 Miracle of Beauty,  
 for you are no less;  
 Water is waiting on such happiness.  
 It is as clear as Crystal,  
 and as pure.

*Granida*

O bless me, Heavens,  
 are you a Christian sure?

*Diphilo*

Madam, I am no less,  
 pray quench your thirst.

*Granida*

Kind Sir, I will,  
 but let me thank you first.

*Drinks*

Indeed 'tis good,  
 but you must better be,  
 In being so courteous,  
 as to give it me.

## Keynsham Mummers' Play (1822)

*Father Christmas*<sup>24</sup>Walk in Shepherdess.

Once I was a Shepherd  
 walking on the plain  
 Courting of my Shepherdess  
 all among the swain

See, see, who comes here.  
 What shining beautys this  
 Which takes my delight  
 all in the shady bliss.

*Shepherdess*

'Tis I and my harmless damsel  
walking on the plain  
 I am lost, I am lost,  
 I fear I shall not be found again.

*Father Christmas*

Miracle thy beauty,  
 I am sure you are no less

Mistress take this little bottle  
 and quench your thirst.

*Shepherdess*

Yes kind Sir  
 let me thank you for it first

It is very good indeed Sir,  
 - much better may you be

I thank you kind Sir  
 for giving it to me.

<i>Diphilo</i>	<i>Father Christmas</i>
Praise it not, sweetest Madam, for you know	
On common Creatures this we oft bestow:	
If I had any worthy thing call'd mine,	If I had a thing as I could call my own
I should be proud to offer't to your Shrine.	How proud and lofty I should be
<i>Granida</i>	<i>Shepherdess</i>
Thou hast enough,	Thou has said enough
for Love hath shot his Dart,	to shoot the dart
And to thy Weeds	So let us gain
I'le yield my Princely heart.	the prince's heart.
...	

This is the full extent of the inserted material at Keynsham. The droll devotes another fourteen lines to reciprocal expressions of devotion and the giving of a ring before Granida invites Diphilo to

... lead on forwards to my Fathers Court,  
We'l grace our Nuptials with some Princely sport'.

But nothing vital is lost by their omission, and as can be seen, whoever was responsible for its integration into the Keynsham play did fairly a neat job of wrapping up the scene while retaining the rhyming words of a couplet which originally did something else. The 'prince' whose 'heart' is now to be won derives verbally from the lady's 'Princely heart', but in the absence of the original the audience was presumably to take him as an authority figure – father, ruler, or both – who can bless their union. This would also motivate an exit, but as it happens a figure labelled 'Prince' comes on immediately after this line, and in another awkward transition he proceeds to woo the shepherdess for himself. But he addresses her as 'Moll', and she repudiates him as a 'clod', the interlude having now transitioned into a traditional rustic wooing scene.

Subtractions within the dialogue can also occasion some awkwardness, for example offering the lady water is now unmotivated, as her reference to thirst is omitted. And what remains of this speech has been seriously disturbed, one line reformulated to make it seem she is *accompanied* by a 'harmless damsel' rather than being one herself (there is no other indication at Keynsham she had a companion). That the shepherd has now acquired a 'little bottle' for the water suggests an alertness to staging practicalities worthy of Shakespeare's rude mechanicals in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Verbally, as already indicated, the inserted material is selected/adapted with a certain competence, except that in one couplet we have lost the rhyme ('own'/'be' for 'mine'/'Shrine'), and one line, 'Miracle thy beauty ...', lacks its mate (although this could be a simple omission in later transmission).

Some changes are indeed probably memory-induced contaminations in performance from other lines, but would need to be reassessed in the light of the second (perhaps intermediate) text also forming part of the vernacular aftermath of this droll.

#### 4. *Alternative Festive Venues*

There were instances above where some features in the textual comparison prompted the suggestion that prior to its insertion into a mummers' play the material concerned may have been performed locally, perhaps even by these same performers, under auspices other than the mummers' play concerned. The possibility is supported by the tantalizing glimpses of early stage plays performed in this festive 'village theatre' encountered sporadically in external sources.<sup>25</sup>

##### 4.1 *Village Theatre*

The account of late eighteenth-century village life in the north of England provided by C.W. Dilke in 1815 (cited in Baskerville 1965, 125-126) mentions dramatic entertainments put on 'during the Christmas festivals by young men for the amusement of their friends' (125), and is based partly on the reminiscences of an elderly gentlemen who among other exploits of the kind had played the role of Achilles in Heywood's *Iron Age*. The 'amusement' was not entirely innocent of pecuniary interest since spectators evidently paid to see the performance. They were sometimes offered full-scale plays, but might also (admission half price) see a droll, and Dilke himself recollected one such derived from *The Merchant of Venice* concluding happily,

*Bassanio*. Here's a health to thee, Antonio.

*Antonio*. Thank thee heartily, Bassanio.

*Chorus*. In liquor, love, and unity,  
We'll spend this evening merrily (Ibid.)

These pieces were however sung, technically qualifying them as 'jigs', which indeed seems to have been the local term. Dilke's informant had furthermore been offered money to compose such a 'jig' from 'some scenes of a play which was brought to him' (126), implying a vernacular element

<sup>25</sup> In which context, as I have noted elsewhere (Pettitt 1999, 274-276), it would be wrong not to mention the heavily traditionalized performances of *3 Henry VI* and *Richard III* under the auspices of Christmas festivities among the English-speaking descendants of African slaves on the Honduran mainland and the adjacent Bay Islands (George 1952), perceived by Lene Petersen as approximating to the *Zielform*, of the plays concerned (Petersen 2010, 68-69).

to textual re-composition as well as mediation. It might be precisely under such circumstances that passages from Congreve's *Love for Love* were, as we have seen, rendered into verse quatrains at Ampleforth.

Analogous, customary but outdoor, performances by amateurs (only now rewarded solely by ample refreshment) occurred in connection with village wakes in eighteenth-century Shropshire. They were offered on a stage comprising a couple of wagons drawn up before a tavern which the actors used as their tiring house, this early-modern ambience reinforced by the use of boys for female roles and the presence of an improvising Clown. Favourite items in the repertoire included *Prince Mucidorus*, *Valentine and Orson* and *Dr. Forster* (i.e. *Doctor Faustus*, perhaps in a revised form; Burne 1883, 493-500).

The connections with professional theatre are not hard to imagine. Those young men who performed at village wakes and Christmas revels will certainly have been in attendance at regional fairs, where the professional entertainers were a major attraction, just as, conversely, the latter will have gravitated to the more local village wakes and Whitsun ales, where they would perform alongside more traditional pastimes and entertainments:

Tarts and Custards, Creams and Cakes,  
 Are the Junketts still at Wakes:  
 Unto which the Tribes resort,  
 Where the business is the sport:  
 Morris-dancers thou shalt see,  
 Marian too in Pagentrie:  
 And a Mimick to devise  
 Many grinning properties.  
 Players there will be, and those  
 Base in action as in clothes:  
 Yet with strutting they will please  
 The incurious Villages.  
 (Herrick 1963, 255: H-761, 'The Wake', ll. 3-14)

Similarly it is reported that in the eighteenth century farmers might hire a company of professional players to perform at their harvest suppers, with the barn fitted out to function as stage and auditorium as well as a banqueting-hall (Wood 1931-1932, 41).<sup>26</sup> And as it happens, this village theatre is represented by a version of the droll, *Diphilo and Granida*, whose afterlife in the mummers' play at Keynsham has just been examined.

<sup>26</sup> For strolling players performing for country folk in stables and cowsheds see Thaler 1922, 272-273 and Rosenfeld 1939, 21-22).

#### 4.2 *Cricklade (Wiltshire): Revisiting Diphilo and Granida*

There is a strong likelihood that *Diphilo and Granida* was also inserted into the mummers' play from Castle Cary, Somerset (25 miles to the south of Keynsham), which had a scene (called 'The Shepherd') between a Shepherd and a Shepherdess, but for which we do not have the text (Helm 1981, 33-34). But it was also performed in customary festive contexts quite independently of mummers' plays at the small town of Cricklade in Wiltshire, where it was known as 'The Shepherd and the Maiden'. Alfred Williams, avid collector of the folklore of the upper Thames valley, recorded the text (sometime in the period 1913-1916) from a local resident (nicknamed 'Wassail' for his engagement in seasonal custom), reporting that 'It was acted at "Bark Harvest", the summer festival of the tanyard workers at Cricklade' (Williams 1971, 170-171).<sup>27</sup> This was evidently the equivalent of a harvest-home in the local tanneries, observed at the beginning of June when the collection and storing of the bark (used in the tanning process) was completed, the workers feasted by their employers with food and beer, then spending the evening in various amusements (Williams 1922, 232; more generally Babb 1980). Williams furthermore reported that 'The Shepherd and the Maiden' was also performed there 'at Christmas-time by players at the farmhouses', but manifestly as a free-standing dramatic interlude in the context of household winter revels: the mummers' play Williams also recorded from Cricklade at this same time does not include this material (1971, 170; 306-313).

The vernacular afterlife of *Diphilo and Granida* accordingly offers unusually favourable circumstances for the study of text in relation to performance, enabling triangular comparative analysis of not one but two 'reported texts', from different customary contexts, in relation to the original composition from which they both derive.

The Cricklade interlude comprises about half of *Diphilo and Granida*, still somewhat more than Keynsham, the difference particularly noticeable at the beginning, where Cricklade retains all but two lines of the Shepherd's opening speech (those revealing his noble origins), and in more complex fashion at the end, where (after a considerable gap and the insertion of two new lines) Cricklade concludes with the same couplet as the droll:

<sup>27</sup> The text of the performance quoted in what follows from Williams 1971 corresponds exactly to the photographic reproduction of the manuscript in the Alfred Williams collection at the Wiltshire Record Office accessible online in the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library Digital Archive, <<https://www.vwml.org/record/AW/4/60>>, accessed 10 January 2019. (The Digital Archive also has a photocopy of the relevant pages from Williams' book, and a cutting of the same text published by Williams in the *Wilts and Gloucestershire Standard* in 1916). There is also a transcript by Chris Wildridge (2010) of the Williams MS at the Wiltshire Record Office's online service, Wiltshire Community History, Folk Play Information, <<https://history.wiltshire.gov.uk/community/getplay.php?id=513>>, accessed 10 January 2019.

*Diphilo and Granida*  
*Granida*

Then lead on forwards  
to my Fathers Court,  
We'l grace our Nuptials  
with some Princely sport

Cricklade Play  
*Maiden*

Since lost I was  
about the woody ground,  
Receive me here,  
and keep what thou hast found.  
Come! lead me forward  
to my father's court,  
And we'll grace our nuptials  
with some friendly sport.

That inserted 'Since I was lost' couplet constitutes two of the in all nine new lines in the Cricklade text, supplementing or substituting for lines in the original, in each case not merely conforming to the droll's metre and style, but either, as here, forming a new couplet, or completing one with a line retained from the original, altogether suggesting that the Cricklade performance recorded by Williams, whatever other changes occurred in the interim, was based on a deliberate revision of the droll.

One of the most complex interventions is the Cricklade adjustment of the proffering of water to the thirsty shepherdess:

*Granida and Diphilo*

*Granida*  
[asks him if he is a Christian]  
*Diphilo*

Madam, I am no less,  
pray quench your thirst.

*Granida*  
Kind Sir, I will,  
but let me thank you first.

Cricklade

[omitted]  
*Shepherd*  
She sees me not;  
then I'll accost her first.  
Pray! take this bottle  
and so quench your thirst.

The Cricklade interlude retains the original's 'quench your thirst' (and 'pray'), and maintains the rhyme between its 'thirst' and 'first', but pivots their relationship so that instead of following 'thirst', as with Granida's 'let me thank you first', the rhyming line, an additional line ending 'I'll accost her first', comes before it. The trigger seems to be the introduction of the phrase 'take this bottle', perhaps (as suggested for Keynsham) by way of a stage direction for untrained performers, but whatever the motivation this is a neat piece of artisanal re-versifying strictly within the metrical system and rhyme scheme of the original.

Further changes will have occurred thereafter in the transmission of the text via memory and performance, for example when ‘the Fruit which grows about the Field’ becomes (with dialect spelling) the Shepherd’s ‘mates’ rather than his ‘food’. Other instances may best be seen in the context of relations between all the three texts. Although Cricklade is (by country roads and footpaths) some 36 miles to the east of Keynsham (and Castle Cary even further) it is hard not to speculate on the relationship between the two vernacular derivatives of *Diphilo* and *Granida*. That there *was* a relationship is suggested by their shared addition of that ‘bottle’, their respective lengths making is most likely, in accordance with the scenario sketched above, that the Cricklade interlude is intermediary between the original droll and the Keynsham mummers’ play. That Keynsham retains two whole lines from the original which are lost at Cricklade (‘Miracle thy beauty, I am sure you are no less’; ‘Yes kind Sir let me thank you for it first’) probably reflects the circumstance that the Keynsham mummers’ play was recorded almost a century earlier, and so may derive from a more complete version of the Cricklade interlude than the one current later. For otherwise Keynsham seems to take further alterations (of the kind induced by memorization and performance from memory) initiated by Cricklade. In the latter, for example *Granida*’s regret in the original droll at finding in the forest

No harmless Damsel wandring, no, nor Man’,

is simplified to be about herself:

I am a harmless damsel wandering on the plain’.

The ‘I am’ looks like a contamination from that beginning the line following (original, ‘I am afraid’), or the one two lines earlier, while ‘on the plain’ repeats the Shepherd’s statement about himself in the first line of the droll. The Keynsham mummers’ play, in handling this line

’Tis I and my harmless damsel walking on the plain

(in addition to implying that the ‘harmless damsel’ is another character), also, following Cricklade, has her ‘on the plain’, but rather than ‘wandring’, which Cricklade retains from the original, Keynsham substitutes ‘walking’, which has also been inserted into the Shepherd’s opening ‘on the plain’ line. It may even be a contamination from the Shepherd’s instruction, ‘Walk in the shepherdess’ while he was still in his role as Father Christmas. Similarly in the next line, where Cricklade replaces the original’s ‘I am afraid’ with ‘I’m lost and fear’ (the ‘I’m lost’ presumably from the speech’s first line), Keynsham repeats the repetition (‘I am lost, I am lost I fear’), but has in the interim omitted the first line from which it derived.



### 5. *Concluding Remarks*

It is evident that folklorists interested in traditional drama would do well to expand their focus beyond the mummers' plays (no longer privileged by exploded notions of ritual origins) to these linked but independent traditions of festive performances. It would be well if they there encountered theatre historians coming in the opposite direction, for as Peter Millington has noted in another context (2004, 5), the Restoration to Great War period desperately needs its own equivalent of the Records of Early English Drama project which has so revolutionized the study of English theatre history prior to the mid-seventeenth century; more particularly, given the ample academic coverage of metropolitan and urban stages, one that took us out of the theatres and into the fairgrounds, taverns and farm kitchens.

Further exploration of these cultural and chronological borderlands must await later opportunities, but with regard to the concrete material addressed here it can be remarked, firstly, that for a study of the relationship between folk drama and the early theatre the above, appropriately for the present context, has a distinctive textual orientation, and, secondly, that, by the same token, it is unusually well-founded. Its five case studies each juxtapose the original text of an early English stage play or other dramatic genre with documentation of a 'vernacular' performance, decades or centuries later, of that same item or dramatic material extracted from it. There is no doubt about which is the original, which the derivative. And while in some cases the folk text may also have functioned as a script for up-coming performances, in all cases it qualified as a transcript documenting anterior performances. Its discrepancies therefore register, as exactly as feasible under the circumstances, what has happened to that original text, deliberately or unconsciously, before performance, between performances, during performance, through that particular strand of its vernacular afterlife. In this it does no more (but no less) than a recording of the most recent production of a given Elizabethan stage play in the latter's theatrical afterlife. But the latter, for all it can do by way of critical 'interpretation' of the play, can offer little or nothing by way of scholarly reconstruction of historical stage conditions and the relations obtaining there between text and performance. The reverse is true for the documentation from the vernacular afterlife of the stage materials offered above, and to the extent they result from the impact of a sustained popular and festive performance tradition, may be useful in identifying and understanding the internal processes and external factors that gave us some of the more notorious Elizabethan and Jacobean 'bad' quartos.

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# Visions of the City in Seventeenth-Century Roman Popular Theatre

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## Abstract

The extraordinary circulation of comic scripts (texts, manuscripts, scenarios and *zibaldoni*) in seventeenth-century Rome allows us to observe the profiles of a 'self-referential theatre' that involved citizens, amateur actors and authors, and depicts clear images of milieus, conventions and habits of the city.

Keywords: *Amateur Actors and Authors, Aspects of City Life, New Masks, Rome, 'Whole Performing City'*

Countless printed and manuscript editions of comedies, tragedies, and operas, an immense repertoire of disparate fragments and scenic scripts, the richest existing repository of materials for *teatro all'improvviso* (not only the collections of *canovacci* and *scenari* deposited in the Corsiniana and Casanatense libraries, but also the folders of *zibaldoni* and *generici* that progressively emerged from research in the city archives)<sup>1</sup> record both an impressive dramaturgical production and a feverish theatre activity that took

<sup>1</sup> The reference is to the collections of Basilio Locatelli, *Della scena de' soggetti comici di B. L. R. Parte Prima. M.D.C.XVII.*, Biblioteca Casanatense, Rome, Ms. F. IV. 12, Cod. 1211 and *Della scena de' soggetti comici et tragici di B. L. R. Parte Seconda. M.D.C.XX.*, Biblioteca Casanatense, Rome, Ms. F. IV. 13, Cod. 1212, to the *Raccolta di Scenari Più Scelti d'Istrioni Divisi in Due Volumi*, Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, Rome, Racc. Corsiniana, Mss. 45.G.5 published now in Hulfeld 2014, to Ciro Monarca, *Dell'Opere Regie*, (sec. XVII), Biblioteca Casanatense, Rome, Ms. 4186, or to those housed in the Biblioteca Vaticana, Codice Vaticano Latino 10244 and Codice Barberiniano Latino 3895, all partially edited and transcribed (Testaverde 2007) to which reference is made with regard to the bibliography. To this list we must add the collection entitled *Motti e detti faceti per diverse persone. Miscellanea componimenti drammatici detti berneschi idea degli antichi storici*, Archivio Doria Pamphilj, Fondo Archiviolo, Tome XX, busta 122 (121), cc. 464 (cc. 414-465) edited by Ciancarelli (2008, 163-219) and the *Generico* relating to the part of the Captain of Anonymous, *Bravure da Capitano*, Archivio di Stato di Roma, Cartari-Febei, vol. CXV cc. 374v-375v; 376r-380v; 383r-383v, ed. by Luciano Mariti (Ciancarelli and Mariti 2015, 246-255).

place in seventeenth-century Rome, involving ‘the whole performing city’ (Ciancarelli and Mariti 2012; Ciancarelli and Mariti 2015).

The passion for theatre, which was cultivated as a pedagogical discipline by boarding school students and accompanied citizens during their whole existence, diffused throughout the century, despite Papal prohibition policies. The endemic pervasiveness of Roman theatre at the time can therefore be considered the result of an action of conquest of abandoned lands. Theatre appeared as a citizens’ space for action and intervention and was destined to be the true connective tissue of the community. Over the years, as citizens gathered in groups and associations (from the most prestigious academies to the *conversazioni*, which functioned as social outposts and theatre workshops), the role of theatre as a ‘public space’ was progressively consolidated and strengthened. Even if it was under the surveillance of political power, Roman theatre was entrusted to citizens and protected by academics and intellectuals; thus, it became an instrument of immediate socialization, a true ‘public theatre’ that was open to the manifestation of the most varied talents, a competitive alternative to professional theatre.

Among the stacks of manuscripts preserved in the Roman archives, a series of documents recently discovered gives an adequate account of the ‘whole performing city’ phenomenon. In the view of Luciano Mariti (2013, 93-104; 125-135), first of all it is worth mentioning the *Index* written by Giovanni Briccio, one of the most renowned protagonists of the Roman theatre of the time, which proves, in a circumstantial manner, the presence of actors practising theatre *all'improvviso* in Rome during the first decades of the seventeenth century (1630-1645). They are catalogued according to skills deriving from natural qualities, artistic knowledge, crafts and life experiences. The one hundred actors mentioned by Briccio were not professionals and their social identity reflected the city’s complex organization: they were students, teachers, artisans, traders, soldiers, and also writers and academics, painters, musicians, courtesans, notaries, judges, lawyers, doctors, surgeons and even priests. But there are even more high profile figures that could not be mentioned, because, as Briccio suggested, it does not seem suitable ‘fare il nome dei tanti uomini nobilissimi, e Prencipi, che hanno in compagnia nostra privatamente recitato ne’ loro Palazzi’ (Mariti 2013, 135).<sup>2</sup>

The images of the ‘whole performing city’ can be related to other images that, by way of unpublished sources, testify to the regularization of the Roman theatrical calendar. They regard the phenomenon of the progressive transformation of halls and warehouses (those in which Giudiate floats were set up during Carnival) into theatrical spaces with well-defined and permanent functions. This process originated in consortiums and associations of layabouts,

<sup>2</sup> ‘To name the noblest men, and Princes, that privately performed with us within their Palaces’. Unless otherwise stated, all translations are mine.



idlers or modest traders and craftsmen who were connected to the protagonists of the most infamous Roman Carnival masquerades. They were groups of young people able to gradually increase their range of action and put on a regular repertoire of farces and comic entertainments in small city theatres, such as the *conversazione* of Rotonda at the Pantheon or the Botticella in Trastevere (Franchi 1988, 720), which inaugurated the first real year-round Roman theatre seasons (Ciancarelli 2014, 112-114).

The chronicles of the time allow us to approach the contexts in which the city theatre grew and developed. They also provide significant information on the phenomenon of the theatrical *conversazioni*, which can be described as a heterogeneous set of environments comprising different resources and distinct specializations. The *conversazioni*, which reflected the complex and stratified social organization of the city, could consist of meetings of ladies and gentlemen held in aristocrats' palaces or gatherings of humble traders and artisans, but were also connected to the enterprises of some of the most renowned artists of the time, such as Gian Lorenzo Bernini, Salvator Rosa or the Cavalier d'Arpino, who were all engaged in continual experimentation linking theatre and painting.

Moreover, chronicles help us to reconstruct the accounts of these theatrical environments, which were able to sustain impressive theatrical productions and functioned as theatrical workshops where new schemes of comedy and unusual comic types developed. The result of these theatrical and dramaturgical experiments is tangible if we think of the Roman assimilation of the masks of Pulcinella and Pantalone, but also of the invention of comic masks such as those of 'The Jew' and 'The Frenchman', the *Villano* Moccicone and the *Norcini* Baciocco, Ciampicone, Ciraglio and Tizzone, of the crowd of young servants and Roman boys, and dumb, playful Don Pasquale.

These inventions shaped a theatre staging the city stories, relationships and protagonists in a game of resonances whose effectiveness was guaranteed by a self-referential context.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Images of the city could materialize throughout the re-contextualization of conventional spaces such as the taverns. Real places like 'Il Cavalletto', 'La Scrofa', 'Il Turchetto' and 'La Vacca' (which were located between 'Via Panico' and 'Porta Settimiana', between the Banchi and Torredenona prisons, between Borgo and Capo le Case, between the springs of Tor Sanguigna and Campovaccino up to the meadows of Villetta della Caffarella) are often mentioned in Roman farces and transformed into settings complete with traps, pitfalls and all kinds of dangers. Further significant resonances arise from the mention of characters and figures gravitating towards specific city settings: the 'pellicciaio' ['furrier'] from Regola, 'Patoccia il Ciavarino ['key maker'] poet in Campo Marzio, the 'ricottaro ['cheese maker'] Tartaglia' with their friends: 'salsicciari, lupinari, nociari, cicoritari' ('sausage sellers, lupin sellers, walnut sellers, chicory sellers'; Ciancarelli 2015, 76). Other resonances arise from city life glimpses, materialized in the names of places (which could even help to reconstruct a detailed toponymy of ancient Rome) or from the recollection of habits of pleasant pastimes such as the Sunday trip to the 'Valle della Caffarella' ('Caffarella Valley'). There, in a comedy of the time (Lorenzani 1692), the brat Ciurlo is described while he is occupying the place for

This theatre staged real or legendary facts, those Bragaglia defined as ‘popular gossip’, and ‘gushes of living local blood’ (1958, 121) that had resonance and clamour, as in the case of the allusions to the vicissitudes of the irresistible political rise of Donna Olimpia Pamphili (sister-in-law of Pope Innocent X) in the decade from 1644 to 1655, of her decline and subsequent rehabilitation. The theatrical primacy of Donna Olimpia is intertwined with important Roman political events, such as the hostilities between the faction she headed, which supported Spain, and the one connected with the Barberini family, who supported France. The staging of the play *Il Principe balordo*, commissioned by Donna Olimpia in 1646, refers to the marriage of her son Camillo to the princess of Rossano, which she opposed. The echo of her power even spread to the English court, where the play *Marriage of the Pope* (Ciancarelli 2008, 59-60), staged in 1650, satirically alluded to her hypothetical marriage with the Pope.

It is therefore evident that the Roman theatre collected and expressed the voices, insinuations and slanders spread throughout the city. An example is the case of Salvator Rosa, who was accused by Gian Lorenzo Bernini and Ottaviano Castelli of the infamous crime of robbing some silver candlesticks from a church, as we can still read in a fragment from the coeval rhymed controversy repertoire between Bernini, Castelli and Salvator Rosa, which comprised invectives that soon degenerated into accusations of dishonourable actions (Passeri 1772, 178; Molinari 1999, 221-229). Later on, this cruel insinuation would often be recalled in Roman dramaturgy of the time, as for example in the manuscript of a comedy entitled *Osteria del Gallo*, where, in a quarrel scene, Coviello-Pascariello (a character who was inextricably linked to the theatrical training of Salvator Rosa) is apostrophized as ‘quel furbo che rubbò un candeliero alla Pace’ (‘that clever man who stole a candlestick from Peace’).<sup>4</sup> Progressively, the

his masters since dawn ‘in quel paradiso dove, nei giorni di festa, si balla, e si canta e c’è chi alza la vetrina, chi sbalbisce, chi tira di poveta, chi il cavo legno sona, chi gioca le ciambelle, chi rompe l’ova toste’ (‘in that paradise where, during the holidays, everybody dances, sings and plays...’) and all sorts of untranslatable games.

<sup>4</sup> *Osteria del Gallo* (‘The Cock’s Inn’), of which a transcription of some scenes appears in the appendix, is part of a collection of seven volumes of manuscript texts held in the Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu, identified by the signature of *Opere sceniche diverse in prosa* (399, II, cc. 1v-63v). The collection of the Archivum, which includes 41 scenic works, of which 4 are pseudonymous and 22 anonymous, is a heterogeneous miscellany of comedies and tragicomedies, moral and Pulcinella operas, of translations and re-elaborations of the French and Spanish repertoire. Arlecchini who harrassed holy women, Zanni disguised as philosophers, wise men transformed into shepherds, Pulcinella in the roles of servant or king, Covielli, Pasquarielli and Norcini coexist with Corneille’s *Orazio* translated for young Roman seminarians, while dialogues written for the ‘catechumeni’ children are conserved next to a scenario of a tragicomedy or a spiritual representation for the school girls of a Roman convent (Ciancarelli 2008, 65-71). The lists of this collection include unknown authors, authors that hid their identity under pseudonyms (such as in the cases of Filarete, of the so called ‘Commentator of Hurania’ or of the Neapolitan Reginaldo Sgambati, who signed his works with the false name of Vincenzo) or to protect themselves behind anonymity. Alongside unknown beginners

references to Salvator Rosa dimmed, but the episode, reformulated and turned into a farce, would even affect the honour of Pulcinella in the manuscript

and debutants in the art of comedy, obscure lawyers, parish priests and teachers, who are all occasional authors, there are more accredited names of academics, actors and writers often mentioned in the dramaturgical repertoires and theatrical chronicles of the seventeenth century. They are, for example, the companions of theatrical adventures of Salvator Rosa, as is the case of Giovan Battista Ricciardi, the Pisan writer who invented, inspired by the scenic improvisations of Salvator Rosa, Trespole, a vile and ignorant comic character. Among the manuscripts of the Archivum collection there are *La Forza del Sospetto* (*Opere sceniche diverse in prosa*, 403, VI, cc. 278v-334v) and *Amore, Medicina e Veleno degli Intelletti* (*Opere sceniche diverse in prosa*, 403, VI, cc. 216v-273v) which turned out to be versions for the Roman public of texts written by Ricciardi that had been circulating for years in other theatrical contexts. These two comedies were composed by Ricciardi in Florence between 1641 and 1649 and were part of the theatrical repertoire of the 'Accademia dei Percossi' ('Academy of the Beaten'), founded by Salvator Rosa during his stay in Florence. *Amore, Medicina e Veleno degli Intelletti* was known as the *Trespole tutore* and under this title was published in Bologna in 1669, while *La forza del sospetto* would be printed in Ronciglione by Francesco Leone, in 1674 (*La Forza del Sospetto ovvero Trespole hoste*; Di Muro 1999, 145-193). Traces of the significant tradition of the theatre of the *Siglo de Oro*, of the 'Italian-Spanish' repertoire, made familiar in Rome also through translations made by the writers of passing Spanish companies, appear in the collection of the Archivum. This is the case of *Tanto fa la Donna, quanto vuole con il Laberinto intrigato d'amore* by a Spanish Company, 1659 (*Opere sceniche diverse in prosa*, 398, I, cc. 204r-222v) which testifies to a text for performance in the city theatres either by a Spanish troupe or mixed troupes of Spanish and Roman actors. It appears to be the Italian version of *Las manos blancas no ofenden*, a rare remake of the palatine comedy by Calderón of 1640 (Ciancarelli and Mariti 2015, 224-243; Ciancarelli 2016, 83-86). In this work the masks of Pantalone and the Doctor appear alongside a list of Spanish characters and document the overlapping of different theatrical traditions. Spanish theatre became known in Rome especially by way of translations, re-workings, adaptations and plagiarism of works already known and published. In this collection, *Il segreto palese* (*Opere sceniche diverse in prosa*, 400, III, cc. 345v-394v) appears as an anonymous work, but it actually is an adapted version for the Roman public of *Il segreto in pubblico* by Giacinto Andrea Cicognini, that, in turn, comes from Calderón de la Barca. The interest of this collection lies in the information it provides on the Roman theatre of the time. Unpublished portraits of theatrical habits emerge from *L'Onore riacquistato* (*Opere sceniche diverse in prosa*, 400, III, cc. 4v-100r), an anonymous work that recalls evening pastimes in a Roman theatre, with the intrigues of love of an ambiguous singer who performs in her house to lure wealthy suitors. This play deserves to be mentioned because it recalls an unknown image of a seventeenth-century Roman *conversazione*. This is what also emerges from *La Verità nella favola* (*Opere sceniche diverse in prosa*, 402, V, cc. 6v- 81r), a comedy which describes the preparations of a show made by a *conversazione* 'alla rotta di Panico' ('close to the Panico's Route'), in an apartment converted into a theatre during Carnival. The audience is supposed to access the apartment on payment of a fee, thus Philadelphus, who has been chosen to set up the show, spares no expense and prepares a performance which is out of the ordinary, 'un misto di serio e ridicolo fatto per incontrare la diversità degli humori' (*Opere sceniche diverse in prosa*, 402, V, c. 15v; 'a mixture of the serious and facetious to suit different moods'). But a crowd of intrusive visitors and spectators who try to attend the play without paying, disturbs the rehearsal. They recall with nostalgia the repertoire of 'little *bagatelle* and old comedies', or the performances of 'autori che si fanno uscì una commedia di testa in quattro dì' ('authors who write a comedy in four days'), alternating with the improvisations of poets of octaves accompanied by the music of archlute players. They insolently turn to Philadelphus insisting on giving advice and proposing solutions for the show. They discuss the choices of the author and they especially disapprove

opera *Le nozze dei Baroni durano poco ovvero Le fortunate Prosperità infelici di Pulcinella* o *Le Allegrezze sognate a occhi aperti* (*Opere sceniche diverse in prosa*, 399, II, cc. 65v-102v), in which Pulcinella steals the candlesticks surrounding the catafalque of the King of England, while watching over his corpse. In a theatre that incorporated and shaped the relationship with its spectators, the theft of the candlesticks became a comic paradigm, a game of echoes continually repeated and varied.

Alongside these examples we find a sinister image of Rome, which is depicted as a sordid and violent city, fascinated by horrible and frightful stories and obscene bloody narrations, as documented by the endless catalogue of macabre *lazzi*, that fill the collections of the Roman *scenari*. The catalogue of comic horrors, especially in the collection of Ciro Monarca, *Dell'Opere regie*, includes beheadings, suicides, impalements, uxoricides, infanticides, amputations, sadistic executions and even the desecration of a corpse (in *La Vittoria cacciatrice. Lo scherno delli favolosi dei antichi con le metamorfosi amorose di Zaccagnino creduto Apollo e Spinetta Diana* there is a description where Silvio is 'condotto legato dai pastori, che l'hanno trovato à far essagerazioni sopra d'un cadavero d'una donna in campagna, mà tanto lacerata, sfigurata e smembrata che non si puole ne meno più conoscere solo che si vede esser morta di fresco'; Monarca, c. 51v),<sup>5</sup> or ethnic massacres: in *La Ninfa del Cielo tradita nell'honore con la forza del pentimento*, Magnifico and Dottore announce the decision of the Duchess to exterminate all the inhabitants of Neapolis and Messina who will walk down the street (c. 182v), while in *La casta e costante Ipsicratea con i trionfi di Pompeo nel regno di Ponto nella Farsaglia*, 'si vede il Rè ... l'anello in bocca stratato alla peggio in terra, la Regina col petto ignudo insanguinata stratata anch'essa su la sedia, e pugnale in mano in altra posizione, i consiglieri in diverse positure morti alla tavola anco apparecchiata, e Zenonima e l'altre dame tutte in diverse maniere

of his decision to assign the female parts to 'giovani che sono tanto grandi che per parlargli all'orecchio ci vuole una scala di trent'agradini' ('boys who are so big that to talk to them in the ear a ladder of thirty steps is needed'). The allusion to boys cast as female characters is very significant, because it certifies the tradition of proscriptions and prohibitions of women on stage, which lasted in Rome for two centuries (from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century). Bans and ostracisms, that can only be seen as a clear sign of isolation and closure (if compared with the theatre of the time elsewhere), in some cases, and in an unexpected way, functioned as an intriguing reference for some excellent spectators. This malpractice can also be perceived as an original characteristic of Roman theatre. Goethe, a spectator of Goldoni's *Locandiera* in Rome in 1778, was to provide a different interpretation of this anachronistic convention, turning it into a potential resource for the Roman theatrical system.

<sup>5</sup> 'Brought tied up by shepherds, who found him in a field while he was raping the corpse of a woman; and the woman was so torn, disfigured and dismembered that it was impossible to recognize her; you can only see that she has just died'.

anch'esse morte dal veleno' (cc. 31v-32r).<sup>6</sup> Masks too are hanged (as is the case of Bertolino, in *Il fraticida, crudele, e le finte caccie*, (c. 158v), throttled (as happens to Finocchio, in *La giustizia catalana*, (Monarca, c. 96r) or impaled (as is the fate of Pulcinella in *Baldovino e Carlotta*, c. 91v).

Attempts at rape and bloody sacrifices fill the 'devotional' plays that were very successful in Rome from the beginning of the century and that are centred on figures of saints and martyrs, of heroes and sinners, and virgins converted to Christianity. Contaminated by the presence of comic characters, once incorporated and assimilated into comic repertoires, they were gradually transformed into ridiculous caricatures and parodies of the original models. Among many possible cases of comic characters accompanying the torments of martyrs and saints, the silly servant Bambacione, who appears in the *opera sacra* of Giuseppe Berneri *Susanna vergine e martire* (1675), can be given as an example of the complete coexistence of antithetical registers. The chaste Susanna, animated by an unshakable faith, manages to defend herself from the traps of an endless line of suitors who desire her alive or even dead (an angel with an unsheathed sword must intervene from the sky to protect her).

As a part of this catalogue of 'comic horrors', it is worth mentioning the so-called 'pellecchia' ('lazzo of the cuticle'), which appears in *La Mula*, in the collection of the Locatelliani of the Casanatense Library. The list of stage *Robbe* includes '8 candellette, 8 cappelli gialli, 8 bavarole, bacile, bocaliera, coltello grande per la circoncisione' (Locatelli, 44,1212, c. 349r),<sup>7</sup> that are meant to ridicule Jews. It is a sad and miserable example of an anti-Semitism that spread relentlessly during the seventeenth century in Rome, in the theatre and dramaturgy of the time.

The comic type of the Jew provides unmistakable clues of the most disturbing and degraded aspects of city life. In Rome, at Carnival, year after year, the ritual of the *pallium* ordered that Jews should run naked at breakneck speed while stones and mud were thrown at them. Another brutal tradition would force them to roll, shut up in a barrel, from the top of the Campidoglio or Monte Testaccio. Such shameful episodes are recalled in *mascherate* and find complete expression in the *Giudiate*, the ferocious parodies written in music and to be seen on the floats during Carnival (Crescimbeni 1702, 99).

Alongside these cruel amusements, compositions that recovered and actualized these degraded traditions proliferated and were accepted in some performances that included punishments for the Jews, such as beatings and death sentences of the cruelest kind.

<sup>6</sup> 'The king, with his ring in his mouth, is lying on the ground, the Queen, with her breasts uncovered and covered with blood, is lying on a chair, with a dagger in her hand, the counsellors, in different postures, are dead on the set table; even Zenonima and the other ladies are lying poisoned.'

<sup>7</sup> '8 little candles, 8 yellow hats, 8 towels, basin, jug, big knife for circumcision.'

Together with these images of a gloomy Rome, of a city involved in crime, brutality and violence of all kinds, that seems to be populated only by vagabonds and litigants of every sort, graceful theatrical depictions of more reassuring, even light-hearted and peaceful aspects of city life can also be found.

A crowd of rascals swarming through the streets of Rome, a colourful company of Roman servants and boys who seem to be catapulted out of the city's alleys, through the Roman theatre of the time. They are impertinent rascals who spend time mocking girls, lazing around, playing all day long at different games like *'alla lippa, a cavacece, al trent'uno, al quaranta, o al chiamare, o al carlino'* (Ciancarelli 2014, 88). Their favourite pastimes consist of some ingenious and imaginative pranks, real works of art that involve complex strategies conceived to take advantage of their victims' naivety.

The mask of Norcino is an easy prey for this bizarre comic company. He is the villain who arrives in the city to sell his garden products and becomes a victim of all kinds of deception. Prototype of the troublemaker and the *cafone* ('peasant') unable to adapt to the city rules, Norcino is always grappling with exorbitant and ruthless lawyers and notaries. His theatrical fortune is linked to his special comic language that contaminates different dialects, studded with contumelies, cripples, vulgar tones and curses (Cruciani 1995).

Among the crowds of foreigners and commuters, implanted in a city that boasts of being the *'comune ricetto di tutte le nazioni del mondo'* ('common shelter of all nations of the world'), the French character makes his way through a whole repertoire of comic prodigies. Victim of ruthless parodies that combine stereotypes and characteristics of the stubborn and presumptuous type, refined and vain, The Frenchman realizes comic masterpieces consisting of obsessions that arise every time his nationalist pride or his disproportionate sense of honour merge with his fear of being the victim of betrayals. Such obsessions materialize when he talks compulsively, when he insists upon a concept, when he tortures and cripples the meaning of words, or performs inconclusive philosophical tirades.

Next to this list of characters we find Don Pasquale. After his first appearances in the Carnival performances in 1632 (Bouchard 1976, 141) he soon became successful in the Roman comic repertoires of the time. He represents the 'first true Roman character', the emblematic caricature of an aristocrat's behaviour. A young gentleman, hilarious and lazy, a comic mixture of malice, ingenuity and dazed madness, always somewhere between ridicule and pathos, capable of uncontainable and unpredictable extravagance.

If the strength of the rooting of the theatre in the city context and the image of Rome as a significant melting-pot of theatrical models, practices

and cultures, as a 'città-teatro' in which everything tends to be spectacular was confirmed and consolidated by these stage inventions, it is right to entrust the claim of its many primacies to a mask, to a 'Roman' Pulcinella that celebrates the city with these words: 'qua ce fioccano da ogni banne, li virtuosi, non solamente dell'arte comica, ma in tutte l'autre scientie, e professioni, perché qua li virtuosi so premiati, e so conosciuti, à dispetto delli maligni, e dell'ignoranti...'<sup>8</sup> (Verucci 1628, p. 7).

### *Appendix*

The document that is presented below is a fragment of a seventeenth-century Roman manuscript comedy: *Osteria del Gallo* by Anonymous, ms. in *Opere sceniche diverse in Prosa*, Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu, Opp. N.N. 399, volume II, cc. 1v-63v. The text, of which here we offer a transcription limited to the first two scenes of Act I and the third scene of act II, presents a list of characters that comprises the most famous masks of seventeenth-century Roman theatre. Its plot is an example of a typology that is widespread in the comic texts of the period: a slender thread (the transformation of a house into an improvised inn to attract and rob patrons) is developed randomly through a series of facts and an assembly of comic gags with no organic connection. It is worth mentioning the significant presence of the character of Pasquariello/Coviello, the mask that refers to the theatrical adventures of Salvator Rosa.

#### Act One

The work opens with the young Fantino, Ascanio and Camillo. Lionetto mentions the 'trick' against Varrone by Lionetto and the loss to gambling of Ascanio (son of Tiburzio) while he was with Camillo (son of Metello). Ascanio asks Fantino how he can pay off his debt. While they are talking, Zan Caldara (servant of Pantalone) arrives loaded with luggage. Zanni is looking for an inn. Fantino asks him why he is in Rome and what he is doing there; Zanni replies that he is looking for the 'Osteria del Gallo' on behalf of his master, and in the meantime he discovers that he spilled some broth on himself and that he needs to get changed and eat.

He is angry with his master who treats him as a servant, although he is very rich: as a matter of fact, he has a purse full of money around his neck. Fantino plots the prank and invites Zanni to enter the house. Fantino tells Ascanio he found a way to make money: they will pretend that the house

<sup>8</sup> 'Everybody comes here: people who stand out not only in comic art, but also in all the other sciences and professions, because in this place virtuous people are awarded and renowned, despite malicious and ignorant fellows...'

is the 'Osteria del Gallo' and they will deceive the rich Pantalone. They will also change their identities: Ascanio will pretend to be Zampino and Fantino will pretend to be Raspa. Lionetto is also involved in the prank. In the meantime, Zanni is eating and drinking. Doctor Varrone (speaking ridiculously in Latin) enters the house and Zanni confuses him with a thief. Moccicone (an ignorant peasant), the servant of Camillo, enters the house insulting Zanni. Meanwhile, Fantino, Lionetto and Ascanio managed to transform their father's house into the 'Osteria del Gallo' (they even found the sign). Zanni, who was asleep, is woken up by Ascanio; as he comes downstairs he meets the French Risciardet, philosopher and alchemist, who is also looking for an inn. There are many misunderstandings between the two, because of their languages. Then The Spaniard arrives: he is Don Guan of Cardon de Cardona, and he is looking for an inn as well. Pantalone enters with Zanni in the fake 'Osteria del Gallo'. Coviello speaks with Varrone about Tiburzio. As soon as they arrive at Tiburzio's home they realize that it has been transformed into the 'Osteria del Gallo'.

#### Act Two

Ascanio is worried because Tiburzio is coming home and he has not managed to steal the jewel box from Pantalone yet. He talks about it with Fantino and together they devise a new strategy: they will disguise themselves. Meanwhile Metello (a judge), father of Camillo, asks Moccicone why his son does not want to talk with Varrone. Tiburzio arrives in front of his house (that is now transformed into an Osteria) and asks who had the audacity to alter his house in such a way. Fantino, disguised, begins to stutter to avoid being recognized and replies to Tiburzio that he cannot help him; Tiburzio recognizes him despite his stuttering. Fantino asks The Frenchman for help to prevent Tiburzio from entering; Coviello comes to Fantino's defence, Zanni does the same; Tiburzio threatens him, Pantalone defends him. They pull out daggers and knives, even The Spaniard intervenes, in a feast of dialects and theatrical languages. Fantino decides to bring Tiburzio to the judge for the offense received and goes away with Pantalone. Meanwhile, inside the inn, Ascanio and Lionetto pretend that the 'Osteria' is on fire to make everyone flee. Pantalone returns, he claims he has been cheated because instead of going to the Judge Fantino escaped. Zanni understands that his master no longer has a penny; he then decides to let him sit in a wheelbarrow, which they will use to go around and ask for charity. Pantalone is ashamed, but Zanni convinces him. Meanwhile Tiburzio and Ascanio argue: Tiburzio accuses him, Ascanio denies everything and asks for the comfort of Fantino, who blames Varrone. Tiburzio, angry, says for the first time that Ascanio is not his son. Ascanio faints. Tiburzio decides to go to Varrone to clarify what has happened. Varrone, urged by Tiburzio (who wants to send him to jail), asks Norcino to help him to disguise himself.



## OSTERIA DEL GALLO

[cc 3r – 6r]

Atto Primo Scena P.<sup>a</sup>

Fantino Camillo et Ascanio

Fantino O come è riuscita pur bene la trappola, che hoggi hà fatto Lionetto à questo D. Marrone spaventachio de stornelli. Ascanio ha comesso li errori e il Pedante vi hà fatta la penitenza li argenti han servito per pagare i creditori di Ascanio, et il bastone per le spalle di questa bestia salvatica. Ma i sbirri che vi hà detto messer Tiburzio che faccia venire acciò siano tirate le reti avanti ch' il tordo eschi fuor della machia chi li chiamerà? Ti so dire che mi fa a proposito trattar con sbirri; fuggo la Corte più che il gatto la quaresima Asc. Sig. Camillo traditore se presto non fuggivo in verità che col mantello ci lascio ancora la vita. Mò li 90 scudi che vi hò perso, d'onde li caverò? Son disperato almeno trovassi Fantino. Ò eccolo a punto. Fantino son perduto se non m'aiuti Fan. È un pezzo che vi perdeste nel giuoco, ed onde volete cavi io questi denari dagl'occhi? Hora ritiratevi in Casa, e non abbaiate più alla Luna lasciatemi fare qualche Incantesimo

Asc. Mi getto tutto nelle tue braccia

Fant. Hor che me l'havete tagliate, aspetate ch'io vedo da lontano un fachino carrico di robbe chi sà che la fortuna non ce lo mandi? Sapete che fate portate giù quel piatto di macherroni con un buon pezzo di cagio parmeggiano del prosciutto, e del buon vino. Miettetevi dentro alla porta si che questo Zanni balordo vi possa vedere perché questa è l'unica e potente calamita di tirar questa sorte di [gh]iottoni.

Asc. Lasciate pur fare à me.

Scena Seconda

Zanni e Fantino

Zan. Venga ol cancher al primo pensir che vegni in tel mazzuch de messer Pantalù mi Padrù d'andar peregrinand pel mod', à son pur statol gran merlot' à lassar metermi sto gharg'adoss che mi hàdislombà tutt'una spala.

Fau. Ecco l'esca da pigliare il pesce.

Zan. Mò che diavol de piazza le stà questa d'isti zon al zert che messir zove ol dif haver fatt di ogni banchett. Al ghe versat tanta la brod della cuxina de sovra via che l'è un subiss', olme par d'esser stat mess int'un bugat tant son bagnad de tutt' band'. Mò cancher ai architett d'esto Paese el non han fatt' ne anch' un hosteria chillo e dis pur ol proverb che Rom ghe la cuxina de meior boccon del mond.

Fan. O pover Zan Caldara e quant'è che tu sei venuto à Roma? Chi t'hà fatto far questo viaggio con tanta carrica adosso?

A.

el ghe port all col  
 un cassetin de zoie  
 e de zechin. Mocancher  
 mi hò scovert il  
 secret del Padrù

Zan. Al mi son vegnù adess' adess', quel che mi cargò d'èsta maniera senza discretion ol vegnirà despò de mi. A. Ma carolin messir dezif un pog' quella là che stà chilò di chi l'è

Fan. È la nostra perché

Zan. Mò non vedi che collù se manza el formai

Fan. Lascialo mangiare che vuol dire che tu ti gratti la gola?

Zan. Ol patis d'un zerto mal messir che com' i veg qualch' ozzett' manzator massem quand mi ho fam ol me sent un brussor al gorgoz

Fan. Che robbe stanno in questo sacco è? M'hanno cera di panni.

Zan. Si pur ch'ei son pan' che messer Pantalù l'è mercant de pan. Mò Diavol stà i n zervell che colù ol te manza el presut fa

Fau. Fa molto bene; o come è bagnata questa Scrittura

Zan. Mò s'è piovud e se se bagna i homen non vole che se bagna la Scriturazz'.

Fan. Mò perche tu dovevi portarla in petto

Zan. Ma de si i pulez i zimez e che soi mi qualch' alter che fa viaz co mi havrif rosegat tutt' i litter. Mo al corp d'un sanguinoz che colù se bef tutt' elzervel.

Fan. In questa Casa il Padrone hà caro che i servi sguazzino

Zan. Non potref piar anche mi per servitor?

Fan. Entra pure e mangia allegramente; Sig. Ascanio lasciate mangiar questo galant' huomo.

(Atto secondo)

### Scena Terza

Tiburzio Fantino Francese Pasquarello (Coviello) Zanni

Pantalone Spagnuolo Ascanio

Tib. Pur troppo comincio à credere à quel che m'hà detto Varrone se ben tardi. Io non so siamo in Roma opure in Baccano. Io non so vedere d'onde mi possa venire un ingiuria così rilevata. Basta comunque sia questi sono assassinamenti vituperosi, io voglio gridare.

Fan. Qua qua quale insolenza mi è sta sta stata fatta homomomo da bebene

Tib. Onde è uscito questo quagliotto di settebatute

Fan. Vovoglio aiuiutarmi cocon questo forforcocone

Tib. Chi t'hà dato licenza d'entrar in casa mia come hai preso quel forcone dalla mia stalla

Fant. Chi sesesete vovostrea mamaesta tututu che voi usurpapapare l'hosteria del Gagagallo

Tib. Tanto havessi mai tu fiato che questa è la casa di mastro Tiburzio

Fant. Non ci sono tataborse qua su

Tib. Levati di qua vituperoso

Fant. Li merciai sososono taccaborse nono li hosti

Tib. Corpo del Cielo che questa e la voce di Fantino come io sono Tiburzio costui è Fantino

Fant. Rumores fuge ò messer francese non lasciate entrar costui

Fran. Chi essere quelle sfasciate che vole fare l'insolente contre le hostellerie delle Galle

Tib. Questa sì ch'è scaltra. Con che licenza sei tu entrato nella casa di messer Tiburzio

Fran. Non son queste le sciase di messere tiralebuffe andate per le fatte vostre che altramente tirarete le buffettone se non basta le buffe

Tib. Mira presunzione lasciami dico entrare in casa mia forfantone insolente

Fran. State lontane che altramente io vi taglio le nase con queste forbiscie d'Alchimie

Tib. Hai ben viso d'Alchimista. Non dubitare che ne pagherai la pena

Fran. Scesone le pene in queste paese, à quelle che essercitano l'Alchimie? Caparascie ie non voli intrighe, o quelle xentilhomine Napolitane non lasciate entrare all'hostellerie queste forfantonascie

Tib. E che essercito di forfanti s'è accampato nella casa del misero Tiburzio

Cov. Che tira bolge o tira balige intienne buono che te dico naso de taratufolo affrittelato dintro nò sputachio di goliatto: se non parti da loco dall'hosteria dello Gallo vi ha senz'altre bolge, o balige collo viatico di cinquecento stilletate te faccio fare lo pelegrinaggio delli farisei all'ospetale de satanasso

Tib. Eh che non hò io un manicho di scopa alle mani per accompagnarti infino all'hospedale de pazzarelli

Cov. Tirate di reto non t'accostare pezzo de carne rostuta metto mano alla spata che mò te boglio sventrare, sfegatare, sponzionare, trittare de muodo che lo pezzo chiù grande sia lo dito piccirillo dello pede mancino

Tib. Per mia fe che costui alle fattezze è quel furbo che rubbò un candeliero d'argento alla Pace

Cov. O che pozzi essere impiso colle cauze a braghe, semo conosciuti pe ladri, lassame fuire dintro che non pozza piggiare la stampa d'esta mia faccia zanne ò zanne vorria che tu mandasse a Diavolo questo spione

Zan. Laghè pur far à mì che i vo' co stò spedazzar stòfegadel' senza set'

Tib. Mira quest'altra fantasma ceffo d'Asino levate davanti à quella porta

Zan. Cosa volivù da sta porta messer non vi riguarda vù vis de polancha vecchia. Fatevi lardare e poi vegni nello spedon

Tib. Ti torno à dire che la casa e di messer Tiburzio vattene in mal' hora

Zan. Chi e sto messer trit' l'orz? se voli tritate l'orz andè in qualche stalla de mulater; e nù che volessi tritar i pollaster' starem' all'Hosteria del Gallo

Tib. Sguattaro puzzolente da qua quello spidone e te va all'Hosteria del Gallo ecco la strada

Zan. Oi de podè oh' messer spa[ra]gnol vegni sus che te vegnia ol cancher; ti non voi sentir

Pant. Che rumorxe questo. Fermev' quel zentilhom' lasce star al mio servidor ch'all' cospetazz dell'ostreghe vegniremo al quibus in zinquà Deis

Tib. Questo metter inanzi le mani per non urtar le forze non vi gioverà che pensate di star a Venetia qui farò ben io vedere che cosa e la giustizia di Roma

Pant. Ma questo xe quello che si desidera perche dunque vegnite con stà insolenza in casa d'altri?

Tib. Che insolenza; che insolenza e la vostra ad occuparmi la casa con tutto quello che è dentro

Pant. Veddi quomod' el sa finzer mettege un pogo il dito in bocca a stò fantolin

Tib. Si può ritrovare il maggior affronto di questo sotto la Luna vecchio sfacciato levatevi da quella porta

Pant. Ma pian co le male crianze messer zovan porte zuzu quella zinquà Dea veni zuzu con l'armi

Cov. Non hai fatto lo testamento ancora e dove sono li beccamorti fa venire momò le cannele che te boglio scippare l'interiora, e po far portare lo fegato, e Polmone alla Tavola de Iuda, e Pilato

Fran. Per manfoi per manfoi con queste pistolese voler tagliare in buone pezze, e fare une belle pastiscie

Zan. A vis de cavial al te vol sfrissar il mazzuch' co stò cortelaz de molina

Tib. O questo si che è un assassinamento alla strada hora hora voglio dar la querela

Pant. Ande in t'una mal hora bestiazza

Fran. Se ie non tirave queste mane riverse incontra le nase non si partive in utte le sciorne

Zan. Se Zan Caldara non ghe minazzava sto ferr'in tol mazzuch à non se n'andava fin a nott

Spag. Dove sono quei vigliaccos che pretendea far [---] alla pollienta de D. Cardon de Cardona?

Fran. Ad esse sciongono le gravite spagnolesche

Pant. Ben vegnuo el soccorso de Liga

Zan. Ol ghe stad' aspettand' la risposta dal consciole spagnù

Spag. In verdad che à pena arrivado totos s'è rapacificados

Zan. À doved' esser sudad vù messer sparagnol per mi havi fatt'un gran combatter'

Spag. Basta à nos con la propria presienza mandar in fuga lo nimigos

Fant. Sig. Pantalone questo non è tempo da perdere **F** ritiriamoci noi.

FV.s. non sa l'usanza di questo paese M. Tiburzio hà fatto il primo l'insolenza et è il p.mo a darmi la querela; e necessario dunque se V.S. non vuol restar di sotto che ancor che la dij che vi farò accompagnare da un garzon

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*Negotiating Meanings*  
*Text and Stage Reception*





# 'Pawn! Sufficiently holy but unmeasurably politic': Middleton's *A Game at Chess* and the Political Significance of Shakespeare's *First Folio*

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## *Abstract*

Thomas Middleton's allegorical play *A Game at Chess* was perhaps the most sensational cultural event of the English Renaissance. It was so incendiary that a spectator declared it may have constituted a hanging offence, and so popular that the concept of the theatrical run had to be invented to accommodate demand. King James' response was to shut down the theatres, launch a manhunt for its author and imprison him. Middleton, considered by T.S. Eliot second only to Shakespeare, never wrote again. Despite the allegory's significance and its infamously transparent message, modern scholars have long struggled to understand it. The article seeks to demonstrate the following. Firstly, that such incomprehension constitutes a major problem for the field. Secondly, that Middleton's theme is 'life imitates art', and that this is systematically accomplished through comparing real-life events to parodic renderings of famous theatrical scenes. Thirdly, that Middleton portrays the main character of White Queen's Pawn as literally a sacrificial pawn used to collapse the proposed marriage between the future Charles I and the Spanish Infanta, and that this may well be the conceptual genesis of the chess theme. Fourthly, that those responsible for collapsing this Spanish Match were chiefly the Herbert family. Fifthly that White Queen's Pawn is a personification of a book registered and rushed into print at the very height of the crisis, and dedicated to the heads of the Herbert family, namely Shakespeare's *First Folio*. Sixthly, that the *First Folio*'s portrayal as a sacrificial pawn demonstrates that it was an intensely political publication.

Keywords: *A Game at Chess*, *Measure for Measure*, *Shakespeare's First Folio*, *Spanish Match*, *William Herbert*

## 1. *The Sceptical Challenge*

Thomas Middleton's *A Game at Chess* (1625) was perhaps the most sensationally popular, most controversial and most documented play of the



English Renaissance.<sup>1</sup> It played to beyond capacity crowds for nine consecutive days before being suppressed, the first and only theatrical run of the English Renaissance. Ticket sales raised the unimaginable sum of £1500 from an audience estimated to have constituted a seventh of London's population (Wittek 2015, 440). In the description of the then Spanish ambassador Don Carlos Coloma, 'There were more than 3000 persons there on the day that the audience was smallest. There was such merriment, hubbub and applause that even if I had been many leagues away it would not have been possible for me not to have taken notice of it' (Wittek 2015, 439). The play is a political allegory whose meaning Middleton attempts to make as outrageously blatant as possible: the character Black Knight wears the cast-off clothes of the former Spanish Ambassador Gondomar; the personification of Error insists at length that rooks are not to be called rooks but should be called 'Dukes' instead, thus radically limiting who these characters could represent ('Induction', 53-59).<sup>2</sup>

The play thus had a phenomenal response among a phenomenal cross-section of the population, and the meaning of the allegory was intended to be obvious – and yet the most successful play of the age is also perhaps its most opaque play to modern readers. Successive attempts over centuries to decode the play's allegory of the political events of the early 1620s have foundered: in 2007 Professor Gary Taylor despaired '*there is too much meaning*. Readers can begin to feel overwhelmed by possibilities, frustrated by the sense that we cannot hold suspended all the meanings in play. This frustration is intensified by the impression that the play is ... a "transparent" political allegory, which ought to be easy enough to understand' (Taylor's italics in Taylor and Lavagnino 2007, 1826).

So extraordinary is this long-standing collective failure to understand *even in outline* an allegory considered at the time to be astoundingly, hilariously blatant that it is no longer only a matter of literary interpretation but a sociological matter too. How comes it that exquisitely-skilled scholars with not only the text in front of them but six different manuscripts to peruse (and with historical archives to access) are incapable of matching the comprehension of a questionably literate groundling as he watched the play unfold before him in real-time? Are there some shared but unwarranted assumptions that prevent modern critics from understanding crucial evidence?

<sup>1</sup> This article is dedicated to Jane Wu, Jonathan Haile and Helen Haile. Without their great kindness and support this paper could not have been written. The sceptical challenge with which I begin this article would not have been my starting point without my having read Kripke's study on Wittengestein (1982).

<sup>2</sup> Quotations of *A Game at Chess* are taken from the text published by Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino (Taylor and Lavagnino 2007, 1830-1885).

It should be stressed that concerns around this collective failure cannot be confined to this play but spill over into general aspects of the field's understanding of English Renaissance theatre. Middleton's play was so precisely engineered that eyewitness John Holles declared 'every particular will bear a large paraphrase' (Taylor and Lavagnino 2007, 1776). There thus existed some kind of allegorical language that we have not understood, which was available to playwrights and which they could rely on their audiences to understand. We don't know how big this language's 'vocabulary' was; whether Middleton was deploying all or just a fraction of it; we don't know how or when it first developed; we don't know how often it was used. However, we do know that the crowds attending the play were a diverse cross-section of London society and that, since the immense crowds held up throughout the run, the word-of-mouth can't have been that it was hard to understand. Rather, the infamously massive commotion caused by the play demonstrates the reverse. Since knowledge tends to move from small groups to large, this symbolic language must have been very well-established by 1624. Moreover, it must have been established considerably before 1624, for John Holles declared that he had not been to the theatre for ten years prior to attending *Game*.

There therefore existed a long-standing, widespread language of allegorical symbols that Londoners had a great deal of experience decoding. Such was their prowess at allegorical comprehension that Middleton could risk his life and liberty on them understanding it, for on hearing of the play King James immediately launched a manhunt for its author. The conclusion is surely that many plays preceding *Game* must have used this allegorical language. Playwrights were broadcasting on a frequency we have hitherto not been able to tune into.

This is surely of enormous worry for the field. For we can very well imagine some sceptical arguments being presented in order to undermine the field's claims to knowledge in a more general sense. For example, a sceptic might declare that if we cannot understand its usage in this play that was acknowledged to be extremely transparent, then we have no grounds to claim we can detect whether or not it is being used in other plays that are presumably more complex. In short, if we cannot understand this famously easy play, we have no grounds on which to claim that we can understand any other given play of the English Renaissance. Is the playwright in a given play broadcasting on this same frequency? Have we misunderstood? How would we know?

The danger is such that it's necessary to stress again how easy London audiences found understanding *Game* – and how clearly the artistic intent was to be as transparent as humanly possible. And yet attempts over centuries to understand this mere child's play have failed. If we collectively cannot understand the symbols +, -, x and ÷ and yet we use these to perform complex arithmetic, what justified confidence can we have that our conclusions are

correct? We may reach a consensus position, but this would surely have no epistemic significance, for in the absence of an understanding of what these symbols mean then any consensus position may be arbitrary, with no way to distinguish between the correct and the false.

Similar sceptical arguments can be produced for other facets of the play. If we cannot understand the most sensationally popular play of the entire Renaissance, then, the sceptic may claim, we have very weak claims to understand the audiences for whom playwrights were writing.

If we cannot understand a play that led to the shutdown of the theatres and a manhunt for its author – and this on the direct orders of the King – then, the sceptic may claim, we have but very weak claims to understand the limits of free speech, and thus of language itself.

An eyewitness, John Woolley, declared that ‘assuredly had so much been done the last year, they had everyman been hanged for it’ (Howard-Hill 1991, 275). If we cannot understand a play that Middleton and his occasional co-writer William Rowley (who played Fat Bishop) risked their lives to produce, then, the sceptic may claim, we can have very weak grounds to claim that we understand what drove ‘our other Shakespeare’ to write. Towards the end of their careers Middleton and Rowley were clearly trying to communicate things to posterity that they could not say plainly, for in *The Changeling* of 1622 they write about a play-within-a-play:

Only an unexpected passage over,  
 To make a frightful pleasure, that is all —  
 But not the all I aim at. Could we so act it  
 To teach it in a wild distracted measure,  
 Though out of form and figure, breaking Time’s head —  
 (It were no matter, ‘twould be healed again  
 In one age or other, if not in this). (3.3.280-286; Taylor and Lavagnino, 1657)

Without knowing what they were trying to communicate we can scarcely understand their motivation for communicating it.

If we cannot understand a play that The King’s Men risked their lives to produce then, the sceptic may claim, we have but very weak grounds to claim that we understand what these people – as tradition has it, key shapers themselves of the plays of Shakespeare – saw as the purpose of theatre. Given the King’s Men’s centrality to London and court theatre, we can have but very weak grounds to claim to understand what was the purpose of drama as a wider culture.

In sum, if we fail to understand this notoriously simple play, then the field is wide open to claims that we have but few grounds to claim that we comprehend English Renaissance plays, audiences, writers or performers. We may well be able to claim differing degrees of mastery of the contemporary discourse surrounding English Renaissance plays, but without understanding

*Game* we cannot credibly claim to understand English Renaissance theatre itself. Banish *A Game at Chess*, and banish all the world.

Therefore Professor Taylor's astounding confession that *even he* lacked the skills to comprehend a text known to be incredibly simple can surely be seen as a declaration that the field of English Renaissance theatre is now in profound, systemic crisis. If the easy things are impossible, what chance the understanding of the complex things is correct? The understanding of the period seems to have become unmoored; Montaigne's question 'que sais-je?' looms large; and perhaps none can credibly claim expertise – unless they can understand *Game*.

The decoding of *Game* is, therefore, a central problem of the field. (Of course, understanding this play is merely a necessary condition for understanding Renaissance English theatre, not a sufficient one: just as a groundling may have understood *Game* but not all the classical references Jonson packed into his plays, for example, an ability to understand *Game* only by itself entitles one to claim that we can approximate a dubiously literate groundling's comprehension.) The purpose of this article is to examine the central plot of *Game*, revolving around White Queen's Pawn, Black Bishop's Pawn and Black Queen's Pawn; to identify the first of these characters; to explain Middleton's artistic aims; and how he went about achieving the same.

## 2. *The Pawns' Plot: Life Imitates Art*

This 'Pawns' Plot' has been even less well understood than the rest of the play, as the characters are harder to identify than the likes of White King (James), White Knight (Charles), White Duke (Buckingham) or Black Knight (Gondomar). The explanation for the play's suppression given at the time concerned a supposed 'commandment and restraint given against the representation of any modern Christian kings' (Howard-Hill 1991, 278). However, Howard-Hill notes that such a law is 'unknown to Chambers's and Bentley's theatrical histories' (cited in Starza Smith 2014, n. 24). It is also hard to reconcile the court's supposed horror at seeing kings portrayed on stage with Woolley's report 'that the Players are gone to the Court to Act the game at chess before the King'; Woolley further declares that the Prince and the Duke reportedly 'laughed heartily' at this royal command performance (Howard-Hill 1991, 275). Moreover, we should treat any official reason for curtailment of speech with suspicion, for any truthful explanation would disseminate what it seeks to suppress. The frontispiece of the printed version of *Game* (printed just the following year) bolsters the suspicion of this explanation. It is perfectly willing to depict the full complement of Kings, Queens, Dukes, Bishops and Knights, but glaringly fails to depict any of the pawns whose relationships the play revolves around.

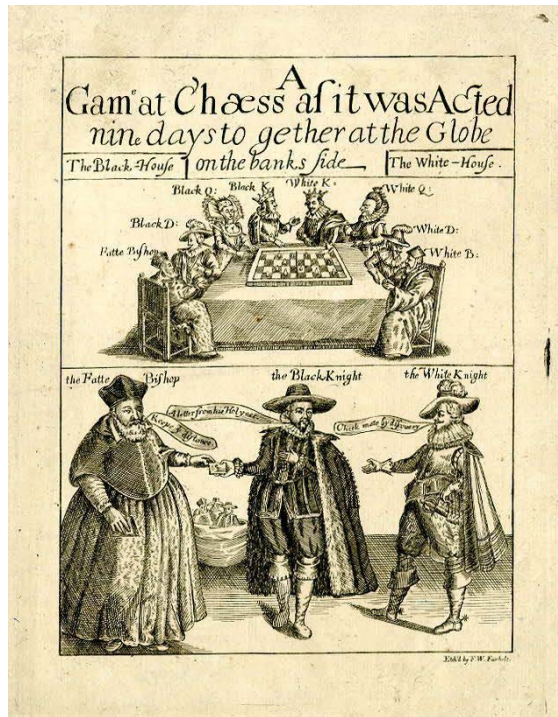


Figure 1 – Thomas Middleton, *A Game at Chess*, Public Domain

It is not only the frontispiece of the play that conspicuously omits the main characters. Howard-Hill asserts that the ‘Pawns’ Plot’ must be a simple moral allegory without any political content because the extensive documentation of reaction to the play failed to mention it:

It has even less political significance than the comparable allegory of *The Faerie Queene*, Book 1 because *no contemporary reporter even noticed the main plot of the play*. It was Middleton’s own invention, apparently owing nothing to printed sources, and comprises the fundamental structural as well as ethical basis of the play. (1991, 284; my italics as regards Howard Hill’s evaluation)

Howard-Hill is right that (with one exception) no contemporary reporter wrote about the Pawns’ Plot. The exception, the poem Thomas Salisbury wrote to Sir Thomas Dawes, is telling however: White Queen’s Pawn is mentioned before the ‘royal pair’ of Prince Charles and the Duke of Buckingham (Bullough 1954, 156-160). Even if we disregard this, however, he surely draws entirely the wrong conclusions about the implications of the silence over the Pawns’ Plot. It is utterly implausible that people queuing up for hours to see the most sensationally popular play in English history up to that date would not have ‘noticed the main plot of the play’ (Howard-Hill 1991, 284).

Every spectator would have known that the play had been suppressed by a very angry King. Since they were willing to freely discuss many aspects of the subplots but studiously avoided all mention of the plot that forms the 'basis of the play' and whose characters dominate most scenes, we can infer that this Pawns' Plot most likely contains information that James wanted to suppress. Far from having little political significance, the Pawns' Plot is, as Black Knight announces, 'unmeasurably politic' (2.1.15). Middleton's imprisonment had just demonstrated to all the spectators precisely how dangerous it was to communicate the meaning of the allegory. Unsurprisingly, they did not generally discuss the Pawns' Plot.

In order to follow and appreciate the Pawns' Plot, the story being allegorically referred to must have been widely understood. In places Middleton relies on the background knowledge of the audience for key plot points: for example, characters discuss how terrible was the revenge that Black Knight's Pawn exerted against White Queen's Pawn (WQP), but what the seemingly squeaky-clean WQP had done to motivate this revenge is never explained nor expanded upon. That Middleton could rely on this wide dissemination of the story when the Pawns' Plot 'owes nothing to printed sources' (Howard-Hill 1991, 284) demonstrates not that the story was of Middleton's invention but that there was some widespread knowledge not in known and comprehended written sources (possibly due to censorship rules).

In order to understand Middleton's allegory, considerable background knowledge was thus required. This is confirmed by William Hemminge's 1630-1632 publication *Elegy on Randolph's Finger*, which describes the play as Middleton's '*learned* Exercise 'gainst Gundomore' (Hemminge 1923, 17, l. 186; my italics). It is curious, then, that one of the earliest readers of the printed play was both extremely learned and also unable to understand the play. In a letter dated 25th May 1625 the Cambridge intellectual Joseph Mead declared that 'The play called the game at chess is in print, but because I have no skill in the game I understand it not' (Taylor and Lavagnino 2007, 1826). Professor Taylor is baffled by Mead's lack of understanding, because he considers Mead to be exceptionally well-versed in the politics and foreign affairs of the time. '[Mead's] difficulty... cannot have been due to ignorance of the play's political background' (*ibid.*).

This, then, is our paradox: this play beyond the ken of Mead was contemporaneously described as 'learned' and involves a set of references so complex that the eye-witness John Holles declared that 'every particular will bear a large paraphrase' (Taylor and Lavagnino 1776). Yet Middleton had such confidence in the ability of the ill-educated London crowds to understand his allegory that he was willing to risk his life and liberty. What learning was widespread among average Londoners but beyond a Cambridge intellectual like Mead?





changing costumes worn by other characters would also be recognised. This would appear to make considerable demands on the audience, especially when combined with constantly-shifting scenery; yet the average Londoner found the play's meaning transparent. The costumes must therefore have been well known, and their relevance to the changing scenes understood immediately.

Perhaps the costumes were sourced from the wardrobes of the famous people portrayed in the play, just as Gondomar's was? Yet the astonishment that greeted the feat of obtaining Gondomar's clothing and the lack of mention of any other such feat for the other celebrities featured in the allegory implies that it was only Black Knight's clothing that was sourced from the actual figure portrayed. Had they additionally sourced clothing famously worn by the King then it would surely have been mentioned. The clothes must have been famous for a different reason, then.

Where then did the King's Men get all these famous bits of clothing from, and why would they be confident that they would be recognised? Jonson's praise of the 'various shifting... *Scenes*' (*The Staple of Nevves*, 3.2) gives us a clue: the actors were relying on multiple scenes being recognized by the audience. The only way the audiences could have accomplished this is if they were already familiar with the scenes in another context. In other words, they were familiar because they had previously been used in other plays. Middleton's play must have consciously featured theatrical clichés because he has Black Knight call attention to one: 'Oboes again!'<sup>3</sup> (5.1.9). This use of clichés may have been rather systematic.

Here we have a proposed solution to our paradox: the 'learning' that the London crowds had but the Cambridge intellectual Mead did not was familiarity with the London theatre world. It is proposed that *Game* tells its story through a systematic use of parodies of famous scenes of plays. The theme of the play in general is that 'life imitates art'. Real-life characters can be represented by stylised chesspieces: the play starts with one chess manoeuvre, Queens Gambit Declined, and it ends with another, Checkmate-by-Discovery. Yet between these events the action's resemblance to a chess game falls away. Taking up the thematic slack is the concept that certain real-life events are similar to scenes from well-known plays.

The best test for this hypothesis is if we discover in *Game* a parody of a poem rather than a play. A poem, of course, would not offer Middleton the costumes, the props or the sceneries that could be used to ram home the presence of a parody. In a play that strained to be as blatant as Black Knight wearing Gondomar's clothes we would expect a parody of a poem to cause Middleton to compensate in some way for this lack of visual cues. This is precisely what we find.

When White Queen's Pawn accuses Black Bishop's Pawn of attempted rape, the latter's innocence is substantiated by fake ante-dated letters that 'prove' his absence at the time (2.2). As punishment for her so-called false accusation, the

<sup>3</sup> Oboes were used for the entrance of both supernatural characters and royal ones.

aspiring nun is sentenced to be imprisoned ‘in a room filled with all Aretine’s pictures’ (3.1.248). According to McKeown, ‘Aretine’s Postures might possibly be described without exaggeration as the most “obscene” piece of erotica in history’ (2008, 12). Ben Jonson knew them well: ‘for a desperate wit there’s Aretine; / Onely, his pictures are a little obscene’ (*Volpone*, 3.4). Pietro Aretino provided the poetic captions for engraved copies of a series of sixteen drawings showing classical figures engaged in various sexual positions. These pictures, which hang in Mantua, were drawn by one Giulio Romano, the Raphael-trained ‘father of pornography’ who was notoriously the only Renaissance artist to be mentioned by Shakespeare: ‘that rare Italian master Julio Romano’ (Shakespeare, *The Winter’s Tale*, 5.2.76).<sup>4</sup>

In Shakespeare’s *The Rape of Lucrece* the titular victim pauses to lengthily contemplate images that tradition identifies as descriptions of frescos in the Sala di Troia, which are also in Mantua, and are by the very same Giulio Romano (Sarrazin 1900, 105-108).

Thus in Shakespeare’s poem the paragon of chastity contemplates Romano’s heroic depictions of noble antiquity, whilst in Middleton’s parody the paragon of chastity contemplates the same artist’s depictions of gymnastic sex.<sup>5</sup>

Middleton confirms that he is parodying *Lucrece* by specifically, gratuitously, mentioning it:

And in a room filled all with Aretine’s pictures,  
More than the twice twelve labours of luxury,  
Thou shalt not see so much as the chaste pommel  
Of Lucrece’ dagger peeping. (3.1.248-251)

What is actually ‘peeping’ is the underlying structure of the allegory. Middleton has no visual cues to rely on, so he compensates by using a verbal one instead.

### 3. *Some Parallels with Famous Plays*

Having tested the hypothesis in the most unpromising of circumstances, we now establish Middleton’s use of theatrical parodies in *Game*. In 1624 one of the most high-profile theatrical productions was Ben Jonson’s *Neptunes Triumph for the returne of Albion*, which had a legendarily abortive performance on Twelfth Night that year. The masque was an allegory of Charles’ return from Spain without his proposed princess bride, and thus relates to the collapse of the Spanish Match. The text had been personally censored and approved by

<sup>4</sup> Shakespeare quotations are from *The New Oxford Shakespeare. The Complete Works. Modern Critical Edition* (Shakespeare, 2017).

<sup>5</sup> For the less literary inclined audience members this episode also functions as a horny nun joke.

King James, yet proved so controversial that the Spanish ambassadors tussled with the French ambassadors over it, resulting in its forced cancellation.

This play that could drive the hated Spanish diplomats to apoplexy clearly became an object of fascination in London, for not only does Middleton (as we shall see) parody a major part of it but Thomas Salisbury's epistolary poem<sup>6</sup> about *Game* climaxes with about twenty lines derived from Middleton's parody of *Neptune's Triumph*. Salisbury clearly expected the recipient of his poem, Sir Thomas Dawes, to recognise and appreciate this parody. We can infer that a version of the masque was produced for general London audiences, so that they could see the play the hated Spanish ambassadors found too hot to handle.

Middleton's parody of *Neptunes Triumph* is immediately foreshadowed by a mention of 'a riot which th' inhabitants of Delos were first inventors of' (5.3. 69-70). 'Inventor' was a technical term for the creator of a masque, and Neptune's Triumph is set in Delos.

For many years Jonson had been yoked together with Inigo Jones for the purposes of creating court masques. The two men despised each other and what they stood for but had to work together because their mutual patron, William Herbert, wanted them to. Jonson wrote the script, Inigo created the scenery and costumes. As expressed in the preface of his *Hymenaei* of 1606, Jonson thought there were two aspects of the art of the masque: the soul and the senses. The 'soul' was provided by the poet, aided the understanding and was lasting (perhaps immortal); the 'senses' were provided by the costume and set designer, pleased the senses and were transient (A3r-A3v).

In *Neptunes Triumph* Jonson personifies these two aspects of the masque as 'the Poet', i.e. Jonson, and 'the Cook', i.e. Inigo Jones. Jonson's script satirises Inigo's pretensions to be the equal of a Poet. The 'Cook' declares that 'a good poet differs nothing at all from a master-cook' but he demonstrates that instead of trying to improve the understanding and virtue of the audience he merely tries to flatter their particular tastes. These tastes differ widely, so the way to please everyone, the Cook believes, is to throw a bit of what everyone likes into a pot.

Jonson's Cook advises to 'study the several tastes, what every nation, the Spaniard, the Dutch, the French, the Walloun, the Neapolitan, the Britain, the Sicilian, can expect from you.' However, instead of throwing cooking ingredients into the broth, the Cook throws in people that represent the various ingredients, e.g. 'Newes-master of Poules, / Supplies your Capon' (*Neptunes Trivmph*).

The Poet responds to this confused jumble of ingredients with 'I conceive / The way of your Gally-mawfrey' – 'gallimaufry' deriving from the French word 'galimafrée', meaning 'unappetising dish'. The Cook responds 'you will like it'. At the end of his demonstration the Cook concedes the supremacy of the Poet but proudly asks to be respected for his ludicrous work: 'Brother *Poet*,

<sup>6</sup> Thomas Salisbury in Sir Thomas Dawes' commonplace book, 1 December 1624. Printed in Taylor and Lavagnino 2007, 872.

though the serious part / be yours, yet, envy not the Cooke his art.' 'Not I!' sniggers the Poet.

Middleton's parody has Black Knight announce his devious ability at politics as 'the master cook of Christendom' (5.3.76) before turning Jonson's idea on its head; whilst Jonson's Cook tries to flatter the tastes of all nations, Middleton's Black Knight treats all the nations of Europe as ingredients to be manipulated within his unappealing broth of megalomaniac universal monarchy:

And in the large feast of our large ambition  
 We count but the White Kingdom (whence you came from)  
 The garden for our cook to pick his salads.  
 The food's lean France, larded with Germany,  
 Before which comes the grave white signory  
 Of Venice, served (*capon-like*) in whitebroth;<sup>7</sup> (5.3.83-88; my italics)

In Jonson's masque the various 'ingredients' are sequentially put in the cooking pot and then tumble out to begin the masque proper. In Middleton's play the Black House pieces are sequentially put into a massive bag after being 'taken' and then try to escape.

Earlier in the year the Spanish ambassadors were maddened to the point of breaking up a theatrical performance of *Neptvnes Triumph*. How could Middleton resist putting a cheeky homage to that play into the mouth of Spanish ambassador Gondomar?

This is not the only parody of famous theatrical scenes in the play. Multiple scholars have remarked that Middleton models part of Act 5 on a scene of a play he part-wrote: the *Macbeth* scene in which Malcolm suggests he will enact all manner of horrors once he's king (suggestions apparently made as a means of testing MacDuff's motivations). Bald wrote 'it is also of considerable interest to observe that the "dissimulation" of the White Knight in the last scene is certainly modelled on the test imposed by Malcolm on MacDuff in IV.iii of *Macbeth*' (1929, 16). Margot Heinemann agreed: 'The Prince is also made to test Gondomar by accusing himself (much like Malcolm in *Macbeth* IV, iii) of ambition and avarice, neither point being developed with much force. Since Middleton is known to have revised *Macbeth* for the King's Men, he was probably directly modelling his scene on that one' (1980, 164). Aside from the general similarity of plot, the scene includes this striking verbal parallel: White Knight declares 'Ambitious, covetous, luxurious falsehood!' (5.3.163); Malcolm declares 'Luxurious, avaricious, false, deceitful' (Shakespeare, *Macbeth* 4.3.59).

Middleton is satirising the ludicrous official explanation for why Charles and Buckingham had taken the astonishingly reckless step of crossing the continent under false names and without bodyguards in order to make themselves *de facto*

<sup>7</sup> A superfluous 'in' is deleted from the last line.

hostages of the Spanish Court. 'Buckingham's widely-distributed relation to Parliament in February 1624 [declared] that there was never any danger of Charles succumbing to Spanish pressure, and that the entire trip was a cunning trap to force Spain to reveal its treachery' (Taylor and Lavagnino 2007, 815).

Middleton creates another uncanny parallel to *Macbeth* in that the Induction to *Game* involves the demonic figure of St. Ignatius Loyola declaring 'O with what longings will this breast be tossed, until I see this great game won and lost!' (Induction, 77-78). The start of *Macbeth* involves the demonic figure of a Witch declaring 'When the hurly-burly's done, / When the battle's lost and won' (Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, 1.1.3-4).

Middleton not only wrote parts of *Macbeth* but also parts of *Timon of Athens* and *Measure for Measure*. This is of extreme interest for understanding the Pawns' Plot, for the characters and relationship between White Queen's Pawn, Black Queen's Pawn and Black Bishop's Pawn is extraordinarily similar to those of Isabella, Mariana and Angelo from *Measure for Measure*, which Middleton edited prior to its publication in the First Folio (the differences between the Quarto version of *Othello*, published in 1622, and the First Folio version published just one year later indicate that editing did take place immediately before publication). To write a play that allegorises the events of the preceding few years requires extensive reflections on them; Middleton seemingly spent the allegorised time editing Shakespeare plays. Extensive parallels could not be accidental. A series of parallels will now be set down.

1. Like Isabella, White Queen's Pawn (WQP) is a young virgin seeking to join a religious order. Both long for a strict set of rules to which they can owe obedience.

From *Measure for Measure*:

Yes, truly, I speak not as desiring more,  
But rather wishing a more strict restraint  
Upon the sisterhood, the votarists of Saint Clare. (1.4.1-3)

From *Game*:

*Black Bishop's Pawn (BBP)*. Please you peruse this small tract of obedience;  
'Twill help you forward well.

*WQP*. Sir, that's a virtue  
I've ever thought on with especial reverence. (1.1.191-193)

After reading the book, WQP begs BBP with these words:

Lay your commands as thick and fast upon me  
As you can speak 'em. How I thirst to hear 'em!

Set me to work upon this spacious virtue  
Which the poor span of life's too narrow for,  
Boundless obedience. (2.1.35-39)

2. Both plays compare Isabella and WQP being the victim of falsehood to their complexion being marred, and both use the same metaphor of 'printing':

Women? Help, Heaven! Men their creation mar  
In profiting by them. Nay, call us ten times frail,  
For we are as soft as our complexions are,  
And credulous to false prints.  
(Shakespeare, *Measure for Measure*, 2.4.127-130)

With a cheek  
Fresh as her falsehood yet, where castigation.  
Has left no pale print of her visiting anguish.  
(Middleton, *A Game at Chess*, 3.1.180-182)

3. Both Isabella and WQP are so pure they're loath to even mention the name of sins or sources of disgrace.

*Isabella.* There is a vice that most I do abhor,  
And most desire should meet the blow of justice,  
For which I would not plead, but that I must;  
For which I must not plead, but that I am  
At war 'twixt will and will not.  
(Shakespeare, *Measure for Measure*, 2.2.30-34)

*Isabella.* This night's the time  
That I should do what I abhor to name.  
(Shakespeare, *Measure for Measure*, 3.1.98-99)

*WQP.* I was discharged  
By an inhuman accident, which modesty  
Forbids me to put any language to.  
(Middleton, *A Game at Chess*, 1.1.145-147)

4. When given a forced choice, both Isabella and WQP are adamant they prefer the wellbeing of their soul to that of the body.

*Isabella.* Sir, believe this,  
I had rather give my body than my soul.  
(Shakespeare, *Measure for Measure*, 2.4.56-57)

*WQP.* Then take my life, sir,  
And leave my honour for my guide to heaven.  
(Middleton, *A Game at Chess*, 2.1.135-136)

*WQP.* Gladly I offered life to preserve honour,  
Which would not be accepted without both,  
The chief of his ill aim being at my honour.  
(Middleton, *A Game at Chess*, 2.2.117-120)

5. Both Isabella and *WQP* are desired by men who are attracted to her because she is so virtuous:

*Angelo.* What does thou, or what art thou, Angelo?  
Dost thou desire her foully for those things  
That make her good?  
(Shakespeare, *Measure for Measure*, 2.2.178-180)

*BBP.* ... That eye  
Does promise single life and meek obedience,  
Upon whose lips (the sweet fresh buds of youth)  
The holy dew of prayer lies like pearl  
Dropped from the op'ning eyelids of the morn  
Upon the bashful rose.  
(Middleton, *A Game at Chess*, 1.1.76-81)

6. Because of this attraction both *Angelo* and *BBP*, though claiming to be morally religious people, become hypocrites and are publicly decried as such by their victims:

*Isabella.* That Angelo is an adulterous thief,  
A hypocrite, a virgin-violator,  
Is it not strange, and strange?  
(Shakespeare, *Measure for Measure*, 5.1.40-42)

*WQP (to BBP).* I will discover thee, arch-hypocrite,  
To all the kindreds of the earth.  
(Middleton, *A Game at Chess*, 2.1.148-149)

7. Whilst arranging a bed-trick, Black Queen's Pawn (*BQP*) announces 'you're man and wife — all but church ceremonies' (4.1.146). This is similar to the Duke's advice to Mariana:

*Duke.* Nor, gentle daughter, fear you not at all.  
He is your husband on a pre-contract.  
To bring you thus together, 'tis no sin.  
(Shakespeare, *Measure for Measure*, 4.1.67-69)

8. In both plays an ex-lover of the lecherous villain substitutes for the virginal religious novice in a bed trick: Mariana in *Measure*, *BQP* in *Game*. When the time comes for the substitute to reveal herself to her ex, we discover that in both cases five years have elapsed since the former lovers' previous meeting.

*Angelo.* My lord, I must confess I know this woman;  
 And five years since there was some speech of marriage  
 Betwixt myself and her, which was broke off  
 ...  
 Since which time of five years  
 I never spake with her, saw her, nor heard from her,  
 Upon my faith and honour.  
 (Shakespeare, *Measure for Measure*, 5.1.212-220)

*BQP.* Do you plant your scorn against me?  
 Why, when I was probationer in Brussels,  
 That engine was not seen; then adoration  
 Filled up the place, and wonder was in fashion.  
 Is't turned to th' wild seed of contempt so soon?  
 Can five years stamp a bawd?  
 (Middleton, *A Game at Chess*, 5.2.90-94)

9. Since BBP does not immediately recognise his former lover when she enters, presumably she is wearing a veil. If so then both women, conscious that they are not as young as they once were, unveil and emotionally ask their former lover to gaze upon them.

*Mariana.* My husband bids me; now I will unmask.  
*[She shows her face]*  
 This is that face, thou cruel Angelo,  
 Which once thou swor'st was worth the looking on.  
 (Shakespeare, *Measure for Measure*, 5.1.201-203)

*BQP.* 'Pray, look upon me, sir;  
 I've youth enough to take it.  
 (Middleton, *A Game at Chess*, 5.2.94-96)

10. Both Isabella and WQP complain bitterly about the wilful caprice of the law:

*Isabella.* O perilous mouths,  
 That bear in them one and the selfsame tongue  
 Either of condemnation or approof,  
 Bidding the law make courtesy to their will,  
 Hooking both right and wrong to th'appetite,  
 To follow as it draws!  
 (Shakespeare, *Measure for Measure*, 2.4.172-177)

*WQP.* What certainty is in our bloods, our states?  
 What we still write is blotted out by fates,  
 Our wills are like a cause that is law-tossed:  
 What one court orders, is by another crossed.  
 (Middleton, *A Game at Chess*, 3.1.401-404)



This complaint is justified in both cases: both accuse the villain of attempted rape and in both cases the authority figure switches between believing the victim's accusations and declaring them falsehoods.

#### 4. *The Identity of White Queen*

The characters and plot line of the Pawns' Plot are thus taken from *Measure for Measure*. The editor once charged with fidelity to Shakespeare's text has become the dramatist creatively rewriting it. The dominant concern now is Middleton's reasons for doing this. What function do the pawns have? What's most remarkable is that White Queen's Pawn is – literally – depicted as a sacrificial pawn in the game: the play opens with a chessboard showing the Queen's Gambit chess opening in which WQP is deliberately offered as a sacrifice to BBP in exchange for a better position.

*Middleton's Variation on Queen's Gambit Declined*

NB Only the central four horizontal rows (ranks) are visible to the audience, and in the bottom three chessboards Middleton removes several pieces, presumably in order to clarify allegorical relationships between the still-visible pieces. Chesspiece design by Colin M.L. Burnett under a GNU Free Documentation Licence.



Black, here moving first, advances Black Queen's Pawn and is immediately countered by White moving White Queen's Pawn to meet it (I: i: 1-5).

Black then moves a Black Bishop's Pawn to threaten White Queen's Pawn. (I: i: 30) This creates the Queen's Gambit opening.



White declines to fall into Black's trap by taking the Black Bishop's Pawn with White Queen's Pawn, instead moving White Bishop's Pawn to protect White Queen's Pawn. (I: i: 195)

Black responds by moving Black Knight's Pawn to protect Black Bishop's Pawn (I: i: 205); Black then moves Black Knight for the same purpose. (I: i: 243)

Figure 2 – Graphic created by the author based on images in Taylor and Lavagnino 2007, 1833, 1839

Given the centrality of WQP, it is highly plausible that this notion of a sacrificial pawn was the conceptual genesis of this chess-based play and therefore crucial to understanding it. The conclusion of the Prologue also presents WQP as a necessary sacrifice if they were to win the game:

... in the close  
 You shall see checkmate given to virtue's foes.  
 But the fair'st jewel that our hopes can deck  
 Is so to play our game t'avoid your check. (Prologue, 7-10)

Thus Middleton declares that the sacrifice of WQP was a gambit that was necessary for White House to beat Black House, i.e. WQP's sacrifice was a gambit designed to persuade James and his heir to pull out of the proposed marriage to the Spanish Infanta.

Middleton is insistent that the Pawns' Plot is of great political significance, for BBP reads a letter addressed to him that begins:

'Pawn! Sufficiently holy, but unmeasurably politic. We had late intelligence from our most industrious servant famous in all parts of Europe (our Knight of the Black House) that you have at this instant in chase the White Queen's Pawn, and very likely in the carriage of your game to entrap and take her.' (1.1.15-20)

BBP also stresses the political significance of WQP, for he tries to overcome WQP's resistance by using the following argument:

Art thou so cruel for an honour's bubble  
 T'undo a whole fraternity, and disperse  
 The secrets of most nations locked in us? (2.1.139-141)

In order to ascertain the identity of White Queen's Pawn we must first work out who White Queen is. Middleton would have had to be very careful about who he called Queen of the English side – nothing kills a jovial mood like open treason – and this means that there are only a very few possible candidates.

White Queen clearly represents someone living, rather than Elizabeth I or James' wife Anne (who died in 1619) as the epilogue refers to her orders and her hopes in the present tense. Middleton's *Collected Works* identifies her as James' daughter Queen Elizabeth of Bohemia (1596-1662). This identification is assumption-based: it declares that the play 'could not have been as comprehensive [a depiction of the Spanish Match crisis] without representing the Queen of Bohemia.' Yet the *Collected Works* immediately casts doubt on this identification: 'even to identify Elizabeth as "Queen" was dangerous, because King James consistently refused to recognise Frederick and Elizabeth's claim to Bohemia' (Taylor in Taylor and Lavagnino 2007, 1796 n. 276). Another danger was that, had the Gunpowder Plotters succeeded, they planned to install then-Princess Elizabeth as a puppet ruler. In chess, of course, the Queen is rather more powerful than the King, Middleton's play reminds his audience about the Gunpowder Plot several times.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> For instance: 'methinks I stand over a powder-vault and the match now a-kindling' (2.1.159-160).

What is extremely divisive is unlikely to delight every type of Londoner, yet this is what the play apparently achieved. Moreover, Middleton would be taking enormous risks for the sake of a marginal character. Extraordinary justification is therefore required, yet every attempt to explain the story of White Queen and her Pawn in terms of Elizabeth and her country has failed. Even the scholar that in 1907 invented the thesis, E.C. Morris, acknowledged its total reliance on the London public being entirely ignorant of events whose allegorical representation they adored: 'It is curious that heretofore no-one has suggested these incidents of the German wars as the basis of the scenes concerning the attacks on the White Queen's Pawn. Possibly the reason is, the actual events as recorded by modern scholarship are too far removed from the plot of the play to be easily recognised' (Morris 1907, 47).

Had the play really disseminated ignorant lies about the conduct of the Royal Family then that would have been good public justification for its suppression. John Chamberlain's letter to Carleton, dated 21<sup>st</sup> August 1624, declares of the play's controversy that 'the worst is, playeng [Gondomar], they played sombody els, for which they are forbidden to play that or any other play till the Kings pleasure be further knowne' (Chamberlain, 1939, 2, 578). Chamberlain doesn't seem to think the play is telling untruths. Yet perhaps the clearest evidence that Middleton is telling the truth is Ben Jonson's response. His *The Staple of Nevves* extensively discusses *Game*. The lines previously quoted about the King's Men's 'various shifting of their Scene, / And dext'rous change o' their persons to all shapes' (3.2), which come in the guise of a letter written by the main model for Fat Bishop, the Archbishop of Spalato, are followed by two lines in which he pointedly refuses to give any eulogy to William Rowley, the recently-deceased playwright who performed the role. Instead he implies he was a non-entity without a legacy:

... *Lic.* He is dead That plai'd him!  
*Tho.* Then, h'has lost his share o' the *Legacy*.  
 (Jonson, *The Staple of Nevves* 3.2)

Jonson, then, clearly felt great animosity towards Rowley's portrayal of Fat Bishop (later we may see why). He also goes so far as to declare that it would be 'justice' for Middleton's 'poor' 'so-called' (3.2) play to be used as toilet paper.

*Lic.* What news of Gundomar?

*Tho.* A second *Fistula*,  
 Or an *excoriation* (at the least)  
 For putting the poore *English-play*, was writ of him,  
 To such a sordid vse, as (is said) he did,  
 Of cleansing his *posterior's*.

Gundomar's use of  
 the game at Chesse,  
 or Play so called.

*Lic.* Iustice! Iustice! (Jonson, *The Staple of Nevves*, 3.2)

Since Jonson was so contemptuous of the play, and was particularly annoyed by Rowley's portrayal of a dissembling writer, had Middleton himself been lying in

the play then Jonson would have had the most open of goals. Yet Jonson does not accuse Middleton of hypocrisy: therefore he cannot have believed Middleton lied.

If, as Morris declared, the facts of the collapse of the Spanish Match as recorded by modern scholarship are far away from the representation of the same onstage, then the most likely resolution is that modern scholarship has missed something crucial about how events transpired. After all, Middleton was Chronologer of London, i.e. its official historian, and therefore in a superb position to know the truth. Very few historians have since tackled the collapse of the Spanish Match, and none have consulted French archives. The field's dominant account is still Gardiner's nineteenth-century opus, which assumes that the negotiations to marry Charles to the Infanta and the negotiations to marry him to his eventual bride Henrietta Maria of France were entirely discrete events, one following the collapse of the other. As we'll see, this is the crucial mistake that makes historical scholarship and *Game* so hard to square – and which in large part makes the play so opaque for modern readers. For if we get the identity of White Queen wrong then the identity of White Queen's Pawn is inexplicable, and therefore also the play itself.

Just as the King of Spain is represented by Black King and James is represented by White King, White Queen represents the Spanish Infanta's rival for Charles' affections: England's Queen-to-be. Although in 1624 Henrietta Maria was not yet married to Charles, those who supported aborting the Spanish Match in favour of a French Match with Henrietta Maria would doubtless be pleased to see her sympathetically presented as already a legitimate part of the English royal family. Such a portrayal would also, at least in part, explain Woolley's conviction that had it been performed the previous year then everyone would have been hanged for it. To present Henrietta Maria as the English Queen when Charles was committed to marrying the Infanta would have been treasonous; to present her as the English Queen when the heir to the English throne was engaged in marriage negotiations with her would have been merely incredibly presumptuous. That such a significant chesspiece as White Queen has such a minor role in the play is also appropriate if White Queen is Henrietta Maria: at the height of the crisis she wasn't yet fourteen.

The key piece of evidence comes when White Knight Prince Charles disappears into the Spanish Court with his marriage to the Spanish Infanta looking assured. White Queen watches him depart in a state of despair:

My love, my hope, my dearest — O he's gone,  
Ensnared, entrapped, surprised amongst the Black ones.  
I never felt extremity like this...

... I never was

More sick of love than now I am of horror.  
I shall be taken. The game's lost, I'm set upon. (4.4.48-57)

White Queen is clearly in a state of romantic heartbreak, and she equates her personal loss with the loss of the entire game, i.e. the attempt to prevent Charles' marriage to the Spanish Infanta. She must represent Charles' future bride.

In this same passage Middleton aims to counter her worst defect as perceived by the English public: her Catholicism. The duplicitous, newly Catholic Fat Bishop flees to the Continent, seeks to 'take' White Queen and tries to have her marry Black King thus entrenching her Catholicism. The reason why it's Fat Bishop who threatens White Queen is that the main model for Fat Bishop, the Archbishop of Spalato, left England and travelled to Paris, where his *Sui Reditus ex Anglia Consilium* was published in 1623. Fat Bishop's approach and plan fills our Paris-based White Queen with horror, and she is rescued by the Protestant White Bishop. The play therefore expresses the (as it happened, vain) hope that Henrietta Maria is not a dyed-in-the-wool Catholic but will be converted to the Anglican faith once she's in England.

If this is not clear enough then the Infanta's replacement by Henrietta Maria in Charles' affections is symbolised in the most blatant way possible: White Queen takes Black Queen, thereby removing her from consideration and standing in her place (5.3).

##### 5. *A 'Perplexed and Secret Business'*

The obvious objection concerns how Henrietta Maria could have been involved with the events of 1623, since she would not marry Charles for another two years and had not yet even spoken to her future husband. (She had, however, seen him across a room.) Dynastic marriages are not necessarily love matches, however, and for years James' ambassador to the French court had promoted Henrietta Maria as a best-of-both-worlds alternative bride for Charles: James could secure a marriage alliance with a great Catholic nation and yet avoid the politically impossible demands the Spanish court had been making. Whilst the fiery Infanta demanded that her children must be raised as Catholics were she to marry Charles – tantamount to demanding the conversion of the British Isles to the Catholic faith – James' ambassador declared that 'where there hath been question of diversity of religions, [Henrietta Maria] hath said, that a wife ought to have no will, but that of her husband's.' (Herbert 1830, 160)

Eventually the ambassador's campaign for Charles to marry Henrietta Maria succeeded. The course of events surrounding the collapse of the Spanish Match is complex. Suffice it to say here that the ambassador's crucial letter was sent to James on 21<sup>st</sup> October 1623<sup>9</sup> and, after pointed criticisms of the impracticability of Charles' proposed marriage to the Infanta, it unleashed this bombshell:

Let me take the boldness to assure your Sacred Majesty that those of this King's council here [i.e., France] will *use all means they can*, both to the King of Spain, and to the Pope (in whom they pretend to have

<sup>9</sup> 31<sup>st</sup> October (New Style dating). In 1624 France used the (modern) Gregorian calendar, whilst England still used the older Julian calendar. At the time New Style was ten days ahead of Old Style. The letter was marked '31<sup>st</sup> October Stil. No.' The dating system used for this paper is Old Style.

very particular interest) *not only to interrupt but if it be possible, to break off your Sacred Majesty's alliance with Spain*. For which purpose the Count de Tillieres<sup>10</sup> hath strict command to give either all punctual advice, that accordingly they may proceed. (Lee 1886, 356; my italics)

On 1<sup>st</sup> November Charles held an impromptu conference with his Privy Council. All members were sworn to silence about the contents of the meeting, which demonstrates that something remarkable was happening behind the scenes: clearly Charles feared that the meeting would be so incendiary as to threaten even the Privy Council's discretion. Charles had had nearly a month to debrief his Councillors following his return from Madrid had that been the cause of the meeting; nothing had materially changed as to the marriage treaty since then. Yet apparently there was new ultra-secret information Charles had to impart. An apparent blank-cheque offer from one of Europe's foremost military powers would surely have been discussed.

Such an extraordinary letter would not have emerged from out of the blue: there must have been feelers going out to the French court to see if there was some way Charles could evade the disastrous obligations he had signed up for in order to marry the Infanta. As early as 1619 the same ambassador had suggested that a marriage deal between Charles and Henrietta Maria could involve some sort of arrangement regarding the Palatinate (Herbert 1830, 158). In the context of 1623, a French commitment to 'use all means they can' to break off the Spanish Match meant offering to commit French troops to restore the Winter Queen and her husband to their rule over the Palatinate. It was during October, as the feelers would have been going out to the French court, that James suddenly decided to demand that the marriage treaty that had already been signed with the Spanish be 'revised upwards' so as to include military intervention in favour of James' daughter. The historian Gardiner (who was unaware of the apparent French offer) was astounded at James' affrontery: 'He actually believed that the King of Spain would be able and willing to effect what was now equivalent to a revolution in Germany as a personal favour to himself' (Gardiner 1869, 428).

Despite Spanish horror at this sudden suggested revision, James grew supremely confident that his son-in-law would be returned to the Palatinate as ruler. On 15<sup>th</sup> November James sheepishly told the Spanish ambassadors that he had promised his daughter and son-in-law that 'by fair means or by foul he would recover all that they had lost' (Gardiner's account. Gardiner 1869, 440) – so James believed he had discovered a 'foul' means. Remarkably, two days before this meeting with the Spanish ambassadors James started sending out messengers to Madrid with orders to prevent the proxy marriage ceremony. Despite this wrecking manouevre, on 20<sup>th</sup> of November James wrote to his son-in-law to announce 'we make you offer of a present and full restitution of all the

<sup>10</sup> The French king's ambassador to James' court.

Palatinate unto the person of your son, and that you shall be his administrator during your life, and that after the death of the Duke of Bavaria your son shall be re-established in the electoral dignity...' (Gardiner 1869, vol. II, 448-449). James' behaviour is only explicable if he believed that he had a rock-solid offer of military commitment from France and that either the Spanish would match it or he'd go with the French offer. Either way, a commitment of troops to restore the Palatinate to the rule of James' daughter and son-in-law seemed guaranteed.

When James' messengers arrived in Madrid the wedding was cancelled and the marriage arrangements terminated, but when marriage negotiations with France began, James discovered that his expectation of French military support was entirely misplaced. The ambassador was abruptly recalled, amidst such anger that his life was shattered forever. An editor of the ambassador's autobiography (which – equally abruptly – stops at this dismissal) stated that his 'public life in the years covered by his autobiography was a triumphal progress; it was almost without shadow. His public life in after years is a dreary series of disasters' (Lee 1886, xxix-xxx). James refused to redeem the large debts run up in the course of his French service, refused to make him a member of the Privy Council – the only French ambassador during his reign not to be so appointed, as our ambassador himself bitterly complained – and in general both James and Charles treated him with remarkable disrespect for the rest of their lives. There seems to be no other explanation but that our ambassador had lied.

The ambassador's autobiography declares several things: that he thought the Spanish side were acting in goodwill; that there was some kind of covert operation going on; and that he would be embarrassed to include fuller details in his autobiography (thus indicating that he did have some role in the collapse):

By the intelligence I received in Paris, which I am confident was very good, I am assured that the Spaniard meant really at that time, though how the match was broken, I list not here to relate, it being a more perplexed and secret business than I am willing to insert into the narration of my life. (Lee 1886, 243)

The identity of this ambassador is interesting in itself: he was Sir Edward Herbert, the older brother of Sir Henry Herbert, the Master of the Revels who so curiously approved this politically incendiary play. During November 1623, Sir Henry Herbert was acting as a trusted intermediary for his brother – a letter from Robert Carr to Sir Edward Herbert regarding Spanish matters dated 10<sup>th</sup> November 1623<sup>11</sup> begins: 'My Lord, I have received from your brother Sir Henry two of your letters together' (Carr 1623). It may be inferred that Sir Henry was supportive of his brother's actions at this time. Given his brother's brutal treatment at the hands of his king, Sir Henry had motive to allow subversion.

<sup>11</sup> 20<sup>th</sup> November New Style dating.

Moreover, the Herbert family's last-ditch efforts had apparently saved England from disaster. 'How would it haue joyd brave Talbot (the terror of the French)', Nashe famously wrote, 'to thinke that after he had lye two hundred year in his Tomb, he should triumph againe on the Stage' (Nashe 1592, 26). How much more would it have joyed Sir Henry Herbert to witness his family's greatest triumph being celebrated on stage and immortalized in art by the country's best playwright. Joyed enough to bend the rules, I suspect.

*Game* was a key source of political iconography for decades after its performances in 1624. In the midst of the Civil War, for example, a pamphlet entitled *The Game at Chesse. A metaphoricall discourse shewing the present estate of this Kingdome* was published. Given this, it is interesting that William Herbert, one of the leading political figures of his day, had multiple portraits made that associated him with the game of chess.



Figure 3 – *An interior with Charles I, Henrietta Maria, The Earls of Pembroke and Jeffery Hudson* c.1635, RCIN 405296, Royal Collection Trust / © Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II 2018

Above is a British School painting formerly attributed to Hendrick van Steenwijck the younger, entitled 'An Interior with King Charles I, Queen Henrietta Maria, Jeffery Hudson, William Herbert, 3rd Earl of Pembroke and His Brother Philip Herbert (later 4th Earl of Pembroke).' William Herbert was one of the Jacobean age's greatest patrons of painters, just as he was one of the greatest patrons of poets and Protestant thinkers, and he had a particular fondness for allegorical art (O'Farrell 2011, 100).

The composition of this painting is extraordinarily eccentric. Charles, King of England, is portrayed as an utterly peripheral hangdog figure lurking in the



gloomy doorway at the very edge of the painting. Henrietta Maria stands in front of him as the couple are presented to an amused and confident Philip Herbert and the commanding figure of William Herbert. Both Herberts carry their white staves of their respective offices, whereas the King bears no such insignia. This is a radical reversal from the orthodoxy of the monarch being portrayed as the central figure receiving obeisance from his courtiers. The artist must have had a reason to do so. If this strangeness weren't enough, the colourful parrot curiously stationed behind William Herbert signals an allegorical meaning.

The painting apparently celebrates the Herberts as being the court's 'queen-makers' - i.e. the people that effectively decided whom Charles should marry. This artistic goal explains why Henrietta Maria is given prominence over her tag-along husband, why the Herberts are portrayed as dominant, and why no other courtiers appear in the scene.

This does not exhaust the strangeness of the composition, however, for even the Herberts are rather peripheral in the painting. The main area and the best lit area is flooring on which Henrietta Maria's court dwarf, Jeffery Hudson, and his dogs are playing. The pattern of the flooring is the same as a chessboard: the chesspiece-sized dwarf is playing a game on a chessboard. The game of chess may be being used as a metaphor for politics: the Herberts may be able to dominate kings but even they are subject to the caprice of geopolitics. The painting both glorifies the Herberts and reminds them of their powerlessness: it serves as a political *memento mori*.



Figure 4 – *William Herbert* William Herbert, 3rd Earl of Pembroke, after Daniel Mytens, oil on canvas, circa 1625, NPG 5560 © National Portrait Gallery, London

Turning to another major portrait of William Herbert, by Daniel Mytens, we see that the composition here is also slightly odd. The space to Herbert's left is notably empty. Again this seems to be because it is the flooring itself that carries significance. We once more see a chessboard pattern. Disregarding the squares obscured by Herbert's legs, there are eight squares to his left and eight squares from front to back of the room. Eight ranks and eight files, just like a chessboard.

That empty space to Herbert's left is visually dominated by an exceedingly colourful pillar in the background that looks out of place in this soberly-decorated house. The strangeness of this pillar is emphasised by its lighting and the intense contrast achieved by placing the pillar in front of a bright window. It looks rather like the pillars in the reconstructed Globe Theatre, where *Game* was performed. This, combined with the curtain beside Herbert – which doesn't seem to be designed to cover a window – suggests that the portrait of the legendary literary patron refers to theatrical matters.

William Herbert, then, is being associated both with the process of choosing Henrietta Maria and *Game*. Returning to Edward Herbert's letter, despite its sensational offer it took nearly two weeks for James to send out riders to Madrid ordering that the marriage should not take place. It seems the King still needed some extra persuasion.

#### 6. *The Identity of White Queen's Pawn*

We therefore now turn to identifying our sacrificial pawn, via a conversation between White King's Pawn (WKP) and Black Knight (BK). Having revealed himself as a turncoat secretly working for the Black side, WKP demands a reward for his work:

*WKP*. I rest upon you, Knight, for my advancement. (3.1.306)

BK replies:

*BK*. Pawns that are lost are ever out of play.

*WKP*. How's this?

*BK*. No replications. You know me.

No doubt ere long you'll have more company.

The bag is big enough; 'twill hold us all. (3.1.310-313)

Immediately afterwards, BK 'takes' his interlocutor. The language used here is revealing. BK is threatening pawns as a plural. The taking of White King's Pawn thus serves to threaten one or more other White Pawns. There are only two other named pawns on the opposing side: White Bishop's Pawn and White Queen's Pawn. For his threat to carry any weight he cannot be threatening White Bishop's Pawn, for according to BK, himself this Pawn is so common as to be trivially dispensable:

It's but a bawdy pawn out of the way a little.  
Enough of them in all parts. (3.1.153-154)

The only remaining possibility, then, is the character that speaks immediately after BK issues this threat: White Queen's Pawn. Moreover, the specific word BK uses is of great interest. Pawns can advance, but his retort 'no replications' is absurd: pawns cannot be replicated. Likewise it would be beyond absurd to threaten to prevent the post-death replication of a person. Since White Queen's Pawn is the one being threatened and she cannot be a person, she must therefore be a personification of an object.

This is further confirmed when BBP, in conversation with Black Queen's Pawn (BQP), expresses his longing for WQP in the following terms:

What art have you to put me on an object  
And cannot get me off? (4.1.92-93)

In principle this object is replicable, as long as those with political power permit it. Despite this replicability, however, WQP clearly represents something very special indeed, revered by both White and Black sides. As we've seen, the Prologue calls her the 'the fair'st jewel that our hopes can deck', whilst BQP goes so far as to throw herself prostrate in front of her:

Let me fall with reverence  
Before this blessed altar. (3.1.216-217)

BQP introduces WQP as 'so clear a masterpiece of heaven's art, wrought out of dust and ashes' (1.1.2-3). WQP is apparently some form of artwork, and a very great one: the word 'masterpiece' is used systematically, recurring another six times in *Game*. This artwork seems to have been composed during Elizabeth's reign, and at least partially for her. Black Bishop's Pawn (BBP) calls her:

A masterpiece of man (composed by heaven  
For a great princess' favour, kingdom's love). (1.1.178-179)

When WQP laments her fate, she reinforces the idea that she existed during the previous reign and was a political pawn to Elizabeth too.

What certainty is in our bloods, our states?  
What we still write is blotted out by fates,  
Our wills are like a cause that is law-tossed:  
What one court orders, is by another crossed. (3.1.401-404)

We note the imagery drawn from the writing process. Since we have seen that WQP's real-life counterpart is an extremely special artwork that is

paradoxically in principle replicable, and that political power is able to prevent replication, then WQP can only represent a book.

Despite the widespread reverence this book represented by WQP evidently attracts, however, at the time of the play's action, it is curiously unavailable. This is symbolised by her virginity, which she talks about in terms of 'print':

*BBP.* Then you have passed through love?  
*WQP.* But left no stain  
 In all my passage, sir, no print of wrong  
 For the most chaste maid that may trace my footsteps. (1.1.142-144)

When WQP's name is cleared after the Black side accuse her of falsely accusing BBP, White King talks of her virginity in terms of a book:

This fair delivering act virtue will register  
 In that white book of the defence of virgins,  
 Where the clear fame of all preserving knights  
 Are to eternal memory consecrated. (3.1.163-166)

Black Knight then remarks on WQP's lack of a 'print':

With a cheek  
 Fresh as her falsehood yet, where castigation  
 Has left no pale print of her visiting anguish. (3.1.180-182)

When WQP is presented with the prospect of marrying BBP she recoils, with her visceral horror expressed in imagery drawn straight from the cast type of the printing process:

So hotburning  
 The syllables of sin fly from his lips  
 As if the letter came new-cast from hell. (5.2.42-44)

WQP is thus a representation of some book, and the 'virginity' that is central to her character is an expression of her determination to remain unprinted. This, of course, invites the question of how the artwork came to attract such wide veneration if it was unavailable in printed form: it must have had public exposure in some other way to that on a page. This could only have been orally, and (since manuscripts were so rare) by a small number of people to a large audience: from the pulpit or the stage. Since the audiences spanned the sectarian divide, the pulpit seems an unlikely source, meaning that this artwork was probably disseminated at the theatre.

The word 'play' and its variants are used 24 times in *Game*. We even get a 'masterpiece of play' (5.2.77). WQP even expresses her opinions using theatrical metaphors, including an unmistakable Shakespeare allusion:



‘true-filed lines’, the character of Fat Bishop is defined by his willingness to lie in books: ‘there’s my recantation in the last leaf.’ (2.2.90)

The line about ‘the fool and the knave’ is also a barbed attack on Jonson, as it uses two of his favourite insults, as shown by this epigram of his:  
To Fool, or Knave

Thy praise or dispraise to me alike:  
One doth not stroke me, nor the other strike.

Furthermore, Cunningham’s *Life of Inigo Jones* describes ‘Jones having accused [Jonson] for naming him, behind his back, a fool, he denied it; but, says he, I said, “He was an arrant knave”, and I avouch it’ (Cunningham 1848, 20). We may also be reminded of Jonson’s *Volpone*:

I am *Volpone*, and this, is my Knaue;  
This, his owne Knaue; This, auarices Foole;  
This, a *Chimera* of Wittal, Foole, and Knaue. (5.11)

Middleton in this passage therefore seems to be inverting Jonson’s praise of Shakespeare and turning his favoured insults against him. It is little wonder that Jonson was so enraged by the character of Fat Bishop, and that *The Staple of Nevves* includes a letter Jonson writes in the name of Spalato.

Black Knight reacts to the presentation of the book with:

Plague of those pestilent pamphlets! Those are they  
That wound our cause to th’ heart. (2.2.93-94)

He is interrupted by the sudden – and perhaps highly appropriate – arrival of White Queen’s Pawn, but he later resumes this tirade against these ‘wounding’ publications. When he summarises the damage that the publications presented by Fat Bishop have done to the Black side cause, he does so using just two root images, one of ‘spears’ and one of ‘shaking’:

Your sharp invectives have been points of *spears*  
In her sweet tender sides. The unkind wounds  
Which a son gives, a son of reverence ‘specially,  
They rankle ten times more than th’ adversary’s.  
I tell you, sir, your reverend revolt  
Did give the fearful’st blow to adoration  
Our cause e’er felt. It *shook* the very statues,  
The urns and ashes of the sainted sleepers. (3.1.64-71, my italics)

The deployment of these two images in a play in which ‘every particular will bear a large paraphrase’ (quoted in Taylor and Lavagnino 2007, 1776)

couldn't be accidental. There is also a specific reference to Heminges and Condell's epistle dedicatory to the Herberts in the First Folio, in which they have a comical self-dialogue concerning whether or not Shakespeare's plays may be called 'trifles':

we cannot but know their dignity greater, then to descend to the reading of these trifles: and, while we name them trifles, we haue depriu'd our selues of the defence of our Dedication. But since your L.L. haue beene pleas'd to thinke these trifles some-thing ... (Shakespeare 1623, A2r)

BK and BBP also have a debate about whether to call WQP a 'trifle':

*BK.* So, is your trifle vanished?

*BBP.* 'Trifle' call you her? It's a good pawn, sir. (1.1.284-285)

White Queen's Pawn therefore represents a book of outstanding plays written long before but unpublished until the period Middleton allegorises, which is chiefly 1623. The book is personified as a Shakespeare character acting out her relevant plot, whilst other characters make numerous extremely specific references to the First Folio. She must be a personification of Shakespeare's First Folio, finally published at the very height of the Spanish Match crisis.<sup>12</sup> Middleton personifies the First Folio as Isabella and makes her so naïve in order to pull off a spectacular piece of dramatic irony: the audience is well aware that they are witnessing a series of hoary old theatrical clichés ripped straight out of Shakespeare's playbook, but Shakespeare's playbook *herself* is completely oblivious and falls for everything.

Since WQP is a representation of the First Folio then that book in some way must have been offered as a sacrificial gambit to help persuade Charles to switch brides to Henrietta Maria. William Herbert – Privy Councillor, First Folio dedicatee and head of Edward Herbert's family – was the dominant Calvinist in Parliament. The legal obligation under the Anglo-Spanish marriage treaty for Charles' children to be being raised as Catholics meant that for William Herbert this marriage was a consummation devoutly not to be wished. He had the motive to collapse the Spanish Match; he had the opportunity in the shape of Edward Herbert's intelligences from Paris; Middleton is emphatic that the means involved the First Folio.

<sup>12</sup> Since WQP's virginity is a metaphor for the unprinted status of the First Folio, the attempted rape episode previously mentioned in connection with the *Lucrece* parody should be read as referring to the False Folio scandal of 1619. The False Folio was an illegitimate attempt to print the first collected works of Shakespeare that was given a spurious legitimacy by the use of replica frontispieces with false dates; likewise BBP makes an illegitimate attempt to have sex with WQP, and uses false dated letters as an alibi.

Since the First Folio was being used as a sacrificial gambit, we would expect some change in its status between William Herbert's attendance at the Privy Council on 1st November and the sending out of the order for the marriage not to proceed on 13<sup>th</sup> November. The First Folio was registered with the Stationer on 8<sup>th</sup> November. This was extraordinarily late: normally publications were registered before printing began in order to protect copyright; printing the First Folio would have been a highly risky financial proposition; and the publication process must have started long before. According to all normal practice the First Folio should have been registered long, long before 8<sup>th</sup> November; instead it was registered mere days before the First Folio appeared on the shelves.

Moreover, when it did appear it was horrendously full of typographical errors, with plentiful signs that the texts were still being edited during final production, such that every copy of the First Folio is slightly different. This latter point demonstrates that the book was printed before even the printers thought it was ready. *Troilus and Cressida* was apparently such a late addition that it suffered the indignity of omission from the Table of Contents, it being stuffed in on unnumbered pages instead. Although the First Folio was prepared during the long crescendo of the Spanish Match crisis – which is very possibly no coincidence, although a consideration of this lies outside the scope of the present article – it was apparently pushed out of the printshop doors with extreme haste. It seems reasonable to suppose that there was a crucial deadline, but no apparent reason for it: Shakespeare had stopped writing plays many years before; the prefatory matter asserts that the purpose of the First Folio is to eliminate the kinds of errors that plagued previous editions; the dedicatees were at that very moment engaged in a struggle to change the course of English history; the printer was coping with the death of his father that month and the assumption of his duties. The question long unanswered is why they would wait so many years, and then in the final stages act in such blind haste.

We may conclude that the extreme rush to finally publish the First Folio relates to its status as some sort of sacrificial pawn that was used by the Herberts to help collapse the Spanish Match. Shakespeare's First Folio is certainly 'sufficiently holy', then, but according to many of those most intimately involved in its creation it was also an 'unmeasurably politic' document. It should be read as such.

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# An Eighteenth-Century *mise en scène* and the Play of Refractions: Essayists, Critics, Spectators, and an Actor Negotiate Meanings

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## *Abstract*

The article aims to reconstruct the eighteenth-century discussion about knowledge and its connection to a new kind of acting. *Mise en scène*, that is, the collective and negotiable creation of meaning in theatre, will be at the core of the following pages. I will examine the eighteenth-century essayists who redefined the body as a readable text and senses as useful tools for understanding others, participants in the process. Metatexts, engendered by both the dramaturgic text and its staging, will demonstrate how these essayists orientated acting and theatrical reception. Keywords around which the main concepts have been developed will be considered as markers of the pervasiveness of the discourse on passions and sensibility in many literary and performative genres. As a case-study, the article focuses on *Macbeth*, affirming that essays written on the art of acting and related topics concurred in creating meaningful refractions in Garrick's performances, whose manifold instances were disseminated by reviewers. The process of knowledge examined in essays was literally acted out in the theatrical space and commented in letters shedding light on Shakespeare's text and its previous adaptations. However, the article's focus can only be retrospective and highly influenced by contemporary pivotal studies on these topics.

Keywords: *Aaron Hill*, *Eighteenth-century Acting*, *Garrick*, *Macbeth*

## 1. *The Text and its Generating Energy*

The eighteenth century has long been considered a watershed in the history of the English theatre because it redefined the complex relationship between text and performance. The Elizabethan text, which was born from the cooperative act of a playwright and his company and during rehearsals was corrected and adjusted for new audiences and historical contingencies, was distinctively unstable. Printed forms of the most famous plays were available, but they differed conspicuously, and none of them was more authoritative than any other. In short, the text shared the transience of its theatrical performances.



However, this did not frustrate writers and actors, and audiences felt no loss of meaning from one text to another, or from a text to a performance based on it. The Urtext of many plays certainly developed into a multiplicity of texts, which could be communicated more or less effectively on the stage, but afterwards it was not so easy to find, and it was rarely sought. Furthermore, many extant copies were incomplete, with the main text being fragmented and distributed to actors playing one or two roles. Fragmentation, then, was part of the organization process, which finally led to the fleeting piecing together of the fragments to recreate the play in its entirety. The main consequence was that authorship was recognized but communal (Pugliatti 2016, 239); the text was sometimes the collaborative effort of two or more dramatists, actors may have had their parts adapted to their physical appearance, and impresarios as well as persons in power may have asked for omissions or additions (250).

The separation of the printed text from its staging appeared in the late eighteenth century, when the literary status of Elizabethan and in particular Shakespearean drama was recognized, and a collation of the many extant quartos and folios was printed of the most reliable versions of the Bard's works, or 'as much of "what Shakespeare wrote" as possible' (Roberts 1998, 192). The canonization of an author entails the unchangeability of his text, especially in the full blossoming of the print era and the literary market.<sup>1</sup> We can affirm, in agreement with Jean I. Marsden, that the philological analysis of the printed text has been paramount in the last centuries, while during the Restoration and early eighteenth century the focus was on adapting the script to the expectations of new audiences (1995, 1-2).

Vanessa Cunningham states that 'after Garrick none had the authority personally to hold together the soon-to-be-separate worlds of editing and performing Shakespeare' (2008, 6). Notwithstanding glosses, notes on variants, and parallel readings,<sup>2</sup> extant scripts were almost frozen in a form deemed to be closer to the original by renowned editors, and then passed on to future generations, while performers continued to mould Shakespeare's lines to render them more palatable and less obscure to contemporary audiences.

<sup>1</sup> Trevor Ross states that '... the nomination of canonical secular texts in a rhetorical culture carries with it an insistence on textual authenticity less because the text may offer an endless supply of meaning than because it heightens the circulation of symbolic capital. And for this intensification to occur, the text must exert a continual and predictable control over its readers' reactions, which it can accomplish only if all readers confront the text in a version that remains uniform throughout an edition ... the fixity that print afforded led to the acclamation of canonical texts whose value lay precisely in their supposed ability to direct readers to a more accordant response' (1998, 108).

<sup>2</sup> Roberts' analysis of Theobald's editing of Shakespeare's dramas in the light of twentieth-century theories highlights the coexistence of conflicting ideas on authorship and the practice of editing in the early decades of the eighteenth century, which produced texts that were both open and closed, unstable and stable, determinate and multiform (1998, 202).

The twentieth-century rift between dramatic text and performance was a trend that had been going on since the eighteenth century, when critics set themselves up as literary judges, while the theatre held on to its intersemiotic<sup>3</sup> translation practice (Jürs-Munby 2006, 4), negotiating meaning among diverse participants in the performance-making process rather than paying homage to the author's intentions.

Since the eighteenth century, critics have cut texts to pieces in order to render them suitable for minute interpretation, concentrating more on deconstructing than on re-creating the whole. The practice has been both the cause and the effect of constructing cultural icons, and has contributed to the dissemination of Shakespearean dramas, albeit in a dismembered form. In addition to this, quotations from Shakespeare's most famous plays have appeared in novels, essays, popular newspapers and advertisements, dislocated from their original characters and words and relocated in newly imagined geographical and temporal contexts. As such, they have taken on new meanings which have been communicated, in their own way, to new audiences (Rumbold 2016). Consequently, quotations can justly be considered autonomous texts which receive and in turn generate new messages. Thus, we have the paradox of the text's powerfully re-emerging fluidity at the very moment that its fixed form evokes the synecdoche of the unalterable text to which the quotation refers.

Rewritings, adaptations, hypertexts, and refractions are the labels used by scholars to describe texts which have been derived from other texts. They testify to the intense multiplying power which is typical of authorized texts, and among them Shakespeare's plays. The phenomenon characterized the Restoration and eighteenth-century theatre, when Shakespeare's masterpieces were cut, expanded or adulterated to obey new aesthetics, comply with classical unities, or respond to the norms of etiquette, and turn a profit. Therefore, they were true refractions (Lefevere 1984, 219) which co-existed with the original, uncontrolled by the author of the source text or hypotext and submitted exclusively to the approval of their audiences and readers (221). Garrick refracted Shakespeare's plays 'in such a way that they became more acceptable to an audience familiar with a poetic concept which was no longer Shakespeare's' (220). Like every refractor, Garrick had to accommodate the hierarchy of constraints imposed by patronage, shared poetics, genres, and the language of Shakespeare's time to what was in vogue in the present day (221).

Garrick was an eclectic figure who both was influenced by and fostered the renewed interest in Shakespeare, intertwining the construction of his own *persona* as the major interpreter of Shakespeare's plays with that of the Bard as a cultural icon. Certainly, he could mediate Shakespeare's complex synthesizing of

<sup>3</sup> The term was coined by Roman Jakobson (1959, 233), and felicitously applied to define the relationship between text and *mise en scène*.

multiple texts into his own literary product by skilfully adapting those materials of the Elizabethan age to respond to contemporary issues. Garrick himself was an eager reader, a critic engaged in intellectual debates, an actor, a manager and a poet. Primarily, he was able to create that special kind of social energy which Greenblatt discusses in his *Shakespearean Negotiations* (1988), as shown by the participation of his audiences, the number of reviews, the letters he received, the essays that analysed his delivery of special lines, and the portrayals that immortalized his gestures and facial expressions on the stage.

In the early stages of Garrick's acting career, the Bard's texts had not yet been completely canonized, and they could easily have become a symbolic place where opposite critical opinions and even models of human beings faced each other. Not only was social energy (Greenblatt 1988, 6) produced and invested again in appropriations and rehearsals, but it also became the focus of literary criticism and acting. According to Johnson, Shakespeare's plays were studies in passions which must be interpreted effectively to mirror, stir, or restrain those of the public. His famous comment in the dedication to the Earl of Orrery, in his preface<sup>4</sup> to the 1753 edition of Charlotte Lennox's *Shakespeare Illustrated* was: 'but his chief Skill was in Human Actions, Passions, and Habits ... his Works may be considered as a Map of Life, a faithful Miniature of human Transactions, and he that has read Shakespear with Attention, will perhaps find little new in the crouded World' (Johnson 1753, ix-x).

Shakespeare's plays were adapted by a process of refraction to meet the needs of the larger audiences that flocked into eighteenth-century theatres. The printed versions of Shakespeare's works, by then part of the cultural capital that the middle class had to acquire to gain access to elite circles, ensnared the potential spectators and served as a sort of advertisement for the performance (Stone Peters 2000, 47). Intellectual, political and social forces at play in those years were willingly exploiting Shakespeare's plays for their own educational purposes and attentively explored the audience's emotional reactions to performances. The 'network of associations or relationships uniting the different stage materials into signifying systems, created both by production (the actors, the director, the stage in general) and reception (the spectators)' (Pavis 2004, 25) was keenly scrutinised by all those who participated in it. Spectators were acknowledged as one of the interpreters and co-authors involved in the complex circuit of theatrical communication. In the Lotmanian sense of the term, they were also 'texts' (Lotman 1994, 378-379), model spectators incorporated in the *mise en scène*, interacting with other heterogeneous texts (previous interpretations of the play, the actual spectators' reactions, old and new aesthetics).

<sup>4</sup> The dedication was ambiguously attributed to 'the author' in the 1753 edition of Lennox's book, but Robert Anderson clarified in his biography that Johnson wrote it for 'Mrs Lennox' (1795, 101-102).

The following sections highlight Garrick's *mise en scène(s)* of *Macbeth*, or, rather, the traces of the communal production of the stage show. Garrick performed it for the first time in 1744, and lastly in 1768. In his intent to offer his own authoritative version of this tragedy, he partly revised Davenant's adaptation (1674), restoring some of Shakespeare's lexical choices and consulting Johnson and Warburton about controversial passages.<sup>5</sup> And extant letters attest to the fact that he also heeded the opinions of dilettantes in interpreting the character of Macbeth. Lefevere states that Garrick's rewritings were successful because they 'fit in with the hierarchy of the receiving-culture audience' (1984, 223). I suggest that his intersemiotic translation of *Macbeth* was particularly attractive because it expressed a new set of aesthetic values and acting styles that enabled spectators to gain access to a great deal of knowledge. An analysis of the multiple texts produced in the aftermath of the 1744 and later performances will show how actors, critics and theatre goers negotiated the text into a collective, distinctively provisional rewriting of *Macbeth*.

The next section will pinpoint some of the issues discussed in essays that helped to define a new set of aesthetic values and audiences' potential needs, which worked as powerful constraints for the refractors. In the first half of the eighteenth century, intellectuals were to a certain extent creating a demand for literary and theatrical products that could teach people how to express themselves, decipher and evaluate oral and visual messages produced by others (the writers, actors, or persons they interacted with in their family or social life).

## 2. *Within the Refraction Process: Negotiating Aims and Strategies of Intersemiotic Translation*

Theatricality pervaded eighteenth-century social life. Much as happened during the Elizabethan age, people scrutinised other social performances, applauded, or criticised them, and put themselves on display on the public stage. Theatres encapsulated many performances: those represented on the stage and those acted out in the galleries, boxes, and pits (Brewer 2013, 64-68). Each of these performances was commented upon in amicable circles, in the clubs and coffee-houses, and in letters, diaries, journals and essays. Because of the Puritan belief that behaviours unveil the individual's inner self, a complex cultural phenomenon was emerging. The body and sight were either the object of intense analysis or the instruments for mapping the self and its place in the outside world.

As Balme states, in the eighteenth century the adjective 'theatrical' was used to define events performed by conflicting forces or characters, or to emphasise the visual quality and perception of actions/portraits/landscapes/bodies/objects. It was also associated with deception. None of these

<sup>5</sup> See, for an exhaustive discussion of Garrick's scripts, Cunningham (2008).

connotations of the term was new but had been passed down through the ages. What was new was the focus on human corporeality as an instrument of both perception and creative construction of knowledge (2007, 4), which was expressed in philosophical and medical essays on the human senses. However, the senses of sight, hearing, touch, smell and taste were insufficient in themselves; a sort of inner eye needed to process them. Only when the apprehension of reality had been mediated and controlled by the human mind did this result in the sensibility of the refined soul (Van Sant 1993, 13). The special quality of sensibility was displayed and scrutinized in society and fiction. Its pervasiveness in so many social and artistic practices marks its centrality to the eighteenth-century discourse. Emotional reactions to works of art, nature and other people's behaviours were vividly examined and described in novels, dramas, books on etiquette and even acting manuals. Since acting techniques could be applied to both social life and the theatre, discussions on oratory and the performing arts can provide a deeper insight into the eighteenth-century construction and maintenance of a well-accepted and 'readable' public *persona*, as well as into the conflicting theatrical aesthetics then under debate (Cassidy and Brunström 2002, 19-20).

It therefore comes as no surprise that one of the recurrent words in eighteenth-century essays on acting is 'sight' and words related to its semantic field. In Elizabethan plays, references were constantly made to the cooperation of senses in eliciting truth from characters and events. It is no accident that Aaron Hill (1685-1750), an actor, writer and influencer, reverted to Shakespeare's ekphrastic descriptions of emotions when he wanted to describe an actor's miming of anger (1753, 369-70). Facial expressions and gestures were thought to be universal. However, they were not easy to imitate, and so it was hard to deceive people by feigning feelings that one did not have. In his *Sentimental Journey*, Sterne demonstrated that he could translate body language into words and reply pertinently to his interlocutor, despite his poor proficiency in French. Moreover, he added that he had long been used to translating body language into words when walking through the streets of London (1768, 182).

Indeed, this universal language may have helped people communicate in a post-Babel world, which had fully experienced the manipulative power of words and rhetoric. Some decades before, Charles Gildon had written that different ethnic groups shared the same 'natural significations of the motions of the hands and other members of the body, which are obvious to the understanding of all sensible men of all nations' (1710, 50). To adapt Wordsworth's lines (1852, 542), theatre was an open school in which audiences 'read with most delight the passions of humankind,' as it reproduced human body language.<sup>6</sup> Eighteenth-century essayists agreed with Sterne when he

<sup>6</sup> The awareness of a complex eighteenth-century discourse on human knowledge, its fragmentariness and liability underlie twentieth and twenty-first-century essays on Georgian



stated that visual signs were a more economic code than words. They advised shorter speeches, translating the unsaid into words such as Yorick's. 'Sight', 'picture', 'portray' are among the most recurrent words in Aaron Hill's *Essay on the Art of Acting* (1753). Moreover, the writer proceeded to fragment performances, considering the visual signs produced by the actors to be a means to highlight the meaning of excerpts from famous scripts.

In doing so, he hinted at a refinement of the Elizabethan hierarchical alliance between sight and word. The interdependence of eye and ear is part of the magic of the theatre: the spectators perceive polysensorially what the actors are performing and feel that their experience is fuller than bookish knowledge. As Gurr states, 'it is now a cliché that Elizabethan audiences were hearers before they were spectators,' which implied a 'three-dimensional acting' and perception (2004, 47). It should be added that the iconoclastic turn in English culture, which was in full bloom during Cromwell's rule, was preceded by a public debate and confuted on the stage by the Elizabethan dramatists. Shakespeare's metadrama can be convincingly considered his own 'response to iconoclasm'. So many scenes demonstrate that 'visual understanding can achieve its own legitimate status and trust in relation to other possible understandings, including the competing scepticism of verbal constructions' (O'Connell 2000, 144). Offstage scenes narrated by various characters, or embedded scenes, clarify that the audience can be deceived when one of these two senses cannot process the events being staged. Let us take for example the proposal to crown Julius Caesar, which is related indirectly by various characters but never actually shown on the stage. The multiple versions blind the crowd's perception but make the audience conscious of the manipulative power of words. Indeed, the spectators cannot verify any of the reports empirically. The opposite situation is staged when Othello sees Bianca and Cassio laughing, but he cannot hear the words they utter. He falls prey to his fears, fostered by Iago's art of insinuation. When characters and audiences can process all the empirical data, they are less likely to be tricked. These sequences are both a lesson on the performer's art, which is a cooperation between visual and verbal signs, and a useful guideline for spectators. They also deny the hierarchical relationship between the two senses in the Elizabethan theatre, which has been recently affirmed by eminent scholars, such as Andrew Gurr, who states that 'proximity to the stage was designed for hearing not for

acting manuals. The compelling and comparative essays by Claudio Vicentini (2012) illustrate the web of interconnections between classical, French, and British eighteenth-century theories on acting and philosophy, while other studies concentrate on acting manuals and the construction of the man (and woman) of feeling (Goring 2005), and on the 'proto-sociology of emotion' (Cassidy and Brunström 2002). Interest in eighteenth-century theories on acting has been discontinuous, but recently renewed. Some of the findings of a common effort to bring to life the remains of an eighteenth-century discourse on acting have helped me to better define my goals.

seeing' (2017, 172), which implies the subordination of the sense of sight to that of hearing in the aesthetic experience of Elizabethan audiences.

Aaron Hill's essay contains evidence of the supremacy of the eye on the eighteenth-century stage as the main perceptive instrument, and of visual signs as the most intuitive translation of verbal signs. In his opening pages, Hill concentrates on acting technique, codifying the main steps of the impersonation of characters into the 'only general rule' (1753, 355) that an actor must observe and practice: 'To act a passion, well, the actor never must attempt its imitation, 'till his fancy has conceived so strong an image, or idea, of it, as to move the same impressive springs within his mind, which form that passion, when 'tis undesigned, and natural'. His acting theory revolves then around the keyword 'passion', in line with eighteenth-century criticism. An actor will not impersonate a character but passions and, as Hill clarifies elsewhere (358; 367-368), that art of expressing 'changing passions' which was typical of Garrick (McKenzie 1990, 3).

The eighteenth-century's critical appreciation of Shakespeare mainly focused on his ability to give vent to strong passions. As Johnson wrote in his preface to Lennox's *Shakespeare Illustrated*, the Bard's plays were still enjoyable and instructive, because 'his heroes are men, ... the love and hatred, the hopes and fears of his chief personages are such as are common to other human beings' (1753, x). Johnson's opinion was shared by Thomas Gray, who wrote to Mason in 1753:

it is nonsense to imagine that Tragedy must *throughout* be agitated with the furious passions or attached by the tender ones. The greater part of it must often be spent in a preparation of these passions, in a gradual working them up to their height, and must thus pass through a great many cooler scenes and a variety of *nuances*, each of which will admit of a proper degree of poetry, and some of purest poetry. (1935, 359)

In so writing, Gray stresses the way in which Shakespeare narrates the passions in his plays, their slightly changing shades of meaning and expression. The interweaving of comedy and tragedy, joy and hatred is typical of everyday life and Shakespeare powerfully conveys the mysterious ways of human conduct because he surrenders to the flowing rhythm of change, flux, and transformation: 'join[s] it [poetry] with pure passion and yet keep[s] close to nature' (359). Won over by the great feast of Shakespearean language, Gray claims that some of the Bard's lines are untranslatable because they are 'picture[s]', as he affirms in a 1742 letter to West (193). One of the main principles of eighteenth-century aesthetics underlies Gray's letters: 'words when well chosen, have so great a force in them that a description often gives us more likely ideas than the sight of things themselves. The reader finds a scene drawn in stronger colours and painted in more to life in his imagination by the help of words than by an actual survey of the scene which they describe' (Addison 1975, 160). Grey, as well as Addison in an essay of 1712 (1975,

160), draw on a common eighteenth-century conception of the relationship between the visual arts and literature. As Gores states: 'eighteenth-century audiences could treat the arts as various representational discourses [i.e. a group of signs united by a certain social practice and which tend to produce the same culturally approved meaning] among which difference was largely a matter of translation' (2000, 18). In Gray's view, Shakespeare sees and feels life more intensely than other human beings and translates his vision and emotional reactions into words. Lexical choice is so effective because it allows the reader to share the poet's vision.

From Hill's perspective, the actor in turn translates the poet's words into visible signs that succeed in communicating passions more effectively. To achieve his goal, the actor must identify the character's emotional reaction to a given event by analysing the script. When he conceives a threatening or joyful passion his face will change and express the strong feeling which emerges from the lines, his body will assume a matching posture, and his voice will attune itself to his body (1753, 362). In Hill's words, the process of translation is 'natural,' the inevitable consequence of the empathetic sharing of a mood, which will generate the audience's sensorial and emotional involvement. The adjective 'natural,' which was loaded with so many meanings in the eighteenth century, here implies that the detected idea transferred itself almost mechanically to the body of the actor, which makes visible the intangible and the secret. It is the idea that cannot but 'impress ... its own form upon the muscles of the *face* ... nor can the look be muscularly stamp'd, without communicating, instantly, the same impression, to the muscles of the body' (*ibid.*). 'Impression' and 'stamped' are polysemous words, which refer to the actions of printing, depicting, and impressing/engraving marks on a surface. These actions happen almost unconsciously and transform the actor's body into a readable book, composed of iconic signs. Just how much these ideas were shared is demonstrated by Thomas Sheridan (1719-1788), himself an actor, in *A Course of Lectures on Elocution* (1762), which aimed at a complete reformation of the rhetoric of delivery (Mullini 2018, 164). Aaron Hill's ideas are considered here applicable to social conversation, sermons, public readings and teaching.

Visible signs were widely charged with the main function of communicating. A diachronic perspective on the history of British acting demonstrates that Colley Cibber already appreciated Thomas Betterton's skilfulness in reproducing the visual expression of feelings (Goring 2005, 122-125). Betterton (1635?-1710) lived before Garrick's revolution, but he certainly expressed a deep interest in human feelings and in the human body as an outlet for the passions. When he died, the sentimental novel had not yet been labelled as such – this would come about in the late eighteenth century (Mullan 1996, 236) –, but the language of feeling was already being perceived and gendered. In a dedicatory poem prefixed to *Poems on Several*

*Occasions* (1696), the anonymous poet pits feminine and masculine competing skills and values against each other, arguing that the softness of sentiment is typical of a female mind (Clery 2004, 39). Sentimental novels were meant to reach a large female audience and successfully spread the eighteenth-century discourse 'that constantly reweighed the relative emotional transparency of variously socially situated bodies' (Zunshine 2010, 131). Women's emotional transparency, already an exploited *topos* in classical literatures, was effusively described and articulated in novels and plays, and held to be the distinctive mark of women's epistles (Hinton 1999, 60-63). Being transparent, they were easily understood, ridiculed and deceived by men, but they were also better equipped to articulate themselves in both the corporeal and verbal languages. The focus on women's communicative skills contributed to train audiences at large in the decoding and translation practices of oral and visual signs.

However, experience teaches us that we are sufficiently self-conscious to assume poses 'to shape other people's perceptions of our mental states' (Zunshine 2010, 120), performing passions as actors do. Therefore, in real life the body is liable to become an opaque sign. Sentimental novels and dramas contrast correct and erroneous interpretations of gestures, behaviours, and gazes, in order to aid in the uncertain act of decoding ambiguous signs and in preventing social misconduct. Aaron Hill instead relies on the strong belief that bodies are transparent signs; that when an actor feigns passions he/she ends up being totally immersed in them. The theatre was a living conduct-book for him (Goring 2005, 128), and his essay on acting was a manual for helping people distinguish and control passions.

In keeping with his didactic and moral purpose, Aaron Hill identifies ten dramatic passions 'which can be distinguished by their outward marks, in action, all others being relative to, and but varied degrees of, the foregoing' (1753, 357). He then proceeds to describe each of them in detail, and how an actor should ensure their perception by an audience. Joy, for instance, 'cannot, therefore, be expressed without vivacity, in look, air, and accent' (358). Reading the passage, we come to understand that conflicting signs are to be avoided (360), as the performance must be a true mirror of a simplified reality, from which ambiguity has been removed. That is why an actor should try to identify the passion which underlies his lines and then relive it on the stage. The translation process is lucidly described: analysis of the text is the first step, the second being impersonation, which results naturally from empathetic feelings. The mirror test will help the actor see whether the marks of joy, for instance, are correctly printed on his face:

If, for example, his brow, in the glass, appears bow-bent, or cloudy, his neck bowing, and relaxed, his breast not thrown gracefully back, and elate; if he sees his arm swing languid, or hang motionless, his back-bone reposed, or unstraiten'd, and the joints of his hip, knee, and ancle, not strong-brac'd, by swelling out the sinews to their full extent. — All, or any of these spiritless signs, in the glass, may convince him,

that he has too faintly conceived the impression: and, at once, to *prove* it, to his own full satisfaction, let him, at that time, endeavour to speak out, with a voice as high raised as he pleases, he will find, that, in that languid state of muscles, he can never bring it to found *joy* ... But, if on the contrary, he has hit the conception, exactly, he will have the pleasure, in that case, to observe, in the glass, that his forehead appears open, and rais'd, his eye smiling, and sparkling, his neck will be stretch'd, and erect, without stiffness, as if it would add new height to his stature; his breast will be inflated, and majestically backen'd; his back-bone erect, and all the joints of his arm, wrist, fingers, hip, knee, and ankle, will be high-strung, and brac'd boldly. And *now*, if he attempts to speak *joy*, all the spirit of the passion will ascend in his accents, and the very tone of his voice will seem to out-rapture the meaning. (360-361)

In his dressing room, or during rehearsals, an actor checks the meticulous transference of meaning from the script to his own body, and the exact match of the feelings which transpire from the words and his body language. When on stage he will have to deliver his lines after assuming the posture, gestures and facial expressions that correspond to the passion he has detected in the script: 'But as soon as this pathetic sensation has strongly and fully imprinted his fancy, let him, then — and never a moment before — attempt to give the Speech due utterance' (367). In so doing, he will display the authentic process and technique of impersonation; the play will be fragmented into messages in different codes which will not act simultaneously but one-by-one, with a composite effect that helps to clarify the character's emotions. The hierarchical relationship between eye and ear has been transformed into an alliance which reminds us of the visually expressed moral abstractions in emblems, a form which powerfully joined words and pictures, and was still appreciated in eighteenth-century England (Bath 1994, 255-256). Hill's essay, published at mid-century, inherited the highly codified language of Ripa's archive of icons, but also 'rested on English empiricism' (Hagstrum 1958, 150). The dramatic code could be a technique for representing a medley of passions but also distinguish any slight nuance in a single one. A more realistic interpretation of them is achieved, while their creation in slow motion on the stage allows a deeper insight into the characters' psychology.

The felicitous expression of feelings will generate an empathetic response on the part of the spectators, and will transmit the living spirit of the words, 'So shall he always hit the right and touching sensibility of tone, and move his auditors, impressingly' (Hill 1753, 367). Aaron Hill applied to the stage what Addison had already stated about the visual quality of poetry, 'the aesthetic value of the sublime object,' and their momentous impact on the mind of the spectators (Hagstrum 1958, 137-138). In his essay, the focus is alternatively on the process of making the passions visible and on the audience's reactions to them. Hill, in attuning himself to the picturesque theories, always bears in mind the necessary cooperation of the hearer/seer. The audience will complete the living portrait of the acted passion by

imagining it. A fragmentary interpretation of the slow raising of passions will help the audience anticipate emotional reactions to the staged events and get involved in the action, thereby becoming part of the frame, and living an intense collective psychological experience.

Although Hill asserts that dramatists, and especially Shakespeare, must be served by the actor, he seems to challenge their authorship because their texts need interpretation and completion by so many participants. John Hill (another Hill, c. 1714-1775), who had been in his early years 'a would-be quack-scribbler-actor' (Rousseau 2012, 11), plainly states the point in his essay *The Actor*: the author's poignant lines fail in raising passions if the actor does not embody the right feelings, and the audience may laugh at emotional speeches when badly delivered (1750, 5-6). This aligns the two essayists with the narrative approach of eighteenth-century novelists, who allow unreliable witnesses to compete with the omniscient narrator (Brodey 2008, 163-164). In its way, the novel reproduced a communal action of deciphering visual and verbal signs.

Pauses between action and speech delivery, between the translative intersemiotic phases, will also allow the actor to pace and control his voice to more closely mirror reality and human nature: 'pensive pausing places, will at the same time, appear to an audience, but the strong and natural attitudes of thinking; and the inward agitations of a heart, that is, in truth, disturb'd, and shaken' (A. Hill 1753, 368). Verisimilitude, plausibility are Aaron Hill's keywords, and one of the main concerns in Lennox's strictures on Shakespeare's plays.

In the dedicatory preface to *Shakespear Illustrated* we read that 'it is not perhaps very necessary to enquire whether the Vehicle of so much Delight and Instruction be a story probable, or unlikely, native, or foreign. *Shakespear's* Excellence is not the Fiction of a Tale, but the Representation of Life' (Lennox 1753, xi). This general assumption is consistent with Samuel Johnson's critical reading of Shakespeare, whom he considered the 'poet of nature; the poet that holds up to his readers a faithful mirrour of manners and of life' (1766, iv). Smallwood claims that these words have been misunderstood. Johnson's appreciation of the Bard revolves around two keywords, 'nature' and 'manners', which have opposite traits, such as 'permanent' and 'changing', 'hidden' and 'visible'. In Smallwood's own words, 'It is a distinction between surfaces and depth – how things appear to us and how they are when we look deeper' (1997, 148). Johnson profoundly believed that a common reader/spectator could still decipher 'details of behaviour, gesture, and speech found in the dead-and-gone society which remain atemporally human and therefore visible today' (148-149). This conviction was nurtured by the strong belief that the particular (the visible) was akin to the general (the ideal; Hagstrum 1958, 135). As Jean Hagstrum notes, one of the senses of the word 'mirror' listed by Johnson in his *Dictionary* was 'an archetype' (136). In accordance

with this, the theatre is a mirror of a prototypical life that constantly renews its forms in successive ages.

Charlotte Lennox blames Shakespeare whenever his portrayal of feelings and actions does not meet eighteenth-century standards of verisimilitude. When contrasting *Othello* with its Italian source, she notes that the drama's plot is more credible but still contains inconsistencies that make some characters' reactions hard to understand. For instance, Othello is a man of noble birth and 'the Dignity which the Venetian state bestows upon Him is less to be wondered at' (1753, 127), Cassio is an amiable and handsome young man, likely to win Desdemona's love and excite Othello's jealousy. Emilia's behaviour seems implausible to Lennox: the woman empathises with Desdemona, correctly identifies Othello's possessive love, but inconsistently helps her husband to entrap them in his psychological snares (127-129). To confute the accusation of implausibility suggested by Rhymer, she observes that it cannot be excluded that a character as evil and dissembling as Iago would live among valiant and noble soldiers and reinforces her point by drawing on a stereotypical archive of cruel and vengeful Italians, still prevalent at the time (130). Following the same train of thought, she acquits Shakespeare of implausibly portraying an interclass and interracial marriage. In her own words, 'There is less Improbability in supposing a noble Lady, educated in Sentiments superior to the Vulgar, should fall in love with a Man merely for the Qualities of his Mind, than that a mean Citizen should be possessed of such exalted Ideas, as to overlook the Disparity of Years and Complexion, and be enamoured of Virtue in the Person of a Moor' (132). It seems improbable to her that Iago, who has fallen in love with Desdemona (130), could urge Othello to kill his wife, while his fear of being betrayed by Emilia and the Moor seems to be more consistent with his actions. However, 'his Barbarity to Desdemona is still unnatural' (130-131).

By discriminating between probable and improbable reactions to people and events, Lennox considers not only archetypal models, but also cultural constraints. In so doing, she describes Shakespearean refractions in the eighteenth century and offers her audience a distinctive sense of what an English lady and gentleman would feel and how they would act in a given situational context. Her judgments of verisimilitude depend on her own values, which are not those of Rhymer. The emergence of a new discourse on femininity is evident, when she accuses Emilia of being Iago's accomplice, and notes that Desdemona loves Othello for his many qualities. Being a cultivated lady, she appreciates virtue and consistently discriminates between good and bad behaviour.

In her contrastive analysis of *Macbeth* and its sources, Lennox is animated by the same methodological rigour, which makes her discriminate between probable and improbable events in the plot. She calls into question the latter cultural products of Shakespeare's time (e.g., the witches' apparition),

whose ‘darkness of Ignorance has been more gross’ (281). She also identifies some of the constraints that must have prompted Shakespeare’s refractions of Holished’s *Chronicles*: transcodification from prose writing to the stage (272-273), homage paid to James I (275-276), and strong cultural beliefs (281-300), as detailed by Johnson in a long embedded long quotation from *Miscellaneous Observations on the Tragedy of Macbeth* (Johnson 1801). Such an erudite discussion leaves space for analyzing the passions. According to Lennox, Shakespeare has ‘softened a little some of the most rugged Features [of Macbeth]; he shews him doubtful and irresolute about the Murder of the King, spurred on by Ambition to commit it, but restrained by his Abhorrence of the Action’ (1753, 279). Lady Macbeth instigates her husband to crime ‘by the most provoking expressions, reproaching him with Cowardice and Sloth, as negligent to receive what Fate had directed to obtain’ (279-280). As far as we know from reviews and letters, Garrick’s and Pritchard’s interpretation of the two characters, made of the inner conflict which tears Macbeth apart, and its psychological projection into the man-wife relationship the central topic discussed in the performance. Ambition is the main passion examined: Lady Macbeth’s actions are driven by her lust for power, while her husband, who is not as bold as she is in pursuing the throne, is tormented by inner conflict. Strangely, Lennox does not comment on the undermining of this traditional masculine leadership, though it was effectively taken into account by Garrick and Mrs. Pritchard in their stage interpretations.

### 3. *Traces of Significant Refractions in Garrick’s Adaptations of Macbeth*

In 1741, Garrick’s first appearance in *Richard III* was greeted as a renewal of the theatre, the shift from a rhetorical and static form of acting towards an emotional, vibrant and more natural rendering of passion-driven characters. From then on, he acted as Shakespeare’s refractor in subsequent *mises en scène*. His rewritings were so successful that ‘Well into the nineteenth century, successor Macbeths expired on the stage with Garrick’s death speech on their lips’ (Cunningham 2008, 43). Although celebrated as a lover of the purity of the Shakespearean texts, he nonetheless made no bones about modifying the plots, removing scenes and adding others to satisfy the cultural needs of his audiences and soothe their anxieties. The fact was that Garrick was rewriting to perform and to sell his performance, not to be read by philologists. His performances were intended to entertain, not to disappoint his audiences, which were well acquainted with previous performances and Davenant’s rewriting. In line with Davenant, he kept the witches’ scenes, which were among the most spectacular of Davenant’s additions (Cunningham 2008, 55).

Contiguous dates of the first performance of Garrick’s *Macbeth* (1744) and the composition of Johnson’s *Miscellaneous Observations on the Tragedy of Macbeth* (1801) suggest the influence of Johnson’s criticism on Garrick.



However, Garrick rejected many of Johnson's choices, since they had different goals (Cunningham 2008, 45). Garrick was out to mediate and make palatable an old revered text to eighteenth-century spectators, while Johnson was on a bookish mission to revise Shakespeare's texts, purge them of their 'blemishes,' clarify the meanings of obscure words, and even correct punctuation. Garrick could count on gestures, facial expressions and proxemics to shed light on opaque meanings, while Johnson wrote *about* Shakespeare's texts, fragmenting them, adding his own explicative expansions. To a certain extent he intervened excessively in the texts, cancelling or highlighting entire passages. This is not to deny that Garrick took pains to single out the most appropriate and theatrically effective words. In fact, he was aware of the creative and suggestive power of words, and – for example – restored 'knife,' whose recurrence is highly evocative, and which Davenant had substituted with the gentler metonymy of 'my keen steel' (Cunningham 2008, 46). Where he removed lines, he protected himself against the predictably unfavourable reaction of an eighteenth-century audience to cruel or coarse scenes. The Porter's part was erased to comply with contemporary tastes, and Macbeth's dying speech was added to increase poetic justice (Benedetti 2001, 127). In Garrick's adaptation, Macbeth confesses to his crimes and anguish, and dies bitterly aware that his soul is heavy with the bloodshed of his victims (*ibid.*). All things considered, Garrick's omissions helped his audiences to concentrate on the main character's inner conflicts and concerns, at the expense of the political and historical context (Cunningham 2008, 54), in keeping with the largely shared aesthetic values of his time.

Garrick's audiences were so impressed and overwhelmed by his performances that they wrote to him, congratulating him on his acting, and discussing their own critical appreciation of the text, suggesting new gestures and pitches of tone to render the 'true' nuance of meaning in selected passages. Some of these letters contained vivid descriptions of very short scenes, which equalled in impressiveness some of the most famous theatrical paintings of Garrick's Macbeth. By reading these letters, we can appreciate an aesthetic perception stimulated by these intensely represented and perceived visual fragments of the performance. This is clear evidence of a new shared analytical approach to the theatrical text, which is primarily based on the relevance of sight in appreciating the main outward manifestations of passion.

In eighteenth-century reviews and debates on theatre, Garrick was celebrated for his demeanor and civility (Shawe-Taylor 1998, 107), the former certifying to his accomplishments in the latter. Biographies devoted to him extolled his gentlemanly qualities, as did the circle of his friends and acquaintances in their reminiscences about him, 'to the point of denying character weaknesses' (Boyd 2018, ch. 1). His own body was a living conduct-book on the stage: gentlemen could recognise their good manners, while people wishing to be members of elitist circles learned correct etiquette from

his performances. When he first performed *Macbeth*, he appeared untidily dressed, and was urged by Lady Macbeth to act manly and return the daggers to the crime scene, to provide other characters with evidence of the grooms' guilt. These details powerfully conveyed his profound distress in the aftermath of Duncan's assassination, but the audience did not appreciate such a display of careless behaviour, as his friends reported (Shawe-Taylor 1998, 110-111). In the following performances, his twisted right leg and his hands fending the air off were signs of a soul struck with horror. Johann Zoffany froze the frightful moment in one of his theatrical portraits (1768, 1776): oblique lines are formed in disorderly fashion by Mrs Pritchard's and Garrick's arms, which point towards the centre of the picture, but without touching each other. Mrs Pritchard looks angrily at Garrick, her right hand raised and pointing towards him, while the other is holding a dagger pointing towards the door on the left. While Mrs Prichard's arms and legs form two almost perfectly parallel lines, Garrick's hands and legs do not repeat the same symmetry. Notwithstanding the neoclassical sceneries, the neat garb, the composure on Garrick's face, the whole scene conveys disturbing emotions. Conflicting signs heighten the inner tension between the gentleman Macbeth and his wife, who urges him on to commit evil: the biblical pattern of the temptress Eve is being repeated in an eighteenth-century mansion.

The striking effect was reached also thanks to Mrs Pritchard, who had 'a genius for body language' (Leigh 2014, 103). Her evil, vigorous Lady Macbeth counterpointed Macbeth's passivity, embodying a manly woman who deviates from the feminine standard. Thomas Davies (c. 1713-1785) grasped the sense of the weird contrast between a sensitive man and his heartless wife and admired how the two actors communicated the anxiety arising from the collapse of the traditional polarity of gender norms: '[Garrick's] distraction of mind and agonizing horrors were merely contrasted by her seeming apathy, tranquillity, and confidence. The beginning of the scene after the murder was conducted in terrifying whispers' (1784, 93). The strength of Pritchard-Lady Macbeth's challenge to her husband can be felt in Davies' metatextual note: 'Her reproving and angry looks, which glanced towards Macbeth, at the same time were mixed with marks of inward vexation and uneasiness' (105). Visual signs were easily decipherable by the audience: stillness, whispers, angry looks foregrounded the conflict between sexes, which runs throughout Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. Indeed, Pritchard's and Garrick's interpretation of the play relocated it in their own times and refracted it through the lens of the cognitive topic at issue then. Pritchard's Lady Macbeth was upset and frustrated because her husband, fraught by worries and remorse, could not act. However, her rational thinking and her focus on her main goal are what cause disaster to crash down on them in the end. As Davies testifies, Garrick's Macbeth won the audience's favour just because he is sensitive enough to regret his crime and to be unwilling to persevere in it (93). A manly man was

not the hero of middle-class audiences.

Like Davies, Thomas Wilkes highlighted the importance of the performance as a complete text, harmoniously knitted together by the combined efforts of visual and oral signs. In a few lines, the author makes us relive the *energeia* that was contained potentially in Shakespeare's text and was later released by Garrick and transmitted to his audience:

It is impossible for description to convey an adequate idea of the horror of his looks, when he returns from having murdered Duncan with the bloody daggers, and hands stained in gore. How does his voice chill the blood when he tells you, 'I have done the deed!' and then looking on his hands, 'this is a sorry sight!' How expressive is his manner and countenance during Lennox's knocking at the door, of the anguish and confusion that possess him; and his answer, 'twas a rough night', shews as much self-condemnation, as much fear of discovery, as much endeavour to conquer inquietude and assume ease, as ever was infused into, or intended for, the character. (1759, 248-249)

Looking at Zoffany's theatrical painting and perusing Wilkes' and Davies' descriptions, we perceive how Garrick and Pritchard were applying Aaron Hill's precepts to their acting. Garrick certainly did not rely completely on his own experiences and feelings, but also 'on the systematic studies of expression which were fashionable at the time' (Shawe-Taylor 1998, 111), notably Le Brun's *Conférence sur L'expression* (1698). The precise drawings in this text presented the actor, the audience and society at large with an inventory of visual signs combined in different ways to express passions as much as Aaron Hill's ekphrastic descriptions did. Both essayists gave the illusion that the human soul was visible, detectable and readable.

Appreciation of the performance was oriented by mental image catalogues and words that confidently assert that human passions and intentions are recognizable and reproducible. The memories of past performances interacted with the most recent ones and activated sagacious comparisons on the part of the spectator, making him/her revert to the Shakespearean text to better understand the poet's intentions. Murphy's famous letter to Garrick (Garrick 1832, 363) reveals that sort of energy that the theatre released back onto the text. It is a wonderful example of how the collective reading and translation of Shakespeare influenced the common reader's taste, sharpening his/her emotional intelligence, that valuable gift of empathy with others. The sender first congratulates the actor on his performance of Macbeth, which, however, seemed to him less effective than the young Garrick's interpretation. Next, he confesses to having read the dramaturgic text again and made a contrastive analysis between it and the later theatrical version, drawing on the visual images he had stored in his mind. The transiency of the performance is highlighted as well as the permanency of the text (which of the many available versions Murphy does not detail!). Garrick's polite response does not deny

the implicit unfavourable comparison, when protesting that, if ‘in order,’ he will profit from these criticisms. A metaphorical portrait of himself running to follow the suggested tracks like a huntsman (364) closes, and renews, the circle of theatrical energy:

The scene I mean is the first in the second act, where you converse with Banquo. For a man just going to commit a murder, and so strongly possessed with the horror of the deed, as in a moment after to see a dagger, — were you not a little too disengaged, too free, and too much at ease? I will tell you how I have seen you do it: — you dissembled indeed, but dissembled with difficulty. Upon the first entrance the eye glanced at the door; the gaiety was forced, and at intervals the eye gave a momentary look towards the door, and turned away in a moment. This was but a fair contrast to the acted cheerfulness with which this disconcerted behaviour was intermixed. After saying, ‘Good, repose the while;’ the eye then fixed on the door, then after a pause in a broken tone, ‘Go, bid thy mistress, &c’. If I had been to give an account of the manner with which Mr. Garrick acquitted himself in this scene, it should have been to the above purport. Pray observe, that as you assume a freedom and a gaiety here, it will be also a contrast to the fine disturbance of mind and behaviour, in the night gown, after the murder is committed, when no cheerfulness is affected: I am sure this was the way formerly, and I own it strikes me most. If I am wrong, you must thank yourself for it.

The other passage is, ‘Doctor, the Thanes fly from me’; it used to be a strong involuntary burst of melancholy, and the other night I thought it sounded very differently. You see I have had my telescope at the sun for the dear delight of finding a few spots, and if I have found them, you are the optician yourself who furnished me with the medium to look through. (363)

Murphy, who was one of Garrick’s biographers, was such an alert reader of the theatrical code that not only did he detect the sequence of conflicting signs (indicating cheerfulness and distress) in the scene, but also the contrast with the assassination scene, where darkness and evil prevail. In other words, he was able to appreciate the theatrical syntax of the performance because he correctly identified not only the ‘relationship between the signs of many different kinds’ (Kirby 1987, 39), but also how later ‘scenes’ were semantically connected to earlier ones. Although fragmented, the performance acquired meaning in the process of making itself, mainly thanks to the spectator’s contribution and his/her use of the retrospective gaze. The active role of the audience is emphasised in the last lines of the letter, where the metaphor of sight is extended to show the connections between all the parts involved in the making of the performance. The actor/optician tests the spectator’s sight, so that the latter can improve his abilities and peruse both the script and its translation on the stage. This circle generates and gives back energy.

In 1744 an anonymous essay on acting, ‘containing the mimical behaviour of a certain fashionable actor,’ was published. As it has been attributed to Garrick, the actor’s artistic choices can be easily detected,

being foregrounded by means of an external point of view. I will confine myself to analysing some excerpts from the mock criticism of the first run of *Macbeth*'s performance. Pretending to highlight his own faults, Garrick stages a conflict between the role of a refined Shakespeare critic and his own. In doing so, he can demonstrate that some of the essayist's main assumptions are pointless, but at the same time assume the critic's stance of facilitating a better appreciation of the masterpieces by the readers. He combines two hackneyed metaphors to describe his critical effort, which is to make other critics see their 'misconceptions' and how their misunderstandings can drive them away into ignorance (Garrick 1744, 13). The sender, the mock-essayist, is there to drive them home, that is back to the main meaning of *Macbeth*: 'But Metaphor apart, what is the *Character of Macbeth?*' (*ibid.*).

Garrick's mask here admits that he has not the physical appearance of a hero. His approval of the first precept in John Hill's *The Actor* (1750, 1-2) sounds like an *innuendo* to the audience (Garrick 1744, 14). Notwithstanding Garrick's shortness, his performance as Macbeth established a model for future generations of actors, spectators and critics. What is at issue here is the aesthetic value of verisimilitude, which is not to be punctiliously pursued in every detail (15-16). Apart from exhilarating notations about the actor's wig and cloak in *Macbeth*, the most relevant information is given when the mock essayist tries to apply the precepts about transient passions to the opening lines of the hero's part: 'Tho' I cannot convey in Writing the Manner how it *should* be spoke, yet every Reader may comprehend how it *ought* to be spoke, the Sentiment is languid, unintelligible, and undescriptive' (16). It is more than a hint at the unsayableness of shades of feelings, which can be better expressed by gestures, looks, and posture. The powerful circle of energy created by the body of the actor is emphasised in the description of the dagger scene, which completely focuses on the facial expressions of the actor, making him capable of reliving the feelings surrounding the assassination, and enabling the spectator to share in the character's anguish:

Macbeth, as a Preparation for this Vision, is so prepossess'd, from his Humanity, with the Horror of the Deed, which by his more prevailing Ambition he is incited to, and for the Perpetration of which, he lies under a promissary Injunction to his Lady, that his Mind being torn by these different and confus'd Ideas, his Senses fail, and present that *fatal Agent* of his Cruelty,—the Dagger, to him:—Now in this visionary Horror, he should not rivet his Eyes to an *imaginary* Object, as if it really was there, but should shew an *unsettled Motion* in his Eye, like one not quite awak'd from some disordering Dream; his *Hands* and *Fingers* should not be *immoveable*, but *restless*, and endeavouring to disperse the Cloud that over shadows his optick Ray, and bedims his Intellects; here would be Confusion, Disorder, and Agony! Come let me clutch thee! is not to be done by one Motion only, but by several successive Catches at it, first with one Hand, and then with the other, preserving the same Motion, at the same Time, with his Feet, like a Man, who out of his Depth, and half drowned in

his Struggles, catches at Air for Substance: This would make the Spectator's Blood run cold, and he would almost feel the Agonies of the Murderer himself. (17)

The conveyance and public experiencing of passions is all we can infer. Theatre should mirror human beings' natural manners (in the Johnsonian sense), the only ones that can be shared by a contemporary audience. Garrick might have discontented his critics, who thought that eighteenth-century theatrical taste had degenerated, but he also won the public's favour. The spectators' reviews testify to the enlivening experience they enjoyed. The marshalling parallelism of positive and negative precepts – probably intended to ridicule James Quin, the rival star –, certainly criticised 'empty posturing and gesticulating, with no pretence of an imaginary dagger' (Benedetti 2001, 128), but also reminded critics that a test of the successfully renewed energy of Shakespearean drama is the audience's empathetic silence. Nonverbal clues give a much more accurate picture of what a person experiences than words can. When this happens, the recipient allows feelings to circulate through his/her body.

Once again, the description of the passions expressed by visual signs has been fragmented, its quick, fractured rhythm aimed at reproducing the rapid shift of feelings. Conflicting ideas have been conflated in so tiny a space that the reader is required to complete the unfinished work, that is the actor's performance, with his own intellectual and emotional response. Indeed, the most powerful aspects of the discussion on the process of knowledge acquisition are visible here: interest in the broken syntax of human feelings, in the visual signs that reveal it, and the effort to include the reader in creating meaning, especially meaning that is unutterable.

The *mise en scène* has shown itself as a dynamic process triggered by multiple refracting readings of Shakespeare's works, and provisionally ended by the actors, the spectators and the reviewers. Now that the complex debate on knowledge acquisition has been partially reproduced on the page, I can conclude that it reverberated in eighteenth-century essays on acting, leading to a profound reform of acting techniques, but also to a profound metatextual analysis of the performance. The main results of this debate were applied by actors and audiences, fully aware of their role as active participants in producing the performance, as testified in their letters.

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# *Impermanence of Authorship*



# The Diminution of Thomas Kyd

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## *Abstract*

Thomas Kyd is traditionally accepted as the author of *The Spanish Tragedy*, *Soliman and Perseda*, and *Cornelia*. Kyd may also have written a lost *Hamlet* play that preceded Shakespeare's version. Among his contemporaries, Kyd enjoyed a far higher reputation than he does today. Thomas Dekker and Ben Jonson's respective epithets, 'industrious' and 'sporting', suggest that Kyd's canon was considerably larger than the three plays now acknowledged as his, and that he may have written comedies. The article explores the ways in which Kyd's reputation as a major dramatist has been impeded, with scholarly arguments for his authorship of anonymous texts often displaced by claims for Marlowe and/or Shakespeare. Furthermore, the theory that Kyd wrote the original *Hamlet* play has been countered by Terri Bourus, who argues that Q1 represents an older version of the play written by Shakespeare. The article thus surveys recent attribution and textual scholarship and suggests that Kyd has been the victim of a curious ideological phenomenon in early modern literary studies, which at once isolates Shakespeare, while enforcing notions of authorial plurality, even when the evidence for co-authorship is lacking. The article calls for a reassessment of Kyd's legacy as a major dramatist of the period.

Keywords: Arden of Faversham, *Authorship*, Hamlet, Kyd, Shakespeare

## 1. *Introduction*

In this article I provide an overview of the scholarship concerning Thomas Kyd's dramatic corpus, before demonstrating the ways in which older scholarship on Kyd's canon has been neglected in modern studies.<sup>1</sup> I survey the arguments for Shakespeare's hand in *Arden of Faversham* (1590),<sup>2</sup> which has been assigned to Kyd since the end of the nineteenth century, and the ways in which modern attributionists have revised or interpreted their data to support the theory of

<sup>1</sup> I am grateful to Lois Potter and the two anonymous referees for offering helpful comments on an earlier version of this essay.

<sup>2</sup> I have used Martin Wiggins and Catherine Richardson's *British Drama 1533-1642* (2013, 9) for dating.



Shakespeare's part authorship. I then examine arguments for Shakespeare's authorship of the so-called *Ur-Hamlet*, and suggest that we can broaden our understanding of Thomas Nashe's invective against the author of this lost play in his 1589 Preface to Greene's *Menaphon* (McKerrow 1958, III, 385-394) by comparing it to Robert Greene's criticisms of the dramatist responsible for *Fair Em, the Miller's Daughter of Manchester* (1590). I also explore the origins of Q1 *Hamlet*, specifically the connections between the printed text and aural memory, for the play seems to me, as Thomas Heywood might put it, to have been 'coppied onely by the eare' (1608, sig. A2r). The article therefore argues for Kyd's authorship of texts in which his hand has been recently denied. By way of conclusion, I propose that Kyd has been the victim of a curious ideological phenomenon in early modern literary studies, which at once isolates Shakespeare, while enforcing notions of authorial plurality, even when the evidence for co-authorship is lacking. The article calls for a reassessment of Kyd's legacy as a major dramatist of the period, and a reappraisal of his influence on Shakespeare's drama.

## 2. *Thomas Kyd*

Thomas Kyd (1558-1594) deserves to be ranked among Marlowe (with whom he shared lodgings), Shakespeare, and Lyly as one of the greatest Elizabethan dramatists. He is traditionally accepted as the author of *The Spanish Tragedy* (1587), *Soliman and Perseda* (1588), and *Cornelia* (1594). Kyd also seems to have written a lost *Hamlet* play (1588) that preceded Shakespeare's version. The son of Anna Kyd and Francis Kyd, a scrivener (a professional scribe), he attended Merchant Taylors' School, which also boasted such alumni as Thomas Lodge, Lancelot Andrewes, and Edmund Spenser. It is probable that Kyd was at some point engaged in his father's trade. Arthur Freeman noted that 'Kyd's handwriting, as it survives in two letters of 1593-4 to Sir John Puckering, is remarkably clear and formal', which suggests the 'training of a scrivener' (1967, 12). Thomas Dekker, in his pamphlet *A Knight's Conjuring* (1607), linked 'industrious Kyd' with the actor John Bentley, and the poets Thomas Watson and Thomas Achelley (1607, sigs. K8v-L1r); while in his eulogy on Shakespeare, published in the First Folio (1623), Ben Jonson placed 'sporting Kyd' among Shakespeare's peers (Bevington, Butler, Donaldson, 2012, V, 639). Dekker and Jonson's respective epithets, 'industrious' and 'sporting', suggest that Kyd's canon was considerably larger than the three surviving plays now acknowledged as his, and that he may have written comedies. Lukas Erne notes that Edward Archer's 1656 catalogue misspells Kyd's name and assigns his *Cornelia* to 'Thomas Loyd', which demonstrates 'how rapidly Kyd was forgotten' (2001, 47). Nonetheless, Kyd's reputation enjoyed a transitory resurgence in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries when several scholarly studies identified him as the author of anonymously published works, as I survey below.

### 3. King Leir and Arden of Faversham

Edmond Malone was the first scholar to suspect that Kyd was ‘the author of the old plays of *Hamlet*, and of *King Leir*’ (Boswell, 1821, II.316), while later, in 1891, F.G. Fleay (II, 52) proposed Kyd and Thomas Lodge as authors of *The True Chronicle History of King Leir* (1589). J.M. Robertson asserted in 1914 that there was ‘some reason to think’ Kyd (albeit recasting a play written by Lodge, as suggested by Fleay) was the play’s author (109). Robertson expanded on his attribution in 1924, arguing that the ‘play is ascribable to Kyd on the score’ of ‘the naturalness of the diction ... the orderly planning and complication of the action throughout’, and ‘the frequent parallelism both in action and in phrase to those of Kyd’s ascertained plays’ (387).

William Wells also argued for Kyd’s authorship of *King Leir*, for it is ‘a play of simple, undisguised realism, with few flights of fancy. Its sentiment is extraordinarily naive, in content and expression, and yet, in its way, powerful. This accords with Kyd’s characteristics’ (1939, 434). Wells rightly dismissed any arguments for Lodge as part author, for ‘the style of *Leir* is uniform throughout, one poet alone is involved’ (437). He observed that *King Leir* is ‘abounding in feminine endings, and this points directly to Kyd, for none but he, among the pre-Shakespearian dramatists, wandered far from the normal ten-syllable line’ (438). In his 1931 study of eleven-syllable verse lines, Philip Timberlake recorded an average of 10.8% feminine endings in *King Leir*, which corresponds to the 10.2% for *Soliman and Perseda* and 9.5% for *Cornelia* (61-62). Kyd is the only known dramatist preceding Shakespeare who comes close to the proportion of feminine endings in *King Leir*, as we can see in the table below, which contains the ranges for dramatists’ sole-authored plays:

Table 1

Greene	0.1-1.6
Lodge	1.0
Marlowe	0.4-3.7
Peele	1.5-5.4
Kyd (uncontested)	1.2-10.2
<i>King Leir</i>	10.8

P.V. Rubow, having identified numerous parallels of thought, language, and corresponding plot features, also ascribed *King Leir* to Kyd in 1948 (145-155).

Similarly, the case for Kyd’s authorship of *Arden of Faversham* has been made by generations of scholars. Fleay proposed Kyd as the play’s author in 1891 (29), as did Charles Crawford in 1903 (74-86). Crawford observed that the play ‘echoes all parts of Kyd’s work; and, therefore, it is a difficult thing

to make choice of illustrations, there being such an abundance of material to substantiate his claim to the play' (1906, 120). Having listed fifty close verbal matches between the domestic tragedy and *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Soliman and Perseda*, he concluded that

A man's vocabulary is the surest test by which he can be judged, for no author can jump out of his own language into that of another without betraying himself. His other work will condemn him, and vindicate the wronged party at the same time. It only means the exercise of much patience and minute inquiry to know 'which is which.' The proof lies before us here: the parallels from Marlowe and Lyly are of an entirely different character from those I have adduced from Kyd himself. I assert, then, that Kyd is the author of *Arden of Feversham*. (130)

In 1907 Walter Miksch, having studied the stylistic, metrical, and rhetorical features of *Arden of Feversham* in comparison to *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Soliman and Perseda*, ascribed the play to Kyd. He listed almost a hundred verbal matches between these texts (19-29). The following year, C.F. Tucker Brooke agreed with Fleay and Crawford that 'there are more parallels in feeling and expression between' the 'play and the tragedies of Kyd than coincidences will account for' (1908, xv). H.D. Sykes, in 1919, identified additional verbal matches, including some with Kyd's *Cornelia*. He argued that 'this play has rightly been assigned to Kyd', for 'the resemblances between *Arden* and the unquestioned work of Kyd extend to the most trivial details of phrasing and vocabulary, and the whole weight of the internal evidence supports the conclusion that it is the product of Kyd's own pen' (48-49).

Following these accounts, T.S. Eliot praised Kyd as 'that extraordinary dramatic (if not poetic) genius who was in all probability the author of two plays so dissimilar as *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Arden of Feversham*' (1920, 88-89). However, the influence of scholars such as E.K. Chambers (1930) and Samuel Schoenbaum (1966) meant that attribution studies were not taken seriously in the post-war years. Even more damaging for Kyd's reputation was the fact that M.P. Jackson dismissed the case for his sole authorship of *Arden of Feversham* in a 1963 Oxford B. Litt. thesis, where he first argued for Shakespeare's hand in the play. Decades later, Oxford University Press have accepted Jackson's arguments (Jackson is a member of the edition's attribution board) and included the play in the 2016 edition of *The New Oxford Shakespeare* (Taylor, Loughnane, Bourus and Egan 2016-2017). The adjunct volume (*The New Oxford Shakespeare: Authorship Companion*, Taylor and Egan 2017), which lays out some of the evidence for the inclusion of the domestic tragedy, has been criticized by Joseph Rudman for not being externally peer-reviewed, which results in 'borderline ad hominem attacks on "opponents" – which is not a cabal but individuals who are also established Shakespeare scholars; Eric Rasmussen, Sir Brian Vickers, Darren Freebury-Jones, and others', while exemplifying a 'seeming experimental bias (bordering on a



God-complex), despite containing ‘methodological flaws and statistical faux pas in many of the individual papers and the volume in general’ (Rudman, forthcoming). Similarly, J.F. Stephenson points out that some of the claims in the *Authorship Companion* are ‘presented with a bit more self-assurance—not to mention a bit more personal animus—than is warranted’ (Stephenson, forthcoming), while W.P. Williams observes that ‘Thirteen of the twenty-five essays in this volume are written, or co-written, by people on the Advisory Board’, which ‘inspires very little confidence in the fairness and objectivity of what is published here’ and equates to ‘“studies for buddies”’ (2018, 132).

Indeed, there appears to be two opposing positions in early modern attribution studies, with Brian Vickers on the one side and the *New Oxford Shakespeare* team on the other, and Vickers’ arguments for an ‘extended’ Kyd canon are thus heavily criticized throughout this volume. In a general essay published in the *Times Literary Supplement* in 2008, Vickers combined close study of verbal matches highlighted by anti-plagiarism software with analyses of Kyd’s dramaturgy in order to strengthen the case for Kyd’s authorship of *King Leir* and *Arden of Faversham* (13-15). He also argued for Kyd’s authorship of *Fair Em*, of which more later, and followed scholars such as Robertson, Marley Denwood (quoted in Robertson 1930, IV, 31), and Wells (1940, 219) in assigning parts of *Henry VI Part One* (1592) to Kyd, and Gregor Sarrazin (1892, 124), Robertson (1924, 384-385), Wells (1940, 218), and Guy Lambrechts (1963, 160-174), in providing evidence for his hand in *Edward III* (1593). The possibility that Shakespeare co-authored *Edward III* with Kyd (Vickers 2014), and added scenes to Nashe and Kyd’s ‘Harey the vj’ (Vickers 2007), suggests that Shakespeare’s relationship with Kyd’s drama deserves further study. However, the *New Oxford Shakespeare* team vehemently denied Kyd’s hand in some of these texts, in favour of Marlowe’s part authorship, but a variety of internal evidence suggests that these attributions to Kyd’s roommate are doubtful (Freebury-Jones 2018a). My own researches have collected a wide range of evidence in favour of an ‘expanded’ Kyd canon. In the course of this study, I have scrutinized the Vickers ascriptions and the arguments against them. I suggest that the inclusion of *Arden of Faversham* in Shakespeare’s canon should be taken *cum grano salis*, and here I should like to highlight some of the potential flaws in arguments for Shakespeare’s part authorship, as opposed to Kyd’s sole authorship. I also explore the ways in which modern attributionists seem willing to revise or interpret their data in line with emerging orthodoxies.

Jackson summarizes his arguments for Shakespeare’s authorship of *Arden of Faversham*’s central scenes (Four to Nine) in a 2014 monograph titled *Determining the Shakespeare Canon: Arden of Faversham & A Lover’s Complaint*, in which he also suggests that Shakespeare co-authored the play with an older dramatist who was probably not Kyd. He criticizes twentieth-century scholars’ ‘haphazard’ searches for verbal parallels, which were

purportedly ‘biased by the scholar’s preconceptions’ (16). Jackson notes that ‘We need to know how rare such formulas are and who among all dramatists within an appropriate time frame used them’ (16). This is a sensible notion, but Jackson uses the database *Literature OnLine*, or *LION*, to test the rarity of utterances that he himself has selected (it is possible that Jackson had Shakespeare’s patterns of word associations in mind, and not Kyd’s, when conducting his searches). Jackson concedes that this process of determining ‘whether a parallel is close enough to be recorded’ involves ‘an element of subjectivity’ and that ‘no doubt some relevant data have been accidentally overlooked’ (19). This method of picking out potentially significant phrases in each line is evidently time-consuming, which might account for why Jackson examines samples of text from just three of the play’s scenes in his monograph. Moreover, many of Jackson’s parallels are not contiguous (indeed, Jackson accepts the co-occurrence of a single word as valid evidence for authorship), and it is therefore questionable whether many instances truly constitute what he refers to as ‘formulas’ (16) at all. It seems that Jackson’s case for Shakespeare’s authorship on the basis of verbal parallels is therefore compromised by ‘the scholar’s preconceptions’ (16). Elsewhere I have shown that Jackson misses several rare verbal matches with plays assigned to Kyd (Freebury-Jones 2018b; 2019), and that *Arden of Faversham* corresponds to the quantity, nature, and distribution of matches between Shakespeare texts and other Kyd plays.

My evidence suggests that Shakespeare was deeply influenced by the phraseology of *The Spanish Tragedy*, *Soliman and Perseda*, *King Leir*, and *Arden of Faversham* (Shakespeare’s verbal borrowings from *The Spanish Tragedy* and *King Leir* exceed *Arden of Faversham*), having perhaps seen or performed in these plays (Freebury-Jones 2017c). Acknowledgement of Shakespeare’s debt to Kyd can therefore offer an insight into the development of Shakespeare’s dramatic language, and his aural, or ‘actor’s’, memory of theatrical phrases. Nevertheless, as several recent quantitative studies have demonstrated, plays assigned to Kyd share more linguistic commonality with *Arden of Faversham*, in terms of phraseology, than do any Shakespeare texts. As I show below, Jackson’s claim that ‘In the two-horse race, Shakespeare beats Kyd’ is doubtful (Jackson 2017a, 49).

For instance, Martin Mueller has created an electronic corpus called *Shakespeare His Contemporaries*, consisting of over 500 plays dated between 1552 and 1662. Mueller has applied a series of statistical tests to the putative Kyd texts, leading him to conclude that ‘Vickers is right about the *Leir* play, *Fair Em*, and *Arden*’ (2009a). In a blog post entitled ‘N-grams and the Kyd canon: a crude test’, on his (then) website *Digitally Assisted Text Analysis*, Mueller explained that he ‘ran an experiment on 318 early modern plays in the *MONK* corpus’ and ‘extracted lemma n-grams’ (contiguous word sequences) ‘from bigrams to heptagrams that were repeated at least once’. He

computed ‘their distribution across plays’ and discovered that *King Leir* and *Soliman and Perseda* are placed above the median (the number separating the higher half of Mueller’s data from the lower half) – with a percentage of 96.5 – for play pairs suggesting ‘characteristic patterns of authorial usage’ (2009b). We might note that this percentage is higher than that found for the uncontested Kyd play pair *Soliman and Perseda* and *Cornelia* (93.5%). Mueller also demonstrated that *Fair Em* and *King Leir* are ‘in the top quartile for shared two-play n-grams by the same author’, with a percentage of 98, which lends ‘support to Vickers’s argument’ that these plays were written by the same author. Most noteworthy is the fact that *Soliman and Perseda* and *Arden of Faversham* are placed ‘in the top quartile for shared two-play n-grams by the same author’, with a percentage of 99.7, while *Arden of Faversham* and *King Leir* are given a percentage of 99, which provides compelling evidence for common authorship of these texts. Mueller’s data also revealed that ‘two plays by the same author may be expected to share about twice as many unique n-grams’ (i.e. phrases occurring nowhere else in Mueller’s corpus) ‘as two plays by different authors’ (2009b).<sup>3</sup>

In another blog post titled ‘Vickers is right about Kyd’ (2009a), Mueller applied ‘Discriminant analysis to lemma trigrams’ (three-word sequences) ‘that occur at least 500 times in 318 early modern plays’, which ‘misclassifies 50 or 16% of 318 plays. It gets 84% right. Of 37 plays by Shakespeare, it gets 34 right’. Discriminant analysis, which establishes ‘variance between groups on the basis of the combined effect of multiple variables’, assigned *The Spanish Tragedy* to Kyd with a 96.1% chance, while *Soliman and Perseda* and *Cornelia* were given percentages of 85.3 and 79.7 respectively. Conversely, Mueller’s Discriminant Analysis tests gave the anonymous burlesque, *The First Part of Hieronimo* (1600), a 30% chance of being Kyd’s. Mueller noted that ‘Discriminant Analysis rejects the prequel as Kyd’s. It assigns it to the grab bag of anonymous plays with a 57.4% chance. So it is not fooled by the presence of many shared repetitions between it and *The Spanish Tragedy*’. Mueller also applied these tests to the plays Vickers attributes to Kyd: Discriminant Analysis assigned *King Leir* to Kyd with a 99.3% chance and gave *Fair Em* a 99.5% chance, while *Arden of Faversham* was given a 97.4% chance of having been written by Kyd. Mueller concluded that ‘Discriminant Analysis very

<sup>3</sup> Similarly, Pervez Rizvi notes on his website *Collocations and N-grams* (2017) that, having tested eighty-six uncontested plays in his corpus, ‘unique N-grams are better than all N-grams’ for correctly identifying authors, despite the fact that n-grams unfiltered for rarity ‘provide a vastly greater amount of data’. He also establishes that ‘unique 3-grams and 4-grams’ are the most reliable phrasal structures for attribution purposes. Using this method in a document on his website titled ‘“*Arden of Faversham*” and the Extended Kyd Canon’, Rizvi discovered that the three accepted Kyd plays, *Arden of Faversham*, and *Fair Em*, are all assigned to Kyd, while the unique four-word unit test assigns large portions of *Edward III* to Kyd ‘by a strong margin’.

strongly confirms' that these plays come 'from the same stable' as the three accepted Kyd plays, and 'If you combine my evidence from common trigrams' with the evidence 'from rare shared repetitions, you would have to be very sceptical about the power of quantitative analysis not to acknowledge the fact that the claim for an expanded Kyd canon rests on quite solid evidence'.

More recently, Pervez Rizvi has developed an electronic corpus of 527 plays dated between 1552 and 1657, titled *Collocations and N-grams*.<sup>4</sup> Users can download summary spreadsheets for play pairs sharing n-grams. The spreadsheet for *Arden of Feversham* as a whole ranks other plays in the electronic corpus according to all n-gram matches, as well as unique n-gram matches (i.e. occurring only in the domestic tragedy and one other play in the corpus), and takes account of composite word counts. Rizvi's results are fully automated and enable scholars to check for every contiguous word sequence (including lemmas), as well as all collocations (discontinuous word sequences), shared between texts. Searches of these lemmatized texts – drawn from Mueller's corpus and the *Folger Shakespeare Editions* website – allow a wider range of matches to be discovered than by searches using the unlemmatized forms of words. The summary spreadsheet for this play shows that *Soliman and Perseda* shares denser n-gram relations with the domestic tragedy than any other play of the period; *Fair Em* is ranked eleventh; and *King Leir* is ranked fifteenth. The highest Shakespeare text in this publicly accessible Excel spreadsheet is *Richard III* (1593), ranked twenty-first. I reproduce the list of the top twenty plays in this spreadsheet below. Readers might note that with the exception of the 'bad Quarto' *The Taming of a Shrew* (1594), no play associated with Shakespeare figures here:

Table 2

1. *Soliman and Perseda*
2. *Thomas Lord Cromwell*
3. *Edward the Second*
4. *A Knack to Know a Knav*
5. *The True Tragedy of Richard the Third*
6. *Alphonsus, Emperor of Germany*
7. *The Taming of a Shrew*
8. 2 *Edward the Fourth*
9. *The Spanish Bawd*
10. *Bartholomew Fair*
11. *Fair Em*
12. *Englishmen for My Money*

<sup>4</sup> Rizvi (2017) provides more detailed explanations for how these play links were recorded and weighted on his website.

13. *Wily Beguiled*
14. *The Massacre at Paris*
15. *The True Chronicle of King Leir*
16. *The Two Angry Women of Abingdon*
17. *Your Five Gallants*
18. *When You See Me You Know Me*
19. *The Duchess of Suffolk*
20. *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*

If we consult the spreadsheet for Kyd's accepted play, *Soliman and Perseda*, as a test case, we find that *The Spanish Tragedy* tops the list (followed closely by *Arden of Faversham*, while *King Leir* and *Cornelia* also feature in the top twenty plays), which demonstrates that though genre, source material, subject matter, playing companies, chronology, plagiarism, and so forth could influence the data, Kyd's habit of self-repetition is a major factor in these rankings. Thus, a variety of statistical tests, based on a number of weighting measures in large electronic corpora, in comparison to all dramatists of the period, suggest that arguments for an 'extended' Kyd canon are valid.

It is worth pointing out that in Rizvi's summary spreadsheets for Shakespeare's early plays, the 'non-Shakespeare' scenes of *Arden of Faversham* are ranked much higher than the central scenes, which Jackson and his *New Oxford Shakespeare* colleagues assign most securely to Shakespeare, i.e. scenes Four to Eight. To offer a couple of examples: in the spreadsheet for *The Taming of the Shrew* (1592), we discover that the 'non-Shakespeare' scenes are ranked 52; however, the scenes Jackson gives to Shakespeare are at 433. If we consult Rizvi's data for *Richard III*, we find that the 'non-Shakespeare' scenes are ranked 43, whereas the central scenes are much lower at 425. Aside from demonstrating that the Kentish tragedy does not share nearly as many distinct phrases with Shakespeare's early works as it does with other plays attributable to Kyd, the above results show that if one were to make arguments on the basis of n-gram distribution, stronger claims could be made for Shakespeare's authorship of scenes that the *New Oxford Shakespeare* team do not attribute to him.

Nonetheless, in his 2014 monograph, Jackson claims that there is a 'disparity' between the large number of verbal matches with Shakespeare in the middle portion of the play, as opposed to the remainder of *Arden of Faversham* (65). However, Jackson's claim is based on the distribution of parallels with plays of the period in M.L. Wine's appendix to his 1973 edition of the Kentish tragedy. As I have shown elsewhere (Freebury-Jones 2016b, 54-55), Jackson overlooks the fact that the overwhelming majority of non-Shakespeare parallels recorded by Wine are with Kyd's plays, and that adjusting the raw figures according to these dramatists' overall canon word counts shows that, on a quantitative basis, Kyd is the more likely author of both the 'Shakespeare' and 'non-Shakespeare' portions of the play.

Jackson concedes that Wine's parallels were 'haphazardly derived, largely from articles by proponents of Kyd's authorship of the play, and untested for rarity' (2017b, 127), but these criticisms also apply to the Shakespeare parallels, which were mainly derived from Jackson's 1963 thesis, in which he first argued for Shakespeare's hand in some of the play's central scenes. Given Jackson's awareness of the unreliability of Wine's cherry-picked parallels, it is peculiar that he should apply Fisher Exact Test probability arguments to their distribution (2014, 65). Jackson states that the 'complete exclusion' of Wine's parallels 'from my overall case would scarcely weaken it at all' (2017b, 127), but given that his arguments for Shakespeare's hand in the play are limited to 126 pages of his monograph, readers might question why such arguments were included in the first place.

Other 'less compelling, but nevertheless of interest' evidence that Jackson cites in his monograph, such as the distribution of 'Tush' and 'Ay, but', may also be called into question. Jackson notes that the exclamation 'Tush' is 'confined' to the 'earliest and latest scenes' of *Arden of Faversham* (2014, 78). He suggests it 'can hardly be coincidental that' this non-Shakespearean feature (according to Jackson) occurs in scenes outside of the middle portion of the play (79). However, this exclamation is not to be found in the second act of *The Spanish Tragedy* (there are four instances in total), while the two instances within *Soliman and Perseda* are confined to the play's opening two acts. Should we suppose that Kyd did not write the remaining scenes in these plays? Jackson also argues that as 'none of the nine instances' of 'Ay, but' feature in the middle portion of *Arden of Faversham*, and given that Shakespeare 'seldom used' this colloquialism, the play appears to have been written by Shakespeare and another dramatist (79). All six instances of 'Ay, but' in *The Spanish Tragedy* feature in the play's second act, so, according to Jackson's argument, the remaining acts could be considered Shakespearean. Moreover, on the basis of Jackson's argument, Shakespeare could have written the third and fourth acts of *Soliman and Perseda*. In my view, many of these claims concerning the distribution of linguistic items in *Arden of Faversham* amount to apophenia.

Similarly, Jackson's claim that compound adjectives in *Arden of Faversham* are 'more like the early plays of Shakespeare than like those of Marlowe, Greene, or Peele' (76) is symptomatic of the scant attention modern attributionists have afforded Kyd's candidature. Here Jackson is following Alfred Hart, who argued in 1934 that Shakespeare had a higher rate of use than his contemporaries (232-239). However, as Inna Koskenniemi observed: 'In the works of Shakespeare's immediate predecessors one finds the greatest variety of adjectival compounds', and 'The highest number of new compounds is found in Kyd's *Soliman and Perseda*' (1962, 31). A.M. Witherspoon pointed out that Kyd's 'translation of Garnier's *Cornélie*' is 'brimful of them' (1924, 171). In an essay-review of *The New Oxford Shakespeare: Authorship Companion*

(Freebury-Jones 2018a, 77-79), I show that the examples Jackson gives for Shakespeare's authorship (none of which actually feature in the central scenes of the play that he assigns most securely to Shakespeare) are hardly beyond Kyd's capacity, and that the figures for compound adjectives formed by noun plus participle and present participle (which Jackson considers to be Shakespeare markers), are commensurate with Kyd's practice (conversely, Marlowe largely eschewed these forms in his dramatic works). Perhaps Shakespeare's debt to Kyd extends to this aspect of the dramatist's lexicon.

Another innovative aspect of Kyd's dramatic style that Shakespeare seems to have followed was his liberal use of feminine endings. Jackson does not acknowledge Timberlake's study of the domestic tragedy in his monograph. Timberlake's findings revealed that Shakespeare employed feminine endings with more frequency than his Elizabethan contemporaries. For example, Shakespeare's earliest plays, according to Martin Wiggins' chronology (Wiggins and Richardson 2013), *Henry VI Part Two* and *Part Three* (1591), have high percentages of 10.4 and 10.7 respectively (Timberlake 1931, 86-94), which presents an obstacle for scholars attempting to give large parts of the Henry VI trilogy to Marlowe – I attribute all of *Henry VI Part Two* and *Part Three* to Shakespeare alone (Freebury-Jones 2016a, 201-216; 2017a) – who 'only once reaches 8.0 per cent' in 'single long scenes' (Timberlake 1931, 45), and whose dramatic output reaches a peak of 3.7 percent feminine endings for *Edward II* (1592). However, as I demonstrated above, Timberlake also discovered that Kyd 'was customarily using feminine endings with a frequency surpassing that of any' pre-Shakespearean 'dramatist whom we have considered' (52-53). Significantly, Timberlake recorded an average of '6.2 per cent of feminine endings' in *Arden of Faversham*, 'with a range in long scenes of 0.9-12.9 per cent. *Soliman* has 10.2 per cent, and a range of 5.3-14.8 per cent'. He concluded that 'this is not entirely surprising. Kyd was a gifted playwright with a keen perception of dramatic values, and his metrical development may find its explanation in that fact' (52).

Given that Shakespeare and Kyd are the only known dramatists of the period with comparably high figures for feminine endings in their dramatic works, we might expect to see such variation in feminine endings between 'Shakespeare' portions and those of an older co-author as to identify the presence of two dramatists (as we can perceive in *Titus Andronicus* and *Edward III*, for example). This is not the case: feminine endings are used liberally throughout *Arden of Faversham*. In my computations, the 'Shakespeare' scenes average 6.4% feminine endings, while Jackson's conjectured co-author averages a strikingly similar percentage of 6.1, which would be too high for any known Elizabethan playwright except Kyd or Shakespeare. Some readers might object that these figures could also indicate Shakespeare's sole authorship but, as Jackson himself notes: 'no attribution scholar currently regards Shakespeare as more than a co-author of the play' (2017b, 128).

Jackson has criticized Marina Tarlinskaja's 2008 article 'entitled "Kyd Canon"', which was 'posted on the London Forum for Authorship Attribution Studies website' but 'cannot currently be viewed' (Jackson 2014, 114). Tarlinskaja is a Russian-American prosodist who examines weak, or odd (called 'non-ictic'), and strong, or even ('ictic'), syllables in verse. Tarlinskaja notes that 'Strong syllabic positions of the iambic metrical scheme only tend to be filled with stressed syllables', while 'Weak syllabic positions only tend to be unstressed'. Different strong and different weak positions 'accept dissimilar numbers of deviating stresses depending on the period, genre, and preferences of a poet' (2014, 17). Tarlinskaja relies 'solely on syntax', which means that 'doubts and choices are inevitable' (for example, there are numerous ways in which a line's monosyllables can be stressed) in her manual analyses of plays (15), but hers is a powerful method for attributing the authorship of contested texts.

Jackson informs readers that Tarlinskaja 'argued, on metrical grounds, in favour of Vickers's expansion of the Kyd canon' (2014, 114). He calls Tarlinskaja's analysis 'subjective' (115), and refers readers to her monograph, which supposedly reveals that 'certain scenes of *Arden*, including 4-8, share metrical features with early Shakespeare' (116). In contrast to her original attribution to Kyd, Tarlinskaja now suggests that the 'stress profile' of Scene Eight, with its 'deep "dip" on syllable 6', points to Shakespeare (2014, 106). However, earlier in the monograph Tarlinskaja points out that Kyd 'consolidated the stress "dip" on position 6' in Elizabethan drama (67). Tarlinskaja notes that 'Scenes 4-8 contain a substantial "dip" on syllable 6', which 'could indicate a typical early Elizabethan text' or 'early Shakespeare, and Kyd' (109). The dip on position six in these scenes therefore provides no evidence for an attribution to Shakespeare and/or deattribution to Kyd. In fact, Tarlinskaja's figure of 71.8 for these scenes accords with *The Spanish Tragedy's* 69.2; *Soliman and Perseda's* 68.6; *King Leir's* 69.2; *Fair Em's* 70.6; and *Cornelia's* (minus Chorus) 70.4.

According to Tarlinskaja's data, Kyd prefers a dip on position six in *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Soliman and Perseda*, while the later stage plays ascribed to him by Vickers contain almost equal stressing on positions six and eight; *King Leir* has a figure of 69.8 for the syllabic position eight, and *Fair Em* a figure of 69.6, while the translation *Cornelia* has a figure of 76.0 (Tarlinskaja 2014, Table B.1). *Arden of Faversham* has an almost equal percentage of missing stresses on six (73.7) and eight (74.5) overall, just like *King Leir* and *Fair Em*, which are closest to the domestic tragedy in terms of chronology. Furthermore, Tarlinskaja's figures for the play per scene show that the 'non-Shakespearean' scenes Twelve and Thirteen also feature a dip on six, while scenes Fifteen to Eighteen and the Epilogue feature a substantial dip on six, just like scenes Four to Eight. Given that there are signs of what Tarlinskaja calls a 'conscious versification experiment' in Kyd's plays and those of his roommate Marlowe



– with *Dido, Queen of Carthage* (1588) and *Edward II*, for instance, being ‘quite different from *Tamburlaine*, *The Jew of Malta*, and *Doctor Faustus*’, in terms of stressing – the attribution of play portions with alternating stresses on syllables six and eight to different playwrights is problematic (74). It therefore seems to me that Tarlinskaja’s data are compatible with my theory that *Arden of Faversham* was written solely by Kyd.<sup>5</sup>

Tarlinskaja also makes an ‘argument for Shakespearean authorship’ on the basis that ‘Run-on lines prevail’ in scenes Four to Eight (110). If we consult Tarlinskaja’s ‘Appendix B’, we find that she records an average of 10.8 run-on lines in these scenes. She also records an average of 9.5 run-on lines in *The Spanish Tragedy*; 9.9 in *Soliman and Perseda*; 9.2 in *King Leir*; 14.1 in *Fair Em*; and 13.6 in *Cornelia*. We might ask ourselves: how does the figure of 10.8, which is in fact lower than Kyd’s undoubted play, *Cornelia*, suggest Shakespeare’s authorship rather than Kyd’s? In my view, Tarlinskaja’s evidence cannot be justifiably interpreted as lending support to Jackson’s argument.

Examples of scholars interpreting their data in support of the hypothesis that Shakespeare had a hand in *Arden of Faversham* can also be found in studies by A.F. Kinney (2009), and Brett Greatley-Hirsch and Jack Elliott (2017). Kinney has concluded that ‘*Arden of Faversham* is a collaboration; Shakespeare was one of the authors; and his part is concentrated in the middle portion of the play’ (2009, 99). Kinney’s attribution to Shakespeare derives from the results of lexical and function-word tests. Even Jackson criticizes Kinney’s failure to recognize Quarto spelling variants (Kinney’s lexical-word tests do not give Scene Eight to Shakespeare), though he asserts that ‘Whether or not anomalous spellings affected Craig and Kinney’s lexical tests of *Arden*’s Scene 8, the multiplicity of evidence presented’ in his monograph ‘vindicates Kinney’s conclusion’ (2014, 51). The question is how are we to trust the results for any single scene in *Arden of Faversham* if the ‘Craig-Kinney software’ was ‘flummoxed’ by ‘unusual spellings’ when it came to Scene Eight? (51). Moreover, Peter Kirwan points out that the ‘lexical-word tests employed by Kinney are questionable’, for ‘only 112 of 174 single-author plays from the period are tested, as opposed to the entire’ *LION* corpus, and that ‘rather than use the 2000-word chunks that Kinney’s team claim are necessary for tests’, he ‘begins with individual scenes, which he admits are too short for reliable results’ (2015, 78-99). It is widely accepted in scientific research that ‘small sample size means smaller power’ (Ioannidis 2005). I concur with Kirwan that ‘The confidence of Kinney’s conclusion is ‘not justified’ (2015, 151). Furthermore, Kinney’s interpretation of his function-word data leads him to claim that *Arden of Faversham* shows ‘no sustained affinities with Kyd’ (2009, 99). However, Lene Buhl Petersen has applied ‘discriminant analysis’

<sup>5</sup> I should like to thank Tarlinskaja for sending me her figures for the play per scene (email correspondence, 21 March 2016).

to ‘principal data components’ with ‘cross-validation’ (2010, 213). According to Petersen’s use of Principal Component Analysis, ‘*Arden of Faversham* cross-validates as Kyd’. Petersen concludes, sensibly, that ‘these classifications are by no means to be taken as truths’ (214). We should therefore bear in mind the caveat that statistical analysis, like literary analysis, can aspire to objectivity, but it also relies upon an interpretative position.

Greatley-Hirsch and Elliott have extended Kinney’s analysis and subjected the Kentish tragedy to a number of tests, utilizing Delta, Nearest Shrunken Centroid, Random Forests, and Zeta. They conclude that ‘It is impossible to reconcile the results we have found with a belief that Shakespeare had no hand in *Arden of Faversham*, thus the play takes its rightful place in the canon of his works’ (2017, 181). However, their tests assign a number of segments in *Arden of Faversham* to Kyd. Indeed, in direct contrast to Kinney’s study, their function-word tests assign scenes Four to Eight, which Jackson attributes to Shakespeare, to Kyd (173). These studies, based on single words denuded of their linguistic and dramatic context, therefore, fail to agree, which surely casts doubt on their reliability. The objectivity of Greatley-Hirsch and Elliott’s chapter is also open to question, in that the Kyd results are given no mention in their conclusion, while the fact that Zeta ‘misclassifies the lone Kyd hold-out segment as not Kyd’ (159) suggests to me that their tests cannot distinguish authentic Kyd texts anyway. In my view, the false negatives for *Arden of Faversham* samples thus do little to damage the substantial case for Kyd’s sole authorship. As Greatley-Hirsch and Elliott concede, their tests are ‘more likely to give a false negative for Kyd’s authorship than a false positive’ (159). I had previously commended ‘the rigour of their analyses’ (Freebury-Jones 2018a, 75), but major flaws in Greatley-Hirsch and Elliott’s handling and interpretation of their data have since been highlighted by scholars such as Rizvi (2018), Rudman (forthcoming), Stephenson (forthcoming), and David Auerbach (2018). On this basis, their attribution of *Arden of Faversham* segments to Shakespeare can be considered illusory.

In order to contest these conclusions derived from computational stylistic tests, I present my findings for a single word: ‘But’. In 1995, Thomas Merriam observed that there is a ‘much higher word frequency of “but” in Kyd’s plays, as opposed to plays by Marlowe and Shakespeare, which led him to conclude that Kyd is ‘the preferred author of *Arden of Faversham*’ (340). Merriam’s raw counts for the word ‘But’ reveal striking affinities with Kyd’s plays: *The Spanish Tragedy* has a total of 203, *Soliman and Perseda* contains 208, and *Arden of Faversham* contains 202 (341). According to my count, of the 202 instances of ‘But’ in *Arden of Faversham*, 105 are placed in the initial iambic foot, compared to 81 and 49 instances in Shakespeare’s *Henry VI Part Two* and *The Taming of the Shrew* respectively. The high figure for *Arden of Faversham* accords with *The Spanish Tragedy*’s 122 and *King Leir*’s (identical) 105. Kyd (by my argument) thus places ‘But’ in the initial iambic foot once

every 20 lines in *The Spanish Tragedy*, 23 lines in *Soliman and Perseda* and *King Leir*, and 19 lines in *Arden of Faversham*, which we might compare to Shakespeare's rate of once every 29 lines in *Henry VI Part Two*, and 46 lines in *The Taming of the Shrew*.<sup>6</sup> It also seems worth pointing out that of the 45 instances of 'But' in scenes Four to Nine of *Arden of Faversham*, which Jackson gives to Shakespeare, 25 occur at the start of verse lines, at a rate of one every 21 lines. I hope that future researchers will expand my work on Kyd's use of 'But' by examining other function words according to their prosodic characteristics and contexts of use.

In the pages above I have provided a selection of counterevidence in order to show the ways in which modern scholars have overlooked earlier studies and contrary findings in order to introduce a new play into Shakespeare's canon, at the expense of Kyd's dramatic corpus. This habit of reassigning plays commonly ascribed to Kyd also extends to works for which we have no extant text, as I show below.

#### 4. Hamlet and Fair Em

Kyd, like Shakespeare, did not have a university education. He was therefore also open to criticism from the University Wits. Nashe seems to have attacked Kyd in his preface to Greene's *Menaphon* (1589), which has helped scholars, beginning with Malone, to identify Kyd as the author of the *Ur-Hamlet*. Nashe alludes to 'the Kidde in Aesop' who has left 'the trade of *Noverint*' (i.e. a scrivener) and now meddles 'with Italian translations', as Kyd had done with his translation of Torquato Tasso's *Padre di Famiglia*, known as *The Householder's Philosophy* (1588). Nashe claims that Kyd bleeds Seneca 'line by line' in order to 'affoord you whole *Hamlets*' (III, 316-317). He derides the opening of *The Spanish Tragedy* in particular, for Kyd 'thrusts Elisium into hell' during Andrea's account of his descent into the lower world. Nashe also claims that Kyd is prone to 'bodge up a blanke verse with ifs and ands' (McKerrow 1958, III, 316-317), which parodies a line from *The Spanish Tragedy*: 'What, Villaine, ifs and ands? offer to kill him' (Boas 1901, 2.1.77).

In 1942, Valdemar Østerberg argued convincingly that Kyd was indeed the subject of Nashe's attack (and therefore the author of the old *Hamlet* play) in his preface to Greene's *Menaphon* (McKerrow 1958, III, 385-394). Erne endorses Østerberg's argument:

the possible allusions to Kyd's father being a scrivener, Kyd's debt to Seneca, his very name, his new occupation as a translator, his 'intermeddling' with an Italian translation, the 'home-born mediocrity' of this translation, and Kyd's 'thrusting

<sup>6</sup> My computations are based on the verse line totals for these plays, taken from 'Appendix B: Table B.1', in Tarlinskaja 2014.

Elysium into hell' in *The Spanish Tragedy*, I.i.72-5, make it more than likely that Nashe's target is indeed Kyd. (2001, 147)

Erne elaborates that 'Italian translations were a rare phenomenon in the years up to 1589 and Nashe could expect that his literary readership would easily identify an allusion to Kyd's *The Householder's Philosophy*' (149). According to Henslowe's diary, the old *Hamlet* play was performed at Newington Butts on 9 June 1594, by the Admiral's and/or Chamberlain's Men (Foakes 2002, 21). Two years after the record of its performance, Thomas Lodge alluded to the old play in his *Wit's Misery*: 'looks as pale as the vizard of the ghost which cried so miserably at the Theator like an Oyster wife, Hamlet, revenge' (1596, 56).

I have suggested elsewhere that our understanding of Nashe's diatribe can be informed by a reading of Greene's attack against the author of *Fair Em* (Freebury-Jones 2017b, 252-254). This comedy was likely performed privately as a compliment to Sir Edmund Trafford, a friend and colleague of Henry Stanley, in 1590 (Thaler 1931, 647-658; George 1991, xxxi, 180-181). Henslowe's diary records a later performance of 'william the conkerer' on 4 January 1593 by Sussex's Men at the Rose Theatre (Foakes 2002, 20). In 1898, Josef Schick identified Henry Wotton's 1578 work *A Courtly Controversy of Cupid's Cautels* as the source for the William the Conqueror plotline in *Fair Em* (v-xliiii). Kyd is the only (undoubted) Elizabethan playwright to use *A Courtly Controversy of Cupid's Cautels* as a source for his dramatic works and Wotton's translation was printed by Kyd's father's acquaintance, Francis Coldocke. The story in Wotton's collection is a tragedy and ends with Lubeck's execution and William's suicide. The dramatist responsible for *Fair Em* transforms the tragic tale into a comedy. Richard Proudfoot notes that the 'Shared source' for *Fair Em* and *Soliman and Perseda* 'speaks strongly for common authorship, as does' the 'ingenious reversal of genre in the dramatization of both source stories.'<sup>7</sup> To the best of my knowledge, Vickers is original in attributing the play to Kyd, although it is worth noting that P.V. Rubow identified verbal parallelisms between the comedy and Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* in 1948 (132-133).

Notably, Timberlake was puzzled by his findings for *Fair Em*, stating that 'one is hardly prepared to find a play of such undistinguished verse exceeding in use of feminine endings the practice of such leading dramatists as Marlowe and Greene' (1931, 63-64). *Fair Em* averages 6.5 percent feminine endings (with a range of 0.0-15.9), which is very close to the figure of 6.2 found in *Arden of Faversham*. Timberlake came to the unlikely conclusion that the play had been 'originally composed in Poulter's measure (or possibly in straight fourteeners) which has been altered' during revision 'to make the play blank

<sup>7</sup> I should like to thank Richard Proudfoot for sharing his thoughts with me (email correspondence, 7 October 2015).

verse throughout' (63-64). Nonetheless, *Fair Em* exhibits Kyd's practice (unique among Shakespeare's predecessors) of admitting a high proportion of feminine endings.

Greene ridiculed the play's author in his *Farewell to Folly* (1591). T.H. Dickinson, writing in 1909, noted that 'There are indications that Greene would have been quite willing to ridicule Kyd', for 'Nash, in the same preface to *Menaphon* in which he had ridiculed Marlowe, satirizes Kyd' (xxxvi). In fact, the opening of Greene's attack, 'Others will flout' (Grosart 1881-1886, IX, 232), resembles Kyd's hint 'at the existence of hostile critics' (Boas 1901, lxxvii), in his dedication to Thomas Reade in *The Householder's Philosophy*: 'Let others carpe' (Boas 1901, 233). In *Farewell to Folly*, Greene criticizes the dramatist's use of 'Biblical paraphrases, the first from I Peter 4:8 and the second from Romans 2:15' (Henning 1980, 64), as 'simple abusing of the Scripture' (Grosart 1881-1886, IX, 232-233). Greene also criticizes the dramatist's use of plots 'distild out of ballets' and his borrowings from 'Theologicall poets, which for their calling and gravitie, being loth to have anie profane pamphlets passe under their hand, get some other Batillus to set his name to their verses' (IX, 232-233). In a letter to Sir John Puckering, Kyd 'projected a poem on the conversion of St Paul' (Erne, 2001, 220). Kyd thus fits Greene's profile of a poet who writes works 'of theological cast' (Baldwin 1959, 515). Greene's image of 'a man' who 'hath a familiar stile and can endite a whole yeare and never be beholding to art' (Grosart 1881-1886, IX, 232-233) recalls Nashe's attack against Kyd: 'that run through every art and thrive by none, to leave the trade of *noverint* whereto they were born and busy themselves with the endeavours of art' (McKerrow 1958, III, 316-317). Greene's line, 'he that cannot write true Englishe without the help of Clearkes of parish Churches, will needs make him selfe the father of interludes' (Grosart 1881-1886, IX, 232-233), suggests that the author of *Fair Em* was a professional copyist, but had turned to playwriting. Furthermore, as Eric Sams pointed out in 1995, 'There is no direct evidence that Kyd was ever a churchman of any persuasion' but 'his scrivener father Francis had been a churchwarden at St Mary Woolnoth's in Lombard Street, not far from Cripplegate' (93). Nashe's claim that the author of *Hamlet* could 'scarcely Latinize' his 'neck verse' (i.e. a verse set before a person claiming benefit of clergy) may also allude to the fact that Kyd's father was a churchwarden (McKerrow 1958, III, 316-317).

It is possible that, in his allusion to 'Saint Giles without Creeplegate' (Grosart 1881-1886, IX, 233), Greene was following Nashe in evoking Kyd's name. Saint Giles (the protector of rams and deer) was a Christian hermit from Athens who, while living in Southern France, was crippled when a hunter's arrow, intended for his companion, a young deer, wounded him. More significant, perhaps, is the fact that the vicar of St Giles' Church at the time (between 1588 and 1605, having taken over as rector of the church after Robert Crowley) was Lancelot Andrewes, Kyd's schoolfellow. Both Nashe

and Greene label the subject of their respective attacks as a 'plagiarist, and dunce' (Henning 1980, 66), or, as T.W. Baldwin put it in 1959, a 'degreeless person' who produces plays that are 'compared favourably with the work' of better educated dramatists (515). Baldwin argued that Nashe and Greene were both attacking the same author (514-520). In my view, Greene's attack is practically identical to Nashe's invective against Kyd and his education at Merchant Taylors', as well as his background as a scrivener.

### 5. *The Origin of Q1 Hamlet*

In a monograph titled *Young Shakespeare's Young Hamlet*, published the same year that Jackson summarized his arguments for Shakespeare, and not Kyd's, authorship of *Arden of Faversham*, Terri Bourus contended that Kyd was not responsible for the so-called *Ur-Hamlet*, and that the 1603 edition published by the bookseller Nicholas Ling represents an early version of Shakespeare's play referred to by Nashe. Bourus does not trust the testimony of Lodge, and compares his use of the phrase, 'Hamlet revenge', which appears to derive from the lost play (it does not occur in any of Shakespeare's texts), to popular misquotations from movies like *Casablanca*. This could be considered anachronistic, something that Bourus stresses scholars should avoid, as we shall see, while her point that many of these misquotations 'involve misplaced or interpolated vocatives' (2014, 146) would seem to undermine her argument that the use of the vocative, 'boy', uniquely emphasizes Hamlet's youth in Q1 (107), for these interpolations could also be memorial. (Similarly, the fact that Yorick has been dead for 'a dozen years', and that the fee paid for Hamlet's father's picture is 'a hundred—two hundred—pounds' in Q1, suggests to me vague numerical recollection, rather than revision). Bourus also notes that the phrase, 'Hamlet revenge', features in Dekker's *Satiromastix* (1601), and is contrasted with Horace 'a.k.a. Ben Jonson, who in his brief and unsuccessful career as an actor had performed "Suleiman" in Paris Garden. Bourus suggests that 'the simplest explanation' for allusions that collocate 'Hamlet' and 'revenge' is that they 'refer to the same play, Shakespeare's', rather than a lost play by Kyd (149-150). But if Dekker were invoking Kyd's Turkish emperor in this passage (as well as Hieromimo in *The Spanish Tragedy*), it is not difficult to imagine that the allusion to Hamlet similarly refers to a play by Kyd. As G.I. Duthie noted: 'we are safe in assuming that the reference cannot be to a *Hamlet* Shakespearian in whole or in part, since presumably Shakespeare's work would not be ridiculed by his own company in his own theatre' (1941, 77).

Though Bourus does not trust contemporary witnesses such as Lodge, she is willing to take Nashe's satirical comment on 'two penny pamphlets' literally, noting that *The Householder's Philosophy* 'was not, as Erne implies, a two-penny pamphlet: it contains eight and a half sheets of paper, and

would have cost four pence'. Bourus continues: 'Erne's own argument here rules out Kyd, since none of his extant works was a two-penny pamphlet' (165). We might ask ourselves: how many two-penny pamphlets translating Italian were written by Shakespeare in the late 1580s? In my view, Erne, in his review of Bourus' monograph, appears to be justified when he states that the 'evidence that this earlier play was by Thomas Kyd, author of *The Spanish Tragedy* (1587), is strong' (2015, 54).

Bourus considers the notion that 'Shakespeare in the early seventeenth century wrote an entirely new play to replace an older *Hamlet* play written by someone else' to be unlikely: 'revision is the more economical hypothesis, not only intellectually but also financially' (2014, 150-151). But this is to gloss over the fact that, to offer just a couple of examples, Shakespeare wrote an entirely new play to replace an older *King Leir* play written by someone else (Kyd, by my argument), as well as a new *King John* (1596) play to replace an older play written by another dramatist (George Peele's *The Troublesome Reign of King John*). The theory that Shakespeare based a new play on an old one has precedence, and Shakespeare's company were demonstrably willing to pay the costs for such adaptations. Let us imagine that the text of *King Leir* had not survived: in such a scenario, it is easy to imagine a similar monograph being produced, suggesting that Shakespeare wrote *King Lear* in the late 1580s, and that the play performed in April 1594 at the Rose Theatre, by the 'Quenes men & my lord of Susexe to geather' (Foakes 2002, 21), was an earlier version of Shakespeare's tragedy.

In 1942, Alfred Hart provided evidence that the 1603 text of *Hamlet* does not derive from an older play, noting that 'Q1 contains 15 per cent' feminine endings 'compared with 23 per cent in Q2', and that lines from the conjectured 'old play have no less than 18 per cent'. He elaborated: 'Does the theory of double revision require that the old *Hamlet*, which probably goes back to 1589, contained what would then be a unique proportion of double endings?' (299). Bourus does not cite Hart in her monograph, while her observations concerning 'demonstrably old-fashioned' stylistic markers, such as 'hath' instead of 'has', and obsolescent word choices such as 'whilom' (it is worth pointing out that this adverb features within the play-within-the-play, which seems to have been written in deliberately archaic language), do not necessarily provide strong evidence that Q1 derives from the 1580s, given that Bourus supplies no comparative data for other suspected 'bad Quartos' (2014, 171).<sup>8</sup> Nor does Bourus make a sustained comparison between Q1 and any 'good Quarto' to consolidate the claim that 'known and necessary agents of normal transmission will account' for the superabundance of textual errors

<sup>8</sup> The 1602 text of *The Merry Wives of Windsor* significantly decreases the number of 'has' in relation to 'hath', and increases the number of old-fashioned third person singular form 'doth'; should this be taken as evidence that the play derives from the 1580s?

in Q1 (88). Were we to accept the theory that Q1 reflects an early version of Shakespeare's play, we would also have to acknowledge that, at the beginning of his career, Shakespeare's grammar was exceptionally poor for a student at King Edward VI Grammar School; that he was more prone to garbled and incoherent speeches than 'any scribbler of the time' (Hart 1942, 447); that he was also prone to homonymic blunders like 'impudent' for 'impotent', 'Martin' for 'matin', 'right done' for 'writ down', and 'ceasen' for 'season'; that he had a proclivity for 'padding phrases' like "contents me not", "I prithee", "And", "Marry", and so on; and that he wrote hundreds of lines of 'fustian verse' (Vickers 1993, 5). If Shakespeare or piratical actors/spectators were not responsible for this 'disastrously brief and erratic version of *Hamlet*' (Gurr 2015, 171), then the integrity and competence of the printers (i.e. Compositor A's short-term memory and typesetters in Valentine Simmes' shop), whom Bourus devotes a chapter to defending (2014, 11-33), must surely be called into question. As Vickers points out: 'There are numerous instances in English publishing history during Shakespeare's life of books which had been printed by persons not having a legal title to the copy, in texts which were sometimes seriously defective, being replaced by authentic texts', and 'the two Quartos of *Hamlet* could be described in exactly the same terms' (1994, 15).

Bourus criticizes the 'anachronistic claims about piracy' (2014, 8) made by scholars such as Kathleen O. Irace (1994) and Tiffany Stern (2013). In direct criticisms of the latter scholar, Bourus states that 'Projecting our own experience and assumptions onto the blank screen of the past is a mistake that is extraordinarily easy for *any* of us to make' (2014, 76). Indeed, Bourus demonstrates this on several occasions, such as when she defends the handwriting of Elizabethan players by telling readers that 'I have known highly educated professionals who scribble more indecipherably than actors of my acquaintance' (37); or when she attacks 'proponents of memorial reconstruction', who have suggested the actor who played Marcellus was an actor-pirate, thus: 'I have met one or two incompetent amateur actors in my lifetime in the theatre, but I have never encountered any creature who matches this cartoon profile' (43-44). Such statements run contrary to Bourus' caveat that "the past is a foreign country," where they did things differently than we do' (76). Another scholar Bourus dismisses is Petersen, whose 2010 monograph explores the possibility that 'bad Quartos' like Q1 could have been shaped by performance and that there are commonalities between play texts and orally transmitted folk narratives (56-58). Similarly, Bourus criticizes Laurie E. Maguire for conceding that Q1 could 'possibly' be a memorial text (Maguire 1996, 256), suggesting that Maguire 'suffered, here, uncharacteristically, from a failure of nerve' (Bourus 2014, 40). Memorial reconstruction, whether due to actor-reporters or spectator-reporters – regarding the possibility of the latter, I agree with Bourus that the origins of Q1 do not necessarily require a complicated note-taking hypothesis, despite



Stern's claim that 'too many features ... recall the note-taking process to explain the whole text as the product of audience-memory' (18) – may no longer be of the fashion, but it seems to me that Q1 is largely the product of aural memory (possibly deriving from a touring version of the play), in a time 'when the aural rather than the visual understanding was much greater than in our own time' (Tobin 2012, 22).

Given 'the gravitational pull of Shakespeare's name' and Bourus' 'association with Gary Taylor ... who has written a preface to her book, and whose revisionary rhetoric pervades the book' (Erne 2015, 54), it is perhaps unsurprising that the *New Oxford Shakespeare* team should consider the case for Shakespeare's authorship of the older play to be 'decisive' on such grounds as 'the odd plural' *Hamlets* representing a 'jibe at Shakespeare as a country bumpkin' (Taylor and Loughnane 2017, 546-547). The *New Oxford Shakespeare* team are willing to revise Shakespeare's chronology in order to include texts that appear to antedate Shakespeare's entire corpus, such as *Arden of Feversham* and the lost *Hamlet* play. But unless firm evidence to the contrary arises, it seems safe to assume that Shakespeare began his writing career circa 1591. It also seems to me that the evidence for Kyd's authorship of the old *Hamlet* remains strong, despite the recent diminution of Kyd's corpus. As Erne puts it: 'Once the dust will have settled, the scholarly community may well rediscover the good sense of what has long been the orthodox view' (2015, 54).

Kenneth Muir claimed that 'The revelation of the Ghost, the feigned madness, the play-scene', and 'the closet-scene' could all be 'found in the old play' (1957, 114). However, as Janet Clare points out, the fact is that we know almost nothing of the old play's 'style, technique, content or to what degree it underwent a transformation in Shakespeare's hands', although we can be confident that 'it was affective and popular before it was superseded by Shakespeare's *Hamlet*' (2014, 168). I suspect that Kyd's *Hamlet* was very different from Shakespeare's version, but that Shakespeare adopted sentiments, structural elements, and some vaguely remembered phrases from the old play. As Hart put it: 'If he preserved as little of this play as he did of his acknowledged source-plays', such as *King Leir*, 'not many more than ten or twenty lines' of the old *Hamlet* play 'would survive' in Shakespeare's version (1942, 64). Nonetheless, the fact that 'the play to which the arguably most famous piece of English literature is heavily indebted' (Erne 2001, 150) was likely written by Kyd, says much for his influence on Shakespeare's drama.

## 6. *Kyd and Shakespeare: A Reappraisal*

I suggest that Kyd's reputation has been impeded by a curious movement in early modern literary studies, which seeks to put an end to Shakespeare-centrism through emphasizing collaboration (privileging dramatists such

as Marlowe as co-authors), even when the evidence for co-authorship, as in *Henry VI Part Two* and *Three*, is dubious, while paradoxically admitting other dramatists' plays into his canon, such as (by my argument) the lost *Hamlet* play and *Arden of Faversham*. The curious gallimaufry of disintegration and Shakespeare-centrism in *The New Oxford Shakespeare* edition is aptly described by William Shaw:

Collaboration is this edition's watchword, reflecting the trend in Shakespeare scholarship over the last fifteen years or so ... This edition has grabbed a few headlines for listing Christopher Marlowe as co-author of the *Henry VI* plays. Yet its other choices betray its bardolatry; Shakespeare is interminably front and centre, even when his hand in a play is minimal. The collaboratively-written *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Sir Thomas More* are represented only by the bits 'probably' written by Shakespeare, with no indication of what came before or after, obscuring his impact on the overall script, and frustrating any reader unfamiliar with the plays. (2016)

While there is firm evidence that Shakespeare collaborated with other dramatists early in his career, on plays such as *Titus Andronicus* (1592) and *Edward III* (with Peele and Kyd, respectively), we should bear in mind that 'collaborative plays were less likely to reach print' (Vickers 2002, 17) and that 'from the very start of his career' Shakespeare 'seems to have preferred to write alone' (Wiggins 2016). Shaw (2016) also notes that 'The insistence on isolating Shakespeare serves to increase his iconic stature, rather than qualify it'. Similarly, Emma Smith employs animal imagery to describe Shakespeare's legacy:

In the great food chain of being, Shakespeare is the apex predator in a cultural ecosystem where he has no rivals, only prey. The literary rabbits and deer and mice need to watch out. But the ecological model actually requires such a dominant figure – a keystone species – for the healthy functioning of the whole system.

Smith is correct that 'Attempts to decentre Shakespeare are thus often self-defeating' (2017). However, if we acknowledge the evidence for an 'enlarged' Kyd canon, we can identify the ways in which Shakespeare learned much from his predecessor, stylistically and dramaturgically. At present, Shakespeare attribution studies, rather like the ghost of Hamlet's father, appear to be in a state of limbo, with the pendulum swinging too far in the direction of co-authorship and disintegration, as opposed to Shakespeare-centrism.

In Tom Stoppard's play *Arcadia*, the character of Thomasina discusses the famous burning of the Ancient Library of Alexandria, which led to the devastating loss of knowledge and literature. She says to her tutor, Septimus:

Oh, Septimus! – can you bear it? All the lost plays of the Athenians! Two hundred at least by Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides – thousands of poems – Aristotle's own library brought to Egypt ... How can we sleep for grief? (1993, 50)

Scholars wishing to compare Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (1600) to the lost play are apt to share Thomasina's sentiment. However, it is worth bearing Septimus' response in mind:

By counting our stock. Seven plays from Aeschylus, seven from Sophocles, nineteen from Euripides, my lady! You should no more grieve for the rest than for a buckle lost from your first shoe, or for your lesson book which will be lost when you are old. We shed as we pick up, like travellers who must carry everything in their arms, and what we let fall will be picked up by those behind. (50)

This article has provided some of the internal and external evidence in favour of recounting Kyd's stock. Rather than three plays, it has shown that there is a case for assigning several extant texts to Kyd. It is unlikely that we will ever retrieve Kyd's *Hamlet*, but an 'extended' Kyd canon could lead to a reconsideration of the playwright's position in early modern drama. Indeed, it seems possible that Shakespeare's dramatic output, including two of the four major tragedies, was, in part at least, dependent on processes of adaptation and collaboration with Kyd, and owed much to the scrivener's son.

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