

SLAVERY, SUBALTERNITY, EMPIRE:
PERFORMING THE MULTICULTURAL MEDITERRANEAN
IN ITALIAN COMEDY

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ABSTRACT

Tessa Gurney: Slavery, Subalternity, Empire:
Performing the Multicultural Mediterranean in Italian Comedy
(Under the direction of Ennio Rao)

In the sixteenth century, the powerful Ottoman Empire is expanding further west. In Italy and elsewhere in Europe, exotic visitors are arriving each day from the vast and elusive *oltremare*. Others depart from Christendom, “turning Turk” in search of a new life or increased social mobility. Corsairs patrol the Mediterranean and its coastal areas, looking for slaves to row their powerful galleys.

This period of increased conflict on the Mediterranean Sea converges with Italian theater’s golden age. The already established negative stereotypes of the Turk thus find an appropriate home in comedy, a genre uniquely equipped to incorporate cultural aspersions. Comedy manages the popular fear of the “Turkish menace” as Turks are represented as barbarous pirates, sexual predators, or as a weak, often female, subaltern. This study traces the discourse of the Other in early modern Italian comedy by focusing on racial differences, religious erasures, and issues of gender in an attempt to identify an origin for certain racial tropes still present in contemporary Italian literature and culture.

Special attention is paid to the work of several playwrights from various parts of the Peninsula. Florentine Giovan Maria Cecchi is credited for the innovation he brought to the genre with *La stiava*. *La turca*, *La sorella*, and *Il moro* are three of Neapolitan Giambattista Della Porta’s comedies that evoke increased conflict and address the coastal

concerns of kidnapping and piracy. Luigi Groto's *Emilia* reads as a revisionist account of the War of Cyprus. Finally, the plays in Giovan Battista Andreini's Turkish trilogy are shown to condemn Turkish practices and imagine Christian triumph and meanwhile display a certain fascination for Turkish wealth, culture, and power not uncharacteristic of the age.

Para FLC

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INTRODUCTION

The title of the 2012 issue of *Renaissance Drama* asked readers a fundamental question: *What is Renaissance Drama?* But the journal might better have asked readers what *English* Renaissance Drama is, because contributors to this and other issues of the publication are primarily monolingual, focusing their attentions predominantly on work in its English original. The dissertation to follow has been fashioned as a first attempt to fill certain notable lacunae in early modern theater studies. The field has no doubt been enriched by the postcolonial approaches initiated in the 1980s and 90s, and much progress has been made in understanding how England, and to a lesser extent France and Spain, navigated the socially and politically fraught sixteenth century and how theater from European traditions managed the threat posed by the powerful, expanding Ottoman Empire. Daniel Vitkus, for example, has taken the focus of English theater studies away from Shakespeare and other tired, canonical authors, publishing a modern edition of three Turkish plays: *Selimus*, likely by Robert Greene, Robert Daborne's *A Christian Turned Turk*, and Philip Massinger's *The Renegado*.

Barbara Fuchs has praised efforts to geographically and conceptually expand the field, but has stressed that there is far more comparative work to be done before we can understand the complexities of early modern theater from a Mediterranean Studies perspective. She has called for a more comparative, multilingual approach, but has admitted the difficulties inherent in such a task:

It may be that our national preoccupations endure precisely because the field has expanded so much in other dimensions: scholars who must master a variety of discourses,

complex historical contexts, and a whole range of specialized knowledges in order to produce the historicist, cultural-studies work that is now standard in the field may find it challenging also to familiarize themselves with literature in other contemporary traditions. (Fuchs, “No Field is an Island” 126)

Fuchs’ call has already begun to be answered by scholars possessing the aforementioned qualities. Michèle Longino’s groundbreaking book has extensively studied the French case in *Orientalism in French Classical Drama*. Fuchs answered her own request with a recent critical translation of Cervantes’ captivity plays, *The Bagnios of Algiers* and *The Great Sultana*. Her translations have effectively brought Cervantes’ theater back to life, making the plays accessible beyond linguistic boundaries and providing us with much-needed modern editions.

There is a conspicuous dearth of scholarship, however, placing theater from the Italian tradition within a broader Mediterranean perspective. It is precisely this gap that the following study hopes to ever so slightly curtail. The reasons for the absence of a study like Vitkus’, Longino’s, or Fuchs’ from an early modern Italian studies perspective are manifold, but lie principally in the traditional nature of scholarly inquiry that has endured in the field of early modern Italian drama. Salvatore di Maria’s *The Poetics of Imitation in the Italian Theatre of the Renaissance* represents one of the most recent monographs in the field of early modern Italian drama and presents us with an excellent close reading of several comedies, yet it and other recent studies continue to anchor themselves in Italian comedy’s link to the classical tradition. Such source studies have been important resources for many of us students of Italian drama, but newer publications simply expand the work of earlier scholars such as Louise George Clubb, Douglas Radcliff-Umstead, and Marvin Herrick. What is needed in the field of Italian drama instead are more approaches that appreciate the genre as a key way to examine the social issues of the period such as gender, race, and the Peninsula’s complex relationships with *oltremare* entities.

Jo Ann Cavallo has recently placed epic poetry within the Mediterranean context, analyzing Boiardo's cosmopolitan vision and what she refers to as Ariosto's "crusading ideology" in *The World beyond Europe in the Romance Epics of Boiardo and Ariosto* (2013). Her study provides us with a new and useful analysis of epic poetry and introduces us to the Turkish anxiety deeply felt by some Italians after the 1453 fall of Constantinople. The genre of epic poetry, however, presents some limits. In a highly illiterate society, the polished epic poetry of Pulci, Boiardo and Ariosto was read and consumed by an elite minority. Comedy, on the other hand, provides us with the ideal opportunity to understand the complex and nuanced relationship between the Peninsula's powers and their neighbors—to the east and elsewhere—because it is the genre that best represents the concerns of individuals from *all* realms of society.

Though Italian comedy grew out of the private academies that produced updated iterations of Greek and Latin dramatic texts, it slowly loosened its ties to the classical tradition and became a more performative genre. Literacy was increasingly not a requirement for spectators, as professional actors functioned as intermediaries between the consumer and the text. As the sixteenth century progressed, comedy expanded from the private to the public sphere and comedic troupes performed their plays in the *piazza* and other public spaces. Those same plays did not lose interest among the *élite*, as they continued to be consumed by the emergent wealthy merchant class and nobles in their private homes and palaces. Comedy thus reflects the concerns of individuals from a vast socioeconomic spectrum, at once managing a common person's fear of being kidnapped and sold into slavery, the more nationalistic concern that the Ottoman Empire might expand into Italian territories, and the anxiety surrounding conversion shared by all western Christian powers.

Conceptualizing the Early Modern Mediterranean

Before placing Italian theater within the broader Mediterranean context, a brief excursus regarding recent efforts to conceptualize this space is necessary. Since its publication in 1949, as many studies have been dedicated to respectfully contradicting Fernand Braudel's thesis as have lauded the French historian and leader of the *Annales* school. In *La Méditerranée et le Monde Méditerranéen à l'Epoque de Philippe II*, Braudel argues that the Mediterranean should be understood as a unified entity and that the *longue durée* should be studied rather than the history of specific events (*histoire événementielle*). Braudel's influence cannot be overlooked, and his work on the Mediterranean revived an interest in the cultural history of the area and spurred a renaissance of scholarship on the topic.

In *The Italian Renaissance in the Mediterranean*, Monique O'Connell argues that Braudel wrote in a time in which a deep understanding of the Turkish Mediterranean was simply inaccessible. After years of careful archival research in Ottoman archives, however, scholars are now able to approach the Mediterranean in a more balanced manner. Manifold volumes published in the last decade have taken as their objective a revision of Braudel's understanding of the Mediterranean. The collection of essays edited by John Marino, *Early Modern History and the Social Sciences*, for example, challenges Braudelian thought in careful ways. How does political history, undervalued in Braudel's study, help us understand the Mediterranean world? What about historical anthropology? *Braudel Revisited* (2010) is another useful study that assesses the impact of Braudel's work in today's academic climate. O'Connell continues to correctly identify the more recent trend as one that examines instead "fragmentation within unity" and focuses on the Muslim "East" and the Christian "West." According to O'Connell, "Scholars of the Mediterranean now focus on borders, on networks of exchange, and on the way that the

interplay of conflict and co-existence allowed for individual and collective negotiations of identity” (2).

The Mediterranean was and is indeed a multi-cultural, fragmented society and must be understood as one. We can thus appreciate Braudel’s work as ground-breaking, provoking, and influential, but his notion of a unified Mediterranean can no longer be accepted as axiomatic. At the same time, though, the traditional East versus West binary is also insufficient in that it denies any connectivity. The ambitious project by Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea* (2000), has proposed a compromise between the Braudelian notion of unity and the traditional East versus West binary. Horden and Purcell argue that the Mediterranean landscape is *fragmented* into microregions that are undeniably and inherently *connected*.

Horden and Purcell’s compromise, considered in O’Connell’s review article and also in *Mediterranean Passages* (2008), is perhaps the most acceptable way to understand Italy in this period. The Mediterranean Sea cannot be seen as a unity when two entities, the East and the West, are pitted against one another in a bitter war. The two were historically interlinked, though, and this is undeniable. Thus the idea of a connected interconnectedness can help us understand the Mediterranean world in this century of conflict.

Ottoman Expansion

In the spring of 1453, twenty-one year old Ottoman Sultan Mehmed II led a fifty-three-day siege against the Byzantine defenders of Constantinople. On May 29, the victorious Ottoman soldiers began the traditional three-day pillage, killing scores and raping surviving females and young males. The victory signified the end of the Roman Empire and dealt a momentous blow to Christendom. Horrified by the loss of life and the pillaging and destruction of Byzantine cultural

artifacts, humanists responded with a surge of anti-Turkish rhetoric that painted the Turks as murderous savages and “inhuman barbarians” (Bessarion ctd. in Bisaha 2). Nancy Bisaha has shown how the Romans inherited the cultural division already employed by the Greeks, and how Europeans utilized the terms “Christian” and “Infidel” to describe the clashing factions from the eleventh century onward (2).

In the century following the conquest of Constantinople, the Ottoman Empire continued to expand, reaching its apogee in the second half of the sixteenth century. Turkish leaders wished to attain territories that could be reached by sea as well as by land, so they built a powerful and well-organized navy. The tradition of maritime prowess initiated by Mehmed II allowed the Turks to encroach upon Italian territories, conquering Otranto in 1480, and setting their sights on various Venetian islands. Syria and Egypt were conquered in 1517, and a significant part of Hungary fell to the Turks in 1526. Suleiman I’s army reached as far west as Vienna, attacking the city in 1529 (Watt 89-90).

Convinced that the powerful empire would attack Rome, the Papacy fueled anti-Turkish feelings throughout Christendom, labeling them the “scourge of Christendom.” Directly following the fall of Constantinople, Cardinal Enea Silvio Piccolomini gave an influential, widely circulated speech to the Imperial Diet in Regensburg in which he urged war against the Turks. When Piccolomini became Pope in 1458, he continued to advocate for war. Christians soon regarded “Muslim” and “Turk” as synonymous and viewed Muhammad, the central figure of Islam, as the Antichrist.

Piracy and Slavery

Humanists may have lamented the tragedy of the Turks' devastation of cultural artifacts and European powers were concerned about losing territory to the expansionist Ottoman Empire, but the fear of the "Turkish menace" resonated with individuals across the socioeconomic spectrum. The average Italian was deeply troubled by the potential that she or a member of her family might fall into the hands of the Barbary corsairs and be sold into slavery.

According to Nabil Matar, this fear would not have been unfounded. Matar, who has extensively studied British captivity in the Barbary States, has explained that North African privateers took "anywhere from a handful of captives to a few hundred" in each incursion ("England and Mediterranean Captivity" 12-13). Robert C. Davis has focused specifically on the Italian case, and assembled an extensive list of major slave taking activity after 1516. Davis' list proves how vulnerable coastal areas along the Peninsula were. In individual raids over a hundred slaves each were taken from the Genoan coast (1531), Cetara near Amalfi (1534), Reggio Calabria (1551), the coast of Puglia (1516), Agropoli (1544), and elsewhere. Numbers reached into the thousands for raids in Ischia and the Bay of Naples (1544) and Vieste (1554), and in 1544 "most of the inhabitants" of Elba were apparently taken captive (xiv).

These raids typically took place at sea, and captives were sailors, merchants, and others engaged in maritime professions. At times, corsairs sailed near the coast, picking up a few fishermen in each raid. In other cases, they might have even accessed land and captured coastal-dwelling families in their sleep. These North African privateers hailed primarily from the Barbary States, an area of North Africa composed of Algeria, Tunisia, and Tripoli. These three regencies were officially part of the Ottoman Empire, but due to their distance from Constantinople, they operated with a moderate amount of political and commercial autonomy (Matar, "England and Mediterranean Captivity" 6).

Davis has admitted the difficulty inherent in arriving at a precise number of Christians taken captive. He averaged that at any given time between 1580 and 1680, there would have been “27,000 [white Christian slaves] in Algiers and its dependences, 6,000 in Tunis, and perhaps 2,000 in Tripoli and the smaller centers combined” (15). This would have averaged 35,000 slaves in the Maghreb at any given time. Davis’ average is gleaned from large-scale corsair attacks, but he noted that the fishermen or peasants enslaved by way of “Christian stealing” or “petty piracy,” the aforementioned small-scale coastal raids, were not always possible to include. As they were not large-scale spectacles and the victims were not considered significant, these raids were unlikely to be documented, and thus the number could have risen even higher than his 35,000-slave estimate (Davis 7).

Once taken, captives would often be taken to one of the many slave markets along the Barbary Coast. While Algiers was the most active slave-trading city, cities from Alexandria to Sallee and from Tunis to Meknes “flourished on the business of enslaving Europeans” (Davis 8). While Davis wrote that he did not wish to “deny or trivialize the well-documented Christian enslavement of Moors and Turks which was going on at the same time” (8), he also claimed that “most students of the period still have to agree that, at least after 1571, corsair slaving was a ‘prevalently Muslim phenomenon’” (9). I would add here that the “students” Davis referred to—Salvatore Bono, Michel Fontenay, Ciro Manca, Vittorio Salvadorini, and others—all hail from the Western European critical tradition.

Others have taken a more neutral stance, reminding us that this was a two-sided phenomenon. Because of the absence of print in the Arab world during this period, it is difficult to ascertain how many Muslims were taken captive by Christian pirates, and thus American and European scholarship has overwhelmingly focused on the side backed by the European print

tradition in which quantities, names, and dates were fastidiously recorded. Careful research like that conducted by Matar, Vitkus, and others, has unveiled that North African “piracy” was a direct result of European colonialism. Matar cites one example from October of 1584 in which Venetians captured a Tunisian galley en route to Tripoli. The Venetians executed all aboard, killing “50 Moors, 75 Turks, 174 Christian converts to Islam, and 45 women” (Matar, *England and Mediterranean Captivity* 9). The Barbary corsairs’ practice of slave taking and privateering pales in comparison to these and other atrocities committed by European powers. Indeed it could indeed be said that Christian slaves were not slaves or captives at all, but prisoners of war.

Matar reminded us of the slave markets in Genoa, Cadiz, Malta, Venice, Naples, Provence, Languedoc, Barcelona, Marseilles, and elsewhere, and of the large numbers of Europeans engaged in the taking of Muslim slaves. In opposition to Davis’ claim, Matar said “that the Barbary corsairs captured thousands of Europeans is not in question; but then, the Europeans captures and enslaved even more” (113).

Matar’s historiographical work on slavery and captivity is absolutely necessary to read along with a study of the plays to be introduced here. It reminds us that the dramatic work left by these playwrights represents only one point of view in a two-sided war. These theatrical testimonies leave no trace of the many atrocities committed by the Christian west, and highlight only the slave-taking practices of Turkish corsairs. Due to the nature of the genre, playwrights employed an excessive use of exaggeration when narrating tales of corsair attacks and time spent in captivity. These plays are not to be understood as truthful or accurate accounts; their utility lies instead in their repetition of stereotypes and demonstration of contemporary fears so that we may better understand Turkish reception in early modern Italy.

Renegades and Conversion

Not all Europeans arrived in North Africa or the Levant as captives. Many went entirely of their own volition. The *chrétiens d'Allah*, these individuals who chose to migrate from Christianity to Islam, were referred to as renegades by the communities they left behind. Renegades did not represent an insignificant minority, either; while it would be impossible to arrive at a precise estimation, it is likely that converts numbered in the hundreds of thousands. The phenomenon has since been determined significant enough to be categorized as a social movement (Dursteler, ("Fearing the 'Turk'" 486).

The motivations for conversion were manifold. Several converts did begin as captives. Upon the observation that converts were spared the more difficult tasks or that one could minimally improve one's situation as a Muslim, a slave might proclaim his or her wish to convert to Islam.

For every Christian who converted in attempt to earn his or her freedom, however, there were several converts who came to North Africa or the Levant as free individuals. A small minority chose to convert for no reason other than their religious conviction—they truly believed that Islam was superior to their Christian birth religion. Some were simply adventure-seekers, eager to travel and explore North Africa or the Levant. Still others converted simply to avoid problems that they had encountered in their Christian lives; they left their religion and their debts behind, swapping their religion for a clean slate. A vast number of these converts were tired of the lack of social mobility in their birth communities and converted in hopes of attaining a better socioeconomic status. It was commonly known that the Turks favored and rewarded hard work and dedication. In a Europe that afforded very little opportunity for upward social mobility and ranked individuals based on the purity of their blood, a society in which one's birth did not

define one's lifelong success presented a natural lure. It follows then, that the majority of these renegades came from areas bordering the Mediterranean, and that many were southern Italians. These areas were particularly stricken by poverty; southern Italians became religious nomads in order to feed and provide for their families.

Those that had lived the Turkish dream were the ones that frightened Christian communities the most. Turkish leaders recognized the value of converts' privileged knowledge as former Christians and placed them in military and governmental positions. Some renegades of lowly Christian birth rose swiftly up the social spectrum after their conversion to Islam. One young captive taken from a small village in Calabria, Giovanni Dionigi Galeni, began his new life as a galley slave and soon became the infamous corsair Occhiali. He rose from slave to corsair to *reis* (galley captain) to *beylerbey* (chief governor) of Alexandria to *pasha* of Tripoli. Religious authorities feared that Occhiali's success story might motivate others to follow in his footsteps, and coastal dwellers were worried that he would use his intimate knowledge of the southern Italian coast to take them and their families captive. During his corsairing years, Occhiali sailed in the fleet of Turgut Reis, and their crew was responsible for some of the most significant raids along the Italian coast.

The Playwrights and Plays

The period of greatest conflict between Christians and Turks can be described as the long sixteenth century, typically said to begin with the discovery of the Americas but here expanded slightly to include the Christian-Turkish conflict in its nascent stages. Incidentally, these years converge with Italian theater's golden age.

Italian theater was born in early modern centers of culture like Florence, Ferrara, and Mantua. The first major author of erudite comedy, Ludovico Ariosto, closely imitated the classical tradition when he composed *La cassaria* for a 1508 carnival performance.¹ Slowly but surely as the genre matured, playwrights ceased to adhere strictly to their classical sources and began to enrich their comedies with meditations on current events and notable individuals, making the dialogue resonate better with the early modern viewing public.

I begin my analysis in 1550 with the publication of Giovan Maria Cecchi's *La stiava*, after the first wave of Italian comedy had come and gone. Encouraged to innovate by critics of the theater like Giambattista Giraldi Cinthio, second-wave playwrights swapped *imitatio* for *contaminatio*, a system by which a comedy was inspired by tripartite sourcing. Playwrights thus modeled comedies not only on classical sources, but also on current events and fourteenth-century comedic topoi borrowed from *novellieri* like Giovanni Boccaccio. The practice of addressing contemporary social and political concerns is precisely why comedy must be appreciated as a genre that represents “the thought and spirit of the sixteenth century” (Radcliff-Umstead, *The Birth of Modern Comedy* ix).

As already noted, conflict had been initiated long before 1550, and there was already a strong tradition of anti-Turkish rhetoric among the Italian élite that had occasioned fear among the populace. The year 1550 is not meant to demarcate the beginning of Italian comedy's fascination with the East, either, as using Turkish incursions to explain infant separation had already become commonplace. Theater had begun to incorporate mentions of the Turk as early as 1509, when Ariosto cited the Turkish invasion of Otranto. Later, in *La mandragola* (1518),

¹ Ariosto was careful not to seem too bold. While he termed his *Cassaria* a “nova comedia,” he also clearly lauded Latin over Italian when he stated that “la vulgar lingua, di latino mista, è barbara e mal culta; ma con I giochi si può far fabular men trista” (*Prologue*).

Niccolò Machiavelli's Fra Timoteo is famously asked, "Credete voi che 'l Turco passi questo anno in Italia?" Fra Timoteo responds, "Se voi non fate orazione, sì" (Act 3, scene 3). The case of Machiavelli is particularly interesting, because while his contemporaries were eager to criticize Turkish rule, Machiavelli remained strangely neutral. *La mandragola* clearly expresses the by-then popular fears in a humorous exchange, but it refrains from passing judgment. He acknowledges a certain threat in his *Istorie Fiorentine* when he refers to the loss of Negroponte as a "grande infamia e danno del nome cristiano," (133) but elsewhere he seems to admire the Turkish military. In *Il principe*, he takes an arguably positive stand when, in book three, he praises the practice of colonization:

come ha fatto el Turco, di Grecia; il quale, con tutti li altri ordini osservati da lui per tenere quello stato, se non vi fussi ito ad abitare, non era possibile che lo tenessi. Perché, standovi, si veggono nascere e' disordini, e presto vi puoi rimediare; non vi stando, s'intendono quando sono grandi e non vi è più rimedio.

It is important to note that not all Italians were staunchly anti-Turkish. Machiavelli's attitude is reflective of a number of others, including but not limited to Giovanni Menavino, Andrea Cambini, and Paolo Giovio. The writings of these individuals stressed that there was an understandable reason behind Turkish domination. They were well organized and possessed an extraordinarily powerful military, and their intelligent practices led to their success. Such writing is not to be understood as pro-Turkish, of course; Machiavelli and others wished to help Westerners "know their enemy" and in so doing, better understand how to defeat them (Bisaha 177-178).

It is with Cecchi's *La stiava* in 1550 that the Turkish threat changes markedly in its representation. Previously used merely to provide a date or location of a play by citing a previous Turkish raid or to conveniently explain the loss of an infant, the Turkish element becomes central to the play. In *La stiava*, the Turkish slave never appears on stage, but it is she who engenders all

of the play's conflict: her presence initiates conflict between a father and his son, between two childhood best friends, and between a husband and wife.

From the publication of *La stiava* on, these themes are visited and revisited, Turkish characters typically serving only to terrorize others. Corsair attacks years prior set the scene for fifth-act recognition scenes and make it seem as if every early modern family lost an infant due to the cruel and relentless corsairs patrolling the Italian coast. Turkish incursions complicate lovers' intricate tricks and threaten tragic endings. Turkish language play dupes gullible characters. Playwrights saw no better way to represent deception than by dressing characters as Turks, widely associated with untrustworthiness and betrayal. In drama—and indeed in all forms of literature—Turks are depicted as libidinous and deceptive, murderous, proselytizing fanatics who would torture captives unless they converted to Islam.

The denigration of the Turk in theater reaches its apex in the 1570s after the War of Cyprus and the Battle of Lepanto that followed. The Papacy had been eager to engage in war with their neighbors to the east for over a century, but other European powers were understandably cautious. They were hesitant to break peace with the Turks, as war could cut them off from important trading opportunities. The capture of Nicosia and Famagusta and exaggerated tales of Turkish atrocities were used by the Pope as a bargaining tool, and he finally convinced European powers to come together to fight Turkish expansion. European powers had themselves been at war, and so the League's organization was rife with internal division. The stars aligned for the conflicted Allied Christian League, however, and they were victorious at Lepanto in October of 1571. A surge of celebratory literature from every genre followed the victory, and theater was no exception.

Lepanto succeeded in slowing Turkish expansion westward, and many scholars refer to the battle as the beginning of the end for the Turks. When the baroque theater of Giovan Battista Andreini was being performed throughout Europe in the early seventeenth century, the Turkish threat had begun to wane. Negative Turkish stereotypes still persisted, to be sure, but the comedies of Andreini and his contemporaries represent not only the lingering fear of the Turks, but also an intense fascination. Experimenting with Turkish themes and incorporating Turkish characters allowed playwrights to dress their characters in exotic Turkish costumes, include strange and unfamiliar props, and simulate non-native, heavily accented speech.

The comedies addressed are by the Florentine Cecchi, the Neapolitan Giambattista Della Porta, Luigi Groto from Adria, and Andreini, another Florentine. An effort has been made to examine plays from throughout the Italian Peninsula, recognizing that various Italian powers had different concerns regarding the Turks. The one purely Venetian play, for example, directly addresses the War of Cyprus between the Republic and the Ottoman Empire. Cecchi evokes the trade interests of mercantile Tuscany and manages its cautious interests to participate more actively in the increasingly global markets, while several of Della Porta's Neapolitan comedies evince the anxiety of coastal areas vulnerable to corsair attacks.

None of the comedies addressed could be considered part of the traditional Western canon proposed by Harold Bloom in 1994. *La mandragola* – listed, in this author's opinion, merely as an afterthought to show that the famously self-congratulatory scholar also knew that the author of *Il principe* produced dramatic work – is the only Italian play to appear. More shamefully still, these comedies also fail to be considered in the Italian critical tradition. While a few of them have been reprinted or edited, many are not easily accessible and are available only in their original. They are, however, all well-written comedies that were widely appreciated in

their own time. Cecchi's comedic work was so admired that he earned the epithet "Il comico," Della Porta was mentioned alongside the baths of Pozzuoli as Naples' "greatest tourist attraction" (Clubb xi), and Andreini's work was as appreciated in private palaces by the *crème de la crème* of European society as it was in the *piazza*.

The reason that the popularity of these comedies has not endured is precisely what makes them most interesting for the purposes of this study. Italian comedy in the years addressed always reflected the practice of *contaminatio*. The balance of the classical tradition with contemporary figures, issues, and concerns varied greatly; at times a comedy would adhere more to the classical source text or texts, while another might have focused more strongly on contemporary issues. All of the comedies to be examined can be linked to sources from the classical tradition, but they all share a strong contemporary element. Since they contemplate events current specifically in the sixteenth century, they are greatly linked to that time period. It follows, then, that these comedies lacked the "staying power" of more paradigmatic comedies like *La mandragola*. Once the Turkish threat began to wane, so did the interest in these plays.

Comedy of Conflict

During the conceptualization stages of this dissertation, a wise professor asked me why I had chosen to limit my study to comedy. Surely such a study could be enriched by an examination of epic poetry and tragedy, as well. Indeed, both of these genres are particularly useful for an analysis of literature in times of war. Tragedy and epic poetry are uniquely linked with militarism, as they focus on what Conrad Hyers has called "warrior virtues"—duty, honor, unquestioning obedience, pride, and the willingness to die for one's leader. While the stories of kings and queens and soldiers are certainly consumed by all with rapt attention, it is comedy that

better represents the average human experience, particularly in the fragmented and fearful Italian Peninsula during this period.

Comedy, as opposed to tragedy, presents more varied *dramatis personae*. Characters are merchants, doctors, lawyers, nursemaids, servants, and slaves. They speak a language that is easier to identify with, a language quite similar to how the spectators themselves speak. Instead of being praised for their “warrior virtues,” characters are valued based on their quick wittedness, family values, and intelligence. At times, characters undergo issues quite similar to the ones that viewers experience, and so there a natural link forms between the genre of comedy and its audience.

It is understandable, then, that comedy tends to represent the concerns of the common individual. In the comedies addressed here, the prevailing fears are those of being snatched up and sold into slavery or being forced to convert to Islam. The concerns of religion and state are also considered, but to a lesser degree. Concerns of the piracy and captivity of common Italians are expressed more frequently than apprehension about Turkish expansion.

In the cases of many of these plays, scholars have grappled with what to call them. Louise George Clubb had said that she hesitated to refer to many of Della Porta’s comedies as comedies because of their violent, uncertain nature; she termed them tragicomedy instead. The violent themes of kidnapping, privateering, slavery, and conversion occur with such a frequency that I would propose they make up an entire subgenre of comedy, which I will refer to as comedy of conflict forthwith.

Comedy of conflict achieves several goals, chief among them providing an escape for a troubled public in a time of conflict. In a 1947 essay, J. R. R. Tolkien discussed the importance of fairy stories for children (and adults) during another period of global conflict, specifically

World War II. He coined term *eucastrophe* to refer to a sudden turn of events that catapults a story from uncertainty to an assurance that all will end smoothly. It is no coincidence that this same phenomenon, referred to as *peripeteia* and inherited from the Greek comedic tradition, is a chief element of all Italian comedies. Comedy functions similarly to the way in which fairy stories function for Tolkien's *postbellum* Europe. It provides readers and spectators with a temporary relief from an unpleasant reality and instills them with the hope that even when an individual's situation seems destined to end poorly, the situation can be reversed.

In a collection of essays, French philosopher Henri Bergson discussed the healing power of comedy and examined how laughter rebuilds the normality of life. Not all comedies are humorous—to be considered a comedy, of course, they must simply end happily—but those to be addressed here are notably jocular. This is because the period required them to be so. Late-sixteenth-century playwrights increased the humor of the trick, at times borrowing from the rollicking *beffe* of Boccaccio, and incorporated aspects of the *commedia dell'arte* in order to lighten the mood and rejuvenate the audience's spirits in a time of turmoil.

Chapter Plan

This study begins by exploring the emergence of Turkish themes in what I have identified as the first comedy of conflict, *La stiava* by Giovan Maria Cecchi. Though not a playwright traditionally associated with innovation, Chapter one will display how Cecchi's play initiates this subgenre by bringing negative Turkish stereotypes to Italian comedy, paving the way for future comedies.

Cecchi's comedic work emerged just after the publication and dissemination of Giovanni Battista Giraldi Cinthio's *Discorso intorno al comporre delle comedie e delle tragedie*. Cecchi

closely observed Cinthio's dictates, carefully referencing classical sources while updating his comedy to appeal to the interests of contemporary audience members. Cecchi's audience was the Florentine society under the rule of Cosimo I de' Medici. In keeping with Cinthio's recommendation that the setting and theme of the play should resonate with its audience, Cecchi's play is inextricably linked to Cosimo's Florence. The play itself was a product of the duke's movement to encourage cultural production, and it appeals to its audience by meditating on the themes of mercantile life and global trade.

La stiava illustrates both the advantages and the disadvantages inherent in Medici Tuscany's expansion beyond the sea. Increased trade with entities beyond the Peninsula presented Tuscany with the opportunity to expand its trading network and greatly increase its wealth, but the increasing accessibility of Tuscan lands by sea made it more easily penetrable, as well. In *La stiava*, Alfonso brings back a shipload of sumptuous goods from a trading trip to Constantinople. His father was also a merchant, as are many of his neighbors and acquaintances. All of them seem to live a comfortable life of ease. The merchant families are able to afford a country home and employ cooks and multiple servants. For all intents and purposes, trade in the Levant has served Alfonso's family and community well.

The arrival of a beautiful slave girl from Constantinople, however, upends the relative peace of the port town. Among the many stereotypes that had emerged, the view of the Turk as lustful and lascivious was one of the most diffuse. "Oriental" sexual practices were thought to be highly liberal, and stories of Turkish concubinage, sodomy, and polygamy had spread throughout Christendom. Too beautiful to even appear onstage, the slave girl's sensuality does not simply attract men, it bewitches them. In *La stiava*, the dangerous sexual object from Constantinople sows dissension between all Christian characters. Order is only returned to the community when

it is discovered that the slave girl is actually Italian. While *La stiava*'s recognition scene is certainly not the first to use a Turkish incursion to explain the loss of an infant or child, it localizes the threat, citing a recent, nearby raid in order to appeal to the local audience.

Years pass, and the Christian-Muslim conflict reaches its apogee in the late sixteenth century as Mediterranean privateering becomes more commonplace and the Ottoman Empire expands westward, conquering Venetian islands. A second chapter treats the comedies of this period, highlighting the increased conflict and bellicose elements present in comedies such as Giambattista Della Porta's *La turca* and *La sorella*, as well as Luigi Groto's *Emilia*.

Sultan Selim II's attack on the Venetian island of Cyprus provided the impetus for a united Christian front. When elaborate tales of the violent sack and pillage of Cypriot cities Nicosia and Famagusta spread throughout Christendom, the Pope was finally able to convince other European Christian powers to overlook their trade interests in the Levant and intervene. While they did not mobilize themselves in time to save Cyprus, the Allied Christian League participated in one of the most notable battles in history, the battle of Lepanto, fought on October 7, 1571.

The events of 1570-1571 provided the material to saturate all forms of literature, and theater was no exception. Groto, from Adria, a town just south of Venice, responded with his *Emilia*. The blind man of Adria, physically unable to join the fight, contributes to the cause in the only way that he can, creatively. In *Emilia*, the "scrittore-soldato" rewrites the invasion of Cyprus, remembering the heroic virtue of Venetian patriots instead of the horrific loss and imagining a case in which the tragedy brought one family together instead of apart.

Della Porta was somewhat more distanced from the fight, but his comedies are nevertheless affected. *La turca* and *La sorella* both reflect a world plagued by constant conflict

and intense fear. In *La turca*, no one is who he appears to be as the masquerade of characters in Turkish garb coincides with a raid led by one of the most infamous Turkish corsairs. The confusion prevails throughout as the motif of battle is frequently repeated, evoking the spirit of the age and reminding audience members of the 1570-1571 conflict that began hopelessly but ultimately ended in Christian triumph. *La sorella* brings the vilification of the Turk to daring new heights with its suggestion that exposure to Turkish customs in Constantinople contributed to the indecent and unchristian incestuous behavior of two siblings. All travelers from Constantinople bear nothing but bad news, and the Turkish language is used to trick and deceive Christians. The play ends positively, but only narrowly so. *La sorella*, whose categorization as comic has been question due to the frightening theme of sibling incest, marks a clear change in comedic production: a happy ending is less certain for Christians in late sixteenth-century Italy, and comedy reflects such tenuity as it moves away from the formulaic plots firmly rooted in the classical tradition.

A third chapter explores another of Della Porta's comedies, *Il moro*. While not explicitly referred to as a Turk, the protagonist is disguised as a black African. Della Porta's knowledge of geography is slightly confused, but Moro is to be understood as a merchant from North Africa. As a resident of North Africa (where most states were regencies under the Ottoman Sultanate) and a person of color, Moro endures a double alterity, though the emphasis placed on the color of his skin instead of his religious beliefs.

Il moro has been called the most strikingly violent of Della Porta's oeuvre due to Moro's murderous rages and demoniac urges. This chapter argues that such an uncharacteristic violence is possible in an early modern comedy because of the protagonist's disguise as a black African, understood in sixteenth-century Italy to be irascible and prone to murderous rage.

Chapter three begins with an examination of the Moorish figure on the early modern Italian stage. As Dymphna Callaghan has established, the Moor was indeed a white man, but the Italian Moor is distinct from other European theatrical traditions, as he endures a double mimesis. In Italian theater, the Moor was a white man playing a white man disguised as a black man, and the racialized trick was almost exclusively unveiled in the play's fifth act return to order. Next, Pirro's violent masquerade as Moro is analyzed, and it is proposed that his black appearance only further accentuates Pirro's whiteness, and Moro's ultimate unmasking as Pirro is read as a parody of the Christian ritual of baptism. Della Porta's representation of Moro is suggested to be a mimetic representation of the black African male as informed by his own study of physiognomy, the classical "science" in which individuals intuited character traits through the physical characteristics of others. Incidentally, it was Della Porta himself who was responsible for the rebirth of the dangerous field of study with the publication of his *De humana physiognomonia* (1586), widely circulated throughout Europe in various languages. The renewed interest in physiognomy in the sixteenth century only added to the promulgation of negative stereotypes of black Africans, resulting in proto-racist sentiment backed by the triptych of Christian belief, questionable intellectual expertise, and now, "science."

The plays discussed in Chapter four were written and performed in a less tenuous period in Italian history, after the Turkish threat had begun to wane. Though Turkish expansion had somewhat subsided, the threat of piracy and captivity were still a harsh reality. Giovan Battista Andreini's Turkish trilogy, comprised of *La turca*, *Lo schiavetto*, and *La sultana*, discusses the lingering fears and anxieties of the Turkish menace. Turks are still referred to as "bestie" and still represented as lustful, dangerous, and untrustworthy. As in the sixteenth-century comedies already discussed, Andreini's baroque spectacles are careful to always portray Christian

characters and their faith as superior. At the same time, however, Andreini recognized the opportunity to visually and aesthetically enrich his comedies by incorporating Turkish costume, props, music, and language. His Turkish trilogy can be argued to display a certain degree of fascination for the Turkish Other. Such conflicted feelings toward the Turkish Other may seem obscure, but they were not entirely uncharacteristic of the time. I have briefly noted Machiavelli's dualistic attitude toward the Turks, and scholars in allied fields have shown how Italian nobles were eager to design their palaces and gardens in the Turkish style, and how non-nobles who could afford such luxury often owned portrait books that portrayed the Turk as valiant and noble.

A fifth chapter examines the role that female characters play in early modern Italian comedy. Characters' dramatic importance is measured based on factors such as visibility and audibility, as well as the assignment of high-level speech vehicles such as the monologue or the aside. In early comedy, female characters are allotted an extremely low level of importance; *La stiava's* Adelfia, for example, does not even appear onstage. She is rarely referred to by name and is referred to as property and categorized as merchandise along with the rest of the goods brought to Genoa from Constantinople.

As more and more Turkish comedies are written and performed, however, women must necessarily appear onstage. Explaining a character's extended absence by associating it with a period of servitude becomes commonplace, and when these characters are free and reunited with their families, they cannot return to their traditional place in society. A female's place in sixteenth-century society is in the home or at the window, but it would seem absurd to return a freed female slave who has seen the world to her traditional cloistered space. Women are instead allowed greater visibility and mobility, and with that comes greater dramatic importance. By the

time that Andreini's comedic troupe is performing *La sultana*, female roles are altogether different. Women drive the action of the play, serving as active agents. They are highly intellectual, reflective of the growing acceptance of female intellect in sixteenth-century society. Because of their years in captivity, female characters are often able to speak a variety of different languages, using those linguistic abilities to their advantage.

I conclude with a sixth and final chapter in which I explore the rite of conversion in the early modern period, the idyllic representation of which inevitably finds a place in the closing act of each of the comedies discussed. Scholarship has shown how, in actuality, conversion was not a choice taken by an individual; it was instead a careful negotiation between the convert and her new religious community. Several factors contributed to a convert's motivation, and only rarely was true religious conviction one of such factors. Furthermore, while instances of conversion to Islam were frequent, the inverse situation was relatively rare. Individuals were motivated to "turn Turk" so frequently that renegadism has been identified as a deeply impactful social movement that was heavy on the minds of religious leaders.

Comedy of conflict, however, would have one imagine a situation entirely opposite of historical reality. In comedy, individuals are strongly moved to participate in an immediate religious migration after having witnessed displays of Christian magnanimity. They independently realize the error of their ways and profess their wish to follow the correct path. Renegade corsairs who once terrorized Christians return to the fold and express their deepest regret for their wayward pasts, careful to note that they had only turned Turk under threat of violence. A kind of dramatic conversion iconography arises out of the theatrical representations present in fifth-acts. Fifth-act conversion scenes realize one of theater's primary goals, to

instruct; spectators are led to renew their own beliefs after witnessing such a powerful display of religious conviction and Christian superiority.

CHAPTER 1

Homewreckers and Human Traders: The Turkish Debut in Giovan Maria Cecchi's *La stiava*

The comedies of earlier playwrights such as Niccolò Machiavelli, Ludovico Ariosto, or Pietro Aretino are overwhelmingly preferred to those of Florentine bureaucrat Giovan Maria Cecchi. Though Cecchi was the most prolific playwright of the sixteenth century, his plays have been dismissed as later iterations of the earlier masters' work. What the scholarship has overlooked, however, is the innovation Cecchi brings to erudite comedy at a crucial juncture in its evolution.

While Cecchi carefully adheres to the classical comedic tradition, he meanwhile incorporates new, contemporary themes that provide valuable insight into mid-sixteenth-century society and culture. With the composition of his play *La stiava*, Cecchi is among the first playwrights to bring one integral issue of the period -- conflict in the Mediterranean -- from a mere mention to a central theme by utilizing the world of Italian mercantilism as his *mise en scène*. Cosimo I de' Medici's mercantile Tuscany in particular, as well as other Italian powers, are eager to trade their goods for Turkish wares, but the relationship is marked by tenuity, anxiety, and uncertainty. The burgeoning Florentine duchy meanwhile fears the growing power of the Turks, particularly the Turkish corsairs' practice of kidnapping Italians at sea and trading them at slave markets in Algiers or Constantinople.

Cecchi was a playwright who wrote for Florentine tastes, and he perfectly articulates the dualistic nature of the attitude toward the Turks in *La stiava*, an attitude present not only in Florence but all throughout the Peninsula. In Cecchi's comedy, the protagonist Alfonso returns to Italy after a trading trip in Constantinople. His experience abroad was more than positive; it was not only economically, but also romantically fruitful. He tells of the opulent merchandise and the bustling slave market in the eastern metropolis. His most prized acquisition was not sumptuous cloth or another material commodity, however. While in Constantinople, he purchased a female slave and swiftly married her. From the moment she disembarks at the port, the young woman -- or more aptly, human ware or good -- is sold off, exchanged, or stolen. Such has been the woman's plight for fifteen years, her sad fate set in motion years before when she was kidnapped by the Turks. Only when she is unveiled as Italian and returned to her family in Genoa does the constant handing off conclude and she is finally granted an identity.

In this chapter, I seek to establish Cecchi as a theatrical innovator, a playwright who successfully penned a comedy in which classical and novellistic tradition converge with the treatment of contemporary social issues, effectively changing the comedic genre and paving the way for the purely Turkish comedies that followed in the second half of the century. Cleverly and innovatively, without actually bringing a non-Christian on stage, Cecchi initiates the tradition of the Turkish comedy by addressing Italian-Turkish mercantile exchange as the central theme of his 1550 *commedia osservata*.

Giovan Maria Cecchi's Life

Giovan Maria Cecchi's life spanned one of the most interesting and baffling periods in Florentine history. Born in 1518, nine-year-old Cecchi witnessed the expulsion of Medici rulers

and the successive short-lived Florentine Republic.² Upon the restoration of Medici power, he saw the assassination of Duke Alessandro de' Medici and lived much of his adult life under the autocratic rule of Cosimo I de' Medici. Coming of age, studying, and working in this period of Florentine history had no small effect on the creative work of this prolific playwright.

The scholarship on Cosimo's reign is divided. One camp refers to the duke as the destroyer of Florentine liberalism and republicanism, while the other lauds his successful attempts to revivify Florence's foundering economy and establish the duchy as a world leader in artistic production. Whichever position one takes on the controversial leader, it is impossible to overlook the boom in literary and artistic production that occurred during his thirty-two-year reign as duke and his successive five-year tenure as grand duke. In addition to lauding his political and economic prowess, Konrad Eisenbichler refers to the cultural progress made under Cosimo as a "miracle." The young leader emphasized the importance of art and literature, wooing talented Florentine artists who had fled the city back to their hometown. His enthusiasm for and investment in literature not only sparked a renewed interest in the earlier works of Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio, but also resulted in a strong tradition of contemporary literary production in Medicean Florence (Eisenbichler, *The Cultural Politics of Duke Cosimo I de' Medici* xi).

The professional and literary success ultimately achieved by Cecchi was not easily earned. He worked tirelessly to bring his family out of a social slump that it had entered when he was a young adolescent. Dating to the mid-thirteenth century, the Cecchi family had been a well-respected Florentine family whose members had long held esteemed public offices (Fiacchi 12).

² Scholars have historically been divided on Cecchi's precise date of birth. Camerini favored a 1517 date, but scholars later preferred 1518, attributing early scholars confusion to the *anno fiorentino*, which began on March 25 as opposed to January 1 (Rizzi 5-6).

However, the family underwent a substantial fall from grace in 1530 when Giovan Maria's father, Ser Bartolomeo di Ser Sano, was murdered by Fabrino del Grilla da Castagno. While Giovan Maria, as the oldest son, pleaded for justice to be served, his efforts proved fruitless. The social mores of sixteenth-century Florence dictated that if a murder were to go unpunished, that family must undergo a certain loss of respect and social standing. More embarrassment followed when, in 1549, Cecchi's aunt Prudenza was found to have poisoned her husband Matteo. She, contrary to Ser Bartolomeo's killer, was prosecuted, found guilty, and sentenced to a public hanging. If having a family member's murder go unpunished tarnished the old Florentine family's reputation, having a convicted murderer in the family certainly created a scandal (Radcliff-Umstead, *Carnival Comedy and Sacred Play* 15-16).

Cecchi underwent much of this family turmoil as a young man. His mother died when he was just sixteen, leaving him to act as teenage guardian to his two younger brothers. Regardless of his family's reduced social stature, Cecchi succeeded in weathering his personal troubles with relative grace. Furthermore, he successfully maneuvered the politically tumultuous period, correctly aligning himself and his loyalties with the proper individuals. His good comportment and prudent decision making led to a career as a notary, which he successfully practiced from 1542 to 1577 (Radcliff-Umstead, *Carnival Comedy and Sacred Play* 16). While acting as notary for the Furriers' Guild, Cecchi held various public offices and was expressly employed by the Medici to compile bureaucratic reports, notably his *Sommario de' Magistrati di Firenze*, completed in 1562.

Cecchi meanwhile continued his literary pursuits. His forty-three years of dramatic production between 1544 and 1587 resulted in over twenty comedies, as well as multiple *drammi spirituali*, *commedie morali*, and *farse*. Indeed, Cecchi is remembered as the most prolific

playwright of the sixteenth century. Though they were not nearly as celebrated as his dramatic work, Cecchi experimented with various other popular literary forms, among them several bucolic eclogues, lyric poems, and *capitoli* (Radcliff-Umstead, *Carnival Comedy and Sacred Play* 20).

In his *Ricordo*, Giovan Maria's son Baccio divided his father's theatrical works into four categories, *commedie osservate*, *drammi spirituali*, *commedie morali*, and *farse*. These categories are generally still respected by critics, even though the modern reader notes a certain degree of overlap among the divisions. According to Cecchi in the prologue to *La Romanesca*, *farsa* is different than *commedia osservata* in that *farsa* is a third category of theater that lies somewhere between comedy and tragedy. Furthermore, *farsa* need not abide by the unities of time and place, and may include fewer acts than the traditional five-act *commedia osservata* or *erudita* (Rizzi 3-7). Radcliff-Umstead aids the modern reader with the distinction between the *commedia morale* and the *dramma spirituale*. The latter is a higher-style sacred play written in verse, such as *L'esaltazione della Croce*, which was derived from Jacobus de Voragine's late medieval *Legenda Aurea* as opposed to a classical comedy (*Carnival Comedy and Sacred Play* 35).

The prolific Florentine playwright published his first plays in prose in 1550. Among the *commedie osservate* included in this volume were *La dote*, *La moglie*, *La stiava*, *Gli incantesimi*, *I dissimili*, and *L'assiuolo*. He continued his comedic production into the 1550s, but changed remarkably in style and tone after the publication of *La morte di Re Acab* in 1559. With this play, Cecchi turns from the comic to the spiritual, and went on to compose a number of sacred or spiritual dramas and moral comedies.³

³ Radcliff-Umstead follows Baccio, the son of Giovan Maria Cecchi, in dividing Cecchi's theatrical work into four categories: *commedie osservate*, *drammi spirituali*, *commedie morali*, and *farse*. Radcliff-Umstead acknowledges a

Scholars have sought to explain such a dramatic change between Cecchi's early work and his move toward the production of spiritual dramas. Radcliff-Umstead avers that "the various misfortunes that had affected his family's honor influenced his conversion and religious devotion. Through the writings of his later years and his support for religious orders, Cecchi hoped to demonstrate his renewed belief" (20).

While the motivation behind his production of devotional works was certainly influenced by his desire to restore his family's good name, it cannot be entirely credited for his change in stylistic preference. Cecchi was an observer, a quiet public functionary whose life was marked by obedience, good behavior, and respectfulness. His work pleased his contemporaries and he wrote according to the tastes of the times; the popular playwright was even known to write comedies upon request. As the Catholic Reformation instilled Europe with a renewed sense of spiritualism, the public wished to see more plays reflective of that. It is thus most plausible that Cecchi simply altered his style accordingly to please his audience.

The public functionary cum playwright enjoyed a certain amount of notoriety during his lifetime, particularly for his comedic production, which earned him the familiar name *Il comico*. In *I marmi*, Anton Francesco Doni even equated the quality of his work with that of Machiavelli's, and Michele Poccianti praises him in *I cataloghi di scrittori fiorentini*. In his volume *Carnival Comedy and Sacred Play: The Renaissance Dramas of Giovan Maria Cecchi*, Radcliff-Umstead recounts the story of how a performance of a Cecchi comedy would even draw the surly painter Battista Naldini from his home (25). The apex of Cecchi's popularity occurred two years after his death, when his sacred drama *L'esaltazione della Croce* was performed at the

certain degree of overlap, particularly between his *drammi spirituali* and his *commedie morali* (*Carnival Comedy and Sacred Play* 35). Fortunato Rizzi expounds upon these divisions in a 1907 study entitled *Delle farse e commedie morali di G.M. Cecchi*.

wedding of Grand Duke Ferdinando and Christine of Lorraine.⁴ After this particular honor, however, Cecchi's plays soon fell out of fashion and were largely forgotten.

It was only in the nineteenth century that the theater of Cecchi experienced a resurgence, and then largely for its linguistic worth. Cecchi had always nurtured a love for his native dialect. When the sixteenth-century *questione della lingua* was being debated, writers and academics clearly showed their allegiance. Cecchi may have considered Pietro Bembo's proposition of using Petrarch's model for poetry and Boccaccio's for prose to be an admirable suggestion, as he praises Boccaccio's prose in his *Dichiarazione di molti proverbi, detti e parole della nostra lingua*. It is clear in this compilation of historical and contemporary Florentine proverbs and expressions, however, that Cecchi favored Machiavelli's recommendation to use living Florentine in literature. The comical Florentine expressions catalogued in this *Dichiarazione* are frequently used in his comedies.

It is precisely for his production of literature in pure "Florentine" speech that his works gained popularity in later centuries. In his introduction to Cecchi's *Commedie*, Luigi Fiacchi stated that there is not "forse autore che più di lui abbia saputo trarre profitto dai tesori della sua lingua e più acconciamente innestar ne' suoi dialoghi que' modi proverbiali tanto saporiti e spiritosi del parlar fiorentino" (xiv). Literary historian Gerolamo Tiraboschi, too, lauded Cecchi and his vast comedic oeuvre when he said that "fra tutti gli scrittori di commedie in verso, niuno evvi per avventura che si possa paragonare a Giammaria Cecchi" (139). In 1866, Michele Dello Russo published Cecchi's works in verse, introducing Cecchi as "uno dei più eleganti scrittori fiorentini del secolo XVI" and criticizing his predecessors for allowing much of the rich cultural patrimony that Cecchi left to have been forgotten, lost, or left unpublished. Later in the

⁴ For more on the celebrations of this illustrious occasion, see James M. Saslow's *The Medici Wedding of 1589* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1996).

nineteenth century, the *Accademia della Crusca* proposed that his works be published and the government listed them among required texts to instruct Italian schoolchildren in the Tuscan vernacular.

While interest in Cecchi's comedies waned slightly in the twentieth century, there are a few notable modern volumes dedicated to his work. Eisenbichler initiated a tradition of English-language scholarship on Cecchi when he published a translation and introduction for Cecchi's best-known play, *L'assiuolo* (1981). Radcliff-Umstead followed with *Carnival Comedy and Sacred Play*, a volume that takes on the task of delineating the difference between Cecchi's comedies of ancient and modern inspiration, as well as his spiritual dramas. Finally, in 1996, Bruno Ferraro published a translation of and introduction to *La stiava* for the *Carleton Renaissance Plays in Translation* series.

La stiava

La stiava was published in 1550 together with five other comedies. All six plays in this edition, published in Venice with the Giolito de' Ferrari press, were written between 1544 and 1549. Based on current events mentioned within the text, Radcliff-Umstead hypothesizes *La stiava*'s date of composition to have been 1546. Ferraro, following Scoti-Bertinelli's chronology, indicates 1544 as the year in which Cecchi wrote *La stiava* (10).

The comedy is, at first reading, not unlike others published during this second wave of erudite comedy production. Indeed, Cecchi himself considered *La stiava* to be a *commedia osservata*; that is, a comedy that closely observes the classical comedic tradition. Utilizing a traditional comedic trope, family ties are challenged when both father and son compete for the

same young woman. The elder ultimately confronts reality and cedes the young woman to his son, a far more age-appropriate partner.

The young man in *La stiava* is Alfonso, a merchant who returns to Genoa from Constantinople. During his sojourn in Constantinople, he encountered Adelfia, a slave girl, at a market in Pera. He bought her, married her, and returned to Genoa with her and the rest of the goods he had purchased abroad. As soon as they arrive in the Italian port city, Adelfia's presence is a cause for commotion. Even before she disembarks, Alfonso's father Filippo sees her and immediately wishes to possess her. Father and son assure one another that they have appropriate 'buyers,' as they both plan to arrange for a friend to purchase Adelfia. Filippo 'sells' Adelfia while Alfonso is still arranging a puppet buyer and he hides her in the home of his neighbor Nastagio. Unfortunately, Nastagio's wife Giovanna returns home unexpectedly and finds the beautiful young slave girl. In a stroke of luck, however, the friend to whom Alfonso had looked to for help, Ippolito, happens to be the son of Nastagio. Ippolito assures his friend that he has found the girl safe, and arranges for a woman of loose morals to escort Adelfia away. En route to her hideaway, Alfonso's servant Gorgoglio spots the young woman and her guide. Together with four of his roughest lowlife friends, Gorgoglio kidnaps Adelfia and hides her aboard Alfonso's ship. In her many comings and goings, Adelfia misplaced a small box with clues to her identity. The box contained a small chain, documents, and a necklace that Adelfia had worn when she was kidnapped by corsairs fifteen years prior. She is, coincidentally, the daughter of Nastagio and sister to Ippolito. Order is restored when Adelfia's true Italian identity is revealed; Filippo overcomes his poorly placed passions and the two young lovers' marriage is officially recognized by all.

Traditional tripartite sourcing

In *La stiava*, as in his other comedies, Cecchi utilizes the tripartite sourcing commonly found in comedies since the early performances of Ariosto's comedies in Ferrara. The first and most important source, particularly for the first wave of sixteenth-century comedy, lies in the classical tradition. In their tireless archival searches, fifteenth-century humanists had discovered new Plautine and Terentian texts, many of which had been unheard of since ancient times.⁵ Sixteenth-century dramatists looked to these rediscovered texts as their primary sources for new, modernized plays. As in the ancient comedy, early-sixteenth-century plays maintained unity of time, place, and action, and mimicked the classical five-act structure.

Cecchi and his fellow playwrights followed their classical antecedents quite closely, but also drew from the more recent literary form popularized during the *trecento*, the novella. Boccaccio's *Decameron* provided a wealth of humorous characters to incorporate. Finally, playwrights brought a touch of the modern to their work by setting the play in an early modern center of culture, or by satirizing local events or individuals. Such a convergence of contemporary inspiration with sources in both the distant and recent past is referred to as *contaminatio*.

Cecchi's classical source is quite clear. He closely mimics the plot of the *Mercator*, an early Roman play by comedic playwright Plautus.⁶ In the Plautine play, the young Charinus has just returned to Athens from a trip. When his father Demipho sees that he has brought back a female slave, he immediately falls for the young and beautiful stranger. Father and son proceed

⁵ Nicholas Cusanus, or Niccolò de Treviri, is to be credited with the lion's share of this landmark rediscovery. While at least eight Plautine plays had been known to medieval scholars, Cusanus discovered an additional twelve in a manuscript during his time in Germany. The discovery was an object of pure fascination in humanist circles, as it proceeded to be transmitted, copied, and hoarded by several individuals (Radcliff-Umstead, *The Birth of Modern Comedy* 60)

⁶ Not to be overlooked is the fact that the *Mercator* itself was adapted from an earlier Greek play, Philemon's *Emporos*.

to engage in similar trickery, each assuring the other that they have buyers who wish to purchase the slave. The girl is passed around and exchanged in a manner quite similar to that of *La stiava*. The most pronounced difference between the Latin source and its sixteenth-century imitation is the final act. Demipho proves to be much less stubborn and lustful than Cecchi's determined Filippo; as soon as he is aware of his son's love for the beautiful slave, he renounces his pursuit. Contrarily, in *La stiava*, Filippo suspects his son's love much earlier on and nevertheless continues his plan.

While Cecchi's novelistic source is less apparent, Radcliff-Umstead has suggested the story of Paganino da Monaco, Boccaccio's tenth tale of the second day, to be a likely source. In the story, Paganino da Monaco steals the young wife of an elderly man. After the elderly man discovers where his wife has been taken, he politely asks Paganino to return her. Paganino replies in kind, offering him his wife back if she be willing. It turns out that she does not agree to return to her elderly husband, and after Messer Ricciardo's death, she marries Paganino. While the message is similar to that of *La stiava* – older men should not marry younger women – it would be ambitious to cite *Decameron* II.10 as a definitive novelistic source. Cecchi was certainly a great admirer of Boccaccio, but the message that men should find age-appropriate partners was a particularly common trope of late medieval literature. Furthermore, Niccolò Machiavelli, of whose work Cecchi was a great admirer, had popularized the theme for the theater in *La mandragola* and *La Clizia*.⁷

By the mid-sixteenth century, precisely the time that Cecchi was writing, a tradition of literary criticism on erudite comedy had been initiated. Thus, Cecchi's work can be classified as belonging to a second wave of erudite comedy. If earlier playwrights Machiavelli, Ariosto, and

⁷ Cecchi praised Machiavelli in the prologue to *La stiava* when he assures his readers that they will enjoy the play to come as much as “una Commedia dello Eccellentissimo M. Lodovico Ariosto, o del Machiavello (*prologo* 351).

Aretino belonged to a first wave of comedic production that was staunchly based on classical imitation, Cecchi and his contemporaries could be considered part of a second wave. These second-wave dramatists looked to the early greats of the first and second decades of the century for examples, but they would also have kept abreast of the ever-increasing body of scholarly literature being produced by early modern critics of the theater.

These critics of the theater primarily referenced Horace's *Ars poetica* and the *Poetics* of Aristotle when conceptualizing their vision of the ideal comedy. Horace's work dictated that each comedy should abide by certain structural rules, such as the five-act division. Disorder and disunity are considered egregious faults in any comedy. Indeed, unity must be sought in every aspect of the play, even the style of a work must be in tune with its nature. Meanwhile Aristotle's work, which had been rendered more navigable by modern translations, contained observations on ways in which authors could attain perfection in their art. The modern critics drew primarily from Aristotelian and Horatian tradition, but they did not adhere religiously to the texts. They often compromised with their classical antecedents, making modern edits to classical doctrine so that comedies might be rendered more interesting to a contemporary audience.

The best-known sixteenth-century critic on the theater was Giovan Battista Giraldi Cinthio, a professor of philosophy and rhetoric in Ferrara. His *Discorso intorno al comporre delle comedie e delle tragedie* was first published in 1544, and sparked a wave of similar critical works that would continue through the end of the century. In Cinthio's work, he dedicates much thought to the contemporary viewing public's enjoyment. According to Cinthio, an author must set his play in a contemporary setting so that it would appear more realistic and spectators might identify better with the plot and characters. Furthermore, the setting must also fit the genre (a play about merchant life, for example, would be better set in a port town than a landlocked one).

The use of foreign clothes or props is recommended, as it would incite wonder and provoke excitement among the audience members.

The play, Cinthio believed, should be pleasing, but not to such an extent that it is obscene, as a playwright must always avoid obscenity. Indeed, one of the principal purposes of a comedy or tragedy is to morally instruct its audience. Viewers sympathize with the characters in the play and learn from their mistakes without having to make the errors themselves. Where Cinthio departs most from Aristotle is in the preference for a double plot. Aristotle had suggested that a single plotline was preferable, while Cinthio believed spectators might prefer the variety and excitement that a double plot brought to a play (Radcliff-Umstead, *The Birth of Modern Comedy* 2-4).

Finally, Cinthio -- to the delight of many early modern theatergoers! -- imposed a time limit; dramatic productions must last no longer than three hours. While the stage time was limited, so too was the action limited to a single day. Should a playwright encounter difficulty fitting such a degree of action into a limited time period, Cinthio makes a recommendation as to how to resolve a complicated plot and conclude the play. In order to bring the action of a close, playwrights could include a recognition scene. In such a scene, characters (often parents and children) who have lost one another are miraculously brought back together. Cinthio draws heavily on Aristotelian observation here; he lauds the recognition scene as being essential to comedy, as it resonates greatly with the spectators:

L'agnizione adunque non è altro che un venire in cognizione di quello, che prima non si sapeva; onde ne divengono gli uomini di amici inimici, o di felici infelici [...] E però questa agnizione, la quale è congiunta colla peripezia, è reputata da Aristotile più di tutte le altre lodevole, perché più di tutte le altre commove gli animi degli spettatori [...] Non è però l'agnizione e la peripezia (pigliandola un poco più largamente) così della tragedia che ambedue non siano della comedia. Ma ciò avviene diversamente, perché la cognizione, e la peripezia nella comedia non è mai all'orrore, ed alla compassione; ma sempre menano elle le persone turbate alla letizia ed alla tranquillità [...] Che il proprio è

della comedia condurre l'azione sua al fine, talmente che non vi rimanga persona turbata.
(*De' romanzi delle comedie e delle tragedie* 66-67)

Throughout his entire discourse, Cinthio repeatedly thinks of the contemporary spectator.

Though Cecchi may not have had access specifically to Cinthio's *Discorso* at the time of *La stiava*'s composition, he was certainly aware that the opinions reflected in the document were important practices to abide by in the composition of a comedy.

The first known performance of *La stiava* was put on by the *Compagnia di San Bastiano de' Fanciulli* in 1546, four years prior to its 1550 publication.⁸ The audience would have been a typical one, composed of Florentine nobles, merchants, academics, nuns, priests, and prelates. The play would not have been a mere imitation of Plautus, as some modern critics have claimed Cecchi's comedies to be. Salvatore Di Maria states that "Cecchi's work did not exhibit exceptional theatrical qualities that might have won him lasting approval among literary critics" (64) and Ferraro notes that "there is little to distinguish Cecchi from the majority of his fellow playwrights in so far as he avoids all controversial matters and is not innovative or experimental where his subject matter is concerned" (10). Instead, the play would have "refined" or "elevated" the genre, as Eisenbichler asserts ("Innovation in the Prologues" 123) or it would have been as Luigi Fiacchi noted in his introduction to the 1850 edition of Cecchi's comedies, where he argues that even though the playwright "imiti qualche volta Plauto e qualche volta Terenzio" he meanwhile keeps his comedy current, in that he "veste tuttavia sempre i suoi personaggi ed i loro caratteri coi colori del suo tempo e del suo paese" (xiii).

Recognition scene

⁸ Nino Pirrotta and Elena Povoledo discuss Cecchi's preference for this group of players, the *Compagnia di San Bastiano de' Fanciulli*, and note that this particular company of players were pre-eminent among numerous groups of players. The *Compagnia di San Bastiano de' Fanciulli* shared this honor with another respected group, the *Fantastichi*. (*Music and Theater from Poliziano to Monteverdi* 347)

The aforementioned *agnizione*, also referred to as a *ritrovamento* or recognition scene, was a literary device rooted in the ancient theatrical tradition. The recognition scene, by which long-lost family members were reunited after years of separation, had been revived numerous times in the early modern period by first-wave playwrights as well as their followers. In the ancient tradition, characters were often misplaced when abandoned at birth. Since the concept of infant exposure might shock an early modern audience, an ideal way to update the ancient technique was to explain the reason behind characters' separation by citing a skirmish at sea or a battle.

The inclusion of a recognition scene was not without critics, however. Anton Francesco Grazzini or "Il Lasca," the notorious nonconformist, was against the use of *ritrovamenti* or recognition scenes. He preached the need for contemporary theater to distance itself from the ancient tradition. In the prologue to *La gelosia*, he explains precisely why his public will not be witnessing a *ritrovamento* in the comedy to follow:

[...] in essa non sono ritrovamenti, nè ricognizioni: la qual cosa è tanto venuta a noia, e in fastidio à i Popoli: che come ci senton nell'Argomento dire; che nella presa d'alcuna Città, ò nel sacco di qualche Castello si siano perdute, ò smarrite, Bambine, ò Fanciulli, danno conto d'haverle udite, e volentieri se potessero con loro honore si partirebbero: Nella sua Comedia dunque non saranno ritrovamenti. (*Il prologo agli huomini* 5)

Cecchi disagreed with Grazzini, however, and included several *ritrovamenti* to tie up any loose ends and bring his plays to a unified close. He does so notably in *La stiava*. Unlike Grazzini, who abandoned this particular aspect of classical theater, Cecchi avoids anachronism by fashioning his recognition scene to include contemporary concerns. In act 5, the slave Adelfia is unveiled not as a Turkish slave but an Italian, the daughter of Nastagio and his wife Giovanna and sister to Alfonso's friend Ippolito. She had been kidnapped years prior as she was returning to Genoa after a trip to Ischia, and was sold by her Moorish captors at slave market in Pera. The

coincidence was discovered when Adelfia dropped a box containing a small chain, some documents, and a necklace with the family coat of arms embossed on it, the very same items that she had been carrying at the time of her capture. The mention of slaves captured in Ischia would certainly resonate with an audience in the 1540s, as they would remember the July 1544 sack of Ischia and the Bay of Naples by the infamous corsair Hayreddin Barbarossa, an incursion that resulted in the capture of over 7,000 slaves (Davis xiv).⁹

Cecchi's inclusion of a recognition scene citing a previous Turkish incursion was not the first instance in which sixteenth-century playwrights referenced Turkish invasions on Italian soil. In fact, since the very first performances of what we now refer to as erudite or regular comedy were performed, the inclusion of a recognition scene involving a Turkish invasion had become a common trope. Ariosto's *I suppositi*, performed at the ducal palace in Ferrara in 1509, cited the 1480 occupation of Otranto as the event that had separated Cleandro from his son Dulippo/Carino. Later, in 1536, Alessandro Piccolomini wrote *L'amor costante*, in which two lovers rediscover one another in Pisa after many years. They had been separated on a voyage from Spain to Italy during which Turkish ships attacked their vessel. Pietro Aretino's 1542 *La talanta* includes a recognition scene in which the beautiful Roman courtesan Talanta is really the male Antino who had been separated from his family during a Turkish raid. The confusion about her/his gender arose because he had disguised himself as a female in order to fool the Turks.

Such scenes aid today's scholars greatly, as we are able to properly assign dates for lesser-known plays or plays with disputed dates of composition, such as *La stiava*. The mention of an incursion at Ischia, for example, leads this author to favor Scoti-Bertinelli and Ferraro's hypothesized composition date of 1544. Cecchi likely wrote the comedy and its timely

⁹ There has historically been a discrepancy present in the number of captives taken, with numbers ranging from 4,000 to 10,000 (Ward, *The Aeolian Islands* 14). Robert C. Davis, following Salvatore Bono's study, avers that nearly 7,000 were captured (xiv).

recognition scene just after the summertime maritime conflict, including a recognition scene that would resonate greatly with an audience in the theatergoing season to follow.

These recognition scenes were the closest early erudite theater had come to a discussion of the topic of the “Turkish menace.” The perception had been explored in various other literary forms, but in a genre that so closely relied on a tradition of *imitatio*, treatment of the Turk underwent a more conservative development. Nevertheless, even early theater moves toward the common topos of Turkish cruelty in the fifth-act of many plays, several of which describe Turkish atrocities as the events that initially separated a family.

Florentine Mercantile Life

Cecchi carefully crafted his play not only to please the critics but also to delight his audience. Though the play is purely Florentine, he set it in Genoa, a bustling port city. Cecchi, a careful and tactful playwright, likely chose Genoa over Pisa or Livorno in order to distance the play from his hometown and avoid any possibility of offending local viewers. The characters’ colloquial speech matches that which would have commonly been spoken by merchants.

Indeed mercantile life permeates throughout the entire comedy, as it did mid-sixteenth-century Florentine society. Trade was an important part of Cosimo's plan for economic revival. The region had been troubled by a half-century of war, and Cosimo looked to trade as a way to revivify the struggling economy. His own family had risen to power through business and had become the biggest success story in the history of Florentine merchants, so he encouraged his constituents to engage in their own entrepreneurial endeavors. While other communities in the Peninsula grew ever more insular, Cosimo was notoriously welcoming to members of other religions or races who wished to make Florence home as they engaged in business ventures.

The Medici duke thought on a large scale, and expanded the port towns of Livorno and Portoferraio so that Tuscany might have greater access to the sea and international markets. The duke knew that though the sea proffered endless opportunity, it also opened the region up to potential danger, and so he safeguarded his dominion by establishing the military order of St. Stephen. The expansion of Tuscany's horizons to the sea was commemorated with Bartolomeo Ammannati's *Fontana di Nettuno*, erected in the Piazza della Signoria in 1562.

Radcliff-Umstead claimed that in this period, "Florentine society had joined a passion for mercantile activity with a love for scholarship and creativity" (*Carnival Comedy and Sacred Play* 19), and this is certainly true in Cecchi's case. Part public functionary and part playwright, Cecchi embodied the Florentine entrepreneurial spirit when he added another title to his resume, wool merchant. In 1581, he formed a partnership in the wool trade with Marco Antonio Adimari, Mariotto Segni, and Giovan Francesco Baldesi.

The choice to adapt Plautus' *Mercator*, therefore, was an obvious one. Few updates were necessary to make the original play appeal to a mid-sixteenth-century audience in mercantile Tuscany. The play lauds mercantilism as a noble endeavor, a view entirely harmonious with Cosimo's economic plan. In *La stiava*, merchants enjoy a high quality of life. Filippo appears to have bountiful resources when he stages the purchase of the slave girl, and the neighbors Nastagio and Giovanna live in the city but enjoy spending time at their country home. Both families keep a servant and employ cooks, leading us to assume that they live comfortable lives. They are well-respected in the town, and are masters in the art of negotiation. Father and son engage in their arguments over the young slave girl as if they were conducting a sale or negotiating with a client. Alfonso states that his buyer would see the girl as an investment and make more from her than Alfonso would ever want for himself, and Filippo immediately

counters Alfonso's offer with an assurance that the buyer that he has secured for the girl would possess a more comfortable home. Later, as Alfonso and Filippo discuss the prices that their puppet buyers are prepared to offer for the slave girl, both the contemporary audience and twenty-first century reader are privy to a glimpse of sixteenth-century merchants' art and the prosperity attainable in their profession:

Fil: O, per dirti, Alfonso, ogni cosa, i'ho uno amico mio grande, che l'ha veduta, e vuolla, ed ha rimesso in me il mercato: la prima cosa noi ne spicheremo cento scudi di guadagno a bocca baciata.

Alf: E più di dugento ne darà il mio.

Fil: E 'l mio trecento, quattrocento, quel ch'io vorrò in somma, che e' ne spasima di voglia. (Act 2, scene 2)

Father and son are both merchants who are well-practiced in their profession, which adds excitement to the traditional conflict between the old and the young. Both know how to bargain with the other when engaging in a sale or exchange, and neither are opposed to a little trickery in order to achieve their goals.

Writing a play such as *La stiava* allowed Cecchi to discuss themes that would be interesting to an audience living in mercantile Tuscany, but it also allowed him to depict a society that is no longer insular or restricted. While the scenery may be fixed, depicting a city street in Genoa between the homes of two merchants, the play is set in an increasingly globalized port city that engages in international trade. The sea and what lies beyond, at once both fascinating and threatening, is ever-present, as characters are often bustling back and forth from Alfonso's ship, docked at the port.

Early Modern Slaving Practices: The Italian Case

The only aspect of *La stiava* that critics have found slightly aberrant to the period's comedic tradition is the presence of a slave in the plot (who, though she doesn't actually appear

onstage, is a central character). If, according to the early modern critics of the theater, playwrights were to avoid anachronism and seek to modernize the plot, why does the action of the play center itself around a female *slave*? Slavery was illegal in early modern Italy, was it not? Cecchi modernized his time, place, and situation, and thus, shouldn't archetypal slave also be modernized?

Eugenio Camerini, a nineteenth-century reader of Cecchi, noted this apparent anachronism, and believed that slaves were introduced “only as a structural device and that they were not present in sixteenth-century society” (ctd. in Ferraro 22). Even contemporaries of Cecchi were hesitant to accept the fact that slave keeping was still extant in the sixteenth century. In the prologue to *La strega* (c. 1545-1550), Grazzini or “Il Lasca” claimed that “... in Firenze non si vive come si viveva già in Atene e in Roma; non ci sono schiavi” (23).

It is only in more recent scholarship that historians have begun to disprove earlier studies that claimed slavery was not practiced in early modern Italy. While it may have officially been an illegal practice in much of the Peninsula, that does not mean that the tradition of keeping slaves was not practiced. Historian Steven A. Epstein outlines the contradictory nature of slave practices in early modern Italy in *Speaking of Slavery: Color, Ethnicity, and Human Bondage in Italy*. Epstein argues that slavery was indeed practiced until well into the eighteenth century, though to far less of a degree than in the medieval period. He notes that, though keeping a slave became far more luxurious after the 1348 plague, it was still done, and particularly in port cities where the slaves would arrive from abroad. He cites Genoa as having one of the highest slave populations, slaves comprising between four and five percent of the port city's population in the

fifteenth century. Even Florence was home to a few hundred slaves which, according to Epstein, were primarily females working in domestic service (xii-xiii).¹⁰

Thus, Cecchi certainly did avoid anachronism, whether he meant to or not. It would have been entirely possible for a Genoese merchant to bring a young female slave home from Constantinople, and the ruse created by Alfonso that his young wife was to be gifted or sold as a domestic servant was also plausible. Even so, Cecchi includes a sort of early modern “trigger warning” for any of his Florentine spectators -- like Grazzini -- that might find the practice of slavery outdated:

Chi dubita che oggidì ogni uomo, che vede di poterlo fare non acconciamente, ma con qualche sconcio ancora, non vada volentieri dietro allo essere ben servito, e perciò con ogni diligenza cerchi di persona che ben gli serva? E chi può meglio far questo ufficio che una bella e giovane Stiava? Né debbe il nome di Stiava spaventare, anzi confortare il padrone; tanto più, quanto egli per tal via è più sicuro che sarà sua, né gli potrà esser levata su, siccome spesso avviene dell’altre fantesche. E se noi vi diamo oggi una così fatta Stiava, non debbo io, e meritamente, credere d’avere a soddisfare ai più di voi?
(*Prologo*)

The prologue skips much of the common explanation of the play to follow and dedicates more of its effort to the defense of the work from potential criticism, a practice typical of early modern theater.¹¹ He is certain that the comedy to follow will please the audience, even if it is brazen enough to include (and take the name of) a slave girl. Essentially, Cecchi’s excuse is that after all, even though it has fallen out of fashion and is less practiced, who wouldn’t (or doesn’t) enjoy the luxuries of keeping a female slave?

¹⁰ In her thorough study, *European and Islamic Trade in the Early Ottoman State: The Merchants of Genoa and Turkey*, Kate Fleet examines trade between Genoa and the Ottomans, and does not neglect to treat the exchange of slaves between the two empires along with the trade of grain, wine, cloth, metals, and other commodities. This study unveils that through the fifteenth century, the Genoese had a thriving slave market at which Turkish slaves were traded, and that there were even official agreements between the two empires regarding the return of escaped slaves.

¹¹ In his prologue to both *La dote* and *Il corredo*, Cecchi himself explains his reasons for sparing his viewers a traditional *argumentum*. In *La dote*, he states that a modern audience is alert enough to do without and that he is content to leave the plot summary to more fastidious writers. He echoes these sentiments again in *Il corredo*.

Similarities (and differences) between La stiava and Giannotti's Il vecchio amoroso

Cecchi's attempts to display more vividly the mercantile culture of his times and the Peninsula's increasing interaction with their neighbors to the east is further illustrated through a comparison between *La stiava* and a similar earlier comedy. Scholars have already noted many similarities between Cecchi's comedy and *Il vecchio amoroso*, a comedy written a decade earlier by Donato Giannotti. Giannotti's play, written between 1533 and 1536, is also based on the *Mercator*. He sets his play in Pisa instead of Genoa, and his protagonist, Lionetto, brings his slave girl home from a recent trip to Sicily. Though there is no proof that Cecchi read or saw Giannotti's play, Ferraro does note the remarkable resemblance not only in source material, characters, and themes, but also in unique structural aspects. Both Cecchi and Giannotti expanded Plautus' twenty-scene play to over thirty scenes, and the final two acts in both *La stiava* and *Il vecchio amoroso* contain the same number of scenes (30-31).

It is, for the purposes of this study, unimportant whether or not Cecchi had access to the earlier play. It is most useful, on the other hand, to compare the two works written ten or more years apart and note several minor differences in these two otherwise remarkably similar comedies. There is the most notable variance in the titles of the two works. Giannotti, in giving his play the name *Il vecchio amoroso*, focuses far more on the conflict between old and young than on the object of conflict. Cecchi, on the other hand, shifts his focus from the conflict itself to its source, the *stiava* herself. He meanwhile maintains the slave girl's mystery, never letting the audience see her onstage, while Giannotti unveils his slave Diamante/Oretta in Act 5.

Furthermore, Giannotti foreshadows the *agnizione* to come as early as Act 3, so the audience is aware early on that the young woman over whom father and son are quarrelling is Italian and sister and daughter to their friends Panfilo and Arrigo, respectively. Giannotti's slave

girl is rarely referred to or spoken of as foreign. She was bought, not in a slave market in Constantinople's Pera district, but in Palermo, from an individual in whose home she was working. Cecchi's Adelfia, on the other hand, is inextricably foreign, and the characters discuss how to converse with her, as they don't believe she will understand their Italian speech. The servant Gorgoglio assures Alfonso that Filippo is unaware that the "Stiava Perotta" understands Italian. Gorgoglio recounts that Filippo and Adelfia did not directly converse, "dico che non favelli seco, che la non intende la lingua di qua," and that he acted as intermediary between the two: "me gli fece dire in lingua Perotta, che gli era 'l padrone" (Act 1, scene 2 353). The ruse is kept up through the final acts and Nuta, a servant in Ippolito's home, tells Ippolito that there is a young woman in the house that "il vecchio l'ha comperata da un giovane che venne iersera di Turchia." Nuta finds the girl pitiful and incomprehensible, and she tells Ippolito that the girl tried to tell her many things "ma io non la intendevo, se non che io le sentivo dire spesso Alfonso" (Act 4, scene 3).

La stiava and *Il vecchio amoroso* are two comedies both written by Florentines within a decade of one another, and both are based on the very same Plautine source. Scholars have noted how similar the two plays are, but far more interesting is how Cecchi's play *differs* markedly from Giannotti's in a few important areas. *La stiava* is set in an entirely different, up-to-date Italy, a Peninsula with growing interests in global mercantile exchange. Though Cecchi's plays have been said to be unremarkable and unprogressive, a comparison of *La stiava* and Giannotti's *Il vecchio amoroso* unveils not only how quickly the Peninsula's socio-political situation is changing, but also just how timely the former play actually was.

Though the Italian Peninsula and the Ottoman Empire were at odds with one another politically, it does not mean that all interactions between Italian states and their neighbors to the

east were cut off. On the contrary, Italian states were eager to expand their global presence by trading with the powerful Turks; they were able to separate their political and mercantile interests in order to trade peacefully across borders. At the same time, though, Italians were keenly aware of the danger posed by the Turks. Treatment of the “Turkish menace” was slow to arrive in early modern theater, a theater that relied heavily on classical *imitatio*, but as theatergoers began to favor more modern plays and critics lauded a playwright’s ability to successfully incorporate contemporary sources along with classical and medieval inspiration, we begin to see Turkish elements arrive on stage.

Giovan Maria Cecchi’s *La stiava* is at once innovative and conservative. It does not abandon the tradition of classical imitation as a Grazzini play would have, though it does not staunchly adhere to its ancient sources as did first wave erudite comedies. Cecchi was able to find a balance between the genre’s requirements and the audience’s tastes, and fashioned a play set in a modern mercantile setting.

CHAPTER 2

Wartime Echoes in the Comedies of Luigi Groto and Giambattista Della Porta

The War of Cyprus was fought between the Ottoman Empire and the Republic of Venice between 1570 and 1573, leading to the dramatic fall of Venetian strongholds Nicosia and Famagusta and ultimately, the ceding of Cyprus to the Ottomans. For several months the outnumbered Venetians attempted to defend the island, a colony of the Republic since 1489, until they were finally forced to surrender. Meanwhile, convinced by Pope Pius V that the Ottomans were a common enemy, European powers assembled a “Holy League” comprised of the major Catholic states in the Mediterranean. The Holy League may not have arrived in time to prevent the events leading to the secession of Cyprus, but their performance at the battle of Lepanto, lauded as the greatest naval event in history, did succeed in quelling Ottoman expansion westward.

An immediate outpouring of literary production, as is common in the wake of a military event, surged throughout the Italian peninsula following these events. In 1971, with his article *Lepanto nella cultura italiana del tempo*, Carlo Dionisotti made the bold claim that the events in Cyprus and at Lepanto proliferated more literature than any other military event in Italian history. In 2015, scholars were still fascinated with the sheer number of poems and histories written after the war; Elizabeth R. Wright, Sarah Spence, and Andrew Lemmons published a collection of translations from twenty-two authors who paid homage to the Battle of Lepanto in their poetry.

There is, however, a dearth of scholarship relating to the production of postwar literature in genres other than poetry. The aim of this chapter is to contribute to the ongoing work on literature after Cyprus and Lepanto while also examining a key period of change in the evolution of Italian comedy. Though comedy was still somewhat constrained to the classical tradition, this did not deter playwrights from contributing their own voices to the postwar literary boom. Luigi Groto, also known as *il Cieco di Adria*, published his *Emilia* in 1579, a comedy set in Constantinople in the wake of the fall of Nicosia and ostensibly with an all-Turkish cast of characters, all of whom curiously spend much of the five-act comedy waxing patriotic for the Venetian cause. The recounting of this war was not limited to those from the Veneto; as Dionisotti asserts, the literary boom permeated throughout the entire peninsula. This is as true in theater as it is in poetry. In a more subtle way, Giambattista Della Porta composed his own comedies in postbellum Naples, darkly humorous works set in coastal or island towns in which the *innamorate* are never sure which characters are real Turks who have come to sack the city, and which characters are their lovers, dressed as Turks as a ruse to fool their lecherous fathers. Della Porta's comedies *La turca* and *La sorella* are replete with heightened conflict. No longer is the traditional rivalry between young and old a laughing matter; the tug-of-war between old and young men for their hand of the beautiful young maiden has become a violent battle. For flair and to arouse wonder in the audience, Della Porta includes several interjections in Turkish, and in several cases, entire dialogues in relatively coherent Turkish. This chapter will examine the aforementioned comedies for their bellicose elements, their increased multicultural presence, and their patriotic nature, reflective of an Italy far different than before the war. The events of 1570-71 necessitated a complete break with the past, and the theatrical tradition matured accordingly. Finally, I will explain the unique role that comedy played in this literary phenomenon. More than

simply encomiastic literature celebrating the heroic deeds of Italians at war, comedy played a dual role, also providing an escape for early modern Italian spectators who had suffered tremendous casualties and still lived in fear of the “Turkish menace.”

Events of 1570-1571

By the late 1560s, it was clear that the relative peace between the Venetians and the Turks was beginning to unravel. Selim II, named Sultan in 1566, was less of a diplomat than his father Suleiman “the Magnificent,” and less interested in maintaining peace with the Venetians. In July of 1570, after years in which a Turkish campaign in Cyprus had been looming, the Turkish fleet under Lala Mustapha arrived at Limassol and Salines and proceeded toward Nicosia. After a forty-five day siege, the Venetians surrendered, ostensibly accepting their fates as slaves. The Turks did not enslave the Venetians as expected, however. They instead engaged in a three-day sack of the city, killing over 15,000 individuals and beheading Nicosian commander Niccolò Dandolo, forwarding his severed head to Famagusta to warn them of what was to come and encourage immediate surrender. According to western accounts, those spared in the sack of Nicosia were limited to attractive young women and men who could be sold in the slave markets of Constantinople. Popular legend told stories of bravery in the face of danger, such as the tale of one young Venetian woman who set fire to an Ottoman war galley, destroying the ship along with its treasures, captives, and crew (Balan 47; Hopkins 82).

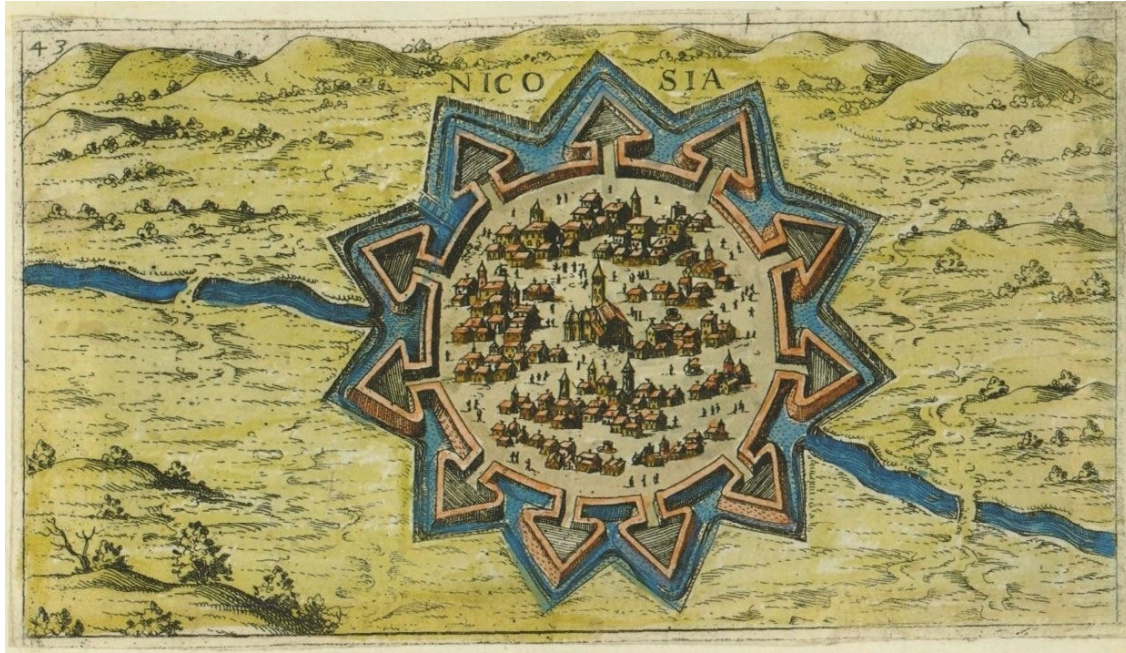


Fig. 1. Giacomo Franco. *Map of Nicosia in Cyprus*. 1597. *Viaggio da Venetia a Constantinopoli per Mare*.

The next stop for the Turks was the Crusader fort of Famagusta on Cyprus' eastern shores, though their extended stay at Nicosia deterred their arrival in Famagusta until relatively late in the season. Such a late date necessitated the return of much of the Turkish fleet to their winter ports, leaving Lala Mustapha and his men vulnerable. Sultan Selim II was displeased with the progress of the siege; he had expected the island to be easily taken long before the cold season. The Venetians in the fortified city held strong throughout the winter season, but defeat was inevitable. In March of 1571, Selim sent numerous reinforcements of galleys and men; with the reinforcements, the Turks numbered between 100,000 and 225,000 against an army of just 4,000 remaining Venetians. Finally, on August 1, 1571, Governor Marcantonio Bragadin surrendered the city and began to negotiate terms of surrender. The negotiations between Bragadin and Mustapha, however, turned sour. Mustapha had Bragadin's escort killed, subjected Bragadin to continued torture, and finally, had the Venetian governor flayed alive. Bragadin's

skin was stuffed and his body was paraded around the city and ultimately sent to Constantinople (Setton 1042).



Fig. 2. George Braun and Frans Hogenberg. *Map of Famagusta*. 1572. *Civitas Orbis Terrarum*.

At the beginning of the Ottoman-Venetian conflict, Pope Pius V was fervently attempting to convince other European powers of the importance of a united effort against the Turks, whom he considered to be the scourge of Christendom. The formation proved problematic, however, as Western powers were not all on friendly terms with one another, and many were hesitant to break relations with the powerful Turks. The Pope was able to initiate an allied expedition in the summer of 1570, but internal conflict deterred the forces from arriving in Cyprus that year. Kenneth M. Setton defined the first allied attempt to save the island of Cyprus as “one of the notable failures of the century” (974) and held that the Christian forces missed “the chance of a lifetime” that year (992). At the end of the 1570 season, as Nicosia was falling to the Turks,

Christian forces returned to their respective ports without ever having witnessed a battle and the Venetians were left to fend for themselves.

The tide changed, however, when news of the events at Nicosia and Famagusta spread throughout Europe. Dramatic tales of the outnumbered Venetians' heroic stand through the winter season and the Turkish brutalities acted in Pius' favor. Western powers were finally convinced to overcome their internal issues and unite against the common enemy, and an effective Holy League was established in Rome on May 25, 1571. Still, negotiations were rife with internal struggle. Allied forces bitterly disagreed with one another about who should lead and how much and of what—ships, money, biscuit—members should contribute. Once the long negotiations had been completed and soldiers gathered at Messina, there was doubt as to whether a key party, Don John of Austria and his men, would even arrive in time for the battle (Setton 1015; Braudel 1089-1096).

Arrive he did, though, and a concise battle plan was prepared in advance. By early September, while assembled at Messina, the Holy League had determined an order of battle. Setton includes the battle plan, the *Ordini della Lega di quanto ha da osservare l'armata et galere in mare nella presente giornata fatta in Messina alli 14 di Settembre MDLXXI*, in his exhaustive account of the maritime battle:

Sua Altezza [Don Giovanni d'Austria, generale della Santa Lega,] anderà in mezzo de gli due generali, et questa sarà la battaglia di galere numero 57—al corno sinistro il clarissimo proveditor generale di Venetiani, il Barbarigo, con galere numero 56; al corno destro il Signor Gio. Andrea Doria con galere numero 56, dico 56; il soccorso, il marchese di Santa Croce con galere numero 40, il quale manderà galere quattro per corno fuori et il resto da dietro per soccorso; li clarissimi proveditori dell'armata Venetiana anderanno in la squadra del detto proveditore generale Barbarigo; le galeazze quali sono sei anderanno per antiguarda ripartite a due a due per corno un quarto di miglio avanti. (1047)

The elaborate plan worked. On October 7, the Christian and Ottoman fleets met at the entrance to the Gulf of Lepanto. In his concise study of the battle, Niccolò Capponi refers to Lepanto as the Battle of the Curzolari. He believes the latter term is more appropriate, as the famous maritime skirmish took place nearer to the Curzolari islands than to Lepanto and furthermore, the Venetians themselves used this term to refer to the battle. The time was just before dawn, and as the sun rose, the Christians discovered the true size of the Ottoman fleet. There were 230 Turkish warships to 208 Christian, far more than had been expected (Capponi 10). Though outnumbered, the Allied Christian fleet won the day. There were 30,000 Turkish casualties and 8,000 Christian.¹² At the close of the battle, “the sea seemed suddenly to run red with blood” (Braudel 1102).



Fig. 3. Unknown. *The Battle of Lepanto*. Late sixteenth century. Oil on canvas. National Maritime Museum.

¹² The number of casualties vary. Capponi follows Giampietro Contarini's *Historia delle cose successe dal principio della guerra mossa da Selim Ottomano a' Venetiani fino al dì della gran Giornata vittoriosa contra Turchi*, rounding up. In his *Historia*, Contarini numbers 7,656 Christian casualties and 29,990 Turkish (Contarini 55).

Surge of Postwar Literary Production

Though the Holy League did undoubtedly win the battle of Lepanto, many lives were lost, ships destroyed, and no territory was gained. Voltaire famously reflected on Lepanto two centuries later, declaring the battle's failure. According to the enlightenment thinker,

The Venetians gained no ground upon the Turks, and Selim II by his admiral retook the kingdom of Tunis, without resistance, when all the Christians who were found there were massacred: so that the victory of Lepanto seemed rather to have been on the side of the Turks. (262)

The battle did accomplish a goal not appreciated by Voltaire and his contemporaries, however, as the victory did much to boost the morale of a society in great need of renewed hope in the struggle against the Ottoman East.

Immediately following the battle, Europeans responded in poetry and prose, in Latin and in the vernacular. Compositions on the subject were not limited to those of esteemed literary figures; literary hobbyists and provincial scribblers joined in the celebration. Dionisotti has noted how the sheer quantity of literature—across genres, languages, and the socioeconomic spectrum—poses a problem for literary historians. How to best work through a body of literature of such magnitude?

La celebrazione letteraria della vittoria di Lepanto fu, com'è noto, amplissima, quantitativamente superiore a quella di ogni altro evento della storia d'Italia, prima e poi. L'aspetto quantitativo, quel cumulo enorme di poesie e di prose, ha dato in passato un evidente e del resto giustificabile fastidio agli studiosi. (Dionisotti 10)

Several common veins do course throughout much of the literature, regardless of genre, language, or author. Literature published in the years following the War of Cyprus and the battle of Lepanto vilifies the Turks, taking previously existing stereotypes to a new literary high. Turks were portrayed as untrustworthy, greedy, violent, and promiscuous. They were denigrated as the

enemy of Christianity, the very antichrist. According to Marina Formica, “Lepanto rappresentò, infatti, l’acme delle caratterizzazioni negative dell’Altro” (67).

With the unprecedented denigration of the Other came an increased patriotism, a heightened sense of unity among Christians, a renewed spirit, and intense pride. Lepanto was a remarkable feat, many felt, but Christians must not rest on their laurels. Many authors wrote in favor of engaging further with the Turks, some even suggesting the launch of a campaign to reconquer Constantinople. Authors modeled their writings not only as proud encomiums, testimonials of the great feats accomplished by Christians, but also as a call to arms (Formica 71).

Theater poses a unique challenge for scholars interested in the lasting effects that the War of Cyprus and the battle of Lepanto had on literature. The genre was, as noted previously, to a certain extent constrained by its tradition of imitation. But the effects of the events of 1570-1571 had such an effect that all literary production was saturated, and theater was no exception. The now-widespread negative Turkish stereotypes presented excellent opportunities to engage any audience.

The events at Cyprus leading up to Lepanto and the battle itself were a play waiting to be written—politics, confusion, triumph, return to order. Indeed Braudel called Lepanto “the most spectacular military event in the sixteenth century” (1088). Setton refers to the scene as a “fearful spectacle” and describes the bloody sea scattered with floating corpses and wounded men crying for help. Carlo Dionisotti refers to the parties involved as “protagonisti” (480). In Capponi’s 2006 study of the battle, he refers to the key figures as the “*dramatis personae*” (15-23) and, as others have often done in various languages, the Mediterranean as a “teatro” (10; 114; 130).

I will follow with an analysis of a few paradigmatic examples, written by two playwrights from entirely different parts of the Peninsula. These examples were chosen as they

were composed in the period directly following the conflict, but the connection between theater and these events is so strong that it was by no means constrained to the late sixteenth century; it is still being made today. British playwright Howard Barker centered his play *Scenes from an Execution* on the battle of Lepanto's reception and set it in 1571 Venice. It remains one of Barker's most popular works, and the National Theater's 2012 production starred Fiona Shaw and Tim McInnerny.

Luigi Groto's Emilia

Luigi Groto (1541-1585) was a curious literary figure, active in many genres, though unremarkable and poorly remembered in nearly all.¹³ Most interesting for the purposes of this analysis is his perfect embodiment of the "scrittore-soldato" prototype, an emergent figure in late-sixteenth-century literary culture. Formica conceptualizes this category of individual in her recent study *Lo specchio turco: Immagini dell'Altro e riflessi di Sé nella cultura italiana dell'età moderna* as one who, unfit for combat for one reason or another, sought to contribute to the cause in other ways. If at times a fierce critic of society, Groto was fervently patriotic and proud of the Venetian Republic. Groto, as his epithet *il Cieco di Adria* makes clear, was blind from a very young age and entirely unfit for any traditional military role.¹⁴ He perfectly exemplifies Formica's idea of the "combattenti *sui generis*," individuals she delineates as:

scrittori improvvisati e di professioni passarono dunque ai torchi tipografici
rimaneggiamenti e trascrizioni di lettere, componimenti, poemi, riflessioni su quelli che

¹³ G. Antonio Cibotto introduces Groto's work as possessing at first glance a "costante assenza di vera originalità, denunciate dagli eruditi nel corso del tempo (fatta eccezione per Klein) avrebbe impresso alla sua fluviale produzione il carattere alquanto monocorde di variazione in margine alle esperienze compiute da altre voci più dotate e geniali nel gran concerto del secolo" (9). Cibotto calls for a rereading and a rethinking of Groto and his work in order to better understand the "realità Groto."

¹⁴ In his *Crolologia*, Antonio Lodo estimates the onset of Groto's blindness at some time between 1544 and 1550, noting that Groto himself alludes to its onset at eight years of age (15).

erano ormai divenuti temi di attualità, diffondendo nel contempo informazioni sugli scontri, sui saccheggi e sulle catture di schiavi in *outramer*. (Formica 77)

Groto, already a respected literary figure before the war of Cyprus and the ensuing battle of Lepanto, became a soldier for the Holy Christian League in his own right. Indeed one particular vein follows Groto throughout over a decade of his literary production, a commonality shared between his poetic and dramatic work: an unrelenting fascination for and pride in the Venetian performance during the events of 1570-1571. The blind “scrittore-soldato” published orations, edited a compilation of poetry, and even penned a patriotic comedy highlighting the actions of the brave Cypriots in their defense of the Republic. A mere month after the conclusion of the battle, Groto wrote the *Oratione di Luigi Groto Cieco Ambasciator di Hadria fatta in Vinegia, per l'allegrezza della vittoria ottenuta contra Turchi dalla santissima Lega*, a panegyric account of the victory, and sent it directly to Doge Alvise Mocenigo. In his oration, Groto lists the many positive effects the battle had for Italy. Such gains would not satisfy Enlightenment thinkers who would later reflect on the battle, but for Groto and his contemporaries, the profits were not insignificant:

Ecco humiliato Maumetto, e esaltata la nostra fede, abbassato l'orgoglio del grande anzi già picciolo Otomano, e alzate le nostre speranze, levato il periglio da noi, e caricato sovra nostri nemici, rintuzzato lo ardire a' nostri avversari, e affilato a' nostri difenditori. Chiusi i Regni Christiani al furor Turchesco, e aperta ogni provincia maritima del Turco alle insegne Christiane. Ecco quante navi parte acquistate, e parte racquistate, quanti schiavi sciolti dalla cathena, e dalla servitù. Quanti mariti resi alle mogli, quanti figli renduti alle madri, e quanti padri restituiti a' figliuoli. (Groto, *Orazione*)

Groto credited the Christian victory to “la Giustitia del nostro Iddio” who, according to him, “non pure ha sommerso le schiere d'Egitto. Non pur salvato il suo carissimo popolo, ma lo ha arricchito delle spoglie de nimici sotto la scorta non di Mose, ma di un figliuolo di Mose.”¹⁵

Groto employed the discourse of the Christian victory as a sort of Proto-Manifest Destiny and an

¹⁵ Here Groto is referring to Venetian Sebastiano Venier, Chief Admiral of the Venetian fleet, who was grandson of Moisé Venier (the first) and son of Moisé Venier.

example of Christian exceptionalism, and sustained that such a victory proved that “la sua è una favola, e la nostra la vera Fede.”

A year later, in 1572, Groto had not forgotten about the events in Cyprus or at Lepanto. He published just one of several compilations of poetry by various authors, all on the subject of the events of the previous October. His *Trofeo della vittoria sacra ottenuta dalla Cristianissima Lega contra Turchi nell'anno MDLXXI, rizzato da i più doti spiriti de' nostri tempi, nelle più famose lingue d'Italia, con diverse rime raccolte e tutte insieme disposte da Luigi Groto, Cieco di Hadria* included not only poets from the Veneto but from all over Italy, each of them praising the prowess of the Christian fleet against their barbaric opponents.

Still in 1576, the events of 1570-1571 were heavy on Groto's mind when he first mentioned a comedy “da concertare” set in the aftermath of the war. Consumed with other dramatic pursuits at that time (notably, his tragedy *Hadriana*), it took at least three years to conceptualize this comedy and his *Emilia* was first performed in Adria on March 1, 1579. In the meantime, he had penned yet another oration on the subject of the war for the occasion of Sebastiano Venier's ascent to the position of Doge of Venice. Even long after the war had concluded and Cyprus had been ceded to the Turks, enthusiasm for the event had not waned. The 1579 production of *Emilia* was a success, as evidenced by its swift publication later that year and a second representation of the play in 1581 (Lodo 18-19).¹⁶

The play is an excellent example of *contaminatio*; Groto carefully reworked the Plautine *Epidicus* to suit a modern audience. Marvin Herrick lauded *Emilia* as the best of Groto's three

¹⁶ I have mentioned only the 1581 performance at the Casa Machiavelli as it is the only other performance on record, but we can assume that there were more reproductions of the play, at least in part. *Emilia*'s dedicatory averred its success, noting that many of the actors took it upon themselves to informally perform the play in other cities. Indeed these informal performances, Groto noted, provided the impetus for publication. This is a common statement made in dedicatories and is perhaps a mild exaggeration, but we have no reason to believe the play was not successful (Lodo 19; Di Maria 85).

comedies (156); Daniela Coletto agreed, describing it as “quella che risponde ai canoni, più ricorrenti e accettabili, di organicità, di unità, di relativa armonia” (366). Regardless of such careful attention to unity and harmony, scholars have yet to deem the play worthy of a modern reproduction and it is available to us only in its poorly legible original, replete with editorial defects.

The play is set in Constantinople just after the fall of Nicosia and during the siege of Famagusta. Wealthy merchant Polidoro Lascaris enlists the aid of his servant Christoforo in finding his son and daughter, both displaced by the war. He fears that his son Polipo, a Turkish soldier, died in combat, but hopes that his daughter Emilia (a Cypriot whom he had fathered years prior) has been enslaved and is therefore recoverable. Christoforo works as a double agent; before the war, he had been enlisted by Polipo to purchase Polipo’s lover, the slave Flavia, which he does with the funds designated for Emilia’s ransom. He locates Flavia and plans to pass her off to Cristoforo as Emilia, but Polipo returns home, no longer enamored of Flavia but of a new slave acquired in Cyprus. With the arrival of Emilia’s mother Lucida, a Cypriot whom Polidoro had met years prior during a previous campaign on the island, order is returned. The beautiful Cypriot slave is recognized as the real Emilia. She is promptly married to Polipo’s friend Neofilo; Flavia, who is discovered to be the long-lost daughter of a neighbor, is married to Polipo; and finally, Polidoro is married with Lucida, his former lover and the father of his daughter.

Salvatore Di Maria has suggested that *Emilia*’s lack of attention from scholars can be attributed in part to an overly faithful adherence to historical details. He has said that the play’s historical context “risked dating it, prompting literary critics to consider it provincial and irrelevant to future and diverse audiences” (85). This is certainly be the case, even if the events

of this particular conflict *still* evoke interest in readers; Wu Ming's *Altai* quickly rose to number five on the list of Italian best sellers as recently as 2009, and the novel gleaned international acclaim with Shaun Whiteside's 2013 English translation. It is precisely Groto's dependence on reality that makes it so interesting for this study.

The actors on stage all claim to be Turks, and the setting is supposedly Constantinople. As the play opens, Christoforo and Polidoro are discussing the news of the fall of Nicosia that is trickling into the Turkish capital from abroad. Paradoxically, they are not celebrating the victory. In fact, Christoforo tells his employer that he has never seen him more melancholy. Furthermore, the two Turks have nothing but criticism for the actions of their own side. Polidoro describes the event as "la ruina *crudelissima* di Nicosia" (Act 1, scene 1). He even admits that when he heard that the Turks were to attack Cyprus, he was not sure if he wished for a Christian or Turkish victory, sharing with his servant how conflicted he was. He tells Christoforo, "così da questi pensieri il mio animo era più combattuto, che la propria città di Nicosia da i nostri esserciti" (Act 1, scene 1).

The "Turks" again portray obscure behavior in the second act, as the young soldier Polipo returns from the war. The young man could not be further from the traditional figure of the *miles gloriosus*, the archetypical soldier who returns from battle to brag of his heroic deeds. Instead, Polipo tells Neofilo how the battle was a well-matched fight. The Turkish win was certainly not due to any skillfulness on the part of the Sultan's men, it was simply a matter of numbers. Neofilo asks Polipo, "Dunque non la virtù vostra, ma il numero ha vinto Nicosia?" Polipo responds in the affirmative, "Sì a dirlo liberamente tra noi" (Act 2, scene 4). Neofilo inquires as to the developing situation in Famagusta. Instead of praising his compatriots, as one

might expect a Turkish soldier to do, Polipo tells of how the brave Famagustans are holding strong inside their fort:

Polipo: Si tien per fermissimo, che la città di sito, e mura debole, per qual, che ha dentro non si possa prendere se non per tradimento, ò per assedio. E que di dentro non sian per arrendersi, fin c'habbiano tra lor pan, palle, e polvere.

Neofilo: E chi son quei di dentro?

Polipo: Marc' Antonio Bragadin Signor per la Republica. Gentil'huom veramente di grand'animo, d'alto consiglio, e amor verso la patria. (Act 2, scene 4)

Polipo reserves the highest praise for figures such as Bragadin and Estor Baglion, whom he describes as “honor de la militia, de la Christianità” (Act 2, scene 4).¹⁷ Neofilo even asks Polipo if the gossip that he has heard is true, and whether or not a woman had really duped the Turks, torching a ship loaded with Cypriot treasure, sending it to the bottom of the sea instead of to the Sultan. Polipo affirms the rumor, telling Neofilo what a magnanimous, generous, modest woman that woman (the wife of one Messer Pietro Pisani) had been.

The Turkish characters, whether soldiers or not, would all seem to be on the side of the Christians. They continuously laud the heroic Cypriot defenders and denigrate the barbarous actions of their own men, a curious stand in a time of war. Di Maria lauded such confusion not as a flaw but as an artistic tool, indeed “the most innovative aspect of the author’s stagecraft,” and posited that Groto intentionally created “an atmosphere of uncertainty whereby the world of the stage is and is not what it appears to be” (95).

Di Maria’s analysis of Groto’s play is entirely correct, though I would add to it by noting that Groto had an additional motive for the heightened confusion present in his play, more political and patriotic than artistic. The defense of Cyprus and the victory at Lepanto that followed had not been forgotten by 1579 and were certainly not memories of the distant past nor were they “non troppo d’attualità ormai nel 1579,” as Marina Calore has incorrectly stated (309).

¹⁷ “Estor Baglion” or Astorre Baglioni, was Bragadin’s general who defended the city during the siege (Tomitano 14).

The opinions that come from the mouths of the Turkish characters in Groto's comedy speak volumes: the Christian army was so heroic in their brave defense of Nicosia and their continued fight for Famagusta that even their sworn enemies have come to respect them. Should Groto's patriotic message fail to impress his audience, or if the Turkish cast and setting in enemy territory should shock his audience, he was sure to include an excuse in his prologue, a space in which playwrights had traditionally defended their work against critics. They're simply actors, the prologue asserts, and "vogliono darvi questi pazzi à intendere, che questa scena sia Constantinopoli. E che Turchi sian tutti que, che parlano ma ne la lingua, che s'usa in Italia. E voi siate fra i Turchi, che facetie..." (*Prologo* 8)

Giambattista Della Porta's La turca

From the curmudgeonly, fiercely patriotic Groto, I move to Giambattista Della Porta, who was writing at the very same time in the south of Italy, in and around Naples. Della Porta was a fervent student of comedy and was far more practiced in the art of comedic production than Groto. The two Turkish comedies that I will proceed to analyze, *La turca* and *La sorella*, are not as directly linked to the events of 1570-1571—after all, in Naples, Della Porta was slightly more removed from the conflict and less political—but they possess the same postwar feel. Echoes of Lepanto abound, and the representation of negative Turkish stereotypes reaches an historic high.

Giambattista Della Porta was born in 1535 in Vico Equense, a small town just south of Naples.¹⁸ His family was one of petty nobility, and his father Nardo Antonio saw to it that all of his four sons received a broad education, an education that for Giambattista paved the way for a

¹⁸ For the controversy surrounding Della Porta's proper date of birth, see Louise George Clubb, 4-6, who sifts through the conflicting evidence. Della Porta contributed to the confusion himself, offering several separate accounts of his age at various points throughout his life.

lush and varied future as a cryptographer, horticulturalist, meteorologist, physicist, astrologer, mathematician, and even dramatist.

His dramatic work grew in popularity in the twentieth century. Louise George Clubb, who published the only volume dedicated specifically to Della Porta's dramatic oeuvre, referred to Della Porta as the foremost Italian comic playwright of his time, and cited several scholars who had historically lauded Della Porta's dramatic works, including Luigi Tonelli, Mario Apollonio, Marvin Herrick, and Attilio Momigliano, who famously likened him to Shakespeare (xv). Such a consensus among scholars led Clubb to claim that "if the single masterpieces of Machiavelli and Bruno are excepted, Della Porta's comedies are the best Italian comedies before Goldoni's" (xv-xvi).

Such praise for his dramatic production over his philosophical and scientific works would likely disappoint Della Porta, who thought of drama as more of a hobby or pastime, a literary diversion that he practiced from a very early age. Clubb asserts that he began to write scripts for his family and friends as a child, likely engaging in informal performances; indeed, Pompeo Barbarito noted that *L'Olimpia*, his first comedy, was written in "i suoi primi anni," leading Clubb to hypothesize that it could have been written as early as 1550 (10). It is clear that this interest in composing works for the stage was one that followed him through adulthood, though he does not begin to publish his dramatic work until quite late in his career.¹⁹ His sudden urge to publish the fruits of his dramatic dalliances occurred later in life, long after he had published *L'arte del ricordare* and *Magia naturalis*. The flurry of publication was likely due to a scare by the Inquisition, to whom his passion for magic had been brought to light. According to Luigi

¹⁹ In *L'arte del ricordare* (1566), Della Porta's treatise on memory, he discusses memory as an important tool for actors (Clubb 14).

Amabile, Della Porta met with the Neapolitan tribunal; though he was dismissed, it was not without a joking command to write a comedy (Clubb 16).

It would follow that Della Porta's comedies take the mission of comedy's moral responsibility more seriously than others from the period; according to Clubb, "all fourteen of them sound the moral, sentimental, and pathetic notes approved by Counter-Reformers and rarely heard in pre-Tridentine *commedia erudita*" (146).²⁰ This is not to say that Della Porta's comedies are conservative and not light and humorous, however. They are indeed highly satirical, and Della Porta was a playwright who had mastered exaggeration, often resulting in ridiculous, hilarious scenes. He incorporated characters based on the by-then popular *commedia dell'arte* masks—the *Capitano*, the *Zanni*, the *Servette*, and others—but through his literary mastery, he gave them the gift of eloquence more difficult to attain in improvisational performance.

During a period of prolific comedic publication in the early seventeenth century, Della Porta published *La turca*. In the comedy, young lovers Eromane and Eugenio wish to marry the young women Clarice and Biancifiore, respectively, who share their sentiments. The young men's plans are foiled by their fathers, the rich and powerful old men Gerofilo and Argentario who have claimed the young women as their betrothed. Eromane and Eugenio devise a plan to gather up accomplices, dress as Turks, and stage a mock-invasion of the island. They will carry away Clarice and Biancifiore, who have agreed to participate in the plan, and live happily ever after. The plot thickens when the very night of the staged invasion real Turks Dergut and Hebraim *do* invade the island. In a confusing turn of events typical of comedy, the real Turks clash with the fake Turks and the citizens of the island. It is eventually discovered that the Turk Dergut is in fact the Christian son of the island's governor who had been taken hostage several

²⁰ It was common in this period for playwrights to assert the moral mission of their comedies, though it resulted that these were often empty claims, and the comedy did not urge spectators to improve themselves particularly.

years prior. The Turkish characters all either surrender or convert, and the young lovers are reunited with their age appropriate partners. Order is returned.

La Turca was published in 1606, but the text and subject matter suggest an earlier date of composition. Eugenio, speaking to Eromane in Act 2, refers to “quest’anno del settantadue” (Act 2, scene 3). We can, therefore, reasonably suppose that the comedy was written in or around 1572 and not in 1606. As previously noted, there has long been speculation that the controversial Della Porta had written but not published several of his plays much earlier and began to publish them later. The publication of work meant to entertain and not potentially heretical material could distract the Inquisition so that Della Porta might avoid the fate of his friend Campanella—or worse—Giordano Bruno.²¹ *L’Olimpia*, Della Porta’s first published comedy, was printed in Naples in 1589. *I due fratelli rivali*, *La Cintia*, *La sorella*, *Lo astrologo*, *La turca*, *La carbonaria*, and *Il moro* all followed in a six-year period between 1601 and 1607 (Sirri X-XI).²²

The subject matter further substantiates the claim that *La turca* was written long before its date of publication, and instead favors the 1572 date referred to in the text. Della Porta proclaimed his comedies to be entirely innovative, and assured his audience that he relied neither on classical tradition nor Boccaccian *novella*. Instead, he drew much of his inspiration from everyday life.²³ Della Porta evokes the reality of everyday life in 1572 Naples never more than in *La turca*, a comedy that makes light of the true fears of corsairs and islands at siege.

²¹ There is evidence that Della Porta was indeed acquainted with Campanella, and that the two corresponded at various points throughout their lives. He later met with Campanella, Sarpi, and Galileo in Padua in 1593 (Clubb 34).

²² In all, the comedies published by Della Porta are fourteen. Several scholars have attributed other theatrical works to Della Porta, but there is as yet no archival proof to sustain such claims. See Sirri’s *Premessa* for a definitive list (IX).

²³ The Prologue to *I fratelli rivali*, also used in *La carbonaria*, proclaims independence from both classical playwrights and *novellieri*: Ignorantissimo, considera prima le favola se sia meravigliosa, piacevole, e se ha l’altre sue parti convenevoli, che questa è l’anima della comedia; considera la peripezia, che è spirito dell’anima che l’avviva e le dà moto, e se gli antichi consumavano venti scene per farla cadere in una, in queste sue senza

Francesco Milano is the only scholar that has attempted to link *La turca* with a real historical event. He suggested that the events may refer to a 1563 raid against Naples led by a Neapolitan renegade from the well-known Del Vasto family (359).²⁴ Milano's claim was an entirely unsubstantiated one, however, as there is no evidence that Della Porta ever made reference to the Del Vasto raid. Perhaps such a direct connection with any specific historical event is futile, but it is nevertheless clear that the author is writing in a time of war, evoking highly publicized events at sea, referencing contemporary historical figures, and playing with his audience's memory of Turkish incursions on Italian soil and their very real fear of being carried away by corsairs themselves.²⁵

Della Porta set the play on the Island of Lesina, an island in the Adriatic Sea off the coast of modern day Croatia. Lesina is the primary island in a group of Dalmatian Islands referred to in Italian as the *Isole Curzolane*. Could Della Porta have confused the *Isole Curzolane* with the *Isole Curzolari* in Greece, the true setting of the battle of Lepanto? *Le Curzolari*, referred to in English as the Echinades, are located along the same coastline, slightly more south in Greece's Ionian Sea. It certainly would not have been difficult to confuse the two neighboring, nearly

stiracchiamenti e da se stessa cade in tutto il quarto atto; e se miri più adentro, vedrai nascere peripezia da peripezia ed agnizione da agnizione. Che se non fossi così cieco degli occhi dell'intelletto come sei, vedresti l'ombra di Menandro, di Epicarmo e di Plauto vagar in questa scena e rallegrarsi che la comedia sia giunta a quel colmo ed a quel segno dove tutta l'antichità fece bersaglio. Or questo è altro che parole del Boccaccio o regole di Aristotile! Il qual, se avesse saputo di filosofia e di altro quanto di comedia, forse non arebbe quel grido famoso che possiede per tutto il mondo (*Prologo* 14).

²⁴ The similarities are indeed noteworthy. Giovanni Antonio Summonte's *Dell'istoria della città e regno di Napoli* described a nighttime incursion on May 21, 1563. The siege was led by the famous corsair Ucciali, who brought with him a renegade relative of the Marchesa Del Vasto. The corsairs were apparently searching for the Marchesa, but found that she had left the city and was taking "rimedi" in Agnano, a nearby site famous for its hot springs. The Turks absconded safely with twenty-four prisoners, but not before the citizens killed one of the invaders. The one captured Turk was "dalla plebe strascinato per tutte le piazze della città" (341).

²⁵ The audience's fears would not be unfounded, either; historian Robert C. Davis estimated that in the century following Lepanto, around 35,000 Christians were enslaved in Barbary alone at any given time. Davis noted the impossibility of ever knowing the true numbers, but averred that "it is probably safe to say that Italy was among the most thoroughly ravaged areas in the Mediterranean basin" (140).

homonymous archipelagoes. Whether or not the setting was meant to be precisely that of the famous 1571 spectacle, the play is full of echoes of Lepanto and conflict between the Christian West and the Ottoman East. While the figure of the Turk had slowly become incorporated into a genre firmly rooted in tradition, Della Porta brings the Turkish figures to center stage and places an unprecedented emphasis on them. The comedy is not set in an Early Modern center of culture such as Florence, Mantua, or Naples; it is set on a Venetian island in the Adriatic, a perfect middle ground between the Ottoman East and Christian West.

In *La turca*, all the island-dwellers are affected by the conflict at sea. Gerofilo and Argentario, though not particularly displeased by the fact, lost their former wives in a previous sack of the island. The governor of the island along with his young son had been enslaved himself some years prior. Though he made every effort to find his son after they were separated, he was unsuccessful. The Turk Dergut is actually a Christian who was enslaved at a young age by the Ottomans.

Water and the sea are terms often used metaphorically in the play, but never to refer to replenishment, renewal, or purity, as one might find elsewhere. Water takes on a dolorous, dangerous connotation in *La Turca*. Eromane refers to himself as being “ingolfato nel mar dell’amaritudini d’amore” (Act 1, scene 1) and later in a “mar d’affanni” (Act 1, scene 2). The servant Olivia describes her mistress as crying incessantly, such that she is in a “mar di pianto” (Act 1, scene 2). When Eromane and Eugenio are discussing their problem and whether or not they should do something about it, their situation is described metaphorically as drowning. Eromane says, “se quelli che stanno nel mare non si aiutano menando le braccia e le gambe, si sommergono; così noi ci lasceremo morire senza trovar qualche rimedio” (Act 2, scene 4).

The metaphor of the battle is also employed several times. The opposition between age groups and the mocking of the *senex amans* had often been treated in a lighthearted, comic manner, from the early comedies of playwrights such as Cardinal Dovizi da Bibbiena and his *La calandria* (1513), or Machiavelli's *Clizia* (1525) and *La mandragola* (1518). In *La turca*, however, the typical opposition between old and young becomes more heated, an element of this play that has stumped scholars. Clubb describes the relationship as particularly bitter, noting that Della Porta's attack against paternal tyranny in *La turca* is "much more vicious" than in other plays from the period, and that "there is a real hatred between both pairs of sons and fathers and only a forced and grudging reconciliation at the end" (177). The filial hatred is so strong that, at times, the young men even wish for their fathers' deaths (Act 2, scene 3). Interactions are no longer light family skirmishes; they have morphed into violent battles. In Act 2, Eromane and Capestro discuss how important it is to be shrewd and cunning in battle in order to defeat their powerful adversaries:

Eromane: ...Le nostre avversità sono straordinarie, però bisogna aguzzar l'ingegno straordinariamente.

Capestro: Io veggio ogni cosa piena di difficoltà, e quanto più mi vo imaginando i rimedii, più la veggio piena di pericoli.

Eromane: Non possiamo esser a peggior termine che noi siamo: correremo per perduti; i nostri padri severissimi e bestiali, noi sconsigliati e non avezzi a sentir travagli; il matrimonio è stabilito, che non lo spartirebbe lo spartimatrimento. Gli odii de' padri e figli sono funesti, sdegni crudeli, risse sanguigne: siamo in un abisso di confusione. (Act 2, scene 8)

The clash between the honorable, struggling young characters and the rich, powerful older men reminds the reader much of the 1571 battle and indeed the entire War of Cyprus, in which the Christians were unorganized and outnumbered by the powerful Turkish forces. After years of falling victim to the Ottoman corsairs and watching the Turkish threat swiftly approach, Christian powers claimed that it was only through the use of *ingegno*—quick wittedness and

intelligence—that the Allied Christian League was victorious in the Battle of Lepanto. Braudel warns us of the many not entirely objective accounts of the battle and how difficult it is to decide which party deserves the most credit. Among others he proposed admiral Don John and also Gian Andrea Doria, who acted with great “*ingegno*.” There was also the clever use of the Venetian galleasses, typically used not in battle but for transport, which were loaded with cannons and acted as a formidable front line (1102).

In Della Porta’s comedy, the two servants put the aforementioned *ingegno* to work and devise a plot as if they were two captains rehearsing tactics on the eve of a battle:

Capestro: Dove è il mio collega? Forca, fatti in qua, riduciamoci in Rota, e come famosi senatori facciamo consiglio di stato. Già i nemici se ne vengono schierati in battaglia. Nel destro corno due vecchi pazzi innamorati a disperazione, strani, difficili e fastidiosi; nel sinistro la Ricchezza carica di perle e di gioie. Nel mezzo Amor, che regge il corpo della battaglia.

Forca: Noi facciamo così. Nel destro corno opponeremo una squadra di bugie incamiciate di verità, le quali se saranno scoperte e vinte, diamogli addosso co ‘l sinistro, armato di astuzie, trappole, furfantarie e tradimenti; nel mezzo staremo noi due arditamente a fronte: con tiri di cannonate sosterremo l’impeto della battaglia, perché se la cosa non va bene sopra loro, riuscirà cattiva sopra noi duo. Però bisogna che noi duo stiamo in cervello e meniamo le mani. (Act 2, scene 8)

The detailed battle plan devised by Forca and Capestro is remarkably similar to the plan cited previously, the intricate plan-of-attack devised by Allied Christian League leaders prior to their departure from Messina. Instead of a Gian Andrea Doria’s team of galleys to the right, Forca recommends cunning lies masked as truths; to the left, in the place of General Barbarigo’s fleet, Forca and Capestro’s league will be armed with cunning, ploys, skullduggery, and treachery; instead of Don John of Austria and his men in the middle, Forca and Capestro will be sustaining the battle with their own version of cannonballs (trickery and subversion, no doubt).

The confused, chaotic scenes to follow mirror the formation of the Allied Christian League and the battle to follow on October 7. It is early morning and Clarice is waiting to reunite

with Eromane and his friends. They are nervous that the others have not yet arrived at the agreed upon location. Clarice says to her servant, “O Dio, che molto tarda il mio Eromane! La mia mala sorte tramette molto indugio al mio desiderio. Dura cose è l’aspettare” and later, “O notte, giorno della mia vita, poiché tu disgombri per sempre le tenebre della mia vita!” (Act 3, scene 4).

Finally in the dark, Clarice and Olivia are able to distinguish figures that they assume to be their companions. Later in Act 3, scene 11, the *Turchi finti* are waiting for Eromane and Eugenio. One whispers to another, “Ormai il giorno si avvicina e non gli veggiamo comparire. Dissero che sarebbero venuti e ben presto, ed ormai son quattro ore che non compaiono. Non posso sospettar se non male” (Act 3, scene 11). The reader is continuously reminded of the long wait at Messina for the arrival of Don John and the Spanish fleet during which the nervous Allied soldiers suffered from low morale (Braudel 2098).

After their long wait, the *Turchi finti* finally spot a group dressed as Turks from afar and they assume that they have found their friends. They are pleased, as the group seems large. With such a number of actors in on the plan, they expect the false invasion to go well. Furthermore, the darkness of the night will play in their favor. In the dark and in their confusion, their enemies might mistake their number. “Oh, noi paremo un essercito, e forse la oscurità della notte ci accresce il numero” (Act 3, scene 11). The people that the *Turchi finti* encounter, however, are Dergut and Hebraim and their colleagues, who have come to sack the island. Dergut and Hebraim begin to scream their nonsensical Turkish battle cries and proceed to enslave the *Turchi finti*.

The Act 3 spectacle between the real Turks and the fake Turks is not the only mock battle—the characters are constantly at war. Again in Act 4, the governor leads a battle against the *Turchi finti* (Act 4, scene 2). The servant Forca, once again through the use of *ingegno*,

captures the Turk Dergut in a pit in Act 4, scene 3. Characters often erupt into cries of “Para, piglia, scanna, uccidi, rubba, assassina” (Act 3, scene 4), “Uccidete, ammazzate, legate, prendete quest’altro furfante” (Act 3, scene 10), or “Abbracciate, legate, imprigionate” (Act 3, scene 11)! The Turkish characters and *Turchi finti* alike scream the nonsensical “brè, brè, brè” (Act 3, scene 4; Act 3, scene 7; Act 3, scene 11; Act 4, scene 2) before each attack, intended as a sort of battle cry.²⁶

It has been noted that the peculiar character Dergut “wants integrating with the rest of the plot” (Clubb 176). This is indeed the case; Dergut weaves throughout the first three acts as a relatively flat character until the focus dramatically shifts to his capture, conversion, and recognition in the final two acts. He is also the clearest reference to a historical figure in the play. “Dergut,” also referred to as the Turkish “rais” in Act 5, is arguably the infamous corsair Dragutto Rais, who Summonte refers to as “famosissimo” (253) and the “capo del mar Tirreno,” (256) and who figures prominently into tales of incursions on the Neapolitan coast for at least two decades. Dragutto Rais became a legendary subject when he managed to escape from Giannettino D’Oria, who briefly held him captive with intent to send him to the emperor. Rais ravaged the coast of Naples and beyond from at least 1548 until his death at the Siege of Malta in 1568 (Summonte 253-57; Pansa 273).

²⁶ For a brief linguistic analysis of the language spoken by the Turkish characters in *La turca*, see Aldo Gallotta’s appendix to the *Edizione nazionale* of Della Porta’s comedies, *L’elemento turchesco nelle commedie La Sorella e La Turca*, 509-514. For a broader linguistic analysis of Turkish characters’ language usage in comedy throughout the Peninsula, see Daria Perocco’s chapter “Turchi in commedia: in Italia fra la fine del Cinquecento e l’inizio del Seicento” in *Sûzişât-I mü’ellefe: Contaminazioni e spigolature turcologiche*.



Fig. 4 (left). Ali Sami Boyar. *Portrait of Dragut (Dergut)*. İstanbul Askeri Müze.

Fig. 5 (right). Unknown artist. *The corsair Dragut Reis*. Archivio Fotografico Giancarlo Costa.

The elaborate execution scene included in Della Porta's comedy would thus have provided much catharsis for the spectators, all of whom would have quickly made the association between Dergut Rais and Dragutto Rais. In Act 5, after the servant Forca enslaves Dergut, he brings him to the Governor proclaiming that he has caught the Turkish *rais*. The rais is escorted to the gallows by Boia, the executioner. After discussing the precious Ottoman costume worn by the rais, Boia proceeds to tease his prisoner.²⁷ Dergut donates his precious Ottoman clothing and possessions to the local poor and expresses his wishes to convert to Christianity. He pleads to the governor, “Vi prego per la Cristiana pietà mi facciate confessar i miei peccati prima che muoia, accioché muoia da cristiano.” The governor is astounded and responds, “Come? I turchi domandano confessione?” (Act 5, scene 2). It is of course then discovered that the rais is Dergut, who is actually Giovanni da Cà, Venetian son of the Governor who was taken years earlier by the infamous Calabrian corsair Ucciali en route to Cyprus (Act 5, scene 2).

²⁷ Boia: “La giuba è di damasco levantino. ... Il turbante è di seta ed è bellissima. ... Oh che bella scimitarra! Vorrei sapere: è damaschina, telmesina o germanina? ... Le scarpe sono nuove nuove” (Act 4, scene 6).

Della Porta's La sorella

If *La turca* displays a world in which Italians live in fear of invasion by Turkish corsairs, Della Porta's later play *La sorella* depicts what happens to Italians and their families post-invasion and deals with the lasting, psychological effects of invasion and war. There is a notable shift in focus from the act of slave taking; indeed, at this point, slave taking is accepted as a common event. *La sorella* deals instead with the ransom of already enslaved Italians and their return home, depicting an increasingly globalized Mediterranean in which characters experience greater mobility between East and West. Slaves travel to Constantinople and return back again, though very much changed, after a long period of servitude. The traditional Captain figure has more to boast about, and weaves elaborate tales of his adventures to exotic eastern locales to fight the "Great Turk" and other enemies. Still, Constantinople is portrayed as the source of all conflict. It is depicted as a place where characters are held captive by brutal owners and a city that breeds deceit. The Turkish language, too, acts as a sort of secret code by which those who speak it (or pretend to) are able to dupe and victimize non-conversant characters.

Della Porta's style, in the years between the composition of the two "Turkish" plays, underwent a notable change. Gone is the sharp, satirical prose of *La turca*. *La sorella*, composed between 1591 and 1598, experiments with the tragic, to such an extent that scholars have referred to it as tragicomedy. As mentioned before, scholars have undergone much study in order to hypothesize dates of composition for all of Della Porta's plays. Often, wide periods are suggested, or scholars link a play with an undetermined date of composition with a play of a more certain date, as Clubb was led to do with *La turca* and *L'astrologo*. Because of the similarity in their plots and their common classical source, Clubb was able to place the two

alongside one another in her chronology. She did the very same for *La trappolaria* and *La sorella*, claiming *La trappolaria* to be *La sorella*'s "true sibling," and not Della Porta's earliest play *Olimpia*, as Milano had earlier claimed.²⁸ I was eager to favor *La turca*'s date of publication as 1572 in order to show the inextricable link between that play and the events of 1570-1571, but as providing my own proposed chronology for all of Della Porta's plays is beyond the scope of this study, I will not enter into the debate surrounding *La sorella*'s date of publication. Were one, however, compelled to find links between Della Porta's plays, I would propose a new "sibling" pair: *La sorella* and *La turca*. The two may not have been written together, both are notably different in style and tone, and both derive from separate classical sources, but though the two have never been mentioned together, there is no doubt that *La sorella* is *La turca*'s sister (older sister, that is—precisely *how much* older I will leave to the chronologists).

A brief summary of the complicated plot will suffice, after which I will look more closely at the text itself. Attilio, the son of Pardo, returns to Nola from Constantinople, where he was sent to ransom his sister Cleria and mother Costanza. He regretfully reports that his mother was unrecoverable and has died during servitude, but all rejoice in the fact that he was able to ransom his sister, except the audience learns early that, unbeknownst to Pardo, Cleria is not Cleria but Sofia, and Attilio never actually made it to Constantinople. He left his sister and mother (still quite alive) to suffer their fates in Constantinople, and returned home with Sofia, a slave he met halfway through his mission in a boarding house in Venice. Attilio and his fellow *innamorato* Erotico plot an elaborate wife-swap by which Erotico will marry "Cleria" and Attilio will marry Sulpizia, Erotico's lover, and they will switch wives by night. Everything is proceeding to plan

²⁸ Milano paired *La sorella* with *Olimpia* due to the fact that both owe much to Plautus' *Mercator*. Clubb departs from Milano, suggesting that "it is fairly safe to place *Trappolaria* and *Sorella* next to each other in chronological order, and their plots, style, and more tone are so similar as to suggest that Della Porta in some sort intended them as a pair, following the example of his Latin precursor" (Clubb 195).

until catastrophe arrives from Constantinople. One Pedrolito and his son, simply referred to as “Turco,” bring Pardo a letter from Costanza. Costanza herself arrives shortly after her letter, and Attilio must confess his wrongdoings. Costanza, apparently not miffed at her son for being left for dead, agrees to act as if Sofia is her daughter. Except Sofia/Cleria *is* the real Cleria, leading Attilio and his lover to realize that they’ve been committing incest and cannot move forward with their plan to marry. Tragedy is nearly avoided when it is discovered that Cleria was switched at birth with Sulpizia, and so the young girl who was captured at a young age was never even Attilio’s sister to begin with.

The play begins with a horrified Pardo. He is displeased by the changes he sees in his son Attilio. Attilio used to be a calm, responsible, respectful young man, but his recent voyage to Constantinople has changed him. “Da quel benedetto giorno (per non dir maladetto) che menò la sorella da Costantinopoli, menò seco la cagione della sua ruina!” (Act 1, scene 2). Among the most negative faults of his new, changed son are his laziness, particularly in prayer. He used to be so devout, saying his prayers every night to the Virgin Mary. Now, however, “non va più a messe, non dice officio, e la buona educazione ch’ornava il suo nascimento è tolta via da usanza così cattiva” (Act 1, scene 2). Trinca, Attilio’s servant, explains to Pardo the reasons for such a character change. “Vostro figlio è stato in Turchia, dove non s’odono messe né si dicono uffici, che ben sapete che i Turchi son mali cristiani, né si usa levar mattino, né si va a studio” (Act 1, scene 2). In fact, Trinca suggests Turkish ways and customs as an explanation for all Attilio’s bad habits. Such contact with the “contagion” of Constantinople is not enough of an excuse for Pardo, however. It certainly does not justify the way in which Attilio behaves with his sister; the two act so inappropriately that Pardo even regrets paying the ransom to bring her home.

E pur con Turchia, Turchia, il canchero che ti mangi, tutte le male creanze le scusi con Turchia. Ti conosco per un scappato da mille forche; quanto più gli scusi, più gli accuse;

se pur son usanze turchesche, or che siamo tra cristiani bisogna viver da cristiani. (Act 1, scene 2)

Pardo has had enough of Trinca's excuses for Attilio's behavior. Now that Attilio and his sister are back in Christian territory, they must behave like Christians and not as in Constantinople, where inappropriate brotherly-sisterly love is apparently commonplace. He will put an end to the unacceptable relationship by marrying Cleria off to the braggart, Captain Trasimaco, and Attilio to Sulpizia.

Again travelers arriving in Nola from Constantinople provide the impetus for disaster in act 3. Pedrolito arrives from a journey similar to Attilio's. He has been to Constantinople to ransom his son, kidnapped years earlier. The news he brings from the Turkish capital completely upends the *innamorati*'s elaborate plan for a double marriage. Pedrolito is happy to be home in Nola after a tumultuous journey in which he was subjected to terrible conditions, thieves, and all sorts of nefarious creatures; the journey was so painful that Pedrolito resolves to never again leave Nola. He eagerly greets his old friend Pardo. When Pardo is shocked by Pedrolito's changed state, the audience realizes that Pedrolito must not have been exaggerating the horrors of his journey. "Chi ti potrebbe conoscere così vecchio? E poi vestito alla turchesca? Che sete stato prigioniero o ammalato, che avete così vigliacca ciera, perdonatemi, cioè macra e scolorita?" (act 3, scene 2). Pedrolito's arrival is the source of ruin for the *innamorati*, as he brings news that Costanza is alive and well in Constantinople. Indeed, from the very moment Pedrolito arrives from Constantinople, everything seems to unravel for the young lovers. Pedrolito produces a letter from Costanza, recognizes that "Cleria" is an impostor, and tells Pardo that he has been the victim of an elaborate hoax. Next, the real Costanza arrives, proving Pedrolito right. Finally, worst of all, Costanza unveils that "Cleria" is really her daughter, and thus really Attilio's sister.

With ransomed slaves returning home and increased mobility between the two worlds, characters in *La sorella* like to think they know much about the Turkish world, particularly Trinca, who pretends to have travelled to Constantinople with Attilio. The trickster purports to have a deep cultural understanding of the Turks, and even elaborated on their religion and specific linguistic details. The most troubling aspect of the play is the incest *tout court*, a behavior that is categorically blamed on the loose morals of the Turks, notorious for their sexual liberality. Pardo is first alarmed by their relationship when he believes Attilio and “Cleria” are really siblings. Later, those “in the know”—Attilio, Sofia/“Cleria,” Sulpizia, and the audience—are even more horrified when Sulpizia really does recognize Sofia/“Cleria” as Cleria. Such a daring inclusion would have been particularly experimental. Incest, according to Donald Beecher and Bruno Ferraro, is “the substance of crisis, the lingering threat to those social orders in which, through the fell clutch of circumstance, consanguinity can easily be lost to view” (34). The incest is indeed a substance of crisis and a lingering threat, but the deeds of the culpable can all be attributed to the immoral Turks. No Christian would act in such a way, not on his or her own accord. Thus, Della Porta, through Trinca, excuses himself for addressing such a potentially heated topic and takes one of many opportunities to play with the stereotype of the immoral Turk by blaming Islam. “E la legge maumettana di là comanda che le sorelle e fratelli trattino fra loro con molta amorevolezza; sarà bisogno smaumettarsi a poco a poco” (Act 1, scene 5). Trinca goes one step further; he even proposes a Turkish term for this sort of acceptable incest: *tubalch*. “Questa amorevolezza,” Trinca explains, “la chiamano in turchesco *tubalch*” (Act 1, scene 5).

Trinca, of course, has never actually been to Constantinople and is thus feeding Pardo with nonsense words, to the amusement of both himself and the audience. In fact, Della Porta, who had begun to incorporate brief passages in Turkish in *La turca* (primarily battle cries and

praises to Allah), was, by the time in which he was writing *La sorella*, incorporating entire scenes in Turkish. Clubb rightly noted what a brilliant linguistic style Della Porta possessed:

Della Porta's most joyous pursuit of *meraviglia* was linguistic. His comic language is a rich *macedoine* of spicy proverbs, city slang, learned allusions, alliterative and antithetical love laments, hyperbolic parodies, and whizzing crosstalk—all perfectly artificial and perfectly natural to artificial characters in artificial surroundings. With each new comedy Della Porta's prose became more dazzlingly decorative... (Clubb 146)

Though Clubb is likely thinking here of Della Porta's linguistic play in his own native language, it is clear that in pursuing linguistic *meraviglia*, he also moves across languages, including meditations on the power of language, bilingualism, and issues of translation.

Scholars who have examined the presence of the Turkish language in Italian literature have attributed the inclusion of excerpts in Turkish to mere exoticism. Typically, according to Aldo Gallotta, “si tratta in definitiva di elementi occasionali e marginali, di forme stereotipate, di monotone ripetizioni di formule islamiche, inserite qua e là per ottenere particolari effetti stilistici o anche solo acustici” (509). This is certainly the case in *La turca*, in which Della Porta includes nonsensical Turkish battle cries and praises to Allah, but *La sorella* must be examined separately, for entire scenes are written in a reasonably intelligible Turkish. Della Porta's motivation for such inclusions, given his love for language-play, may certainly have begun as stylistic and acoustic, but I argue that there is slightly more behind his linguistic choices in *La sorella*.

Throughout the play, Turkish is a trick language. At first, Attilio and “Cleria” speak in a secret language amongst one another in order to exclude Pardo. Pardo is naturally perturbed that the two have the power to communicate in a language that he cannot understand; he complains to Trinca, “tutto il giorno a gracchiar con la sorella e rider fra loro, e quando io vi son presente *pis*, *pis* dentro l'orecchie, e dagli atti e cenni conosco che si burlano de' fatti miei, si parlano in zergo

e mi danno la baia e stimano che non me ne accorga” (Act 1, scene 5). Cleria later uses her specific linguistic case in order to extricate herself from a difficult conversation. It has already been established that the young woman, as she was enslaved in Constantinople for so many years, “non intende ben l’italiano,” (Act 1, scene 5) and she falls back on this supposed ignorance in act 2. After hearing Pedrolito’s news, Pardo confronts the woman he believes to be his daughter, demanding an explanation. The young woman is at a loss for words. Struggling, she stammers out a denial. Pedrolito insists that he has seen her, in a boarding house in Venice belonging to one Pandolfo. Cleria knows then that she is caught, and she replies “Che Pandolfo? Che alloggiamenti? Quanto più segni mi dai, men t’intendo.” Pedrolito calls her bluff, telling her “Che parlo arabico o tartaresco? Fai della stordita, per non accettar la verità” (Act 3, scene 3).

Cleria’s feigned ignorance does not satisfy Pardo, but Trinca’s quick-wittedness and deviousness briefly save the pair. In one of Della Porta’s best examples of metatheatricality and linguistic play, Trinca speaks to Pardo’s son Turco in “Turkish,” falsely translating Turco’s speech for the gullible Pardo.

Trinca: Gli parlerò in turchesco. Tu non mi scapperai. Cabrasciam obniboraf, enbusaim Constantinopla?

Attilio (fra sé): O buon Trinca, o illustrissimo Trinca.

Turco: Ben belmen ne sensulers.

Pardo: Che dice?

Trinca: Che suo padre non fu mai in Constantinopoli.

Pardo: Dove dunque fu per riscuoterlo?

Trinca: Carigar camboco maio ossasando.

Turco: Ben sem belmen.

Trinca: Dice che sono stati in Negroponte.

Pardo: Da Negroponte in Constantinopoli ci sono molte miglia. Dimandagli che camino han fatto per venire in Italia.

Trinca: Ossasando nequet, nequet poter levar cosir Italia.

Turco: Sachina busumbasce agrirse.

Trinca: Dice che son venuti per mare e non passati per Vinegia.

Pardo: O Dio, che umori stravaganti sono negli uomini! Che cosa ha spinto colui a dirmi così gran bugia, che sia stato a Vinegia, e portarmi una lettera di mano di mia moglie? Che mondo è questo?

Trinca: Bisognarebbe far un mondo a vostro modo o riformarlo. Han falsificato la mano di vostra moglie per farvi qualche burla.

Pardo: Certo che dovea star ubbriaco; e già lo tengo per tale, che stava rosso nel volto.

Trinca: L'avete indovinata: ed or gli lo vo' dimandare. Siatì cacus naincon catalai nulai.

Turco: Vare hecc.

Trinca: Ha detto marfus, che vuol dire ubbriaco; ha detto che poco innanzi è intrato in una osteria, nel viaggio, appresso Nola, e che ha bevuto molto bene e che andava cadendo per la strade, e che appena or si potea reggere in piedi. (Act 3, scene 4)

Della Porta is exercising his famous word play here for exoticism and comicality, to be sure, but not only. Though he purported to be a mere hobbyist, Della Porta was an avid student of theater. He would have carefully read Angelo Beolco or Ruzante, who famously played with language and who, like Della Porta, interweaved current social and political events into his dramatic work. Donald Beecher has said of Ruzante's *La moscheta* that in the play the ridiculous *moscheta* language is "a metaphor for the condition of Beolco's world. Nothing can be trusted in this world, especially language" (Beecher 176). Not much has changed in the half century between the composition of Ruzante's *La moscheta* and Della Porta's *La sorella*:

Every character in the play is driven by selfish motives that can best be furthered at the expense of others, so that community, family, friendship, honour, and morality do not obtain in this upside down universe. Language presupposes some common values or experiences; here there are none. Language becomes, then, another vehicle for deceit and delusion rather than the medium of mutual understanding and shared principles. (Beecher 176)

Beecher, speaking here of Ruzante's use of dialect, could just as easily be discussing the use of Turkish in *La sorella*. Pardo, distraught with the behavior of his community members and his family, had asked himself "Che mondo è questo?" It is no longer a world of family values and trust. It is instead a selfish, cruel world, in which wives and daughters are ripped from their families and sold into slavery. It is a world in which a man might lie to his own father, steal his ransom money, abscond with a young woman, and leave his sister and mother to suffer a life of

servitude in the hands of the Turks. It is a world in which using language as a vehicle for deceit should not be the least bit startling.

A choice for comedy

Groto's *Emilia* and Della Porta's *La turca* and *La sorella* are all set in times of war. They narrate tales of piracy, captivity, and battle. Such meditations on islands at siege and family members taken captive by real corsairs active in the period—often renegades, spectators' own countrymen who had "turned Turk"—played on the intense fears of the spectators. Scholars have frequently noted how *La sorella*, nearly ending in tragedy, contains "moments of melodrama bordering on tragedy" (Clubb 265). The same could be said of Groto's foray into the comedic genre with his self-described "comedia nova" *Emilia*. His curmudgeonly personage was far better suited for tragedy, a claim he himself confirmed in his dedicatory.²⁹ In all three plays, though particularly Groto's, the focus on specific wartime events in very recent history and the mention of living, contemporary corsairs evoked painful memories for theatergoers. Why is it, then, that these authors chose to dress such a potentially tragic subject matter in the trappings of a comedy?

Such a choice was not a cursory one, but was instead entirely deliberate. During comedy's golden age, Italy is in continued conflict with the Turks, but never is this conflict more heated than in the period in which Groto and Della Porta were writing the comedies I have discussed. I have mentioned before how war naturally occasions literary production in all forms, but it must be added that no genre is more fit for a time of war than comedy. Comedy allows spectators an escape from the harsh reality of wartime. The audience's fear of a Turkish invasion

²⁹ Groto's dedicatory admits a certain degree of difficulty in the composition of this comedy, his first: "Io gli risposi che questa messe non era della mia falce perché le Comedie si hanno a condir d'astutie, di motti, e di riso, dalle quai cose io era più lontano che Gennaio dalle more."

on Italian shores is momentarily assuaged as they view the ridiculous, bumbling clashes between real and fake Turks in *La turca* or witness Trinca's absurd impressions of the Turkish language in *La sorella* and in their laughter, as Henri Bergson has argued, individuals are able to rebuild the normality of life (5).

At the same time, humor offers the writer an opportunity to create his own revisionist account of a difficult war, as Groto did in his *Emilia*. While the Venetians may have been proud of their heroic stand in Cyprus, their pride was marked with bitterness; they could not have avoided feeling that such courageous deeds were proved fruitless when the island was officially ceded to the Turks in 1573. Groto thus exercised his control over a tragic circumstance by instead highlighting the heroic stand of the Venetians (ever more impressionable when the praise comes from the mouths of the enemies) and narrating how the circumstances of war reunited families and brought lost loves back together.

The events of 1570-1571 on the island of Cyprus and the ensuing battle of Lepanto between the Holy Christian League and the Turks represented the height of conflict in the Mediterranean. Though the Christian West saw many great losses—Cyprus represented only one example—they also enjoyed a remarkable victory at the battle of Lepanto in the final act. Lepanto was a battle that, in many ways, represented a real-life *peripetia* in the ongoing conflict between the Christian West and the Ottoman East.

The abundance of literature written henceforth naturally reflected on wartime events and teemed with negative Turkish stereotypes. In Groto's case, comedy and the laughter it induced proved an excellent source of relief for a war-torn culture, and it offered a unique opportunity to highlight moments of light in a period of darkness. The Neapolitan Della Porta, at once both innovative and highly skilled in satire, was ideally equipped to incorporate and advance negative

Turkish stereotypes. The genre was already based on the use of traditional stereotypes, and thus represented the ideal genre in which to further exemplify the Turk as a violent pirate, a deceitful prevaricator, or a morally repugnant individual prone to incestuous urges.

CHAPTER 3

Pseudoscience and the Masquerade of Alterity in Della Porta's *Il moro*

Quentin Tarantino's 2012 film *Django Unchained* tells the story of a freed Black former slave who unleashes his wrath all over the American South, killing spoils as he seeks to free his wife from servitude. Tarantino's use of gratuitous violence, for which he has become famous, does not disappoint in *Django*—the death toll has been averaged at over sixty. The film was Tarantino's highest grossing ever, and was met with worldwide acclaim; its first international performance was held at the Rome Film Festival, where Ennio Morricone presented Tarantino with a special lifetime achievement award.

Over four centuries prior, Giambattista Della Porta wrote *Il moro*, a comedy in which Pirro, a young man from Capua, returns to his hometown in disguise to avenge the wrongs that were committed against him ten years before by his fellow citizens. He ends up acting as an early modern iteration of a hired hitman, first contracted to duel his own brother and next to kill a man who is rumored to have recently returned to town, though this particular mission is rendered impossible as the intended victim turns out to be Pirro himself. This excessive violence is possible in an early modern comedy because of Pirro's disguise as a Moor, understood in sixteenth-century Italy to be irascible and prone to murderous rage.

Portrayals based on the unfounded link between men of color and violence have permeated Western culture, and the groundless stereotype of the violent black male has been

represented and re-represented, from Della Porta's comedy to Tarantino's film. Such a myth must be dismantled posthaste. It is the goal of this chapter to contribute to the slow process of deconstruction of such a delusion by examining the representation of the Moor in early modern Italian comedy, situating its conceptualization during a time of conflict in the Mediterranean and in a period of interest in the study of physiognomy, a pseudoscience re-popularized by Della Porta himself.

The Moor in Early Modern Europe

The early modern understanding of the Moor was different than the Turk, who was—as has already been exhaustively treated—categorized on the basis of his religious affiliation. The term's linguistic root is Greek, and originally referred to residents of the ancient Kingdom of Mauretania in what is today Morocco.³⁰ Europeans expanded the term to include inhabitants of what they called the Barbary Coast, or Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia.³¹ Their religion was unspecified, therefore a Moor could certainly have been a Muslim, but not exclusively; he or she could also have been a Christian or a Jew, as all three religions comingled in sixteenth-century North Africa. The understanding of the term Moor is further complicated by a varying interpretation from one European community to another. Broadly speaking, however, Moors were most commonly identified on the basis of a skin color that could range from brown to black, though it should certainly be noted that just as individuals from this geographical area could have

³⁰ Anthony Gerard Barthelemy provided a comprehensive review of the origins of the term "Moor," tracing its origin to the Greek "μαῦρος" (individual from Mauritania) and "ἄμαυρός" (dark) and to the Latin "Maurus," which also included the dual meaning "from Mauritania" and "dark" (8-9).

³¹ Historian Nabil Matar has set to right many of the errors committed by contemporary scholars of this period and geographical area. Among his highly justifiable grievances is the tradition of referring to the "Barbary coast" in the vast body of literature referencing the "Barbary corsairs," founding his complaint on the fact that the term Barbary was never once used by the populations of North Africa and does not appear on any modern atlases (Matar, *British Captives from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic* 3)

been a member of several religions, they also possessed a vast array of skin colors from light to quite dark.³²

Kate Lowe has written that, though Africans came from a variety of places, all culturally, racially, and religiously distinct, they lost their identity upon arrival in Europe and were reduced to simply “black Africans.” Giving these black Africans any sense of individuality would be to give them a certain degree of power, which Europeans were careful not to do. Lowe noted that, particularly for those who arrived as slaves, arrival in Europe meant “the systematic erasure of all the more significant aspects of their past, starting with their names, their languages, their religions, their families and their communities” (2). Such erasure of key elements of individualism explains why we find nameless characters in drama referred to simply as “Moro,” as in Della Porta’s comedy, or characters such as Othello, who was given a name that was almost always conditioned with the addition of the epithet “Moore of Venice,” as appears in Shakespeare’s first quarto (1622), or “Moro di Venezia” in Italian translation.

Scholarship exploring the English case has extensively examined the figure of the Moor, which Nabil Matar and Rudolf Stoeckel have determined to be “a more challenging presence than any other outsider’s,” claiming the Moor and not the Jew to be the “crucial” Other in early modern English drama (222).³³ The Moor first appears in George Peele’s *The Battle of Alcazar* (1594), after which he (and perhaps even she, if we are to understand Cleopatra to be a Moor) abounds in the work of William Shakespeare and other English dramatists, most notably in *Othello*. Shakespeare’s source for *Othello* was the novella of homonymous name included in Giovanni Battista Giraldi Cinthio’s *Hecatommithi* (1565). It is thus curious that the Moor

³² The English would later address this confusion, utilizing the terms “White Moor” and “Blackamoore.” Leo Africanus, too, distinguishes between “Affricani bianchi” and “Affricani neri” (Barthelemy 15).

³³ Africans were also the most “numerous and conspicuous racial others” in early modern English society (Callaghan 76).

enjoyed such a prolific afterlife in English drama and a comparatively lackluster one in the language that gave birth to literature's most famous Moor.

Of course in the Italian case as in the English, when we are referring to the Moor onstage, we are referring to a white European disguised who is only portraying the role of a Moor, and never an actual black African. Black individuals were no doubt present in sixteenth-century Italian society, the most illustrious of which might have been Alessandro de' Medici, the Medici duke who historians claim to have been the son of Simonetta da Colvecchio, a slave of African descent, and either Lorenzo di Piero de' Medici or Giulio de' Medici.³⁴ Regardless of the presence of people of color in Italy, the theatrical Moor is exclusively simulated by cosmetic means, or early modern blackface. Della Porta without doubt featured a European actor in blackface for four and a half acts of his five-act play *Il moro*, and it can be speculated that Andreini used blackface in his Turkish plays, though this is not certain. The frontispiece of *Lo schiavetto* depicts the bust of a noosed slave with a clearly blackened face, ostensibly Schiavetto himself. This might lead one to believe that Andreini also employed blackface, as did Emily Wilbourne.³⁵ Andreini never explicitly mentioned makeup in his stage directions as Della Porta did in his text, so we cannot ascertain Andreini's use of blackface in *Lo schiavetto*.³⁶ Lesser-

³⁴ For more the debate surrounding the questionable heritage of Alessandro de' Medici, I would point the reader toward John Brackett's chapter "Race and rulership: Alessandro de' Medici, first Medici duke of Florence, 1529–37" in *Black Africans in Renaissance Europe*.

³⁵ Wilbourne has claimed that as Florinda, Virginia Ramponi crossed "boundaries of gender, *race*, and class" as she cross-dressed as a "black male slave" in her masquerade as Schiavetto (331). Hers is a bold claim, though not unsubstantiated, due to the image on the frontispiece that I have mentioned. Andreini had a penchant for elaborate costumes and props and certainly a fascination with the foreign Other; but at the same time, he was also extremely detail-oriented. It seems odd that were he to have intended Schiavetto not only to change gender but also skin color, he wouldn't have mentioned explicit instructions for the employment of such a disguise. Unfortunately Erith Jaffe-Berg, drawing on Wilbourne's error, perpetuates it in her otherwise excellent study *Commedia dell'arte and the Mediterranean* (91).

³⁶ Andreini's *La sultana* also includes two Moors toting cymbals, accompanied by two laden camels. I would hesitate to include them in my analysis, as they are not integrated into the plot in any way, and can thus be understood as having been an exhibition, included only for aesthetic purposes.

known comedies from the period also included Moorish characters, such as the relatively unknown Giovan Battista Petrucci's *Il moro* (1609).



Fig. 6. Giovan Battista Andreini. *Lo schiavetto*. Frontispiece. 1622. Università di Torino.

Again in contrast with the English representation of the Moor, the Italian Moor endured a double mimesis. He was not merely a black figure being portrayed by a white actor, he was a white actor playing a white man who was masquerading as a black man, as in both Della Porta's and Petrucci's plays. Petrucci's Moor explains his disguise first thing, alluding to a dye or colorant, telling his father that "feci risoluzione tingermi questo volto" (Act 1, scene 1). Della Porta's Moor unveils himself as Pirro at the very end of the last act, explaining the means by which he kept himself disguised for so long. His lover Oriana, confused by Moro's confession that he is in fact Pirro, states that "il mio non era di faccia così bruna;" Pirro explains that he colored his face with "la morchia d'olio, che l'usano in Barberia, e la rendono poi Bianca come prima, quando li piace" (Act 5, scene 5). The *morchia d'olio* would have been a sludgy, oily deposit, a residual solid substance that remains after oil has been pressed or filtered.³⁷ These Moorish masquerades allude to the heliotropic belief that an individual's "original" color was

³⁷ We can assume that such a substance was used to paint the face of Della Porta's protagonist. Other methods used to blacken an actor's face were burned cork, masks, or white ivory's black pigment (Vaughn 9-13).

white, and that blackness resulted from the burning or scorching of the epidermis after prolonged exposure to the hot sun, a misunderstanding that still prevailed in the early modern period.

Later, increased mobility between Italy and Northern Africa would prompt the publication of travel narratives and thus more and more varied dramatic representations of the Moor naturally followed, but during this period, the most paradigmatic example of a protagonist of color belonged to the Della Portian *Il moro*, a comedy composed in 1598.³⁸ Because of its highly violent nature—an increased violence that I have already addressed in other Della Portian “comedies”—scholars have tended to categorize the play as tragicomedy rather than comedy. Among those comedies that toed the line between comedy and tragedy, Clubb insisted that the plot of *Il moro* was the “most nearly tragic that Della Porta ever used in a comedy” (215). The play’s protagonist is Pirro, a resident of Capua who spent a decade travelling throughout Africa. He left following the tragic events of his wedding night, in which he was made to think that his new wife Oriana wished to murder him. Oriana had also been convinced that Pirro desired to murder her, all part of a devious plan by the envious Captain Parabola. Pirro returns in his Moorish disguise just before Oriana has been arranged to remarry against her will, this time with Erone, the governor’s son.

Pirro’s Blackness

Pirro arrives in Capua already disguised. His face and hands are tinted, his beard is outgrown, and he is donning Moorish attire befitting that of a merchant. His precise intended ethnicity is unclear, as he simply states that he comes “dalla Morea.” Such a profession is problematic for the contemporary reader, as we associate *Morea* with the Peloponnesian peninsula in southern Greece that had been conquered by the Ottomans in 1460. I propose that

³⁸ *Il moro* was first published in 1607 (Clubb 300).

with reference to *Morea*, Della Porta was in error and had intended *Morea* to refer to the “land of the Moors.” The text would support such a claim, as Pirro often explains his travels, strictly referring to locations in Africa. He tells us in the first act that his decade-long pilgrimage took him to various parts of Africa, including Ethiopia and Libya. The warm climate was particularly destructive for the jilted lover, as the heat only intensified the burning in his heart for Oriana: “Che mi giova aver trascorsa l’adusta Etiopia e quanto circonda l’Oceano, e l’inabitate arene dell’arsa Libia, sotto la torrida zona, se la fiamma, cresciuta fra quei fuochi, è sempre venuta meco?” (Act 1, scene 1). He is described as wearing an “abito Mauro,” which the pedant Amusio carefully defined for us in the text, making Della Porta’s minor geographical error clearer: “*Maurus, Maura, Maurum*: uomo, femina e cosa di Mauritania, cioè dell’Arabia” (Act 2, scene 1). Erone also described his friend as “un Moro dall’Affrica” (Act 4, scene 3). We can thus conclude that Della Porta mistook *Morea* for a location somewhere along what Europeans understood to be the Barbary Coast.

While we can safely assume that he comes from somewhere in North Africa, far more emphasis is placed on his skin color than his place of origin, or even his religion. Thus Della Porta’s understanding of Moors is far more similar to the English, which focused on skin color, than the Spanish, who added a religious element, believing Moors to be Muslim. We know Della Porta’s Moor to have quite dark skin, as individuals see him coming from afar and note the irregularity, as Balia does when she remarks to Oriana, “Chi è questo moro che vien per qua?” (Act 1, scene 5).

Pirro admits that he is “tutto mutato da me stesso,” but only when referring to physical appearance. Through his or her privileged knowledge, the reader knows the character’s inner character has also changed. The sweet, gentle *innamorato* who exchanged cloying pet names

with Oriana, and the Pirro we know to have run off, heartbroken, to Africa after his disastrous wedding-night is certainly not the same man who has returned to Capua. In transforming from Pirro into Moro, this character has also altered his entire persona, inside and out. Sweet Pirro has been substituted with Moro, a man of violent and explosive temperament and an apparent bloodlust.

Upon his arrival, Moro immediately announces his goals in Capua. He wants to hear news of Oriana, and if he discovers that “non m’ama e sia vero quello che si disse, prenderò vendetta del tradimento e della rotta fede del matrimonio” (Act 1, scene 1). His announcement is ominous and ambiguous, and we are left to wonder against whom he would be taking such revenge. After he has been briefed by Balia on Oriana’s impending, unwanted remarriage, he ventilates his anger, proclaiming his intention to murder Erone: “Andrò all’alloggiamento, torrò la mia spada, andrò dimandando finché trovi quella villa, e m’informerò del figlio del Governatore, ché ho molto ben a mente i segnali: l’ucciderò e lo farò in mille pezzi, così mi torrò questo impedimento dinanzi” (Act 1, scene 8).

Though he does try, Moro’s plan to murder Erone and “cut him into a thousand pieces” does not succeed, and he is caught and placed in prison, awaiting certain death. He expresses his disappointment to the governor upon his arrest, telling him “Sarei galantuomo, se avessi potuto uccidere il tuo figlio: ché, se ucciso l’avessi, contentissimo morirei” (Act 2, scene 2). Moro’s understanding of early modern *virtù* seems remarkably different than that of other early modern protagonists. At times it is as if his goal is not even to win Oriana back, but principally to kill Erone. He constantly states that his “sola mira fusse d’ammazzarlo” (Act 3, scene 1) or that Erone was a man who “con tutto il cuore desiderava ammazzare” (Act 3, scene 2).

Though unsuccessful in his attempt to kill Erone, Moro is clearly a force to be reckoned with. Erone recognizes Moro's unique qualities as a warrior, and enlists him to duel Filadelfo, who is in reality his own brother, in exchange for freedom. Filadelfo has challenged Erone at the bequest of Oriana, who is holding out hope for her husband's return. Filadelfo is rumored to be an excellent fighter; indeed he is advertised as "il maggior uomo che viva" and has apparently earned "i primi onori nella schirma e nel ferire" (Act 2, scene 6), which only serves to further emphasize Moro's fierceness. Pirro-disguised-as-Moro-disguised-as-Erone eventually wins the duel, proving to be true Erone's suspicions that he is a ferocious combatant. After witnessing such a display, Erone again seeks his Moorish friend's "services," and hires him. His second contract involves lying and deceitfulness; as Oriana does not wish to remarry unless her first husband is officially pronounced dead, Moro is asked to relay to her news of Pirro's death.

Erone's plan is nearly foiled when he hears the rumor that Pirro has returned to town. Fortunately, he has prepared for this eventuality. When commissioned to relay the lie to Oriana, Moro asked Erone what would occur if Pirro happened to arrive in Capua, alive and well. He assured Moro that "ho il moro, mio grandissimo amico, che basterà ammazzar lui e mille de suoi pari" (Act 4, scene 4). Look to Moro for help is precisely what Erone does when an informant tells Erone to beware of Pirro, who is thought to be in town for the sole purpose of seeking revenge. Erone is not afraid, however; he tells his informant that "ho meco il moro, e mentre egli è meco non temo di qualunque diavolo dell'inferno" (Act 5, scene 1). He thus enlists Moro to complete another violent task—he wishes the Moro to find Pirro and murder him. Once Pirro is dead, there will be no more obstacles preventing the nuptials.

Pirro's racialized masquerade serves to allow him to engage in violence unbecoming the typical *innamorato* who was, which goes without saying, exclusively a white Italian. *Innamorati*

are nearly always well-behaved, highborn young men, perfect examples of early modern *virtù*. As a Moorish visitor, however, Pirro is able to avenge the wrongs committed against him. He is able to attempt to murder a governor's son. His disguise explains how, when faced with the dilemma of whether to duel his brother or meet certain death at the gallows, he chooses to duel and permanently destroy his brother's honor.

His racialization serves the further purpose of accentuating the whiteness of his former self, a whiteness equivalent to goodness and purity. We are to understand that before his ten-year trip to Africa, Pirro was the picture of virtue. He was a loving and loyal husband and an excellent brother and son. The murderous rages of Moro only further exaggerate Pirro's excellent qualities. Moro's violent nature encourages the early modern reader/spectator to reflect on Pirro's comparative patience, his loyalty to Oriana in over ten years of separation, and his brave travels throughout foreign lands. As soon as he wipes his face clean, his qualities begin to be lauded. As Moro, he is confronted with the difficult decision of whether or not to duel his own brother. He ultimately decides to do so, destroying his brother, physically and emotionally. As Pirro unmasked at the end of the play, he is presented with another difficult decision, a similar question of honor. As a white man, he is able to take the high road and walks away.

Moro confides his secret to Erone in act four. Once Erone realizes that Moro is actually Pirro, his attitude changes completely. He had only overappreciated Moro for his valor, strength, and prowess in battle, but now that he knows him to be Pirro, he refers to him for the first time as a man, and respects him as such. He hears of Pirro's travails and immediately changes his mind. Instead of wishing him dead, Erone proclaims, "Oh Dio, che ascolto! Ed è possibile trovarsi uomo di tal qualitate? (Act 5, scene 2). In unveiling his secret, he is now not only a man, but a man of quality, whereas before he was simply "un moro." Erone is willing and eager to cede

Oriana to Pirro, happily admitting to Oriana that “è più degno di me e vi merita più di me, e conoscerete al fin che dico il vero” (Act 5, scene 3).

Moro’s official unmasking occurs in the very final act, just a few lines before the play’s completion. Pirro is finally able to confront the man who had originally orchestrated the disastrous events of his wedding night that separated him from Oriana, Captain Parabola. He is given the opportunity to avenge himself. The man whom we knew as Moro would not have hesitated, but now that Pirro has “returned,” he transitions back into his original, moralizing self. We can almost envision him with a devil on one shoulder and an angel on the other, each representing his former Moorish self and his newly unmasked self. The one side seems to be telling him, “Lascia te vivo, autor di tanto vituperio, è contro ogni atto di cavalleria” (act 5, scene 5). The other side, however, hesitates. The forgiving Oriana and Omone urge him to return to the light:

Oriana: Respira, o cuor mio, in tanti affanni, ed ascolta quel che dicono.

Omone: Pirino, poiché l’istoria è più felice successa che non fu il principio degno di compassione, perdona a questo infelice e disgraziato la vendetta.

Pirro: E che maggior diletto può ricever un’anima offesa che la vendetta?

Omone: Il perdonare è di Dio. (Act 5, scene 5)

Pirro sees reason and pardons the Captain, letting him go with his life. It is at this point that he wipes his face clean, telling his friends how he had disguised himself so successfully with the oily grease that they use in “Barbaria.” After Pirro’s face has been cleared, Oriana exclaims, “Già, già vi riconosco.” We can understand Pirro’s unmasking scene as a parody of the Christian ritual of baptism.

In receiving baptism, the catechumen's cleaning, typically with water, signifies his burial into Christ's death, from which he rises up by resurrection with him, as "a new creature" (King

James Bible, 2 Cor. 5:17). Pirro does precisely this as he wipes the grease from his face, leaving behind his violent past as an ill-natured Moor and welcoming his regeneration as Pirro.

Always, baptism is associated with repentance and forgiveness. Acts 2:38 states, “Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.” In accordance with the Scripture, Pirro looks to his friends and family, apologizing for any wrong he may have committed against them. He repents, seeking the forgiveness of all present: “O Dio, quanto devo a tutti! Poiché sete stati in tante pene per le miserie mie” (Act 5, scene 5). He particularly wishes to repent for the sins against his brother Filadelfo, who was apparently so destroyed by his defeat that he can no longer show his face in public: “Vo buttarmi ai piedi cercandoli perdono del tradimento che li ho fatto” (Act 5, scene 5).

Della Porta’s parody of baptism confirms what Barthelemy has said regarding the early modern association between blackness and sin. Blackness was believed to be a visual marker denoting an individual’s sinfulness. According to Barthelemy, “In a theological system that believed that sinfulness is the inheritance of all and that employs the trope of ablution through Baptism, the mark of sin on blacks is uniquely severe because the sign of their sinfulness is indelible” (Barthelemy 3). Thus with the baptism of Moro and the cleansing of his face to reveal a white complexion, Della Porta turns his play from the tragic to the comic, neatly erasing his protagonist’s tragic flaw—his skin color—with a cosmetic trick.

Throughout the entire play, the audience or reader is of the privileged knowledge that Moro is in fact Pirro, and thus a white man and not truly a man of color. This does not matter, however, to an early modern public. When presented with the image onstage of a man of color weaving himself into high-class, white Capuan society, they see him as such, and their interest is

piqued. Della Porta is playing on the very real anxieties that white Europeans had regarding people of color, and it is clearly visible in a close reading of the text. In the subplot, for example, the comic Ventraccio puts his joke into effect by dressing as a Moor and beating a man. He is certain that the intended victim of his *burla*, Captain Parabola, will be immediately shocked and frightened by his appearance: “lo farò morire di paura solo a vedermi” (Act 2, scene 9).

No other characters enjoy such an elaborate description of their appearance and character as Moro. From simply seeing Moro from afar, individuals are able to deduce exactly what sort of character he is. The pedant Amusio tells the Governor: “Vedemmo venir verso di noi un milite ensifero, di prava indole, di volto cerbero, escandescente d’ira, minabondo, di abito Mauro” (act 2, scene 1). It is telling that simply from spotting an individual from afar, Amusio can deduce so much about his character and inner self. Perhaps he can see that he dons Moorish garb and carries a sword, and indeed he might even be of the opinion that the approaching man has a “monstrous look” about him, but how is it possible for him to know that he is of cruel temperament and burning with rage from a moment’s glance? Naturally, he believes it to be his duty; Europeans thought themselves to be the civilized culture whose duty it was to observe the character and behavior of the uncivilized black African other. A tradition of African travel narratives by Italians had already become commonplace. Venetian Alvise da Ca’ da Mosto or Cadamosto described his voyage along the North African coast in *Paesi novamenti ritrovati*, published in 1507. One Antonio Malfante had described a (real or imagined) journey across the Sahara in a 1447 letter written to the Genoese Giovanni Moriano (Brackett 65).

The audience would have been just as anxious and afraid of Moro as the pedant Amusio is, but would have been in even further distress upon seeing Moro’s tender exchange with Oriana in act four. Moro is to relay the news of Pirro’s death, and since he claims to have known Pirro

in Africa, the two forge a tender bond. His account of Pirro's memory and his tragic death moves her to such a degree that she falls lifeless into his arms. One of the numerous stereotypes early modern Europeans had of Africans was that they were sexually promiscuous. European masters excused sexual activity with Black African slaves by claiming them to be wanton and seductive. Leo Africanus, acknowledged as Europe's expert on Africa in the mid-sixteenth century, had described African men as polygamous, in stark contrast to European Catholic ideas of civility (Lowe 29). Black men were often portrayed as eager for power, and one of the ways they might express such a power might be by conquering a white woman of high social status, as Othello does with Desdemona in Cinthio's tale. Seeing a young, virginal *innamorata* in the arms of a supposed Black African would have been at once both titillating and frightening for an early modern Italian audience.

The depiction of black Africans as violent, evil, and lustful was nothing new to the sixteenth century. Christian Europeans had long since used a biblical explanation to rationalize the violent nature of Africans. According to Barthelemy, "In the Christian tradition, whiteness is desired, blackness is condemned. White is the color of the regenerated, of the saved; black is the color of the damned, the lost" (3). Christians believed that Africans descended from Ham's sons, and thus equated blackness with a mark of Ham's sin. A black complexion has been further associated with Lucifer, who in several accounts turns black in a visual manifestation of his sins.

The publication of Africanus' wildly popular *Della descrizione dell'Africa et delle cose notabili che iui sono* (1550) did nothing for the reputation of Africans in Europe, indeed it furthered classical and medieval misconceptions. According to Africanus, "The Negros likewise leade a beastly kind of life, being utterly destitute of the use of reason, of dexteritie of wit, and of all artes" (qtd. in Barthelemy 5). Though it has since been established as highly unlikely that

Africanus truly visited many of the places which he describes, the book was considered authoritative in its time. It was translated into numerous European languages, and at times translators employed a liberal translation that further colored African reception in that language. The Christian misconceptions about Africans were thus legitimated by Africanus' "expert" account, the truth of which had been even further diluted through spurious translations.

Della Porta and Physiognomy

Later in the sixteenth century, a renewed interest in physiognomy only added to the promulgation of negative stereotypes of black Africans, resulting in proto-racist sentiment backed by the triptych of Christian belief, questionable intellectual expertise, and now, "science." Physiognomy was not a new field, however, nor was it a true science. The first text on physiognomy, the *Physiognomonica*, arose in the fourth century and is attributed to Pseudo-Aristotle. Physiognomy analyzed the physical traits of the body, giving special attention to the face. From an individual's outward appearance, it was thought that one could glean key information about that individual's character (Baumbach 26).

I have discussed elsewhere what a multidisciplinary author Della Porta was. Indeed in addition to his dramatic pursuits, his work on natural magic, and his studies of memory, it was Della Porta who wrote the second most important physiognomic tract in history, publishing *De humana physiognomonia* in 1586 with its Italian version *Della fisionomia dell'uomo* to follow in 1610 (Epstein 105). The text was popular throughout Europe in its various translations, and was influential through the eighteenth century when Johan Kaspar Lavater used *Della fisionomia dell'uomo* as a key source for his *Physiognomische Fragmente zur Beförderung der Menschenkenntnis und Menschenliebe* (1775-1778). Lavater noted that Della Porta's

“observations on national character, although written three centuries ago, are found correct at the present day” (iv).

In his text, Della Porta initiates his reader to the study of physiognomy. He attempts to bring legitimacy to his art providing an overview of what scholars such as Ptolemy, Pliny, Plato, and others have said on the subject. He proceeds then to make his own observations on the physical attributes of an individual, such as the head, ears, eyes, hair, skin color, and how those attributes might aid in an understanding of the individual’s inner self. Eyes, a particularly telling organ, could reveal much about a person’s character. Those with black eyes with reddish grains, for example, might be inclined to poison another or worse, those with black eyes with pale grains might be “maestro di veleni” (361). An entire book of his six-volume work is dedicated to the eyes. In another book in which he discusses hair and skin, he reveals that a woman without a beard possessed a “buona conditione” and was generally pleasant, timid, and obedient (430). Della Porta spares no details; physiognomy may have had its critics, but the sixteenth-century treatise could not be accused of lacking detail.

In the fourth book of his multivolume work, Della Porta treats the subject of skin color. The ideal skin color is “bianco vermiglio,” or creamy white skin with red undertones:

Il color bianco vermiglio, mostra buonissimo segno, quando si trova in corpo liscio, dice Aristotele. Dicemmo il color rosso mostrar calda e sanguigna complessione, lo bianco flemma, e freddezza, l’uno e l’altro gionti insieme mostrano un buonissimo temperamento. Galeno nel libro dell’Arte medicinale pone il color bianco vermiglio, per segno d’ottimo temperamento, cioè caldo & humido, per esser il color meschiato di caldo, e rosso. Il medesimo Avicenna da lui. Et Aristotele nell’Idea dell’Ingegnoso dimostra il color bianco vermiglio da buon ingegno. Polemone & Adamantio: Il color bianco, che s’avicina un poco al rosso, dimostrano un’eccellente nobiltà d’ingegno, lo rapprerder scienza, prontezza, e molta sottilita. (443-444)

If creamy white skin molds with pinkish undertones to create an “excellent temperament,” it follows that black skin denoted the opposite. Though Della Porta is careful to note that his

observation “non vale se non in questo nostro clima temperato” (435), he does offer specific observations on skin of a “color molto nero” (436). He reminds his reader of Ludovico Sforza who “dalla nerezza del suo volto fù cognominato il Moro: Diceva esser officio di savio Principe, con sottili astutie, e con artificiose simulatione saper nascondere i suoi pensieri, e mentir le parole, per ingannar con sua commodità gl’huomini semplici” (437). Dark-skinned individuals were, according to Della Porta, prone to lying and trickery. Though he had said that he would not include observations of individuals outside Italy’s temperate climate, he could not help a brief mention of Egyptians and Ethiopians “che sono neri,” who were, in his view, “di maligna, & ingannevol mente” (436). Indeed all from the African continent were assigned negative associations. Della Porta follows Ptolemy who believed that Africans were “lussuriosi, mancatori di fede, e temerarii” and Materno, who drawing on Plato wrote that Africans were “d’animo doppio” and again “lussuriosi” (59).

In Della Porta’s sixth book he treats a subject that he believes to be “nuova, e degna d’esser’ amata, e desiderata” (563). In this final book of his multivolume treatise, he addresses whether, after identifying one’s defects through physiognomatic understanding, one can convert those defects into virtues. Among other topics, he addressed how an ignorant man can become intelligent, how forgetful individuals can convert themselves into responsible creatures, how madmen might become sane, or, how irascible, angry creatures can become domesticated (“Gl’iracondi come divengono mansueti”). He had already established who the “iracondi” were. Della Porta associated anger and ire with a specific geographic area where the land is barren, dry, and “scorched by the sun,” a common way to describe the African climate. In such places, the heat frequently and quickly let them into violent rage (18). His advice for the enraged is as follows:

Quelli che habitano sotto la Zona torrida per esser' ivi perpetuo caldo, perpetuamente il cuor boglie di caldo & però sempre iracondi sono. Hippocrate diceva, che ne' luoghi nudi, & senza acqua, e dove sono spesse mutationi di tempi aspri, & che continuamente sono scaldati dal Sole, questi hanno genti iraconde, con ire tenaci, e dure che assomigliano più tosto a fiere, che ad huomini mansueti. Dunque questi iracondi, & colerici habitar devono in luoghi humidi, cavi, & acquosi, dove non sieno né Inverni, né Estati gagliardissime, perche in questi luoghi divengono gli huomini humili & mansueti. (591)

Della Porta's recipe for turning an angry man into a domesticated one is not particularly helpful. His best advice, it would seem, for a violent, angry individual, is to change his location. He continues this dangerous discourse in chapter fifteen in which he describes how mean, predatory, thieving individuals can liberate themselves from such disdainful habits. This time, he specifically associates such negative behaviors as being typical of Ethiopians:

Che la rapacità, & avaritia venghi dal secco temperamento del corpo ce lo persuadiamo con questi argomenti. Veggiamo gl'Etiopi, che habitano sotto la torrida Zona, secchi, & abbruggiati, esser ladri, & con fatica si possono astender da cotal vizio, così gli habitatori dell'Isole, & de' lidi maritimi, quasi tutti sono ladri, e rapaci. (595)

Though the objective of the sixth book was to advise readers on how to change their habits, he noted very little possibility of change for these individuals, saying only that they might be able to liberate themselves from such bad behavior with great struggle.

Della Porta's work was highly praised for centuries, but its subject was not without its critics. Girolamo Cardano and Leonardo da Vinci are among the sixteenth-century critics of physiognomy. Cardano professed that he was entirely different inside than out and da Vinci, admittedly speaking before Della Porta's text was published, discounted simple physiognomy as lacking in scientific foundation (Wilson; Kemp 144). Modern scholars have wisely identified the catastrophic effects of Della Porta's text. Juliana Schiesari, speaking on Della Porta's interpretation of female faces, had said that "The perniciousness of physiognomy becomes evident, of course, when its conclusions are extended to entire groups of human beings based on their sharing certain common physical characteristics" (56).

Della Porta's text and other studies on physiognomy have thankfully been relegated to the status of relics from pre-modern science. What is troubling, however, is that the field's immense popularity leaked into canonical literature and created stereotypes that were mimicked and repeated. Della Porta himself tells his reader how useful the study of physiognomy can be for authors and artists who assign certain character traits to their characters based on their outward appearances:

E propria ancor questa arte de Poeti e di Pittori, i quali introducendo nei loro Poemi e pitture persone di varii costume, e descrivendo le fattezze, ce le diano convenevoli, come veggiamo haver fatto Homero, Virgilio, Ovidio, Plauto, Terentio nelle comedie, & Euripide e Sofocle nelle Tragedie o che medesimamente gl'antichi artefici haver usato nelle medaglie di bronzo e nelle statue di marmo. (N. pag.)

Della Porta followed the model of his illustrious predecessors, and allowed the "science" of physiognomy to intersect with his creative work. We can read *Il moro*, written just three years prior to the publication of *Della fisionomia dell'uomo* in Italian, as a clear display of physiognomy in practice.

We have seen how Della Porta believed black Africans to be untrustworthy, lascivious, and prone to violent outbursts, and how he backed these beliefs with "science." He incorporates all of these characteristics into the character of Moro. Moro is irascible, often erupting into paroxysms of anger in which he threatens the lives of various others. He proves himself to be disloyal and of untrustworthy character when he duels his own brother or later, when he lies to Oriana. In the scene in which he holds the unconscious Oriana in his arms, it is further suggested that he is lustful.

We can thus understand Della Porta's Moro as a mimetic representation of the black African informed by the sixteenth-century pseudoscience he so carefully outlined in *Della fisionomia dell'uomo*. His limited understanding of African geography and culture is apparent,

but this does not limit him from drawing dangerous conjectures about the character of black Africans and promulgating these beliefs in his dramatic work thus creating stereotypes within early modern theater.

CHAPTER 4

Understanding Multiculturalism in Giovan Battista Andreini's Turkish Trilogy

Baroque showman Giovan Battista Andreini transformed the Turkish comedy with his trilogy of proto-Orientalist plays in which he built upon the Turkish characters and topoi already incorporated by earlier playwrights and capitalized on their possibilities. In Andreini's comedies, the Turkish slave is no longer portrayed only post-Christian-recognition or not at all, but she becomes the central figure. The echoes of war are no longer echoes, as Andreini incorporates full-blown battle scenes acted out in front of awed spectators.

The publication and repeated performance of *La turca* (1611), *Lo schiavetto* (1612), and *La sultana* (1621) could not have been orchestrated by any other figure in theater history. The famous *capocomico* had grown up in a theater family, and was not only a professional but a scholar, having carefully studied dramatic theory and text. He came of age at the dawn of the baroque; unlike his contemporaries, he was far more interested in the performative aspects of his works than their appearance in print. His performances were elaborate, decorative, and exotic, and his Turkish comedies presented him with the opportunity to showcase costumes and props that would invoke wonder—sumptuous foreign cloths, ornate jewels, exotic currency, and unfamiliar weapons. With each iteration in his trilogy, Andreini became slightly more confident, catering less to the powers-that-be and formulating his own independent style.

Because he was also an adroit diplomat, he was able to move in and out of social circles, enjoying an unprecedented degree of social mobility. He could cite philosophy among the intellectual elite, flatter the wealthy nobility, appease theater's religious critics, and laugh alongside his spectators in the *piazza*. Such diplomacy translated into a freedom that few other professionals of the period enjoyed, and he could pursue his own artistic endeavors as he wished. Andreini was thus particularly well poised to revolutionize the *commedia dell'arte*. He revived the genre, bringing to it the respect and recognition that it needed in order to survive. Along with estimation he brought relevance; his plays reflected a newly international cast of characters reflective of a more globalized Italy, paving the way for a long tradition of multiculturalism in European performance.

Giovan Battista Andreini and his Theater as a Speculum Vitae

In 1576 Florence, a son was born to the most important couple in sixteenth-century theater, Isabella and Francesco Andreini. Giovan Battista Andreini spent his youth in Bologna, but soon joined his illustrious parents' theater troupe in 1594. He played the part of the *innamorato* and took the stage name *Lelio* or *Florindo* (Rebaudengo 10).

Continuing the family tradition in both the private and the public sphere, Andreini pursued a career as an actor himself, and in 1603 married fellow actress Virginia Ramponi. To her he dedicated his first play, the tragedy *Florinda*, performed in 1603 for the Florentine *Accademia degli Spensierati*, an elite group of intellectuals of which Andreini was a member. The couple spent the year in Florence, performing at the court of the Medici Grand Dukes. During his tenure in Florence, Andreini's career as not just an actor but an author was flourishing. He published his first play, *Florinda*, though he destroyed all the copies due to serious errors in the publication. Andreini also published *La saggia egiziana*, dedicating the dialogue in verse in

laud of the theater to Antonio de' Medici, Knight of Malta. Though Andreini moved to Mantua to serve at the court of Duke Vincenzo I Gonzaga after the death of the actor's mother in 1604, he maintained close ties with the Medici family (Falavolti 53-54).

Andreini spent the first decade of the seventeenth century writing and performing in Mantua under the auspices of the Gonzaga family with his newly formed troupe, the *Fedeli*. The successful troupe was hosted not just in Mantua, but in Turin, Vienna, Ferrara, Bologna, Florence, and Milan. The *Fedeli* passed the years of 1613 and 1614 in Lyon and Paris and spent significant time at the court of Maria de' Medici, following her from the Louvre to Fontainebleau and Saint-Germain. Andreini and his troupe were particular favorites of the French queen. He dedicated the first edition of his *L'Adamo* to the Medici queen, and he took her advice when she suggested he write another *sacra rappresentazione* called *La Maddalena*. She often requested the presence of the *Fedeli* and paid them handsomely.

The years of particular interest to the scope of this essay are the years of 1611-1621. In this decade, the actor turned playwright and *capocomico* was producing prolifically, and the nature of his productions is curious and worthy of further examination. Andreini published his first comedy *La turca, commedia boschereccia e marittima* in 1611.³⁹ His second published play, *Lo schiavetto*, quickly followed in 1612. Before and after their publication, both were performed frequently throughout the peninsula and abroad with great reception. Nine years later, in 1621, he would return to the same themes and develop them even further in *La sultana* (Ferrone 67).

The prolific actor and established playwright did not limit himself to writing and performing comedies and tragedies; Andreini, described as a fervent student and a voracious reader, was also a theater scholar. In his earliest plays, he sustains many of the themes brought

³⁹ Enrico Bevilacqua estimates a date of composition far earlier than its 1611 publication date, averring that the comedy was composed in 1608 at the bequest of Duke Francesco Gonzaga (122-123).

up in the 1598 theater treatise *Della poesia rappresentiva* by Angelo Ingegneri. He believed, as did Ingegneri and many of the two thespians' contemporaries, that theater should be a *speculum vitae*; that plays should reflect actual people, events, and situations. Later Andreini proceeded to write several treatises in defense of actors, in laud of the theater, and on the purpose of the theater, such as *Teatro celeste* (1625), *La ferza contro le accuse date alla commedia a' professori di lei* (1625), and *Lo specchio della commedia* (1625).

For Andreini, plays were meant to be recited and performed, not read, and he looked at publication as a necessity so that his work might live on after his death. "Per mezo di queste composizioni ch'io lascerò doppo la mia vita in vita," he noted in *La rosa* (1638), "altri conosca quanto di buono esempio furono le cose da me portate in theatro" (*Prologo*). His publications therefore must not only be lively and performable, but they must also be erudite. Though self-preservation was indeed a goal for the actor-writer-director, it was equally important to him that he leave careful directives for eventual reproductions that would follow. He wanted his plays to live on after his death, to be sure, but precisely in the way he intended them, and thus he included details relating to the production that were unprecedented.

Unfortunately, despite his efforts to publish, today neither his plays nor treatises are given the attention they deserve. His works are rarely published and even more rarely translated.⁴⁰ Throughout his few accessible works, however, a well-established theory emerges. There is an emphasis on the realistic throughout all of his theater; costumes should properly reflect the character, as should language spoken by the character. In the prologue to *La centaura* (1922), Andreini emphasized the importance of proper costumes. He criticized many of his

⁴⁰ At this time, the only modern edition of an Andreini comedy in its original Italian appears in Laura Falavolti's 1982 volume, *Commedie dei comici dell'arte*. Jon R. Snyder has skillfully translated Andreini's *Amor nello specchio* (1622), published in 2009 for inclusion in *The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe's* series as *Love in the Mirror*.

contemporaries for portraying twins in their comedies and making the gross oversight of not dressing the twin characters alike. They should be dressed the same, as Andreini and his father had dressed in *I due Leli*. Likewise the mad characters, Andreini believed, should undoubtedly be dressed in an extravagant, wild fashion to reflect their obscure behaviors.

Similarly, no longer is a simple background sufficient for the staging of a comedy. A painted background should accompany the play, as in *La turca*. The background for *La turca* was elaborate: it consisted of a distant sea, high mountains, several painted cardboard huts, a few castles, and a window large enough in one house so that a woman might be able to flee from it. Siro Ferrone, in his chapter on Andreini in *Attori mercanti corsari: la commedia dell'arte in Europa tra Cinque e Seicento*, compares Andreini to other playwright-actors such as Scala, Cecchini, Fiorillo, or Barbieri. According to Ferrone, Andreini “È il più attento a munire le sue commedie di istruzione per l'uso, e forse il primo a preoccuparsi della fruizione pratica dei testi più che della loro conservazione in biblioteca” (Ferrone 223).

Andreini's tendency to play with language is never more apparent than in his early play *La Florinda*, in which characters speak over eleven different dialects and languages. In *Lo schiavetto*, the Florentine innkeeper Succiola speaks in a crass manner and a thick dialect, while the four Jewish characters at times employ a Hebrew-Italian jargon. In *La sultana*, brief exclamations in Turkish paired with Turkish characters' broken Italian contribute to the oriental flair that resonates throughout the entire play. Theater should, therefore, in its every particularity, be a mirror of contemporary society. Costume and scenery should be as close to reality as the linguistic element. He puts his theory into words in the prologue to *Lo schiavetto*:

E bene quel grande oratore Cicerone, considerando il giovamento che con dolci ravvolgimenti si tra' dalla comedia, la chiamò *speculum vitae*, poichè, sì come lo specchio rappresenta ad altrui ogni macchia, che nel volto si porti, onde volendo quella

levare, far lo possa; così, fatto specchio la comedia, nella quale lo spettatore miri le macchie sue, possa con agevolezza quelle dalla fronte levarsi. (*Prologo*)

Thus all of Andreini's preoccupations with presenting realistic costumes and props and appropriate language are not merely the trappings of an obsessive baroque *capocomico*; his mimetic practices aid viewers in making connections between theater and reality, providing them with a meaningful context by which they can better understand the lesson that the comedy intends to teach.

Imagining Christian Triumph in La turca

The first in Andreini's Turkish trilogy is *La turca*, where a strong moral and religious agenda courses strongly throughout. In post-Tridentine Italy, several high-powered individuals opposed the *commedia* for its often bawdy, salacious subject matter, not to mention its acceptance of women onstage. Religious figures holding substantial political pull such as Carlo Borromeo, a particularly outspoken critic of the theater, posed a certain threat to the profession.⁴¹ Andreini thus forged an unofficial, unspoken alliance between the religious elite and comedy. Not only does he appease the Church by publishing numerous *sacre rappresentazioni* alongside his comedies, but he fuses the same moral Christian message into his comedies, effectively building a bridge between his profession and the Church and contributing to his revolution of comic theater.

Set on the island of Tabarca, the protagonist of *La turca* is Candida, a woman who has escaped from slavery in the Barbary Coast. Though she is referred to as La Turca because of her origin, it is eventually discovered that she is in fact Florinda, the twin sister of the Turkish slave Nebì, and neither is truly Muslim. Nebì is Christian, not Muslim as originally presumed, and is

⁴¹ For more on Borromeo's stringent antitheatricalist stance, see Michael O'Connell's chapter "Theater and the Devil's Teats" in his volume *The Idolatrous Eye: Iconoclasm and Theater in Early-Modern England* (14-35).

named Florindo. The two were separated from their father, the poet Laurindo, during a sack of the island years before. All the traditional characters of Andreinian comedy are present: Florinda, Florindo, Lelio. Andreini's typical tropes are all included: metatheatrical elements, gender switching, elaborate costumes, and stage directions.

Incorporated into the drama is the historical figure Occhiali, who was also mentioned in Della Porta's comedy as the noted corsair who took Dergut and his father prisoner. Occhiali, also known as Ucciali, Uluç Ali Pascià or Ucchiali, was a well-known renegade of Italian origin, born Giovanni Dionigi Galeni in Calabria. Captured in his youth, he became a renegade corsair after renouncing the Christian faith. The infamous corsair rose to become captain of the left wing in the Battle of Lepanto, where he fought against Gian Andrea Doria and his men. At the close of the battle, Uluç Ali was able to extricate his ships and others, guiding them safely back to Constantinople. He returned to Constantinople a hero, and was soon named *kapudan paşa* (Barbero 26; Capponi 21; Bono 350-358). The defeat at Lepanto did not slow down the infamous corsair. He encountered the Christian fleet at Morea again in 1572 and even more significantly, in 1574 he conquered Tunis on behalf of the Ottoman Empire (Voltaire 262).

Uluç Ali has lived on as much in fiction as in historical accounts. Cervantes, who called him *Uchali*, traced his rise to fame in *Don Quijote*. Della Porta, as previously mentioned, briefly discussed *Ucchiali* in his own *La turca*. His presence in fiction, particularly comedy, was not coincidental; his name was known throughout the Peninsula, and he served as a paradigmatic example of a Christian-born individual who had converted from Christianity to Islam and risen up the Turkish social order. Christians turned Turk such as Occhiali made up a significant contingent of Barbary corsairs.⁴² The profession attracted not only those who had been enslaved

⁴² Davis noted that Barbary was "positively crawling with renegades," drawing on Pierre Dan's calculation that there were nearly 9,500 renegades in Algiers alone (Davis, *Holy War and Human Bondage* 49).

and sought conversion as a way to extricate themselves from servitude, but also those who wished to make their fortune; it was far easier to rise up the social and economic ladder as a Turk than as a European Christian, which made the conversion of free Christians particularly appealing (Davis, *Holy War and Human Bondage* 49).⁴³

In Act 4, scene 3, Christians and Turks engage in an elaborate battle on the island led by Capitan Corazza and Occhiali, respectively. When the Captain's men are clearly winning, Occhiali flees the scene. "Ohi, ch'io cedo, e fuggo," he exclaims (Act 5, scene 3). The Christian soldiers in this fictional battle do not make the mistake of leaving the scene early, as the Allied Christian League was criticized of doing. This time, instead of rushing home, the Christian characters advance and follow Occhiali. Capitan Corazza responds to Occhiali's flight by saying, "Ben io ti seguo, e uccido" (Act 5, scene 3). Multiple Christians advance, following the Turkish soldiers around the island. As they flee, the Turkish characters exclaim, "Siam morti; Mahomet, Mahomet, Mahomet" (Act 5, scene 3).

The soldiers return to the stage in Act 5. The Christians have won the battle, and Occhiali has converted—or reconverted, rather—to Christianity. Capitan Corazza forgives Occhiali and, just as Nebì and Candida had realized that they are brother and sister separated in their youth by corsairs, he discovers that Occhiali is his long-lost brother. The captain forgives Mehemet, who also converts, promising to pursue a truly Christian life: "Intendo, e così giuro al Cielo d'esser hora tanto seguidor de' Christiani, quanto già fugitor ne fui" (Act 5, scene 9).

The presence, defeat, and ultimate re-conversion of the notable traitor Occhiali in *La turca* was more than simple catharsis for the Christian audience, it acted as a lesson. As

⁴³ It is important to note that conversion to Islam did not necessarily free a slave (at least not initially), but it did guarantee a notably better quality of life. Renegades enjoyed a certain degree of autonomy though still bound to serve his patron. Christians, on the other hand, were relegated to tasks such as "rowing the galleys, digging rocks, working in construction, or cleaning out sewers" (Davis, *Holy War and Human Bondage* 49).

previously mentioned, there was a remarkably high number of conversions from Christianity to Islam, but very few instances of Muslim individuals converting to Christianity. The ease and appeal of Muslim conversion was a significant cause for alarm among the religious elite. *La turca* showed how conversion may indeed be an enticing possibility for an enslaved Christian or a way to earn fame and fortune, but renegades never ended well, and the Christian faith would ultimately triumph. Not only does the Christian faith supersede Islam, Christian characters are depicted as benevolent and compassionate, embodying the Christian spirit of forgiveness as they guide the infidels back to the proper path.

The most unique and curious aspect of Andreini's *La turca*, however, is *how* the victorious soldiers return. Andreini, baroque showman *par excellence*, is no longer satisfied with a traditional return to order in the fifth act. After having defeated the Turks, the Christian characters march back and forth across the stage in a Baroque representation of the Roman *trionfo*. The Roman triumph was a ritual reserved for only the noblest leaders upon their return from a crusade in a foreign land. A Roman general and his spoils—conquered slaves, artwork, various and sundry riches—would parade atop a chariot through the streets of the city (Beard 2).

According to Anthony Miller who examined the tradition's early modern afterlife in England, "by displaying and distributing captive arms and wealth, the triumph defined the victorious city as centre and consumer, the conquered nation as margin and tributary" (1). Andreini seeks to do precisely this, depict the Turks as subordinate to the victorious Christians. Ever detailed in his stage directions, Andreini includes an epilogue in which he expounds upon the procession and how it should be enacted. Capitan Corazza, who dons "bellissima armatura," a great plume in his helmet, a beautiful shield in one hand, and a golden club in the other is to ride on a "carro bello, adorno di molte armi turchesche" (183). Occhiali and Mehemet, hands tied,

are to carry the chariot aided by other Turkish prisoners. The islanders are to be adorned with laurel crowns and trumpets are to be sounded.

It is impossible not to make the comparison between this theatrical spectacle and one particular representation in early modern art. Giulio Romano's *Trionfo di Tito e Vespasiano*, executed in 1537 for Federigo Gonzaga's *Camerino dei Cesari* in the Palazzo Ducale, where they were located directly below portraits of emperors by Titian. Andreini lived a rather itinerant existence, but sojourned longest in Mantua with his troupe the *Fedeli*, and would have walked by the Romano hundreds of times. The Romano piece features Titus and Vespasian upon their return from Judea as they promenade atop a similar chariot pulled by horses and tied slaves, Vespasian carrying a similar golden club. The chariot is flanked by islanders donning the laurel crown.



Fig. 7. Giulio Romano. *Trionfo di Tito e Vespasiano*. 1537. Oil on panel. Musée du Louvre.

In *La turca*'s final act, Andreini did not only seek to commend the superlative military strength of the Christians, depicting them as brave soldiers who rise up to pursue their enemy. He showed them to be pious, as the victorious Capitan offers his hand to Occhiali and Mehemet in a sign of forgiveness. The publication and dissemination of *La turca* at the beginning of Andreini's career established him as a highly moral comic playwright—not an enemy of the Church but an ally—and would allow him greater freedom and mobility in his future work.

Lo schiavetto and the Proto-Orientalist Discourse

Lo schiavetto is set in the coastal town of Pesaro, as the brigand Nottola and his friends have outworn their welcome elsewhere. They have made their fortune by thieving and other high jinks, and arrive in Pesaro looking forward to more of the same. Though dressed in rags, Nottola proclaims that he is a wealthy prince, and that the members of his entourage are members of his court. The gullible, uneducated Florentine hotelier Succiola is quickly won over, and after greedy Alberto sees their acquired riches, he soon follows suit. Alberto invites the men to stay as guests in his home, and even betroths his daughter Prudenza to Nottola, notwithstanding the stark difference in age. Prudenza, on the other hand, not entirely worthy of her name, has other plans in mind. Two young men wish for her hand, Fulgenzio and Orazio. She chooses Orazio and the two lovers plan to run off together, but in a confused turn of events, Nottola passes his betrothed off to Fulgenzio. Fulgenzio is due to marry Prudenza before she can elope with Orazio.

The plot seems typical of the *commedia dell'arte* tradition, except Andreini has incorporated several new figures into the cast of characters. Four Jews—Scemoel, Caino, Lion, and Sensale—weave in and out of the play, never particularly integrated into the overarching plot. Again we see an emphasis on the Jew when Fulgenzio and Orazio disguise themselves as

Jews in order to gain entrance to Prudenza's home. There are the curious characters Schiavetto, who gives his name to the comedy, and his crass sidekick Rondone, both slaves of Turkish origin. Schiavetto and Rondone, though both slaves, fall into slightly different categories. Rondone has lived the difficult life of a galley slave. He is lame, excessively thin, and his only possession is the shirt on his back. Alternatively, Schiavetto is in notably better condition: he is less weatherworn, wearing better clothing, and is in possession of a *turcasso* (a scabbard or sheath) and a dagger. We learn later, of course, that Schiavetto is only dressed as a slave and that he is really a she: she is Florinda, Orazio's former lover who has disguised herself in order to seek revenge.

Andreini and the *Fedeli*'s lives were certainly affected by the threat at sea. As was necessary in their profession, they traveled widely. Even during their many sojourns abroad they traveled by land, knowing the dangers of maritime travel. Andreini had a deeply personal connection with the harsh reality of slavery: his father Francesco was enslaved for eight years after having fought in the service of Cosimo I (*La ferza* 41).⁴⁴ Gone are the corsairs that toyed with the audience's fears of slavery and captivity in *La turca*, but slavery is on Andreini's mind throughout the play, employed literally and metaphorically. In Act 5, Alberto explains the protagonist's reasoning in attempting to poison her former lover:

È quella che in abito di schiavo e sotto nome apposito di Schiavetto, schiava di fortuna andava errando, per far tanto schiavo di morte Orazio, quanto Orazio aveva di lei fatta schiava del disonore. (Act 5, scene 5)

⁴⁴ In *La Ferza. Ragionamento secondo contra l'accuse date alla Commedia*, Andreini defends the art of theater against its harsh critics, noting his father and mother as exemplary comedians: "Ma qual vita visse il Signor Francesco Andreini suo Carissimo Cosorte, e à mè amorosissimo Padre? Disceso prima da soldati antenati suoi, di 20, anni, fu' soldato in mare, preso del Turco, otto anni colà dimorò; fuggito poi, e fattosi consorte di così gloriosa donna, seco menò la vita così cara, che le città altro dir non sapevano, che dello sviscerato, trabocchevole amore ch'ambi si portavano" (41).

Indeed the entire play can be read as a metaphor for Andreini's theory on the theater. The written play in its literary form acts as the metaphorical slave. When a work is performed for a group of spectators, the play is unshackled, released from its bonds on the stage. The staged play, however, is as it is meant to be -- free, living, performed, enjoyed. Andreini hints at this metaphor in the opening note directing future acting troupes to the detailed stage directions included as an appendix: "Se, per avventura, a questo Schiavetto si concedesse tanta di libertà che dal ceppo si sciogliesse al teatro, si potrebbe agevolare il modo di rappresentarlo con quel che si legge al fine della presente operetta..."

The presence of slavery is often quite literal, however. It is not a coincidence that Andreini set *Lo schiavetto* in Pesaro, a port on the Adriatic Sea. Robert C. Davis lists Pesaro, among other Adriatic coastal cities like Pescara, Ancona, Civitanova, and Vasto, as one of the towns hardest hit by the Ottoman corsairs (*Christian Slaves, Muslim Masters* 139).

In the first lines spoken between Schiavetto and Rondone, they discuss their sad plight as slaves. Andreini delineates the difference between Schiavetto, a more fortunate slave, and Rondone, who has lived the harsh life of a galley slave. In keeping with Andreini's theory of the theater as *speculum vitae*, there appears a stark difference between the two slaves from different ends of the socioeconomic spectrum:

Rondone: Tu vuoi la burla, pare a me. Ti dico che ho nome Rondone, ma non Rozzone, o cavalaccio da soma! Tu vuoi ch'io porti questo cofanetto de gl'imbonimenti su le spalle, e mi pesa; e quel camminar dietro alla marina per quella arena, oltre ch'io sono zoppo, m'ha segate le gambe. E poi non ho altro che questa camisioletta rossa su la carne, e il vento mi s'è ficcato così nelle coste [...]

Schiavetto: Pur io sono vestito da schiavo, come te, ben che un poco più nobilmente, e tanto il vento non m'ha trafitto. (Act 2, scene 3)

In *Lo schiavetto* as in *La turca*, the Turkish characters speak an intelligible Tuscan both to one another and to the Italian characters. Later, in *La sultana*, Andreini will experiment with a broken Italian and several brief “Turkish” interjections.

The discourse on Orientalism initiated by Edward Said in 1978 is particularly useful in understanding this period in Andreini’s career. Said identified the Orientalist discourse with the publication of his *Orientalism*, a landmark book that has been integral to post-colonial studies. His theories, strongly rooted in both the Foucaultian notion of knowledge/power and the Gramscian theory of hegemony, can be considered a powerful conceptual tool in the difficult task of giving new interpretations and meanings to the ideological biases present in literature even before the colonial period, particularly during this period of tension between the Ottoman East and the Christian West. Those who engage in the Orientalist discourse are not the ruling élite or politicians, they are instead based in the civic sphere, just like Andreini. Said invokes the knowledge/power discourse of Foucault, and explains the cyclical nature of Orientalism. These learned individuals share their work with contemporaries, their contemporaries imitate their work, and as such, an accepted understanding of the Other is created (Said 36).

Orientalists become authorities on the highly generalized ‘East,’ though they have not necessarily ever travelled there. They see the East as fundamentally different from the West, and Eastern society the antithesis of Western society. The Eastern Other is understood, therefore, not necessarily as Eastern, but as non-Western. Andreini employs this tendency when he replaces the current fear, that of becoming a Christian slave with the ideal, the enslavement of an Ottoman. In doing so, he not only creates an accepted truth and understanding of the Turk, but exerts power over the Turk by representing him as dominated and subaltern.

For Said, the Oriental is depicted as weak, yet strangely dangerous. Furthermore, Said held that the Oriental was often portrayed as a small, feminine character. This is particularly evident through the turn of events in the paradigmatic Orientalist baroque comedy examined here. The diminutive *-etto* in the name of the character denotes his smallness. Though the two characters are poor slaves, Schiavetto small and Rondone remarkably weary and weatherworn, the Turks remain strangely dangerous, mysterious. Schiavetto carries obscure Turkish weapons. Both are in possession of exotic substances, including the poison that is used in the attempted murder of Orazio.

The final surprise occurs in Act 5, when the character undergoes a change in gender. The character we have known during the first four acts to be a male Turkish slave unmasks himself/herself. Schiavetto is in fact Florinda, Orazio's former lover who had been spurned and replaced as object of his affections by Prudenza. The fact that this Turkish character would have been interpreted by a woman throughout four of the five acts speaks volumes: the Other was not only petite, weak, enslaved, and cunning, but even a *female*. Therefore, Andreini represents Schiavetto as both the Other in terms of race and religion and the subaltern in terms of class. Finally, he gives the Other a gendered identity.

Italian Orientalism in the early seventeenth century is rather different than that of a century later in France and Britain discussed by Said, but is still inherently linked to this theory of knowledge/power. Italian Orientalism is, in my view, not yet an Orientalism linked to imperial interests, as is already the case in England, but also in France, Spain, and Portugal; it is not a region interested in dominating the 'lesser' East.⁴⁵ Italy in the early seventeenth century is a

⁴⁵ Nabil Matar has changed the course of scholarship on corsairing in the Mediterranean, which has historically focused on Turkish corsairs and their Christian captives. Matar has instead highlighted the degree to which imperialist countries such as England, France, and Spain engaged in corsair activity (and the uniquely cruel nature of Western slave-taking practices) in *Britain and Barbary, 1589-1689*.

vulnerable peninsula, an area strongly affected by the constant threat of Ottoman expansion. Its peoples live with the daily fear of being captured and sold into slavery. We can better understand Andreini's Proto-Orientalism as one rooted in fear. Through creating a knowledge and understanding of the Other, Italian Orientalism seeks not to exercise power over the Ottoman Other, but to defuse the power of the Other.

Another Other: The Jewish Presence

The Turk is not the only foreign figure in the cast of *Lo schiavetto*. While Jewish characters had appeared in English theater, quite famously so in Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta* (1589) or Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* (1596-98), it was less common to find a Jew in a prominent role on the Italian stage. Not only do four Jewish characters appear in *Lo schiavetto*, but the two lovers dress as Jews in order to gain access to the young and beautiful Prudenza's home. The role of the Jewish characters and the motivations for their inclusion are mysterious, primarily because they have little integration into the plot. Indeed, they appear almost an afterthought; it is as if Andreini added them to the published version after having performed the play several times without them. A convincing argument that would support this claim has been made by Paola Bertolone, who argues that certain scenes in the play parody the 1612 creation of the Mantua ghetto. Andreini, according to Bertolone, was "raising his voice against the injustice of the Mantua ghetto" (108).

How to approach the growing Jewish presence became a subject of debate throughout the Peninsula in the sixteenth century. The first ghetto was established in Venice as early as 1516. In 1541, Jews were expelled from the Kingdom of Naples. In Counter-Reformation Italy, rules became even stricter, and cities which were typically more welcoming to their Jewish citizens

received pressure from Rome. In 1566, Jews in Milan were required to wear the yellow cap. In Verona in 1599 the Jews, who had previously lived wherever they pleased, became required to live near the center of the city. In 1602, The Paduans followed suit and required Jewish individuals to live together, segregated from the rest of the citizens.

Mantua and Tuscany were two duchies often criticized for taking a liberal stance with regard to their Jewish citizens. After Clement VIII complained to the diplomatic representative of Mantua in Rome that Duke Vincenzo Gonzaga failed to ghettoize the Mantuan Jewish community, plans for a ghetto (the last in the Peninsula in 1612) did finally go into effect. Even with the eventual ghettoization, however, Duke Vincenzo Gonzaga proved tolerant and reasonable in the negotiations. He took the Jewish citizens' requirements into consideration. Moreover, the Mantuan Jews were content with ghettoization; they felt safe from persecution outside the walls and the living conditions were acceptable (Simonsohn 29-44).

Duke Cosimo I de' Medici had moved Tuscany's 710 Jews to a Florentine ghetto many years prior, in 1571. While scholarship has historically looked at this action as cruel and oppressive, recent studies have sought to situate the Grand Duke's action within a political context. Stefanie B. Siegmund has explained Florentine ghettoization as an act of state, arguing that Cosimo also received pressure to act, and noting that he was remarkably tolerant as compared to leaders elsewhere in the Peninsula; he assured Jews a home within the Medici state and made no effort to expel or convert the Jewish population (Siegmund 1-15).

Playwright and dramatist Leone de' Sòmmi, author of the instrumental *Quattro dialoghi in materia di rappresentazioni sceniche*, was particularly well respected and welcome at the Gonzaga court in the late sixteenth century. In 1610, the Jewish actor Simone Basileo from Mantua was granted entrance into Tuscany by Cosimo II. He was given a *patente* instructing

officials that while in Tuscany he need not wear any distinguishing badge or hat and should be extended the utmost hospitality (ASF, Mediceo del Principato 303, fol. 99). Basileo, one of Mantua's most well-respected dramatists, had long since been afforded the same permanent privilege in his hometown (Siegmund 666).

Andreini was a colleague of Basileo's in Mantua. He was an author-actor born into a liberal artistic circle who established himself at the similarly liberal Mantuan court. It is my opinion that the Jews were included in the comedy not to satirize or denigrate, as we have seen Italian playwrights do with Turkish characters. I believe they were included as an aesthetic addition. I have discussed Andreini's firm beliefs in representing the real in his theater, thus using comedy as a mirror of the present. Andreini was a theater scholar concerned with performance and spectacle. As he required elsewhere, the four Jewish characters would have been dressed authentically, adding a unique exotic flavor to this already intercultural play. Furthermore, they spoke in a *mélange* of languages and dialects; the text includes Hebrew, Judaeo-Italian, and Yiddish words as well as many Italian dialects.

The Jews in *Lo schiavetto* can thus be understood in a similar manner to Marlowe's Barabas in *The Jew of Malta*. Initially Marlowe's work was seen as highly anti-Semitic, but more recent scholarship views Barabas as a sympathetic example of the accepted Jewish stereotype, even a victim of this categorization. His sweeping statements about how sinful he is are now often read as satirical, and it is frequently noted that bad behavior in the play is by no means limited to the Jewish character – Christians and Muslims are also represented as morally deficient (Greenblatt 114-122).

Similarly, the Jewish characters in *Lo schiavetto* denounce themselves as sinners, subaltern to the benevolent Christian. In a curious monologue, Sensale attacks his fellow Jews, accusing them of being unappreciative of the Christian's understanding and benevolence.

...È proprio del Cielo aver misericordia e perdonare, come pur veggiamo che ogn'altro nostro enorme peccato ne fu punito sì, ma poi perdonato, e giamai non perdemmo le nostre dignità maggiori, ancor che peccando. Ma ora, che diavolo di peccato è questo, che ne priva di non aver giamai perdono e che di tutte le grandezze ne dispoglia? E poi chi le possiede...? (Act 2, scene 7)

Should Sensale's attack be taken literally? Or is it, like many have argued Barabas' many self-depreciating speeches to be, ironic and farcical (the Christians, who had beaten the Jewish characters earlier in the play, had been far less than benevolent, after all)? I maintain the latter, and believe that incorporation of Jewish figures into the play was an artistic decision. Andreini was fascinated by different languages, dialects, physiognomies, and backgrounds, and the characters Scemoel, Caino, Lion, and Sensale provided unique aesthetic additions to the playwright's increasingly baroque spectacle. In *La turca*, it was necessary to emphasize Christian forgiveness in the face of the Turkish infidels, but for Andreini, the Jews simply did not pose the threat that the Turks did. They are certainly an Other, but for Andreini they are respected colleagues (like Leone de' Sómimi and Simone Basileo) and what's more, they were an already weak and persecuted Other, posing less of a threat to Italian society. We must, therefore, analyze the Jewish Other in an entirely different way from the Turkish Other.

Fear of and Fascination for the Other in La sultana

Andreini and the *Fedeli* had been performing *Lo schiavetto* for nearly a decade when *La sultana* was conceptualized. Laura Falavolti has identified the errors and incongruities present in *Lo schiavetto* and rightly noted that it was “un prodotto di un autore-attore giovane” (27). His

later work is remarkably similar, but notably improved since the author-actor had published his first works at little more than thirty years of age. After a decade of experience in the profession and extensive travel, Andreini had had the opportunity to iron out the inconsistencies.

Daniel J. Vitkus has noted the convoluted relationship that seventeenth-century Western Europeans had with the Turks; according to Vitkus, “the worldly wealth and power of Islam in the early modern era was both alluring and repellent, fascinating and terrifying” (*Early Modern Orientalism* 218). *La sultana* smacks of the same proto-Orientalism as *Lo schiavetto*, but also reveals a fascination for Turkish wealth and power. What results is a perfect manifestation of the contradictory European image of the Other in this period, by which he or she is both an external enemy *and* a source of wonderment and awe. Andreini thus presents us with a Sultana, weak and travel-worn though slightly menacing, who has arrived in Naples with the single goal of tracking down her former lover and murdering him. At the same time, however, *La sultana* is adorned with Turkish music, costumes, props, and even language. Turkish characters elaborate on their exquisite lifestyle in Constantinople and are in possession of ornate jewelry, gems, and apparently unlimited funds.

In *La sultana*, Andreini substitutes Schiavetto/Florinda with the Sultana character. Recycling the same lover-as-slave metaphor, the Sultana has traveled from Constantinople to Ragusa to Otranto to Naples in search of Lelio (*Lo schiavetto*’s Orazio), a former slave of her father’s with whom she had fallen in love.⁴⁶ After robbing the naïve Sultanness and leaving her pregnant, Lelio fled the palace and escaped back to Italy. Among Andreini’s omissions was the flat character of Rondone, in whose place he incorporated the Sultana’s Nudrice, her loyal

⁴⁶ The Sultana recounts how Lelio, during his tenure as a slave in Constantinople enslaved women with his various qualities: “così dotato egli era, di virtù così rare, e pellegrine ch’avvicenda con la bellezza ogni donna imprigionava, e con la virtù ogni huomo catenava” (Act 1, scene 2); again she notes “io sola misera schiava rimanendo” (Act 1, scene 2).

companion throughout her long journey and ultimately, her voice of reason. Once the Sultana has arrived in Naples and identified Lelio, who plans to kill at her first chance, she (dressed as a male Turkish slave) pays him to purchase him/her at a slave auction and then liberate him/her. With the help of the tenacious courtesan Tirenica, the Sultana gains access to Lelio and poisons him. Her dagger raised above a half-drugged Lelio, the Sultana threatens to strike, when at the last moment the Nudrice thrusts the pair's young child between Lelio's chest and the blade. The Sultana rethinks her decision, Lelio confesses his sins and professes his deep regret, and both are overcome with love for one another.

Like an improved version of Schiavetto/Florinda, the Sultana is at once a weak and powerless character *and* a formidable one. In the first act she remembers the privileged life she had enjoyed at home in Constantinople as if it were a distant memory:

... se dir mi debba adorata, poiche della ricca e numerosa famiglia del poi tradito Padre tutti gli occhi mi rimiravano, tutte le lingue mi celebravano, e tutte le fronti, e le ginocchia mi s'inchinavano; A mè i doni da genti diverse, e tributarie ne venivano, per mè le più sublimi feste festeggiavano, sovra il mio crine i nemi di fiori diluviavano, e sovra le mie vesti d'oro seminavano gliagli le ricche perle Eritree, e dell'Oriente le più lucide gemme; e per mè al fine tutta Costantinopoli sospirava d'amore, la bella Sultana chiamandomi. (Act 1, scene 2)

The memory of her illustrious past makes her miserable present appear even more pathetic. By the time we meet her, she is continuously in tears, comforted only by her infant son, the “sola radice di questo cuore,” who she feels she has failed as a mother—at times she is so weak that she is unable to produce milk for him, and can only nurture him with her tears (Act 1, scene 2). She is exhausted and starving after a long, arduous journey. The wronged woman entrusts Tirenica with the story of her fall from grace, telling her “Sappi, che donna io sono; donna solo di danni di ruine, d'angosce, di lagrime, e di sospiri miserabile ridutta” (Act 3, scene 7).

The Sultana is not without her frightening aspects, however. She has traveled all over the Mediterranean in order to find the man who had imprisoned her and brought her to such a miserable fate. Once she finds him, she plans to kill him:

Venimmo à Napoli, dov'hor noi siamo, e dove spero ritrovato il crudele trovar pietate,
sapid'io per sua bocca, che Napolitano non solo egli era: mà che'n Napoli dimorava:
Ma quando maritato o innamorato il trovi, giuro al Cielo, che armata di ferro, e di ragione,
voglio levar la vita à chi mi levò dalla patria, dal rito, e dall'honore. (Act 1, scene 2)

The jilted lover comes close to acting on her fearsome claim, too, which nearly catapults the play from comedy to tragedy in the final act. In Act 4, she appears ever more redoubtable as she drugs her former lover with an unidentified somniferous poison (just enough to keep him alive) and dramatically clutches her dagger just feet above Lelio's chest. The Sultana figure in the comedy of homonymous name is thus far better Orientalized than Schiavetto had ever been. As a pitiful slave, Schiavetto/Florinda had been appropriately subalternated, indeed, but he/she was not nearly as convincing of a threat to the play's *innamorato*.

As noted before, Andreini thought himself not only an actor and a professional but also an intellectual. *Commedia dell'arte* actors rubbed elbows with the *crème de la crème* of European nobility, but were themselves professionals of humble birth. Throughout Andreini's theatrical career, there is a clear awareness of this fact and an attempt, wherever possible, to elevate his art, legitimating it with careful literary, philosophical, and even geographical study.⁴⁷ As an actor-author of note, he possessed a degree of social mobility uncommon for the period, because while he looked to his wealthy patrons for his primary source of income, *commedia*

⁴⁷ In her introduction to the modern edition of *Lo schiavetto*, Falavolti noted that Andreini had cited Michelangelo Buonarroti the younger's *Tancia* in *Lo schiavetto* (published in the same year). She makes the bold and legitimate claim that perhaps it was not Andreini to cite Buonarroti, but the other way around. In either case, this instance at the most proves how Andreini's mission to insert himself among the intellectuals of his day was successful enough that he was cited by a man of letters such as Buonarroti and at the least shows that Andreini was honest in his pursuit of intellectual inquiry and kept remarkably up-to-date on contemporary literary publications. Falavolti makes a further connection substantiating Andreini's intellectual status when she suggests that he was familiar with the island of Taprobana discussed by Tommaso Campanella (30).

dell'arte performances were also consumed by the public. He thus flaunted his vast erudition among his wealthy patrons and, at the same time, educated and instructed his less-privileged public.

This is most notable in his constant geographical name-dropping. As Jon Snyder has keenly noted, Andreini's characters travel all over the Mediterranean and never miss an opportunity to discuss the places where they have been: Tabarca, Constantinople, Ragusa, etc. Erith Jaffe-Berg has discussed the importance of maps to the *commedia*, claiming that since access to maps was limited to the elites, it was in part through *commedia dell'arte* performances and the elaborate travels of their characters that the public gained an understanding of the world around them. In taking his characters all over the Mediterranean in an early modern grand tour, Andreini wanted his noble patrons to know that he was as worldly and educated as they were and simultaneously share his privileged access with others.

With three successful Turkish comedies under his belt—performed not only throughout Italy but at the French royal court—Andreini thinks himself an expert on the East and Turkish customs in general. He weaves cultural lessons into the dialogue, eager to instruct his spectators on the exotic ways of the Turks. He uses the character Lelio (played by Andreini himself), who spent an unidentified period as a slave in the service of the Sultan, as his mouthpiece; Lelio is constantly lecturing the audience on Turkish ways and manners, legitimated by his experience in Constantinople. He'll often interject, excusing a Turkish character's obtuse or barbaric ways because "s'usa così in Turchia" (Act 2, scene 2).

Indeed his Turkish-themed play allowed endless opportunities to exercise his favorite theatrical tropes, chief among them his theater-within-the-theater obsession. His gender performances never failed to disappoint—Florinda's elaborate performance as the male slave had

gleaned Andreini and the *Fedeli* a certain degree of fame, and he recycled the same motif in *La sultana*, which had also been performed and “lodata non poco.” This time, his play within the play comes in the form of an elaborately orchestrated eight-folio slave market and auction scene.

In the spectacle, Momolo plays the part of the auctioneer and the elaborately disguised Nudrice acts as a Turkish merchant and vendor of the slave in question. The slave (the Sultana) is paraded around for potential buyers as the auctioneer discusses his attributes as the discerning public wishes to check his teeth and inquires how often he eats per day. The slave performs for his audience, playing card tricks and singing a song. The stage directions state that the air could be one “alla spagnola, e sapendone alcuna alla schiavona o vero alla turchesca pur non starebbe male” (Act 2, scene 6). The ideal air would be a Turkish one or one “alla schiavona” (Dalmatian), but it appears that in the cases of the *Fedeli*’s performances, Virginia Ramponi knew only Spanish airs, and her husband found that to be adequately exotic. Andreini’s reproduction of a slave market is remarkably faithful, and it would not have been impossible for him to have visited the largest slave market in Italy, located in Livorno, not far from his native Florence. He describes how the crowd of potential buyers gathered around the slave, looking him over carefully, assessing him, and inspecting his teeth. His value is discussed and adequately assessed; he comes at a slightly higher price as he once held a privileged position in the Sultan’s palace (Fusaro 102).

The Turkish play allowed Andreini to exaggerate his claims that theater should mimic life. This is visible in the dialogue of the Turkish characters, as they speak in the broken, incorrect Italian of a foreigner, often leaving verbs unconjugated in their infinitive form. Not only does the dialogue match how each character might logically speak, characters are costumed in accordance with their geographical origin (and social and economic status). Andreini includes

a detailed *Ordine per recitar la Sultana con gran facilità* as an appendix to the published play. According to the *Ordine*, when she meets Lelio for the first time, the Sultana should be dressed as a male slave but will be carrying with her a “canacca di perle, e altre gioie, un gran gioiello, e un cinto bello.” The Nudrice is to be “vestita alla levantina” during the slave auction and Momolo is to be parading around with a flag adorned with Turkish crescents. Should the audience fail to note with wonder the exotic items that have been expressly brought on stage, the character Lelio is again used to explain what they have been presented with, as in Act 2, when he glosses the “quest’è una Canacca alla barbaresca tutta tempestata di grosse perle, e di bellissimi diamanti” (Act 2, scene 2).

As Dennis Britton has stated, “props and costumes are not free of meaning; they carry with them a kind of theatrical memory and hold myriad cultural associations,” (79) and this is absolutely the case in *La sultana*. Props and costumes suggesting Turkish wealth abound throughout. Though we see her as a slave and a pilgrim, the Sultana did not leave Constantinople without a vast collection of riches. When her father arrives in Act 4, he makes a grand entrance, complete with an entourage of Turks; immediately to follow are several moors atop camels, elaborately dressed.

What are we to make of a play in which the Turkish Other is depicted in so many various ways? The Sultana has been Orientalized, depicted as a weak and powerless individual to such an extent that she is ridiculed through a mock-slave auction, but her wealth and power are undeniable. She tells tales of the elaborate gifts that she once received as the daughter of the Sultan in Constantinople and how she was robbed and her riches were diminished, but she still appears to have plenty to spare.

Such a conflicted relationship with the Turks was not uncommon among early modern Italians. Christopher Pastore has called Ferdinando I de' Medici's behavior "bipolar," as the Medici Duke invested much energy into strengthening the Tuscan fleet and aggressively policed Barbary corsairs while simultaneously borrowing from Islamic garden design and technology as he renovated his own properties. Christina Strunck has noted how in pictorial depictions of the battle of Lepanto, Turks are not represented as exclusively barbarous; at times they are showed to be wealthy and noble, arguing that such an apparently conflicting representation further legitimated the Christian victory. Bronwen Wilson has noted the same inconsistencies in late sixteenth-century Venetian costume books, and noted how many Venetian families were eager to purchase books containing images of Turkish apparel. Andreini's representation of the Turk in *La sultana* is thus not entirely uncharacteristic of the period.

Such fascination is not to be construed with admiration, however. The Turks are still "bestie turchesce" (Act 2, scene 6), "carnali" (Act 2, scene 2), and again "male bestie" (Act 4, scene 1) and the author does not miss the opportunity to make light of Muslim customs that differed from Christian ones. In Act 2, the Sultana has just arrived in Naples and the crass Venetian innkeeper Momolo jokes with her regarding the Muslim practice of circumcision:

Momolo: E vù gieri turca.

Sultana: Così è.

Momolo: Seu mò circoncesa?

Sultana: Tu mi fai ridere quant'è tempo ch'io pianga.

Momolo: E perche, se sarè tal, troverè ben qui in Cristianitae, chi ve meterà quel che ghe manca. (Act 2, scene 1)

Andreini's brief interchange is lighthearted and humorous, though it reflects a very real anxiety among early modern Christians. The rite of circumcision was unique to Jewish and Muslim religions, and Christians categorically rejected the tradition, believing it to be an Abrahamic practice:

...as the Jews have showed themselves most obstinate in the blindness of their hearts by the retaining of this ceremony and their old traditions: so the Turks likewise, no less vain in the idleness of their own imaginations, have and do use circumcision, as a special token or mark of their fond and superstitious sect. (Anon., *The Policy of the Turkish Empire* qtd. in Vitkus, *Three Turk Plays* 237)

The most fearful element of the tradition unique to these “sects” was the fact that it was easy to mask a circumcision, as individuals were typically clothed. There was no definitive (and still socially acceptable) way to distinguish a Turk from a Christian. Such a possibility fascinated Andreini; he was as captivated by the fact that one could essentially fabricate one’s religion by dressing in a certain way as he was that one could fabricate gender by masquerading as a man (or as a woman).

In addition to Lelio, Giovan Battista Andreini played many characters. He was not only an actor, but an author, director, intellectual, and a skilled diplomat. An adept mediator between both the artistic and religious worlds, he appeased Borromeo and other harsh Catholic critics in Post-Tridentine Italy by incorporating a strong moral message of Christian triumph and piety into each of his comedies, particularly his first. He navigated Italian and French courts carefully, gaining respect and admiration from the nobility, making high-powered allies and gaining patronage to further his art. He was also dedicated to his performances in the public sphere, and performed for a less illustrious public in the *piazza*.

Andreini thus toes the line between the religious, political, and artistic worlds, catering to each party simultaneously so that all involved will be pleased and his comedies will be universally appreciated. We can thus interpret the multicultural presence as one rife with inconsistencies, but understand that such a conflicted relationship with the Turks was not an uncommon one in the period. Andreini’s Turkish trilogy is full of negative Turkish stereotypes

and images of Christian superiority; at the same time, however, he was an artist and a baroque, and he could not resist the undeniable fascination of Turkish wealth and power.

CHAPTER 5

Windows on the World: *Schiave* and the Mediterranean Grand Tour

In 1977, when Joan Kelly-Gadol proposed that “there was no renaissance for women—at least, not during the Renaissance,” (176) she countered the accepted view of gender equality in the early modern period that had reigned since Jacob Burckhardt had stated in 1860 that women in the Renaissance “stood on a footing of perfect equality with men” (156). Though *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* was not without its critics, this particular aspect of Burckhardt’s thesis went relatively uncontested for over a century until Kelly-Gadol argued the contrary and initiated a heated debate. She went as far as to claim an apparent regression in gender equality from the Italian medieval period to the Renaissance, attributing such a regression to the relatively early formation into states and the early emergence of capitalism, among other factors.

Kelly-Gadol’s study represented an important turning point in early modern Italian studies, and has since been praised, criticized, tweaked, and modified. In this chapter, I wish to highlight the inequalities that Kelly-Gadol noted, sustaining her argument, but also identify improvement and track progress. This particular dissertation has dealt exclusively with early modern comedy from 1550—at which point theater was well into its second wave—through the 1620s. All the while focusing on printed comedies, I began (chronologically, that is) with a discussion of the treatment of the emergent “Turkish threat” in fifth-act recognition scenes, such as the one in Cecchi’s 1550 *La stiava*, and ended with Andreini’s baroque Turkish spectacle *La*

sultana (1620). In a short span of seventy years, comedy changed completely, and not only in its written form. The profession matured accordingly.

At the dawn of Italian theater's golden age, it was by no means a feminine space. There are no records of dramatic compositions by women in the first half of the sixteenth century, and the study and imitation of classical comedy was a strictly male activity. Women were not to perform on stage, and female roles were exclusively interpreted by male actors. The female characters were remarkably flat, rarely contributed to the furthering of the plot, and were allotted little dramatic importance. Machiavelli's *Clizia* and Cecchi's *La stiava* are only two examples of plays in which, despite the fact that they take the name of women, the female "protagonist" is not allotted any dialogue and never actually appears on stage. By 1620, on the other hand, *La sultana* emerged, a play that celebrates feminine strength and intellect as the bright, cunning female Sultaness drives the action.

In this chapter, I wish to trace gender equality as represented in comedy from its origins, firmly rooted in masculinity, through its remarkably swift evolution into a genre that celebrated feminine individuality and intelligence and showcased the actress and her abilities. It is my contention that the subgenre heretofore identified, comedy of conflict, played a significant role in the furthering of gender equality in Italian theater, its Turkish topoi allowing for the character development of women. Female characters' positions as slaves allowed them not only social but geographic mobility. No longer were women confined to windows, doorways, and walks to church, they were given the liberty—ironically, through servitude—to travel the vast Mediterranean in an early iteration of the grand tour. In so doing, the roles of women were vastly enriched and allotted more visibility and audibility than ever before.

Scholars such as Judith Butler and Joan Scott have introduced us to the now axiomatic understanding that gender is constructed. The Turkish topoi so common in the comedies I have discussed contributed to the unmaking of traditional femininity that had survived Roman comedy and reappeared in early sixteenth-century erudite comedy, reconstructing a notion of femininity in which a woman could be a protagonist. Indeed, as we will see, she could be a well-traveled, multilingual, independent protagonist.

Women in Early Modern Italian Comedy

In *Gender and the Italian Stage*, Maggie Günsberg astutely analyzes women's roles in early modern theater, associating factors such as age and class with the degree of dramatic importance allotted to female characters. Those women at the top of the social hierarchy were the ones with the least importance allotted to them. The younger they were, the even more dramatically disadvantaged they tended to be. Conversely, servant women, slave women, procuresses, and prostitutes were far more likely to be seen on stage or to contribute to the dialogue. They, unlike younger, higher-class characters, were at least afforded the opportunity to move freely throughout the streets, and were not confined to the window, doorway, or church. Wives and mothers enjoyed a middling position along Günsberg's spectrum of dramatic importance, though she notes the startling lack of such characters, particularly in comparison to the overabundance of fathers (6-10).

In seeking to understand female characters' low level of visibility, Günsberg identifies the classical unities as hindrances that kept women from employing any potential agency. The setting of most comedies is outdoors, typically in the piazza and never inside the home. There is the further restriction of time. Since comedies were to take place in the span of twelve or

twenty-four hours, it was necessary that, in order to resolve a complicated plot within that length of time, some scenes take place in the early morning or late at night. Günsberg argues that since neither the place of women (the home) nor the time of women (daylight hours) converged with the theatrical conventions of time and place, they were thus deprived of much of the stage time (11-14).

Social historian Robert C. Davis would agree with Günsberg's findings, and confirm that the dramatic constraints placed on female characters mirrored those typically placed on women in the early modern period.

Social traditions in Renaissance Italy saw the public realm – the guild halls and taverns, the main streets and piazzas – as the appropriate male sphere; while to women were allotted the household, local neighbourhoods and parish churches, and the convent – all of those urban areas most identified with the private, domestic, and sacred roles that women were expected to play in society. (“The Geography of Gender” 1)

Davis' view, which includes local neighborhoods among the spaces of women, could even be considered a liberal interpretation. Günsberg argues that any presence of a young female outside the home, with the exclusion of a walk to church, could be equated with sexual availability on her part. According to Günsberg, “In order to defuse this connotation, a female character who is on stage/out of doors, has to elaborate on the usual circumstances which have led her to lay herself open to sexual advances simply by being on the street” (17).

Obviously, if a female character was allocated a low level of visibility on stage, she was unlikely to participate in the play as an active agent. For those women who were present on stage, however, there is the additional importance of audibility that must be taken into account when weighing her dramatic importance. Günsberg, following Manfred Pfister's 1991 study *The Theory and Analysis of Drama*, delineates a speech hierarchy in early modern comedy, attributing greater importance to certain speech vehicles and lesser importance to others. The

prologue, for example, is identified as the most privileged speech vehicle, bar none. The character that delivers the prologue is alone on stage and given the opportunity to address the audience directly, thus conditioning the audience's understanding of and opinions about the play that they are about to see. Similar speech vehicles enjoying a privileged place on the hierarchy are the soliloquy and the monologue, which allow for character revelation, character development, and the opportunity to contribute necessary information that is not acted out on stage. Not to be overlooked, in Günsberg's opinion, is the monological speech vehicle of the aside, a way in which a character addresses the audience when he believes that he is not being overheard by other characters. Such a speech vehicle is necessary only when a character is trying to hide privileged information from other characters and so "only characters who participate actively in the trick, rather than those who wait in the wings as the prize to be won at the end, make use of asides" (46). Günsberg argues that, as one might expect, the aside is only employed by low-status female characters.

While the factor of race is not an issue in the comedies I plan to treat here, factors of gender, age, and socioeconomic status certainly are. Thus we can employ, admittedly loosely, Kimberlé Crenshaw's theory of intersectionality as a useful tool to understand the dramatic importance allotted to female characters. Crenshaw essentially explained how women are doubly hindered by multiple factors, among them race and socioeconomic status. In early modern comedy, female characters are treated similarly. Some women might appear quite frequently, and others not at all. Women with any degree of agency were, at first, strictly women possessing a myriad of "attributes." She had to be of advanced age and of low social status to have a high dramatic status, while young, virginal, wealthy women appeared little or not at all. Furthermore, as we attempt to quantify a female character's agency, we are to look not only at visibility, but

also at audibility. Those same women who enjoy more stage time are far more likely to employ speech vehicles higher on the speech hierarchy.

Female Merchandise in La stiava

Giovan Maria Cecchi's comedy, as already established in Chapter 1, was part of a second wave of comedy in which playwrights were still faithful to the classical tradition by way of close imitation, but for whom an established literary theory was also beginning to be available. In the play, themes that will eventually become hallmarks of the Turkish comedy, such as servitude or an invasion by corsairs to explain an infant's separation from his or her family, are incorporated seriously for the first time. It is a comedy that, at first glance, appears almost pro-women. The prologue opens the play with a harsh warning to any men in the audience who "hate women" to such an extent that they cannot even look them in the eye:

E, per dirvi, io sarei stato ardito di dire a tutti, se io non avessi creduto che tra voi fussino alcuni di quelli ch'hanno le donne in odio, che veder in viso non le vogliano, e si stomacano quasi a sentirle ricordare, non ch'essi permettino che le gli servino. A questi tali, facendosi servire in ogni lor bisogna da servitori, so io che la nostra stiava non è mai per piacere; quantunque ella sia così fatta, che ella faccia di sé innamorare ognuno, come udirete dandone il solito silenzio, prima che di qua partiate. Faranno adunque cortesia questi nimici a spada tratta delle femmine, se alcuno ce n'ha tra voi, di partirsi avanti che questa nostra venga fuori, e dare luogo a quelli che, delle femmine diletlandosi, *volentieri udiranno e vedranno questa nostra stiava*. E se pure questi tali, per non volere essere additati, partir noi si vogliono, gli prego che taciti si stien ad ascoltare non la stiava, ma duoi giovani che ci saranno, nell'uno de' quali conosceranno i travagli che fa patire Amore a chi lo seguita; nell'altro come si debbe essere all'amico favorevole. (*Prologo*)

From a play that begins with an entreaty for men who cannot stand to look women in the eye or cannot bear to hear talk of them to leave the audience, one expects to continue to read a play entirely different from that which follows. The play to follow does not defend women or praise them. It instead praises the early modern ideal of femininity, a strictly male concept. The

prologue carefully stated that men who “delle femmine diletlandosi, volentieri udiranno e vedranno questa nostra stiava.” It is important to note that he is asking the audience not to listen to the slave girl herself, for she never appears. The *stiava* he is asking the audience to pay attention to is the play. What the prologue actually does is condition the audience to keep the roles of women in mind as the play proceeds, noting the stark contrast between the good, subservient, and absent slave girl and the intolerant, hysterical Giovanna, lauding the former and castigating the latter.

Filippo attempts to explain the slave girl’s absence within the text. In keeping with Günsburg’s theory, the young, nubile woman must be contained inside the home, a safe space in which her dangerous sexuality will not affect other men:

Ella non potrebbe cavar piè fuor di soglia, che ella avrebbe sempre dietro le stiere delli scioperati, tutto il dì intorno all’uscio le spie, tutta notte i civettoni con mille fischi e mille cenni... (Act 2, scene 2)

Since the beauty of the slave girl would attract unwanted attention in the streets, she must be kept hidden away on the ship or in the home. Adelfia is not the only female presence missing from the stage, however. The only two women who are allotted any degree of stage presence are Giovanna (Nastagio’s wife and Ippolito’s mother) and Nuta, her nurse. The women have extremely limited visibility, not arriving until Act 3. We are prepared for Giovanna long before she arrives, as the male characters condition the audience to view her as a jealous, unfortunate woman. Once she arrives, her dialogue serves only to establish her further as a jealous and hysterical character, prone to yelling loudly and disturbing the neighborhood with her histrionics.

Laura Giannetti and Guido Ruggieri, in an attempt to understand the absence of mothers in Italian comedy, have proposed various explanations. They tentatively suggested that the fact that early modern mothers were often close in age to their sons might have hinted at incestuous

relationship and could thus have been deemed inappropriate by the audience. More broadly speaking, they argued that a mother might be in a position to oppose young love and were therefore often omitted in order to avoid overcomplicating the plot (xxxvi). In the case of *La stiava*, one of Italian comedy's rare mothers appears, and it is in her dual role as a wife that she complicates the action, opposing her husband's supposed affair with a slave girl. A certain degree of complication is necessary, however, particularly when the agent of the complication is opposing an inappropriate romantic alliance between the *senex amans* and a young woman. The unruly wife/mother character in *La stiava* thus serves as an obstacle that the male characters are charged with controlling. Nastagio offers advice to Filippo on how to keep the slave girl in his home without his wife causing trouble about it. Nastagio tells Filippo "è ver che difficilmente se ne difende. Tutta volta chi vuol guardar una donna, la dia a guardia a una donna" (Act 1, scene 5). Later, when it is Nastagio who is having difficulty controlling what he described as his hysterical, jealous wife, it is Filippo who offers him advice: "E bisogna saperle avvezzare. Tutte le donne sono ritrose e sazievoli, quando elleno veggono con chi poter fare i lezi e le melensaggini" (Act 4, scene 5).

La stiava and the image of femininity it presents are still constrained by classical tradition, showcasing women either as merchandise to possess or unruly obstacles to guard and control. The play clings both to classical tradition and the accepted view of women's roles outlined by Leon Battista Alberti over a century prior in *I libri della famiglia*. Alberti's Giannozzo instructs men to do as he does, that is, remain outside among other men doing important male duties and leave the house to the care of the woman:

Perché a me pareva non piccolo incarco provvedere alle necessità entro in casa, bisognando a me non raro avermi fuori tra gli uomini in maggiori faccende, però mi parse di partire questa somma, a me tenermi l'usare tra gli uomini, guadagnare e acquistare di fuori, poi del resto entro in casa quelle tutte cose minori lascialle a cura della donna mia. (230)

Since Giovanna is not locked up at home watching over her husband's material goods, she is presented as an obstacle. In other cases, as in the case of Adelfia, the woman is interpreted as a material good herself. Eager to see his son and the sumptuous goods he has no doubt brought home from Constantinople, Filippo races to the harbor and boards the ship:

Salgo in nave, e mi affaccio di prima giunta in una fanciullozza, bianca, grassa e fresca che pare un sole di Maggio; intendo da Gorgoglio che 'l mio figliuolo *l'ha compera* per donarla alla mia Madonna Gismonda. (Act 1, scene 3)

Adelfia's purchase and sale are repeatedly negotiated throughout the play. In Act 2, scene 2, Filippo and Alfonso engage in a heated argument as to which of them will sell the slave girl and to whom. They both claim to have pre-arranged buyers and argue over potential profits. Finally, when he realizes Filippo's "wealthy friend" (Filippo himself) can offer more than his "friend," Alfonso proclaims that he should decide how and to whom the slave girl is sold, as she is her merchandise:

Alfonso: Sarebbesi mai costui avvisto che costei è *mia cosa*?

Filippo: Che di' tu di *mia cosa*?

Alfonso: Dico che, essendo questa *mia mercanzia e mia cosa*, che voi la lasciate finir a me; e che io sono disposto, non la volendo per noi, di darla a costui che me l'ha chiesta prima, e a chi sono troppo obbligato, tante cortesie ho avute già da lui. (Act 2, scene 2)

While discussing their merchandise, neither Alfonso nor Filippo refers to Adelfia by her name. She remains "la stiava" throughout. Indeed, though much of the discourse in the five acts of this play revolves around Adelfia and her fate, her name is mentioned a mere three times.

Late sixteenth-century mothers and wives

Women, once curiously absent or serving only to complicate the male characters' lives as in *La stiava*, reappear in late sixteenth-century comedies with much more to do. By this time, abduction by corsairs and enslavement abroad has become a common way to explain a

character's absence and a convenient way to enrich the plot, all the while addressing current issues and playing on the audience's fear of Turkish invasion. In Della Porta's *La turca*, the wives Gabrina and Medusa were abducted in a previous incursion on the island. Their absence allows Argentorio and Gerofilo to proceed unhindered in their pursuance of the beautiful young women, and their ultimate reappearance serves to return order at the end of the play. In *La sorella*, Constanza and Cleria's servitude explains why Attilio traveled to Venice and met Sofia/Cleria, bringing her home and initiating the action of the play. The return of Attilio's mother, Costanza, leads conveniently to the recognition scene in which Sofia/Cleria is recognized as the real Cleria. In Luigi Groto's *Emilia*, both Emilia and Flavia have arrived in Constantinople to be sold as slaves by the dealer Arpago.

Mothers in particular are no longer excluded from the *dramatis personae*. On the contrary, in the sampling of Turkish plays that this study has addressed, they are prevalent. In both *La sorella* and *La turca*, Della Porta's mothers do not appear until relatively late in the play, but their ultimate arrival is an important part of the plot, particularly in the case of Costanza in *La sorella*.

Costanza has been enslaved in Constantinople for twenty years. Even before her arrival, she is given a voice by means of a letter written by her to her husband Pardo and brought to him by Pedrolito. Her letter contradicts the story that Pardo has been told by his son; that is, she is alive and well and her relatives never attempted to provide ransom on her behalf:

Mi avisa avermi scritto molte lettere e di niuna mai averne ricevuta risposta, né per lei mandato il riscatto, che spera esserle donata la libertà, e voler venirsene sola come meglio potrà. (Act 3, scene 2)

Thus, without the help of her husband or son, Constanza has managed to earn her way out of servitude. It is unclear what sort of work she was forced to do in Constantinople, but she later

tells us that her masters were “genti barbare” (Act 4, scene 2; Act 4, scene 5) and “cani” (Act 4, scene 3). Not only has she managed to single-handedly, without the aid of ransom, acquire her freedom, she also plans to make the long journey from Constantinople to Nola through Venice, just as her son had attempted to do in reverse before he was held up by his passions in Venice.

Upon her arrival in Nola at the beginning of Act 4, Constanza is allocated a particularly privileged speech vehicle. In her soliloquy that opens the act, Constanza tells the audience of her arduous twenty-year ordeal:

Io non posso se non infinitamente ringraziare Iddio, poiché egli infinitamente m’ha favorito. Chi credesse mai che, stata vent’anni schiava in man de’ Turchi, mi fusse donata la libertà dal mio padrone, per esser ormai decrepita, e postami con alcuni cristiani riscattati in compagnia, in una nave venisse a Vinegia ed indi a Nola mia patria? O terreno desiderato del paese! O aria, quanto mi sei più cara di tutte l’arie del mondo! Se la fortuna mi favorisse in farmi trovar Pardo, il mio marito, ed Attilio, il mio figlio, vivi, le perdonerei la servitù di vent’anni e la perdita di Cleria mia figlia; mi farebbe dimenticare di tutti i passati disagi; né ioarei che più desiderar in questa vita. (Act 4, scene 1)

While she tells the audience that it was her master who put her on a boat home because she was too old to be of use to him, one must assume that the same master that would put his slave through so many “disaggi” would also not be prone to take her liberation lightly. She is thus to be commended not only for independently securing her freedom and embarking on the dangerous journey from Constantinople to Nola, but also for her humility, as she attributes her safe return home to “Iddio” (Act 4, scene 1) or to “benigna fortuna” (Act 4, scene 2) but never to her own personal efforts, which would certainly have been considerable.

Indeed Constanza is the picture of humility, grace, and motherly virtue. Without second thought, she forgives her son for the grave wrongs that he committed against her, and she even agrees to aid him in the elaborate after-hours wife-switching plan he has concocted with Erotico, by which he will be married to Sulpizia by day and Sofia/Cleria by night.

If early learned comedy avoided the incorporation of wives and mothers because they might complicate the plot by opposing the young lovers' union, Della Porta introduces a mother who does anything but interfere. On the contrary, Costanza arrives to help just as Trinca, Attilio, and Cleria's lie is beginning to unravel. Attilio confesses to her how he had wasted the three hundred *scudi* secured for her ransom and left her in Constantinople, bringing home Sofia under the name of Cleria. He admits that her arrival places him in a difficult position:

Costanza: E s'io dicessi che quella fusse Cleria mia figlia, ti saria di contento?

Attilio: Grandissimo.

Costanza: Ti prometto dirlo, e l'accetterò per figliuola e per mia diletissima nuora mentre vivo, per amor vostro. Non sapete voi che le madri condescendono agevolmente ai desideri de' figliuoli e li sono aiutrici verso i padri? (Act 4, scene 2)

Indeed Costanza is such an agreeable mother that, when reunited with Pardo, she never mentions Attilio's transgressions and fulfills her promise to recognize Sofia as Cleria. She does, however, briefly complicate Attilio's situation when she recognizes Sofia/Cleria as the real Cleria. She regrets having returned home to uncover the incest between the two, claiming that she would have rather remained "in man de' Turchi" (Act 4, scene 5) than bring such news to her family members. The problem that she unveiled is swiftly solved, however, as it is soon discovered that the child had been switched in infancy with another, and thus there is no actual blood relation between Attilio and Cleria.

Two other mothers who were enslaved and presumed dead like Costanza appear in *La turca*. The old men prepare the audience for the worst, Argentoro alleging that "Talché ho sempre gratissima memoria di quei turchi che mi liberarono da simile inferno" and Gerofilo admitting that "Onde, quando i turchi me la tolsero, dalla sua rapina mi vidi sollevato alla gloria" (Act 1, scene 4). The wives Gabrina and Medusa shared the same feelings for their husbands. In Act 3, it is revealed that it was Gabrina and Medusa who first set the action in motion,

encouraging the Turk Dergut to attack Lesina. They shared privileged information with the corsair, telling him precisely where to find the old men and their riches, and making it expressly clear that “desiarebbono vedergli tolte le loro ricchezze ed essere schiavi de’ turchi come loro” (Act 3, scene 1). Once they are rescued by Forca and revealed to their husbands, order is returned. If their first wives are indeed alive, Argentoro and Gerofilo cannot enter into a second marriage with Clarice and Biancifore, and thus the young couples no longer face any obstacles. Though the audience is well aware of the elderly couples’ storied history, the two women appear genuinely pleased to see their husbands again, presumably because they know that their reunions will benefit their sons’ unions with age-appropriate partners. Gabrina and Medusa only further prove what Costanza had explicitly told her son, that it is a mother’s pleasure to make the wishes of her son come true, even if his father stands in the way or objects.

A mother not to be overlooked is Lucida in Groto’s *Emilia*. Described as a *gentildonna*, the audience learns that Lucida is the mother of Emilia. During a previous campaign on the island, Polidoro had met Lucida, had a child by her, and returned to Constantinople. Apparently still very much in love, Polidoro tells Christoforo how he had wanted her to leave Cyprus with him but she had not wished to go (Act 1, scene 5). He searches tirelessly for her, asking Christoforo if he has heard news of Lucida, and again asking Captain Fracasso if, during his time in Cyprus, he became aware of “una vedova, gentildonna assai nobile di Persia che è stata presa e condotta verso Africa” (Act 3, scene 6). Lucida’s story is slightly different; she tells her *cameriera* Catella how she was once married to a man with whom she was very much in love. When he died shortly after their marriage, she travelled from Persia to Cyprus, where she tells the audience she knew no one. It was in Cyprus that she met Polidoro. He consoled her and ultimately became the father of her daughter Emilia. It is not her love for Polidoro that has

motivated the well-traveled woman to visit Constantinople, however. Her priority is finding Emilia, and she hopes that the men who abducted her from their home in Cyprus have taken her there to be sold.

All of these women come from various walks of life. *La sorella*'s Costanza is a merchant's wife, though she lived the majority of her adult years as a slave. *Emilia*'s Lucida is a wealthy, beautiful Persian noble. *La turca*'s Medusa is a wealthy citizen from Lesina and Gabrina is a *gentildonna* from an impoverished noble family. Though their backgrounds and experiences differ greatly, the women have much in common. Of greatest importance to them is the happiness and well-being of their children. Unlike *La stiava*'s Giovanna, none of these women are successfully "controlled" by their husbands; indeed their husbands never even seek to control them. Instead, these women control their husbands on behalf of their children. They are, also unlike Giovanna, not confined to the home. On the contrary, these women have traveled across both land and sea, much of the time without a chaperone. The by then common *topos* of explaining a mother's absence by servitude abroad necessitated that a character leave the feminine place of the home to travel and to ultimately return with more dramatic importance and thus more agency.

Innamorata liberata?

Wives and mothers are not the only female characters who grow ever more visible and audible toward the end of the sixteenth century. Even the *innamorata*, rarely appreciated as more than an object of sexual desire and typically relegated to her fixed place at the window or doorway, also gains a certain degree of control as the century wanes.

Cleria embarked on a journey similar to that of Costanza. Taken from Nola to Constantinople, she worked together with her mother for nearly a decade before she was separated from her and purchased by a *sanjak-bey*.⁴⁸ When her new master began to make advances toward her, his wife became jealous and arranged for a servant to sell her. From there, she tells others that she met her brother in Constantinople and returned home. We can assume that the first part of her story is true, but that the real truth is a combination of her and Pedrolito's story. After being sold at the request of the *sanjack-bey*'s wife, she did not remain in Constantinople. It is assumed that from there, she was taken to Venice. In Venice, she worked the boarding house where she met Attilio.

Cleria's imposture and duplicity is a common thread throughout *La sorella*, and she plays an active part in the trick, a common aspect of early modern comedy. According to Günsberg, the trick is a "cunning plan conceived with wit (*ingegno*), in which several characters conspire together at the expense of others" (22). The aforementioned plan often involves a way by which a young male character can gain access to the female object of his interest. In the case of *La sorella*, the trick is put into action before the play even begins. The audience is immediately aware that Pardo has brought home a young woman he had met in Venice and is passing her off as his sister so that he might live together with his beloved. The tricked individual is Pardo, who has been led to believe that Sofia is Cleria and Costanza is dead, and is thus allowing the two young lovers/siblings to commingle underneath his own roof. In the typical trick, the young woman plays no part other than serving as the "prize" at the conclusion of a successful trick. Indeed, it is not uncommon for the woman to be a *victim* of the trick (Günsberg 22-23). In *La sorella*, however, Cleria is not merely a prize to be won, she is an important participant in the

⁴⁸ A *sanjack-bey* or *sanjak bey* was a military leader and administrator, the commander of the *sanjak* (Sinclair 115).

intrigue, at times actively and independently deceiving the victim (Pardo) without the help of the trick's mastermind, Trinca. In Act 3, scene 3, Pardo confronts Cleria along with Pedrolito. At first, she wishes desperately for the aid of Trinca:

Cleria: Padre che comandate?

Pardo: Costui è venuto di Turchia.

Cleria: (*fra sé*) Infelice me! Costui sarà venuto a far riscontro s'è vero che sia Cleria, e quanto falsamente gliel'abbiamo dato ad intendere.

Pardo: E dice che Costanza sia viva.

Cleria: (*c. s.*) Che affermarò? Che negherò? Io non so che debba affermar né negare, né che mi fare. O fosse qui Trinca! (Act 3, scene 3)

She follows with a beautifully constructed lie, manufactured entirely on her own, and it becomes clear that Trinca's help is not necessary. She firmly refutes Pedrolito's claims that Constanza is alive, telling him that "sete così bugiardo nell'uno come nell'altro. Mia madre, che so che è morta, dici che sia viva; ed io, che viva sono, dici che morta sia" (Act 3, scene 3). As soon as Pedrolito begins to gain ground in the argument, Cleria feigns ignorance by pretending not to understand Italian, even though it has been made abundantly clear that she has a firm grasp on the language.

In this scene, Cleria supersedes Trinca as the trick's mastermind, whereas Attilio must almost always be accompanied by Trinca, who uses his quick wit to preserve the trick. Cleria engages in privileged audience contact through her use of the aside, a speech vehicle typically associated with the trickster as it allows a character to withhold information from other characters.

Cleria has shown herself to be an active agent in the trick, indeed she is not only far more of a quick-witted character than her male counterpart Attilio, she appears braver than him, as well. When the young couple learns that they are likely to be separated, it is Cleria and not Attilio that first proposes that the two run away together. After all, Cleria is far better traveled

than Attilio. She has lived and worked all over the Mediterranean, whereas Attilio never made it past Venetian shores. She proposes that they escape Nola and travel the world, confidently stating that she is not frightened by any danger:

Cleria: ... consideriamo s'è meglio fuggir di casa ed andar dispersi per lo mondo. Conducetemi per dove volete, per luoghi dispersi e senza via: vi son stata compagna nelle prospere, così vi sarò nelle fortune calamitose. È ferma deliberazione dell'anima mia non esservi renitente in cosa alcuna, non mi riterrà né muro né terra né cielo, seguendo quel che si voglia: pur che sia insieme con voi, ogni luogo m'è patria, ogni fatica m'è dolce, niun pericolo mi spaventa. (Act 1, scene 3)

Cleria's confidence is placed in sharp contrast to Attilio's timidity. Hearing her daring proposition, Attilio is clearly apprehensive and dismisses the idea, offering up a half-hearted excuse: "non vorrei, andando così di fuori, perder quello che ho in casa" (Act 1, scene 3).

Cleria represents a huge step forward for the *innamorata*. Held captive at a young age, she has spent her entire life away from the feminine space of the home. The audience is privy to some of her adventures, such as her servitude in Constantinople, her discovery in Venice, and her trip to Nola, but other details are conveniently left ambiguous. She tells the audience that a *sanjak-bey* "s'invaghì di me" (Act 4, scene 4) to such a degree that it alerted the suspicions of his wife. The audience knows that she has been living in Venice and working in a boarding house for some time before meeting a young man, falling in love, and traveling with him back to his hometown. Cleria's life before the play begins has been action-packed and full of adventure and mystery. When she arrives in Nola and the play begins, however, she is content to play the role of the traditional *innamorata*. The audience is first introduced to her as she is waiting for Attilio to pass by her window. When she spots him, she tells him, "Attilio, anima mia, fermatevi costì, che son stata gran pezza aspettandovi in fenestra" (Act 1, scene 4). It seems preposterous for a woman to be confined to the home when the audience knows her to be worldly and capable, but when convenient, Cleria is content to reassume the role of the traditional *innamorata*.

Della Porta's Cleria reminds us much of Boccaccio's Alatiel, the beautiful daughter of the Sultan of Babylon in *Decameron* II.7. Alatiel travels throughout the Mediterranean, finding herself with a different sexual partner—eight in total—in each new location. When she is finally reunited with her father, he happily accepts the story that she had spent her lost years in a convent and marries his “virginal” daughter off to the king of Algarve. Scholars have engaged in much debate as to whether *Decameron* II.7 narrates a tale of repeated rape or highlights one woman's agency as she explores the Mediterranean and her own sexuality.⁴⁹ Cleria, like Alatiel, lives a life of travel and servitude before returning to Nola but is careful to remain silent regarding many of the details of her journey. Once returned, she happily returns to her place in society and is content to wait at the window for Attilio to pass by.

Women as Intellect in the Commedia dell'arte

The increased dramatic importance of female roles in the late sixteenth century converged with the emergence of the actress, an innovation credited to the *commedia dell'arte*. In *commedia* performances, actresses such as Isabella Andreini and Vittoria Piissimi became famous. Chief among their skills were their linguistic abilities, and it is often noted how they deftly switch from one language to another. Isabella famously performed *La pazzia d'Isabella* as a part of the wedding celebrations for Ferdinando de' Medici and Christine of Lorraine in 1589, a performance in which she interpreted a madwoman who followed her lover across various different countries, all the while ranting and singing in several languages and dialects (Jaffe-Berg 81). In examining the various roles that women played in the *commedia dell'arte*, Erith Jaffe-

⁴⁹ For more on Alatiel's Mediterranean journey and a brief, recent outline of the debate surrounding Alatiel's agency or silence, see Sharon Kinoshita and Jason Jacobs' "Ports of Call: Boccaccio's Alatiel in the Medieval Mediterranean." See also Millicent Marcus' "Seduction by Silence: A Gloss on the Tales of Masetto (*Decameron* III, 1) and Alatiel (*Decameron* II, 7)" and Manuela Merchesini's "Le ragioni di Alatiel (*Decameron* II.7)."

Berg has noted the multiple instances in which women act as “counterparts to the journeying male traveler” (72). Working specifically with *scenari*, she has identified this prototype of the foreign female as one who “falls in love with an Italian or is intrigued by the prospect of travel to Italy” (72). Jaffe-Berg is careful to note that these women are never Italians, but are exclusively foreign women from the East who convert before departure.

Such a storyline is indeed common in the many *scenari* of the *commedia dell’arte*, particularly from the first and second waves of the *commedia* tradition.⁵⁰ By the time that Giovan Battista Andreini is performing and publishing *La sultana*, however, the female character can no longer be categorized as a mere “counterpart” to a male traveler. It is Sultana who is the unaccompanied traveler, Sultana who envisions the trick, and Sultana who moves the action of the plot. She is not following him to Italy, she is hunting him.

Since this study considers Giovan Battista in his capacity as an author, examining his published work, one might tentatively include him among Italian comedy’s first feminist playwrights, for it is in his *La sultana* that a female protagonist reaches her highest degree of visibility and audibility. She is a multilingual, well-traveled young woman who plays the manifold role of navigator and mother-protector over her infant child during their long and arduous journey from Constantinople to Ragusa to Naples. She shows herself to be powerful and intelligent. Though menacing, she appears infinitely more virtuous than Lelio, who impregnated, robbed, abandoned, and humiliated her.

Giovan Battista’s association of multilingualism with his female protagonist is a clear nod to the successful career of his mother Isabella, whose talent and fame he credited for his

⁵⁰ Jaffe-Berg places Isabella and Vittoria Piissimi in the “second wave,” appearing after the first *commedia* performances of the 1560s (74). Following her demarcation, Virginia Ramponi, the interpreter of Sultana, would have been part of the third or fourth wave of *commedia* actresses.

professional success.⁵¹ Sultana's grasp of the Italian language is so advanced that she is able to speak a perfectly fluent Tuscan for the majority of the play, and she is also able to imitate the broken Italian of a Turkish slave, utilizing unconjugated verbs and simplifying her speech. The multilingualism of female characters is apparent in the earlier Turkish comedies of Della Porta and Groto, as well. Though she cannot act as testimony to her intellect because she never appears, Nastagio even hints in *La stiava* that Adelfia has an excellent understanding of Italian (Act 3, scene 2). The cunning Cleria, as noted before, grew up in Constantinople, but speaks a perfect Italian, though her exquisite grammar does not stop her from citing her foreignness in order to conveniently excuse herself from an uncomfortable situation. In Groto's *Emilia*, the slave dealer Arpago speaks with Christoforo about how to pass Flavia off as Emilia:

Arpago: Bisogna dunque vestir Flavia in habito Ciprioto.

Christoforo: Bisognà anchora metterle un'altra lingua in bocca.

Arpago: Tu bonissimo sarai, che'n Cipri sei stato.

Christoforo: Nò simuli pur, che la madre l'habbia fatto apprendere anco la lingua di Costantinopoli.

Arpago: Ha il dir Turcheso, ha il dir Greco, e desidera haver lo Italiano.

Christoforo: L'havra, non habbia pur il Francese. (Act 1, scene 3)

While the language skills of female characters are often lauded within the script, the languages acquired by traveling men are never outwardly cited. Unlike women, who are constantly switching languages, men apparently did not speak languages other than their own, as Trinca clearly demonstrates in *La sorella* through his unintelligible rant in "Turkish." The trickster himself lacks the knowledge of a foreign language to successfully trick his victims, but the multilingual female repeatedly demonstrates this ability. It would seem that foreign language learning had become a uniquely feminine ability, and that Alberti's view that women are slow, soft, and not meant to engage in important duties, has begun to lose its footing.

⁵¹ Giovan Battista was highly influenced by his mother's work. Long after Isabella's death, as Giovan Battista was approaching death himself, he signed a letter on the subject of his personal and professional life, signing it "Lelio, figlio d'Isabella" (Rebaudengo 25).

Running concurrently throughout theater's golden age was the "woman question," an early modern continuation of the late medieval *querelle des femmes*. Sarah Gwyneth Ross has shown that, at least by the seventeenth century, if not before, the learned woman was no longer a startling figure in society. She tracks the evolution of the female intellectual from her emergence in the fifteenth century when forward-thinking fathers allowed their daughters an education equal to that of his sons. These early women humanists never found a comfortable place in society in the fifteenth century, but in time, the father or father-patron became less crucial as a means to secure legitimacy, the stigma of the intellectual woman was lost, and there was a strong tradition of Italian female intellectuals (Ross 2).

The multilingualism increasingly associated with female characters in Italian theater would certainly support Ross' thesis. *La sorella*'s Cleria, *Emilia*'s Emilia, *Lo schiavetto*'s Florinda, and certainly *La sultana*'s Sultana all speak a myriad of different languages. At times, their intellect is simply highlighted as an attribute, but in other cases, particularly in the cases of Cleria and Sultana, they draw on their linguistic abilities and convert such privileged knowledge into power over their male counterparts.

From the outset, Sultana makes it clear that hers is a mission of revenge. She does not appear particularly bent on reuniting with her lover, as Florinda/Schiavetto had in Andreini's similar comedy *Lo schiavetto*. Sultana seems far more interested in finding her former lover for the express purpose of killing him. She tells her nurse how she wishes to find Lelio and "levar la vita à chi mi levò dalla patria, dal rito, e dall'honore" (Act 1, scene 2). She ultimately finds Lelio, tricking him into thinking that she is a male and enlisting him to purchase her freedom. She fabricates a reason for her presence in Naples:

Mi per un peccà fatto in Constantinopoli Macomet nostro gran Profeta castigarmi in Cristianità. Mi levar l'honor à una gran sultana, ingravidarla, prometterghe fuggir, torla per morir, donarme zioe, sultanini, e mi impiantarla da traditor. (Act 2, scene 2)

She has cleverly inverted the stories of the two of them, presumably in an attempt to see if Lelio is at all affected by her explanation. Lelio is entirely nonplussed, telling her casually “Eh, di queste cose in Cristianità non se ne fà tanto di conto; anzi è tenuto bello spirito chi la fà a molte.” It is upon hearing this that Sultana responds with her feminist call to arms: “Ah, disleale, star peccà in turchia, impala, impala chi inganna femmena” (Act 2, scene 2).

Her ultimate display of feminine strength comes in the final act. She has drugged Lelio and given him just enough poison to keep him alive, as she wishes for him to be coherent in the moment in which she takes his life. She is strong and determined; poised above Lelio in his drug-induced stupor, she holds her knife firmly above his chest as she prepares to take his life. Nothing can convince her to do otherwise except the appearance of her infant child and the intelligent reasoning of her nurse.

In early written theater, the odds were stacked against female characters, particularly those of a certain age and social status. In a theatrical tradition that so closely adhered to the classical tradition, factors such as the unities of time and place naturally contributed to a low level of visibility and limited audibility, aided considerably by the contemporary view of women as soft, slow, and dangerously sexual.

As Italian theater progresses, however, it moves farther away from a strong adherence to its classical roots, and begins to experiment with new and different themes. As has been discussed in the previous chapters, it became common to address local or peninsular social and political affairs. The Turkish threat being of great concern, themes such as abduction, enslavement and servitude found a regular place in comedy. Initially used to explain the absence

of a female character, these themes eventually contributed to the rise in agency of female characters. These women—wives, mothers, *innamorate*, those typically least privileged on the hierarchy of dramatic importance—returned. During their absence they had changed, gaining attributes traditionally associated with a masculine identity. These female characters could and did travel, far beyond the home, the doorstep, or the local parish. In their travels they acquired various languages, allowing them the opportunity to participate in the trick, a role previously assigned exclusively to men. The result is a strong, intelligent, powerful female character entirely different from those of under a century prior.

CHAPTER 6

‘Et io pur Cristiano far mi voglio’: Conversion and Reconciliation in Comedies of Conflict

Recent scholarly interest in religious conversion confirms that the fear of Christians “Turning Turk” was a legitimate concern in late sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Italy. Conversion to Islam was often an appealing option for Italians disenchanted with their stagnant social or economic status. Evidence shows that those who left their birth religion for Islam were numerous, whether they converted after enslavement or were volunteers, converting of their own accord. The opposite phenomenon, on the other hand, was far less common; historians count far less instances of Muslims who embraced the Christian religion. Though both conversion to Christianity and re-conversion or reconciliation were uncommon, comedies of conflict are replete with representations of penitent Turks turning Christian in an inversion of historical reality and a display of Christian wishful thinking. Renegades, Christian-born individuals who turned Turk at a young age, were recurring characters. Della Porta introduces the renegade Dergut (or Tergut), a contemporary corsair active in Neapolitan waters in those years, and narrates his reconciliation in the final act of *La turca*. Andreini’s comedy of homonymous name also includes several Christians turned Turk and their ultimate re-conversion again becomes the harmonizing fifth-act event. Andreini’s *La sultana* displays how, for a play to end “happily,” all characters must end as Christians. The final act showcases a mass-conversion of several Turks,

and the draw of the Christian life and its potential for salvation is represented as so appealing that the Sultan himself crosses over.

In this chapter, I examine the importance of the rite of conversion not for the convert specifically, but for the various other parties involved. Conversion must be understood not as an individualist choice but as a complex decision based on social, political, and economic factors in addition to religious. Work on various charitable religious institutions throughout Italy by scholars such as Peter Mazur, Eric Dursteler, Natalie Rothman, and Maria Pia di Bello has unveiled how meaningful the act of conversion was for the witnesses to the event. Viewing a conversion was a particularly transformative, meaningful experience. Conversion is indeed a visual phenomenon, as the rich tradition of conversion iconography testimonies. The Christian rite thus finds an appropriate place in Italian theater as comedy experiments with new, non-traditional themes in Della Porta's mannerist theater and moves toward the baroque spectacles of Andreini, all the while negotiating its place in a highly conservative post-Tridentine Italian society.

Christian Conversion in Early Modern Italy

Though a quantitative analysis of Christian to Muslim conversion would be difficult to precise, Eric Dursteler has provided approximations that aid scholars in understanding the phenomenon of conversion in early modern Italy. Dursteler confirmed the assumption that instances of Christian to Muslim conversion were far more common than Muslim to Christian conversion. Indeed the number of these instances was so high that it can be termed a social movement, and that movement's consequences were not insignificant in the period of conflict between the Christian West and the Muslim East. According to Dursteler,

In the sixteenth century alone, the number of those who ‘turned Turk’ is calculated to have reached into the hundreds of thousands. This mass movement of people took on the form of a social revolt and profoundly impacted the Ottoman Empire and the societies which were the source of the majority of converts. (“Fearing the ‘Turk’” 486)

The hundreds of thousands of Christians turned Turk were commonly referred to as renegades.

Many were captives who converted in an attempt to improve their situation. Others were voluntary converts whose motivations for conversion were manifold. Commonly cited reasons include the employment opportunities available to converts. Those who felt underappreciated or underpaid might be lured by the adventurous, lucrative lifestyle of piracy.⁵² Daniel Vitkus has identified cases in which the Ottoman army or navy welcomed former Christians as technical advisers. Others, often sailors or ship captains, might simply have been motivated by the protections that the North African principalities afforded to the Muslim religious community. There were even concerns that those working in maritime professions might switch between religions when convenient, playing Muslim while at sea and returning to a Christian life upon their return (*Three Turk Plays* 4-5).

Early modern Christians, of course, were unlikely to admit the positive aspects of Islam that motivated renegades’ decisions. Turks were represented as cultish dissidents who eagerly anticipated the conversion of all of Christendom. One anonymous English author describes all Turks as proselytizing barbarians in the following text:

They do think... that they are bound by all means as much as in them lieth, to amplify and increase their religion in all parts of the world, both by arms and otherwise: And that it is lawful for them to enforce and compel, to allure, to seduce, and to persuade all men to the embracing of their sect and superstitions: and to prosecute all such with fire and sword, as shall either oppose themselves against their religion, or shall refuse to conform and submit themselves to their ceremonies and traditions. And this they do to the intent the name and doctrine of their Prophet Mahomet may be everywhere, and of all nations, revered and embraced. Hence it is that the Turks do desire nothing more than to draw both Christians and others to embrace their religion and to turn Turk. (ctd. in Vitkus 8)

⁵² This is not meant to intend that only Muslim individuals participated in corsairing activities. As Vitkus has stressed, corsairing in the Mediterranean was a “free for all” in which all parties participated (4).

Christians like the author cited above were quick to label the Turks as proselytizers who forced their religion upon Christians, urging them to “turn Turk,” but failed to mention that the practice of forced conversion (to Christianity) occurred in Western Europe. It must be noted that forced conversions of Muslims and Jews were not uncommon in parts of Christian Europe, reaching their apex in late fifteenth-century Spain and Portugal. It was not until the mid-sixteenth century when Paul III and members of the Roman curia began to condemn the practice of forced conversion (Mazur, *Conversion to Catholicism* 31).

Part and parcel to the view that Muslims were staunch advocates of conversion was the understanding that they used violence to further their goals. Nicholas Terpstra has shown how those captured in the Mediterranean could improve their situation if they converted. Christian women might, in some cases, marry their captors; while an inter-religious marriage was certainly permitted, conversion would have benefited those women’s living situations (154). But among the testimonies collected by Dursteler, never do the reconcilers admit convenience as their reason for converting; the vast majority of them cited the intense violence they underwent before conversion, and noted how it was the fear of such violence that finally pushed them to turn. One Marco Lombardo claimed to have been forcefully intoxicated, circumcised against his own will, and made to speak Turkish. It was only out of the “fear of death” that he ultimately converted. A Paolo di Pietro was apparently threatened with decapitation by his Turkish captives until he converted. An Elena Carandi narrated a similar tale, telling inquisitors that she had only “turned Turk” when her owner subjected her to violent beatings. The tales are all remarkably similar, to such an extent that Dursteler has been able to delineate a pattern common to nearly all those seeking reconciliation. According to Dursteler, “the key narrative elements are identical: fear,

compulsion, conversion, the interior preservation of one's 'true' religious identity, and a seamless and speedy reintegration into the body of Christendom" ("Fearing the Turk" 485).

Despite the difficulty inherent in such an inquiry, gauging a catechumen's sincerity is one trend that has interested scholars and been the focus of much of the recent scholarship on religious conversion (Rothman 40).⁵³ Dursteler is one scholar who has cautiously questioned the converts' sincerity. He noted how forcing a Christian into conversion would have been in stark contrast to the Qur'an, which explicitly forbids such compulsion. Furthermore, the sheer number of identical testimonies that Dursteler presents arouses suspicion, to be sure. Tijana Krstić's study of questioned conversions to Islam would support doubts of the truthfulness of Christian renegades. She stressed the fact that unconverted Christians lived well in Ottoman territory, citing the popularity of neomartyrologies dating from the 1560s that narrated tales of Orthodox Christians who converted to Islam insincerely and ended poorly. Such tales were commonly circulated with the express purpose of warning potential converts to refrain from conversion unless they felt a sincere draw (2). Her entire study proves that Ottoman leaders would prefer a Christian to an insincere converted Muslim. Such an abundance of evidence would seem to suggest the insincerity of the narrative of forced conversion presented to Christian inquisitions by renegades.

Nevertheless, Christians were content to view the renegades as victims of Islam, and regardless of their honesty, the tales they wove were usually positively received. Mazur has studied reconciliations of former renegades in Naples, and has found that inquisitors "were generally lenient in these cases, letting the wayward free after a formal abjuration, a penance,

⁵³ See Davis' *Christian Slaves, Muslim Masters*, for example. Salvatore Bono and Lucetta Scaraffia are two others who have analyzed renegades from this angle.

and the imposition of few, if any, significant penalties” (*A Mediterranean Port* 225; Dursteler, *Venetians in Constantinople* 199).

Those seeking reintegration into Christianity represented a minuscule fraction of the hundreds of thousands that converted. Evidence proves that those lost were, in the vast majority of cases, lost forever. Renegades rarely ever returned to their birth faith. Dursteler has counted no more than two-hundred individuals reconciled in Naples between 1564 and 1740 and a mere thirty-six reconciliations in Friuli in the nearly three centuries from 1596 to 1786 (“Fearing the ‘Turk’” 487).

In Della Porta’s comedy *La Turca*, the story told by the Turk Dergut perfectly narrates the politics of renegade reconciliation in sixteenth-century Italy. He invokes the tropes of fear, compulsion, and conversion delineated by Dursteler, and his swift process of reconversion and warm welcome is in line with what Mazur has stated about the relative ease of reintegration in Naples.

In Act four, in a clear allusion to the Boccaccian tale, Dergut is captured by Forca in a subterranean sewage pit. Taken to the hangman, Dergut first admits his wrongs, telling Boia that he merits “questo e peggio per li miei peccati,” and attests that “Soffrirò il tutto in penitenza de’ miei peccati” (Act 5, scene 1). He asks to be taken to the governor, to whom he begs, “Signor Governatore, vi prego per la Cristiana pietà mi facciate confessar i miei peccati prima che muoia, accioché muoia da Cristiano” (Act 5, scene 2). The Governor dismisses confession as a ridiculous request from a Turk, and Dergut proceeds to explain the situation of his faith. He was not born a Turk, he claims, but was captured and pressured to convert:

Se ben mi giudicate turco, io nacqui Cristiano e fui preso da’ turchi; essendo figliuolo, fui circonciso e posto in seraglio. Il mio valor fece poi che dal Gran Signore mi fusse consignate alcune galere e si fusse servito di me in molte imprese. Quando venni negli

anni della discrezzione, ho avuto sempre rimorso di coscienza di quest'atto, e feci voto a Dio che, capitando in cristianità, tornaria alla mia vera religione. (Act 5, scene 2)

In Dergut's tale, he is careful to include how he was young and impressionable at the time he was taken, shifting the blame to his captors and painting himself as a victim. As if he were reading from one of the "scripts" that Dursteler examined, he notes regret and remorse.

Dergut's narrative does tempt a modern reader to question his spiritual motivations. Though he claims to have wished to return to his "true" religion as soon as he found himself in Christian lands, the reader or spectator is aware that he has been in Lesina for a day, taking several of the island's residents captive. It would seem, then, that he returned to Christianity not upon arrival, but at the moment in which he found it convenient. In an inversion of the traditional narrative in which captive Christians who fear death convert to Islam, it is thus the threat of death at the hands of Christians that ultimately forces Dergut to convert.

Bearing Witness: The Visualization and Dramatization of Conversion

The archival footprint left by Christian converts is limited. There is, however, often missionary documentation of individuals' conversion processes. Natalie Rothman has extensively studied Venice's *Pia Casa dei Catecumi*, for example, a religious institution that followed new Christians through the conversion process. Her study shows how the *Pia Casa* was rigorously involved in every aspect of Venetian conversions. It housed the individuals as they prepared for conversion, acted as godparent to the converts, and oversaw their integration into Venetian society. According to Rothman, young male converts might be placed as apprentices with local artisans, and some might become soldiers or mariners. Women, on the other hand, typically worked as domestic maidservants. In any case, the investment that the *Pia Casa* made

in converts did not end upon their placement; the institution continued to survey the individual throughout his or her life (49).

Throughout the Peninsula, there were several other religious organizations that functioned in similar ways. Venice was the second house after Rome's *Casa dei Catecumi*, established in 1543. A recent 2016 study by Mazur, *Conversion to Catholicism in Early Modern Italy*, has examined many of these houses, specifically their iterations in Rome, Mantua, Modena, and Florence. His analysis points out one aspect of the conversion process that has been less commonly studied. In supporting these houses, patrons and donors received intangible benefits. According to Mazur, conversion allowed patrons "to embody the most cherished and ancient Christian virtues, charity, in a way that was highly visible, easily understood, and unambiguously conformed to the ethic of the Counter-Reformation" (*Conversion to Catholicism* 39).

Another work by anthropologist Maria Pia di Bella examines a nontraditional sort of conversion. She examines the *Compagnia del Santissimo Crocifisso* or the *Bianchi*, active in Palermo from 1541. The *Bianchi*, according to di Bella, were tasked with comforting criminals for three days prior to their death, and instructing them on "how to die a good Christian death" (86). During their tenure at the house, individuals were initiated into the fraternity, taken for confession, and offered communion. Finally, in an elaborate procession, the condemned would be taken from the church to the scaffold, where a Priest would ask him whether or not he would like to die a Christian death. The condemned almost exclusively replied that they would indeed like to die a Christian, though such an affirmation did not, in any of the over 2,000 cases, save the condemned from execution (86-87).

The cases of the *Pia Casa* and the *Bianchi* are entirely different, but both take the emphasis away from the converts themselves and highlight the many players that were involved

in the conversion process. Rothman has said that conversion was not an “individual spiritual choice” (40), and this is as much the case with the *Bianchi* converts as with those of the *Pia Casa*. In Venice, the government had a vested interest in converts, both before and long after their conversion. In the Sicilian case, the people of Palermo flocked to witness these “spectacles,” and the Christian death of the condemned was the “collective concern of all members of the community” (87).

Both Rothman and di Bella’s microstudies and Mazur’s Peninsula-wide analysis display how conversion did not immeasurably improve an individual’s social or economic situation, certainly in the Sicilian case, where converts did not live to see socioeconomic improvement. The *Pia Casa* made an effort to secure their initiates a place, but they generally remained in low-status positions, like domestic servitude. This is a notable contrast to the Muslim converts who enjoyed vast improvement in their social status upon taking the faith. As Krstić and others have shown, new Muslims were often chosen over Muslim-born individuals for certain governmental positions (Krstić 1-2; Stelling, Hendrix, and Richardson 3).

Mazur has rightly termed conversion a “negotiation” between converts and Christian leaders and teachers (*Conversion to Catholicism* 22). In reading the microhistories presented to us by Rothman, di Bella, and others, however, it would seem that converts did not make overly significant gains from these negotiations. Christian conversion would thus seem to be as meaningful—if not more—for the witnesses to the rite as it was for the recipients themselves. In addition to gaining an adherent to the faith, Christian conversion presented less-publicized opportunities for nobles and princes to gain popularity through actively engaging in charitable activities. It was a community-building and -strengthening practice, as well. Born Christians

were led to contemplate and renew their own faith as they sponsored, witnessed, and participated in the conversion of others.

Diane Apostolos-Cappadona has examined the inextricable link between conversion and the fundamental human activity of seeing. In “Seeing Religious Conversion through the Arts,” she discusses the profound experience that individuals undergo during and after the viewing of a visual representation of conversion. The feelings have been so intense that viewers have been often moved to convert or renew their own faith.

Apostolos-Cappadona claims that the Christian religion, perhaps more than any other religious tradition, has created a vast iconography of conversion in which commonly evoked Christian conversion narratives appear and reappear. The conversion of Emperor Constantine and Francis of Assisi, for example, both provided the material that inspired several works of art. Most frequently represented, however, would be the experience of Saul of Tarsus. Famously depicted by Michelangelo Buonarroti in 1542 and later in 1601 by Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio, Saul was a notorious persecutor of Christians who experienced a sudden, literally blinding experience en route to Damascus as he witnessed a bright light and heard a voice from above that motivated him to reverse his previously held beliefs. Buonarroti’s depiction of the Pauline conversion is housed in the Vatican’s Cappella Paolina. The artist chose to depict the moment in which Saul lies on the ground flanked by several bystanders, blinded by a bright light originating from the heavens above, a blast of spiritual realization and transformation.



Fig. 8. Michelangelo
Buonarroti.
Conversion of Saul.
1542-1545. Fresco.
Cappella Paolina,
Vatican Palace.

Caravaggio's iteration is a deeply personal, dramatic representation of the moment in which Saul has fallen from his horse. The light from above illuminates Saul's body, which is in stark contrast to the darkness of the image. Images like these two that depict moments of conversion hold value far beyond the aesthetic. Images, Apostolos-Cappadona has written, "have power: power to please, power to shock, power to educate, power to convert, power to transform" (329).

When Apostolos-Cappadona speaks of iconography, she is referring to illustrations or portraits specifically. The term's origin can be found in the Greek *eikonographia* that, according to the Oxford English Dictionary, was composed of the term *eikōn*, meaning "likeness," and *graphia*, "writing." The term can therefore not be limited to illustrations. Dramatization, too, was able to depict a likeness of the act of conversion through the performance of a written script. Indeed dramatic form was uniquely poised to extend the moment of conversion, depicting the

moments leading up to and following an individual's conversion in addition to the act itself. It could more richly emphasize the audible element of the Pauline conversion, for example, through spoken dialogue. Furthermore, its message could also, arguably, reach a wider and more varied public. Works of visual art were often held in the homes of nobles and their availability was thus limited, while comedies were performed both publicly and privately to a wide and diverse audience. Thus the conversion narratives present in several of these comedies of conflict can be read as a theatrical iconography of conversion.



Fig. 9.
Michelangelo
Merisi da
Caravaggio.
*Conversion on the
Way to Damascus.*
Oil on cypress.
1600-1601. Santa
Maria del Popolo.

The conversions that conclude both Andreini's *La turca* and *La sultana* both narrate conversions similar to the Pauline example. Both plays initiate the dramatization with the sudden conversion of one prominent character. Motivated by that character's meaningful experience and their newfound Christian zeal, a ripple effect occurs, and all non-Christian characters suddenly profess their wish to join the Christian faith. The very same phenomenon occurs in the Pauline

transformation. Paul leaves behind his past as a Jew and an infamous enemy of Christendom and instead becomes one of its greatest proponents.

The sudden revelation that characters undergo is a motif recycled from the case of Paul's conversion on the road to Damascus. Though theatregoers were certainly prepared for the play's problems to be resolved in the fifth act, there is an unforeseen aspect inherent in each, an element of surprise. In Della Porta's *La turca*, for example, Dergut is conversing with the hangman, practically at the gallows, when it is revealed that he was once a Christian and wishes to return to the faith. Such impromptu professions in early modern literature may have contributed to the fashioning of early conversion scholar Arthur Darby Nock's belief that conversion was a deliberate decision and necessitated a complete break with the past. We now understand conversion to be a far more gradual and complex process, one that did not necessarily occur by way of an instantaneous flash illumination and one that did not require the convert to leave behind all aspects of his or her former life.⁵⁴

In *La turca*, it is Occhiali who suddenly initiates the mass conversion. After having defeated the Turkish enemies, Capitano addresses Occhiali, asking him, "Occhiali dimmi, è vero che tu se' rinegato." Occhiali responds in the affirmative, confessing his sins and repenting in front of all the victorious Christian soldiers and their Turkish captives:

È vero, e confesso che l'ira, che scende dal cielo non è mai tarda per punire un cuor fellone, sprezzatore degli huomini, e del Cielo, e ben conosco, e confesso che la machia ferente ch'all'anima io feci non si poteva se non con mio sangue lavare, non havendo giamai tentato di lavarla co'l pianto. E molto mi glorio di non esser morto fra l'armi, per lo fetto di honorato soldato, poiché solo perder la vita io doveva, per la mano d'infame carnefice, essendo stato crudele cotanto a me stesso, nemico a quest'anima, dispietato contra i Christiani, infido al Cielo, fido all'inferno; nemico a Dio. (Act 5, scene 9)

⁵⁴ In many cases, a convert's privileged familiarity with another religious culture benefited them in their new life. Jewish converts, for example, could be highly respected in academic settings, where their knowledge of Hebrew was valued.

Occhiali was much like Saul. In his capacity as a renegade, Occhiali was a notorious persecutor of Christians. As discussed elsewhere, the Calabrian-born renegade was one of the most terrifying corsairs who used his privileged knowledge of Italian waters to collect captives, and was represented and re-represented in contemporary literary accounts. Visualizing the capture of such a notorious individual would have proved particularly cathartic for an Italian audience, and visualizing his reconciliation would have been even more meaningful, proving “God's power to use everything, even the hostile persecutor, to achieve the divine purpose” (Hiesberger 341).

In Act 5, scene 9, Occhiali leaves his Muslim name behind and embraces his Christian birth name, Rosmino. So moved by Occhiali's reconciliation, Mehmet is left speechless. When he finally finds himself addressed by Occhiali, Mehmet finds the words to express his feelings and intentions. He tells all present, “Intendo, e così giuro al Cielo d'esser hora tanto seguidor de' Christiani, quanto già fuggitor ne fui” (Act 5, scene 9). Occhiali, clearly moved, looks up to the heavens and professes his and all Christians' thanks to God for offering “d'un tanto dono.” The ripple effect continues. Ferahat speaks on behalf of all the captured Turks:

Io parlerò per tutti, io che Ferahat mi chiamo, non già fiero ma tutto humano. È vero mahometani fummo, è vero di macigno erano questi nostri petti, ma percossi dalle belle lagrime di Rosmondo e di Rosildo si spezzarono, e spezzandosi adiro hanno aperto a mille acquose vene di pianto; onde fonti lagrimosi sembriamo, altro non bramando questo piangente stuolo che si seguitar nell'opere Christiane gli stessi Christiani. (Act 5, scene 9)

Capitano functions as confessor to the newly converted. He urges them to leave behind their Turkish past and forgives them of their sins: “Disciogliersi questi legami, come da ogni legame d'errore al presente disciolto è ciascuno” (Act 5, scene 9).

La sultana's final act is remarkably similar. Sultana admits that she had converted before arriving in Italy. When her father hears that both his daughter and his infant grandson are Christians, he is eager to convert, as well:

Et io pur Cristiano far mi voglio, accioche e viver, e morire con la mia figlia co 'l mio genero ad ogn'hor frà cristiani io possa, e perche con simil pensiero di Turchia partir mi dispose, per questo quant'oro quante gemme, e furniture di palazzo haveva meco portai, e mi fu molto facile, poiche dovendo andar in governo per voler del Gran Signore di forte luogo in mare, caricai perciò di così fatte cose molte galere, e alhor che mi trovai in poter dell'onde, e de' venti, comandai ch'à Ragusa tirassero, e tutto il mio tesoro in Vinezia conservo, del quale tù Lelio, e tù picciolo Nipote ne siete fatti gran signori. (Act 5, scene 9)

Not only has Sultana's father converted, but he brings with him significant wealth and military power. The fact that renegade conversion was not an uncommon occurrence but a significant social movement has already been addressed. The privileged knowledge of renegades was of particular value to the Turks, and here Andreini provides his audience with a parodical inversion of this contemporary fear. In Andreini's happy ending, it is the Turkish renegade who brings with him enemy knowledge and power.

As if the conversion of Sultana's father and the transfer of his wealth were not enough, the ripple effect continues. Minor Turkish characters begin to convert, as well. One character, referred to as "Turco 1" expresses that he had already made his Christian promise en route; another, "Turco 2" adds that he has "purged" his spirit and promises to urge his followers to do the same. Upon hearing the conversion of these two Turks, a chorus erupts, and Turkish extras loudly proclaim that they wish to become Christians. One of the newly converted finishes the scene and the play:

Sù dunque non solo alle trombe ordinarie in straordinario contento si dia il fiato: ma su dal Cielo le squille Angeliche rimbombino, s'è pur vero, com'è certissimo, che della conversione qua giù de' Peccatori la su tanto gli Angeli si rallegrino, poscia tutti andiamo uniti al Vicere, dove questo caso inteso, possa farlo per via d'avrei scalpelli, e di purgate penne, per marmi, e per carte gloriosamente eterno. E voi Signori, che felici spettaroti di simil caso foste, Quì l'Opera è finita. Hor questo fine serva in voi di principio à raccontar in voce, quello che l'occhio, quello che l'orecchio in Theatro superbo, e vide, e'ntese, che 'n questo modo fatti ancor noi per le vostre lingue famosi, prenderemo ardire, ardore, in altro amico tempo d'appresentarvi cose migliori. (Act 5, scene 9)

In the Turk's conclusion, he alludes to the overwhelming power of the theater. Andreini, who had previously penned a treatise in laud of the theater (*La saggia egiziana, dialogo spettante alla lode dell'arte scenica*), believed in its transformative power. It had the power to cleanse the spirit, teaching good morals to erring spectators. For Andreini, theater was art in its audiovisual form, able to please multiple senses at once. Christian art, as we have seen, had already produced an ample volume of conversion iconography. It follows, then, that Andreini chose to bring his comedy to a close with a moving dramatization of the mass conversion of high-status Turkish individuals. Andreini's play functioned in a manner similar to Michelangelo's or Caravaggio's visual depictions of the Pauline conversion; such conversion iconography held immense power, and seeing the act of conversion—in art or in life—had an intense and meaningful effect on the spectator.

The Festivity of Conversion

An analysis of the *Archivio di Stato di Firenze*'s vast collection of *avvisi*, or proto-newspapers, further proves the importance of conversion to a city or community. One individual *avviso* might highlight the day's or the week's most important news from another Italian or European city. Subjects such as important diplomatic visits, notable criminal activity, or illustrious marriages were often addressed and sent to other courts throughout the Peninsula. It appears that among these other current events, conversions were considered highly newsworthy. The brief summaries of such conversions unveil that they were not routine, everyday occurrences. They were instead remarkably well-attended events proctored by high-ranking religious officials in some of the most important cathedrals of each respective city.

An *avviso* sent from Milan to Florence on January 12, 1576 described the conversion of one of Governor Antonio Guzmán y Zúñiga's "Turks," ostensibly a slave in the service of Guzmán y Zúñiga. Though the "Turk" was likely a humble slave, his conversion was treated with the utmost importance. Cardinal Borromeo himself performed the rite in the city's "chiesa maggiore."⁵⁵ After the ceremony, there was an elaborate banquet held. This special event initiated the beginning of the Carnival season, and participants paraded throughout the city to the sound of trumpets.⁵⁶

In another *avviso* sent from Rome to Florence on April 16, 1574, the conversion of five Turks was held in the church of Saint John in Lateran. Such an event was apparently as noteworthy at the Papal mass that same morning, in which Pope Gregorius XIII performed Easter mass for over sixty-thousand attendees, since the two events are mentioned alongside one another.⁵⁷ Another Roman conversion made news in 1590, in which the reporter describes a city-wide procession from Saint Mary above Minerva to Our Lady of the Soul that accompanied the conversion of one woman. Pope Sixtus V himself was in attendance.⁵⁸

Religious rites are often associated with public spectacles, but why a need for such pomp and circumstance when a Turk turns Christian? Certainly high-ranking individuals like Antonio

⁵⁵ Because the ceremony was proctored by Archbishop Borromeo, the "chiesa maggiore" likely refers to the Duomo di Milano, which only further adds to the importance of this and other local conversions. Less likely but still possible, the *avviso* author could have been referring to the Chiesa di San Maurizio al Monastero Maggiore.

⁵⁶ [...] Hieri si battezzò nella chiesa maggiore un Turco di questo signore Marchese per mano dell'Ill. mo Borromeo, che fu con molte cerimonie. Li compari furono li figliuoli d'esso principe, li quali dopo magnare con molt'altri cavalieri spagnoli, diedero principio al Carnovale, con mascararsi, et andar per la città con le trombe a publicarlo (*Avviso di Milano* 3254, 248).

⁵⁷ Il papa restò molto contento la mattina di Pasqua di veder tanto popolo sulla Piazza di San Pietro che era circa 60 mila persone, ne si satiava di benedirlo et mirarlo, et prima che venisse in cappella comunicò tutta la sua famiglia. Et in quel giorno furono battezzati cinque turchi a San Giovanni Laterano, et dell'altri che sene stanno nel Palazzo dell'Aquila, si dice che tuttavia va innanzi la pratica del loro riscato. (*Avviso di Roma* 4026, 287)

⁵⁸ Domani va Sua Santità alla processione della Minerva all'Anima per il Te Deum per la conversione del marchese di Bada et sentire messa nell'Anima (*Avviso di Roma* 4027, 345).

Guzmán y Zúñiga wished to display their power and wealth through such ceremonies and the festivities that went along with them, but there was more to it than this. It is my contention that in a society in which religious identity was so fluid and a Christian could “turn Turk” without any outward, physical demonstration, a public confirmation of the event was necessary to universally confirm an individual’s Christian identity in the presence of many witnesses.

“Festive” religious events such as marriage or conversion (often viewed as a sort of marriage to the church) thus naturally found a home in the fifth-act of early modern comedies. Classical tradition still required that the story come to a positive, ordered conclusion, but as theater’s golden age proceeded, playwrights increasingly incorporated current events into their comedies. Both Della Porta and Andreini’s plays may have represented conversion in the impromptu, sudden Pauline fashion and not as the negotiation we now know it to have been, but they did mimic the atmosphere of festivity and celebration that I have shown to be associated with contemporary conversions. Indeed, Andreini’s plays involve both music, poetry, and procession.

The final scene of *La turca*, as I mentioned in Chapter four, involves a full-scale *trionfo* in which converted Turks traipse across the stage alongside their fellow Christians. The poet Laurindo describes the festive scene:

Hor mentre giolivi, e festeggianti co bell’ordine facciam mostra di noi gariscano le
trombe, rumoreggino i tamburi, sventoleggino gli stendardi, rimbombino i metalli
fiammeggianti, e nel Theatro del Tempio recitanti devoti, e spettatore il Mondo
rappresentiamo quella pietà celeste, che dall’imo delle sventure inferne alle superne
felicità mirabilmente il Peccatore innalza. Addio. Valet.

La sultana ends with a similar procession celebrating the new Christians, if not as intensely elaborate. Andreini’s stage directions require that players have trumpets and drums. As they conduct their procession, they are to proclaim “viva, viva l’Ambasciador Persiano” (the Sultan is

dressed as a Persian ambassador). The newly-converted Sultan will lead the group and will be followed by six soldiers dressed in the Spanish style. Behind the soldiers twelve Turks will process; six of these will be nobles, and the other six are ostensibly their servants. The six Turkish servants, Andreini explicitly states, should be carrying two torches apiece. Finally, six stable hands with additional torches in hand will trail behind.⁵⁹

These closing scenes are highly evocative of the conversion of Antonio Guzmán y Zúñiga's Turkish slave in which individuals garrulously paraded around the city (much to the conservative Borromeo's dismay), playing instruments and loudly proclaiming the Turk's conversion and the start of Carnival.

There was clearly an inherent link between conversion and theatricality in late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century Italy. The religious rite of conversion in the period can be understood as a spectator-centered, celebratory occasion in which those present would commonly participate in festive events such as processions, or banquets and music afterwards. We have discussed how important such events were for several players, not just the catechumen but also local patrons, religious institutions, and entire communities.

The rite thus finds a likely home in comedy, a form of entertainment that was moving away from its historic home in closed academies and noble houses and becoming an increasingly public event accessible to a wide spectrum of individuals. The fifth act of several of the period's Turkish comedies include closing scenes in which Turkish characters who convert are welcomed to the faith with similar pomp and circumstance. Such conversion narratives function as an

⁵⁹ Andreini's stage directions are included after the text as an appendix. For scene 10, players require "un bicchiere di aceto per Scanuccio, trombe, tamburi voci dicenti viva, viva l'Ambasciador Persiano, e qui uscirà seguitato da 6 cavalieri alla spagnola vestiti, & egli avrà un seguito di 12 turchi 6 nobili, e 6 servitori, quali havranno 2 torcie per uno, cioè i servi, ci saranno pur 6 staffieri con lo stesso ordine di torcie."

enhanced iteration of the already extant tradition of conversion iconography, a powerful Christian tool used to evoke a powerful emotional response in the viewer.

CONCLUSION

In the preceding pages, I have endeavored to reintroduce worthy non-canonical Italian comedies into the larger discussion of early modern comedy. Meanwhile, I have sought to approach them from a nontraditional angle. As several scholars have done for the theater of other European traditions but have heretofore neglected to do in the Italian case, I examine Italian comedy within its larger Mediterranean context in order to better understand how Italy managed the “Turkish threat” during a period of heightened conflict between the Christian West and the Muslim East.

The works by playwrights such as Giovan Maria Cecchi, Giovan Battista Della Porta, Luigi Groto, and Giovan Battista Andreini all merit further study, but have largely fallen into disregard because of the disproportionate attention that they afford to discussions of events specific to the time in which they were written. When the Turkish threat began to wane, so too did the interest in comedies that narrated period-specific tales of Turkish atrocities such as piracy and slavery.

A close study of these plays reveals how the genre most closely linked to the people addresses their fears in especial. The plays also manage the anxieties of political and religious leaders, considering their trepidation that Turkish expansionism might encroach upon their own borders or that Christians might become bewitched or seduced and “turn Turk” *en masse*, but the primary concerns of comedy are those shared with common Italians: the problem of piracy and kidnapping, the plight of slaves, renegadism, and forced conversion.

Turkish themes course so strongly throughout late-sixteenth-century and seventeenth-century comedy that they can be identified as a subgenre. Too dramatic and nearly tragic to be referred to as comedy, one would also have difficulty referring to them as tragicomedies, as they do not precisely fit the traditional specifications. I have tentatively termed this subgenre *comedy of conflict*.

Not always lauded for their dramatic work, the playwrights I have examined were influential enough that many of their writings were preserved. Cecchi's work, for example, remains in part thanks to the attitude of Cosimo's Florence that revered any sort of cultural production. Della Porta did not think of himself as a playwright, but his plays were nevertheless reprinted, edited, and circulated. The plays addressed are meant as paradigmatic examples that inspired relatively unknown playwrights and hobbyists to compose their own dramatic works narrating similar tales of kidnapping, piracy, captivity, and conversion.

Comedies of conflict by other playwrights, however, exist only in their limited and barely legible original editions, and many are housed in smaller, more local archives that are difficult to access. Filippo Gaetano, duke of Sermoneta, was one hobbyist who was so influenced by the work of Della Porta that he composed his own Turkish comedy, *La schiava*. In chapter three, I briefly mentioned the play *Il moro* by the Sienese Giovan Battista Petrucci, of whose life very little is known. The Genoese Anton Giulio Brignole Sale knew much of Christian-Muslim conflict at sea. In his role as a prominent citizen of Genoa, he frequently argued in favor of increased naval armament in order to protect his community from the threat of corsairs. The politician was also a playwright, and tried his hand at a Turkish comedy with *Li comici schiavi*. With more time, it would be useful to study these less accessible plays in depth, and such further study might also lead to the discovery of other worthy though forgotten plays. It is my contention

that there may be many such plays, and that such research could shed new light on how early modern Italians understood and managed the Turkish threat.

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