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## “COMMEDIA DELL’ARTE”. AN ENQUIRY AND SOME INCURSIONS INTO THE MEANING OF THIS TERM\*

### *Foreword*

The expression “commedia dell’arte” has never received a precise definition. Even a new journal named “Commedia dell’Arte” is prefaced by Siro Ferrone and Annamaria Testaverde with the provocative but perfectly legitimate statement: “La Commedia dell’Arte” does not exist<sup>1</sup>. In this enquiry I set out to establish the expression’s original meanings and I hope this will go some way to clarifying the reality.

If we consider the expression itself, it has been said, by Benedetto Croce among others, that the second term, “arte”, originally meant *métier*, trade or craft.<sup>2</sup> In fact the first occurrences of the expression known to us date from quite late on, in the era of Goldoni,<sup>3</sup> and seem to indicate improvised comedies generally associated with masked performance and the acting profession, as in ‘*commedie fatte alla maniera degli attori* [plays put on in the manner of actors]’, carrying a derogatory sense probably acquired as this performing style degenerated.<sup>4</sup> But, as it has also been remarked, the expression could well date from earlier on and was probably part of actors’ jargon.

There are two fundamental considerations. In the first place, it is surely very unlikely that the famous formula should have been coined by actors with a negative implication right from the outset, referring to acting for profit. Furthermore, documents and sources dealing with art in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries

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\* Translated by Mark Weir, Università di Napoli “L’Orientale”. From E. Tamburini, “Commedia dell’arte”: immagini e percorsi intorno a un’ipotesi, *Drammaturgia*, 5 July 2010, [www.drammaturgia.it](http://www.drammaturgia.it) (© 2010 Drammaturgia).

<sup>1</sup> S. Ferrone and A. Testaverde, ‘Presentazione’, *Commedia dell’Arte*, no. 1 (2008). At the same time, however, the two scholars emphasise the importance of establishing a common field of enquiry for the elements of text, staging, organization and public reception. I wish to thank my friends and colleagues Roberto Ciancarelli and Luciano Mariti for their advice and for our frequent exchanges of opinion. I have benefited from constant, fundamental discussions with Ines Aliverti. I owe a debt of gratitude to Gerardo Guccini for the first important conference on this subject; and to Siro Ferrone for his precious observations and criticisms. The Greek scholar Maria Paola Funaioli and the musicologist Gloria Staffieri have also been indispensable points of reference.

<sup>2</sup> Benedetto Croce, *Intorno alla “Commedia dell’Arte”*, in *Poesia popolare e poesia d’arte*, Bari, Laterza, 1957 (first edition 1932), pp. 507-518.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. R. Tessari, *La commedia dell’Arte nel Seicento. ‘Industria’ e ‘arte giocosa’ nella civiltà barocca*, Firenze, L. S. Olschki, 1969, pp. 1-8. See also P. Fabbri and S. Monaldini, ‘Dialogo della commedia’, in *Commedia dell’Arte e spettacolo musicale tra Sei e Settecento*, ed. by A. Lattanzi and P. Maione, Napoli, Ed. Scientifica, 2003, pp. 69-87.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. F. Taviani and M. Schino, *Il segreto della commedia dell’arte*, Firenze, La Casa Usher, 1982, p. 435.

obviously often contain the word “arte”. In contemplating the formula, the historian of theatre cannot fail to wonder why, in all the contemporary texts and documents consulted, the word never has the meaning of ‘employment for gain’ which the historiography of the discipline has bestowed on it. To be committed to the ‘proper precepts of the Arte’; ‘to attain to the perfection of the Arte’; pictures which bring pleasure to the unschooled no less than to the ‘Professori dell’Arte’; actors who are as skilled as the ‘traditional Professors of the Arte’: these are all expressions dating from the seventeenth century which indicate a lofty meaning of the term that is difficult to reconcile with the contemporary disdain for commercial enterprise.<sup>5</sup> If “arte” was a noble affair, the semantic resonance of the term must have had a corresponding overtone: “*commedia dell’arte*” would then read as “comedy of excellence”.

Enquiring into origins is, particularly in the theatre, a methodologically debatable operation. As Cruciani argued: ‘Theatre did not originate in, and cannot be explained in terms of, the theatre. In talking about theatre the historiographer becomes aware of the need to identify connections and relationships, looking beyond the theatre but merely in order to return to it’. It may well seem particularly inappropriate to enquire into the origin of an expression that is known to occur in written sources, dating from the mid eighteenth century but believed to date from earlier, and that must have been in use exclusively in acting circles but without a scrap of documentary evidence to prove it. In our defence we can point out that the historiography of theatre is full of instances in which an “error” can prove to be remarkably productive. In this case it provides us with a line of enquiry that does indeed go outside theatre and then returns to it.

Cruciani was drawing on Copeau’s concept of the *tradition de la naissance* in which, rather than seeking to identify the origin of a phenomenon as something new and radical, the focus was on reviving and investigating the *tradition*, meaning the cultural background against which it came into existence. In fact Cruciani went on to say: ‘As historical enquiry, the historiography of drama is fundamentally a dialectic approach [...], theatre and more besides [...]: representations, expressive needs, society, commerce, utopia, modes of behaviour, patterns, visions, literature, music, the plastic and figurative arts, aesthetics, pedagogy and so on’.<sup>6</sup>

There is no doubt that actors were very often also artists. The two dimensions – theatre and art – occurred so often together that commentators have spoken of “a situation of promiscuity” and ‘a constant proclivity for an artistic melting-pot’,<sup>7</sup> and we cannot help asking why this should be so. In fact our initial question is joined by another, with all the appearance of a paradox: could the expression “*commedia dell’arte*” originally have been a literal transcription of the proximity of the two

<sup>5</sup> These citations, recovered during my research on Bernini as actor and author, all come from biographers of Bernini or Bernini himself. See E. Tamburini, ‘Ut theatrum ars. Gian Lorenzo Bernini attore e autore’, *Culture Teatrali*, no. 15 (*Artisti e uomini di teatro*, ed. by E. Tamburini), Autumn 2006, pp. 67-108. See also, in the same issue, E. Tamburini, ‘Commedia dell’Arte’, pp. 11-14.

<sup>6</sup> F. Cruciani, ‘Comparazioni: la «tradition de la naissance»’, *Teatro e storia*, no. 6 (April, 1989), p. 5.

<sup>7</sup> S. Ferrone, ‘Pose sceniche di una famiglia d’attori’, in *Domenico Fetti (1588/89-1623)*, ed. by E. A. Safarik, Milano, Electa, 1996, p. 51. This problem has been at the heart of the research carried out by Sara Mamone, starting with ‘Tra tela e scena. Vita d’Accademia e vita di corte nel primo Seicento fiorentino’, *Biblioteca teatrale*, nos. 37-38 (*Immagini di teatro*, ed. by G. Botti), January-June 1996, pp. 213-241.

dimensions of theatre and art?

It will only be possible to attempt to answer these two questions if we can come up with some source material that goes further back in time. For the time being we can look more closely at the meanings given to the words “commedia” and “arte” in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Meanings which were in fact anything but obvious or unequivocal.

### “Commedia”

The term “commedia” would seem to be the more straightforward of the two. The definition given in the oldest edition of the *Vocabolario degli Accademici della Crusca* (1612) is certainly short and to the point: ‘Poema rappresentativo di private persone [poem concerned with ordinary people]’. It certainly does not express the complexity of either the source, obviously Aristotle’s *Poetics*, or the contemporary debate, which at that period was particularly lively.

One of the first translators of the *Poetics*, Francesco Robortello, pointed out that Aristotle had actually identified not just the two standard genres of tragedy and comedy, in which the characters were respectively better or worse than us, but also a third genre featuring our peers and contemporaries. He went on to recall that the philosopher had associated the three genres with the names of painters, i.e. Polygnotus, Pauson and Dionysus, each of whom was paradigmatic for the genre in question (one of numerous passages in which Aristotle made the parallel between art and theatre explicit).<sup>8</sup> However, Robortello also pointed out that Aristotle did not characterise the genre dealing with peers, namely comedy which, according to Cicero as reported by another leading philologist, the Florentine Pietro Vettori, was *imitatio vitae, speculum consuetudinis, imago veritatis* [imitation of life, mirror of customs, image of truth], able to elicit ‘measured laughter, expressed according to the modalities of *urbanitas* and controlled *iocositas*’. Another commentator who took a similar approach was Giovan Battista Della Casa, the author of the celebrated *Galateo* and friend of Vettori. Thus the third genre was clearly not the *comoedia vetus* popularised by Aristophanes, with real, recognisable characters who expressed themselves with striking vulgarity, but a new form of comedy (as conceived by Terence), featuring characters who exemplified *decorum* in which, ‘on the basis of the behaviour of the collectivity, “models” are constructed which, as the plot progresses, will express a certain virtue or vice through the relevant passions’.<sup>9</sup> This form of comedy which, as

<sup>8</sup> See Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1448a: ‘Since the objects of imitation are men in action, and these men must be either of a higher or a lower type [...] it follows that we must represent men either as better than in real life, or as worse, or as they are. It is the same in painting. Polygnotus depicted men as nobler than they are, Pauson as less noble, Dionysius drew them true to life. Now it is evident that each of the modes of imitation above mentioned will exhibit these differences, and become a distinct kind in imitating objects that are thus distinct [...] The same distinction marks off Tragedy from Comedy; for Comedy aims at representing men as worse, Tragedy as better than in actual life’ (*The Poetics of Aristotle*, ed. and transl. by S. H. Butcher, London, Macmillan and Co., 1902, pp. 11-13).

<sup>9</sup> G. Alfano, *Dioniso e Tiziano. La rappresentazione dei ‘simili’ nel Cinquecento tra “decorum” e sistemi dei generi*, Roma, Bulzoni, 2001, p. 43 (see in particular the first chapter, *Annunci del realismo. Teoria dei “similes” e sistema del comico nei commenti aristotelici*). Cf. also *Francisci Robortelli utinensis in librum Aristotelis de arte poetica explicationes*, in *Officina Laurentii Torrentini*, MDXLVIII, p. 290; and Ludovico Castelvetro, *Poetica d’Aristotele vulgarizzata e sposta*, critical edition based on Vienna (1570) and Basle (1576), ed. by W. Romani, Bari, Laterza, 1977-78.

Vettori remarked, aimed to combine Aristotelian *mimesis* with Latin *utilitas*, did in fact have no equivalent in the two principal genres: since tragedy and comedy featured people who were either better or worse than us, they clearly could not involve identification mechanisms. Ludovico Castelvetro put forward an original solution to the problem, arguing that ‘worse, better, similar’ should be interpreted in terms of social standing (peasants, noblemen, citizens), giving a ‘most perfect’ and ‘pleasing story’, i.e. a realistic fiction free of the wilful sallies loosed by the ‘bow of ancient comedy’. A similar rejection of old stereotypes was expressed by Giraldo Cinthio.<sup>10</sup> The objective, as expressed in particular by Alessandro Piccolomini, was to employ imitation for the benefit of “peers” so as to further their incorporation into ‘the great republics, kingdoms and in every well regulated principedom’. In fact there was a progression from imitation *of* one’s peers to imitation *for* one’s peers.<sup>11</sup>

It seems highly likely that such a form of comedy was also the goal of the actors, at least those who had plays and treatises published during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. They could draw on another distinction which was no less salient, occurring in Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* and frequently reiterated in the treatises: between the comic actor, likened to the ‘witty or facetious man’ who could ‘keep to the middle way’, and the fool who ‘receives less consideration than the comic actor, since he shows no regard either for himself or for others in provoking laughter, and says things which no respectable person would say, and some things he would not even wish to hear’.<sup>12</sup>

In complete coherence with these indications, comic actors referred to themselves as ‘professori dell’arte vivente [professors of living art]’ and to this form of comedy as ‘a living picture’, a mirror in which ‘the images are revealed true to life’ (Domenico Bruni)<sup>13</sup> or again as ‘a popular chronicle, an eloquent written text, an episode staged true to life’ (Nicolò Barbieri).<sup>14</sup> In short, as a comedy they felt to be a living, pulsing imitation of Nature.

With the manifest intent of combining the two dimensions, Andrea Perrucci published *Dell’arte rappresentativa premeditata ed all’improvviso* in 1699. This work was dedicated to comedy in Cicero’s formulation quoted above so that it might contribute *ad morum salubrem expurgationem* [to the health-giving purification of customs] much prized by Aristotle. It extolled that comic art ‘which consists of good acting, with well-chosen words, restrained gestures, and measured actions’, and which, ‘it cannot be denied, belongs also to the art of oratory’.<sup>15</sup>

The innovations introduced by Don Giovanni de’ Medici in the celebrated

<sup>10</sup> See Giovambattista Giraldo Cinthio, *Discorsi intorno al comporre delle commedie e delle tragedie* (1543). Cf. G. Alfano, *Dioniso e Tiziano*, p. 184.

<sup>11</sup> G. Alfano, *Dioniso e Tiziano*, p. 89. In this sense Piccolomini indicated the comedies given by the Intronati in Siena as representative.

<sup>12</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1128a.

<sup>13</sup> Domenico Bruni, *Prologhi. Parte Seconda* (1623). I quote from F. Marotti and G. Romei, *La commedia dell’Arte e la società barocca. La professione del teatro*, Roma, Bulzoni, 1991, p. 385 and pp. 413-415.

<sup>14</sup> Nicolò Barbieri, *La Supplica* (1634). I quote from F. Marotti and G. Romei, *La commedia dell’Arte e la società barocca. La professione del teatro*, p. 608.

<sup>15</sup> Andrea Perrucci, *A Treatise on Acting, from Memory and Improvisation (1699)/Dell’arte rappresentativa premeditata ed all’improvviso*, bilingual edition in English and Italian, transl. and ed. by F. Cotticelli; A. Goodrich Heck; T. F. Heck, Lanham (Maryland); Toronto; Plymouth, The Scarecrow Press, 2008, p. 8. I can recall that if *docere-delectare* was a Horatian principle, we owe the expression *docere-delectare-movere*, originally applied to the art of oratory, to Cicero.

Compagnia dei Confidenti, described by Siro Ferrone, were also probably inspired by the "commedia de' simili".<sup>16</sup> They involved giving more importance to an authorial script, as was the case in *Frutti delle moderne Comedie, et Avvisi a chi le recita* by Pier Maria Cecchini (1628) and *La Supplica* (1634) by Nicolò Barbieri.<sup>17</sup> In both these treatises the plays written by comedians are viewed as moderate, well regulated productions. This emphasis on the *premeditato*, meaning a text that is wholly written down, was also fostered by Giovan Battista Andreini who after the composition of his *Lelio bandito* (1620) reduced the importance of the masked roles and increased that of the unmasked Lovers, doing without most of the stock obscenities, play with dialects and improvisation.<sup>18</sup> Luciano Mariti is surely right in saying that Andreini followed the lead given by the actresses and their interpretation based on the psycho-physical technique of the expression of affects,<sup>19</sup> while Ferdinando Taviani has drawn attention to the distinctive and fundamental part the leading ladies appear to have played in the companies of the "Arte".<sup>20</sup>

The same form of play was undoubtedly the focus of attention in the milieu of the Barberini. We know that the major obstacle to producing a drama featuring the lives of the martyrs was precisely the fact (as their principal theoretician, the Jesuit Tarquinio Galluzzi, observed) that the protagonist would inevitably have to be better than us, which goes to show to what an extent the idea of a play featuring mediocre characters had gained acceptance.

At the same time the general theory of "the middle way" (an Aristotelian concept that was by no means restricted to dramaturgical theory) was adopted in painting by the Carracci and the theoretician who worked with them, Giovan Battista Agucchi, who referred to exactly the same passage in the *Poetics*. Persuaded of the importance of both "the middle way" as regulator of the universe and of the different regional idioms in Italian art, Agucchi highlighted the excellence of Annibale Carracci, who had assimilated these idioms to an extraordinary degree and made his fellow men the

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<sup>16</sup> See S. Ferrone, 'Dalle parti scannate al testo scritto. La Commedia dell'Arte all'inizio del secolo XVII', *Paragone Letteratura*, no. 398 (April, 1983), pp. 38-68, p. 53 ff.; and more in general for a history of Don Giovanni and his dealings with Confidenti, S. Ferrone, *Attori mercanti corsari. La commedia dell'arte in Europa tra Cinque e Seicento*, Torino, Einaudi, 1993, pp. 137-190.

<sup>17</sup> See R. Tessari, 'Il testo postumo. Strategie promozionali e letterarie degli attori professionisti', *Culture Teatrali*, no. 10 (*L'Arte dei comici. Omaggio a Isabella Andreini nel quarto centenario della morte 1604-2004*, ed. by G. Guccini), Spring 2004, pp. 21-24.

<sup>18</sup> See the sixth chapter devoted to Giovan Battista Andreini in S. Ferrone, *Attori mercanti corsari. La commedia dell'arte in Europa tra Cinque e Seicento*, in particular pp. 253-262. Andreini also made an explicit citation from Terence (see *ibid.*, p. 229).

<sup>19</sup> See L. Mariti, *Il comico dell'Arte e Il Convitato di Pietra*, in S. Carandini and L. Mariti, *Don Giovanni o l'estrema avventura del teatro. Il nuovo risarcito Convitato di Pietra di Giovan Battista Andreini*, Roma, Bulzoni, 2003.

<sup>20</sup> See F. Taviani and M. Schino, *Il segreto della commedia dell'arte*.

chief object of his art.<sup>21</sup> In the dedication in the score of the first ever opera, *Euridice*, performed in Florence in 1600, the composer Jacopo Peri declared that he had imitated the *forma mezzana* or “middle way” between melody and “ordinary speech” favoured by the ancients.<sup>22</sup>

Thus it is no coincidence if, in the 1618 edition of Ripa’s highly influential *Iconologia*, *Commedia* is presented by means of three different allegorical figures (which are in fact described, not illustrated), the third in particular being very singular. The first is a woman dressed as a gypsy, with the ready promise of imaginary fortunes, full of ‘facile propositions and arduous actions’; her multi-coloured dress illustrates the entertainment comedies provide for the ‘intellect’; she holds ‘in her right hand [...] a cornet for playing music, in the left a mask, with clogs on her feet’, where the cornet symbolises ‘harmony’, the mask ‘imitation’ and the clogs the footwear of classic comedy. The second figure is a matron with a noble bearing, holding a *tibia* and also shod with clogs;<sup>23</sup> her hair style features ‘many complicated twists and knots’, signifying a wealth and complexity of thoughts, and bears the motto *Describo mores hominum* [I describe men’s customs]. The third figure is *Commedia Vecchia*, which in the 1618 edition of *Iconologia* is the most elaborate of the three, although it did not appear in the first edition of 1593 and was apparently dropped from all later editions. A ‘laughing old woman, with a wrinkled face and unpleasant air [...] a disorderly mass of grey hair, clothes in tatters and patched, in motley colours’; in her right hand she holds ‘some arrows or a whip, with a monkey preceding her, holding up to her a covered basket’ which the old woman opens with her left hand, revealing animals that are ‘ugly and poisonous... vipers, asps, toads and so on’. Obviously Ripa was mindful of Aristotle in making such a clear distinction between the *Commedia Nuova*, more civil and authentic in its reformed guise, and the ancient comedians who ‘entertained the populace [...] by reciting and narrating things which were funny, ridiculous, bitter and satirical in order to denounce and deride the injustices of judges, the avarice and corruption of governors, the bad habits and misadventures of citizens, and suchlike things’, i.e. with a satirical representation of contemporary reality. And if the rags of the *Commedia Vecchia* allude to the low social standing of its characters and the arrows evoke the wilfulness of its mottos, the motley colours show ‘the heterogeneity and disparity of the elements brought together, and the different styles that were expressed accordingly’, while the ‘vile imitation through

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<sup>21</sup> On the question of the representation “de’ simili” for which, as we have seen, Aristotle alluded to the painter Dionysus (cf. note 8) and which was explicitly referred to in the treatise Giovan Battista Agucchi published (written in the years 1607-15), Mosini asked ‘whether Annibale Carracci can be compared to Dionysius, Demetrios and others who imitated objects as they found them in the natural state’: Giovanni Atanasio Mosini [Giovanni Antonio Massani], *Diverse Figure, al numero di ottanta, disegnate di penna nell’ore di ricreazione da Annibale Carracci, e cavate dagli originali da Simone Guilino Parigi*, Roma, L. Grignani, 1646, republished in D. Mahon, *Studies in Seicento Art and Theory*, London, Warburg Institute, 1947, pp. 255-256 and pp. 258-259. On the interpretation of these pages see S. Ginzburg Carignani, *Annibale Carracci a Roma. Gli affreschi di palazzo Farnese*, Roma, Donzelli, 2000; and D. Benati, *Annibale Carracci e il vero*, in *Annibale Carracci*, ed. by D. Benati and E. Riccomini, Milano, Electa, 2006, pp. 18-37.

<sup>22</sup> Peri’s dedication is published in A. Solerti, *Le origini del melodramma*, Torino, Fratelli Bocca, 1903, pp. 45-46.

<sup>23</sup> A sort of flute, used in classical theatre: in the first book of his *Poetics libri septem* (Lione, 1561) Giulio Cesare Scaligero dedicates two sections to the *tibia*.

which vices and horrors were expressed' was embodied in the monkey.<sup>24</sup>

But our enquiry does not end here. We learn from seventeenth-century documents that the word "commedia" was also used as the equivalent for other terms, in particular of theatre, painting and "arte" itself. It is common knowledge that in this period "theatre" did not have the meaning it has today, but referred to a building (from which one can see and be seen), which could be either real or imaginary. And "commedia" could in part be used as a synonym, even though this meaning is not found in any contemporary dictionary. Thus in connection with Horace's *ut pictura poesis* and mimesis, the Florentine artist Giovan Maria Casini was able to identify comedy with painting, according the latter the status of a global and all-inclusive expression of all the Arts, in both the Trivium and the Quadrivium. For Casini comedy was 'Living [...] painting' since it aimed to 'imitate truth with movement, action and the relative effects [of purification]'.<sup>25</sup>

The professional comedian Nicolò Barbieri also undeniably seems to link "commedia" and "arte": 'by the term comedy I always mean to indicate art in general, as it is seen in both comedies and tragedies, pastorals, tragicomedies and other works combining different genres'.<sup>26</sup> Leaving aside for the moment the meaning of "arte", is it not possible that in this expression the two words, comedy and art, are used as synonyms, mutually reinforcing each other?

Finally, for Aristotle the faithful imitation of Nature regulated by Art was the prime objective of Comedy as of all other creative acts, and produced pleasure through the recognition of real phenomena. In the period we are considering this concept enjoyed a particularly ample consensus, but the relationship between Art and Nature gave rise to divergences in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century treatises and considerations of aesthetics. At least from Bembo and Vasari onwards, reference was made to the Nature-Art dialectic in theoretical and academic discussions in every field of artistic expression. Giulio Cesare Scaligero claimed that 'nature is disorder and anarchy, whereas art is method and rule'.<sup>27</sup> The output of the three Carracci artists, and above all Annibale, came in for trenchant criticism for taking as its paradigm 'Nature that is always imperfect, rather than [...] Art which orders and corrects it'.<sup>28</sup> At the turn of the seventeenth century Annibale planned to create a masque based on this dialectic in Rome in which he would side with Nature, as the ancients had done, against Vasari and what Annibale referred to scathingly as 'il fare statuino [making little statues]'.<sup>29</sup>

In fact it was not always a straightforward opposition, but rather involved different levels of excellence which, from the beginning of the Renaissance, were the

<sup>24</sup> These excerpts are from Cesare Ripa, *Nova Iconologia*, Padova, P. P. Tozzi, 1618, pp. 70-73.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. A. Testaverde, "Valente Pittore ed eccellente Poeta": Giovan Maria Casini tra drammaturgia e "primato della Pittura", *Culture Teatrali*, no. 15, p. 24.

<sup>26</sup> Nicolò Barbieri, *La Supplica*, p. 578.

<sup>27</sup> I quote from I. Mamczarz, 'La trattatistica dei Gesuiti e la pratica teatrale al Collegio Romano: Maciej Sarbiewski, Jean Dubrueil e Andrea Pozzo', in *I Gesuiti e i primordi del Teatro Barocco in Europa*, ed. by M. Chiabò and F. Doglio, Roma, Centro Studi sul Teatro Medioevale e Rinascimentale, 1994, p. 356.

<sup>28</sup> Carlo Cesare Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice. Vite de' pittori bolognesi*, Bologna, Per l'Erede di Domenico Barbieri, 1678, I, p. 363.

<sup>29</sup> See G. Perini, 'Disegno romano dall'antico, amplificazioni fiorentine e modello artistico bolognese', in *Cassiano Dal Pozzo*, ed. by F. Solinas, Roma, De Luca, 1989, pp. 211-212.

subject of constant debate. Moreover the ability to avoid making a distinction between the products of Art and of Nature was an element of hermetism, linked to alchemy and the Cabala.<sup>30</sup> This aspiration lay behind not only the decorations but also the collections – bringing together treasures found in nature and elaborated by art – displayed in Francesco I de’ Medici’s celebrated “Studiolo” (1570 circa). Francesco himself was a prince subject to the same “melancholy humour” that characterised artists, and he devoted himself to alchemical and esoteric studies and practices, evoked in the pagan myths adorning his study. The barrel vaulted ceiling, walls and cabinets were decorated with a dense display of iconography, specifically elaborated by Vincenzo Borghini in conjunction with Vasari, featuring elements, humour and topics revolving round a Prometheus figure (Art). Weary of wresting its secret treasures from the earth as in the myth passed down by Pliny, he offers the “philosopher’s stone” to a naked Nature, in keeping with the hermetic beliefs of the Accademia di Careggi.<sup>31</sup> The fact that painting could be considered at one and the same time as a “natural” operation and a hermetic-alchemical practice has been pointed out by several commentators.<sup>32</sup> But the conduct of theatre, or “commedia” as it was referred to in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, could also embody such a conjunction; indeed it may well have been the sphere *par excellence* in which Nature and Art combined found their complete, authentic and lasting expression.

The painters Annibale Carracci and Caravaggio affirmed that they set store above all by Nature rather than Art (unlike their colleagues, following Vasari). Isabella Andreini, a professional actress and also a highly regarded woman of letters, maintained that in both her callings she drew not only on Nature (as was generally the case for comedians) but also on Art: ‘And since in theatres I represented with various expressions both female and male parts, according to the teachings of Nature and Art, so, right from my erstwhile youth, I wrote no less than a thousand pages in different styles’.<sup>33</sup>

Among the many passages one could cite on this same subject, I believe some by Nicolò Barbieri and Domenico Brunì to be particularly significant. Barbieri extols the comedian as ‘a person of intelligence who exploits the gifts which Heaven and

<sup>30</sup> See for example a celebrated treatise Stephan Michelspacher, *Cabala, Spiegel der Kunst und Natur*, Augsburg, 1615; subsequently translated into Latin, *Cabala, speculum artis et naturae, in Alchimia*, [Augsburg], A. Erffurt, 1654.

<sup>31</sup> See M. Dezzi Bardeschi, *Cultura, segno, situazione dell’architetto*, in *Il potere e lo spazio. La scena del principe*, Firenze, Electa, 1980, pp. 87-102; and M. C. Mazzi, ‘Il collezionismo di Francesco I. Dal segreto alchemico all’ordine meccanico’, in *La Rinascenza a Firenze. Il Cinquecento*, ed. by F. Schino, Roma, Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 1981, pp. 166-194.

<sup>32</sup> Maurizio Calvesi’s various treatments of this topic have led on to many others. See for example ‘Arte e alchimia’, *Art Dossier*, no. 4 (edited by him), July-August 1986. Music too favoured the magical process of fusion. Indeed one can say that it was fostered by all the arts, and in particular those in any way linked to the mechanism of “transmutation”.

<sup>33</sup> I quote from F. Vazzoler, ‘La saggezza di Isabella’, *Culture Teatrali*, no. 10, p. 124. The issue provides an up to date account of the actress. See also, on the same Nature-Art dualism, the dedication of her *Lettere* signed by her husband Francesco Andreini (ibid., pp. 127-128). As well as the dedication of Comin Ventura to Signora Emilia Albana Agliarda, dated 14 November 1594: ‘she who as a lofty triumph of Nature and of art, arousing the envy of past ages and furnishing a model for ages to come, is in our day the sole ornament of stages and theatres, and therein dispenses to all the laws and passions as she sees fit’ (I quote from F. Taviani, ‘Bella d’Asia. Torquato Tasso, gli attori e l’immortalità’, *Paragone/Letteratura*, no. 63, February-April 1984, p. 63).

nature have bestowed on him. These are the comedians of worth, who know how to make the most of opportunity and the art'. Or again: 'In this art one needs a natural talent, granted only to a few, and for a hundred who set about acting, ten prove to be no good, even if they are veritable Aristotles when it comes to knowledge and understanding, since they must have elocution, pronunciation and pleasing delivery'.<sup>34</sup> Brunni avers that for the successful comedian 'study is necessary, indeed assiduous study. In addition nature, showing particular regard, must assist the comedian'.<sup>35</sup> Thus the concept of both Nature and Art being embodied in the actor was no casual remark: it is actually a long-standing topos. The same concept is clearly evoked in the few lines of poetry that illustrate an engraving of the actor Francesco Gabrielli (who will be important in what follows).<sup>36</sup> In addition, assertions of the supremacy of the great eighteenth-century actor David Garrick began precisely from the fact that he embodied this admirable union.<sup>37</sup> And one might add that modern historiographers of the theatre have in fact revived this topos in attributing a 'natural artificiality' to the performance of Harlequin in the *Recueil Fossard*.<sup>38</sup>

As it has been observed, the densely decorated "Studiolo" of the alchemist prince Francesco I was designed to evoke and solicit the revelation of Knowledge by means of an alienation of the self, whether in a fit of madness or the assumption of an alien identity. Such an estrangement was seen as a necessary prelude to *coniunctio* with the Divinity.<sup>39</sup> Is it not therefore perfectly plausible that some performances by actors could imply and involve esoteric phenomena? We can recall the celebrated "mad fits" of Isabella Andreini featuring, as it has been pointed out, the metamorphosis and loss of identity that was a keystone in the system elaborated by Plato, Aristotle and Aquinas.<sup>40</sup> Alchemy as an approach to knowledge has been frequently associated with the drama.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Nicolò Barbieri, *La Supplica*, p. 600 and p. 608.

<sup>35</sup> Domenico Brunni, *Fatiche comiche* (1623). I quote from F. Marotti and G. Romei, *La commedia dell'Arte e la società barocca. La professione del teatro*, p. 348.

<sup>36</sup> I refer to a rare engraving by Carlo Biffi (seventeenth century) conserved in the Raccolta Bertarelli, Milano (published in *Enciclopedia dello Spettacolo*, at 'Gabrielli, Francesco'). The image also documents Gabrielli's musical talents.

<sup>37</sup> In a contemporary eighteenth century poem. Cf. M. I. Aliverti, *La naissance de l'acteur moderne*, Paris, Gallimard, 1998, p. 143.

<sup>38</sup> I quote from Franco Ruffini (discussing Ferdinando Taviani) reported by F. Marotti, 'La Commedia dell'Arte. Studi recenti e prospettive', in *Origini della Commedia Improvvisa o dell'Arte. Convegno di studi, Roma, 12-14 October 1995; Anagni, 15 October 1995*, ed. by M. Chiabò and F. Doglio, Roma, Centro Studi sul Teatro Medioevale e Rinascimentale, 1996, p. 27.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. M. Dezzi Bardeschi, 'Lo Studiolo di Palazzo Vecchio: l'Invenzione e i Concetti', in *Lo Studiolo di Francesco I dei Medici e il suo doppio*, ed. by G. Portoghesi Massobrio, Roma, Apollodoro, 1986, pp. 29-55. Dezzi Bardeschi recalls the words of Campanella (*Metaphysica*, par. I): 'Knowing means to alienate oneself; alienating oneself means to go mad, lose one's identity and take on another, alien one'. So did perhaps the mad fits of actresses, notably those of Isabella, also reflect this type of motivation?

<sup>40</sup> See C. Molinari, 'L'altra faccia del 1589. Isabella Andreini e la sua "pazzia"', in *Musica e Spettacolo. Scienze dell'uomo e della natura*, Firenze, L. S. Olschki, 1983, pp. 567-571.

<sup>41</sup> See for example the very recent M. Schino, *Alchimisti della scena: teatri laboratorio del Novecento europeo*, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 2009, in which the image of alchemy as a process of genuine transmutation is adopted to express the no less radical transformation pursued in twentieth-century theatre-laboratories.

**“Arte”**

Now we come to the truly arduous task of investigating the word “arte”. As we have seen, its meaning is in fact substantially different to what is generally assumed by historians of the theatre. Rather than having any interest in reviving “arte” in the sense of a lofty and disinterested expression of taste which Nicoll set against Croce’s interpretation of the term,<sup>42</sup> we wish to ascertain its meaning in the anthropological sense by studying it in the context of phrases in which it was actually used. It may well have maintained the medieval meaning of *métier*, trade or craft during the seventeenth century, but I believe it is true to say that from the Renaissance onwards “arte” much more often had a lofty meaning. After all, as early as the fourteenth century we find Boccaccio explaining: ‘The difference between *métier* and art is that the former is an exercise in which no manual activity dependent on ingenuity is used; [...] whereas in art not only manual activity but also ingenuity and the application of artifice are used’.<sup>43</sup> This meaning, backed up by other occurrences, seems to me fundamental, and is eminently suited to designating an activity like theatre in which the two dimensions are clearly combined. At the same time, it is also undoubtedly a reason for the word’s ambiguity. If during the Middle Ages the Arts became so important that they replaced the classical Muses, there must be a residue in the term “arte” of that inseparable conjunction of manual and intellectual operations that was already implied in the classical *techne* and *ars*.<sup>44</sup> Thus in Leone Ebreo’s *Dialoghi d’amore* “Arte” is one of the five ‘habiti umani’ or intellectual exercises (together with Prudence, Intellect, Science and Knowledge) that lead to the achievement of Virtue and Wisdom. It is ‘an exercise governed by reason’ but also a manual and ‘corporal’ activity, and hence inclusive of ‘all the mechanical arts’.<sup>45</sup>

In the 1603 edition of Ripa’s *Iconologia* the figure for *Arte* is a woman clad in green (a clear reference to Nature) holding in her right hand a brush and a chisel (Painting and Sculpture) and in the left a stake planted in the ground which enables the proper growth of a ‘supple and tender sapling’.<sup>46</sup> This presents an art from which architecture has been omitted, making it essentially mimetic (and Aristotelian), and at the same time an art as ‘artifice, discovered by human ingenuity, which is greatly

<sup>42</sup> Cf. A. Nicoll, *The World of Harlequin*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1963.

<sup>43</sup> Giovanni Boccaccio, *Il Comento sopra la Commedia di Dante Alighieri* (2,118). I quote from the entry ‘arte’ in S. Battaglia, *Grande Dizionario della lingua italiana*, 21 vols., Torino, UTET, 1961-2004, I, p. 705. According to the *Vocabolario degli Accademici della Crusca* (1612), *artefice*, *artista*, *artigiano* are synonyms, with the sense of ‘performer of a mechanical art’. The concept of *arti meccaniche* as opposed to *arti liberali* had been discussed by the Florentine Benedetto Varchi in 1546 (see *Lezzione nella quale si disputa della maggioranza delle arti e qual sia più nobile, la scultura o la pittura*, published in *Trattati d’arte del Cinquecento fra Manierismo e Controriforma*, 3 vols., ed. by P. Barocchi, Bari, Laterza, 1960, I, p. 18). The author explained that they were not to be interpreted in the sense of Aristotle’s *Mechanics*, ‘nor in the common sense of mechanical, meaning mercenary or wholly base and abject’, but as ‘manual, in which it is necessary to use the body in some way’. Hence here the concept is not necessarily negative (as opposed to the mercenary activity, qualified as ‘base and abject’).

<sup>44</sup> A. Surgers, *Scenografie del teatro occidentale*, ed. by G. Di Palma and E. Tamburini, Roma, Bulzoni, 2002 (first edition 2000), p. 22.

<sup>45</sup> Leone Ebreo, *Dialoghi d’amore* (1535). I quote from M. Calvesi, ‘La «morte di bacio». Saggio sull’ermetismo di Giorgione’, *Storia dell’arte*, nos. 7-8 (1970), p. 202. The same distinctions, derived from Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*, are also discussed by Varchi in *Lezzione nella quale si disputa della maggioranza delle arti e qual sia più nobile, la scultura o la pittura* (pp. 6-8).

<sup>46</sup> See the engraved figure of a nobleman in Cesare Ripa, *Iconologia ovvero Descrizione di diverse Immagini cavate dall’antichità, & di propria inventione*, Roma, L. Faeti, 1603, relative entry.

superior to Nature and makes the most difficult things quite easy'.<sup>47</sup> This art facilitates manual activities through the exercise of 'ingenuity', and both these concepts were viewed as essentially noble.

Even in the 1612 edition of the *Vocabolario degli Accademici della Crusca* referred to earlier we do not find "arte" defined as trade or craft. The first and most prevalent meaning is that of an 'exercise derived from the experience of being able to operate according to reason with respect to any subject, such as the seven liberal and mechanical arts', where operating according to reason in a subject means observing the set of rules governing any art, 'liberal or mechanical', here too with implicit reference to Aristotle.<sup>48</sup> Nor do the subsequent seventeenth-century editions add much that is new. In the entry 'Arte' of his *Vocabolario dell'arte del disegno nel quale si esplicano i propri termini e voci, non solo della Pittura, Scultura, & Architettura; ma ancora di altre Arti a quelle subordinate, e che abbiano per fondamento il Disegno* (1681), Baldinucci in practice reiterates the definition given by the Florentine Academy, although the title of his work indicates that he was familiar not only with the latter's theoretical tenets but also with the sense of the term then current. Even though the semantic field was truly vast, there is no doubt that, for scholars at least, "arte" was a noble term for which the touchstone was Aristotle's *Poetics*.

According to Giasone De Nores Aristotle 'established the corpus of the poetic art' on the basis of just three 'types of poetry': comedy, tragedy and the heroic poem, genres selected in relation to their social utility.<sup>49</sup> 'Each art has its own purpose' Guarini proclaimed, or rather it has two: one he calls instrumental, associated with the form of its subject matter, and the other, more important and comprehensive, he styled 'architectonic'.

In tragic and comic art – we can note how "arte" combined with the adjective "tragic" or "comic" means tragedy or comedy; thus if "commedia" could be used in the place of "arte", in a certain sense the inverse was also true – these purposes co-existed. In comedy the instrumental purpose was the Aristotelian principle already referred to, 'imitating those actions of everyday people whose shortcomings provoke laughter'; the architectonic purpose, even though Guarini does not refer to it as such, can be recognised as 'cheering our spirits' and 'dissipating [...] that morose, brooding humour which [...] all too often makes us obtuse and slow to act'. In the case of tragic art, both purposes had been set out by Aristotle: the instrumental was the 'imitation of some terrible, heart-wringing case', and the architectonic the 'purging of the terror and compassion'. Since tragicomedy and pastoral were both composite genres they were not assigned purposes, but these can be plausibly deduced and in

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<sup>47</sup> An illustration of the fact that "artifice", which undoubtedly also covers the system of the stake used in agriculture, was regarded as noble can be seen in the entry (accompanied by an engraving of a young man of noble bearing) in the 1630 edition of Ripa (*Della più che novissima iconologia*).

<sup>48</sup> *Vocabolario degli Accademici della Crusca*, Venezia, C. Alberti, 1612. The second meaning covers skill, artifice, astuteness, fraud; the third and apparently last refers to a legal position concerning craftsmen.

<sup>49</sup> Giasone De Nores, *Discorso intorno a que' principj, cause ed accrescimenti che la Commedia, la Tragedia, ed il Poema Eroico ricevono dalla Filosofia Morale e Civile, e da' Governatori delle Repubbliche* (1586-87). I quote from *Iconologia ovvero Descrizione di diverse Immagini cavate all'antichità* ed. by R. Zacchi, Napoli, Liguori, 2006, pp. 17-18.

general have to do with utility.<sup>50</sup> When he comes to make more specific references to staging, Battista Guarini uses the word “arte” in the specific context of the rules and problems pertaining to the various dramatic genres.

Finally Angelo Ingegneri, an unconventional Venetian literato employed as first choragus at the Teatro Olimpico in Vicenza and also by Cardinal Aldobrandini and in the Savoia household, has no doubts about the matter. It is not enough for a poem to immediately ‘gain a universal consensus’ if on closer inspection it turns out that the “favola”, “disposizione” and “decoro” are not properly handled, making it ‘devoid of art and invention (I am speaking of the true art, and invention according to the rules of this art), and (what can be even more outrageous) unfit for the stage and representation’. Thus the true art is what was established by Aristotle, with a creative process in five parts, including *memoria* and *actio*, as specified in his *Rhetoric*. The logical implication of this is that a composition which is not suited to being staged will inevitably be deemed in some way defective by the “experts”. On this unequivocal premise Ingegneri made a ground-breaking attempt to elaborate a theory concerning Representative Poetry, meaning verses written for the stage.

He maintained that the goal of the “dramatic poets” is for ‘their compositions to be represented’; but they are reluctant to set about them since

comedies which are learnt by heart, being patently ridiculous, are no longer in favour, except when the most sumptuous and costly costumes and stagings make them remarkable. It is the mercenary actors, who with an illusion to the Venetian coin used to be known as “della Gazzetta”, that have been responsible for this. Over a long period of time and with constant application they have made the ridiculous so extreme that it is difficult to find a term of comparison for those who abhor such obscenities which the actors pursue most assiduously. However, in saying this I do not wish to offend those who are less foul-mouthed and altogether more circumspect.<sup>51</sup>

As a consequence we have to be grateful to the few who have attempted the task: ‘wealthy companies, as in Venice’, ‘generous academies, as in Vicenza’ and ‘magnificent theatres, like the Olimpico’. This moralistic prejudice finally induces him to reject the much loved pastorals ‘on account of the tender dialogues that [...] they sometimes contain’ which risk ‘corrupting manners’, and to prefer tragedy, even if ‘the difficulty of the rules laid down in this respect by the *Maestri dell’arte* ends up by putting off any comedian who might be interested.<sup>52</sup>

Thus the authors of these treatises affirm “arte” as a noble term, associated with the rules and genres of drama set out by Aristotle and codified by the literati. It is certainly not ‘the mercenary actors who used to be known as “della Gazzetta”’, as Ingegneri refers to them, who can appear in quality comedies; or rather, only the best

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<sup>50</sup> Battista Guarini, *Compendio della poesia tragicomica tratto dai duo Verati. Per opera dell'autore del Pastor fido, colla giunta di molte cose spettanti all'arte* (1601). I quote from *Iconologia ovvero Descrizione di diverse Imagini cavate all'antichità*, pp. 21-24.

<sup>51</sup> Angelo Ingegneri, *Della Poesia rappresentativa & del modo di rappresentare le Favole Sceniche* (1598). I quote from F. Marotti, *Lo spettacolo dall'Umanesimo al Manierismo. Teoria e tecnica*, Milano, Feltrinelli, 1974, pp. 273-275.

<sup>52</sup> From Ingegneri's dedicatory letter to the apostolic protonotary Girolamo Fosco, prefacing the tragedy *Tomiri* (Napoli, 1607). In fact at this late stage of his life Ingegneri appears to have taken an interest almost exclusively in tragedy. Cf. L. Riccò, “Ben mille pastorali”. *L'itinerario dell'Ingegneri dal Tasso al Guarini e oltre*, Roma, Bulzoni, 2004, p. 336 ff.

among them can, found in the 'wealthy companies' or 'generous academies', professionals and amateurs whom Ingegneri brackets together on account of their practice of "high-brow" theatre, designed to achieve that cultural and social elevation envisaged by both Plato and Aristotle. Nowadays many scholars would dispute that there ever was in fact a clear distinction between the two dimensions of amateur and professional theatre.

As is well known, improvisation is a very important feature, associated above all with the professional Italian comic actors. Nonetheless Massimo Troiano has shown that at the court in Munich in 1569 *una commedia all'improvviso all'italiana* was performed for the Prince's wedding by a company of amateurs.<sup>53</sup> This comment is difficult to reconcile with the standard historiographic categories, for it demonstrates that improvisation, while typically Italian, could perfectly well be practised by amateurs.

Nicolò Barbieri also makes a clear distinction between Italian actors and those of other nationalities, extolling the former's skills in improvisation and their vast culture:

All the foreign actors stage tragic works with comic intermezzi, and show no regard for the proper rules of the Greeks and Romans; but the Italians do tragedies, popular comedies mixing tragic and comic, and other histories also made up in one style and the other, and come close to the rules laid down by Horace and Aristotle. What is more, they act using improvisation, something that other nations have still never been able to do: so that their plays are almost universally appreciated, and are so traditional that custom dictates how they must be played, with rules apparently fixed once and for all.<sup>54</sup>

In fact these rules were practically identical to the ones that had been published by scholars and Academicians.

The Italians were remarkably skilful at organizing a performance, *concertare*, in next to no time. 'A famous Spanish comedian named Adriano, who came to Naples with other [actors] to put on their comedies, could not understand how a comedy could be produced simply by coordinating several characters and staging it [*diponerla*] in less than an hour'.<sup>55</sup> The verb *diponerla* means dividing the play up into acts – *dispositio* in rhetoric – and staging it in a succession of scenes. In music too a talent for improvisation appears to have been a uniquely Italian prerogative. The French composer André Maugars recorded how, in order to make his mark, he had to overcome not a little scepticism: 'they doubted whether, being French, I was capable of exposing and varying a subject while improvising'.<sup>56</sup>

The goal was to maintain a high standard of improvisation without resorting to repetition, and there is no doubt that even in the period we are considering it was no simple matter. In 1640 Leopoldo de' Medici remarked for example that what then passed for improvisation was in fact nothing of the sort.<sup>57</sup> Proper improvisation was

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<sup>53</sup> Massimo Troiano, *Dialoghi ne' quali si narrano le cose più notabili fatte nelle Nozze dello Illustriss. & Eccell. Principe Guglielmo* (1569). I quote from D. Vianello, *L'arte del buffone. Maschere e spettacolo tra Italia e Baviera nel XVI secolo*, Roma, Bulzoni, 2005, p. 391.

<sup>54</sup> Nicolò Barbieri, *La Supplica*, p. 624 and p. 673.

<sup>55</sup> Andrea Perrucci, *A Treatise on Acting, from Memory and Improvisation*, p. 101. This idea was a commonplace that would merit further investigation. Cf. F. Taviani and M. Schino, *Il segreto della commedia dell'arte*, p. 303 ff.

<sup>56</sup> I quote from A. Ghislanzoni, *Luigi Rossi. Biografia e analisi delle opere*, Torino, Bocca, 1954, p. 38.

<sup>57</sup> Cf. C. Molinari, *La Commedia dell'Arte*, Milano, Mondadori, 1985, p. 37.

very different to what slapdash actors were wont to do ‘to make the parts fit the scheme [...] to the best, or should one say the worst, of their ability’, as the Genovese literato and nobleman Giovanni Ambrosio Marini put it in his presentation of *Calloandro*;<sup>58</sup> or to the one Luigi Riccoboni “abhorred” because ‘for the ignorant, vulgar comedian [...] all too often improvisation merely enabled him to introduce obscenities into his speeches’;<sup>59</sup> or again to the sort of spontaneous improvisation that came naturally to an uneducated performer, dismissed by Goldoni.<sup>60</sup> On the contrary, in the sixteenth and seventeenth century it was viewed by professionals and scholars alike as a mark of excellence, bringing the two dimensions together and justifying the aspiration for “arte” to be incorporated into the academic context of “high-brow” culture. As Apollonio has observed, ‘improvisation in the theatre goes hand in hand with improvisation in the other arts in the Baroque age, and above all in literature and music’.<sup>61</sup> In music the *Impromptu* probably drew on ancient practices, its composition being related to the practice of *centonare*, i.e. composing using the well known expressions of others: such a montage technique is at the heart of actors’ improvisation, as is seen in particular in the versification of Isabella Andreini.<sup>62</sup> This may well explain how Basilio Locatelli, a member of the Accademia degli Umoresti in Rome, could consider the Academician *virtuoso* and *faceto* like the true comedian; moreover, as Luciano Mariti and Ferruccio Marotti have noted, the practice of improvisation appears to have been quite happily endorsed.<sup>63</sup> It

<sup>58</sup> See D. Conrieri, *La rielaborazione teatrale di romanzi nel Seicento. Considerazioni e prime indagini*, in *Scritture e riscritture secentesche*, Lucca, M. Pacini Fazzi, 2005, p. 152. It is all too obvious that here the sense of improvisation to a high standard has been completely lost.

<sup>59</sup> ‘No one had a greater loathing than I myself for the unseemly custom of performing comedies based on improvisation, yet possibly nobody made more use of this expedient than I did. For an actor who is diligent, well mannered and not ignorant, I recognise that invention is not dangerous, and indeed can serve as a stimulus to speak well and acquire knowledge. But I have always abhorred it, because I know from experience that for the ignorant, vulgar actor (and alas there are such), improvising only serves as a way of introducing facile obscenities into his speeches; and in the case of those without talent, however much care they take to speak properly, the outcome is banal and boring. In consequence, all too often an excellent play has become intolerably bad in passing from one actor to another, since the contents of the scenes were no longer adorned with spirit and wit, as they had been when it had first been favourably received’. Luigi Riccoboni, *Discorso della Commedia all'improvviso e scenari inediti*, ed. by I. Mamczarz, Milano, Il Polifilo, 1973, p. 30.

<sup>60</sup> Obviously the reference is to Goldoni’s play *Il teatro comico* (1750) in which the expression “commedia dell’arte” is documented for the first time. In the preceding quotations it is clear how the expression came to indicate the progressive degeneration of a certain form of theatre (see note 58 and 59).

<sup>61</sup> M. Apollonio, ‘L’improvvisazione nella Commedia dell’Arte’, *Rivista di studi teatrali*, nos. 9/10 (1954), pp. 26-27.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. I. Innamorati, ‘Il riuso della parola: ipotesi sul rapporto tra generici e centoni’, in *Origini della Commedia Improvvisa o dell’Arte*, p. 166. As the author shows, *centonare*, meaning the practice of dissimulated or ostentatious plagiary involving a technique of montage, aimed primarily at provoking marvel, was also adopted by literati, albeit with strong misgivings. One can think of the diatribes that unfailingly accompanied Marino, a convinced adept of these practices. Cf. E. Tamburini, ‘Dietro la scena: comici, cantanti e letterati nell’Accademia romana degli Umoresti’, *Studi secenteschi*, no. 50 (2009), pp. 103-112.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. L. Mariti, *Commedia ridicolosa. Comici di professione dilettanti editoria teatrale nel Seicento*, Roma, Bulzoni, 1978; and F. Marotti and G. Romei, *La commedia dell’Arte e la società barocca. La professione del teatro*, p. 693 and p. 710. The whole of the recent study of Roberto Ciancarelli is based on these shared practices in the theatre (*Sistemi teatrali nel Seicento. Strategie di comici e dilettanti nel teatro italiano del XVII secolo*, Roma, Bulzoni, 2008).

may also account for the famous professional actress, Marina Dorotea Antonazzoni, a member of the Compagnia dei Confidenti, aspiring to take over the mantle of Isabella not as an actress in improvised comedies but only in the *commedie premeditate*.<sup>64</sup> This may indicate a specific design on the part of Don Giovanni de' Medici to raise the cultural level of the Compagnia dei Confidenti, involving among other things greater adhesion to the rules.

### **Extensions**

If we extend the scope of our enquiry we can find further evidence for this high-brow sense of "arte" bringing together professionals and amateurs. In the preface to his translation of Dürer's *Della simmetria de i corpi umani*, published in 1591, the Venetian nobleman Giovan Paolo Gallucci declared he wished to demonstrate the 'resemblance of painting to poetry' and that 'painting is an art' because 'both these arts, one with words and the other with colours, imitate natural and artificial phenomena'.<sup>65</sup> Thus while there is no question as to the status of poetry as "arte", in the case of painting this needs to be demonstrated, and the most salient argument is that both imitate 'natural and artificial phenomena'. Gallucci attributes the greatest merit to Alfred Dürer, who in his opinion 'subjected painting to rules and rationality' by identifying hard and fast rules for proportion in depicting the human body, thereby doing away with the mere 'judgement of the eyes' advocated by Michelangelo, which was to lead to widespread abuses and in particular the *maniera* popularised by Vasari. It was thanks to Dürer that painting could be considered an art: for painters too, "arte" meant subjecting one's work to precise rules and rational criteria, rejecting what was perceived as the entirely arbitrary 'pleasure' or 'desire'.<sup>66</sup> In the 1580s even figurative art became caught up in the vogue for possessing a body of rules and the need for a method which could bring together and order the 'immutable fundamentals of the art'.<sup>67</sup> At the same time, however, in painting "arte" could also correspond to the dictates of the Counter-Reformation which set out primarily to correct painters' defects, just as in the theatre it set out to eliminate obscenities.<sup>68</sup>

To extend our scope still further, we can turn to music. In a letter dated 11 November 1623 the Florentine Antimo Galli speaks of a dispute a few months previously between himself and Marino as to which was the better of two remarkable singers: La Cecchina (Francesca Caccini, daughter of the Roman composer Giulio Caccini, a protagonist of the new genre of opera) and Adriana Basile (sister of the Neapolitan literato Giovan Battista Basile, author of the *Cunto de li cunti*). While Marino had initially been an enthusiastic champion of the latter, he

<sup>64</sup> Francesco Gabrielli speaks of this in a letter from Ferrara dated 6 January 1627 to Antonio Costantini. Cf. S. Ferrone, *Attori mercanti corsari. La commedia dell'arte in Europa tra Cinque e Seicento*, p. 175.

<sup>65</sup> I quote from M. Rossi, 'Un metodo per le passioni negli scritti d'arte del tardo Cinquecento', in *Il volto e gli affetti. Fisiognomica ed espressione nelle arti del Rinascimento*, ed. by A. Pontremoli, Firenze, L. S. Olschki, 2003, pp. 83-102.

<sup>66</sup> 'rather according to pleasure and desire than to reason or art'. Guglielmo Ebreo di Pesaro, *De pratica seu arte tripudii - On the Practice or Art of Dancing*, ed. by B. Sparti, Oxford, Clarendon, 1993, p. 104.

<sup>67</sup> M. Rossi, 'Un metodo per le passioni negli scritti d'arte del tardo Cinquecento', p. 99.

<sup>68</sup> Rules and morality appear closely interlinked: the most obvious case is that of Barbieri's *La Supplica*.

had had to revise his opinion on hearing a scintillating improvisation which La Cecchina performed on lines from his own *Adone*, a performance that the ‘beautiful Adriana’ was not able to match. He was thus forced to admit that ‘[la Cecchina] has much more expertise, and mastery of the art, whereas [Adriana] has much the better voice, and more skill in expressing sentiments’.<sup>69</sup>

Thus ‘mastery of the art’ involves assimilating the rules to such an extent that one is able to perform a skilful and “lofty” improvisation. Other qualities, such as beauty of the voice and truth to sentiment, are seen as different attributes, the latter in particular appearing to foster a truth which does not merit the same respect. Are we not once again confronted with the dichotomy of Art and Nature?

Drawing on the visual evidence of images, Ripa’s presentation of “Arte” in *Iconologia* constantly embodies this ambivalence. In portrait painting even Vasari required both resemblance and *inventio*, meaning the appropriate inventiveness. During the Renaissance resemblance was not universally valued: Michelangelo’s aversion to portrait painting is well known. He held to the “Idea” rather than to the imitation of reality, as did his disciples. Nonetheless, in the wake of the great artists of the sixteenth century and the intellectualistic expressions of the manieristi, new significance was given to the representation of reality, not least by adopting truth to sentiment from the lower arts. In fact this acted as a vital injection to high-brow culture, proving a powerful means of involving a new segment of public, and artistic and literary production began to be reshaped accordingly.<sup>70</sup> This took place at the turn of the seventeenth century and can clearly be seen in the portraits painted *al naturale* or *dal vivo* – playwrights used very similar expressions for their comedies, as we have seen – introduced for the first time into “high-brow” culture by Agostino, Ludovico and above all Annibale Carracci. The latter remarked that he was attracted by a ‘spontaneity’ that is ‘true to life, not [simply] life-like, and natural, not artificial or forced’, and this tenet of truthfulness was the foundation for the famous Carracci Academies (even though, as we shall see, when necessary they were perfectly capable of expressing themselves in other idioms).<sup>71</sup>

Music too can be seen as being divided between those who, like the Bolognese theoretician Giovanni Maria Artusi, believed in a separate, autonomous evolution favouring pleasure and beauty, and those who, like Monteverdi, set out to develop above all the extraordinary possibilities of expressing the affects or sentiments. Giulio Caccini declared that he had found inspiration for his *nuova maniera* in some popular songs featuring ‘above all colloquial words’ which were not well thought of by *litterati*.<sup>72</sup> Nonetheless there can be no doubt that, alongside some forceful

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<sup>69</sup> I quote from the letter published in A. M. Crinò, ‘Virtuose di canto e poeti a Roma e a Firenze nella prima metà del Seicento’, *Studi seicenteschi*, no. 1 (1960), p. 180. La Cecchina was in fact the first woman to compose the music for an opera, *La liberazione di Ruggiero da Pisolina di Alcina*, given in the Medicean villa of Poggio Imperiale in 1625, which may well also have been the first Italian opera to be performed abroad, in Poland.

<sup>70</sup> Cf. E. Fubini, *Musica e pubblico dal Rinascimento al Barocco*, Torino, Einaudi, 1984. This came about because the aim was no longer simply *docere* and *delectare*, but increasingly, according to Cicero’s dictum, *movere*, meaning that the touchstone was the great, all-embracing art of rhetoric.

<sup>71</sup> I quote from Carlo Cesare Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice. Vite de’ pittori bolognesi*, I, p. 366. See note 21.

<sup>72</sup> Giulio Caccini, *Ai lettori*, dedication in *Euridice* (1600). I quote from A. Solerti, *Le origini del melodramma*, p. 58. It took courage on the part of Caccini to make this claim, because at that time it was only the approval of the *litterati* that mattered.

assertions of the claims of realism, artifice, in which the verbal text was perhaps the main focus of interest, was the chief preoccupation of the leading literati of the age, from Tesauro to Marino.<sup>73</sup> And for a long time, in treatises on theatre, priority continued to be given to the set of rules governing each discipline that responded to the "arte" (going back to Aristotle), which was seen as constituting the ultimate authority.

The cities of Florence and Rome were the setting for important developments involving the affects and the interpretation of nature in the pursuit of a dialogue between the various arts.<sup>74</sup> The new genre of opera was hailed as the supreme product of this dialogue, and drama was a constant implicit point of reference. For Giulio Caccini, who pursued a career as singer and composer in both cities, singing was 'an art that will not tolerate mediocrity' and requires 'principally three things': 'the affect, variety of the same, and *sprezzatura*'. Thus on one hand, as Plato established, it involves 'the imitation of the conceits contained in the words', each imitation performed with the most appropriate variations and the necessary naturalness of manner because 'noble singing cannot issue from counterfeited voices'; and on the other hand a 'noble *sprezzatura*', meaning that the 'art of counterpoint' had to be concealed as far as possible so as to banish all trace of 'constriction and aridity' and make the singing 'pleasant, untrammelled and melodious'. In fact, he remarks, 'there is no one quality in particular that makes for excellence in a singer, but rather, all the qualities combined', and thus 'the musician needs a certain discrimination which will at times prevail over the "arte"'.<sup>75</sup> Similarly Pietro Della Valle observed that according to that learned scholar Quintilian, [...] one must know the rules of the art in order to perform well, and whoever does not know them is truly ignorant; but also very ignorant is the performer who on occasion does not know how, or does not dare, to go against the rules, at the right time and in the right manner, in order to do better. According to Vincenzo Giustiniani 'one can truly say that nature plays a large part in the effects produced by music, also with the aid of artifice'. After emphasising the importance of Rome on account of the enormous number of extraordinary singers who learnt their trade there, Filippo Vitali described a performance in which the singers 'gave meaning to the words by means of vivacious gestures: all their movements were pleasing, necessary and natural, and you could tell from their expressions that they were really feeling in their

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<sup>73</sup> Obviously I have in mind Galilei's prose in the "Scienza Nuova". The clear prevalence of artifice among literati probably reflects the fact that they tended to belong to the upper classes and would thus automatically turn their backs on "low-brow" culture, also in terms of poetics. This corporativism was to have far-reaching consequences.

<sup>74</sup> The importance of Rome as the birthplace of opera, not least in view of developments in Venice, has been generally under-rated. It should be recalled that Girolamo Mei (the theoretician behind Giovanni de' Bardi's theories), Emilio del Cavaliere and Giulio Caccini were active in Rome, and as we shall see in the text, thanks to the *cappelle musicali* that flourished in the city Rome produced an enormous quantity of singers of outstanding quality. Cf. G. Staffieri, *L'opera italiana: una guida*, forthcoming by Carocci.

<sup>75</sup> In the above-mentioned dedication of his *Euridice* Giulio Caccini, native of Rome but active above all in Florence, whose daughter was the talented singer Francesca, spells out how the new manner of singing features not virtuoso display and counterpoint but the rendering of the affects and the correspondence between words and music. The analogies with the world of actors are clear, both in terms of the problem of interpretation and for the sense given to the term "arte". I quote from A. Solerti, *Le origini del melodramma*, pp. 59-61, pp. 65-66 and pp. 74-75.

hearts those passions they were uttering with their mouths'.<sup>76</sup> It is obvious that actors were the models for this ability, and this must have stood as something of an admonishment to those who had always been convinced of music's superiority, the only one of the arts whose place among the liberal arts had never been disputed. In fact 'singing [...] dressed up in comedies' was seen as rather dishonourable for a singer: the celebrated Leonora Baroni never performed in a theatre. The last word on this topic comes from the Florentine author of *Il Corago*:

Above all, to be a good operatic performer one should also be a good actor, for we have seen that some who have been particularly gifted in acting have done marvels when they have also known how to sing. On the question of whether one should choose a person who is not too bad a musician and a good actor, or alternatively an excellent musician who has little or no talent for acting, we have found that, while a few connoisseurs of music prefer the best singers even if they do not take much part in the action, the majority of theatre goers are more content with first-rate actors, even though they have a mediocre voice and musical ability.<sup>77</sup>

The taste of a few 'connoisseurs' against the enjoyment of one and all: put like this, nowadays there could be no two ways about it.<sup>78</sup> But at the time it was a totally new departure to speak out in such terms, and marked a true anthropological paradigm shift. This preference can be attributed not only to the fact that opera tended to be performed at court but also to an increasing preoccupation with achieving universal emotional appeal. There is no doubt that in view of such a trend Nature, and indeed actors, were bound to acquire greater consideration.

### **Actors and Fools**

The rules of the art in drama seem to have been based on the *Poetics* and elaborated by refined literati such as Francesco Robortello and Ludovico Castelvetro, while Isabella Andreini appears to have succeeded better than anyone else in the arduous task of combining the 'elegant and cultivated style' of the Academies with the protean and "natural" talent of her celebrated imitations. In her dialogue *Amoroso contrasto sopra la comedia* a cultured lady, Ersilia, criticises the travelling players and *mercenarii* who earned their living from theatre as being only interested in creating sensational effects and making the greatest profit. Against them she advocates the study of Aristotle's 'art of poetry' with its relative rules as holding the key to true comedy. However, Ersilia's interlocutor Diomede, a writer of *commedie distese*, plays that are entirely scripted, also speaks out in favour of the status of his activity: 'the

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<sup>76</sup> Pietro Della Valle, *Della musica dell'età nostra che non è punto inferiore, anzi è migliore di quella dell'età passata* (1640); Vincenzo Giustiniani, *Discorso sopra la musica de' suoi tempi* (1628); Filippo Vitali, *Al Benevolo lettore*, dedication in *Aretusa* (1620). I quote from A. Solerti, *Le origini del melodramma*, p. 120, p. 153 and p. 94. Such a maturity of interpretation reveals long practice.

<sup>77</sup> *Il Corago, o vero alcune osservazioni per mettere bene in scena le composizioni drammatiche*, ed. by P. Fabbri and A. Pompilio, Firenze, L. S. Olschki, 1984, p. 91.

<sup>78</sup> The concern to gain the approval of the uneducated emerges clearly perhaps for the first time in the *Dialogo della pittura* by the Venetian Ludovico Dolce. He attributes to Aretino the provocative statement that 'it is the multitude that generally bestows fame and reputation on poets, orators, actors, musicians and also, to a much greater degree, on painters' (in *Trattati d'arte del Cinquecento fra Manierismo e Controriforma*, I, p. 157).

poet [...] has to act like the painter (called in fact a mute poet), who first makes a rough sketch of the figure he intends to paint, then perfects it, giving it features by means of his paints'.<sup>79</sup> This method and the example were also taken from Aristotle, as was the aspiration to achieve plots based on *peripeteia* and recognition; while when Diomede speaks of his art as drawing on 'sensibility and not based on mere actions' he is alluding to new perceptions that belong in those depths of the human soul that, at least from Tasso onwards (and from Correggio in painting), became the object of enquiry and expression in literature (and the arts), with implicit recognition of the role of acting in providing the model.<sup>80</sup>

This lofty notion of the practice of drama as invention and interpretation, with the stage conceived as the vehicle for playwrights and arena for the prodigies of nature,<sup>81</sup> but even more of an "arte" that is (first and foremost? also?) hard-won mastery of the relevant rules, as well as a paradigm of morality,<sup>82</sup> also seems to have been shared by Flaminio Scala. In the same vein Isabella's husband, Francesco, spoke glowingly of 'the Comici Gelosi, a company that can never be too highly praised' for showing 'future actors the real way to compose and perform Comedies, Tragicomedies, Tragedies, Pastorals, intermezzi designed as spectacle and other representations'.<sup>83</sup> In fact both Francesco Andreini and Flaminio Scala go considerably further, claiming recognition for an "arte" in theatre which is entirely autonomous, based not on Aristotle's rules (even though a thorough knowledge of these is required) but on theatrical practice. As Scala puts it:

Who can know the rules of the art if not the actors themselves, who put them into practice every day in their activity, and thus learn them by using them? And who surpasses them in the true art of imitation, for they do not just imitate in matters of sentiments and the appropriacy of actions, but also, since they generally speak various languages, they have to be able to imitate successfully not only in their own language but also in those of others?

Clearly here it is not a question of the usual *querelle* between ancients and moderns, but rather of establishing specific criteria for drama which differ from those of the literati; and in view of the enormous consensus granted to the tenets of Aristotle, this was no small claim. Scala goes on:

This is why many celebrated literati, not having practical experience of the stage, write

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<sup>79</sup> Isabella Andreini, *Frammenti di alcune Scritture* (1620). I quote from F. Marotti and G. Romei, *La commedia dell'Arte e la società barocca*, p. 205.

<sup>80</sup> Cf. Tasso, *Tiziano e i pittori del parlar disgiunto. Un laboratorio tra le arti sorelle*, ed. by A. Emiliani and G. Venturi, Venezia, Marsilio, 1997. Tasso's "parlar disgiunto" [disjointed speech] is diametrically opposed to the well ordered, correct delivery typical of oration; this corresponds to Venetian art as opposed to Florentine painting done on the basis of drawing; and thus evokes inevitable parallels in the theatre. See also *La "Jérusalem délivrée" du Tasse. Poésie, peinture, musique, ballet, Paris, Musée du Louvre, 13-14 November 1996*, Paris, Klincksieck-Musée du Louvre, 1999; and G. Careri, *Gestes d'amour et de guerre: la Jérusalem délivrée, images et affects (XV-XVIII siècle)*, Paris, Ed. de l'Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, 2005.

<sup>81</sup> See Nicolò Barbieri, *La Supplica*, p. 594.

<sup>82</sup> 'thus the bad habits and corrupted art of second-rate actors can and must be corrected'. Domenico Bruni, *Fatiche comiche*, p. 349.

<sup>83</sup> Francesco Andreini, *Le Bravure del Capitan Spavento* (1607). I quote from F. Marotti and G. Romei, *La commedia dell'Arte e la società barocca*, p. 218.

plays with a fine style, excellent conceits, pleasing speeches and noble inventions, but once they are put on stage they prove cold and lifeless because, lacking imitation of Nature, they repulse the audience by the tediousness of the action and on occasions by unlikely, not to say impossible, situations, so that they fail even to entertain, let alone improve.<sup>84</sup>

Francesco Andreini was also profoundly aware of the novelty and importance of what he was doing:

And although I was daunted by the prestige of heroic, lyrical, tragic and many other poetic styles, I nervously began to write, devoting myself to prose and to what had never previously been dealt with by any other author. And if it is invention which distinguishes the Poet, there is no wreath in Parnasus that I do not deserve merely for this new invention, since it combines both the comic and the tragic genres associated with the stage.<sup>85</sup>

We should not take the term ‘invention’ to imply pure invention: Giovanni Briccio, a Roman comedian, painter and *menante* (theatrical promoter, although he was a case in point of the ambivalent distinction between the professional and amateur actor), accused modern playwrights of constantly adopting passages from other authors and genres, whether classic, Italian or foreign, so that it was rare to come across a play that ‘did not have an odour of staleness’.

We can single out one work in which the lofty sense of “arte” is plain for all to see: *Il Tedeschino ovvero difesa dell’Arte del Cavalier del Piacere*, written in 1633-1635 by a highly literate fool at the court of the Medici, Bernardino Ricci. In fact the ‘Arte’ cited in the title is not that of the actor but that of the fool, a figure who in actors’ treatises is always less highly rated, not least because (at least in formal terms) he comes under the Aristotelian proscription. Here too, in the form of a dialogue, it is argued that the occupation of the fool is an art. Although the fool, who calls himself “il Tedeschino”, is entirely isolated, he is utterly convinced of his legitimacy, and the terms he uses to develop his case are highly significant in the context of our enquiry. It is clear that he conceives of “arte” in the highest sense from the reply of his interlocutor, Pompeo: ‘You say that foolery is art. But how can it be art if art is a compendium of rules set down in order to serve a useful purpose for human life, while the only occupation of the fool is indolence, and in civil life he seems to be no more than [...] a drone among the bees?’. *Il Tedeschino* objects that foolery does have ‘its conventions and rules’, which was in fact generally recognised in his day; but also that the true fool has

a knowledge of the human soul: herein lies the principal premise for the art, because once he has uncovered people’s inclinations thanks to this ability [...] he chooses the most effective means to engender laughter and high spirits by means of quips and pranks. And these have to be handled with great skill and discretion, and there are many rules and specific observations, in addition to all those in which Count Baldassar Castiglioni instructs his highly accomplished Courtier. Because the fool [...] also has to know how to acquit himself in all sorts of new ploys, irregular and extravagant, and how to imitate and make fun of those around him whenever the occasion arises to enhance the entertainment of the person he serves, without offending persons of

<sup>84</sup> Flaminio Scala, *Prologo della comedia del “Finto Marito”* (1618). *Ibid.*, pp. 59-61.

<sup>85</sup> Francesco Andreini, *Le Bravure del Capitan Spavento*, p. 219.

quality.<sup>86</sup>

Thus the fool is required to possess all the knowledge and *savoir faire* of the 'highly accomplished Courtier' and much else besides.

However, Pompeo will not let him off the hook: how can one claim that the rules and conventions of foolery can 'serve a useful purpose for human life'? The author replies that it depends how one defines usefulness, for this may not rule out 'the pleasurable, when this is not disjoined from honesty, because otherwise it would mean excluding those arts which are among the most noble and worthy of them all. Neither music, nor painting, nor poetry could then be called an art'.<sup>87</sup> Thus since the art of the fool too causes 'honest entertainment', it can lay claim to being useful to civil life. In particular fools are indispensable for princes, as genuine 'physicians of the soul', since they restore and reinvigorate their spirits, undermined by the weighty and insidious cares of office, while at the same time the fool can show the ruler the risks his habit of command may lead him into.<sup>88</sup> One can conclude that foolery is indeed "arte", and a liberal not a mechanical art at that, since it is primarily an 'art of words'. What is more, it is assisted by the other arts as if they were its handmaids: grammar 'teaching how to speak properly', rhetoric 'suggesting which terms have to be used according to the difference in persons, times and places' and the 'other arts of ornament which, together with poetry, help to come up with the inventions to entertain and have to be accompanied by a knowledge of stories and other things to form a perfect fool, like Aristippus'.<sup>89</sup> In answer to a further question, il Tedeschino explained that by 'the art of words' he meant an art which 'embraces mottos, consisting in a few acute, scintillating words, as well as gossip and narrations' in which 'all the knowledge of a good fool is revealed', indicating that the *Decameron* was a rich source of such 'artificial ornaments', even though study is no substitute for certain highly specific natural gifts, in particular a 'lively and ready wit'. Moreover, it is not enough for a fool to possess 'the art of words, but also of conduct': 'of gestures, with which he is able to adorn his narrations and mottos, but also of disguises, original actions, jokes and pranks, which more often than not require no words'.<sup>90</sup>

Even though the expedient of 'undue appropriation', the process of constant 'manipulation' and 'inventive rewriting' (so that he can count on a constant supply of fresh inventions), together with appropriate reference to Nature and Art, do mean that the fool has much in common with the actor, the two callings are not identical.<sup>91</sup> Indeed, to judge from this treatise, since the fool is devoted to the satisfaction of a courtly circle that is often very limited (even just one individual), he actually enjoys, or can at least lay claim to, a higher social standing, since he is not a slave to

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<sup>86</sup> Bernardino Ricci, *Il Tedeschino ovvero difesa dell'Arte del Cavalier del Piacere* (1633-1635), ed. by T. Megale, Firenze, Le Lettere, 1995, p. 85.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 85-86.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 86-87. Il Tedeschino was duty bound to emphasize that this part generally went unobserved because the prince was interested above all in receiving adulation and all too often the fool could only comply.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 90-91. As Teresa Megale points out in the introduction, Aristippo, founder of the Cirenaic School, 'was well suited to explaining the ancient, cultivated origin of foolery' (*ibid.*, p. 13).

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 92.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14 and p. 35.

commerce. On the contrary, as heir to an ancient tradition, he depends directly on the Prince, the only person responsible for giving him rewards and stipends. While actors ‘in public theatres’ reveal ‘the faults of others, both to the nobleman and to the populace, for scant payment’, the fool ‘is attached merely to the person of the Prince, and lives with him’.<sup>92</sup> Ricci shows that the social utility of the fool derives from this exclusive service and proximity, and his lofty status from having responsibility for the well-being of the Prince, public figure *par excellence*.

In the light of this, we should perhaps take a different view of the scorn actors usually show towards the fool: in reality there may well have been jealousy on the part of the travelling players, who were constantly at the mercy of those in power and of adverse fortune, vis à vis a professional who was securely employed in the ennobling service of the Prince. This might also suggest that the travels undertaken by actors, in particular the migrations of the Gelosi and the Confidenti to the court of France, were motivated not so much by immediate financial gain as by the hope of being integrated into a courtly context in which their earnings would be ennobled: an aspect of professionalism which in that period was obviously considered differently, and was in all likelihood anything but disdained.<sup>93</sup> If this was the case, it surely has a bearing on the “myth” of the “commedia dell’Arte” as being born in France (with all the distortions this has given rise to): its inception had been prepared by previous tours, by a series of publications and by an original cultural project, but it was only from the moment of their integration into the court (c. 1660, with Tiberio Fiorilli) that the extraordinary ascendancy of these actors really began.

We can nonetheless recognise a close affinity between the figures of the actor and the fool when it comes to culture, moderation and morality, which feature prominently in the writings of both Bernardino Ricci and many illustrious actors.<sup>94</sup> Both figures were at pains to distance themselves from the general disapprobation they usually encountered, and their propensity to produce plays and treatises reflects their anxiety to ensure greater social consideration.

As the seventeenth century progressed the term “arte”, while not actually losing its lofty implication of rigour and study, appears to become a synonym for “exercise” or theatrical “profession”. This was in fact a regression to an ancient sense of the term, not restricted to or conditioned by profit-making; in part, as we have already noted, for lack of an adequate term, but also giving effective expression to the difficulty of the term’s initial characteristics. The professional actor and theoretician Domenico Bruni was careful to orient this art ‘to its proper goal, to entertain and improve’, striving to cure the defects of nature with the ‘marvels’ that “arte” alone can ‘discover in the most recondite recesses where Nature conserves her secrets’ (an allusion perhaps to Prometheus’s cave).<sup>95</sup> Giovan Battista Andreini sees actors as *alfieri di virtù* [standard bearers of virtue], maintaining a clear distinction between actors and fools and writing ‘in praise of the art of comedy’, ‘sent down to earth out

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid., p. 105. In his treatise, *Discorso sopra la musica de’ suoi tempi* (1628), Vincenzo Giustiniani spoke of a ‘Pythian musician and noble fool’ (p. 106).

<sup>93</sup> See also the aspirations of Flaminio Scala to “gain at least a little entry” at court. I quote from S. Ferrone, ‘Dalle parti scannate al testo scritto’, p. 56.

<sup>94</sup> See S. Ferrone, ‘Dalle parti scannate al testo scritto’, p. 39.

<sup>95</sup> Domenico Bruni, *Prologhi*, p. 384 and p. 415.

of heaven's compassion for the wretched and feverish life of mortals'.<sup>96</sup> In this sense, according to Nicolò Barbieri, "arte" can legitimately lay claim to its 'just deserts'. In writing the passage in the *Supplica* quoted above that appears to identify "commedia" with "arte", Barbieri was in fact giving expression to the close relationship existing between style of acting and theatrical genre, concluding that 'the name of "actor" itself does not in the least stand as guarantee for the quality of their performances, for these are judged as good or bad according to how they acquit themselves' and that there is no "arte" so perfect as to exempt its practitioners from errors'. He states explicitly that this opinion holds good for poets and play actors, reciters and comedians, as well as both academic and commercial actors, for 'while making no distinction I do not confuse them' because 'commercial actors often perform the same plays as the Academies'. He recalls Saint Jenesius Martyr who 'was converted while he was acting', stage conventions that were generally moral and religious, and the relative dispositions laid down by Saint Thomas Aquinas, thereby asserting the honest and purificatory purpose the "arte" could serve.<sup>97</sup> In practice "arte", 'although having the same name, does not in fact share the same character as what so many people detest and what is rightfully abhorred by every true gentleman'; moreover it is itself a "mediation". These are the verdicts of respectively Domenico Bruni and Flaminio Scala, both echoing the concept of the middle way that can in fact apply even to phenomena that are inherently contradictory.<sup>98</sup>

Nicolò Barbieri gave a clearer indication of this danger in speaking of the different tastes and sensibilities of a theatre-going public that was in fact being "educated" by what they saw. He was well aware that the lofty intentions were not matched by adequate financial rewards. Moreover,

even though the dramas are invariably directed more to utility than to entertainment, nonetheless theatre goers are above all out for the latter, so that it is better to disguise what is useful with what is entertaining, just as one coats the medicines to treat children's ailments with sugar to make sure they are taken like sweets rather than as treatment; otherwise the populace would get no enjoyment out of it, and without enjoyment there would be enough room in even the smallest theatre for its audiences, and in even the smallest purse for the takings, since the appeal to the senses has more effect on people than an appeal to the reason.<sup>99</sup>

The images of the 'theatre' and the 'purse', together with the allusion to Nature and Art, in this case an "arte" which is very different to the one implying rules, were also used by Marino, if one accepts that the mysterious *Oratione fatta in Parnaso dal cavalier Marino*, published for the Spanish ambassador to Venice in 1636 as part of the *Essequie poetiche overo Lamento delle Muse Italiane in morte del Sig.r Lope de Vega Insigne & Incomparabile Poeta Spagnuolo* [*Poetic Funeral or Lament of the Italian Muses on the Death of Signor Lope de Vega Illustrious and Matchless Spanish Poet*], was indeed by Marino, or at least that it gives a faithful account of his ideas.

<sup>96</sup> Giovan Battista Andreini, *La Ferza* (1625). I quote from F. Marotti and G. Romei, *La commedia dell'Arte e la società barocca*, p. 471 and p. 475. The expression *alfieri di virtù* referring to actors comes from *Le due comedie in comedia* by Giovan Battista Andreini.

<sup>97</sup> Nicolò Barbieri, *La Supplica*, p. 581, pp. 592-596 and p. 601.

<sup>98</sup> See Domenico Bruni, *Fatiche comiche*, p. 345; and Flaminio Scala, *Prologo per recitare* (1618). I quote from F. Marotti and G. Romei, *La commedia dell'Arte e la società barocca*, p. 553.

<sup>99</sup> Nicolò Barbieri, *La Supplica*, p. 613 and p. 578.

The true art of comedy is the one that puts on stage what is most entertaining for the listeners; this is the invincible rule of nature; and a display of lack of ingenuity or facile criticism maintaining that an image is beautiful because the facial expressions are in accordance with the rules of the art, while it is lacking in that inexplicable and invisible quality by which nature (with art) binds them together, is equivalent to saying that nature is inferior to those who, passing themselves off as critics, imagine quite arbitrarily that they can recognise art in everything.

He goes on: ‘For the honour of Lope the consensus and applause of all nations must suffice, since in Italy and France those who mount plays for profit put on the playbills that they are to play a subject by Lope de Vega, and this is sufficient to fill to overflowing both their theatres and their money chests’.<sup>100</sup> This latter expression probably reveals that the *Oratione fatta in Parnaso dal cavalier Marino* was referring to a passage from the *Supplica* of Nicolò Barbieri, also first published in Venice two years previously. And the same can be said for the claims of absolute morality and even the conversions secured thanks to the plays of Lope.

In a speech he delivered in 1608 that began to circulate in Italy on its publication in 1611, the *Arte nuevo de hacer comedias in este tiempo* [*New Art of Writing Plays Today*], Lope de Vega maintained the legitimacy of a new Art, freed from the Aristotelian precepts and based exclusively on the taste of the public. The same arguments were accurately rehearsed in the *Oratione*, in a much more radical manner than in Barbieri’s treatise or in those by other actors. It might be objected that the *Essequie* were published in the milieu of the Spanish Ambassador, who had every reason to make propaganda for the ideas of his nation’s playwrights. And moreover that the operation was conceived and carried out in Venice, in all likelihood with reference to the Accademici Incogniti, on the threshold of the boom in commercial music theatre. In this case it does seem that the academicians were more unconventional than the actors themselves. As we have seen, the latter were busy trying to raise their own social standing and, in some cases at least, were fully aware of the autonomy of their “arte”, to the extent that they sought to introduce into the “high-brow” culture of the literati a new genre, namely the *scenario* or plot outline. This genre was unknown outside Italy, or at least lacked the dignity and authority with which at least some actors attempted to impose and defend it. It took root in Rome and subsequently in Venice, in particular to outline the actions in the fledgling music theatre.<sup>101</sup> Indeed, at least from 1616 onwards it was even found in the theatre of the Jesuits;<sup>102</sup> while a professional actor like Flaminio Scala began to publish *scenari* (the first part of *Teatro delle favole rappresentative* appearing in Venice in 1611, with a dedication by Francesco Andreini; we can recall what was said above about the *Confidenti*), but did not take the project any further. In fact it has been said that ‘quite quickly [...] improvisation, which up until that point had been virtually

<sup>100</sup> I quote from A. Tedesco, ““Scrivere a gusti del popolo”. *L’Arte nuevo* di Lope de Vega nell’Italia del Seicento”, *Il Saggiatore Musicale*, no. 2 (2006), p. 239.

<sup>101</sup> Cf. G. Staffieri, ‘Lo scenario nell’opera in musica del XVII secolo’, in *Le parole della musica. Studi sul lessico della letteratura critica del teatro musicale in onore di Gianfranco Folena*, ed. by M. T. Muraro, Firenze, L. S. Olschki, 1995, II, pp. 3-31; and R. Ciancarelli, *Sistemi teatrali nel Seicento*, p. 59.

<sup>102</sup> Cf. B. Filippi, *Il teatro degli Argomenti. Gli scenari seicenteschi del teatro gesuitico romano*, Roma, Institutum Historicum S. I., 2001.

synonymous with professional theatre, became an exception, with few practitioners'.<sup>103</sup>

### **Actors and Artists**

The last important meaning for "arte" is provided by the Florentine literato Filippo Baldinucci: 'At the request of Cardinal Antonio Barberini, Bernino composed and had performed at his own expense, by Persons of the Arte, that is by painters, sculptors and architects, the fine, moral plays we shall speak of in due course'.<sup>104</sup> Here "arte" assumes yet another meaning. It clearly refers to artists, and in fact this meaning featured in the 1729 edition of the *Vocabolario degli Accademici della Crusca* (under 'Compagnia d'Artisti'), although no reference was made to a corporation, for neither actors nor artists had been incorporated. The fact that this word was used for both artists and actors suggests the existence of not just an affinity but a profound relationship between the theatre and the figurative arts, which must to some extent have been structural. Indeed this relationship is still vital today, in phenomena like *body art* or happenings, and it should not be forgotten that it has its roots in the expressive techniques developed by artists in the past.

It is significant that, following the dictum *ut pictura poesis*<sup>105</sup> (or indeed, as Emmanuelle Hénin titled her recent study, *Ut pictura theatrum*),<sup>106</sup> these artists chose to base their *elocutio* or mode of expression not on the imitation of generic models but on "impersonation". They may have taken themselves as their subject (doing self-portraits with a mirror was clearly a widespread phenomenon, viz. examples by the three Carracci, Caravaggio, Domenichino, Rembrandt, Bernini and Salvator Rosa)<sup>107</sup> or called on other artists. The specific motive for this was clearly stated by Carlo Cesare Malvasia in his biography of the Carracci: 'They were in the habit of acting as models for one another; Agostino was perfectly happy to assume the poses Lodovico wished for, being of the opinion that people who did not understand what was being asked of them were not able to represent them properly, which is why the poses of models were false and lacking in verve'. We learn that Ludovico, 'who was rather plump', was willing to strip off and 'allow Annibale to copy his back in the attitude of a Venus'.<sup>108</sup> Thus in the circle of the Carracci more importance was given to the talent for interpreting than to the physical likeness of the model, and this made their two Academies in Bologna, the Desiderosi and the Incamminati, places of outstanding importance for the special dialogue between actors and artists we are

<sup>103</sup> S. Ferrone, *Attori mercanti corsari. La commedia dell'arte in Europa tra Cinque e Seicento*, pp. 174-175.

<sup>104</sup> Filippo Baldinucci, *Vita del cavaliere Gio. Lorenzo Bernini scultore, architetto, pittore*, Firenze, V. Vangelisti, 1682, p. 23.

<sup>105</sup> Cf. R. W. Lee, *Ut pictura poesis. La teoria umanistica della pittura*, Firenze, Sansoni, 1974.

<sup>106</sup> E. Hénin, *Ut pictura theatrum. Théâtre et peinture de la Renaissance italienne au classicisme français*, Genève, Droz, 2003.

<sup>107</sup> For the Carracci see the numerous self-portraits done with a mirror by Annibale published on the occasion of the exhibition *Annibale Carracci*, above all in sections I and II; for Caravaggio cf. Giovanni Baglione, *Le Vite de' pittori, scultori et architetti*, Roma, A. Fei, 1642, p. 136; for Bernini I can refer to my 'Ut theatrum ars', pp. 87-89 and pp. 101-104; for Rembrandt see S. Alpers, *L'officina di Rembrandt. L'atelier e il mercato*, Torino, Einaudi, 1990; for Rosa cf. Filippo Baldinucci, *Dal Barocchetto a Salvator Rosa. Vite di pittori italiani del Seicento*, ed. by G. Battelli, Firenze, Sansoni, 1914, p. 204.

<sup>108</sup> Carlo Cesare Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice. Vite de' pittori bolognesi*, I, p. 378.

postulating.

Two recent exhibitions have opened up a highly significant research perspective by showing that the Carracci were well aware of the comic and profane figurative culture of that time in Milan, in particular as it was cultivated by the Accademia della Val di Blenio.<sup>109</sup> Contrary to the prevailing Borromeo culture, this Academy developed the topics of the illusory nature of reality and the grotesque contamination of styles, the opposition of Nature and Art (with a clear emphasis on the former), poetical *furor* and inspiration combined with a life lived fully under the uncontrollable influence of the senses and instincts: all topics that characterised what has been called the “Counter-Renaissance”.<sup>110</sup> Many artists have been associated with this Academy, including the Cremonese painters Campi, with whom the Carracci are known to have had dealings, and Simone Pederzano, the only artist recognised to have been a teacher of Caravaggio.<sup>111</sup> The Academy, founded in 1560 under the aegis of Conte Pirro Visconti di Modrone and presided over for many years by the Lombard painter and theoretician Giovanni Paolo Lomazzo, existed to oppose the aulic style, going back to Petrarca, and to develop the realistic, comic and caricatural potential revealed in the work of Leonardo. It described itself as being ‘of a poetical nature’ (even though it was anti-literary and unconventional, giving it much in common with the actors) and was open not only to exponents of the major arts as sanctioned by Vasari, but also to embroiderers, medallists, chasers and practitioners of marquetry, and other crafts. As a way of expressing a common aspiration to “humility”, its members adopted the clothing and dialect of the porters who worked the valleys of Upper Lombardy – Val di Blenio itself but also Valtellina and Valcamonica – bearing their loads to Milan or Venice, as Garzoni recorded in *Piazza universale di tutte le professioni del mondo*. ‘The Bleniese porter as found in Lomazzo is not just a variant on the madman or fool of popular comic tradition (in fact the first dialogue of the Lombard painter and theoretician’s *Sogni e ragionamenti* is introduced by a fool), but also on the arcadian shepherd, the courtier as presented by Aretino, or again the noble savage admired by Montaigne’.<sup>112</sup> Historians of the theatre are very familiar with the extraordinary function of these porters, who ‘have a particular language which the zanies have taken over for their comedies’, as Garzoni also

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<sup>109</sup> See Rabisch, *Il grottesco nell'arte del Cinquecento. L'Accademia della Val di Blenio. Lomazzo e l'ambiente milanese* (exh. cat., Lugano, Museo Cantonale d'Arte, 1998), Milano, Skira, 1998. Rabisch (“arabesques” in the dialect of the porters; in fact the word is a transposition of the term “grottesche” or “grotteschi”) links painters like Caravaggio and the Carracci to an art that was generally considered inferior. See also *Le stagioni di un cantimbanco: vita quotidiana a Bologna nelle opere di Giulio Cesare Croce* (exh. cat., Bologna, Biblioteca Comunale dell'Archiginnasio, 2009), ed. by G. M. Anselmi, Bologna, Compositori, 2009.

<sup>110</sup> See H. Haydn, *Il Controrinascimento*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 1967.

<sup>111</sup> I can recall that, in the opinion of Agucchi and Bellori (perhaps the most idealist of contemporary theoreticians), both Carracci and Caravaggio were painters who aimed at the reproduction of the real as it exists in Nature; in particular, referring to the passage from Aristotle quoted above (cf. notes 8 and 21), they relate Caravaggio to the painter “de’ simili” Demetrios. Cf. Giovanni Atanasio Mosini, *Diverse Figure*, p. 257; and Giovanni Pietro Bellori, *Le vite de’ pittori, scultori et architetti moderni* (1672), I quote from the reprint published in Milano, A. Forni, 1977, p. 212.

<sup>112</sup> F. Porzio, ‘Lomazzo e il realismo grottesco: un capitolo del primitivismo nel Cinquecento’, in Rabisch, *Il grottesco nell'arte del Cinquecento*, p. 27.

recorded, pointing out the caricatural features that were common to the Zanni.<sup>113</sup> This link is borne out by the documented presence among the Accademici Bleniesi of Simone Panzanini of Bologna, a member of the Compagnia dei Gelosi, known in the trade as Zan Panza de Pecora and "compà Svagnin", who was 'brilliant at playing the figure of a Bergamasque porter'.<sup>114</sup> He wrote the famous *Lacrimoso Lamento*, dedicated to himself and written in the same porters' dialect as the *Rabisch*, the verses collected by Lomazzo which are perhaps the most complete expression of this cultural phenomenon. Further confirmation comes from the close ties which Isabella Andreini formed with some of the leading members of the Academy during her frequent stays in Milan, particularly with the poet Gherardo Borgogni and his publisher Comin Ventura. Both men were enthusiastic admirers of her art, and in fact, obviously by common accord, they praised the actress as being the equal of Tasso. The milieu of book sellers, publishers, poets, painters and actors which Andreini frequented in Milan, described by Taviani in an important essay on the actress, thus coincides, at least to a large degree, with the Accademia della Val di Blenio.<sup>115</sup>

When Malvasia wrote that the "tearaway" Annibale (notorious for his impulsive irreverence) called down the criticisms of the "connoisseurs" for his 'trivial and excessively facile approach' because, 'having got a porter to strip off and don a blanket, he was perfectly capable of copying him just as he was into the picture, deriving great merit in the eyes of the ignorant with precious little creative effort', it is surely unlikely that the reference to a 'porter' was merely generic. It would appear that in the Academy of the Carracci the same approaches and impersonations were pursued as were practised in the Accademia della Val di Blenio, albeit in a less extreme fashion.

Finally there can be no doubt that the pursuit of truth involved the expression of the "affects", facilitated by the common invocation of *ut pictura poesis*, poetry that could express itself like a painting, showing how these Academies did indeed enable artists and actors to realise common goals.

We can recognise a sort of professional proficiency in interpretation also on the part of artists: in the seminal passage quoted above where Malvasia, in his biography of the Carracci, spoke of the custom of the painters acting as models for each others' works, the use of the verb 'understand' recalls the distinction, fundamental in that period, between those versed in the rules (of the "arte"?) and those who were ignorant of them in all domains. Then comes a consideration that gives a new emphasis to Nature: 'a painting represented [...] with movements depicted naturally will undoubtedly cause [the spectator] to laugh with those who laugh, think with those who think, grieve with those who cry, and rejoice and celebrate with those who

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<sup>113</sup> Tommaso Garzoni da Bagnacavallo, *Piazza universale di tutte le professioni del mondo* (1585). I quote from F. Marotti and G. Romei, *La commedia dell'Arte e la società barocca*, pp. 7-9.

<sup>114</sup> Cf. *Rabisch. Il grottesco nell'arte del Cinquecento*, p. 183, catalogue entries 38 and 39 by F. Paliaga; and *Rabisch. Giovan Paolo Lomazzo e i Facchini della Val di Blenio*, ed. by D. Isella, Torino, Einaudi, 1993, pp. 118-119.

<sup>115</sup> F. Taviani, 'Bella d'Asia. Torquato Tasso, gli attori e l'immortalità' (see note 33). The libertine milieu he describes for the Veronese Adriano Valerini also seems analogous to the one mentioned. Cf. F. Taviani, 'La Commedia dell'Arte e Gesù Bambino. Intorno all'*Afrodite* del Valerini', in *Origini della Commedia Improvvisa o dell'Arte*, pp. 49-83.

rejoice'.<sup>116</sup> Domenichino, another Bolognese painter who was active in Rome, expressed a conviction that is even more significant, and which we would be hard put to find even in the treatises of the comedians. According to Bellori, he used to say that he

could never understand how some people could create works with a tragic content while engaged in light-hearted conversation, which denotes practical activity, not the application of the intellect. And he would add that, in paintings, one must not only contemplate and recognise the affects but also experience them as one's own feelings, doing and suffering the same things that are being represented.

Before beginning to paint he used to recreate, in private, the actions and attitudes and words of the various characters; and when one day his teacher Carracci surprised him in the act of impersonating a soldier who was killing Saint Andrew, raging and cursing, he was so delighted that he embraced him.<sup>117</sup>

In his biography of Federico Barocci, Bellori speaks of one more extremely interesting aspect. This artist used to paint his pictures exclusively *al naturale* and was thus in the habit of looking around him for faces or parts of faces which were 'remarkable [...], selecting them and making use of them when the occasion arose'; but

first he settled on the action to be represented, but before sketching it in he got his youngsters to pose and made them carry out the action as he imagined it, asking them if they felt anything strained in the pose they adopted, or whether the action came more easily if they made some changes. In this way he arrived at the most natural movements, with nothing forced about them, and only then would he make his sketches. In the same way, if he wanted to include a group of figures, he got the youngsters to pose together and then made his final drawing out of the various sketches. This is why the movements in his works all display a particular facility, naturalness and comeliness.<sup>118</sup>

These are in fact exactly the sorts of theatrical exercises which an actor or director would use, and are extraordinarily modern. They were obviously drawn from the "secret" world of actors, a "secret" which is partially revealed by these passages found in artists' biographies.

At this point it seems only too obvious and coherent that painters should have had recourse to actual actors. Surely Siro Ferrone is right to call attention to actresses who are shown by painters and engravers in impersonations that may contrast starkly

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<sup>116</sup> Giovanni Paolo Lomazzo, *Trattato dell'arte della pittura, scultura et architettura* (1585), in *Scritti sulle arti*, ed. by R. P. Ciardi, Firenze, Marchi & Bertolli, 1973-74, II, p. 95. Cf. E. Hénin, *Ut pictura theatrum*, p. 582. Similar considerations are also expressed by Cardinal Paleotti: 'there is no doubt that there is no stronger or more effective instrument than images done *al vivo*, which can almost ravish our unprepared senses'. Gabriele Paleotti, *Discorso intorno alle immagini sacre e profane*, Bologna, A. Benacci, 1582, in *Trattati d'arte del Cinquecento fra Manierismo e Controriforma*, II, p. 230. For the theatre see Ingegneri's opinion, expressed in these years, that only truth produces commotion (cf. Angelo Ingegneri, *Della Poesia rappresentativa & del modo di rappresentare le Favole Sceniche*, p. 277).

<sup>117</sup> Cf. Giovanni Pietro Bellori, *Le vite de' pittori, scultori et architetti moderni*, pp. 347-348. See also E. Hénin, *Ut pictura theatrum*, p. 595 ff.; and for Bernini see E. Tamburini, 'Ut theatrum ars', pp. 87-88 and pp. 99-104.

<sup>118</sup> Giovanni Pietro Bellori, *Le vite de' pittori, scultori et architetti moderni*, pp. 194-195.

(like Virginia Ramponi modelling for Ariadne, Mary Magdalene and the figure of Melancholy).<sup>119</sup> We can also understand the underlying reasons for the fact that so many artists appeared as actors, obviously as amateurs, although even so they are often on record as improvisers: in Siena this dual vocation is documented from the early sixteenth century.<sup>120</sup> In the *Indice di tutti i più famosi recitanti di Comedie improvise, che sono stati in Roma ne' tempi dell'Autore, e che hanno recitato con lui*, compiled by Giovanni Briccio, most of the actors listed are in fact painters.<sup>121</sup> Indeed, as Sara Mamone has pointed out, whole companies of Florentine artists were also companies of actors.<sup>122</sup> But the reverse was true too. The fame achieved by some very popular actors led to the dissemination of their portraits and engravings: indeed we can speak of a sort of parallel commerce between actors and artists.<sup>123</sup> Some venues brought the two together, notably the "Foundries" (the Fonderia Medicea in Florence and the Fonderia Vaticana in Rome), which were primarily the haunts of artists and artisans, but also hosted theatrical performances.<sup>124</sup>

Bernini maintained that there were three parts to painting: the drawing, the colouring and the *espressiva*, meaning the expression of the sentiments. It hardly needs saying that the latter, which received its first theoretical treatment in Lomazzo's *Trattato dell'arte della pittura, scoltura et architettura* (1585), a work Bernini had in his personal library, was of particular interest to actors.

It has often been observed that theatre in that period lacked a specific statute. In speaking of actors as representing the "traditional Arte", "arte" and theatre are identified as one and the same thing. Indeed the "arte" could stand for the theatre because, as we have seen, at the time "theatre" did not have the meaning it now has. It is surely a perfectly justifiable and natural adaptation for actors to refer to the "arte", and thus to the form of expression which they, constantly involved with the

<sup>119</sup> Cf. S. Ferrone, *Attori mercanti corsari. La commedia dell'arte in Europa tra Cinque e Seicento*. Giovan Battista Andreini speaks highly of the custom of portraying actors 'in galleries and in exceptional places [...] in the guise of various divinities [...] not only to glorify them by means of the venues painted by the painter's excellent skill and extraordinary invention, but also in order to say: she was Vittoria [Piissimi], sage yet animated in the representation of the affects, they were Orazio [Nobili], wise and handsome, and so on' (*La Fersa*, p. 521).

<sup>120</sup> Cf. C. Valenti, *Comici artigiani. Mestiere e forme dello spettacolo a Siena nella prima metà del Cinquecento*, Ferrara, F. C. Panini, 1992. Valenti speaks of craftsmen but this includes painters because, as we have observed, at that time a painter was still often regarded as little more than an artisan (see note 43).

<sup>121</sup> As was kindly drawn to my attention by prof. Luciano Mariti. On the *Indice* see L. Mariti, 'Esercizio d'attore nel Seicento. Giovanni Briccio & C.', in *Scritti in onore di Giovanni Macchia*, Milano, Mondadori, 1983, II, pp. 633-652.

<sup>122</sup> Cf. S. Mamone, 'Tra tela e scena'; and S. Mamone, *Dei, Semidei, uomini. Lo spettacolo a Firenze tra neoplatonismo e realtà borghese (XV-XVII secolo)*, Roma, Bulzoni, 2003, pp. 228-233.

<sup>123</sup> Cf. R. Guardenti, *Gli italiani a Parigi. La Comédie Italienne (1660-1697). Storia, pratica scenica, iconografia*, Roma, Bulzoni, 1990.

<sup>124</sup> The Casino Mediceo or Casino di San Marco in via Larga, like that of Cardinal Antonio in the garden of Palazzo Barberini, was also a venue for staging plays. The Casino in Florence, at least up until the advent of Ferdinando de' Medici (1587), was a laboratory for artists and artisans, i.e. the famous Fonderia Medicea (cf. M. C. Mazzi, 'Il collezionismo di Francesco I', p. 179; although we can note that after 1587 it was restored and decorated with frescoes and, at least in part, undoubtedly used as a Medici residence). One cannot help thinking of the Fonderia Vaticana, where the bronze baldacchino was manufactured for Saint Peter's and where Bernini is said to have staged his plays. See on this subject my recent paper 'Sui teatri Barberini: nuovi documenti e alcune riflessioni', read at the conference in honour of Mercedes Viale Ferrero, *L'immaginario scenografico e la realizzazione musicale - II*, held in Venice on 5 and 6 March 2009 (forthcoming in the *Atti*).

*espressiva*, felt most affinity with, and which was much more generally recognised than their own calling. It is clearly a legacy from this same substitution that, as has often been pointed out, even in the last century actors who performed *all'antica italiana* would speak of their occupation as the “arte”, without any further specification. And as we have seen, the word “commedia” itself could also fulfil the same function. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the comparison *ut pictura poesis* was so commonly evoked as to obscure the specificity of each respective idiom.

### “Commedia dell'Arte”. The Actors

If it is inevitable for the reader today to feel disoriented by this constant opposition and conjunction of meanings, there is no doubt that, after careful reading of numerous sixteenth- and seventeenth-century texts and documents drawn not only from the domain of drama, “arte” as a mercenary occupation is found to be by far the least common meaning.<sup>125</sup> In that period theatre as a means of living was stigmatised, first and foremost for the moral implications of exploiting a body that was transfigured and disguised, but also on account of an objective evaluation of the phenomenon, as on occasions the actors themselves would admit. Giving voice to an opinion that was probably prevalent at the end of the seventeenth century, Andrea Perrucci maintained that it was shameful to earn ‘sordid wages for singing, playing an instrument, dancing, fencing, wrestling, and riding, since anyone, even a nobleman can do these things without harming his reputation, when no remuneration is required’.<sup>126</sup> Both amateurs and the highest-ranking professionals appear to be united in their condemnation of the ‘infamous play actors’, dishonouring an “arte” which can aspire to the highest condition.

At the same time it is true, as has been remarked, that the famous formula “Commedia dell'arte” is not equivalent to “arte della commedia”, even though “arte comica” is an expression that was in common usage even in the titles of treatises. At a time in which the first *Vocabolari* were appearing and the study of words was emerging as a discipline, the meanings themselves were still largely in a state of flux. A word was indeed a vehicle for thought, and reproduced the travails and transformations of the individual and of society. Thus one might say that there is no one “right” way in which, also in the light of a previous age, one can interpret the sense of each and every word. There is, instead, the sense in which a word is used by each individual, each with his or her own culture (“high-brow” or “low-brow”, pertaining to the literati or the artist-actors) and thus, more often than not, with a different meaning; and there is also a diachronic development of meaning to be traced, which will in its turn have precise cultural and anthropological justifications.

If, as we have seen, a fool could style himself *Cavalier del Piacere* in order to establish his status, the comedian could call himself “actor of the Arte”, meaning of

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<sup>125</sup> One of the very few passages that bears out Croce’s interpretation of *arte* as *métier* is the statement by Pier Maria Cecchini (1621) that Florence ‘placed the activity of theatre in the category of the necessary arts, so that no one can stage anything in the whole state of Tuscany without it being first written down, whether he be master or apprentice’. But research carried out in this respect by Cesare Molinari only produced any evidence concerning another category of entertainers, the *saltimbanchi*, from whom the actors always took good care to distinguish themselves. Cf. C. Molinari, *La commedia dell'arte*, pp. 68-70.

<sup>126</sup> Andrea Perrucci, *A Treatise on Acting, from Memory and Improvisation*, p. 10.

that set of rules which could ensure the utility of a human life and whose complete mastery made the actor able to produce "inventions". But this does not give the whole picture.

The fact is that "commedia dell'arte" can have many, too many shades of meaning. It may lay claim to a specific ability, viz. 'plays put on in the manner of actors' ("arte" as theatrical practice) or of artists ("arte" as study of the *espressiva*), rather than the *litterati* (the "arte" of rules). Alternatively it could refer to the "arte" of Aristotle, or in any case to the mastery of a superior knowledge which at that time was not the exclusive prerogative of academicians; or again to the multiple identification, in the wake of Horace's *ut pictura poesis*, of comedy, theatre, painting, sculpture and art (as mimetic arts). And finally, all these meanings could coexist and be recognised in the approaches, at once different but related, of actors, artists and *litterati*, and in the common goals of "the middle way", morality and reference to reality, which most of them pursued.

If we adopt the language of the seventeenth century,<sup>127</sup> "Arte" when used in connection with "Commedia", can be a metaphor of "resemblance" or "antithesis": 'plays put on in the manner of actors' (theatre of Nature) or 'theatre of excellence' (teatro d'Arte, i.e. "commedia dell'Arte"?). Presumably the original sense of the expression depends on when exactly it was coined: the latter being older, contemporary with Isabella, and the former later. But I would highlight the fact that in the seventeenth century the metaphor of antithesis was constantly in use; nor do I believe that the first meaning can exclude the second, because it is precisely the intrinsic opposition which gives value to the fusion. Thus a rendering of "commedia dell'arte" that reflects this aspect (and takes into account the citations of Isabella Andreini, Barbieri, Bruni and all the other commentators mentioned above) could be: *teatro d'Arte che si intende contrapposto a un pur lodevole e comunque padroneggiato teatro di Natura* [theatre of Art understood as being contrasted with a nonetheless praiseworthy and accomplished theatre of Nature] where "Arte" implies the exercise of ingenuity and "Natura" the faithful imitation of real actions.

The dialectic between "Natura" and "Arte" originated with Vasari, i.e. during the first generation of celebrated individual actors.<sup>128</sup> It bears out the particular affinity between actors and artists we have noted; and indeed in some cases we can say that it represents their relationship,<sup>129</sup> echoing (and reinforcing) for the actors a contrast with "grotesque" overtones that was already true for artists.<sup>130</sup> Their affinity was favoured by an analogous, contrary process on the part of the artists who, in the wake of Vasari, had started out by generally over-estimating Art, only to rediscover

<sup>127</sup> Obviously I am thinking of the *Cannocchiale Aristotelico* by Emanuele Tesauro (1654). For the metaphors that follow see G. Conte, *La metafora barocca*, Milano, Mursia, 1972, above all pp. 112-115.

<sup>128</sup> But derived from Aristotle and also from Horace's *Ars Poetica*.

<sup>129</sup> Some lines from a rather "strange" sonnet by Adriano Valerini dedicated to the painter Orlando Flacco, who he was hoping would paint his portrait, are significant in this respect: 'Quel che natura non può darmi, l'Arte/mi darà appieno e mi farà immortale/e dir potrò ch'io sia due volte nato [What nature cannot give me, Art will give me in abundance and will make me immortal, so that I can say I have been twice born]' (cf. F. Taviani, 'La Commedia dell'Arte e Gesù Bambino. Intorno all'*Afrodite* del Valerini', pp. 49-83). It goes without saying that this sonnet (and in particular its collocation in the appendix to the tragedy *Afrodite*) appears less strange in the light of this study.

<sup>130</sup> Cf. F. Taviani, 'Un vivo contrasto. Seminario su attrici e attori della commedia dell'arte', *Teatro e storia*, no. 1 (October, 1986), pp. 25-75.

Nature (in most cases at any rate) in part by frequenting actors.

Even after pursuing these two dialectics, in which instances of reciprocal interchange were not lacking, ambiguity remains and reflects a richness of contents, corresponding in reality to the numerous nuances of a phenomenon – actors – that was in fact new, at least if we view it within a “high-brow” culture. Moreover, it was constantly characterised by an ambivalence involving ‘gravity and light-heartedness, naivety and culture, commitment and irresponsibility’.<sup>131</sup> Is it not likely that it was precisely on account of this ambiguity and richness that the expression “*commedia dell’arte*” came in time to prevail over all other expressions?

### *Actors, Artists and Literati*

At the very end of the sixteenth century a remarkable *milieu* evolved in Rome that respected and drew on not only the classics and both classicist and manierist artists, but also on a large community of Dutch and Flemish artists. The mainsprings for this were probably on one hand the generous patronage of the Popes who, from Gregory XIII to Sixtus V and Clement VIII, pursued a strikingly consistent cultural policy,<sup>132</sup> and on the other the substantial autonomy of the Roman micro-courts.<sup>133</sup> In fact in the *Accademia degli Umoristi*, at least in its early years, the exchange between the arts – all the arts, including music and drama – and letters – in which play texts were an integral part – was actually laid down in the institution’s statutes.

Isabella Andreini, who is known to have been in Rome in February 1585, January-February 1590 and again in 1600, certainly occupies a pre-eminent position in this development of a lofty and interdisciplinary “*arte*”, not least on account of her celebrated “mad scenes”.<sup>134</sup> She served as an important *trait d’union* between Milan and Rome, passing on the ideals of the *Accademia della Val di Blenio*. Moreover, in keeping with the regulatory efforts of Don Giovanni de’ Medici and the emphasis on masked rather than unmasked acting introduced into the *Compagnia degli Innamorati* by Giovan Battista Andreini,<sup>135</sup> there was a significant presence of amateur actors in both Rome and Florence, also within the Academies, and a vogue for *commedie ridicolose* that were entirely scripted. The fact that such an unconventional literary figure as Marino could achieve membership of the *Accademia degli Umoristi* in the early years of the seventeenth century (in 1623 he was actually elected Principe) is a sure sign of the wish to do away with barriers and of an extraordinary circulation of ideas between the worlds of letters and the arts and also between the

<sup>131</sup> S. Ferrone and A. Testaverde, ‘Presentazione’, p. vii.

<sup>132</sup> Cf. S. Ginzburg Carignani, *Annibale Carracci a Roma. Gli affreschi di palazzo Farnese*, p. 153.

<sup>133</sup> Cf. D. Bodart, *Les peintres des Pays-Bas Méridionaux et de la principauté de Liège à Rome au XVII siècle*, 2 vols., Bruxelles-Rome, Institut Historique Belge de Rome, 1970.

<sup>134</sup> For the first two years see R. Ciancarelli, ‘Committenza e spettacoli nella Roma sistina: il teatro tra liturgia e società civile’, *Biblioteca teatrale*, no. 7 (1987), p. 27 and p. 36: the archive sources cited do not actually refer to Isabella but to the *Compagnia dei Gelosi*, of which she was a member. For the year 1600 we know of a *Pazzia d’Isabella* given by the Gelosi at Castel Sant’Angelo. Cf. S. Mazzoni, ‘Genealogia e vicende della famiglia Andreini’, in *Origini della Commedia Improvvisa o dell’Arte*, pp. 136-137.

<sup>135</sup> S. Ferrone, *Attori mercanti corsari. La commedia dell’arte in Europa tra Cinque e Seicento*, pp. 253-262. The sixth chapter is devoted to *Lelio bandito e santo*. It must however be said that Francesco Andreini had himself portrayed by Fetti with a traditional mask, while the use of the neutral mask remained very limited.

different genres within these worlds. However far removed he appeared to be from the "chaste Venus", Marino was a great admirer of Isabella and was a keen practitioner of "intarsios" associating the various arts.<sup>136</sup> In fact he cultivated above all not so much the affects in the classicistic sense but actually those beguiling expressions of love pertaining to the sorts of play held up as corrupting influences by Ingegneri. He even dedicated a famous and strictly prohibited *Canzone* to those *baci* [kisses] that constituted a major attraction in the actors' comedies.<sup>137</sup> And finally, surely the *Cannocchiale Aristotelico* testifies to this continuous exchange between word and image and the concept of writing as spectacle. Such was the goal and mission of its author, Tesauro, even during the years he spent in Rome in contact with Cardinal Maurizio di Savoia and the Accademia dei Desiosi, an extension of the Accademia degli Umoristi, where topics like the passions constituted a legitimate subject of enquiry.<sup>138</sup> And there can be no doubt that it was in Rome, the bastion of absolute values and centre of classicality, that the stakes were highest.

While Lomazzo, whom we know to have been a regular spectator of the plays put on by the Compagnia dei Gelosi,<sup>139</sup> may be called the first theoretician of the *espressiva*, Annibale Carracci was one of the first to undertake a practical and conscious study of painting *dal vivo*. He tackled the problem of attempting a faithful imitation of reality, which had previously been considered a form of imitation that was typical of popular or folk art.<sup>140</sup> He was in fact close to those actors who declared themselves "professors of living art", and succeeded in launching the practice of caricature, a portrait that was not so much deformed as *caricato* or overdone in one aspect, already cultivated by the Accademia della Val di Blenio and in which the amateur actor Bernini proved to be expert.<sup>141</sup>

When we learn that Annibale studied and adopted all the idioms of the various

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<sup>136</sup> Marino mourned Isabella's death in a famous sonnet, published in F. Marotti and G. Romei, *La commedia dell'Arte e la società barocca*, p. 167.

<sup>137</sup> The theatre performs a necessary function, Nicolò Barbieri observed, namely recreation: 'If one wished to get rid of all entertainments, one would have first to deprive the senses of all the emotions' (*La Supplica*, p. 627). This inextricable link between the emotions, the senses and the corresponding gestures sounds very modern; it is surely no coincidence if it is expressed by an actor.

<sup>138</sup> See D. Aricò, 'Il colore delle passioni. La "filosofia morale" del Tesauro tra gli aforismi di Salvator Rosa', *Filologia e critica*, nos. 2-3 (May-December, 2000), p. 376.

<sup>139</sup> Cf. F. Porzio, 'Lomazzo e il realismo grottesco: un capitolo del primitivismo nel Cinquecento', pp. 23-36. In particular we know that while Lomazzo was busy writing the biography of the painter Girolamo Figino he was urged by a group of friends from the Accademia to go and see a play by the Gelosi.

<sup>140</sup> Cf. D. Freedberg, *Il potere delle immagini. Il mondo delle figure: reazioni ed emozioni del pubblico*, Torino, Einaudi, 1993 (first edition 1989).

<sup>141</sup> This is the conventional view based on Mosini (see *Diverse Figure*, p. 260 ff.), but according to Baldinucci, it was Ludovico who suggested this "bizarre joke" to his cousin, namely 'to draw above all, and sometimes to paint, portraits *al naturale*, altering the parts of the faces, increasing them or diminishing them to make them ridiculous, without in general departing too far from a true likeness, so that the subjects of the portraits will still be recognisable' (Filippo Baldinucci, *Dal Barocco a Salvator Rosa. Vite di pittori italiani del Seicento*, p. 107). Giulio Mancini attributes the initiative to Agostino (cf. Giulio Mancini, *Considerazioni sulla pittura*, 2 vols., ed. by A. Marucchi, Roma, Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, 1956-57, I, p. 155). In any case, the caricature or *ritratto carico*, at least in this phase, appears to be Bolognese, although undoubtedly deriving from origins in Leonardo and the Accademia di Blenio. According to Baldinucci, prior to Leonardo its origins lay in Florence. Cf. B. W. Meijer, "'L'arte non deve schernire": sul comico e sul grottesco al Nord', in *Rabisch. Il grottesco nell'arte del Cinquecento*, p. 69.

regional schools of painting, drawing on now one and now another according to the subject he was working on and thus respecting the laws of *decorum*, making the language fit the rank of the character, how can we not think of the various dialects that were coherently and knowledgeably used by actors (from Sivello to Bernini himself)? As the art historian Sylvia Ginzburg Carignani has put it: ‘These were years and circles – of Annibale and Sivello – in which style in painting was considered much as dialect in language, both being linked to a specific geographical area’.<sup>142</sup>

One of the arguments that Croce put forward for considering “commedia dell’arte” as merely ‘theatre considered as a trade or craft’ was that it flourished in an age of Italian decadence. However, the years 1590 to 1620 saw a political and cultural project that extended to all the branches of knowledge and expression, originating primarily in the circles of the Aldobrandini (Cardinals Cinzio and Pietro and the Pope Clement VIII) and of the Savoia (Carlo Emanuele I and Cardinal Maurizio). Embracing Rome and Turin, Tasso, Lomazzo, Agucchi, Marino and Tesauro, painters and literati, plays and operas, it sought to revive the fortunes of the whole peninsula. The same ferments were at work in various quarters: the Teatro Farnese was apparently linked to the project to build an alliance with the Medici so as to constitute a robust entity between the Papal State and the powers beyond the Alps.<sup>143</sup> These projects had great internal obstacles (*in primis* the choice of which dynasty to place at the head of the new state), and in fact they did not come to fruition. They could however have counted for support on Maria de’ Medici, Queen of France, the granddaughter of Ferdinand I, connoisseur of letters and all the arts, who organized a performance of *Pellegrina* with musical intermezzi which passed into history for many reasons, including the presence of Isabella Andreini, featuring in her celebrated “mad scene” among other roles.<sup>144</sup> It was a grandiose entertainment to grace the wedding of the Granduca with Christine of Lorraine, a tangible sign of the pro-French policy inaugurated under his rule. I can also recall that the execution of the Galleria Farnese by no means corresponded with the wishes of the pontiff; Odoardo Farnese is depicted as the most important figure amidst the French court and the assembled actors, in the company of Padre Ranuccio, Cinzio Aldobrandini, Federico Borromeo, Alessandro and Cesare d’Este, Carlo Emanuele di Savoia and Alessandro Pico della Mirandola among the Intenti of Pavia, the Academy that had dared to enrol the highly cultivated Isabella.<sup>145</sup>

Is it plausible that some actors in Lombardy, notably the members of the

<sup>142</sup> S. Ginzburg Carignani, *Annibale Carracci a Roma. Gli affreschi di palazzo Farnese*, pp. 13-18.

<sup>143</sup> Cf. R. Ciancarelli, *Il progetto di una festa barocca. Alle origini del teatro Farnese di Parma*, Roma, Bulzoni, 1987; and M. Dall’Acqua, ‘Il Teatro Farnese di Parma’, in AA.VV., *Lo spettacolo e la meraviglia. Il Teatro Farnese di Parma e la festa barocca*, Torino, Nuova ERI, 1992, pp. 17-155.

<sup>144</sup> Cf. S. Mamone, *Firenze e Parigi, due capitali dello spettacolo per una regina: Maria de’ Medici*, Cinisello Balsamo, Silvana, 1988; and M. Lombardi, *Processo al teatro. La tragicommedia barocca e i suoi mostri*, Pisa, Pacini, 1995, pp. 208-211. As it is well known, Giovan Battista Andreini dedicated his *Centaura* to Maria de’ Medici.

<sup>145</sup> Cf. F. Fiaschini, *L’“incessabil agitazione”. Giovan Battista Andreini tra professione teatrale, cultura letteraria e religiosa*, Pisa, Giardini, 2007, p. 55.

Compagnia dei Gelosi, particularly associated with the Savoia household,<sup>146</sup> and of the Confidenti under the protection of Don Giovanni, were enrolled in the alliance and also in some way aware of the new cultural and political prospects outlined above? Could their intense publishing activity in these years, the reform of their modes of composition and the new awareness of their "arte" also be seen as pertaining to this milieu, with the proposal for a new kind of drama, and hence a new recognition, for courts that were more liberal and open? Is not what has been dubbed the "myth of the Commedia dell'Arte", formed and consolidated, as leading scholars have affirmed, in France following the exhibitions of some of our best theatrical companies, also due to their aspirations to be instated in the "elevated" context of a particularly magnificent court, and to these new cultural and political prospects?

In what has been called the 'magical passage from the sixteenth to the seventeenth century' in the Rome of Caravaggio and the Carracci, the encounter between the arts, letters and theatre that had been solicited from various regions of Italy contemporaneously was thwarted by censorship and the dispersion of the Umoreisti. But the Italian "arte" achieved what is perhaps the most original creation in Western culture: a stage persona, based on the study of the *naturale* and of the human affects, with an emphasis on expression that was to remain predominant until the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>147</sup> With such an interpretation it is not hard to believe that the "actors of the Arte" in its broadest sense – the theatre – but also in its more exclusive and noble sense – thinking of the particular input of the great actors we have mentioned – also made a decisive contribution. And in fact this contribution becomes tangible in all the various senses that emerge from study of the famous formula.

At the turn of the seventeenth century artists and actors came together under the impulse of Nature and Art. This enquiry, taking strange and tortuous paths, has repeatedly returned to the theatre, but not as a refuge. It provides proof of the infinite network of relationships which theatre engenders, and of the irrelevance of self-serving investigations. Several questions have arisen out of an initial object of enquiry that was indeed rather tenuous, but surely the questions have proved to be by no means secondary.

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<sup>146</sup> Isabella dedicated her *Rime* to Cinzio Aldobrandini in 1601 and her *Lettere* to Carlo Emanuele di Savoia in 1607 (who was also the dedicatee of Marino's *Pittura. Diceria prima Sopra la Santa Sindone*, 1615). Her husband Francesco dedicated his *Bravure* to Amedeo di Savoia (1607); Domenico Bruni also proclaimed himself "Comico di Madama Serenissima Principessa di Piemonte" and dedicated to her his *Fatiche comiche* (1623). Lomazzo dedicated his *Trattato* to Carlo Emanuele and also sent him two self-portraits as Abate of the Accademia di Blenio (see the interesting comments on this episode in M. V. Cardi, 'Intorno all'autoritratto in veste di Bacco di Giovan Paolo Lomazzo', *Storia dell'arte*, no. 81, 1994, pp. 182-193; and in D. Isella, 'Per una lettura dei "Rabisch"', in *Rabisch. Il grottesco nell'arte del Cinquecento*, pp. 111-119), just as Federico Zuccari dedicated his *Idea dei Pittori, Scultori et Architetti* (1607) to him. And we can recall the Roman academy of Cardinal Maurizio di Savoia, whose coat of arms stamped on the binding of the *Scenari Corsiniani* has suggested that he frequented actors, particularly during his Roman years (cf. A. Testaverde, 'Introduzione', in *I canovacci della commedia dell'Arte*, ed. by A. Testaverde and A. Evangelista, Torino, Einaudi, 2007, p. xxxiv).

<sup>147</sup> Cf. F. Caroli, *Cinque secoli di pittura dentro il profondo*, in *L'anima e il volto. Ritratto e fisiognomica da Leonardo a Bacon*, Milano, Electa, 1998, pp. 19-37.