SHAKESPEARE'S HARLEQUINADE: SOME ITALIAN ELEMENTS IN THE EARLY COMEDIES

A Thesis
Presented to
the Faculty of the Department of English
University of Manitoba

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
Ninian Mellamphy
September 1967

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AN ABSTRACT

Investigation into the possible sources of Shakespeare's inspiration as he approached the writing of his dramatic masterpieces has traditionally been undertaken by men whose interests have been chiefly literary and who have paid little attention, if any, to the influence of purely theatrical considerations on the work of the great poet-playwright. This essay shows that the importance of theatrical traditions is by no means slight if we are fully to appreciate Shakespeare's technique in the composition of the early comedies, for there is convincing evidence that he was extensively indebted to the stage-traditions developed by the professional actors of Italy during the second half of the sixteenth century. These actors formed small companies that travelled not only throughout Italy, but also abroad, bringing to the countries of western Europe a special form of entertainment—improvised comedy. Since detailed knowledge of the conventional character-types and stage-techniques of the _commedia dell' arte_—as the genre was later to be called—is not widespread, our introductory chapter outlines the history of its development, the quality of its entertainment and its relation to Italian literary drama in the _cinquecento_. The second chapter records the presence of Italian player-troupes in England in the two decades before Shakespeare began his career as a playwright. It refers to private letters,

official documents and to the literature of the period to show that English dramatists and the public in general were familiar with the traditions of the *commedia dell' arte*. The four remaining chapters deal sequentially with *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *Love's Labour's Lost*, *The Comedy of Errors*, and *The Taming of the Shrew*, indicating, in the case of each play, striking resemblances to the characterization, plot-development, stage-techniques and even the language of improvised comedy. These resemblances are frequent and detailed; they convincingly suggest that Shakespeare, who constantly borrowed ideas from the treasury of European literature, drew upon the successful traditions of the Italian professional theatre to answer the promptings of his dramatic genius. His adaptations of literary sources show that he never borrows merely to imitate. This essay shows that the same is true in his use of *commedia dell' arte* elements in the early comedies, for Shakespeare transcends the limitations of the Italian genre, giving to its generic figures a depth and to its stage tricks a dramatic purpose which the comedians from the South, in their improvised plays, could never have achieved.

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CHAPTER I

THE *COMMEDIA DELL' ARTE*: ITS SUBSTANCE AND DEVELOPMENT

One of the most interesting phenomena in the history of European theatre is the flourishing of improvised comedy in sixteenth-century Italy. Appearing as a distinct theatrical genre in the decade following 1550, it was soon to win great popularity at home and abroad and to exert considerable influence on occidental dramatic life for over two centuries. Its demise in the days of Goldoni is as curious as its dynamic growth in the *cinquecento*, because this phenomenon uniquely belongs to those few hundred years. Though in our own time improvisation is an intrinsic part of pantomine, of vaudevillian entertainment, and of most forms of popular comedy, it is not by any means the central component of dramatic expression for our comic actors. We are familiar with the art of *ad-libbing*, the entertainer's departure from a well-conned text in the interest of topical humour. The *artiste* in improvised comedy had a very different point of departure; he worked from a meagre plot-outline that indicated the possible business of each scene in the play and had to improvise all the dialogue and much of the action in which he was involved. He became, spontaneously, his own author and director, and consequently faced challenges to his imagination and acting skills such as no player in any other medium has had to face.

There are many historical facts that tantalize the modern scholar because documents and other manuscripts that might account for them have been lost or destroyed. This is especially true of the origins of the commedia dell' arte. Ever since the publication of Maurice Sand's Masques et Buffons in 1856,[1] there has been an abundance of critical and historical books on the characteristics and influence of this form of comedy. Yet no individual or school of thought has provided us with any conclusive information. Sand, following the example of eighteenth-century commentators such as Luigi Riccoboni[2]—who, in his turn, continued the tradition of the classicists of the previous century—wished to give the commedia dell' arte an aura of respectability by tracing its genesis to the mimic Atellanae of Augustan times. Though records of Atellan comedy are at best scant and fragmentary, we know that it had fixed characters such as Maccus, a beak-nosed, humped yokel; Buccus, a companion rustic; Pappus, a pot-bellied, bald, decrepit oldster, and Dossenus, a cunning, hunchback clown.[3] We also know that these characters wore masks and that pieces of stage-business called tricae were not dissimilar from the lazzi of professional clowns in the commedia dell' arte, but the sum of the evidence that makes the ludi Atellani a putative father of cinquecento improvised drama cannot establish any facts from these few superficial analogies, and cannot, certainly, explain why there is no historical evidence whatever to suggest the survival in any form of Atellan farce throughout the Middle Ages. There may be some grain of truth in this theory, but perhaps it is best to ascribe the similarities to the constant and instinctive disposition to mime and the natural propensity to parody reality of humanity in general, and of the Italian people in particular, rather than cling to hypotheses of a definite, linear, historical continuity that are too full of improbabilities and contradictions.

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[1] Vito Pandolfi, La Commedia dell' Arte: Storia e Testo (Firenze: Edizioni Sansoni Antiquariato, 1958), Vol. I, p. 9.

[2] Author of Histoire du théâtre italien (Paris, 1727).

[3] Kathleen M. Lea, Italian Popular Comedy (New York: Russell and Russell, Inc. 1962), I, 226

In *Der Mimus*[4] the German scholar Hermann Reich states that while all traces of the Roman mimes died out in Western Europe during the Dark Ages, some forms of primitive mimes were preserved in the East and were reintroduced into Italy by way of Venice when scholars and groups of players began an exodus westward after the fall of Constantinople in 1453. Here, he implies, is the new blood that mingled with indigenous farce and led to the conception of the *commedia dell' arte*. This seems quite likely until we discover that one of Reich's strongest arguments is the similarity between the Turkish puppet Karagöz and the character of Pulcinella—a Mask which we know did not originate until the early 1600's, when the *commedia dell' arte* had already been thriving for at least half a century.[5]

Critics of another persuasion, determined to trace the origins of the new comedy to Medieval rather than classical dramatic traditions, have championed legends that give the title of "father of improvised comedy" to individual playwright-actors of the early sixteenth century such as Angelo Beolco, popularly known as "Il Ruzzante," or Andrea Calmo. Both of these men did much to fuse popular and classical themes and techniques, and in blending romantic story with satirical characterization provided later comedians with a wealth of histrionic material from which to draw:

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[4] Hermann Reich. *Der Mimus: Ein litterar-entwickelungsgeschichterlicher Versuch* (Berlin, 1903).

[5] Allardyce Nicoll, *Masks, Mimes, and Miracles* (New York: Cooper Square Publishers, Inc., 1963), pp. 214-215.

un-Arcadian shepherds and shepherdesses, various stupid swains and clever rustic rogues, amorous old misers, licentious pastors, ridiculous pedants and parasitic servants.

The tradition inherited by Beolco and Balmo was rich and varied. The popular plays of the fifteenth century can be roughly divided into religious drama (rappresentazioni sacre), rustic farces,and humanistic comedies in Latin. The rappresentazioni sacre dramatised Bible stories, lives of saints, and folk tales suitable for religious instruction. They correspond to the mystery and miracle plays of England, but were much more polished in style, many of them written in ottava rima, though in the later 1400's many were in unrhymed verse or prose. Though chiefly didactic, many of these plays include lively, boisterous scenes whose obvious purpose is sheer comic entertainment. The rustic plays were simple in structure. Those called contrasti were mere debates involving two or three characters often caught up in the hilarious haranguing of the timeless eternal triangle situation. The maggi (May plays) were spring festa fare, involving clowns, masked actors and other carnival characters. The humanistic plays were academic in origin, quite pagan in tone, imitating the spirit of Terentian and Plautine comedy, but free rather than well-knit in form, and drawing upon contemporary rather than classical situations in their mockery of love and pedantry. The rediscovery of the commentaries of Donatus on Terence in 1433, however, taught the Italians the classical form of comedy, and when Ariosto began writing after the turn of the century, educated dramatists had espoused the Roman form. By 1480 Latin comedies such as Terence's Andria and the Menaechmi of Plautus were frequently acted in all the big cities of Italy. Since audiences found Roman life somewhat foreign and therefore dull, entre-actes, called intermedi or intermezzi, became a regular feature of these performances. In these scenes the popular delight in pantomime, pageantry, dance and song was indulged, and the emphasis was mainly placed on spectacle and slapstick. When playwrights such as Ariosto, Machiavelli and Pietro Aretino presented their comedies of sixteenth century Italian life, based upon Latin models, the *intermedio* was a commonplace of dramatic presentation, and though dramatists deplored such extraneous amusement, we can see from the presence of the same elements in the *commedia dell' arte* that popular taste prevailed over artistic disapproval.[6]

The comedy of Beolco followed the pattern of neo-classical drama but retained many features of the medieval farce.[7] Insisting on naturalness, he consistently made use of dialect and of rustic characters as a fundamental of his art. His most famous invention was Il Ruzzante (The Rustic), a clumsy, cowardly, deceitful and delightful peasant rogue—a role which he himself interpreted in play after play. Because of establishing this fixed character, because his comedy depends greatly upon established stage-tricks, and because his *dramatis personae* use dialect, Beolco has been credited with founding the *commedia dell' arte*. This, however, is not a warrantable claim.. His plays were fully written and recited by his actors; there are a very few allowances for improvisation in his scripts. Though the character of Ruzzante does not change from one play to the next, no mask in the *commedia dell' arte* inherits his peculiar characteristics. Even Beolco's use of dialect differs from that of the *attori all' improviso*:

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[6] For a detailed description of a number of *intermezzi*, cf. Marvin T. Herrick, *Italian Comedy in the Renaissance* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1966), pp. 62-64.

[7] Herrick, 43.

> The radical difference between the use of dialect by Ruzzante and the 'comici dell' arte' has a modern parallel in the contrast between the use of a brogue by the Irish Players which has an artistic value, and the pseudo-Irish of the music-hall anecdote which is a comic handicap. Beolco is the J. M. Synge of the Playboys and tinkers of north-east Italy.[8]

Andrea Calmo was as famous for his playing of old men as Beolco was for his portrayal of Ruzzante, (a name that has become synonymous with his own). Calmo went beyond Beolco's use of the Paduan dialect, giving each character a different patois. Both of them obviously influenced the development of Italian comedy in certain aspects, but to claim that either of them is founder of the commedia dell' arte is to mistake a reflection of facets for an imitation of the whole. There are other factors which were of great significance in the development of that new genre; not the least of them is the historical-cultural situation in Italy in the middle of the sixteenth century.

The rediscovery of twelve forgotten plays of Plautus in 1429, the unearthing of Donatus on Terence in 1433, the printing of comedies of Terence in 1471 and the publication of Aristotle's Poetics in 1498 are famous milestones in the history of Italian comedy. Growing interest in Terentian and Plautine comedy led to a rich neo-classical movement in drama in the first decade of the sixteenth century. Dramas studiously based on classical models but thoroughly Italian in scene and spirit were typical of this movement which we now know as the commedia erudita (learned comedy). Lodovico Ariosto, then employed by Ercole I of Ferrara to stage the comedies of Plautus and Terence, wrote a rather dull prose comedy entitled La Cassaria in 1508. He uses the techniques and situations which we associate with his Latin masters, but La Cassaria is not indebted to any single play, and indeed has a far more complicated double plot than any of them.[9] His I Suppositi, based upon the Captivi of Plautus, and Il Negromante, a free adaptation of the Hecyra of Terence, are better known today, the former especially, because it is the source of George Gascoigne's Supposes (1566), the first prose comedy of the English Renaissance. Ariosto was the first great figure of the commedia erudita, but other illustrious playwrights were soon to follow in his footsteps. Machiavelli's La Mandragola ("The Mandrake"), written late in the second decade of the century, is one of the finest comedies ever; characterized by its vivid picture of Florentine life, its crisp, ultra-economical, colloquial Italian, and a masterful achievement of liaison-des-scènes, it is a model of classical structure. Ten years later, Pietro Aretino, whose Marescalco ("The Horse Doctor") probably influenced Jonson's The Silent Woman, had already emerged as a naturalistic dramatist with little regard for classical decorum and restraint but with the ability to blend loose medieval plotting with Plautine situations. In 1531 appeared Gl' Ingannati ("The Deceived Ones"), a comedy by some unknown Sienese academician, a member of the Intronati; this play had some influence on Shakespeare's Twelfth Night. The list of other writers of comedy and their chief works in the next half-century would form a lengthy bibliography. It is sufficient for our present purpose to state that there was a remarkable flowering of dramatic talent in Italy in the first half of the cinquecento, a flowering that is best illustrated by reference to the remarkable wealth of similar genius in England in later Elizabethan and early Jacobean times.

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[8] Lea, Italian Popular Comedy, I, 236.

The commedie erudite were composed by men of academic training and were presented by amateur actors for the entertainment of learned and aristocratic audiences in the palaces of Italian nobles. By the middle of the sixteenth century the demand for comedy was so great that famous actors formed travelling companies which could capably meet this demand by providing the novelty of a wide *repertoire* and the satisfaction of a more efficient and polished performance. The beginnings of the *commedia dell' arte* strikingly coincide with the formation of the early professional companies. Though in 1545 a comedy-troupe, led by Maphio di Re, known as Zanini, was already well established, there is no evidence to suggest that improvised comedy was already in existence at that date. Yet, by 1568, the year of the earliest definitive document describing such a comedy, the tradition seems already well established—the principal characters already well defined and the antics characteristic of this type of entertainment throughout the next century at least very much in evidence. The document referred to is the journal of Massimo Troiano,[10] a professional musician at the court of Bavaria, who describes a performance given on March 8 of that year, on the occasion of the wedding of Duke William of Bavaria with Renata of Lorraine.[11] It is one of the ironies of history that Troiano's enthusiastic and carefully detailed record of what we might call a typical professional performance describes the acting of a group that was mainly amateur.

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[9] Herrick, Italian Comedy in the Renaissance, p. 67.

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[10] *Un discorso degli trionfi, Giostre, Apparati, e delle cose più notabile nelle sontuose Nozze dell' Illustrissimo et Eccelentissimo Signor Duca Guglielmo, Primo Genito del Generosissimo Alberto Quinto, Conte Palatino del Reno e Duca di Baviera alta e bassa nell' anno 1568 a 22 de Febraro, ecc., ecc., di Massimo Trojano da Napoli, Musico dell' Illus. ed Ecc. Signor Duca di Baviera. In Monaco . . . MDLXVIII.*

[11] The text of Troiano's description is fully translated in Winifred Smith's *The Commedia dell' Arte* (New York: Benjamin Blom, Inc., 1964), pp. 104-109, and in K.M. Lea's *Italian Popular Comedy*, I, 7-11.

What differentiates professional comedy from the *commedia erudita* is its characteristic mode of presentation. The term *commedia dell' arte* is an unsatisfactory and indeed an anachronistic label.

> In the first place, we note that this phrase does not appear before the eighteenth century, when it seems to have been used in the sense of 'professional comedy,' as opposed to amateur or literary comedy. According to this description, *arte* means 'the special art of playing these pieces,' just as the phrase 'the profession' is used in theatrical parlance today to signify 'the special profession of acting.' Maurice Sand, indeed, takes it in the sense of 'artistic perfection,' but the other view seems at once more in accordance with the facts and more favoured by students of the subject. Commonly, in earlier times, the words *commedia a soggetto* were employed to designate this type of theatrical art, and these perhaps have more truly the air of definitive exactitude than the vaguer term by which the Italian Comedy is known today. Both suggest that this special form of theatrical activity is distinguished by the fact that the actors improvise their words (*all' improviso*)and work only from a plot, theme, or subject (*a soggetto*).[12]

We might best translate the expression then as "the comedy of professional skill," and in view of what was demanded of the actor, it seems a good description as well as an apt definition. Traditional drama is basically literary, and from the point of view of the thespian studying his part, is dogmatically prescriptive. Each role is, basically, absolutely defined by an individual dramatist who is responsible for the content and phraseology of dialogue, and who solely determines the scope, procedure and outcome of the action. The actor who assumes a particular role, if he is to be creative, must be so within precise limits; his genius is exercised in the interpretation of the dramatist's intentions and in recognising the possibilities of the author's essential concept of the meaning and function of that particular character. The *commedia dell' arte* actor had no such authoritative text.

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[12] Nicoll, *Masks, Mimes, and Miracles*, pp. 215-216.

He worked from a *scenario*, a concise script indicating the broad outlines of plot and action, of exits and entrances, and giving in a few phrases the matter to be dealt with in each scene and the attitudes of the characters therein involved, but leaving to the improvisation of the comedians the dialogue and stage business that would fill out the scene for the pleasure of the audience. The following extract from Act I of *La Fortuna di Flavio*[13] by Flaminio Scala gives the modern reader a good idea of the quality of a typical *scenario*:

Cap[itano] Spav[ento] *Morat schi[avo]*	vedendo Flam[inia] e credendola cortigiana la saluta, & ella rendendoli il saluto se n'e[n]tra subito; Frances[china] vaggeggia lo schiavo e facendoli riverenza sen entra in casa: Ca[pitano] che la donna li piace, e di volerla sevire qual che giorno per haverla: schiavo lo dissuade, in quello
Frances[china]	qual và per lo cuscino à casa la parente dove è rimaso: Cap[itano] l'accarezza, in quello sente parlar Panta[lone], fugge per strada, Cap[itano] rimane.
Panta[lone] *Grillo*	di casa dicendo io non voglio più contendere con questa scelerate, io in tutti i modi me ne voglio liberare: Capit[ano] sentendo quelle parole si crede che Panta[lone] sia un bertone della giovane, lo consiglia a lasciar la pratica delle puttane essendo vecchio com'è: Panta[lone] domanda di chi egli ragiona, Cap[itano] che parla di q̃lla puttana che sta in q̃lla casa. Pãt. in collera, dice, che mente. Cacciano mano all' armi ambeduo, in quello servo di Panta[lone] con l'alabarda.
Burat[tino]	Hoste con spiedo da cucina, Schiavo conduce via il Capit[ano]. Pantalone dubitando dell' honor suo, manda Buratt[ino] in casa, poi dice à Grillo suo servo voler rompere il giuramento fatto di non maritar Flamin[ia] sin tanto, che non fusse tornato a casa

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[13] This is the second of fifty *scenari* published in Flaminio Scala's *Il Teatro delle favole rappresentative* (Venice, 1611).

> Flavio suo figlio già tant'anni fatto schiavo.[14]

The scene may be translated as follows:

Capitano Spavento Marat, the Slave	seeing Flaminia and believing her to be a courtesan greets her, and she returning his salutation, goes in home. Franceschina chats with the slave, and [then] curtsying to him goes indoors. The Captain [says] that he likes the young woman and wishes to be of service to her in order to have her some day. The Slave dissuades him; at this point,
Franceschina	appears; the Captain hugs her; at this [she] hearing Pantalone speak runs away along the street. The Captain stays.
Pantalone	[comes] out of the house saying, I don't want any more bickering with that little tramp and at all costs I want to be free of her.[15] The Captain, hearing these words, assumes that Pantalone is the young girl's pimp, and advises him to give over being a pander, now that he's an old man. Pantalone asks whom he is talking about; the Captain replies that he refers to the tart who lives in that house over there. Pantalone, enraged, calls him a liar. They both go for their swords; at this
Grillo	Pantalone's servant [enters] with the battle-axe.[16]
Burattino	the host, rushes out of his kitchen; the Slave leads away the Captain. Pantalone is worried about his standing from the viewpoint of honour; he sends Burattino home, then tells his servant, Grillo, that he wants to break

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[14] Pandolfi, La Commedia dell' Arte, II, 182.

[15] Flaminia is Pantalone's daughter; their relationship is clearly along Jessica-Shylock lines. Franceschina is his maid-servant.

[16] A halberd is one of the listed props in "Robbe per la Comedia [sic]," a column printed beside the list of dramatis personae.

> the oath he swore not to marry off Flaminia until such time as his son Flavio, stolen by slave-traders many years before, had returned home.

The scenario, then, is at best a very unliterary and quite skeletal plot which is suggestive rather than directive in its composition. The comedian upon the stage became, *ex tempore*, his own author and director.

Another striking aspect of the *commedia dell' arte* is its mode of characterization. In conventional drama the identity of a particular character is, with very few exceptions, confined to a particular play and circumscribed by the self-imposed exigencies of the literary dramatist. The actor identifies himself with the character he is playing during the few hours of a performance; he assumes a certain role at certain times, but does not wed himself to it. A well-recognised actor in our own day may successfully play Bluntschli in Shaw's *Arms and the Man* on Broadway in the autumn, delight London's West End with his interpretation of Willy. Loman in Miller's *Death of a Salesman* in the spring, and impress even the foremost critics as the *Tempest's* Prospero at Stratford, Ontario in the summer. In any of these performances, the identity of character and actor never obtains beyond the final curtain-call. In the *commedia dell' arte*, however, the identity of the actor and his role was so complete that many comedians were universally known by the names of the characters they interpreted, and each actor confined himself to a single role throughout his professional career. This is the antithesis of the star-system: the conventional theatre has immortalized Nell Gwynne, David Garrick and Sarah Bernhardt, whereas the monumental names of the *commedia dell' arte* are Pantalone, Gratiano and Arlecchino, generic titles all. Pantalone, for example, was always recognisable as the miserly Venetian merchant and always predictable in that his selfishness and suspicion must always lead to his own chagrin, no matter what play he appeared in, no matter what company graced the stage, and no matter what actor donned his characteristic garb. The various *scenari* presented him in various situations—sometimes husband, sometimes widower, now a cuckold, now a rake, sometimes childless, often blessed (or perhaps "cursed" would be a better word) with children, but he was invariably the same well-known individual, the comic synthesis of *bourgeois* industry and thrift. The seemingly interminable television series of our own time offer pale equivalents of the characterization-techniques of *il teatro all' improviso*. The Cartwrights of *Bonanza* are better known to us as a familiar family than by their legal names, and many of us forget that Perry Mason is known to his neighbours as Raymond Burr.

That professional companies of the sixteenth century should have embraced the new freer genre in preference to the *commedia erudita* is probably due as much to the exigencies of public taste as to any other factor, since the prime concern of such troupes is to please audiences. The Italian public has always enjoyed comedy of everyday life played rather realistically. This seems as true in our day as at any other time, if we are to judge by the popularity of Guareschi's Peppone and Don Camillo. The basis for the comic stereotypes and for the actor's specialization in one definite role is probably the audiences' delight in varied spectacle accompanied by direct, simple language and portraying characters who reflect the actual conditions of their own time. Improvised dialogue, when properly handled, provides a naturalness which it is impossible to achieve with such convincing results in any other form of theatrical expression;

the astounding variety and basic sameness of television shows in our own time demonstrates how themes borrowed from the learned comedy could satisfy the popular demand for new plays; indeed, the practice of _commedia_ troupes, as Vito Pandolfi suggests, might be compared to the improvisations of modern jazz musicians, who treat us to new and ingenious variations at every performance, but who really perform in a manner which can best be described as stereotyped.[17] Finally, in peopling the stage with parodistic and satiric versions of Petrarchan lovers, Bergamask labourers, Venetian merchants, self-important but ridiculous pedants, bombastic Spanish mercenaries, and resourceful and irreverent household maids, the _comici dell' arte_ strikingly reflected contemporary social conditions. Furthermore, instead of demanding that willing suspension of disbelief that required the onlookers to imagine the stage a far-off Illyria or vaguely situated Bohemia, it was common practice for the Italian professionals to make the local city the scene of the play, thus insisting all the more upon the immediacy of the comic situation and, of course, allowing conveniently for improvised reference to the actual events of the day or hour. The intrigue, whatever its origins, is of minor significance; it is merely a springboard for the creative abilities of the entertainers, who, rather than the plot, gave the play its tone. Significantly enough, the interest of the audience did not depend upon the final outcome of the plot but was centred on the quality of the entertainment provided throughout the spectacle. Each actor, therefore, was virtually obliged to delve into the great works of literature and criticism in order to bring increasing depth to the character he portrayed and to continually offer fresh glimpses of that personality.

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[17] Pandolfi, _La Commedia dell' Arte_, I, 13.

Though the characters of the *commedia dell' arte* were fixed in that they recurred from play to play, they were not stock types in the strict sense of the expression.[18] There is an original informing concept of each comic part, and the development of a particular character is dependent upon a multiplicity of interpretations over the years, just as the development of the Homeric figure Odysseus grew in a long series of folk legends, as some confident, though contentious, classical scholars would have us believe. How thoroughly the more respectable and reputable actors approached their work is obvious from the following remarks of Niccolò Barbieri in 1628:[19]

> I comici moderni sono tali che non vi è buon libro, che da loro non sia letto ne bel concetto, che non sia da essi tolto, ne descrizione di cosa, che non sii imitata, ne bella sentenza, che non sia colta, perche sempre leggono, e sfiorano i libri. . . .Basta, che tutti studiano ò poco, ò assai, come si puo vedere dalle loro cose stampate, Rime, Comedie, Discorsi, Lettere, Dialoghi, Prologhi, ed altre composizioni. . . .In quest' Arte è necessario un talento naturale à pochi conceduto, e di cento, che si pongono a recitare, dieci non riescono buoni . . . .[20]
>
> (Modern actors are so good that there is not a good book they have not read, not a pretty conceit that they have not made their own, a description they have not imitated, a beautiful sentence they have not collected, because they are always reading and gathering posies from books. . . . It is sufficient to state that they study, some just a little, others assiduously, as one can see from their printed compositions: rhymes, comedies, discourses, letters, dialogues, prologues and other compositions. . . .In this art, there is need for a natural talent that is granted to few; and of a hundred who try acting, not even ten turn out to be good.)

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[18] Allardyce Nicoll, *The World of Harlequin* (Cambridge: The University Press, 1963), p. 22.

[19] *Discorso Famigliare di Nicolo' Barbieri, Detto Beltrame, Intorno alle Comedie moderne*. (Venice: Antonio Pinelli, Publisher, 1628).

[20] Pandolfi, III, 376.

A reading of the Discorso of Barbieri (better known by the generic name Beltrame) shows how learned professional comedians could be. The Lettere of Isabella Andreini, the most illustrious prima donna in the history of the first half century of the commedia dell' arte, were published in 1607. She was a member of l'Accademia degli Intenti, and she was not the only leading lady of the early professional companies who belonged to a learned academy—the equivalent of a modern actress's possessing a Ph.D.[21]

Now that the professional seriousness of the actors has been at least suggested, and the scholarly insight that enriched popular drama has been recognized, we turn to the individual members of the dramatis personae, whose names and personalities were already household words in France, Spain, Germany, England, and even in far-off Moscow, as well as in their native Italy, before the year 1580.[22]

Pantalone

The old man who, led by lust, falls in love and who, buoyed up with vain hopes, is mocked by his own disillusionment and by the tricks and unkind remarks of his acquaintances, has for thousands of years been a central personality in comedy. We find him in Plautus and Terence and see him transferred with great facility and little metamorphosis to the learned comedy of the Renaissance. He was a regular in Venetian carnival masks and the most important personage in the boisterous farces of Calmo, and he graced the stage of the commedia dell' arte right from its beginning. Giulio Pasquati, who joined the company of the "Gelosi" in the 1560's and became their first Pantalone, is probably the person who gave this mask his definitive physiognomy,[23] that of "the lean and slippered Pantaloon," to use Shakespeare's apt description.

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[21] Nicoll, The World of Harlequin, pp. 33-35.

[22] Lea, I, 255-280.

All paintings depicting Pantalone in the last quarter of the *cinquecento* are unanimous in their representation of his dress: tight-fitting red vest, red breeches and stocking, brimless fez-like cap, and dark, ample, floor-length coat. His mask is dark-brown, features a long, beaked nose; his beard is long and straggling.[24] He is always a wealthy *Magnifico* of Venice, always speaking the dialect of that city, and often sporting a pouch so attached to his belt that it seems at once a symbol of mercantile money-mindedness and a relic of the grotesque phallic appendages characteristic of Atellan comedy.

Pantalone's personality was as well-defined as his appearance. In a type of comedy that depends almost invariably for its intrigues on the difficulties of young lovers, he is a *vecchio*, an old man. Much like the Plautine *senex*, he is generally a purveyor of comic fare in a rather negative way. The actor who donned the mask of Pantalone had to bear in mind that he was interpreting a respectable, capable and serious gentleman whose persuading, advising, reproving and commanding of characters—who, from the point of view of age or social position, are his inferiors—is quite keen-witted, if not always moral. In his seriousness he is a foil to unrealistic lovers and mischievous servants. He is inevitably an obstacle to the lovers, a living reproof to pranksters (whether they are in the Sir Toby Belch or Launcelot Gobbo vein), and is consequently a butt of their jokes, the victim of their burle (deceits). To continue the reference to English comedy, we should think of the comic effects of the utter seriousness of the melancholy Jacques, of Volpone, or of Shylock if we are to appreciate the functional importance of Pantalone in the commedia dell' arte, that form of entertainment which has proved to be "una dell.... più libere e gioiose forme d'arte,"[25] —one of the freest and most joyous forms of art.

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[23] Pandolfi, I, 297.

[24] Nicoll, *Masks, Mimes, and Miracles*, p. 254.

Though Pantalone is a vecchio, one would be mistaken in imagining him a decrepit old man. In Renaissance comedy anyone over forty, in other words a man old enough to be father of a twenty-year-old son or of a daughter of sixteen, is relegated to the ranks of "the aged." Hence, we must not be surprised if, as in the scenario of Massimo Troiano to which we have already referred, we find him, in a moment of exuberance, cartwheeling with a clown. Such conduct, so unbecoming his rather dignified bearing, has obvious entertainment value. Neither must we be surprised to find him chasing courtesans in those scripts which give him a wife, or falling in love with some skittish young thing when, as is commonly the case, he is a widower whose rival for the girl's attentions happens in some plays to be his own son. But Pantalone's most characteristic role is that of troubled father. Kathleen M. Lea remarks somewhat facetiously:

> He is an affectionate but incredibly careless father who is always resorting to moles and birthmarks to identify his children.[26]

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[25] Pandolfi, I, 77.

[26] Lea, Italian Popular Comedy, I, 20.

But his love for his children is not so obvious in their presence. In *La Fortuna di Flavio* he is so eager to marry off his daughter, Flaminia, that he considers breaking his oath to cherish her until his long-lost son returns. Ironically enough, the son is quite aware of his father's pining for him. By the end of the play, we find the Captain's slave, Marat, who contributes so much to the intricacies of the plot, further complicating matters towards the *finale* by proving to be the boy Flavio.

Eavesdropping, an extension of his suspiciousness, is as characteristic of the *Magnifico* as is his miserliness. An even more objectionable (though equally enjoyable) form of intrusion is his propensity to overwhelm offspring, servants and acquaintances with *consigli* (advice); and this habit is all the more objectionable (and, for that, more full of comic potential) because of his limitless verbosity. There is truly no more perfect parallel to our *vecchio* in this respect than Shakespeare's Polonius.

The Pedant

The *dilettante* reader or play-goer scarcely ever fails to be amused at jokes about scholars who are so engrossed in particular fields of study as to seem inalienably removed by a wall of dusty tomes and learned jargon from the values and pursuits of everyday life. It is an amusement which is basically uncomfortable, for there is always the suspicion that the interests of the intellectual are more worthwhile than those of the common man. Hence, when a poem or play ridicules the pseudo-intellectual and exposes the absurdity of his hiding ignorance behind a mask of spurious learning, the reader or onlooker experiences no discomfort and freely expresses his glee. It is no wonder then that the *dottore* of the *commedia* dell' arte has predecessors without number in the commedia erudita and that his peculiar brand of ridiculous utterance follows a tradition that is easily recognizable in the macaronic poetry of the fifteenth century.

The pedant of the commedia dell' arte was called Graziano, or some variation of that name, such as Gratiano or Graciano, and was frequently given a surname such as Cottiche (Codegne, Codige, Codgne), probably a corruption of the plural form of the Latin word codex. Many theories attribute the origin of this mask to various figures in Italian drama from the twelfth to the sixteenth century, though the origin of the name has little or nothing to do with the development of the character. The possibility that the name and place of origin as well as the profession of Il Dottore were inspired by Graziano de' Bambagioli, a fourteenth century Bolognese notary and commentator on Dante as well as author of "Trattato delle virtù morali," is fairly acceptable, because our Graziano speaks a mixture of Bolognese dialect and macaronic Latin and is most frequently a jurist rather than a doctor of medicine. Graziano's peculiarly indigestible parlance is his most noteworthy characteristic, and this facet of his character is magnified by his addiction to expounding and arguing, as well as by his solecism-crammed Latin quotes and grotesque distortion of the sound and meaning of common Italian words. The mask of Graziano provided actor and scenarist with immense possibilities for entertaining satire and delightful bombast; in this lies the prime importance of that lasting comic type.

The most famous of the early dottori, and the man who almost definitely set the archetypal pattern of Graziano by establishing his mask, costume, language, and psychology, was Lodovico de' Bianchi, who became known as Gratiano da Francolino after joining the Gelosi company in 1578. His predecessor, Luzio Burchiella, born Antonio Molino, was also famous in the role. However, neither of them originated it: the first documentary evidence of the Doctor's appearance before an audience is a note by Rogna, secretary to the Duke of Mantua, which is dated May 11, 1567: "S. E. ha fatto recitare una Commedia dei Graziani."[27]

In the early years of the *commedia* the stupidity and absurd childishness of Graziano is stressed. L'Estoile wrote in his *Les Comédiens de la Cour* in 1603: "il faut un Gratien, qui fasse le pédant—Et qu'il ne sache rien au fond de la doctrine"—(What is needed is a Gratiano who plays the pedant, but who has absolutely no depth of learning.)[28] But perhaps the best illustration of the quality of his scholarship is de' Bianchi's *The One Hundred and Fifteen Conclusions of Doctor Gratiano.*[29] These trite endings are not funny to anyone reading the list, but at the end of a bombastic speech leading up to a long-expected dramatic and weighty ending, they must have been amusingly anticlimactic. Here are a few sample quotations translated with a good deal of poetic licence:

2) The man who goes out walking is not dead.
7) He who does not speak may be considered dumb.
27) The man strips naked who goes nude to bed.
35) A man aboard a galley doesn't walk upon the earth.
61) They who're locked in prison stay inside until they're freed.[30]

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[27] Pandolfi, *La Commedia dell' Arte*, II, 10. ("His Excellency had a Graziano comedy acted today").

[28] *Ibid.*, p. 9.

[29] *Le cento e quindici conclusioni in Ottava rima del plusquamperfetto Dottor Gratiano Partesana da Francolin, Comico Geloso, & altre manifatture, & compositioni nella sua buona lingua.* (Bologna, 1587).

[30] Pandolfi, *La Commedia dell' Arte*, II, 13ff.

Gratiano is also a *vecchio*. Dressed in decorous black garb—short cloak, doctoral bonnet, white ruff—he is usually a friend though sometimes an enemy of Pantalone, to whom he is a foil in his facile deviating from gravity to levity. He is even more circumlocutious than the *bourgeois* merchant, whether stifling ordinary language with Latinate jargon in stressing the obvious or pretending to knowledge that he does not have. More often than the *Magnifico* he proves lascivious with the maids, but true to their custom of showing the *vecchi* ridiculous in love, the scenarists normally engineer his eventual disappointment by having a young blade steal the girl of his heart. But his lack of morals and lack of luck are of far lesser importance that his constant "assassination" of both Latin and Bolognese by unwittingly destorting words until they sound like other words and convey the impression to the auditor that between what he says and what he wishes to say there is a vague no-man's-land which is the birthplace of his humour and his appeal.[31]

Il Capitano

Italy has always had more than its share of foreign domination; the internecine warfare of its duchies, principalities and city states had always attracted foreign mercenaries to its shores. It is a natural consequence that military power should be a popular subject of satire and, especially, that the swaggering, foreign army officer should be a comic scapegoat. The throng of haughty, blustering captains found in the *commedia erudita*, in the popular farces of Ruzzante and Giancarli and, later on, in the *commedia dell' arte* is very great indeed, and the list of their colourful, extravagant names—Polipponte, Bellerafonte, Martebellonio, Basilisco, to mention a few—seems endless. How exactly this mask developed is uncertain, but Renaissance familiarity with classical comedy inevitably endowed him with many of the characteristics of the old miles gloriosus, while making him an exaggerated mirror of the hated Spanish mercenaries and the Italians who imitated their behaviour in sixteenth century Italy. He, like Pantalone and Il Dottore, appears in the earliest scenari and in the earliest historical references to professional comedians.

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[31] His slips of the tongue transformed *amore* to *orrore*, *latino* to *lanternino*, *ramare* to *urinare*, and *innamorata* to a flat-chested *imamorata*. (Pandolfi, II, 32).

Troiano's Discorso mentions this role in 1568. By that time, Fabrizzio de Fornaris, leader of a Neapolitan troupe, was already famous for his characterization of Capitano Coccodrillo, a part which he played before Parisian audiences in 1571 and again thirteen years later. Fiorillo, also from Naples, was known to have played Capitano Matamoras as early as 1584 and as late as 1634.[32] The most famous of the early Captains was Francesco Andreini, who names his captain Spavento di Valle Inferno, and in that part delighted audiences in Italy and France for over a quarter of a century. When his wife Isabella, famous for her acting and for her learning, died in childbirth in France in 1604, he retired from the stage, but soon set down in writing a reflection of many of the speeches and boasts of Captain Frightful from Hell Valley in his famous Le Bravure del Capitano Spavento di Valle Inferno.

Normally sporting a plumed hat and sweeping cloak, and never without a long sword, the Capitano is, in most scenari, an enemy of the vecchi and a target for the wit of the others. His is not a serious part in the sense in which the roles of Pantalone and Graziano are serious, for the valiant Capitano, whose hyperbolic self-glorification is only balanced by the immeasurable depths of his resources of cowardice, is an utterly fantastic individual, whose grasp of reality has been so weakened that he lives in an imaginary world of ideal martial valour, so enthralled is he by the classical tales of epic feats and by the legends of the chivalric romances. "In one sense," says Allardyce Nicoll, "Capitano is Bobadill writ large. Without a doubt much of the delight which audiences took in him derived from the very extravagance of his lengthy harangues."[33] The tradition of these very harangues was both summarized and further influenced by Andreini's *Bravure* and by a similar volume published in Bologna a year earlier (1606), Antonio Pardi's *Le Stupende Forze e' bravure del Capitano Spuzza Capo et Sputa Saette* (The Stupendous Mighty and Bold Deeds of Captain Head-off and Spit-Dart). These lists of boasts are crammed with references to Mars, Titans, Gorgons and devils and with tales which even Homer in all his glory would not have dared to chant to the public ear. Their very extravagance is so consistent that their appeal soon palls, as far as the modern reader is concerned, but we must not forget that these are preserved in actors' craft-books that were designed as inspirational pieces for the help of players, and, furthermore, that the vaunting Capitano often had to bring his self-eulogies to an abortive termination in order to escape the wrath of an angry Pantalone or the manacles of a Dogberry-like bailiff.

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[32] Lea, Italian Popular Comedy, I, 34.

Generally, but by no means invariably, the Capitano is cast as a Spaniard, speaking Spanish or "pidgin"-Italian. He is usually *da sè*, unconnected by blood with the families of Pantalone and Graziano, but he often falls hoplessly in love. Such a situation leads, on occasion, to attempted suicide, but solemn promises to drown himself freeze at the sight of a chilly river. His love intrigues lead, too, to duels, but for him swift legs are more trustworthy than the swiftest rapier, and apologetic explanations come later; in *Li diversi Linguaggi*, for example, he refuses to fight, lest the soft blood of the Bolognese should destroy the temper of his weapon.[34] The ridiculous situations in which he finds himself because of love are many. In the Venetian *Li Porci* he becomes a veritable pig-in-a-poke in true *Merry Wives of Windsor* style when Franceschina, promising to become his mistress if he hides in a bag, sends for a butcher who buys her unseen porcine pet and sets to sharpening his knives with gusto. The Capitano's hasty escape would not become Orlando *furioso*.

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[33] Nicoll, *World of Harlequin*, p. 97.

In treating of the *commedia dell' arte* of the *cinquecento* we must be careful to distinguish between the *capitano* and the *bravo*. Both are characterized by outrageously boastful and superlative language and by a conspicuous dearth of prowess. The *bravo* does not wear a mask and is not, therefore, a primary character.[35] He is a soldier-of-fortune cast off by some war, now seeking a place in society (as batman or pimp, usually), and is capable of the vilest action. This role is definitely inspired by Plautus' *miles gloriosus*. The Capitano is essentially a lovable, decent, basically dignified but utterly unrealistic individual. To fail to emphasize the contrast between his dignity and idealism is to reduce him to an uninteresting fool. This is what the actors eventually did, and after the

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[34] Lea, I, 50.

[35] Pandolfi, *La Commedia dell' Arte*, I, 326.

1630s the role is no longer found in any scenario. The character to emerge after the decline of the Capitano was Scaramuzza, better known to us by his French name, Scaramouche, who retained many of the character-traits of the "Spanish" prototype, but savoured strongly of devilment-loving Arlecchino.

The Zanni

The servants of the commedia dell' arte are a fascinating group. The generic name by which they were known was Zanni, a name whose etymology has been ingeniously explained in various ways, but whose most probable explanation is that John was a common working-class name in Northern Italy, where Giovanni was transformed to "Zanni" in the same way as in North America Charles becomes the familiar "Chuck." The social and cultural basis for finding this name in comedy is rather clear. Bergamack labourers flocked to the ports of Genoa and Venice in the late fifteenth century. At first they became subjects of satire to the citizens, who despised them. From satire to parody is a slight step—and as laughter leads to liking, so the despised Bergamask labourers soon became personal servants. The name is quite common in early sixteenth century comedy, but the role became exclusive to the commedia dell' arte before 1570, having been established as a fixed type by Simone Basilea, a Jewish comedian from Bologna. Frequently in the early scenari he is the central character.

A study of any few documents relating to the new comedy convinces the reader that Zanni has little to do with the Plautine slave or with the servants in the commedia erudita; nor during the first forty years of improvised comedy was he ever given the name Arlecchino (Harlequin), by which the part is best known today. Zanni became a character name and also a generic title. The mask might be called Zan, Zuan, Zuane or any other variation of Giovanni, or might be given an entirely different nomination such as Pedrolino. "Harlequin," for instance, "is merely the most successful of the infinite types of appellation invented to impress upon the mind of the onlooker the memory of one interpreter of the Zanni role."[36] Whatever his name, the presentation of the part was ~~rather~~ uniform. He is:

> lazy, of excessive appetites (though in truth more interested in the pleasures of the table than those of the bed), insolent, uncouth, and at the same time, cunning.[37]

This was the great clown role, for the actor that was nimble in mind and body had a ready way to the auditors' heart with his multifarious disguises, absurd songs, ingenious tricks, odd gait, acrobatic extravaganzas, and that peculiar blend of knavery and kindheartedness that enabled him to enjoy his master's confidence and then blurt out every secret; to help and hinder the love intrigue (and be, in effect, the prime mover of the plot), and to perplex the rest of the *dramatis personae* by proving rogue when they play on his *naiveté*, and vice versa.

One characteristic of the *commedia dell' arte* was the practice of pairing characters. From the beginning it was normal practice to have two lovers and their respective sweethearts and, of course, the two *vecchi*, the pedant and the merchant, while the Capitano was often paired with a more worldly-wise *bravo*. It was a natural development that the slick and ingenious side of the Zanni's character should give birth to a separate mask and that the stupid, dull side should produce an individual, dull-witted clown. So it came about that the appearance of two menservants, the one an innocent rogue, the other an innocent boor, became the rule. The cunning rascal assumed names such as Arlecchino, Trivellino, Covillo, Scapino and, late in the *seicento*, Finocchio. The more gross, vulgar and, often, brutal blunderer frequently called by the generic name, Zanni, is best known in variations of the role as played by Brighella and his successors and near-likenesses, such as Pulcinella. The ragged costumes of the original went through a stylistic revolution culminating eventually in the stylized, patch-work tight clothes, neat skull-cap and black half-mask of Harlequin and in the baggy, white, loose, garb, the full wart-ridden mask, and peaked cap of the rogue Pulcinella, ancestor of the puppet Punch.

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[36] "Arlecchino non era che il più riuscito di tutte le infinite specie di nomi inventati per confermare nella memoria dello spettatore un interprete dello Zanni." Pandolfi, I, 164.

[37] "Pigro, dagli appetite smodati (e in verità, più detto ai piaceri delle tavola che a quelli del letto), insolente, rozzo, e allo stesso tempo furbo." *Ibid.*

Arlecchino is astute, but living in an inner world where moral concepts have no being, he tempts and goads men such as Pantalone and Il Capitano into licentiousness and embarrassment, and often Bears the brunt of their calamities as severely as they. Yet he is not vicious, for he can no more hold a grudge than learn from experience. His innocence is emphasized in numerous situations in almost every *scenario*: he never sees the consequences of his actions and is invariably as credulous as the people he dupes; inventive, he assumes numerous disguises but is so full of fun that words and silences at critical junctures in the acting of his pretended part reveal his disguise; yet, never at a loss, one good trick or excuse borrows another, so that as in the case of his Shakespearian cousin, Puck, all ends well.

The second zany, in the stupid Brighella tradition, had none of this sense of fun, and is much more fool than knave. He is rude, unlettered, cumbersome and slow-witted and, for that reason, patently coarse as well as unwittingly cruel. There is something of him in Launcelot Gobbo and a good deal more in Verges and Dogberry. But since most of us prefer an imp to an idiot, it is not surprising that we can delight for longer in the antics of Tranio, for example, than in the *gaucheries* of these last-named fools; it is not unexpected then that Arlecchino plays a more important role in the *commedia dell' arte* than Pulcinella and his ilk.

The Lovers

The plot of improvised comedy revolved about the lovers, but as the details of the intrigue are by no means dominant in such entertainment it is natural that the importance of the *innamorati* is slight in comparison with the incidental fortunes of the *vecchi*, the *zanni* and even the *capitano*. While the other principal men characters are masked (the ladies never are) the *amorosi* are as clean-faced and aristocratic as the hero of *As You Like It*. The common names for the leading *innamorato* range through Orazio, Flavio, Ottavio, Silvio, Livio, Leandro, Fortunio and dozens more. This young hero is always gallant, fashionable and learned, always speaking choice Tuscan, as does the *prima donna*, and his role calls for a handsome actor of outstanding histrionic powers and of poetic inspiration, who could uphold the part of a Petrarchan lover in the mad-cap society of the rest of the *dramatis personae*. His were the passionate *clichés* and sighs of young love; he is the quintessence of Shakespeare's young Romeo. Flaminio Scala, author of *Teatro delle Favole rappresentative*[38] was famous as Flavio towards the end of the sixteenth century, probably with the Gelosi company,[39] and, later on, he "sighed like furnace" as leading male in the Accesi and the Confidenti.

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[38] Venice 1611. Here is the only volume of *scenari* known to scholars until the end of the nineteenth century. It gives only fifty of them. Today over seven hundred have been published.

The *innamorate*, known by such names as Isabella, Flaminia, Celia, Adriana, Diana, Valeria and Laura, were, in character, and conceit, reflections of the *innamorati*. These ladies usually belong to the households of the *vecchi*, normally as daughters, but there are occasional young widows in the *scenari*. The part is a difficult one, for there was no precedent for it in Roman comedy, and many actresses became learned ladies in studying to bring beauty to the part. Isabella Andreini, wife of Francesco (the famous Capitano Spavento), the Gelosi heroine, is the most famous of the early *prime donne*. Her pastoral, *Mirtilla*[40] was published in 1588, when she was twenty-four. Her *Lettere* (1607) and *Frammenti* (1625) and *Rime* (printed, 1696) show why her name was so illustrious in her lifetime and give us to understand why the academics honoured her, and why her son, the famous G. B. Andreini, head of the Fedeli troup, was not shy to rank her above Tasso and Ariosto as the greatest poet of her generation, in *La Saggia Egiziana* (Florence 1604). But Isabella is only one of many actresses who enjoyed immense adulation because of the part. Obviously the stilted conversations and ingenious conceits that were part of the stock-in-trade for the role pleased the public in a manner beyond our imagining.

La Fantesca: *The Maid-Servant*

Mistress Quickly and Juliet's nurse are the Shakespearian counterparts of the lively role of the commedia dell' arte maids. Often the object of the Capitano's lust and often courted by the licentious vecchi, their position is not as stereotyped as that of other characters, nor is there a constant norm for la servetta's age. The part was refined by successive ages but depended always on the exigencies of the scenario. Whether called Ricciolina, Pasquella, Franceschina, as in the Scala plays, or by the most popular name of Colombina, she was, in effect, a female counterpart of the zanni and was sometimes referred to as La Zagna.[41] In the early years the part was often played by men, but the fame of Angela Lucchese, in Naples, and Silvia Roncagli, who acted with the Andreinis, is evidence that it had become a woman's part before the last decade of the sixteenth century. Sometimes the fantesca is a vivacious flirt; occasionally she is slantedly meretricious—perhaps in imitation of Terentian courtesans, but whether young, as Ricciolina invariably was, or rough and more mature like Franceschina, the maid-servant is a quick-witted Harlequine, whose spirit we can best appreciate by observing the delicious devilment of Maria in Twelfth Night.

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[39] Nicoll, *Masks, Mimes and Miracles*, p. 235.

[40] *Ibid*, p. 237.

The conventional characters are not the only important characteristics of the commedia dell' arte. Since improvisation was the core of the actors' art it is not surprising that odd plots were constantly juggled and readapted and that certain motifs kept on recurring. The lost child theme—the lad who was sold as a slave, doesn't know his identity and returns unrecognised to his home town—is used time and time again, and frequently reaches the absurd situation of a girl accepting the ring of a rejected fiancé, on discovering that the man she nearly married is her brother. Sweethearts are easily and quickly disposed of in such a situation. This is also true in the frequent cases of a last-minute repentance of a jealous or prodigal lover, who, on finally recognizing the excellence of a pursuing and unwanted loving lady, marries her without apology and is forgiven without fuss. Where the spirit of a play is comic, where plot is subservient to incidental fare, there is room for quick changes of affection, for transports of well-nigh celestial joy and for renunciations that are as rash as they are facile.

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[41] Pandolfi, La Commedia dell' Arte, I, 157.

Another popular _motif_ is that of the separated identical twins. Sometimes they are brothers; sometimes they are brother and sister—she, often, quite prudently transvestite. _Zanni Incredible_ is a _scenario_ that is somewhat similar in broad outline to the _Comedy of Errors_, but the latter is more complex in that as well as the twin youngsters there are twin masters for good measure. _La Gelosa Isabella_ has many similarities, in its twin-business, with _Twelfth Night_.

People continually resort to disguises in the _commedia_. A basic characteristic of the genre is the wearing of masks by more than half the cast. This stresses dialogue and movement at the expense of facial expression, but it has the further advantage of heightening the sheer theatricality of what is happening on the stage. The disguise device is a form of visual dramatic irony, for a change of a mere garment or the donning of a mask never deceives the audience, while it entirely baffles everyone upon the stage. As with the other devices, we must not cry Incredible! when we deal with a form of art that stressed the artificiality of its artistic techniques.

We also notice, as we do in Shakespearian light comedy, that while women really or pretendedly get pregnant, there are never any young children or mothers of infants in the cast. Pregnancy can be a very exploitable comic fact; neither motherhood nor infancy can ever be.

Another aspect of professional comedy is that successful pieces of physical comedy that proved amusing to audiences became characteristic of certain masks universally or of particular individual players. Night scenes in which the actors, in full daylight, pretended to be in Stygian darkness offered great possibilities of amusement, and were by no means rare. Another regular lazzo was a servant's meeting his master and either deliberately or unwittingly failing to recognise him. The word lazzo comes from azzo, or, more correctly, azione, meaning "an action" or a piece of stage business.

> Lazzi were simply scenes of action independent of the episodes outlined in the scenario. "We give the name lazzi," remarks Riccoboni,[42] "to the actions of Harlequin or other masked characters when they interrupt a scene by their expressions of terror or by fooleries. These have nothing to do with the subject in hand, and to it return must always be made."[43]

One such famous piece of fun is Arlecchino's chasing, catching, manually dissecting, and eating a fly and then reacting with uncomfortable awe to the machinations of the little insect within him. Equally famous is "the trick of going back to knock" which is often used, though we do not know the substance of it for certain. Perhaps the Grumio-Petrucchio business, with the "Knock me" farcical stuff, is a reflection of this type of pleasant waste of time: Launce and his dog are also in a definite lazzi tradition. The antics of Harlequin with his wooden baton are legendary, and when his imagination was as nimble as the regular leading zanni's physique should be, there were limitless possibilities for the jocose.

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[42] L. Riccoboni, Histoire du théâtre italien depuis la décadence de la comedie latine, p. 65.

[43] Nicoll, Masks, Mimes, and Miracles, pp. 219-20.

Such were the characters and such the techniques of the _commedia dell' arte_, that comedy of heightened realism detached from life, which so quickly cast a grin across the face of Europe in the last quarter of the sixteenth century, and influenced some of the world's greatest writers of drama: Lope de Vega, Molière, and Shakespeare.

CHAPTER II

THE *COMMEDIA DELL' ARTE* IN ENGLAND

The frequent tours of Italian professional acting companies in foreign lands during the last three decades of the sixteenth century familiarized play-goers in most Western European capitals with the lively and novel entertainment of the *commedia all' improviso*. Documentary evidence of the personnel, repertoire, and itineraries of these troupes in France and Spain is abundant. Corresponding English records are at best fragmentary. Despite this, references to Italian players and plays, in journals, letters, critical writings and dramas of the period, are sufficiently frequent to convince us that lovers of the stage at Court and in the principal cultural centres of England were quite familiar with the *commedia dell' arte* before 1580 and that within the next twenty years the characters and the characteristics of that genre were well known to most literate Englishmen.

In 1571 three *commedia* companies visited France. One led by Giovanni Tabarin left Paris in February. In March the Compagnia de' Gelosi reached the French capital; and in the autumn Alberto (Zan) Ganassa's troupe were charging such high prices that the *Parlement* forced them to leave the city. It is highly probable that it was the Gelosi who were admired by Lord Buckhurst when, attending the wedding of Charles IX as ambassador, he was entertained by the Duke of Nevers "with a comedie of Italians that for mirth and the handling thereof deserved singular commendacion."[44]

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[44] *State Papers, Foreign, Newsletter, lxxii* (1569-73), p. 413, quoted by Lea, *Italian Popular Comedy*, II, 347.

Fifteen months later, Edward Clinton, Earl of Lincoln, accompanied by a large train of English nobles, was on diplomatic business in Paris. He wrote to Lord Burghley that the King "hadd some pastyme showed him by Italian players which I was at with hym," and said that, at the Louvre three days later, he, along with the King, the Dauphin, Nevers and others, went for post-prandial entertainment to a "large chamber wheare there was an Italian play."[45] Perhaps it was Ganassa's company that entertained Lincoln, as they had returned to France in 1572 to play at the wedding of Henri of Navarre and Marguerite of Valois; or it might have been the troupe led by Antonio Soldino, who were at Blois in March and subsequently acted in Paris.

Both these Englishmen mention acrobatic activity upon the stage. This suggests that they attended improvised comedy, because acrobats were never used in _commedia erudita_ performances. The latter form of entertainment was essentially amateur, whereas professional companies naturally attracted the more intelligent tumblers who found in the comic possibilities of the _commedia dell' arte_ a challenge to intellect as well as to the physical agility which had already made them veritable _piazza_-nomads. There is further evidence to support the possibility that the plays in question were of the improvised kind; it is this: the Duke of Nevers who was responsible for these productions, was brother of the Duke of Mantua, the principal patron of the _comici dell' arte_ in Italy at that time.[46] It may have been as a result of encouragement from Buckhurst or Lincoln that an Italian company, possibly Soldino's,[47] crossed the Channel in

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[45] Lea, II, 348.

[46] Smith, _The Commedia dell' Arte_, p. 147.

[47] E.K. Chambers, _The Elizabethan Stage_, (Oxford: The University Press, 1923), II, 263.

1573. The first notice of their presence is an entry in the Nottingham Chamberlain's Accounts, September 4 (or 14?), recording payment of five shillings "gevin to Italyans for serteyne pastymes that they showed before Maister Meare and his brethren."[48] Kathleen M. Lea contends that:

> These were probably the Italian Players whose permit "to make shewe of an instrument of strange motions within the Citie" was the subject of two letters belonging to 1573, but otherwise undated, sent by the Privy Council to the Lord Mayor of London.[49]

In the Revels Accounts for February 1573—November 1574 there is a long catalogue of charges for the outfitting and transportation of "the Italyan players that ffollowed the progresse and made pastyme fyrst at Wynsor and afterwardes at Reading."[50] From the list of properties and the "sundry kyndes of Apparell" rented for the progresses, it is obvious that the players presented a pastoral play or two, but this fact does not eliminate the possibility of their presenting improvised comedy; scenari unearthed in the past century show that the professional repertoire extended beyond romantic comedy to include a number of tragicomedies and many fairly elaborate pastoral plays. It was usual for the comici dell' arte to stage an occasional *commedia erudita* before audiences which included a number of people who had a good command of Italian. Sir Edmund Chambers assumes that these were the comedians commended to the Lord Mayor of London on July 22, (a week after the Reading performance), and who upset the moral sensibilities of Sir Thomas Norton in November, when he called special attention to "the unchaste, shamelesse and unnaturall tomblinge of the Italian weomen."[51] Agile tumbling, whether of men or women, and whether we term it unnatural or otherwise, is an identifying feature of improvised comedy. Since the Italians did not stage their shows merely in the capital, but also toured the provinces, they frequently played before audiences who could not possibly understand a word of the dialogue. Such audiences necessarily concentrated on the physical aspects of the comedy and, inevitably keeping in mind the more extravagant gestures and actions, might well have referred colloquially to the *comici dell' arte* as tumblers.

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[48] Chambers, II, 262.

[49] Lea, Italian Popular Comedy, II, 353, quoting Acts of the Privy Council 1573, pp. 131-132. Miss Lea mentions these letters, but does not comment on the fact that the entertainment in question may not have been a comedy at all. There is a strangeness about the expression "an instrument of strange motions." Is there not a possibility that this might suggest something in the nature of a puppet-show? Milton uses a similar expression in Areopagitica when he refers to man deprived of free will as being no more than "such an Adam as we see in the motions." Areopagitica and Of Education, ed. George H. Sabine (New York: Appleton, Century, Crofts, 1957), p. 25.

[50] Chambers, II, 262.

What is important in the context of this paper is, of course, the fact that the *commedia dell' arte* was popularly known in many parts of England, though we do not know how long the visiting companies remained in the country or what was the extent of their influence on English taste. References to the magnitude of that influence are frequent in the literature of the period; most notable among them are remarks by Gascoigne and Gosson, intellectuals who mounted the rostrum of scholarly concern for the canons of good taste. George Gascoigne, in *The Steele Glas* (1575), lists "these Enterluds, those new Italian sportes"[52] among things "of little worth in dede," and though interludes and sports seem synonymous, there is a possibility that he includes such frivolities as the Jig under the former heading, and improvised comedy under the latter. In 1579, Stephen Gosson laments the fact that his fellow-countrymen in their imitation of foreign tastes have "robbed Italy of wantonnesse," and, in the tradition of the sternest moralists, addresses his readers:

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[51] *Ibid.*

[52] George Gascoigne, *The Steele Glas* (English Reprints, Westminster: A. Constable and Co. Ltd., 1901), p. 59.

> Compare London to Rome, and England to Italy, you shall finde the Theaters of the one and the abuses of the other, to be rife amongs vs.[53]

But courtiers delighted in these "sportes" and "abuses." On February 27, 1576, the Treasurer of the Chamber paid "Alfruso Ferrabolle and the rest of the Italian players"[54] for a play presented at Court. The Ferrabolle referred to was almost certainly the musician Alfonso Ferrabosco, who resided at the Court of Elizabeth from 1562 to 1578, but whose extended return trips to Italy afforded him ample opportunity of becoming so familiar with professional comedy that he might well have played with a visiting troupe in London. On January 13, 1577, the Privy Council directed "the Lord Mayor of London to geve order that one Dronsiano, an Italian, a commediante and his companye, maye playe within the Cittie and the liberties of the same between this and the first week of Lent."[55] This Dronsiano was almost certainly Drusiano Martinelli of Mantua, who later became an internationally famous _comico dell' arte_ with the Confidenti. His wife Angelica was the group's _prima donna_, and it was his brother Tristano who created the mask of Arlecchino, and in the 1590s became the most illustrious member of the Gelosi.

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[53] Stephen Gosson, _The School of Abuse_ (English Reprints, Edward Arber ed., Southgate, London, 1868), p.34.

[54] Smith, _The Commedia dell' Arte_, p. 174.

[55] Smith, p. 175. The quotation taken from J.R.Dasent, _Acts of the Privy Council_, Vol. X, p. 144.

Drusiano's connection with professional comedy, coupled with the fact that very few London citizens or residents could understand Italian well enough to appreciate *la commedia erudita*, is sufficient evidence to suggest that the visiting troupes presented *commedie dell' arte*---that genre which was visually comic in such a distinctive way and which, for this reason, could delight the onlooker whose ignorance of Italian deprived him of an appreciation of the actors' verbal humour. So we can be almost certain that when an Italian play was presented before the Council in Durham Place in April 1577, this distinguished audience attended a *commedia all' improviso*, and delighted more in the mimic excellence of the *comici* than in the verbal vagaries of players whose witty words fell on deaf ears. And their amusement may possibly have been provided by that most illustrious troupe, La Compagnia de' Gelosi, who were in France in the years 1577 to 1578. Drusiano may have belonged to this group and come with them---or, at least, a segment of the company---to England.

Between 1576 and 1583, an Italian named Scotto, a well-known juggler, was at the court of Elizabeth. A Dr. Dale, in a letter dated March 25, 1576, wrote to Lord Burghley from Paris:

> There is on Scotto an Italian that playeth such knackes as Feates doth uppon the cardes who commeth to showe the Quenes Ma^{tie} sum of his toyes, he hath been made much of in this court, & maketh himself a iolye follow.[56]

That Scotto did come is certain. *The Defensative against supposed Prophecie of Henry Howard, Earl of Nottingham* (1583) mentions the sleights "that Scotto the Italian was able to play by leger du main before the Queene."[57]

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[56] Lea, II, 360, (quoting *State Papers, Foreign*, 1576, p. 691).

[57] *Ibid.*

This Scotto was a street-comedian in Italy, and in a 1602 letter to the secretary of the Duke of Mantua was referred to as "Dionisio, detto Scotto Mantovano." We know nothing of Scotto's activities in London, but cannot but wonder if he too had a comedy troupe with him, when we see Volpone in the famous piazza scene visualize his performance as part of a typical *commedia all' improviso* situation. Professor Alvin B. Kernan is convinced that Jonson is consciously working in that very tradition:

> The particular form the cunning of Mosca and Volpone takes is of central importance in the play. They are above all else master actors; not the kind of actors who learn their lines before hand . . . but improvisers like the *commedia dell' arte* players—referred to in the text in several places—who extemporize their lines and actions. . . .[58]

The references to the *commedia all' improviso* are indeed many. Mosca's soliloquy includes the remark: ". . . Such sparks/ Are the true parasites, others but their zanies" (III. ii. 22-23). In the piazza scene Volpone, who plays "Scoto of Mantua," invites Nano on to his mountebank stand with, "Mount Zany" (II. ii. 22-23), and soon addresses these words to him:

> And Zan Fritada pray thee sing a verse, extempore
> In honour of it [i.e. the "oglio del Scoto"]   (l. 114-5).

In the next scene Corvino, the merchant, worried about Volpone's attentions to Celia, addresses him by a conventional *innamorato* name, Flaminio:

> Signior Flaminio will you down, sir? down?
> What is my wife your Franceschina, sir?
> No windows on the whole Piazza, here
> To make your properties but mine? but mine?
> And called the Pantalone di Besogniosi
> About the town.

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[58] Alvin B. Kernan (ed.), *Ben Jonson*: *Volpone* (new Haven: Yale University Press, 1962), p. 7.

As Winifred Smith points out, the characters and situations in this scene are almost identical to much of the fare in the first act of Scala's *Fortuna di Flavio*.[59] Perhaps this *scenario* was the basis of one of the Italian plays presented in London. At any rate, the Pantalone of the Gelosi was surnamed "dei Bisognosi."

Jonson's *Volpone* was written in 1607. Long before this date, literary men had been making references to the Italian comedy, references that seem to assume a general familiarity with the genre. Whetstone, in his *Heptameron of Civill Discourses* (1582) writes:

> Certayne comedians of Ravenna presented their services . . . [They] are not tide to any written device, as our English Players are, but having a certayne groundes or principles of their owne, will, Extempore, make a pleasant show of other men's fantasies.[60]

Gabriel Harvey makes a slighting reference to Englishmen who ape European fashion (he calls them "anglofrancitali") in "Speculum Tuscanismi," and then describes the typical *magnifico*:

> His cringing side necke, Eyes glancing, Fisnamie smirking
> . . . .
> Large-bellied Kodpeasd Doublet, unkodpeasd halfe hose
> Strait to the dock, like a shirte, & close at the britch,
> like a diveling.[61]

Gosson's *Plays Confuted in Five Actions* (1582) states that:

> The groundworke of the comedies is love, cosenedge, flatterie, bawdorie . . . ; the persons . . . lecherous olde men, amorous young men with such like of infinite variety. (Action II)

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[59] Smith, *The Commedia dell' Arte*, p. 194.

[60] Lea, *Italian Popular Comedy* II, 346.

[61] Alexander B. Grosart (ed.), *The Works of Gabriel Harvey* (Two Volumes, printed for the Huth Library Collection, 1884), Volume I, p. 84.

Gosson may have intended to confine his disparaging remarks to Plautine comedy, but it is quite possible that he had in mind the entertainment provided by professional comedians. In *Henry IV, Part I*, Mistress Quickly, on seeing Falstaff and Hal parody the forth-coming interview of the King with the Prince of Wales, remarks that Sir John acts *extempore* as well as "one of these harlotry players" (II. iv. 395); her choice of the adjective "harlotry" shows that she may also have recognised that bawdry and "cosenedge" are the basis of improvised comedy fare.

It seems that the Elizabethan recognised the possibilities of the *commedia dell' arte* for other entertainment than bawdy comedy, if we can believe the contents of a letter written by Paolo Lardi in Calais to Gioseppe Rosaccio in Venice, on April 24, 1586. Lardi describes a parody of the Mass in an interlude attended by Queen Elizabeth and many London notables, in which a *magnifico* dressed as a priest and a *zanni* as a cleric, were attended in their liturgy by some sportive actors decked out as devils.[62] The letter describes how this sacrilegious sport was interrupted by the appearance of real devils who swept away the blasphemous actors before the eyes of the horrified assembly. Whatever the basis for the tumultuous disorganisation of the actors and the consternation of the onlookers (it may have been the coinciding of a thunderstorm with a melodrammatic scene) we can only wish that Signor Lardi's love of truth had, this once, prevailed over his enthusiasm for the improbabilities of medieval hagiography. Thomas Kyd clearly alludes to improvised comedy in *The Spanish Tragedy* (1591). In Act IV, when Balthasar invites Hieronimo to stage a play, the latter voices his admiration for the champions of that art:

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[62] Winifred Smith, "Anti-Catholic Propaganda in Elizabethan London," *Modern Philology*, XXVIII, November, 1930.

> The Italian tragedians are so sharp of wit
> That in one hour's meditation
> They would perform anything in action.[63]

He then insists that Bel-imperia play a part—and for reasons both un-English and unclassical: "For what's a play without a woman in it?" (IV. i. 98). The text he produces,

> . . . was determined to have been acted
> By gentlemen and scholars too,
> Such as could tell what to speak. (101-103)

—evidently a mere *scenario*. Hieronimo then decides that each player should speak a different language, believing that this "may breed the more variety" (l. 174), and when he says of Bel-imperia, "In courtly French shall all her phrases be" (l. 178), he obviously sees her as an *innamorata*.

There is a similar scene in Marston's *Histriomastix* (1598). Post-haste suggests to his fellows, Gutt, Belch, and Incle, that they form an acting troupe:

> Lett's make up a companie of Players,
> For we can all sing and say
> And so (with practice) soone may learne to play.

Incle, doubtful of their ability, replies:

> True could our action answer your extempore.[64]

Both Incle and Post-haste evidently think in terms of improvised performances. Marston must also have had the *commedia dell' arte* clearly in mind when

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[63] Thomas Kyd, *The Spanish Tragedy*, Philip Edwards ed. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1959), Act IV, Sc. i, ll. 164-6.

[64] H. Harvey Wood (ed.), *The Plays of John Marston* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1939), II, 280.

Drum in *Jack Drum's Entertainment* (1599) sees John so-the-King as a typical *capitano*, greeting him in Act III with, "Welcome Basilisco."[65]

The comments of English travellers in Europe, the visits of Italian companies to England, and the references to the *commedia dell' arte* in sixteenth century literature indicate that the influence of that form of comedy on the English stage was far stronger than it is now possible to demonstrate, and far more important than scholars who have investigated the literary sources of Elizabethan drama have allowed for. That so prolific a playwright as Shakespeare, whose genius it was to borrow and transform material from a great variety of sources, should have been unaware of the rich fund of historic techniques and comic traditions that his contemporaries recognised and referred to is quite improbable, and that, being familiar with this material, he should have failed to exploit it is incredible.

Even if a *commedia dell' arte* had never been staged in England, the English companies that toured abroad came under the influence of Italian comedy troupes and learned much from them.[66] The Earl of Leicester's players were in Europe in 1586. Undoubtedly they come into contact with *comici dell' arte*, who then haunted the courts of Europe. Leicester's players included one Will, "a jesting plaier," who is mentioned in the Household Accounts of the Danish Court as "Wilhelm Kempe instrumentist."[67] This is Kemp, the most famous of Shakespearian clowns, the original interpreter of the roles of Peter in *Romeo and Juliet* and Dogberry in

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[65] *The Plays of John Marston*, II, p. 208.

[66] For a detailed account of English actors on the Continent in the 1580-1600 period, see Chambers, *Elizabethan Stage*, II, 271-279.

[67] Chambers, II, 272.

Much Ado About Nothing.[68] In 1600 he again was abroad, spending some time in Germany and also in Italy, especially in Rome.[69] He may indeed have journeyed into Italy in 1586, if we are to believe a statement made (possibly by Nash) in the pamphlet "An Almond for a Parrat" (1590): in Bergamo, he says,

> The famous Francatrip' Harlicken . . . inquired of me if I knew any such Parabolano here as Signor Chiarlatano Kempio. Very well (quoth I) . . . He hearing me say so, began to embrace me anew, and offered me all the courtesie he could for his sake, saying that altho' he knew him not, yet for the report he had heard of his Pleasance, he colde not but bee in love with his perfections being absent.[70]

It is no more coincidence then that Peter and Dogberry have so much in common with *zanni* roles in the *commedia dell' arte*. Nor is it impossible that the stock *zanni* tricks or *lazzi* of Launce in *Two Gentlemen of Verona* and of Costard in *Love's Labour's Lost* were imports from the South.

There is further evidence to show that Kemp was recognised as being well versed in the techniques of improvised comedy. *The Travailes of Three English Brothers* (1607) by John Day[71] has a scene in which a player designated as Kemp acts with an Italian Harlequin in a typical *commedia dell' arte* skit that is unrelated to the rest of the play.[72] Kemp promises to act with the Harlequin and his wife, "if they will invent any extemporall merriment." Then follows lively dialogue in which Kemp seems as familiar with the characters and characteristic situations of the *commedia dell' arte* as is the Italian player. We do not know if Kemp himself played this part, but there is no doubt that Day presents him in a characteristic pose and that the audience is expected to enjoy the recognized skill of their admired clown in *extempore* playing.

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[68] Louis B. Wright, "Will Kemp and the *Commedia dell' Arte*," *Modern Language Notes*, XLI (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1926), p. 519.

[69] Chambers, II, 326.

[70] Ronald B. McKerrow (ed.), *The Works of Thomas Nash* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1958), III, 342.

[71] A. H. Bullen (ed.), *The Works of John Day* (London: The Holland Press, 1963).

[72] There are no scene or act divisions. The part referred to appears on pp. 370-373 of the Bullen edition.

Since Shakespeare availed himself of Kemp's comic talent, it is more than probable that his acquaintance with so renowned a clown should have influenced his composition of plays in which that actor was to appear. Kemp's specialized knowledge of improvised comedy, as well as the general public's familiarity with the *commedia dell' arte*, surely gave Shakespeare an intimate acquaintance with that genre.

CHAPTER III

SHAKESPEARE'S TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA AND THEIR ITALIAN FRIENDS

The incidence of references to magnificoes, Pantalcons, pedants and zanies in later Elizabethan literature, coupled with historical records of the activities of Italian actors in England and of English players in Europe, make it virtually certain that Shakespeare's contemporaries had a more than casual knowledge of the *commedia dell' arte*. This is true of Shakespeare himself: Jacques, the retired continental traveller of *As You Like It*, seems to have developed an acute appreciation of the clowning and the "good set terms" of motley fools abroad, while he soaked himself in the slough of fashionable melancholy, for in his famous "Seven ages of man" speech, he not only describes the vicissitudes of human misery in an extended theatrical metaphor but in terms which indicate an awareness of the main characteristics of the *tipi fissi* in improvised comedy.

Jacques' description of man in the pre-senility stage of old age as a

> . . . lean and slippered pantaloon
> With spectacles on nose and pouch on side,
> His youthful hose well sav'd, a world too wide
> For his shrunk shank; and his big manly voice,
> Turning again towards childish treble, pipes
> And whistles in his sound. (II. vii. 158-163)

is a vivid picture of Pantalone, the *vecchio* Venetian merchant—though, quite appropriately for Jacques' purpose, there is no mention of the characteristic mask. Most early illustrations of Pantalone—and there are many, as he was the most constant and, in this sense, the most important figure of Italian professional comedy—depict him as lean, hosed, and slippered;

some illustrations show him wearing spectacles and a pouch, the latter occasionally not "on side" but so placed as to suggest a phallus.[73] Jacques' lines imply Pantalone's rages, when suspicion of his wife or displeasure with his children cause his dignified voice to range to piping falsetto in a vehement harangue. The "pouch on side" detail is suggestive of the typical *magnifico's* rapacity, a trait which is the source of much amusement in Shakespeare's own Pantalone, the aging, raging, and duped Shylock, money-loving merchant of Venice. It is also note-worthy that the pantaloon's hose are "well sav'd," for careful economising is a buttress of miserliness.

The connotations of the word "pantaloon," as used by Jacques, make the connection with improvised comedy obvious. However, there are other reflections of the *commedia dell' arte* in his speech. It may be a labouring of the point to indicate that the usual *scenario* provided little more than "exits and entrances" and that the regular *commediante* indeed played many parts,[74] since duplication of roles was an economic necessity for English companies too. But it is surely more than a coincidence that Jacques' lover, soldier, and justice are as typical of *commedia* masks as is the old pantaloon.

The principal *amoroso*, or *innamorato*, sighed, indeed, "like furnace," and his familiar Petrarchan sentiments and statements informed many a sonnet or ballad with platitudinous regret that his sweetheart's response to his passion was indifferent, if not disdainful, arching of her *supercilii*.

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[73] Nicoll, *The World of Harlequin*, p. 44.

[74] Though the typical *commedia* company had only ten players, many *scenari*, such as Scala's *La Fortuna di Flavio*, list as many as twenty characters.

Jacques' soldier is

> "Full of strange oaths, and bearded like the pard,
> Jealous in honour, sudden and quick in quarrel."

This sounds like that flamboyant, ridiculous character made famous by Francesco Andreini, creator of Capitano Spavento. The *commedia capitano* rushes recklessly into love and, because of love, into transports of jealousy, and since his jealous nature and over-imaginative concept of the demands of heroic honour blind him to his own folly and his adversaries' valour, he becomes involved in frequent quarrels, from which a combination of swaggering, cowardice, classically inspired oaths, incredible lies and dependably fleet martial strides extricate him ignominiously——and invariably.

It is a strange coincidence also that "the justice" described by Jacques is "full of wise saws and modern instances," for Dottor Gratiano, the second *vecchio* of Italian comedy, is often presented as a Bolognese whose profession is the law, whose vocabulary consists of the gleanings of pedantic lore, and whose conversation is charged with a verbosity which depends to a great extent on circumlocutions reiteration of obvious pathways of thought with pleonastic litanies of synonyms.

Another *vecchio* of the Shakespearian stage, Polonius, is like Pantalone in that, having a respectable social position, he loses our respect and becomes a butt for the humour of his acquaintances because of an egocentricity that makes him a meddling obstacle to the course of young love. When a troupe of players arrives at Elsinore, he proves as familiar with the affairs of the theatre as any Jacques, and the precise distinctions he makes when gratuitously cataloguing the various genres of dramatic fare would well become the most pedantic Gratiano:

> The best actors in the world, either for tragedy, comedy, history, pastoral, pastoral-comical, historical-pastoral, tragical-historical, tragical-comical-historical-pastoral, scene indivisible or poem unlimited: Seneca cannot be too heavy, nor Plautus too light. For the law of writ and the liberty, these are the only men.[75]

Polonius, who had "played once i' the university" has not, if we are to credit Hamlet's reproach, maintained his enthusiasm for learned drama, preferring instead "a jig or a tale of bawdry," (II. ii. 530). The Elizabethan jig, a sub-dramatic form of theatrical entertainment, corresponded to the *intermezzo* of the Italian stage,[76] and was a popular, not to say pedestrian, distraction. The expression "tale of bawdry" might equally well apply to the romantic comedy of the *commedia erudita* and the *commedia all' improviso*. The unintellectual bias of Polonius' theatrical preferences may shed some light on the meaning of the greatly disputed phrase, "the law of writ and the liberty." The closeness of the reference to Plautus and Seneca makes it probable that "the law of writ" means written comedy, *la commedia erudita*, and "the liberty" means *la commedia dell' arte*, that genre in which the actors, freed from the prescriptions of "writ", enjoyed the liberty of improvisation.[77]

Commentators on the sources of Shakespeare's plays have found material in the literatures of classical times, of Renaissance Europe, and of Shakespeare's homeland which in matter and in manner seem to have contributed much to certain plays and poems. The tendency has been to consider Shakespeare more as a *littérateur* than as a practical playwright, so that it is not surprising that scholars, focusing their attention on art-forms governed by "the law of writ" should have paid little attention to what Polonius calls "the liberty." This is especially true of those men who have explored the tributaries flowing from the Parnassus of European literature into the mainstream of Shakespeare's talent as he composed *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*. Some scholars have tried to estimate the indebtedness of this play to Girolamo Parabosco's *Il Viluppo* ("The Tangle," 1547) and to various other Italian written comedies, while the accepted opinion has been that the major influence upon Shakespeare's story was the Spanish romance, *Diana Enamorada* (1542) by the Portuguese author, Jorge de Montemayor. There is no evidence whatsoever as to how Shakespeare could have had access to *Il Viluppo*, and Professor Geoffrey Bullough does not even mention it in his publication of possible sources and interesting analogues of the *Verona* story.[78] There was no translation into English of Montemayor's story until 1598, six years after the composition of the play, but since Shakespeare may have had access to a French translation published in 1578, Bullough categorically lists it as a source. The broad outlines of the love-intrigue involving Don Felix and Felismena in *Diana Enamorada* resemble the Julia-Proteus affair, and that tale has prototypes of the *billet-doux* business in Act I, Sc. ii and of Julia's disguised presence when Proteus serenades Silvia in Act IV, Sc. ii. Shakespeare may have based his play upon an earlier play (now lost, but known to have been acted before the Queen in 1585), Felix and Philiomena,[79] and this may have been his rather muddled source of the details of Montemayor's tale. But whatever the source of the inspiration, The Two Gentlemen of Verona, the very first Romantic Comedy attempted by Shakespeare, has interesting characteristics which cannot be attributed to literary sources and which can be traced to the traditions of Italian improvised comedy. The fare provided by the "harlotry" commedianti was frequently a dramatisation of material from romance literature, and the manner of their presentation was not dissimilar to Shakespeare's plotting and characterisation in The Two Gentlemen of Verona. If this play is built upon the skeleton of an~~y~~ earlier comedy such as Felix and Philiomena, his source must have been very Italianate; otherwise, we must conclude that Shakespeare revitalised that skeleton with devices borrowed from the commedia dell' arte. If we choose to disregard hypotheses about sources, we must similarly recognise that the organisation of Verona must surely be inspired by the traditions of the popular theatre of improvisation. To support this conclusion one should glance at Il teatro delle favole rappresentative (1611) by Flaminio Scala, there to find entire scenari, occasional scenes, and general dramatic characteristics that show a remarkable closeness to the work of Shakespeare in his early comedies. Some of Scala's plays can be dated as early as the 1570's and 1580's,[80] and since he was the principal innamorato of the Gelosi at the period of their early visits to France, it is possible that Shakespeare had seen some of them or heard them described. There is no way of dating Scala's Flavio Tradito, just as there is no way of explaining away the striking similarities between this _scenario_ and _The Two Gentlemen of Verona_.

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[75] Hamlet, II, ii, 24-30. *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare*, W. J. Craig ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), p. 883.

[76] Nicoll, *Masks, Mimes, and Miracles* , p. 219.

[77] See John Payne Collier, *The History of English Dramatic Poetry* (London: J. Murray, 1831), Vol. III, p. 393.

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[78] *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1957) Vol. I, 203-269.

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[79] Kenneth Muir, Shakespeare's Sources (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1957), Vol. I, p. 129.

[80] See Smith, The Commedia dell' Arte, p. 111.

The broad outlines of Scala's story are given in the "argomento" which, as in all of his _scenari_, precedes the list of _dramatis personae_, "Robbe per la comedia" and the details of the business of each act:

> In Florence there were two young men who loved each other most cordially and were true and loyal friends to each other. One of them, Flavio, was surnamed Alidori; the other was called Oratio Belmonte. It so happened (as it often happens) that Flavio was fired by the beauty of a young daughter of a certain Dottor Gratiano Forbicione, named Isabella; she reciprocated Flavio's love. It happened that Oratio, having absolutely no regard for his ancient friendship with Flavio, fell in love with young Isabella; and he used his deceits in such a way as to make Flavio believe himself betrayed by his lady-friend and think that she loved and desired him [Oratio] alone. This reduced Flavio to such a state of hopelessness that he promised to marry another woman, and yielded his beloved Isabella to his friend . But it then so happened that, through the astuteness of a servant, the treachery of Oratio was discovered and revealed to Flavio, who was [then] almost willing to duel with him. He, however, because of the treachery practiced against him, phlegmatically awaited for time to bring about some strange occurrence. And not much time had elapsed when Oratio, fighting with one of his enemies, was thrown to the ground and at the mercy of his rival. At that moment there arrived by chance his friend Flavio (who indeed still loved him), by whose help he was freed from the hands of his enemy. Because of this, he made Oratio recognise and confess his error and, being pardoned, yield to him [Flavio] the girl he wished to marry. Once again becoming true and faithful friends, they, from then on, enjoyed a happy life with their ladies.[81]

The Scala play deals with the conflict between love and friendship, and treats the subject in a manner which is, in many respects, similar to Shakespeare's handling of the same theme. Both Oratio and Proteus, vanquished by lust, deceptively pretend that the utterly frayed bonds of friendship are secure, while engineering the alienation of trusting companion from faithful *fiancée*. Their means are different but the end result is the same. Oratio pretends to read a letter from Flavio's Isabella in which she supposedly invites the reader, father of her unborn child, to a customary secret *rendez-vous*. Proteus, less overtly cruel and far more ingenious, reveals to the Duke his daughter's plans to elope with Valentine, then stressing Silvia's fidelity—"A sea of melting pearl, which some call tears" (III. i. 225)—encourages Valentine to the flight he has made necessary, and begs him:

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[81] Pandolfi, _La Commedia dell' Arte_, II, 204. Translation mine.

> Confer at large
> Of all that may concern thy love affairs. (III. i. 233-34).

Oratio secures an emotional alienation of Flavio from Isabella; the alienation of Valentine from Silvia is physical, in fact geographical. But both Shakespeare and Scala are at one in the treatment of the theme of ideal friendship. Neither Flavio nor Valentine is tainted by the least perfidy to the laws of *amicitia*, and in the case of each, the refusal to repay false friend in the currency of hate is the strict dramatic basis of the inevitable happy ending of romantic comedy.

Flavio learns of his friend's treachery from his faithful but mistrusted servant, the normally naive and bungling Pedrolino, who, in this crisis of Oratio's successful deception, proves effectively crafty. In the second act Pedrolino had planned to have Oratio killed and, to this end, coaxed the unhappy Isabella to promise herself in marriage to an ardent chance admirer, the blustering Neapolitan, Capitano Spavento. The *capitano*, with predictably murderous intentions, sets out on the trail of Oratio, whom he does not know, on behalf of Isabella, whom he had never previously met and who, though he does not know it, happens to be the girl he has journeyed hither to marry. Flavio, unaware of so much complex unawareness, had eavesdropped as Isabella guilefully complied with Pedrolino's wishes, and is enraged and amazed at her unfaithfulness to his friend, Oratio. The third act opens with Flavio's learning a lesson in the ways of the deceitful world, when Pedrolino explains his using the brash captain as a convenient executioner, and then coaxes Franceschina to confess that Oratio had paid her to deliver the pretended letter from her mistress, the supposedly *enceinte* Isabella. The servant, to confirm Flavio's new grasp of the situation, asks his master to hide, and announces to Isabella that the captain had killed the wrong young man. Her tears win Flavio anew, and he reveals himself and begs her pardon for his cruel suspicion. His knowledge of Oratio's treachery does not, however, lower his standards of faithfulness in friendship, and this is made clear when he saves his faithless comrade's life; the captain had inadvertently crossed swords with Oratio, had accidentally disarmed and grounded him and had jumped on him to deliver a *coup-de-grâce*, when Flavio saved the prostrate swordsman's life:

> Flavio assalta il Capi. libra Oratio, e combattendo col Cap. lo getta a terra, Cap. demanda la vita in dono, Flavio gliela concede: Oratio vedendo il beneficio grando ricevuto da Flavio, ingenocchioni li confessa il suo tradimento.[82]
>
> (Flavio, attacking the Captain, sets Oratio free. In the ensuing fight he floors the Captain, who then begs for his life as a special favour. Flavio grants him his request. When Oratio witnesses Flavio's goodness to him, he casts himself on his knees and confesses his betrayal.)

Ready pardon succeeds ready confession, and in a trice, fair-hearted Flavio marries fair-lady Isabella, the old friendship is as secure as it had formerly been, Oratio casually marries man-hunter Flaminia, and the inn-keeper, Burattino, with Touchstone facility, takes the hand of the

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[82] Pandolfi, II, 210.

servetta, Franceschina.

Valentine, in _The Two Gentlemen of Verona_, is equally true to the false friend who had well pondered the decision to betray his trust, before embarking on the sea of self-promoting hypocrisy:

> To wrong my friend I shall be much forsworn; (II. vi. 3).
>
> I to myself am dearer than a friend. (II. vi. 23).

These declarations not only invest Proteus' earlier line, "I leave myself, my friends, and all for love" (I. i. 65) with retrospective irony, but emphasize the conscious direction of his plan when, attracted by Silvia's beauty, he feels his "zeal to Valentine" grow "cold":

> If I can check my erring love, I will;
> If not, to compass her I'll use my skill. (II. iv. 212-213)

Valentine, confident of Proteus' sincerity, is admirably idealistic in putting his complete trust in him. The consequence is banishment, a banishment which has removed him from the possibility of suspicion, only to reveal the enormity of his friend's treachery in a scene where Proteus, threatening to rape Silvia, gravely offends against the laws of both love and friendship. Yet Valentine's constancy in true _amicitia_ forces him, as a gentleman who has worthily pursued honour, both to acknowledge the heinous character of Proteus' deception and immediately to "receive him honest." His magnanimity in freely giving the desired Silvia to his friend—"All that is mine in Silvia I give thee" (V. iv. 83)—an incredible gesture in terms of practical life, is the triumph of the highest form of human love, as if Valentine's philosophy of life is a simple "_Caritas super Omnia_." This situation is closely parallel in spirit to Flavio's sense of outrage when Isabella seemingly proves herself unfaithful to Oratio in her "Sarò vostra senz' altro" promise to Spavento. Both Oratio and Proteus have committed a rape of true friendship, though neither succeeds in his plan to sexually enjoy his comrade's lady. Oratio's pretense of a fruitful *liaison dangereuse* with Isabella, and Proteus' intent to molest Silvia, cannot deter their constant friends from granting them, for their happiness, the women whom Flavio and Valentino, respectively, adore. In both plays, this grand gesture proves a veritable conversion experience for the guilty, and it is such a gesture, coupled with protection from imminent death, that wins the wrong-doer from the regrettable pathway of dishonour and deceit. It is this example of perseverance in the true spirit of friendship that in both *Flavio Tradito* and *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* leads to the confessions of guilt, the renewal of integral *amicitia*, and the facilely-arranged marriages which, in celebrating victorious *Eros*, bring down the curtain on a society which, however odd, has achieved a momentary, if not lasting, harmony.

The story of Julia is in many ways so close to the *Diana Enamorata* of Montemayor that the Spanish romance seems to have inspired it. But we must not forget that the stratagem of the prudently transvestite *innamorata* who travels abroad in search of her lover is a commonplace of Italian comedy.

> Cecchi's *I Rivali* and *Gl' Ingannati* (by a member of the Intronati of Siena) are two of the best known of innumerable written plays in which the heroine resorts to masculine disguise.[83]

This device was prevalent in the *commedia dell' arte* also. Scala uses it in a few of his comedies, notably in *Il Ritratto* (1578?) This

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[83] Smith, *The Commedia dell' Arte*, p. 98, n. 56.

scenario[84] outlines a plot of multiple infidelities: Pantalone and his wife Isabella, Gratiano and his wife Flaminia attempt to secure the pleasures of adultery. Against this background we see a Milanese lady, Silvia, arrive in Parma, hoping to win back the love of Capitano Spavento, who has deserted her in favour of a meretricious *comediante* named Vittoria. Aided by Arlecchino, she is accepted by the Capitano as his page, calling herself Lesbino. The Capitano's candour about his love for *la jolie comédienne* creates situations that are remarkably close in tone to the scene in which Julia enquires of Proteus if his former sweetheart is dead:

> *Julia.* She is dead belike?
> *Proteus.* Not so; I think she lives.
> *Julia.* Alas!
> *Proteus.* Why dost thou cry "Alas"?
> *Julia.* I cannot choose / But pity her.
> *Proteus.* Wherefore shouldst thou pity her?
> *Julia.* Because methinks she loved you just as well
> As you do love your Silvia.
> She dreams on him that has forgot her love;
> You dote on her that cares not for your love.
> 'Tis pity love should be so contrary;
> And thinking on it makes me cry "Alas!" (IV. iv. 74-84)

Silvia in *Il Ritratto* is likewise sad:

> Lesbino si duole della sua mala fortuna e come il Capitano non prezza l'amor suo, sendo donna che tanto l'ama, per cagione del nuovo amore ch'egli porta a quella commediante.[85]
>
> (Lesbino [i.e.Silvia] is sad because of her ill fortune, [declaring] that the Captain does not value her affection, though she loves him very much, so caught up is he with the new love he bears that actress.)

Silvia, like Julia in the Shakespearian play, tries to awaken his old love by appealing to his memory, but meets with no success:

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[84] *Il Ritratto* ("The Portrait") is the thirty-ninth *scenario* in the Scala collection.

[85] *Il Ritratto*, Act III. Reprinted by I.A. Schwartz, *La Commedia dell' Arte and its Influence on French Comedy* (Paris: Librairie H. Samuel, 1933), p. 173-181. See p. 177.

> Capitano dice non poter viver quieto sin tanto che non venga l'ora della comedia, per l'amor grande che porta à Vittoria comica. Lesbino cerca levarlo da quello amore, discendoli no nesser di suo onore ne di sua reputazione l'amare uHa comediante vagabonda,.... Detto ciò, li dimanda se mai ha provato altro amore; Capitano che si e che in Milano amava una bellissima giovane, nella quale non poteva sperare, poichè il padre la voleva maritare con altra persona.[86]

> (The Captain says he just can't relax until it's time for the comedy, because of his great love for the *comica* Vittoria. Lesbino tries to free him from this love, telling him that it befits neither his honour nor reputation to be in love with a strolling player. Having said this, she asks him if he had experienced another love. The Captain says that he had loved a very pretty girl in Milan, but that he could not hope to win her, since her father wanted to marry her to another.)

Whether or not Shakespeare has an Italian play, learned or improvised, in his mind in his arranging that Julia should become Proteus' page cannot be definitely stated. Yet he certainly is conforming to a well-established Italian convention. Professor O. J. Campbell asserts that:

> the male disguise of the girl was the authorized solution of a universal problem of stage realism. The scene of all the action of Italian comedy, both learned and professional, was a public place. But Italian customs of the cinquecento forbade the appearance of a respectable citizen's daughter on the street with men. If the girl, therefore, was to have any sort of extended speech with the men in these comedies, she had either to talk to them from a window or a balcony, or to assume some sort of male disguise. Consequently, all Renaissance comedy is filled with these two situations.[87]

There is another aspect of the love-plot of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* which we might consider indispensable to all *commedia dell' arte* plots;

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[86] Schwartz, p. 177

[87] O.J. Campbell, "*The Two Gentlemen of Verona* and Italian Comedy," *Studies in Shakespeare, Milton, and Donne*, (University of Michigan Publications in Language and Literature, Vol. I (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1925), p. 56.

it is the role of the vecchi in hindering the course of young love, especially the role of the amorosa's father in his rejection of the fashionable young suitor in favour of some well-healed, unattractive oldster.

Dottor Gratiano, father of Isabella, the prima donna in Flavio Tradito, is the typical vecchio who, for reasons of his own and with no regard for the preferences of his daughter, arranges a suitable marriage for her with Capitano Spavento, who arrives with credentials from far-off Naples. In this play, as in many others, the choice of so vain and cowardly, so self-confident and unrealistic a mate for a sensitive and admirable young lady is an arrangement which the dramatist can effectively use as a jocose satire on the inanity of certain bourgeois values, as the myopic insight into human nature of a father who is respected and deemed wise by society at large is painfully obvious to the least discriminating member of the audience. The posturings of the capitano in Italian professional comedy, which places a premium on laughter, are often too outrageous for satire, but the possibility remains for the actors who wish to exploit it. Shakespeare seems in two minds about the character of Sir Thurio. His is a role similar to that of the capitano in that his appearances are few, while his importance as a well-patronized rival is not slight. The Duke is obdurate in his decision to match his daughter with this gentleman. It is this dogged determination that forces Silvia and Valentine to resort to subterfuge, and that, consequently, provides Proteus with the convenient weapon of the elopement-news. Valentine has a realistic view of the Duke's stand: he speaks of his "foolish rival, that her father likes/Only for his possessions are so huge" (II. iv. 173-174). In the banishment-scene, the Duke proclaims:

> 'Tis not unknown to thee that I have sought
> To match my friend Sir Thurio to my daughter. (III. i. 61-62)

and, soon afterwards, feels relieved that Valentine's forced flight brings nearer the fulfullment of his wish:

> Sir Thurio, fear not but that she will love you,
> Now Valentine is banished from her sight. (III. ii. 1-2)

This wish is quite enthusiastic, a stern determination rather than a mere desire; to Proteus the Duke confides:

> Thou knowest how willingly I would effect
> The match between Sir Thurio and my daughter.
> . . . .
> And also I think thou art not ignorant
> How she opposes her against my will.
> . . . .
> Ay, and perversely she persevers so.
> What might we do to make the girl forget
> The love of Valentine, and love Sir Thurio. (III. ii. 22-30)

There is a wealth of common-sense in one side of Thurio's character. When the banishment of Valentine effects no difference in the attitude of his promised bride, Thurio recognises the perseverance of faithful love where the Duke sees an affection which will soon abate so that "worthless Valentine shall be forgot" (III. ii. 10). Thurio sensibly "thinks not so" (l. 16) but decides to go along with the romantic suggestion of his adviser, Proteus, to serenade Silvia. Later, when the events in the forest prove the validity of his earlier doubt, he dismisses further thought about the girl he would have married, and surrenders her to Valentine:

> I hold him but a fool that will endanger
> His body for a girl that loves him not.
> I claim her not and therefore she is thine. [i.e. Valentine's]
> (V. iv. 135)

In his original doubts and in his final decision Thurio is both prudent and clear-minded. It is one of the charms of Shakespeare's art that such worldly wisdom seems to us, as the Duke terms it, "degenerate and base," though the Duke himself has hitherto been the epitome of the unromantic, and though we ourselves, in day-to-day life, consider the unwillingness of a future spouse no "slight condition" for avoiding matrimony. Thurio's good sense is mocked by the magic atmosphere of the world of romantic comedy. Shakespeare, deceptively deft in his mockery, is not content to leave the situation so simple. There is an ironic ambiguity about Thurio's prosaic thoughts: we condemn him as an unworthy, indeed, a despicable lover; and yet, if we are on the alert, we realize that the dramatist, with tongue in cheek, is mocking the unreal world of the great romances, where whatever smacks of logic in the affairs of the heart inevitably tastes sour. It almost seems that Shakespeare, in giving Thurio our values and in inviting our disapproval of their application, is chiding us for assenting to the nonsense of romance.

As we have said, Shakespeare seems in two minds about Thurio. Besides the dull, sensible, mercantile Thurio, there is a belligerent old idiot—and it is this side of his character that suggests that Shakespeare may have toyed with the idea of making him a "capitanesque" blusterer. This might be inferred from his first appearance, when he engages in the thrust and parry of a verbal duel with Valentine in the presence of the lady of their hearts. After a lively stychomythic exchange, in which each quip is quickly born from the previous phrase in typical commedia dell' arte fashion, the younger courting courtier insults Thurio with the taunt "I'll double your folly" (II. iv. 21). Silvia notes his mounting choler, as her favoured youth calls him a chameleon. Thurio replies that he is a valiant type of chameleon, "That hath more mind to feed on your blood than live in your air." Here he is typical of the threatening capitano, and indeed the young lady seems to recognise the fact, for when she diplomatically pretends that the exchange of words was merely a verbal game, there seems an ironic poignancy in the Martial imagery of her remark:

> A fine volley of words, gentlemen, and quickly shot off. (l. 31)

There is none of the extravagant boasting, none of the lies, and little of the illusion of a capitano in Thurio, and Shakespeare seems to have forgotten or neglected the idea until the last act of the play. Then, curiously enough, when the older man inquires of his emissary, Proteus, as to the progress of his suit, there is evidence that Shakespeare now conceives him as a kind of capitano, though no intervening scene suggests this point of view:

> Thurio. How likes she my discourse?
> Proteus. Ill when you talk of war.
> Thurio. But well when I discourse of love and peace.
> Julia. [Aside] But better, indeed, when you hold your peace.
> Thurio. What says she to my valour?
> Proteus. O, Sir, she makes no doubt of that.
> Julia. [Aside] She needs not, when she knows it cowardice.

The concern for his discourse, the suggestion of heroic vaunting, the inquiry as to a lady's reaction to the public image of a man who wishes to be seen as brave, and the suggestion in Julia's "asides" that he talks too much and fights too little, paints Thurio in the Spavento tints and shades. Yet apart from his threats to Valentine in his word-volley scene, Thurio has been rather dull and silent, quite capable indeed of accepting Proteus' claim that he is "not sharp enough" (III. ii. 67) to temper Silvia into loving him, and only once flexing the muscles of his bravery to warn that same Proteus against interesting himself in the young lady's charms (IV. ii.). Thurio, I feel, is a capitano in embryo (not, however, a miles gloriosus; there is no evil in him) and I find it difficult to explain the raison d'être of the connotations of the lines we have quoted, or to give them any valid dramatic justification, if our playwright did not have the figure of the capitano in his conscious or subconscious mind while creating the character of the parentally favoured but romantically ill-favoured Thurio, the golden gate that juts out prominently on the obstacle-course of love.

The innamorati and the innamorate in improvised comedy had rather stereotyped roles, the main function of which was to promote the plot and give ample opportunity for the chief comic masks to delight those auditors whose lungs "are tickle-o'-the-sere." When lovers won public acclaim, as did Scala and Isabella Andreini, for instance, it was because of the excellence of their command of Petrarchan conceits and the fertility of their imaginations in pouring forth eloquent love tirades. These effusions were not, in kind, unlike the extravagant speeches of lovers in la commedia sostenuta being, like them, rich in mythological allusions, classical quotations, philosophic aphorisms and clever imagery. P.M. Cecchini, in Frutti delle moderne commedie (1607) declared:

> They who play the difficult parts of the lovers enrich their minds with a pretty lot of noble discourses suitable to the variety of the matter which the stage should treat . . . (by) a frequent reading of eloquent books so that there remains in the reader's memory an impression of most heightened style, which when their speeches are heard produce the effect of springing from native genius.[88]

Isabella Andreini, (1562-1604), the famous prima donna of the Gelosi, was one of those that set such high standards for the role of lover. She, like many other professional actors, wrote numerous works in verse and prose. Her

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[88] Quoted in translation, W. Smith, The Commedia dell' Arte, p. 87, n. 30.

La Mirtilla, a verse pastoral which by its literary nature seems never to have been intended for the stage, was the basis for her acceptance into l'Accademia degli Intenti. Her *Lettere*, published by her husband, Francesco, in 1607 (he retired from the stage after her death in child-birth in Lyon) and *Rime* (collected in one volume 1696) attest the wide range of her learning and the high quality of her artistic inventiveness. Her son Gianbattista was Lelio, the chief *innamorato* of the Fedeli in the second quarter of the seventeenth century; he wrote a long series of dramatic compositions, one of which, *Adamo*, "may have formed part of Milton's inspiration when he was planning *Paradise Lost*."[89] The following excerpt from *La Mirtilla* gives us an inkling of what some of her set speeches for the part of *prima commediante* may have been like:

> E quanto il ciel di più bel fior dipinge
> E più le cose allegre
> Tanto al mio tristo core
> La fiera doglia accresce.[90]

This quatrain may be translated (very freely) as follows:

> The more the things of life are filled with joy,
> The more fair heav'n doth colour give the rose,
> The more proud sorrow rages in my soul
> And in my heart a heavy sadness grows.

When Scala notes in a *scenario*, "Isabella despairs as a despised lover," or "Isabella raves against Love and Fortune," she might recite, as Winnifred Smith suggests, one of the passages preserved in her *Lettere*, such as the following:

> If I did not complain of Love I must have been born mute. So great are my misfortunes that not only must I complain of him but must lament that I have not all the tongues,

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[89] Nicoll, *The World of Harlequin*, p. 34.

[90] *La Mirtilla* Act I, Sc. ii, quoted by Smith, p. 88, n. 32.

> all the languages of the world, that I might better sorrow over his injustice; he rewards my pain with grief, wills that I feed on woodworm and hemlock, wills that I suffer patiently . . . wills that I dissimulate my woe and cruelly commands me to show a smiling face, rejoicing while my miserable heart in its bitter pain bitterly bewaits its sorrow. . . . I renew the torture of Tantalus and long for the food and drink of love which are not given me.[91]

Such stock passages, well prepared and well conned, were a traditional aid to the skill of the comico dell' arte. Each actor had a file or notebook, variously referred to as a generico, zibaldone or ripertorio, filled with passages suitable to his part in a number of predictable situations. It was the skill of the good actor to play his part in such a way that the audience could not differentiate between the truly improvised and pretendedly extempore lines.

Our reference to and quotations from the compositions of the immortal Isabella cannot in any way prove Shakespeare's indebtedness to the love-tirades of the commedia dell' arte. But it is surely interesting that many pieces spoken by Valentine, Proteus and Julia in The Two Gentlemen of Verona are almost identical in tone and content with those lovers' conversations which were greatly admired by Italianplay-goers when improvised comedy had reached the fullness of its pristine vigour in the last two decades of the cinquecento. Valentine, at first free of love's snares and, later on, enjoying the tyranny of an amorous attachment, speaks in a vein quite similar to that of Isabella in the quoted passages:

> To be in love—where scorn in bought with groans,
> Coy looks with heartsore sighs, on fading moment's mirth
> With twenty watchful tedious nights (I. i. 29-31)

is a realist's viewpoint expressed in the terms of the courtly lover. But soon he becomes aware of a new reality:

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[91] Lettere d'Isabella Andreini. Comica Gelosa, et Academica intenta, nominata l'Accesa (Venice 1607) 9f., quoted in translation, Smith, p.88

> I have done penance for contemning Love,
> Whose high imperious thoughts have punished me
> With bitter fasts, with penitential groans,
> With nightly tears, and daily heartsore sighs. (II. iv. 128-131)

This last passage, carefully arranged in the imagery of penitential atonement, is typical of the elaborate conceits of Italian stage lovers. We find the same style characteristic of many speeches of Julia:

> Then let me go, and hinder not my course.
> I'll be as patient as a gentle stream
> And make a pastime of each weary step
> Till the last step have brought me to my love;
> And there I'll rest, as after much turmoil
> A blessed soul doth in Elysium. (II. vii. 33-38)

References to classical mythology, such as the use of the word "Elysium" here, abound in both forms of Italian comedy. But it would be idle to suggest that Shakespeare is deliberately using an Italian stage convention. "Venus and Adonis" and "The Rape of Lucrece" date from the same period as _The Two Gentlemen of Verona_, so it is natural that the _clichés_ of Renaissance romance and a wealth of classical allusion should suggest themselves to his mind. It is an interesting coincidence (if no more than that) that the young dramatist experiences the same lyrical inspiration as the poetic lovers of improvised comedy and is similar to them in his use of language and image. An Italian actress in a situation such as that of the forsaken Julia might also have seen a prototype of her plight in the infamous desertion of Ariadne by Theseus (IV. iv. 167-168). A serenading _amoroso_ who "loved not wisely but too well" would have little need of a reminder from some _senex_ to compare his venture to Phaeton's daring ride (III. i. 133-134). As we have said, Shakespeare had no need of _innamorati_ from a foreign stage to teach him the technique of composing love's bitter-sweet laments; yet the closeness is remarkable, and all the more remarkable in that the

Italian professional comedians frequently used the amours of a "fast" fantesca or zany zanni to parody the main romantic interest, while Shakespeare makes the monologue of Launce on the indifference of his unpitying, thankless dog the most heartfelt and memorable "tirade" of any friend or lover in Verona or Milan.

Clowns such as Launce are English to the core, and their dramatic ancestry extends back through Lyly's silly servants to the outlandish swains in Gammer Gurton's Needle. Yet Shakespeare's jesters and valets bear many striking resemblances to the zanni of the commedia dell' arte, resemblances so striking, in fact, that it is almost impossible to imagine otherwise than that, either as a result of Kemp's influence or of the dramatist's direct observation, or both, he is consciously using to advantage the successful comic types and situations of the professional comici in creating Launce and Speed,—not to mention numerous other immortal characters such as Dogberry in Much Ado About Nothing and Peter in Romeo and Juliet.

In many commedie dell' arte that feature rival lovers, we find that the admirable and eventually successful amoroso has at his disposal a servant who is knavish and very clever, and the less honourable and eventually unsuccessful lover has as his attendant or uses as his emissary a boorish, foolish zanni. The difference between the two types of manservant is great: the clever valet, the Harlequin, a descendant of the medieval Vice in many respects, is amusingly mischievous; the dramatic conception of this mask seems based upon the traits of the professional jester; the second type, whom Scala usually names Pedrolino, is slow-witted, foolish, a type of rustic simpleton, whose role is that of ignorant "clod" or clown.

Shakespeare differentiates markedly between the two types in The Two Gentlemen of Verona; Speed is nimble and witty like the Italian Arlecchino, Launce delightfully simple like Pedrolino. And, since the great Elizabethan stage comedians, Tarleton and Kemp[92] preferred to affect the country dullard, thereby setting an English theatre trend, the clown-role, as in the play in question, is the object of more attention and the purveyor of more amusement. Some critics have looked upon the Speed-Launce episodes as intermezzi which have no relation to the plot, much in the manner of the Licio-Petulus interludes of Lyly's Mydas (1592). But the scenes in which Petulus and Licio, and occasionally Pepinetta, give us of their quality[93] do not present servants who are essentially different in kind, though the style of dialogue frequently resembles that in which Speed and Launce discuss the "cate-log" forwarded by some match-maker (Act III, Sc. i).

When first we see Speed in conference with his master's friend, Proteus, we are immediately aware of his very nimble wit and verbal adroitness, qualities that are typically harlequinesque:

> Speed. You conclude that my master is a shepherd, then,
> and I a sheep?
> Proteus. I do.
> Speed. Why then, my horns are his horns, whether I
> wake or sleep. (I. i. 76-80)

Springing from a pun upon "ship" and "sheep;" Speed has devilishly introduced the topic of cuckoldry to a young lover whom he knows to be a slave of the unrealistic notions of courtly love. Then, further developing his theme in banter which would be outrageous if it weren't light-hearted, he skips from "sheep" to "laced mutton," teasingly reducing Proteus' "goddess" to a very "stale." And, aware that Proteus knows his disappointment at receiving no gratuity for delivering Love's tokens, he nimbly engages in the exercise of imaginatively effective begging, an art which he (and, later, Twelfth Night's Feste) seems to have learned from its foremost practitioner, Arlecchino.

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[92] See William Creizenach's The English Drama in the Age of Shakespeare (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, Ltd., 1916), pp. 296-303.

[93] Scene two of Acts 1, 2, 4, and 5, and scene three of Act 3.

The earthiness of Speed's mind, coupled with his keen awareness, enables him to spy the obvious directness of Silvia's device in getting Valentine to write her own love-letter to himslf, where Valentine, confounded by his concept of the hopeless lover's expectations, cannot imagine what inspires the apparent inconsistency of her behaviour. Earthiness is a typical quality of the Italian Harlequin, whose impudence and impertinence bring him in almost every comedy to bear the brunt of blows from the outraged; Speed, too, gets his share of punishment: he reminds Valentine that he had that day received "a swinging" for too-devout attachment to the bed he loves (II. i. 80).

Launce has a different type of wit. When first we meet him, rehearsing the farewells of his sorrowing family, his commerce with staff, hat, shoes and dog in an unmasterly effort to stage the doleful scene, is a lazzo that, from the linguistic point of view appeals to the onlooker through the clown's malapropisms, unclear-thinking and unawareness. There is grotesque naiveté in his assumption that Crab should have more pity in him than a sub-human (by implication) Jew. There is a hideous bar-sinister inference in, "No, this left shoe is my father" [Italics mine], and the deciveness of, "This shoe with the hole in it is my mother," does not make it clear to the amused playgoer whether or not he is merely insisting that she has a "worser" soul than his projenitor. When Panthino enters to interrupt his sorrow, Launce's pun upon the tide on which he will be shipped with Crab, "the tied" (II. iii. 39), amuses and delights himself, as if he is surprised by the Speed-like facility of his pun.

The setting is perfectly suited to commedia dell' arte practice when Launce and Speed meet in Milan (Act II, Sc. V). Speed, characteristically inquisitive, questions his companion about Proteus' parting from Julia and expects to hear that they are engaged to be married. When Launce proves cunningly vague and sees that his stratagem provokes the curious Speed, he disconcerts the inquisitor further by giving his replies in language which is rich in sexual connotations:

> Speed: How then? Shall he marry her?
> Launce: No.
> Speed: What, are they broken?
> Launce: No, they are both as whole as a fish.
> Speed: Why, then, how stands the matter with them?
> Launce: Marry, thus: when it stands well with him, it
> stands well with her. (II. v. 15-21)

Many such conversational exchanges are typical of the zanni encounters of the commedia dell' arte. But Shakespeare is using this piece of dialogue with much more artistic purpose than any improvising Pedrolino who delights in his momentary superiority over an eager Arlecchino, for through the carnal connotations of "fish" and "stand," Shakespeare indirectly comments upon the nature of Proteus' interest in Julia; it was merely a physical attraction, no matter how Petrarchan his former profession of amorous sentiments, and so we note and agree with the suggestion proposed through Launce's words, as we remember how quickly Proteus, in the preceding scene, felt his zeal to Valentine grow cold.

When Pedrolino, in Flavio Tradito, planned the murder of Flavio's false friend, Oratio, he was conforming to a distinctive trait of the dull-witted zanni—the enthusiasm to do something really vicious when occasion prompted. This is never a characteristic of Arlecchino. Launce reflects this tendency in his delaying Speed with the inventory of the good and bad qualities of Nan, the non-virginal maid; annoyed at Speed's prying into his affairs, he bides his time until tardiness warrants punishment, and then, gleefully sure of revenge, strolls off "to rejoice," with pardonable sadism, "in the boy's correction" (III. ii. 378).

There are, as we have pointed out, many unmistakable signs of commedia dell' arte influence in The Two Gentlemen of Verona. The influence seems strong, but there is never any doubt in this play or in any other that Shakespeare never borrows simply to imitate. He uses the ideas of other men, of other schools, of other theatres, subordinating them to his own poetic and dramatic purposes. Speed and Launce are an excellent example of this type of adaptation. They reflect, they almost duplicate their corresponding types on the Italian comic stage, but they, especially Launce, are of functional importance in the plan of the drama in a way that no improvising actor or scenarist could be. Launce's dog had brother curs on the Italian stage, but there is no evidence in any of the scenari that allotted a zanni his dog or a capitano his hawk (often the hawk was a barnyard cock) that these pets served any but a diversionary purpose. Crab, on the other hand, is used by Shakespeare as an ironic parallel to the haughty mistress of Proteus and of Silvia's later loathing of him, and, of course, as a type of the ungrateful friend. Shakespeare achieves a delicate balance in counterbalancing the courtly language and sentiments of the lovers with the shallow, ridiculous and pedestrian speeches of the clown to his dog. And the silence of the dog, a silence of incomprehension, is set off against the silence of Julia when, wordless at her sense of loss, she bade farewell to Milan-bound Proteus. Indeed, as Harold F. Brooks[94] has pointed out, the parallels and antitheses between the actions of the servants and their betters are many. Launce's caution to avoiding disclosing information about the girl he may marry contrasts with Valentine's indiscreet disclosures about the hopes he shares with his beloved. Even his going with Speed to down a "Christian" glass or two counterbalances the un-Christian deeds of his master whose meeting with Valentine at court is the beginning of well-meditated discord.

These clowns, who play such Italianate roles, are a promise of Shakespeare's later genius in making individual scenes and even images of immense importance in the structure of each play. They are anglified Italians truly, who have become important personages in the world of literary history, for they show us how Shakespeare, as a young dramatist, could wisely use characters and techniques of proven popularity and use them in a very individual way for his own artistic purposes.

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[94] Harold F. Brooks, "The Clowns in a Comedy (to say nothing of the Dog) : Speed, Launce (and Crab) in 'The Two Gentlemen of Verona,' " Essays and Studies, 1963 (London: John Murray), pp. 91-100.

CHAPTER IV

LOVE'S LABOUR'S LOST AND
THE COMMEDIA DELL' ARTE

We have shown that the labours of Italy's much-travelled *commedianti* were not lost on Shakespeare when he stepped into their favourite world of Romantic Comedy in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*. Since that play is so close in content and spirit to a number of *commedie all' improviso*, it seemed a natural—and convenient—starting-point for our discussion of the influence of Italian professional comedy on our dramatist. But there is no doubt that Speed, Launce, Thurio and the rest were not the first Shakespeare characters who bear a striking resemblance to the *tipi fissi* from the South; nor is *Verona* the only early comedy that appears enriched by the techniques and traditions that the Italian troupes found so successful. *The Taming of the Shrew*, which like *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* is generally believed to date from the 1593-1595 period,[95] has many of the characteristics of Scala's farce-*scenari*—as we shall show in a later chapter. Indeed, even a cursory glance at Shakespeare's earliest plays, *The Comedy of Errors* (1588-1593) and *Love's Labour's Lost* (1588-1594), provides ample suggestion that our playwright in the first exercising of his dramatic powers chose to work within a framework of theatrical composition that had already proved its entertainment value to audiences on the continent and in his native England. A close look at *Love's Labour's Lost* offers convincing evidence that "the pedant, the braggart, the hedge-priest, the fool and the boy" (V. ii. 539-540)—who, indeed, are not like men "of God his making"(V. ii. 525)—are close cousins of the *dottore*, the *capitano*, the *affamato* (or parasite), the rustic and the Harlequin, respectively. They seem to have undergone but little transformation in stepping from the Italian piazza into Shakespeare's "Wooden O." This is particularly obvious in the case of Holofernes, that bombastic, prolix pseudo-scholar, full of wise saws and Latin instances, and of the blustering Spaniard, Don Adriano de Armado, whose oaths and boasts and threats and "heaviness in love" reflect the "fantastical" expressions and volatile passions of Scala's military Spaniard, Capitano Spavento da Vall' Inferno, the character interpreted and immortalized by Francesco Andreini.

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[95] "The date of this play is in doubt. It was not named by Meres in [*Paladis Tamia*] 1598, but most critics put it earlier; Chambers in 1594, Dover-Wilson before 1593." Bullough, *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*, I, 57.

What we know about the Capitano we owe more to the writings of Andreini than to the extant *scenari*, though the importance of the latter is by no means slight in this respect. After the death of his wife, Isabella (Lyons, 1604), Francesco retired to prepare her writings for publication and to give to the world of literature a lasting record of his own genius as an actor in improvised comedy. Adreini's *Bravure*,[96] consisting of the speeches of a typical *capitano* in a great variety of situations, are printed in dialogue-form, off-set against the impertinently pertinent rejoinders and critiques of his harlequinesque servant, Trappola. These speeches are inspired by those of Plautus' miles gloriosus, but there is never any doubt in our minds of the essential difference between the relatively vicious Latin original and the patently naïve and basically innocent capitano, who is unmistakably a Renaissance character. The bravure are the boasts of an imaginative and unrealistic Spanish mercenary soldier, out of place in normal society, the boasts of a man who expects his acquaintances to be impressed with yarns of impossible heroics that have always had their place in the romantic epic but never in the realm of day-to-day experience. We learn that the spirit of dread Mars has led Spavento into the frozen wastes of the North, across the turbulent waves of many far-off seas, and even to the performance of god-defying feats of arms out in the starry cosmos and down in the depths of hell.[97] Both the scenari of Scala and the Bravure of Andreini consistently present this flamboyant, plume-hatted officer as a man whose riches are questionable, whose cowardice is unquestionable, whose wealth is more apparent than real, and whose command of language is invariably that of a tyrannical executioner of words.

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[96] *Le bravure del Capitano Spavento, divise in molte ragionamenti in forma di Dialogo di F. A. da Pistoia Comico geloso*.... *Venetia, 1607*, and *Nuova aggiunta alle Bravure del Capitano Spavento, di Francesco Andreini*.... Venetia, 1614.

If we examine Shakespeare's characterization of Don Armado against the well-established stage-portrait of the capitano, we must soon admit that their similarities of attitude, utterance and behaviour can hardly be fortuitous. Indeed, it strikes me as improbable that our young dramatist should have failed to use so enjoyable and clear-cut a personality as a launching-pad from which to fire the sharp and glittering missiles of his satire and his wit—especially when the objects of his aim drifted in the courtly orbit of pretensious fashions and sophisticated language and were the very people who patronized the commedia dell' arte companies that toured and played in England.

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[97] Smith, The Commedia dell' Arte, pp. 90-94.

When Armado is first mentioned in the play, he is described by Ferdinand, King of Navarre, in terms which we might aptly consider capitanesque:

> . . . Our court you know is haunted
> With a refined traveler of Spain
> A man in all the world's new fashion planted,
> That hath a mint of phrases in his brain;
> One who the music of his own vain tongue
> Doth ravish like enchanting harmony;
> A man of complements, whom right and wrong
> Have chose as umpire of their mutiny.
> This child of fancy, that Armado hight,
> For interim to our studies shall relate
> In high-born words the worth of many a knight
> From tawny Spain, lost in the world's debate.
> How you delight, my lords, I know not, I,
> But, I protest, I love to hear him lie,
> And I will use him for my minstrelsy. (I. i. 161-175)

Then as if to emphasize Armado's characteristic "rape of language," suggested by the king's phraseology in lines 165-166—the ravishing of the music of his own vain tongue— Berowne extends the mint-image, calling the Don "a man of fire-new words." The Italian capitano, whether a Spaniard, such as Spavento, or a Neapolitan, such as Matamoras, continually perpetrates the most hideous outrages upon the chastity of the fair Tuscan tongue. Armado's verbal-coinage in Love's Labour's Lost provides some of the most memorable Wood's Half-pence of the English language before Mrs. Malaprop pranced across Sheridan's dais.

Armado, like the capitano, is a traveller and (if I correctly understand the insinuation of "in all the world's new fashion planted") a poseur. Both of these facets of his personality are reflected elsewhere in the play.

He acclaims the witty vowel-juggling of that "consonant," Moth, with a poetic oath:

> Now, by the salt wave of the Mediterranean,
> a sweet touch, a quick renew of wit! (V. i. 59-60)

He responds to Berowne's taunting, later on, with the oath of an Arctic explorer, "By the North Pole, I do challenge thee" (V. ii. 693). But Armado's wanderings render him familiar with regions beyond merely terrestrial confines. He poses as "a man of travel, that hath seen the world" (V. i. 108), but goes farther in his epistolary salutation to Navarre, for in honouring that monarch with the grandiose title of "the welkin's vice-regent" (I. i. 218), he suggests that familiarity with the heavens that his Italian counterpart explicity claims. His acknowledgement of Ferdinand as his "soul's earth's god" implies that in the distant realms of the cosmos they enjoy spiritual parity. Thus we see the aptness of the King's terming Armado "this child of fancy" (I. i. 169).

The King delights in the voluble Spaniard and reveals to Berowne, Longaville and Dumaine that their chief entertainment ("interim") during their ascetic three-year retreat to academe will be Armado's heroic tales:

> He shall relate
> In high-born words the worth of many a knight
> From tawny Spain, lost in the world's debate. (I. i. 170-172)

The expression "lost in the world's debate" is beautifully ambiguous, especially since the usual capitano-figure is more persevering in the war of words than on the battle-field. In fact, cowardice is an outstanding quality of the braggart; but we cannot avoid noticing one peculiar difference between Armado and other knights "from tawny Spain": a good strategist, he uses the "world's debate" in order—if we may use a colloquialism—to get lost. Armado, a true devotee of Mars, "disdains" combat with an inferior, and finds an excuse that well befits a man of honour and of strict military propriety: "I will not combat in my shirt" (V. ii. 705). We may compare this with a similar stratagem of Capitano Spavento in Scala's Il Ritratto:

> Capitano.... [dice che].... Vittoria è donna onorata. Orazio, arrabiato, dice che mente: cacciano mano all' armi, poi Capitano domanda a Orazio se si vuol uccidere seco; Orazio disi. Capitano li dice che vuol andare a scrivere la pace e remissione che li vuol fare, perchè, occorrendo ch' egli l' uccida, non vuol che la giustizia possa a far l'istesso, acciocchè, uccidendolo la giustizia non lo molesti, e via.[98]
>
> (The Captain . . . [says that] . . . Vittoria is an honorable woman. Orazio, enraged, tells him he lies. Both go for their swords. Then the Captain asks Orazio if he wants to fight to the death with him. Orazio answers yes. The Captain announces that he now must withdraw and write up a certificate of peace and forgiveness that he wants to give him, so that in the event of his killing him [the Capitano] he [Orazio] may be free of legal proceedings against him. At the same time he invites Orazio to do likewise, so that when he kills him [Orazio] the law cannot interfere with him. And away he goes.)

Thus ends the first act of Il Ritratto. Needless to say, the duel is never resumed.

In the speech outlining the characteristics of the Spaniard at his court, the King does not directly call him a coward. He does, however, recognise Don Adriano's naiveté, painting him as:

> A man of complements, whom right and wrong
> Have chose as umpire of their mutiny. (I. i. 167-168)

Armado, like Andreini's famous braggart, lives in a nether world far from the clear values and moral obligations of the realist. Right and wrong present him with a dilemma, for in his special universe, the only realities are impossible dreams, the only values, complements—formal manners (and mannerisms?). His years have not won him away from fairy-tale heroics and juvenile hero-worship, and though virtue may not garland his martial brow, innocence has never deserted him. It is no wonder then that Ferdinand should "love to hear him lie" (I. i. 174). After all, who can resent an individual who one moment confesses to being "a gentleman and a gamester" and, in the next breath, reveals his inability to compute "the gross sum of deuce-ace" (I. ii. 40-47), and who, despite his claim to knowledge of French curtesy, associates the expression "French brawl" with a Gallic "Donnybrook" rather than with the graces of the dance-floor?[99] Armado knows the purpose of "l'envoy," to be sure, but his knowledge of foreign lands is as questionable as the philosophizing of that potential astronomer, Joxer Daly's friend, Boyle, in the chilly waters of the "Antanartic Ocean."[100]

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[98] Printed in Schwartz's The Commedia dell' Arte and its influence on French Comedy, p. 175.

From the moment that Armado appears upon the stage (I. ii), Shakespeare seems determined to fit him into the mould of a capitano. His troubles are those that Spavento of the Gelosi so often experienced,—the anguish and astonishment of an irascible bridegroom-of-Bellona in love with a lowly wench. This "tough signor" (l. 16), whose servant's lack of reverend seriousness heats his blood (l. 30), this "man of great spirit grows melancholy" (line 1); his "spirit grows heavy in love" (l.121). This soldier, who addresses Holofernes and his scholastic disciples as "men of peace" and is hailed by them as "most military sir" (V. i. 37-38), confesses to Moth that his honour is compromised, because "it is base for a soldier to love" (I. ii. 58). Here Shakespeare places in the mouth of Armado a series of high-sounding declarations that, in minutest details, recall the great boasts (bravure) of Andreini.

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[99] III. i. 10.

[100] Seán O'Casey, Juno and the Paycock, ed. Guy Boas, M.A. (London Macmillan and Co. Ltd., 1962). Act II, p. 22.

Almost every page of Andreini's Bravure is crammed with evidence of the Capitano's wide knowledge and his great contempt for accuracy. There is an abundance of Dantesque adjectives, Petrarchan conceits, biblical allusions, quotations from Virgil and Homer and, of course, a compensating wealth of Malapropisms. And whenever the darts of love pierce the Achilles' heel of his passions, he, like Armado, expects his servant to comfort him by finding "some mighty precedent" (I. ii. 115) to excuse his forgivable weakness. How well he bedecks his heroism with the trappings of classical heroism is evident in the following extract from the Bravure:

> Mi saprabbonda il riso quando ch'io mi rammemoro di un certo baron francese, il quando domanda del nome mio e, udende dire ch'io era nominata il Capitano Spavento da Vall' Inferno, tempio di Giano, scudo di Medusa, falce del Monte e generale generalissimo di bravura, subito cadde tramortito in terra.[101]
>
> (I break my sides laughing when I remember a certain French baron who, on asking my name and hearing that I was called Captain Frightful from Hell-Valley, Temple of Janus, Shield of Medusa, Whip of Death, and general Generalissimo of Bravery, immediately dropped dead on the ground.)

The tone of Armado, when outlining his helplessness before the onslaughts of Eros, is quite close to this:

> If drawing my sword against the humour of affection would deliver me from the reprobate thought of it, I would take Desire prisoner and ransom him to any French courtier for a new-devised cursy. I think scorn to sigh: methinks I could outswear Cupid. Comfort me, boy. What great men have been in love? (I. ii. 59-65)

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[101] Quoted by Schwartz, The Commedia dell' Arte and its influence on French Comedy, p. 186.

When Armado proclaims his wish to take Desire prisoner, he reflects one of the capitano's claims, for in the seventeenth raggionamento of the Bravure, Spavento relates how he took Death, Love and the Devil prisoners. Armado can outswear Cupid; the Capitano went one better:

> "Know," he says to Trappola, his Zanni, "that one day Death and Cupid got drunk and went to sleep in the temple of Bacchus—Lyaeus, Bassareus, Father Liber, which you please—and when they woke each took the bow and dart of the other; so they went about their business. . . . I happened to be passing, full of pride and glory, across the ridge of the Caucusus. . . . As I walked Death (whom I despised) shot a mortal bolt to take away my life; instead, it made me fall in love with the Queen of the Amazons, who stood delighting me in the window of her palace."[102]

The exaggerated nature of such "tirades" is reflected in Armado's rejecting Hercules as a man of insufficiently good "repute and carriage" (I. ii. 69) to serve as a model for his own lapse into love. Then, when "well-knit Samson, strong-jointed Samson" (l. 73) proves an acceptable precedent-setter, our Spaniard cries:

> I do excel thee in my rapier as much as thou
> didst me in carrying gates. (I. ii. 74-75)

It is only appropriate that when he graces the Pageant of the Nine Worthies with his acting skills, he should be "that flower" who interprets the role of Hector, the favourite of all the disciples of the divine, "armnipotent" Mars. It is also appropriate, is it not, that in his relentless war with the vocabulary of the English language, Armado's happiest thrust should be so bellicose a coinage as the word "armnipotent"?

Armado does not need the mockery of the scholar-lovers and of Costard to demean his glorious image before the royal "couplement" of king and princess. His own outrageous boasting is sufficient, of itself, to "infamonize" him "among potentates" (V. ii. 678). And, as if to remove all doubt that the audience is to consider the Don as a *generalissimo generale della bravure*; Shakespeare makes Costard declare that the Spaniard's unborn bastard already "*brags*"[103] in the belly of Jaquenetta.

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[102] Andreini, Bravure, I, 17, quoted in translation by Smith, The Commedia dell' Arte, p. 93.

Holofernes' character seems as heavily indebted to the *commedia* role of Doctor Graziano as is Armado's to that of braggart Captain. It is interesting to note that both of these Shakespearian characters are what we might call linguistic cousins, for both of them parade their learning by means of classical allusion and at the same time show their ignorance by outrageously mistreating the vernacular. The same is true of their *commedia dell' arte* prototypes. In that same *raggionamento* in which Spavento records his being the target of love's darts when Death mistook his weapons, Trappola upbraids his master for his pedantic conversational habits:

> This remark of yours sounds like a speech of Gratiano—your saying, "A propos of Bacchus, I remember [a fight I once had with] Death." Master, beware! pay attention to what you speak and where you speak, or else those who don't respect you as I do, may cast "fool" in tour teeth.[104]

The actors playing the *capitano* and the *dottore* were noted for using Latinisms and classical myths in a manner that satirized the learned people in the audience, who saw their own conversational mannerisms clearly parodied on the stage. Shakespeare uses Holofernes, especially, and the

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[103] V. ii. 677. (Italics mine).

[104] Quoted in translation by Smith, p. 92.

Don, to a lesser extent, as a tool with which to satirize those among his theatre-goers who were guilty of daily bandying about the ink-horn terms that the Earl of Oxford and his admirers proudly affected, and as a scourge with which to playfully tease those "enrichers" of the language who sought to give English a Latinate flavour while refusing to exploit the riches of native vocabulary.

When Don Adriano announces to the pedant that Ferdinand is to visit his royal ambassador, the style of his utterance is not only a parody of Holofernes' sententiousness but a jibe at the affectations of every Euphuist:

> Sir, it is the king's most sweet pleasure and affection to congratulate the princess at her pavilion in the posteriors of this day, which the rude multitude call the afternoon. (V. i. 87-90)

It is interesting that the exquisite appreciation of the possibilities for English usage inherent in Latin roots which urges Armado to give the afternoon hours an upsetting form of classical repectability, and the self-congratulatory divulging of the secret of royal favour—

> It will please his majesty, . . . sometime to lean upon my poor shoulder, and with his royal finger thus dally with my excrement, with my moustachio.

—should both be couched in imagery which could possibly convince a modern psychologist that the Spaniard may suffer from an anal fixation. Since we cannot expect Shakespeare to anticipate Ernest Jones's type of investigation into his drama, may we not be forgiven for assuming that our playwright is suggesting that over-Latinate English cannot easily be associated with the cerebral region of the human frame? This may seem an unacceptable deduction if we forget that Holofernes, that walking dictionary of Latin-

English synonyms—"*coelo*, the sky, the welkin, the heaven, . . . *terra*, the soil, the land, the earth" (IV. ii. 5-7) seems to have swallowed a noun-purging laxative.

Having stated her conviction that the creation of Armado shows indebtedness to the *commedia dell' arte*, Winifred Smith says that it is wiser to examine Holofernes against this background rather than try to decide whether or not this character may be a caricature of one of the poet's monitors in his youthful days:

> Not less important [i.e. than Armado] is Shakespeare's Holofernes, whose name, manner of speech, and general imbecility place him nearer to the Italian stage-type than to a possible village personage of Shakespeare's acquaintance.[105]

Critics have ingeniously identified the pedant of this play as Shakespeare's teacher, Thomas Hunt, as Richard Lloyd, tutor to the Sixth Earl of Derby,[106] as the playwright George Chapman,[107] whose comedies are both imitated and parodied in the characterization and dialogue of *Love's Labour's Lost*, and, of course as the Italian scholar at the Court of Elizabeth, John Florio, compiler of an Italian-English dictionary and author of *The World of Wordes* (1596). It is quite possible that all, and probable that some, of these individuals were meant to taste the vitriol of the dramatist's satire, but the historical details cannot be decided *ex cathedra*. On the other hand, the dramatic genealogy of the comic pedant can be clearly divined. A nineteenth-century critic of the *commedia dell' arte*, in describing the foibles of the typical *dottore* of improvised comedy, seems to be giving us a pen-portrait of Holofernes, when he writes:

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[105] "Italian and Elizabethan Comedy," *Modern Philology*, *V*, (1927), p. 561.

[106] Lloyd was author of a play entitled *The Nine Worthies*.

[107] For a brief but more complete *explique* of these details, see O. J. Campbell, "*Love's Labour's Lost* Re-studied," University of Michigan Publications, *Studies in Shakespeare, Milton and Donne* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1925), pp. 35-36.

> Il Dottore è sempre il solito ignorantone, saccetone, che sputa sentenze, con mescolanza inevitabile di latino maccheronico, di citazioni spropositate, di etimologie bislacche.... Segno evidente che il tipo vero di Graziano ebbe al cospetto del pubblico per base unica la saccenteria ignorante, la etimologia insula, la storpiatura grottesca di vocaboli, la buffoneria delle citazioni latine.[108]
>
> (The Doctor is always a thorough-going ignoramus and arch-pedant, who spouts forth sententious utterances in a inevitable *mélange* of macaronic Latin, inappropriate quotations and ridiculous etymologies. . . . This is an obvious sign that the true type of Graziano had, in the public mind, as its distinctive bases, ignorance parading in wisdom's guise, unenlightened etymology, grotesque distortion of words, and clownish indulgence in Latin phrases.)

The *dottore* is a hypocritical pedant, an ignoramus hiding behind the easily-pierced *facade* of learning. But his hypocrisy extends into the domain of morality as well as of scholarship. In *scenari* where he is definitely described as *un marescalco*, a horse-doctor, he uses his doctoral tag as a passport into the bedrooms of ailing young ladies, and his intentions are, invariably, strictly dishonourable. The tendency to seek the satisfaction of his lust behind the guise of educator of youth is a characteristic of Shakespeare's first pedant, unless we are dull enough to miss the *double entente* of Holofernes' disclosure in reply to the praise of his admiring disciple Nathaniel:

> *Nathaniel*. Sir, I praise the Lord for you, and so many of

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[108] L. Rasi, *I comici italiani: biografia, bibliografia, iconografia* (Firenze, 1897), I, p. 407.

> my parishoners, for their sons are well tutored by
> you and *their daughters profit very greatly under* you. . . .
> *Holofernes*. Mehercle, if their sons be ingenious, they
> shall want no instruction; if their daughters be
> capable, *I will put it to them*. (IV. ii. 74-80)[109]

If the underlined expressions are not meant to suggest the *roué* in Holofernes, I see no point to the distinction between the benefits derived by sons as opposed to daughters. But since the distinction is made, it is only natural to conclude that Shakespeare's pedant and Scala's Graziano have a common link in lust, a link that along with so many other similarities of expression and behaviour indicates that they must enjoy a consciously contrived dramatic kinship. Indeed one might recognise, in examining Rasi's unwitting portrait of Holofernes, that seldom in the history of theatrical characterization has so much absurdity and hypocrisy been so common to so few.

Rasi accuses the traditional *dottore* of ridiculous etymologies and of padding his sentences with what the Irish call bog-Latin. After Nathaniel has, with accent "missed" and "apostrophus" unfound, read Berowne's mis-directed letter, which ended in the hands of simple-minded Jaquenetta, Holofernes determines to "supervise the canzonet" whose only grace is regular rhythm ("Here are only numbers ratified"), but first proclaims Ovid the only acceptable model "for the elegancy, facility, and golden cadence of poesy" (IV. ii. 121-124). What Graziano, we might ask, could produce so delightfully contrived and so ~~scholastically~~ pedantically spurious an etymology as the following?

> Ovidius Naso was the man; and why indeed "Naso" but
> for smelling out the odiferous flowers of fancy, the

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[109] Italics mine.

> jerks of invention. (IV. ii. 125-127)

This grotesque statement, and especially the choice of an image such as "the jerks of invention" can only be produced by the mental agitation of an academic spastic. The same is true of praise for his own talent in *extempore* alliterative rhyme:

> This is a gift that I have, simple, simple; a foolish extravagant spirit, full of forms and figures, shapes, objects, ideas, apprehensions, motions, revolutions. They were begot in the ventricle of memory, nourished in the womb of *pia mater*, and delivered upon the mellowing of occasion. But the gift is good in those in whose it is acute, and I am thankful for it. (IV. ii. 66-73)

Here we have the typical catalogue of *minutiae*, the Gratianesque hugging-to-death of a conceit—here, the conception-gestation-birth imagery— and enough prolixity to make his favourite Latin maxim, "*Vir sapit qui pauca loquitur*," the most satiric statement about him in the whole play. His verbosity is indeed a sure sign of his being a *vir insapiens*, and on occasions when his litanies seem almost never-ending, as for example, when he describes Armado as:

> . . . Too pricked, too spruce, too affected, too odd, as it were, too peregrinate . . . (V. i. 14-16)

we condemn this trait as something truly "abhominable," and may be forgiven for feeling that "it insinuateth" him "of insanie" (V. i. 27-28). What *sane* scholar could approve "the posterior of the day" as "liable, congruent, measurable . . . well-culled, sweet, and apt" (V. i. 92-94)?

Holofernes' love of Latin quotation is another distinguishing mark, and this affectation is so constant that he scarcely speaks a sentence without an *intelligisne*, a *quoniam* or a *caret*, or, failing that, a classical form of sentence-structure such as, "It insinuateth me of insanie" or "A soul feminine saluteth us." The absurdity of such pretension becomes delightfully obvious when, in the best dottore tradition of inappropriate Latin quotation, our pedant slings an irrelevant line by Mantuan, an Italian couplet of dubious grammar, and a misrendering of the tonic solfa at a country lass who cannot read a courtier's letter penned in the vernacular (IV. ii. 94-103). The shoddy nature of Holofernes' scholarship is insinuated when, instead of commenting on the poetic quality of Berowne's verses, he promises to show at dinner that they savour neither "of poetry, wit, nor invention" (l. 161). This promise may be a ruse to avoid discovery, much in the manner of the honorable stratagems of an Italian capitano who has a Falstaffian appreciation of Blunt-ish glory. A lifelong study of Priscian,[110] with or without "scratches," forms the grammarian, not the connoisseur of poetry. But Holofernes is not even a grammarian. As Moth points out, he has merely been to "the great feast of language" and has "stol'n the scraps" (V. i. 39-40). Moth made this succinct statement in an "aside" to Costard who, immediately, describes the pedant as a word-beggar and verbal-glutton and, in this connection, uses that indigestible Latin word, so full of sound and so empty of significance,—honorificabilitudinitatibus. It is at least an interesting coincidence that in a list of macaronic Latinisms and of words stretched upon the rack of il dottore's "multisyllabicality," Pandolfi mentions the monumental Gratianesque affirmative, certificabilitudiniprimamente.[111]

The presence of a Spanish braggart and a Latinophile pedagogue in

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[110] Latin grammarian of the sixth centuty, A.D.

[111] La Commedia dell' Arte, II, 32.

Love's Labour's Lost and the closeness of those characters to two of the oldest masks in Italian professional comedy indicates Shakespeare's debt to the *commedia dell' arte* in this play. But since the familiars of Holofernes and Armado also closely resemble the associates of *il pedante* and *il dottore*, we find the sum of the evidence all the more impressive. Nathaniel, for example, has a very slight role in this play; in fact his whole *raison d'être* seems to be the mirroring in a bizarre manner of the peculiarities of that master whom, because of abysmal ignorance, he can never hope to equal. Like all parasites, he is a flatterer—and the *commedia erudita* offers scores of such sycophants. But there is no learned comedy in which the *affamato* (the word is better translated as "starveling") attaches himself to the pedant. On the other hand, this is frequently the case in improvised comedy.[112] Nathaniel, being a parish priest, is no starveling in the strict sense, but despite his stupidity, he conscientiously devours the crumbs that fall from the verbiage-table of his master, who in turn is content with scraps stolen from "the great feast of language."

Moth and Costard fit neatly into the servant roles of the touring Italian troupes, the one bright and impish in the jester-*zanni* vein, the other dull and slow-witted like the lout or clown-*zanni*. Moth is, then, a type of Arlecchino and like the wily Harlequin (Can this be no more than coincidence?) he is the servant of a Spanish *capitano*. We can only surmise what freedom to indulge in physical *lazzi* Shakespearian clowns such as Kemp enjoyed, but there is no doubt whatever of the characteristic harlequinesque nimbleness of wit that is at the core of Moth's audience-appeal. His very first appearance shows his linguistic dexterity, as he quibbles with his lord of the "congruent epithetons":

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[112] D. J. Campbell, "*Love's Labour's Lost* Re-Studied," p. 42.

> Moth. And I used tough signor, as an appertinent title to your old time, which we may name tough.
>
> Armado. Pretty and apt.
>
> Moth. How mean you, sir? I pretty and my saying apt? Or I apt and my saying pretty? (I. ii. 16-20)

He is so "quick in answers" that he vexes his master (l. 29) and so quick in puns that he reveals the Spaniard's penury to the audience by following Armado's "I love not to be crossed" with a mischievous "crosses [i.e. coins—perhaps cruzeiros] love not him" (ll. 33-34). Mischief is part of Moth's soul, and when he taunts prison-bound Costard, "the transgressing slave," he delights in counterpointing his own sacred duty with the captive's love of liberty. Costard, who prefers self-imposed penance done at liberty, would "fast being loose" (l. 154); Moth, with a self-delighting pun, tells the sensual swain that he refuses to play "fast and loose" with orders. There is no malice here, no vague suggestion of malice such as we may find lurking behind Launce's setting forth to rejoice in the boy's [i.e. Speed's] correction" in The Two Gentlemen of Verona. Mischief, not malice, is as much the secret of the fun provided by mentally agile Moth, as by Arlecchino, that charming descendent of the medieval Vice that we find in the commedia dell' arte.

The Italian scenari invariably play off a Bergamask dullard against the Bergamask imp. Scala's rustic zanni is normally called Pedrolino, and it is not an unusual situation that his grosser servant should sow his wild oats where the Captain wishes to reap love's harvest, in those scenari where a fantesca rather than a fashionable lady wins the Spaniard's heart. The latter in which Armado denounces his lowly rival describes Costard as "an unletter'd, small-knowing soul . . . a shallow vassal (I. i. 248-250). We immediately set him off against Don Adriano's harlequinesque valet, and soon realize that, for once, the Spaniard is capable of realistic description. His being involved in affairs that merit the soldier's unsoldierly revenge-by-betrayal immediately puts Costard in a typical Pedrolino-situation. Soon we find him truly a convincing reflection of the Scala character: his learning amounts to little more than "ad dunghill" (V. i. 78) and his store of solecisms in the vernacular seems as extensive as the very possiblilities of the native tongue itself. Just as we laugh with Moth or Harlequin and laugh at Pedrolino, so we laugh *at* malapropistic Costard. His being unlettered leads to a conventional improvised comedy situation—the letter mix-up. And when Berowne's missive ends up in Jaquenetta's hands, and Armado's *billet-doux* reaches the "lowly" princess, are we not witnessing a slight variation of a still more complicated letter-misdirection by illiterate Pedrolino in *La Fortuna di Flavio?*

When Costard's peculiar blend of *l'association des idées* helps him to translate "envoy" as "fat goose" (III. i. 105) and to confuse an abstract "remuneration" with a concrete three-farthings; when his lips favour a shortening of "represents" to "pursents" (V. ii. 488) and transform Pompey the Great to a denizen of the vegetable patch (l. 502), we miss the importance of Costard's role in the total experience of the play if we conclude that his sole function is to amuse us with his stupidity. From the earliest scenes of *Love's Labour's Lost* it is obvious that Shakespeare uses characters and situations typical of the *commedia dell' arte* tradition with a mastery which few critics have troubled themselves to discuss. I am convinced that Shakespeare, here at the outset of his career, manipulates the scenes in which Costard, Moth, Armado and Holofernes are the principal objects of our attention in much the same way as he uses the Falstaff scenes in the two Henry IV plays—not merely as amusing interludes to appease the non-intellectual members of the audience, but as an extension of and comment upon the main action of the play. In other words, far from being the follies of a playwright serving an apprenticeship to his own future excellence, these very scenes show us the capable craftsman giving a striking sense of dramatic unity to a drama that comprises the disparate actions, attitudes and dialogue of kings and clowns, scholars and dunces. To illustrate this point, one might examine the details of the very first scene of this comedy.

The king of Navarre and his favourite courtiers, Berowne, Longaville and Dumaine, resolve to make the court "a little academe" and, for that purpose war against their own affections and the world's desires (ll. 8-10). They have sworn themselves to three years of ascetical abstinence from the pleasures of board and bed. Longaville proudly boasts that it is "but a three years' fast"; Dumaine imaginatively thinks the "gross world" of comfort well lost for his great and haughty sweetheart, Philosophy. Berowne, alone, has reservations, unsure as he is that to read the books of love in the eyes and heart of a fair mistress might not be a more ready road to wisdom. Whether or not this academe represents Raleigh and his scientist astronomers, as Dover-Wilson and Quiller-Couch suggest in the 1923 Cambridge edition of the play, is I think irrelevant. What is important, though, is that, in the course of the comedy, Shakespeare heaps scorn on the Navarre academics. We soon recognise in them many timeless absurdities. The stringent prohibitions against association with women crystalize a type of scholastic discrimination that, though now diluted, has not been extirpated even in our own day. Their retreat from Nature to Art is as worthy of condemnation and mockery as the pursuits of the Projectors of Lagado in Gulliver's Travels, but is, at the same time, no more ridiculous than the celerity of their falling in love and the high-minded Petrarchan bombast of their individual odes of affection later in the play. The members of the academe forsake reality in their confusing of learning with wisdom. Berowne unwisely, against his better judgment, remains with his oath-bound friends, and rediscovers his former good sense only after succumbing to the extravagance of courtly love; he finally decides that the best books and arts "to nourish all the world" are the beauty and companionship of ladies. True love for Rosaline is the agent of his regeneration, and when that sensible lady has taught him that love does not read by rote, he realizes the futility of:

> Taffeta phrases, silken terms precise,
> Three piled hyperboles, spruce affectation,
> Figures pedantical—these summer flies
> (that) Have blown [him] full of maggot ostentation. (V. ii. 407-410)

recognising them as "the motion of a school-boy's tongue" and rejecting them in favour of "russet yeas and honest noes" (l. 414) of simple realists such as Costard. Here Berowne realizes more clearly than ever what he had known before his retreat. And it is a fitting conclusion that the King and his companions are not allowed the sweets of love in the closing scene of the play; they had, at the beginning, retreated from reality with infantile idealism and arrogant self-confidence. They must now retreat to penance and good works in order to contemplate for a twelvemonth the wisdom that unexpectedly invaded their hearts. Then having profited by this new experience, they will be accepted as worthy votaries at the altar of Love. Even the news of the death of the King of France, a seemingly inappropriate stratagem that is used to bring the play to a quick close, can be viewed as artistically appropriate, in that it opposes the realities of real life, which the lovers must face, to the idealism and hypocrisy that motivated their original retreat from the fullness of experience.

The retreat decided upon in Act I Sc. i. is definitely treated by Shakespeare in terms of the play's final resolution. No sooner are their proud self-confidence and academic goals established than the less admirable, less noble world of baseless pride, affected learning, and lust crash in upon them. It is, I think, very significant that the reality of Costard's sexual commerce with Jaquenetta should immediately counterpoint their unrealistic banishing of all females from the court. And, examining this scene from the general perspective of the play's intrinsic statement, is it not significant that the Don should be a wind-bag of that type of pride and that brand of self-complacency that we find echoed by anticipation in the noble scholars' determination to fright ladies away with the tyrant's "dread penalty" (on pain of losing their tongues), in Longaville's dismissing of their task as a mere fast of a few years (Who but a valiant hero could think thus?), and even in the soldierly imagery of Berowne's " 'Tis won as towns with fire" (l. 145)? Costard's presence in the fullness of his culpability of contravening the royal edict against commerce with the opposite sex and his casually admitting the truth of the charge against him:

> The matter is to me, sir, as concerning Jaquenetta.
> The manner of it is, I was taken with the manner [i,e, in
> the act] (ll. 200-202)

is a direct comment on the fallibility of the noblemen's aspirations and a direct contrast with their refusal to face the truth offered for their consideration in Berowne's objections to their scheme. Armado the "phantaseme" is a dramatic reflection of their own proud fantasies. Costard is the dramatic antithesis of both their flight from the completeness of life that womankind offers and their later recourse to the posturings of Petrarchan _fine amor_, which refuses to note the realities of the flesh-and-blood aspects of real love.

Holofernes, with his priest-pupil and constable-student, is more than a social comment on euphuism and pedantry in general. Historical-critics may argue and surmise as to the real people of the later sixteenth century satirized in this group, and they may reach convincing or questionable decisions. One fact that is sure is this: the essence of the importance of Holofernes and his disciples, the aspect of their function within the play that prevents their nonsense from destroying the dramatic unity of _Love's Labour's Lost_, is the obviousness of their serving as a parody of the goal at which the king and his fellow-scholars are aiming. Holofernes' learning is questionable; it is the wrong type of learning, for it is divorced from the realities of life. He uses his Latin to confuse the ignorant rather than to make his thoughts more clear to the discerning. Grammar is to him an end, not a means. His learning is counterfeit, for it has, with all its flaws, become identified with wisdom in his mind. And we all know that he is a fool. The king is a Holofernes in his initial academic dedication. Dumaine and Longaville are his Sir Nathaniels.

Thus these secondary characters serve the same purpose as the _zanni_ in the _commedia dell' arte_—as agents through whose actions and words the main story is parodied. It is interesting that echoes of improvised comedy within the play serve to convince us that Shakespeare is consciously availing himself of these well-established techniques. Remembering that the actions of Arlecchino and Pedrolino were chiefly responsible for promoting many a Scala plot, we note that, on discovering that the ladies had been previously informed as to the purposes and identity of their "Muscovite" visitors, Berowne upbraids the "leering" (cf. V. ii. 481) tell-tale, Boyet, with the term "slight zany" (V. ii. 464); the audience obviously is expected to recognise that Boyet is accused of the impish, harlequinesque deviousness that confounded many an honest lover as well as many a roguish _vecchio_ or _capitano_ on the Italian players' stage.

The masks of the _commedianti_ served to emphasize the sheer theatricality of improvised comedy. Comedians felt free, as a consequence, to exploit for their own purposes the audience's constant awareness of the theatrical situation. Hence, the "aside" of the _commedia erudita_ gave place to direct address to the onlooker. This Shakespearian comedy is not without its conventional "asides." But it also has the address by actor to auditor—a device later discarded by our playwright. At the pageant, Costard, having sympathized with Nathaniel, who has "overthrown Alisander the conqueror" (V. ii. 571), seems as free to address the real audience as his stage-audience:

> There, an't please you, a foolish mild man; an
> honest man, look you, and soon dashed. He is a
> marvelous good neighbour, faith, and a very good
> bowler; but for Alisander—alas! you see how 'tis—
> a little o'er-parted. (V. ii. 578-583)

The same is true of Berowne's remark later in the same scene:

> Our wooing shall not end like an old play;
> Jack hath not Jill. These ladies' courtesy
> Might well have made our sport a comedy. (11.875-877)

And truly the play cannot properly end so. The return to reality, the awareness of their own foolishness, has not yet purified the braggart members of the pedantic academe. These men, like Pip in *Great Expectations*, have deplored the faults in others and long remained blind to their own folly. And as Pip cannot see a reflection of his own posturings in Wopsle's ludicrous *Hamlet*, so these noble worthies have not seen a reflection of themselves in the pathetic Pageant. There is a possibility that Shakespeare stages the *Pageant of the Nine Worthies* in *commedia dell' arte* fashion. The play, when we first hear of it, is to be staged in the posteriors of that very day, with Armado, presumably, as chief scenarist. When it is staged, the speeches of Holofernes and Armado are so similar to their habitual style of discourse and so crammed with their particular kinds of allusion that they simply must be improvised, and the performance of Nathaniel and Costard suggest that their *zibaldoni* (crib-books) were of little help to them. Indeed when the swain, who "made a little fault (of memory?) in "Great," hopes he was perfect, we realize that his zeal—and the zest for acting exhibited by all the others—is hopelessly outbalanced by his inability. This is true of the contrast between the zeal of the King and his courtiers and their sudden lapse from the conditions of their oath, as the ladies clearly realize. The faults of King and gentlemen have been parodied for the audience by Shakespeare's handling of Spaniard, pedant and servants. When the play-within-the-play (a frequent device in improvised comedy) mocks its protagonists, then the aristocrats' folly is lampooned before their unseeing eyes. Thus does Shakespeare give the Italian traditional stage techniques a typically Italian comic purpose, but his consistency in such mirroring of the main action, even in the *intermezzo* of the bungled pageant, is much more thorough than we can expect the collective genius of professional acting troupes ever to have effected.

CHAPTER V

ITALIAN ELEMENTS IN THE COMEDY OF ERRORS

The Comedy of Errors has not proved to be one of the most popular of Shakespeare's plays, but it occupies a special place in the canon of the poet's works. Possibly the earliest and certainly the shortest Shakespearian comedy, it is very closely linked with the classical tradition, especially with the *Menaechmi* of Plautus, that gay farce which was its ultimate, if not immediate, model. Only one version of the text has come down to us, and that, as Professor Harry Levin remarks, "is a good text which seems not far removed from the author's manuscript, and which is particularly interesting for the explicitness of its stage directions."[113] Like the Latin play which inspired it, this early Shakespearian comedy depends more on chance than on character for its primary entertainment value, and its author was never afterwards to revert to writing a play in which the main protagonists are memorable only for the pranks that fortune plays upon them. In discussing a dramatic piece in which the characterization is, at best, shallow, and where the contrivance of individuals has no bearing on either plot-entanglements or comic resolution, there is little purpose to considering the members of the *dramatis personae* in the light of any tradition of personality portrayal. Here Shakespeare is primarily interested in effectively handling a plot in which the hero is Chance, and so, preoccupation with the characteristic traits of passionately enslaved and sorely disappointed lovers, with various types of servants, with the schemes of old men and the follies of all men, is only secondary, Indeed the minor role of the characters *per se* is indicated by the facility with which the abbess enters as a sort of *dea-ex-machina* to resolve the final difficulties and bring about a happy dénouement.

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[113] "Introduction to The Comedy of Errors," The Signet Classic Shakespeare (Toronto: The New American Library of Canada Limited, 1966), p. xxiii.

Because of its close relation to classical comedy, one very righly approaches the study of *The Comedy of Errors*, as one does the *Supposes* of George Gascoigne, using the same critical apparatus that one applies to the examination of the *commedie erudite* of the Italian *cinquecento*. In basing his play upon the comedies of Plautus, Shakespeare exercised his dramatic and poetic talents in much the same way as did that anonymous Sienese member of the *Intronati* academy who based his *Gl' Ingannati* on the *Menaechmi*. But upon comparing *The Comedy of Errors* with the original Latin play, we discover that many of the obvious discrepancies and additions are not only un-Plautine, but are distinguished by elements that are characteristic of Renaissance Italian improvised comedy rather than the written comedies of ancient Rome.

The *Menaechmi* is, in the strictest sense, sheer farce. The plot-development is independent of human motivation, for the writer's chief concern is with what happens to people in a given situation rather than with what they happen to do. The action springs from an external situation, the improbable but not impossible coincidence that identical twins, separated in infancy, should both be in Epidamnus on a certain afternoon, and that, in their busy ramblings through the streets, they should not meet until a series of mistaken identities have resulted in discomfort and confusion for themselves and all who encounter them. Thought is not carried over into action, so the protagonists are merely flesh-and-blood puppets reacting to Fortune's playful trifling with the strings of circumstance. In Aristotelian terms, the characters of farce lack the necessary dramatic element of "universality," for they do not speak and act according to the law of probability or necessity. They react to their experiences, certainly, but do not make dramatically significant decisions. Plautus, a sure master of plot-manipulation, gives the *Menaechmi* such a quick pace and such a variety of misapprehensions that he tricks his audience into concentrating on rampant confusion, which accelerates with every entrance and exit of the baffled individuals who comprise the *dramatis personae*. He abstracts his twins and their acquaintances from real life by depriving them of that element of serious thought which enables characters in tragedy and serious comedy (where conduct must be scrutinized in the light of universal patterns of human behaviour) to draw obvious conclusions from the situations in which they find themselves. In *Menaechmi* circumstance is the most important factor in terms of the play's general effect. We should not be surprised, therefore, that there is no central conflict in the play—unless we are to consider the race between Time and Baffling Circumstance such a conflict. It is the dramatist's design to string together a number of rapid scenes in which confusion mounts to a climax and then, by bringing the twins face-to-face, to resolve all difficulties in a recognition scene that reveals to the brothers and to everyone in Epidamnum the truth which we have known from the beginning of the second act.

We find many of the same farcical elements in *The Comedy of Errors*, especially in the scenes which directly present the difficulties that dog the two Antipholi. Here we notice the typically Plautine liveliness of pace, and we find that Shakespeare's twins share a monumental lack of common sense with the Menaechmi brothers. When Antipholus of Syracuse finds himself among the Ephesians, he is too suspicious of their reputed magical trickery to think of the obvious possibility that his seven-year quest for his twin brother has finally proved successful:

> They say this town is full of cosenage:
> As nimble jugglers that deceive the eye,
> Dark-working sorcerers that change the mind,
> Soul-killing witches that deform the body,
> Disguised cheaters, prating mountebanks . . .
> (I. ii. 97-101)
>
> There's none but witches do inhabit here
> And therefore 'tis high time that I were hence.
> (III. ii. 161-162)

Such wariness was probably based upon the advice of Messenio, slave to the traveller twin of Plautus:

> This town Epidamnum is . . . as full of Ribaulds, Parasites, Catchpoles, Cony-catchers, and sycophants as it can hold: then for Curtizans, why here's the currantest stamp of them in the world. Ye must not thinke here to scape with so light cost as in other places. The very name shows the nature, no man hither comes sine damno. (Act II)[114]

By establishing this type of suspicion and also means of the traveller's far-from-hesitant acceptance of the benefits accorded him, Shakespeare, like Plautus, delays disclosure of the truth to the principals until the top note of the crescendo of bewilderment has been reached.

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[114] The Menaechmi of Plautus, translated by William Warner (London, 1595); Bullough, Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare, I, 17. (Warner's translation could have been Shakespeare's model, as it was circulated in manuscript among the translator's friends for three or four years before being published.)

Many details of The Comedy of Errors are reflections of Plautine situations. Antipholus of Syracuse, like Menaechmus the Traveller, is considered mad by his "acquaintances," though he does not "put an antic disposition on," whereas his Latin counterpart treats us to a jolly lunatic scene. Dromio's interest in dining—"Methinks your maw, like mine, should be your clock" (I. ii. 66)—resembles the main concern of Peniculus, the wily, spiteful, gourmand parasite of the Menaechmi. The travelling master in both plays hides his surpise at being familiarly greeted by strangers in order to enjoy to the utmost the unaccountable munificence of his new-found friends. The business of the ornamental chain and the rope's end, as well as the precarious money transferences, in The Comedy of Errors is transacted in the manner of similar misunderstandings in the Plautine farce. Shakespeare borrows Plautus courtesan, though he minimizes her role and chooses to emphasize that of the wife. Adriana, the uxor in Errors is like Mulier in being a voluble fault-finder but, as we shall later see, she wears her shrewishness with a difference. The unpleasantness of these ladies drives their husbands to find comfort in meretricious arms, but Antipholus of Syracuse is guilty only of a momentary lapse from marital fidelity, whereas such behaviour is habitual in the case of the Epidamnian gift-giver.

Shakespeare, apparently determined to surpass the Latin master in contriving complications, seems to have styled the lock-out scene (III. i.) on material found in another Plautine play. The Amphitruo has two pairs of doubles: Jupiter, to satisfy his lust, assumes the appearance of the warrior Amphitruo, and Mercury appears in the guise of the soldier's slave, Sosia. Alcmena, who patiently awaits her husband's return from battle, unsuspectingly greets the god, and Mercury guards the door while Jupiter enjoys the pleasures of her bed. The return of the real husband and slave introduces the doubles-problem. There follows a lock-out incident similar to Shakespeare's, when the supposed Sosia refuses to allow the real Amphitruo enter his own home (IV. 2).

From the viewpoints of characterization, stage business and general farcical tone, there is little doubt that The Comedy of Errors is indebted to these two Latin plays. There are, however, as many differences as there are similarities, differences which, when we examine them, persuade us that the conventions of Plautine farce are not the sole models used by Shakespeare as he moulded this—perhaps his first[115]—comedy. Indeed, whether he used a Latin text of Menaechmi or had access to the Warton translation (incidentally, the very first in English), he so amplified the identical twin theme that the classical play seems the ultimate rather than the immediate model.[116]

There is a possibility that The Comedy of Errors is a re-writing by Shakespeare of an earlier play in English. The Revels Accounts record a performance of The historie of Error at Hampton Court, January 7, 1577, by the Children of Paul's and "A historie of fferrar" played at Windsor by Sussex's men on "Twelf daie at night," 1583.[117] If Shakespeare based his Errors on such a play, we may be able to understand why he carelessly allowed

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[115] "The date of composition is unknown. The first recorded performance was at Gray's Inn on 28 December, 1594, but verbal resemblances to Nashe and Arden of Feversham suggest an earlier date, perhaps 1592. There is some likeness in theme and style to The Taming of the Shrew, which, maybe, it preceded." Bullough, Narrative and Dramatic Sources, I, 3.

[116] See Lea, Italian Popular Comedy, II, 435

[117] See Lea, II, 436 and Bullough, I, 3.

Luce (III. i. 48-61) to become Nell (III. ii. 112), and why he gives the name Juliana (Folio, III. ii. 1) to Luciana on occasion. We know nothing of the plays mentioned in the Revels Accounts; we do not know if they were the same play or not. Hence there is little merit in surmising whether the author of such a drama gave the Plautine uxor a sister, or called his ancilla Nell. What is worthy of our consideration, however, is what Shakespeare achieves through these characters. In what way does Luciana change the Plautine atmosphere? What was Shakespeare's purpose in modifying the Latin shrew to a nagging wife whose main fault is an over-possessive love for an errant husband? And why does he set the action against a melodramatic back-drop—the Duke-Aegeon-Abbess framework?

In terms of the play's tone, I think the departure from Plautus in the characterization of the Citizen's wife is very significant. Adriana is, indeed, a shrew, but she in no other sense corresponds to Mulier. The Roman matron is ferocious and unloving, a butt for the humour of her father, who is ready to defend her man's adultery, and of her husband, who, in deciding to depart with his new-found twin, derisively proclaims himself willing to let her go to the highest bidder—while implying that there will be no bids. Adriana is one of Shakespeare's instruments for taking Errors out of the realm of unmitigated farce. Through her conversations with her sister, Luciana, he gives the play a set of moral concerns that are entirely absent in the pagan Menaechmi. Gentle Luciana, when first we see her, reproves Adriana for impatience when she worries at her lord's late return from the Mart. Adriana is no shrew here; she is a wife that regrets her husband's selfish thoughtlessness (II, i.). Both women discuss the respective roles of man and wife in marriage, with a seriousness which is nowhere found in the Plautine world, and when we study Luciana's attitudes, we discover that she voices the Pauline philosophy of marriage: "Mulieres viris suis subditae sint, sicut Domino"—Let wives be subject to their husbands, as to the Lord (Ephesians, V, 22). Adriana's attitude is a rebellious one, and must be reproved; she believes in the very unsound philosophy (so it appears) of equality in matrimony: since "A man is master of his liberty" (II. i. 7), she would have woman enjoy the same freedom. This moralizing does not seem flippant. Indeed Luciana's attitude to marriage is far from naive; she fears possible "troubles of the marriage bed," rather than wifely submission; in other words, she is worried about the inadequacy of the male. The basic seriousness of the debate is underlined by Adriana's upbraiding of her husband in the street (II. ii. 111 - 147). She rails at him, but not in the Plautine Uxor's manner of nagging for nagging's sake; Adriana, realizing, as Hamlet does that "man and wife is one flesh" claims that, because of Antipholus's commerce with the courtesan, she, herself, is "possessed with an adulterate blot" (l. 144). The basic earnestness of such speeches suggests that Shakespeare chose Ephesus as the location of the action because of his fellow-countrymen's association of that city with Christian dicta regarding marital love. Then, when the abbess appears in what we have previously called a *dea-ex-machina* situation, the Christian element of this philosophy of marriage is stressed again, for the Ephesian abbess, like a latter-day Paul, converts the shrewish, loving wife to a patient one, and, thus, assures us that both of her sons will face the future with ideal wives. How diametrically opposite this is to the finale of *Menaechmi*!

The element of morality evident in Shakespeare's handling of Adriana and Luciana is an anticipation of the poet's later plays in which he studiously works out serious themes by careful character-building. The presence of moral concerns in The Comedy of Errors explains why Shakespeare emphasizes the wife's role at the expense of that of the courtesan, and suggests why the adultery-situation in Amphitruo, while it might have been considered too lewd by an Elizabethan audience, would not, in any case, have appealed to him as a dramatically exploitable incident. But we must not deceive ourselves into thinking that what we might call the Christian element alters the over-all quality of the comedy in any far-reaching way. The principal appeal of Errors is the confusion that engulfs the Antipholi and the Dromios, and this is nothing if not farce. And, as we shall now demonstrate, the non-Plautine elements in this comedy are not all of Shakespeare's own invention. Evidence abounds to support the possibility that, in departing from Plautus, he may have availed himself of numerous stage-tricks and plot-entanglements that had long appealed to Italian audiences of both learned comedy and the commedia dell' arte.

Writers of commedie erudite had, long before Shakespeare's day, been inspired to loot the Menaechmi. Bernardo Dovizi da Bibbiena was accused by Castiglione of being "un gran ladro di Plauto"—a great thief of Plautus—because of such looting in the composition of La Calandria (1513).[118] Gigio Artemio Giancarli followed Bibbiena's example when he wrote one of the funniest learned comedies of the sixteenth century, La Cingana ("The Gypsy Woman," 1550). Giovanni Maria Cecchi, writer of comedies, farces, moralities, religious dramas and *intermezzi*, did his share of pilfering from both the *Menaechmi* and Terence's *Andria* for *La Moglie* (1550). Giovanni Giorgio Trissino, writer of tragedy as well as comedy, endeavoured to produce an Aristophanic version of Plautus in *I simillini* (1547). Agnolo Firenzuola, a Florentine poet whose sonnets were imitated by Thomas Watson in *Hecatompathia* (1582),[119] produced an excellent Italian version of the *Menaechmi* in *I Lucidi* (posthumously published in 1549).[120]

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[118] Herrick, Italian Comedy in the Renaissance, p. 71.

As we have already stated, the professional actors of the *cinquecento* were only too ready to avail themselves of the plots of learned comedy and to exploit to their advantage any and every situation suitable to the art of stage improvisation. *Scenari* built on the *Menaechmi* theme abound, and in them we find echoes of almost every variation and augmentation of Plautus that might be attributed to the erudite authors—and a few more besides. For the purposes of our discussion of the probability of Shakespeare's debt to la *commedia dell' arte* in the composition of *The Comedy of Errors* we shall refer to three such *scenari*: *Li dui simili di Plauto* ("Doubles According to Plautus"), *Zanni Incredibile con quattro simili* ("The Unbelieving Zanni and the Four Alike"), and *Li due Trappolini* ("Trappolinos Twain").[121]

The most obvious link with improvised comedy in *Errors* is the handling of the two Dromios. They are consistently referred to as slaves, but they are much closer in conduct to the *zanni* of *la commedia dell' arte*. They are frequently battered by their betters, as were most servants on the professional stage, and the basis of their sufferings is a typical series of _zanni_ misunderstandings: misdelivery of messages, letters, or goods, and, especially, the misplacing of money or jewellery. In the comedy of _Li sei simili_—a _scenario_ that calls for three sets of doubles—there is the usual commotion about the mislaying of a ring and chain. The _scenario_ that offers the closest parallels to the ructions about the money of Antipholus of Syracuse is _Li due Trappolini_, the story about two servants whose misfortunes resemble those of the Dromio brothers.

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[119] Herrick, p. 61.

[120] This information may be found in Bullough, *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*, I. 4 and in Herrick, *passim*.

[121] The first two of these *scenari* are printed by K. M. Lea in *Italian Popular Comedy*, II, 591-610. *Trappolini* is summarized in the same volume, pp. 438-440.

In this comedy, Trappolino, a wanderer in search of a long-lost twin brother, enters the very town where the latter is in service. Fortune, seemingly unable to decide whether to embroil the twins in trouble for love or money, decides on both. Francese, a pedant, seeks the servant Trappolino, intending to send him with a hundred _scudi_ to Pantalone, future husband of the scholar's daughter, Clarice. The money is part of her dowry. Francese meets the newly-arrived Trappolino, who refuses the charge, but soon finds it safer to accept the money. As he wanders about town he receives more money and other goods and, of course, a beating, and is all the while amazed that the citizens call him by name. Pantalone meets the local Trappolino, asks for his gold, and is summarily informed that Francese and he are liars both. Francese meets the original messenger, learns that the money has been deposited for safekeeping at a friend's house and, soon afterwards, informs Pantalone of this. Next, Pantalone again meets the local Trappolino, and is once more given the lie in the throat. Trappolino's arrest is ordered. Officers capture the stranger; Pantalone drags in the local boy, and in the last moments of the play, the typically Plautine recognition scene takes place.

The love-trouble, meanwhile, has been gathering momentum. The pedant's son loves Pantalone's daughter, Isabella. She loves him, but is also loved by a stranger, Lelio, who eventually turns out to be her long-lost brother. Clarice, Pantalone's fiancée, has an eye for Lelio and, for her sake, Isabella writes to him to arrange an after-sundown rendez-vous. The girls give the letter to Trappolino, the stranger, overcoming his hesitation to bear another message to another unknown, when they offer him a ring. As might be expected, the letter reaches Fabritio's hand. He beats Trappolino, then reads the letter, and is incensed by his Isabella's supposed infidelity, when the other Trappolino strolls familiarly on-stage in the wake of the stranger's hasty retreat. Fabritio attacks him and the servant, innocent of complicity though not without guile, suggests that the lover keep the appointment in Lelio's stead. Trappolino next meets Isabella and, thinking she is drunk, stops her flow of questions by pretending to have delivered the letter. She then gives him a letter for Fabrizio. Franceschina, who had arranged a liaison with the other Trappolino when the girls gave him the letter to Lelio, now reminds the wrong twin not to forget their after-dark date. The local Trappolino promises, then goes to Lelio with the letter for Fabritio and advises him to take the place of the pedant's son.

The dark scene, played in full daylight, can well be imagined. Fabrizio and Lelio, each pretending to be Isabella, enter in women's clothes. They meet and embrace. The girls end up in a similar ridiculous clinch. Both the Trappolini, each sure he is linking Franceschina, stroll about arm-in-arm. The lovers eventually sort themslves out, and later win parental consent for their respective marriages. When the lovers recognised their error, the zanni came face to face. Each, sure he has seen a ghost, runs away in terror.

The discovery of their true identity takes place after the capture already mentioned and the twins' joy, along with Pantalone's discovery of his lost son's identity is, with the marriage-go-round, one of the elements of the happy ending. (Pantalone, whose lust for Franceschina prevented her meeting with the two Trappolini, cedes Clarice to Lelio, and, making his relationship with the *servetta* legal, supplies the necessary third marriage.) "With such general training," says K. M. Lea, "the Trappolini would have made admirable Dromios."[122] Shakespeare certainly seems to have brought this type of training to his creating these servants. One cannot easily refrain from surmising whether the *comici dell' arte* who played in England might have staged a Plautine drama in the manner of *Li dui Trappolini*, and whether Shakespeare might possibly have attended such a performance. If these suppositions are groundless, then he must have learned from some of his contemporaries who visited Italy the secret of "modernizing" the slaves of classical drama in the style of the Bergamask *zanni*. The experiences of the Dromios have so many parallels in improvised comedy that it is almost impossible to accept an appeal to coincidence as a satisfactory way of explaining the similarities.

The actual details of the arrest of Antipholus of Ephesus, who sends the wrong Dromio home for the purse in his desk, with the result that Dromio gives the money to his real master, the wrong Antipholus, while Dromio of Ephesus brings his arrested master the rope's-end ordered by Antipholus of Syracuse, are paralleled in a scenario entitled *Il Tradito*. Horatio, a lover, pretends to be a servant, and his pride nettles mischievous Zanni , who procures a thief to inform the lover that Pantalone, his master, has been arrested for a security of one hunded *scudi*, and wishes him to come immediately with a casket of jewels which are hidden in Pantalone's closet. Horatio, righteous and diligent, follows orders, while Zanni informs the merchant that his servant has robbed him. They ambush, rob and beat poor Horatio, despite his protestations of innocence, and he lives in ignominy until everything is explained just before the final curtain. The spirit of this scene is different from the situation in *Errors*, but the actual complications and the amusement they afford are very similar indeed.

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[122] *Italian Popular Comedy*, II, 440.

The slaves of Plautus are never interested in intrigues with women. They, like the parasite Peniculus, have one main appetite to satisfy, the appetite for food. The *zanni* of *la commedia dell' arte*, on the other hand, while making gods of their bellies to good comic effect, are frequently involved in bantering, and often enough in *liaisons dangereuses* with the *fantesche*, as is Dromio of Ephesus with that not-so-ravishing creature whom we are free to call Luce or Nell. Shakespeare exploits the disgust of Dromio of Syracuse, who was so embarrassed by the maid's attentions, but he does not present the girl and her real lover together on the stage, preferring to relate rather than dramatize the respective attraction and antipathy of the brothers in respect of that wench. The geographical description of Nell by the Syracusan would do justice to any Arlecchino, though I have not discovered any such description in the few dozen *scenari* I have read. However, there is an excellent mirroring of the amazement of Dromio of Syracuse on being claimed by Nell, in *Zanni incredibile*. This *scenario* exploits two sets of doubles in the same way as Shakespeare does in *The Comedy of Errors*, but the scenarist refuses to impose upon the credulity of his audience by producing both sets of twins upon the stage at one time.

Instead, he places the final recognitions in a house—off-stage—and gets the traveller brothers to return on stage in great glee just before the curtain-drop, leaving the local Zanni and the local Lavinio weeping tears of joy indoors—and out of view. This device was not essential in the case of the Zanni brothers, for their role called for masks, but the Lavini are *innamorati* and, therefore, maskless. In the first act of *Zanni incredibile*, the local servant expresses his jealous passion for the free-and-easy *servetta*, Argentina. Soon afterwards, the other twin arrives in town and quickly experiences something like the chagrin of Shakespeare's slave from Syracuse:

> *Zanni Forastiero* essere arivato in questa città voler trovare una osteria. Arg[entina] lo chiama lui si meraviglia lei l'accarezza lui che non la conosce, lei dice che l'ingravidata lui gli da una mentita, lei gli da un schiaffo et entra lui piangendo parte facendo finir l'atto.[123]
>
> (The out-of-town Zanni states that he has just arrived in this city and is looking for an inn. Argentina calls him. He is amazed. She embraces him. He says he does not know her. She informs him that she is carrying his child. He calls her a liar. She smacks him and goes in. He leaves weeping, thus bringing act one to a close.)

In the same comedy, Lavinio the traveller experiences some of the discomfort of Antipholus of Syracuse, when, on meeting the Local Lavinio's sweetheart, Silvia, he suddenly finds himself harnessed to a lady who claims the right to his love.

The *commedia dell' arte* servant's interest in sex, which is usually more explicitly treated than Shakespeare's Nell-Dromio *affaire*, differs markedly from the Plautine slave's lack of interest in wenches. This is very obvious if one compares *Menaechmi* with an improvised comedy version of the same story, *Li due simili di Plauto*. Here Pantalone, playing the

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[123] Lea, II, 603.

senex role, is, unlike his Latin prototype, present from the beginning of the play, and he is involved in most of the doubles-confusion, alternately meeting his friendly son-in-law, Silvio, and the other twin, Capitano, who has just returned from Spain, where he has dwelt since infancy, and where, incidentally, he has developed a fiery temper. His servant, Burattino, is a very Italianate Messenio, who, when they arrive at the local inn, immediately gives himself to outrageous flirting with the host's wife, Olivetta. (Olivetta and her husband are the only additions to Plautus's *dramatis personae*), when Flavia (Mulier) has mistaken the foreigner for his identical twin, Silvio, her husband, Zanni, enraged at having, *per accidens*, missed a meal at the home of Hortensia, the courtesan, enters and demands his wages, which are long overdue. He addresses the wrong twin, and finding the Capitano in a friendly mood, bargains for an afternoon in bed with unsuspecting Flavia in lieu of his regular pay. The upshot of this is an "error" that Plautus never thought of and that Shakespeare could not have used: Zanni, from the bedroom window, demands his money from an astonished Silvio, because Flavia refuses to commit adultery. The horror of the twin in the street grows to a rage that might well become his irate brother, when Zanni asserts that Flavia has witnessed the bargain.

Flavia, in *I dui simili di Plauto*, is quite the vixen; she is closer in concept to the Mulier of *Menaechmi* than to the wordy, worried Adriana. This may be attributed to the scenarist's giving more prominence to the courtesan Hortensia, whose *seconda donna*, the maid Fanceschina, plays a boisterous role in the farce. But Shakespeare's Adriana is not without her counterparts in the *commedia dell' arte*. The *Lettere* and *Frammenti* of Isabella Andreini leave us no doubt that she, as *prima donna*, frequently found occasion to express the heartbreak of a neglected *innamorata*, and her penchant for learned philosophizing on the role of woman in courtship and marriage won great applause from *commedia* audiences, especially from learned men, such as the Intenti academicians, who showed the magnitude of their admiration by electing her a member of their exclusive literary society. Shakespeare creates a sympathetic Luciana. On studying her functional importance in *The Comedy of Errors*, we find that she is a sounding board against which the dramatist strikes the tongue of Adriana's ideas. She is also a convenient mate at the end of the play, when Shakespeare presents us with a whole and sane Ephesian society facing a harmonious future, symbolized in the marriages of the Antipholi and the reunion of Aegeon with his wise and pious wife. This is precisely the function of the *seconda donna*. She is off-set against the more prominent *prima donna* throughout the comedy. Moreover, she is always excellent wedding material for the marriages which, in amplifications of Latin farce, in the extravaganzas of pastoral life, as in the comedies that were undilutedly romantic, were always *de rigeur* in the *commedia dell' arte*.

The basic seriousness of the dialogues of Adriana and Luciana contrast pointedly with the principal elements of this Shakespearian comedy. The discussions, by themselves, serve (as did the laments of Isabella, Scala's *prima innamorata*) to underscore the primary farce elements in the play. There are, however, a few minor characters, who differ from anyone we meet in Plautus or in the Italian improvised *commedie*. Balthazar makes one appearance in *The Comedy of Errors* (III, i.). His chief function is to insist that Adriana is no shrew, but, rather, a woman of wisdom, sober virtue, and honesty (ll. 88-90), a wife who deserves to be free of the insinuations of "vulgar comment" (l. 100). This insistence on the honourable life of Adriana is repeated by the indirections of the abbess (V. i. 68-86) whose diatribe against uxorial fits of selfish jealousy shows us that Adriana is not the vixen she pretends to be. It is the addition of Balthazar's advice and, especially, the presence of the nun, Emilia, that indicates Shakespeare's independence of the traditions of Latin and Italian comedy. The _commedia dell' arte_ derides over-serious, over-selfish fathers. Pantalone and the _dottore_ are perennial figures of fun. But improvised comedy, dedicated as it was to the essentially theatrical rather than the life-like, had no place for old ladies. This is a tribute to the sacredness of motherhood. When Shakespeare introduces Emilia, the abbess, he lifts the comedy, in its final moments, out of world of farce. His play has departed from the norms of social behaviour, as a result of confusion over appearances. The family reunion at the end, where loving father is reunited with admirable mother, where young wife embraces husband, free of all confusion, and where the wandering brother has found the twin he long sought and a clear-thinking, gentle wife as a direct reward of his search, is a return to normalcy, a discovery of reality, a truly comic _finale_.

It has been our purpose in this chapter first of all to show to what extent Shakespeare availed himself of Plautine material in composing _The Comedy of Errors_, and then to consider his departures from _Menaechmi_ and _Amphitruo_ with reference to similar departures that had become theatrical _clichés_ in Italy before Shakespeare began to write. The presentation of the identical twin business, of Adriana, Luciana and Nell, and of the servant brothers is, as we have indicated, so similar to the *commedia dell' arte* mode of presentation that Shakespeare seems to be familiar with Italian improvised comedy. But he has only borrowed what seemed suitable for his purposes, and has clearly decided when to transcend the traditional. Aware of the *limitations* of the *commedia dell' arte*, he borrowed its *zanni*, its *innamorate*, but as scenarist and improviser of every role, he has omitted the unusable and given us a farce with an Italianate comic ending which *compagnie di comici* could never have ordered with such nice proportions.

CHAPTER VI

THE TAMING OF THE SHREW — ITALIAN STYLE

The Comedy of Errors shows that Shakespeare was not only a capable craftsman in using the tools of farce, but also an artist with a strong propensity to transcend the limitations of farce. We find him vying with Plautus for the mastery of the Latin dramatist's special comic genre and yet adding a note of seriousness in heightening the business of the shrewish wife into an examination of woman's role in matrimony. In *The Taming of the Shrew* he again exploits his ability to walk the thin white line between situational comedy and comedy of character. Here he gives free rein to his zest for the writing of farce and, at the same time treats more fully and explicitly the problem of woman's tendency to resent the position of subordination in matrimony that has traditionally been her lot, as St. Paul reminded the Adrianas and Antipholi of the Ephesus of his day. The problems of mistaken identity are the core of *The Comedy of Errors*; the question of the shrewish wife is relatively peripheral. Adriana's colourful successor, Kate, moves from the periphery into the centre of the dramatic lion-cage. Gone are the indirectness of gentle Luciana and the directness of the gentle abbess. A new tamer, Petruchio, enters with all the trappings of farce to win our enthusiastic cheers, and his technique in subduing the roaring lion of feminine obstinacy is daring, reckless, cunning and confident. Recognising the ferocity of his adversary, he adopts tactics that are brutal. True to the nature of farce, his success—unthinkable in the day-to-day world of marital strife—is complete. But Shakespeare, never willing to turn a deaf ear to the demands of good sense, ends the play on a basically serious note, for Kate's speech on wifely obedience suggests that the real victory has been hers rather than Petruchio's. I do not suggest that this speech (V. ii. 137-180) is a long ironic comment by a shrew who has substituted guile for honest wrangling. I think the scene is the direct expression of the thoughts of a woman who has gained wisdom, for Kate recognises that there is an essential difference in the roles of man and wife in marriage. Her advice against ranting—

> A woman moved is like a fountain troubled,
> Muddy, ill-seeming, thick, bereft of beauty
> (ll. 143-144)

—is the sound conclusion of one who has learned from experience; yet we do not find her advocating blind submission, for she brands as "contending rebel" and "graceless traitor to her loving lord" only that wife who disobeys her husband's "honest will." Kate's victory has been over herself. Her words manifest none of the fear of the defeated. The reward of her victory is her husband's admiration and affection: "Why, there's a wench! Come on, and kiss me, Kate" (l. 181). The ending emphasizes the harmony and order of what we might call the ideal Pauline marriage. Yet surely we can be forgiven for surmising that Kate's victory is more than a victory over self; after all, what power has a man, even a Petruchio, to resist submission to the pleasant tyranny of the genuine charm of a loving wife?

There is a liveliness of pace, a preciseness of simplified characterization and a light-hearted disregard of the decorum of normal behaviour that brings The Taming of the Shrew into spiritual affinity with Italian comedy. Then, in the minor characters there is so much similarity to the *tipi fissi* of the *commedia dell' arte* that Shakespeare seems indebted in many ways to the well-known and much admired *comici*.

The Taming of the Shrew presents a special problem to the interested in discussing its genesis, a problem that seems insoluble. It is not that the wife-taming *motif* presents any difficulty: an anonymous translation of a story by Erasmus, bearing the title *A Mery Dialogue Declaringe the Properties of Shrowde Shrews, and Honest Wyves,* published in 1557, and Hugh Jackson's printing of an anonymous verse-tale entitled *Here Begynneth the Merry Jest of a Shrewde and Curste Wyfe, Lapped in Morelles Skin, for Her Good Behavyor* (c. 1550) show that the problems of the shrewish partner in marriage had their place in sixteenth century letters long before Shakespeare took pen in hand. The dilemma that perplexes us lies in the similarities and dissimilarities between Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew,* (first published in the Folio of 1623) and the anonymous *The Taming of a Shrew* (printed in quarto, 1594) and in the apparent inconsistencies within both of these plays. Many eminent scholars have tried to discover the relationship between the two. Their findings are so various and so contradictory that to wade into the mass of evidence they present in support of their theories seems foolhardy. Indeed, the student who fears being bemired in this scholarly morass might point to the example of so reputable a scholar as Kenneth Muir, who shies away from the controversy, claiming that "the state of our

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For a discussion of some analogues and possible sources of the play which were disregarded by Bullough, see Richard Hosley's "Sources and Analogues of *The Taming of the Shrew,*" *Huntington Library Quarterly,* XXVII (1963-64), 289-308.

knowledge is such that it would be unprofitable to discuss the question of sources."[125]

Reviewing the controversy briefly, one might divide *Shrew* critics into three camps. The theory of longest standing is that *A Shrew* is a source of *The Shrew*, in other words that Shakespeare, possibly with a collaborator, refurbished the anonymous play. The chief recent advocates of this theory have been John W. Shroeder[126] and Geoffrey Bullough[127]. Scholars in the second camp claim that Shakespeare's play is the source of *A Shrew*—that the latter is a pirated memorial reconstruction of *The Shrew*, and that is is an unusual example of a bad quarto because the reconstructor not only changed scenes and lines but used his own dramatic inventiveness to alter the original quite radically. This is the theory of Peter Alexander[128], John Dover Wilson[129], Sir A. Quiller-Couch[130] and E. P. Kuhl[131]. The third school of thought believes that both of the plays in question are based upon an earlier play which has not been preserved.

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[125] *Shakespeare's Sources*, I, 259.

[126] "*The Taming of a Shrew and The Taming of the Shrew*: A Case Re-Opened," JEGP, LVII (1958), 424-443.

[127] *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*, I, 57-68.

[128] *Shakespeare's Life and Art* (London, J. Nisbet & Co. Ltd., 1939), pp. 69-70.

[129] New Cambridge edition of the play (1928), pp. 104 ff.

[130] *Introduction* to the New Cambridge edition (1928), pp. V ii ff.

[131] "The Authorship of *The Taming of the Shrew*," PMLA, XL (1925), p. 551.

R. A. Houk[132] and G. I. Duthie[133] believe that *A Shrew* is a bad quarto of this lost Shrew play which, it seems, was Shakespeare's source for *The Shrew*. The whole problem is further complicated by suggestions that Shakespeare was not the sole author of *The Taming of the Shrew*, but had a collaborator who wrote the sub-plot under his direction, with Gascoigne's *Supposes* as a source of material. The case for the collaborator has been argued adamantly by T. M. Parrott[134] and E. K. Chambers,[135] but recent studies of the structure[136] and imagery[137] of the comedy state the contrary and are more convincing and more widely accepted than the assertions of these gentlemen.

All of these theories are open to attack; none of them is absolutely foolproof. The supposition of the existence of an early Shrew play which is no longer extant is a convenient device for eliminating arguments about the plays' similarities and dissimilarities, but there is no historical evidence that such a play ever existed. The idea that *A Shrew* is a source of *The Shrew*, an idea long considered acceptable, seems quite persuasive but it poses one very difficult problem: it demands of us to accept the improbability that an anonymous author is responsible for the tripartite structure of the comedy, even though none of Shakespeare's contemporary dramatists, Lyly, Peele, Greene, Marlowe, Kyd,[138] Munday and Dekker, ever show such a capacity for complicated dramatic structure in any of the extant plays that we attribute to them. Shakespeare, on the other hand, shows in *The Merchant of Venice*, for example, that in the 1590s he had the inventiveness and the power of dramatic synthesis to contrive such a plot, and to give it the structural and thematic unity which is characteristic of *The Shrew*. This leads me to an acceptance of Peter Alexander's idea that the 1594 comedy is simply an unusual type of bad quarto—a pirated version of Shakespeare's play, in which the pirate for reasons of his own, made changes in nomenclature, dialogue, and structure. The most careful textual comparison does not satisfactorily make this theory entirely convincing, and scholars seem likely to continue their arguments about the inequalities of Shakespeare's style. But, as K. Wentersdorf points out in a recent essay, "The Authenticity of *The Taming of the Shrew*," there is a consistency in the imagery which indicates beyond doubt that the play is the work of one author, and, furthermore, there is a peculiarity of choice and application of imagery which is typically Shakespearian.

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[132] "The Evolution of *The Taming of the Shrew*," PMLA, LVII (1942), 1009-1039.

[133] "*The Taming of a Shrew and the Taming of the Shrew*," RES, XIX (1943), 337-356.

[134] *William Shakespeare: A Handbook* (New York: C Scribner's Sons, 1934), Chap. X.

[135] *William Shakespeare: A Study of Facts and Problems* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1930), I, 324 and II, 404-405.

[136] Cecil C. Seronsy, "Supposes as the Unifying Theme in *The Taming of the Shrew*," SQ, XIV (1963), 15-30.

[137] K. Wentersdorf, "The Authenticity of *The Taming of the Shrew*," SQ, V, (1954), pp. 11-32.

Thus, accepting the evidence which supports the theory that Shakespeare is the sole author of *The Shrew* and that *A Shrew* is a pirated version of that play, we turn to an examination of the Italian elements in Shakespeare's technique of scene-structure and characterization. The sub-plot of *The*

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[138] See Hosley's "Sources and Analogues of *The Taming of the Shrew*," *The Huntington Library Quarterly*, XXVII (1963-64), pp. 289-308.

Taming of the Shrew is almost certainly based on the Supposes of George Gascoigne, which in its turn is little more than a free translation of Suppositi of Ariosto—a commedia erudita which provided improvised comedy companies with inspiration for many a plot involving deception and confusion. There are, however, some striking differences between the Bianca story and Supposes, differences that suggest that Shakespeare, in The Taming of the Shrew, is working within the traditions of improvised comedy. Commedia dell' arte scenarists, always concerned with introducing as many complications as possible into the love-intrigue, usually surrounded the prima donna with three suitors, two innamorati and one vecchio. Gascoigne's Polynesta[139] attracts only two rivals, Erostrato of Cathanea and Cleander of Ferrara, while Bianca, like Isabella in Flavio Tradito, is the object of the hopes of three men, the ardent Lucentio, the somewhat mundane Hortensio, and of the money-minded oldster, Gremio. By introducing the second young lover, Shakespeare is able to dispense with Pasyphilo, the parasite of the Supposes, and also with Psyteria, the old hag, for in the complex business of Bianca's suitors, there is no need for tell-tale trouble-makers. The hag is here transposed into the widow who marries Hortensio, an independent and strong-minded lady whose small role is similar to that of the maid-servant Franceschina in the commedia dell' arte, in that she is convenient raw material for the third marriage which is essential to the traditional happy ending. The unsuccessful lover in Supposes is the dottore, Cleander. Shakespeare, obviously determined to avoid having a real pedant to distract his audience from Lucentio's ruse in courting Bianca as the supposedly learned Cambio, presents us with the *vecchio amoroso* Gremio, who in his role as a rich merchant more concerned about dowry than romance, is clearly cast in the mould of Pantalone of *la commedia all' improviso* and is even seen in the light of the Italian tradition by Lucentio and Tranio, who effect a servant-master exchange in order to "beguile the old pantaloon" (III. i.37).[140] Indeed one of the big differences between *The Taming of the Shrew* and *The Taming of a Shrew* is that the latter has no characters corresponding to Tranio and Gremio, each of whom in dramatic function and in personal qualities, reflects an amusing and well-known *commedia dell' arte* mask.

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[139] I give the names of Gascoigne's characters as they are given in the dramatis personae list at the beginning of the 1566 edition, as reprinted in Bellough's Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare, pp. 111-158.

Bianca's father, Baptista, is essentially the same character as Damon, the *pater familias* of *Supposes*. His role is that of the paternal autocrat intent on marrying his daughters for motives that are basically pecuniary. This disposition is the basis for the introduction of the rich suitor: Cleander, the miserly pedant, in Gascoigne's play and Shakespeare's unforgettable pantaloon, old Gremio. Far from being a pedant, Gremio has interested himself in more tangible riches than those of the intellect, and he reveals this in no uncertain terms when he relates how, shocked at Petruchio's irreverent behaviour during the wedding ceremony, he left the church "as willingly as e'er [he] came from school" (III. i. 153). His concern for amassing wealth is as thorough as that of any Pantalone, and he implies that marriage to a less fearsome termagant than Kate could be acceptable if the price were right, when he confesses to Hortensio that he would prefer "to be whipped at the high-cross every morning" than win Kate's dowry and be forced to live with a consummate shrew (I. i. 134-136). When to win Bianca he engages Lucentio as a schoolmaster who will, he thinks, further his cause, he promises to reward "Cambio" "with a largess" (I. ii. 154). The role of the _vecchi_ in the _commedia dell' arte_ is to provide serious obstacles to the course of young love by insisting on values that are mercantile (as opposed to romantic). The lovers must, if romance is to prevail, dupe the old men—and this they always do. Indeed it is a characteristic of improvised romantic comedy that the only lovers that are roundly mocked are _poseurs_, hypocrites; naturally, the pedant, the merchant and the braggart captain are the three who are mainly subjected to the raillery of their acquaintances. The duping of money-conscious Baptista and of rich Gremio is the reason for the exchange of identity determined on by Lucentio and Tranio and for Hortensio's assuming the position of Litio, . the music teacher. "See," says Grumio, "to beguile the old folks, how the young folks lay their heads together" (I. ii. 140-141). The contrast between the romantic yearnings of youth and the match-making of the oldsters is clearly asserted when Tranio, as the supposed Lucentio, vies with Gremio for Bianca's hand. Tranio's:

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[140] Lucentio refers to Gremio, not to Bianca's father. The First Folio edition of the play (1623) has the following stage-direction following I. i. 47: "Enter Baptista with his two daughters, Katerina & Bianca, *Gremio, a Pantalowne* [Italics mine], Hortensio sister [*sic*] to Bianca. Lucen. Tranio stand by."

> I am the one that love Bianca more
> Than words can witness, or your thoughts can guess.
> (II. i. 329-330)

is contrasted with Gremio's itemizing of his horde of gold, tapestries, ivory and his stock of lands and argosies. And the concern of the older men with money is delightfully satirized when Tranio abandons the role of conventional lover to impress Baptista and depress Gremio by playing the game of merchant and daring to insure the girl's future with argosies, galliases and galleys (II. i. 370-374). And, when the craftiness of youth defeats the seriousness of age, Gremio, like the worldly-wise Pantalone, suffers no pangs of despised love; "out of hope of all but [his] share of the feast" (V. i. 148) he attends the wedding banquet, there to become an interested but detached spectator of the wagering by the three new husbands who test the obedience of their brides. And, as if to emphasize the rift between the generations in the matters of the heart, Shakespeare has Gremio back the wrong mare, when on hearing of Bianca's answer to her husband's invitation, he chides Petruchio with, "Pray God, sir, your wife send you not a worse" (V. ii. 84), and is thereafter left wordless, to consider (perhaps?) whether his former bride-to-be may not be a worse shrew than the Kate whose tongue he feared.

In the confusion about the Mantuan pedant who plays father to the real Lucentio, Shakespeare seems very close to situations that frequently recur in improvised comedy. We may wonder whether the playwright has in mind the characteristic long gowns worn by Pantalone and _il pedante_ when Biondello, on seeing the old Mantuan coming down the hill, cannot determine whether that "ancient angel" is "a mercantante or a pedant" (IV. ii. 63). It is interesting to note that in a number of the _scenari_ of Scala we find a Pantalone-figure named Cassandro.[141] He, like Pantalone, is a merchant and holds a respected position in society, but judging by his part in the plots in which he appears, he is more wise in his seriousness and more kindly in his attitudes; and sometimes we find him counteracting the meddlesomeness of his fellow-vecchio to help dissipate difficulties and make a happy ending possible. This is precisely the type of character we find in Vincentio, and we note that his arrival upon the scene brings confusion to a climax and then helps iron out the difficulties that must disappear before the finale.

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[141] Two such _scenari_ are _La finta pazza_ ("The Supposed Madwoman") and _Li duo amanti furiosi_ ("The Two Mad Lovers"). Cassandro is a companion of Pantalone in both plays.

It is perhaps more than coincidental that there are Italian parallels to Vincentio's encounters with his servants, Biondello and Tranio. As Winifred Smith points out,[142] the first act of Scala's Il dottore disperato has a vecchio-zanni encounter which is very similar to young Biondello's roguish assumption of arrogant independence when he pretends not to recognise his master's father and, so, earns himself a beating (V. i. 46-60). When Tranio enters, a moment later, and upbraids Vincentio:

> Sir, you seem a sober ancient gentleman by your habit,
> but your words show you a madman. (V. i. 74-75)

he is playing what we might call "theI-don't-know-you dodge," which is a traditional zanni mirth-provoker in improvised comedy. Then Vincentio's confrontation with the supposed Vincentio at the home of Lucentio has parallels in the balcony-to-street arguments that abound in Li dui simili di Plauto—which we have mentioned à propos The Comedy of Errors. These encounters exist very much for their own sakes and are typical of the lazzi in the farce-scenes that occur so frequently in the commedia dell' arte; complexity is rampant and, especially in the encounter of the real and pretended fathers, logical thought does not intrude to help explain the mutual misunderstanding.

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[142] The Commedia dell' Arte, p. 198, n. 60.

In his handling of the two main servants, Tranio and Grumio, Shakespeare follows the Italian scenarists in placing before us one clever, guileful servant, Tranio, who in some ways resembles Arlecchino, and one blundering attendant, Grumio, who is always reminiscent of the duller zanni whom we have hitherto identified as Pedrolino, (the name most commonly given to this mask in Il teatro delle favole rappresentative). The menservants of the commedia all' improviso are always Bergamasks. It is interesting to note that Shakespeare has Vincentio remind Tranio—that "fine villain" in "silken doublet, . . . velvet hose, . . . scarlet cloak, and . . . copatain hat" (V. i. 66-69)—that pearl and gold are inappropriate decorations for one whose father "is a sail-maker in Bergamo" (line 80). Tranio is a clever Bergamask, one who delights in the role of master, one whose zest for helping the lover Lucentio leads to the adoption of the Pisan pedant as a father who will assure Bianca's parent that the promises about wealthy galliases are not vain. It is a characteristic of Arlecchino that the more willingly and ingeniously he provides help, the more complicated the results will prove. It is also one of his traits that his mischievous nature never allows him to concentrate on more than one thing at a time. This is especially true of Tranio in the scene where he vies for Bianca's hand (II. i.); he gets so caught up in the wish to defeat Gremio that each offer by his opponent elicits a more daring bid from him, while his caution in respect of awkward consequences entirely disappears.

Not only does Tranio have the Harlequin's single-mindedness, he is also blessed with the same intriguing combination of wit and impudence. There is no place in Shakespearian comedy for the physical agility of Arlecchino, but plenty of opportunity for the mental gymnastics that are an equally important part of that role. In Act V, Scene ii, Tranio neatly skips from what Petruchio calls "a good swift simile but something currish" (1.54) to a fiendish jab at the shrew-tamer: "O, sir," he says, referring to his role as suitor to Bianca,

> . . . Lucentio slipped me like his grey-hound,
> Which runs himself and catches for his master.
> . . . .
> 'Tis well, sir, that you hunted for yourself;
> 'Tis thought your deer does hold you at a bay. (V. ii. 52-56)

Just as the servant in improvised comedy is usually the chief instigator of the action, so Tranio directly offers a contrast to Lucentio's courtly-lover's enthusiasm about the coral lips and perfumed breath of "sacred and sweet" Bianca (I. i. 178-180) and invites the lover to consider the difficulties as well as the joyous raptures of love. He states that love-at-first-sight is an embarrassing commodity when directed towards a princess in a tower:

> Nay, then, tis time to stir him from his trance.
> I pray, awake, sir: if you love the maid,
> Bend thoughts and wits to achieve her. Thus it stands:
> Her eldest sister is so curst and shrewd,
> That till her father rids his hands of her,
> Master, your love must live a maid at home.
> And therefore has he closely mew'd her up,
> Because she will not be annoyed with suitors. (181-188).

Thus he helps Lucentio prepare himself for the grasping of the first opportunity that can bring him close to the cloistered Bianca.

Since Tranio is busy entertaining us with his pose as Bianca's lover, some of the typical Harlequinesque duties are performed by Biondello. He is the liaison officer who promotes the lovers' happiness, and when he calls them to their secret wedding, he discusses marriage in printer's terms, using "cum previlegio ad impremendum solem" [sic] in ambiguous reference to the husband's marital duties and referring to the wife as man's "appendix" (IV. iv. lines 93 and 105). In a sense, Biondello is an extension of wily Tranio, for in him we find the guile and wit that we associate with the older servant.

While it is Tranio's task to play the far-from-Harlequinesque role of serious lover, Grumio is free to be his own wayward self. His first appearance is the occasion of a lazzo, for the knocking-scene (I. ii) has no dramatic purpose but to provoke our laughter with slap-stick fare. Whether we choose to examine this episode as a deliberate or a real misunderstanding of the expression "Knock me here soundly" (l. 8), there is no doubt that the basis for the fun is the stupidity of a servant who can neither understand nor use correctly the simplest conversational language, and whose dullness is the main reason for the frequent beating he receives. "Is there any man has rebused your worship?" asks Grumio, with that abuse of English which corresponds to Zanni's faulty Italian. But, Shakespeare's Grumio is no Italian. This is immediately evident when his master's greeting Hortensio with, "Con tutto il cuore ben trovato" appears to the servant to be an allegation in Latin. A slow-witted zanni such as Scala's Pedrolino is very much the "peasant swain," the "whoreson malt-horse drudge" (IV. i. 132) that Petruchio sees in Grumio. Like him, Grumio is mischievous and also somewhat vicious. Arriving at Petruchio's country home, he describes himself as "a little pot and soon hot" (IV. i. 6) and asserts that this hotness, his fiery temper, has saved him from freezing on the road from Padua. His mischief is perhaps seen at its best in the scene in which he joins his master in abusing the bewildered tailor, for even if Petruchio wishes Kate to suffer both for the loss of the "quaint . . . pleasing (and) commendable" gown (IV. iii. 102) and for the tailor's discomfiture, we can be sure that for the servant this is an occasion for indulgence in every whim arising out of the very ridiculousness of the situation. Grumio's teasing the hungry Kate at the beginning of the same scene might be considered a piece of devilment ordered by his master, but in his conjuring up visions of juicy neats-foot and tempting helpings of beef and mustard (IV. i. 1-34) only to deny them on the grounds that the first is "too choleric a meat" (1.19) and that the second might be too hot, we see that same delight in teasing and in causing discomfort to others that we witnessed when he invited curious Curtis to lend an ear and, to his own great delight, summarily smacked it (IV. i. 60). This scene with Curtis is primarily a *lazzo*, just as is the taunting of the tailor a few scenes later. But Shakespeare, while treating us to snatches of action that seem to contribute little to the plot—apart from the immediate effect of causing us to laugh—sometimes invests such scenes with a significance that we can only appreciate later. In the exchange of bawdy jests and general lively chatter between Curtis and Gremio WE LEARN that Kate, despite her unenviable trials on the purgatorial honeymoon journey, was overcome with concern for the abused servant whom Petruchio mistreated in her stead:

> Thou shouldst have heard how . . . he beat me because her horse stumbled; how she waded through the dirt to pluck him off me: how he swore; how she prayed, that never prayed before (IV. i. 75-80).

Here we are informed of the first noticeable change in Katharina, and realize that the task-master has almost tamed his hawk—or that the wife, who seemed so shrewish, is beginning to reveal the compassion of a feminine heart and betray a warm sympathy that she has too long kept hidden. The *lazzo* of *zanni* raillery and the tradition of *zanni* beatings are both used by Shakespeare for the purpose of an unexpected revelation that effectively prepares us for the dénouement.

One of the essential elements of the audience-appeal of a servant such as Grumio or Pedrolino is a certain strain of the grotesque in his make-up. Grumio, when he accompanies his absurdly-dressed master to the impious wedding of the shrew, is accoutred in the motley of the loutish Bergamask servant:

> with a linen stock on one leg and a kersey boot-hose
> on the other, gartered with a red and blue list; and old
> hat, and the 'humour of forty fancies' pricked in 't for
> a feather: a monster, a very monster in apparel, and
> not like a Christian footboy or a gentleman's
> lackey. (III. ii. 68-74).

But the absurdity of some of Grumio's statements keeps him nearer in tone to the grotesqueness of the unlettered Pedrolino. When Hortensio first proposes to Petruchio that faults and fortune may be reaped in the questionable harvest of a marriage to the Minola termagant, Grumio's expression of confidence in his lord's ability to silence a scolding tongue is a superb instance of inept oratory:

> An he begin once, he'll rail in his rope-tricks. I'll
> tell you what, sir, and she stand him but a little, he
> will throw a figure in her face, and so disfigure her with
> it that she shall have no more eyes to see withal than
> a cat. (I. ii. 113-117)

If, as I suspect, "rope-tricks" is a confused enunciation of "rhetoric," Grumio's enthusiastic vote of confidence in his master's ranting-power is belied by reference to the dim-sightedness of the cat. Since most of us consider feline eyes so superbly keen, we may be right in suspecting that our author uses the lackey's uncertain metaphors as an almost imperceptible but nonetheless influential means of ironically forecasting the possibility of a triumph for Katharina in her becoming "as conformable as other household Kates" (II. i. 272). This indirectness of dramatic suggestiveness is again discernible in the seemingly innocuous but obviously puzzling information which Grumio offers Petruchio as they prepare for the ride to Kate's new home:

> Petruchio. Grumio my horse.
> Grumio. Ay, sir, they be ready: the oats have eaten the horses. (III. ii. 208-209)

There may be a suggestion here—a vague one admittedly—that just as surely as "The oats have eaten the horses" is the converse of the real situation, so also Petruchio's confidence in the inevitability of his success as Kate-tamer might be a type of expectation that will eventually be belied. Indeed the irony of Kate's gentle railling of the other brides and the self-congratulatory arrogance of Petruchio's embarrassing the other grooms, easily suggest that Shakespeare might be hinting that Katharina's charming docility may be a new form of 'shrewishness' which assures her of the mastery over her brash, admiring and unsuspecting lord.

The professional comedians of the cinquecento, dressing the tipi fissi in masks and frequently abandoning plot-progess in favour of incidental lazzi, emphatically stressed the theatricality of their entertainment. The incidence of the play-within-a-play device is, naturally, by no means rare in the commedia dell' arte. The second act of Scala's Il vecchio geloso uses this device, when the scenarist has Pedrolino arrange a meeting of Isabella with the innamorato, Orazio, while the lady's jealous husband, Pantalone, enjoys a performance by a band of wandering players. In La fortuna di Flavio, Graziano sets up a stage and uses Arlecchino's talent for jesting and Turchetto's penchant for song in order to win himself an audience. Though Shakespearian drama is characterized generally by the creation of theatrical illusion—by the presentation of a slice of life in which the characters are real persons rather than caricatures or types (in the Jonsonian manner), the use of the induction to _The Taming of the Shrew_ emphatically stresses the fact that the story of Katharina and Petruchio and the Bianca romance are to be viewed as theatre, not as life. By quickly eliminating Sly and his companions, Shakespeare seems to be cunningly demonstrating to his audience the effects of theatre-illusion, for soon we are absorbed into the world of the play which actor Sly ostensibly attends, and we soon forget the very existence of that besotted player-auditor. Indeed the symmetry achieved by the rounding out of the Sly-business in _A Shrew_ is perhaps a dramatic flaw, for the awakening of the sleeper who must, like us, homeward plod his weary way to test the effectiveness of Petruchio's ruse in a world where wives seldom preach in the manner of the subdued Kate, strikes us as an anticlimactic episode which seems little more than an awkward appendage to the comedy. It would appear, then, that Shakespeare is here exploiting a time-honoured device of the _commedia dell' arte_, but doing so with a dramatic mastery that is unique, for there are no _scenari_ that go to the extreme of presenting us with a long drama that is a play-within-a-play.

We have shown that echoes of improvised comedy are to be found in almost every scene of _The Taming of the Shrew_: the oldsters and the servants and the complex Bianca love-story are typical of the _commedia dell' arte_; we find numerous items of stage-business that resemble the _lazzo_; Hortensio and Lucentio, by assuming disguises for the furthering of their individual suits, act as do innumerable *amorosi*, and Hortensio's succumbing to Tranio's ruse in suggesting that both abstain from further interest in the same young lady is truly in the vein of those facile renunciations and sudden re-directions of passion that make way so frequently for the astonishingly sudden and facilely contrived happy endings that are *de rigeur* in the *scenari*. That these are direct reflections of the traditions internationalized by the ubiquitous *compagnie di comici* can never be stated as an absolute certainty, but the number and the quality of those aspects of Shakespeare's work that strikingly reflect the art of the Italian professionals places within the realm of probability the likelihood of Shakespeare's indebtedness to the *commedia dell' arte*. Even the stychomythic exchange of unromantic sentiments that amuses us when venomous Kate first meets devious Petruchio is reminiscent of those improvised fugues of disdain that delighted Italian audiences when lover and mistress ran foul of the snares that make perilous the path of romance:

Petruchio. Myself am moved to woo thee for my wife.
Katharina. Moved! in good time: let him that moved you hither
Remove you hence. I knew you at a first,
You were a moveable.
Petruchio. Why what's a moveable?
Katharina. A joint-stool.
Petruchio. Thou has hit it: come, sit on me.
Katharina. Asses are made to bear, and so are you.
Petruchio. Women are made to bear, and so are you.
Katharina. No such jade as you, if me you mean.
Petruchio. Alas, good Kate, I will not burthen thee . . .
(II. i. 194-203)

This type of dialogue continues for another thirty lines in the jabbing staccato of a verbal duel, until Petruchio begins his ironic catalogue of Katharina's gentle virtues, with the words, "I find you passing gentle" (l.237). This is in the style of those tirades of disdain preserved for us in the

Frammenti of Isabella Andreini. We note that each line in the Kate-Petruchio dialogue stems from the one immediately preceding it. The speakers show their wit by using the association of ideas and the ability to extend a metaphor with ingenuity until an unexpected quip channels the argument through the turbulent canyons of insult:

> Petruchio. I swear I'll cuff you if you strike again.
> Katharina. So may you lose your arms:
> If you strike me you are no gentleman,
> And if no gentleman, why then no arms.
> Petruchio. A herald, Kate? O, put me in thy books.
> Katharina. What is your crest? A coxcomb?
> Petruchio. A combless cock, so Kate will be my hen.
> Katharina. No cock of mine; you crow too like a craven.
> Petruchio. Nay, come, Kate, come, you must not look so sour.
> Katharina. It is my fashion when I see a crab. (II. i. 219-228)

Allardyce Nicoll describes a similar scene from the commedia dell'arte (but does not identify the scenario):

> The lady drops her handkerchief, which . . . forms the focus for a lengthy debate. The lover picks it up, and refuses to return it. On the lady's enquiring what use it can be to him, he replies that it will cure his wounds; "But there is no balsam on it," she objects; "That," he says, "I shall hope for from your pity." So the game goes on. The handkerchief's whiteness is interpreted by the lover as a symbol of happy peace; it will become a sail of his good fortune, a bandage for Cupid's eyes; it will dry his tears. The lady for her part stresses its frailty, something the wind may blow away. . . . He determines to keep it as an image of his eternal faith, while she avers it will be burned, a symbol of passion consumed.[143]

The method of procedure here is similar to the argument in The Shrew—and here we have proof of Shakespeare's closeness in tone to yet another tradition of the commedia dell' arte.

Conclusion

The purpose of this paper has been to state that, despite the silence of most critics, Shakespeare was almost certainly influenced by the well-established and well-known theatrical techniques and dramatic *clichés* of Italian improvised comedy. For this purpose, especially to show that the probability of such an influence can be detected in his earliest compositions for the stage, discussion has been confined to the four plays that are generally considered to be Shakespeare's earliest comedies. Because what may be the latest of these, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, is a romantic comedy in the style of the *commedie all' improviso*, it seemed a natural starting point for this dissertation. The remarkable similarity of Nathaniel and Armado, especially, to Italian prototypes led to an examination of the Italianate quality of *Love's Labour's Lost*, before we turned to the two plays that are closest in spirit and content to farce, *The Comedy of Errors* and the history of spirited Katharina.

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[143] The World of Harlequin, p. 37.

Shakespeare's debt to the *commedia dell' arte* does not end with these early dramas. We may choose to reject the legend that he wrote *The Merry Wives of Windsor* in a mere fourteen days. We may wonder if there is any relationship between this play and *The Jealous Comedy* which was produced "by the Alleyn company for Henslowe"[144] after this group obtained a special license from the Privy Council on May 6, 1593. But we cannot but wonder if Shakespeare is drawing upon an Italian *scenario* such as *Li Tre Becchi*,[145] for there is a strong resemblance between the experiences of Pantalone in the latter and the tribulations of Falstaff the *vecchio amoroso*. It is interesting that *The Merry Wives* is one of the most hilarious of Shakespeare's plays and that we are quickly surprised, on examining it from a literary rather than a theatrical viewpoint, to discover that the funniest scenes contribute nothing to the plot—that such scenes are mere *lazzi*. The use of dialects is another characteristic of this play that shows how close the author is to one of the prime sources of amusement in improvised comedy, when he ushers Dr. Caius and Sir Hugh Evans on to the stage. A comparison of Scala's Graziano with the Falstaff of *The Merry Wives* illustrates quite persuasively how the lechery, the hypocrisy and the Euphuism of Sir John places him squarely within the traditional role of *il pedante*. Fenton and Anne Page are Italianate lovers. Mistress Quickly can easily be compared to the *servetta*, Franceschina, and this comparison leads us to the conclusion that she is a superbly Anglicised *servetta* in every way. Even in the more serious middle comedies the parallels with *commedia dell' arte* practices are impressive. Shylock, an important Venetian merchant, is a superb example of how Shakespeare can amplify and humanize a typical Pantalone;[146] indeed it might be argued that Shylock has merely undergone a sea-change in being immersed in the scintillating waters of Shakespeare's poetic power, after being imported from *scenari* such as Scala's *La pazzia d'Isabella* ("The Madness of Isabella") and *Il fido amico* ("The Faithful Friend"). The popular device of the heroine disguised as a boy appears in *As You Like It* and *Twelfth Night*, and, whereas this device is a very common one in learned comedy, the latter uses identical twins in conventional *commedia dell' arte* style. Bottom's metamorphosis parallels Pantalone's becoming an ass in *Il Pantaloncino*, and also in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the behaviour of Demetrius, Hermia, Helena and Lysander reflects the vicious circle of enchanted lovers.

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[144] E. K. Chambers, *William Shakespeare: A Study of Facts and Problems*, I, 435.

[145] Reprinted by Lea, *Italian Popular Comedy*, II, 580-584.

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[146] Cf. Walter Barker, *Three English Pantalones*. Unpublished dissertation, University of Connecticut, 1966.

Puck, too, seems to be a transformed commedia mask; he has all the qualities of the medieval Vice that had become part of Arlecchino's personality—and the secret of the appeal of the devilment of both these nimble characters is that their actions constantly remind us of "what fools [we] mortals be." The plight of Hero in Much Ado about Nothing is similar to the accusation against the heroine in La Gelosa Isabella.

The most striking resemblance of any of Shakespeare's plays to the commedia dell' arte is to be found in what may well have been the poet's last play, The Tempest. K. M. Lea, in discussing the probability of Shakespeare's indebtedness to improvised romances for the structure of this play, shows that five scenari edited by Ferdinando Neri[147] and Shakespeare's Tempest are, in essential stage effects and in action, almost identical. She also cites Scala's pastoral L'Albore Incantata as a scenario which seems to be a possible structural model for The Tempest, in which there is a departure from the narrative technique of The Winter's Tale. "It may be suspected," says Miss Lea, " . . . that Shakespeare observed the unity of time in the Tempest not so much because of any dissatisfaction with the technique of his other romance as because of the accidental difference in the form of his source."[148]

Since the study of Shakespearian drama has traditionally been undertaken by men whose interests are literary, concern with the identification of his sources and with the transformation of them effected by his genius has generally been confined to the rich fields of our author's availing himself of a body of theatrical traditions that belong purely to the stage, their task is unnecessarily difficult, because they must suppose elements of adaptation from old stories and recognise as original certain stage-effects that Shakespeare may have borrowed. That so little effort has been expended on the study of possible sources of the technical aspects of our dramatist's work is quite surprising, especially in an age that is so interested in cinematographic production. Furthermore, the twentieth century has witnessed a recurrence of emphasis upon the theatricality of dramatic presentation, notably in the work of the German poet and playwright, Bertold Brecht. Brecht, like the scenarists of the *commedia dell' arte*, used the sprightliness, drollery and improvisation of actors in order to remind his audience that the stage is a place where life is portrayed rather than lived. He rejects theatrical illusion, giving us drama which is objective rather than subjective, drama which invites the play-goer to consider his own role as that of a spectator at a bull-fight. Shakespeare differed from the *cinquecento* Italian professional and from Brecht in his over-all concern for the creation of dramatic illusion. Yet, as we have seen, in his frequent exploitation of incredible coincidence for plot-furtherance, in his handling of servant roles, and in his indulging so frequently in Italianate *lazzi*, he frequently drops the veils of illusion to expose us to the stark reality of the nature of theatrical entertainment. The purpose of this work has been to illustrate the nature and extent of Shakespeare's concern with the technique of comic presentation. We have shown that the possibility of his borrowing from Italian theatrical traditions is by no means slight, asserting that recognition of the influence of the *commedia dell' arte* can cast new light on our understanding of his approach to the composition of his dramatic masterpieces.

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[147] Scenari delle Maschere in Arcadia, Città di Castello, 1913.

[148] Italian Popular Comedy, II, 445.

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